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Lane-switching and Jughandles in Contemporary Interpretations of Roman Poetry

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Mike Jameson, in memoriam

SUMMARY: My paper answers two of the conference organizer's questions: the first, *what are you working on*, by mentioning some difficulties I am having with my current research, the important related question, *how does your approach differ from what it was ten years ago*, by discussing some problems of interpretation that demonstrate a need to connect formal and textual with historical and material aspects of Roman culture. My six examples feature (1) the need for interdisciplinary discussion, (2) the significance of an intertextuality that is not demonstrably "causative," (3) the importance of taking seriously "literal" indications such as location and (4) architecture, (5 and 6) the use of deictics and numerology as pointers to, respectively, the economy of patronage and the agenda of Augustan ideology.

I MUST SAY AT THE OUTSET[1] that the "contemporary interpretations" of the title are taken from my own work in progress, and I do not imply that they are representative of a larger picture. The program of our conference offers an embarrassing dilemma between claiming an excess of authority and adopting the *captatio benevolentiae* of a confessional mode, and I have chosen the latter, although I know it has its own dangers.

My paper answers two of the initial questions, the easy ones (see Lowell Edmunds' Introduction in this volume for a complete list), the first, *what are you working on*, by mentioning some difficulties I am having with my cur-

[1] I thank the participants to the discussion at Rutgers and in particular Cynthia Damon for her patience and support; also, the participants in discussions of my paper at the University of Texas at Austin and the Humboldt in Berlin; for specific suggestions and improvements, Gianluca De Sanctis, Denis Feeney, Matt Fox, Stephen Hinds, Ann Kuttner, Jörg Rüpke.

rent research, even by offering snapshots of some papers and projects that are definitely on the rocks,[2] and also the important related question *How does your approach differ from what it was ten years ago?*

Starting from the second question, let me give you a soundbite on how I have seen the world of Classics change over the last ten years. Let me start, for brevity, from the titles. *In*: whatever had "the rhetoric of" or "the poetics of" plus something non-literary, e.g., the poetics of clothing, and also, chiastically, "the politics of" plus something ultra-literary like pastoral or allusion. *Out*: titles in which rhetoric, poetics, and politics are associated with the usual suspects. *In*: the poetics of execution, *out*: the poetics of Aristophanes, *in*: the politics of etymology, *out*: the politics of Julius Caesar. This seems to me to express a growing need for more interaction between what we lazily call literature and what we call, for lack of a better term, history.

But I need to stop now. This should be the end of my personal voice. It is clearly a wrong rhetorical strategy to focus too much on myself. This was precisely what Lowell Edmunds' sagacious assignment was asking for: self-positioning—and now my register is precisely what I wanted to avoid: it sounds smug and jaded, just like the stereotype that my current career status—tenured, middle age—would suggest anyway. In fact I do not want to suggest that I am above and beyond the fashions and tides of contemporary research. On the contrary, the question of what we should do with various kinds of historical and cultural poetics is precisely what interests me right now. Far from making fun of this new rhetoric of titles, I see my own research as totally embedded in this trend.

Let me get rid of the problem by prefacing my paper with a short personal statement, in the best tradition of graduate student files—even more fascinating for me since I don't have a PhD (or a license to drive, for that matter; hence the autobiographical irony of my titular allusion to New Jersey's car culture). One of the best parts of this conference was going to be the confrontation between professionals and graduate students. In the event this was prevented by budget cuts,[3] so let me make up for the absence of graduate students[4] by going back to my undergraduate years.

[2] Or perhaps more exactly, *insabbiati*. Imagine them as unfinished text files floating on a computer screen that looks like a lagoon. In fact this paper is a less heroic and more swampy sequel to my paper called "Eight Points on a Map of Shipwrecks" (reprinted in Barchiesi 2001) on intertextuality and its discontents.

[3] The other important lacuna of the conference was the absence of early-career scholars among the speakers, with one notable exception, but I am sure that there will be many different and alternative opportunities in the future.

[4] Absent from the proceedings, that is, but there was a lively debate with them and among them in New Brunswick and later; I return to this aspect in my final paragraph.

The world I have seen in Classics has been, from the late 70s on, increasingly dominated by a pattern of action-reaction. Today's orthodoxy becomes tomorrow's target. The driving force has been the idea that the mission of a professional academic is to discover something new. This is not a traditional idea, because traditional Classics was previously based not on the (opportunistic) ideology of discovering something new but on the (equally opportunistic) ideology of preserving or rediscovering what is true. In the long run the emphasis on discovering the new has promoted a crisis of the discipline—a crisis of the discipline not because knowledge of Greece and Rome is declining but because the foundations of the discipline and its status as a discipline have started, with good reason, to appear problematic. The solution has been either the end of Classics as we knew it, or a compromise: the compromise is that the mission is to innovate within a generational landscape of ideas and approaches. "Generational" has become the implicit standard of every new project; the generational positioning of every new researcher has the potential to decide most of the questions, if not the answers, that will be confronted by her in the future.

(There is, however, a complication to this picture: but since it affects my own work, not the work of most contributors to this conference, I will only mention it in a footnote.[5])

A cynical and jaded reaction to this picture would be to say that the world of research is implicitly dominated by the powerful ideology of the fashion industry: a pendular movement affecting individual choices under the imperative question "what to wear next season" followed by the formulaic answer "the *xy* are coming back." (Fashion is not a wrong topic anyway, once you realize that readers of Roland Barthes' *Système de la mode* or *Mythologies* have had a considerable advantage in being able to anticipate by a generation the rise of US Cultural Studies, unless they thought, like most Italian intellectuals at the time, that fashion was a frivolous topic.) Yet it is also possible to be more constructive and optimistic. The good news is that the pendulum almost never returns exactly to its starting point. It swings back and away, but in a slightly new direction. Every "return to" has been in fact a revised ap-

[5] The complication: in spite of globalization, some specific traditions and local idioms still exist, and they condition the genesis of research work that is then appraised in a completely different setting and creates unpredictable ripples. As an Italian classicist of my generation, someone who started contact with US Classics not before his early thirties, I have had the experience of two systems that were generationally contemporary but were moving in almost opposite directions: in Italy, the crisis of traditional historicism; in the US, reaction against the monopoly of New Criticism and its formalism.

proach; for example, anthropology for a while excluded politics, and politics is now returning, but it is different from what it used to be (see, e.g., Connolly's paper in this volume); and we are all curious to know what a new formalism will look like after the new historicism (see, e.g., Lowrie's paper in this volume).

After so many historicisms and formalisms, how are we going to interface literature and cultural/historical approaches? There is an evident problem here in cultural poetics. This approach draws energy from a rejection of not only formalism but also old-fashioned historicism (Dougherty/Kurke 5):

> Cultural poetics rejects the privileging or bracketing of a self-contained realm of art within society, which an old-fashioned historical approach to literature maintains, with its carefully articulated foreground and backdrop, the text and its context. Instead, this approach sees texts as sites for the circulation of cultural energy and for the ongoing negotiation of power relations within society.

The rejection of a "text and context" metaphor would seem to carry us beyond textuality into culture and society. Yet it takes but a moment's reflection to realize that this new approach has been made possible not only by a generation of classicists who had become impatient with literary criticism and with the alternative between European historicism and American New Criticism, but also by the fact that in some US campuses during the 70s and 80s anthropology was being practiced by people who had a strong interest in literary criticism and were applying to rituals and spectacles some of the best tools of textual interpretation. One paragraph before rejecting "text and context" as a bad metaphor Dougherty and Kurke were praising "eloquent text" as a good metaphor for what the analysis of a civic procession can hope to achieve.

My impression is that most people doing research in Classics now would agree that "history" is not "the context" any more because it has been fragmented, and that, in spite of this fragmentation or because of this fragmentation, there is a growing need to compare and match, or mix and match, literary and non-literary, textual and non-textual material. At this level of the discussion, the hope to find explanations that work according to a cause-and-effect model is very slim, and most people seem ready to accept *analogy* as a viable model, instead of relationships that are causal and generative. Then the difficulty, of course, is not that your analogy does not work, but that it becomes very difficult to select analogies that have a superior strategic and productive value in interpretation out of an almost infinite field of relationships. This also happens, of course, in a traditional vision of intertextuality, where the main problem is always selection of features, not discovery; yet one may

argue that traditional intertextuality had the advantage of suggesting some vestigial process of cause-and-effect relationship.

In sum, the bad news is that no approach can really deliver us from texts and hermeneutics. The good news is that now we know that culture has *forms*, and forms can incorporate a rhetoric and a poetics. We can see, e.g., that according to scholars of Greek society the practice of burial incineration is a practice, not a text, but it can also incorporate a metaphoric relationship to the burning of sacrificial offerings. This does not transform burial into sacrifice, and does not elide differences in those practices—people would not say "Darling, I am going to my great-uncle's sacrifice tomorrow" if what they meant was "funeral"—but the relationship is a real one, as real as the cult action itself, since it is part of a shared imaginary; and the relationship is not so different from phenomena we traditionally see in poetry. One sees at least more potential for a dialogue; students of my generation found it complicated to mediate between the fascination of a semiotic approach to culture and the massive database of the Pauly/Wissowa.

EXAMPLE 1: DISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

My first problem derives from the impact of our own academic structure on the questions that we wish to raise; the starting point is of course that every discipline in Classics has crafted its own autonomy and indeed improved its tools by claiming control over certain kinds of evidence.[6] This autonomy is the precondition for research as well as the limit of research; we have to live with this contradiction and keep adjusting our vision, knowing that we are at the same time limited and empowered by those limitations. My point #1 shows what happens when we try to reopen a dialogue, for example, between literary interpretation and religious anthropology. The example features an extract from the email of a graduate student, someone who would have been a good addition to the conference (damn the budget cuts). He's an Italian, working with me on topics like walls, foundations, and the *pomerium* in Roman culture. He was spending time in Dresden when I emailed him point blank the question, "Is it right to say with Nicholas Horsfall ad loc. that in this passage from *Aeneid* book VII [vv. 157–59, but the extract below is 153–72: on the reasons for taking into account the larger context, see below], especially in view of *humili … fossa* and *designat moenia*, that there is a hint at the proper ritual of foundation of a Roman city, the *sulcus primigenius*?"

[6] There are important comments on those problems in Feeney in Barchiesi/Rüpke/Stephens 1–4, 18–20.

centum oratores augusta ad moenia regis
ire iubet, ramis uelatos Palladis omnis,
donaque ferre uiro pacemque exposcere Teucris.
haud mora, festinant iussi rapidisque feruntur
passibus. ipse *humili designat moenia fossa*
moliturque locum, primasque in litore sedes
castrorum in morem pinnis atque aggere cingit.
iamque iter emensi turris ac tecta Latinorum
ardua cernebant iuuenes muroque subibant.
ante urbem pueri et primaeuo flore iuuentus
exercentur equis domitantque in puluere currus,
aut acris tendunt arcus aut lenta lacertis
spicula contorquent, cursuque ictuque lacessunt:
cum praeuectus equo longaeui regis ad auris
nuntius ingentis ignota in ueste reportat
aduenisse uiros. ille intra tecta uocari
imperat et solio medius consedit auito.
Tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis
urbe fuit summa, Laurentis regia Pici ...

I had also drawn the student's attention to the way Aeneas had been told to act by Anchises on behalf of the gods, cf. 7.126–27 *ibique memento / prima locare manu molirique aggere tecta* (to be compared to *primae … sedes* in our passage). I quote (with his permission) from his email, without any attempt to polish the text, since my interest is in his immediate reaction to the problem:

> Caro prof.
> Mi scuso se le scrivo così tardi, ma purtroppo l'ultima settimana a Dresda non ho avuto a disposizione il mio computer e così le scrivo solo oggi, al mio ritorno, dall'assolata Roma. Mi domanda di questi versi: *Ipse humili designat moenia fossa, / moliturque locum primasque in litore sedes / castrorum in morem, pinnis atque aggere cingit.* Non mi sono occupato della questione e non ho ancora avuto il tempo di leggermi i commenti; ma direi così su due piedi che Enea sta costruendo un *castrum* (è Virgilio stesso a confessarlo!), più che una città vera e propria. Manca ad esempio una *inauguratio* del luogo in grado di qualificare il nuovo insediamento come *urbs*; non c'è poi alcun riferimento alle azioni (a parte *humili designat moenia fossa*) o oggetti rituali (abbigliamento, animali, lituo, ecc ...) tipici dei riti di fondazione. Pochi versi prima invece (VII, 153) le mura della città di Latino sono definite *augusta moenia*, il che mi fa pensare ad un tipo di abitato differente, sia da un punto di vista materiale che religioso, certamente una *urbs* nel senso varroniano del termine. Non mi aspetto di aver chiarito i suoi dubbi in proposito, ma mi piacerebbe sapere l'idea che si farà in proposito. Per qualunque cosa sono a sua disposizione.
> G.

The author of this email has been working hard for his dissertation on the distinction between various kinds of foundation and on the ritual of the *pomerium,* so he does not welcome easy confusions. His reaction to the text is a helpful corrective to the predictable reactions of a more belletristic kind of Virgilian commentator—as is precisely my case. In my case, I had found it easy to accept Horsfall's idea of some kind of allusion to the practice of city foundation, and if I had noticed at all the striking repetition of the adjective *augustus* before and after the description (153, the august walls of the city of the Latins; 172, the august building of the palace-temple-senate house of Latinus, 2 out of 4 examples of *augustus* in the poem, the other two being epithets of Octavian) I was very likely to choose a predictable tack, Augustanism in Virgil, instead of focusing on why *augustus* is an important word to use in a context dominated by the idea of a foundation.

Since this initial exchange, I have found that the resistance of my interlocutor was very important to me. It is fundamental to realize that the foundation of *urbes* should not be confused and was not easily confused with other kinds of ktisis and settlement, because it was a ritual, a ritual that was, so to speak, an "eloquent text." But as our dialogue continued, we discovered that the firm distinction between *castrum* and *urbs* is not the final answer to Horsfall's question. Here are the further stages in our argument.

Let us assume that Aeneas is founding *castra* not an *urbs*; the crucial expression then is *in morem castrorum.* Metaphor and metonymy are operative in social practice as well as in literature and ideology—we should not forget that *castra* by itself is not just a technology, it is a cultural symbol of Romanness. At the surface level of poetic utterance, *in morem* is perhaps the crucial ambiguity; this favorite Virgilian expression (created by him?) is often, possibly always, metaphorical, and it is a pointer towards difference rather than similarity; but in the case of Aeneas we are also dealing with potentially a founder of *mores.* When dealing with the *Aeneid*, we should not forget that the poem is both about Roman culture and about the invention of Roman culture and its pre-history; there is space for mirroring Roman *mores* as well as for experimenting with them.

But what about the narrative dynamics? We know that Aeneas will not found the definitive *Urbs*, in spite of the ambiguity of the prooemium, but we also know about his desire to start a real city. So what if we accept that in the dynamics of the narrative Aeneas "starts out" as the founder of a regular city but turns out to be the author of a military camp? this is precisely the answer I had from a colleague who is a specialist of military religion, not, like my student, a specialist of city foundations. Let me quote this email as well:

> Dear Alessandro,
> That sounds as if the idea is: he marked out undeniably and intentionally a city, but actually he could not do more than start a camp. *Moenia fossa* must refer to a city (trenches were not usual for marching camps), the second line deals with the camp —a *vallus*, and an improvised fence."
> J.

This has the advantage of not explaining away the contradiction—but it is still important to realize, as in the student's message from Dresden, that founding a city and starting *castra* are two different kinds of business.

And finally, what if we try to grasp together the cultural constraints, the rhetoric of *mores*, the narrative dynamics (as in my previous points) and also, this being the new step, to take seriously and in a sense literally the importance of location (a point to which I will return later with other examples)? Aeneas has many occasions to try his hand at settlement and foundation during the poem, but this one was in a place that had a special reputation in Roman collective memory. As we all know, Virgil is exceptional in his choice of a landing place for Aeneas in Latium: not just some beachhead south of the Tiber mouth, as in most other sources, but the very place where the Tiber meets the Tyrrhenian sea. A dramatic conjunction of landscape and history, of course, this being the nodal point for every Mediterranean journey, the point where Rome as a land-locked city projects itself onto the sea-coast, opens itself to its empire while remaining sheltered from the dangers of the sea as every Platonic city should be. Also—in a less grandiloquent mood—we should point out that the Virgilian Aeneas is starting construction work in a place that every Roman would have marked out as the first Roman colony ever, the first offshoot community of Rome in Republican history: Ostia. By a neat convergence of spatial and temporal visions, the *last* landing place of the Trojan journey is also the *first* stepping stone of future Roman expansion, the very first stage of the expansion that will lead the Romans to their future colonization of the sea. In the narrative of the poem, Aeneas' journey starts from the edges of the empire, Ilium, and touches some of the most recent colonial (re)foundations, such as Buthrotum and Carthage, before ending up in the very first of Roman colonies, the first floodmark of Roman expansion.

This is important because it makes us realize that is simply not true that poetry loves indistinction (Aeneas founds a city *and* a camp) and culture is based on distinctions (a city *is not* a camp); the ambiguity between the founding of a *colonia* and the building of *castra* goes back to precisely the 4th-century foundation of Ostia—both the archetypal Roman colony (with Greek influence) and a prototype of Roman *castra*. Note the discussion by Rüpke 167 (my translation):

> The founding of the Roman colony Ostia with its square plan, based on Greek models, in the third quarter of the 4th century B.C.E., speaks for a contact between city-planning and the origins of *castra*-planning, especially if one considers the fundamentally military aims of that colony.

On the other hand my student, with precision trained by his research, has been able to make the important point that the *inauguratio* is missing, and oppositionally present in the literal context of the narrative when the city (7.153) and palace (7.162) of Latinus are mentioned. Without his approach I would have noticed the framing use of *augustus* only as an obvious political allusion, not as an element of Roman religious practice. It is impossible not to start from distinctions and oppositions when doing cultural research. Without the distinctions articulated through hard work by the Italian graduate student in Dresden there could be no convincing argument, but then there is always the next step. The question is whether the next step belongs to the text or to the culture. Sacrifice, for example, is not burial, and mistaking one for the other could be a serious error, yet scholars of Greek culture must be right in suggesting that the practice of burial by incineration is enhanced by cultural proximity with sacrifice, and draws prestige from this link, whether it is a metaphor or a synecdoche. Similarly, in our case, *castra* are not *urbes*, yet in Roman culture there is a link.

So cultural studies encourage us to create a specific model of *castra*-foundation, but there is no need to think that associative images and contaminations of field and even rhetoric are exclusive to poetry. Yet we should make sure that we are not simply exporting the language of literary criticism into structuralist anthropology. Our transfer is perhaps easier if it can be supported by ideas of specific interests; in our case, ideas why people in Augustan Rome would like to have Aeneas found *castra* that are and are not exactly like an *urbs*.

For a scholar of my generation, the good news is that recent scholarship is not pitting the autonomy of the literary text against the *Realencyclopaedie*; the study of *Realien* has morphed into the study of culture. The bad news is, of course, that new scholars will need a very complicated background and a strong attention to the borders of their discipline—otherwise, they can at least talk to each other across disciplinary fences and stockades, which is why my first example has been about dialogue and reciprocal consultation.

EXAMPLE 2: COMPETING FOR LAURELS

New classicists, in particular today's graduate students, will have to work out for themselves a methodology in which models come in various forms, textual and non-textual. (Understandably, there was serious concern at the con-

ference about how to accommodate so many paradigms of research, as well as informations, within the span of a graduate student's career). But how is our ability to create links affected by *the absence of textual interaction*? That is, how are we doing when we cannot imagine a precise chain of information being transmitted?

Take as a test case this famous passage from Ovid's Daphne myth (*Met.* 1.557–67):

> cui deus "at, quoniam coniunx mea non potes esse,
> arbor eris certe" dixit "mea! semper habebunt
> te coma, te citharae, te nostrae, laure, pharetrae;
> tu ducibus Latiis aderis, cum laeta Triumphum
> vox canet et visent longas Capitolia pompas;
> postibus Augustis eadem fidissima custos
> ante fores stabis mediamque tuebere quercum,
> utque meum intonsis caput est iuvenale capillis,
> tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores!"
> finierat Paean: factis modo laurea ramis
> adnuit utque caput visa est agitasse cacumen.

Bömer's note *ad* 1.560 (my translation) is representative of the whole interpretive tradition: "The following lines are a panegyric of the emperor: they make a clearly recognizable insertion; they could be omitted, without minimally disturbing the tenor of the Greek myth of Daphne." In fact, there have been studies about the sources of the Daphne myth in Ovid, and discussions of Augustan ideology in the Roman "additamentum" at lines 560–63, but very little attempt to promote a dialogue; both areas have their own specialists. Yet Bömer's approach—the "without minimally disturbing" approach—is one that deserves immediate skepticism: it implies a clear-cut separation between Greek myth and Roman ideology, between Greek culture and Roman politics, between Greek form and Roman political imaginary. This separation has affected even the work of scholars who have much more intellectual energy than Bömer's proverbially reactionary approach to Classics can offer, but it has begun to appear untenable in recent years. For deconstruction of the disjointed approach to Greek myth and Roman culture, note for example Denis Feeney's memorable *bon mot*, that few anthropologists would accept to study Neapolitan food without tomatoes and Native American Great Plains culture minus the horses, on the grounds that tomatoes were not seen in Naples, nor horses in the American West, before the Spanish conquest of the New World.

In fact, some scholars with a flair for the influence of Alexandrian poetry have already suggested that Ovid is developing conceptual and formal mod-

els of Callimachean aetiology here. Yet no specific model of *politicized* transference has been suggested, and there is still a rift between the aetiology of laurel in Apolline cult, with its Greek setting, and the bold transfer of Daphne to the symbolism of Octavian's power. In my view, it would be a good idea to focus on one example in which, long before Octavian, another self-promoting ruler, in another land but, like Rome, in a land far away from Hellenic core identity, claims appropriation of the Daphne myth in a context of Apolline mysticism and incipient ruler cult. The information is about Syria not Rome, it comes from late texts, and from prose not poetry (Just. *Epit.* 15.4.3–8):

> Seleucus ... his origins were astonishing. His mother Laodice, married to Antiochus the distinguished general of Philippus, had a vision that she was being impregnated by Apollo in her sleep, and as a present for her sexual favors she had a ring from the god ... . Informed about his double origins, Seleucus founds a city in the East, the city is named Antiochia after his father Antiochus, and the plain near the city becomes a sanctuary for Apollo.

Libanius fills in the picture. After the foundation of Antiochia, he discusses the suburb of Daphne (*Or.* 11 [*Antiochena*] 93–98):

> The city was named after his father, the most illustrious of his works. Then we have this much celebrated suburb of Antioch [i.e., Daphne]. Seleucus dedicated the area as a sanctuary to the god, after he found that there the myth was reality. Apollo, desiring Daphne, but unable to persuade her, was following her. When she prays and becomes a plant, the beloved is metamorphosed into a garland. This is what is sung, but to Seleucus the hunt was proof that the story was true. Following the dogs and leading the horses, he was looking for game: when he was close to the tree of Daphne's metamorphosis, the horse stops, hits the ground with a hoof, and lo! a golden arrow emerges from the earth. The arrow had letters showing the identity of its master: "Phoibos' arrow" was the inscription. I think, in fact, that saddened by the girl's transmutation, he threw away the quiver, and one of the arrows was lost and hidden in the ground and kept for Seleucus, a protreptic to adorn the place and turn it into what it was, a holy place of Apollo ... . Seleucus carries the arrow with him, sees a dragon, and kills him: another confirmation that the god was present on the spot. A sanctuary, a sacred wood, a temple are soon dedicated, and quickly the vegetation was blooming and the wood was protected by formidable curses.

More literal-minded than Ovid's Augustus, who wants twin laurels to guard his own door and appropriates Apolline cult, but without going beyond figurative appropriation, the Seleucids are not satisfied with some kind of mirror-site; they had moved the entire myth, complete with place-name, river-name,

pursuit, metamorphosis, and Apollo's inscribed arrow, to a land that had to be claimed for a new kind of Hellenized culture. Ovid follows their example in incorporating the Daphne myth into a Palatine-oriented, Hellenized Rome, through his own poem. I would say that this analogy is important, and I am not troubled by the fact that no extant literary model guarantees a direct influence on Ovid. It is not difficult to explain why the Seleucid model is not often invoked in discussions of Ovid's Daphne: not only there is no intertextual "cause-and-effect" link, but the Seleucids are somehow poor relatives of other Hellenistic civilizations when it comes to discussing Greek influence on Roman culture. They cannot claim the status of Pergamon or the glamor of Alexandria as influences on Roman culture, and the archaeological record for places like Antioch or Apamea is only beginning to suggest interesting links with Augustan Rome—the negotiation between "Eastern" and "core Hellenic" idioms, the ambitious use of Apolline symbols and elaborate processions. Finally, as I mentioned, there is no extant court poetry that functions for us as a mediating influence on the Romans, like the poetry written by Posidippus or Callimachus for Macedonian dynasts in Egypt, and demonstrably imitated by Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. In fact, it would not be impossible to imagine a scenario in which some Hellenistic poet becomes an intermediary between Antioch's Daphne and the Roman Daphne[7]; but it is more important to realize that the analogy is worth pursuing even in the absence of textual interaction and transmission, because it shows that Apollo's Romanizing apostrophe to the laurel girl is not just a bizarre twist to a traditional story; it is part of a discourse of monarchical appropriation of Greek mythology, a discourse of *Kulturtransfer* that is now being itself transferred, or imitated, by the Romans, and it has a meaning for the way the *Metamorphoses* represent and construct the new regime of Augustus.

EXAMPLE 3: *ANDROMAQUE, JE PENSE À VOUS!*

Baudelaire's poem *Le cygne* is a universally famous text about modernity, melancholy, and living in a modern metropolis, but it famously opens and ends with references to Virgil; it even used to have the Latin motto *Falsi Simoentis ad undam*,[8] the obvious Virgilian intertext for its line 4 (1–5, 51–52):

[7] For example, as a long shot, one could mention Euphorion, a Greek poet who has a significant influence on Augustan poetry, and spent the final part of his career as a Librarian in the Seleucid court.

[8] I quote from Adam 95–96.

> Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve,
> pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
> l'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
> ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,
> A fecondé soudain ma mémoire fertile ...
>
> Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
> aux captifs, aux vaincus! ... à bien d'autres encore!

Of course the river is even more of a "liar" than in Virgil. In the Latin model it was a pseudo-Simois, a pathetic attempt to authenticate the landscape of a Little Troy, a fake city of Troy in a foreign landscape; now it is, alarmingly enough, what fertilizes the memory of the poet (4–5), and the classical memory has also been activated by the vision of a beautiful swan who looks for his native lake in an urban landscape of dusty, waterless streams (17–22). By the end of the poem, Virgil is by implication the model of a poetry about the conquered and the enslaved (*aux captifs, aux vaincus*).

This is perhaps the most famous example of the reception[9] of the Virgilian episode of Andromache; the story has become an epitome of a fascination for exiles, losses, and diasporas. The false Troy on the coast of Epirus has become Troytown—like Chinatown, a theme park of dislocation and alienness. The distance from the classical tradition, which is both lying and debased in Baudelaire's Paris, contributes to the original pathos of the situation in Virgil.

But can we try to be more specific about the Virgilian landscape of New Troy? His Buthrotum was certainly the purest example of that curious paradox, a Trojan provincial life. This is where the Parisian dry river comes from (3.349–51):

> procedo et parvam Troiam simulataque magnis
> Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum
> agnosco, Scaaeque amplector limina portae

The little Troy, the fake Pergamon, the strangled brook ... . In a fine metaliterary reading of the Virgilian episode, Ralph Hexter points out that this is bad literature, bricolage, slavish imitation of Greek models (77):

> They have simply renamed a Greek landscape and its features and built their citadel on Greek foundations ... . Working with the material left over from Greeks already belated, what Helenus and Andromache create with their literally servile imaginations can hardly thrive or satisfy.

[9] On the importance of reception in recent studies of Latin literature see Hinds in this volume.

This way the episode becomes a *mise en abîme* of Virgil's poetic agenda, a favorite trope in recent interpretations of Roman poetry: Hexter's reading nicely tallies with Virgil's mention of a "little Troy," since "Little Iliad" was the title of a secondary, decadent epic, a spin-off of Homer's great Ilion epic. We have seen the same trope at work in Baudelaire's idea of a "lying river." Yet there was a real place called Buthrotum in Virgil's times, and the name could have started interesting memories in the Latin-speaking audience. It was one programmatic example of another curious paradox, a Roman provincial life in Greece. Notice how a language similar to Hexter's idea of "working with the material left over by Greeks already belated" has been employed by scholars of material culture working on the area of real Buthrotum—thus Zachos 77 on the victory monument of Octavian at Nicopolis:

> The blocks re-used in the monument may have derived from one or more monumental buildings of a nearby town, whose inhabitants were displaced and forced to settle in Nicopolis.

(The monument was the result of the expulsion and relocation of Greek residents, and even its material structure consisted of recycled Greek constructions). And Trimble 64 on the visual style of the remains in the Caesarian and Augustan settlement at Butrint:

> The imposition of a Roman colony onto this thriving Hellenistic city brought about a systematic displacement of the native inhabitants of Buthrotum, a development that can be considered in the framework of the sometimes brutal political and cultural change that characterized Augustus' imposition of imperial rule in western Greece ... . The ... statue at Buthrotum ... exemplified a visual ideology that was formulated in Early Imperial Italy through the appropriation of Greek cultural forms, and that was exported back into Greece within this Roman colony.[10]

Buthrotum and Nicopolis were both in fact complementary statements of a new approach to Roman rule over Greece: the first, a Roman colony moving in (with its Hellenizing-made-in-Italy style) and displacing the original population; the second, an artificial Greek community created by evictions and forced settlement under the sign of Roman victory. Now think about the language traditionally used by literary criticism about this episode: nostalgia of Troy, toy Troy, mock Troy, Disneyland Troy, theme park, exile, *Andromaque je pense à vous*, and so on—and now picture yourselves Italic and Roman set-

[10] Cf. Bergemann 56 on the effect of breaking away from local-hellenistic theater architecture, and 49 on the culture wars in Buthrotum; the changes in administration and civic life could hardly have been more incisive.

tlers in this programmatic beachhead or foothold, and *their* nostalgia, constructing a fake Italy with recycled Greek material on the margins of Greece and looking back to Italy and Rome—this begins to suggest that the direction of the text can be read eastbound as well as westbound. Read it westwards, it's exile, read it eastwards, it's colonization. Now we can see why the Simois is such a liar (in Baudelaire's language): it is not only the simulation of a Trojan river but also the dissimulation of nostalgia for an Italic river.

Colonial and provincial readings of the *Aeneid* have often been limited to localized *allusions à clé*—the new Caesarian interest in Carthage and Ilium, Augustus on the bay of Naples, the veterans in Sicily, but what interests me is not the idea that localized episodes allude to a Roman vested interest in specific areas; it is the idea of a specific reference to the emotions and experiences of provincial life. The dusty river that mimics the Scamander is a prophecy of many mini-Tibers, the Trojan theme-park is a also a Rome-town, like a China-town; the *nostos* as a prophecy of Greek colonization is now converted into a post-factum prophecy of Roman and Italic colonization. The absent mother-city of Troy and its precarious cultural baggage are a poignant analogy for the cultural insecurities of Roman colonization, and so is the anxiety of Phoenician settlers with their oversized and brand new city of temples and theaters in an exotic, pre-urban setting (cf. Woolf 125–26), and their invocation of Troy, rather than Tyre, as a token of cultural identity.

The way Troy is positively lost and absent and yet intensively talked about in the most different corners of the Mediterranean with different accents—nostalgia, repetition compulsion, and also hearsay that binds people together (Dido, Latinus, and Evander all know stories about Troy)—and through objects, images, and rituals from Troy being distributed across the Mediterranean, this is all a strikingly distorted but significant image of how Rome is supposed to work within the formation of the Imperial fabric.

So it should be possible to see the theme of exile in the Virgilian episode both as what it claims to be and as a meditation on Roman colonial experiences; after all, it is precisely through his Virgilian nostalgia that Baudelaire ends up discovering, right at the center of metropolitan spleen, a testimony to the diasporas of French colonialism (41–44):

> Je pense à la negresse, amaigrie et phtisique,
> piétinant dans la boue et cherchant, l'oeil hagard,
> les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
> derrière la muraille immense du brouillard.

In this example, a "literal" approach to the text in its historical setting is not necessarily incompatible with a "lateral" approach through reception and modern appropriation.

EXAMPLE 4: THE HOUSE IN APULEIUS AND EVARISTO

Up to now, my examples, taken from current work, suggest that there is something to be gained in letting literary interpretation talk to scholarship about material reality, now that the first is less confident in the autonomy of its topics, and the second is ready to understand the fluid relationship of the real and the imaginary. I might go a bit further and suggest that a renewed attention to "reality" is a promising approach, not exactly in the sense of a new historicism, but more modestly, of a "new literalism," a form of respect and attention for the most literal aspects of fiction and poetic imagination: location, material infrastructure, objects, all the things we *literati* can easily take for granted.

The following excerpt, a famous ecphrasis from Apuleius' novel, shows that attention to poetics and self-reflexivity does not need to bypass attention to material objects and their social significance (*Met.* 2.4–5):

> Atria longe pulcherrima columnis quadrifariam per singulos angulos stantibus attolerabant statuas, palmaris deae facies, quae pinnis explicitis sine gressu pilae uolubilis instabile uestigium plantis roscidis delibantes nec ut maneant inhaerent et iam uolare creduntur. Ecce lapis Parius in Dianam factus tenet libratam totius loci medietatem, signum perfecte luculentum, ueste reflatum, procursu uegetum, introeuntibus obuium et maiestate numinis uenerabile; canes utrimquesecus deae latera muniunt, qui canes et ipsi lapis erant; his oculi minantur, aures rigent, nares hiant, ora saeuiunt, et sicunde de proximo latratus ingruerit, eum putabis de faucibus lapidis exire, et in quo summum specimen operae fabrilis egregius ille signifex prodidit, sublatis canibus in pectus arduis pedes imi resistunt, currunt priores. Pone tergum deae saxum insurgit in speluncae modum muscis et herbis et foliis et uirgulis et sicubi pampinis et arbusculis alibi de lapide florentibus. Splendet intus umbra signi de nitore lapidis. Sub extrema saxi margine poma et uuae faberrime politae dependent, quas ars aemula naturae ueritati similes explicuit. Putes ad cibum inde quaedam, cum mustulentus autumnus maturum colorem adflauerit, posse decerpi, et si fontem, qui deae uestigio discurrens in lenem uibratur undam, pronus aspexeris, credes illos ut rure pendentes racemos inter cetera ueritatis nec agitationis officio carere. Inter medias frondes lapidis Actaeon simulacrum curioso optutu in deam proiectus iam in ceruum ferinus et in saxo simul et in fonte loturam Dianam opperiens uisitur.
>
> Dum haec identidem rimabundus eximie delector, "Tua sunt" ait Byrrhena "cuncta quae uides," et cum dicto ceteros omnes sermone secreto decedere praecipit. Quibus dispulsis omnibus: "Per hanc" inquit, "deam, o Luci carissime, ut anxie tibi metuo et ut pote pignori meo longe prouisum cupio, caue tibi, sed caue fortiter a malis artibus et facinorosis illecebris Pamphiles illius, quae cum Milone isto, quem dicis hospitem, nupta est. Maga primi nominis et omnis

> carminis sepulchralis magistra creditur, quae surculis et lapillis et id genus friuolis inhalatis omnem istam lucem mundi sideralis imis Tartari et in uetustum chaos submergere nouit."

My original approach to this text was uncompromisingly formalistic. It is now traditional to view the ecphrasis of Byrrhena's mythological atrium as a *mise en abîme* of the novelistic plot, and I agree with this reading; the only difference in my project was that I wanted to highlight another aspect to this literary self-consciousness, namely, Ovidian imitation. I do not need to develop this thread here; suffice it to say that my intended reading was a development of previous "metapoetic" interpretations, with a new emphasis on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a major (but neglected) player in the literary genealogy of Apuleius. The real point that I need to mention here is that I have progressively realized that our current understanding of the ecphrasis is almost programmatically unconcerned with the "reality effect" of the architecture. In her fine commentary on the text, Danielle van Mal-Maeder points out that the magnificent *atria* receive a strong emphasis in the context (100): "La tournure qui fait de *atria*, mis en évidence en tête de la phrase, le sujet ... a pour effet de le personnifier et traduit le saisissement qu'il produit chez Lucius."

On the other hand, some of the best readings of this ecphrasis adopt a distinctive strategy, according to which the entire structure is unrealistic and even at odds with the context, and is *therefore* intended to challenge the reader and invoke the necessity of a metaliterary interpretation. The winged Victories and the outrageously elaborated iconography of Diana and Actaeon trespass their realistic setting, the house of Byrrhena in Hypata, and this lack of motivation points vigorously to the plot of the novel and its dynamics, from animal metamorphosis to Isiac redemption:

> "nor is it at all clear *what a private citizen in the Greek east is doing with statues of winged victories* in her home" (Slater 28).

> "*First of all, what is a private citizen doing with a hall of statues of Nike?* The evidence of a cult or dedications to Nike in the Greek world is extremely scanty in all times ... even if we suppose that Apuleius is extending the common Roman cult of Victoria into the Greek world, still the problem remains that although the army and the Arval Brethren naturally sacrificed to Victoria, and emperors liked to be associated with her (*OCD* s.v.), one would not have thought a rich and distinguished private citizen (even away from the emperor's gaze in the provinces) would have dared to—or had much reason to want to ... perhaps not every feature of the novel should be pressed for realistic detail; so we might conclude that Apuleius has been content to give his character *a rather strange taste in decor* [my italics] in order to make the thematic point of final success" (Peden 381).

Yet this is precisely the kind of question (*what is a private citizen in the Greek East doing with a hall of statues of Nike?)* that scholars of material culture are likely to encounter; for example, if they are working on a house such as this one:

> *Roman Imperial House Excavated in Corinth: preliminary reports*, American School Athens [*Newsletter* 42, Winter 1999, 3 and 9] (G. D. R. Sanders reporting) "fragments of paneled frescoes in the debris. Lively half life-sized winged Victories decorate two large fragments ..." (3) [Newsletter 45, Winter 2001, 1 and 5] (1) "a suite of five rooms ... these include a room with a centrally placed rectangular fountain pool surrounded by mosaics ... and a room paved in marble with a centrally placed octagonal fountain ... (5) this is the same room in which two half-lifesized fresco representations of Nike were found in 1996 ... the find of nine small-scale sculptures ... the deities represented are Artemis, Aphrodite, Roma, Europa, Pan, Herakles, Dionysos, and Asklepios (twice)."

A very ambitious house in Imperial Athens. How was the owner likely to identify his or her "strange taste in décor": Roman, Hellenic, Neo-Hellenic, Hellenic with a Roman accent, post-classical? It may be that a separation of Greek and Roman in the culture of housing is anachronistic in the Antonine age. Still, I am convinced that the ecphrasis of the lavish atrium of Byrrhena, complete with statues of Nike, reflecting pool, and mythological program, is not unrelated to the questions of prestige, identity, and self-positioning that a real house would raise in this age. This is not because I know for a fact that Apuleius and his intended audience were well informed (or indeed cared) about the material culture of Greece and Macedon, or that the house of Byrrhena had a real and historical model; the point is, rather, that the very idea of an *atrium* is a marker of cultural identity. The famous passage in Vitruvius on the *atria* as the quintessential difference between Italic and Greek traditions (Vitr. 6.7.1 *Atriis Graeci quia non utuntur, neque aedificant, sed ab ianua introeuntibus itinera faciunt latitudinibus non spatiosis ...*) does not, of course, imply that there was not a process of contamination between the two orders in the Imperial age, but more importantly, it reveals, through a time-warp approach to the history of architecture, the die-hard expectations and constructions of ethnicity implied in the choices of house planning (Wallace-Hadrill 304):

> In his (i.e., Vitruvius') discussion of housing more than anywhere else he is concerned to set up a series of contrasts between "them" and "us." His chapter on the Greek house is quite explicitly phrased to underline difference. So the chapter opens with the text-book indicator of attempts to indicate cultural difference, a statement of what someone is not.

Stimulatingly, the earliest Greek source for the Roman word *atrium* expresses uneasiness and tension:

> As ambassadors on behalf of the demos they (i.e., Amymon and Megathymos) endured both mental and [physical] suffering. They met the [leaders] of the Romans and won them over by daily [perseverance]. They also persuaded the patrons of the [city] to come to the assistance of our demos. By explaining the state of affairs and by means of the daily round of calls at the atria they made friends of [some of] those who looked after and championed our opponent.[11]

As a narrator, Apuleius is under no obligation to produce a believable image of a Greek house, but he cannot escape the fact that objects come loaded with cultural expectations. Self-reflexivity does not obliterate those properties; if it works, it is because it exploits them. If a character drives a car in a novel, there may be a number of functional reasons, but the narrator cannot escape the implications of the choice, whether it is SUV, station wagon, city car, or a red Corvette.

But in the context of Lowell Edmunds' question on changing patterns of thought in contemporary Classics, it is significant to mention that I may have come to realize the importance of architecture in this passage not by reading studies of architecture and *Realien* in Apuleius[12] but by being exposed to post-colonial literature. Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* has a multiple claim to fame: the first English novel in verse set in a London that is simultaneously 211 A.D. Londinium and turn-of-the millennium multicultural South London, it is a witty story of race and gender transgressions. The narrator is a Nubian girl who moves to Roman Londinium, A.D. 211, then turns trophy wife of a rich and vulgar Roman businessman. This is how she reacts to the taste of her husband's house (64–65):

> I walk into the atrium. gaze up
> at the square hole of the sky. You see, our villa
>
> is built in the fashionable style of the Med,
> as Felix always boasts,
>
> "Great for British winters" I once replied
> as snow fell on the frozen fountain
>
> its centrepiece a statue of snarling Medusa
> (a strange choice, but Felix believed

[11] *SIG* 3.656 (=Sherk no. 26, from which the translation is taken); discussion in Erskine.
[12] Although important ones now exist; see Egelhaaf-Gaiser.

low-class intruders would fear
they'd be turned to stone, and backtrack)

Water poured out of her open mouth,
and her flying dreadlocks, which normally

produced fine sprays,
had grown icicle extensions.

To be honest, I don't actually remember whether I noticed the importance of the *atrium* first in the *Metamorphoses* or in *The Emperor's Babe*; the important thing is that there was an interaction. The real point, of course, is that today's atmosphere is full of attention to the politics of objects and manufacts, and to the way a local culture incorporates styles of cosmopolitan domination; not just the Golden Arches of McDonalds but also the imposition of American-style grand Hotels with their *atrium* onto the anti-monumental architecture of Britain and its very different rhetoric of power and wealth (this is what *atrium* means nowadays to most inhabitants of the British isles: not Roman, but US cultural imperialism). In other words, I may stand to learn from the whole post-colonial atmosphere something that has a bearing on the cultural history of the Roman empire.

At the same time, I have not necessarily lost contact with my Ovidian project. The way I see the presence of Ovid in Apuleius, it is not only a formal or a narrative influence; it also about re-interpreting the Greek tradition in the light of a triumphant "Imperial" taste, a mythography for Latin readers and a perfect companion for the Hellenizing and mythological architecture of the Antonine age and its pleasures of ownership. A modern Latin poet of artificial nature is the literary equivalent of the amazing House of Byrrhena; the taste for mythology, desire, water, and illusionism unites the influence of the Ovidian poem and the self-fashioning of the Imperial élite.[13] The desire to merge provincial life and participation to the Empire (a significant aspect of Apuleius' Byrrhena) goes well with an Ovidian imprint; the ecphrasis, after all, is the first major difference when we compare the first three books of Apuleius with the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*, a text convincingly analysed by Edith Hall (57–59) as a story of Greek provincial humiliation. The imposition of a grand Romanizing architecture over the drab provincial landscape of a Greek novella is a telling example of how Apuleius reworks the Graeco-Roman mesh of Imperial culture.

[13] On 2nd-century examples of prestigious combinations of public and private, garden and interior, with an emphasis on water, see, e.g., Egelhaaf-Gaiser 325.

This experience also tells me that while interpreting a text I shouldn't be too anxious to move beyond the level of object reference, because more often than not it is precisely the link between literary discourse and objects that goes underexamined. Research has a tendency to bifurcate between the recuperation of *Realien*—there are in fact books on archaeology in Apuleius—and the generalizations of narrative analysis and poetology. Because of the specific evolution of Classics in my generation, disciplinary and methodological, what has not been developed enough is the interface between texts and things. Self-reflexivity does not exclude material culture; those two aspects are not to be imagined as the opposite and mutually exclusive ends of a spectrum of critical positions. They may well be simultaneously needed and relevant.

EXAMPLE 5: COUNTING DEICTICS AND TREES IN HORACE

So what about extreme formalism itself? Needless to say, it has a bad name nowadays. All those formal niceties—all this numbering lines, finding patterns and anagrams and acrostichs, allusive footnotes and self-reference, all this listing repetitions and tropes—have the effect of occluding reality and promoting, as an antidote, a healthy nostalgia for political and social agendas. I quite understand impatience about those reading practices; when a graduate student's syllabus is so chokingly full of other important things and tools, should we encourage an active interest in the elitist mannerisms of Roman poetry?

Well, no and yes. In my confessional mode, I must say that I still find extreme formalism attractive because it draws attention to features that are not visible enough for many other approaches, and as an added bonus, it can easily be deconstructed or discarded if it becomes a nuisance.

In this vein, here is another fragment of my current research (and research difficulties). I have been trying to check—in a decidedly formalist mood—whether the use of deixis in Horatian lyric has much in common with the use of deixis in archaic Greek lyric. The project is too difficult for my current resources,[14] but there is one detail that bears mentioning here. One result that appeared from my statistics was that Horace only has two cases where deixis is explicitly attached to a material object. The object is in both cases a tree (*Carm.* 2.11.13–14 and 2.14.22):

> cur non *hac* sub alta vel platano vel *hac*
> pinu iacentes ... [potamus]
>
> neque *harum*, quas colis, arborum

[14] Although I learned much from a conference on Deixis organised by Egbert Bakker and Nancy Felson, which sparked various papers on the topic.

In terms of poetics and generic context, the two passages are related[15]: the tree references are featured in the most "sympotic" book of poems by Horace, and they both imply the presence of wealthy addressees; in 2.11 the meeting is in Quinctius' villa, not *chez* the poet, and in 2.14 the trees Postumus is cultivating will not follow him after death, except the cypresses. If we believe that a deictic reference has some special value, this factoid could be used in different lines of argument, ramifying in a number of predictable directions. For example, a self-reflexive reading should take into account the extraordinary poem in which Horace is almost terminated by, of all things in the world, a tree (2.13, a poem positioned between our two deictics), and the surprising positioning of the "under a tree" *dolce vita* among the models of life choice in 1.1.19–22, where it has often been argued that (cf. 1.1.30–32) the image of an idler lying under a shady *arbutus* is a covert way for Horace to underwrite at least one of the clichés he is enumerating and then rejecting.

But then the danger is to forget too quickly the significance of Roman trees in terms of economy *and* the related imaginary. Trees are strategic because they imply simultaneously (1) longue durée ownership and owner's care (contrast the spontaneous, wild *arbutus* of 1.1.19–22, where the poet is isolated from the society of patrons and *amici*, and the many "movable" commodities which are typically rejected in diatribic passages about wealth and *compradores*); (2) commodity based on wealth, but one to which no market value should be attached; (3) pleasure and *otium* as a result of success—the kinds of trees that occur in deictic passages (plane-tree, pine-tree, cypress, poplar) are all providers of shadow, health, visual elegance, and acoustic pleasure, but none of them has direct economic revenue, so they don't suggest need for production; (4) the non-productive side of what was normally a symbiosis of leisure and production, the villa; (5) the contact zone between poet and wealthy *amicus*: the owner is a tree-gazer and host, the poet, by definition, one who finds shelter under a tree.

A satisfying reading of those two poems could be accomplished simply by constructing a model of villa culture and poetic economy of patronage, and by dispensing with verbal analysis, yet I think that the precise formal observation—the issue of deictic pointers in lyric, and their distribution—should not be despised. Lyric deixis creates not only an effect of presence/absence but also a sense of performance in the texts, hardly a minor issue for the in-

[15] A third exceptional instance of explicit deixis, the adverbial *huc* in 2.3.13, occurs in another sympotic poem for a wealthy addressee, Dellius, in a context marked by the presence of a pleasure garden, complete with large pine-tree, white poplar, and *hospitalis umbra* (9–10).

terpretation of Horace. The consequence here is that the kind of teaching and research that we promote should not forget the authority of close reading, of specific attention to textual detail; it is not unavoidable to think of formal observation as distracting from other kinds of interest. Ideally, we should be able to see both the forest and the trees.

EXAMPLE 6: THE *CARMEN SAECULARE* BY THE NUMBERS

Something I have found often useful in my recent research is lingering on the material and the localized, instead of moving directly into processes of literary semiotics. There is, however, a counterbalance, based on my *inveterato* and perhaps invertebrate formalism: the belief that we cannot really have too much formalism, provided that we formulate projects that transform formal analysis into acts of interpretation. I take as a test case the *Carmen saeculare* by Horace, since this is a text that has become interesting again precisely for the reason that it escapes or resists a purely formalistic reading. My approach to the poem was in fact dictated by a need to bring together the social function of the song and the intertextuality with Greek poetic traditions. I wished to challenge the traditional separation between social function and learned Greek background, but this is not today's question. My point today is the slightly irritating fact that this performance poem has a trick that can only be highlighted in textual form: the number 7, *septem*, occurs in what is, for readers at least,[16] its line 7 (*Saec.* 4–8):

> tempore sacro,
> quo Sibyllini monuere versus
> virgines lectas puerosque castos
> dis, quibus septem placuere colles,
> dicere carmen.

This is not exactly a promising feature if you are looking for social function and communal values in the poem. On the face of it, it looks like a private code or a hyper-formalistic joke, similar to the Alexandrian tradition of *carmina figurata*. On the other hand, it is a fact that the *Carmen* is very rich in numbers, not a normal feature in Horace, who even in this respect marks a difference from number-loving Catullus. I do not want to force my luck by pointing out that the line that has the numbers 10 and 11 is in fact line 21 of the song (*Saec.* 21–24)

[16] I feel confident that Horace was basing his approach to sapphics on an understanding of the meter as a four-line (not a three-line) strophic meter.

certus undenos deciens per annos
orbis ut cantus referatque ludos
ter die claro totiensque grata
nocte frequentis

But this passage at least reminds us that the *Ludi saeculares* were heavily based on numerology; to this I return in a moment. Coming back to our line 7 and the 7 hills of Rome, there is still a question whether the effect of "7 in a 7th line" is a purely private, insider's joke. The *Carmen* is in some respects a successor to the *Aeneid*—with Virgil dying suddenly a few months ago, and the epic just published, Horace is becoming a public poet of Rome and the Aeneas legend (this second, not a favorite topic of his previous lyric poetry). If you look at the *Aeneid* from the vantage point of *Carmen saeculare* line 7, you will see a typical "don't blink" detail, one of those formal secrets that sometimes connect the works of Alexandrian poets. The first line mentioning Rome in this long poem is (*Aen.* 1) line 7 *altae moenia Romae*, and its content, as Servius notes ad loc., implies the existence of the 7 hills as a marker of Rome (*quia in montibus est posita*). But it is perhaps more urgent to look at the number seven from the perspective of the gods who are being invoked in the Song. If they are, as looks likely, fundamentally the same gods who dominate the hymnal beginning of the Carmen, Apollo and Diana, and the same gods who share a particular "love" of Rome, then the function of 7 begins to look interesting:

> 7: Apollo's number.[17] His birthday on day seven of the month. Hence Apolline festivals on day 7; sevenfold circles around Delos; temple of seven statues. Lyre, invented by Hermes for Apollo, has seven strings. Seven intervals in music—imitation of the seven intervals of cosmic movements.
>
> 7: Diana's number, basis of lunar cycle.
>
> 7: Seven hills (Varro inaugurates this revisionist Roman tradition, already canonical in Virgil and Propertius; cf. Gelsomino, and Grilli; in Philo, *de opificio mundi* 127, *septem* is etymologically related to Greek *semnon, sebasmos*, the number of veneration, venerable, august: presumably a piece of Augustan panegyric incorporated into Greek scholarship of the early Empire)

I conclude that the articulation of the song interlocks, for a moment, with the powerful number that unites the sibling (or even twin) gods Apollo and Diana with Rome and, implicitly, with Augustus. Until now, however, we have been analyzing the song without reference to the *Ludi*—a basic error of traditional scholarship on the poem, as Denis Feeney has convincingly argued.

[17] For basic information see, e.g., Mineur 208–10.

If we take a look at the main inscriptional document about the *Ludi*, we will immediately realize that numbers were highly significant in the proceedings and in the way public texts are representing them. I emphasize in particular the following numbers, which are prescriptive and performative, as well as mnemotechnic and memorializing[18]:

(line 16) CENTESIMO ET DECIMO ANNO
NOCTU AUTEM AD TIBERIM SACRIFICIUM FECIT DEIS ILYTHIS LIBEIS

(line 115) VIIII POPANIS VIIII PTHOIBUS VIIII IMPERATOR CAESAR

(line 118) [Augustus speaking] "TIBI VIIII POPANIS ET VIIII LIBEIS ET VIIII PTHOIBUS SACRUM FIAT ..."

(123–25) DEINDE CX MATRIBUS FAMILIAS NUPTIS QUIBUS DENUNTIATUM ERAT ... M. AGRIPPA PRAEIT IN HAEC VERBA "IUNO REGINA AST QUID EST QUOD MELIUS SIET POPULO ROMANO QUIRITIBUS ... MATRES FAMILIAS CX POPULI ROMANI QUIRITIUM

(147–49) SACRIFICIOQUE PERFECTTO PUERI XXVII QUIBUS DENUNTIATUM ERAT PATRIMI ET MATRIMI ET PUELLAE TOTIDEM CARMEN CECINERUNT. EODEMQUE MODO IN CAPITOLIO. CARMEN COMPOSUIT Q. HORATIUS FLACCUS

The 110 years are basic to the new chronographic structure of the *Ludi*; they are mirrored in the 110 *matronae* who perform offerings and prayer. The 27 focaccias and pitas and cakes are offered to the gods in words and action; they are replicated in the 27 boys and the 27 girls who perform the rhythms of Horace's poem. We could extend this numerological matrix from the *Ludi* to the poetic text, and say that Horace (CARMEN COMPOSUIT Q. HORATIUS FLACCUS) is offering a poem in sapphics, a poem whose basic measure is 11, a key number for the calculations of the "new" New Age that is being advertised.

Now we are less confident that speculating on numbers in the poetic text is purely a formalistic exercise. The *Ludi*, not only the poetic text, are held together and made significant by numerical calculations. Moreover, the entire apparatus of the *Ludi* was a very bold experiment in the invention of a Roman "public religion"—much more daring and artificial than most of us would assume[19]—in a society whose active participation in public religion has often been exaggerated by optimistic and idealizing scholarship on "die

[18] The epigraphic texts are quoted from Schnegg-Köhler, who also offers a fundamental commentary; her work can now be combined with the independent results of Feeney 1998 about the poem.

[19] On tradition and innovation as a formal and political issue in the poem see Barchiesi in Woodman/Feeney 107–23.

augusteische Kultur." The numbers are both a signifier of traditional religion and a strategic move in manipulating public participation in the ritual. They ensure scrupulous repetition from a distant past into the distant future, but they also matter because they "seem to work." Their reassuring correspondence and fit is precisely the obverse of the inextricable mess of garbled chronologies and invented continuities and recounts that is of the essence of the entire business of the *Ludi saeculares*; they matter because they *must* work, in the proceedings and in Horace's text, because they are the visible manifestation of a very artificial and even improvised new order.

POSTSCRIPT

In this paper I have been discussing some problems of interpretation, based on poetic or fictional texts, and all related to a need to connect formal and textual with historical and material aspects of Roman culture. My examples feature (1) the need for interdisciplinary discussion, (2) the significance of an intertextuality that is not demonstrably "causative," (3) the importance of taking seriously "literal" indications such as location and (4) architecture, (5 and 6) the use of deictics and numerology as pointers to, respectively, the economy of patronage and the agenda of Augustan ideology.

Some of my examples, if not all, are based on reading practices that are quite normal in my field, but they implicitly challenge the growing importance of two (different but at times overlapping) separations: the dualism between formalists and historicists (a typical way to articulate simple ideological divisions nowadays: "text person" vs. "material culture person"), and the divide between prose and poetry scholars (as acknowledged by most job descriptions in the world's greatest market for professional classicists, the US).

The most pressing question, if my paper has some bearing on what really is going on in departments and graduate schools, would be how to accommodate different approaches into the crowded syllabus of a graduate school. This was a hot issue in discussions, formal and informal, during and after the Rutgers conference. For if it is a fact that students specializing in history, anthropology, and material culture of the Ancient Mediterranean are progressively giving up a formal training in the languages and literatures, the literature students, I am arguing, should intensify, not simplify, their contacts with, precisely, history, anthropology, material culture. When one thinks about the requirements of a philological training and about the pressure to "do" as much theory as possible, it is not surprising that the bulk, the stratification, and the eclecticism of the syllabus can become intimidating and frustrating. To this, as far as I remember the discussion, the mid-career panelists offered at least one optimistic response: that most of what we are as scholars has happened

in a long-term process, full of chance encounters and changes of direction, drawn out for a long time after graduate school was over.[20]

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[20] One alternative answer, that what we need is to recreate the unity of *Altertumswissenschaft,* did not recommend itself to the conference participants, I think because of its limited practical value; it is also true that holistic approaches to culture and history did not seem to be very influential among us.

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