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Narrative Presence in Ovid's *Fasti*

by

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## *Introduction*

Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE -- 17 CE) was a Roman poet during the Augustan era, and the *Fasti*, a title literally meaning “the calendar,” is his six-book work on the Roman calendar, a poem which contains various mythological and historical stories to explain religious holidays and rituals. But although the stated subject of the poem is the Roman calendar, Ovid draws attention to himself as the narrator throughout the poem. This throws Ovid front and center, making the poem as much about Ovid writing the poem as it is about the calendar itself. Ovid makes himself the main character in his poem, which allows him to do several things, including call attention to certain realities about the difficulties of writing about the calendar, such as breadth of topics encompassed by the theme of the calendar and the political ramifications implicit in writing about history; unify his myriad subjects around not only the calendar, but around the daily life of a Roman citizen over the course of a year, or at least the six months that the poem ends up covering; and remind the reader constantly that he, Ovid, is the author of the work, and is making a great contribution not only by explaining the etiologies and history behind the calendar, but also by composing a poem worthy of being counted among the great ancient classics whose influence on the *Fasti* is clear.

My paper examines Ovid’s narrative presence by studying two major categories: the sources from which Ovid ostensibly draws his information and the places in which Ovid exhibits uncertainty about the information he is telling the reader. In my first section, I talk about how Ovid portrays his sources, which consist mainly of dialogues with gods and humans and Ovid’s experiences rather than any written documents or monuments, and how this portrayal allows him to play with the student-teacher dynamic that is typical of didactic poetry and how Ovid ultimately uses these dialogues to claim his literary heritage. In my second section, I talk about

the various possible causes of Ovid's apparent hesitancy to claim authority and the circumstances under which he renounces his authority. Ultimately, my conclusion is that Ovid's role as an omnipresent narrator serves to unify the work into a poetic whole and to glorify Ovid himself as the great writer who memorialized the calendar.

Before beginning such an analysis, however, it is necessary to provide some background about the Roman calendar and its significance in Augustan Rome in order to fully understand the context of the *Fasti*. In Rome before Caesar and Augustus, *fasti* encompassed the Fasti Anni, the annual calendar which listed festival days and religious days to be celebrated every year, and the Fasti Consulares, a list of elected officials whose names became the means of denoting the year in which they were in office.<sup>1</sup> Therefore there were two aspects: the cyclical and the linear.<sup>2</sup> Caesar and Augustus effected radical changes to the calendar, adding two eponymous months and commemorating births, deaths and anniversaries important to them. Where before the *fasti* had not been about any individual, it now centered around the principate.<sup>3</sup> When Augustus came to power, he erected a version of the *fasti*, known as the Fasti Capitolini, in the Roman Forum as a physical monument, with some immediately visible changes. One of the most important ones is that he added a numeric year dated from the founding of Rome in 752 B.C.E. next to the consular names, which changed the dating of the calendar from the founding of the Republic to the founding of Rome, a change that asserted his power by reminding people that Augustus's radical changes were in fact supposed to be seen as a return to the traditional way of doing things.<sup>4</sup> In 1 C.E., Augustus began to insert his name and title at the beginning of each year before the names of the consuls, putting himself literally and symbolically before them. In this

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<sup>1</sup> Feeney (2007) 168.

<sup>2</sup> Feeney (2007) argues that Ovid's writings reflect this duality and that the *Metamorphoses*, his record of mythological stories, reflects the linear history that compliments the cyclic calendar of the *Fasti*.

<sup>3</sup> Feeney (2007) 184-185.

<sup>4</sup> Feeney (2007) 172-182.

way, both the calendric and linear *fasti* became powerful symbols of imperial authority. It is in this atmosphere that Ovid, who would have grown up during the civil war that brought Augustus to power, wrote his *Fasti*.

As we move on to the subject of the poem itself, I would like to begin with a discussion of the genre of the *Fasti*; because the main discussion of this paper will focus on the purpose of the narrator throughout the *Fasti*, comparing its narrator with the narrators of other contemporary literature with similar objectives helps to shed light on the importance of particular stylistic choices. The problem is that the *Fasti* does not fall neatly into any one particular genre as we understand them. The most ostensibly appropriate genre is that of didactic poetry; Ovid begins by telling his audience that he will sing *tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum / lapsaque sub terras ortaue signa* ('The times arranged in order with etiologies through the Latin year, and the constellations having risen and fallen under the earth,' I.1-2). Saying that he will give us information about a specific subject at the very beginning of the poem alerts us at once to the influence of the didactic genre. As the poem progresses, Ovid explains his topic in detail in a methodical fashion, teaching his audience the reasons that the Roman calendar is the way it is.

There are, however, some notable differences between the *Fasti* and other didactic poetry. Volk, for example, specifically excludes it from her discussion of didactic poetry because it does not fit two of her criteria for the normal workings of didactic poetry: she claims that Ovid does not specifically say that he will teach the audience anything, only that he will sing about it; and that although most didactic poetry is geared towards a specific student or audience, as Hesiod's *Works and Days*, for example, is geared toward his brother Perses, Ovid's audience is

unspecified and his addresses to them “occur in an extremely random and unsystematic fashion and are interspersed with addresses to numerous other characters.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to violating Volk’s criteria, the *Fasti* diverges from traditional didactic style as Ovid adopts a stance of uncertainty and even confusion about his subject material that occurs in many places throughout the poem. Nearly half of the dialogues with gods are initiated by Ovid asking questions about a particular topic, and he inserts *ni fallor* (‘unless I am mistaken’) as an introduction to specific facts, as though he is not certain that what he is saying is correct. This is in stark contrast with the narrators of other didactic poetry, who typically claim to be the ultimate authorities on the subjects on which they are writing. This undermining of narrative authority in the *Fasti* through Ovid’s apparent ignorance of particular aspects of the subject at hand will be a large part of my discussion, both because it is so unusual and because Ovid’s motives behind his decision to portray himself in such a way are far from clear.

The fact that the *Fasti* only has six books and therefore only covers half of the year might also contradict the conclusion that the poem is didactic. We do not know why the poem does not continue past June; Ovid either intended it to end there and never meant to write the second half at all, or he intended to write it but either he never got around to it or he wrote it and it has been lost. It seems likely, however, that the omission of the second half was intentional; the symmetry is so perfect, with six months written and six months gone, and he stops immediately before he must talk about the politically-charged months of July and August. If he indeed intended to only write six months of the year, it would be difficult to call the *Fasti* didactic; because didactic poetry is meant to teach its audience about a subject, one would also expect a didactic poem to fully explain its subject matter, or at least cover all of the basics, and the *Fasti* would fail on that count because Ovid only gives us information on the first half on the year, rendering his

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<sup>5</sup> Volk (2002) 42.

teachings cut off in the middle if his aim was indeed didactic. Thus the *Fasti*, although it displays certain similarities with other didactic poems, does not truly fit in with them; we might say it has a didactic tone, but the poem itself does not fit neatly into the genre.

Another genre which clearly influenced the *Fasti* is history, particularly the category of antiquarian study, research into the early history of Rome. After all, one of the major themes of the poem is the detailing historical and mythological stories behind contemporary rites and practices. There was even a precedent of writing about history in verse; the epic *Annales* of Quintus Ennius, one of the most influential Roman poets before the “Golden Age” of literature, was written in dactylic hexameter and laid out the history of Rome. This genre once again cannot explain Ovid’s choices through the entire poem, such as the omnipresent nature of the narrator or his dialogues and personal stories, but it is important to keep in mind the influence of the historical genre on the *Fasti*. In ancient Rome, one of the most important aspects of history was the way it reflected upon and even had the potential to influence the present; this is perhaps most famously exemplified by Livy’s *Praefatio* to the *Ab Urbe Condita* and his insistence *hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri* (‘This thing is especially beneficial and fruitful in the examination of things, that you regard the warnings of every example placed in a shining monument,’ *Ab Urbe Condita* Praefatio section 10).

Wallace-Hadrill argues that this bearing on the present is especially important when considering the extreme conservatism of Roman politics; the rhetoric was such that each politician defended his actions by claiming his was the way Romans had always done things, and justified change by claiming that the present way of doing things was inconsistent with the ways of the infallible *maiores*, the ancestors, and that rather than advocating change, they were really

advocating a return to tradition.<sup>6</sup> I mentioned before that Augustus used numeric dating to draw attention to the founding of Rome instead of the Republic, and it is for this reason that he was so interested in reminding people that Rome began as a monarchy. Antiquarian research, which arose in the Augustan period, was thus highly politically charged; before its rise, the main “experts” on the *mos maiorum*, the way of the ancestors, were the senators who claimed to be the actual descendants of the great Romans in question, who often twisted it or presented it in a light that supported their way of thinking, rather than being supported by any concrete facts. Because antiquarianism was a new way separate from the claims of the senators for Romans to connect with their past and the *mos maiorum*, it gave common people access to views of the past that might conflict with what the senators attempted to claim for political reasons.<sup>7</sup> Thus the Augustan age saw a transfer of power away from the senators as antiquarian research made it harder for them to make erroneous claims about the past in a very real example of the phrase “knowledge is power.” But because this was a period of such major upheaval and rupture between the present and immediate past, antiquarian research marked the stark contrast between Rome of the late Republic and Rome of early antiquity, putting the *mos maiorum* into the hands of historians and potentially made any historical account a statement on how the *maiores* did things.<sup>8</sup> In this way, writing about the past gave the historian power over the present, because their claims of the way the *maiores* did things allowed them not only to impart historical truths, but also to advance personal agendas.

It is also impossible to ignore the influence of elegiac poetry on the *Fasti*. Elegiac poetry refers to any poem written in elegiac couplets, and in this sense the *Fasti* is an elegiac poem. In ancient Rome, however, elegiacs were commonly used for love poetry; although this distinction

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<sup>6</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 228

<sup>7</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 235

<sup>8</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 236.



must be made, and I will refer to these separate ideas as elegiac poetry and elegiac love poetry to differentiate between them, I would like to discuss the influence both of previous elegiac poetry and of the genre of elegiac love poetry on the *Fasti*. Elegiac poetry was pioneered by the Greek poet Callimachus, and all of the Roman elegists who came later owe much to him, especially the persona of the poet aware of himself and the tradition of which he is a part,<sup>9</sup> a persona which is integral to the identity of the narrator in the *Fasti*. Many techniques that the Roman poets adopt for their poetry stem from Callimachus, including their application of the *recusatio*, a poet's claim to inability or disinclination towards writing about a particular subject, especially epic.<sup>10</sup> His *Aetia*, a poem about etiologies, is the poem that has the most noticeable impact on the *Fasti*, both in format and in subject material; Callimachus explains etiologies, although they are not bound by such a clear theme as the *Fasti* are, telling mythological and historical stories while talking frequently with gods. Gallus, Propertius and Tibullus are the main Roman love elegists preceding and contemporaneous to Ovid, and Propertius Book IV proves to be another huge influence on the *Fasti*. Although there are still love poems scattered throughout the book, it generally departs from the theme of love Propertius pursues in his first three books to concentrate on Roman history and etiologies; these themes allow a kind of compromise between his previous poetry and an expansion of his subject material into realms still encompassed by elegy, permitting him to "retain his elegiac identity and his proclaimed model while making his own contribution to the contemporary poetry that was attempting to define the national character of Rome under the emerging principate of Augustus."<sup>11</sup>

Ovid, like Propertius, also began with a background in elegiac love poetry before moving to heavier themes; the first poems we have evidence of him writing were the *Amores*, a

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<sup>9</sup> DeBrohun (2003) 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> DeBrohun (2003) 6.

<sup>11</sup> DeBrohun (2003) 8.

collection of elegiac love poetry. In the *Fasti*, he specifically calls attention to his choice of elegiac couplets in Book II, asking *quid volui demens elegis imponere tantum / ponderis? heroi res erat ista pedis* ('Why did I foolishly wish to put so much weight on elegiac couplets? This is material for the heroic meter,' II.125-126), claiming that *deficit ingenium* ('his talent falls short,' II.123). Hinds reads this call for attention to meter to mean "any tendencies which *can* be read as elegiac *will* be read as elegiac, whatever other, non-generic lines of interpretation they may admit too."<sup>12</sup> Thus we see that elegy is one of the most important genres to consider when trying to assess Ovid's choices, especially as far as the narrator is concerned.

I would also like to briefly discuss the structure of the poem. Each of the six books of the *Fasti* relates to a particular month, in order from January to June, and each month is divided into days; Ovid typically takes the beginning of the month to explain issues particular to that month as a whole, such as the origins of the name of the month, and on each day he elaborates on topics pertaining to the day. The topics usually fall into the categories of history, mythology, religious rites and festivals, movements of constellations, and etiologies and etymologies. Ovid sometimes tells us the information he is imparting outright, in a straightforward manner where the narrator does not make himself known, but often he instead imparts the information in the form of personal stories, relating either conversations or experiences to his audience. Sometimes an interlocutor does not actually appear after Ovid invokes one; Ovid's exclamation, for example, when seeking information on the Carmentalia, *ipsa mone, quae nomen habes a carmine ductum, / propositoque fave, ne tuus erret honor* ('Teach me, you who have a name (Carmentis) derived from song (*carmen*), and favor my objective, so your honor does not go astray,' I.467-468), but although Carmentis never appears, Ovid continues on with the story, presumably enlightened by a spiritual if not physical encounter with the goddess. These occasions harken back to a

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<sup>12</sup> Hinds (1987) 117 (his emphasis).

traditional way of communicating with gods in classical poetry, that is, rather than the gods encountering the author and having a conversation which the author provides verbatim, as Ovid does in his dialogues, they act as a more abstract source of inspiration. There are instances of this as far back as Homer, in the form of invocations to the Muses, and this tradition is continued through Roman times, as we see in epics like Vergil's *Aeneid*. While these encounters in the *Fasti* are not dialogues, they are still important interactions with the gods; I will refer to them as inspirational episodes in the course of my paper.

The dialogues too have a tradition behind them. Gods directly communicate with poets as far back as Hesiod, when the Muses tell him that he must write the *Theogony*. There are also divine dialogues in elegy; it is one of the most famous conventions in the *Aetia*, which portrays Callimachus talking to gods like Apollo (*Aetia* Book I fragment 1.23-30) and Calliope (*Aetia* Book I fragment 7). Propertius, too, talks to gods, styling an intervention by Apollo in 3.3 after Apollo's conversation with Callimachus in the first book of the *Aetia*. Ovid, however, seems to interact more actively with the gods, asking questions and holding full dialogues. It does happen that Ovid will ask a question or provide a scene to set up a dialogue, but the interlocutor takes up the remainder of the conversation with speech, where Ovid's only contribution is in the introduction; these are more in the style of Ovid's predecessors. I will refer to these, when necessary, as pseudo-dialogues.

Because the omnipresent nature of the narrator in the *Fasti* is so important to my point, I would like to take a moment to emphasize how often the narrator refers to himself directly, using first-person verbs and *ego* and *meus* in their various cases. The longest he goes without mentioning himself is I.685-853 during his story about Lucretia, and there are only four other times in the poem where a hundred lines go by without mention of the narrator: during the story

of Persephone from IV.417-573; from II.126-247 with various unrelated stories of constellations, Callisto and the house of the Fabii; II.545-651 with his story about Anna Perenna; and Erato's monologue in III.249-348. Even the Persephone story, which in reality does not end until IV.620, is interrupted by an interjection of the narrator. The narrator is everywhere in the *Fasti*, bringing himself to the forefront even during stories which move forward just as smoothly without commentary.

Thus, my argument is that this prominence of the narrator puts Ovid into the role of the main character in the *Fasti*, playing the roles alternately of historian, didactic teacher and elegiac narrator. These functions allow Ovid to write about writing about the Roman calendar, which allows him to explore the difficulties behind writing about such a politically charged subject, to provide narrative unity for the various topics lumped under the category of the Roman calendar, and, by not only pointing out the conventions he intentionally adopts and the great authors who use them, but also emphasizing the greatness of his task, to portray himself as an author worth immortalizing with the other great authors of the past.

### *Part I: Narrative Sources*

The sources Ovid relates in the *Fasti* – that is, the people he talks to and the experiences he relates to further the story while conveying information – are almost certainly not the sources he turned to while he was doing research to write the *Fasti*, which probably would have included written sources such as ancient calendars and histories. Nevertheless, in this paper I want to focus on the sources from whom Ovid the narrator, if not Ovid the poet, learns about the calendar, and thus when I use the word “sources,” it is the ones within the *Fasti* to which I am referring. Although the *Fasti* is a work dedicated to informing the audience about the Roman

calendar and the topics that naturally follow, such as rites and traditions, constellations, history, and mythology, Ovid appears to rely almost solely on personal sources rather than anything physical, such as written histories or monuments. These sources, mainly dialogues and experiences, allow Ovid to relate how he learns his information in an interesting way, while his depiction of himself as learning the information as he writes creates an illusion of simultaneity, that is, the phenomenon whereby the unfolding of the year, the creation of the poem, and the perusal of the poem by the audience are all happening at the same time.<sup>13</sup> This simultaneity takes advantage of the didactic tone of the poem to let Ovid play with the teacher-student relationship of a normal didactic work, which traditionally gives the narrator the role of a teacher presenting facts. By declining physical sources in favor of conversations and more personal stories, Ovid is not only claiming his literary heritage by harkening back to well-known poetic convention, but also emphasizing the immortality of great literature over the eventual deterioration of physical monuments, an implicit comparison of his poem with the physical calendar.

Although the vast majority of Ovid's sources are experiential, there are five instances where Ovid refers to written sources. He refers to *annalibus priscis*, ancient annals, in I.7, which implies serious research. The position of this reference is significant; Book I is the first book the reader encounters, and as such, the book by which the reader anticipates the rest of the poem. Thus, the episodes and conventions we encounter in it are particularly important because they are designed to develop expectation, and can therefore tell us about authorial intention throughout the entire poem.<sup>14</sup> That he mentions *annalibus priscis* as a source this early on in the poem suggests that he is using the reference to bolster his credibility by telling readers that he has done his research. He mentions *annalibus priscis* again in IV.11 as he gives Venus a brief synopsis of

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<sup>13</sup> Volk (1997) 287.

<sup>14</sup> Green (2004) 1.

the beginning of Book I, reiterating also the *tempora cum causis* ('the times with etiologies') and repeating word for word the second line of the poem in the following line. In neither case does he mention specific information he has researched in the *annalibus*, only that there is information which has been uncovered by him from these sources.

He elsewhere invites his readers to search *peregrinos fastos*, foreign calendars, in III.87 as proof that many other cultures also have a month named for Mars, but he does not say that it is from these *peregrinos fastos* that he learned the information; he is using them instead as evidence to corroborate his claim. In III.844 he tells us that the fact that Minerva Capta came to Rome as a captive of the Falisci is taught by a *littera prisca*, an ancient letter, and here at last we have an instance of Ovid discovering specific information from a written source. However, this is one of multiple etiologies for the epithet Capta, and it is not even the final, conclusive reason, but is the middle reason of the possible three. After his final account, he ends with a prayer to Minerva, adding *a quacumque trahis ratione vocabula* ('From whatever reason you derive these terms,' III.847), indicating that he finds no conclusive evidence to support favoring any of the reasons over the others, not even the reason backed by a *littera prisca*. This source, then, although written, is not reliable, and lends the possible etiology no more weight than the unsupported ones. Finally, in I.657 he searches *signantes tempora fastos* ('calendars designating times') for the Sementiva, but the *fastos* cannot yield to him the information he seeks because, as a Muse informs him after his fruitless search, the date is not consistent from year to year. Thus, the most use Ovid finds for written sources is to give him authority rather than to prove any specific piece of information; at worst, they hold no special authoritative weight or, as in the final case, are worthless.

In contrast, Ovid uses divine dialogues to present a great deal of information. The breadth of information we learn from the gods in dialogue is clearly demonstrated by Ovid's conversation with Janus in lines I.195-282, the first dialogue of the *Fasti*. The two discuss many topics related to both Janus and to the first of January, including Janus' origins and symbolism, and the etiologies behind the rites and traditions related to the day. Although most dialogues do not yield such a wide range of information, using this first dialogue as a template for what to expect from the rest of the poem foreshadows the variety of topics that will be covered in the dialogues throughout the *Fasti*. Ovid also has a long conversation with Erato in IV.189-372, and they, too, talk about the rites and traditions of the day, this time the feast of Cybele, and Erato answers questions about the nature of Cybele, such as her story in IV.248-348 about how Cybele came to Italy from Ilium. We learn various other topics from many other gods; most of the information is about the origins of contemporary rites and traditions, but we also learn about the anniversaries of historical events, as in Vesta's interjection about the death of Caesar (III.699-702), and etymologies, as in the discussion of the Muses about the origins of the name of the month of May (V.11-110). Ovid even has a conversation with Mercury about the constellation of the Gemini, when he asks *at mihi pande, precor, tanto meliora petenti / in Geminos ex quo tempore Phoebus eat* ('But lay out for me, I pray, asking things greater by far, from what time Apollo goes into the Gemini,' V.693-694) and Mercury not only tells him when, but also the story behind the constellation. The gods discuss history, mythology, rites and religion, traditions and constellations; as many categories as Ovid elucidates for us in the *Fasti*, so many are the categories on which we receive the gods' input. It is thus difficult to say why Ovid chose these passages in particular, as they have no unifying theme. It is possible, however, that Ovid chose these episodes to relate through gods precisely because they are on such a wide variety of topics,

and so that every topic he talks about elsewhere is represented at some point in the mouth of a god.

For the most part, it is easy to see why Ovid invokes particular gods to speak about particular issues. If Ovid is writing about a god's festival day, for example, it makes sense for him to speak to that particular god about not only the rites and rituals of the day, but also the origins of these traditions and often of the god. Janus, Flora, Mars, Minerva and Tiber all speak about rites that are related to them, and Erato speaks about Cybele since they are so closely connected. Ovid also often has gods talk on their own behalf when there is a variant etiology concerned, for example when Juno (VI.21-64) and Iuventas (VI.67-88) both plead their cases for why the month of June is named after them.

Although Ovid's dialogues are an unusual way to convey information, they are not exclusive to the *Fasti*. Hesiod is the earliest poet we have who records the Muses talking directly to him in his *Theogony*, but we have dialogues even closer to the kind Ovid writes in Callimachus' *Aetia* and to some extent in Propertius' elegies. Ovid even holds brief discourse with Apollo in his *Ars Amatoria* when the god interrupts with the famous counsel from the Delphic oracle *cognosci quae sibi quemque iubet* ('Which bids each to know himself,' *Ars Amatoria* II.500), and Ovid warns his reader *certa dei sacro est huius in ore fides* ('There is certain trust in the sacred mouth of this god,' *Ars Amatoria* II.510). That the dialogues are used elsewhere in a fashion similar to how Ovid uses them suggests that conveying information in such a way would not be so incredible as to undermine the authority of the speaker, especially when taking into account the latter example, where Ovid has established his ultimate authority on love, the subject of his poem.



In spite of this, when Ovid tells us at the beginning of Book VI that it is right for him to see the gods in response to the people he imagines will say that he has made it up, *nullaque mortali numina visa putent* ('And that they think that no god was seen by a mortal,' VI.4), he seems to attempt to give credit to an otherwise incredible story. But although he seems to be preempting doubters when he tells us *fas mihi praecipue voltus vidisse deorum* ('It is particularly proper for me to have seen the visage of the gods,' VI.7), he does not mention anything like this before the beginning of the final book, despite the fact that he has been talking with gods since the very first day, which suggests a different motive.

When he tells us *facta canam; sed erunt qui me finxisse loquantur* ('I will sing the facts; but there will be those who may say that I made it up,' VI.3) at the very beginning of this passage, however, it calls to mind the Muses at the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony*, when they tell him ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα / ἴδμεν δ', εὔτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι ('We know how to tell many lies resembling true things, but we also know, when we wish, how to tell the truth,' *Theogony* 27-28), especially since Ovid refers to Hesiod only a short while later in line 13 when he says that the goddesses who came to him were not the ones who came to Hesiod. This lends credence to Ovid's own divine conversations not only because he is directly alluding to the first author to hold direct discourse with the gods in his works, but also by juxtaposing truth and lies in the same way Hesiod's Muses do, reminding the audience of the fine balance between conveying factually correct information and telling a good story. Thus, this passage is Ovid's way of calling attention to the convention he has adopted and tracing it back to Hesiod. This allows him to claim his poetic heritage, as he tells us specifically when he says that he has the right to talk to gods *vel quia sum vates, vel quia sacra cano* ('Either since I

am a poet, or since I sing of sacred things,' VI.8), and to show off his poetic talent by weaving pretty stories into his poem to help convey information.

His divine conversations, however, are not the only experiential sources of information which he regularly claims; he also has several mundane encounters from which he claims he has learned the facts he presents. Some of these stories are direct encounters like the ones he has with the gods; for example, on a journey to Paelignos, he stays with a host who tells him a story that explains why it is tradition to let go foxes with torches tied to their backs (IV.681-712), and at the end of April (IV.905-942) he runs into a Flamen, who informs him that the reason a dog is sacrificed on that day is because when the dog star rises, it is bad for the crops. Others of his stories, however, are just descriptions of firsthand experiences he has had that lend authority to his claims. For example, as he explains to us that the origin of the name of the month of February is from *februa*, which he claims was originally the name of instruments of purification, he tells us *ipse ego flaminicam poscentem februa vidi; / februa poscenti pinea virga data est* ("I myself have seen the Flaminica demanding *februa*; a piney branch was given to her as she requested *februa*,' II.26-27). Adding that he has seen this himself, and emphasizing this fact by including the *ego*, lends weight to his argument. This is also the case in Book III as he is talking about the nymph Egeria; he begins his story by describing a *silva opaca*, a shaded forest, and saying that there is a river for which Egeria supplies the water, and adds *saepe, sed exiguis haustibus, inde bibi* ('Often I have drunk from there, but with small sips' III.274). Once again, he assumes the authority of having been to this grove himself, and even having drunk from the stream.

Ovid's drink, however, has an even deeper symbolic meaning. In ancient poetry, drinking from streams was widely used as a source of poetic inspiration, which some Hellenistic poets traced back to the writings of Hesiod. Moreover, the idea of drinking water for inspiration was

used in conjunction with, and sometimes in contrast to, the idea of drinking wine; whereas wine-drinking was connected with Dionysus and a grand style of poetry, water drinking was connected with precise and carefully-wrought poetry, the kind Callimachus was famous for.<sup>15</sup> Thus, drinking water can be seen as a poet's aspiration to write Callimachean poetry.<sup>16</sup> Ovid's drink from this stream thus symbolizes his resolve to follow in the footsteps of Callimachus, further strengthening the poem's elegiac ties.

The question of why Ovid lends such importance to his experiential sources while discrediting his physical ones has not yet been answered; a conclusion may be drawn from the treatment of other various physical monuments Ovid talks about in the *Fasti*. In V.144, he tells us that he sought a physical statue of the Lares, but reveals that *viribus annosae facta caduca morae* ('By the power of years-long time it had been made capable of perishing' V.144). This is not the only story he shares of a physical monument's destruction. In VI.635 he gives a description of a palace so large and lavish, *urbis opus domus una fuit* ('The one house was the work of a city,' VI.642), which, for all its extravagance, was torn down anyway (VI.645-646). Ovid portrays physical artifacts as ephemeral by nature, and we have no reason to believe that the physical remnants of the *annalibus* or *fastos* to which he briefly refers are any different; they too will someday perish. Great literature, however, does not. The poetry of Callimachus and Hesiod remain after the death of the poets; because literature is not a physical entity, but can rather be copied over and over and hence preserved, it becomes immortal. In this way, Ovid gives a striking contrast which harkens back to the comment of the poet Horace on his own poetry: *exegi monumentum aere perennius* ('I have built a monument more lasting than bronze,' *Odes* 3.30.1). In writing the *Fasti*, Ovid has built a monument more lasting even than the

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<sup>15</sup> Hunter (2006) 44.

<sup>16</sup> Crowther (1979) 1.

physical calendar that would have hung in the Roman forum, and by using dialogues to convey his information, he is not only creating a sense of simultaneity, but also claiming his place next to other great authors who have used this convention before him.

## *Part II: Narrative Confusion*

This section will expand upon and attempt to explain the phenomenon I touched upon earlier, whereby Ovid undermines his authority as a teacher by not only admitting that he does not know everything about his subject material, but by actually appearing unsure about his stories and etiologies. He does this throughout the *Fasti*, defying the conventions of contemporary didactic poetry in which the narrator is the absolute authority on the subject of the poem. This confusion can be explained in part by the relevance of the genre of antiquarian research to the *Fasti*, but there are subjects on which he takes an authoritative stance and acts as a true didactic teacher; this tells us that his goal cannot be simply to undermine his own authority by claiming ignorance about his subject matter. Rather, by appearing knowledgeable about some aspects but confused about others, his goal is to emphasize the enormity of the task of writing about the calendar, highlighting the amount of information there is to know about it and the range of topics on which he is writing.

Because we have just discussed the dialogues, perhaps the most obvious question at this point is whether the dialogues and pseudo-dialogues represent uncertainty on the part of the narrator. After all, rather than tell us his wealth of information directly, he chooses to ask questions of higher authorities and record their answers. This narrative choice makes it seem as though Ovid either does not know the information or wants to confirm the information before writing it down; for this reason, I argue that the dialogues do fit as characteristic of Ovid's

uncertain narrator and his doubt on his subject material. It is not simply the presence of the dialogues which is convincing on this point, however; after all, the episode where Apollo appears to Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria* that we looked at in Part I does not serve to undermine the narrator's authority in the slightest. Apollo appears to Ovid to impart advice to the reader, and it seems Ovid's main reason for including him was simply to lend extra authority to his words, because Ovid confines any commentary on the episode to a single couplet: *sic monuit Phoebus: Phoebos parete monenti / certa dei sacro est huius in ore fides* ('Thus Apollo warned; obey Apollo's warnings; there is certain trust in the sacred mouth of this god,' *Ars Amatoria* II.510). More proof is needed to safely assume that the dialogues in the *Fasti* give an appearance of inexpertise; for this proof we must look to the context of the dialogues.

One of the ways in which these dialogues reflect the uncertainty of the narrator is that in almost all of them, Ovid is asking questions of his interlocutor. His first dialogue in Book I with Janus begins when Ovid asks a question: *quem tamen esse deum te dicam* ('But what god shall I say that you are,' I.89), after which Janus appears and the two engage in a lengthy discussion. Beginning the very first dialogue in this way sets up the expectation in the audience that other dialogues in the *Fasti* are a result of the narrator's need of assistance from an outside source, rather than authoritative interjections, as is the case with Apollo in the *Ars Amatoria*. This confusion is not limited to the direct dialogues; the invocations by nature are Ovid's asking for assistance and then carrying on, having been divinely inspired, despite the lack of a physical god to respond. When Ovid is confused about the Carmentalia, for example, he asks *unde petam causas horum moremque sacrorum* ('From where should I seek the origins of these things and the tradition of the sacred rites,' I.465) before even revealing to the reader that he is asking these questions specifically of Carmentis. He goes on to narrate the answers to his questions without

Carmentis intervening by speaking directly to him. These inspirational episodes are not uncommon in ancient literature, but they are most often invocations to the Muses, rather than to specific gods to whom the information pertains; Ovid treats these inspirational episodes more like dialogues without the immediate presence of an interlocutor than as a typical ancient poetic invocation.

In fact, Ovid's uncertainty and eagerness to call upon outside sources to help him become downright confusion in the beginning of Book V. He is pondering the origins of the name of the month of May, and rather than merely calling on the Muses to help, he first describes his confusion in a metaphor, telling us that he does not know where to turn, *ut stat et incertus qua sit sibi nescit eundum, / cum videt ex omni parte viator iter* ('As a traveler stands and, uncertain, does not know where he must go, when sees a journey from every side,' V.3-4). He then asks the Muses for help. In this passage, his description of himself *ut incertus viator* tells us that his unauthoritative stance thus far has been calculated and included for a specific reason by Ovid. This is one of the most important passages illustrating Ovid's uncertain stance as the narrator, not only because it is the passage in which we see most clearly that the narrator is floundering and needs the guidance that the gods offer him, but also because, in acknowledging his confusion in such an obvious way, Ovid draws attention to this confusion and invites us to interpret it as a specifically included device in the poem.

There are only four divine dialogues in which Ovid does not directly ask any questions. In two of these, however, he still clearly expresses seeming unfamiliarity with his material in other ways: in I.657-664 a Muse helps him when he is having trouble finding the date of a festival; and in VI.13 Juno appears to him as he is searching for (*quaerebam*) the information about the origins of the name of the month of June. His dialogue with Vesta is slightly more

problematic. In III.699-702 Vesta appears to him because, Ovid says, *praeteriturus eram gladios in principe fixos* ('I was about to pass over the swords having been stuck in the leader,' III.699). In this case, Ovid was about to leave out an important story, the story of the death of Caesar. Although Ovid does not specify whether he was about to pass over the story on purpose or in error, the politically charged nature of the episode leads us to believe that Ovid did not want to have to describe it for political reasons, especially considering the habit of the Romans to attach great significance to the way in which historical episodes were described. Vesta arrives and saves Ovid from having to tell the episode in his own words and take responsibility for how he portrays it, but he is thus still able to include the story in the *Fasti*. This ploy hints that part of the reason for the dialogues and the general confusion of the narrator comes from a desire to remain unaccountable for the stories he relates. Because we have this brief phrase, he does not escape entirely from describing the scene in his own words, and the choices he makes are peculiar, particularly referring to Julius Caesar as *princeps*. This word means leader, but under Augustus it comes to refer to the non-military title of the Emperor, as opposed to the more military term *imperator*, general, or the negative *rex*, king. Thus, although he tries to escape responsibility for the description of the episode, he still inserts small descriptions that can be attributed to nobody but himself.

The fourth divine dialogue in which he does not ask any questions is his conversation with Venus in the beginning of Book IV, and here alone is he confident in his banter with the goddess. He does not ask her questions, but instead banters with her and answers her hurt inquiries about why he has abandoned her. In mollifying her, Ovid says *tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus* ('you are my way of life, you are always my work,' IV.8). In telling her this,

Ovid reveals to the audience just how great an impact the whole genre of elegiac love poetry has had on the *Fasti*.

But Ovid does not only show uncertainty at the beginning of dialogues; there are also a few places where he uses short phrases and words to express hesitation before stating a fact, such as when he inserts *fallimur*, ('am I mistaken?'), or *ni fallor*, ('unless I am mistaken'). In Book IV he demonstrates the clearest example of expressing uncertainty with this phrase when he says *hac quoque, ni fallor, populo dignissima nostro / atria Libertas coepit habere sua* ('On this day also, unless I am mistaken, Liberty began to have her own hall, most worthy of our people,' IV.623-624). He apparently does not want to state with certainty that the temple was founded on this particular day, and so instead adds a qualifier as though to cover himself in case his is mistaken. He uses *fallor* again when he asks *fallor, an arma sonant* ('Am I mistaken, or are weapons clashing') which he immediately answers with *non fallimur, arma sonabant* ('I am not mistaken, weapons were clashing,' V.549) as he describes the coming of Mars. Both this example and the final one, when he asks *fallimur, an veris praenuntia venit hirundo / nec metuit, ne qua versa recurrat hiems* ('Am I mistaken, or has the swallow come announcing spring, not fearing that winter will anywhere turn around and come back,' II.853-854) are used more to convey a sense of poetic simultaneity as they describe a poet who has suddenly heard something and waits to affirm that the noise is what he thinks it is before relating the information with certainty to the audience.

This use of *fallor* has no equivalents in Vergil's *Georgics*, in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* or in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, three prominent, contemporary Latin didactic poems; the only time the verb *fallo* is used in reference to the author in any of these works comes in Lucretius, where he strengthens, rather than weakens, his narrative authority by telling us that something



*nec me animi fallit* ('does not deceive my mind') as he does throughout the poem, such as in I.136 when he tells us that he is not deceived as to the difficulty of putting the discoveries of the Greeks in Latin verse, or I. 922 when he says *nec me animi fallit quam sint obscura* ('it does not deceive my mind how obscured these things are'). The narrative uncertainty and confusion of the *Fasti* sets it apart from contemporary poems of didactic nature; although the authors of most poems prefer to play up their role as the teacher who thoroughly understands the material at hand, Ovid as the narrator of the *Fasti* alone prefers to present himself as unsure and to play the role of the student as well as that of the teacher.

*Fallor* is not the only word Ovid uses to cover his bases in a moment of uncertainty; he also raises doubt about what he is saying in III.792 when he tells us *itur ad Argeos (qui sint, sua pagina dicet) / hac, si commemini, praeteritaque die* ('there is a procession to the Argei (who they are, their own page will say) on this day, if I remember, and on the previous day'), purposefully inserting *si commemini*, ('if I remember'), as though he is not entirely sure of the fact. These words in particular, *fallor* and *commemini*, are designed to impress upon the audience the greatness of the task of keeping all of the facts straight in a comprehensive guide to the Roman calendar by emphasizing the difficulty of remembering.

It is also possible that his many etiologies and etymologies for things express confusion, as in Book II.359 after he has finished telling the story of how Faunus was tricked by a man wearing a woman's clothing as an explanation for why the Luperci run naked. He says *adde peregrinis causas, mea Musa, Latinas*, ('add Latin causes to the foreign ones, my Muse') and goes on to tell a story about Romulus and Remus as a variant explanation. These multiple etiologies are a rhetorical strategy that can be seen in many other ancient sources, especially histories. Because they are so normal in other literature in which the writer claims authority on

the subject, however, it is unlikely they were meant to add to the impression of confusion from the narrator in the *Fasti*.

In other instances, however, Ovid does take great pains to pose as knowledgeable about his subject matter, and, in fact, there is no particular category about which Ovid either expresses uncertainty or displays his knowledge. He adopts the usual teacher-persona of the narrator in contemporary didactic poetry often, as when he says *mihi docenda est* ('I must tell,' II.685) before beginning his story of the rape of Lucretia, unhindered by questions and unaided by dialogue with a more knowledgeable source; he does not need help telling other stories either, such as the story of the unlucky Faunus in II.303-358 nor the story of how Ariadne became a goddess in III.460-516.

Nor does there seem to be a particular category about which Ovid is not knowledgeable. Although he must ask Egeria in III.259 about both her own and Numa's actions that brought about the songs and weapons of the Salii, he demonstrates knowledge of Numa's reign in IV.641 when he describes the origins of the rituals of the 15<sup>th</sup> of April. In fact, Ovid demonstrates both confusion and authority not only about Roman history and mythology, but also about etymology and the rituals and festivals of Roman life: although he must ask for help on the origins of the name May for the fifth month, saying *non satis est liquido cognita causa mihi* ('The cause is not known to me clearly enough,' V.2), he tells us in Book II that *februa Romani dixere piamina patres* ('the Roman fathers called sacrifices *februa*,' II.20) and, after expanding upon the idea of *februa* being the origin of the name of February, that *mensis ab his dictus* ('the month is called so from these reasons,' II.31), displaying his knowledge and lack thereof of etymologies; although he must ask Cybele *da, dea, quem sciter* ('give, goddess, that which I ask) about the origins of the festival of Idaea in IV.191, he gives specific instructions on how to give offerings

to the dead in II.533, demonstrating that while he knows about some rituals, he is confused about others. There is no category of information about which Ovid is puzzled, be it mythology and history, etymology or religious rituals, that he does not elsewhere talk about confidently.

Moreover, Ovid occasionally speaks as though granted dispensation to represent a higher source, lending extra authority to his narrative persona. In his instructions on how to give offerings to the dead, as he is describing the offerings, he says *nec maiora veto, sed et his placabilis umbra est* ('I do not deny larger ones, but the ghost can be placated by even these,' II.541), rather than putting *veto* into third person and specifying a higher source which might rightly deny such things. Similarly, when giving the wording of a prayer to Ceres and Terra, he tells his audience *haec ego pro vobis, haec vos optate coloni* ('I desire these things for you, desire them yourselves, settlers,' I.696), once again using an authoritative first person singular. He does not display any confusion, but rather dispenses advice with confidence.

These observations beg two major questions that have not yet been adequately answered. We are left to wonder first why Ovid undermines his authority by calling on outside help and hesitating to give us information, and second why, if this is his narrative technique, he does not apply it uniformly throughout the *Fasti*, but rather chooses to vary it by passing on information clearly and confidently, especially since there is no obvious distinction between the information he imparts with ease and the information he gives with at least some hesitancy.

Possible answers are more readily available for the first question. To suggest only one answer would be oversimplifying the matter, and so I will offer several explanations based on the information I have already discussed. The first explanation is that Ovid is commenting on the field of antiquarian research. I explained in the introduction how this field had a special significance to the Romans of the Augustan period because it not only explained the past, but

also had a bearing on the present. In relying on outside sources to convey information, as I have discussed in Part I, Ovid is in part distancing himself from the information in order to also distance himself from any ramifications of his writing. The uncertainty and reluctance to impart information that we find throughout the *Fasti*, however, is an intensification of this commentary on the politically charged past. This is also a viable explanation for the abrupt ending of the poem at the end of June; the next two months are July and August, named for Julius and Augustus Caesar, two months which must necessarily be politically charged in the descriptions even of the origin of the names. In stopping before these two months, Ovid could be pointing out how difficult it is to write about history by refusing to play the political game of carefully watching all the information in these two months in particular, even refusing to take responsibility for it, by not even writing about them.

My other explanation harkens back to the conclusion I drew at the end of Part I, namely that Ovid is writing the *Fasti* to glorify himself as much as he is writing to glorify the Roman calendar. The confusion Ovid expresses is a means of letting the audience know how vast a subject he is covering; the Roman calendar covers such a wide range of information, in fact, that it would be impossible for one man to immediately know all of the necessary information without outside help. With this we return in part to the idea of poetic simultaneity as we reexamine Ovid's role as both a teacher and a student within the poem; although the appearance of learning the information as he writes the poem most clearly advances the simultaneity, one of the deeper purposes is to emphasize just how broad the topics are about which Ovid must write. Learning as he writes, then, is a necessity dictated by the complexity of the subject, and it is understood that it takes a great man to undertake such ambitious works. We can thus see that

Ovid inserts himself as much as he does into the *Fasti* to make his writing as much about his greatness as it is about the greatness of the calendar.

### *Conclusion*

It is therefore apparent from the conclusions of both sections that one of Ovid's primary goals was to use an omnipresent narrator to draw attention to how he is a great author. He not only uses his divine dialogues as a means of connecting his work with that of other great authors who have used the same convention, but also uses confusion to emphasize the breadth of the topics associated with the calendar, thereby stressing the difficulty of his job as the poet. The main purpose of the narrator, then, is to call as much attention to Ovid as possible and to portray him in the best possible light. The exact nature of the narrator, though, is still uncertain. It departs too far from the traditional role of the didactic poet to be considered a teacher in a didactic poem, and is too omnipresent to simply be seen as an author presenting historical research. In order to ascertain the true nature of the narrator and to analyze what conventions Ovid draws upon to create such a persona, I would like to take a final look at the influence of Latin love elegy on the *Fasti*.

Ovid specifically draws attention to his choice of meter in Book II, when he laments *quid volui demens elegis imponere tantum / ponderis? heroi res erat ista pedis* ('Why did I, demented, wish to place so great a burden on elegiac verse? This theme is for heroic meter,' II.125-126) before extolling the virtues of Augustus. In this passage, Ovid is not only acknowledging the importance of Augustus by implying that he must be written about in the epic meter of heroes, but also calling attention to his choice of elegiac meter as he "insists on making

the issue of its elegiac status absolutely central to a reading of the *Fasti*.<sup>17</sup> It is clearly important to Ovid that the audience realize not only that the *Fasti* is in elegiac couplets, but that he wrote it that way for a reason. I propose that this reason is to strengthen the connection of the *Fasti* to love poetry while distancing it from other genres, especially epic.

Moreover, the *Fasti* shares themes with the *Amores*, even though it is not about love. One of the more obvious parallels is the emphasis on the military, and using military references to justify non-military themes. We see these military references in many different places throughout the *Amores*, perhaps most memorably in I.9, a poem entirely devoted to comparing the work of a lover to that of a soldier. These themes are not absent from the *Fasti*, and in the beginning of Book II, Ovid overtly compares his work with soldiering, saying *haec mea militia est: ferimus quae possumus arma / dextraque non omni munere nostra vacat* ('This is my military campaign; we bear those arms which we are able and my right hand is not empty from every offering,' II.9-10). Thus, he argues, even if he cannot fight for Caesar with weapons, he can still praise the glory of Caesar through his verse. This too seems to be an argument which compares the importance of poetry to the importance of military pursuits. This sheds a new light on the idea that Ovid is trying to emphasize the vastness and difficulty of the subject he is covering. He is trying to highlight what an important undertaking this poem is, important enough to liken to military service, and the value of his skill not only in writing about this particular subject, but in writing poetry in general.

He also tells us in the very beginning of the poem, when he is still explaining the topic of his work, *Caesaris arma canant alii: nos Caesaris aras / et quoscumque sacris addidit ille dies* ('Let others sing of the weapons of Caesar; I sing of the altars of Caesar and whatever days he added to the sacred ones,' I.13-14). The *canant arma* brings immediately to mind the first,

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<sup>17</sup> Hinds (1992) 85.

famous phrase of Vergil's *Aeneid*, *arma virumque cano* ('I sing of weapons and a man,' *Aeneid* I.1), an epic which is written in dactylic hexameter. This line, then, not only draws a distinction between his subject material and warfare, but separates his genre from epic and further emphasizes the elegiac nature of the *Fasti*.

Further connecting the *Fasti* with the genre of love elegy is Ovid's conversation with Venus at the beginning of Book IV. As I have already mentioned, it is the only divine dialogue in the *Fasti* that does not involve the interrogation of the deity by Ovid; the main purpose of the dialogue seems to be to show Ovid's close, personal connection with the goddess from his dealings with her in the past (i.e. writing love poetry), with the dedication of the month as hers seeming only of secondary importance to this relationship. Once again, Ovid's phrase *tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus* ('you are my way of life, you are always my work,' IV.8) implies just how great an influence elegiac love poetry has on the *Fasti*, by inviting the reader to ponder in what way Venus is still the subject of his work when he writes about the calendar.

Thus, although Ovid takes on the role of teacher in a rather didactic sense, the liberties he takes with his role and the emphasis of the poem on elegy show that he is really playing the part of an elegiac narrator and casting himself in the role of the main character. Whereas epic usually focuses on the great deeds of great men, love elegy always revolves around the life and love of Roman people, specifically the narrator and his *puella*, his girl. With this in mind, we can approach the *Fasti* as being not only about the calendar, but about Ovid himself and his daily life as he takes us through the year. The poem narrates many historical and mythological narratives and gives us plenty of information about the calendar, but at its heart, the *Fasti* is a poem about Ovid writing about the calendar, just as love elegy is about the poet writing about love. The omnipresence of the narrator and the poetic simultaneity throughout the *Fasti* allow us to follow

Ovid through the days of the year, and having him as the main character in the poem unifies the various topics of the calendar and draws them together around a much simpler theme: following a Roman through the days of the year as he attempts to explain, through narrative in dialogue as well as in traditional didactic style, why the Romans celebrate the things they do.

I have also mentioned Ovid's interest in enshrining himself in the *Fasti*; if we look at Ovid's other literary works, we see Ovid specifically citing immortality through fame as a specific desired outcome of writing poetry by means of *sphrageis*, a literary device by means of which a poet put a kind of cap on his poem stating his intent in writing it. He tells us in the *Amores* that *mihi fama perennis / quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar* ('I seek for myself eternal fame, so that I may be sung always through the entire world,' *Amores* I.15.7-8), or *Mantua Vergilio, gaudet Verona Catullo; / Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego* ('Mantua rejoices in Vergil, Verona in Catullus; I will be called the glory of the Paelignian race,' *Amores* III.15.7-8). These *sphrageis* seem to imply that the ultimate goal of writing poetry is to achieve immortality for the poetry, and through the poetry, the poet. The *fama perennis* is not only for Ovid, however; he uses the same phrase to tell his *puella* that his poetry is more precious than gold or jewels because it will bring her everlasting fame (*Amores* I.10.62). Thus his love elegy glorifies two people: the object of his poetry, the *puella*, and himself. There is no *sphragis* in the *Fasti*, probably because, as *sphrageis* come at the end of a literary work, it was meant for the second half of the poem that we do not have. Regardless, he takes such care in his other poetry to tell us that he will gain everlasting fame through his works that it is easy to transfer such a sentiment to the *Fasti*.

In this way, the *Fasti*, too, has such a dual purpose. Although he does not specifically state that he is looking for such fame for himself, his constant presence means that he will not be



forgotten, and even in the absence of an explicit *sphragis*, his name will be inextricably tied to the Roman calendar through his poem so that he is glorifying himself even as he is glorifying it. Although he is writing a great poem about a great subject, by separating it from epic and instead emphasizing the elegiac connections, Ovid plays the role not only of the narrator, but also of the main character of the *Fasti*, and by so doing unites the topics around the theme of the daily rites a Roman citizen practices and enshrines his name along with the calendar's by creating a poem in the grand tradition of the great poets who came before him, that has both the breadth to prove the how great Ovid is by the difficult nature of the subjects he tackles, and ultimately the potential for immortality.

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