

Performing Foundation: the Gendered Role of Baking in Ovid's *Fasti*

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When I arrived in the UK one summer a few years ago, I found the entire country in the grip of a “cult”, one that cut across lines of ethnicity, gender, age. The “cult” was that of *The Great British Bakeoff*, which was being shown on BBC 1, and its presiding “diva” was the English food writer and chef Mary Berry, who was then in her late seventies¹. Ancient Rome too had its matronal “divas” of baking, to judge from Ovid's *Fasti*. Baking and sharing bread are acts that help forge community; in ancient Rome they were also associated with the foundation of the city's sacred cults². This paper concerns the largely unrecognized importance in the *Fasti* of female deities and bread and baking to the founding legends of ancient Rome and to the formation of Roman cultural identity. James has argued that the narratives about Rome's foundation often involve

1 — I am using the word “cult” here in a popular sense, to indicate the almost religious devotion that viewers across social and national spectrums have for several years now exhibited towards the show.

2 — Schultz (2006) in her important study of women's religion in the Roman Republic has argued that female religious participation was not confined to the private sphere, the traditional domain of women, but often included public events.

the violent subjugation of young women³. By contrast, the baking and sharing of bread and cakes, traditionally the most domestic of activities, offered a model of maternal authority that not only honoured the gods but emphasised the fundamental value of hospitality towards strangers and the needy; ritual and communal acts of giving and sharing bread demonstrated the social and religious power of women, young and old, within the state. Such female cults offer alternative foundation narratives to the violent origins promulgated through the better-known legends of Aeneas, Romulus and Remus, and Mars and Ilia, and in the *Fasti* they always have a political dimension.

In ancient Greece, the major female festivals of the Athenian Thesmophoria and the more parochial festival of Haloa, celebrated nearby at Demeter's cult centre of Eleusis, testify to the close connection between the domestic skill of baking and ritual purposes⁴. We do not possess, however, a comparable wealth of sources for ancient Rome. Ovid's *Fasti* therefore constitutes a valuable source for understanding the social and cultural role of bread-making in ancient Rome and consequently the importance of female community power and domestic politics in the formation of the Roman state. The *Fasti* mentions five cults associated with baking and foundation: in Book 2 the Fornacalia (513-32); in Book 3 the festival of Anna Perenna (523-710) and the Liberalia (713-90); and in Book 6 the Vestalia (249-460) and the Matralia (473-562). These ancient festivals involve female figures who are not burdened with young children or with marital obligations. They offer a view of women not as dangerously subversive figures but as figures of religious authority who contribute to the social and ethical formation of a peaceful state. In two of the festivals, that of Anna Perenna and the Matralia, bread is a significant agent in the foundation of the goddess's cult as well as an integral part of its values and rituals.

This interest in maternal, foundational authority connects the *Fasti* with Ovid's present-day Rome where the empress Livia provided a powerful model associated with the restoration of Rome's early female cults. The recent study by Angelova of the gendered imperial discourse of founding provides an important corrective to the almost exclusive emphasis in scholarship on male emperors as founders, beginning with Livia's husband, Augustus, lauded and self-lauded as rebuilder of Rome and restorer of its religious cults⁵. Livia, Angelova shows, was honoured not only as the sacred maternal founder of a new dynasty but also as a

3 — James (2016).

4 — Foley (1994) 71-5.

5 — There are notable exceptions; e.g. Milnor (2005); Panoussi (2019).

civic benefactor and, outside Italy, as a city founder⁶. In Rome, Angelova argues, Livia's restorative projects "seem to have been associated broadly with women's interests, roles and virtues"⁷. While Livia's most prominent public work was the Porticus Liviae with its Shrine of Concordia, she also restored the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris and the Temple of Bona Dea Subsaxana on the Aventine Hill, the latter a goddess associated with the therapeutic power of plants; all these cults are mentioned in the *Fasti*. Ovid's late poetry is a valuable witness to the unprecedented public role that Livia enjoyed in the state; her presence in the *Fasti* connects the distant past with present time, archaic legend with Augustan myth-making. In her public image, Livia was widely shown to resemble Ceres, the goddess of grain and fecundity; she thus demonstrated the conflation of civic and domestic ideals associated with the female work of turning grain into food fit for both the people and the gods⁸. In Milnor's words, the domestic sphere offered a place where "tradition, virtue, and the nostalgic comforts of home might be invoked as the basis of a renewed sense of national purpose". In Ovid's *Fasti*, the importance of female cults associated with baking aroused the memory of shared values while offering a gendered and, I shall argue, a not uncontroversial notion of civic identity in the Augustan age.

This paper falls into two parts. I will first look at the gendered history of baking in ancient times and provide an overview of the religious cults associated with baking that are given prominence in Ovid's *Fasti*. In the second part I will focus upon the final cult associated with baking to be mentioned in the *Fasti*, that of the Matralia (6.473-562). Here the poet widens the scope of the poem beyond ritual foundation by providing an aetiological narrative of the encounter between two ancient Roman deities, Carmentis and Mater Matuta, the former a goddess that in Book 1 the poet connects with the empress Livia. Their story, placed towards the conclusion of the *Fasti*, associates the baking of bread with the fundamental value of hospitality, particularly in the form of welcoming strangers and exiles to Italy; I shall suggest that it may well have had particular significance for the poet in Tomis.

Bread and Baking in Ancient times and in Ovid's Fasti

The first appearance of the word *panis* in Roman poetry occurs in the *Fasti*: *panis erat primis virides mortalibus herbae / quas tellus nullo*

6 — Angelova (2015) 69-83. Angelova 76-7 observes that throughout the empire Livia followed the pattern of Hellenistic queens in her assimilation to the patron deities of cities.

7 — Angelova (2015) 72.

8 — Angelova (2015) 77-8.

sollicitante dabat (the bread of the first humans consisted of the green herbs which the earth gave spontaneously, 4.395-6). Indeed, as Fantham observes, the appearance of this humble word in elevated poetry, and, furthermore, as the very first word in the introduction to the festival of Ceres, would have shocked Ovid's readers "as it seems to have shocked the scribe who introduced the variant *messis*"⁹. The periphrasis *dona Cereris* or the metonymic "Ceres" was the literary equivalent of *panis*. This "grassy" early form of bread then gave way, through Ceres' inspiration, to *meliora alimenta... / utiliore cibo* (better nourishment and more useful food, 401-2), which must include grain and therefore bread¹⁰. The Roman goddess Ceres was closely associated with Demeter. Ovid's account of the festival of Ceres (*Fast.* 4.393-620) has little to do with grain or bread, however, but instead emphasises Ceres' wanderings in search for her daughter; as Bartlett points out, these locate her outside of Roman society for much of her episode in the *Fasti*¹¹. All the same, Ovid's bold use of *panis* here and again in connection with the Vestalia, in commemoration of the occasion when loaves of bread were successfully hurled at besiegers of Rome (6.311 and 315), suggests its fundamental importance to human life at all social levels, to Roman history and Roman vitality, and indeed to the *Fasti*.

Bread was enormously important to the Roman diet and economy, and also to religious and political life. Wheat, Latin *far*, was the first and best food of the Romans, according to Pliny *Nat.* 18.94¹². As Montanari argues, bread was also ideologically important, distinguishing human from animal, and Roman from barbarian, through the complex transformation of uncooked grain into a palatable food fit for commoner or god alike¹³. We see its ideological importance in texts as early as the Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh*, where the wild man Enkidu is introduced to human culture through partaking of fermented, human-made foods, bread and beer. Bread also assumed moral significance, for along with olive oil and wine it was "a symbol of the simple life, of a dignified poverty characterized by hard work and humble satisfaction"¹⁴. Bread was therefore fundamental to Roman cultural identity and civic pride. In imperial times, grain was imported on a vast scale from North Africa and Egypt to feed the poorer citizens, who received a monthly dole of grain, which

9 — Fantham (1998) 169 on *Fast.* 4.395.

10 — Cf. Verg. *G.* 1.7-8: *et alma Ceres, vestro si munere tellus / Chaoniam pingui glandem mutavit arista*, and *Fast.* 4.401-2: *Ceres... / mutavit glandes utiliore cibo*.

11 — Bartlett (2013) 298-300.

12 — Braun (1995) 25-34 notes that the earliest bread was made from barley, a grain that the Romans thought fit only for feeding to animals.

13 — Montanari (1999) 71-5.

14 — Montanari (1999) 73.

was then taken to a local bakery to be made into bread¹⁵. The Roman army also marched on bread, which was fundamental to their diet; bread symbolized their citizenship through their inscription in the rolls of the army¹⁶. Bread at Rome was thus closely linked to cultural history and to politics; along with wine and oil, it offered an ideological food model based on moral and civic values¹⁷. The symbolic value of bread as a signifier of early Roman virtues is displayed in the exemplary anecdotes told by Suetonius about the emperor Augustus' frugality: he preferred coarse bread and ate it sparingly whenever he felt hungry, during a carriage run or before the bath, for instance (Suet. *Aug.* 76-7). Unlike his poorer subjects, however, the emperor could snack on bread whenever he wished¹⁸.

Women from the earliest times of Rome seem to have been associated with bread and baking, including with the hard labour of grinding the grain. The gendered associations of baking grain into bread are, however, often obscure or garner little attention. Pliny the Elder, for instance, claims that in early Rome, bread-making was the particular task of women in the home (*mulierum id opus maxime erat*, *Nat.* 18.107). The early cultic associations of wheat are ascribed by Pliny to the efforts of Romulus and Numa (*Nat.* 18. 6-8). In the same passage he also mentions two ancient goddesses, Seia, named from sowing, and Segesta, named from reaping the harvest, but beyond referring to their statues on display in the Circus, Pliny has nothing further to say about them. In *De Agricultura* 74 and 75 Cato mentions the simple methods of baking bread and cakes (*liba*) as a central part of a householder's duties, but he does not specify who does the baking. Ovid's tale of Baucis and Philemon suggests the gendered division in preparing a meal (*Met.* 8. 637-50): Baucis stokes the fire and cooks vegetables, while her husband does the heavy lifting by taking the meat off its hook and carving it. The tasks of this mythical couple complement those of the unnamed *parca colona* (*Fast.* 4.692) and her husband; he ploughed the fields (693-4) while she swept the cottage, collected hen's eggs, gathered simple vegetables, kept the humble hearth warm, and wove winter clothing (*Fast.* 4.695-700). Baking is not directly mentioned here but is surely assumed with the reference to the hearth. Besides, the activities of the *colona* are described on a day dedicated to the festival of Ceres, goddess of grain – which may explain Fantham's puzzlement over

15 — Corbier (1999) 132.

16 — Dupont (1999) 126-7.

17 — Montanari (1999) 77-8.

18 — Cf. *Res Gestae* 5, where Augustus prided himself on administering the dole at his own expense during a famine, a precedent that eventually led to Juvenal's sarcastic coinage of the phrase "bread and circuses" (10.81) to indicate the people's subjection to imperial control.

the privileging of the *colona*, whose activities are given six lines compared to the two lines granted her husband¹⁹.

Bread-making thus seems to have been a domestic and communal activity in Rome until local mills and professional, large-scale production took over. Pliny dates the commercialization of bread-making to the period of the Third Macedonian War of 171-168 BCE (*Nat.* 18.107)²⁰. Imperial times in particular saw the rise of professional male bakers who had mills and ovens situated apart from their homes. Yet it seems that free women remained involved in baking, if in a less ostentatious way than the baker Eurysaces whose tomb, sculpted like bread ovens, looms beside the Porta Maggiore in Rome. For instance, a marble block from first-century Ostia, with holes on top for containers, has an inscription stating that “P. Nonius Zethus Aug(ustalis) made it for himself, his freedwoman Nonia Hilara, and his wife Nonia Pelegia” (*CIL* XIV.393). The left and right of the inscription show characteristic images from a bakery of a donkey tied to the mill, and of various equipment used in baking, such as a bread pan, a sifter and a breadbasket²¹. The block seems to commemorate a successful business run by the man and his two women. Female slaves too seem to have been involved in the business of baking bread. For instance, Justinian’s *Digest* describes baking bread and managing the house of a large estate as women’s work, probably with reference to slaves (*Dig.* 33.7.12.5): *mulieres quae panem coquant quaeque villam servant* (women who bake the bread and look after the house). As Laes comments, however, apart from a few comments in letters on papyri, we have no testimony from ancient women or children about either the need for food or its preparation²². Despite this lack of direct evidence for women’s experience in the Roman world of preparing food and baking bread, anthropologically across cultures, as Laes emphasises, women were involved with these activities²³. The gendered division of labour in baking continued into later times across cultures, as is seen, for instance, in the stereotypical, popular story of King Alfred burning a woman’s cakes, baking being a task that evidently he was ill equipped to manage.

As human beings’ first food, bread had symbolic value as the very foundation of life and as an icon of cultural identity, a conceptual image that persists to this day. For instance, the front page of the *New York Times* for Sunday November 10, 2019 reported the closing of a bakery in France under the heading *Lost without Fresh loaves*: “Without bread there is no

19 — Fantham (1998) 222-3 on *Fast.* 4.691-2.

20 — Plin. *Nat.* 18.107; Banham and Bayliss (July 2018). On the problem with this dating see Mayeske (1979) 39-40.

21 — Bakker (2000).

22 — Laes (2018) 185.

23 — Laes (2018) 180.

more life’”, lamented a resident of a French village whose bakery had closed”. As medievalists Banham and Bayliss write in their blog, *The Early English Bread Project*, “sex and fertility also tend to creep into narratives of women and bread (as it still does – think of “a bun in the oven”)”²⁴. Sex, fertility and motherhood were very much a part of female ritual activity at the Greek festivals of the Thesmophoria and Haloa where women, for instance, feasted together and participated in ritual, erotic play with dough. As Dillon comments, through their participation in these women-only rites, women “inverted many features of male political organization”²⁵. By contrast, the several narratives associated with baking in Ovid’s *Fasti* lack the subversive sexuality of the Greek festivals. Instead, the baker is generally the *anus*, the old woman or the childless goddess whose former fertility is transferred to the creation of material nourishment for citizens and newcomers alike. Let me now turn to the *Fasti* and to the early cults associated with bread and baking mentioned there.

The first reference in the *Fasti* to the processing of grain occurs in Book 2 with reference to the Fornacalia (2.513-32), a very ancient cult. According to Pliny, it was established by Numa, who also introduced the important procedure of toasting wheat to make it edible and fit for offering to the gods (*Nat.* 18.7-8):

Numa instituit deos fruge colere et mola salsa supplicare atque, ut auctor est Hemina, far torrere quoniam tostum cibo salubrius esset, id uno modo consecutus, statuendo non esse purum ad rem divinam nisi tostum. Is et Fornacalia instituit farris torrendi ferias.

Numa instituted the worship of the gods with earth’s produce and the supplication of them with ground salted flour, and, according to Hemina, the roasting of grain, since toasted it was healthier as food, establishing this practice by declaring that it was not pure for divine purposes unless toasted. He also instituted the Fornacalia, the festival for roasting grain.

King Numa is credited here with introducing baking for the primary purpose of offering sacrificial bread to the gods; only when it was softened through baking was it unadulterated. Bread is thus associated with the early days of Rome and with a king renowned for his justice and piety (Livy 1.18). But in the *Fasti*, the Fornacalia, which traditionally was a moveable feast, is mentioned in the context of the strange “Festival of the Fools”, *Feriae Stultorum* (2. 513-32). In what Robinson calls “a striking reversal of the traditional picture of life in early Rome”, Ovid presents the early Romans as too involved in war to invest time in agriculture; they

24 — Banham and Bayliss (July 2018).

25 — Dillon (2017).

wasted grain by toasting it directly on the fire and offered raw spelt to Ceres, a dangerous procedure that caused fires (*Fast.* 2.515-24)²⁶. Their solution, according to Ovid, was to create the goddess Fornax, “the Oven diva” (*facta dea Fornax est, Fast.* 2.525), to whom they prayed for assistance²⁷. As Frayn explains, the *fornax* was a large oven designed to soften the grain after harvesting so that it could be kept dry and ready for grinding²⁸. Strikingly, Ovid does not mention Numa’s important civilizing role. Rather, the farmers who worship “the Oven” as a female deity are represented as foolish on the Festival of Fools. Nonetheless, in this first reference to the importance of transforming raw grain into a substance that could eventually be kneaded and baked, Fornax demonstrates the gendered nature of baking: “she” is the elemental form of female fertility. As Jacob comments, “the oven was the womb of chemistry”²⁹. But in the *Fasti* the cult of Fornax is also the instrument of deep political irony. The Fornacalia is associated not only with the Feast of Fools but also with the Quirinalia, the festival which celebrated Romulus’ highly controversial “apotheosis”³⁰. The men’s agricultural problems, furthermore, do not reflect back well on Romulus. Numa’s foundational role in advancing the religious and domestic life of the Romans is replaced by the attention drawn to the problematic policies of Rome’s first founder and his problematic end, either murdered by the senators or deified. The action of Fornax does not deal directly with baking but rather with the preliminary stage, the softening of grain. This short, odd episode, however, programmatically demonstrates that in the *Fasti* baking is always part of a larger political and cultural as well as gendered discourse.

In the numerical centre of the *Fasti*, in Book 3.523-710, Ovid explores the identity of the ancient goddess Anna Perenna, whose festival was commemorated on the Ides of March. Contrary to the political associations of the Ides with Julius Caesar’s assassination, Anna’s festival celebrated life – partying with song, dance, drink and sex took place on the banks of the Tiber (525-38). Among several explanations for the name of the goddess, including her identification with Dido’s sister (545-656), Anna is identified as an *anus* (668), an old woman from the Latin town of Bovillae who baked rustic *liba* (sweetened bread / cakes) for the

26 — Robinson (2011) 323.

27 — Ovid gives our only ancient reference to this goddess (also at *Fast.* 6.314, *Fornacali... deae*), and some have doubted her existence; see Bömer (1958) 120 on *Fast.* 2.525. But as Pliny mentions that the ancient Romans also worshipped the goddess Segesta, whose name was derived from *segetibus* (*Nat.* 18.8), the same etymological logic may explain Fornax; see Maltby (1991) 556 on Segesta (2).

28 — See Frayn (1978) 30.

29 — Jacob (1944) 27.

30 — Robinson (2011) 320-2.

plebeians during their first Secession when they had run short of bread (661-74)³¹. “She fashioned rustic cakes with trembling hand” (*fingebat tremula rustica liba manu*, 3.670), a detail that suggests her age and the effort involved, and yet also her skill; *fingebat* is also a metaphor for poetic composition. Every morning she distributed fresh cakes among the people camped out on the Sacred Mount (3.671-2): *per populum fumantia mane solebat / dividere: haec populo copia grata fuit* (in the morning she would distribute piping hot cakes among the people: the people are grateful for this bounty). As Heyworth points out, repetition of *populum / populo* brings out the reciprocal relationship between the plebs and the old woman³². For when peace was made, the people rewarded Anna with unusual honours for a woman: she was awarded a statue and immortalized as Anna Perenna (3.673-4). The baking of bread – her acts of charity towards the plebeian class – thus are instrumental in the formation of Anna’s cult. As Ramsby argues, “In the already festive atmosphere of the *Fasti*, Anna Perenna stands out as a goddess whose identity is associated with both the festive ‘acting out’ of the plebeian class against the stricter *mores* of the upper class (the festival on the Tiber involves public drinking and sex) and a more somber historical moment of ‘acting up’ when the plebs seceded from the state in 494 BCE due to various political and social grievances”³³.

Anna was probably a seasonal goddess, whose name derived from *annus*, the year³⁴. And yet the etymology and story of Anna Bovillae are not implausible and probably had some cultic reality. Ramsby has discussed a coin of 82 CE possibly depicting Anna Perenna that was minted by the suggestively named Gaius Annius, proconsul and supporter of the plebs³⁵. Ovid’s plebeian action should not be dismissed. Archaeological evidence, moreover, shows that she continued to be worshipped well into the fourth century³⁶. And, as Fabre-Serris comments, the *Fasti* plays a very subtle game between the constraints of the Roman calendar and liberty in the choice and interpretation of narratives³⁷.

A well-established argument points to the literary influence here of Callimachus’ poem *Hecale*, in which an old woman offers Theseus hospitality on the night before he slays the Marathonian boar; she is

31 — On the identification of Anna Perenna with Queen Dido’s sister see, for instance, the extensive discussion in Chiu (2016) 72-86.

32 — Heyworth (2019) 221 on *Fast.* 3.667-74.

33 — Ramsby (2019) 115.

34 — Bömer (1958) on *Fast.* 3.543.

35 — Ramsby (2019).

36 — Newlands (2016); Wiseman (2019).

37 — Fabre-Serris (1998) 71.

posthumously rewarded with a deme named after her and a cult³⁸. The *Fasti* Romanises and politicises this story. Anna comes from the town of Bovillae, which was the centre of Julian cult³⁹. On the Ides of March, a day of charged significance for the Julian *gens* and for the Roman state, since it essentially marked the end of the Republic, the poem provocatively exalts an old woman who nourished the plebeian revolt with her cakes. Anna thus emblematises the link between religion and politics, particularly plebeian politics, in the foundation of early Roman cult. As Chiu observes, Ovid creates here a narrative that “de-prioritizes male political prominence and lofty rhetoric in favor of Anna, her sympathy with the plebs, and her resistance to established civic authority”⁴⁰. Anna’s role in distributing (*dividere* 3.672) cakes to be shared among “the people” suggests resistance to authoritarian rule as well as community building, the sharing of a meal that fosters personal and political ties and reciprocal, rather than hierarchical, relationships.

Liba, that is bread sweetened with honey, are central to the Ovidian narrative of the immediately following festival, the Liberalia (3.713-790). It too was a plebeian cult and, as Miller points out, it celebrated both Liber and his partner Libera⁴¹. Unlike the Greek Dionysus, the Roman Liber and Libera seem to have been associated more specifically with basic food as well as drink. In their temple on the Aventine these two deities were joined by Ceres, thus emphasising the importance to the festival of grain as well as wine – the staples of Roman life. Indeed, the Ovidian narrator announces that the focus of his explanation of this festival will be the reason why Liber, sower of the vine, calls the people to his cakes on his feast day, *vitisator populos ad sua liba vocet*, interestingly, for it gives more weight to the agency of the elderly priestesses, an older reading, printed in Frazer’s (1931) Loeb edition, reads *vilis anus* in place of *vitisator* (726). He offers an etymology of the *libamina*, offerings, and *liba*, which were served as the offerings (733-6) as derived from the name of the festival Liberalia: *nomine ab auctoris ducunt libamina nomen / libaque, quod sanctis pars datur inde focus* (libations derive their name from the inventor’s name as do libation cakes, because part of them are offered on sacrificial hearths).

Elderly priestesses made the cakes and performed the sacrifice. This official position for old women is confirmed by Varro, who describes old women (*sacerdotes Liberi anus*) baking the cakes on a portable stove and sacrificing them for the buyer (Varro, *LL* 6.14): *Liberalia dicta quod per*

38 — Harrison (1993); Chiu (2016); Heyworth (2019) 219-20.

39 — Newlands (2019) 139-40.

40 — Chiu (2016) 27-8. Herbert-Brown (2009) notes the importance in the *Fasti* of female deities who are defenders of the plebs against the senatorial class.

41 — Miller (2002).

totum oppidum eo die sedent sacerdotes Liberi anus hedera coronatae cum libis et foculo pro emptore sacrificantes (The Liberalia is so called because on that day the priestesses of Liber sit throughout the whole city, old women crowned with ivy who make sacrifices with freshly baked cakes on behalf of the buyer). As Miller comments, this is “a real-life sacral practice on the streets of Rome”, a scenario far from the grandeur of Greek tragedy⁴². Old women were chosen as the official priestesses of Liber and Libera because of their love of wine, Ovid explains (*vinosior aetas*, an age more fond of wine, 765), a comment that Heyworth connects to the comic tradition of the drunken old woman⁴³. On the other hand, Ovid does not portray them as drunk and unable to perform their religious duties. It is surely appropriate that Liber’s priestesses take pleasure in the juice of the grape, and, as Schulz has argued, wine-drinking by women was acceptable for ritual purposes⁴⁴. Besides, Dionysus rouses young women with his thyrsus, an oblique reference to the god’s role as founder of drama and to the Bacchantes whom the god can dangerously rouse to murder even their own children (721-3; 763-4). And indeed, in the story of Carmentis and Mater Matuta, we will see the dangerous role that the Bacchantes of Italy can enact there. The text here perhaps also hints at the Bacchic scandal of 186 BCE, which resulted in the banning of male priests from the cult while allowing female priests to continue in their duties⁴⁵. The elderly priestesses of Liber implicitly restore the reputation of the cult by engaging in the peaceful, orderly activity of making cakes for sacrifice to Liber and Liberalia on the appointed day; they support the sacred order and rhythms of the city and thus counter the youthful disorder and sexual licence with which the cult had been previously associated (763-6). Ovid tells us, moreover, that the cakes are pleasing to Liber for they are piping hot, like the cakes distributed by Anna of Bovillae, and suffused with honey, a substance that Liber himself, according to Ovid’s narrative here, discovered (735-62) and which, of course, is associated with both pleasure and poetry (761-2): *melle pater fruitur, liboque infusa calenti / iure repertori splendida mella damus* (the father god enjoys honey, and it is right that we give to its discoverer glistening honey soaked in a warm cake)⁴⁶.

In the case of both Anna of Bovillae and the priestesses of Liber and Libera, the women are old, poor (*pauper*, 668), and of low social class (*vilis*, 726; *OLD* 5). They have however sacred and, in the case of Anna, foundational significance. With their cakes the elderly priestesses of Liber

42 — Miller (2002) 206-7.

43 — Heyworth (2019) 240.

44 — Schulz (2006) 131-4.

45 — Schultz (2006) 83-92.

46 — The association between honey and poetry has a long history. In Latin poetry eg. Lucr. 1.931-51; Bömer (1958) 195 on *Fast.* 3.746.

and Libera summon the people to honour the gods; as Heyworth comments, the poetic plural *populos* (726) gives a sense of the demotic nature of the festival⁴⁷, a sense reinforced by another etymology that the narrator provides for the festival, *libertas*, liberty (773-88). We may recall Anna of Bovillae distributing cakes among the people, *per populum* (671). Cakes are the cornerstone of the Liberalia.

Again we have a politically provocative religious festival and a plebeian cult, in which women's role as maker and dispenser of *liba* is crucial to its origins and ritual functions. Anna's story, however, is often dismissed as a spin-off from the Liberalia. But the two festivals together reinforce both the important association of women, here elderly women of low social class (*vilis anus*, 3.726), with plebeian cult, and the significant role that bread, sacrifice, and commensality play in the formation of Rome's social and political identity. Yet these ancient cults and their sanctuaries were vulnerable to decay and neglect. The Temple of Liber, Libera and Ceres lay in ruins during most of Augustus' reign after a fire in 31 BCE; its repair was not completed till 17 CE, the likely year of Ovid's death in Tomis⁴⁸. At some point in the reign of Tiberius the cult site of Anna Perenna was moved from the imperial centre of Rome to the outskirts⁴⁹. The *Fasti* "re-founds" these early cults by restoring the memory, at least, of these ancient Roman deities and their festivals.

Finally, in Book 6 the close association of female fertility with chastity in Roman cult is demonstrated in the Vestalia, the major festival of the most prominent and most ancient of the Roman female deities, Vesta, custodial goddess of the hearth (6.249-460). Vesta was closely associated with the ancient cult of the Trojan Penates and with Aeneas; her generative flame was said to maintain the longevity of the Roman state (6.455-60)⁵⁰. Augustus' renewed attention to the cult of Vesta emphasized chastity and female virtues. Moreover, as Feeney comments, in "an extraordinary transformation for *Vesta publica populi Romani Quiritum*, the guarantor of the city's identity and continuity", Augustus established a second shrine for her on the Palatine, thus incorporating her into dynastic cult and emphasizing her importance to his own moral reforms⁵¹.

The *Fasti* draws attention to a lesser-known aspect of Vesta and her festival through its celebration of Vesta's association with the milling and baking of bread. Vesta was the patron of bakers and of the donkey (generally regarded as a humble, lewd animal), who ground the grain at

47 — Heyworth (2019) 233 on *Fast.* 3.723-6.

48 — Miller (2002) 204-5; 220-3.

49 — Newlands (2019) 143-4.

50 — Littlewood (2006) 82-3.

51 — Feeney (1991) 215; *Fast.* 4.949-54.

the mill. The *Copa* refers to the donkey as *Vestae delictum* (Vesta's darling, 26); both Propertius in 4.1.21, referring to early Rome (*Vesta coronatis pauper gaudebat asellis*), and Ovid in *Fasti* 6 referring to the present (311, 469-70), mention garlanded donkeys bringing bread at the Vestalia: *ecce, coronatis panis dependet asellis* (6.311). Pompeian bakers took Vesta as their patron deity; their homes and bakeshops were decorated with paintings of Vesta, often crowned and throned, and with the Lares and the donkey, guardians of their home and their business⁵². Indeed, Mayeske has pointed out that all the sacred paintings of Vesta in Pompeii except two appear in bakeshops or the homes of bakers, and the exceptions are located in houses directly adjacent to bakeries⁵³.

In addition to providing a solemn exegesis of her historical, dynastic and philosophical significance, the *Fasti* brings out the popular aspects of Vesta as the goddess who guards the basic foodstuff of life and protects the hearth on which bread was originally baked. Vesta is briefly linked with Fornax, the elemental goddess of the oven (6.313-318) who was celebrated in Book 2. Vesta was also linked with another ancient goddess of the hearth, Vacuna (6.305-10), who seems to have been Sabine in origin and thus representative of the simplicity and moral integrity for which the Sabines were known⁵⁴. The account of the Vestalia in the *Fasti* brings out the paradoxical nature of this ancient goddess, her scrupulous chastity and her generative power⁵⁵. Burlesque stories concerning Vesta circulated at her festival⁵⁶. One such narrative is a version of the satyric drama in which Vesta is rescued from rape by the timely braying of the donkey (6.319-46); another narrates her miraculous bread-baking at the time of the Gallic siege when Rome is saved not by javelins but by loaves of bread hurled from the city ramparts upon the enemy (6.349-94). As Littlewood remarks, both these stories "affirm the popular image of Vesta as patron of... bakers"⁵⁷. The saving of the city by bread also recalls the story of Anna Perenna who assisted the plebeian revolt with her freshly baked cakes; in both narratives, bread has political as well as social agency. The *Fasti* thus gives particular attention to Vesta's connection with bread, the fundamental, first cooked food that was also a symbol of the moral and physical health of the Roman state at all social levels. In its concluding book, the *Fasti* highlights the importance of women's domestic skills for basic human sustenance, for the formation of moral and civic values at Rome's origins, and for bread's simple, socially levelling pleasures.

52 — Littlewood (2006) lviii-lx.

53 — Mayeske (1979) 42.

54 — Littlewood (2006) 97-9.

55 — Littlewood (2006) 80-1.

56 — Littlewood (2006) 103-5; Newlands (1995) 127-45.

57 — Littlewood (2006) 104.

Mater Matuta and Carmentis

The festival of the Matralia, in honour of Mater Matuta, follow closely upon the Vestalia (6.473-562). It is also the first of three female cults celebrated on June 11 which have associations with the empress Livia: Fortuna, whose archaic temple was restored by Livia, and Concordia, whose shrine she dedicated in the Porticus Liviae (473-648). As we shall later see, the Matralia is also linked to Livia also through the aetiological narrative Ovid creates for her cult. Like Vesta, Mater Matuta was an archaic Italic kourotrophos goddess; she watched over not only the birth but also the growth of young children. Ovid claims that her temple, like that of Fortuna (described immediately following this episode), was founded by Servius Tullius in the sixth century (479-80); archaeological evidence suggests that the two archaic temples stood side by side in the Forum Boarium. As Littlewood observes, these two cults were dedicated to the female cycle of adult life, with Fortuna presiding over a woman's transition from virginity to pregnancy in the first weeks of marriage, and with Mater Matuta presiding over the care of children not her own⁵⁸. To explain this curious aspect of the cult of Mater Matuta, Ovid introduces a literary explanation which occupies a large part of Book 6 of the *Fasti* (473-562). The original name and identity of Mater Matuta was that of queen Ino of Thebes, regarded as a kourotrophos goddess for her raising of Semele's child Dionysus. She and her own infant son Melicertes sought refuge in Italy and, thanks to the hospitality and prophetic powers of the Roman goddess Carmentis, were honoured with deification, taking on the new names of Mater Matuta and Portunus⁵⁹. In the narrative of Ino's transformative encounter with Carmentis, prophet, mother of Evander, and goddess, the major themes that have emerged in the discourse around bread in the *Fasti* – its intersection of class, gender, ethnicity and age, and its political significance – come together, with, moreover, a new discursive feature, the theme of exile.

Panoussi's recent book on female rituals in Roman literature emphasises the close link of Mater Matuta to Rome's religious foundations⁶⁰. The episode is set in Evander's humble settlement by the river Tiber that would become the famous *urbs* of Augustus and of Roman poets. Indeed, when Ino arrives in Italy, she first sails up the Tiber to the Aventine (501-3). Her trajectory, as Panoussi argues, is analogous to that of Aeneas in his quest to found a new nation⁶¹. Book 8 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas visits Evander, thus hovers in the background (*A.* 8.102-369). But

58 — Littlewood (2006) 147-51.

59 — Littlewood (2006) 151-2.

60 — Panoussi (2019) 188-202.

61 — Panoussi (2019) 195.

as Panoussi comments, Ovid's narrative provides a positive alternative to male foundation narratives encountered in other Augustan authors, primarily Vergil's *Aeneid*⁶². For the emphasis falls on female agency, not only as regards the founding of the cult of Mater Matuta, but as regards the founding of Rome itself.

Ino's initial arrival in Italy with her young son is anything but peaceful, however. In the grove of Stimula or Semele on the Aventine, she is almost torn apart by Bacchantes, *Maenadas Ausonias* (504), who have migrated from Arcadia to the future site of Rome and are goaded by Juno to kill the new migrants in revenge for Ino's fostering of Jupiter's bastard son Bacchus. The epithet "Ausonian" suggests the young women have sloughed off their idealized Arcadian identity but have failed to assimilate to their new land, preserving instead the Dionysian violence that is ignited by the dualism of Juno, both maternal goddess and the epitome of rage. Ino's nephew Bacchus does not intervene; instead, Ino is rescued by Hercules in his role of Virgilian civilizing god (503-26), a scenario that suggests an affiliation between the Italian Maenads and Virgil's Cacus in *Aeneid* 8, except that the women flee when Hercules comes on the scene (521-2). The grove of Semele where the attack takes place (503) became the site for the scandal of the Bacchanalia in 186 BCE⁶³. As with the Liberalia, the passions, in the form of female, Bacchic violence, hover on the margins of cults involving women, but are kept mostly at bay by the establishment of local religious ritual and sacred, domestic order. The threat of violence highlights the importance of Ino's subsequent welcome in the home of Carmentis, mother of Evander. Carmentis makes cakes (*liba*) to welcome Ino and alleviate her hunger – a simple, creative act that counteracts the sacrilegious desires of the Maenads to tear her and her child apart. As at the Liberalia, worship of Mater Matuta subsequently involved the sacrificial offering of honey cakes, *flavaque... liba* (*Fast.* 6.476, 482), in this case by *matronae*⁶⁴.

Ino has a violent past that must be left behind if she is to become assimilated to Roman society. The murderous stepmother of Helle and Phrixus and the suicidal mother of Melicertes, with whom she jumps to death off a cliff, only to be saved by sea nymphs (*Met.* 4.416-542), is thus given a second chance in Italy. As Parker has suggested, we might see here a recuperation of violent, tragic Greek myth in the more peaceable land of Italy, but Ino's first human encounter is with murderous Italian Maenads on the Aventine (503-26); in this episode, Evander's proto-Rome, the Virgilian crucible of Roman moral virtues, is temporarily turned on its

62 — Panoussi (2019) 189.

63 — Livy 39.12.4; Littlewood (2006) 159 on *Fast.* 6.503.

64 — Littlewood (2006) 153 on *Fast.* 6.475. Littlewood interprets Ovid's *bonae matres* as *univirae*; but here may be an allusion to Ino's poor record as a biological mother.

head⁶⁵. Moreover, the new goddess's problematic past is recalled and accommodated in some striking features of her rites. At the Matralia, a good mother will pray on behalf of another's child, for Ino was a better aunt (to Bacchus) than a mother to her own children (*Fast.* 6.551-62). Female slaves are also excluded from her worship as one of them revealed Ino's plot against her stepchildren Helle and Phrixus (551-7)⁶⁶. They were blamed and expelled for a famine at Thebes that Ino herself created by tricking the farmers with burnt seeds that were infertile (*semina... tosta*, 556; 2.628). And yet, despite her checkered history, Ino becomes a propitious Roman goddess associated with the care of children, albeit those not her own. Let us look more closely then at the key episode of her transformation, in the home of Carmentis, where the interesting associations in the *Fasti* between foundation, female divinities and baking play a prominent role in Ino's domestication as the new Italian goddess Mater Matuta (6.529-50).

According to the Ovidian narrator, the practice of offering *liba* at the festival of the Matralia originated with the hospitality of Carmentis, mother of Evander, who welcomed Ino to her house by hastily making cakes and thus assuaging Ino's desperate hunger after her long journey to Italy (531-2): *liba sua properata manu Tegeaea sacerdos / traditur in subito cocta dedisse foco* (With hasty hand the Arcadian priestess is said to have cooked cakes quickly on the hearth). Since the time period is well before that of Romulus, the cakes are baked on the hearth, as the Italian farmers did before they developed the concept and cult of the oven (*Fast.* 2.515-26; 6.313-6)⁶⁷. Cakes therefore are offered at the Matralia in memory of Carmentis' hospitality and provision of much-needed sustenance (533-4): *nunc quoque liba iuvant festis Matralibus illam: / rustica sedulitas gratior arte fuit*. Littlewood translates line 534 as "her rustic welcome gave Ino more pleasure than her (culinary) skill", a lightly comic reference to the hearth-baked cakes of pre-Romulean society, described, however, in a graceful chiasmic line. Moreover, the noun *sedulitas* recalls Anna Perenna, *multae sedulitatis anus* (3.668), the embodiment of core Roman values. Though from disparate social classes, she and Carmentis are linked in age, in humble living, and above all in their generosity to others in need. In *Fasti* 6, while the hastily baked fare is welcome, the open hospitality in the midst of poverty is prioritized. The sharing of food, moreover, provides a symbolic language through which assimilation between donor

65 — Parker (1997).

66 — *Fast.* 6.551-62, with Littlewood (2006) 167-8; also 154 on *Fast.* 6.481.

67 — Frayn (1978) 29 explains that the bread was baked on pieces of tile placed on the warm hearth; it was then covered with ashes to maintain a steady heat.

and recipient can occur⁶⁸. Commensality harmoniously levels distinctions between ranks and between foreigner and insider⁶⁹. The acceptance and the eating of cakes are an instrument of Ino's peaceful incorporation into Italian society and Italian sacred cult.

The epithet *Tegeaea* (531) reminds us that Carmentis came to Italy from Arcadia; she too was an exile like Ino, and her cakes forge trust between the two women. Like Anna of Bovillae, Carmentis belongs to the tradition of humble hosts. Although Carmentis is mother of *King* Evander, the phrase *rustica sedulitas* and the fact that Carmentis has to bake cakes herself by hand, like the poor old woman Anna of Bovillae (3.670) – there are no servants and no cakes stored in a royal larder – suggests an early stage of Roman society. The virtues of humility and simplicity emphasized in Aeneas' visit to Evander in *Aeneid* 8 are now transferred to Ovid's early Rome and embodied in the activities of two older women, Anna and Carmentis. The implicit social differentiation between the Greek queen Ino and the impoverished Carmentis is reminiscent again of the pattern of Callimachus' *Hecale*, where an old woman entertains the great Hercules. But that difference is dispelled when Carmentis in her role of prophetic priestess assumes a taller and holier figure (539-40), like Virgil's Sibyl at *Aen.* 6.49, and predicts that Ino will be transformed into the Roman deity Mater Matuta, and her son into the god of harbours, Portunus. Her words have illocutionary force. On Ino's nod of agreement to be a benign presence with her son in Italy, they are deified in a perfunctory couplet (549-50): *annuerat, promissa fides. Posuere labores / nomina mutarunt: hic deus, illa dea est* (Ino agreed (to be a propitious presence in Italy); she faithfully promised. They set aside their troubles. They changed their names. He is a god, she is a goddess).

In an earlier article I placed my focus upon Ino's retention of some of her problematic history as told both in the *Metamorphoses* (4.519-42) and in the *Fasti* (3.849-62; 6.485-500)⁷⁰. The imperial politics of deification perhaps here intrudes. The narrative of Ino / Mater Matuta implicitly questions the qualifications for deification; it is not by merit that Ino is deified. Mater Matuta offers an ambiguous model of female, divine authority that is repeated in the other problematic maternal cults that fall on June 11, those of Fortuna and Livia⁷¹. In that article, however, I did not focus on the importance of hospitality and of redemption, on the means by which Ino the exile became a goddess in Italy, the land that had offered a fresh start for outcasts. Nor did I discuss the significant role

68 — Effros (2002) 4.

69 — Schmitt Pantel (1997) 38-9.

70 — Newlands (2000) 188-93.

71 — Newlands (2000) 193-201.

of Carmentis. It now seems to me that Carmentis, as host, prophet, and maker of gods, is a major figure at the ending of the *Fasti* and also at its beginning. Moreover, Carmentis, like Ino, is also an exile from Greece, now assimilated into Roman social and civic life. She too eventually becomes a goddess, presiding over childbirth; she is also a goddess of prophecy, whose name suggests song or prophetic utterance (*Fast.* 1.467). Such is her importance that she is the first Italian female deity to appear in the *Fasti* (1.461-542; 617-36) and the only Italian goddess in Book 1, as the poet notes (*Fast.* 1. 583-6)⁷². The antiquity of her cult is attested by the presence of the Flamen Carmentalis, and by the extension of her festival, the Carmentalia, over two separate days, January 11 and 15⁷³.

Fantham observes that Carmentis is also the first immigrant in the poem to come to Italy, just as Ino / Mater Matuta is the last in the poem to arrive. Both come up the Tiber to the future site of Rome⁷⁴. The one cardinal migration of Aeneas and the Trojans to Italy in the *Aeneid* is replaced in the *Fasti* by the repeated travel westwards of deities and humans⁷⁵. It is not Evander but rather his mother Carmentis who has the commanding role in Ovid's account of their arrival at the future site of Rome⁷⁶. Carmentis is of nobler blood than her son (1.471-2). She counsels the weeping Evander to pull himself together; she first recognizes their destination and guides their ship to its prescient landing site; she is the first to greet the indigenous gods and prophesies Rome's future greatness; and she becomes an important Italian goddess (1.479-540)⁷⁷. The creation of new gods is a central theme of Carmentis' prophetic speech in Book 1⁷⁸. In Book 6, Carmentis' prophecy to Ino creates a god and a goddess (6.537-50); in *Fasti* 1 Carmentis prophesies her own deification and that of Livia (1.535-6): *utque ego perpetuis olim sacrorum in aris, / sic Augusta novum Iulia numen erit* (As I myself will one day be consecrated on eternal altars, / so Julia Augusta will be a new divinity). Although Livia was not deified until 42 CE in the reign of Claudius, Livia was granted the title of Julia Augusta upon her husband's death in 14 CE⁷⁹.

72 — The importance of Carmentis in the *Fasti* has recently drawn a good deal of attention. See for instance Šterbenc Erker (2013); Chiu (2016); Papaioannou (2017); Fabre-Serris (2020); Walter (2020). On the etymology of Carmentis see Fabre-Serris (2020) 33-4.

73 — Šterbenc Erker (2013) 86-9; Littlewood (2006) 164-5 on *Fast.* 6.531.

74 — Fantham (2009) 69-71.

75 — Fantham (2009) 70.

76 — Chiu (2016) 67-72.

77 — As Chiu (2016) 68 observes, Ovid's Evander appears as "a callow young man clearly overwhelmed by his circumstances". See also Šterbenc Erker (2013) 103-4.

78 — Walter (2020) 385-90.

79 — Tac. *Ann.* 1.8. Ovid's *Fasti* is the first literary work to refer to Livia's dynastic title "Julia Augusta" (*Fast.* 1.536), awarded her in Augustus' will. Newlands (2015) 135-38.

Unlike Virgil's authoritative, paternal king, Ovid's Evander plays little role in the early foundation of Rome. As Fabre-Serris points out, it is astonishing that the first prophecy delivered on the historical destiny of Rome, a prophecy furthermore that legitimates the Augustan ruling house, is addressed by Carmentis to her son Evander, not by Evander to Aeneas⁸⁰. The figure of Carmentis in the *Fasti* overturns the traditional masculine hierarchy of foundation narratives⁸¹. Moreover, we see from Carmentis' welcome of Ino in *Fasti* 6 that it is she who has adopted the values that the *Aeneid* associated with Evander when he invited Aeneas to spend the night at his humble "palace" (*A.* 8.359-69). Referred to as *pauperis* (poor, *A.* 8.360), Virgil's Evander models open hospitality, kindness to strangers, simplicity of living, and humility. As Fabre-Serris emphasises, Carmentis stands out among the famous exiles who come to Latium through her welcoming of strangers. In *Fasti* 6 Carmentis, not Evander, adopts the lexicon of hospitality that runs through *Aeneid* 8 with its foundational moral contrast between poverty and wealth. As hospitality was a fundamental institution of archaic social life, the giving and sharing of food are not mere forms of entertainment, but rather offer models and mirrors of civic life⁸². In the case of Ino, as I have argued above, the acceptance of Carmentis' cakes begins her peaceful initiation into early Roman society.

It is generally now accepted that we should assume that the entire passage in Book 1 of the arrival of Carmentis and Evander in Italy was written during Ovid's exile⁸³. There is a dual affinity between Ovid and Carmentis. Both are figures of exile and of inspired poetry; a common etymology derived her name from *carmen* (poetic prophecy)⁸⁴. In Book 1 the poet invokes her as his Muse (1.467-8). In a sense then, she is the poet's voice, here prophesying major honours for Livia, who appears in Ovid's exile poetry as the primary patron of suppliants⁸⁵. Moreover, Carmentis speaks of her son's exile in linguistic terms familiar from Ovid's *Tristia* (*Fast.* 1.481-4):

Sic erat in fatis: nec te tua culpa fugavit
 sed deus; offenso pulsus es urbe deo.
 non meriti poenam pateris, sed numinis iram.
 est aliquid magnis crimen abesse malis.

80 — Fabre-Serris (2020) 27.

81 — Šterbenc Erker (2013) 103.

82 — Schmitt Pantel (1997) 40-2.

83 — Herbert-Brown (1994) 159-62; Green (2004) 235-6.

84 — Green (2004) 215 on *Fast.* 1.467.

85 — Cf. for instance *Pont.* 3.1 with Newlands (2015) 136-8 on the adaptation of the language of *servitium amoris* to the power relations between the empress and her slavish suppliants, including Ovid's wife.

So it was fated: no fault of yours drove you into exile, but rather a god; you were expelled from the city by an offended god. You do not endure a punishment you deserved, but rather a divinity's anger. Great misfortune can lack any crime.

Like Evander, Ovid was expelled from the city by an offended Augustus whom he often refers to as a god, for instance, at *Tr.* 1.10.42, *offensi... ira dei* (the anger of the offended god). Here too the punishment, so it is claimed, is not deserved⁸⁶. Fabre-Serris suggests that Livia can be seen after 14 CE as rather like Carmentis, the involved mother of a political ruler, Tiberius; thus Carmentis' prediction of Livia's deification at the end of her prophecy (1.535-6) may form a veiled prayer for clemency towards Ovid⁸⁷.

But there is also a significant contrast between Carmentis and Ovid that is reinforced by the imperfect telestich which, as Mitchell argues, is encrypted into the lines quoted above, where the final letter of each line in sequence spells out Ovid's place of exile: T-O-M-IS⁸⁸. This particular telestich, Mitchell argues, is repeated twice more in the *Fasti* at 4.941-6 and at 5.255-62. In these dangerous times of dynastic struggle and political scandal, Ovid encodes the name of his place of exile in an emotional contrast with the situation of Carmentis and Evander, exiles whose landing in Italy helped found a glorious future.

There is therefore a secondary story involving exile that underlies the encounter between Carmentis and Mater Matuta, two goddesses who fled their native lands to prosper in Italy. In *Fasti* 6 we see Carmentis now settled in Italy, a founding figure for the great Rome of the future. To Carmentis and the complex, troubled Ino / Mater Matuta, early Italy is a place where one can start again and, for the most part, put one's past behind. But there seems to be no second chance for Ovid.

I would like to suggest that there is a different telestich also in the narrative of Carmentis and Mater Matuta, at the moment of Carmentis' momentous prophecy and act of deification (6.539-44):

Vix illam subito posses cognoscere, tanto
 sanctior et tanto, quam modo, maior erat.
 "laeta canam. gaude, defuncta laboribus Ino",
 dixit "et huic populo prospera semper ades.
 Numen eris pelagi, natum quoque pontus habebit.
 In vestris aliud sumite nomen aquis.

86 — On the linguistic parallels with Ovid's other descriptions of exile see Mitchell (2020) 147-8.

87 — Fabre-Serris (2020) 36-7.

88 — Mitchell (2020) 144-8.

Suddenly you could scarcely recognize her; she seemed more holy, and taller, than she had been before. “I will sing of joyful events”, she said. “Be glad, Ino, your toils are over, and you will be a divinity of the sea, and your son too. Take a new name in your own waters”.

Carmentis’ important words “make” Ino and her son gods. Inscribed in the line endings is the imperfect telestich *T-O-S-T-I-S* (“baked”). This epithet occurs in the story of Mater Matuta in two contexts: *tosta* refers to the toasted seeds Ino deceptively gave the farmers in her past life in Thebes, *semina tosta* (6.556); it also refers to the cakes sacrificed to her as Mater Matuta at her Italian festival, *libaque tosta* (6.482). Both parts of Ino’s life are represented in the word play. But the ambiguous epithet, when embedded into Carmentis’ active words of deification, points to her new positive future as kourotrophos goddess. The words of divine transformation are paralleled by the telestich, understood as an instrumental ablative (by means of bread), that marks the transformation of the epithet from negative to positive valence; grain when toasted and baked becomes food fit for the gods. The original act of commensality between Carmentis and Ino helps assimilate her into Italian society as a new goddess. The offering of bread will become part of the rites observed at the Matralia: *nunc quoque liba iuvant festis Matralibus illam* (now too cakes please her at the festival of the Matralia, 6.533). Carmentis’ baking is referred to as a rather simple “art” (6.534), but an art nonetheless that is honoured and more than matched by the poet’s art, the braiding of the telestich T-O-S-T-I-S into her prophetic and creative words⁸⁹.

At the end of the *Fasti*, the narrative of the encounter between Carmentis and Mater Matuta suggests the seminal importance of women’s task of baking, its association with the formation of sacred cult, and with hospitality. Carmentis’ baking of cakes for Mater Matuta, a stranger who turns up at her door, makes a tacit, symbolic challenge to the arrival of Aeneas in Italy bringing war to the peaceful agricultural land; men “once more reheat their swords in furnaces” (*recoquunt patrios fornacibus ensis* (A. 7.636). Through Virgil’s metaphorical language of baking (*recoquunt, fornacibus*), war is depicted as a perversion of civic life and of the fundamental task of supplying food for friends, citizens, strangers, and gods without shedding blood. As Montanari remarks, “It was not meat but bread – an absolute example of artifice, a completely “cultural” product throughout all the phases of its preparation – that became the symbol of civilization and of the distinction between men and animals”⁹⁰. He refers to Ovid’s myth of the three daughters of Anius (*Met.* 13.632-74), who

89 — Cf. the metaphorical implications of *fingebat* used of Anna of Bovillae (*Fast.* 3.670).

90 — Montanari (1999) 71.

transformed everything they touched into grain, wine and oil, “a utopia in which nature could be transformed by the human hand”, in particular the female hand⁹¹. Furthermore, in the *Fasti* the offering of grain to the gods is associated with the Golden Age, a period of peace without war (*Fast.* 1.337-8). Indeed, at the start of the *Fasti* (1.317-458), as at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (15.96-142), the later practice of blood sacrifice is criticized as a symptom of moral decline and the start of conflict among humans⁹². The emphasis in the *Fasti* on bread as a sociable, humanizing food complements Sissa’s idea of the poetic biosphere of the *Metamorphoses* as ideally one of alimentary non-violence⁹³.

The possible *telestich* in *Fasti* 6 points to the important religious and social associations of baking with hospitality to strangers, female hospitality in particular. *Tostis* carries the reminder of Ino’s checkered past but also of her new future as a nurturing deity in Italy. Carmentis’ sharing of bread with a stranger, in this case one with an extremely problematic past, is represented as a redemptive act that leads to the establishment of a new female cult and of a new social identity in early Latium. As Fabre-Serris observes, Carmentis’ performative words to Ino and her son, *ite, precor nostris aequus uterque locis* (6.548), includes herself (*nostris*) as an integral part of Latin cult, worshipped by the local people⁹⁴ and, we should assume, thus detached from the violent potential of the Ausonian Maenads who have not assimilated to the *mores* of their new land. As Derrida has argued, there are two opposed kinds of hospitality: one regulated by laws and institutions, the other ideal and unconditional – without obligation, and without questioning, it is “une loi sans loi” (it is a law without a law)⁹⁵. In *Fasti* 6 this primary form of hospitality is elevated as foundational to the development of early Rome and central to female cult, but, seen through the eyes and words of the exiled poet, it appears as a lost ideal. For the recuperative transformation of Ino is not possible for Ovid. While the *telestich* suggests the parallelism between poetic and culinary composition, it also marks the exclusion of the exiled poet from the lexicon of hospitality. As Mitchell notes, each *telestich* is encrypted at the edge of Ovid’s verse, just as Ovid himself has been relegated to the edge of the Roman world, excluded from the fundamental decencies of human life and the foundational rituals of the state⁹⁶. At the same time, the vertical reading offered by the *telestich* graphically and metaphorically suggests that there is never a single path for reading Ovid.

91 — See Hopkinson (2000) 29-32 on *Met.* 13.632-704.

92 — Green (2004) 160-1 on *Fast.* 1.337-48.

93 — Sissa (2019).

94 — Fabre-Serris (2020) 35.

95 — Derrida (1997) 77.

96 — Mitchell (2020) 146.

In the first book of the *Fasti*, the empress Livia, the imperial model of matronal authority and restorer of ancient values, is associated with Carmentis through the goddess' prophecy of Livia's deification, along with her own (*Fast.* 1.535-6). In Book 6, the two female cults celebrated on the same day as the Matralia are also associated with Livia: Fortuna, whose temple the empress restored (*Fast.* 6.569-636), and the Aedes Concordiae within the Porticus Liviae (*Fast.* 6.637-48)⁹⁷. Carmentis' prophecy of Livia's deification can be read as a compliment to Livia by the exiled poet, but it could also have been a provocation to Tiberius, who during his entire lifetime vehemently resisted the idea⁹⁸. Ovid's *Fasti* probes behind the façade of the imperial, bountiful Ceres; her apparent conflation of civic and domestic ideals in reality seems to have ruptured. As Dolansky has recently argued in her discussion of regal narratives in the *Fasti*, the stories surrounding Fortuna and Concordia, for instance, look to present time and expose the tensions and discord within the Domus Augusta that had been exacerbated by family scandals and tragic losses⁹⁹. Julia's name, for instance, and that of her two sons, is missing from the dedication of the Porticus Liviae whose inner shrine honoured family concord¹⁰⁰. The *Fasti*, Dolansky argues, activates contemporary concerns with the viability and power of imperial, monarchical rule.

Walter notes the irony that Ovid's brilliant revision in the *Fasti* of Evander's landing in Latium in *Aeneid* 8 leads to the creation of Augustan gods who will silence the poet, leaving his calendar poem unfinished¹⁰¹. Just as important as her powers of deification, however, is Carmentis' modelling of the virtues that were understood to have made Rome great, among them scorn of wealth and hospitality. Book 6 of the *Fasti* amplifies Carmentis' role by representing her generosity and openness to strangers and outsiders as central principles of Roman social and cultural identity. Carmentis provides a pointed political illustration of these ancient virtues, displayed moreover on the early site of Rome where the city's fundamental values were formed. The simple act of baking cakes for even the reprobate Ino led moreover to a powerful transformation of the Theban queen into a

97 — Littlewood (2006) 169-86; 186-8.

98 — We should also not forget that the Carmentalia falls upon two different days. According to Ovid (*Fast.* 1.617-36), the second day celebrated the collective power of the *matronae* in overturning the Oppian Law that forbade them the privilege of riding in a special carriage, the *carpentum*. Their resistance took the form of refusing sex and of aborting their unborn children – the latter a detail unique to Ovid. Written in the aftermath of the Julian social and moral legislation of 18 BCE and 9 CE, this story of matronal social power is unlikely to have been pleasing to Livia. See Papaioannou (2017) 319, 325-31.

99 — Dolansky (2020).

100 — Dolansky (2020) 101-2.

101 — Walter (2020) 390-3.

Roman goddess – such a transformation, however, and exoneration, were out of Ovid’s reach as a victim of the *Domus Augusta*.

Angelova’s important study of “sacred founders” focusses on the discourse surrounding elite, imperial women, beginning with Livia. By contrast, Ovid’s *Fasti* has shown women founders acting independently of male consorts and drawn from various strata of society. Ovid’s *Fasti* places Livia within the context of women’s active social and civic roles in Rome’s ancient past, but at the same time the *Fasti* demonstrates the significant differences in archaic cults from the imperial model. For instance, non-elite women as well as non-Olympian deities are shown to have participated in the establishment of female cults. Moreover, they did so generally on their own, not coupled with a partner like Livia; and often the making and sharing of bread is represented as central to the formation of female civic identity. The literary world of the *Fasti* therefore seems to corroborate Schultz’s argument from epigraphic as well as literary evidence that the religious activities and duties of women of the Roman Republic extended well beyond the care of the family home¹⁰². Furthermore, while James has observed a disturbing pattern in Rome’s foundation narratives whereby political change occurs over women’s dead and / or violated bodies, the women we have looked at here – founding mothers and grandmothers – are not passive victims, such as, for instance, Ovid’s Ilia, mother of Romulus and Remus¹⁰³. Rather, they take active roles in the foundation of Roman cult and the development of Rome in their important work of providing food for families and also citizens. The work of the *Fasti* is therefore recuperative, drawing attention away from the hyper-masculine discourse of founding to the peaceful, creative activities of *matronae* and the social and cultural values they represent. Indeed, if we look at the festivals I have discussed here as a whole, we see a certain pattern emerge, that is, we can observe the intersectionality of class, ethnicity, age, and gender in these cults centred on baking. Two of the elderly women are of low social status, two are foreigners and fugitives, and one of the cults, the Liberalia, involves a male and female partnership. Not surprisingly then, several of these cults have links with plebeian issues and with resistance to autocratic rule. Another striking phenomenon in these cults is the importance of female outsiders to foundational narratives. Carmentis comes from Greece in exile, like Ino. Their mission, however, is not, like the exiled Aeneas, to form a new state through war and the establishment of hierarchical institutions, but rather to build community

102 — Schultz (2006).

103 — James (2016).

through peaceful, creative means – for which the baking of bread, the fundamental food, was foundational¹⁰⁴.

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