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FESTIVALS, FOOLS AND THE *FASTI*: THE *QUIRINALIA*
AND THE *FERIAE STULTORUM* (OVID, *FAST.* II 475-532)

Ovid's *Fasti* presents many challenges to the reader: its subject matter, the festivals and anniversaries of the Roman year, is less immediately accessible than much of Ovid's poetry; and unlike his earlier works, where familiarity with the literary context provides plenty of material for literary criticism, the *Fasti* is in constant dialogue not just with literature but also with the fabric of Rome – its myths and monuments, its rituals and politics. As such, the *Fasti* more than many texts requires an awareness of its social, historical and religious context to be fully appreciated.

The *Fasti* also poses a more subtle and perhaps more interesting challenge, namely a challenge to the reader's approach to the text. In the *Metamorphoses*, the many and varied ways in which Ovid connects his mythological tales together are a very self-conscious display of *ingenium*, inviting us to marvel at the skill with which these varied myths become part of one continuous narrative. The nature of these connections is such that we can never be sure what myth Ovid will be narrating next: as such, the *Metamorphoses* is full of surprises, and full of evidence for the poet's control over the text. In the *Fasti*, however, things are – on the surface – very different. First, Ovid constantly gives us the impression that the content of the poem is forced upon him by the Roman calendar, introducing narratives with gerundives or words expressing obligation (cf. e.g. II 685 *nunc mihi dicenda est regis fuga*; IV 417 *exigit ipse locus, raptus ut uirginis edam*)¹. Second, the fact that many of the narratives are linked to separate days of the calendar and are separated from one another by formulae expressing the passing of time can encourage the reader to treat these narratives as discrete entities, marked off from one another like entries in the inscribed *Fasti*. This approach is one encouraged by modern editions of the poem, which split up the text into small sections, separated by various calendrical markings.

¹ There are many other examples: cf. e.g. III 445, IV 681f., IV 721, V 494, VI 585. For further discussion of this aspect of the *Fasti*, see A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1997, pp. 73-78.

However, it is very dangerous to assume that Ovid has relinquished control of his text: indeed, many of the most interesting readings of the *Fasti* emerge when we recognise the choices Ovid has made regarding the tales he wishes to tell, and when we read the poem as a continuous text, rather than as a collection of episodes unrelated to one another.

A good example of this can be found in Book Two of the *Fasti*, when Ovid discusses what seems to be two festivals dated to February 17th, namely the *Quirinalia* and the *Feriae Stultorum* (at II 475-532). As we shall see, he goes to some lengths to select and shape his material in such a way that our response to the first narrative (the *Quirinalia*) is complicated by our reading of the second (the 'Feast of Fools')².

Before we turn to the *Fasti*, we must first discover what other ancient sources can tell us about the events of February 17th. Regarding the *Quirinalia*, they tell us very little: from the extant *fasti* we know that it was a large letter festival, and that it fell on February 17th³; from the literary sources we learn only that the day was sacred to Quirinus and that some unspecified rites to the god were performed; and that the day was also known as the *Feriae Stultorum*⁴. This latter festival is not marked in any extant calendar⁵, and the literary sources do not make it entirely clear whether the *Quirinalia* and the *Feriae Stultorum* were viewed as two different festivals, or as one and the same; nor is it clear to what extent they were felt to be connected. Although modern scholars tend to link the two festivals together⁶, for the ancients the primary connection of the *Feriae Stultorum* was not with Quirinus but rather with the *Fornacalia*, or 'Feast of Ovens'⁷. This festival is also somewhat obscure, but

² Barchiesi, cit., pp. 112-19 discusses the *Quirinalia* in some detail, and the links between this and subsequent narratives. There is some similarity in our approaches to this passage, though I focus on a number of different elements.

³ Cf. A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, vol. 13.2, Roma 1963, p. 411.

⁴ Cf. Festus 304 L = 254 M s.v. *Quirinalia: Quirinalia mense Februario dies quo Quirini fiunt sacra. Idem stultorum feriae appellantur ...*; 418 L = 317 M s.v. *Stultorum feriae. stulto<rum> feriae appellabatur Quirina<lia>...*; Paulus-Festus 419 L = 316 M s.v. *Stultorum feriae. stultorum feriae appellantur Quirinalia ...*; Plut. *Ait. Rom.* 89 = 285d Διὰ τί τὰ Κυρινάλια μωρῶν ἑορτὴν ὀνομάζουσιν; and cf. Varr. *L.L.* VI 13 *Quirinalia a Quirino, quod <e>i deo feriae et eorum hominum, qui Furnacalibus suis non fuerunt feriatī.*

⁵ Though Verrius seems to have mentioned it in the *Fasti Praenestini*: cf. Degrassi, cit., n. 3, p. 411.

⁶ For a brief summary, cf. H. Le Bonniec, *P. Ovidius Naso: Fastorum Liber Secundus*, Paris 1969, on II 512-32; L. Delatte, *Recherches sur quelques fêtes mobiles du calendrier romain*, AC 5 (1936), pp. 381-404. For more recent theories, see D. Baudy, "Der dumme Teil des Volks" (*Ov.*, *Fast.* 2,531), MH 58 (2001), pp. 32-39.

⁷ Cf. Varr. *L.L.* VI 13 *Quirinalia a Quirino, quod <e>i deo feriae et eorum hominum, qui Furnacalibus suis non fuerunt feriatī*; Festus, 304 Lindsay = 254 Morel *Quirinalia: idem stultorum feriae appellantur quod qui d<i>em suorum fornacalium sacrorum †cognominant† eo potissimum rem divinam faciunt*, 418 Lindsay = 317 Morel s.v. *Stultorum feriae. ... qu<od> eo die omnes sa<crificant i q<ui> sollem-*



seems to have involved the ritual roasting of *far*⁸. It was a *popularia sacra* to be performed by all the citizens⁹, though not all together: the celebration of the rites was organised by *curia*. Those who were unable to celebrate the *Fornacalia* with the rest of their *curia*, either because they were busy, absent, or unaware of the *curia* to which they belonged, were able to celebrate *en masse* on the 17th: according to the ancient sources, it was these ‘fools’ who did not know their *curia* that gave the *Feriae Stultorum* its name¹⁰.

When Ovid announces the arrival of the ‘day dedicated to Quirinus’ at 2.475, we may wonder what he is about to tell us. We may well be expecting – and religious historians may be hoping for – some information about the rites and rituals of the *Quirinalia*, or perhaps some information about the shadowy figure of Quirinus himself. To our mild surprise, however, we find that Ovid chooses to tell us nothing about the *sacra paterna* of day in question, narrating instead the tale of Romulus’ deification and transformation into the god Quirinus, an event which was traditionally dated to July 7th¹¹. Now in the light of the deification of both Julius Caesar and Augustus, a story concerning the deification of the first *pater patriae* needs to be handled quite carefully¹². Any cynicism or scepticism regarding Romulus’ ascension to heaven may reflect badly on more recent imperial deifications, and we know from Augustus’ regular use of the phrase *divi filius* in his publicity material that Julius Caesar’s status as a god was very important to him¹³.

According to both Dionysius and Plutarch, there were many different

ni die aut> non potuerunt rem divinam face>re aut ign<oraverunt ...> Fornacaliu<m ...> commissumque ... more at ...quibus p<ermittentur post feriae feriari>; Paulus, 419 Lindsay = 316 Morel s.v. Stultorum feriae. ... quod eo die sacrificant hi qui sollempni die aut non poterunt rem divinam facere aut ignoraverunt; Plut. Ait. Rom. 89 = 285d Διά τί τὰ Κυρινάλια μωρῶν ἑορτὴν ὀνομάζουσιν; ἢ ὅτι τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην ἀποδεδώκεσαν, ὡς Ἴββας φησί, τοῖς τὰς αὐτῶν πατρίας ἀγνοοῦσιν; ἢ τοῖς μὴ θύσασιν, ὡσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ, κατὰ φυλάς ἐν τοῖς Φουρνικαλίοις δι’ ἀσχολίαν ἢ ἀποδημίαν ἢ ἄγνοιαν ἐδόθη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐκείνην ἀπολαβεῖν.

⁸ Cf. Plin. *N.H.* XVIII 7 who attributes the origin of the festival to Numa: *Numa... Fornacal<i>a instituit farris torrendi ferias*; Paul. Fest. 73 Lindsay = 83 Morel = 199 G.-L., s.v. *Fornacalia*: *Fornacalia sacra evant cum far in fornaculis torrebant*; 82 Lindsay = 93 Morel = 212 G.-L. s.v. *Fornacalia*: *Fornacalia feriae institutae sunt farris torrendi gratia, quod ad fornacem, quae in pistrinis erat, sacrificium fieri solebat.*

⁹ Cf. Paul. Fest. 82 Lindsay = 93 Morel.

¹⁰ Cf. Plut. *Ait. Rom.* 89 = 285d: see also the reference in note 7.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Rep.* I 25; Plut. *Rom.* 27, 3 (though Plutarch seems to think that this took place on July 5th); Sol. I 20.

¹² Whether or not this passage was written before the death of Augustus, the fact that it was published after the death of Augustus means that this reading is now allowed by the text. In any case, even before the emperor’s death, his deification was certainly expected. It should be noted that the role of Julius Proculus in the story of Romulus takes on an even greater significance after Augustus’ death, as a similar witness comes forward as a guarantee of Augustus’ ascension to the sky (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 100, 4; Dio 56.46, 2; and see Sen. *Apocol.* 1, 2). Dio is as suspicious of this witness, who he names as Numerius Atticus, as he is of Julius Proculus, claiming that Livia bribed him to take the oath.

¹³ Cf. e.g. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 1., ed. C. Sutherland and R. Carson, London 1984, esp. pp. 59-73.





accounts from which to choose¹⁴; though only a few have survived. The most common sees Romulus involved in some sort of activity at the *Caprae Palus* when darkness descends, either due to an eclipse or a storm (or both). When light returns, Romulus has disappeared¹⁵. According to the «more fabulous» accounts, as Dionysius terms them, Romulus was taken to heaven by his father Mars¹⁶; according to others («the more plausible»), he was killed by angry senators or angry citizens¹⁷. However, many of the extant accounts do not like to confirm or deny the deification: instead, they narrate how Romulus disappeared, and how the senate then came under suspicion; and how amidst growing citizen anger and unrest, Julius Proculus appeared and announced that Romulus was now a god¹⁸. It should be noted that in these accounts, it is Julius Proculus who confirms that Romulus has been deified. In all versions of the story, Julius Proculus' appearance is at best timely: in most the suggestion is that he is in fact a stooge of the senate¹⁹; only Dionysius (and Plutarch to some extent) seem to preserve an account in which his integrity is unquestioned²⁰.

Against this background, Ovid's narrative appears to be extremely well-behaved. The passage begins in antiquarian style, with a confident identification of Romulus with Quirinus²¹, and a discussion of various etymologies of

¹⁴ Dion. Hal. II 56, 1 πολλοὶ παραδέδονται λόγοι καὶ διάφοροι; Plut. *Rom.* 27, 3 οὐδὲν εἰπεῖν βέβαιον οὐδὲ ὁμολογούμενον πυθέσθαι περὶ τῆς τελευτῆς ἀπολιπών, ἀλλ' ἢ τὸν χρόνον.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Rep.* I 25, II 17-20; Liv. I 16; Dion. Hal. II 56; II 63, 3 Plut. *Rom.* 27; *Num.* 2; Flor. *Ep.* 1.1.89; Dio *apud* Ioann. Antioch. fr. 32 M.; ps.-Aur. Vict. *De Vir. Ill.* II 13.

¹⁶ Cf. Dion. Hal. II 56, 2 οἱ μὲν οὖν μυθωδέστερα τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ ποιοῦντες. It seems likely that Ennius' version of the story was one such account: cf. O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius*, Oxford 1985, p. 250.

¹⁷ Cf. Dion. Hal. II 56, 3 οἱ δὲ τὰ πιθανώτερα γράφοντες... For such accounts, cf. Plut. *Rom.* 26, 3-6; Dio *apud* Ioann. Antioch. fr. 32 M. Locations for these stories also include the senate house (cf. Dion. Hal. II 56, 4) or the temple of Vulcan (cf. Plut. *Rom.* 27, 6).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Rep.* II 17-20; Liv. I 16; Dion. Hal. II 56, 5 and II 63, 3; Plut. *Rom.* 27, 6-28, 3; *Num.* 2; ps.-Aur. Vict. *De Vir. Ill.* 2, 13f.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Rep.* II 20 *qui impulsu patrum, quo illi a se invidiam interitus Romuli pellerent, in contione dixisse fertur a se visum esse in eo colle Romulum ... eum sibi mandasse, ut populum rogaret, ut sibi eo in colle delubrum fieret; se deum esse et Quirinum vocari*; Liv. I 16, 5 *et consilio etiam unius hominis addita rei dicitur fides*; this seems to be the suggestion of Plut. *Num.* 2, 3 ἀλλὰ ταύτην μὲν τὴν ὑποψίαν ἐθεράπευον εἰς θεῶν τιμὰς ἀνάγοντες ὡς οὐ τεθηκότες τὸν Ῥωμύλον, ἀλλὰ κρείττονος ὄντα μοίρας καὶ Πρόκλος, ἀνὴρ ἐπιφανής, διωμόσατο Ῥωμύλον ἰδεῖν εἰς οὐρανὸν σὺν τοῖς ὄπλοις ἀναφερόμενον, καὶ φωνῆς ἀκούσαι κελεύοντος αὐτὸς ὀνομάζεσθαι Κυρίνον.

²⁰ Cf. Dion. Hal. II 63, 3 παρελθὼν τις εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν Ἰούλιος ὄνομα τῶν ἀπ' Ἀσκανίου γεωργικὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ τὸν βίον ἀνεπίληπτος, οἷος μηδὲν ἂν ψεύσασθαι κέρδους ἕνεκα οἰκείου...

²¹ Theories abound as to when exactly Romulus was identified with Quirinus. For some recent discussions, see D. Porte, *Romulus-Quirinus, prince et dieu, dieu des princes*, ANRW II 17, 1 (1981), pp. 300-342; Skutsch, cit., n. 16, pp. 245ff.; and H.D. Jocelyn, *Romulus and the Di Genitales (Ennius, Annales 110-111 Skutsch)*, in *Studies in Latin Literature and its tradition in honour of C.O. Brink*, ed. J. Diggle, J.B. Hall, H.D. Jocelyn, Cambridge 1989. Suffice it to say that the identification seems well-established in the Augustan poets: cf. Verg. *Aen.* I 292; Hor. *Carm.* III 3, 15f.; Prop. IV 10, 11f.





the name Quirinus (475-80). The first word of line 481 – *nam* – suggests that Ovid is about to continue his etymological discussion, perhaps giving some further explanation of the etymology of line 480. However, the words that follow – *pater armipotens* – announce both a more mythical subject matter and a more epic tone²², as Ovid begins to narrate the story of Romulus' disappearance and deification²³. The lines that immediately follow (481-90) are very similar to the passage in the *Metamorphoses* that deals with the same event (*Met.* XIV 805-28); indeed, comparison with the *Metamorphoses* shows how self-consciously Ovid is striving for an epic tone here. As in the *Metamorphoses*, we find epic touches such as a description of the nod of Jupiter (489-90), couched in Vergilian (or perhaps Ennian) language²⁴, and a quotation from Ennius (in the mouth of Mars) underlines the grandeur of the passage (485)²⁵. In the *Fasti* passage, however, Ovid also introduces further elements of the high style, such as an *ecphrasis* (491) and a description of a terrible storm (493-5)²⁶; the elevated tone of the passage is maintained until the end²⁷. Comparison with the *Metamorphoses* also highlights a key difference between the two passages: in place of the detailed description of Romulus' ascent to the heavens that we find in the *Metamorphoses*, in the *Fasti* Ovid introduces the figure of Julius Proculus and his encounter with the newly deified Romulus. Again, Ovid appears at first to be on-message here: he alludes to the fact that the senators were suspected of Romulus' murder, as do most versions of the story, but rejects this as false; Julius Proculus' arrival is, as in all other accounts, timely, but there is no suggestion, as there is in Cicero and Livy, that his testimony is a deliberate fiction to calm the populace²⁸. Indeed, it is Ovid himself, rather than Julius Proculus, who narrates the details of Romulus' appearance, and for once Romulus' deification has authorial sup-

²² For the epic connotations of *armipotens* cf. Lucr. I 32f. (of Mars); Verg. *Aen.* II 435, XI 483 (of Minerva), VI 500 (of Deiphobus), VI 839 (of Achilles), and IX 717 (of Mars). The phrase *pater armipotens* echoes the grand phrase *pater omnipotens* of *Aen.* X 100 at the conclusion of the council of the Gods.

²³ The use of *nam* to connect this epic tale to the antiquarian discussion that precedes lends an air of scholarship to the narrative, which serves to boost its credibility.

²⁴ Cf. *Met.* XIV 816. The nod of Jupiter makes its first appearance at *Il.* I 528ff.; more recently we find it at *Aen.* IX 104-6 and at X 113-15, at the end of the council of gods, a passage Ovid seems to have in mind here: with *Fast.* II 489 *Iuppiter adnuerat. nutu tremefactus uterque || est polus* compare *Aen.* X 115 *adnuat et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum*. It is possible, however, that both Ovid and Vergil are looking back to an Ennian source.

²⁵ The same quotation is found at *Met.* XIV 814: *unus erit quem tu tolles in caerulea caeli* = Enn. fr. I 54f. Sk.

²⁶ On the epic qualities of the *ecphrasis*, see Fraenkel cit., pp. 46-7, and Austin on *Aen.* IV 483. For the epic storm, with Ovid's *sol fugit, et removent subeuntia nubila caelum, ... hinc tonat, hinc missis abruptur ignibus aether* compare *Aen.* I 88 *eripiunt ... nubes caelum* and III 198f. *nox umida caelum || abstulit, ingeminant abruptis nubibus ignes*.

²⁷ With one possible exception – see below.

²⁸ Cf. n. 19.



port. He manifests himself to Julius Proculus in suitably majestic fashion (503) – and in bright moonlight (500) – and his words are appropriately grand: *prohibe lugere Quirites, || nec violent lacrimis numina nostra suis; || tura ferant placentque novum pia turba Quirinum || et patrias artes militiamque colant* (505-8)²⁹. As in all accounts but for that of Livy, Romulus announces to Proculus that he is now the god Quirinus³⁰; and as in Cicero's accounts, he commands the people to worship him³¹. Unlike the more philosophical message of Plutarch's Romulus³², or the more political message of Dio's Romulus³³, the message of Ovid's Romulus to his people (*et patrias artes militiamque colant*) is very much focussed on war, as befits his militaristic presentation in the *Fasti*. This is not necessarily a problem: indeed, in tone and language Romulus' words are strongly reminiscent not only of Livy's account: *"abi, nuntia" inquit "Romanis, caelestes ita uelle ut mea Roma caput orbis terrarum sit; proinde rem militarem colant sciantque et ita posteris tradant nullas opes humanas armis Romanis resis tere posse."*³⁴, but also of Anchises' injunction in the *Aeneid*: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento || (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, || parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*³⁵. With a final epic flourish³⁶, Romulus disappears into thin air, while Proculus reports what he has seen to the people. A temple is built to the new god, and worship continues to the present day.

Once again, Ovid's narrative – in isolation – seems to be well-behaved, presenting the deification of Romulus in a grand and unquestioning fashion. Suspicious readers may detect a mischievous glint in Ovid's eye as he undercuts the epic tone at 501 with *cum subito motu saepes tremuere sinistrae*, the 'rustling of hedges on the left' providing a rather limp fanfare for the epiphany of the newly deified Romulus; and they might see in *iussa verba* at 510 a glance at the tradition in which Julius Proculus speaks to the people at the

²⁹ Barchiesi, cit., pp. 116f. compares Ennius' epitaph: *nemo me lacrimis decoret nec funera fletu || faxit. cur? volito vivos per ora virum.*

³⁰ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Rep.* II 20, *de Leg.* I 3; Dion. Hal. II 63, 4; Plut. *Rom.* 28, 2, *Num.* 2, 3.

³¹ Cf. Cic. *Rep.* II 20 *in contione dixisse fertur a se visum esse in eo colle Romulum, qui nunc Quirinalis vocatur; eum sibi mandasse, ut populum rogaret, ut sibi eo in colle delubrum fieret; se deum esse et Quirinum vocari; de Leg.* I 3 *Romulus Proculo Iulio dixerit se deum esse et Quiri num uocari templumque sibi dedicari in eo loco iusserit.*

³² Cf. *Rom.* 28, 3 φράζε Ῥωμαίοις, ὅτι σωφροσύνην μετ' ἀνδρείας ἀσκοῦντες ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀνθρωπίνης ἀφίξονται δυνάμεως.

³³ Cass. Dio IA fr. 32 M: Proculus is told to tell the Romans βασιλέα τε πάντως εὐθὺς ἐλέσθαι τινὰ καὶ τοῦτω πολιτεύματι κεχρησθαι.

³⁴ Liv. I 16, 7.

³⁵ Verg. *Aen.* VI 851-3.

³⁶ Compare *Fast.* II 509 *iussit et in tenuis oculis euanuit auras* with Verg. *Aen.* IV 278 *in tenuem ex oculis euanuit auram.*



behest of the senate; but in general there is not much room to argue that Ovid is undermining his own narrative³⁷.

However, the crucial point here is that we do not read Ovid's narrative in isolation. No sooner have the citizens accepted the word of Proculus Julius and begun worshipping Romulus as a god than we read *lux quoque cur eadem Stultorum festa vocetur* || *accipe* (513-4). Now as we have seen, the coincidence of the *Quirinalia* and the *Feriae Stultorum* is part of the Roman calendar, and so the combination in itself is not necessarily a problem. However, in choosing to narrate not the rites and rituals of the *Quirinalia* but rather an account of the deification of Romulus, and in giving a prominent role to Julius Proculus, who is often viewed with suspicion in other sources, the narrative becomes particularly vulnerable to association with *stultitia*. Still, it would be very easy to keep these two narratives separate. After all, the ritual roasting of grain and the ascension of Romulus into heaven would seem *a priori* to belong to two different worlds, with no danger of contamination. In discussing the *Feriae Stultorum*, Ovid could perhaps give an account of the festival of the *Fornacalia*, or of its institution by Numa; and as we know, the *stultitia* in question is only a matter of curial affiliation. The association of Romulus' deification with *stultitia* could be little more than a brief dissonance, quickly resolved into something harmless. How then does Ovid choose to explain the name *Feriae Stultorum*?

<i>Lux quoque cur eadem Stultorum festa vocetur</i>	
<i>accipe: parva quidem causa, sed apta, subest.</i>	
<i>non habuit doctos tellus antiqua colonos:</i>	515
<i>lassabant agiles aspera bella viros.</i>	
<i>plus erat in gladio quam curvo laudis aratro:</i>	
<i>neglectus domino pauca ferebat ager.</i>	
<i>farra tamen veteres iaciebant, farra metebant,</i>	
<i>primitias Cereri farra resecta dabant:</i>	520
<i>usibus admoniti flammis torrenda dederunt,</i>	
<i>multaque peccato damna tulere suo;</i>	
<i>nam modo verrebant nigras pro farre favillas,</i>	
<i>nunc ipsas ignes corripuere casas.</i>	
<i>facta dea est Fornax: laeti Fornace coloni</i>	525
<i>orant ut fruges temperet illa suas.</i>	
<i>curio legitimis nunc Fornacalia verbis</i>	
<i>maximus indicit nec stata sacra facit:</i>	

³⁷ *Contra* Barchiesi, cit., 112-19, who argues that Ovid shifts responsibility for the credibility of Romulus' deification onto Julius Proculus, and thus stretches the credibility of his tale to breaking point. However, I would argue that compared to other narratives, Ovid's version is striking in that he, not Julius Proculus, relates the epiphany of Romulus.



*inque foro, multa circum pendente tabella,
signatur certa curia quaeque nota, 530
stultaque pars populi quae sit sua curia nescit,
sed facit extrema sacra relata die.*

The phrase *parva quidem causa* prepares us for a narrative in less elevated style than the passage that preceded. What it does not prepare us for is an account of the inability of war-wearied farmers to safely roast emmer wheat and their attempt to solve this problem by worshipping the oven³⁸. It turns out that the bulk of the narrative is something of a digression, giving an explanation (nowhere else attested) of the origin of the *Fornacalia*: a rather otiose preamble to the explanation of *Feriae Stultorum* promised in the opening couplet, which only begins in the last six lines of the passage (527-32). To our surprise, then, Ovid presents us with another narrative that centres upon deification: in this instance not the deification of Rome's founder Romulus, but the rather the deification of the oven. Comparison between these two passages, which we might have initially expected to be unthinkable, is now unavoidable: and as we shall see, Ovid has gone out of his way to make the juxtaposition of these two festivals highly problematic, by allowing us, or even encouraging us, to link the two passages in both a parallel and a linear reading.

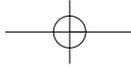
Although Ovid will give the traditional explanation of the identity of the *stulti*³⁹, this information is delayed until the final couplet. So when we read '*Lux quoque cur eadem Stultorum festa vocetur || accipe ... non habuit doctos tellus antiqua colonos*' (513-5) there is a strong implication that the *stulti* in question are the *non doctos colonos*, an implication which seems to be confirmed as we hear of the various disasters they encounter in their inept attempts to roast the emmer wheat. Against this background, their solution to this problem – to deify the oven in an attempt to influence it by prayer – and their satisfaction with it (*laeti Fornace*) appear to be the crowning moment of their stupidity. The dangerous concept of *stultitia*, that should have been confined to the sphere of curial affiliation, is now freed from its shackles and implicitly linked to the act of deification itself. To deify the oven is the rather primitive act of a rather primitive people: how then do we feel about the deification of Romulus? How then do we feel about the deification of Caesar?

There is an added piquancy here, in that according to some ancient sources the two festivals of the *Quirinalia* and the *Fornacalia* were instituted at roughly the same time⁴⁰, so the possibility is raised that the two deifica-

³⁸ The reason the farmers are trying to roast the emmer wheat is that the process of roasting makes the husk brittle, and thus easily separated from the grain: cf. e.g. Plin. *N.H.* XVIII 61 *far ... purgari nisi tosta non possunt* and M. Spurr, *Arable Cultivation in Roman Italy*, London 1986, p. 12.

³⁹ Cf. nn. 7 and 10.

⁴⁰ The *Fornacalia* was said to have been introduced by Numa (cf. Plin. *N.H.* XVIII 7); the



tions are contemporaneous, providing further invitation to compare the two passages⁴¹: the simple, possibly *stulti*, people who deified Fornax are the same people who deified Romulus. This gains extra bite when we recall, as perhaps Ovid did, the words Cicero puts in the mouth of Scipio at *De Republica* II 18-19 *atque hoc eo magis est in Romulo admirandum, quod ceteri, qui dii ex hominibus facti esse dicuntur, minus eruditus hominum saeculis fuerunt, ut fingendi proclivis esset ratio, cum imperiti facile ad credendum impellerentur... ex quo intellegi potest permultis annis ante Homerum fuisse quam Romulum, ut iam doctis hominibus ac temporibus ipsis eruditus ad fingendum vix quicquam esset loci.*

Looking at the passage in more detail, we see that Ovid has also contrived to forge links between the two passages that encourage us to read them not just in parallel, but also in sequence, as if the events of the second narrative follow on from the events of the first⁴². With the injunction of the newly deified Romulus (*et patrias artes militiamque colant*) still ringing in our ears, we discover that the ancient *coloni* were too busy cultivating war to cultivate the fields (515-8): *non habuit doctos tellus antiqua colonos: || lassabant agiles aspera bella viros. || plus erat in gladio quam curvo laudis aratro: || neglectus domino pauca ferebat ager.* These two couplets present the *coloni* as without the skill, time or enthusiasm for agriculture, which is a striking reversal of the traditional picture of life in early Rome. Farming was an emotive subject for the Romans, with very positive moral connotations, and the tough but honest life of those who worked the soil embodied the qualities that made Rome great. Cato comments in the preface to his *De Agri Cultura* that when in the past men wanted to praise a man, they would call him a 'good farmer'⁴³, and Varro comments that men of old held country-dwellers in higher esteem than city-dwellers⁴⁴. Far from being incompatible with warfare, farming produced the best soldiers:

... *ex agricolis et uiri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur*

(Cat. *De Agri. pr.* 4)

Quirinalia was introduced after the death of Romulus – and again, according to some sources, by Numa (cf. Dion. Hal. II 63, 3).

⁴¹ Ovid does not say explicitly that he is dealing the *coloni* of early Rome, and it is of course possible that he is thinking of an older, pre-Romulean time. However, the fact that Ovid presents the deification of the *Fornax* as an *aition* for the *Fornacalia*, and that the institution of this festival is traditionally associated with Numa, does at least raise the possibility that these events took place after the death of Romulus.

⁴² Of course, if we accept the possibility that the two passages are roughly contemporaneous (and indeed the death of Romulus would precede the institution of the *Fornacalia* traditionally linked to Numa), the reading of the passages in chronological sequence would be a natural result.

⁴³ Cat. *De Agri. pr.* 2ff. *et uirum bonum quom laudabant, ita laudabant: bonum agricolam bonumque colonum; amplissime laudari existimabatur qui ita laudabatur.*

⁴⁴ Cf. Var. *Res Rus.* 2. pr. 1 *uiri magni nostri maiores non sine causa praeponerant rusticos Romanos urbanis.*



at me hercules uera illa Romuli proles adsiduis uenatibus nec minus agrestibus operibus exercitata firmissimis praeualuit corporibus ac militiam belli, cum res postulauit, facile sustinuit durata pacis laboribus

(Col. *De Re Rus.* 1 pr. 17)

*at patiens operum paruoque adsueta iuuentus
aut rastris terram domat aut quatit oppida bello*

(Verg. *Aen.* IX 607f.)

*non his iuuentus orta parentibus
infecit aequor sanguine Punico
Pyrrhumque et ingentem cecidit
Antiochum Hannibalemque dirum,
sed rusticorum mascula militum
proles, Sabellis docta ligonibus
versare glaebas...*

(Hor. *Carm.* III 6, 33-39)

The great generals of Rome's history were all keen farmers:

cum tot alios Romani generis intuear memorabiles duces hoc semper duplici studio floruisse uel defendendi uel colendi patrios quaesitosue finis...

(Col. *De Re Rus.* 1 pr. 14)

Magna ergo me voluptas subiit contemplantem mores Scipionis ac nostros: in hoc angulo ille 'Carthaginis horror' ... abluabat corpus laboribus rusticis fessum. Exercebat enim opere se terramque ut mos fuit priscis ipse subigebat.

(Sen. *Epist. Mor.* 86, 5)

Indeed, we are told that the fields in ancient times were more fertile precisely because they were cultivated by the generals themselves:

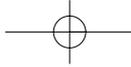
quaenam ergo tantae ubertatis causa erat? ipsorum tunc manibus imperatorum colabantur agri, ut fas est credere, gaudente terra vomere laureato et triumphali aratore, sive illi eadem cura semina tractabant, qua bella, eademque diligentia arua disponebant, qua castra ...

(Plin. *Nat. Hist.* XVIII 19)

isque mos dum seruatus est, perseuerantissimo olendorum agrorum studio ueteres illi Sabini Quirites atauisque Romani, quamquam inter ferrum et ignes hosticisque incursionibus uastatas fruges largius tamen condidere quam nos ...

(Col. *De Re Rus.* I pr.19)

Ovid replaces this view of agriculture, in which warfare and farming coexist,



with one that comes to the fore after the civil wars and is perhaps more familiar, in which working the land symbolises peace, and is presented as the antithesis to war⁴⁵. Indeed, with lines 517-8 *plus erat in gladio quam curvo laudis aratro: || neglectus domino pauca ferebat ager* Ovid evokes the language of the *Georgics*:

*quippe ubi fas uersum atque nefas: tot bella per orbem,
tam multae scelerum facies, non ullus aratro
dignus honos, squalent abductis arua colonis,
et curuae rigidum falces conflantur in ense.*

(Verg. *Georg.* I 505-8)

We can also compare a passage earlier in the *Fasti* (celebrating Augustus' restoration of peace):

*bella diu tenuere viros: erat aptior ensis
vomere, cedebat taurus arator equo;
sarcula cessabant, versique in pila ligones,
factaque de rastro pondere cassis erat...*

(Ov. *Fast.* I 697-700)

On this sequential reading, then, Romulus' message to his people seems to have had significant consequences, resulting in a neglect of agriculture disturbingly similar to that thought to be symptomatic of the civil wars. Indeed, on a second reading, Ovid's evocation of Anchises' speech in the *Aeneid* has particular point: there, at the heart of Rome's greatest epic, Anchises urges the Roman to leave the arts to others, and concentrate on warfare; here Romulus urges his people to concentrate on warfare, at the expense (as we discover) not of the arts but of fundamentals such as agriculture⁴⁶. This is a very different situation than the one envisaged in Lycidas' song at *Eclogue IX* 46-50, where the star thought to represent the deified Julius Caesar's soul heralds great fertility:

*Daphni, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus?
ecce Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum,
astrum quo segetes gauderent frugibus et quo
duceret apricis in collibus uua colorem.
insere, Daphni, puros: carpent tua poma nepotes.*

50

⁴⁵ cf. e.g. *Fast.* IV 923ff., *Georg.* I 493ff., 497ff., *Aen.* VII 635f.; Tib. I 10, 45ff. with Murgatroyd *ad loc.*; Luc. *Bell. Civ.* I 28f.

⁴⁶ The religious observations of the early Romans will also be disturbed by too much fighting: see below.



It is not just agriculture that suffers from this over-fondness for warfare. After Ovid finally reveals the 'true' identity of the *stulti* of the *Feriae Stultorum*, the narrative continues at 533-4 *est honor et tumulis, animas placare paternas, || parvaque in exstructas munera ferre pyras*. Unusually, there is no explicit indication here that we are moving on to another day in the calendar, for once inviting a continuous reading. A few lines later, we learn that the rites of the *Parentalia* were neglected during a long war (II 547-8) *at quondam, dum longa gerunt pugnacibus armis || bella, Parentales deseruere dies*. Now it seems, as Barchiesi notes, that the Romans are cultivating war at the expense of cultivating the gods⁴⁷.

For some readers, even if they accept the negative impact of Romulus' message, this negative impact need not be a problem. Romulus' militaristic excess may have caused problems for early Roman agriculture and religious worship, but the important point is that Augustan peace has restored both⁴⁸. For the suspicious reader, however, the matter is made more complicated by Romulus' key role in the ideological system developed by Augustus, whereby the past prefigures the present: having forged links between himself and Rome's first founder in order to co-opt Romulus' virtues for himself, the same dynamic allows criticism of Romulus to reflect back onto the emperor⁴⁹. The suspicious reader may find some support for this reading from the fact that this is not the only occasion on which imperial military success is presented at the expense of agriculture⁵⁰; nor is it the only occasion on which Ovid appears to show a sly cynicism about Caesar's deification⁵¹.

Here we can see how the way in which Ovid presents material as being forced upon him by the calendar may provide a useful defence: he might argue that any unfortunate consequences arising from the juxtaposition of these two narratives are not his fault, as he is merely following the events of the Roman year. As we have seen however, this is not the case. The calendar presents Ovid with two seemingly unrelated festivals, one involving the worship of Quirinus, the other the ritual roasting of grain. In both cases he chooses not to discuss details of the rites or rituals involved, but rather to explain

⁴⁷ Barchiesi, cit., p. 119.

⁴⁸ Compare, for example, Velleius on the effect of Augustan peace II 89, 4 *restituit cultus agris, sacris honos, securitas hominibus*.

⁴⁹ A classic example of this can be found in the comparison between Augustus and Romulus at *Fast.* II 129-48. See further S. Hinds, *Arma in Ovid's Fasti—Part 2: Genre, Romulean Rome, and Augustan Ideology*, *Arethusa* 25 (1992), pp. 113-53; Barchiesi, cit., pp. 174-77. For a different view, which argues that Romulus was no longer an important ideological figure for Augustus by the time Ovid was writing, see G. Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti: A Historical Study*, Oxford 1994, pp. 43-63.

⁵⁰ At IV 673-6 Venus hastens the agriculture festival of the *Fordicidia* to a close in order to celebrate the martial victories of Augustus: on this see Barchiesi, cit., pp. 130-33.

⁵¹ Cf. *Fast.* II 144 *caelestem fecit te pater, ille patrem; Met.* XV 745-51; 760-61 *ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus, || ille deus faciendus erat*.



their origins with two aetiological tales: one traditionally associated with another day in the calendar, one attested nowhere else. We now have two passages side by side, discussing the origins of two festivals which were instituted at roughly the same time, the one dealing with the deification of an oven by a rough and primitive people, the other dealing with the deification of Romulus: comparison and contamination is inevitable; the prosaic and patronising tone of the second passage cannot but complicate our response to the epic grandeur of the first; *rex patriis astra petebat equis* loses some of its sheen when we read *facta dea est Fornax*. The passages also interfere with one another when read sequentially: cultivation of warfare is shown to have a negative impact on the cultivation of the fields, and in the next passage, of the gods. All this is in no way forced upon him by the calendar.

The above discussion illustrates how important it is to remember that Ovid is always making choices in the *Fasti*. He chooses what anniversaries to celebrate, and what narratives to celebrate them with; or which constellations to mention, when, and which aetiological tale to tell. Though he may try to conceal it, here, just as much as in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is always in control of his text.

