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Textual Encounter and the Male Homosocial Readership of Ovid's *Fasti*

In dedicating his *Fasti* from exile (after 14 CE, *F.* 1.1-26), Ovid longed for male literary culture in Rome, in which audience response to recitation guided composition. Desire of alternating cooperation and competition among men (Richlin 1997, Gleason 1990, 1995, Sedgwick 1985) drives Ovid to construct Germanicus, a popular warrior-prince, as ideal male reader. E. Fantham (1985) has already remarked that Ovid addresses Germanicus as "surrogate Muse," a female deity, and E. Oliensis (1997) has observed male same-sex eroticism between elegists and male addressees (cf. Greene 1998). No one has articulated the relevance of male homosocial dynamics to production and reception of the *Fasti*.

Comparison of the dedication (*F.* 1.1-26) and *Ex P.* 2.5 (addressed to Salanus) cites similarities between Germanicus' bond with Salanus, his *com_s* in rhetorical training (*Ex P.* 2.5), and Ovid's proposed bond with the prince in the *Fasti*. The dedication appeals, although more subtly than *Ex P.* 2.5, to a group of shifting erotic and military metaphors to represent literary co-creation between men.

Ovid negotiates this homosocial author-reader bond through "triangulation" of desire, not literally through women (cf. Sedgwick 1985, etc.), but through a conventionally feminized and eroticized elegiac text (Wyke 1987, Debroun 1994, E. Greene 2000, A. Keith 2000). Prior erotic poetry suggests innuendoes problematizing male co-creation, since they trigger male anxiety about dominant and submissive, quasi-gendered, positions. Such positioning is signaled by the assumption by the author or the reader of either an active or passive relation to a text (*pagina*) trafficked for "correction" between elite male author and elite male audience.

Homosociality informs Ovid's persona as *v_t_s*. In the dedication, Ovid offered himself and his text as passive recipient of the prince's active divine, masculine vigor in "correcting" the poem (*d_mihi t_placidum, deder_s in carmina v_r_s*, 1.17-18). Later, inspiration transpires through "touch" (e.g. via Venus in Book 4, pref.) and a metaphor of male pregnancy (Plato, *Symposium, Phaedrus*; Ovid's relations with Mars in *Fasti* 3, pref.; *Fasti* 6, pref; cf. duBois). However, in the prefaces of Books 5 and 6, rival discourses apparently teem with female deities and interests (Muses in *F.* 6 and Juno, Juventas, and Concordia in *F.* 5). But here the issue is proper male "choice" among them: Ovid triangulates proper masculinity with elite male readers through mutual critique of choice among goddesses. Fear of elite male critique of manhood explains why "Ovid" shrinks from choosing, unlike both feminized Paris (*F.* 6 pref.) or masculine Hercules (*F.* 5 pref.).

Finally, Ovid's *Fasti* stages an anxiety about shifting male identity among the elite (Rudich 1993 and Edwards 1993). "Ovid's" subjection of the *Fasti* to Germanicus' critique figures a cagey subjection of "self" – i.e. his prior, feminized, elegiac "self" – to a morally critical gaze. While communal inter-subjectivity was not new, subjection of self to the rule of one man problematized elite male identity in the turn from republic to autocracy (Foucault and Veyne).