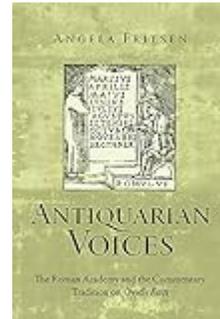


Angela Fritsen. *Antiquarian Voices: The Roman Academy and the Commentary Tradition on Ovid's "Fasti"*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015. 264 pp. \$69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8142-1284-4.



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In 1736 Maria Theresa Voigtin, widow of the printer to the University of Vienna, issued an edition of *Fasti Austriae*, a highly original poem which purported to sing the glories of the Habsburg dynasty month by month. Voigtin's volume is not central, of course, to Angela Fritsen's *Antiquarian voices* (her book being chiefly concerned with the reception of Ovid's own *Fasti* in Renaissance Italy) but is nonetheless a potent testimony to the pervasiveness of Ovid's poetical calendar of the Roman year in the early modern period. Moreover, the *Fasti Austriae* shows how, as late as the first half of the eighteenth century, Ovid's *Fasti* continued to be regarded as a source of national pride and politics. Long before, however, the Habsburg family appropriated Ovid's poem on the ancient festival in the cause of their own ideals, Renaissance humanists had seen in the *Fasti* an image of their own cultural past. This book sets out to survey the printed dissemination of Ovid's calendrical text in Rome in the latter half of the fifteenth century, and to relate interest in the poem at the time to the humanists' antiquarian pursuits as well as to their efforts to renew modern papal Rome. The volume opens with a preliminary chapter in which the author, after accounting for current attention paid by classicists to the *Fasti* both as a complex work of art and as an exploration of religious

thinking at a time of ideological realignment, provides a general overview of the poem's transmission throughout the ages. The text received scholarly attention in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (the so-called *aetas Ovidiana*), particularly in France. Medieval exegesis on the *Fasti* continued to exert an influence on successive scholars, as best illustrated by the case of the Alsatian humanist Beatus Rhenanus (1485-1547) and by the activities of the Italian humanists. Indeed, most conspicuous for their interest in the *Fasti* were several humanists involved in the Roman Academy under the mentorship of Pomponio Leto (1428-98). Two members of the Academy, Paolo Marsi (1440-84) and Antonio Costanzi (1436-90), are the heroes of Fritsen's wide-ranging monograph.

Very few readers in the Renaissance came to the literature of ancient Rome in a format unmediated by the annotation that is found in so many editions. Ovid's *Fasti* proved no exception to this general rule and the poem was also considered suitable for commentary as a guide to classical Roman culture. Published respectively in 1482 and 1489, Marsi and Costanzi's annotations to the *Fasti* are taken by Fritsen as her focal point in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 attends to the close-knit group of scholars gathered around Pomponio Leto, who wrote annotations to the *Fasti* and, as was the case with Marsi,

incorporated the poem into their own teaching program. This chapter is also particularly valuable for its attention to the use of the *Fasti* by real readers, as evidenced by several manuscript copies examined by Fritsen which include glosses in Ciriaco d'Ancona, Antonio Volsco, and Pomponio Leto's hands. Chapter 3 offers useful descriptive analysis of the two commentaries. It also looks at the impact of the printing press on the exegetical activities of many of the humanists involved, who were forced to "publish or perish." Moreover, in this section the author shows how many commentators on the *Fasti* employed their annotations to the text to exhibit their own poetic credentials. All in all, this chapter is packed with information that will be of great interest to the growing number of researchers working on the Renaissance commentary.

The subject of chapters 4 and 5 is antiquarianism. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which Ovid's *Fasti* provided inspiration for the study of the ancient past. Roman antiquarians such as Ciriaco d'Ancona, Poggio Bracciolini, Flavio Biondo, as well as the commentators on the poem discussed in chapters 2 and 3 found in the *Fasti* a useful guidebook to Rome. This was, of course, far from a straightforward process, and empirical observation and material evidence very often contradicted Ovid's poetical descriptions of Roman monuments. Chapter 5 examines the appropriation of Ovid's calendar-poem by the papacy following its crisis around the Great Schism, when the authority of the Roman church had to be re-established. In this section Fritsen shows how this operation was undertaken both within the body of learned

commentaries on the *Fasti*, and in the series of devotional works inspired by Ovid that often reflect the liturgical calendar. Underlying Costanzi's annotations to the *Fasti* is his willingness to uphold the political supremacy of the church. As for Christian imitations of Ovid, between 1480 and 1494 Lodovico Lazzarelli composed the monumental *Fasti Christianae religionis* (Calendar of the Christian Faith), a work which hails the birth of Christian Rome, overshadowing that of pagan Rome.

The merits of this book are manifold. Fritsen's observations on the Renaissance exegesis and imitation of the *Fasti* are firmly grounded on a thorough knowledge of Ovid's poem. As with the humanists she portrays, Fritsen seems equally at ease walking around ancient and early modern Rome. Another value of the volume under review lies in the broad range of types of evidence examined by the author, from poems to visual aids, from commentaries, prefaces, and other paratexts to readers' annotations. Moreover, Fritsen has not restricted her enquiry to a philological analysis of Renaissance encounters with Ovid's *Fasti* but has explored the social and political implications of such textual engagement. In summary, *Antiquarian voices* provides a remarkably well-researched, informative, and original picture of the multifaceted dissemination of Ovid's *Fasti* in the early era of print.

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