

## Later Latin Poetry: Some Principles of Interpretation

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The study of later Latin poetry focuses with peculiar sharpness problems important for the understanding of the whole of Latin literature, most of which arise from the unexamined preconceptions and expectations we bring to this task, that is to say, from what scholars like to call "common sense." A dangerous ally of common sense is nature. In scholarly exegesis, since scholars are so rarely common men (and even less so authors), common sense must necessarily play a limited part; and the appeal to so malleable a term as what is "natural" should be automatically suspect. None of this is unfamiliar to the sceptical reader of Bentley's note on Horace's *volpecula* (*Epp.* 1. 7. 29), or to the student of Housman's Lucan.

The most important qualification for the Latinist is neither common sense nor a feel for nature nor even an indifference to boredom, but what Keats called "negative capability," which we may here interpret as the ability to keep quiet and let the author do the talking. Our perception of "Rome" over the centuries has become encrusted with notions of *gravitas*, *auctoritas*, *dignitas*, settled order (*pacique imponere morem*); its language has become famous for its lapidary terseness, making modern English, for example, seem verbose and undisciplined. This has been an effective weapon in the hands of our teachers, and later, anxious to prove we learned our lesson well, we are only too eager to find the confirmation of these ideas in the literature. In the larger sphere, the ready ease with which the Roman Church has assumed the mantle of its imperial predecessor and too often used the weight of authority (*mos maiorum*) to stifle free enquiry has assisted in this ossification.

But this elevation and petrification of our concept of the Romans has dangerous consequences even for the theologian, and *a fortiori* for the student of the Classics. In fact Latin (*sit venia verbo*) is not necessarily terse (Claudian? Prudentius?), and its love-affair with the subjunctive, increasingly passionate in the post-Augustan authors, is not the token of a nation primarily concerned with simple clarity, or with saying what it means (the *Thebaid*?). Similarly, the history of Rome is not that of a long Victorian Age, but too often the bloody record of power-grabbing at whatever cost in suffering. But these things are true of Rome in all periods. There never was a Golden Age of selfless surrender of *res privata* to the *res publica*, of

austere simplicity of language (Livius' *Odisia*?). If we still admire the Roman achievement, it will not be because we swallow tall tales like this.

In the effort to right the balance, an important truth not sufficiently grasped is that *literature is literary, that is, essentially selective, genre-determined, partial*. A great deal of talk is heard these days about neo-Realism, that is, about the "reflection of real life" in the Latin poets. What this actually means is that scholars who paid lip service when John Sullivan was young and under the influence of his ideas to concepts of modern literary criticism are now sliding back into old ways, treating poems as documents, as autobiography and so on. But the gap between literature and reality (*veritas*, whatever *veritas* means) remains. Here—and this is the first of the "principles of interpretation" to which my title refers—the study of Byzantine literature has much to teach. It is a literature and civilization to be viewed essentially as a continuation of Roman, since the Byzantines were after all Ῥωμαῖοι ("Rhom" to the Turks). The aesthetic, for example, revealed in Procopius' double handling of the reign of Justinian, but also Nonnus' carnivalization of the epic, is relevant to the reader of Ovid or Tacitus. Already Norden points out<sup>1</sup> that a number of Tacitus' mordant epigrams have curious parallels in Plutarch. He suggests that there may have been a common Latin source. But did Plutarch know enough Latin? Suppose he and Tacitus were drawing on an account written in (Asianizing<sup>2</sup>) Greek? In any case, would it not be an excellent introduction to Tacitus' distortions to read something from Procopius, both from the *History of the Wars* and from the *Anecdota*?

But the difference of *color* caused by the switch in Procopius from the epideictic to the satirical mode is not a matter of concern to the student of prose alone. How often, for example, has the assumption been made that Juvenal is describing "real life"? But suppose he were using a genre that selected and edited its own material, and filtered out evidence to the contrary?

These later productions therefore enlarge tendencies already present in Latin literature—and incidentally give the lie to any easy theory that Byzantium is more or less an extension of Hellas. It seems extraordinary in our time that university presses, contradicting T. Mommsen,<sup>3</sup> would still be producing or planning histories of Greco-Roman literature which treat Byzantium as outside their sphere, and in particular as outside the sphere of the Latinist. *O curas hominum! o quantum est in rebus inane!*

<sup>1</sup> *Antike Kunstprosa* (fifth ed., repr. Stuttgart 1958), I, pp. 340 ff. (citing Mommsen). Dio Chrysostom independently echoes Juvenal's *panem et circenses* (*Or.* 32. 31, τὸν πολλὸν ἄρτον καὶ θεῖαν ἴππων, of the Alexandrians).

<sup>2</sup> *Sententiosum et argutum, Brutus* §325.

<sup>3</sup> "Despite its appeal as a largely untilled field of philology, what Mommsen saw in the Byzantine world was the essential continuity of Roman law and administration; that is to say precisely those aspects of Roman civilization that he understood better than anyone else" (Brian Croke).

T. P. Wiseman has recently and rightly re-emphasized<sup>4</sup> that Roman society was brutal and horrifying in its everyday impact on the unprotected. But that is not the whole story, as the subsequent history of Europe and its fight to claim the legacy of the Caesars shows. Christians have enjoyed exaggerating the faults of paganism, just as Gibbon enjoyed standing this argument on its head, and blaming Christianity for the vices it introduced. But "decadence" would not have survived so long in the scholar's briefcase were it not more than a useful tool for defending or attacking the record of the Christian church. In fact, it supplies a handy scissors for the weary student eager to find a colorful excuse for cutting short the reading list. But as a critical concept, it obscures the primacy in the Roman aesthetic canon of the satiric, a point already made by Quintilian in his *satira quidem tota nostra est*, the most far-reaching single literary judgment, for the Latinist at least, preserved from antiquity. The Romans enjoyed in every age the comic, the improper, the grotesque, and Republican literature offers the proof, in Plautus, Lucilius, even Cicero and Catullus (with his "indictment of Rome" at the end of poem 64). Later satire is not somehow privileged more than these earlier authors. If we do not believe that the system that defeated Hannibal was decadent—after all, the "Golden Age" of Lucretius and Virgil was yet to come—we must not believe that either about the system that would produce the five good emperors, the Christian saints and martyrs, including the Fathers—and Byzantium.

"Decadence" must go. It is a methodologically inadmissible term (*ein methodologisch unbrauchbarer Termin*)—my second principle. In pleading in this brief essay on a potentially long, controversial and even incendiary (if one thinks of Urban VIII) theme for a more honest and searching look at later Latin, I would like to emphasize three related points: the religiosity of Roman poetry, its continuity, and its theatricality. If I begin *hustaton proton*, that is because in its way theatricality subsumes, though without exhausting, the other two features on this list. It is, I venture to suggest, the most neglected topic in our entire study of Roman literature.

In a poem saluting Charlemagne, an anonymous author quoting the *Aeneid* describes him as establishing a theatre at his new Rome, Aachen.<sup>5</sup> This has nothing to do with any real-life building program of the Emperor (any more than there was a theatre at Dido's Carthage), and everything to do with his claim to *renovatio imperii*. But this was not a Greek (Attic) theatre. At Rome, the imperial theatre (taking that term in its widest sense) was immensely influential, but much more primitive. It was the locus at which the people and its ruler(s) met and even, in some sort of extempore repartee, exchanged views about political issues.<sup>6</sup> This theatrical and religious *παρρησία* extended to all those gatherings at which plebs and

<sup>4</sup> *Catullus and his World* (Cambridge 1985), pp. 1 ff.

<sup>5</sup> P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Age* (London 1985), no. 25, vv. 104–05.

<sup>6</sup> T. Bollinger, *Theatralis Licentia* (Winterthur 1969).

princeps met face to face: to the Amphitheatre, to the Circus. Naevius' *Libera lingua loquemur ludis Liberalibus* sets the tone for a tradition still persisting in Cassiodorus (*Var.* 1. 27. 5, 509 A.D.). Emperors even met their deaths on these occasions.

The truth therefore grasped by the Anonymus about Rome (but not by our literary histories) is something we may earlier find enshrined in a fragment (7, Leo) of Plautus: *circus noster eccum adest*, no doubt said by a character slyly glancing round at his audience. Rome was both circus and theatre. Gibbon, referring to Byzantium, spoke of the "splendid theatre" of the Roman government.<sup>7</sup> But Ennius already saw Romulus' coronation as taking place in the the Circus (*Ann.* 78–83, Sk.), and it was in the Milanese Circus that Adolod, eager to establish his authenticity, was crowned in the fifth century A.D.<sup>8</sup> At Kiev, the eleventh-century cathedral still shows circus scenes in the passage leading from the royal palace to the church. Equally, Pompey the Great built Rome's first permanent theatre on the steps of the temple of Venus with more in mind than a disinterested love of the arts, as Lucan realized (1. 133; 7. 9). Even the young and ambitious Cicero trod the boards in a sort of music-hall turn with his quaestorship on his arm ("just me and my gal"),<sup>9</sup> and in another mood (*Sest.* 54. 116) he bitterly assailed Clodius and his sister Clodia for precisely their theatricality, just as he assailed Mark Antony in the Second *Philippic*. Byzantine consular diptychs in one way, and the Nica riots in another, make us conscious of the longevity of all these ideas and tensions. But, on the other side, Armenian hagiography depicts saints on the stage,<sup>10</sup> and in 1633 Lelio Guidiccioni saw Ss. Peter and Paul as actors, even as gladiators and charioteers, and here he was in quite an old and sacred tradition.

Ennius on Romulus may, for example, be compared with the following passage from Guidiccioni (*Ara Maxima Vaticana* [Rome 1633], p. 11):

Salve o Saule, Heros Tharsensis; vox tua digno,  
 Quippe triumphalis, fuerat sacranda Theatro.  
 Talis adest Campo species, ubi meta petita est  
 Ambobus; Roma ambobus diversa Theatrum  
 Exhibet; in pugnam tales prodistis & ambo  
 Carceribus; Veluti cum proripueri Quadrigae  
 Incita multijugo sese in certamina cursu.

<sup>7</sup> *Decline and Fall*, Everyman Edition, ed. O. Smeaton, I, p. 522.

<sup>8</sup> Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Lombard.* 4. 30, adduced by J. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses* (London 1986), p. 619

<sup>9</sup> *Ut me quaesturamque meam quasi in aliquo terrarum orbis theatro versari existimarem*, *Verrine* 5 §35.

<sup>10</sup> Dickran Kouymjian, "The Eastern Case: The Classical Tradition in Armenian Art and the *Scaenae Frons*," in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, edd. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham 1981), pp. 155 ff.

Hail, o Saul, hero of Tarsus! Your voice, as one of triumph, should have been dedicated in some worthy theatre. Such was the sight of the Campus, when the goal was sought by both (i.e. by Paul and Peter). Rome in its variety offers to both a theatre: into the fray such also you both came forth from your prisoning gates, as when chariots hurl themselves with all their speeding horses into the swift contest.

*In scaena numquam cantavit Orestes.* When therefore Juvenal (8. 220) attacks Nero for his theatrical proclivities, we should realize that perhaps the sensitive emperor/artist was simply more aware of the bias of his own civilization. The Flavian Amphitheatre was built by the frugal Vespasian, whose son Domitian was in so many ways Rome's first Byzantine emperor. He was also a Circus emperor, as Martial's poems make abundantly clear. This implies certain things: the mastery of beasts in a bigger and better world that O. Weinreich has explained.<sup>11</sup> But equally the status of saving—but eventually mocked, dethroned and then resurrected—god. Nero certainly, appearing on contorniati of the fourth century A.D. in a guise going back to motifs of Syracusan coinage of the fifth century B.C., is a fine example of all this.

Statius documents the carnival god in Domitian (*Silvae* 1. 1 and 6), horseman larger than life, giver of all good things. The Romans were (and are) a profoundly theatrical people, and Apulcius (10. 30–34) shows that the theatre increasingly continued to influence formal literature. Like Statius, Lucan wrote *fabulae salticae* (pantomimes), but if we compare the apparition of Roma to Caesar (*Phars.* 1. 186) with that in Claudian (*Prob. Olybr.* 75 ff.) the kinship with the *pyrrhiche* as described by Apulcius in the later poet is evident. In both later authors, the goddess has her attendants. In both a divine messenger conveys a heavenly plan to mortals. In both spectacle is paramount, and Claudian's encomiastic *longueur* serves the purpose of allowing the scene to deploy itself, if in no other theatre, at least in that of the reader's own mind. How much in the *ecphraseis* of all Latin poetry would the effect be enhanced if we could only bear in mind a Kabuki model, something already noted by L. Illig<sup>12</sup> in Pindar's first *Nemean*.

These are wonderful examples of the *principle of continuity*. Yet in our studies of later Latin literature the contrary (and mistaken) principle of discontinuity is often disguised as progress towards maturity—and then its inevitable and satisfyingly gloomy foil, decadence, a theme not so much perhaps canonized for the modern student by *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as by Cecil B. de Mille. But discontinuity prevents us from attending to persistent themes and motifs,<sup>13</sup> and because of this partiality it prevents us from understanding even the classical and pre-classical authors.

<sup>11</sup> *Studien zu Martial* (Stuttgart 1928), pp. 30 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Zur Form der pindarischen Erzählung* (Berlin 1932), pp. 20 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Some of these are noted by H. Bardon, *La littérature latine inconnue* II (Paris 1956), pp. 305 ff.

When in Ennius a trumpeter is cut down, the poet remarks (485–86, Sk.) that, though the head had toppled, “the sound ran on hoarsely through the bronze.” Virgil altered what looks like the lead-in to this passage (483–84, Sk. = *Aen.* 10. 396) to give us fingers still flickering in death. In Lucan, this would be grisly “rhetoric.” And in Ennius or Virgil? Why not simply admit with Plutarch (*de Curios.* 520C) that Ennius, Virgil and Lucan, as good Romans, enjoyed what M. Bakhtin has called the “grotesque body”?

In the same way, we perhaps understand better what Horace (*Sat.* 2. 1. 84 *iudice ... Caesare*) and possibly the new Gallus are saying about Caesar (if the reference is to him in *iudice te*, fr. 4. 4, Buechner, *Frag. poet. lat.*, p. 130) when we realise that the notion of the emperor as the supreme author and judge of authors is later a commonplace. Again the Anonymus is relevant (64–75):

Rex, rector, venerandus apex, augustus, opimus,  
 Arbiter insignis, iudex, miserator egenum,  
 Pacificus, largus, solers hilarisque, venustus.  
 Grammaticae doctor constat praelucidus artis,  
 Nullo unquam fuerat tam clarus tempore lector;  
 Rhetorica insignis vegetat praeceptor in arte:  
 Summus apex regum, summus quoque in orbe sophista,  
 Exstat et orator, facundo fame pollens;  
 Inclita nam superat praeclari dicta Catonis,  
 Vincit et eloquii magnum dulcedine Marcum  
 Atque suis dictis facundus cedit Homerus  
 Et priscos superat dialectica in arte magistros.

King, ruler, reverend Head, awesome, rich, noble intermediary, judge, merciful to the poor, peace-loving, generous, his cheerful skill graced with loveliness! Brilliant teacher of the grammarian's art! Reader unparalleled in history, lively instructor in rhetoric, chief of kings, chiefest professor in the world, orator of eloquent fame, better than old Cato's saws, better than Cicero in his sweet utterance, winner over eloquent Homer, over the old masters of logic.

Students of “real life” will perhaps be surprised to learn that in real life the king could not write. The characteristic *superat* (*vincit*), already found in Plautus, and its equivalent *cedit* (Cicero's *Cedant arma togae*, Propertius' *cedite, Romani scriptores*) will be noted.

Some of this eulogy of Charlemagne is as old as the opening of Bacchylides 5 on Hiero:

Εὔμοιρε Συρακοσίων  
 ἰπποδινῆτων στραταγέ,  
 γνώσῃ μὲν ἰοστεφάνων

Μοισᾶν γλυκύδωρον ἄγαλμα, τῶν γε νῦν<sup>14</sup>  
 αἶ τις ἐπιχθονίων  
 ὀρθῶς φρένα δ' εὐθύδικον  
 ἀτρέμ' ἀμπαύσας μεριμνᾶν  
 δεῦρ' ἄγ' ἄθρησον νόφ.

General of Syracuse and its wheeling cavalry, blest by fate! You will greet the sweet gift of the violet-crowned Muses—if anyone can of mortals now alive—with true judgment. Give gentle rest from its cares to your righteous heart, and direct hither your mind's gaze.

With ἄθρησον in turn may be compared Virgil's *hanc quoque, Maecenas, aspice partem* (*Geo.* 4. 2).

In a prose epilogue (*nescit quod bene cessit relinquere*) Guidiccioni says of Urban VIII (*Ara Maxima Vaticana*, pp. 37–38):

Plane sic res est, B<eatissime> P<ater> (a Te enim principium, tibi desinit). Te Principum maximum, Principem litteratorum habemus. Ut summus non esses hominum Princeps, dignus eras litterarum principatu. Nunc, Orbem Christianum moderaris imperio, mortalium mentes instruis ingenio. . . . Sed tamen tua ista celsitas, quae magno est litteris compendio splendoris, & lucri, nonnulli est litteratis intertrimento. Eccui monitori, ac Iudici, utilius quam tibi, sisteret unusquisque labores suos? quo frequentius sua scripta deferret, unde salubrius referret? Fores tuae, undantes cohortibus stipatorum, stipandae pariter fuerant turba doctorum. . . .

This is the simple truth, most Blessed Father—for from you I took my beginning, and with you I end. You are the greatest of our Princes, and the Prince of our men of letters. Even if you were not the greatest Prince among men, you would deserve the principedom of letters. As it is, you rule the world of Christians with your authority, and guide men's minds with your genius. . . . But that high estate of yours, great as is the distinction and gain it confers upon letters, brings to men of letters some loss. To what Adviser and Judge more advantageously than to you would each submit the fruits of his labors? Whither would he more often bring his writings, and from where would he bear them away more healthfully? Your doors, flooded by companies of your attendants, should likewise have been attended by the throng of scholars. . . .

In all this, an essential principle conceded by scholars with understandable reluctance is that *the best interpreters of the poetic tradition are poets*. This interpretation is not necessarily, and perhaps not normally, made in formal treatises, and indeed some formal treatises written by practising authors may for various reasons, including the failure of nerve, be an imperfect guide to what those authors actually do. Lucan, whose poem

<sup>14</sup> The characteristic difference from the Roman sensibility here is explained by Fraenkel on *Ag.* 532 (p. 268 of his commentary).

contains a reminiscence of the *Metamorphoses*, has been ranged, for example, with the authors of the historical epic condemned by Callimachus, and even the title of his poem has been changed to accommodate this theory. But the importance of Lucan is that he Callimacheanized the historical epic, using Virgil's techniques of verbal repetition and response to create a musically balanced and ultimately ambiguous portrait of Caesar (Pompey is a gallant irrelevance, like Turnus) and his critic Cato. At the end, Cato would have committed suicide, and the question whether there could be an acceptable Caesarism would have been left hanging in every man's conscience: *sed par quod semper habemus, libertas et Caesar erit.* (The gladiatorial metaphor is noteworthy.) But Stoicism did not favor political quietism, or recommend suicide as a first response. And what if Nero were the ideal philosopher-king? The theme of Nero as the new Augustus and favorite of Apollo, so evident in the *Einsiedeln Eclogues*, has been completely underplayed in the assessment of Lucan's poetic purpose. Livy (who however continued to enjoy Augustus' approval) debated whether the birth of Caesar was a blessing or a curse for Rome. Lucan, in the wake of the new Julius, Claudius, and his alleged excesses against Roman constitutional propriety, is to be thought of as doing the same.

A great scholar, Eduard Norden, propagated the notion that part of Ovid's literary guilt lay in his separation of Roman poetry from its natural Greek soil. But if we accept the principle of continuity, we shall also accept a *continuing dialogue with Alexandria*, something which the most diverse poets,<sup>15</sup> in their repeated echoing of the Preface to the *Aetia*, attest. But there is also some echoing of Theocritus, usually thought, on the basis of his remarks in *Idyll 7* (45–48), to have been on Callimachus' side in the battle of the books. Three passages (Theocr. 16. 48–51; Prop. 3. 1. 25–28; Corippus *Iohannis 1, praef.* 5–10), separated in time by centuries, may be compared:

τίς δ' ἂν ἀριστῆας Λυκίων ποτέ, τίς κομόωντας  
 Πριαμίδας ἢ θῆλυν ἀπὸ χροιάς Κύκνον ἔγνω,  
 εἰ μὴ φυλόπιδας προτέρων ἕμνησαν ἀοιοδί;  
 οὐδ' Ὀδυσσεύς . . .

Who would ever have known the Lycian chiefs, the long-haired sons of Priam or Cycnus with his girlish complexion, had not poets celebrated the battles of old? Nor would Odysseus <have won fame> . . .

Nam quis equo pulsas abiegnō nosceret arces,  
 fluminaque Haemonio comminus isse viro,

<sup>15</sup> Including Shakespeare, who prefaces his *Venus and Adonis* with Ovid's *Vilia miretur vulgus. mihi flavus Apollo / pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua* (*Am.* 1. 15. 35–36), a fine specimen of what has elsewhere been called the "Alexandrian code." This code is not a secret document. Like the British "Highway Code" issued to all drivers, it publicly advertises responsible choices.

Idaeum Simoenta Iovis cum prole Scamandro,  
Hectora per campos ter maculasse rotas?

Who would have known of the citadel beaten down by the horse of pine, the river that fought with Achilles, of Trojan Simois, of Scamander, son of Jove, of Hector thrice staining the chariot wheels as he was dragged over the field?

Omnia nota facit longaevo littera mundo,  
dum memorat veterum proelia cuncta ducum.  
quis magnum Aeneam, saevum quis nosset Achillem,  
Hectora quis fortem, quis Diomedis equos,  
quis Palamedeas acies, quis nosset Ulixem,  
littera ni priscum commemoraret opus?

The written record makes all known to the long history of the world, recalling all the battles of the chiefs of old. Who would have known of mighty Aeneas, of cruel Achilles, of brave Hector, of Diomedes' horses, of Palamedes' battles, of Ulysses, did not the record recall these deeds of yore?

In his turn, Theocritus was dependent on the choral lyric, and the sceptic might dismiss all this as the mere development of a topos. But why is the topos structured so similarly (ἔγνω, *nosceret, nosset*)? Why did Corippus resort to Propertius' elegiacs, but to Theocritus' language (φυλόπιδας προτέρων = *veterum proelia*), and even heroes ('Οδυσσεύς / Ulixes)?<sup>16</sup>

One great principle of the Alexandrian poetic was the avoidance of the trite and expected: ἀντὸς ἐπιφράσσαιτο, τάμοι δ' ἄπο μῆκος ἀοιδῆι (Callimachus, fr. 57. 1, Pf.). Accordingly, *brevitas* was of concern to Roman poets again separated by hundreds of years:

Nam me visus homo pulcer per amoena salicta  
et ripas *raptare* locosque novos.  
(Ennius, *Ann.* 38–39, Sk.)

*rapiunt* Proserpina curru  
imploratque deas . . .  
(Claudian, *De Rapt. Pros.* 2. 204–05)

This is all we get from either poet of the initial sexual encounter of god and maiden.<sup>17</sup> But a longer examination of both passages would show them as pieces of theatre.

This still living exchange with Callimachus, or at least with the general principles of his school, illustrates another important point telling against the tendency to treat post-Augustan poetry as if it were somehow separable from the study of Greek. This has obscured the evident dialogue

<sup>16</sup> I should perhaps add that I do not know the answers to these questions, but at least they should be asked.

<sup>17</sup> J. B. Hall has an excellent note (p. 222 of his edition of the *De Raptu* [Cambridge 1969]) citing the "puerile" complaint of Bonnet.

which Martial conducts, for example, with Callimachus. But equally, it obscures the value to be set on Martial's reading of the mixed—Roman and Greek—poetic tradition which confronted him as he approached his own task.

The question of length and the Alexandrian poet, for example, is greatly illumined by considering Martial, not as in a debate with contemporary poetic theory of the epigram—or not only in such a debate—but in a wider literary-historical context. Catullus, Marsus, Albinovanus Pedo and Gaetulicus, adduced by Martial among his models, all seem, though masters of brevity, to be authors of more than brief poems. In particular, although Marsus, according to Quintilian (6. 3. 104), defined brevity as the soul of wit, he wrote an epic. Either he held irreconcilable positions, or there was a push within Alexandrianism towards the longer poem, provided always that it met the standards of art. This polar tug had perhaps already been felt by Varro of Atax and Furius Bibaculus, and certainly by Catullus.

Martial, the poet who so often emphasizes his own "brevitas," purports to fend off the criticisms of readers who believed that his poems were too long. There are already two examples of this in the second book:

Ter centena quidem poteras epigrammata ferre,  
 sed quis te ferret perlegeretque, liber?  
 at nunc succincti quae sint bona disce libelli.  
 hoc primum est, brevior quod mihi charta perit;  
 deinde, quod haec una peragit librarius hora,  
 nec tantum nugis serviet ille meis;  
 tertia res haec est, quod si cui forte legeris,  
 sis licet usque malus, non odiosus eris.  
 te conviva leget mixto quincunce, sed ante  
 incipiat positus quam tepuisse calix.  
 esse tibi tanta cautus brevitate videris?  
 ei mihi, quam multis sic quoque longus eris! (2. 1)

You could have contained three hundred epigrams, but at what cost in patience and readers, my book! Let me explain the advantages of conciseness. The first is a saving in paper. Then there is the time: a copyist gets through this in a single hour, and will not slave only over my rubbish. The third point is that, if you find a reader, you may be bad all through, but you won't be tiresome. The party-goer will read you when the five measures are mixed, but before the drink he has set down grows lukewarm. You may think you are well guarded by brevity such as this. Alas, how many even so will deem you long!

But, even so, Cosconius was not satisfied (2. 77):

Cosconi, qui longa putas epigrammata nostra,  
 utilis unguendis axibus esse potes.  
 hac tu credideris longum ratione colosson,  
 et puerum Bruti dixeris esse brevem.  
 disce quod ignoras: Marsi doctique Pedonis

saepe duplex unum pagina tractat opus.  
non sunt longa quibus nihil est quod demere possis,  
sed tu, Cosconi, disticha longa facis.

Cosconius, you think my epigrams are long. You may be good for axle grease. With genius like yours you probably believe that the Colossus is tall and Brutus' Boy short. Let me tell you a secret. Sometimes two pages are needed by Marsus and witty Pedo for a single poem. Poems are not long when there is nothing in them superfluous. But you, Cosconius, make even couplets long.

It is notable that Martial assails him in Alexandrian terms ultimately perhaps derived from Callimachus' riposte to Creophylus (*epigr.* 6, Pf.), and perhaps connected with the writing of the *Hecale*:

τοῦ Σαμίου πόνος εἰμὶ δόμῳ ποτὲ θεῖον αἰοιδόν  
δεξαμένου, κλείω δ' Εὐρυτον ὄσσ' ἔπαθεν  
καὶ ξανθὴν Ἴόλειαν, Ὀμήρειον δὲ καλεῦμαι  
γράμμα· Κρεωφύλῳ, Ζεῦ φίλε, τοῦτο μέγα.

I am the labor of the Samian who once welcomed the divine bard in his house, and I celebrate the sufferings of Eurytus and fair Iole, and I am called a work of Homer. Dear Zeus, this is Creophylus' definition of "big" (μέγα).

Compare the scholium on *Hymn* 2. 106 (Pfeiffer II, p. 53):

ἐγκαλεῖ διὰ τούτων τοὺς σκάπτοντας αὐτὸν μὴ δύνασθαι  
ποιῆσαι μέγα ποίημα, ὅθεν ἠναγκάσθη ποιῆσαι τὴν Ἐκάλην.

In these lines he attacks those who made fun of him for not being able to write a poem that was "big" (μέγα). This forced him to write the *Hecale*.

Callimachus was exercised over the proper definition of length.<sup>18</sup> This Alexandrian debate still engages Martial.

In a later book, in answer to *Tucca*, this theme is resumed:

'Hexametris epigramma facis' scio dicere Tuccam.  
Tucca, solet fieri, denique, Tucca, licet.  
'Sed tamen hoc longum est.' solet hoc quoque, Tucca, licetque:  
si breviora probas, disticha sola legas.  
conveniat nobis ut fas epigrammata longa  
sit transire tibi, scribere, Tucca, mihi. (6. 65)

"Your epigram takes up whole heroic lines"—I know this is what *Tucca* remarks. *Tucca*, it is normal, and allowed. "But that is lengthy." Yes, *Tucca*, but also normal and allowed. If you only like shorter poems, only read the couplets. Let us agree that it is all right for you to skip the long epigrams, and for me, *Tucca*, to compose them.

<sup>18</sup> See further my article "Callimachus and the Epic" in *Serta Turyniana* (Urbana 1974), pp. 342 ff.

The theme recurs two books later:

Disticha qui scribit, puto, vult brevitate placere.  
quid prodest brevitās, dici mihi, si liber est? (8. 29)

An author writing couplets, I suppose, wants to satisfy by being short. But what is the point of shortness that fills up a book?

*Brevitas* implies therefore, not only short individual poems, but short collections. A *libellus* may be acceptable, but not a *liber*, though later (11. 24. 12) even *libri* become acceptable.

But there can be too many *libelli*:

Obstat, care Pudens, nostris sua turba libellis  
lectoremque frequens lassat et implet opus.  
rara iuvant: primis sic maior gratia pomis,  
hibernae pretium sic meruere rosae;  
sic spoliatricem commendat fastus amicam,  
ianua nec juvenem semper aperta tenet.  
saepius in libro numeratur Persius uno  
quam levis in tota Marsus Amazonide.  
tu quoque, de nostris releges quemcumque libellis,  
esse puta solum: sic tibi pluris erit. (4. 29)

Their very number, dear Pudens, harms my books, and my constant publications exhaust and sate my readers. "Few and far between" is the formula for success. So the early fruits are in higher regard, winter roses better valued. Her very aloofness enhances the charms of a grasping girlfriend, while an ever-open door cannot hold a lover. For all his one book, Persius counts for more than lightweight Marsus with his whole "Tale of the Amazons." And you, in your turn, imagine that whatever book of mine you decide to read again is the only one: so it will have more merit in your eyes.

A great deal in this polemic smacks of traditional Alexandrian doctrine: the opposition between the long epic and the paradoxically more meritorious short poem; the implications of the abuse of Cosconius as "good for axle grease" (= *pinguis*, *παχύς*); the hint that *brevitas* and its opposite are not to be determined entirely by mechanical criteria.

But it has been argued that there is also evidence of a more recent controversy. In the early Empire, it is asserted, a doctrine had been developed that the epigram must not exceed a narrow compass, and Martial is allegedly under attack from proponents of this post-Callimachean and post-Catullan theory—even post-Augustan, if we take his references to Pedo and Marsus at face value.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the truth of this, in poem 4. 29. 7–8

<sup>19</sup> O. Weinreich, *Die Distichen des Catull* (Tübingen 1926), pp. 4–7; P. A. Howell, *A Commentary on Book I of the Epigrams of Martial* (London 1980), pp. 8–9.

(adduced above), where there is an allusion to Persius' single book, Martial is quoting from Antipater of Sidon on Erinna (*A.P.* 7. 713):

Παυροεπῆς Ἥριννα καὶ οὐ πολὺμυθος αἰοδαῖς  
 ἀλλ' ἔλαχεν Μούσης τοῦτο τὸ βαιὸν ἔπος.  
 τοιγάρτοι μνήμης οὐκ ἤμβροτεν οὐδὲ μελαίνης  
 νυκτὸς ὑπὸ σκιερῇ κωλύεται πτέρυγι·  
 αἱ δ' ἀναρίθμητοι νεαρῶν σωρηδὸν αἰοιδῶν  
 μυριάδες λήθη, ξεῖνε, μαραίνομεθα.  
 λωίτερος κύκνου μικρὸς θρόος ἢ ἐ κολοιῶν  
 κρωγμὸς ἐν εἰαριναῖς κιδνάμενος νεφέλαις.

Erinna wrote few verses, and her songs are not verbose, but the little she does say is the gift of the Muse. And so she is remembered, and dark night does not imprison her beneath its shadowy wing, while we countless swarms of modern poets are wasted in our heaps, my friend, by oblivion. Better the tiny call of the swan, than the crowing of rooks scattered in the clouds at springtime.

The Greek lemmatist paraphrases the sense of this epigram in this way:<sup>20</sup>

Ἀντιπάτρου εἰς Ἥρινναν τὴν Λεσβίδα ποιήτριαν ἣς οἱ τριακόσιοι στίχοι παραβάλλονται Ὀμήρω.

By Antipater on Erinna the Lesbian poetess, whose 300 verses are compared to Homer.

Evidently the comparison was not to her discredit. The poem is in fact deeply in debt to Callimachus (cf. especially *Aetia*-preface 11–16), and is a simplifying expansion of his belief that length is irrelevant to good poems. It had already been paraphrased and applied to himself by Lucretius (4. 180–83 = 909 ff.).

Lucretius is able to cite Antipater in his defence because he feels that his didactic poem does satisfy Alexandrian criteria. Six books in ultimately Aratean vein are apparently not *nulli versus*. Martial's quotation is really on the other side, since he is apologizing for his prolixity. His comic suggestion for dealing with his fertility is not in fact convincing, because he had hardly written at the same length as either Erinna or Lucretius, and they thought they had not offended. But he still apparently felt a certain literary unease.

This was not, or not wholly, because of a new theory worked out by critics in his own day about the permissible length of the epigram. Why is Martial's dialogue in that case with earlier predecessors, reaching back into the Alexandrian Museum itself? If we confine our enquiry to the post-

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Gow and Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge 1965) I, p. 30. In v. 2 of the epigram they print Μούσας, interpreting it however (rightly) as genitive singular.

Augustans, where were these attacks on Martial coming from, and why does he pay them the compliment of repeated refutation?

The answer is that Martial *encourages* the notion that he has written at length. Perhaps there was some contemporary theory about the epigram, as obscure as the authors cited from the *Greek Anthology* to substantiate it. But Martial exaggerates the importance of these polemics because he wants to be known as a poet of more than negligible trifles. The Callimachean challenge was towards the large-scale, provided the large-scale could meet the demands of art.<sup>21</sup> Like Lucretius, Catullus had answered this challenge well enough. So apparently had Marsus and Pedo. In order to keep in step, Martial has to pretend that he is not a poet of *brevitas* after all. He needs critics to tell him this, so that in the Alexandrian battle of the books he can claim to have been wounded while fighting for the right side. Whatever the validity of the charge in itself, at least it proves that he felt the Callimachean urge towards more than the single shining jewels of poets like Asclepiades and Posidippus.

It is because of his desire to establish his complete satisfaction—but as a Roman poet—of the Alexandrian demand, even though he quite obviously had not written at length in any real sense, that Martial had an ambiguous attitude towards the Alexandrian master. In one way, he admired him:

Dum tu lenta nimis diuque quaeris  
 quis primus tibi quisve sit secundus,  
*Graium* quos epigramma comparavit,  
 palmam Callimachus, Thalia, de se  
 facundo dedit ipse Brutiano.  
 qui si Cecropio satur lepore  
 Romanae sale luserit Minervae,  
 illi me facias, precor, secundum. (4. 23)

You were too slow and long, Muse, in deciding whom to rank first and second in the contest of (Greek?) epigrams, so Callimachus of his own accord passed over himself and gave the prize to eloquent Brutianus. But if ever Brutianus is glutted with Athenian charm and decides to sport with Roman Minerva's wit, I implore you to make me second to him.

But, if this Callimachus is granted *lepos*, he is by the same token deprived of *sal*. What can that mean? *Romanae . . . Minervae* offers an essential clue. The sober Quintilian's fulsome language reminds us that Domitian was under the spell of this goddess.<sup>22</sup> He believed that she was his mother. On his coins at least, he wore her breastplate (and see also Martial

<sup>21</sup> This is why Leonidas of Tarentum hails Aratus as καμὸν ἔργον μέγα (*A.P.* 9. 25. 5: Gow and Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams*, no. Cf).

<sup>22</sup> *J.O.* 10. 1. 91–92: cf. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich 1902), p. 205, note 7; H. Bengtson, *Die Flavii* (Munich 1979), pp. 221–24. Wissowa is offended by the claim that Domitian was the son of a Virgin, but what was contemporary Christianity saying? These religious ideas were in the air.

7. 1). He founded literary competitions to honor her. Martial's poetry differs from that of Callimachus, because, in a much more engaged way, it serves a social function in contemporary Roman, imperial society:

fer vates, Auguste, tuos: nos gloria dulcis,  
 nos tua cura prior deliciaeque sumus.  
 non quercus te sola decet nec laurea Phoebi:  
 fiat et ex hedera civica nostra tibi. (8. 82. 5–8)

Augustus, bear with your own bards: we are your welcome fame, your first responsibility, your favorites. It is not only the oak that befits you or Phoebus' laurel. Let our citizens' crown also be created for you from ivy.

The emperor (just like Charlemagne later) is both ruler and man of letters; not only the savior of his fellow-citizens (*quercus*) or the triumphant general (*laurea Phoebi*), but also the wearer of the poet's ivy, which is yet *civica*, the mark of citizenship and social concern. The *corona civica* indicated that its wearer had saved the life of another citizen, and so the Messianic expectation of the genre is well in evidence.

As *Auguste* and *vates* indicate, these are Augustan motifs.<sup>23</sup> Since Martial has been able to establish in this way a satisfactory *point d'appui* for his poetry, he has no need to feel inferior because he has not proceeded to "long" poems in any sense that posterity has found convincing. The deficiency is really made up by his social concerns. At the start of Book 10 therefore he can claim "length" with perfect assurance:

Si nimius videor seraque coronide longus  
 esse liber, legito pauca: libellus ero.  
 terque quaterque mihi finitur carmine parvo  
 pagina: fac tibi me quam cupis esse brevem. (10. 1)

If you think I am too much of a book, long because my colophon is postponed, just read a few pieces, and I will become a little book. Often enough in me a page ends with a short poem. Make me as short as you like.

But now he has switched to the other side. He has written a long book, which it is a question of allowing the reader to shorten, should he so wish. This solution, already adumbrated in 6. 65, enables him in an epigram that follows to draw a sharp (and self-flattering) distinction between his poetry and that of Callimachus (10. 4):

Qui legis Oedipoden caligantemque Thyesten,  
 Colchidas et Scyllas, quid nisi monstra legis?

<sup>23</sup> Augustus was the supreme *vates*: Newman, *The Classical Epic Tradition*, (Madison 1986) 192. Cf. *vates rege vatis habenas*, said by the repentant Ovid to Germanicus, *Fasti* 1. 25. In this tradition, Urban VIII was both Augustus and Virgil (Guidiccioni, pp. 29–30).

quid tibi raptus Hylas,<sup>24</sup> quid Parthenopaeus et Attis,  
 quid tibi dormitor proderit Endymion?  
 exutusve puer pennis labentibus? aut qui  
 odit amatrices Hermaphroditus aquas?  
 quid te vana iuvant miserae ludibria chartae?  
 hoc lege, quod possit dicere vita 'Meum est.'  
 non hic Centauros, non Gorgonas Harpyiasque  
 invenies: hominem pagina nostra sapit.  
 sed non vis, Mamurra, tuos cognoscere mores  
 nec te scire: legas Aetia Callimachi.

You read of Oedipus and Thyestes in his [daytime] darkness, of girls like Medea and Scylla: but all this is romantic twaddle. What good will Hylas and his Rape, Parthenopaeus and Attis, or Rip van Endymion do for you? Or young Icarus who lost his gliding wings? Or Hermaphroditus, no longer so fond of passionate springs? What is this delight you take in these mockeries of the unhappy paper [on which they are written]? Read something of which Life can say: "This is mine." No Centaurs, Gorgons or Harpies await you here. My page smacks of man. But, Mamurra, you don't want to discover your own character, nor to know yourself. All right, read Callimachus' "Aetia."

"Mamurra" here indicates a dialogue with Catullus. The *Aetia* of Callimachus may be rejected because they are, from Martial's perspective, unnecessary to the poet of social resonance. But it was from the *Aetia* that Catullus had translated the *Coma Berenices*, perhaps earlier (5. 30. 4) and more respectfully rejected as inappropriate to the season. The difference between Catullus' attitude to Callimachus and that of Martial is that Catullus, living when society was facing collapse—

socer generque, perdidistis omnia

Father-in-law, son-in-law, you've ruined everything.

—injected his social concern into the structure of his poetry. Martial, in his time, can feel an extra-literary context. For the Catullan venom he substituted a fancied influence on the great ones of his age, even on the court. Here he resembles the Augustan elegists and what has been called their "deformation" of the iambic impulse.

Later in Book 10, Martial is even bolder about length. Now, instead of permitting his reader to pick and choose, he scolds him:

Consumpta est uno si lemmate pagina, transis,  
 et breviora tibi, non meliora placent.  
 dives et ex omni posita est instructa macello  
 cena tibi, sed te mattea sola iuvat.  
 non opus est nobis nimium lectore guloso;  
 hunc volo, non fiat qui sine pane satur. (10. 59)

<sup>24</sup> "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba / That he should weep for her?"

If a single selection takes a whole page, you skip. You prefer the shorter, not the better. A rich supper is set before you, drawn from every stall in the meat-market, but all you want is a dainty dish. I don't need a reader who is too much of a gourmet. I like a man who needs bread to fill him.

In this poem, the ideal of *brevitas* is rejected, along with the Callimachean insistence on plain fare. But whether this epigram or any of Martial's poetry deserves to be called long is another question. The poet would call it "long" because it echoes far and high, because length is to be determined by other means than the mere counting of verses.

He needs therefore a social dimension, and interestingly the loss of this context inspires a later Preface (12). *Theatra* is telling:

Accipe ergo rationem, in qua hoc maximum et primum est, quod civitatis aures quibus adsueveram quaero, et videor mihi in alieno foro litigare; si quid est enim quod in libellis meis placeat, dictavit auditor: illam iudiciorum subtilitatem, illud materiarum ingenium, bibliothecas, *theatra*, convictus, in quibus studere se voluptates non sentiunt, ad summam omnium illa quae delicati reliquimus desideramus quasi destituti.

Let me offer an explanation. The most important and first point is that I need my usual audience of citizens. I have the impression that I am pleading at a foreign bar. Yet any appeal made by my books was inspired by my readers. I miss that refined taste, that inspiration of my themes, the libraries, the theatres, social gatherings, where pleasures do not feel themselves to be at school; in a word, what I abandoned because I was spoiled I now long for like someone despoiled.

With this may be compared Catullus' anguished declaration of faith:

hoc fit, quod Romae vivimus: illa domus,  
illa mihi sedes, illic mea carpitur aetas;  
huc una ex multis capsula me sequitur . . . (68. 34-36)

The reason is that I live in Rome. That is my home, that is my place, there my life is spent. Only one box [of books] out of many is my legacy here.

Perhaps the death of Domitian, like the end of the Republic, shattered poetic pretensions. But both Martial and Catullus remained Romans, and shared some things that transcended illusions.

The theatre communicates by speech, and so does later Latin poetry (*personat et noto Pythia vate domus*, Claudian, *Bell. Goth., praef.* 5). The student will have been warned of the "evil effects of the *recitatio*," its concentration on immediate effect, its sacrifice of the whole to the parts. He will expect the worst.

But, quite apart from the evidence for the *recitatio* long before Asinius Pollio (e.g. Cicero, *Brutus* §191), all this is in flat contradiction of Aristotle's theory of composition (*Poetics* 1455 a 29: cf. μμήσεις δράμα-

τῆς, 1448 b 35). It actually hinders us from listening to the poems for what is there.

The real importance of orality in fact has been completely bedevilled by the "Homeric question." Because of this essentially anthropological rather than literary enquiry, oral or primary epic is distinguished from secondary epic—a fateful simplification. Once the primitive and heroic age of primary epic is over, scholars easily assume that all men of letters must work in the same way. The poet and the professor alike meet in the Museum, at the typewriter.

This is quite false, as any recital out loud of Callimachus and Apollonius will show. We read of Virgil's *vox et os et hypocrisis* (*Vit. Verg. Don.* 28). The poet is not, like the academic, attempting to communicate a truth that he perceives clearly, for that kind of truth gains its limpidity at the cost of shallowness. Because of his gift he has access to the noumenal world, and all attempts to describe that in the language of phenomena must necessarily fail. In his dilemma the poet typically calls on other artistic media for help; on painting, for example, but particularly on music.

What the poet says therefore is conditioned by *how* he says it, by what the Formalists call "sound gesture." The medium is, if not the message, certainly its key. This is obvious to the reader of Catullus and Virgil. It has been less so to the reader of Lucan, whose poem has been assimilated to the historical epic so praised by Konrat Ziegler and so dignified beyond its deserts by R. Häußler.<sup>25</sup> But the verbal repetitions in the poem<sup>26</sup> point towards quite a different tradition, as indeed we might expect from the emulator of Virgil and Ovid.

A final great defect in modern preparation that must affect the appreciation of the post-classical poets is the ignorance of religion, although Polybius had already noted (6. 56. 6 ff.) that the Romans were the most god-fearing of men. Scholars like to point out to hapless students that it is too late to write Latin out of the Western experience. But it is also too late to cancel Latin (Roman) religion. The unbeliever finds it either an unintelligible impediment to gratification, or, in an act of over-compensation, sits stiffly in his pew determined at all costs to preserve the gravity of the occasion. *Favete linguis* is indeed important. But ultimately the Roman god does not depend on human acknowledgment. Like the force of gravity,<sup>27</sup> he is there as part of the way things are. Because of this, he does not require rigid conformity to a puritanical code of etiquette. It is

<sup>25</sup> *Das historische Epos von Lucan bis Silius und seine Theorie* (Heidelberg 1978).

<sup>26</sup> They form the basis of the study by O. Schönberger, *Untersuchungen zur Wiederholungstechnik Lucans* (2. Auflage, Munich 1968), although Schönberger should have understood that the polyphonic (dialectical) style thus set up cannot produce the univocal effect he desiderates on p. 3 of his work.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrew וָיָגֵב, "weight," "glory." The Romantic likes to think of gods as insubstantial ghosts, but the man of religion knows better.

permissible to laugh, to exaggerate, even to be rude. This has its importance for that offshoot of Roman satire, Augustan elegy, which was not the channel of underground resentment against the emperor, but blended exaltation of the king of the carnival with ritual mockery of his claims in a perfectly understood combination. But it also helps with the understanding of Martial. The Golden Age, when it comes, brings with it a Messiah. And if the emperor is that Messiah?

Some neglected religious concepts pointing to the essentially comic view of the world in the Roman mentality may be briefly listed:

Now is best. It subsumes (consumes) the past and future. Romans, imbued with the ethic of eternal victory, are always entitled to claim that they have surpassed their predecessors.

The gods are bigger as well as heavier. Man feels mixed emotions as he encounters the divine.

Laughter is sacred, and the token of new birth and resurrection. To laugh at something is not to destroy it, but to acknowledge its status and claim.

Playing is sacred.

When the golden age of peace is restored, every tear will be wiped away, and there will be feasting and abundance. All contradictions will not so much be reconciled as be possible at the same time.

Then servants will be the masters.

Paradise is threatened, but the threat will not be the end of the story.

The strange mixture of ideas which characterizes Roman thought is found in a passage of Statius' *Silvae*, which should be examined for more than their rhetoric. In the second poem of the second book, the poet praises the Sorrentine villa of Pollius Felix. Some characteristic themes are not slow to appear: the idyllic renewal of contact with the world of the gods, the peace among the warring elements of nature, what Bakhtin calls *le monde à l'envers*, so that what was wilderness is now tamed. By a typical (comic) Roman *contaminatio*, Pollius is Amphion and Orpheus in one.

Evidently the estate is a kind of earthly Eden (רַגַל יָרַח, Sirach 40. 27):

Sis felix, tellus,<sup>28</sup> dominis ambobus in annos  
 Mygdonii Pylisque senis nec nobile mutes  
 servitium: nec te cultu Tirynthia vincat  
 aula Dicaearchique sinus; nec saepius istis  
 blanda Therapnaei placeant vineta Galaesi. (2. 2. 107 ff.)

Be happy, earth, for your two masters throughout years that match those of Tithonus and Nestor, and never alter your glorious servitude. Let not

<sup>28</sup> *Feliciter sù genio loci* is found on an inscription in the Museum at Malton (the legionary fortress of Derwentio) in North Yorkshire. From such humble kinships spring imposing poems.

Herculaneum or Puteoli outstrip your fruitfulness; nor more often than yours may the sweet vineyards along Tarentine Galaesus give pleasure.

—but not one to be enjoyed by Statius himself (121–32):

Vive Midae gazis et Lydo ditior auro,  
Troica et Euphratae supra diademata felix,<sup>29</sup>  
quem non ambigui fasces, non mobile vulgus,  
non leges, non castra tenent; qui pectore magno  
spemque metumque domas voto sublimior omni,  
exemptus fatis indignantemque repellens  
fortunam; dubio quem non in turbine rerum  
deprendet suprema dies, sed abire paratum  
et plenum vita. nos, vilis turba, caducis  
deservire bonis semperque optare parati,  
spargimur in casus: celsa tu mentis ab arce  
despicis errantis humanae gaudia rides.

Live on, with wealth greater than the treasures of Midas, than Croesus' gold, happy beyond the crowns of Priam and Parthia. No giddy emblems of office, no fickle electorate, no laws or campaigns distract you. With greatness of soul you keep in check both hope and fear, superior to every prayer, untouchable by the fates, spurning shocked fortune. Your last day will not catch you unawares amid the world's confusions. You will be ready to depart, having had your fill of life. We are the cheap multitude, always ready to spend ourselves in slavery to fading goods, always wanting more; we scatter to our fates. You, Pollius, from your intellect's lofty refuge look down on us as we stray, and smile at human joys.

The passage is replete with allusions, not least to the second book of Virgil's *Georgics* (490 ff.) and to Horace (*Odes* 1. 1. 7; *Epp.* 2. 2. 213–16). It is the genre however that enforces this contrast between the struggling (“poor”) poet and the serene patron.<sup>30</sup> *Rides* is important for the understanding of the atmosphere evoked.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> G. L. Dirichlet, *De veterum macarismis* (Giessen 1914) notes (p. 69) that this *makarismos* is applied to Pollius Felix as an Epicurean, but he also compares it to a *topos* going back to Empedocles (fr. 132, Diels = 95 Wright) and Menander (fr. 416, Koerte: τούτων εὐτυχεστάτων λέγω κτλ.) on the σύγκρισις of the active and contemplative lives. Epicurus' ambiguous attitude to primitive simplicity—he wanted it, but he also wanted “progress”—is reflected in Lucretius 5. See B. Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit und Sinnverwandte Vorstellungen*, Spudasmata 16 (Hildesheim 1967), p. 151. R. G. M. Nisbet, “Felicitas at Surrentum (Statius, *Silvae* II. 2),” *JRS* 68 (1978) 1–11, also argues that Pollius was an Epicurean, and that *felix* alludes to the Epicurean *ataraxia*. At the end of Catullus 68 (v. 155), such an allusion in *vivite felices* would fit well with the suggestion that the “Allius” of the poem is the Epicurean Manlius Torquatus. But though these elements may be present in all three poets, they are not the whole story. Roman Epicureanism is alloyed with a satirical and comic admixture even in Lucretius. Catullus' reference to Themis is Hesiodic, not Epicurean. Statius too writes in this Roman vein.

<sup>30</sup> Compare *illa cantat, nos tacemus* etc. in the *Pervigilium Veneris*. In the *Cambridge Songs*, preserved in an 11th-century manuscript in the University Library there, we read, following a

Thetis uses similar language in Book 1 of the *Achilleid* (384–88) when, having left Achilles on Scyros, she now apostrophizes the island. Once again, the typical situation is that the person or personification addressed is raised to some ideal status. The person addressing or petitioning is left with a burden of responsibility. Thetis was not in the end able to protect her son.

It is from these passages of Statius, the ardent student of the *Aeneid*, that we might proceed to elucidate Virgil's own preoccupation with the Golden Age and its contradictions (*Eclogue* 4. 6; 8. 41; *Geo.* 2. 173, 458 ff.; *Aeneid* 6. 793 ff.; 7. 45 ff., 202 ff.; 8. 319). One thinks of things like *pauca tamen priscae suberunt vestigia fraudis, amor successit habendi*, and all that side of Virgil so sensitively caught by Eduard Fraenkel in his lecture on the "Carattere della Poesia Augustea."<sup>32</sup> Whether these contradictions were all reconciled in Augustus (*Aen.* 6. 792) is not a question to be answered easily. Suppose Aeneas sailed for Utopia and found himself instead in a Cretan labyrinth? That really would make his poem akin to the *Thebaid*, and prove once again the accuracy of the poetic reading of poetic texts—and their religiosity, continuity and theatricality.

Sed haec non huius temporis nec loci. Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.

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description of spring: *quod oculis dum video / et auribus dum audio, / heu pro tantis gaudiis / tantis inflor suspiriis* ("Levis exsurgit zephyrus," vv. 13–16). Gray's *Elegy* is not too far away.

<sup>31</sup> Among parallels may be noted: to *errantis, palantis*: Lucr., *Rer. Nat.* 2. 10; Ovid, *Met.* 15. 150; to *rides, ridet*, *Rer. Nat.* 3. 22; *rise*, Boccaccio, *Teseida* 11. 3. 1 (death of Arcita). Nisbet (*loc. cit.*, p. 2, note 16) adds Horace, *Sat.* 2. 6. 16; *Odes* 2. 6. 21 ff.; *Ciris* 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* (Rome 1964) II, pp. 209 ff. The particular allusion is to p. 225, on *rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet* (*Aen.* 8. 730).

