Crimes of Fashion:

Vestal Virgins, Elegiac *Puellae*, and Claudia Quinta in Ovid *Fasti* 4

Prior to her appearance in Ovid’s account of the official importation of the Magna Mater, Claudia Quinta was already a renowned exemplar of Roman female virtue (Cicero *Pro Cael*. 34, *De Harusp*. 13.27); furthermore, her reputedly miraculous statue stood in the Palatine temple of Cybele (Val. Max.1.8.11, Tac. *Ann*. 4.64). While Livy 29.14 mentions but does not elaborate on a tradition in which she was wrongly suspected of having a *dubia fama*, Ovid makes this idea the centerpiece of his extensive literary treatment. In *Fasti* 4.305-48, the arrival of Cybele is the frame for the story of Claudia’s spectacular public vindication by the goddess. I explore in this paper how Ovid characterizes Claudia Quinta and the suspicion of immorality that initially clung to her — *casta quidem, sed non et credita: rumor iniquus / laeserat, et falsi criminis acta rea est*. He describes her with elements both of historical Vestal Virgins accused for *incestum* and of the *docta puella* of Roman love poetry even though Claudia Quinta is neither in the *Fasti*. Specifically, Claudia’s vivaciousness and saucy speech (*promptaque lingua*), combined with her conspicuous dress sense and fashionable hairstyles (*cultus et ornatis varie … capillis*), attract negative gossip and impugn her moral character (*F*. 4.307-10; cf. Sempronia in Sallust, *Cat*. 25). I will first consider Ovid’s Claudia Quinta in the Vestal context – inasmuch as her couture, coiffure, and wit harm her as they did the actual Vestals Postumia and Minucia (Livy 4.44.2 and 8.15.7-8) and then as Claudia is Vestal-like in her importance to Rome (and indeed in later accounts identified as a Vestal). I will then explicate Claudia Quinta’s affinity for the sensibilities of the elegiac mistress, specifically in terms of attire and hairstyle laid out in *Ars Amatoria* 3.133-92 and also in terms of attracting and flouting censorious criticism in the manner of Catullus 5. In sum, Ovid eroticizes and problematizes Claudia Quinta as a socially disruptive but elegant woman of fashion and wit, and he then vindicates her without diminishing her overt visual erotic appeal, thus playfully complicating the idea of Roman female exemplarity and how it is reckoned and received.