

## The Palatine of the Milky Way: Architecture and Rome in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.168-180

In the first book of *Metamorphoses*, the deterioration of humankind from quasi-divine to corrupt and unsatisfactory beings serves as Ovid's transition from creation to transformation myth. Jupiter summons a *concilium deorum* (1.163-252) to determine a plan of action for confronting and/or punishing the problematic human race. References to Roman practices and ideals in this passage have often been discussed, particularly the associations of the *concilium deorum* with Roman Senate meetings (see, e.g., Buchheit 1966; Ginsberg 1989; Rosati 2001; Nix 2008), Ovid's use of Roman terminology for social class (e.g., Galinsky 1975; Feeney 1991), and the connections between Ovid's Jupiter and the emperor Augustus (e.g., Bretzigheimer 1993; Barchiesi 2005).

Ovid explicitly correlates Rome and Olympus in 1.175-176: *hic locus est quem, si verbis audacia detur / haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli*. Many scholars (including Wheeler 2000; Keith 2007) have commented upon the specificity and boldness of the comparison in these lines. To my knowledge, however, no one has given full consideration here to the Palatine as a representation of Roman architectural space, how Ovid compares the homes on the Palatine to those of the gods. This premise is the focus of my paper, which begins by addressing the beginnings of domestic architecture, laid out in Ovid's Ages of Man (1.121-122), and progresses to an analysis of the Roman analogies summarized above, highlighting Ovid's use of architectural terminology and ideology.

I argue that in *Met.* 1.168-180, Ovid employs a discourse of Roman architecture to explore further the often-complicated similarities between gods and humans, an underlying theme of the *Metamorphoses*. In a ring composition Ovid projects Roman architecture back into the past: the Palatine of Ovid's day inspires the description of Olympus at the beginning of time,

which seemingly would influence monumental domestic and public architecture of later periods. According to Ovid's comparison, the gods seem to take on human qualities in fashioning their homes after those on the Palatine, and in turn this could make the Romans assume divine qualities in their capacity to inspire such action in the gods. In other words, when it comes to architecture, especially in Rome, the divide between human and god is all the more blurred.

### Bibliography

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