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### Felicissima Matrum: The Construction of Maternal Identity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

“In the division of labor according to gender, the makers and sayers of culture, the namers, have been the sons of mothers. There is much to suggest that the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of *dependence on a woman for life itself*, the son’s constant effort to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is ‘of woman born.’”<sup>2</sup>

Motherhood has always been a concept of both immense importance and immense anxiety. It is how a family lives on, how a city grows, and how power is secured. Yet, it is also the sole realm in which men exert relatively little power. It is a woman who carries the child and who assures its healthy growth and entrance into the world. The visibility of motherhood through pregnancy offers security and stability for the woman as a sign of the fulfillment of her duties to society and of her biological connection to the child. It is uniquely feminine and thus uniquely inaccessible to men. This inaccessibility coupled with the lack of visibility of fatherhood festered in the patriarchy of ancient Rome, contributing to a culture built on the subjugation of women by men. In order to regain the power and control lost through motherhood, women were stripped of the ability to freely structure their own identities and instead served the community as a whole by becoming mothers. As women in an intensely patriarchal society, both their status and identity depend entirely on their reproductive capabilities.<sup>3</sup> In a patriarchy, the more children a woman is able to produce for her husband and for her society, the more she is valued within that society.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the Mellon Initiative for Undergraduate Research in the Arts and Humanities, which gave me the opportunity to begin this research as a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellow. I would also like to thank Dr. Patrick Burns for his application of digital humanities to this research and Dr. Rebecca Kahane for being a reader for my thesis and offering helpful comments and insight. Most of all, I would like to thank Dr. Tim O’Sullivan for mentoring me through this research and during my time at Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> Rich (1976): 11.

<sup>3</sup> In Rome especially, a woman’s social identity was centered around childbearing and childrearing. As noted by McAuley (2016), the title for women who embodied Roman virtues was *matrona*, from *mater*, and maternity was so important culturally that, in many of Rome’s foundation myths, Rome is created through motherhood.

This paradigm was especially true in ancient Rome, where a mother was supposed to be a paragon of feminine virtue: chaste, self-sacrificing, restrained, and, above all, committed to improving her sons' morality and social standing.<sup>4</sup> A Roman mother was constantly judged by society at large in order to make sure that she was worthy of the title of 'mother' and all of its benefits.

These standards and the judgment they encouraged only grew during Augustan Rome. Following nearly a century of civil wars, Augustus emerged victorious, ushering in an era of peace and a new imperial form of government under the guise of returning to tradition, which meant a greater political focus on domestic life. Augustus passed a set of laws that, among other things, incentivized marriage and pregnancy and penalized those who remained unmarried and childless; one of these laws specifically gave women with three children economic and legal freedom — freedom that they could only access through motherhood.<sup>5</sup> These laws brought tangible, legal benefits to motherhood in addition to the benefits of status that were more loosely and implicitly defined. These were just a small part of Augustus' efforts to control the Roman family, which were meant to supposedly return Rome to its proper morals. To do this, Augustus focused his energy on the figure of the mother, who was used to transcend the boundary between public and private in order to control greater aspects of Roman life.<sup>6</sup> Motherhood became synonymous with tradition and peace as something that could contrast the masculine world of war that Augustus was seeking to leave behind.<sup>7</sup> The mother became more important than ever to represent the new age of Augustus, one filled with the strong morals of the past, including peace, wealth, and, most of all, children, with women in their rightful place as mothers.

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<sup>4</sup> Fischler (1994) 117.

<sup>5</sup> Bauman (1992) 105.

<sup>6</sup> Milnor (2007) 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> McAuley (2016) 34.

Several scholars have discussed at length the use of the mother, and related topics, as important symbols in Augustan ideology. Milnor states in her book on this topic that Augustus understood “that the symbolic in its most basic form — that which is used in place of something else — is a powerful tool, in that it may at once evoke that which it stands for and also subtly bring to bear any number of, technically unrelated, images and ideas.”<sup>8</sup> McAuley applies this idea to the mother, which she states “function[s] as a stabilizing term,”<sup>9</sup> in that as much as it is “a reassuring symbol of permanence, continuity, and fecundity after a time of social rupture and upheaval,”<sup>10</sup> it also “signifies a move to a deeper ‘truth’, meaning that can be fixed, the prospect of an epistemological and ethical certainty.”<sup>11</sup> In order for this effort by Augustus to be successful, the Roman *mater* must be reduced to something simple and thus easily manipulated. She must have a set meaning that can be understood by the Roman public with ease, whether she is included in the imagery of imperial buildings, such as the *Ara Pacis*, or in the words of Augustan poets.<sup>12</sup> She cannot be complex or flawed if she is to be the symbol of the prosperity and morality of Rome. In other words, she cannot be a realistic individual but instead must be a monolith.

It is within this context that Ovid writes two of his poems, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. In these works, the poet trades his preferred humorous love elegy for larger works that confront all aspects of Augustan ideology. Through the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid confronts Augustus through the genre of epic, which already had “Augustan celebratory implications.”<sup>13</sup> Through the *Fasti*, Ovid challenges Augustus through a poem that is structured around the

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<sup>8</sup> Milnor (2005) 47.

<sup>9</sup> McAuley (2016) 34.

<sup>10</sup> McAuley (2016) 34.

<sup>11</sup> McAuley (2016) 34.

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis on the imagery of the *Ara Pacis* see Zanker (1988) and Lamp (2009).

<sup>13</sup> Myers (1999) 192.

religious calendar of Rome.<sup>14</sup> In both of these works, Ovid focuses especially on maternal figures and depicts a variety of ways in which women interact with the identity of mother that was imposed upon them. In this thesis, I will examine the ways in which Ovid specifically acknowledges and disrupts Augustus' construction of maternal identity as a stable symbol of peace and prosperity, which is accomplished differently in each work. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid confronts the pressure placed on women to become mothers by exploring the transgressive mothers of myth. In particular, I argue that this is accomplished through a focus on names and titles, especially that of *mater* and a woman's given name. In the *Fasti*, Ovid takes on the paradoxical visibility and power of mothers at this time through the imperial family by concentrating on the upright founding mothers of Rome. Ovid achieves this through structure, namely by positioning mothers in the narrative to consistently take power away from men. In this way, the poems work together to address both realities of mothers at this time while also challenging Augustus' efforts of control and stability.

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<sup>14</sup> For Augustus' associations with the Roman calendar and Roman religious life, see Feeney (2007).

## I. Maternal Identity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Mothers have always had a place in Greek and Roman epic. In many poems, they introduce a different set of emotions and values into the male-dominated narrative before ultimately being pushed into the background and forgotten once again.<sup>15</sup> Ovid builds on this pattern in his *Metamorphoses*, in which stories of motherhood comprise a large portion of the text — fittingly, because pregnancy and childbirth are among the few real-life metamorphoses that humans can undergo. These stories of realistic female transformation stand in sharp contrast to those tales of fantastical shape-shifting into animals and trees that make up the rest of the poem. Moreover, in contrast to previous epics, Ovid's female characters do not simply support the narratives of male characters: they tell their own stories. They are the protagonists of their own myths which depict experiences unique to women, and Ovid uses them to give voice to the struggles of existing in a world where a woman's social identity is inextricably connected to motherhood.

Ovid's epic mothers illustrate the various ways of dealing with this type of social pressure, and while there are a few that serve as *exempla* of the ideal Roman mother, a vast majority transgress social norms in some way. They act distinctly “unmotherly,” either by harming their children, prioritizing themselves or other familial relationships, or displaying manipulative and competitive behavior. Yet ultimately, they are punished for their actions and

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<sup>15</sup> In Homer's *Iliad*, motherhood is an important part of both Hecuba's, Andromache's, and Thetis' characters and roles in the epic. Andromache's lament for Hector centers around the effect his death will have on their son (*Il.* 24.724-45). Hecuba's lament similarly emphasizes the pain she feels as a mother (*Il.* 24.748-59). Thetis mourns the painful life that she gave to Achilles (*Il.* 18.52-64). For an analysis on how mothers and maternal imagery affect the text see Muich (2011), Holmes (2007), and Pratt (2007). In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope's motherhood is an influential part of her identity and the struggles in Ithaca (*Od.* 21.102-17). For an analysis of the ways in which Penelope's identity affects the narrative of the *Odyssey*, see Wohl (1993).

forced to choose between being *mater* or themselves and, in turn, between being a part of society or an outsider.<sup>16</sup>

In this section, I would like to show how Ovid emphasizes this connection between motherhood and female social identity through verbal play with the word *mater*. In many instances, the poet intentionally varies how he refers to these female characters, sometimes calling them by their given names and at other times calling them simply “*mater*.” Through this variation, Ovid illustrates the social pressure and judgment inherent in Roman motherhood, namely that the identity of a mother must be earned, and thus can be taken away at any time. Beyond using *mater* as a means to illustrate the inadequacies of some of his characters, Ovid also explores the pressure this title and its social demands have on women as they move throughout society, demonstrating the ways in which it is simultaneously a restrictive and liberating force. By means of these uses of *mater*, Ovid constructs a complex and nuanced depiction of maternal identity that explores how the pressure placed on women to conform to a maternal ideal often forces them to act in transgressive ways. In creating this portrayal of motherhood, Ovid undermines the simplistic symbol the mother had been made into in Augustan Rome. Ovid's mothers are transgressive to traditional societal norms in ways that are in direct opposition to the ideal Augustan mother who upholds those norms. At the same time, though, Ovid's treatment of mothers and their experiences feeds into the same patriarchic power structure that Augustus sought to maintain by continuing to objectify uniquely female experiences as a means to create networks of meaning.

Ovid's story of Niobe is perhaps one of the best examples of a ‘bad mother.’ In the myth, Niobe boasts that her fourteen children make her superior to the goddess Latona, who only has

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<sup>16</sup> For how women's actions as mothers influenced whether they were seen as members of society or as outsiders, see Fischler (1994), McAuley (2016), and Milnor (2005).



two; unfortunately, those two children are the divinities Diana and Apollo, who avenge this slight to their mother's honor by systematically killing all fourteen of Niobe's children.<sup>17</sup> Niobe thus fulfills only the initial demand of motherhood to produce children and fails to perform her role in furthering her children's status in society as they grow, instead using the social power of her maternity for her own gain. Prior to the death of her children, which serves as her turning point in the narrative, Niobe is referred to as *mater* only once. When she is first introduced, Ovid states that "Niobe would have been called the most fortunate of mothers, if she did not think so herself" (*felicissima matrum | dicta foret Niobe, si non sibi visa fuisset, Met. 6.155-56*).<sup>18</sup> This statement encapsulates both the limits of female social identity and the importance of the feminine virtues embodied in Roman motherhood. 'The most fortunate of mothers' is all that Niobe, or any Greco-Roman woman, can hope to be, which illustrates the immense social power linked to motherhood. The only way she can contribute to her community, and achieve the social capital that comes with it, is solely through the children she produces and her willingness to give up her personhood to become simply her children's mother. Thus, she fails to embody this title because of the pride she takes in her motherhood. She refuses to sacrifice her personal identity for her children and is open about the pride she feels at having successfully given birth to and raised fourteen children. This pride is unacceptable in her society, though, and Ovid shows us that a Roman mother is only virtuous when she does not emphasize the power she has in her maternity.

Throughout the course of Niobe's story, Ovid switches between referring to her as *mater* and referring to her by her given name depending on her actions in the narrative. Niobe becomes *mater* for the first time once her sons are killed, as "rumor of the misfortune, the pain of the people, and the tears of her own friends told the mother of the sudden catastrophe" (*fama mali*

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<sup>17</sup> On the Niobe episode in Ovid's *Met.*, see Feldherr (2004) and (2010).

<sup>18</sup> All translations are my own.

*populique dolor lacrimaeque suorum | tam subitae matrem certam fecere ruinae, Met. 6.267-68).*

The narrative here pulls Niobe towards the traditional literary role of the grieving mother who will deliver a heart-wrenching lament about her fallen children, a role that she herself is the model for since Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>19</sup> She is encouraged to relinquish her personal identity to become this archetype, something that is nicely embodied through the use of *mater* here.

Niobe, however, does not yet become an obedient, mourning mother, even as she sees the bodies of her dead sons. Ovid signals this when he writes “how far this Niobe was from the previous” (*quantum haec Niobe Niobe distabat ab illa, Met. 6.273*). Even when saying how much she has changed, the Latin shows that she hasn't. She is still Niobe, not *mater*, and this is further signaled by the lack of separation between the two instances of Niobe—there is no distance between the old Niobe and the new. She shows this explicitly in her own speech to Latona, during which she says “more remains in my misery than in your happiness: after so many deaths, I am still victorious” (*miseræ mihi plura supersunt, | quam tibi felici: post tot quoque funera vinco, Met. 6.284-85*). Niobe has not changed in her perception of motherhood.

It is only when Niobe is down to her last child that Ovid finally refers to her as simply *mater*, and she is referred to as such for the remainder of her story when, “covering her [last child] with her body and clothes, the mother cried out, 'leave me the littlest one, of all my children I beg you for just the littlest one’” (*quam toto corpore mater, | tota veste tegens “unam minimamque relinque; | de multis minimam posco” clamavit “et unam, Met. 6.298-300*). This myth ends with typical Ovidian irony and humor, if one is inclined to interpret it that way. Niobe is not referred to by name again and, as she weeps for her lost children, she is immortalized in stone. Ovid gives her the title of *mater* which she so wanted, but only after she no longer fulfills the definition of motherhood that she set for herself, and she is doomed to exist as the archetypal

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<sup>19</sup> Fantham (2004) 69-70.

weeping mother that she fought so hard against in her narrative. In a strictly biological definition of motherhood, Niobe fulfills the role, but this story reminds us that Roman motherhood was so much more than that definition. Her fault is “to mistake motherhood for a static, timeless essence rather than a fragile and relational identity in time.”<sup>20</sup> She centers herself in her motherhood when the virtues assigned to the Roman mother were meant to do the exact opposite. Niobe’s attempt to adorn herself with the title of *mater* infringes on the power given to the community, and to men, in this type of society, and it is through this transgression that she also causes the deaths of all of her children, consequently taking the lives that she was tasked with creating and protecting.

While the story of Niobe illustrates the high demands of maternal identity and one woman’s attempt to utilize her maternity in transgressive ways, the story of Agave and her son, Pentheus, demonstrates the issues of identity and agency that come with motherhood. In this story, Pentheus, having angered Bacchus, is tricked into spying on Bacchic rites that were reserved for women, and is subsequently killed by those women, which include his aunt and mother.<sup>21</sup> As Pentheus creeps into the woods and sees the Bacchic women participating in the rites, he is spotted by his mother. Ovid writes “the first to see him, the first to rush to him in a mad course, the first to injure her own son with her thrown thyrsus was his mother” (*prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu, | prima suum misso violavit Penthea thyrsu | mater, Met.* 3.711-13). This is the first time in Ovid’s telling of this myth that Agave is introduced; however, her name is not yet given. She is only Pentheus’ mother, both the one who gave him life and the one who will now take it. This relationship is emphasized by the Latin itself: the asyndeton creates motion towards the reveal of the subject in line 713, and the repetition of *prima* has a

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<sup>20</sup> McAuley (2016) 158.

<sup>21</sup> On the Agave and Pentheus episode in Ovid, see Feldherr (1997).

similar effect, while also drawing attention to the importance of the subject: *mater*. *Mater* itself stands out due to enjambment, allowing it to take the position of importance in its line. All of this combines to create a crescendo to the appearance of Pentheus' mother, which Ovid's audience would know meant that Pentheus' demise was imminent. Referring to her as simply *mater* also highlights the irony of this situation as this suggests that her appearance should be a good thing. A mother should protect her son and if the first of the women to see him is his mother, then he should be safe. Yet, we know that this is not true in this story. Pentheus' mother will not act like a *mater* even though she holds the title; she instead will transgress all of society's expectations for mothers.

Agave goes on to incite the other Bacchic women to kill Pentheus as she mistakes him for a wild boar, and together they all rip him limb from limb. Pentheus attempts to appeal to his mother, calling out to her and reaching for her with the bloodied remains of his limbs, but she fails to recognize him as her son: "Agave wailed at the sight and threw back her neck and, grabbing his head with her bloodied fingers, tore it and shouted 'Companions, this labor is our victory!'" (*visis ululavit Agave | collaque iactavit movitque per aera crinem | avulsumque caput digitis complexa cruentis | clamat "io comites, opus hoc Victoria nostra est!"*, *Met.* 3.723-26). In failing to recognize her son, Agave loses her identity as *mater* and finally takes on her own name for the first time in this story. Like when she was referred to as *mater*, Agave is emphasized by placement, taking the opposite place of *mater* at the end of the line. Similarly, just as *mater* was used to highlight the wrongness of the Agave's actions, her name here acts to show her separation from her son. She is not his mother here but instead is closer to a stranger. She has no maternal love or instinct to protect him. Without her given name, she lost what distinguished her as an individual and was instead one of many, merely *a* mother. Yet, her acquisition of this

identity is not a celebration of female liberation because of her lack of agency in his killing. Throughout this encounter, Agave is suffering from madness, as inflicted by Bacchus, and therefore does not knowingly kill her son. Bacchus has removed her agency in this situation, both as a mother and as just a woman. Ultimately, she was used by a man to punish another man, valuable only because of her status as a mother.

So far we have seen how Ovid himself uses how he refers to his female characters, either by name or by *mater*, to highlight how their actions compare to society's expectations, but Ovid also has his female characters speak on their own views of maternal identity. In these instances, a mother is put in a situation where she must choose whether to prioritize her maternal responsibilities, usually the life of her child, or another familial relationship, and she expresses this internal struggle through a soliloquy before making her choice, often highlighting the constraints the title of *mater* places on her actions.<sup>22</sup> A straightforward yet moving example of this is in Ovid's gruesome and disturbing retelling of the myth of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus. After Procne recovers her sister who has been raped and had her tongue cut out by Tereus, she tells Philomela that she will do anything to help her and will punish her husband however necessary in an act of vengeance for how he has harmed her. As they talk, however, Procne's young son, Itys, enters the room and Procne becomes *mater* (*peragit dum talia Procne, | ad matrem veniebat Itys, Met. 6.619-20*). Prior to this line, Procne has not been referred to as *mater*, even though her son had been mentioned, albeit briefly, previously. With the appearance of her son, Procne is reminded both of her duties as a mother and of her husband, saying "how like your father you are" (*quam | es similis patri, Met. 6.621-22*). For Procne, her son symbolizes all that is demanded of her as a wife and mother and everything that she has done for a man that raped and maimed her sister. Though her society demands that as a married woman she be a wife before all

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<sup>22</sup> For precedents of women as agents of morality in tragedy especially, see Foley (2001).

else, she cannot help but think of her sister. As Itys throws his arms around his mother's neck, Procne laments the unfairness of the situation, namely that her son, guilty by association, is able to live unharmed and speak freely while her sister, completely innocent, has suffered one of the worst injustices that a woman can experience and had her speech stripped away from her. This is epitomized in Procne's exclamation "Since he calls me mother, why does she not call me sister?" (*quam vocat hic matrem, cur non vocat illa sororem?*, Ov. 6.633). The identities of *mater* and *soror* are placed in opposition and are emphasized by the scansion of the line. It is also important to note that the way in which Procne expresses her conflict is by focusing on what she is called and thus the identity placed upon her. The title given to her by society does not align with the complicated web of relationships and identities that she has internally. As *mater*, she cannot also have the identity of *soror*; or, at the very least, the two cannot hold the same importance. There is an abandoning of personhood that comes with motherhood, illustrated by the use of *mater* instead of Procne's name once Itys enters, and the connections of *soror* are too tied to that personhood to coexist with Procne's maternity. With this reading, Procne's struggle here is not just over the actions of her husband and what to do about it but her inability to have personal connections and to choose her own identity outside of her motherhood. The title of *mater* placed on her by her society is too overbearing.

Ultimately, like many of Ovid's mothers, Procne chooses to be a transgressor by choosing her sister and, by extension, herself. She grabs her son and prepares to kill him, an action whose repercussions are emphasized through a striking epic simile. Procne "dragged Itys, just as a tigress in the Ganges drags a suckling fawn through the shady woods" (*traxit Ityn, veluti Gangetica cervae | lactentem fetum per silvas tigris opacas*, Met. 6.636-37). By depicting the two as different animals, and one as a predator of the other, the simile stresses the severance of

Procne's maternal relationship with her son. This is punctuated by the line of the murder itself: "Procne strikes him with a sword" (*ense ferit Procne, Met. 6.641*). By killing her son, or perhaps by deciding to kill her son, Procne regains the name that she lost when her son entered. She chooses to abandon the identity of *mater* placed on her, though her son, the epitome of her motherhood, must be the sacrifice for this change. In doing so, Procne makes a decision and acts not based on what is demanded of her as a mother by society but based on her own wants.

A similar tension is felt by Althaea, who is faced with the responsibility as a sister to avenge her brothers' deaths by killing their murderer but struggles to do so when the murderer is her own son.<sup>23</sup> In this way, she is put in almost the opposite of Procne's situation, and this difference is felt in Althaea's own soliloquy about her difficulty with abandoning her feelings for her son in order to avenge her brothers. Althaea is introduced as she is offering thanks to the gods when her son, Meleager, kills her brothers during a boar hunt after they attempt to prevent a woman, Atalanta, from receiving spoils from the hunt that she participated in.<sup>24</sup> Though originally planning on celebrating her son's victory in the hunt, Althaea must instead mourn for her lost brothers and decide what to do about her son. As she stands before a pyre she had prepared with the piece of wood that was given to her at her son's birth in her hand, she cannot decide whether to throw it into the fire, killing her son and avenging her brothers, or not, keeping her son alive and fulfilling her duty as a mother. Ovid writes that "mother and sister battle and the two different names drag apart her one breast" (*pugnat materque sororque | et diversa trahunt unum duo nomina pectus, Met. 8.463-64*). As in the story of Procne and Philomela, Althaea is pulled in two opposite directions by her various familial relationships, and the imagery in these lines illustrates the severity of this struggle. The names, and therefore identities,

<sup>23</sup> For how Ovid interacts with earlier tellings of the Meleager myth see Segal (1999).

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that the only Althaea is referred to by name is when she first appears: *dona deum templis nato victore ferebat, | cum videt extinctos fratres Althaea referri, 8.445-46*.

of *mater* and *soror* are personified as they fight within Althaea, which is fitting imagery for a struggle that is mostly internal and fueled by emotions, as seen in her following speech. In this scenario, the two identities cannot coexist. As *soror*, Althaea must kill Meleager to avenge the death of her brothers; as *mater*, Althaea must do all she can to protect the life of her son. At such a crossroads, Althaea delivers a moving speech about this internal strife and her eventual decision to be *soror* rather than *mater*. As she wars with herself, she admonishes the very difficulty she is having with the decision, asking her brothers to “forgive a mother” for her hesitation (*fratres, ignoscite matri, Met. 8.491*). She goes on to say, “Where is my maternal heart? Where are the pious duties of parents and the pains I endured for ten months?” (*mens ubi materna est? ubi sunt pia iura parentum | et quos sustinui bis mensum quinque labores?, Met. 8.499-500*). As a mother, she has an obligation to devote herself to protecting her son, to whom she sacrificed her body to give life. These lines also illustrate that motherhood is something a woman devotes her entire being to, both her heart or mind (*mens*) and her body (through *labores*). It is a pervasive experience that creates an overbearing identity, which is emphasized in the ways in which she connects herself to Meleager in the speech: “Let this funeral pyre burn my womb” (*rogus iste cremet mea viscera, Met. 8.478*); and “Accept as a sacrifice the evil offspring of my womb” (*accipite inferias uteri mala pignora nostri, Met. 8.490*). Through metonymy, Althaea refers to Meleager through references to herself, or more accurately a specific, uniquely maternal part of herself.<sup>25</sup> In a way, it is a part of her that she must burn, both in the literal sense of her son and in the metaphorical sense of her motherhood. She states, “Before my eyes are the wounds of my brothers and an image of such a slaughter, but now piety and the name of mother shatter my soul” (*modo vulnera fratrum | ante oculos mihi sunt et tantae caedis imago, | nunc animum pietas maternaque nomina frangunt, Met. 8.506-08*). Once again, she personifies and

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<sup>25</sup> Segal (1999) 325.



externalizes the internal strife as the name of *mater* itself breaks her. Similar to Procne's focus on her son's ability to call her *mater* and her sister's inability to call her *soror*, it is important to note that maternal identity is embodied in the vocal act of naming, though it is now juxtaposed against the sight of Althaea's brothers' bodies. The obligation to her brothers eclipses that to her son, though, and Althaea burns the brand, saying, "It is evil that you win, but win, brothers" (*male vincetis, sed vincite, fratres, Met. 8.509*), before she kills herself.<sup>26</sup> There is not the clean resolution that is found in the Procne myth in which the mother almost unapologetically kills her son. Althaea is conflicted with her decision until the end, as shown by her statement of *male vincetis*. She does not see it as a 'good' decision, but it is one that she must make according to the rules of her society. In this way, even when she has been forced into the identity of *mater*, she is also forced out of it, causing her to have to go against all that she has been socialized to believe. Once again, the mother must take away the life she gave, whether she wants to or not.

As Ovid has constructed motherhood by illustrating what it is not and through mothers' own perceptions of their identities, he continues to crystalize our understanding of this role by demonstrating how the title of *mater* is used by mothers to move throughout society. One of these instances is the story of Ceres' search for her stolen daughter, Proserpina. As an *exemplum* of the ideal *mater*, Ceres is often referred to as *mater* throughout her story, as a marker of the strong connection between her motherhood and her identity, and unlike the previous stories discussed, there is not a specific point at which she is solely Ceres or solely *mater*. The only consistency with the use of *mater* is that it is always used in scenes showing Ceres', or Proserpina's, distress and emotional pain caused by what has happened to her daughter. When her daughter is first taken by Pluto, she "sorrowfully cries for her mother and her companions,

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<sup>26</sup> For the significance of how Althaea commits suicide and its ties to gender in this myth, see Segal (1999).

but more often for her mother” (*dea territa maesto | et matrem et comites, sed matrem saepius, ore | clamat, Met. 5.396-98*). This serves to set up the close relationship the mother and daughter have, which will be integral for the rest of the story. As is usual for Ovid, the Latin itself reflects the content as the repetition of *mater* in this phrase creates the same effect as Proserpina crying out over and over again for her mother. As Pluto takes Proserpina to the underworld, “the terrified mother searched for her daughter in all the land, in all the depths” (*pavidae nequiquam filia matri | omnibus est terris, omni quaesita profundo, Met. 5.438-39*). This is the first time that Ceres herself makes an appearance in this story, though she is mentioned in dialogue briefly, so Ovid is further emphasizing her strong maternal identity by using *mater*. This continues as Ceres is told by another woman that Proserpina has been made the “wife of the tyrant” (*matrona tyranni*) of the underworld, and “the mother was stunned by what she heard as if she was turned to stone, and as her immense senselessness was driven out by immense grief,” she decides to meet with Jupiter (*mater ad auditas stupuit ceu saxea voces | attonitaeque diu similis fuit; utque dolore | pulsa gravi gravis est amentia, Met. 5.510-12*).

Once Ceres’ strong embodiment of the ideal *mater* is emphasized by the text and after Ceres finds out that she has been taken by Pluto, Ceres approaches Jupiter. Upon meeting, Ovid writes that “‘I have come as a suppliant to you, Jupiter,’ she said, ‘on behalf of my blood and yours’” (*‘pro’que ‘meo veni supplex tibi, Iuppiter’ inquit, | ‘sanguine proque tuo...’, Met. 5.514-15*). This sets up how Ceres intends to frame their conversation, as mother speaking to father. Though Jupiter occupies roles as both the leader of the gods and as Pluto’s brother, Ceres makes him approach this situation as Proserpina’s father or, to draw parallels to Roman society, as the *paterfamilias*. More important to the focus of this paper, though, is Ceres’ use of her identity of *mater* in this situation, which is further explored in the following lines. Ceres

continues, “If the mother has no favor, may the daughter move her father, and let your care for her not be lesser because she was born from me” (*si nulla est gratia matris, | nata patrem moveat, neu sit tibi cura, precamur, | vilior illius, quod nostro est edita partu, Met. 5.515-17*). Though this statement seemingly demotes the status and power of the mother in family affairs, it has more power as almost facetious and should rather be taken as a comment on the relationship between Ceres and Jupiter. It is not so much that the mother has such low status that the father would not be swayed by her requests as it is that Jupiter himself does not have a strong relationship with Ceres.<sup>27</sup> His marriage is to Juno, and the preceding books have been filled with his various affairs with other women, showing his lack of commitment or loyalty to any one woman. Ceres here acknowledges that Jupiter should come to her aid because of her status as *mater*, which is stressed in her statement through the placement of *matris* as the final foot in the line. This also occurs in the final line of this quotation with *partu*, which similarly references Ceres’ status as Proserpina’s mother. There is a continuous emphasis on Ceres’ maternal identity. If she had truly not thought that her motherhood would be influential, she could have approached Jupiter as a divinity or daughter. Regardless, Jupiter accepts Ceres’ plea for help, telling her how to get her daughter back although he does approve of her marriage. He also acknowledges Ceres’ power over what happens to her daughter as her mother, stating “She is our shared pledge and charge, my daughter and yours” (*commune est pignus onusque | nata mihi tecum, Met. 5.523-24*). He expresses that they both have equal power and responsibility in raising their daughter and deciding her future, thus illustrating the status and influence of the *mater* within the family. Additionally, though he approves of the union between Proserpina and Pluto, he honors Ceres’ wishes as he states, “But if your desire to separate them is so great, let Proserpina return to the sky” before giving her instructions on how to bring her daughter back (*sed tanta cupido | si tibi*

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<sup>27</sup> On the authority of senior women to offer opinions on familial affairs, see Fischler (1994).

*discidii est, repetet Proserpina caelum...*, *Met.* 5.529-30). In this myth, we see the actual power of influence that comes with the identity of *mater* and that it is one respected and honored by Jupiter himself. Ceres likewise is successful in her attempts to find her daughter because she uses her maternity strategically. As she searches, she speaks to other women, who it can be inferred would be easier to reach and more receptive of a mother's plea.<sup>28</sup> Ceres is able to move throughout the world and interact with others specifically as *mater*, and her success in retrieving her daughter is owed to that identity as well.

The power of motherhood in this myth is not confined to this sole interaction with Jupiter or even only Ceres herself. Its framing illustrates additional maternal power. The entire episode occurs because of Venus and the influence she has over her son, Cupid. Venus begins her address to Cupid by saying "my arms and hands, my son, my power" (*arma manusque meae, mea, nata, potentia*, *Met.* 5.365). This introduction conveys all that Cupid's existence adds to Venus' own power, not as a god in his own right but as her son, and how exactly he increases his mother's power is demonstrated in the rest of this scene. Venus has called Cupid to her in order to convince him to shoot Pluto with one of his arrows so that love and lust may infect all realms of the world, through Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto. As she persuades him, she asks "do you not want to extend the empire of your mother and yourself?" (*cur non matrisque tuumque | imperium profers*, *Met.* 5.371-72). She is ultimately able to convince him, and Cupid shoots Pluto "at his mother's bidding" (*arbitrio matris*, *Met.* 5.380). The rest of the story shows the consequences of Cupid's actions, which are shown to be directly because of his mother. Venus' plan is ultimately successful, with Pluto affected by love and Proserpina made a married woman, and though she

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<sup>28</sup> This touches on another element of motherhood not discussed in this paper, namely the connection between and community formed by mothers. For another example within the *Met.* see the myth of Alcmena's labor (*Met.* 9.275-323).

harms another mother in the process, she receives no punishment for her actions. Her ‘empire’ has expanded through the influence she has as a mother.<sup>29</sup>

In what is effectively the climax of Ovid’s retelling of the Trojan War, Ovid gives one of the most powerful yet heart-wrenching portrayals of maternity in the entire epic through the figure of Hecuba. In Ovid’s version of her myth, Troy has been decimated, and the Achaeans are leading captive women out of the city to their ships as spoils of war when the shade of Achilles demands Hecuba’s sole surviving daughter as a sacrifice. Hecuba’s daughter is ripped from her arms before being killed, and though Hecuba mourns her daughter’s death, she takes some solace in the knowledge that one of her children, a son, survives since she sent him away earlier. However she finds his dead body and, transformed by her rage, exacts vengeance on the one responsible for his fate. This myth contains all the various ways Ovid constructs motherhood throughout the text and thus is helpful in illustrating how they work together to create a multidimensional view of motherhood. It is additionally important because of Hecuba’s status in epic up to this point; she is the archetypal mourning mother, and while she certainly fulfills that role in this epic, we can see how Ovid enhances that image. Though this myth especially is driven by speeches, particularly by those of Polyxena and Hecuba, there are instances in which the poet as narrator comments on Hecuba’s motherhood. From the moment that Hecuba is first introduced, her identity is strongly connected to that of her children, as Ovid writes that that “last [of the Trojan women] to go on board, a pitiable sight, was Hecuba, discovered midst the sepulchres of her sons” and that “the hands of the Dulichian dragged her away” (*ultima conscendit classem (miserabile visu) | in mediis Hecabe natorum inventa sepulcris; | ...Dulichiae traxere manus...*, *Met.* 14.422-25). The Latin itself highlights this connection with

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<sup>29</sup> For a detailed analysis of the imperial undertones of Ovid’s version of this myth, see McAuley (2016) 142-59.

the word order of line 422. Hecuba is quite literally in the middle of her children's graves (*in mediis... sepulcris*), and the positioning of *Hecabe natorum* on first glance makes it seem as though these words go together, as if her sons own Hecuba. The actual noun that *natorum* is referring to is not stated until the very end of the line with *sepulcris*. This all acts to intensify and emphasize the bond between Hecuba and her children, a bond that is so strong that she must be dragged away from them (*Dulichiae traxere manus*). Ovid is firmly placing Hecuba in the role that she has always had in myth as a mother. After this scene, the next we see of Hecuba is when, once again, she is separated from her children by force. After Achilles' shade demands Polyxena as a sacrifice, she is "torn from her mother's arms" (*rapta sine matris*, *Met.* 13.450). In both of these instances, Hecuba is depicted as powerless but not passive, which is an important distinction to make here. Though she is unable to stop herself from leaving the tombs of her sons or to stop her daughter from being taken from her, she does not merely let these things be done to her. She is not just led away from the tombs; she is dragged forcefully, as illustrated through the verb *traxere*, which can denote a strong, and even violent, motion. Similarly, she does not simply let her daughter go; her daughter is ripped from her arms, and *rapta*, too, has similar connotations of violence and force. This is all to say that Hecuba is defined by her commitment to her children and to her duties as a mother, though the men in power in these situations forcefully act to stop her from doing so.

Hecuba's lament over her daughter gives her an opportunity to express her own relationship with motherhood and the status it offers. While Procne and Althaea expressed the tension motherhood put on other familial relationships, Hecuba speaks of her motherhood as a prized role that has now been lost. For her, the identity of *mater* was not at odds with any of her other identities, be it as wife or queen, since each is centered on carrying on the royal line and, in

turn, prioritizing her children. In this way, her statements on motherhood offer a different perspective on the experience of this identity. In her own speech, Hecuba verbalizes her own loss of identity and status with the loss of her children. She begins her speech saying, “Daughter, the last of your mother’s grief (for what else is left?), daughter, you have fallen, and I see your wound, my wound” (*nata, tuae (quid enim superset?) dolor ultime matris, | nata, iaces, videoque tuum, mea vulnera, vulnus, Met. 13.494-95*). Similarly to Althaea’s speech, there is a collapsing of the separation between the identity of one’s child and one’s self, illustrated here by *tuum, mea vulnera, vulnus*. In this case, the Latin itself does not separate but is nested one inside the other, further emphasizing this point. Without her children, the basis of her identity as a mother, Hecuba has nothing; her child’s death (or wound) is her own. She both feels her child’s pain as if it were her own but is also doomed to suffer a type of social death that she expects to result from the loss of her children. Whereas she was once powerful in her many children and her husband, she now has nothing and has become just another captive woman, one who will be a prize for Penelope. She places herself outside of other the community of mothers, saying that Penelope, “pointing me out to the mothers of Ithaca, will say, ‘This is the renowned mother of Hector, this is the wife of Priam’” (*matribus ostendens Ithacis ‘haec Hectoris illa est | clara parens, haec est’ dicet ‘Priameia coniunx, Met. 13.511-13*). Without her children, Hecuba views herself as no longer a part of the elite mothers of the community. She not only separates herself from these mothers but portrays them as a force that is actively against her and treats her as something different and lesser. As these mothers are shown Hecuba by Penelope, the most elite mother among them, they see all that is lost with one’s motherhood; beyond just losing a supportive community, Hecuba has also lost any power to change her circumstances.

The concern with motherhood seen in these myths, and throughout the *Metamorphoses*, is not unique to Ovid, but instead is a reflection of the new politicization of mothers under Augustus. As mentioned earlier, Augustus used increased pressure on women to become mothers and maternal symbolism to transcend the boundaries between public and private to control greater aspects of Roman life. To do this, Augustus had to portray mothers in a way that emphasized the simplicity of the identity and the ways in which it aligned with traditional Roman values for women. Yet, the mothers portrayed by Ovid do not have this singular shared function as protectors of morality or the sanctity of the family. Other works by Ovid have been analyzed through a political lens to illuminate how the poet interacts with Augustan ideology and to determine whether Ovid can be categorized as pro- or anti-Augustan.<sup>30</sup> One of these studies of the *Amores* highlights how Ovid emphasizes “what the Augustan version of the myth omits, the individual injustice and suffering entailed by Rome’s foundation,”<sup>31</sup> referring to the rape and adultery of the foundation myths Augustus used to support his push for sexual morality.<sup>32</sup>

I argue that a similar effect occurs in the *Metamorphoses*. Before even citing the ways in which Ovid depicts mothers, Ovid’s choice of genre is itself evidence of a conscious choice to interact with Augustan ideology.<sup>33</sup> Epic had become connected, particularly through Virgil, with Augustan themes and Roman history, so Ovid had to interact with those topics when he wrote epic. One of the ways that he confronts Augustan ideology is through his exploration of myths of infamous mothers. These mothers are transgressive to traditional societal norms in ways that are in direct opposition to the ways in which Augustus was using mothers as symbols to uphold those norms in the same era. In the six examples that I have examined in this section, we have

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<sup>30</sup> For the complexity and issues that arise from this type of categorization, see Kennedy (1994). For the merits of still using this categorization, see Davis (1999).

<sup>31</sup> Davis (1999) 444.

<sup>32</sup> Davis (1999) 444.

<sup>33</sup> Davis (1999) 436.



seen how Ovid as a narrator uses *mater* to highlight the transgressive actions of mothers, such as Niobe and Agave, how *mater* is felt to be a restrictive force within the text, like in the myths of Procne and Althaea, how *mater* is used as a strategic weapon of power through Ceres and Venus, and how the loss of the title of *mater* resulted in a total loss of identity, as in the myth of Hecuba. These mothers become almost the opposite of *exempla* in that they are evidence of the flaws both which are inherent to mothers and which are created by a system that bases a woman's social identity on her maternity. It cannot be known the degree to which this alternative narrative of motherhood was felt by Ovid's contemporaries, but the challenge to Augustan ideology remains.

It is tempting to want to view the *Metamorphoses* specifically and Ovid more generally as proto-feminist, or as close to that as one can get in classical Rome. There is an attention and interest in the experiences of women, especially mothers, in the epic that has a unique depth and nuance. Particularly in comparison to the rigid model of motherhood pushed by the Augustan regime, Ovid seems to have an understanding of struggles of mothers. However, I reject this interpretation on the grounds that both Ovid and Augustus use the figure of the *mater* in the same but opposite ways. Mothers are still objectified. That is, they are continued to be used as vehicles for meaning. Even myths that involve "good" mothers, particularly Ceres and Venus, ultimately do not fit the standard. Ceres uses her maternity to interfere in the marriage of her daughter, arguing with Jupiter in the process. Venus meddles in "state" affairs through her son.<sup>34</sup> It is no coincidence that later attacks against Julio-Claudian women accuse them of these very things.<sup>35</sup> Ovid is not inventing perceived flaws of mothers but plays on pre-existing anxieties surrounding

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<sup>34</sup> It should also be noted that it is only divine mothers that are allowed the most power and agency.

<sup>35</sup> The depiction of Julio-Claudian women in Tacitus *Annals* is perhaps one of the best examples of the critiques leveraged against them. For a closer analysis of this, see Rutland (1978) and L'Hoir (1994).

motherhood, which is what makes this a stronger counter against Augustus.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, it is unlikely that maternal struggles are being used in this text to forward an agenda of understanding women; rather, women are once again used by men without agency.

This touches on a basic yet important connection to larger studies on the roles of women in society. The core of this research rests on the inability of Roman women to create their own identities and positions within society. The loss of feminine agency over language has long been explored in feminist theory as a significant aspect of women's subjugation by men.<sup>37</sup> As feminist scholar Mary Daly stated in one of her most important works, "...it is necessary to grasp the fundamental fact that women have had the power of *naming* stolen from us. We have not been free to use our own power to name ourselves, the world, or God."<sup>38</sup> At the same time women have not been able to name, they have been named and, in turn, morphed into symbols to create meaning for the experiences and desires of men.<sup>39</sup> The effects of this system are apparent in all myths that support a patriarchy, and those have been apparent in this study of the *Metamorphoses*. There is the simple fact that a woman's name and *mater* are interchangeable in the text; *mater* is not used merely as a descriptor or epithet in place of a name. A woman's social status becomes her identifier. This link between motherhood and one's own identity — a link

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<sup>36</sup> Anxieties surrounding the pregnancy and paternity and their effect on power have long been expressed in myth since Hesiod's *Theogony*. On the connections between the family and power in Hesiod, see Arthur (1982).

<sup>37</sup> Naming conventions in Rome are especially illustrative of this loss of individuality and agency. For example, Evans states on Lucretia that her "anonymity was further reinforced, it might be added, by the Roman practice of identifying women not as individuals but as the daughters of their fathers: for example, her name simply means 'the daughter of Lucretius.'" Evans (1991) 51.

<sup>38</sup> Daly (1973) 8.

<sup>39</sup> Again, Daly (1973) 6-7: "Women have been extra-environmentals in human society. We have been foreigners not only to the fortresses of political power but also to those citadels in which thought processes have been spun out, creating a net of meaning to capture reality. In a sexist world, symbol systems and conceptual apparatuses have been male creations. These do not reflect the experience of women, but rather function to falsify our own self-image and experiences."

forged and maintained by society and not by a woman herself — in effect removes the identity a woman had prior to being a mother. The speeches of Procne, Althaea, and Hecuba reveal the tensions created by this connection as they both struggle against other identities and reduce themselves to their reproductive capabilities. The most illustrative detail in the text, though, is the power given to the act of being called *mater*. Procne's conflict is condensed into her son's ability to call her *mater*. Althaea states how the title of *mater* breaks her resolve. Ceres and Venus call themselves *mater* as a means of influence. Hecuba speaks of her future in which she is no longer called *mater*. There is an inherent and implicit display of power in what one is called, and this is apparent throughout the text. The construction of the identity and title of *mater* within the *Metamorphoses* thus reveal not just contemporary conceptions of motherhood in the time of Augustus but also the ways in which myth and language construct and support a dominant ideology.

## II. Maternal Identity in Ovid's *Fasti*

Thus far, we have examined Ovid's portrayal of the mother as a transgressive figure in his *Metamorphoses*. Motivated by the stifling suppression of their personhood by society at large, these women show how they struggle to form their own unique identities and act according to their own wishes while also conveying the immense power that the title of *mater* holds within their society. These aspects combine in myths that feature mothers brought to their breaking point when they commit acts that defy the identity of *mater* forced upon them. They show how a society that bases a woman's social standing and identity on reproduction only breeds threats to the preservation of that society and its values. This is a concept that directly disrupts and challenges Augustus' efforts to use mothers and a state endorsement of motherhood to promote a new era of peace for Rome. Yet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is not his only work that departs from his previous work on love elegy or that focuses heavily on the figure of the mother. While working on this epic, Ovid was also writing the *Fasti*, a didactic poem written in elegiac couplets detailing Roman religious observances and their origins. This hefty undertaking has survived in the form of six books that describe the religious days of the first six months of the year and that also feature the cult practices of and festivals for women, particularly mothers.

Though the *Fasti* could be written off as simply a description of the Roman calendar, it is intensely political, especially because of Augustus' connections to religious life in Rome and the Roman calendar. Julius Caesar had introduced the new Julian calendar only two years before Ovid himself was born, in the process taking the power over the calendar from priests to give to himself.<sup>40</sup> Augustus himself had an influence on the calendar through adding religious festivals

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<sup>40</sup> On Caesar's changes to the calendar and on how Augustus used his control over the Roman calendar to further imperial propaganda, see Feeney (2007).

and commemorations of the imperial family, which he highlights in his *Res Gestae*.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, a large part of Augustan propaganda relied on drawing on models of the past, which were commemorated through religious festivals in the Roman calendar. In choosing this subject matter, Ovid is directly choosing to speak on the figures and times that Augustus has based not only his own identity but also Roman identity. The *Fasti* is a mediation on *Romanitas*, with its accounts of major foundation myths of Rome's politics, religion, and culture. Thus, much like the *Metamorphoses* contends with Augustan ideology through genre, the *Fasti* does so through content.

In this context, Ovid once again devotes line upon line to mothers. They drive their own plots, making their own decisions and influencing those of others, and, perhaps most importantly, aid in the founding of Rome and in the formation of Roman identity. In this way, there is a subtle but important difference between the mothers of Ovid's epic and those seen in this work. The mothers of the *Fasti* work within the limits placed on them by society and embody the virtues demanded of them. They show complete devotion to their children at the expense of any selfish desires; they are submissive to their fathers, husbands, and sons; they do not question their role or identity as *mater*. They are the mothers that Augustus wished Roman women would model themselves on. Yet, though these mothers embody traditional Roman values assigned to motherhood, they use their position and the influence that comes with it to create change that has substantial effects on Rome's history. In the *Fasti*, this difference manifests in a contrasting significance of the use of *mater* to express the connection between female social identity and a woman's reproductive capability. Here *mater* becomes synonymous with a distinctly feminine source of power that allows women to become influential agents in the course of Roman history.

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<sup>41</sup> *RG* 8.5: *legibus novis me auctore latis multa exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro saeculo reduxi et ipse multarum rerum exempla imitanda posteris tradidi.*

Over and over, Ovid links mothers to integral moments in Roman history, oftentimes downplaying the actions of the important Roman men Augustus so admired.<sup>42</sup>

This might seem a drastic change from the mothers of the *Metamorphoses* and the challenge that they posed to Augustus' moral program and plans for the future of Rome, and it is. However, I do not argue that the *Fasti* is any more pro- or anti-Augustan than the *Metamorphoses*. As I hope to show, the *Fasti* Ovid attacks Augustus' focus on motherhood from a different angle. Instead of showing how such a focus only leads to women who transgress norms and threaten societal stability, he shows how it at the same time lends women the power to take control from men in a more implicit, and thus more threatening, way. In doing so, Ovid is able to speak to the simultaneous pressure on women to return to the realm of private life through motherhood and the unprecedented visibility of women, especially mothers.

Most of the mothers that populate Ovid's *Fasti* are tied not only to Rome's founding but also to the organization of time and religion. In this way, the mother is connected to cosmic order — fittingly, considering Earth's connection to motherhood. Many scholars have discussed Ovid's theme of rejecting *arma* for *sacra* and *sidera*, as stated in the beginning of the poem: “Let others sing of Caesar's arms: I will sing of Caesar's altars and whatever days he added to the sacred list” (*Caesaris arma canant alii: nos Caesaris aras, | et quoscumque sacris addidit ille dies, Fast. 1.13-14*).<sup>43</sup> To aid in this point, Ovid recharacterizes Romulus as a man built for war not organizing the cosmos and thus has the founder mistakenly make a year ten months. Ovid, however, allows a justification for this, writing, “There is, nevertheless, a reason, Caesar, that may have moved him and through which he may defend his error. The time that is sufficient for an infant to come forth from its mother's womb, he determined to be sufficient for a year” (*est*

<sup>42</sup> On the *summi viri* in the Forum of Augustus and its role in public life, see Shaya (2013).

<sup>43</sup> On Ovid's rejection of *arma* for *sacra* and *sidera* and how this interacts with Augustus, see Hinds (1992).

*tamen et ratio, Caesar, quae moverit illum, | erroremque suum quo tueatur, habet. \ quod satis est, utero matris dum prodeat infans, hoc anno statuit temporis esse satis, Fast. 1.31-34).* This first usage of *mater* in Ovid's *Fasti* parallels the first usage in his *Metamorphoses*, which also refers to pregnancy, and is an apt beginning to both texts. The value here, though, is that this rationale — the length of a pregnancy — is deemed a sufficient explanation of Romulus' error. This would mean that pregnancy, the act of becoming a mother, is important and respected enough to be the way to structure time itself, though Romulus is ultimately flawed in his decision.

Just like motherhood is shown to have influence over man's attempt to bring order to the cosmos, it is also shown to influence political order at various points of Rome's foundation. One of the most impactful and curious instances of motherhood being introduced into foundational myths occurs in Ovid's telling of the rape of Lucretia.<sup>44</sup> This should stand out as odd. Neither mothers nor motherhood are a prominent feature of this myth traditionally. In this tale, Sextus Tarquinius, struck by the beauty and virtue of Lucretia,<sup>45</sup> the wife of Collatinus and distinctly not a mother, sneaks into Lucretia's bedroom and rapes her. As dawn breaks the following morning, Lucretia is left in the aftermath, and Ovid leaves us with an impactful simile: "She sits with unbound hair, just as a mother about to go to the funeral pyre of her son" (*...passis sedet illa capillis, | ut solet ad nati mater itura rogum, Fast. 2.813-14*). With this simile, Ovid introduces motherhood where it was previously absent. As mentioned earlier, mothers in poetry, particularly epic and tragedy, were relegated to roles of lamentation and mourning as a way to inject emotion into a story, and this convention is referenced in this passage. The simile used here serves to

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<sup>44</sup> The rape of Lucretia is also attested in Livy 1.57-60. For other depictions of this myth and how it has changed over time, see Donaldson (1982).

<sup>45</sup> *Fast. 2.763-6: forma placet niveusque color flavique capilli, | quique aderat nulla factus ab arte decor; | verba placent et vox, et quod corrumpere non est, | quoque minor spes est, hoc magic ille cupit.*

illustrate the severity of Lucretia's grief over her rape: she mourns for her lost virtue as if for a lost child. In this way, she is given the power of the title of *mater* without having to fulfill the biological or societal requirements.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, it also brings to the fore how Romans conceptualized the issue of rape. The problem was not that a woman, as a human being, had been assaulted but that it tainted her value as a commodity, namely as a womb. Rape brought with it the potential threat of illegitimate children which would jeopardize inheritance and power in the future. As an elite married woman with no children of her own, this would be the reality faced by Lucretia. In killing herself, she goes beyond exhibiting a strong commitment to her virtue to exhibiting a strong commitment to the preservation of the Roman family. Thus, a woman, faced with the possibility of becoming a mother that would transgress societal values, kills herself, triggering major political change and beginning a new period for Rome. Ovid's simile brings closer into focus what is left in the background in the original myth and subsequently injects motherhood into an integral moment in Roman history. In a time when symbols and associations were so influential, Ovid affects the public memory of this pivotal moment. In comparing the appearance of Lucretia to the appearance of a grieving mother, he creates an association between the two in the minds of his readers. When reading, listening, or thinking of this monumental event, an audience would see, in their mind's eye, a mother — a mother who causes the downfall of the Roman monarchy.

The episode of early Roman history that most prominently features the actions of mothers follows the rape of the Sabine women. Though this episode is most notable for the rape itself,

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<sup>46</sup> The simile also draws attention to her *mors immatura* since, as Ovid's audience would have known, she will die before she has children. Her potential as a Roman mother is unfulfilled. On *mors immatura* in Roman culture, see Martin-Kilcher (2000).



that part is not commemorated in the *Fasti*.<sup>47</sup> It is only mentioned in passing.<sup>48</sup> The extended passages devoted to the Sabine women focus on the aftermath of the rape as Romulus struggles to get the women to produce children and on the eventual war between the Sabines and Romans. Ovid begins with the former as he explains the origin of the Lupercalia. Romulus laments the lack of children: “What use is it to me to have stolen the Sabine women...if my injustice has made not strength but war? It would have been more useful to not have daughters-in-law” (*quid mihi clamabat prodest rapuisse Sabinas* | *Romulus (hoc illo sceptrata tenente fuit)* | *si mea non vires, sed bellum iniuria fecit?* | *utilius fuerat non habuisse nurus,* *Fasti*. 2.431-34). This statement makes the purpose of Roman marriage and women explicit. Through marriage and subsequent childbirth, women serve to give power to their husbands and, overall, to support male power, as shown by *vires*. If a woman cannot produce children, she is worthless. Romulus’, or rather Ovid’s, choice to call the rape of the Sabine women an *iniuria* is also important. There is a recognition that this action was unjust but that the circumstances demanded it. A population increase was needed to such a degree that state decisions previously thought to be too far or illegal were made. This should bring to mind a similar move by Augustus at the beginning of his reign, but we must first also examine a preceding excerpt. Ovid’s apostrophe to the Sabine women occurring directly before this makes these ideas only more salient. He writes:

Bride, what are you waiting for? By neither potent herbs, nor prayers, nor magic song will you be a mother; patiently receive the whips of the fruitful right hand, now your father-in-law will have the preferred name of grandfather. For there was a day when married women rarely gave back the pledge of her own womb.

*nupta, quid exspectas? non tu pollutibus herbis  
nec prece nec magico carmine mater eris;  
excipe fecundae patienter verbera dextrae,*

<sup>47</sup> Ovid focuses on the rape itself in his *Ars Amatoria*. For an analysis of the episode in the *Ars*, see Labate (2006) and Wardman (1965).

<sup>48</sup> It first is referenced in 2.139: “You [Romulus] steal, he [Augustus] commands married women to be virtuous through his leadership” (*tu rapis, hic castas duce se iubet esse maritas*).

*iam socer optatum nomen habebit avi.  
nam fuit illa dies, dura cum sorte maritae  
reddebant uteri pignora rara sui.*<sup>49</sup>

This makes the circumstances Romulus was facing only more clear. It was not simply that the women were experiencing infertility or infant death; these women were purposefully trying not to get pregnant. Using ‘potent herbs, prayers, or magic song,’ women sought to either prevent or end pregnancies despite the punishments (*verbera*) they might receive from their husbands. There is also an emphasis in this passage on titles. Ovid states that by doing these things a woman will not be *mater* and that they must change their ways so that their father-in-law may receive the ‘preferred name’ (*optatum nomen*) of *avus*. This all fits within the construction of motherhood established thus far through the *Metamorphoses*. Motherhood and pregnancy are acts that a woman does for others and are not ones that she does for herself; she, and her labors, are a means to an end. She does not give the gift of children to her husband but gives it back (*reddebant*). Her job as a married woman is to submit to her husband or other men in the family by becoming *mater*, and it is only then that she earns her worth. These requirements, though, are not being met during Romulus’ rule; instead, women are actively rejecting motherhood and, in turn, the title of *mater*. This problem is eventually resolved through the Lupercalia, but it still conveys how women through the importance of motherhood have the power to affect the political and religious spheres. Through these two excerpts, which occur almost back-to-back, Ovid paints a clear picture of the problem faced by Romulus and also draws subtle but important parallels to Augustus. It is all too easy to see echoes of Augustus’ concern with population growth and marriage in Romulus’ own dilemma.

This is not the end of the Sabine women in Ovid *Fasti*, however, and they only continue to exert more explicit political power. For the first day of March, Ovid has Mars, the god of war,

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<sup>49</sup> *Fast.* 2.425-30.

tell the of the origin of the Matronalia, a festival that celebrated Juno and marriage.<sup>50</sup> The linking of Mars to this women's festival is one that Ovid emphasizes throughout the episode, with Mars beginning his narration by saying, "Now for the first time I, a god useful in arms, am called for endeavors of peace, and having advanced, I move onward into new camps" (*nunc primum studiis pacis, deus utilis armis, | advocor et gressus in nova castra fero, Fast. 3.173-74*). There is some comedy here as Mars, a very masculine deity, must associate with the feminine, but this too has connections to Augustan Rome. Mars was naturally a very important god for the Romans since he is the mythological father of Romulus, and this importance only grew under Augustus whose "particular incarnation of Mars was, among other things, an ancestral god, a male counterpart to Venus Genetrix," and through his epithet of Ultor, he becomes indisputably "a military god of rightful retribution and victory."<sup>51</sup> In a context where Mars was linked to war perhaps more than ever, Ovid deliberately puts him in a position that emasculates him, since, as we are soon to find out, the Matronalia is a commemoration of mothers' actions to end a war, thus showing how they "undercut and undid [Mars'] main function as war god."<sup>52</sup> Once again, a man integral to Rome's foundation and early history is outdone by mothers.

Mars continues on to tell the story of a war between the Romans and Sabines, which placed women in the middle of the conflict as their husbands fought their fathers. Mars makes a sly comment that "then was the first time a father-in-law brought arms against his sons-in-law" (*tum primum generis intulit arma socer, Fast. 3.202*), referencing the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar. He then carries on, telling the audience how things had changed since the Sabine women were last seen: "and now the stolen women also had the name of mothers"

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<sup>50</sup> For a more in-depth examination of the Matronalia and its role in strengthening gender roles, see Dolansky (2011).

<sup>51</sup> Chiu (2016) 96.

<sup>52</sup> Chiu (2016) 97.

(*iamque fere raptae matrum quoque nomen habebant*, *Fast.* 3.203). It seems that the festival of the Lupercalia has succeeded and that the wives have proved their worth by having children, thus awarding them the title of *mater*. These children, though, have not solved all of Romulus' problems and have only complicated the position of the women. Forced into such a difficult situation, the mothers take matters into their own hands and meet altogether within the temple of Juno to make a plan:

[The mothers] prepare and loosen their hair and clothe their bodies in sad funerary clothes. Already the armies had stood in ranks and were equipped with deadly sword, already the horn was about to give the signal for battle, when the stolen women come between their fathers and husbands and hold their children, their dear pledges, in their lap.

*parent crinesque resolvunt*  
*maestaque funerea corpora veste tegunt.*  
*iam steterant acies ferro mortique paratae,*  
*iam lituus pugnae signa daturus erat:*  
*cum raptae veniunt inter patresque virosque,*  
*inque sinu natos, pignora cara, tenent.*<sup>53</sup>

The mothers literally enter into the sphere of men when they enter the battlefield, and it is their motherhood that they use as weapons. Just as a soldier would prepare for battle, so too do these women, a parallel which is emphasized through the use of *pareo* in lines 213 and 215. They turn themselves into martial, or epic, women by becoming mourning mothers just as the men turn themselves into martial and epic men by becoming soldiers. This imagery and these parallels are only strengthened through the narrator, Mars, who himself is a martial deity more at home in epic. The women even enter the battle just when the signal to become is about to be given (*signa daturus erat*), making them into an army of their own. Yet, unlike their husbands and fathers, they are not fighting for more violence but are petitioning for peace, which is symbolized in their motherhood. As discussed in the previous section, this association between peace and

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<sup>53</sup> *Fast.* 3.213-18.

motherhood was one promoted by Augustus and thus would have been felt by Ovid's audience.<sup>54</sup>

In this way, the mothers impose peacetime upon wartime and force the men to comply. Seeing their respective wives and daughters, children and grandchildren, the Romans and Sabines stop their war, allowing Mars to bring his tale of the origin of the Matronalia to a close:

From that time, Oebalian mothers have the duty, no light one, to celebrate the first day, my Kalends, since having drawn together to join swords they boldly ended Martial wars with their own tears.

*inde diem, quae prima, meas celebrare Kalendas  
Oebaliae matres non leve munus habent,  
aut quia committi strictis mucronibus ausae  
finierant lacrimis Martia bella suis.*<sup>55</sup>

Mars has been bested by mothers, and this is commemorated annually on the first of his month. As has been the trend in the *Fasti*, these mothers, here being honored with the title of *matres*, have had real influence on Rome's history and now have directly participated in and ended a war. Additionally, this transgression into the distinctly masculine sphere of war is not treated as such. Their actions are celebrated and awarded, not criticized or made into a punishable offense. In choosing to emphasize both this episode and the earlier issue of the women's refusal to have children, Ovid places the Sabine women, traditionally in a powerless position, into one of power and agency. Romulus' involvement in these episodes also makes this choice all the more impactful since Ovid subsequently portrays him as an almost unfit ruler. He is unable to control his wife and the other Sabine women, resulting in the lack of children. Juno Lucina must rectify the situation herself without even a prayer or request for help from Romulus.<sup>56</sup> In the event of the

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<sup>54</sup> On this association and the Ara Pacis, Zanker (1988) 172: "The campaign to encourage procreation of children failed, but in the visual imagery it was maintained at a subliminal level... Whether a political act of Augustus was a success or failure was of secondary importance; the imagery of lasting happiness transcended any reality and eventually came to shape the common perception of reality."

<sup>55</sup> *Fast.* 3.229-32.

<sup>56</sup> *Fast.* 2.435-50.

war between the Romans and Sabines, Romulus cannot end it himself; women must end the war for him. His leadership is undercut again and again as women, especially mothers, exert more explicit power and influence.

Like in the *Metamorphoses*, references to Virgil abound in the *Fasti*. One such example is Ovid's portrayal of Evander, the Greek king, who aids Aeneas in his battle against Turnus and the Rutuli. Evander's assistance in Aeneas' founding of Rome is not what allows him mention in the *Fasti*, though; it is his mother and a prophetess, Carmentis, sometimes called Carmenta, who is responsible for originating religious life in Italy.<sup>57</sup> It is not him but her that is honored on the Roman calendar. The sections of the poem that occur on two days that make up her festival, the Carmentalia, focus on her guidance of her son as he is exiled to Italy and sets up Pallantium. From the moment Evander is introduced in the poem, he is defined by his mother. Ovid writes, "From this place [Arcadia] was Evander, who, though illustrious from both sides, was more renowned from the blood of his sacred mother" (*hinc fuit Evander, qui, quamquam clarus utroque, | nobilior sacrae sanguine matris erat, Fast. 1.471-72*). His mother grants him the most prestige because of her own abilities as a prophetess. Here there is almost a reversal of the power dynamics between mother and child seen thus far; instead of a focus on how children give power to their mother, this story focuses on how a mother gives power to her child. The power Carmentis has is shown implicitly through the fact that she is exiled along with her son: "For the youth, having been exiled with his mother, deserted Arcadia and his Parrhasian Lar" (*nam iuvenis nimium vera cum matre fugatus | deserit Arcadium Parrahasiumque larem, Fast. 1.487-88*). As Evander cries, lamenting the loss of his homeland, Carmentis provides guidance and encouragement that gives him the strength to sail on. Up to this point, Carmentis has not

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<sup>57</sup> On Evander's role in the *Fasti* and connections between this episode and Ovid's own contemporary Rome, see Fantham (1992). For Carmentis' role in founding religious and public life in Italy, see Chiu (2016) 67-70.

been explicitly named, only being referred to as *mater*. At the same time, her name frames this entire narrative section: it explains the reason for the Carmentalia. Ovid begins this section with an invocation of Carmentis: “Instruct me yourself, you who has a name derived from song, and be favorable to my plan in order that your honor not be lost” (*ipsa mone, quae nomen habes a carmine ductum, | propositoque fave, ne tuus erret honor, Fast. 1.467-68*). Though her name is not mentioned until later, this reference to her name helps to emphasize the framing of the narrative. Her name has been given the ultimate honor of being immortalized and celebrated through an annual festival. It need not be said just yet; instead, the focus is kept on her virtues and attributes that led her to this honor: her actions as a mother.

As the origin of the Carmentalia progresses, Carmentis’ name is used for the first time in the poem. Once Evander has been strengthened by his mother’s words, he sails on to Tarentum:

And now [Evander] with respect to learned Carmentis’ instruction had led the vessel into the river and was going to meet the Tuscan waters; she saw the bank of the river, which has joined the shallows of Tarentum and the scattered huts through the solitary place, and just as she was, with streaming hair she stood before the helm and fiercely restrained the hand of the one guiding the way.

*iamque ratem doctae monitu Carmentis in amnem  
egerat et Tuscis obvius ibat aquis:  
fluminis illa latus, cui sunt vada iuncta Tarenti,  
aspicit et sparsas per loca sola casas;  
utque erat, immissis puppem stetit ante capillis  
continuitque manum torva regentis iter.<sup>58</sup>*

In this section that first uses her given name explicitly, she goes beyond having great influence to exhibit immense agency as the passage progresses. It is because of *docta* Carmentis that her son continues sailing; Carmentis is the one to lay eyes on where they will settle; Carmentis directs the ship. This degree of agency is not new in Ovid; it is seen again and again in the *Metamorphoses*. The difference here, though, is that these actions will be rewarded, not

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<sup>58</sup> *Fast.* 1.499-508.

punished. She completely fulfills her role as a mother, and, as a prophetess, she has the ability to guide her son better than any other. She exhibits this in her following prayer to the Roman gods, thus originating religious observances in Italy, and her prophecy of Rome's future. It is through this that she is awarded the honor of a festival and, in turn, the honor of a name that will be immortalized. In her son's arms, she cries out, greeting the gods and praying, "May this sight be good omens for both my son and for me" (*este bonis avibus visi natoque mihique, Fast. 1.513*). She goes on to prophesize the future, beginning with the eventual founding of all-powerful Rome: "Am I deceived, or will these hills become high city walls, and from this land will other land seek laws? One day the entire world is promised to these mountains" (*fallor, an hi fient ingentia moenia colles, | iuraque ab hac terra cetera terra petet? | montibus his olim totus promittitur orbis..., Fast. 1.515-17*). She continues on to mention Aeneas' arrival and battle over Lavinia, the death of Pallas, the introduction of Vesta and the penates, and the reign of Augustus.<sup>59</sup> Her speech, and prophecy, culminates in the assurance of her own apotheosis and that of another mother: "And just as I will one day be worshipped on perpetual altars, so too will Julia Augusta be a new divinity" (*utque ego perpetuis olim sacrabor in aris, | sic Augusta novum Iulia numen erit, Fast. 1.535-36*). Though the references to Livia will be discussed more comprehensively later in this paper, this final statement ends Carmentis' prophecy with a reference to and recognition of motherhood and the deification that it can lead to. Carmentis does not parallel herself to another divinity known for prophecy, nor does she simply touch upon

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<sup>59</sup> *Fast. 1.519-32: et iam Dardaniae tangeant haec litora pinus: | hic quoque causa novi femina Martis erit. | care, nepos, Palla, funesta quid induis arma? | indue! non humuli vindice caesus eris. | victa tamen vinces eversa que, Troia, resurges; | orbuit hostiles ista ruina domos. | urite vitrices Neptunia Pergama flammae! | num minus hic toto est altior orbe cinis? iam pius Aeneas sacra et, sacra altera, patrem | adferet: Iliacos accipe, Vesta, deos! | tempus erit, cum vos orbemque tuebitur idem, | et fient ipso sacra colente deo, | et penes Augustos patriae tutela manebit: | hanc fas imperii frena tenere domum.*



Livia's deification divorced from any connection or context; they are linked together through both divinity and motherhood.

The Carmentalia is not only explained through this one episode, however. Ovid tells one possible origin of the festival on each of its celebrated days, January 11th and 15th. For the story told for the second festival day, Carmentis is even more explicitly connected to motherhood. In the fairly short explanation of this day, Ovid states that "previously Ausonian mothers used to drive carriages, but soon the honor is snatched away" (*nam prius Ausonias matres carpenta vehebant | ... mox honor eripitur...*, *Fast.* 1.619-21). Subsequently, "each matron resolves to not renew ungrateful men with any progeny, and so that she would not give birth, rashly with a secret strike to her womb while pregnant, she drove out the burden" (*matronaque destinat omnis | ingratos nulla prole novare viros, | neve daret partus, ictu temeraria caeco | visceribus crescens excutiebat onus*, *Fast.* 1.621-24). The women, no longer mothers, weaponize maternity to get what they want. Faced with the destruction of the Roman family and Rome's future, the senate acquiesces to the women's demands while also instituting a festival in honor of Carmentis for fertility.<sup>60</sup> While this does show yet another honor to Carmentis and speaks to her own prestige, it also, perhaps more noteworthy, exhibits, and commemorates, an instance in which women were able to have significant legal influence. Their actions have both historical and literary precedents. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, women withhold sex from their husbands as a way to end the Peloponnesian War, but Ovid takes this a step further.<sup>61</sup> As one scholar states, "where the Greek wives had refused to have sex with their husbands until the women achieved their objective, the Roman wives refuse motherhood itself."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, as some scholars have pointed out, this

<sup>60</sup> *Fast.* 1.625-28: *corripuisse patres ausasimmitia nuptas, | ius tamen exemptum restituisse ferunt; | binaque nunc pariter Tegeaeae sacra parenti | pro pueris fieri virginibusque iubent.*

<sup>61</sup> On the *Lysistrata* and its portrayal of women's involvement in public life and power, see Foley (1982).

<sup>62</sup> Chiu (2016) 95. On the Lex Oppia and women's involvement, see Bauman (1992) 31-34.

passage has echoes of the *Lex Oppia* in that women band together to sway a decision of the Senate.<sup>63</sup> In a society that, as has been shown, privileged motherhood to such a degree as Augustan Rome, the actions of the Roman matrons in this passage of the *Fasti* is simultaneously impactful and puzzling. This shows that women recognized the power that they had in their motherhood, but it also commemorates a time, at least according to Ovid, when the Senate allowed itself to be controlled by women and, in turn, when men had the pressure they put on women to become mothers used against them. Whereas in the *Metamorphoses*, this circumstance would be the perfect time for a horrific transformation of these Roman matrons as punishment for their transgressions, the *Fasti* cites this as the origin of a festival to a mother and for motherhood.

Thus far, I have examined how Ovid undercuts the power and authority of traditional Roman figures to focus on the influence of mothers in Rome's foundation myths and have shown how these choices have ramifications for Augustan Rome, but Ovid is even more explicit in his confrontations with Augustus through his portrayal of the most powerful woman in Rome: Livia, or Julia Augusta. As the wife of Augustus and mother of Tiberius, Livia held an extremely important, powerful, and visible position in Rome.<sup>64</sup> She was raised up as the embodiment of everything a Roman woman, wife, and mother was supposed to be. As the female head of the imperial family, she was in charge of the home, which often included state matters since household staff were often used in imperial administration and political business could have very well been conducted at home behind closed doors.<sup>65</sup> Livia was also well-known for looking after the children of the Julio-Claudian extended family, those of other elite families, and the hostage children of foreign monarchs and for even paying the dowries of other families' daughters, all of

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<sup>63</sup> Chiu (2016) 95.

<sup>64</sup> On how Livia served as an example for Roman women, see Purcell (1986).

<sup>65</sup> Fischler (1994) 116.

which would have given her a closer association with Roman motherhood.<sup>66</sup> It is also important to recognize that this association was strong enough for the Senate to consider awarding her the title of *mater patriae* to mirror Augustus' own of *pater patriae* before it was ultimately decided against due to Tiberius' own reluctance to bestow the title.<sup>67</sup> With this context, her portrayal in Ovid's work is of special importance.

Livia is mentioned by name three times in the *Fasti* and once by the title of *genetrix*, and for the scope of this paper, I will be examining the two references to Livia that most reflect her connection to motherhood. The presence of Livia in this text is a stark contrast to her single oblique reference in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>68</sup> Livia's first reference in this text, though, is a powerful one. As discussed earlier, Carmentis ends her prophecy of Rome's future with a reference to both her own deification and Livia's.<sup>69</sup> Thus it is Livia who becomes the culmination of Rome's history and success, not Julius Caesar, not Augustus, and not Tiberius. Additionally, it is specifically Livia's deification that is emphasized and assured.<sup>70</sup> Carmentis also refers to her as Julia Augusta, a name which she received after Augustus' death when she was adopted in his will.<sup>71</sup> This name "marks her as the elevated representative of the Julian line; the title Augusta, at this point still unique, presents her as a female counterpart to the *princeps*," in turn, Livia has

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<sup>66</sup> Bauman (1992) 126.

<sup>67</sup> Bauman (1992) 126.

<sup>68</sup> In book 15 during the culmination of Ovid's Roman history, Livia is referenced as the "chaste wife" that will bear Augustus' son: *pace data terris animum ad civilia vertet | iura suum legesque feret iustissimus auctor; | exemploque suo mores reget inque futuri | temporis aetatem venturorumque nepotum | prospiciens prolem sancta de coniuge natam | ferre simul nomenque suum curasque iubebit*, (*Met.* 15.832-37, emphasis added).

<sup>69</sup> *Fast.* 1.535-36: "And just as I will one day be worshipped on perpetual altars, so too will Julia Augusta be a new divinity" (*utque ego perpetuis olim sacrabor in aris, | sic Augusta novum Iulia numen erit*).

<sup>70</sup> Bauman (1992) 124-38: Livia's deification was a complicated matter due to Tiberius' reluctance to grant her additional honors, so she was not deified until the reign of Claudius, making her the second woman to receive the honor after Caligula's sister.

<sup>71</sup> Bauman (1992) 131.

become “the feminine face of contemporary dynastic power.”<sup>72</sup> In the context of the importance of names, Ovid gives Livia the highest honor. He does not leave it up to his audience to make an educated guess as to who he is referring to or make it ambiguous for a big reveal later on. He chooses to place Livia, as Julia Augusta, in the spotlight and to emphasize her imperial connections at the same time. All of these implications are explicit through just two simple lines, and they are even more powerful because they are spoken by Carmentis, an influential mother. Carmentis is shown to be a strong guiding figure for her own son, and by creating a parallel between herself and Livia, this quality carries over to her as well. Livia herself was important and received prestige as Augustus’ wife but also as the mother to his children, particularly Tiberius who would be his eventual heir, and her role as a mother would only have been more important following Augustus’ death and Tiberius’ succession, which would also have been when she had the title of Julia Augusta. From this first introduction, Livia is given explicit power and significance and is implicitly linked to motherhood.

Livia’s other references within the text all refer to her role in religious life and in her husband’s building program and continue to elevate her status to be equal to, and in some cases above, that of Augustus and Tiberius. One that is most compelling in regard to its play with power occurs not long after Livia’s first appearance in the first book when the temple of Concordia is discussed.<sup>73</sup> After situating the temple in its local context, Ovid briefly mentions its original founding by Marcus Furius Camillus before focusing Tiberius’ rebuilding of the temple following his victory in Germany: “The recent cause is better: Germany presented her unbound hair at your command, venerated leader; from that you offered spoils from a triumphed people and made temples to a goddess, whom you yourself honor,” (*causa recens melior: passos*

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<sup>72</sup> Chiu (2016) 107.

<sup>73</sup> For a more detailed examination of sources to explore Livia’s actual involvement with the temple and shrine, see Flory (1984).

*Germania crines | porrigit auspiciis, dux venerande, tuis; | inde triumphatae libasti munera gentis | templaque fecisti, quam colis ipse, deae, Fast. 1.645-48).* At first glance, this is celebratory of Tiberius and his achievements. Ovid places him in a higher position than the Roman man who originally built the temple and calls attention to a great military victory under his leadership. As with the first reference to Livia by Carmentis, however, Ovid diminishes this apparent honor in the final two lines: “Your mother established this goddess [Concordia] by means of her deeds and an altar, she who alone has been perceived to be worthy of the bed of great Jupiter,” (*hanc tua constituit genetrix et rebus et ara, | sola toro magni digna reperta Iovis, Fast. 1.649-50*). Livia is once again awarded the place of emphasis as the climax of a section, overshadowing her son’s achievements in the process. The word choice in this section is also important and helps to convey Livia’s high status. Here Livia is not called by name or by *mater* but by *genetrix*. While this has the same meaning as *mater*, it is significantly less common, occurring only four times in the *Fasti*. Though this could be an artifact of meter since *genetrix* is more difficult to fit into a meter as restrictive as elegiac couplet, it nevertheless has the effect of making the term stand out when it is used and suggests an effort on the part of the poet to fit it in. It is also hard to use the word *genetrix* without calling to mind Venus Genetrix, the incarnation of Venus favored by Julius Caesar and Augustus due to her role as Aeneas’ mother and subsequently as an ancestor of the Julii. Thus Livia is aligned with a divine mother. It has also been argued by some scholars that Ovid’s use of the word *constituo* is meant to convey a larger role that Livia had in the actual dedicatory ceremonies for the Temple of Concordia, and so the use of *constituo* only in reference to Livia gives her more prestige and a greater role in Roman

religious life.<sup>74</sup> These various elements work to elevate Livia at the expense of Tiberius and to connect her both to motherhood and religious life.

The second line of this excerpt (*sola toro magni digna reperta Iovis*) additionally demands attention by creating a parallel between Juno, wife of Jupiter, and Livia, wife of Augustus. The connections between Ovid's Jupiter and Augustus in the *Metamorphoses* have long been written on by scholars, and the connection is explicit here as well.<sup>75</sup> By saying that Livia is “worthy of the bed of Jove,” Livia is compared to Juno and Jupiter to Augustus. This has fairly obvious implications for Livia's status as it raises her to the level and honor of a major goddess, similarly to *genetrix*, but it also serves the purpose of connecting her even more closely to motherhood because the Juno of the *Fasti* is explicitly connected to motherhood and takes on the identity of mother herself. This affinity for maternity is a departure from Juno's character in the *Metamorphoses*, where she repeatedly laments her inability to produce children for her husband.<sup>76</sup> She is presented differently here — as a mother. In the month of March, Ovid questions Mars as to why the Matronalia is celebrated on his Kalends, to which Mars replies, “My mother loves brides; a throng of mothers frequently visits me; this cause, so pious, is especially becoming for us” (*mater amat nuptas: matrum me turba frequentat: | haec nos praecipue tam pia causa decet, Fasti*. 3.250-51). Juno finally receives the title of *mater* that she

<sup>74</sup> For a detailed analysis of the use of *constituo* in Ovid's *Fasti* and how it affects interpretations of this specific passage, see Simpson (1991).

<sup>75</sup> For a closer look at how Ovid's Jupiter in the *Metamorphoses* interacts with Augustus and Augustan ideology, see Segal (2001).

<sup>76</sup> In the *Met.*, Juno expresses her outrage at Semele's pregnancy by Jove through a short speech that illustrates her frustration with having other titles (*regina, soror, coniunx*) but not being able to attain the title of *mater*. *Met.* 3.268-70: ‘*profeci quid enim totiens per iurgia?*’ *dixit, | ‘ipsa petenda mihi est; ipsam, si maxima Iuno | rite vocor, perdam, si me gemmantia dextra | sceptra tenere decet, si sum regina Iovisque | et soror et coniunx, certe soror: at, puto, furto est | contenta, et thalami brevis est iniuria nostri. | concipit id erat manifesta que crimina pleno | fert utero et mater, quod vix mihi contigit, uno | de Iove vult fieri: tanta est fiducia formae.*’ It should also be noted that a number of transformations occur in the text because of Juno's anger at the other women that Jupiter has children with.

so desired in the *Metamorphoses* as well as the respect that comes with it. At the same time, as is the trend in this poem, her own power remains and carries over to her son. It is because of his mother that he has this association with brides. Mars also emphasizes the religious piety that is tied to Juno's motherhood by calling this *tam pia causa*.<sup>77</sup>

Juno's daughter, Hebe, is equally respectful of her mother's power and status at the beginning of the book on June as Ovid works to discover the origin of the month's name. Juno asserts her status to Ovid, highlighting her connections to Jupiter and Saturn: "It is something to have married Jove and to be Jove's sister; I do not know whether to pride myself more on my brother or my husband. If family is looked on with respect, I first made Saturn a parent, I first was the daughter of Saturn" (*est aliquid nupisse Iovi, Iovis esse sororem: | fratre magis, dubito, glorier anne viro. | si genus aspicitur, Saturnum prima parentem | feci, Saturni sors ego prima fui, Fast. 6.27-30*). She continues to list her honorific titles as reasons why she should lend her name to a month: "Why then am I called queen and *princeps* of the goddesses?" (*cur igitur regina vocor princepsque dearum?, Fast. 6.37*). There are obvious and important implications of Juno's use of the word *princeps* that Augustus so favored. Among all of these various titles and identities that Juno cites, her motherhood is what is explicitly shown to earn her respect when Hebe joins the narrative. She begins by recognizing and deferring to Juno's status as her mother: "If my mother commands me to leave from the entire heaven, I will not remain against my mother's will" (*non ego, si toto mater me cedere caelo | iusserit, invita matre morabor, Fast. 6.67-68*). Hebe demonstrates respect for her mother and her wishes, even if it comes at Hebe's own expense. The goddess continues to talk more about her mother's honors: "My mother has taken possession of the golden Capitol by means of a shared temple and, as she should, holds the

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<sup>77</sup> There is an additional layer of emasculation of Mars that occurs in this section, for a more detailed analysis of this, see Chiu (2016) 96-101.

highest place with Jove” (*aurea possedit socio Capitolia templo | mater et, ut debet, cum Iove summa tenet, Fast. 6.73-74*). The enjambment occurring between these lines places special focus on *mater*, which only serves to align Juno more strongly with this identity. There is also special care taken to not subordinate Juno to Jupiter. She is given primary agency and power, placing them both on equal levels of prestige if not giving Juno more.

In characterizing Juno and her authority in this way, Livia’s connection to her in the first book is all the more powerful. Juno is connected to maternal power, but this power is also shown to not be any less than that of her husband or son; this is the same dynamic seen between Livia, Augustus, and Tiberius. The distance that Juno allows Ovid enables him to make even more explicit references to the inner workings of the imperial family. It is Juno (Livia) that is *princeps*, just as it is Juno (Livia) that holds the highest position on the Capitoline that Jupiter (Augustus) must share with her. This is not to say that Juno, or especially Livia, held the same type of influence that her husband did, only that they were comparable and equally recognized and privileged within society.

Like in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, mothers abound in the *Fasti*. They receive the poet’s focus, leading their own narratives and acting out of their own agency. In contrast to his epic, though, the mothers of the *Fasti* are everything that Roman mothers should be. They devote themselves to their husbands, fathers, and children. They guide their sons through challenges and protect their morality. They are pious and chaste. These mothers are *exempla* that seem worthy of Augustus’ approval, if not for the immense power and influence that Ovid gives them. Again and again, Ovid undermines the actions and achievements of important Roman figures by showing that more often than not it was mothers who were behind them. Romulus is a figure that is stripped of his *gravitas* multiple times. He is shown to have made a crucial mistake in making the



length of a year ten months because he based it on the length of a pregnancy. After the initial rape of the Sabine women, he is unable to get them to produce children, forcing Juno to become involved. Once the Sabine women become mothers, they themselves must stop a war between their husbands and fathers because Romulus is unable to stop it himself. Other important women's maternity is also emphasized and shown to be influential. Lucretia, traditionally not a mother, is made into one and is given the authority of one. Carmentis is revealed to be the one who guided Evander to Italy and headed religious worship. In Ovid's contemporary time, the poet reinforces at multiple points in the text Livia's power and authority, choosing to focus on her rather than her husband or son and even going as far as to undermine them to do so, all of which is only made more potent by the parallels between her and Juno created throughout the poem. All of these women act exactly how they are supposed to as mothers and are shown to have drastic effects on the political and religious history of Rome.

This portrayal of motherhood interacts with Augustus' own in important ways. While Augustus worked to encourage women to become mothers, and thus to restrict them to the private sphere, there was also unprecedented visibility for women, especially mothers. As Rome transitioned from republic to monarchy, there was bound to be more emphasis on the power of imperial women because of their importance in succession. Similarly, because of the imperial family and Augustus' use of them as a standard for all other Romans, Livia and other Julio-Claudian women needed to be active in the public sphere. As Ovid includes in the *Fasti*, Livia dedicated buildings, and she was an active member of her community. Mothers themselves were visible through imperial propaganda and imagery, such as on the *Ara Pacis* or during the *Ludi Saeculares*.<sup>78</sup> This idealized motherhood is what Ovid portrays in the *Fasti* and what he

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<sup>78</sup> On the role of women in the *Ludi Saeculares*, see Erker (2018). For a detailed analysis of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, which was performed at the festival, see Putnam (2001).

shows the dangers of. The new monarchy's inherent reliance on women for succession coupled with the proximity of imperial women to political power exacerbated long-held anxieties about women and pregnancy, and these pre-existing fears are drawn on by Ovid. He illustrates that if motherhood can give any semblance of power or influence to women, it has the possibility of being misused. The same role or identity used to suppress women can also be weaponized by women. The *Fasti* demonstrates the power of motherhood, and the mothers in the poem recognize that and use it instead of allowing it to be used against them. The motherhood portrayed in the text also has the added effect of undermining the models that Augustus has based his own identity on. Ovid presents figures like Romulus, Evander, and even Mars as men that are bested by, or at the very least, heavily influenced by mothers. In this way, these symbols of Roman masculinity, and Augustus, are emasculated by the uniquely feminine.

The *Fasti* also extends ideas from the *Metamorphoses* concerning a woman's personal identity and her identity as a mother. It is important to keep in mind that although these women are shown to be much more powerful and influential, their roles are limited to motherhood. The only difference is that the mothers of the *Fasti* do not fight against the constraints of maternal identity but instead work within its bounds. Furthermore, though the mothers in this poem are referred to as *mater* as well as their given names, the patterns are different than those of Ovid's epic. Motherhood is shown to be a source of power in the *Fasti*, one that women know how to use and that is respected by the men around them. In this way, *mater* no longer has the restrictive and oppressive quality that it does in the *Metamorphoses*; it becomes a way for women to gain and exert power and influence that would be inaccessible any other way, which Augustus brings into law through his moral legislation of 18/17 BCE. Likewise, they use this power in ways that undermine the authority of men, and, by extension, the authority of Augustus, who has based his

own identity and his own idea of Roman identity on these same influential male figures. This is especially impactful because of the visibility and involvement of imperial women in public life. In the new monarchy, women are now closer than ever to political power and have even more influence over Rome's future due to their importance for succession. In this way, Ovid's mothers in the *Fasti* embody real anxieties of the time period that Augustus himself exacerbated and gave form to through his focus on motherhood.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have endeavored to show how Ovid confronts and disrupts Augustan constructions of maternal identity. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid shows how the connection between female social identity and a woman's reproductive capabilities that is used to control women can also create transgressive women that have the ability to destabilize their society. In such an oppressive environment, Ovid conveys, those oppressed are bound to rebel against their oppressors. In the *Fasti*, Ovid explores a different type of motherhood. These mothers fully commit to their roles and embody all the traditional values assigned to Roman mothers, but at the same time, they utilize their maternity to exert social, political, and religious power and influence. The honor given to them because of their adherence to societal demands becomes a way for them to destabilize their society. These depictions of motherhood, though different, work together to confront the paradoxical realities for women set in motion and perpetuated by Augustus at this time. While Augustus encouraged women to get married and have children, thus anchoring them in the private sphere, women were also given unprecedented visibility in the public sphere through Augustus' own focus on motherhood in legislation and imagery and particularly through the involvement of imperial women in public and political life. In this way, Ovid is able to challenge both realities that Augustus established and undermine any efforts on the part of the emperor to turn motherhood into a symbol of imperial prosperity and peace.

I believe that it is important, however, to end by focusing back on the mothers themselves. It must be stated again that the portrayal of mothers in these texts and the ways in which they challenge Augustus' simplistic portrayal of motherhood cannot and should not be read as some type of proto-feminism or an acknowledgment of the complexity of women's lives and their subordination through patriarchy. It is not likely that Ovid focused on mothers, or

women more broadly, out of a desire to champion women's rights. Women's struggles are merely co-opted by Ovid for literary and political argument. Just as Augustus uses mothers as vehicles of meaning, so too does Ovid. Feminist scholars have written on this use of women as symbols without regard for women themselves:

To consider a person — a subject — as a symbol is to treat him or her as an object, which is fundamentally an egoistic and hostile act...It is characteristic of this species of symbol-oriented writing that it merely refers to “woman,” rather than to “women.” The static, symbolic point of view does not take into account plurality, which implies variety. It is hierarchical, but not pluralistic. It sees polarity, but not individuality; specific complementarity, but not...likeness and autonomous self-realization.<sup>79</sup>

Though Ovid's mothers are different from other depictions in their centrality to their respective narratives, they are still reductions of reality and play a singular role. Ovid is ultimately the one in power as he decides their identities and purposes as well as how they can best be used to suit his own desires. Women remain important as a means to an end, both in literature as a way to be in dialogue with dominant ideology and in reality as a way to carry on the family line.

Furthermore, the ability of mothers to carry such symbolism as seen in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* and in Augustus' ideology and imagery speaks to a shared recognition of this importance; such integral Roman values would not be able to be assigned to them otherwise. At the same time, men resent that importance and seek to temper it. The symbolism of the Roman mother thus serves as a way to control maternal power by defining the meaning of motherhood. Women are left to exist within the boundaries created by men and to find a way to balance between the transgressive mothers of the *Metamorphoses* and the powerful mothers of the *Fasti*.

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<sup>79</sup> Daly (1975) 161-64.

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