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The 'Connected Reader' as a Window into Lived Ancient Religion: A Case Study of Ovid's *Libri fastorum*

Abstract

Ovid's commentary on the Roman *fasti* is one of the literary products of the Augustan period extensively dealing with religious practices in centralised cult and domestic worship. Apart from its role in the development of ruler worship, its documentary value for reconstructing Roman ritual has been intensively investigated. However, the answers given by Ovid as contemporary observer or as Augustan theologian are at least as important as the questions Ovid is asking, or has his figures ask. Reader response criticism, my paper claims, opens up a tool for reconstructing lived ancient religion. The paper will analyse these questions of why, what, and when, in order to reconstruct a profile of what is questionable and worth knowing for the reader, implied by this exceptionally well-preserved 'antiquarian' text.

Keywords: Ovid: *fasti*, emotions in ritual, implied reader, urban religion, religious knowledge, Roman religion

1 The Problem

'Lived Ancient Religion' is a research program asking for a change of perspective. Religious 'tradition', 'shared social meaning', 'ritual precepts' and 'public religion' are well-researched areas of religious practices and beliefs in the ancient circum-Mediterranean world. Instead, by focussing on 'lived religion', individual appropriation of tradition, personal experiences and responses, the incoherencies of situational interpretation, isolated performances, local and group-specific styles come into focus.[1] If this interest goes beyond listing the myriads of documents of individual performance, consisting of votives, inscriptions, and anonymous depositional remains –

1 Rüpke 2012c. – This paper is part of a research project 'Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning "Cult" and "Polis religion"', funded by the European Community within FP2008–13 under agreement no. 295555.

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which are all deeply shaped by their (usually) formulaic and stereotyped character – the question of evidence becomes crucial. How can we identify individual appropriation and transformation, or the creative reassembling and consequential selections, of elements of tradition made by individuals? How can we evaluate the impact of such individual modifications on the resulting shape of seemingly stable 'traditions'? Where can we trace the interdependencies of the individual and the social in specific situations?[2]

Individual religious practices depend upon the intellectual as well as embodied availability of 'traditions' and their situational salience. Such 'traditions' embrace complex belief systems as well as simple sequences of ritual action. 'Learning' and 'memory' are involved in processes of individual appropriation. These terms refer to processes of acquiring knowledge by formal training or constant repetition, by casual exchange and need-driven inquiry.[3] Paying attention to these forms is a necessary element of any historical reconstruction.

By the late republican period, a small minority of Romans could read and had access to private copies or the first public libraries, or could afford to spend time in, or be invited to, recitations. For them, from the mid-first century onwards, texts on religion were available which were lavish in ritual and theological detail.[4] These texts, where extant, have been used for centuries as the principal sources for the reconstruction of 'Roman religion'. Occasionally (and more intensively in recent years) they have been detected as offering a glimpse onto the intellectual concerns and the cognitive dimension of late Republican and early Imperial religion. They have come to be regarded as theological enterprises in their own right, establishing their authors as figures of religio-historical importance as much as holders of public priesthoods.[5] It is my claim in this paper that analysis of such texts can also contribute to the methodological problems raised by the Lived Ancient Religion approach. But how could such contributions be elicited, how could the user rather than the producer, the usage rather than the production, be illuminated?

2 See for case studies addressing the problem of religious individuality: Rüpke and Spickermann 2012; Rebillard 2012; Rüpke 2013; Rüpke and Woolf 2013.

3 For the concept of memory see Halbwachs 1992; Connerton 1989; Le Goff 1992; Flower 2003; Oesterle 2005; Cubitt 2007; Benoist et al. 2009; Erll 2011; Dignas and Smith 2012; Cusamano et al. 2013; Rüpke 2012b.

4 See Rawson 1985 (for the period as a whole), briefly Ledentu 2004, 329–337.

5 Beard 1986, 1987, 1991; Feeney 1998; Rüpke 2012a.

2 Searching for the Readers

One of the most pressing problems in the sociology of ancient literature is the almost total lack of testimonies of readers and their reactions – with the exception of some famous responses, for example of Cicero as a reader of Varro, or about Augustus as a listener to Vergil.[6] Likewise, a dense sequence of manuscript copies, which would at least allow a glimpse into the reactions of copyists through their modifications of the original wording (and layout), is restricted to very few cases, in particular to texts later classified as 'Christian'.[7] Analysis is thus usually restricted to the texts themselves and what can be elicited about the reader therein. Reader response criticism has suggested different approaches to this task, especially in the last third of the twentieth century.[8]

Evidently, the act of reading is a complex process. It is confronting a reader's formation and expectation with a text that confirms or frustrates such expectations and that offers a sequence of representations and meta-representations (that is, representations of others' representations), information and evaluation or – in extreme cases of some magical papyri and Dadaism – just sounds or images. It is permanently forcing the recipients – and for antiquity we have to think of hearers even more frequently than readers – to recalibrate their appraisal.[9] Apart from the different voices of explicit (i. e. narrated) or implicit narrators, the text might offer figures within the plot as models for or alternatives means of reception, so-called narrated readers (or, as I stressed, hearers). The text might also construe an 'intended reader' as somebody of a certain age, gender, social identity or intellectual interest. This would usually be even an 'ideal reader' with all the competences necessary to fully grasp the text. The text as a whole, that is, as a sum of its challenges to connect its unconnected parts, and to combine its different perspectives, would, according to Wolfgang Iser, produce an 'implicit' or 'implied reader'.[10]

For this brief exposition, I am not interested in discussing the merits of the different shades and the ontological statuses of these readers.[11] Evidently, the more implicit the reader is, the more dependent her character is

6 Cic. *acad. post*. 8–9; Donat, *Vita Vergilii* 31.
7 See e. g. Haines-Eitzen 2012.
8 E. g. Booth 1983 (1961); Jauss 1977a, 1977b, 1982, 1987; Iser 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978; overview: Prince 2009.
9 Iser 1994.
10 Ibid., 62–66.
11 For criticism see Genette 1994, 291–292.

on the interpretation of the text as a whole by the literary critique and little more than the indeterminable point where all the loose ends of a text are tied together.[12] For the purpose of my analysis it suffices to say (and eases my task) that literary communication in antiquity, including religious communication,[13] is much more tightly bound to established social relationships than to literary texts of the late early modern and modern periods.[14] This is due to the limited extent of literacy, and its concentration in the upper echelons of society.[15] It is reinforced by the necessity to manually copy books. Distribution usually relies on friends (and friends of friends) rather than on the very limited commercial book market.[16] For the most part reading took place in a network made up of strong *and* weak ties.[17] Again, we usually have no external evidence on the specific religious appropriations of the members, that is, the nodes of such a network. In order to avoid circularity in my argumentation by imputing what I would like to see implied, my analysis will concentrate on narrated figures, but of course collect other clues leading to intended audiences as well. This is what I will call 'connected reader', i.e. somebody cognitively and socially connected, in the following.

3 Informing and Involving the Connected Reader: A Case Study

The text to test the methodology outlined is Publius Ovidius Naso's *Libri fastorum,* his commentary on the Roman calendar in its graphic form of the *fasti,* mostly completed after 2 CE, perhaps before 4, but certainly before 8 CE.[18] Roman poetry might not seem to be the best inroad into broadly valid data on ancient religious practice; its audience must be looked for in the Roman elite, despite its critical voices visible in several late republican and early Augustan texts from Catullus and Vergil to Horace and Propertius. It was in the communicative and social space of the elite, however, that such

12 Nünning 1993; radicalised by Willand 2014, in particular 265–297.
13 For the latter concept see Rüpke and Spickermann 2009; Rüpke 2001.
14 Habinek 1998, in particular 103–121.
15 For the discussion see Harris 1989; Corbier 1991; Bowman and Woolf 1994; Curchin 1995; Hezser 2001; Derks and Roymans 2002; Lardinoi 2011.
16 In general Johnson 2012; for circulation see Starr 1987; Mratschek 2010; Haines-Eitzen 2012, 24.
17 For a fruitful application of network theory to ancient religion see Collar 2007; Eidinow 2011 and Collar 2014.
18 For the title and genre see Rüpke 1994. Against common usage, I use the fuller title to fight the widespread misunderstanding of the poem as versified calendar. For a short discussion of the date (not accepting the earlier terminus post quem, to which I tend) see Littlewood 2006, xx.

poetry had a role. These texts 'became part of the Romans' social equipment and came to inform their view of the world', as Sander Goldberg has shown in his study on republican Roman literature.[19] Religious practices, institutions, and history had a substantial share in this view of the world.[20]

Ovid's six books, covering the months of January to June, are, together with Propertius' fourth book of the elegies (to which Ovid reacts),[21] the apogee of this poetry in the early Principate. They are part of the cultural revolution which Andrew Wallace-Hadrill demonstrated to be at the heart of the Augustan 'restoration'.[22] At the same time they were very political statements.[23] In a longer perspective, however, the composition of these texts on Roman religion was also part of the process of insular rationalisation from the third century BCE onwards, which came, at least for religion, to a halt in Augustan times.[24]

For research into constructions of audiences and narrators, Ovid's elegiac poems on an epic scale are particularly rewarding. The homodiegetic narrator (to use Genette's terminology), that is to say a narrator fully embedded in the principal narration, is not omniscient, but himself frequently in need of further information, or reflecting on different explanations. As Joy Littlewood formulates, 'audience involvement is essential to Ovid's Fasti narrative, which is a personal exchange with literary Rome, the educated elite'. The self-contained short units of elegiac distiches are in particular suitable to 'colloquial dialogue'.[25] The elaborate dedication of the *Libri fastorum* to Augustus in the first version (probably still to be detected in the beginning of the second book on February)[26] and the dedication to Germanicus in the second and final version from exile (8–17 CE) call for active appropriation by every single reader. These texts are intensively arguing for the importance of the poems' contents to the individual dedicatees, but they are also asking any other reader to consider their importance. Time and again these 'con-

19 Goldberg 2005, 207.
20 See in general Feeney 1998; for history see Feeney 2007a; Rüpke 2012b, 165–173.
21 In particular Ov. *fast.* 2.7–8; see Rüpke 2009.
22 Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 236–239.
23 See Wallace-Hadrill 1988; Barchiesi 1994; Feeney 1994; Herbert-Brown 1994; Fantham 2002.
24 Rüpke 2012a, where I claim the process to be predating the 1st century advocated by Moatti 1997. Feeney 2007b is right, however, to point out numerous innovations in the second half of the 1st century BCE.
25 Littlewood 2006, lxviii–lxix and lxxiv, quotations lxix and lxxiv.
26 I follow the thesis of Peter 1874, 10 (accepted e. g. by Bömer 1958, 19; without new arguments rejected by Miller 1991, 143–144).

nected readers' are directly addressed. The opening of the sixth book is an example of this:

> *Hic quoque mensis habet dubias in nomine causas:*
> *quae placeat, positis omnibus ipse* leges (6.1–2).[27]
>
> 'This month, too, has dubious causes for its name.
> All will be listed. Pick the one you like.'[28]

Intellectually, this form of literary communication is part of antiquarian literature, which has risen since the second century BCE at Rome. In the face of imperial expansion and rapid social and cultural change, antiquarian descriptions and systematisations of Roman rituals and institutions offered a way to construe a particular cultural identity beyond military dominance and offered a way to negotiate change and tradition. Augustus made full use of that. In that manner, innovations could be rooted in a vision of religious continuity and reaffirmation:[29] '"Traditionalism",' as Wallace-Hadrill points out, 'brought not inflexibility, but the basis for creative adaptation. Cultural identity invested in a remote past becomes not so much a programme as an alibi.'[30]

But there is more to it. It is my hypothesis that in this discourse description and prescription went hand in hand. In tapping into different local, social, and even ethnic traditions, antiquarianism not only offered a fuller account of the shared cultural heritage, but also a broad range of religious resources, practices and beliefs, for individual appropriation. This detailed and colourful image of religion allowed for more than to serve the narrow ideological function of providing identity for contemporaries. For us, it offers a glimpse into lived ancient religion, even if it is difficult or even impossible to determine in every single instance whether we are dealing with actual or just imagined lived religion. Given the communicative and social context of this type of imagination, it is at least an imagination closely controlled by contemporaries. This holds true for the information given about religious practices as much as for the information implied about a connected reader's interest in these practices. Whereas previous research, interested in religious institutions, has concentrated on the former, this analysis, interested in lived religion, will concentrate on the latter.

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27 I basically follow the text as constituted by Alton, Wormell, and Courtney (Ovidius Naso 1985).

28 These and the following translations are taken from Boyle and Woodard 2004, who help to grasp the colloquial style.

29 See Rüpke 2012a, in particular 144 ff.

30 Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 239.

In his poem, Ovid did not invent a Roman calendar of festivals. His commentary is a reaction to a series of calendar reforms, starting with the technical reform by Julius Caesar, which changed an age-old instrument of daily use and brought it into the foreground of political and dynastic propaganda. Beginning in the form of a large-sized marble calendar in the sanctuary of the reformed priesthood of the Arval Brethren shortly after the battle of Actium, publicly displayed Roman *fasti* were quickly produced and proliferated in the city of Rome as well as in central Italy and occasionally beyond.[31] Augustus used the calendar to represent his own achievements in the form of extended festival annotations, producing visibility of the rituals referred to, far beyond actual participation. In turn, local elites even of small villages or magistrates of slave *collegia* could display their loyalty by copying these calendars and inscribing themselves into this Augustan world in the form of annual lists of magistrates, likewise called *fasti*.[32] If it had been attractive to know about Roman festivals and the 'Roman year', it now became imperative to know about the *fasti*, the specific graphical form of the Roman calendar. Ovid took up this challenge.[33]

Before any further details are addressed, the very implications of the generic identification of the poem not only as some didactic text but as a commentary have to be pointed out. The whole poem works only on the assumption that the connected reader is actively following the chronological progress by using his or her own copy of the calendar. This is the necessary pretext without which it would be hard, at times impossible, to understand the text. The *locus classicus* is Ov. *fast.* 5.727–728: 'The next place comes with four marks, which, read in order, / denote a sacred rite or the king's flight.' The arbitrary and incomplete introduction of some calendar indications in our editions since Rudolf Merkel's *editio maior* in the 19th century has obscured this fact. The connected reader, hence, is a very active one.[34] The abbreviations or short notes of the calendar and the names used in it are the primary instigation for questions (and at times answers). Ovid's introduction of the rise and disappearance of constellations of stars, dealt with in other genres ('parapegmata'),[35] made the reader even more active. Here, Ovid's treatment implied a criticism of the form of the current calendars

31 See Rüpke 2011 for a reconstruction of the process and Rüpke 1995 for a review of the preserved calendars.

32 Rüpke 1997a, 1997b; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 246.

33 Rüpke 1994, see also Rüpke 2009.

34 It is not only 'authorial passivity' which invites 'co-authorship' on part of the reader, as claimed by King 2004, 199.

35 Rehm 1949; Rüpke 1996; Lehoux 2007.

in the face of the rise of astrology, a criticism taken up by popular forms of domestic calendars to be found in the Roman Empire.[36]

In terms of reader construction, the *Libri fastorum*'s main feature is the direct apostrophe of the reader in second person singular. This was a well-known technique to involve readers (or listeners), shifting the author's authority from the magisterial role of an omniscient narrator to his less visible power to define his readers' interests. In Ovid, the questions of the narrator are attributed to the narrated reader, as if the narrator's answers are caused by an intervention of a present interlocutor. The range of questions is the same as the range of questions raised by the narrator, who is either asking these questions and simply answering them or addressing them to more knowledgeable instances, sometimes human, more often the deities concerned or the Muses.

If asking such questions is normally an honourable business, it can have its risks. The figure of Ino is credited with the same curious set of mind on her arrival in Italy. Her inquiry about the race of the Maenads (6.505) is not very well received. Saturnian Juno stirs up the Maenads by suggesting: 'She is a spy and aims to learn our sacred rites' (6.511). Obviously, Juno prepares a fate for her parallel to that of Pentheus.[37] And yet the wording of the questions as well as the sharp criticism in characterising Juno as *insidiosa* (6.508) suggests that Ovid is well aware of the parallels in inquiring and of the total absence of similar consequences in the present.

Question and answer is the basic mode of discourse. It is usually the single narrator or reader who poses questions. Only five times against twenty-four instances in the whole poem a plural of readers is supposed to ask: *quaeritis*; all these instances occur in the second half of the poem, from book four onwards.[38] 'Why', is the quintessential question (45 times throughout the whole poem). Similar in attitude is asking for origins (*origo*, eleven times) or causes (*causa/ae*, 91 times). The distribution over the books is fairly even in all cases. Even without being asked, simply on perceiving the tacit astonishment of the narrator, an old woman gives the 'cause' for her naked feet (6.415). In the following I concentrate on examples taken from book 6. I try to combine an economy of space, which concentrates on representative examples, with a careful contextual reading, which pays attention to the image of the 'connected reader' as painted within the framework of a typical unit of reception.

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36 Goessler 1928; Wagner-Roser 1987; Rüpke 1995, ch. 12; see also Stern 2012.

37 Thus Littlewood 2006, 161.

38 4.878; 5.1, 526; 6.195, 551. This might point to an imagination of (or even experience with) an audience of several listeners rather than of isolated readers.

4 Knowledge and Ritual Competence in Ovid's Readers

The connected reader, hence, is someone interested in reasons, usually given in the form of stories about origins, mythical or historical. This is conforming to previous antiquarian discourse as well as aetiological myths, which flow together in the interplay of questions and answers. Religion is something that could be explained, and it is not priestly lore, but historical research, which provides answers.[39] The religious data to be explained are frequently names. These names, however, are visual data, they are suggested only by being seen in the calendar which in itself is representing visible cult. Other *explananda* present themselves visually. Temples are frequently 'looking out', occasionally statues or ritual procedures force themselves into the narrator's field of vision.

If narrator and connected reader share an interest in vision, vision also marks a decisive difference. Visual epiphanies are a privilege of the narrator. Surprisingly, this fact empowers the narrator as much as the inscribed reader. The narrator expects the reader to doubt the authenticity of the visions, as some lines in the beginning of book 6 make clear:

> *facta canam? sed erunt qui me finxisse loquantur*
> *nullaque mortali numina visa putent.*
> *est deus in nobis? agitante calescimus illo;* (5)
> *impetus hic sacrae semina mentis habet.*
> *fas mihi praecipue voltus vidisse deorum,*
> *vel quia sum vates, vel quia sacra cano.*
>
> 'I will sing facts, but some will call them fiction
> and think no gods appear to mortal men.
> There is a god inside us; his movement makes us glow,
> His power owns the seeds of sacred thought.
> For me above all it's lawful to see a god's face,
> Since I'm a poet *or* sing sacred themes' (6.3–8).

Such visions are a continuous source of knowledge. It is knowledge, however, which is questionable and contested at times. The concept of 'vision' is even adapted to accommodate the direct contact with that goddess whose very characteristic it is to not be represented by a statue and to remain unseen by males, Vesta (6.291). This specific and performative poetic knowledge supplements the type of information that is generically attributed to 'old annals' in two prefatory remarks.[40] Occasionally, ten times throughout the poem, the narrator 'remembers' *(memini, commemini)* what he has seen or even

39 Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 240–242. 248.
40 1.7 and 4.11: *annalibus eruta priscis*.

learnt *(didici)* earlier, in one passage of book 6 even 'in my childhood years' (6.417). Knowledge in religious matter is learnable.

The connected reader is attributed an interest in knowledge. *E nostro carmine certus eris* – 'from my song you will gain certain knowledge – is the promise made by the narrator when he talks about obscure Carna (6.104) – again I take my example from book 6, which is representative in these aspects. Certain knowledge about gods made a category of its own for Varro's classification of gods *(di certi)*. Religious data could be subject to ignorance or error; the narrator admits to such states (6.255, 295) and tries to free his readers from such error.[41]

In some instances knowledge implies a change in the course of future action. This relates to knowledge about the character of days, whether they are suitable, or more precisely, better *(melius)* suited for marriage or warfare (6.221–222, 769) or to meteorological knowledge and sailing (6.715; similar 2.453; 4.625). With regard to religious activities superior knowledge seems not to have any consequences. About Semo Sancus Dius Fidius and the names to be used in his cult the narrator learns from Semo Pater that 'whichever of them you choose, I'll have the tribute' (6.215).[42] The long discourse on the identity of the statue covered by togas in Fortuna's temple – identified as Servius Tullius – remains without consequences as the matrons are exhorted not to touch the heap of textiles (6.621).[43]

Such exhortations to perform cult are extremely rare. Religion described as lived in Ovid is not characterised by different degrees of perfection in reproducing scripted rituals. The connected reader is not admonished to fulfil ritual duties. Regular participation in public cult is not an aim of the didactics of the text. The very few exceptions are rather admonitions to find the apt emotional tone in ritual participation. The first instance is given by the *Feriae Sementivae,* a movable feast, treated in January. The admonitions are directed towards different roles among the rustic inhabitants, animals included (1.663–696). The whole exhortation is formulated as an emotionalised prayer. The *Karistia* or *Cara Cognatio* on 22 February offers the next instance, exhorting the *boni* to give incense and simple meals in domestic cult. Linguistically it is slowly shifting from description to exhortation (2.617–638). It is useful for ordinary girls *(volgares … puellae)* to venerate Venus on the Vinalia of 23 April (4.865–872), a deity so useful for many things that one should ask her favours in a mocking tone. By contrast, the Quirites should

41 See 2.47 *ne erres;* 2.151 *ne fallare;* 2.453 *tu desine credere* (relating to meteorological phenomena); cf. 2.531 *stulta pars populi*.

42 See Bömer 1958, 349–350 on the deities.

43 See Littlewood 2006, 173 on the historical problem.

celebrate Mars Ultor in a solemn way, by circus, not by scenic games (5.597–598). The matrons should give 'golden cakes' to Mater Matuta, because it is their own festival (6.475–476). The *Quirites* should celebrate Fors Fortuna in a happy mood *(laeti),* and drunkenness is no reason for shame (6.775–758). The plural used in these passages and the clear indication of social groups clearly contrast with the usual singular in addressing the reader.

It is interesting to observe the differences in the description of the festival of Fors Fortuna to the description of the ritual of 15 March, the festival of Anna Perenna. In appearance the two are comparable occasions of excessive drinking on the banks of the Tiber. However, in the first instance (3.523–542) it is an activity of the *plebs*, the narrator (and others) are clearly distanced as observers.[44] On 24 June, the veneration of the deity is characterised as originating in the *plebs*. However, a series of three imperatives and two exhortative subjunctives is addressed to the *Quirites*, that is all the people, to take part in merrymaking.[45]

ite, deam laeti Fortem celebrate, Quirites;
in Tiberis ripa munera regis habet.
pars pede, pars etiam celeri decurrite cumba,
nec pudeat potos inde redire domum.
ferte coronatae iuvenum convivia lintres,
multaque per medias vina bibantur aquas (780).

'Go, celebrate with joy the goddess Fors, Quirites;
The Tiber's bank has her gift from the king.
Rush on down, some on foot, some in a speedy skiff,
And don't be ashamed to return home drunk.
Garland yourselves, boats, and carry parties of the young,
And let wine be drunk aplenty mid-stream' (6.775–780).

The drunkard returning now is not an object of ridicule, drawn by his old and drunken wife, as he was on the occasion of the Anna Perenna festival in March (*senem potum pota trahebat anus,* 3.542). Instead, he is a fairly reliable witness:

ecce suburbana rediens male sobrius aede (785)
ad stellas aliquis talia verba iacit;
'zona latet tua nunc, et cras fortasse latebit;
dehinc erit, Orion, aspicienda mihi.'

44 3.539*: sunt spectacula volgi*; 3.541 *occurrit nuper (visa est mihi digna relatu) / pompa …*

45 Other references do not allow for an unambiguous identification of the participants. When Cicero contrasts the *Tiberina descensio* with the joy of a victor and triumphator (Cic. *fin.* 5.70) one would expect an experience open to his audience. The problem has never been discussed. Bömer 1958, 180–181, doubts that the rites of the Anna Perenna festival are 'fester Bestandteil des öffentlichen Kultus', but does not realise the social demarcation given by Ovid.

> 'Look, a man returns from the shrine near the city
> Unsober, and hurls these words to the stars:
> "Your belt hides now, and perhaps will hide tomorrow.
> After that, Orion, I shall see it"' (6.785–788).

Unlike *plebs, Quirites* includes the connected reader.

There is an interesting movement within the poem on the part of the narrator here. At the end of book 6 the connected reader might be someone who is not only intellectually interested in cult, but might be reminded of his or her (females also are addressed in some of the plural exhortations) social or rather political status and be driven to active participation in religious merrymaking. And yet, the evidence remains inconclusive. First and foremost the recipient constructed by Ovid is someone who witnesses the narrator's admonitions directed towards different, larger social groups composed of others.

It is only at the very end of a poem reworked in exile to precisely end where it ends, after six months, after half a year and half a calendar, that the role of the observer borders on the role of a religious performer. Ovid's reader most certainly is an 'embedded reader', a reader who sees the passage in front of her or his eyes within the context of the poem at large and is able to take up the clues and hints at comparison organised by the author in the last passage discussed.[46] Here is a second voice in the inscribed narrator, indulgent in merrymaking ritual. The implication has to be spelled out. Not only the implied narrator, but also the connected reader is somebody fully present at Rome. This is published, this is written by an author, who lacked this presence and complained about this very fact elsewhere.

5 Antiquarians' Connected Readers and Individual Appropriation of Religion

Does the connected reader help us in analysing ancient individual appropriation of religion? I maintain it does. To argue this, I have to systematise my findings and to bolster them by further evidence. It is the very specific character of Ovid's connected readers on the one hand and the coherence of this (of course) authorial construction throughout six books of epic length (and a re-edition) on the other hand, which argue for an adequate ideal or even social portrait of the concerns of Ovid's addressees.

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46 I have taken the concept of 'embedded reader' from Boyd 2006, 172 (adopting J. J. Winkler's analysis of Apuleius' mysteries novel to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*).

* Ovid's commentary on the *fasti* addresses the local reader and supports his (or, as I would like to add in the case of Ovid, her) dominant mainstream political identity. This is not surprising, but also not necessary in antiquarian literature. Callimachus did not restrict himself to Alexandrian readers in his geographically wide-ranging *Aetia*.[47] Propertius problematises, identifies and had his readers make excursions, for instance to Lanuvium.

* Ovid does not suppose a reader to be interested in ritual details for the sake of active participation or high-resolution observation. Nevertheless a wide range of ritual practices are touched upon, even far beyond the necessities of a commentary on the Roman *fasti*. This holds true for the complex rite performed by the old woman for dea Tacita[48] as well as the otherwise unattested rites for Vacuna (6.307–308).

* Ovid does construe a reader who is above all interested in the why and whence. Of course, these are questions that are welcome to the narrator as it offers the opportunity to narrate stories. But even if occasionally the answers remain inconclusive or conflicting, the reader is supposed to regard such etymological or historical knowledge as something that can be 'learned' and 'remembered'. Religious practice and religious symbols invite questions and can be explained. Answers are neither forbidden nor dogmatic. The narrator is quite aware that his own answers are questionable. Explanation is a part of and not the end of religion,[49] it is performance of religion.

* Ovid's connected reader is made to be interested in visible religion. He or she is made aware of temples and statues and temples without statues, is made aware of the ritual use of otherwise undistinguished space. There is, however, no hint of a private usufruct of such a ritual topography.

* Instead of a systematics of religion frequently conceptualised in modern research on the blueprint of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* as a functionally ordered 'pantheon', gods and temples and the quality of days are quite often shown to be the outcome of historical contingencies and decisions. This is conforming to a trend visible in other contemporary authors as well.[50] Here, the narrator is interested in recent changes and the latest renovation of a temple rather than in a complete chronology. Clearly, religion is presented as a field of creative action for members of the political elite and the emperor in particular.

* The connected reader is as interested in domestic and local cult as in major public festivals, even if neither annotations in the calendar nor public

47 I am grateful to Tony Bierl to point this out.
48 2.571–582; see McDonough 2004, 357–358.
49 See in particular Beard 1987, 1988, 1989, 1993; Scheid 1992, 1993.
50 Rüpke 2014.

architecture points to the former's existence. Such domestic and local cult, too, is temporally regulated and discontinuous. Its performance on the part of the reader is not presupposed.

* Specific cults are the opportunity for, or even duty of, specific social, gender, or age groups. The connected reader is supposed to learn about that, he or she is at best indirectly admonished to join in. The largest exhortations for groups of which the reader would most probably be a member of are not very specific cults, but occasions which involve many groups, if not everybody: even animals in the case of the *Feriae Sementivae,* even slaves in the case of Fors Fortuna. In all these cases it is most important for the recipient to get an idea of the emotional tone of the cult. This holds true for the organisers of the cult as well as for any participant.

* It is not the modern *bricoleur en religion,* who conforms to the connected reader crafted by Ovid. It is an informed and sympathetic observer or bystander, embedded in a structured society, but free to exercise his or her own choices, knowing about the possible extents of individual innovation as about the fitting affective regulation or deregulation when joining in with a traditional cult. Such a reader will have already reached the stage of the trained reader, able 'of themselves to understanding and to make discoveries', as Quintilianus said (*inst*. 2.5.13). For his didactic poetry Ovid will certainly have accepted the same aim, which Quintilianus formulated in the sentence following: 'For what else are we about in teaching than ensuring that our pupils will not always require to be taught?'[51]

6 Conclusion

Surveys, interviews, participant observation – methods employed in research on lived religion today[52] – are not available for the study of ancient religion. There is a lot of evidence for a limited range of individual religious activities, for instance votives, tomb inscriptions, or the material remains of funerary rituals. For other fields, we have to rely on occasional anecdotal evidence as given by ancient historiography or in letters. In many instances, however, we see infrastructure rather than their usage, texts rather than testimonies of their reception. Here, anticipation of reaction and focussing of attention in direct or subtle ways by the instigators of architecture or by the authors of texts, step in. Such an approach has been used to learn from texts that which can no longer be learned about authors. But it can also be used to

51 Trsl. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom 1972, 378.
52 E. g. Heimbrock 2007; Bergmann 2008; McGuire 2008.

learn something about recipients, which is not attested to elsewhere. In this article, the primary interest was not in Ovid, but in his contemporaries' religious practices, presupposing that the text had some insights into contemporaries' appropriation of religion. Through the lens of the 'connected reader' (who in most cases is the inscribed: the narrated hearer), Ovid's *Libri fastorum* are neither a document for a complex but fixed ritual system (as the text has been usually interpreted) nor the document of some individual reflection on such a system (as the text has been interpreted recently). Instead, it is a document of a field of social action, shaped and reshaped by contingent individual and group action, i. e. of lived ancient religion.

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