

Panel: Ovid's *Fasti*

Panel Description:

The five papers in this panel explore themes of censorship, discourse and exile in Ovid's *Fasti*. Paper 1, "Interpreting Romulus and Remus in Ovid's *Fasti*," examines the contradictory themes of fratricide and imperial praise in order to evaluate the role that encomium of Augustus and the imperial family serves within Ovid's poetry. Paper 2, "Exile Stories in Ovid's *Fasti*," looks at the ways in which Ovid links the mental and emotional experience of exile in the stories of Evander and Carmentis, Ariadne, and Anna Perenna to themes of censorship and discourse in Ovid. Paper 3, "The Decline of Free Speech in Augustan Rome in the Context of the *Parentalia*," considers the role of the *Parentalia* in the works of Cicero, Vergil and Ovid and examines what the changing attitudes towards the festival can tell us about cultural resistance and free speech in the early Empire. Paper 4, "The De-eroticization of Creation in *Fasti* 4," argues that Ovid de-eroticizes Venus and restores her role as a generative goddess in order to demonstrate that the poet is in creative control of his work. Paper 5, "The *Lemuria* of Ovid's *Fasti*: What the Not-So-Silent Dead Have to Say," provides a close reading of the scenes featuring the *Lemuria* in order to illuminate Ovid's political subtext within the poem and highlight the poet's objections to the loss of free speech during the Augustan Age.

Interpreting Romulus and Remus in Ovid's *Fasti*

Recent scholarship in Ovidian literature has often focused on the politics of the *Fasti*, and how unanswered questions and contradictions presented by Ovid may lead to an essentially oppositional interpretation. Scholars such as Alessandro Barchiesi and Carole Newlands have recently demonstrated the possible political leanings of Ovid through the contrast of subject matter with poetic form. This paper works within that theory, instead applying a similar contrast to apparently incompatible themes of fratricide and imperial praise within the *Fasti*, which I believe provides a greater insight into the extent to which Ovid denounces Augustus, and comments on the emotional state of Rome in the late 1st century B.C.

In this paper, I intend to demonstrate that the same interplay between the form of the *Fasti* and the weighty praise of the emperor, as explored by current scholarship, extends to the very foundations of the work, that is, the thematic unity of the text as an encomium of Augustus and the imperial family. To illustrate this point I have selected the foundation myth of Rome, and further the characterization of Romulus as contrasted with Augustus, themes that I believe Ovid chose purposefully to demonstrate this exact dichotomy. Duplicity is not merely present in the form and theme of the work, but also in its most important selections, namely the foundation myth. I first demonstrate the manner in which Ovid has doctored the foundation myth to suit his needs, namely in comparison with that presented by Livy in his *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.7. Next I discuss the characterization of Romulus, and how apparent praise for Augustus present in implicit comparisons between the two can equally be interpreted as ironic criticism. Finally, I analyze the story of Romulus and Remus itself, namely how it also depicts Romulus as a deplorable character, perhaps even willing participant in the human sacrifice of his brother. The characterization of Romulus in the fratricide and the dubious praise of Augustus that accompanies their comparisons serve to demonstrate the ironic nature of any praise leveled at Augustus in the *Fasti*.

The incompatibility of these two themes lies at the heart of my contribution, or rather, expansion, to the paradigm presented by current literature (Bannon, 1997). Because the post-civil war Roman world has become as insensitive and unsympathetic as Romulus following the murder of his brother, the intended effect of the fratricide on Roman minds is heightened, and adds to a text already ripe with anti-Augustan discourse.

The Exile Stories in Ovid's *Fasti*

This paper examines the stories of exiles presented in the Ovid's *Fasti*. Since Ovid spent ten years in exile, during which time he reworked portions of the poem, there was opportunity for his own experience to influence his portrayal of exiles in the work. I will argue that the exile stories in the *Fasti* share a common treatment in which Ovid draws parallels between his experience and those of the mythical exiles. These parallels generally focus the reader's attention on the mental and emotional experience of exile.

My thesis is that through the exile stories of Evander and Carmentis, Ariadne, and Anna Perenna Ovid does two conspicuous things: he emphasizes, or even invents, the element of exile in the story and he highlights and amplifies the emotional experience of the exile for the reader. The stories of Evander and Anna Perenna provide examples of aetiologies invented by Ovid because of their exilic content whereas the story of Ariadne is significantly modified to add a second exile. Within and across these stories a specific set of emotions is emphasized and repeated: despondency and despair (Anna Perenna, Ariadne), anger and criticism (Evander, Ariadne), exuberant optimism (Evander) and consolation (all three). I conclude with some thoughts on why Ovid might wish to highlight these particular emotions to his reader.

This paper follows those readings of the *Fasti* which see it as a dialogue with various audiences at Rome about the power (and legitimacy) of the Julian line (Barchiesi 1997; Newlands 1996) rather than as primarily an antiquarian catalogue or rigorous explication of the Roman calendar. In its focus on exiles, this paper is part of a much smaller group. While the topic of exile is common in the scholarship of the *Fasti*, the exile stories themselves are treated individually or their importance is connected to some other theme (Green 2004; Rutledge 1976). Some work, however, has been done along similar lines (Parker 1993). It is hoped that this paper's examination of the exile stories as group will contribute to the overall understanding of Ovid's approach to questions of censorship and discourse under the emperors.

The Decline of Free Speech in Augustan Rome in the Context of the *Parentalia*

This paper attempts to link the changing attitudes towards the *Parentalia* as expressed in Cicero's *First Phillipic*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and Ovid's *Fasti* in order to analyze the decay of free speech at Rome during the transition from republic to principate. I begin the paper with an overview of the state of free speech at Rome prior to the rise of Octavian and the decline of the republic. Following on the work of Mary McHugh and Dennis Feeney, I show how freedom of speech generally flourished during the republic. The real threat to *libertas* and by extension freedom of speech first emerged during the troubled times of the triumvirs in 44 B.C. Free speech suffered greatly during the years of Octavian and Marc Antony. Nevertheless, once Octavian had asserted his dominion and taken on a new persona, he restored many elements of free speech and gave license to most poets and historians.

The thesis of this paper states that while all three authors had different intentions when composing their works they all tell us something about the current attitudes toward the festival itself and by extension free speech. Cicero appears as a figure of "cultural resistance" in the *Phillipics* when he opposes the reappropriation and destruction of traditional religion by the triumvirs. In contrast, Vergil attempts to place his description of the festival in the context of the emperor's program to reinvent Roman identity. Therefore, unlike Cicero and Ovid he emphasizes the inclusive, public nature of the festival calling all Romans to honor their "father." Finally, Ovid manipulates his discussion of the festival by placing it on February 21, the feast of the goddess *Muta*. In this way, he can link the festival of the dead with his own loss of free speech and exile on the Black Sea.

The De-eroticization of Creation in *Fasti* 4

In interpreting the proem of *Fasti* book four most scholarship has sought to look back at Ovid's third book and his pairing of Mars and Venus, noting their grouping in Augustus' temple of Mars Ultor (Miller 1997; Herbert-Brown 1994). While the pairing of Venus and Mars does present important material for interpreting the proem of both books three and four, scholarship has generally neglected the importance of looking forward to Ovid's pairing of Venus and Cybele and the subsequent appearances of generative goddesses following the proem. Although the appearance of Lucretian language and themes has been widely noted in Ovid's work and in *Fasti* 4 specifically (Miller 1997; Barchiesi 1997), I will argue in this paper that Ovid carefully models his presentation of Venus in book 4 on Lucretius' presentation of the goddess throughout the *De Rerum Natura* and sets off an eclipse of her creative power by closely following the portrayal of Magna Mater in *DRN* 2.600-45.

Through the use of Lucretius' grouping of Venus and Cybele Ovid creates a de-eroticization of the concept of creation that continues through his depiction of Ceres and Pales ending the book with chaste Vesta, taking that power away from Venus. By de-eroticizing the generative role of Venus and eclipsing her with less erotic generative goddesses Ovid separates her erotic and poetic elements from the concept of nature and creation and creates a presentation of the generative Venus that had previously appeared in the *DRN*. By appeasing Venus in the proem of *Fasti* 4 and then slowly de-eroticizing elements of her power and usurping her authority in nature Ovid lessens her control and does not allow her to deter him from writing on larger themes, as she did in *Amores* 1.1. Thus, the sincerity of the proem to book 4 comes into question and a power struggle emerges between the poet and the goddess.

Ovid's use of Lucretius in *Fasti* 4 also sheds light on verses from the proem of the book. In the following passage Ovid at first glance seems to be defending Venus from those who do not agree that she holds a relationship to April:

Quo non livor abit? sunt qui tibi mensis honorem
eripuisse velint invidiantque, Venus. (4.85-6)

King (2006) takes the statement literally, but when reading these lines in the context of Ovid's use of Lucretius to supplant Venus with Natura the statement can be interpreted in a number of ways. First of all, the statement is humorous. While seemingly defending Venus from those who want to take away Venus' role as a creation goddess in nature, Ovid is actually setting himself up to do just that as the book progresses. Furthermore, just as Cupid snatched away a foot and deterred Ovid's path from epic in *Amores* 1.1, Ovid now has snatched the creative role away from Venus and successfully moves away from love poetry and into the *maior* theme of Epicurean philosophy and didactic. In this light, Ovid's statements at the beginning of *Fasti* 4 when he pledges his devotion to Venus appear to be a trick. Ovid knows that he cannot get away from love poetry easily – Venus has foiled his attempts to work in heavier genres in the past – in *Fasti* 4 Ovid cunningly usurps Venus' creative role as a goddess, de-eroticizing her and lessening her power until he has successfully moved past the love poetry of his youth.

The Lemuria of Ovid's *Fasti*: What the Not-So-Silent Dead Have to Say

Ovid's *Fasti* provides the only extant account of the ritual for the dead performed during the Lemuria festival and provides a controversial etymology linking it to the ghost of Remus. The passage at once invites criticism since the author claims the tradition for the name Lemuria has long since been lost. Mercury, the divine trickster and psychopomp, provides the history of the holiday. Or does he? This paper explores this enigmatic festival and attempts to provide context for the tradition and the author. It is widely believed that Ovid edited the *Fasti* significantly while in exile, and his writings indicate an erudite and allusionary style. "An integral part of the charm of Ovid's *Fasti* is the way he wraps up politically correct Augustan ideology in amusing tales which offer unexpected and slightly improper associations and conjunctions." (Littlewood 2001, 921) Following Littlewood and others in the belief that Ovid is saying more than meets the eye, the political subtext is explored in detail with especial consideration paid to the inclusion of Remus as the namesake for the festival.

Also considered is the debate in modern scholarship about the locus of the Lemuria. Was it a public or private affair? Ovid appears to place the ritual in the domestic realm which is advocated by this author. This reading provides yet another layer to the political commentary running below the surface of Ovid's work. Finally, the contradictions of the "silent dead" who refuse to be quieted are considered. Ovid injects Remus into the *Lemuria*, without precedent, and uses this controversial figure to further his subtle objections to the Augustan censorship he had fallen victim to. Thus it would seem that the account of the *Lemuria* and the unsatisfied Remus, serves as a vehicle for Ovid to express his own dissatisfaction of exile and the Augustan reforms.