

# Time in Written Spaces

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## Introduction

Time in written form pervades our social existence. From the daily news, whether on the web or in print, to wall calendars in our homes or offices, which tell us what day it is; from personal watches or cellphones to public clocks, which tell us what hour it is; from small change in our purses or pockets to use-by dates on our groceries, which remind us when things were made; and from personal or recreational diaries to bus and train timetables, which tell us when we did or should do things, we are constantly made aware of time and its passing in the modern world. And because of the means by which we tell the time in these contexts, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the ancient world did not have such persistent reminders as well. Yet archaeology and literature combine to tell us differently. In this chapter I wish to discuss aspects of this combination, focusing on time in written forms, on the collocation of the mechanisms of time and writing, and on the spatial setting in which these are found, all of which demonstrate a politicization of time in the late Republic and early Empire.

## Calendars

Let us start with calendars as written time. We may distinguish two types of monumental calendars in the Roman world, one (*Fasti Anni*) charting the days and months of the year and representing a cyclical approach to time, the other (*Fasti Consulares*) listing the eponymous magistrates of Rome and demonstrating a linear approach to the passage of time from one year to the next. A third type of *fasti* recognized nowadays, the *Fasti Triumphales*, should be separated from these first two, as they do not signal continuous time, but commemorate one-off celebrations in episodic time, with events separated by irregular interstices. Furthermore, several of the *Fasti Anni* and *Fasti Consulares* appear together in the archaeological and literary record (six of the 35 surviving consular lists are accompanied by calendrical *fasti*), and it is thought that they may always have appeared together.<sup>1</sup>

Of the calendars of days and months, there survive over two dozen in various states of preservation from republican and imperial Rome, and almost another two dozen from elsewhere in Italy and Gaul.<sup>2</sup> Only four painted versions survive. The rest are made of marble but date mostly to the Augustan-Tiberian period.<sup>3</sup> This association of stone calendars only with the early Principate, and the absence of bronze examples (in contrast, say, to bronze tables of laws, known from literature and archaeology) probably signify that from the republican period to Late Antiquity the standard mode of presentation of the *fasti* was as painted wall-decoration, which has largely disappeared.<sup>4</sup>

These *fasti* were generally public documents, insofar as they were displayed in the meeting-rooms of priestly colleges, associations and country towns,<sup>5</sup> but the findspots of the *Fasti Antiaties Maiores* (found in a building on the site of Nero's later villa at Antium, about 57 km south of Rome),<sup>6</sup> and the *Fasti porticus*<sup>7</sup> may have been private. Even so, in both of these cases, if the buildings were private, then we are talking of domiciles on a luxury scale. The *Fasti porticus* also demonstrate a capacity for this type of calendar to be illustrated on a large scale, with (as far as can be told from the surviving parts) frescoes of appropriate seasonal activities accompanying each month.<sup>8</sup> Earlier surviving painted calendars happen not to demonstrate this illustrative element, but much later the Calendar of AD 354 comes as an illustrated book, a compilation of various types of calendar, and we might suppose earlier versions existed too, whether in codex or roll form.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest sign of a public calendar in the Republic is of *fasti* set up by M. Fulvius Nobilior, some time after his Aetolian victory, celebrated in triumph in 187 BC.<sup>10</sup> These *fasti* were part of the decoration of the temple of Hercules Musarum ('Hercules of the Muses', a Roman adaptation of the Greek Herakles Mousagetes) in Rome, to which Fulvius added statues of the Muses which he had taken as booty from Ambracia.<sup>11</sup> The Severan Marble Plan of Rome situates the temple in the vicinity of the Circus Flaminius, built some 40 years earlier in 220 BC between the western side of the Capitoline hill and the Tiber. Its podium was discovered in 1980–1. While the Circus itself provided a large space for public meetings and markets, it maintained a major military function as the point of assembly and departure for triumphal processions. The addition of the temple in its neighbourhood is therefore apt.<sup>12</sup> In Fulvius' company during his Aetolian campaign had been the poet Ennius, author of the *Annales*, the first history of Rome in Latin. If Fulvius' *fasti* included not only a calendar of days but also a consular list, as is supposed on the basis of the only surviving republican *fasti*, the *Fasti Antiaties Maiores*,<sup>13</sup> then the approach to time that these represent is congruent with Ennius' sequential approach to history. In this context it is noteworthy and appropriate that the temple of Hercules Musarum may have served as the meeting place of the *collegium scribarum histrionumque*, an association identified with the later *collegium poetarum*.<sup>14</sup>

We have only a few fragmentary indications of the content of Fulvius' *fasti*, notably from Varro, Censorinus and Macrobius. These can be strung together to read as a preface, which may have run somewhat like this at the head of the calendrical data:<sup>15</sup>

*Bello Aetolico confecto fastos posuit M. Fulvius Nobilior cos. cens.*

*Romulus X menses appellavit: primos in honorem patris proaviaeque; postquam populum in Maiores iunioresque dividerat, ut altera pars consilio altera armis*

*rem publicam tueretur, tertium et quartum in honorem utriusque partis; ceteros a numeris. Numa II additos a Iano et dis inferis. mensis XIII lege Acilii cos. anni DLXII interkalatur.*

The consul and censor M. Fulvius Nobilior set up this calendar after the conclusion of the Aetolian War:

Romulus gave names to the ten months, the first and the second he named in honour of his father and his ancestress; after he divided his people into older and younger so that one group would defend the state with their counsel, the other by force of arms, he named the third and fourth months in their honour; the rest of the months were named from their number. Numa gave names to the two months he added from Janus and the gods of the netherworld respectively. A thirteenth month was intercalated according to a law of the consul Acilius in the year 562.

Another calendar demonstrates a more thoroughly exegetical tendency in its appendages to the calendrical data. The now fragmentary *Fasti Praenestini* (Figure 5.1) were dedicated in the forum of Praeneste probably between AD 6 and 9, with some annotations being added later between AD 10 and 22. Suetonius relates that the *fasti* were the handiwork of the grammarian M. Verrius Flaccus, the freedman teacher of Augustus' grandsons, Gaius and Lucius. A statue of Flaccus was set up in the upper part of the forum, near the hemicycle in which the calendar was displayed.<sup>16</sup> The physical setting of the calendar, in the civic centre of the town, is decidedly public and as such it encourages visual connections with nearby buildings, not only the forum itself but also the temples of (perhaps) Jupiter Imperator in the forum and of Fortuna Primigenia up the hill.<sup>17</sup> Sacred and secular structures surround the calendar, which then reflects back content related to functions in these environments, through references to public festivals and market schedules. On the other hand, however, the semi-circular form of the calendar's hemicycle would also have drawn the reader into its half-enclosed space and so enforced an individual focus on the calendar's form, content and messages. In much the same way, the hemicycles of the Forum of Augustus in Rome drew visitors into their ambit to view and consider the messages embodied in the statues of prominent Romans from the past and their association with Augustus.<sup>18</sup>

In Flaccus' *fasti*, the beginning of the month of March (the middle column in Figure 5.1) reads:<sup>19</sup>

MARTIUS-AB-LATINORUM-[DEO-BEL]LANDI-ITAQUE-APUD  
ALBANOS-ET-PLEROSQUE-[P]OPULOS-LATI[N]OS-IDEM-FUIT-ANTE  
CONDITAM-ROMAM-UT-A[U]TEM-ALII-CRE[DU]NT-QUOD-EI-SACRA  
FIUNT-HOC-MENSE

D K · MART(IAE) · NP.

FERIAE-MARTI-IUN[O]NI-LUCINAE-EXQUILIIS  
QUOD-EO-DIE-AEDIS-EI-D[EDICA]TA-EST-PER-MATRONAS  
QUAM-VOVERAT-ALBIN[I-FILIA]-VEL-UXOR-SI-PUERUM  
[PARIENTEM]QUE-IPSA[M-FOVISSET]

E VI F

F V C



**Figure 5.1** Fasti Praenestini, AD 6–9. Rome, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Palazzo Massimo (photo R. Hannah)

March: from the god of fighting of the Latins, therefore among the Albans and most Latin peoples, it was the same before the founding of Rome; as, however, others believe, because things were sacred to him in this month.

D Kalends of March NP

Festivals: for Mars; for Juno Lucina on the Esquiline, because on that day there was dedicated to her on behalf of married women a temple, which the daughter or wife of Albinus had vowed, if she favoured her while bearing a son.

E 6 F

F 5 C

This is indeed a commentary, yet not separated from but embedded within the very fabric of the calendar itself, with the exegeses appended in smaller red letters above the month and beside the day entries. We can see its particularly academic nature, as Flaccus explains in scholiast-like fashion the origin of the name of the month, emphasizing its source in Latium, perhaps in contrast to others who argued for a simple connection with Mars, the god of war: Fulvius had earlier explained that March was so named by Romulus after his father, i.e., the god Mars.<sup>20</sup> Etymologies follow for the other nine months of the originally ten-month Romulan year, and then Numa's two extra month names, January and February, are explained, and the introduction of the intercalary month is dated.

What these *fasti* indicate is a particular level of literacy on the part of the intended users, as the calendars are constructed in a highly compressed form, with single letters or abbreviations signalling individual days and their commemorated events. Just how distinctly literary, more than just literate, Verrius Flaccus' *fasti* are, may be gauged by comparison with its earlier republican counterpart, the *Fasti Antiates Miores* (Figure 5.2), dated to 84–55 BC and so the only one that predates the reforms of Julius Caesar from 45 BC. It was found as more than 300 fragments of stucco, painted in black and red lettering. Complete the calendar of days measured 1.16 by 2.50m. The preserved remains cover just over half the year's days. The nature of the original building that it decorated, however, is unknown, and so we are deprived of a full appreciation of the public accessibility of this visually impressive monument.

This calendar is well-ordered into thirteen columns but packed with abbreviations. Here is the month of June, with restorations:<sup>21</sup>

E K·IVN·N  
 – MARTI·IN·CL  
 IVNON·IN

F F  
 [G C]  
 H C

A NON·N  
 – DI·FIDI

B N  
 C [N]  
 D [N]  
 [E VESTAL·N]  
 [– VESTA]E

[F N]  
 [G M]ATR·NP  
 [– M]ATRI·MATV



**Figure 5.2** Fasti Antiates Miores, 84–55 BC. Rome, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Palazzo Massimo (photo R. Hannah)

FORTV[N]AE

[H N]  
 A EIDVS·N[P]  
 B N  
 [C] Q·ST·D[·F]  
 [D] C  
 [E] C  
 F C  
 G C

– MIN[ERVAE]

H [C]  
 A [C]  
 B [C]  
 [C C]  
 [D C]  
 [E C]  
 [F C]  
 G C

– LARV[– – –]

[H] C  
 A [C]  
 X X I X

The explanations for the abbreviations and entries for this part of the *Fasti* from Antium may serve also for the excerpt of the *Fasti Praenestini* presented earlier.

The whole calendar starts on 1 January with a column on the left, which presents a continuously repeated sequence of the eight letters, A to H. The series begins with A on 1 January and runs uninterruptedly to 29 December – recall that this is the pre-Julian calendar, with only 29 days in January, April, June (signalled by the number XXIX at the bottom of the month's column), Sextilis, September, November and December, 31 days in March, May, Quintilis, and October; the intercalary month, with 27 days, is attached after December.<sup>22</sup> By 29 December the eight-letter alphabetic sequence has reached C. When it gets to 1 June, the sequence has come to the letter E, and it then runs through the month until 29 June and the letter A; 1 July then follows with B.

These letters are called the *nundinal* letters. Ovid is assumed to be referring to them near the beginning of his poetic commentary on the Roman calendar, the *Fasti*, when he mentions the type of day 'which always returns from a cycle of nine' (*Fasti* 1.47–54). This 'cycle of nine' is presumably the *nundinae*, an eight-day week, which is marked in the public calendars by the first eight letters of the alphabet. It counts as nine days because of the Roman habit of inclusive reckoning from the last day of the previous week. The name *nundinae* came to mean 'market day', because the Romans held their markets in different towns on successive days of the cycle. Quite how the system worked, however, remains a mystery. A number of *nundinal* cycles survive from different localities,<sup>23</sup> and the fact that some share the same town names has led

to attempts to correlate the separate cycles. Some of these inscriptions also provide the seven-day week named after the planets (Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus), which is an innovation introduced in the time of Augustus,<sup>24</sup> but because the towns they share turn up in a different order in the week, these hebdomadal days seem to confirm that one town's nundinal cycle was not necessarily another's.<sup>25</sup> Timetables, however, whether of market days or buses and trains, are fluid things, subject to change with and without notice, and we know too little of the actual dates of these surviving nundinal cycles to be sure that they are actually contemporary and therefore open to correspondence. Some appear ephemeral, scratched as graffiti on plaster (e.g., the Pompeii calendar)<sup>26</sup> while others seem more permanent, carved on marble (e.g., the *Pausilipum parapegma*).<sup>27</sup> They may reflect circumstances that changed on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than schedules fixed in Roman concrete. Or perhaps people simply got their information wrong – the following graffito from AD 60 in Pompeii presents several chronological problems.<sup>28</sup> Its spatial setting is also curious: within a private house, the Casa delle Nozze d'Argento (V.2.i), it is scratched on the middle column of one side of the peristyle, on yellow-grey plaster, in letters almost 9mm high. We can only guess who was meant to read it.<sup>29</sup>

Nerone Caesare Augusto  
 Cossus Lentulo Cossi fil. Cos.  
 VIII idus Febr(u)arius  
 dies Solis, luna XIIIIX, nun(dinae) Cumis, V (idus Februarias) nun(dinae)  
 Pompeis.

When Nero Caesar Augustus  
 And Cossus Lentulus son of Cossus were consuls  
 Eight days before the ides of February  
 Sunday, 16th day of the moon, the nundinae at Cumae, five days before the ides of  
 February the nundinae at Pompeii.

The year is neatly provided by the consular names (the Emperor Nero and Cossus Lentulus), and *VIII idus Febr(u)arius* is 6 February. But Mau noted that the writer incorrectly made this day 'the day of the Sun' (i.e. Sunday), when it was in fact the day of Mercury (i.e. Wednesday). The lunar day is also questionable, because in AD 60 there was a full moon on 5 February, and so 6 February was the fifteenth day of the moon, not the sixteenth.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the nundinae would suggest that market-day in Cumae was on 6 February, and in Pompeii on 9 February, whereas the Pompeii calendar would place Pompeii's a day later in the cycle.<sup>31</sup>

But to return to the month of June in the *Fasti Antiates*: the second column for June starts with the letter K, followed by the abbreviation IVN. This stands for *Kalendae Iuniae*, the Kalends of June. Further down in this column will be found NON, indicating *nonae*, the Nones, on the fifth day; and EIDVS, signifying *idus*, the Ides, on the thirteenth day. These constitute the very familiar triple division of each Roman month under the Republic and the Empire: the Kalends (*kalendae*) on day 1, the Nones (*nonae*) at day 5 (in the shorter months) or 7 (in the 31-day months), and the Ides (*idus*) on day 13 (in the shorter months) or 15 (in the longer). Rüpke

has suggested a fourth dividing point may be found at the end of the month, almost matching in its position the Nones at the beginning of the month. The vestiges of this last marker, he argues, are to be found in the calendars at the point of the 'double festival' of the *Tubilustrium* on 23 March and May and the day marked QRCF (*Quando Rex Comitiavit Fas*) on 24 March and May. Overall, we would be facing four 'weeks' in the month, which, importantly for our present purposes, match lunar periods: from new moon to first quarter (Kalends to Nones), from first quarter to full (Nones to Ides – *idus* may stem from a Greek word for the full moon),<sup>32</sup> from full to last quarter (Ides to *Tubilustrium*/QRCF), and last quarter to new (*Tubilustrium*/QRCF to Kalends).<sup>33</sup>

A further feature worth noting in this context takes us back to the *Fasti Praenestini*, as this aspect does not occur on the *Fasti Antiates Maiores*. In the extract from the former, there are two entries on the two days after the Kalends: the numbers VI and V. These are abbreviated references respectively for *ante diem VI nonas Martias* and *ante diem V nonas Martias* – the sixth day and the fifth day before the Nones of March, as the Romans counted 2 and 3 March. Beyond the Kalends, Nones and Ides, the remaining days of the month were numbered according to their relationship to one of these three primary divisions, using inclusive and prospective reckoning.

In so compressed a form of writing, it is remarkable that we can still discern former means of telling the time via the lunar phases, especially as these lost their strict correspondence with the moon itself at an early stage – at 29 and 31-day lengths, the Roman month on average does not equate as well as it might with a lunar month. In addition, there is a trace in the Roman calendar of an earlier oral element in the very word *kalendae*. Varro tells us that the word derived from the fact that the Nones of a month are called (*calantur*) on the Kalends.<sup>34</sup> The formula spoken by the priest who did the calling, Varro tells us, was '*kalo Iuno Covella*' ('I call, o Juno Covella'), which was repeated five times if the Nones were to fall on the fifth day of the month, and seven times for Nones on the seventh. Macrobius explicitly derives the word *kalendae* from the Greek verb *kalo* (I call), on the basis of the same story as Varro's.<sup>35</sup> He describes the event in more detail, which demonstrates the observational and oral aspects: originally a minor priestly official was delegated the task of watching for the first sign of the new moon and then reporting its appearance to the high priest. A sacrifice would then be offered, and another priest would summon the people and announce the number of days that remained between the Kalends and the Nones, 'and in fact he would proclaim the fifth day with the word *kalo* spoken five times, and the seventh day with the word repeated seven times'. The first of the days thus 'called' was named *kalendae* after *kalo*.

We see elsewhere in the second column for June in the *Fasti Antiates* the letters F, C, N and NP, the last apparently a ligature of N and P. From literary definitions<sup>36</sup> we know that the first three letters stand respectively for *fastus*, a 'lawcourt day'; *comitialis*, an 'assembly day'; and *nefastus*, a 'non-court day' (the first two had appeared in the excerpt of the *Fasti Praenestini* examined above). Lawcourt days (*fasti*) were technically those days on which the praetor could utter the words 'I grant, I pronounce, I award' (*do, dico, addico*), which are associated with formulae for judgement in court cases.<sup>37</sup> So the calendar clearly demarcates the days on which legal and political business may take place. This is a primary function of the *fasti*, a facet easily lost sight of if we approach them through the literary construct of Ovid's *Fasti*. We do not know precisely what



NP means. A common view is that the assumed underlying N and P stand for *nefastus publicus*, which indicates that the day so designated is like a *nefastus* day, on which law courts cannot do business, but is also a day on which the great public festivals, *feriae publicae*, can be held.<sup>38</sup> An alternative reading of the letters as meaning *nefastus purus* still has its adherents, and it too retains the notion of a day whose character changes partway through.<sup>39</sup> A third interpretation is that it stands for *nefas piaculum*, with *piaculum* signalling the need for an act of expiation on these days.<sup>40</sup>

We need not concern ourselves here with the details of all the festivals marked for June, but a glance at those on 1 June is in order, to gain a sense of what else these calendars actually marked beyond the legal-political timetable.<sup>41</sup> MARTI·IN·CL stands for *Marti in cliuo* ('for Mars on the hill'). The *cliuus Martis* was originally a rise in the road leading to the temple of Mars, where troops assembled on their way to war, on the Via Appia in the south-east of Rome.<sup>42</sup> This festival marked on the calendar may have celebrated the dedication of the temple. The inscription marking the other festival on 1 June, IVNON·IN, is incomplete. But it obviously refers to a festival in honour of Juno, and the festival and temple of Juno Moneta are mentioned by Ovid in his entry for the Kalends of June, while Macrobius records that the temple of Juno Moneta was dedicated on that day.<sup>43</sup> On this basis, the calendar entry may be restored as IVNON IN ARCE, which is slightly shorthand for *Iunoni in arce*, 'Juno on the Arx', a reference to the festival celebrating the dedication of the temple of Juno Moneta on the northern part of the Capitoline hill called the Arx.<sup>44</sup>

With the *Fasti Antiates Maiores*, and therefore undoubtedly from the republican period onwards, perhaps even from Fulvius' time, the calendars of days are sometimes, and perhaps always were originally, accompanied by a further list organizing the Roman state in time. This was a list of the consuls and other top magistrates of the state (*Fasti Consulares*) and a further list of those who gained triumphs (*Fasti Triumphales*). In the *fasti* from Antium the consuls were named for each year, arranged in paired columns, as the example from the year equivalent to 154 BC demonstrates:<sup>45</sup>

Θ L. Postumi(us) A[l]binu[s]	Q. [Opi]mi(us) Q. f.
suffectus M. [Acili(us) G]labrio	
M. Valeri(us) Messal(la)	[C. Cas]si(us) Lon(ginus)-cens(ores)
	lustrum f[ecerunt]

The names of the two regular consuls, Lucius Postumius Albinus and Quintus Opimius son of Quintus, begin the entry. When a regular consul did not complete his year of office, owing to death or other circumstance, the name of his replacement, the suffect consul, was included on the following line, slightly indented and written in red in contrast to the black for standard entries. Thus, Postumius Albinus died in office – the Greek letter theta, Θ, at the beginning of the first line stands for θάνατος (*thanatos*), 'death' – and was replaced by Manius Acilius Glabrio, whose name appears underneath Albinus', and slightly indented from the left margin. Censors' names were also added in red letters, punctuating the lists eventually every five years, although six or seven years separate them early on. So here we have the names of Marcus Valerius Messalla and Gaius Cassius Longinus added underneath the consuls' names, along



We find censors in 92 BC, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and L. Licinius Crassus, and then again in 89 with P. Licinius Crassus and L. Iulius Caesar, the consul of 90. The *Fasti Antiates Miores* provide the details which support the restorations here for 92: ‘the censors resigned, did not perform the lustration.’<sup>53</sup> The lustration took place in 89, according to the *Fasti Antiates*, although the census of the people seems not to have been undertaken, according to Cicero.<sup>54</sup>

Notwithstanding the unlikelihood of the censorship-lustration being used as a dating system, another chronological system does appear in this excerpt. Valerius Flaccus and Herennius were consuls for the year 93. Before their names, however, we can see the number ĐCLX, i.e. 660. This signals the six-hundred-and sixtieth year since the founding of Rome.<sup>55</sup> Once again, this system is set up against the fundamental organizing principle of the tables, namely the consular list, for the foundation of the city predates the Republic. More than this, Rome’s ‘birthday’ was taken to be 21 April,<sup>56</sup> whereas the consular year, after 153 BC, was 1 January–31 December, so it was not coterminous with the ‘foundation year’. Consistency in temporal argument, however, was not what governed these *Fasti*. It was politics. This is seen best in the section of the *Fasti* that covers the period from 1 to 13 AD. If we take just the year 12 AD as an example, we can pick out some of the underlying political emphasis:<sup>57</sup>

[Imp. C]aesar Divi f. Augustu[s, pont(ificem) max(imus), tr(ibunicia) pot(estate)  
XXXIII]  
[Ti. Caesar] Augusti f. Divi n. [trib(unicia) potest(ate) XIII]  
Germanicus Ca[esar] Ti. f. C. Fonteius C. f. C. n.  
Augusti n. Capito  
ex k(alendis) Iulis  
C. Visellius C. f. C. n. Varro

The year starts, as it has done on the surviving tablet since 1 AD, with the name of Augustus, but not as consul for the year, for he had resigned from that post in 23 BC, as the *Fasti* tell us, and accepted instead a novel annual authority, *tribunicia potestas*, ‘tribunician power’. In 12 AD he holds this for the thirty-fourth time. He also has as a colleague with the same authority his adopted son, Tiberius, who holds tribunician power for the thirteenth time, but his name is added underneath, not alongside, Augustus’. Under Tiberius’ name we find at last the two ordinary consuls of the year, Germanicus, the son of Tiberius, and Fonteius Capito, their names reverting to the twin column format of the republican part of the *Fasti*. A suffect consul, Visellius Varro, is listed under Germanicus as taking up office on 1 July. What matters most now, as Feeney has emphasized, is not the office of the consulship *per se*, for that is now subservient to the princeps and his colleague with tribunician power, but rather an idea of time, with the consulship serving to separate one year from the next, and one part of the year from another.<sup>58</sup>

One final point of interest in the entry for the years 93–89 BC is the extra notice given in the year of the consulship of L. Marcus Philippus and Sex. Iulius Caesar (91 BC). Beneath their names is added centrally *Bellum Marsicum*. Within the general framework of the *Fasti* there are placed occasional entries which reflect the beginning

of major wars, and in this case we have the Marsic War, i.e., the Social War of 91–87 BC. Elsewhere we find the First Punic War and the war against Perseus of Macedon.<sup>59</sup> This will remain a tradition in consular *fasti*, even down to the time of the codex Chronicle of 354, where the list of consuls is punctuated by notices in the republican period of secular events – the election or omission of dictators – and then under the Empire only of Christian events, including the birth and passion of Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup>

We do not know where the *Fasti Capitolini* were originally placed, but the most popular guess at present is a commemorative arch erected by Augustus in the Roman Forum.<sup>61</sup> They were public documents, made to be viewed, if not read, by all passers-by. In this respect they differ from the other *fasti* we have examined, the calendars of days, whose readership was likely to be limited to a household and its inhabitants and clients, or to an association or college. But then the sort of information proffered by the calendars of days is typologically different from the information presented in the *Fasti Consulares*. Although time informs the *Fasti Consulares*, it presents it in a variety of ways that do not seek mutual consistency. A calendar of days without such inherent consistency would be an oxymoron; it could not perform its primary function.

## Sundials

Inscriptions help us to recognize the politicization of time elsewhere in the early Empire in monuments both small and grand, in both the small country towns and in the metropolis of Rome. In Pompeii a sundial on a column was donated by two magistrates, perhaps in the time of Augustus, in front of the Temple of Apollo near the main forum in Pompeii. An inscription on the column states:<sup>62</sup>

L SEPVNIVS L F  
SANDILIANVS  
M HERENNIVS A F  
EPIDIANVS  
DVOVIR I D  
D S P F C

L. Sepunius L.f. Sandilianus, M. Herennius A. f. Epidianus duo vir(i) i(ure) d(icundo) d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(aciundum) c(urarunt)

L. Sepunius Sandilianus son of Lucius, Marcus Herennius Epidianus son of Aulus, *duoviri* for administering the law, saw to it being done at their own expense.

The same *duoviri* set up near the ‘Temple of Hercules,’ i.e., the unidentified Doric Temple in the Foro Triangolare, a semicircular bench (*schola*) with a magnificent view of the coast, and with a very similar dedication:<sup>63</sup>

L SEPVNIVS L F SANDILIANVS  
M HERENNIVS A F EPIDIANVS  
DVOVIR I D SCOL ET HOROL  
D S P F C

L. Sepunius L.f. Sandilianus, M. Herennius A. f. Epidianus duovir(i) i(ure) d(icundo) scol(am) et horol(ogium) d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(aciundum) c(urarunt)

L. Sepunius Sandilianus son of Lucius, Marcus Herennius Epidianus son of Aulus, *duoviri* for administering the law, saw to the *schola* and sundial being made at their own expense.

At the temple of Apollo it makes sense to dedicate a sundial, since the god had long been equated with Helios/Sol the Sun god, but the setting up of a sundial and bench at the Foro Triangolare is simply municipal beneficence, or ‘euergetism’, which was so strong a feature of both Greek and Roman life, and which could find expression in the setting up of a public timepiece as an amenity. We learn of a similar benefaction in the first century AD at Talloires in southern France, where a private tombstone commemorates the deceased’s donation of a public *horologium* (probably a water clock) and an attendant slave to look after it, plus its own building and decorations, all at great personal expense.<sup>64</sup>

In Rome, on the other hand, amenity is turned by Augustus into agitprop through the erection of a monumental time-piece in the Campus Martius in Rome.<sup>65</sup> This comprised a 30-metre high Egyptian obelisk taken from the Sun temple of Heliopolis, and set on a base which carries an inscription commemorating the settlement of Egypt by Augustus and dedicating the monument to the sun (Figure 5.3):<sup>66</sup>

IMP·CAESAR·DIVI·F·  
AVGVSTVS  
PONTIFEX·MAXIMVS  
IMP·XII·COS·XI·TRIB·POT·XIV  
AEGVPTO IN POTESTATEM  
POPVLI·ROMANI·REDACTA  
SOLI·DONVM·DEDIT

Imp(erator) Caesar Divi f(ilius) Augustus, pontifex maximus, imp(erator) XII, co(n)s(ul) XI, trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIV, Aegypto in potestatem Populi Romani redacta, Soli donum dedit

Imperator Caesar, son of the Divine [Julius], Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Imperator for the 12th time, consul for the 11th time, with Tribunician power for the 14th time, with Egypt to the power of the Roman People subjected, gave this as a gift to the Sun

The obelisk was to act as a (partial) sundial’s gnomon by casting a shadow which pointed north at midday along a bronze line, which was inlaid in the stone pavement and marked to show the division of the year into zodiacal months and their days (Figure 5.4). It thus told noontime, and hence provided a measure of the midday shadow through the year, a function mentioned by Pliny,<sup>67</sup> although the obelisk would seem an excessively large monument were this its only function. The excavator of the line, Buchner, argued that the shadow would, of course, be cast elsewhere through the day and year, and he particularly emphasized its relationship with the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Augustan Peace) to the north-east of the obelisk. The Altar was



**Figure 5.3** Rome, Piazza di Montecitorio: obelisk of Augustus' *'horologium'* (photo R. Hannah)



**Figure 5.4** Rome, Via Campo Marzio 48: part of the meridian of Augustus' *'horologium'* (photo R. Hannah)

voted in 13 BC by the Senate, to commemorate Augustus' return from the western provinces of Gaul and Spain, and stood beside the Via Flaminia, the road along which Augustus would have travelled on his way back into the city. It was completed in 9 BC, the year the obelisk was also erected. Whether or not the Altar stood at the end of a physical equinoctial line on an enormous grid, as Buchner thought, the general effect at the equinoxes would still hold, as the shadow pointed in the direction of the Altar, and may indeed have reached it. With the obelisk's shadow cast on the entrance to the Altar, Buchner saw Augustus encapsulating the two monuments in a single theme: his own cosmological import as bringer of peace to the Roman state. The correlation made sense insofar as the shadow would have hit the Altar on the autumn equinox, which coincided more or less with Augustus' birthday on 23 September.<sup>68</sup> On this day observers could be reminded of Augustus' prime role in restoring peace to the Roman world after a century of violence, through his settlement of Egypt (the source of the obelisk), and of the western provinces (symbolized by the Altar). This cosmological symbolism applies to his conception day too: the northern extremity of the meridian line marks the turning point of the noonday sun's shadow at the winter solstice and when the sun entered Capricorn, nine months before Augustus' birthday.

Heslin, however, has recently argued that the shadow could not have reached the Altar's entrance, and that therefore the intimate relationship perceived by Buchner between the obelisk as timepiece and the Altar is illusory.<sup>69</sup> Heslin's argument rests partly on criticisms of Buchner's case made earlier by Schütz, who was taken to argue that the very physics of shadow-casting precluded the shadow of the obelisk ever reaching the Altar;<sup>70</sup> and partly on his contention that there was nothing special about the obelisk's shadow pointing towards the Altar, since it would do this every day of the year.

The second objection is the easier to dismiss, as experience ought to suggest that the shadow of the obelisk cannot point towards the Altar every day of the year. The circuit of the sun in winter is considerably smaller than it is in summer, and since the Altar was situated effectively on the vernal/autumnal equinoctial line of the obelisk-as-gnomon, there would appear to be a good chance that the shadow would not point near the Altar in wintertime. Calculation demonstrates that this is indeed so, and that the shadow would not point towards the Altar or anything south of it between about 7 November and 5 February. Conversely, from about 5 February to 7 November the shadow would have pointed towards the Altar every day.<sup>71</sup>

Heslin's first objection, on the other hand, appears to be a misunderstanding of Schütz, who rightly notes that the shadow of the globe on top of the obelisk would become so diffuse as to be invisible near the Altar. But the obelisk, at almost 30 metres in height, was able to cast a shadow about 66 metres long at noon on the winter solstice, to judge from Pliny's assertion that 'a stone pavement was laid out in accordance with the height of the obelisk, equal to which was the shadow at the sixth hour on the day of the full winter solstice'.<sup>72</sup> By calculation, at the equinox the shadow of Augustus' obelisk would theoretically have stretched about 89.5 metres in the direction of the Altar, which was 83m away. It still remains to be demonstrated that the obelisk's shadow could not reach the Altar at that distance – the present setting of the obelisk prevents such testing, and Schütz's criticism of Buchner is focused only on the effective disappearance of the shadow of the globe on top of the obelisk, not on

the obelisk itself. Tests conducted with a monument of a comparable scale suggest to me that in fact the obelisk's shadow could have reached the *Ara Pacis*.<sup>73</sup> Sun and time, then, were linked architecturally into cosmological signposts for those Romans who could read such things.

## Time and writing

Roman time was distinctly oral and practical in its origins. The division of the day and the month into pockets of time not only relied initially on observation of the passage of the sun through the day, and the phases of the moon through the month, but the words used to define moments of time, such as *kalendae*, sometimes retained an element of a preliterate society, in which these moments in time had to be publicly heralded. The Greeks had begun to write their public calendrical data at least by the fifth century BC, to judge from the sacrificial calendars and *parapegmata* of the Athenians.<sup>74</sup> Rome took advantage of writing for similar purposes only much later, and arguably under Greek influence.

Writing provided new opportunities for the organization of knowledge, and its manipulation in the Greek world. I have argued this in the case of the Greek *parapegmata* of the fifth century BC.<sup>75</sup> Much the same argument may be applied to the construction of the *fasti* in Rome, even though these belong to a later period. Let us rehearse some of that argument here, and check it against the *fasti*.

A generation ago, Jack Goody argued that writing serves two principal functions: to store information, and to facilitate the process of reorganizing information.<sup>76</sup> Writing, he stated, insists upon 'a visual, spatial location which then becomes subject to possible rearrangement'.<sup>77</sup> A particularly common form of preserved early writing is the list, which permits both of the functions of storage and reorganization, and at the same time necessarily imposes a spatial arrangement of words which is left open to rearrangement. Three types of list are common: the retrospective inventory of persons, objects or events; the prospective plan, such as an itinerary; and the lexical list.<sup>78</sup> These types of list, Goody believed, process information in a way that is usually quite distinct from ordinary speech: they do not represent speech directly, but rather reflect a mode of thought, or a cognitive operation, that differs from that of speech, insofar as they treat verbal items in a disconnected and abstract way; they may have no oral equivalent at all.<sup>79</sup> A list permits the organization, and reorganization, of information which is received at various times and places, for instance, a religious calendar of sacrifices to the gods through the year. Such a list not only provides a record of an activity at a particular time, but also establishes a more formalized way of conceiving that activity.<sup>80</sup> The activity becomes 'decontextualized',<sup>81</sup> set apart from its particular context in time and space, and instead is placed into another context in which it may gain other significances as it is juxtaposed beside other activities or other classes of events. To quote Goody's summary of his theory:<sup>82</sup>

Lists are seen to be characteristic of the early uses of writing, being promoted partly by the demands of complex economic and state organization, partly by the nature of scribal training, and partly by a 'play' element, which attempts to



explore the potentialities of this new medium. They represent an activity which is difficult in oral cultures and one which encourages the activities of historians and the observational sciences, as well as on a more general level, favouring the exploration and definition of classificatory schemas.

Goody argued for a position in which writing, and list-making in particular, provided the impetus for intellectual reflection on information. It is for him a facilitator of cognitive growth.<sup>83</sup> Of course, the very act of list-making is not the preserve of the literate alone. Oral societies were perfectly capable of creating lists which incorporated variable data. So, to this extent, he overstates his case for list-making as a peculiarly literate activity. But in the area of the development of ideas from the very act of manipulating data into lists, I think he is probably correct. In terms of cognitive skills, the ability to construct and then to recall a list – as oral poets did – is at a lower level than constructing, recalling, reflecting on, checking and adjusting the contents of a given list, which is what we find the constructors of the *fasti* doing.

Rüpke has argued that the *fasti* of Fulvius represents the spread of writing in Rome to new social contexts and types of communication:<sup>84</sup>

It was a new idea for history not to be narrated orally but to be written down. Similarly novel was the phenomenon of not just participating in but of recording the celebration of festivals and the building of temples and then to have these records not simply displayed on the building but also available elsewhere. One could claim that this is not exactly the case for the wall painting of the *fasti*. It was tied to a particular place. But we need to keep in mind that the site where this wall painting was displayed was the meeting place of the professional writers in Rome. It was available for copying, and indeed it was, as the *Fasti Antiates Maiores* demonstrates.

He sees the systematization of the *fasti* as indicative of members of the elite class in Rome 'exploring new intellectual possibilities and new venues for organizing knowledge.'<sup>85</sup> The subtle yet dramatic shift in the way the *Fasti Consulares* in particular were written in the time of Augustus demonstrates the manner in which seemingly innocent, historical data could be reorganized to reflect a new political world, in which the princeps, not the consuls, now dominated with a new, unrepublican authority. The physical emphasis on Augustus' name and titles that we witness in these *Fasti* is replicated in the simple inscription on the base of the obelisk in the Campus Martius. Here, however, the relationship with time itself, which subtly underlies and is played with in the *Fasti Capitolini*, is made much more explicit, through the collocation of the obelisk with the Altar of Peace. This is indeed, to borrow Wallace-Hadrill's phrase, 'time for Augustus.'<sup>86</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Feeney, 2007, pp. 167–9.
- 2 Rüpke, 1995b; Degrassi, 1963.
- 3 Rüpke, 2006, p. 492, 2011, pp. 8–9.
- 4 Rüpke, 2006, p. 492.

- 5 Rüpke, 2007, p. 187.
- 6 Degrassi, 1963, p. 1.
- 7 Reynolds, 1976, *pace* Magi, 1972.
- 8 E.g. September, Magi, 1972, pls. IV, XLIII–XLVII.
- 9 Salzman, 1990; Claridge et al., 2012, cat. nos. 1–13.
- 10 Dates for the dedication range from 184 to 179 BC: cf. Feeney, 2007, pp. 143–4, opting for the earlier, and Rüpke, 2006, pp. 490–1, opting for the later; Flower, 1995, p. 186 keeps an open mind.
- 11 Eumenius 9.7.3; Macrobian *Sat.* 1.12.16. The texts are conveniently presented at Rüpke, 2006, pp. 491 n. 7 and 499.
- 12 Richardson, 1992, p. 187; Claridge, 2010, pp. 250–1, 256, Figure 107 (based on the Marble Plan). Photographs of the relevant fragments of the Marble Plan are also available online at: <http://formaurbis.stanford.edu/fragment.php?record=145> (last accessed 4th February 2013) and <http://formaurbis.stanford.edu/plate.php?plateindex=28> (last accessed 4th February 2013).
- 13 Rüpke, 1995b, pp. 43–4, 331–68, esp. pp. 365–6; 2006, 509.
- 14 Rüpke, 2006, p. 491; Feeney, 2007, pp. 143–4, 167–70.
- 15 Rüpke, 2006, pp. 507–8, who calls it a dedication, although ‘not a dedication that is associated with a specifically religious monument, but with a monument that commemorates history’.
- 16 Suet. *Gram.* 17.
- 17 Cf. Coarelli, 2007, p. 523. I am grateful to Peter Keegan for encouraging me to consider this aspect of the *Fasti*.
- 18 On the effects of spectator involvement in the *Fasti Praenestini*, see Hernández, 2005, pp. 118–9.
- 19 Degrassi, 1963, pp. 120–1.
- 20 Censorinus, *DN* 22.9–11. Rüpke, 2006, pp. 495–7.
- 21 Degrassi, 1963, pp. 12–3; Michels, 1967, Figure 4.
- 22 See Hannah, 2005, pp. 106–12 for a discussion of how the intercalary month worked.
- 23 Degrassi, 1963, pp. 300–6; Lehoux, 2007, pp. 198–200.
- 24 So we may judge from its presence on the fragmentary *Fasti Sabini* (after 19 BC), *Fasti Nolani* (early imperial) and the Augustan *Fasti Foronovani*: Degrassi, 1963, pp. 51–4, 156, 229–31, 326. Tibullus (1.3.18), in the time of Augustus, refers to ‘Saturn’s holy day’, meaning what we call Saturday.
- 25 Lehoux, forthcoming.
- 26 *CIL* 4.8863, Degrassi, 1963, p. 305; Lehoux, 2007, pp. 173–4. One is reminded of the equally ephemeral and thoroughly domesticated wall calendar in *Satyricon* 30, where it is used to note when Cinnamus is dining out (see also Lehoux, 2007, pp. 41–2, 201).
- 27 Degrassi, 1963, p. 304; Lehoux, 2007, p. 174. I recall, however, my first visit as a student to Rome in the 1970s, when I encountered signs, carved in marble, stating that sites were temporarily closed.
- 28 *CIL* 4.4182.
- 29 I am grateful to Peter Keegan for drawing this issue to my attention.
- 30 Mau notes (*CIL* 4.4182, at p. 515), however, that if the moon had 29 days in December rather than 30, as seems to have occurred in the Calendar of Filocalus (i.e. the Calendar of 354), then 6 February would be the sixteenth day of the moon.
- 31 Lehoux, forthcoming, speculates that the nundinal days for any given locality, like Pompeii or Cumae, might effectively represent another type of week, so that ‘the

names of cities may have been simply used as the names of the days of the nundinal week, just as the names of the gods Saturn, Sol, Luna, and so on, were used to name days in the hebdomadal week<sup>6</sup>.

- 32 Macrob. *Sat.* 1.15.14–17.
- 33 Rüpke, 1995b, pp. 209–25.
- 34 Varro, *Ling.* 6.27.
- 35 Macrob. *Sat.* 1.15.9–11.
- 36 See Hannah, 2005, pp. 103–4 for references.
- 37 Varro, *Ling.* 6.30, Macrob. *Sat.* 1.16.14.
- 38 Michels, 1967, p. 76; Beard et al., 1998, p. 62.
- 39 Brind'Amour, 1983, p. 227.
- 40 Rüpke, 1995b, pp. 258–60.
- 41 See the discussion on the remaining days and their duties or festivals in Hannah, 2005, pp. 104–6.
- 42 Cf. Livy 7.23.3; Ov. *Fast.* 6.191–2. Platner and Ashby, 1929, pp. 123–4, 327–8; Haselberger et al. 2002, pp. 165, 256–7.
- 43 Ov. *Fast.* 6.183–4; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.12.30.
- 44 Degrassi, 1957, p. 31; Invernizzi, 1994, pp. 64–5; Haselberger et al. 2002, p. 153.
- 45 Degrassi, 1947, pp. 160–1.
- 46 Feeney, 2007, pp. 167–83 has an excellent, illustrated discussion of the *Fasti Consulares*, focusing on the *Fasti Capitolini* with glances cast back occasionally to the *Fasti Antiates*; the seminal publication is Degrassi 1947.
- 47 Rüpke, 1995b, p. 43; Degrassi, 1947, pp. 159–66.
- 48 Rüpke, 2006, pp. 509–10.
- 49 Degrassi, 1947, pp. 50–1; 1954, pp. 68–9.
- 50 Livy 1.44.1–2.
- 51 Feeney, 2007, pp. 176–7, 289 n. 55; Rüpke, 1995a, pp. 192–3.
- 52 Degrassi, 1947, pp. 54–5; 1954, pp. 74–5.
- 53 Degrassi, 1947, pp. 129, 165.
- 54 Cic. *Arch.* 11.
- 55 On the meaning of the founding of Rome as a date see Feeney, 2007, pp. 86–8; Hannah, 2005, pp. 149–57. The founding of Rome is used as the starting point for the *Fasti Triumphales* associated with the *Fasti Capitolini*, starting with year I and Romulus' triumphs, and continuing with each triumph dated from this point down to the last in 19 BC, in the 734th year from the founding; Degrassi, 1947, pp. 64–87; 1954, pp. 90–110.
- 56 Ov. *Fast.* 4. 807–62; Plin. *HN* 18. 247.
- 57 Degrassi, 1947, pp. 62–3; 1954, pp. 88–9.
- 58 Feeney, 2007, pp. 177–80.
- 59 Feeney, 2007, p. 173.
- 60 Hannah, 2005, pp. 151–2.
- 61 Feeney, 2007, pp. 172, 285 n. 1; Beard, 2003, p. 24; Coarelli, 1985, pp. 269–308.
- 62 La Rocca et al. 1994, p. 107.
- 63 De Vos and de Vos, 1982, p. 32; Gibbs, 1976, p. 394 no. 8007.
- 64 Hannah, 2009, pp. 176–7 nn. 56–9; *CIL* 12.2522, *ILS* 5624; Harvey, 2004, p. 91, no. 58.
- 65 Rehak, 2006; Zanker, 1988; Wallace-Hadrill, 1987.
- 66 *CIL* 6.702.
- 67 Plin. *HN* 36.72.

- 68 Buchner, 1982, pp. 1993–4.
- 69 Heslin, 2007.
- 70 Schütz, 1990.
- 71 In the time of Augustus, Varro (*Rust.* 1.28.1–2) says that the first day of spring occurred on the twenty-third day of Aquarius, that of summer on the twenty-third day of Taurus, of autumn on the twenty-third day of Leo, and of winter on the twenty-third day of Scorpio. These dates he then computes to their equivalents in the new Julian calendar: the first day of spring is 7 February, that of summer 9 May, that of autumn 11 Sextilis (August), and that of winter 10 November. By this reckoning, the Altar of Augustan Peace may have served as a boundary marker for the change from autumn to winter in early November, and the change from winter to spring in early February. The liminality is suggestive.
- 72 Plin. *HN* 36.72.
- 73 Hannah, 2011.
- 74 Hannah, 2005, pp. 42–70.
- 75 Hannah, 2001.
- 76 Goody, 1977, p. 78.
- 77 Goody, 1977, p. 104.
- 78 Goody, 1977, p. 80.
- 79 Goody, 1977, pp. 81, 86.
- 80 Goody, 1977, pp. 87, 88.
- 81 The term is introduced, with some caution, by Goody, 1977, p. 78.
- 82 Goody, 1977, p. 108.
- 83 Goody, 1977, pp. 108–11.
- 84 Rüpke, 2006, p. 510.
- 85 Rüpke, 2006, p. 511.
- 86 Wallace Hadrill, 1987.