

TRANSGRESSIVE ACTS: OVID'S TREATMENT OF THE IDES OF MARCH

CAROLE NEWLANDS

PRELIMINARIES

WHEN OVID ADOPTED the Roman calendar as the subject of his poem the *Fasti*, he implicitly engaged in a contest with Augustus over control of time. Mary Beard has cogently argued that the Roman calendar was politically constructed to define and reaffirm normative Roman values.¹ Restructured by Julius Caesar, the calendar offered the dictator and his heir the opportunity both to identify themselves with Roman cultural values and also to reshape them. Old Roman festivals disappeared or else took on new meanings more congenial to the imperial regime; new festivals were added honoring the emperor and his family. As Wallace-Hadrill observes, in manipulating the calendar to insert himself and his family centrally into the ritual progress of the Roman year, Augustus succeeded in "turning all Roman time into Augustan time."²

Ovid's *Fasti* represents his own manipulation of the politically constructed Roman year. As a contemporary interpretation of the Augustan calendar, Ovid's *Fasti* is a political site of special interest for the analysis of ideological practices, for it provides a unique perspective upon the ways in which the calendar was being reshaped to support the new imperial dynasty. Ovid's calendar suggests the instability of time and meaning at the same time as it recognizes the powerful opposing interests that sought to give definitive shape and value to the imperial year. It interweaves Roman national myths with the passion and eroticism of Greek astronomical myths. As well as documenting new Augustan festivals, it gives a major place to the fecund sexuality of ancient popular festivals such as the Lupercalia, the Floralia, and the festival of Anna Perenna.

Altheim complained that Ovid had eroticized (and thereby trivialized) the Roman calendar.³ But as W. R. Johnson has suggested, the popular festivals, which he singles out as an especially important part of Ovid's calendar,

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1. Mary Beard, "A Complex of Times: No More Sheep On Romulus' Birthday," *PCPhS* 33 (1987): 1–15.

2. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus: Ovid, Augustus, and the *Fasti*," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby, P. Hardie, and M. Whitby (Bristol, 1987), 221–30, 226.

3. Franz Altheim, "Der Fall Ovid," *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Baden-Baden, 1953), 257.

provided us with a glimpse of "the authentic spirituality of old, vanished Rome" that had been displaced by the hollow modernisms of Augustus.⁴ Johnson cites as an evocative example the festivities of the goddess Flora, through whom Ovid hints at "the old carnal pieties, the worship of food, sex, and prosperity and of the great and mysterious powers that bestow being and its enjoyment and responsibilities."⁵ Johnson ends his article by pointing to the festival of Anna Perenna as another example of the authentic Roman spirituality that, in his view, was being erased by Augustus' frigid festivities.⁶

The date of Anna Perenna's festival, the Ides of March, was the commemorative date of Julius Caesar's assassination. Surprisingly, in Ovid's treatment of the Ides of March in Book 3 of the *Fasti* (523–710), the discussion of Anna Perenna by far outweighs the account of Julius Caesar's assassination and apotheosis, 152 lines for Anna (523–696) and 14 lines for Julius Caesar (697–710). Although the Roman goddess Anna Perenna is now largely forgotten, she is clearly an important figure in Ovid's *Fasti*. Yet the lengthy discussion and account of her festival is interrupted and eventually displaced by Vesta's mandate to the poet that he commemorate Julius Caesar.

In this article I wish to show how the conjunction of the popular and the imperial event on the Ides of March symbolically enacts the intervention of the Augustan *domus* into Roman time. This juxtaposition offers an implied critique of the process by which power was wielded to reshape history and Roman identity. In suggesting that Ovid exploits the Ides of March in a politically subversive manner, I am well aware that I am entering territory that has already been hotly contested by critics with opposing ideas of Ovid's aims and methods in the *Fasti*. For McKeown, for instance, Ovid writes in the shadow of Callimachus; the poet's lengthy discussion of the festival of Anna Perenna is thus politically disengaged.⁷ For Ahl, on the other hand, Ovid "rubs some salt" into the Julian wounds by treating the assassination and apotheosis of Julius Caesar in a cursory manner and by paying more attention to the spurious apotheosis of Anna Perenna.⁸

I would like to approach the Ides of March another way, by applying to Ovid's text the typology of the carnivalesque. The festival of Anna Perenna conforms to the pattern of the carnival and therefore assumes an implied critique of hierarchical modes of thought and behavior. In their introduction to *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that the carnivalesque is "analytically powerful in the study of ideological repertoires and cultural practices."⁹ In addition to offering a special opportunity for understanding a vital, often overlooked aspect of Roman religious life, the festival of Anna Perenna is constructed in Ovid's text to

4. W. R. Johnson, "The Desolation of the *Fasti*," *CJ* 74 (1978): 7–18, esp. 16.

5. Johnson, "Desolation," 7.

6. *Ibid.*, 17–18.

7. J. C. McKeown, "*Fabula Proposito Nulla Tegenda Meo*," in *Poetry And Politics in the Age of Augustus*, ed. T. Woodman and D. West (Cambridge, 1984), 169–87.

8. Frederick Ahl, *Metaformations* (Ithaca, 1985), 315.

9. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, 1986), 26.

provide insight into the powerful forces reshaping Roman ideas of time and identity. My argument, therefore, departs from Johnson's main focus on Roman religiosity to center upon the political implications of the festival of Anna Perenna. Even though Anna Perenna eventually passed into obscurity while Julius Caesar remained an important figure in the popular imagination, in Book 3 of the *Fasti* Anna functions not as a dim echo of a once vibrant populist past but as a dynamic figure in Ovid's contestation with Augustan ideology.¹⁰

Before proceeding to a detailed discussion of Ovid's text, I wish first of all to position the festival of Anna Perenna within a theoretical framework that views the symbolic function of carnival as a festive critique of elite culture and politics.

CARNIVAL AND LINGUISTIC CONSTRAINT

The writings of Mikhail Bakhtin have given classic formulation to the carnival as a site of popular freedom that opposes elite culture.¹¹ Bakhtin idealizes the carnival as the place where the "vox populi" could be heard in glorious unrestraint, where social niceties and bourgeois decorum could be swept away and replaced by a frank indulgence of the body and material pleasures: "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions."¹² Lechery, gluttony, and obscene speech were given free rein at the carnival as the lower echelons of society celebrated their release from the social and ethical rankings and strictures of their superiors. Bakhtin interprets the term carnivalesque "not only as carnival per se in its limited form but also as the varied popular-festive life of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance."¹³ Indeed the term "carnavalesque" has come to be applied to the collapse of hierarchical distinctions and ossified values and judgments. The liberating energy of the carnivalesque scrutinizes, mocks, and subverts social norms and institutions.

Bakhtin traces a tradition of cathartic laughter from the Roman Saturnalia to its full flowering, in his view, in the works of Rabelais. We need not then confine the concept of carnival purely to the festivities of Mardi Gras or to the Saturnalia. Many festivals share the essential features of carnival that Bakhtin identifies: its sexual license, alimentary and verbal excess, its social levelling and inversions. Although we have little direct evidence for Roman festive expressions, such uninhibited, carnivalesque play seems to have been a part of even serious Roman ceremonial. Indeed, in his specific study of

10. Her cult was still observed in Martial's day. See *Epigram* 4.64.16–19.

11. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, tr. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). Ideas of the carnival influenced Bakhtin's views of classical and medieval literature. In "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, Texas, 1981), Bakhtin posits a counter-cultural tradition of Latin literature of parodic forms such as mimes, satire, and epigrams, a tradition largely lost because Latin literature was preserved by "agelasts" (58), people without humor.

12. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10.

13. *Ibid.*, 218.

the feast in Greek and Roman religion, Kerenyi argues that the festive is defined by the alternation of complementary elements, the serious and the playful, constraint and freedom.¹⁴

An interesting example of this patterning is found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*. At the end of Book 7 (70–73) this author describes votive games held at Rome in which the solemn procession of magistrates and celebrants was interrupted by dancers dressed as Sileni and as satyrs who mocked and imitated the serious movements of the others, with a view to making the crowd laugh (72.10–11). Dionysius accepts that such ridicule was an ancient Roman practice not confined to state festivals; for instance he tells us that satyrs preceded the funeral procession of famous people (72.12). Since Dionysius views the serious ceremonial as Greek practice (and consequently more civilized), Dionysius subscribes implicitly to the view that the carnivalesque offers a mode of understanding Roman society as suffused with a barbaric energy that is contained by Greek culture.

Dionysius' account shows that subversive elements that mock traditional relations of power have a ritually defined place in the Roman festival. In an important modification of Bakhtin's utopian view of carnival as the uninhibited and natural expression of the people, anthropologist Victor Turner has pointed out that rites of reversal such as Dionysius describes involve licensed complicity. Although carnival liberates the people from the normative demands of society, it is a licensed affair, a time of popular freedom that is carefully circumscribed by the temporal or physical limits imposed by the elite.¹⁵ The satyric performances that Dionysius describes have carefully prescribed physical limits, as the comic dancers are preceded and followed by solemn officials of state. According to Turner, carnival is not destructive of social rules, but offers a fresh perspective upon them. The licensed alternation of the serious and the playful, of constraint and freedom in the Roman games described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus can be seen as a sign of social well-being.¹⁶

Each instance of carnival must be treated in its historically specific context, however. Barbara Myerhoff, for instance, sums up recent studies that have shown that rites of reversal can be used to make a variety of statements about the social and political order: "to affirm it, attack it, suspend it, redefine it, oppose it, buttress it, emphasize one part of it at the cost of another."¹⁷

14. C. Kerenyi, *The Religion of the Greeks and Romans* (London, 1962), chap. 2.

15. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1969), chap. 5, esp. 176: "Cognitively, nothing underlines regularity so well as absurdity or paradox. Emotionally, nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted illicit behavior. Rituals of status reversal accommodate both aspects. By making the low high and the high low, they reaffirm the hierarchical principle."

16. See also Barbara Babcock, *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca, 1978), who argues that symbolic inversions, a primary feature of carnival as demonstrated in the satyric disguise and mockery, "define a culture's lineaments at the same time as they question the usefulness and the absoluteness of this ordering" (29). In order to maintain cultural vitality, the ceremonial needs to be reinvested with the carnivalesque.

17. Barbara Myerhoff, "Return to Wirikuta: Ritual Reversal and Symbolic Continuity on the Peyote Hunt of the Huichol Indians," in Babcock, *World*, 235.

The festive, then, is not always a sign of a society's intellectual and social well-being. The perspective it offers upon everyday existence can include resistance to the impositions of the dominant elite as society is stripped of its pretenses to reveal its hierarchical ordering. Carnival can provide the opportunity for political criticism of the status quo. Since carnival releases strong emotions, at times the aggression of carnival has overflowed its festive bounds as the world ceases to seem comic and takes on the appearance of something deeply unjust.¹⁸ Indeed, whether it leads directly to political revolt or not, carnival cannot be dissociated from politics; it thus offers a unique analytic perspective from which to explore social and political order.

The understanding of carnival as a powerful ideological tool seems to me to offer a fruitful approach toward exploring the interplay of literature and politics in Ovid's *Fasti*. In his treatment of the Ides of March in the *Fasti*, Ovid follows the popular festival of Anna Perenna with a clear sign of political authority and constraint when Vesta enters the poem to urge the poet to deal with Julius Caesar's assassination and apotheosis. To some extent, then, Ovid's treatment of the Ides of March follows a pattern inherent in Roman culture; the narrative order symbolically enacts the temporal and physical constraints imposed upon the carnivalesque by central authority. Yet the pattern in the *Fasti* is heavily weighted towards the popular, festive event, not the serious commemoration of the state's elite; Ovid's emphasis is upon the carnivalesque. Cultural analysis cannot be dissociated from the powerful political associations of the Ides of March and the subversive potential of carnival that, as I shall argue, Ovid fully exploits here.

Indeed, one particular aspect of the carnival that Ovid develops in this episode is the opportunity for linguistic freedom. The *Fasti* has often been accused of being episodic and lacking coherence.¹⁹ As Denis Feeney has argued, however, the poem reveals a persistent interest in the conditions of speech, the liberties allowed and the limitations placed upon speech.²⁰ For Feeney, the *Fasti*, revised and augmented in exile, represents a response to the increasingly repressive environment of the last years of Augustus' rule.²¹ Faced with the vested interests of the Augustan state in the Roman calendar, Ovid recognized that a degree of independence from these interests demanded a different poetic voice, not brashly outspoken, as it was in the *Ars Amatoria*, but varied and elusive.²²

18. Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, tr. Mary Feeney (New York, 1979), has documented the dangerous potential of carnival in his detailed treatment of the peasants' revolt and massacre that took place at the carnival at Romans in 1580.

19. Sara Mack, *Ovid* (New Haven, 1988), 29–30.

20. D. C. Feeney, "Si licet et fas est: Ovid's *Fasti* and the problem of Free Speech under the Principate," in *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*, ed. Anton Powell (Bristol, 1992), 1–25.

21. Feeney, "Si licet," 15–19. On the revision of the *Fasti* see Franz Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso: Die "Fasten"*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1958), 17 and 20–22.

22. In the opening of the *Fasti* Ovid reveals a very different didactic voice from that at the start of the *Ars Amatoria*. The confident, independent voice of the elegiac teacher of love has been replaced by the tentative voice of a poet concerned not to overstep legal bounds and dependent, it seems, on imperial guidance and approval. Thus he asks Germanicus to guide his poem *si licet et fas est* (*Fasti* 1.25). In *Ars Amatoria* 1 Ovid dispenses with Apollo and the Muses and claims that he relies on personal experience alone; he is the self-styled *vati perito* (*Ars* 1.29).

Popular festivals are important in the *Fasti* because one of the main features of carnival was verbal freedom.²³ Carnival provides a privileged place for speech and aggressions that are normally suppressed; it symbolically offers the poet the opportunity for transgressive speech.²⁴ The Ides of March, a day of both carnivalesque celebration and official commemoration, paradigmatically juxtaposes situations of linguistic freedom and constraint. Vesta's verbal mandate to the poet reaffirms hierarchical, patriarchal relations and the transformative power of Augustan ideology. By contrast, the narratives told about Anna Perenna invert Roman *dignitas* and masculine power, and ridicule the cherished founder of Julian genealogical myth, Aeneas. In this way, they provide a privileged vantage point from which to scrutinize the subsequent assertion of patriarchal, political authority. Moreover, the carnivalesque invades even the Caesarean commemoration to undermine its official utterances; the festive critique of elite culture in fact embraces both events on the Ides of March. This date in Ovid's calendar therefore seems an appropriate point from which to investigate how the typology of the carnival gave Ovid the freedom—despite his strong sense of linguistic constraint in this poem—to play with authority and, by questioning its established conventions, disclose its ideological underpinnings.

My discussion of Ovid's text will fall into three parts. First, I will discuss the description of the festival of Anna Perenna in order to demonstrate the ways in which it conforms to the pattern of carnival. Second, I will discuss the aetiological explanations for Anna and her rites, for these reveal Ovid's non-authoritarian approach to didactic elegy. Third, I will turn to his treatment of the assassination and apotheosis of Julius Caesar, for it is there that we can see how an apparently exemplary occasion for linguistic constraint can also be presented as an occasion for critique.

ANNA PERENNA

Victor Turner has argued that festivals involving rites of reversal are generally associated with fixed points in the calendar.²⁵ The festival of Anna Perenna occurs in March, the time of spring and the month in which the ancient Roman year began. Macrobius associates Anna Perenna with the year: "publice et privatim ad Annam Perennam sacrificatum itur, ut annare perennareque commode liceat."²⁶ Frazer speculates that Anna Perenna was the feminine personification both of the year and of a succession of years.²⁷ Ovid seems to hint obliquely at this meaning with his emphasis upon *annos* in lines 531 and 533; otherwise, neither in his description of the festival nor in his aetiological explanations does Ovid pay attention to the goddess'

23. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 145–95.

24. I take my definition of "transgressive" from Stallybrass and White, *Transgression*, 17, who, drawing upon Babcock, *World*, 14, designate transgression as "any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political."

25. Turner, *Ritual*, 177.

26. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.12.6–7.

27. Sir James Frazer, ed., *The "Fasti" of Ovid*, vol. 3 (London, 1929), 111. See also W. Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic* (London, 1899), 50–54.

seasonal associations. He presents instead the festival of Anna Perenna as a popular occasion involving the suspension of social restraints and the celebration of material pleasures; his emphasis falls upon the sexual and verbal freedom of the festival and its overturning of social categories (*Fast.* 3.523–42):²⁸

Idibus est Annae festum geniale Perennae non procul a ripis, advena Thybri, tuis. plebs venit ac virides passim disiecta per herbas	525
potat, et accumbit cum pare quisque sua. sub Iove pars durat, pauci tentoria ponunt, sunt quibus e ramis frondea facta casa est; pars, ubi pro rigidis calamos statuere columnis, desuper extentas imposuere togas.	530
sole tamen vinoque calent annosque precantur quot sumant cyathos, ad numerumque bibunt. invenies illic qui Nestoris eibat annos, quae sit per calices facta Sibylla suos.	535
illic et cantant quicquid didicere theatris, et iactant faciles ad sua verba manus, et ducunt posito duras cratera choreas, cultaque diffusis saltat amica comis. cum redeunt, titubant et sunt spectacula volgi, et fortunatos obvia turba vocat.	540
occurrit nuper (visa est mihi digna relatu) pompa: senem potum pota trahebat anus.	

The freedom of the celebrants is conveyed in the sexual license (525–30) and excessive drinking (531–34) that accompany comic, obscene language (535). The word *disiecta* (525) suggests the people's state of complete relaxation, their freedom from categorization and civic restraints; for the duration of the festival at least they can scatter themselves freely over the grass, each with their equal (526). Their freedom from hierarchical control is symbolically displayed in the shelters they build (527–30). These are temporary and pliable, made of branches and leaves; such *casae* are associated with the liberties of a nomadic life, not with the responsibilities of civic life. The substitution of reeds for stiff columns (529) opposes the musical symbol of private pleasure to the authoritarian symbol of civic architecture. Musicality, flexibility, and vegetative life replace the sterile, unyielding permanence of stone. The collapse of hierarchical distinctions is encapsulated in the use of the toga, the garment of civic responsibility, as a roof covering (530). Stripped of Roman dress, the people are also freed from the demands of Roman civilian life. Notions of permanence and responsibility are overturned as the celebrants play grasshopper for a day.

The feasting, drinking, dancing, singing, and lovemaking culminate in a blatant inversion of social order, of patriarchal Roman *dignitas*, as a drunken old woman drags along a drunken old man (542). Ovid himself is not a

28. Text of the *Fasti* is that of E. H. Alton, D. E. W. Wormell, and E. Courtney (Leipzig, 1985).

participant in the festival of Anna Perenna. He is an observer of this rite in Augustus' Rome and thus preserves a somewhat ironic distance. He makes a somewhat amused aside when he notes of the drunken old woman and man *visa est mihi digna relatu* (541) and follows this remark with the tripping rhythm and explosive *ps* of line 542. Yet such a remark is not entirely removed from the event he describes, for his choice of the word *digna* points clearly to the crucial Roman value of *dignitas* that the elderly pair are violating. The transgression of traditional power relations between the social classes is associated here with the transgression of gender roles.²⁹ Later we are told that young girls sing obscenities at Anna's festival (675–76), another sign of social and sexual inversion that challenges sanctified notions of cultural decorum. The festival of Anna Perenna subverts the patriarchal ordering of Roman society as well as its codes of normative social behavior.

In particular, Ovid's emphasis falls upon the people's freedom of speech. Ovid describes the mob returning from the festival as *spectacula volgi* (539), the people's theatre. The word *spectacula* has a culturally specific meaning for the Romans. The theatre at Rome was traditionally the place where licentious behavior, including speech, was condoned. Freed from the theatre's circumscribed space and conventions, such license was given public voice in the open space of the festival and as such had greater social bite. The songs that people sang at the festival were those they learned in the theatre (535); young girls in particular sang obscenities (675–76). The festival of Anna Perenna was an occasion when speech need not be *fas*. To what extent then does Ovid, an observer of this ancient rite in sophisticated Augustan Rome, participate in the transgressive spirit of the festival to imply a critique of Augustan ideology?

OID'S UNCROWNING

As Bakhtin notes, an essential feature of carnival is ritual inversion: "We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' ('à l'envers'), of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings."³⁰ Thus one of the important features of the Roman Saturnalia and of other carnivalesque celebrations was the "uncrowning" of the king and the substitution of a clown or underdog.³¹ As we shall see, Ovid capitalizes on the carnivalesque nature of the festival of Anna Perenna by making inversion the prominent feature of the three aetiological narratives that follow the description. Although disparate in topic and treatment, all three aetiological narratives present central images of uncrowning as figures of authority are bested by lower elements of society.

29. Frazer, *Fasti*, vol. 3, 112, refers to a suggestion of E. H. Alton that the old drunken woman who is leading the old drunken man represents Anna Perenna herself, whereas the old man represents the old Mars, or the bygone years, now symbolically placed behind the woman. See Cailliois on dramatic representations of originary myth, n. 40 below.

30. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 11.

31. On uncrowning as a feature of carnival see Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 196–208 and 370.

The first two of these narratives purport to explain the origins of the goddess's name. Anna is identified with Dido's sister, an exile who seeks refuge in Italy (543–656), and next with an old woman from the Roman town of Bovillae, who helped the plebs during their secession to the Sacred Mount (661–74). For Ovid, Anna is not a goddess of the year and seasonal change. He dismisses in one line the speculation that Anna represents the Moon goddess because the moon fills the year (*annum*) with her months (657). Instead, he emphasizes two possible identifications of the goddess that, in true carnivalesque spirit, challenge literary and political hierarchies.

As the first and lengthiest action (543–656) has been thoroughly discussed by McKeown, I will not discuss it here except to touch on a few significant details.³² Ovid identifies Anna Perenna with Dido's sister Anna, who some time after her sister's suicide comes to Italy seeking shelter. Ovid's narrative delights in inverting heroic values. Aeneas, the hero of the *Aeneid*, is represented in *Fasti* 3 as a rather shiftless lover and husband, at a loss with how to cope with Anna's arrival. He first encounters Anna as he moons along his dotal beach (*Fast.* 3.603–4):

litore dotali solo comitatus Achate
secretum nudo dum pede carpit iter.

The model for this couplet is *Aeneid* 1.312–13, where Aeneas is described as exploring the Carthaginian shore with Achates alone:³³

ipse uno graditur comitatus Achate
bina manu lato crispans hastilia ferro.

With a nice ironic twist, Ovid presents Aeneas walking with Achates on the Italian shore, but about to meet up with his Carthaginian past in the form of Anna. The allusion emphasizes Ovid's reversal of Aeneas' heroic qualities. The reference to the fact that the beach was part of his wife's dowry (*litore dotali*, 603) slyly suggests that Aeneas lacks authority in his new home. The manliness of Virgil's Aeneas is obvious; he walks with a flourish, brandishing not one but two spears. There is something furtive, however, about Ovid's Aeneas, who walks barefoot along a secluded path, more ready it seems for love than war. And of course he is about to meet a beautiful lady in distress. Indeed shortly after, when we are told that Aeneas weeps at the memory of Dido, he is described as Venus' hero (*Cythereius heros*, 611), a reference that evokes his amatory credentials as lover as much as his divine ancestry. Carnavalesque genres, Bakhtin tells us, transfer high culture to the material, bodily realm. This "downward movement" is expressed in the sexualization of Aeneas.³⁴ Here what matters is Aeneas' relationships to women, not to war.

32. McKeown, "Fabula," 169–74.

33. See Bömer, *Fasten*, vol. 2, 188.

34. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 18–30; 370.

Indeed, in Aeneas' household power relations are reversed; Lavinia is the true authority. When Aeneas introduces Anna to Lavinia, he does not give Anna's name but incompetently describes her in such ambiguous language that she could be assumed to be Dido herself (*Fast.* 3.629–32):

“hanc tibi cur tradam, pia causa, Lavinia coniunx,
est mihi: consumpsi naufragus huius opes.
orta Tyro est, regnum Libya possedit in ora:
quam precor ut carae more sororis ames.”

With the reference to *pia causa*, Aeneas summons his trademark quality. But in this parodic world, the call for *pietas* evokes its opposite, as Lavinia plans to murder her new “sister.” Aeneas is powerless. Indeed he disappears from the narrative after this speech, and Anna flees in terror from the house with a melodramatic jump from a window. In Ovid's reworking of Virgil's epic, Lavinia has an important place and voice in the narrative. She is the opposite of Virgil's silent virgin, a matron with violent feelings and great power. Aeneas is correspondingly deprived of authority. The story hinges on Lavinia and Anna, not on the Trojan hero.

This transference of the heroic images of the *Aeneid* to the sexualized realm of melodrama has political implications, for Aeneas was the ancestor of the Julian race, and the apotheosis of Julius Caesar is celebrated on the Ides of March. Indeed Ovid seems to invite us to make this connection with Julian ideology when he ends this first action with the deification of Anna Perenna in the river Numicius (647–56). No other ancient authority associates the Numicius with Anna Perenna. Traditionally the river was associated with the deification of Aeneas, who became a god when he was buried by the river Numicius or drowned in it.³⁵ Instead of Aeneas, Ovid gives us Anna Perenna. He evokes Aeneas' deification by introducing the Numicius, but he substitutes Anna. By privileging a female in his narrative of deification, he thus mimetically represents the social inversions of Anna's feast, in which the old woman precedes the old man. He also calls attention to the text's avoidance of Julian ideology. Aeneas' deification was commonly seen as a prelude to the apotheosis of Julius Caesar.³⁶ But at the end of the first action Ovid associates with Aeneas' place of deification a figure who, as a woman and a Carthaginian, challenges the Julian appropriation of the Ides of March.

McKeown fully acknowledges the playfulness of this first action, but judges it an exercise in Callimachean method that his readers, including Augustus, would recognize as politically unexceptionable.³⁷ The typology of carnival, I believe, permits us to see this attractive story as having social and political bite. The world of Ovid's Virgilian sequel is the world of the

35. For the ancient evidence see Frazer, *Fasti*, vol. 3, 118–20.

36. For instance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Venus petitions for both Aeneas' deification (*Met.* 14.581–608) and Julius Caesar's (*Met.* 15.745–851).

37. McKeown, “Fabula,” especially 171–74 where McKeown marshals evidence for reading the Anna Perenna episode as subversive of the *Aeneid* and Augustan ideology, and 180–86 where he offers a rebuttal of such an interpretation.

carnavalesque. Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia has reversed power relations of gender and class. As impotent husband, Aeneas is a comic figure. In this action Ovid makes fun of the *Aeneid* and of Aeneas as the embodiment of Roman male virtues. Another way in which carnival debases is through the "carnival uncrownings," the deposition of kings. Figuratively, Aeneas has been uncrowned. His heroic qualities have been reduced to a feckless sexuality, his authority has been taken over by Virgil's silent, blushing virgin, and the thunder of his apotheosis has been stolen by Anna.

The second narrative told to identify the goddess (661–74) reinforces this pattern of inversions and is connected directly with popular protest against the elite. Ovid here turns to a Roman historical context when he identifies Anna with an old woman who brought food to the plebs on their secession to the Sacred Mount. They were starving, but Anna supplied them with an abundance of home-baked cakes. Here the goddess is associated with popular political protest, with the collective and successful challenge to patrician authority that granted the people their own political representative, the tribune.³⁸ Once again the action presents as the key figure a woman who, in addition to being old and poor, was an outsider from the suburbs and thus would normally be among the most powerless elements of Roman society. Exploiting the transgressive opportunities of Anna's feast, Ovid favors this action (*nec a veri dissidet illa fide*, 662) that makes an old woman the agent of political change. She evokes a past age of Republican freedom and popular power, a time when the governing elite at Rome were temporarily uncrowned. Yet as a transgressive figure—female, elderly, and poor—she strongly signals the aberrant nature of that power. In his two explanations of Anna's identity, Ovid dismisses her seasonal associations and emphasizes her subversive potentiality.

The third and final action turns from the identity of the goddess to the nature of her feast (675–96). Significantly, given Ovid's preoccupation with linguistic boundaries in the *Fasti*, Ovid is concerned only with one aspect of the festival, the verbal license that dissolves cultural and sexual barriers. In this third aetiological narrative he purports to explain why *puellae* traditionally sing obscenities (*ioci veteres obscaenae dicta*, 695) at Anna's feast. The free and licentious speech derives, according to Ovid, from an incident in which Mars, hopelessly in love with Minerva, was duped in bed by the aged Anna, who had promised to help Mars's suit but then sought to seduce him herself. Historians of religion have sought to identify Minerva here with the obscure Nerio, who is mentioned by early Roman writers as the wife of Mars.³⁹ This seems to me an attempt to give the licentious story a Victorian respectability that ignores the important but non-canonical figure of Anna.

For Cailliois, who defined festival as a reenactment of the creative period of the world, rites of renewal are celebrated in the context of originary myths

38. On the political background see Bömer, *Fasten*, vol. 2, 190.

39. See Frazer, *Fasti*, vol. 3, 121–27; Bömer, *Fasten*, vol. 2, 191–92.

representing ancestral beings.⁴⁰ Sometimes the myth is recited, sometimes it is acted out in dramatic representation, often with debauched language or gesture.⁴¹ Dramatic reenactment may have been part of the festival of Anna Perenna. For instance, Elaine Fantham's study of such farcical tales in Ovid's *Fasti* as Anna's ruse to seduce Mars suggests that the story of Mars' sexual escapade has a plot typical of Roman mime.⁴² If so, the action may represent a story that was acted out, or sung, at Anna's festival. It is noticeable, however, that the narrative does not in fact explain why *puellae* in particular sang ribald and obscene songs. In the story of the besting of Mars by an old woman, the emphasis falls yet again upon the deposition of the male figure of authority and the concomitant reversal of gender roles.

This third story is politically subversive too, for Mars was the father of the Roman state, and in this paternalistic role he is closely linked to both Aeneas and Augustus. Mars introduces the month of March in his role of patriarchal head of state and founder of the Roman race. Mars was particularly important to Augustus, who built a magnificent temple to the god in his role of Ultor, Avenger, in the Forum Augustum (*Fast.* 5.545–98). The games of the new Augustan cult of Mars Ultor were of a different order from the festivities of Anna Perenna; in the *Fasti* they are characterized as *sollemnes* (597). We are told moreover that the god dislikes the stage (598).⁴³ Yet this august figure is duped by an old woman in a comic inversion of his role as Rome's virile leader and defender. This third story has affinities with the trickster tale in which the underdog outwits the normally dominant antagonist. The tale is funny, but it also has subversive implications in its leveling effect, for Mars is shown to have brawn but little brain. The story celebrates the guile and cleverness of a woman. Like Aeneas, Mars *pater* is a figure of authority who has been "uncrowned" in the festive environment of carnival.

Political subversion is linked in this action with literary subversion. Mars is associated in Book 3 both with the patriarchal, military ordering of the Roman state, and with epic poetry, which generically opposes elegy. Stephen Hinds has argued that in *Fasti* 3 Ovid, faced with the challenge of accommodating to an elegiac poem Mars, god of war and epic themes, engages in sophisticated generic play that "disarms martial themes" as they arise: "all the normative characteristics of elegy are deployed to mitigate the suggestively epic *arma* which the month of Mars produces: elegiac rejection of war, elegiac love, even elegiac lament."⁴⁴

In Book 3 of the *Fasti* Ovid goes out of his way to challenge the dominant position of epic among the poetic genres, nowhere more so than in the context of carnival, the classic locus for the overturning of hierarchical

40. Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le sacré* (Paris, 1950), chap. 4, esp. 136–40.

41. According to Caillois, *Homme*, 145–47, obscenity fulfills a necessary expiatory function. Cf. 159: "La débauche générale rajeunit le monde."

42. E. Fantham, "Sexual Comedy In Ovid's *Fasti*: Sources and Motivations," *HSCP* 87 (1983): 185–216.

43. Flora's games, like those of Anna Perenna, are associated with jesting and obscenities (*Fast.* 5.331–32) and with licentious theatre (*Fast.* 4.946). See n. 42 above.

44. Stephen Hinds, "Arma In Ovid's *Fasti* Part 1: Genre And Mannerism," *Arethusa* 25 (1992): 81–112, 90.

rankings. The Ides of March is preceded by an important festival to Mars on the fourteenth, the Equirria, but Ovid accords it only six lines (517–22). Structurally Mars is displaced by the far lengthier disquisition on the popular festival of Anna Perenna. Ovid's treatment of Anna Perenna transfers to the register of Roman cult and practice the generic oppositions at work in Book 3 in which elegy, traditionally inferior to epic, celebrates its erotic affinities, and the female deities and themes of peace and *amor* triumph over Mars and themes of war. In the aetiological explanations for Anna and her festival, Aeneas appears in elegiac guise, literally and symbolically disarmed, and Mars, a lover too in the third aetion, is made a fool of by an old woman. The victory of Anna and Minerva over Mars symbolically celebrates the power of elegiac discourse; it provocatively links that discourse here with transgressive speech.

In the third aetion Ovid emphasizes again the idea that the festival of Anna Perenna is an occasion when speech is unrestrained, a subject, as we have seen, of particular interest to him in the *Fasti*. The final pentameter of the narrative elegantly suggests the pleasure and power of linguistic freedom, *et iuvat hanc magno verba dedisse deo* (696). The pleasure of the tale lies in the victory of words, *verba*, over such a great god as Mars. Anna has defeated Mars in bloodless battle. Festive speech then is recognized as a powerful tool that through laughter challenges and even overturns hierarchical pretensions to authority and control. Festive laughter “uncrowns.”

Ovid's aetia are accommodated to the free and provocative atmosphere of the festival, which gave a privileged place to uninhibited speech. Not that Ovid's speech itself is uninhibited. But both the aetia and the description of the festival itself challenge and overturn political and literary hierarchies as common people and women are shown with unprecedented freedom and power, whereas patriarchal figures like Aeneas and Mars are represented as buffoons who are figuratively uncrowned in the festive narratives. In the interplay of literature and politics Ovid celebrates here and elsewhere in the *Fasti* the vitality and freedom of the old Roman cults, their important role as an outlet and form of critique in a repressive, hierarchical society.

Ovid participates, above all, in the spirit of carnival by undercutting his own aetiological project. To offer aetiological explanations at all is to set oneself up as a figure of authority. But Ovid not only refuses to choose between the two main identifications of Anna Perenna he offers, he also confuses the reader by claiming that each narrative provides the definitive answer. The story that identifies Anna with Dido's sister is prefaced by the earnest statement that it will clear away all erroneous opinions (*Fast.* 3.543–44):

quae tamen haec dea sit, quoniam rumoribus errat,
fabula proposito nulla tegenda meo.

Yet the story that identifies Anna with the elderly baker claims to be close to the truth, *nec a veri dissidet illa fide* (662). These views can obviously not be reconciled. In this way Ovid overturns the authority of the aetiological poet. As observer and explainer of Anna's feast he is nominally in a position of control in his attempts to categorize and order its individual oddities. Car-

nival, however, is a great leveler and ultimately resists categorization. Thus the hierarchical relationship between the poet and the feast collapses as he, a willing participant in its transgressive spirit, burlesques the notion of authorial control and submits to voluntary uncrowning.

VESTA AND JULIUS CAESAR

The freedom of the festival is inevitably followed by the resumption of the normative demands of society. Vesta's intervention into the poem to remind Ovid of his duty to the Augustan state represents a specific treatment of this pattern that emphasizes authoritarian control over festive time (*Fasti* 3.697–99):

Praeteriturus eram gladios in principe fixos,
cum sic a castis Vesta locuta focis:
"ne dubita meminisse". . .

Vesta insists that Ovid on the Ides of March commemorate the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and Augustus' victory over the assassins. The license of people and poet is not unbridled but is limited and controlled by powerful national interests in the coercive form of Vesta.

This choice of Vesta deserves attention. Vesta is not only a uniquely Roman goddess. In the *Fasti* she appears as a specifically Augustan deity, and she is closely identified with the fortunes of the imperial household. Book 4 ends with celebration of the new shrine that Augustus built for Vesta on the Palatine, thereby signifying his co-option of the goddess as the special guardian of the imperial family and its domestic values (4.943–54). Here, and in an earlier passage in Book 3 where Ovid celebrates Augustus' title of *pontifex maximus*, the close relationship between Vesta and Augustus is marked in terms of kinship (3.435–36; 4.949). In *Fasti* 6 Vesta is celebrated as the guardian of female chastity under Augustus (455–60); her protective function, however, is extended beyond the domestic sphere to guardianship of the lives and family honor of the Julian *gens*. In *Fasti* 6 she is associated with vengeance over the Parthians (465–68). In *Fasti* 3.697–710 and 5.573–76 she is associated with vengeance over Caesar's assassins, for Julius Caesar as *pontifex maximus* was her special priest: *meus fuit ille sacerdos* (3.699). She herself, she tells us, snatched Caesar's body from the conspirators, bearing him heavenwards and leaving a false image behind (701). In the final section of Ovid's treatment of the Ides of March, Vesta appears in her Augustan role as protector and avenger of Augustus' family line.

Ovid's free and licentious speech thus comes abruptly to an end as the sexually ribald farce of Mars and Anna is followed by the serious matter of the assassination of Julius Caesar, and a chaste goddess closely associated with the Augustan household replaces the popular, divine procuress. The references to civic architecture—the Palatine shrine of Vesta (*castis . . . focis*, 698) and later the temple of Divus Julius in the Forum Romanum (704)—symbolically reassert the authority of the Augustan *domus*. The constraints

operating upon the poet and the calendar are thus vividly illustrated here in the dramatic intervention of Vesta. The festive pattern has been accommodated to meet specific ideological demands, and the powerful interests at work in Augustus' revision of the calendar are bluntly revealed in Vesta's mandate to the poet.

Not surprisingly, then, the passage conforms to Augustan ideology in condemning the assassination of Julius Caesar. Presented as *pontifex maximus* and thus Vesta's special charge, Julius Caesar is seen from Vesta's point of view as the victim of sacrilege. Powerful religious language describing the hands of Caesar's assassins as *sacrilegae* (700), and the murder as *nefas* (705) and as a source of pollution, *polluerant* (706), leads to the judgment that the death of the conspirators at Philippi was deserved, *merita* (707). Indeed Augustus' vengeance at Philippi, a battle inscribed in the Roman consciousness as the tragic distillation of civil conflict, is described as an act of piety and justice (709–10).⁴⁵ It is worth remembering that in *Res Gestae* 2 Augustus shows no compunction about his extermination of the Republican murderers, whom he bluntly describes as "those who butchered my father," *qui parentem meum trucidaverunt*. Geraldine Herbert-Brown claims that this passage in *Fasti* 3 is "an ill-disguised justification" of Octavian's revenge upon the assassins and their supporters.⁴⁶ Is the festival of Anna Perenna then a licensed affair that ultimately legitimates the ideology of the rulers of Augustan Rome? Or does the festival, as I suggested at the start of this paper, in some way provide an alternative perspective from which to critique that ideology?

Clearly this moment in the *Fasti* is a political occasion when speech must seem *fas*. Yet we should not assume that Ovid is nothing more than the mouthpiece of Augustan ideology. Vesta after all has commanded him to speak of Julius Caesar, her priest; thus he signals the necessity of presenting her point of view, if not necessarily subscribing to it. Moreover, there are oddities of language in this passage that cunningly suggest possible viewpoints that run counter to the dominant Augustan position expressed through Vesta's insistence.

First, Vesta's account of her rescue of Julius Caesar, which plays a subtle variation on Ovid's presentation of the same theme in the *Metamorphoses*, is phrased in sexually ambiguous language. In *Metamorphoses* 15 (843–51) it is Venus who takes Julius Caesar's soul heavenward for deification. She acts here in conformity with her role as the founder of the *gens Julia*; her epithet *alma* (844) suggests her maternal, not her erotic aspect. In the *Fasti*, however, it is not Venus but Vesta who removes Julius Caesar to the heavens. Again, this function is appropriate in that Julius Caesar is Vesta's *pontifex maximus*, and the granting of this title to Caesar's successor Augustus has been celebrated earlier in *Fasti* 3 (415–28). Still, there are incongruities here. In the *Metamorphoses* it is Julius Caesar's soul that Venus takes away; in the *Fasti* it is his body, although Vesta and her virgin priestesses

45. For the tragic view see for instance Verg. *G.* 1.489–97.

46. Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the "Fasti"* (Oxford, 1994), 125–29, esp. 126.

are otherwise ritually denied all sight, let alone touch, of man. Ovid draws attention to this incongruity by the provocative language of line 701, *ipsa virum rapui simulacraque nuda reliqui*. The word *rapere* in Ovidian poetry carries with it a long association with rape and sexual exploitation. The reference to Caesar as *virum* emphasizes the paradoxical action of Vesta, a goddess not only chaste but also forbidden the sight of man, as Ovid emphasizes in *Fasti* 6.254: *nec fueras aspicienda viro*.⁴⁷ Sexual ambiguity is further played upon with the reference to the surprisingly naked image that Vesta left behind.⁴⁸

In *Fasti* 3 Vesta shares the textual space of the Ides of March with a goddess of a very different type, Anna Perenna. Through sexually ambiguous language, Ovid blurs the rigid boundaries between the two deities and plays with Vesta's chaste authority. The carnivalesque intrudes upon Vesta's realm as subtle humor undermines her version of Caesar's apotheosis. Ovid makes light of Vesta's solemnity, inviting us to question her uncomplicated acceptance of an Augustan perspective.

The rest of the speech shifts from Julius Caesar's apotheosis to the grimmer subject of the vengeance enacted at Philippi by Augustus for the murder. In this section we find a subtle blurring of the apparently rigid binary opposition constructed in the passage between the assassins and Augustus. For instance, although the assassins' death is here called "deserved," the way in which Philippi is subsequently described conveys the cruelty of that death. At line 708 in *Fasti* 3 Philippi is described as ground that is white with the scattered bones of the revolutionaries, *et quorum sparsis ossibus albet humus*, a grim reminder of Octavian's refusal to allow his opponents burial.⁴⁹ This line focuses on the tragedy of war, not on the triumph of Augustus. Indeed the description virtually repeats line 557 of Book 1, where the cave of the cannibalistic monster Cacus is described as ground that is white and squalid with human bones, *squalidaque humanis ossibus albet humus*. This intratextual allusion suggests a degree of sympathy for Caesar's opponents, whose bones now lie whitening like those of the monster's victims. Again, if we choose to follow the comparison further, it is possible to see an association between Augustus and Cacus as those responsible for the carnage. As Alessandro Barchiesi has commented, the substitution of a *simulacrum*, an image, for Caesar himself has grim associations: Did a phantom merit the horror of all the deaths at Philippi?⁵⁰

At any rate, this evocative image of Philippi blurs the distinction between Augustus and the assassins and challenges the absolute truth of the idea that Augustus' revenge was an act of piety and justice (*Fast.* 3.709–10):

hoc opus, haec pietas, haec prima elementa fuerunt
Caesaris, ulcisci iusta per arma patrem.

47. Compare the neutral language of an earlier rescue and apotheosis in the myth of Bacchus and Ampelus, *amissum Liber in astra tulit* (*Fast.* 3.414).

48. Bömer, *Fasten*, vol. 2, 192, cites as a model for this idea Euripides' mention of the image of Helen in *Electra* 1280–83. But there is nothing sexually provocative about the Greek image, and the "false" Helen is not naked.

49. Suetonius, *Aug.* 13.

50. Alessandro Barchiesi, *Il Poeta e il Principe* (Rome-Bari, 1994), 116–17.

As Frederick Ahl has pointed out, *elementa* commonly refers to the first letters used by a child for learning the alphabet.⁵¹ Traditionally they were made out of ivory. Metaphorically applied to the bleached bones of Philippi, *elementa* ominously suggests that this battle was merely a preliminary exercise for the youthful Octavian.⁵² Thus we are invited to question this ideological redescription of civil war as justified, pious revenge.

The leveling impulse of the carnivalesque continues in this passage in its delicate blurring of the rigid categories that are overtly constructed here—chastity and fecundity, sacrilege and justice. In the *Fasti* Vesta is associated both with Augustus' high valuation of female chastity and with revenge, whether for Julius Caesar's murder or for the loss of the standards to the Parthians. But Ovid subtly also offers here in *Fasti* 3 a humane perspective upon the notion of righteous revenge, one that touches upon the similarity between victor and victim, rather than the differences. Despite its official intonations, the passage on Julius Caesar demonstrates how, when carnival is over, transgression can continue in a different form in Ovid's poem, insinuating itself through various linguistic strategies, including intertextual and intratextual allusions.

Moreover, we should not read the passage on Julius Caesar as a closed, separate section of the poem. The *Fasti* is constructed on juxtapositions that subvert established points of view. Because the passage on Julius Caesar is juxtaposed with the prominent passage on Anna Perenna, we should be alert to the interplay between the two events on the Ides of March. For instance, the deification of Julius Caesar is less special and more open to ludic treatment when it is preceded by the deification of the popular deity Anna. At the same time, the space devoted to the festival of Anna Perenna as well as Ovid's ludic treatment of Vesta suggests a more sustained interest in the popular festival than in the party line.

Indeed, the juxtaposition of popular festival and official occasion is part of a pattern that extends beyond the single date of the Ides of March. This is not the place to go into detail here, but I shall touch on the significant passages that frame the Ides. The festival of Anna Perenna is preceded in Ovid's calendar by a brief mention of Mars' festival the Equirria (*Fast.* 3.517–22). Here, the festival of a god closely connected with Augustus is given short shrift, for this passage is preceded by a lengthy erotic narrative explaining the origin of the constellation of Ariadne's Crown (459–516). Although the narrative comes from the provenance of Greek myth with its treatment of Ariadne's marriage to Bacchus, Ovid treats Bacchus as identical with the Roman god Liber. Thus Ariadne is here brought within the realm of Roman cult by her identification with the consort of Liber (512). Not only does Ariadne, elegiac heroine *par excellence*, play an important part in the poem's generic dialogue; she also is linked through Liber with the celebration of material pleasures so important in ancient Roman cult.

51. Ahl, *Metaformations*, 53 and 149–50.

52. See Barchiesi, *Poeta*, 117–19, where he suggests also that the first *elementa* of "CAESar" echo *caedo*.

The passage on Julius Caesar is followed in like manner by a short astronomical observation that forms a skilled transition between the Augustan passage and the next festival, the Liberalia (*Fast.* 3.711–12):

Postera cum teneras aurora refecerit herbas,
Scorpios a prima parte videndus erit.

Pliny tells us that Julius Caesar had a superstitious dread of the Scorpion, believing its setting on the Ides would be fatal to him.⁵³ The mention of the Scorpion here in the *Fasti* thus maintains a link with the preceding passage. But coming only four lines after the description of the ground bleached with human bones (708), the mention of dawn and of young grass (711) suggests yet again the promise of new life, of the revitalization associated with carnival, and provides a natural lead into the lengthy discussion of the festival of the Italian god Liber, the Liberalia (713–90). The Liberalia was a popular festival involving feasting and drinking. By using the old Italian name instead of Bacchus, Ovid associates Liber with *libertas*, freedom. Indeed he provocatively connects popular *libertas* with the Republican period (779–88). The festive pattern thus continues.

The interplay between popular cult and official ideology does not end with Vesta's command to the poet to commemorate Julius Caesar. Rather, the passage on Julius Caesar, when read in the context of a continuing, dynamic dialogue in the poem, offers one point of view that is open to scrutiny and that has to be considered in relation to the other views of Roman culture and identity that are offered for reflection.

CONCLUSION

Acutely conscious of the need for linguistic constraint in the *Fasti*, Ovid found an excellent vehicle for creative transgression in the carnivalesque nature of Rome's ancient, popular festivals. But his treatment of the Ides of March also reveals that when carnival is over, transgression can continue in other subtle forms. Ovid's handling of the Ides of March delicately exposes the power relations that the juxtaposition of Anna Perenna and Julius Caesar encode. While he acknowledges the power of Augustan ideology, he also emphasizes the importance and vitality of the old popular festivals. Indeed, by celebrating popular festivals as well as state occasions Ovid opens his Roman poem to a variety of voices and points of view. Always the iconoclast, Ovid finds an opportunity for transgressive speech and, with skill, wit, and grace, insinuates a critique of hierarchical modes of thought and behavior.

The carnivalesque nature of Anna Perenna's popular feast becomes a powerful ideological tool in Ovid's analysis and reshaping of Rome's past. Indeed, the *Fasti* as a whole can be called a carnivalesque poem, in that the feminine, the free, and the fecund are frequently juxtaposed with the masculine, the civic, and the chaste, and illicit thoughts are allowed room to

53. Pliny, *NH* 18.237.

play in often uneasy coexistence with a central authority that inhibited free and licentious speech. In the *Fasti* the delicate art of juxtaposition gives play to a variety of points of view and constantly challenges the stability of any single perspective.

Anthropologists have argued for the complementary function of the carnivalesque and the ceremonial; each is necessary to a culture's vitality. Ovid incorporated this festive pattern into his poem in order to celebrate the rich complexity of Roman culture and the fluidity of time and meaning. Bakhtin says that "carnival was the true feast of time."⁵⁴ Is not then the *Fasti* time's true poem?

*University of California,
Los Angeles*

54. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10.