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FASTI



*Translated by*  
JAMES G. FRAZER  
*Revised by G. P. Goold*

# OVID

FASTI

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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REVISED BY G. P. GOULD



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## REVISER'S PREFACE (1987)

SIR James Frazer's five-volume edition of the *Fasti* is a classic in its own right, and the single volume which he produced from it for the Loeb Classical Library partakes of the special quality of the larger work. In having the temerity, on the occasion of a reprint, to introduce revisions I have taken pains not to alter the general character of the original work while at the same time unobtrusively updating the Latin text to conform to the most recent scholarship in the evaluation of manuscript readings and in orthography. The Appendix has been left untouched. In common with many contemporaries Frazer referred to the place of Ovid's exile as Tomi: I have not altered this, though all scholars now accept that Tomis, Ovid's own spelling, is correct.

Frazer's Loeb gave very few critical notes, and I have therefore dropped from the Introduction his detailed discussion of the mss: this has in any case been superseded by the researches of Alton, Wormell, and Courtney (conveniently summarized by Tarrant). The chief mss are now reduced to five (Frazer's sigla, where different, in brackets):

*A*: Vat.Reg.1709, late 10th cent., Caroline: the oldest and best ms.

*U*: Vat.3262 (*Ursinianus*), 11th cent., Beneventan: Montecassino.

*I* (—): Bodmer 123 (*Ilfeldensis*), 11th cent., only fragments.

*G* (*X*): Brussels 5369 (*Gemblacensis*), 11th cent.  
*UIG*, whose consensus is indicated by *Z*, form a separate family.

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*M* (*m*): Bodl.Auct.F.4.25 (*Mazarinianus*), 15th cent., contaminated.

(*s* indicates one or more other mss.)

The evidence for all readings adopted in the text will be found in the new Teubner edition (4.831 *domitaeque* in the appendix: cf. David Kovacs, *AJP* 107 [1986] 422) except for the transposition of 3.557f, a brilliancy of C. E. Murgia (APA meeting, 1986).

Since Riese's edition (1874) it has become conventional to insert into Ovid's text the appropriate entries from the ancient Roman calendars (see page xxvii, footnote *a* and Degrassi), though these entries are of course no part of the poet's composition: they perform, however, the useful function of reference-markers and occasionally afford some clue to Ovid's handling of his sources (e.g. at 3.877 he passes over the entry for Mar.24 QRCF: such omissions I have italicized).

As presented in this book, the entries are as follows:

- (*a*) arabic numerals indicating the day of the month (modern reckoning);
- (*b*) the nundinal (market-day or weekday) letter: these letters formed a sequence from A (beginning with Jan.1) to H, after which the sequence was begun again. Thus Jan.31 is G, Feb.1 H, Feb.2 A, and so on (see page 6, footnote *b*);
- (*c*) then, if relevant, K for Kalends, NON for Nones, or EID for Ides;
- (*d*) next, if applicable, the abbreviation of the festival: these I have expanded in parentheses.
- (*e*) there follows a letter or letters denoting the character of the day:

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F (*Fastus*), N (*Nefastus*), NP (*Nefastus P[ublicus]?*): the symbol is much disputed), EN (*ENdotercisus = intercisus*): see pp. 4f, footnote c;

C (*Comitialis*): see p. 6, footnote a;

QRCF (*Quando Rex Comitiavit, Fas* 'business may begin when the King has dismissed the assembly'), limited to Mar.24 and May 24;

QSTDF (*Quando STercus Delatum, Fas* 'business may begin when the trash [from Vesta's temple] has been removed'), only on June 15;

- (f) finally, in smaller letters than any of the above, later notes of festivals or anniversaries (that recorded on Mar.6, cf p. 150, footnote b, will serve as an example). I have not ventured to add to what the old Loeb presented, though it will be clear that among the calendars Ovid consulted he pretty certainly found ANNAE PER (or some such note) against Mar.15.

While the works of Ovid (even the poems he composed in exile) have in recent decades evoked a most enthusiastic revival of interest, it is to be regretted that the *Fasti*, by comparison, have somehow failed to secure their merited share of attention. Some notion of the verve with which the poet tackled his task and of the success he achieved may be gained from the following tribute (and it is a back-handed compliment, coming as it does from the pen of one who was not by nature susceptible to his waggish genius): 'Still, when all is said, a student of the Roman religion should be grateful to Ovid; and when after the month of June we lose him as a

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companion, we may well feel that the subject not only loses with him what little literary interest it can boast of, but becomes for the most part a mere investigation of fossil rites from which all life and meaning have departed for ever' (Warde Fowler, *The Roman Festivals* [1899] 14).

G. P. GOOLD

## FROM THE INTRODUCTION (1931)

### § 1. THE LIFE OF OVID

ON the life of Ovid we have more authentic information than on that of most ancient writers, for not only has he interspersed many allusions to it in his poems but in one of them he has given us a formal autobiography,<sup>a</sup> a species of composition to which the ancients were not addicted. Indeed, even the art of biography was little cultivated in antiquity, and were it not for the splendid portrait gallery which Plutarch has bequeathed to us in his *Lives* our knowledge of the personal character and fortunes of the great men of Greece and Rome would be for the most part but slight and fragmentary, and for us they might have stalked like masked figures, looming vast and dim through the mist, across the stage of history.

Ovid was born in 43 B.C., the year in which the two consuls, Hirtius and Pansa, fell in battle during the civil war which followed the assassination of Caesar. His birthplace was Sulmo, the modern Solmona, a town situated in a well-watered valley of the Appenines, in the land of the Paelignians, about ninety miles to the east of Rome. He has himself described the happy vale, rich in corn and vines, dotted here

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10.



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and there with grey olive-groves and traversed by winding streams, the ground everywhere kept fresh and green even in the baking heat of summer by the springs that bubbled up through the grassy turf.<sup>a</sup> No wonder that in his dreary exile on the dismal shore of the Black Sea the memory of his sweet native dale should have come back on him with many a pang of fond regret.<sup>b</sup>

The poet came of an old equestrian or knightly family and prided himself on being a knight by birth and not by the gift of fortune or, like a multitude of newly dubbed knights in that age of civil war, in virtue of military service.<sup>c</sup> He had a brother a year older than himself, who died at the age of twenty. Together the boys were sent at an early age by their father to be educated at Rome, where they were placed under the care of eminent masters. His brother displayed a taste for rhetoric and looked forward to the profession of a pleader in the courts.<sup>d</sup> Ovid's own bent from childhood was all for poetry. In this he received no encouragement from his father, who endeavoured to dissuade him from so unprofitable a course of life, holding up to him, as an awful warning, the fate of Homer, who had died a poor man.<sup>e</sup> Clearly the old gentleman thought that there was no money in the poetical business, and substantially he was doubtless right. Gold is not the guerdon which the Muses dangle before the eyes of their votaries, luring them on "to scorn delights and live laborious days." For a time the youthful poet

<sup>a</sup> *Amores*, ii. 16. 1-10.

<sup>b</sup> *Fasti*, iv. 81 *sqq.*

<sup>c</sup> *Amores*, iii. 15. 5 *sq.*; *Tristia*, iv. 10. 7 *sq.*

<sup>d</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 9-18.

<sup>e</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 19-22.

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endeavoured to comply with the paternal injunction. He turned his back on the Muses' hill and struggled to write prose instead of poetry, but do what he would all that he wrote fell naturally and inevitably into verse.<sup>a</sup>

On attaining to manhood he exchanged the broad purple stripe, which as a noble youth he had worn on his tunic, for the narrow purple edge which was the badge of a Roman knight. At the same time he renounced all intention of aspiring to the rank of senator, which would have entitled him to flaunt for life the broad purple on his tunic. However, he set his foot on the first rung of the official ladder by accepting a place on the board of minor magistrates charged with the duty of inspecting prisons and superintending executions—duties which can have been but little to the taste of the poet's gentle and sensitive nature.<sup>b</sup> But in the company of poets he found a society more congenial than that of gaol-birds and hangmen. For Rome was then at the very zenith of its poetical activity and fame. Virgil and Horace, Propertius and Tibullus, were all alive and singing when Ovid was a young man at Rome, and in the poetical heaven shone lesser stars whose light has long been quenched. Among them Ovid sat entranced, looking on every poet as a god. He was an intimate friend of Propertius and listened to the bard pouring out his fiery elegiacs. He heard Horace chanting his melodious lays to the music of the Ausonian lyre.<sup>c</sup> He lived to mourn the early death of Tibullus.<sup>d</sup> Virgil our author appears to have seen

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10.23–26.

<sup>b</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 27–36.

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 41–54.

<sup>d</sup> *Amores*, iii. 9.

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only once without obtaining speech of him,<sup>a</sup> in which he was less fortunate than the nobody, recorded by Browning, who once had the good fortune to see Shelley:

And did you once see Shelley plain?  
And did he stop and speak to you?

But even in the society of poets Ovid was not content to pass all his life in the smoke and din of Rome. He travelled widely to see for himself the places of which he had read in story. As a student he visited Athens,<sup>b</sup> and in the company of his friend Macer he roamed among the splendid cities of Asia and spent the greater part of a year in Sicily, where he beheld the famous fountain of Arethuse, the lakes of Enna, and the sky ablaze with the flames of Aetna; and in a letter to his friend, written in exile, he recalls the happy time they had passed together driving in a light car or floating in a painted skiff on the blue water, when even the long hours of a summer day seemed too short for their talk.<sup>c</sup>

Ovid was thrice married. His first marriage, contracted in early youth, was brief and unhappy: his second was also brief; but his third wife proved a faithful helpmeet to him in his later years and stood by him in the last great trial of his life, his exile, though she was not allowed to share it.<sup>d</sup> In a letter addressed to her from his place of banishment he speaks of her as the model of a good wife.<sup>e</sup> By one

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 51 "Vergilium vidi tantum." Among the intimate friends of Ovid was the grammarian C. Julius Hyginus, the head of the Palatine library. See Suetonius, *De grammaticis*, 20.

<sup>b</sup> *Tristia*, i. 2. 77.

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 69-74.

<sup>d</sup> *Ex Ponto*, ii. 10. 21-44.

<sup>e</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iii. 1. 43 sq.

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of his wives Ovid had a daughter to whom he was tenderly attached, and who made him twice a grandfather, though by different husbands.<sup>a</sup> When he was about to give her in marriage, the poet consulted no less a personage than the High Priestess of Jupiter (the Flaminica Dialis) as to a lucky day for the wedding, and was warned by her not to let his daughter wed in the first half of June or, to be more exact, not until the Ides (the thirteenth day of the month) should be past.<sup>b</sup>

Meanwhile his poems had made him famous: his acquaintance was sought by younger bards, as he himself had courted that of their elders<sup>c</sup>; and in the noble epilogue to his greatest work, the *Metamorphoses*, the poet anticipated, not unjustly, for his works a deathless renown.<sup>d</sup>

It was when he was thus in the full enjoyment of domestic happiness and literary fame that the sentence of banishment, pronounced by Augustus, fell on Ovid like a bolt from the blue. His fiftieth year was past and his hair was already grised; we may suppose that it was the year 8 of our era.<sup>e</sup> The place of his exile was to be Tomi on the bleak western shore of the Black Sea, where the land of the barbarous Getae bordered on the land of the barbarous Sarmatians.<sup>f</sup> The alleged reason for the sentence was the immoral tendency of his poem *The Art of Love*,<sup>g</sup> but that can hardly have been the Emperor's real motive, since the offending poem had been published many

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 75 sq.

<sup>b</sup> *Fasti*, vi. 219-234.

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 53 sqq.

<sup>d</sup> *Metamorphoses*, xv. 871-879.

<sup>e</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 8. 33, iv. 10. 93-98.

<sup>f</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 10. 97 sq., 109 sqq.

<sup>g</sup> *Tristia*, ii. 207, 211 sq.

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years before, apparently without creating a scandal at the time. The real motive, as the poet plainly implies, was a deep offence which he had given to Augustus and which the Emperor never forgave.<sup>a</sup> To this the poet alludes again and again, but always in veiled language; he never revealed the exact nature of the offence. He protests over and over again that the cause of his ruin was an error, not a crime.<sup>b</sup> The nearest he comes to lifting the veil is a passage in which he asks, in grief and remorse, why had he seen something? why had he made his eyes culpable? why had he been accidentally privy to a guilty secret? and compares his case to that of Actaeon who was punished for unwittingly coming on Diana naked.<sup>c</sup> On the strength of this passage some modern writers have suggested that Ovid may have accidentally witnessed an escapade of the Emperor's profligate granddaughter Julia, who was banished by Augustus in the same year as the poet.<sup>d</sup> But this is a mere conjecture. Ovid kept the fatal secret locked up in his breast, and we shall never know it.

He has described in pathetic language the last night he passed in Rome—the passionate grief of his weeping wife, now clasping him in her arms, now prostrating herself in prayer before the household gods at the hearth where the fire was dead as her hopes; the tears and sighs of the grief-stricken household, the last farewell to friends; till, as the night

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, ii. 207–210.

<sup>b</sup> *Tristia*, i. 3. 37 *sq.*, iii. 1. 51 *sq.*, iii. 6. 25 *sq.*, iv. 10. 89 *sq.*

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, ii. 103–106; compare *Tristia*, iii. 5. 49 *sq.*,

Inscia quod crimen viderunt lumina plector,  
peccatumque oculos est habuisse meum.

<sup>d</sup> Suetonius, *Augustus*, 65. 1.

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grew late, the sounds of lamentation died away into silence in the house, while outside the moonlight slept white on the marble fanes of the Capitol close at hand. But with break of day the parting hour was come, and the Morning Star gave the signal for departure.<sup>a</sup>

The long and difficult journey to Tomi would seem to have been compulsorily undertaken in winter, for the poet tells us that in chill December he was shivering on the Adriatic, while he wrote versified epistles on shipboard to the friends he had left behind him.<sup>b</sup> Here the ship encountered a storm that threatened to drive her back to the port from which she had sailed, and the exiled bard was tantalized by seeing, across the heaving waters, the distant coast of Italy on which he might never set foot again.<sup>c</sup> He crossed the Isthmus of Corinth and took ship again at the port of Cenchreae, only to be again tempest-tossed on the Aegean as he had been on the Adriatic, and again to scribble verses in the height of the storm, to the astonishment, as the poet imagined, of the very Cyclades themselves. After touching at the island of Samothrace he landed in Thrace and made his way on foot through the country of the Bistones to Tomi.<sup>d</sup> It was doubtless on this land journey through the snowy Thracian mountains that our author beheld the Sapaeans and other wild highlanders offering the entrails of dogs in sacrifice to a barbarous deity whom he identified with Diana.<sup>e</sup>

At Tomi our author sought to while away the tedious hours of exile by inditing poetical epistles to

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, i. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Tristia*, i. 11. 3 sq.

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, i. 4. 1-20.

<sup>d</sup> *Tristia*, i. 10. 9-23, i. 11. 1-10.

<sup>e</sup> *Fasti*, i. 389 sq.

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his family, his friends and patrons in Rome, entreating them to use their influence with the Emperor to ensure his pardon or at least his removal to a less distant and less barbarous place of banishment. He even addressed himself to Augustus direct in the longest of these poems,<sup>a</sup> beseeching him for mercy, but all in vain. And after the death of Augustus the unhappy poet turned to the popular prince Germanicus the stream of his mingled flattery and prayer in the hope of touching his clement heart and obtaining at least a mitigation of his sentence.<sup>b</sup> But all his entreaties fell on deaf ears.

The neighbouring barbarians did not add to the amenities of life in the frontier town by the random flights of poisoned arrows which from time to time they sent whizzing over the walls in the hope of picking off some fat pursy citizen as he went about his peaceful business in the streets. Ovid often alludes to these missiles<sup>c</sup> and even contemplated the possibility of his blood dyeing a Scythian arrow or a Getic sword,<sup>d</sup> but we have no reason to suppose that his life was thus brought to an untimely end, although, when the watchman on the battlements gave the signal of an approaching raid, and the hostile cavalry were circling at full gallop round the walls, the stout-hearted bard used to clap a helmet on his grey head and, grasping sword and shield in his tremulous hands, hurry to the gate to meet the foe.<sup>e</sup>

However, the valiant poet returned good for evil by learning the languages of both the barbarous

<sup>a</sup> *Tristia*, ii.

<sup>b</sup> *Ex Ponto*, ii. 1, iv. 8. 21 sqq.

<sup>c</sup> *Tristia*, iii. 10. 63 sq., iv. 1. 77, 84, v. 7. 15 sq.; *Ex Ponto*, i. 2. 15 sq., iii. 1. 25 sq., iv. 7. 11 sq., 36, iv. 9. 83, iv. 10. 31.

<sup>d</sup> *Ex Ponto*, ii. 1. 65 sq.

<sup>e</sup> *Tristia*, iv. 1. 73 sqq.

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tribes, the Getae and the Sarmatians,<sup>a</sup> who infested the bleak, treeless, birdless plains that stretched away to the horizon from the walls of Tomi—plains where spring brought no vernal flowers and autumn no cheerful reapers, and the only crop that broke the dreary prospect was here and there a patch of bitter worm-wood.<sup>b</sup> But Ovid did more than learn the language of his enemies. He composed a poem in the Getic language in which he paid high, not to say fulsome, compliments to the memory of the deceased Augustus, to his surviving widow, to his sons, and to his successor on the throne, the Emperor Tiberius; and this precious effusion he professes to have recited to a circle of Getic hearers, who received it with murmurs of applause, which they emphasized appropriately by rattling their quivers.<sup>c</sup> The poet even expressed a fear that his study of the Getic language had corrupted his Latin style.<sup>d</sup> In the interest of science, if not of literature, it is much to be regretted that the poem has perished; had it survived it would have been of priceless value as a unique example of a barbarous language preserved for us by the care and diligence of a classical writer.

Among the poet's murmurs at his fate are naturally many references to the rigorous climate of his place of banishment in the far north, on the very edge of the Roman world. He says that winter there was almost continuous,<sup>e</sup> that the sea froze, that the wine turned to blocks of ice, and that the barbarians drove

<sup>a</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iii. 2. 40.

<sup>b</sup> As to the scenery of the country round Tomi see *Ex Ponto*, i. 2. 23, iii. 1. 5–24.

<sup>c</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iv. 13. 19–38.

<sup>d</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iv. 13. 17 sq.

<sup>e</sup> *Ex Ponto*, i. 2. 24.



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their creaking ox-drawn wains over the frozen Danube.<sup>a</sup> Of the society of the place he does not paint a flattering portrait. He admits that there was a tincture of Greek blood and a smatch of Greek culture in them, but adds that in their composition there was more of the Getic barbarian, which came out in their harsh voices, grim faces, and shaggy unkempt hair and beard; every man carried a bow and wore a knife at his side, with which he was ready to stab at the smallest provocation.<sup>b</sup> However, a residence of nine or ten years at this end of the world would seem to have in some measure reconciled the poet to his lot. In one of his last letters, written to a friend from Tomi, he tells him that he keeps all his old serenity of mind; that he had won the goodwill of the people of Tomi, who for their own sakes would gladly keep him with them, though for his sake they would willingly let him depart; and that they and the inhabitants of neighbouring towns had publicly testified to their friendship by passing decrees in his honour and granting him immunity from taxes.<sup>c</sup> And in almost the last letter of all he addresses the people of Tomi, telling them that not even the folk of his dear native vale among the Apennines could have been kinder to him in his misfortune and sorrow than they had been, and he even adds that Tomi had grown as dear to him as Delos to Diana when she stayed the wandering island and found in it a place of rest and peace.<sup>d</sup> So the curtain falls gently, almost tenderly, on the exiled poet. He died at the age of sixty in the year A.D. 17 or 18, and was buried at

<sup>a</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iv. 7. 7-10, iv. 9. 85 sq.

<sup>b</sup> *Tristia*, v. 7. 9-20.

<sup>c</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iv. 9. 87-104.

<sup>d</sup> *Ex Ponto*, iv. 14. 47-62.