

‘Connecting the Disconnected’: The Kalends of May in Ovid’s *Fasti*

While the order of presentation in Ovid’s *Fasti* is largely determined by the sequence of the Roman calendar, the poet in fact exercises great selectivity in what to include or omit, and how to develop what he does select for inclusion. Implicated in these many choices is the poem’s larger, complex architecture. Modern scholarship has charted thematic structure in various ways. Adjacent entries have been shown to resonate as ‘syntagmatic tensions’ (Barchiesi 1997), such as the invented story of abortion on the Carmentalia against the strong Augustanism of the surrounding days. Conspicuous themes emerge within each book (Braun 1981), as in more traditional Latin elegiac poetry books—e.g. peace in Book 1, the star myths of Book 2, and so forth. Carole Newlands (2000) applies the perspective of ‘connecting the disconnected’ across different books of the *Fasti* (her example is Book 6 vs. Book 1), which enlarges the range of thematic associations in both complementary and contrastive terms.

The present paper applies Newlands’ perspective to the micro-level of the poem in a single day’s entry, that for the Kalends of May (5.111–58). Ovid chooses a trio of items to represent the day: the constellation Capella, the ruined altar of the Lares Praestites, and the old shrine of Bona Dea recently restored. These would seem to have little in common beyond the superficial similarity of the two latter as anniversaries of shrines. But closer scrutiny shows that we are invited to read the events in the light of one another. The first two sections are neatly balanced: after 9 couplets on Capella Ovid devotes 9 couplets to Lares Praestites, where the opening verse restates the date (129 *Maiae . . . Kalendae*; cf. 111 *prima . . . nocte*) along with a motif of sight (129 *videre*; cf. 111 *videnda*). *Signa* also figure in both openings (and at 143), albeit with a different

meaning in each case, ‘statues’ (130) vs. ‘constellation/star’ (112 *signum*). Both movements feature a double protection involving an animal, first baby Jupiter by the milk and the horn of Amalthea’s goat, then for the city of Rome by the Lares and the symbolic dog accompanying them. The possible indirect evocation of Augustus at the end of ‘Capella’ (evocation of Capricorn associated with him) becomes an explicit Augustan conclusion at 145–46. Such associations between the Capella and Lares sections may jog memory of the tradition that the Lares were the same as the Curetes who helped hide the baby Jupiter in Crete (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 139).

The final section on Bona Dea is shorter (13 verses), but after an ingenious transition from the Lares, we find a reformulation of motifs from that movement: a renewed sequence of word plays on *stare/statuere*; cf. 150 *Saxum* and 137 *saxo*; 153 *oculos* and 134 *oculis*; again the stages of a temple’s history—the progression 154–57 *constituere . . . dedicat . . . restituit*, after 131–32 *voverat . . . destruit* and at 143–46 Augustus, in effect, making up for the loss of the single pair of Lares at the shrine by the ‘thousand’ pairs of Lares, augmented by his own Genius. More precisely, the lattermost measure powerfully illustrates exactly how Livia’s restoration of Bona Dea imitates Augustus, so the two sections’ endings intimately correspond. Bona Dea also looks back to Capella and caps other unfolding threads: a didactic gerundive opens both (111, 148); all three sections are concerned with naming (cf. 128, 133–36, 148–50, 155); at 152 *prima . . . signa dedistis*, the motif of *signa* recurs yet again, here in a third sense (‘augural signs’), but also responding to the previous passages: Remus looked for signs in vain, in contrast to his brother Romulus, but like Ovid in his search for the Lares’ statues (143); cf. the verbal cluster at 111–14 *prima . . . signum . . . dati*. All in all, Ovid has

brought us from Jupiter's cradle (112) to Livia and Augustus (157–58), whom he styled Juno and Jupiter earlier in the poem (1.650).

Works Cited

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