

Mourning and Memory in Ancient Rome

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This project examined how the Romans imagined grief and how they gave it form in words and in monuments. I began the summer with close readings of Cicero, Seneca, and Ovid. Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* presents mourning as a condition that can be shaped through reason and speech. Seneca's consolatory writings attempt to do the same, using examples from myth and history to persuade the mourner to recover a measure of control. Ovid's exile poetry undermines this pattern. In the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* he writes of grief that does not end and cannot be healed. The verses themselves carry the mark of absence, with hesitation and repetition showing how loss overwhelms voice.

After this work in Brunswick I traveled through Italy. My journey began in Syracuse and continued north to Rome and then outward to other sites. At Syracuse I studied the overlapping presence of Greek and Roman remains, where different traditions of commemoration were layered in one landscape. In Rome I walked the Forum, the Campus Martius, and the necropolis under St. Peter's, noting how the dead were placed at the center of civic life. I studied inscriptions, tombs, and urban topography, each revealing how grief was made visible and how memory was joined to space. Beyond Rome I traveled to Ostia, Ravenna, and smaller sites, examining how families and communities preserved names and bound their mourning into durable forms of presence.

The project brought together philology and archaeology. Texts revealed how Romans described mourning while monuments showed how they lived with it. The two bodies of evidence confirmed that grief was treated as both a private condition and a civic act. This work demonstrated that mourning was at once universal and historically specific, always shaped by the forms that carried it. The Romans left behind words and structures that continue to shape our own understanding of loss and endurance. This fellowship provided the foundation for my honors thesis, which will extend these questions into a fuller study of grief, exile, and memory in Roman literature and culture.

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