

Satirizing the *Fasti*: Calendrical Elements in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*

Seneca satirizes a range of different modes and genres in the *Apocolocyntosis*, among which targets are historiography, tragedy, comedy, epic and more (Blaensdorf 1986; Damon 2010). While Robinson (2005) discusses the role of temporal transitions in the text, the *fasti* and calendrical time has not been considered as a significant presence and an additional satirical target. In fact the *fasti* is conspicuous by its absence in Diespiter's speech in support of Claudius' apotheosis, where he closes his argument by saying that the event should be added to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (9.5). Eden (1984.114) comments that the *Metamorphoses* is an unexpectedly comic substitution for the official *fasti*, where such an event should have been recorded. Eden refers only to the calendrical *fasti*, revolutionized by Julius Caesar, but we should not forget that the poet whom the text mentions by name, happened to also have written a poem on that very subject, namely the *Fasti*. In this paper I explore ways in which both the real *fasti* and Ovid's *Fasti* are present in the satire to argue that both are an important context for the potential apotheosis of Claudius and further, that Ovid's *Fasti* provides Seneca with a way to examine more closely the practice of apotheosis and the institution of the *fasti*.

Firstly I consider the frequent references in the text to days, months and the cycle of the year, which draw attention to the types of concerns that would be appropriate to the *fasti*. Together these references set up the *fasti* as a framework in which we should be considering the action of the satire. Such moments also often emphasize the malleability of the *fasti* at the hands of the emperor, both when alive and dead. For example an anonymous speaker relates how Claudius celebrated the month of Saturn for *toto anno* (8.2), allowing one month to seemingly subsume the rest of the year, while the text opens

by saying that the occurrence of Claudius' death in October inaugurates an *anno novo* (1.1), potentially necessitating a change to the cycle of the year. The extent to which emperors could manipulate the *fasti* for their own purposes is well attested in the historical record for the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, Nero and beyond. An awareness of the institution of the *fasti* being open to such manipulation is clearly present in the text and renders it a prime target for satirization, especially due to the close connection between the *fasti* and apotheosis.

Secondly I explore the presence of intertextual links between the *Apocolocyntosis* and Ovid's *Fasti*. Janus as the first speaker in the *Fasti* (F.1.101) and invited to speak first in the *Apocolocyntosis* (9.2) is an obvious point of contact and Seneca's Janus is informed by Ovid's depiction of him as the doorkeeper of the gods (F.1.125). Ovid's *Fasti* provides the backstory for many of the characters mentioned in the satire who underwent their own process of apotheosis, such as Hercules, Romulus, Tiberius and Livia. Connecting those names with their backstories serves to uncover points of disconnect within the tradition of apotheosis and draws attention to the gap between the world of the *Apocolocyntosis* and the record-keeping institution of the *fasti*. As a recent literary treatment, the lens of Ovid's *Fasti* allows for a deeper consideration of the trend of deifying the emperor and his family. For example connections can be made between the witnessing of the apotheosis of Drusilla (1.2-3), Romulus' ascension as seen by Julius Proculus (F. 2.499ff) and the deification of Augustus himself, who on the surface appears untouched by the satirical agenda of the text.

Even though neither the real *fasti* nor the Ovidian are explicitly mentioned in the text, both are significant contexts for the satire, and for broader issues of apotheosis and

the power of the imperial family. Intertextual connections with Ovid's *Fasti*, together with repeated references to cyclical time, which establish the *fasti* as an important framework for the satire, allow Seneca to add the institution of the *fasti* to his list of targets for satirization. The *fasti* may have been the official vehicle through which the cycle of time at Rome was maintained, but the *fasti* which emerges from the *Apocolocyntosis* and its intertexts with the Ovidian *Fasti* is one deeply compromised by its responsiveness to the power, life and deaths of the imperial family.

Select Bibliography

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