

The Roman Calendar as an Expression of Augustan Culture: An Examination of the *Fasti Praenestini*

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Around the year 6 AD, the Roman grammarian Marcus Verrius Flaccus erected a calendar in the forum of his hometown of Praeneste. The fragments which remain of his work are unique among extant examples of Roman *fasti*, or calendars. They are remarkable not only because of their indication that Verrius Flaccus' *Fasti Praenestini* was considerably larger in physical size than the average Roman *fasti*, but also because of the richly detailed entries for various days on the calendar, which are substantially longer and more informative than those found on any extant calendar inscriptions. The frequent mentions of Augustus in the entries of the *Fasti Praenestini*, in addition to Verrius Flaccus' personal relationship with Augustus as related by Suetonius (Suet. Gram. 17), have led some scholars, most notably Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, to interpret the creation of the *Fasti Praenestini* as an act of propaganda supporting the new Augustan regime.¹ However, this limited interpretation fails to take into account the implications of this calendar's unique form and content. A careful examination of the *Fasti Praenestini* reveals that its unusual character reflects the creative experimentation of Marcus Verrius Flaccus, the individual who created it, and the broad interests of the Roman public, by whom it was to be viewed.

The uniqueness of the *Fasti Praenestini* among inscribed calendars is matched by Ovid's literary expression of the calendar composed in elegiac couplets. This unprecedented literary approach to the calendar has garnered much more attention from scholars over the years than has the *Fasti Praenestini*. However, much of the debate over Ovid's

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interpretation of the calendar illuminates our investigation of the *Fasti Praenestini*. In particular, scholars have puzzled over the question of why the playful love-poet would take on the austere topic of the calendar with its religious and political overtones. Ronald Syme articulates their concern best when he states that the topic of the *Fasti* was “not a good idea” for Ovid, unlike the mythological material of the *Metamorphoses*, which “accorded with his talents.”² Some scholars concern themselves with Ovid’s political aims in writing the *Fasti*. For instance, in his article “Ovid’s *Fasti* and Augustan Politics,” J. C. McKeown evaluates Ovid in terms of politics, and concludes that he is politically neutral, neither presenting Augustan culture in a subversive way nor necessarily writing to produce propaganda.³

It is the notion of propaganda which frames Wallace-Hadrill’s discussion of Augustan time. In a paper entitled “Time for Augustus: Ovid, Augustus, and the *Fasti*,”⁴ Wallace Hadrill contends that the new Augustan regime sought to exercise and reenforce its power by incorporating itself into the expression of time. He cites the active involvement of Augustus in a variety of forms of the expression of time, such as his erection of a new triumphal *fasti*, his creation of the *Horologium*, a large sun dial located on the *Campus Martius*, and his presence in the form of a multitude of new holidays regarding him in the civil and religious *fasti*.⁵ Wallace-Hadrill argues that the incorporation of Augustus into both Ovid’s literary *Fasti* and Verrius Flaccus’ *Fasti Praenestini* derives from Augustus’ direct involvement in the creation of these works; both *fasti* are thus examples of propaganda designed to transmit Augustus’ views of himself in relation to the Roman calendar to the Roman public at large.

Wallace-Hadrill’s preoccupation with concepts of propaganda in the Augustan Age limits his approach to Augustan time, Ovid’s *Fasti*, and the *Fasti Praenestini*. New approaches, as presented by Karl Galinsky in his work *Augustan Culture*, examine the nuances of cultural expression in the Augustan Age without merely dismissing forms of expression as propaganda. According to Galinsky, ideas did not flow directly from Augustus to his subjects in a top-down model, as is implied by the term propaganda, but rather ideas held by Augustus were shared by many other Romans, who found their own means of expressing these ideas in nuanced and experimental ways.⁶

Geraldine Herbert-Brown's interpretation of Ovid's *Fasti* provides an example of the creativity, experimentation, and cultural expression present in the literature of the Augustan Age. While the greater goal of her work is to explore the development of a dynasty in Ovid's portrayal of Augustus' family, she also considers why Ovid may have chosen the calendar as a subject for a poem.⁷ She argues that the calendar, which is in itself a framework connecting disparate elements, provided an excellent opportunity for the types of episodic narrative at which Ovid excelled.⁸ She further argues that Ovid is breaking new ground in composing a large-scale work concerning such a serious topic in elegiac couplets, which are usually reserved for light love poetry. Working in this meter allows Ovid to treat an austere subject more lightly.⁹ She goes as far as to examine the influence that Augustan art may have had on Ovid's choice of topic.¹⁰ It is likely that these factors and others all influenced Ovid's decision to compose the *Fasti*. This seems a more compelling assessment than that put forth by Wallace-Hadrill, who finds that Augustus was "too demanding to allow anyone's world to remain insulated from politics,"¹¹ and that poets, including Ovid, "felt obliged not merely to pay lip service to the emperor, but to incorporate him within their value systems."¹²

Herbert-Brown provides us with a more nuanced understanding of the freedom of expression and experimental nature of Ovid's work on the calendar. Yet such an examination remains to be completed on the *Fasti Praenestini*. In her discussion of Ovid's *Fasti*, Herbert-Brown refers to the *Fasti Praenestini* as "magnifying in marble" the "new genre that was the Roman calendar."¹³ In what ways does the *Fasti Praenestini*, the forerunner of this "new genre," reveal the free and experimental expression of Augustan values? To answer this question it will be necessary to examine closely the remains of the *Fasti Praenestini* and compare them to what remains of other Augustan-era *fasti* to determine what aspects of this calendar are unique and perhaps experimental. To begin, it will be necessary to consider what we know about the origins of this particular calendar.

In the case of the *Fasti Praenestini*, we are fortunate to have a literary account of how this calendar may have come into being. In his descriptions of the lives of famous grammarians, Suetonius records the following about Marcus Verrius Flaccus:

The freedman, Marcus Verrius Flaccus, won a particular praise for his methods...for this reason he was selected by Augustus as a tutor for his grandsons and transferred to the palace with his whole school, but on the condition that he should accept no more pupils. He taught in the hall of Catulus' house, which at that time was part of the palace, and was paid 100,000 sesterces per annum. He died at a ripe old age in the reign of Tiberius. There is a statue to him in Praeneste in the lower part of the forum facing the hemicycle, where he displayed the Calendar of Praeneste, which he had personally revised and had engraved on its marble walls (Suet. Gram. 17).¹⁴

Suetonius reveals a great deal about the man who may have created the *Fasti Praenestini* which we have today. This passage reveals that the *Fasti Praenestini* was the work of one individual, Marcus Verrius Flaccus, who displayed a calendar in the forum of Praeneste. We know that this man was a scholar who had a special relationship with Augustus as the tutor of his grandsons. Through this relationship with Augustus, he was rewarded not only financially, with 100,000 sesterces a year, but also with the high esteem of having taught the grandchildren of Augustus (though clearly he had quite a reputation as an excellent teacher before coming to work for him). It is evident that Verrius Flaccus personally benefited from Augustus. Finally, we know that this scholar worked to revise a version of the Roman calendar, and that he himself had the calendar displayed in the Forum of Praeneste in a hemicycle, an architectural feature consisting of a semicircular recess built into the wall of the forum. It is reasonable to assume that he did this at his own expense as a means to gain public recognition.

A. Degrassi and other scholars generally agree that calendar fragments discovered in various places in the town of Praeneste and its surrounding fields over several centuries are the remains of Verrius Flaccus' *fasti*.¹⁵ When pieced together these fragments record the months of January, March, April, and December almost in their entirety, while recording bits and pieces of the months of February, August, September, October, and November. The inscriptions on the fragments appear in what have been identified as two distinct hands. The first hand records the majority of the information on the calendar; the

second records information which specifically relates to Tiberius. This information would have taken on significance and merited placement on the calendar once Tiberius had been designated as Augustus' heir. By comparing the latest date of the first hand and the earliest date of the second, both Degrassi and Wallace-Hadrill date the first hand to AD 6 and the second to AD 10.¹⁶

The information for each month is inscribed on its own tablet. While the January and December tablets have a flat surface and are slightly larger with a width of .60 m, the March and April tablets have a concave surface and a slightly smaller width of .51 m, which suggests that they were arrayed in a curved hemicycle.¹⁷ Degrassi agrees with other scholars who estimate the diameter of this hemicycle to be 5.44 m.¹⁸ The height of each of the tablets, as estimated from the more intact examples, is 1.95 m. While several examples of *fasti* are of similar height, the *Fasti Praenestini* surpasses all others in width with the next largest being the *Fasti Alfiani* at an estimated 3.40 m.¹⁹

However, the *Fasti Praenestini* stands out from its Augustan contemporaries in more ways than merely its size. This is evident from a simple comparison of the physical appearance of the text of this *fasti* with its counterparts. The text of *fasti* dating from approximately the same time period, such as the *Esquilini* of 7 BC or the *Vallenses* of 7 AD, appears sparse next to the densely worded entries for dates on the *Praenestini*. In addition to the amount of information found on the *Fasti Praenestini*, the types of information recorded on its tablets also make it distinct. Detailed explanations, or *aetia*, for various dates and elements of the calendar are found. Also, descriptions of the various activities carried out on specific dates are included in the text. Further consideration of these two key types of information reveal a great deal about the unique character of the *Fasti Praenestini*.

There are several types of explanatory material found in the *Fasti Praenestini*. Before the first day of the months for which we have fragments from the tops of the tablets, there is a paragraph providing explanations for the origins of that month's name. This type of explanation is not to be found on any of the other extant *fasti*. The two most complete examples of these passages are those for March and April. In both passages more than one explanation for the month's name is provided. The month of March is said to be named either *ab*

Latinorum deo bellandi, from the Latins' god of warring, or *ut autem alii credunt...quod ei sacra fiunt hoc mense*, as others believe... because rites are made to him in this month (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.121). Similarly, April takes its name either *a Venere, quod ea... mater fuit Aeneae, regis Latinorum*, from Venus, because she was the mother of Aeneas, the king of the Latins, or *quia fruges, flores, animalia ac maria et terrae aperiuntur*, because fruits, flowers, and animals are brought forth in the sea and on land (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.127). Based on the evidence provided by these two months, as well as fragments of such explanations for January and August, it is reasonable to assume that such information was provided at the beginning of each month.

In the *Fasti Praenestini*, the three “dividing days” which appear in each month of the Roman calendar, the Kalends, Nones, and Ides, also seem to have been given explanations at their first appearances in January.²⁰ The entry for the Kalends is mostly intact, and explains the significance of this special day etymologically; it is the day of the month when a specific officiant from the college of priests or *pontifices*, would announce the day on which the Nones would fall, *pontifex minor... ad nonas singulas calat* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.111). The fragment containing the Ides is damaged, but the parts of its entry which remain indicate that an explanatory statement was provided, as is evidenced by the fragment *puta* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.113), which appears to be derived from the verb *puto*, meaning “to think.” The use of the verb *puto* in this instance, suggesting that a hypothetical explanation is being offered, is evocative of the language used in providing the other, more intact explanations in the inscriptions of the *Fasti Praenestini*. While the part of the tablet on which the Nones of January would have fallen is missing, the evidence from the entries for the Kalends and Ides suggest that the entry for January's Nones would also have included explanatory material.

The *Fasti Praenestini* also includes information that explains the origins of the various “character” designations for days which are a standard feature of the Roman calendar.²¹ These designations appear in each entry of the Roman calendar and indicate the type of activity appropriate for the given day.²² In the *Fasti Praenestini*, explanations appear for the designations *dies fastus*, *endotercivus* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii. 2.111), and *comitiales* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii 2.113)²³ at the first occurrence of each type

of day in the January tablet, and it is safe to guess that similar explanations were provided for the other designations which have not survived.

In addition to the explanations of various aspects of months and days in the Roman Calendar, the *Fasti Praenestini* is unique in including information describing what takes place on various holidays and religious days. This information includes both descriptions of the actions of officiants performing religious ceremonies and descriptions of what the general public in Rome does on these days. Information given for what religious officials do on older holidays includes the dancing of the *Salii*, members of a religious brotherhood, in the place of assembly on March 19 (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.123), the anniversary of the dedication of the temple to Minerva on the Aventine Hill, as well as the decoration of horses and mules with flowers and the conveyance of the *rex sacrorum*, an important religious official who performed the religious duties of the expelled kings of Rome, on a horse on December 15, the *Consualia* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.137). We are also given details of what takes place on newer holidays which are associated with Augustus, as on January 17th when the pontifices, college of priests, augeres, college of diviners, *XV viri sacris faciundis*, college of 15 men in charge of the Sybilline books, and *VII viri epulonum*, the seven men in charge of public feasts, make sacrifices to the *numen*, or divine essence, of Augustus (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.115).

However, the *Fasti Praenestini* also provides descriptions of what Roman citizens do on such days. For example, on April 4, *Megelesia*, Roman nobles are accustomed to engage in *mutitationes*, exchanges of hospitality at dinner parties (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.127). On March 6th, citizens celebrate the anniversary of Augustus' election to the position of *pontifex maximus*, the most important of the Roman priesthoods, by decorating their heads with crowns; *populus coronatus feriatu agit* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.121).

While the *Fasti Praenestini* is the only extant calendar that includes all of this information, it also includes a pieces of information shared with almost all of the other Augustan-era *fasti*, such as the *Fasti Fratrum Arvalium*, *Fasti Caeretani*, *Fasti Maffeiani*, and *Fasti Vallenses*.²⁴ These include explanations for holidays, or *feriae*, which have been added to the calendar by the senate, particularly those dealing with Julius Caesar,

Augustus himself, or members of his family. In the *Fasti Praenestini*, these days are indicated by the formulaic phrase *feriae ex senatus consulto quod...*, as on January 30th which reads as follows: *Feriae ex senatus consulto quod eo die ara Pacis Augustae in campo Martio dedicata est Druso et Crispino consulibus*. (Holiday by decree of the senate because on this day the altar of Augustan Peace was dedicated on the Campus Martius when Drusus and Crispinus were consuls.) (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.117).

The inclusion of explanations of various days and the descriptions of what takes place on those days do not add anything to the functionality of the *Fasti Praenestini*. As Agnes K. Michels demonstrates, the standard information which was included on Roman calendars was intended to provide the Roman citizen consulting the calendar with some kind of useful information, such as the “dividing days which serve as the basis of measuring the Roman month, or the character designation of days, such as *fastus*, *nefas*, or *endotercisus*.”²⁵ Etymological derivations for the names of months, explanations for why a holiday is celebrated, or descriptions of activities which officials carry out on such days are not particularly useful pieces of information for the public.

One might argue that instructions such as those seen on March 6th, the date on which the Roman citizenry celebrates Augustus’ election as *pontifex maximus* by wearing crowns, do inform people how to conduct themselves on holidays. Similar instructional information is found in other Augustan-era calendars, such as the *Fasti Caeretani*, on which March 21, the festival of *Parilia*, is also said to be celebrated *coronatis omnibus*, with all wearing crowns (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.66). However, it remains to be seen what practical function the etymologies of month-names or descriptions of customs practiced by the public on traditional holidays may have served. The inclusion of detailed descriptions of customary behavior during traditional festivals, with which it is reasonable to guess that most Romans would have already been familiar, is unique to the *Fasti Praenestini*, and suggests that this calendar was designed with a function beyond providing information needed by the public.

Wallace-Hadrill focuses on the information included which concerns Augustus, and he argues that through Verrius Flaccus, who was in the “direct employment of the emperor,”²⁶ the traditional

calendar has been expanded to place Augustus alongside “the origins of Rome, where the gods were last close to Roman man.”²⁷ Wallace-Hadrill notes that in the *Fasti Praenestini*, dates for observances of ancient festivals are juxtaposed with newly added observances for dates pertaining to Augustus or his family. He describes this as an “hour-glass” effect, whereby the ancient past and present-day are represented extensively in the Roman calendar, while events in between are few.²⁸

While this characterization may be accurate in describing the content of the *Fasti Praenestini*, an examination of other Augustan *fasti* reveals that this characterization is by no means unique to the *Fasti Praenestini*. Furthermore, while the *Fasti Praenestini* includes all of the types of information discussed above, other Augustan *fasti* tend only to record detailed explanations for holidays pertaining to Augustus or his family, as seen in the *Fasti Fratrum Arvalium*, *Fasti Caeretani*, *Fasti Maffeiani*, and *Fasti Vallenses*. These types of holidays with their relatively detailed explanations stand out from other holidays in the majority of Augustan-era calendars. In the inscriptions for the month of March in the *Fasti Maffeiani*, a stark contrast is evident between the spare wording for traditional named *feriae* such as *Liberalia* and *Tubilustrium* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.66), which are marked only by *Lib* and *Tubil*, the abbreviated forms of their names, and two days pertaining to Augustus, the day on which he became *pontifex maximus* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.66) and the anniversary of his victory at Alexandria, described respectively with the phrases *hoc die Caesar pontifex maximus factus est* and *hoc die Caesar Alexandream recepit* (*Inscr. Ital.* xii.2.66). Finally, the *Fasti Praenestini* was created years after many of these other calendars, demonstrating that the association of Augustus and the calendar was a wide-spread trend in Roman culture before Verrius Flaccus created his calendar.

It is clear that the *Fasti Praenestini* stands apart from other *fasti* not in its inclusion of information concerning Augustus, but in its inclusion of detailed explanations for all types of days in the Roman calendar. Wallace-Hadrill’s argument that the *Fasti Praenestini* was an integral part of the machinery of propaganda which created the cultural trend of the calendar being associated with Augustus does not reflect the evidence of the other *fasti*. It is more reasonable to argue that it shares

this information with many other calendars because it is an expression of the culture in which this association was commonly held. The *Fasti Praenestini* is not innovative in its integration of Augustus into the calendar, but instead in its integration of all of the other types of material which it includes. Instead of being an instrument of propaganda passing these ideas from the top down, it expresses a great deal of information about the culture at large in which it was created.

One of the areas of Augustan culture which the *Fasti Praenestini* reflects is the intellectual movement known as antiquarianism.²⁹ This refers to the general interest in Rome's remote history among intellectuals of the day. Historians such as Livy sought to link the earliest days of Rome to the Augustan present; he hoped that such an examination of antiquity would be "salutary" and allow the reader to select "what to imitate for its virtues and what to avoid for its disreputable motivations and deplorable consequences" (Livy 10).³⁰ An important model for writing about the distant past and especially how events in the distant past brought about recognizable elements of the current world was the Alexandrian poet Callimachus who wrote in Alexandria in the 3rd century BC.³¹ Callimachus' major work, which only survives in fragments, was called the *Aetia*, or "causes," and consisted of explanations for a variety of phenomena associated with both nature and man. Many scholars, Herbert-Brown among them, recognize the influence of Callimachus on the aetiological poetry of Propertius and in Ovid's *Fasti*. The explanations given in the *Fasti Praenestini* also seem to follow the Callimachean model. This is especially evident in the multiple *aetia* given for the names of months, as demonstrated earlier.

Furthermore, the inclusion of material describing important aspects of religious holidays reflects a broad-reaching religious revival which took place under Augustus. During the political upheaval of the civil wars, many functions of public religion had been neglected. Galinsky argues that due to the intrinsic relationship between the Roman state and religion, restoration of the neglected aspects of religion would be a natural extension of any restoration of the republic.³² Thus it is not surprising to find that Augustus himself emphasizes his role in restoring aspects of religion in his *Res Gestae*. However, Augustus was not the only Roman who held this revived interest in religion; many other

Romans at all levels of society shared this interest. Among the elite in Roman society, traditional religious sodalities and priesthoods such as the Arval Brethren gained great popularity under Augustus, as he himself became a member of many of these organizations.³³ The cult of the *Lares Compitales* was restructured to allow freedmen, women, and even slaves to participate as officiants in venerating the *Lares Compitales*, or dieties guarding the crossroads of their local municipal districts, along with the new practice of worshipping the *genius*, or divine essence, of Augustus.³⁴ Thus an integral characteristic of this age is the wide-spread religious participation of all levels of society. The descriptive information which is included in the *Fasti Praenestini* not only speaks to the revived interest in various types of religious activity under Augustus which had been neglected during the civil wars, but also reflects the wide-spread participation at every level of society in religious activity, from the nobles' celebration of *Megelensia* with *mutitationes* to the *populus coronatus* observance of Augustus' anniversary as *pontifex maximus*.

In addition to its unique content, the *Fasti Praenestini* also stands out from other Augustan-Era *fasti* in its location and arrangement. Suetonius notes that Verrius Flacus positioned his *fasti* in a hemicycle in the forum of Praeneste. The remains of the *Fasti Praenestini* suggest that the calendar was indeed displayed in a curved arrangement. The placement of the calendar in a hemicycle is significant for understanding how the *Fasti Praenestini* may be viewed as an experimental form of Augustan art.

A hemicycle, which may also be referred to as an exedra, is an architectural feature consisting of a large, semi-circular recess in a wall.³⁵ In the plan for the Forum of Augustus, it becomes evident how this type of feature was used in the public space of the forum. Within the porticos which run along the long sides of the Forum of Augustus appear a "Hall of Fame"³⁶ consisting of statues of great Romans who had been leading citizens. Statues of the two most important ancestors of Rome, Aeneas and Romulus, appear in opposed exedrae which branch off from the porticos. The two statues were placed at the central point of the arc of the hemicycle's wall. We know that on the north exedra, the statue of Aeneas was surrounded by statues of his earlier descendants, the King of Alba Longa on his

right hand side, and his more recent descendants, the Julians, on his left hand side. In the Forum of Augustus, the recessed exedra is used to place emphasis on a sculptural array that its designer felt was very important: linking Augustus' Julian heritage to Rome's mythical past.³⁷

This use of the hemicycle/exedra suggests that this architectural feature was used to display important works of art. Although Michels notes that the aesthetically pleasing form of the Roman calendar would have provided decoration along with its functionality, the *fasti* compiled by Degrassi show no evidence that any other extant calendar had been displayed in such a position of prominence as a hemicycle. Placing the *fasti* in a hemicycle takes it from being a functional, perhaps decorative, element of a wall to being a work of art which invites critical examination, as with the sculptures of Augustus' ancestors in the exedra of his forum.

In the Forum of Praeneste, the form of the hemicycle physically draws the viewer into the calendar. Upon entering its recess, the viewer is removed from the space of the forum. He is now surrounded on three sides by the calendar itself. This design focuses all of the viewer's attention on the form of the calendar. At this point, the viewer would engage the content of the calendar. The explanatory and descriptive material invites the reader to consider his own experiences with the calendar. As M. Pasco Pranger³⁸ has described it, "the *fasti* in some sense asks for elaboration." Thus the *Fasti Praenestini's* physical presentation and varied content draws the reader into participating with the Roman Calendar in a consideration of Roman time as understood in the Age of Augustus. This invitation to participation is a key aspect of many forms of Augustan art, which may be seen to have reached its pinnacle in the *Ara Pacis*. This monument's polysemous imagery draws interpretation from viewers on a variety of levels depending on their personal experiences and education. Thus, through the synthesis of the physical presentation and its rich content, the *Fasti Praenestini* becomes a work of Augustan art.

In this context the unique aspects evident in the *Fasti Praenestini* may be argued to create a "new genre" of the traditional and functional Roman calendar, a novel form of cultural expression. The *Fasti Praenestini* is a successful expression of the culture in which it was created because it is able to convey broad-reaching cultural ideas such

as the new association of the calendar with Augustus, intellectual ideas such as the antiquarian movement of the time, and the new religious revival. In addition to suggesting the austere, ritualistic “pageantry” of Rome’s history which Mary Beard ascribes to the Roman calendar,³⁹ the descriptions of what takes place on various days of the year express the actions of Romans at every level of society. The array of descriptions, each of which provides a vignette of daily life in Rome, gives the calendar the air of a written mural. The text is even displayed much as a painting would be, and it lends itself to being read, not as one would read the narrative of a story, but as one would view elements of painting on a wall.⁴⁰ Thus it may be argued that the *Fasti Praenestini* surpasses the other *fasti* of the Augustan age because it has become a work of art in and of itself. This is supported by the fact that the explanatory material and the descriptions of activities on various days serve no practical purpose in the functioning of the calendar. When considered in conjunction with the arrangement of the calendar, the inclusion of such elements seems to serve an aesthetic or possibly educational function. Thus it may be argued that the *Fasti Praenestini* does represent a “new genre” of calendar, the calendar as a work of art.

Finally, it is important to consider the role of Verrius Flaccus in the creation of this “new genre” of calendar. Wallace-Hadrill labels Verrius Flaccus as a propagandist of Augustus.⁴¹ This is a simplistic interpretation of the relationship between the two men, and misses a vital aspect of the work Verrius Flaccus produced. While it is possible to argue that Verrius Flaccus produced his calendar at Augustus’ request, there is not evidence to this effect. At the most, Verrius Flaccus, a man who was indebted to Augustus, chose to honor him through a medium with which he was already associated, the calendar. Nevertheless, the creativity of the calendar must lie with Verrius Flaccus himself

However, as Suetonius notes, a statue of Flaccus was erected in the Forum of Praeneste near the calendar itself. This evidence is suggestive of a common Roman practice of providing a gift to the public in the hopes of being recognized for one’s beneficence. It seems likely, based on Suetonius’ mention of the nearby statue, that Flaccus created the *Fasti Praenestini* for public use in order to earn the reputation

of being a wise benefactor of the city of Praeneste. He would be recognized with the honor of a statue near his monument, no doubt with an *elogium*, an inscribed bronze plaque relating his illustrious career. Thus it is reasonable to assume that Verrius Flaccus, not Augustus, earned the most prestige from creating the *Fasti Praenestini*.

Thus, like Ovid's literary *Fasti*, Verrius Flaccus' *Fasti Praenestini* may be seen as a novel and experimental expression of the Augustan culture in which it was created. Instead of representing ideas propagated by Augustus from the top down, the *Fasti Praenestini* represents the creative response of a Roman to ideas which were being considered by all in this society, including Augustus.

Notes

¹ A. Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus: Ovid, Augustus, and the *Fasti*," in P. Hardie and M. Whitby (eds.), *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bolchazy-Carducci, 1987). pp. 221-30.

² Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid*, (Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 105. Herbert-Brown explains the history of this debate nicely in her chapter "Why *Fasti*?" in *Ovid and the Fasti: An Historical Study* (Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 1-31.

³ J. C. McKeown, "Ovid's *Fasti* and Augustan Politics," in Tony Woodman and David West (eds.), *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge University Press, 1984). pp. 169-87.

⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," pp. 221-30.

⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," pp. 223-7.

⁶ Galinsky, Karl, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷ Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti: An Historical Study* (Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 1-31.

⁸ Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, p. 29.

⁹ Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, p. 7.

¹⁰ Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, pp. 26-31. Herbert-Brown provides a fascinating examination of the art and architecture of the Forum of Augustus and the Temples of Castor and of Concord. Although I do not believe her discussion of such imagery is as sophisticated as Galinsky's, she considers how "official state imagery"

was punctuated by rich, experimental ornamentation.

¹¹ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 223.

¹² Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 222.

¹³ Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, p. 26.

¹⁴ Cooley, M.G.L., *London Association of Classical Teachers-Original Records 17: Age of Augustus*, Literary Texts translated by B. W. J. G. Wilson (London Association of Classical Teachers, 2003), p. 46.

¹⁵ A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae, XII: Fasti et Elogia, Fasculus II, Fasti Numani et Iuliani*, (Libreria della Stato, 1963), p. 141.

¹⁶ Degrassi, 142; Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 225.

¹⁷ Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, p. xxv. Both the *Fasti Alfiani* and the *Fasti Fratrum Arvalium* would have stood more than two meters tall.

²⁰ Michels, A. K. *The Calendar of the Roman Republic* (Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 19. The Kalends is the first day of every month, the Nones is either the 5th or 7th day depending on the length of the month, the Ides either the 13th or the 15th.

²¹ Michels, *The Calendar of the Roman Republic*, p. 31.

²² Ibid. The various "character" designations which appear consistently on Roman calendars are as follows: F, for *fastus*, designated a day as appropriate for business; N, for *nefas*, denoted that business was not to be carried out; EN, or *endotercidus*, that half of the day was *nefastus*, half *fastus*; C, for *comitiales*, indicated that the assembly of Roman citizens known as the *comitia* was allowed to meet. The designation of NP remains unexplained.

²³ For definitions of the various "character" designations, see above note.

²⁴ In Degrassi, see *Fasti Fratrum Arvalium*, *Fasti Caeretani*, *Fasti Maffeiani*, and *Fasti Vallenses* for almost identical wording to that found in the *Fasti Praenestini* when explaining the reasons for *feriae* concerning Augustus.

²⁵ Michels, *The Calendar of the Roman Republic*, p. 31.

²⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 227.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 226.

²⁹ Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, p. 9.

³⁰ Cooley, *Age of Augustus*, p. 55.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, p. 288.

³³ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, p. 292.

³⁴ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, pp. 300-10.

³⁵ Robertson, D. S. *Greek and Roman Architecture* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 384. Roberts notes that, while modern commentators distinguish between these two in size, ancient writers used the terms interchangeably.

³⁶ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, p. 208.

³⁷ For discussion of the imagery in the Forum of Augustus, see Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, pp. 197-213.

³⁸ M. Pasco-Pranger, "Added Days: Calendrical Poetics and Julio-Claudian Holidays," in Geraldine Herbert-Brown (ed.), *Ovid's Fasti: Historical Readings at its Bicentennial*, (Oxford University Press, 2002). pp. 251-75.

³⁹ Beard, M, "A Complex of Times: No More Sheep on Romulus' Birthday," *The Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 33 (1987), pp. 1-15.

⁴⁰ Beard discusses how the disparate elements of the calendar come together to form the pageantry of the Roman past in context with the present. However, she does not focus on the physical aspects of the calendar so much as the coming together of rituals over the course of the year.

⁴¹ Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus," p. 227.