Iudice Formae:
An Anagram in *Fasti* 6.101

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I argue that *prima dies* in *Fasti* 6.101 is an anagram of *Priamides* in *Fasti* 6.15. This wordplay frames the divine epiphany of Juno, Iuventas, and Concordia, in which Ovid holds a role similar to Paris in the famous beauty contest of Juno, Minerva, and Venus. Unlike Paris, Ovid avoids judging which goddess possesses the correct etymology for June. Ovid's refusal is full of wordplay that shows off his etymological skill as *uates* (poet-seer) and so prepares the alert reader for the anagram. Just as *prima dies* creates a ring composition with its anagrammatic counterpart *Priamides* in the "judgment of Ovid" scene, this anagram also frames a larger ring composition with the start of Book 1, in which January 1st is also called *prima dies*, the only other day in the *Fasti* to earn this title. Both January 1st and June 1st hold significant ties to the two-faced god Janus, who appears as Ovid's teacher in the former and the rapist of Carna, the goddess of hinges, in the latter. The bond between the anagram *prima dies* and Carna becomes clear when one adopts a bifurcated reading of the *Fasti* by looking back at the text simultaneously as one reads forward. Ultimately, Ovid invites the Janus-like reader to judge the full beauty of the *Fasti* by accepting the role of Paris that he had himself eschewed.

In the history of its reception, the *Fasti* went from an underappreciated text mined for tidbits of religious trivia to a poem whose merit as a literary work has slowly gained recognition.[1] It is time to consider how one of the prominent ways in which the *Fasti* earns its literary status is

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[1] On the *Fasti* as a source for religious studies amid literary disdain, see Newlands 1995, 1–6, Volk 1997, 287, and Green 2004, ix. For the poem's literary merits, see Martin 1985, Barchiesi 1997, Pasco-Pranger 2006, 10, and Herbert-Brown 2009, 120.

precisely its amenability as a mine, specifically, for wordplay. This article shares the discovery of an anagram in *Fasti* 6 and argues for that anagram's significance as a comment on the poem's overarching theme, as announced by its first three words, *tempora cum causis*: time with its causes.

In Greek and Roman literature, types of wordplay, such as anagrams or acrostics, often exist across liminal boundaries of the text and, thus, run the risk of being glossed over by an inattentive eye. When sharing his discovery of the UNDIS acrostic in Virgil *Ecl.* 9.34–8, Alexei Grishin brings the lines of the dialogue of Lycidas and Moeris together, whereas many editions create a space between the lines to indicate the change in speaker.[2] Although Grishin does not explicitly state so, that editorial space may explain why this acrostic escaped Hilberg's notice.[3] Similarly, the anagram proposed in this article defies the boundary of days in the *Fasti*. By labeling the start of each day, modern editions produce gaps in the text which can detract from the continuous motion of time that Ovid may have intended with an undivided text.[4] This is true of the first two words of the Kalends of June, *prima dies* (*F.* 6.101), which straddle two scenes, starting a new day as they complete a ring composition of the first scene of Book 6 in their anagrammatic relationship to *Priamides* in *F.* 6.15.

Priamides and *prima dies* frame a scene of quasi-judgment as Ovid observes the goddesses Juno, Iuventas, and Concordia. The quarreling goddesses want Ovid to decide which of them is correct about the etymology of June, but Ovid refuses to play the role of Paris. The playful allusion to that more famous judgment of Paris that initiates so much of Greco-Roman myth and literature should prepare us for ludic elements in the new "judgment of Ovid." Ovid's refusal, along with his suppression of Paris' name[5] at the end of the divine epiphany, becomes more conspicuous once *prima dies* is unscrambled to *Priamides*. After examining the effect of this anagrammatic framework on the "judgment of Ovid" scene, I will analyze how the anagram that closes the previous scene then exemplifies the day devoted to Carna, goddess of door hinges and rape victim of two-headed Janus.

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[2] Grishin 2008, 237.

[3] Hilberg 1899.

[4] Pasco-Pranger 2002, 252; Littlewood 2006, 37–9; Robinson 2011, 7.

[5] For the significance of suppressed names, see Booth 2006.

Paris as Ring Composition

Ovid begins the month of June by admitting that its origin is in doubt. In the second line of Book 6, he encourages the reader to pick whatever origin pleases him most (*ipse leges*). The theme of the judgment of Paris is already sewn into the month, with the reader taking the role of the judge of origins, rather than beauty.[6] After defending his ability as *uates*, poet-seer, to see gods in epiphanies (*F.* 6.3–8), Ovid describes one such epiphany (*F.* 6.13–18):

> ecce, deas uidi, non quas praeceptor arandi
> 　　uiderat, Ascraeas cum sequeretur oues,
> nec quas **Priamides** in aquosae uallibus Idae
> 　　contulit: ex illis sed tamen una fuit.
> **ex illis una fuit,** sui germana mariti;
> 　　haec erat (agnoui) quae stat in arce Iouis.

> Behold! I saw goddesses, not the ones which the teacher of plowing [Hesiod] had seen, when he was following the Ascraean sheep, nor the ones **the son of Priam** [Paris] met in the vales of watery Ida. But nevertheless, from those goddesses there was one. **From those goddesses there was one**, the sister of her husband; it was she (I recognized her) who stands on the citadel of Jove.[7]

As Ovid introduces the epiphany, he creates a sort of inverted priamel of who the goddesses he sees are not — they are not the Muses whom Hesiod saw, nor the goddesses Paris met. Ovid then corrects himself: actually, one of them, Juno, *was* one of the goddesses whom Ovid sighted. The repetition of the phrase *ex illis una fuit* isolates the unnamed Juno as the first goddess to speak to Ovid.

Ovid listens as Juno makes the case for her name as the month's etymology, Iuventas argues for the youth of military age (*iuuenum*, *F.* 6.88), and Concordia concludes by arguing that it originates from the joining (*his ... iunctis*, *F.* 6.96) of the people ruled by Tatius and Quirinus. Only at the very end of the scene does Ovid make it clear that the three goddesses have set him up to judge their etymologies (*F.* 6.97–102):

> dicta triplex causa est. at uos ignoscite, diuae:
> 　　res est arbitrio non dirimenda meo.

[6] See Volk 1997, 308 ft. 44.

[7] All translations are my own.

> ite **pares** a me. **per**ierunt iudice formae
>   **Per**gama: plus laedunt, quam **iuuat** una, duae.
> **prima dies** tibi, Carna, datur. dea cardinis haec est:
>   numine clausa aperit, claudit aperta suo.

> The spoken cause was threefold. But excuse me, goddesses. This matter should not be solved by my judgment. Go as **equals** from me. **Troy** was **destroyed** by the judge of beauty: two goddesses hurt more than one **helps**. **The first day** is given to you, Carna. She is the goddess of the door hinge: with her divinity she opens what is closed and closes what is open.

Ovid refuses to be like Paris and choose a winner from the goddesses, yet his refusal is full of echoes of Paris that precede the anagram in question. By asking the goddesses to go from him "as equals" (*pares*), he conjures up the name "Paris." Immediately following, Ovid suppresses Paris' name by saying that Troy was destroyed by the judge of beauty (*iudice formae*). In the phrase containing the suppression of Paris' name, there is a smaller echo of Paris in the repeated syllable *per*. The soundplay of *perierunt* and *Pergama* is easily translatable into English. Frederick Ahl has shown how Chaucer does this in Book 1 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Calchus calculates that, "**Troy** sholde/ De**stroy**ed ben."[8] Here, the adjective *pares* and the *per* syllables both invoke the presence of Paris, with the latter suggesting his guilt in the downfall of Troy. Paris' name is suppressed, but he is ever present.

The suppression of Paris' name is closely linked with the suppression of another. In the opening scene, Juno is tied to Paris, son of Priam (*Priamides F.* 6.15), when Ovid acknowledges that his and Paris' epiphanies shared one goddess (*ex illis una fuit*). The second quote, while it echoes Paris' name, also singles out a goddess as Ovid says that two goddesses hurt more than one helps: *plus laedunt, quam **iuuat** una, duae* (*F.* 6.100).[9] Although this initially sounds generic, the goddess whom Ovid singles out is Juno, whose ancient etymology from the verb *iuuare* is firmly established in Cicero's *Natura Deorum*.[10] In this way, Ovid refuses to say where the month of June comes from, but he reminds the reader that he does know the origin of the goddess Juno. Even though Juno's name promises that she

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[8] Ahl 2009, 70.

[9] *Iuuat* in *UXMm*: *iuuet* in *D*.

[10] Cicero *ND* 2.26: *Sed Iunonem a iuuando credo nominatam*. See O'Hara 2017, 46, ft. 262; cf. Ziogas 2019, 188–9.

will help him, the larger context of Paris' folly keeps Ovid from giving the honor of the month to her. His refusal to judge the goddesses' quarrel shows off his etymological skill as a *uates*.[11]

Another *uates* figure in the *Fasti* is Numa,[12] Romulus' successor, and he also experiences an interaction with the divine that leads to an anagram. When Jupiter reveals himself to Numa (*F.* 3.329–30), a comedy ensues where Numa interprets Jupiter's commands in harmless ways. Jupiter calls for a head; Numa says it will be of an onion (*F.* 3.340). In the next line, Jupiter clarifies "of a man;" Numa says he will get a man's hair. Jupiter asks for a man's soul (*animam*, *F.* 3.342); in the same line, Numa says he will get a fish's, or merely a fish. Molly Pasco-Pranger has clarified that *animam* is an anagram of a type of fish called *maina/maena*.[13] This last anagrammatic joke causes Jupiter to laugh and give way. In *F.* 3.344, he calls Numa a man who cannot be kept from conversations with gods. This scene is clearly parallel to Ovid's role as *uates*. Numa illustrates both the privilege of a *uates* to see gods and the skill of *uates* to manipulate the meaning of words in a playful way.

Numa's crescendo of wordplay culminates in an anagram. Similarly, the play on Paris' name in *pares* and the *per* syllables leads to the anagram of *Priamides* (*F.* 6.15) in *prima dies* (*F.* 6.101). The only other time that the phrase *prima dies* is found in the *Fasti* is back in *F.* 1.166, when Ovid marvels at how January 1st is not without some legal proceeding: *post ea mirabar cur non sine litibus esset/ prima dies. 'causam percipe' Ianus ait* ("After these things I was wondering why the first day is not without disputes. 'Perceive the cause,' Janus said," *F.* 1.165–6). This forms a larger ring composition of *prima dies* framing the first and last books of the *Fasti*. The mention of disputes in this passage from Book 1 is interwoven with the dispute among goddesses in Book 6. After the discovery of *Priamides* in *prima dies* in Book 6, a re-reading of Book 1 would then associate the phrase *non sine litibus* with the divine dispute resolved by Paris. In this way, both passages in Books 1 and 6 containing the phrase *prima dies* also hold an echo of Paris, son of Priam. Yet, the possibility of the anagrammatic character of *prima dies* in Book 1 only comes about from a retrospective read because the echo of Paris

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[11] In contrast, Harries (1989, 173) sees Ovid here as undermining his role as judicial *uates*. For both the grave and playful sides of Ovid as *uates* in the *Fasti*, see Miller 1991, 82.

[12] Pasco-Pranger 2002, 296.

[13] Pasco-Pranger 2006, 98. For associations of this fish in magical rites, see Robinson 2011, 367–8.

only activates after reading Book 6. During a re-reading of Book 1, Janus'
command "perceive the cause," seems to be asking the reader to notice the
anagram in *prima dies*.[14] The phrase's second appearance in Book 6 is, after
all, also tied to Janus via his rape victim, Carna.

Carna: *clausa aperit, claudit aperta*

Ovid's apologetic apostrophe to the three goddesses leads immediately to an
apostrophe to Carna to mark the Kalends of June. Although scholars have
noted her association with Janus as a frame that links the first and last books
of the *Fasti*,[15] the connections go deeper. As the quote above has shown,
Carna is a goddess of hinges and, with her divinity, she opens closed things
and closes open ones: *dea cardinis haec est:/ numine clausa aperit, claudit
aperta suo* (*F.* 6.101–2). This emphasis on Carna's liminality points to how
the anagram in *prima dies* acts as the goddess does: it opens Carna's scene,
having closed the "judgment of Ovid" scene and, having opened Carna's
scene, it closes the ring composition that started with *Priamides* in *F.* 6.15.[16]
This phenomenon is akin to the start of Book 2, which begins with Janus'
end: *Ianus habet finem* ("Janus has his end," *F.* 2.1).

Janus' ability to look back simultaneously as he looks forward is what
leads to Carna's rape. Previously, she foiled potential suitors by asking them
to lead her to a more secluded place, whereupon she ran and hid from them
as they led the way (*F.* 6.117–27):

> credulus ante ut iit, frutices haec nacta resistit
> et **latet** et **nullo est inuenienda modo**.
> **uiderat** hanc Ianus **uisaeque** cupidine captus
> ad duram uerbis mollibus usus erat.
> nympha iubet quaeri de more remotius antrum
> utque comes sequitur destituitque ducem.
> stulta! **uidet** Ianus, quae post sua terga gerantur:
> nil agis, et **latebras** respicit ille **tuas**.
> nil agis, en! dixi: nam **te** sub rupe **latentem**
> occupat amplexu speque potitus ait:

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[14] For a connection of a first day and *causa*, cf. Virgil *Aen.* 4.169–70.

[15] See Littlewood 2006, 36.

[16] Note, too, how the phrase before the mid-line caesura of 102 closes with the verb
aperit, while the new phrase after the caesura opens with the verb *claudit*.

> "ius pro concubitu nostro tibi cardinis esto:
> 　　hoc pretium positae uirginitatis habe."

As the gullible man went before her, she stops after reaching the bushes and she **hides** and **she can in no way be found**. Janus had **seen** her and, captured by the desire of the **seen** woman, he used soft words toward the stubborn one. The nymph orders, in the usual way, for a more secluded cave to be sought out and she follows like a companion and leaves her leader. Foolish woman! Janus **sees** the things that happen behind his back: you act in vain, and he sees **your hiding place**. You act in vain, I said it! For he takes **you hiding** under a rock in his embrace and after he got what he wanted he says, "Let the authority of hinges go to you in exchange for our lying together: have this as the price of your taken virginity."

As disturbing as this scene can be, it establishes Carna as a figure that hides (*latet, latebras … tuas, latentem*) and Janus as the figure that sees (*uiderat, uisae, uidet*). Janus sees her both before she attempts to hide from him and after. The initial sighting that leads to his infatuation echoes the very condensed rape of Rhea Silvia by Mars in *F.* 3.21: *Mars uidet hanc uisamque cupit potiturque cupita* ("Mars sees her and wants the one he saw and obtains the desired one"). Here, the scene is stretched out as Janus follows Carna to her hiding spot and has his way with her there. In exchange for this, he rewards her with the role of the goddess of door hinges.

　　This scene explains how *prima dies*, as an anagram of *Priamides*, illustrates the joining of Carna and Janus. This is an anagram that hides in plain sight. Yet, it is seen by readers who can, like Janus, look back while they look forward in the text. If this kind of vision is not adopted, the anagram remains hidden and not able to be found in any way, as line 118 says of Carna (*et latet et nullo est inuenienda modo*). While the phrase *prima dies* refers to the previous scene anagrammatically, its position in the very beginning of the June 1st passage enacts Carna's role as a textual hinge. Ovid may not want to make the same mistakes as the Trojan *iudex formae*, but by putting this anagram as a significant hinge of two scenes, the poet is inviting the reader to become a judge of the beauty of the *Fasti*.

　　Janus' programmatic double form appears in both the beginning and end books of the *Fasti*, urging what scholars like Philip Hardie have called a

"bifocal reading" of the poem.[17] By this, they highlight how the *Fasti* keeps multiple explanations of origins at play. I suggest that this double reading involves a second reading for wordplay, such as the anagram of *prima dies* found in both *F.* 6.101 and in its weaker echo in *F.* 1.166. This backward view serves to elevate Ovid as *uates*.

In the first book, when Ovid brings up the first day of January (*prima dies*, *F.* 1.166), Janus plays the gentle teacher who instructs Ovid, in the same line, to "perceive the cause" (*causam percipe*) of litigation on January 1st. This imperative may be simultaneously directed to the careful reader who can spot the cause of the position and significance of *prima dies* in *F.* 6.101, straddled as it is by a scene echoing Paris and the rape that explains the nature of Carna. By refusing to establish a hierarchy of etymologies for June in an epiphany of three goddesses, Ovid creates an epiphany of Paris through wordplay that ultimately gives Ovid himself, rather than the bickering goddesses, the highest honors. *Prima dies* is a phrase that encapsulates the first three words of the *Fasti*: at first glance, it refers to time (*tempora*), but a second look reveals the causes within (*cum causis*). While Numa's anagram makes Jupiter laugh, Ovid's is for the pleasure and amusement of his Janus-like reader, the *iudex formae* of the *Fasti*.[18]

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