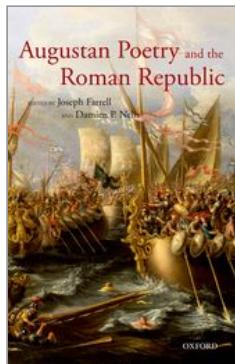


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Augustan Poetry and the Roman Republic

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The Philology of

How and What Augustan Literature Remembers: Horace, Odes, 2.7, Virgil, Ecl. 1, and Propertius, 1.19, 1.22, and 2.13B

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Abstract and Keywords

The dialogue between remembering and forgetting is one of the crucial dilemmas of the age because of how much is at stake for a society coming out of the chaos of civil war. This is most clearly reflected in first-person genres such as elegy, and Propertius' sphragis epigrams (1.21–22) offer a particularly trenchant meditation on the indissociable links between personal concerns and civil strife.

Keywords: propertius, elegy, epigram, civil war, memory

I would like to illustrate a phenomenon which could be called the fury of remembrance. To sustain the image, we could say that the fury of remembrance is destined to bind or control the fury of disappearance. People remember to the extent that, and as intensely as they become aware that, things are retreating, disappearing, and slipping away from them. Groups, communities, and societies remember by formalizing themselves in rituals, festivals, and cults, and in this way gain a succinctness that can attempt to bind the fury of disappearance, but not overcome them. To be sure, the Acheronian goddesses may carry the individual thing away, but it survives in a genealogical, tribal, social form. One can call this culture. Culture is formalized memory. That is presumably why we always experience a slight disquiet when we hear cultural studies speak of a ‘culture of remembrance’; there is an element of tautology in such a hybrid construction.

But there exists nevertheless a ‘cultural’ system in which it makes sense to speak of a ‘culture of remembrance’. I refer to literature, particularly Roman literature, and most particularly Augustan literature.¹ The culture—and that (**p. 41**) means, according to our definition, formalized memory—of Augustan literature is essentially based on the element of memory itself, and is therefore the formalized memory of memory. That only sounds strange as long as we forget that already the Latin *memoria* not only means the institution of remembrance itself, but can also mean its object, that which is remembered, and the medium in which it is represented.² The French ‘mémoire(s)’ and the German ‘Erinnerung(en)’ are similar in this respect. One can go further and say, more precisely, that literature is not only the formalized remembrance of particular, individually different or collective things, but also the formalized remembrance of other formalized remembrance. In consequence, cultural studies ought to speak not of a ‘culture of remembrance’, but rather of a ‘KulturKultur’ (‘culture of culture’).

A ‘KulturKultur’ is a culture whose remembrance is directed towards just such a formalized remembrance and which first arises by means of a movement of self-distancing from this remembrance. This process implies at least two things:

1. The culture towards which our remembrance is constitutively directed has also arisen in coming to terms with a previous phase which may itself fulfil the conditions for being called a culture.
2. *Distancing* must precede the emergence of a culture, if it is to be recognized as a culture at all.

If we find ourselves in a situation in which one culture is explicitly referring to another culture, then the process of remembrance will obviously take on extra complexity. For example, Augustan culture remembers Republican culture, which remembers monarchical culture, which remembers Trojan culture, and so on. It is easy to imagine several inter- or intra-cultural crossovers simultaneously, in that the youngest culture can enter into different relations to previous cultures. Generally, the relation is one of competition. Cultures are sometimes competitive in the sense that they want to imitate a previous culture (*imitatio*) or to transcend it (*aemulatio*), sometimes in the sense that they want to replace, repress, or forget it.³ Both directions of development have an extreme point that can even considerably endanger the emergence of a new culture: epigonality and barbarism. In each case, an extreme culture represents a process of over-adaptation (hypercorrectness). Barbarism is (**p.42**) the formalization of blind memory. It is directed towards the annihilation of the traces of remembrance. But as a rule, even cultural breaks work with substitutional processes that attempt to blend out the vacuum of memory by filling in gaps in remembrance by means of a new cult and a new mythology. Even in institutionalized cultural breaks, such as iconoclasm and purges, one can usually recognize traces of the latent, repressed cultures. An institution such as the *Jugendweihe* only becomes comprehensible if you have knowledge of the one preceding it. Now, amnesiac or barbarian cultures are not exactly based on the comprehensibility of their rules and narratives. But just as the Stygian realm of ancient journeys to the underworld, the quintessence of a culture based on forgetting, only becomes comprehensible by means of knowledge of the world on the surface, so too is barbarism, if it wants to function as barbarism, inescapably bound to the *imitatio* of the memory it is trying to kill. And that, too, is a form of 'blind mimesis'.⁴

The epigonal imitativeness that, speaking grammatically, founds a relation of synonymy, also presupposes that it does not make explicit the break that precedes it. Epigonality also represents a form of over-adaptation, by which a culture of remembrance constructs everything in relation to what has gone before. This process entails the concealment and, at the same time, the betrayal of the shift which has taken place. This shift consists in cultural decline and loss of originality, which merely repeat an earlier period; in faithfully iterating what has gone before, it fails to legitimize itself semantically, that is, to put something new in the place of the old. Epigonal culture is the 'KulturKultur' as a tautology.

Augustan culture is without a doubt neither a ‘KulturKultur’ of destructive obliteration—here, letter does not stand against letter—nor a ‘KulturKultur’ as tautology: it is certainly not the repetition of Republican culture to any degree at all.⁵ But it is nevertheless dangerously close to either the barbarian or the epigonal extreme. It must on the one hand (and this is where a further difficulty arises) take care to cover up the traces of the Republic in order to be originary, that is, in order to be able to found a new cultural phase, and it must on the other hand distribute the trace of the Principate as exactly as possible over the trace of the Republic in order to remain original. This distinction between ‘originary’ and ‘original’ is (**p.43**) more than just a play on words. Before we decide that it is an exclusively modern phenomenon, or a phenomenon which founds modernity, we ought briefly to look at it more closely.

Originality is a phenomenon with two faces. It implies that something has an origin which makes it unique and originary, in a certain sense self-originating; but it also implies that something has an origin that points towards a context beyond it, in which it is based and which thus allows it to appear as original; as part of a collective, natural, or social system. Only this last meaning, of course, is what is being referred to when Apuleius and later authors use the word *originalis*. It is nevertheless uncontroversial that in the act in which a culture ascertains its origins there is a moment of heresy which can, in turn, found a new culture. One could characterize this act as one of free choice but also as one of self-definition in relation to a set of shared origins.

The question of how Augustan culture was able to become self-originating without losing its ties to collective roots and, at the same time, how it could remain originary without becoming unoriginal, is clearly a question which depends on the answer to our first question about the specific constitution of its ability to remember. How and what does Augustan literature remember? We could at this point name an enormous number of remembered items without addressing the problem in the slightest. When someone says: the author X remembers the event Y, and means that remembrance on which culture is based and which binds, for example, the Augustan epoch with the Republican, then we have cause to believe that here an assertion is being made that cannot easily be verified with respect to any specific texts. Horace, for instance, so our ‘fictus interlocutor’ might say, remembers the Battle of Philippi in *carmen* 2. 7,⁶ and in order to prove that it is an act of remembrance we are dealing with, he gives the most powerful argument for remembrance to be reflected in speech: *sensi* (10). And, nonetheless, we do not hesitate to have doubts, to shake our man’s all too strong belief in the authenticity of his statement. The speaker in fact takes care to mark the distance between the text surface and the core of the report by the means of a prominent figure of displacement. Can one actually *feel*, can one *sense* (**p.44**) Philippi? The *relicta...parmula* (10) stands for a type of literary substitution of fragments of memory that is widespread in Augustan literature.⁷ In these cases, the ‘memory’ skips what really happened and reformulates it, either in terms of comparison or entirely of fiction, in the language of literary mythology.⁸ The same is true of the whole fourth stanza which describes a scene of battle and the separation of the friends in the form of an epic report (13-16):

sed me per hostis Mercurius celer
denso paventem sustulit aere;
te rursus in bellum resorbens
unda fretis tulit aestuosis.

I panicked, but swift Mercury carried me off
in a dense mist through the enemy ranks,
while a wave sucked you back into war
and swept you along in a boiling sea.⁹

It is not the real past that appears in the act of remembering, but the restitution of the old mythological-literary narrative according to which Mercury saves the hero, wrapped in a cloud of fog, from the hostile tumult of battle. And thus, the remembrance of the fall of the Republic on the battlefield of Philippi is itself being shrouded in an aestheticized perception.¹⁰ Filled with Massic wine, *levia...ciboria* (21-2) will see to the rest—wine is a drink of oblivion (*obliviosum*, 21).¹¹ In the final verses, the speaker is entirely removed into a sphere of sweet fury, fully relieved of the weight of the real (26-8):

...non ego sanius
bacchabor Edonis. recepto

dulce mihi furere est amico.

...I shall run wild as any Edonian
at her Bacchic orgies. My friend is back.
What joy to go mad!

(p.45) Bacchus¹² is ready to dissolve the remembrance of the break between the epochs in diffuse ahistorical narrative.¹³ No philology of history is allowed to join them again.¹⁴

In other texts, the topic of the break between the epochs is expressed in the structural asymmetry of the composition.¹⁵ In Virgil's first *Eclogue*, for instance, no similar experience of Meliboeus can correspond to Tityrus' newly won *otium*:

nos patriam fugimus; tu, Tityre, latus in umbra
formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas (*Ecl.* 1.4–5).

We are outcasts from our country; you, Tityrus, at ease beneath the shade,
teach the woods to re-echo 'fair Amaryllis'.¹⁶

It is not yet quite clear what will follow the dissolution of the Republic in flight and expulsion. But a new peace, a new culture is taking shape. It is the *vita umbratica* of the singing shepherd who has already been illuminated by the godlike, urban liberator. Tityrus' *umbra* encloses the poem (4, 83). He can only let the restless Meliboeus dwell in it as long as the songs have not died away.¹⁷ It is three cultures—partly in beautiful analogy with the cycles of agrarian life—that are being reflected here. The old life on the *dulcia...arva* (3) which Meliboeus does not hesitate to call *mea regna* (69), the era of the civil wars and the misery of the created land confiscations (*en quo discordia civis | produxit miseros*, 71-2), when it was possible for veterans to take possession of land in northern Italy, and the epoch of Tityrus, best denoted by the words *urbs* (19) and *libertas* (27), as well as the divine *iuvenis* (42). It is striking that these three cultures are thought of as approximately coexistent. Whereas Meliboeus remains in the second stage, Tityrus has already reached the third, which resembles in turn the first stage, Meliboeus' *regna*. Remembrance of (**p.46**) the Republic during the phase of transition is thought of in the categories of home and flight, freedom and bondage, and possession and dispossession.¹⁸ Here, the remembrance of the Republic is nothing but the remembrance of its final agony. The civil soldiers impiously (*impius*, 70) take over the hereditary and promising cultures (*culta novalia*, 70) of the dispossessed settlers and are accordingly called barbarians (*barbari*, 71). Remembrance of the Republic coincides with the dark prognosis of an inverted world, where the murderous mob of the later Republic turns into the beneficiary of the injustice done to the Transpadanes. In Tityrus' world view there is no room for such a vision. For him, the young ruler's glorious urbanity signifies the liberation of the bondage weighing heavily on the countryside. It is more likely for the order of the world to be reversed, he proclaims confidently, than for him ever to forget his patron's countenance (59-63). The two shepherds have diametrically opposed views of the world. Tityrus stresses his new fortune with a strong *adynatōn*, which seems to be in keeping with Meliboeus' disjointed world. Meliboeus, on the other hand, sings the praises of that other, happy order of the world utterly out of his reach, so that, with his last words, he actually stops being what justified his performance, his story, and his song in the first place, namely a singing shepherd (77-8):

carmina nulla canam; non me pascente, capellae,
florentem cytisum et salices carpetis amaras.

No more songs shall I sing; no more, my goats, under my tending, shall you
crop flowering lucerne and bitter willows!

Whereas Tityrus has already come to live fully within the new era, the decisive founding principle of which is not so much the now overcome bondage but rather the remembrance of the concise Roman event of the foundation of a new creed, Meliboeus remains closely attached to the epoch of dissolution. He can only conceive of the new and liberating times as a utopian foil for his state of misfortune. It is within his memory that he may reshape the former civil society into the category of the *regnum*. In the poetics of history in the first *Eclogue* we also witness how historical memory develops in situations of conflict. The rhetorical-literary media of this thinking are marked by the use of antithesis, amoebaean exchange, and dialogue. Memory is only the counterpoint, vanishing into fiction, of a construction which captivates entirely the attention of the astonished observer. Meliboeus, too, is stunned when he (**p.47**) realizes the state of his much happier neighbour. His memory is configured according to the evident standards of present but nevertheless unreachable happiness. Pastoral memory is a force of the present. Its growing shadows are not menacing. They cover the old world and let the contours of the future take shape.

In the examples considered so far, we cannot avoid the impression that the remembrance of the Republic is sometimes covered by the euphemistic discourse of myth and literature on the one hand or of the present glowing with the promise of the future on the other. These forms of discourse are without doubt the productive results of melting down the elements of the past. There might, however, also be a case of remembrance in which a fragment of memory is not only integrated into a new time and a new perception, but itself also becomes the constitutive basis of a new model. One could call such a case, if it exists, a case of inverted presence. The present disappears in the wake of a fragment of memory which has become substantial. I will attempt to provide an example.

The final poem of the *Monobiblos* of Propertius is certainly one of the most intriguing poems in Latin literature. In the address to Tullus at the beginning, the question addressed to the speaker is attributed to Tullus himself, *qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi...Penates* ('what sort of man I am, and where my family comes from, who my Penates are').¹⁹ And it is curious indeed that such a question is attributed to a man who already in the first elegy was allowed to hear the most intimate declarations of love (*Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis, | contactum nullis ante cupidinibus*, 1.1.1–2), who in the sixth elegy, by reverting to the declaration of friendship in Catullus 11, appeared as the close companion of the speaker, and who in the fourteenth elegy finally became the addressee of a confession expressing the entire philosophy of life of the elegiac 'I'.²⁰ The question about origins from the mouth of such a close friend can only be understood as a really fundamental question. The tricolon, shaped according to the law of the tricolon crescendo: *qualis, unde genus, qui sint mihi Penates*, shows that the question, typical for a sphragis, about the origins of the author is asked emphatically.²¹ The explanatory *pro nostra semper amicitia* ('in the name of our friendship', 2), included within the report of the question, plays a similar role. And this question about origins (**p.48**) must legitimize itself. It is legitimized, neatly, by means of an expression which extends the friendship between the questioner and his addressee itself back into an indefinite period of time (*semper*).²²

We now expect a not entirely ordinary answer, formulated more in terms of abstract principles than as a piece of specific information. But it turns out quite differently. A long sentence begins which, too indistinct in the direction in which it develops its cognitive or argumentative content, one cannot call a period.²³ It is as though it follows its own meandering rule of movement.

The conditional clause that precedes Propertius' actual answer (*si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra*, 'if you know the Perusine tombs of our country', 3) couples the right understanding of the expected answer to a protasis that can enlighten only the initiated. In the landscape whose introduction we have awaited with anticipation, a graveyard comes into view, and it is specified in two ways: it is the graveyard of Perugia; and the graveyard of the fatherland. The metonymical relation to the *patria* is enough to cast doubt on the possibility of determining genealogical relationships; but the speaker's answer does not stop here; the response continues thus: *Italiae duris funera temporibus* ('the burial place of Italy in grim times', 4). The graveyard not only hides the *patria*, but also threatens even the geographical indicator *Italia*. In a new, doubly metonymical relation, the graves of Perugia become Italy's funerals. The exact syntactic relation of *Italiae* remains, intentionally, unclear: not only does it relate doubly to *funera* and *duris temporibus*; the question should also remain open as to whether here Italy is being buried or is digging its own grave. The 'hard times' are the fitting temporal complement to the funereal vision of space.

The apposition, rich with connotations, now seduces the speaker into explicating the concept of time. *Cum Romana suos egit discordia civis* ('when Roman strife assailed her citizens', 5) is, according to the local and temporal definition in particular, a historical specification. It points towards the time when Rome was divided in civil war. What is unnatural about this condition finds its linguistic correlation in a construction in which Rome is no longer seen as the agent of autonomous action. It is the Roman strife which drives 'its' now alienated Romans, bound no longer to Rome but to the *Romana discordia*, against each other.²⁴ The graves and cemeteries of Perugia-Italy are the last witnesses of the uprooting of (**p.49**) the Roman citizens in their own city. According to this analysis of the sentence, two directions of movement can be observed: the direction of spatial extension on the one hand, Perugia-Italia-Roma, which is accompanied by the climactic abstraction leading from *sepulcra* over *funera* to *discordia*, and, on the other hand, the diametrically opposed direction of the narrowing, ever more precise reasoning, which first tries to determine the fall of the *patria* locally, then local-temporally, and at last juridical-historically.

Even more surprisingly, the still possible *concinnitas sententiae* is now entirely broken off when in the sixth verse the dust of Etruria, in a noticeable break with what precedes, is emphatically addressed: *sic*²⁵ *mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor* ('dust of Etruria, especially to me do you bring grief,' trans. Goold (1990) with slight alteration). In a moment we are confronted with a curious confession, without being able immediately to discern its exact relevance to Tullus' question. After the clarification of local, temporal, and historical references to the disastrous events, our gaze turns immediately to a personal catastrophe: personal in the sense that the 'persona' of the speaker reveals its painful participation in that complex of events, but also personal in the more pointed sense that the dust of Etruria allows a relative to lie there unburied, instead of covering the bones of the unhappy man with protecting earth (7-8).²⁶

One might think that the speaker, after such a digression, would not easily find his way back to the beginning of his explanation. But quite the contrary: when it comes, this return in fact occurs so suddenly that it seems to imply a clear break in the sequence of thought. How tactless the proud speech about the fruitful earth of home could appear: *Vmbria...| me genuit terris fertilis uberibus* ('Umbria...gave me birth, fertile with rich soil', 9-10)! But things are not so simple. At the base of the Umbrian terrain which raises itself in gentle waves and hills from the Etrurian earth, that very *pulvis Etrusca* is found to which, in the demonstrative speech of the speaker, the power to hide or not to hide the bones of the fallen was accorded. The Etrurian earth hides the graves of the fatherland, of Italy, of Rome. The son of the neighbouring Umbrian land is (**p. 50**) born of the earth: *Vmbria...| me genuit terris fertilis uberibus*.²⁷ The relation to the adjacent graveyard is contingent, but contingent in the elementary sense that the terrestrial contact is the sign in which the procreation of the elegiac speaker falls.²⁸

The terrestrial dimension of this biography cannot be denied. But what is the situation with the further relation of this *vita* to the dark untreated core of this Perugian-Italian-Roman history? In order to understand this aspect, we must direct our gaze for a moment to another Propertian model of the construction of a life-history.

It is striking that Propertian careers are often thought of from the end. There is no reader who has not noticed that the elegiac 'I', in constantly repeated attempts, develops an obsession with fantasies of death.²⁹ These fantasies are in fact fantasies over the grave, sepulchral reveries, that circle around the post-mortem condition. Thus, the love of the elegiac 'I' in 1.19 is felt so strongly that even the ashes of the lovers cannot stop loving (5-6):

non adeo leviter nostris puer haesit ocellis,
ut meus oblitio pulvis amore vacet.

Not so lightly does the boy stick in my eyes
that love would be forgotten and absent from my ashes.

That is a monstrous thought which can only find its justification in Propertius' quite specific conception of love.³⁰ It is the *traiectio magni amoris* that founds the relationship between the regions of life and death: *traicit et fati litora magnus amor* ('great love crosses even the shores of death', 12). Even in death, that which remains of the lovers walks in the footsteps of life.³¹ Desire, sight, and love do not stop with death (7-10):

illuc Phylacides iucundae coniugis heros
non potuit caecis immemor esse locis,
sed cupidus falsis attingere gaudia palmis
Thessalus antiquam venerat umbra domum.

(p.51) There, in the place of darkness, Protesilaus, descendant of Phylacus,
heroic husband of a charming wife, could not be forgetful;
lustful to grasp at joys with ghostly hands,
the Thessalian came long ago as a shade to his ancient home.

The love of the dead not only follows the living as long as they live, but, in a further intensification, even into death. Cynthia may sense the truth of her supra-human promise in relation to the ashes of her departed loved one: *quae tu viva mea possis sentire favilla!* ('may you while still alive be able to recognize this from my ashes', 19). This represents the final intensification of a life of love into the form of ash, which in a subtly prepared prosopography can now permanently represent the departed person.³² However, it would be erroneous to think that here the post-mortem love is regarded more highly than the living love. Poem 1.19 offers a decisive affirmation of love, in that the constant menacing of love by death is recognized as lacking any reason and thus itself becomes part of the affirmation of love (25-6):

quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes:
non satis est ullo tempore longus amor.

So, while we may, let us enjoy our love between the two of us:
love is not long enough over any period.

Not only does this mean that love never, ‘at no time’, lasts long enough, but also that it has no adequate measure of time at all—the *traiectio fati* does not suspend it, but on the contrary pulls it into the timeless world of the shadows.

Shadows, bones, ashes, and urns are not only insignia of a departed life, but emphatically sustain the forms of representation of previous life on earth. They are the agents of an elegiac philosophy of love which can prove itself precisely in the liminal zones of a life thought to be about to end and of the entry into the realm of death.³³ Thus, from the beginning, the elegiac ‘I’ can talk of the *fata* he owes to the life-ending pyre (2). The elegiac ‘I’, his *fata*, and the *extremus rogus* appear almost as contracting (**p.52**) parties in a game that blithely ignores familiar boundaries. Where a pyre may have become a creditor, there is no end to pondering and hoping even after death. Life and death are but the two sides of one and the same stage. The play that is performed in this theatre of the liminal is the perpetualizing force and insistence of intense life, which can only shadily be surrounded but cannot be defeated by death.³⁴

In place of the familiar ‘Remember my ashes’, Propertius sets a new philosophy of the *vis memorativa* of the life of ash. The gaze of Amor has touched the lover too powerfully for him to be able to forget love even in death.

In another Propertian text, the curious poetics of burial in 2.13, the elegiac speaker remembers the most powerful advocate of the dead; the earth (41-2):

interea cave sis nos aspernata sepultos:
non nihil ad verum conscientia terra sapit.³⁵

In the meantime, beware lest you spurn me buried in my tomb:
for in truth the earth is conscious and does have some feeling.

The ‘taste’ of the accomplice earth represents, in this philosophy of transvitality or post-mortality, the claims and rights of buried love. The gravestones also have memories (*memores*, 40). They announce the first and the last members of a particular chain of destiny (35-6):

...‘qui nunc iacet horrida pulvis,
unius hic quondam servus amoris erat’.

...‘who now lies here foul dust
was once the slave to a single love’.

One may ask whether here life in death is thought of or rather death in life. It is more than just a play on words when it is said that the shadow of the laurel tree should cover ‘the last place of an extinguished life’ (*exstincti funeris...locum*, 34). Here, death is unmistakably drawn into life: *funus* is life under the sign of death, life that may be extinguished by death.³⁶ Strikingly often, Propertius speaks in such a way as to make (**p.53**) death and life simultaneous: *cineri nunc medicina datur* (‘medicine is now being given to a corpse burnt to ash’, 2.14.16) is perhaps only a macabre joke, but it is certainly also a joke that can only arise from a view of the world in which human beings can, as a matter of course, also dress their vitality in pictures of death.

The biographies of Propertius are actually thanatographies. Life is narrated as the story of its end, as in the epigrammatic intensity of the fictitious gravestone of Cynthia: ‘*cinis hic docta puella fuit*’ (‘This ash was once a poetic girl’, 2.11.6). And just as a single life can be restored from the ashes, so might a whole people, having become ash, receive divine power:

‘vertite equum, Danai! male vincitis! Ilia tellus
vivet et huic cineri Iuppiter arma dabit’ (4.1.53–4).³⁷

‘Greeks, turn the horse: it is futile for you to win. The land of Ilium
will live, and Jupiter will give arms to this ash.’

The *cinis* from Troy will turn fortunes once again—under the influence of the living Ilian earth.

It has not been sufficiently appreciated that, in Propertius’ work, it is the dead who have the final word.³⁸ Cornelia speaks from the grave to those left behind and to her husband once again entrusts their sons as a pledge of her love: *haec cura et cineri spirat inusta meo* (‘this concern breathes branded deep [or unburnt] even in my ash’, 4.11.74).³⁹ In Cornelia’s ashes still breathes (one should hear the oxymoron here), burnt in—or *not* burnt out?—her care for her sons. It is possible that her widowed husband will remain unmarried if he ‘holds my ashes to be of such value’ (*tanti cineres duxerit esse meos*, 92). Ashes may, from the grave, direct the steps of the living. Cornelia closes with a warning that also closes the last book of elegies (99–102):

causa perorata est. flentes me surgite, testes,
dum pretium vitae grata rependit humus.
moribus et caelum patuit: sim digna merendo,
cuius honoratis ossa vehantur avis.

My case is complete; witnesses, rise, weeping for me,
while the grateful earth repays the reward for my life.
To those of good character even the heaven is open: may I deserve
through my merits
that my bones be borne to my illustrious ancestors.

(p.54) Has it actually been understood what it means that the earth ‘gratefully repays the price that my life earned’? Again we see the earth as the advocate of successful life. At the end, the bones receive the same honour that once was paid to the fathers. Out of the grave is developed a new doctrine *de officiis*, which points beyond the sepulchral aesthetics of earlier poems. Out of the graves successful life speaks to us, life which the earth has taken up and which carries out the law of the earth on those who are left behind.

It is now no surprise when we return to *Elegy* 1.22 that our question about the funereal dimension appears in a new light. In the hour of the epigrammatical-elegiac concentration of a poet’s life, the elegiac speaker answers the question about his origins in the shortest and at the same time most complicated way.⁴⁰ The remarkable fondness of detail shown in the answer is recognizably more than a merely rhetorical-poetical ornament or a pose with familiar images. It is such that he does not merely touch the answer, but rather encounters it with elemental force in the element of dust, of the ground and of the earth. The land which has given birth to ‘the poet’ is next to that land, or better, that graveyard which still cannot cover the bones of those who fell in fighting for the Republic. This understanding of the origins of the elegiac ‘I’ is tied to the fragments of Republican memory not only externally—by means of the conditional period which begins with the words *si...tibi...sunt nota*—but rather is based—and this is my central thesis here—on the presupposition that one knows that the *pulvis Etrusca* and moreover the unburied bones of unhappy relatives are not only at the centre of this little poem but also of the entire elegiac œuvre.⁴¹ Just as Catullus put an experience of loss, that is, the mourning for a brother, in a very similar way at the centre of his most prominent poems,⁴² so also Propertius, when his elegiac ‘I’ thinks about the beginning and the middle of his work, comes to understand that at the basis of this life and this work the elements dust and ashes stand, elements that one may call fragments of a genuine remembrance **(p.55)** of the Republic. A genuine remembrance, in contrast to those cases of remembering with which we were—too briefly—concerned in Virgil and Horace.⁴³ If they are models of substitution or interconnected structural asymmetry, we encounter here in the case of Propertius a mode of remembrance which productively reforms the radical traces of an event of memory, which itself has pushed forward to reveal a concrete core, into a poetical *vita terrestris* which also lays the foundation for the major theme of the *magnus amor*. Without the dust of Perugia and the ashes of the Republic, the work of the poet is unthinkable.⁴⁴ He constructs his poetic life thanatographically under the sign of the ashes. It is for this reason, and only for this reason, that in the hour in which his elegiac ‘I’ is to answer the question about his life he uses the form of the elegiac grave-epigram.⁴⁵ That is what I would like to call Propertius’ ‘cineric prosopography’.⁴⁶ A conception of a personality that draws its inspiration and its vitality from the insignia of imagined death. The ashes of the forefathers are the most manifest memory

trace of the Republic in Propertius' Augustan œuvre.⁴⁷ It is also now clear that our poet had good, even the best reasons to fend off the political topics that were suggested to him again and again. Already in the first poem of the second book, as Putnam has pointed out,⁴⁸ a question about origins is again asked; this time the question about the subject of poetry. The poet does not have to sing explicitly about Mutina and Philippi, the *civilia busta* (27). The dust of Perugia is written into his memory and his poetry. It is therefore only (**p.56**) consistent when the subject at the end also of this poem must become aware of the dark side of his motivation, of the inspiring beloved. In 2.1, too, the elegiac 'I' stands under the sign of the ashes (75–8):

si te forte meo ducet via proxima busto,
...
talia...illacrimans mutae iace verba favillae:
'Huic misero fatum dura puella fuit'.⁴⁹

If by chance the route close to my tomb carries you
...
...weeping cast such words as these to the mute ash:
'A hard-hearted girl was the destiny [or the death] of this poor soul'.

I know of no more emphatic, no uncannier, and no more substantial symbol for the way in which Augustan literature remembers the Republic. It is a symbol that reflects remembrance itself and appears to revolt against its own symbolic nature by attempting to set itself in the place of memory. It is a memory that thinks life out of death.

Notes:

I would like to thank Giulia Agostini (Heidelberg) and Glenn Patten (Santa Barbara) for translating my German text into English. Kathrin Winter assisted me with the final corrections. This paper is basically an identical version of the talk I gave at the conference at Geneva. I have retained the form of the oral presentation, with a few additions to refer to more recent bibliography.

- (1) For a thorough account of the epigraphic sources cf. Corbier 2006.
- (2) On the relationship between *memoria* and *historia* cf. Gowing 2005: 7–15.
- (3) Illuminating insights into the politics of remembrance of the early Principate (*optanda erat oblivio*) in Gowing 2005: 1–7. See also Lyasse 2008.
- (4) See my article on 'Blinde Mimesis': Schwindt 2004.
- (5) Cf. the instructive contributions in Habinek and Schiesaro 1997; in Citroni 2003b (in particular Moatti 2003: 81–98); in Galinsky 2005 (in particular Wallace-Hadrill 2005: 55–84); as well as in Severy-Hoven 2007.

(6) In the following, my perspective is complementary to the one pursued by O'Gorman 2002. O'Gorman does not so much question the act of remembrance itself, to a unilinear and historical mode of interpretation; she rather opposes the reading of a temporal framework inherently rich with implications, in whose present middle the event of the civil war, which is meant to be forgotten, only experiences its uncanny reactualization (cf. n. 13).

(7) For the literary historical background cf. the most recent contribution by Freund 1999.

(8) Cf. the excellent work of Davis 1991: 89–98, where our scene is analysed not so much from an angle of remembrance, but still as a prominent example of literary authentification.

(9) Quoted according to the text of Shackleton Bailey 1985. Translations are based on West 1998.

(10) Cf. the brilliant reading of Citroni 2000: 27–56, in particular 39–45.

(11) While it is usually named for calendrical reasons (cf. O'Gorman 2002: 91).

(12) Cf. also Lowrie 1997: 199.

(13) 'Yet Horace's representation of the final drinking party is made in terms which convey the familiar madness of civil war (*non sanius Edonis...fure*re). These vestiges of the terms under which the two friends drink work ironically against the oblivion inducing wine, suggesting that the drink may erase the memory of the past, but the symposium itself causes the drinkers forgetfully to reenact the conflicts of the present' (O'Gorman 2002: 98).

(14) For the culture of remembrance of the early Horatian odes cf. generally Leach 1997 and Leach 1998. It is obvious that the model of the substitutive memory can easily be brought into contact with G. B. Conte's observations concerning poetic memory (in particular Conte 1974).

(15) On the social history of the literature of this time cf. for example White 2004.

(16) Quoted according to Mynors 1972. Translations are based on Fairclough and Goold 1999.

(17) The Virgilian *umbra*, rich with connotations, has been illuminated by Dick 1968: 35. Cf. Dick 1970: 277–93, especially 277. See now also Putnam 2010.

(18) For a clarification of the contentious relationship between the problems of freedom and possession cf. Wimmel 1998.

(19) In the following, the quotations from Propertius are generally taken from Fedeli 1984, 1994². Translations are based on Heyworth 2007, with slight alterations where Heyworth's text does not agree with my own.

(20) Cf. Putnam 1976: 93–123, especially 97, and Citroni 1995: 391.

(21) On the poem's sphragis character cf. in particular Garbarino 1981. Cf. the highly differentiated treatment of the problem of the determination of genre in Fedeli 1980: 496–9.

(22) Stahl 1996: 101–2 argues, not very convincingly, for a connection of *semper* with *quaeris* (1).

(23) Cf. also Döpp 1985: 105–17, esp. 109.

(24) Well explained, but not really understood by Leo 1898: 474.

(25) A. K. Lake's defence of the traditional *sit* is brilliant, but fails to see the decisive point of the poem if the following *pulvis Etrusca* has to be understood as a nominative (see Lake 1940). Cf. now the critical note in Heyworth 2007: 101.

(26) Good references for the logical exchange of *pulvis* and *solum* in Leo 1898: 474–5, again, however, without recognizing the reason for the inversion.

(27) It would be interesting to consider whether the reflections on 'The return of the native', developed by J. Farrell in his reading of the Prooemium of Cicero, *Leg. 2*, could be generalized (Farrell 2001: 18–27).

(28) Cf. Putnam 1976: 106: 'Though all appearances be to the contrary, can what is nearest to something else, touching it in fact, remain unaffected by this neighbour's plight?'

(29) Cf. the concise research report in Maltby 2006: 147–81.

(30) The most insistent treatment of the problem is that of Papanghelis 1987.

(31) Boyle 1974: 900 at least pointed to the manifest physicality of the language (*haesit, pulvis*).

(32) Older readings tend to overlook that Propertius' visions of death are remote from traditional doctrines of immortality—and that it is precisely the materiality of death that may found a survival of its own kind. Cf. for instance Grimal 1983: 129–30. In Propertius, the quotation of popular funeral rites as well, as they are attested in inscriptions, is subject to a process of recasting—mostly by revitalizing worn and dead metaphors.

(33) Insightful remarks on the founding significance of a liminal discourse especially in Propertius' fourth book in Debrohun 2003: 118–55. Cf. now also Möller 2007.

(34) Even advanced interpretations of Propertius' philosophy of death (such as Papanghelis' monograph, cf. n. 30) generally reduce the material signs of death to their ideal denotations. However, if ash, dust, bones, and urn are exclusively understood symbolically according to a Romantic philosophy of death, the one decisive moment of substantial presence is lost, which in Propertius marks the difference from the conventional representation of death. See further below.

(35) Cf. Grimal 1983: 130–1 with the *caveat* in n. 33.

(36) Cf. Richardson's 1977 remark on 1.19.3 (*sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore*, 'but that my burial may happen to lack your love'): 'mihi funus: = meum funus = ego mortuus'. In 2.13.22, *mors mea* similarly stands for 'my corpse' (cf. Camps 1967, ad loc.). The explanation of Rothstein 1898 ad loc. weakens the image.

(37) Cf. Labate 1991.

(38) But see now Lowrie 2009: esp. 358–9.

(39) Cf. Warden 1980: 67–8 and Hutchinson 2006 ad loc., with an insightful remark on the Varronic etymology: *cura* = *cor urere* (*Ling.* 6.46).

(40) 'The birth of the poet finds its literary parallel in the birth of a form, as epigram and as lament' (Putnam 1976: 109). Cf. now also Breed 2009: 44.

(41) G. Petersmann, to whom we owe the most vivid interpretation in German of the first book of poems (Petersmann 1980), read the motif of the unburied bones as central to the last group (1.17, 19, 21 and 22). Thus, the *timor* in 19.1–2 (*Non ego nunc tristis vereor, mea Cynthia, Manis, | nec moror extremo debita fata rogo*) is the 'sublimation of the motive of the unburied dead' ('Sublimation des Motivs des unbestatteten Toten', 211), and '*contempto...busto* (19.21) is the final and succinct expression of the poet's *timor*' ('*contempto...busto* (19.21) faßt den timor des Dichters am Ende prägnant zusammen', 222).

(42) Further observations in Putnam 1976: 110–12 and Döpp 1985: 110. Cf. also Schwindt 2012.

(43) Putnam 1976: 113–15, nonetheless, pointed to surprising parallels specifically between the texts we are dealing with here (Prop. 1.22 and Virg. *Ecl.* 1). Putnam's reading, however, offers a structural analysis of the binary oppositions the poems undeniably are built upon.

(44) And here it is of no importance that these elementaries in 1.22 might produce the ironic effect, that they are actually unable to react to the apostrophe by the elegiac 'I' (cf. Putnam 1976: 103–4). Cf. also Breed 2010 on love elegy and the experience of Perugia.

(45) Not seen by Schulz-Vanheyden 1970: 29–41, in an otherwise valuable discussion of the tradition of the genre Propertius quotes. On the relationship with the preceding epitaphion 1.21, see Davis 1971. Interesting reflections on the 'Book as Tomb' and the consequences of such a vision for reciter and author in Dupont 1997: 45–59, esp. 56–9.

(46) Or 'cineric prosopopoiia'; cf. Schwindt 2005: 5.

(47) The other great remembrance remembers the campaign of expropriation of the late 40s—and it does so at a prominent moment of the text, namely still in the opening elegy of the fourth book (129–30, see most recently Cairns 2006: 53–4). Significantly, also here it is the bones of the father who died too early that are remembered first of all: *ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda | patris et in tenuis cogeris ipse lares: | nam tua cum multi versarent rura iuvenci, | abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes* ('you gathered bones that should not have been gathered so young— | your father's—and were yourself forced into modest quarters: | for when countless bulls were plowing your fields, | the dull measuring rod took away refinements of wealth', 4.1.127–30).

(48) 1976: 121.

(49) Cf. also 3.15.9–10 (to Cynthia): *cuncta tuus sepelivit amor, nec femina post te | ulla dedit collo dulcia vincla meo* ('Passion for you has buried everything, and after you no other | woman has lain pleasurable chains on my neck'). This poem ends under the sign of the ashes, too: *te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem* ('even when I'm burned up on my funeral pyre, I'll love you alone', 46)—ashes, which perpetuate the love of life into death.

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