Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci
personat aduerso recubans immanis in antro.
cui uates horrere uidens iam colla colubris
melle soporatam et medicatis frugibus offam
obicit. ille fame rabida tria guttura pandens
corripit obiectam, atque immania terga resoluit
fusus humi totoque ingens extenditur antro.
occupat Aeneas aditum custode sepulto
euaditque celer ripam inremeabilis undae.

These realms huge Cerberus makes ring with his triple-throated baying, his monstrous bulk crouching in a cavern opposite. To him seeing the snakes now bristling on his necks, the seer flung a morsel drowsy with honey and drugged meal. He, opening his triple throat in ravenous hunger, catches it when thrown and, with monstrous frame relaxed, sinks to earth and stretches his bulk over all the den. The warder buried in sleep, Aeneas wins the entrance, and swiftly leaves the bank of that stream whence none return.

Commentators on Virgil have pointed out that in this part of the Virgilian *katabasis* the relationship between the hero and the priestess seems to be modelled on the myth of the Argonauts, as described by Apollonius of Rhodes.[31] After Jason has successfully completed the first two trials, thanks to Medea's instructions, it is the enchantress herself who faces the serpent who is the guardian of the golden fleece. The monster is frightening, a worthy adversary of an extraordinary hero: but while the character who should be the protagonist remains perfectly passive, the heroic role is, on the contrary, played by a powerful, intrepid woman, who succeeds in the exploit, thanks to her magical arts.

In the face of the fantastic, the enterprising boldness of the heroic model represented by Hercules is lost for ever. Aeneas inherits the inadequacy of Jason, though his heroic stature is not reduced in the slightest, because the relationship of trusting obedience to the divine will and confidence in destiny makes the *pietas* of Virgil's hero a force that is truly capable of going beyond the human dimension, thus proposing a model of civilization in which men do not imagine that they can free the world from the prodigious or disturbing manifestations that come from the divine world, but at the same time, they are aware that they can deal with them and turn them to their own advantage.*

[31] Cf. Norden 1976: 242–3.

* The author and editor are grateful to Ronald A. Packham, who translated this chapter.

8

Thaumatographia, or 'What is a Theme?'

Jürgen Paul Schwindt

The following remarks are based on the hypothesis that the theme 'paradox and the marvellous in Augustan literature and culture' cannot easily be treated *thematically*, whether historically or systematically. To say 'my theme is the paradoxical and the marvellous' is problematic because if it is true that the paradoxical cannot, 'as a rule', be exactly philologically defined, this is even truer of the marvellous.[1] The theme: positing, anchoring a thought that is, in itself, based on a *momentum* of unquiet, implies, to put it mildly, an awkward logical operation. Some themes are destined to be missed. That must influence our method. Let us therefore begin with the *thema*. And see whether and how long we can separate it from the *thauma*.

No one will be able to identify the exact point in time at which one ceased to be astonished that there were themes. Themes are the least questionable things in a world of titles, rubrics, and lemmata. No thought of a time (if there ever was one) in which one did not cease to be astonished at the complexity of the inner and outer world, so much so that this astonishment grew and grew and ultimately caused all the possible and existing titles, rubrics, and lemmata for a moment to be forgotten. Such that it took the place of the theme. Became the theme. Was the theme. The inability and lack of desire on the part of the *homo computans* to be astonished at anything other

[1] That obviously does not make older studies such as Gerber 1885 obsolete. Gerber and in the twentieth century particularly Lausberg 1973 reproduce the epistemic space or rather the topological field (grammar, rhetoric) in which figures such as paradox and oxymoron locally function.

than the disobedience of the rules which allow him to be at home in his anything but astonishing world have their counterparts in the decisively thematic orientation of his organs of perception. The worst thing that can happen to him is the 'summer recess'. This is, as is well known, for Germans in particular something absolutely terrifying. It is that boring, oppressive time without a theme, without a major theme, and that means: it is the time of the rainmakers amongst the journalists, the theme-makers, the time between the Tour and Flushing Meadow, without soccer or the Olympic Games, and politics takes, at least usually, a break.

We are in love with themes; and in scholarship, too, success means taking up the major themes: globalization and postcolonialism, the media revolution, and high technology.

The heretical attacks on thematicism ceased long ago. 'Thematistic' was what the students of the 1960s called the tedious research on content and motives being carried out by what they considered to be bourgeois literary criticism that had taken up the 'wrong' themes. We know about the traumatic experiences left by an athematic, dystonal century in the aesthetic consciousness of that educated elite which long hoped (and in places still hopes) to find orientation in the 'classical' texts of antiquity about what a major theme unquestionably could or could not be. In particular Augustan literature was confidently viewed as the high culture of a thematically stable, unquestionable aesthetic orthopraxy.[2]

The alliance suspected between the theme of a text and its aesthetic contours could however turn out to be a misunderstanding. At least when rhetoric and aesthetics are only viewed as the transmission belts of authorial intentions. We must reckon with a double complication of the situation:

1. The paradoxical and the marvellous are possibly 'themes' that endanger the thematic structure of the texts, i.e. can destabilize and dissolve their thematic coherency.
2. What is paradoxical and marvellous about a theme is not necessarily comprehensible on the level of content, motives or images (as we will see in the first two examples); it consists

[2] Cf. the remarks of P. Hardie in this volume, pp. 1–2. Amongst earlier studies I refer particularly to his foundational article, Hardie 1996 (revised as ch. 5 in this volume).

sometimes in the way in which mimetic speech becomes conscious that it is mimetic speech.

Let us approach the topic first from the pragmatic-historical side. It would be helpful for the discussion of the *thauma*-theme if we could find, in particular phases of that literate culture which is the object of our study, practices, habits, or dispositions which favour the emergence or application of processes of writing or exegesis which themselves are not primarily thematic, but rather poetic and, as we will show, thaumatographical.

My thesis here is that what emerges in the above-mentioned suspicions of the stability of literary-hermeneutical points of reference can be observed as a constantly recurring phenomenon in ancient poetic texts. Not in the way that ancient poetry knows no themes or does not value them as highly as we are used to in later literature. But there are no attempts to define the thematic as such more precisely, outside of pragmatic-rhetorical and that means as a rule juridical contexts (Quint. 3.5.5), to grasp it thematically, to isolate it, as a *punctum* towards which or from which a text was written or read.

On this point, three preliminary remarks: the first has to do with linguistic findings, the second with pragmatic-societal, the third with systematic-literary studies aspects.

1. In Greek, *hypothesis* is a common word since Plato, Xenophon, and Isokrates.[3] Roman authors prefer to make use of paraphrases when they want to communicate their 'theme', such as *id quod propositum est, id quod quaerimus*—and, consequently, *res proposita* or *quaestio*. These paraphrases reveal a lot about the specific understanding of the textual theme; it is not so much the static, condensed form of an achievement of will or question, it is more the will or the question itself that should structure the text. The theme is the formal presence of the author in the text. 'To digress from one's theme' means therefore *a proposito declinare* or *aberrare*, 'to come back to the theme' *redire ad rem propositam* or *ad id, unde digressi sumus*, 'to call for a lecture on a given topic' *iubere qua de re quis uelit*

[3] See LSJ II 1: 'subject proposed (to oneself or another) for discussion'. In the sense 'subject of a poem or treatise' (ibid., II 3) since Zeno the Stoic.

audire, 'to give someone a theme' *ponere alicui de quo disputet*, 'not to have a theme' *non habeo* or *non est quod scribam*. A theme is possibly nothing which can be thought as such or substantially. It is the will of the writer, the way in which he announces himself in the procedural forms of his text. At least in the Latin expressions above, it is actually that which is excluded, perhaps even a figure of exclusion that only allows itself to be described asymptotically, but whose idiomatic comprehension, independently of the will of the author or the scenario of the speech act, is not important.

2. Another attempt at an explanation would be the following: for the ancient author and reader, the 'theme' is so obvious, as *argumentum* or *locus*, as *causa* or *quaestio*, that he doesn't need to reflect on it again or imagine it again every time. He knows himself to be part of a community of themes which can be overstepped only through the willed or even arbitrary break with the community which makes and transmits the themes. The possible ruptures are dealt with by the major authors of *Poetics* with extreme sensitivity—as in Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica*. The most visible expression of a disinterested treatment of themes is that the theme, as far as we can see, is not yet isolated as theme, as a title graphically separated from the continuous text and thus emphasized. The theme is named, if at all, in the running text. It is indeed an entirely common occurrence that authors specify their works by addressees and theme (so for example *nunc autem mihi est uisum de senectute aliquid ad te conscribere*, 'however, at the present I have determined to write something on old age to be dedicated to you', Cic. *Cato* 1, or *in Catone maiore qui est scriptus ad te de senectute*, 'in my *Cato the Elder*, which was written to you on the subject of old age', Cic. *Lael.* 4, or *sed ut tum ad senem senex de senectute sic hoc libro ad amicum amicissimus scripsi de amicitia*, 'but as in that book I wrote as one old man to another old man on the subject of old age, so now in this book I have written as a most affectionate friend to a friend on the subject of friendship', ibid. 5), but in the work itself one usually looks for such clear isolations in vain. In very complex texts, one

practically has to deduce the theme from the veiling disguise of introductory speech. Here, the work of reconstruction has to direct its attention to the elementary direction of movement of the text (how do I create my theme?). The best examples are provided by some of the speeches of Cicero. One does not always have to suspect rhetorical or artificial masking intentions behind such constructions; it is a widespread fact of cultural history that pragmatic texts designed to disappear entirely in the successful functioning of an everyday act or ritual often resist most violently. That is true no less for the use of household appliances than for the milk libations of Brahman sacrificial ritual (I mention only the Mundaka Upanishad of the Atharvaveda). Functional, purposeful speech must appear the more obscure, the more it is directed at the *pragma* whose success it is intended to guarantee. Paradoxically, some texts which already appeared obscure to their contemporaries will be more easily understood today precisely because the context in which they were meant to function did not only consist in a *pragma* which today has been lost.

The basically strong relation of Roman literature to addressees also speaks for our assumption of a strong community making and transmitting themes. It is only one step from the literature of addressees and greeting formulae to occasional literature. The *uoluntas* of the author enters into competition with the wishes, expectations, and hopes of the addressee or dedicatee. Occasional poetry only knows the pre-determined theme to the extent that it always stands at the disposal of its addressee.

3. Connected with this is a third aspect: the major themes of Roman literature are determined, in the different genres, by the genre tradition. Even where such a predetermined theme (*propositum*) is corrected, negated, or ignored, the corrected, negated, or ignored theme shines through the new theme. Genres condition themes to a certain degree (I can naturally write a didactic poem about fishes or birds or snakebites, the contents can vary; but the theme is always the development of the content, the cataloguing and *descriptio* of natural phenomena). In a certain sense, the unimportance of Roman themes always has something to do with the fact that they are not

themselves found, that they are meta- or post-themes. Just as the gift of *inuentio* is not measured according to how far it tries to create something entirely new, so it seems that, for the longest period, there was no pressure of expectation to measure the novelty of works according to the novelty of their themes.

These tendencies are doubtless even more strongly developed in non-pragmatic texts. We expect to observe things quickly which are not easily compatible with our expectations of Roman thematic speech. Poetry in particular can still surprise us. Its surprises have to do with the role, more specifically, the poetically constitutive function of the paradoxical and the marvellous in numerous texts of Augustan literature. In particular, Horace's *carmina* resist strongly the identifying interest of thematically oriented approaches to interpretation.[4] My thesis has two parts:

1. Horace's odes formulate from time to time a disquiet about thematic speech. The structure of the formulation of disquiet about thematic speech is thaumatography. The author observes and documents himself in his resistance to thematic speech. This thaumatography (thaumatography I) *is based on* a method. It is, as we will show, a part of the process of completing the poetic text. That makes its description difficult, if not impossible.
2. The reaction to the thematic instability is the overcompensation of ancient and modern philology, to the extent that it tries to rethematicize the odes.[5] Thaumatography protects it from being so intent on the theme that it misses 'the *thauma* of the *thema* that is astonished at itself'. This thaumatography (thaumatography II) *is* a method—as a process of trying to reveal the fundamentally thaumatographical structure of poetry.

It is evident to anyone that Augustan poetry is more easily recognized by what it does not want to say than by what it wants to say. It is very professional in saying what its theme is not. One might call this

[4] Even the latest Horace companion still contains a section of over 100 pages entitled 'Poetic themes' (Harrison 2001: 163–273).

[5] This re-thematicization already leaves traces in late antique editions and commentaries. Cf. Schröder 1999 and Diederich 1999.

its athematic disposition. Sometimes it comes late to 'its' theme, so that it is no longer able to develop it. The theme is thus not the theme of the poem, but rather the non-themes are the theme, as in *Odes* 1. 6: *scriberis Vario fortis et hostium*. Let us consider the last strophe of the poem more closely (17–20):[6]

> nos conuiuia, nos proelia uirginum
> sectis in iuuenes unguibus acrium
> cantamus, uacui siue quid urimur
> non praeter solitum leues.
>
> We sing of drinking parties, of battles fought
> by fierce virgins with clipped nails against young men.
> We sing, whether fancy free or a little moved,
> cheerfully, after our fashion.

At first we may doubt whether it suffices, in order to define a topic, when someone says: 'My theme is the *conuiuia*'. The theme is then rather the fact that the *conuiuia* are the theme. But even as a potential theme, the *conuiuia* are immediately cut down to size; we are to be interested only in the subheading of the *proelia uirginum . . . acrium*. Of this, from the next perspective, we see *secti . . . ungues*. Further, at this point, from the non-theme of the maritime victor Agrippa we could not be.[7] Even the explicitly thematicized sympotic setting is made smaller and smaller in such a way that beyond the—blunt—weapons of the girls, we no longer see anything of the *proelia*. Rapidly, the various different approaches to the theme are pulverized: the

[6] Translations of Horace are based on West 1995 and 1998, with slight alterations where West's text or interpretation does not agree with my own.

[7] How closely the last strophe—in the picture of the *proelia*—remains related to the strophes devoted to the non-themes has been shown by Santirocco 1986: 86: 'Thus, heroics, when achieved at the end, are redefined in purely personal and private terms.' Even the apparently constructive part of the poem participates therefore in the movement of breaking down the major theme. The relationship marked by Santirocco is aptly described by G. Davis as 'assimilation by trope' (Davis 1991: 33–6; see there the reference to the same procedure in Sappho 16 LP). On the cheerful-ironic inversion of the Iliadic 'themes' in the final strophe, see Harrison 1993: 140–1. M. C. J. Putnam emphasizes on the other hand the contrapuntal use of the epic bass tone in the last line, when Horace 'further asserts lyric's control over epic, but he likewise appropriates its energies, literally deployed in the martial achievements of soldier, leader, ships, and horses, to the metaphorical designs of convivial amatory escapades' (Putnam 1995*b*: 57). The subversion of the epic (and its allegedly more appropriate representative, Varius) already begins, according to Putnam, in the first strophes, even with the first word: 'Actually we have known the passive hero from the very beginning of the poem through the word *scriberis*' (ibid., 55).

constructive denotation of the *con-uiuia* is already denied by the sub-theme of the *proelia*; these conflict immediately with the next word *uirginum*; their eagerness for the fray finds its proximate limit in the bluntness of their weapons. Even the threats of the intended enemies, confronted with the ineffective fingernails, become ridiculous. One could speak of the structure of the paradoxical asyndeton. One could, if one wanted, see in this structure of consecutive denials[8] the formal correlate of the decision, in the last strophe, for light entertainment. In a characteristic fashion, the choice of theme is connected with the psychic-physical disposition of the poet, and this speech act, too, appears only in the form of a double oxymoron. More precisely: with the statement in the penultimate verse that singing depends on anything but the emotional involvement of the singer (*uacui siue quid urimur*), we seem to have left the notion of *talis oratio, qualis uita* completely behind.[9] But with the last verse, we seem to return to exactly this point: *non praeter solitum leues.* What is now being maintained as ultimate truth is the *leuitas* of the singer; this, however, is a lightness protected from a characterizing, individual interpretation by its recourse to convention (even if this convention is bound to the persona of the speaker): *non praeter solitum.*[10] Everything is unimportant, nothing is decided: the battles are not battles, whether the singer is in love or not is irrelevant, even this indifference is an entirely everyday affair. Much ado about nothing? The poet as projection screen for every literary-historical idea—and its precise opposite?[11] And the texts provide the matrix for

[8] Missed by Nisbet/Hubbard, ad 18: 'In our passage commentators from Porphyrio suggest that cut nails mean a sham fight [. . .]; yet this view does not suit *acrium.* But *sectis* can be defended if we assume that the girls' nails were sharpened to a point (thus ps.-Acro).' Even if, as is likely, the Ps.-Acronian scholia were right, the expectations raised by *sectis* are indeed—disappointed (*unguibus*): 'The girls have their sharpened weapons drawn (*sectis*), but the scratches that their nails may leave are harmless enough, only marks from sexual games' (Johnson 2004: 8; cf. also ibid., n. 20: 218–19).

[9] On the intellectual history of this process see Möller 2004.

[10] Putnam 1995*b*: 62–4, has directed our attention to the previously overlooked subtext of the verses 19-20: Catullus 72.5–6: *nunc te cognoui: quare etsi impensius uror | multo mi tamen es uilior et leuior.* Thus also a recourse to literary history.

[11] R. O. A. M. Lyne has pointed to a further aspect which could support the structure of consecutive denial we are tracing here: '[. . .] *militia amoris* was typically elegiac, and Horace was no Elegist; indeed, for identifiable reasons, he rather despised the genre and its practitioners. The elegiac flavour of Horace's "recusatio" is reinforced: it is indeed an unconvincing way for Horace to sound sincere and serious in his supposed epic disability' (Lyne 1995: 77–8).

the reflective play of all the themes and non-themes of poetry? Without ever themselves becoming thematic? Let us look further! The unimportance of thematic poetry becomes even clearer in the much-discussed, still enigmatic ode 1.32 (1–4):

> poscimur.[12] si quid uacui sub umbra
> lusimus tecum quod et hunc in annum
> uiuat et pluris, age, dic Latinum,
> barbite, carmen.

> We are summoned. If ever we have relaxed with you in the shade
> and played a melody that may live a year
> or more, come and sound
> a Latin song, my Greek lyre.

Neither those who ask the speaker for a song, nor those being asked, are concerned with a theme.[13] The song for which he asks, significantly by passing on the request to the *barbiton*, ought to be enduring—with the curious reference to the poet's previous, presumably successful use of the lyre as he was *uacuus*. It is striking how much attention is paid to the avoidance of naming the theme—and this particularly with the help of the figure of the multiple transposition of objects: the request to the 'we' of the first line is transferred to the *barbitos*, the *barbitos* vanishes just in the moment of its being addressed behind the figure of the 'first singer' and his themes.[14] Only in the last strophe is the address to the lyre completed; and here, again, there is no talk of themes, but rather only of their beneficial effect. The movement of avoidance carried out in this poem is relatively easily explained: by poetry's evident reference to itself, its

[12] The decisive reasons for *poscimur* against *poscimus* were already given by R. Reitzenstein: 'Es handelt sich ja nicht um einen bestimmten Stoff, sondern um die Aufforderung zum Liede, und nichts deutet selbst dem feinhörigsten Leser an, welches Lied diesem Präludium einst gefolgt ist, ja ob das Lied überhaupt in unserer Sammlung steht' (Reitzenstein 1913: 251–6).

[13] Cf. Fraenkel 1957: 176: 'For some time Horace had been writing Latin lyrics in "Lesbian" style; he was determined to go on with it. But he does not give us any clue as to the theme or themes he has in mind. [. . .] Since he did not care to specify the meaning of *Latinum carmen* in this context, we must not try to extract from the phrase something definite.'

[14] The Alcaic catalogue of themes with a clear movement of concentration from outside to inside, from 'larger' to 'smaller' objects (Paschalis 2002: 81).

most important medium, the self-celebration of the lyre, singing by and for itself.[15] Only in the last predications of the lute as the preferred toy of Apollo and Zeus (by feasts of the gods) does the reference to the sources of poetic inspiration shine through.

These become clearer in 2.19, and it is here that the connection between the question of theme and our theme, the marvellous, first becomes completely clear. Here we can hope to find an answer to our question: 'What is a theme?' The song begins with the description of a scene that is, by itself, so incredible that the narrator must already begin to ask for understanding in the second verse, not however for the understanding of his contemporary audience, but rather—astonishingly enough—of posterity (1–4):[16]

> Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus
> uidi docentem (credite, posteri)
> Nymphasque discentis et auris
> capripedum Satyrorum acutas.

> I have seen Bacchus among the lonely crags,
> teaching songs—believe me, generations yet unborn—
> and Nymphs learning them, and the sharp ears
> of goat-footed Satyrs.

The situation with respect to the addressees is already so bizarre that doubts must arise about the truth of what is being described. The description does not gain in credibility when the narrator claims to have observed everything *in remotis ... rupibus. Bacchum ... carmina ... uidi docentem.* What a counterintuitive description! Let us take note of the small irregularities of the syntax: can one teach poems? (One can teach the making of poems.) And—even more disconcerting—can one see teaching? And further: how does one recognize learning nymphs? Certainly, when they repeat a lesson or a song, but that is not what the narrator says, just as he does not say

[15] 'Die Bitte des Dichters um ein Lied gestaltet sich selbst zum Lied, und damit ist die Bitte zunächst erfüllt' (Heinze/Kiessling, ad I. 32). Similarly Nisbet/Hubbard, ad 1.32: 359: 'the poem does not introduce another, but simply refers to itself'. See however Santirocco 1986: 72 and West 1995: 157.

[16] Nisbet/Hubbard's prosaic interpretation on the basis of good parallels: 'The implication is that future generations will naturally tend to incredulity' (ad 2) does not go far enough. Cf. Horsfall 1998: 45.

that he hears Bacchus in yonder distant ravines teaching.[17] But he sees the pointed ears of the goat-footed satyrs—and thus the indistinct scene is only brought to the point of a visible image by the final *rocaille*.[18]

With the first strophe, concerned with seeing and via seeing hearing the goat-footed satyrs, contrasts vividly the immediacy of the shock of what has been seen in the second strophe (5–8):

> euhoe! recenti mens trepidat metu
> plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum
> laetatur. euhoe! parce, Liber,
> parce, graui metuende thyrso.

> Euhoe! My breast is full of Bacchus. My mind
> thrills with the terror I have just seen, and wildly rejoices.
> Euhoe! Spare me, Liber, spare me,
> fearful with your irresistible thyrsus.

The calls to Bacchus, the doubled *apostrophe*, the doubled warning (*parce, parce*), the present tenses which describe the contradictory emotions of *recens metus* and *turbidum laetari* paint the violent restlessness into which the *mens* of the speaker has fallen. But even now we do not learn *what* Bacchus was teaching his listeners. *That* he was seen doing so: this is the sole emphasis in the first strophe, and that is what leads to turbulence in the second. The content is here unimportant. The 'that' is what causes the distress of the 'seer': his *pectus* is *plenum Bacchi*. Now he could tell a story, but what does he do? He says (9–12):

> fas peruicacis est mihi Thyiadas
> uinique fontem lactis et uberes
> cantare riuos atque truncis
> lapsa cauis iterare mella.

[17] As Porphyrius wrongly suggests: *et quasi perturbatus his, quae audierat, exclamat: heu heu.* The Ps.-Acronian scholia get it right: *et quasi perturbatus uisis exclamat, uelut praesentiam numinis sentiens: 'euhoe'* (ad 1).

[18] P. Hardie has connected our strophe with a widespread motif in Pompeian frescoes (Pan and the nymphs)—with the reservation that '[...] if such art objects lie behind the poem, any ecphrastic immediacy [...] is forestalled by the projection of the scene into the past [...], followed immediately by an appeal for belief to future readers' (Hardie 1993*b*: 123). Do the hermeneutic irregularities have their 'natural' cause in the medial transfer? Useful comments on the iconographical background can be found in Syndikus 2001: 469–70 n. 23 and 27.

> It is no sin for me to sing of your wilful Thyiades,
> of your fountain of wine and rich rivers
> of milk, and again and again of honey
> dripping from hollow tree trunks.

Once again, someone says that he is singing about something, rather than simply singing about it. He enumerates themes, instead of thematicizing. Who, if not someone at a loss for a theme, talks about themes instead of creating them? The fact that the *themata* are *thaumata*—the swarming Thyiades, the springs of wine, the streams of milk and honey—does not in and of itself make for a thaumatography. The thaumatography is the dissolution of the thematic as a sensible object in its linguistic-aesthetic evocation. A sign of this is particularly the last strophe: here, the technique of the dissolution of the action into contingently formatted pictures is striking. The departure-scene on leaving Hades is intended to allude to the rescue of Semele by her son Bacchus (29–32):

> te uidit insons Cerberus aureo
> cornu decorum leniter atterens
> caudam et recedentis trilingui
> ore pedes tetigitque crura.

> Cerberus saw you in all your beauty with your golden horn
> and did you no harm, but gently brushed his tail
> against you and licked your departing feet
> and legs with his three-tongued mouth.

The hellhound is surreally fragmented into the extremities of his amicably wagging tail and his three-forked tongue, this last a particularly bold substitute for the tongues hanging out of his three heads. The *insons Cerberus* is a hard oxymoron. Even Bacchus, whose name ornaments the opening of the *carmen*, is now only visible in his extremities: the golden horn, presumably worn on his head,[19] and his legs and feet. Again, a scene of seeing, and again, it is Bacchus who is seen; this time, it is Cerberus who sees. In the place of the pointed ears of the goat-footed satyrs, we have the tongue of the dog at the foot of the god. What a crazy world! At the end of the thematology, a

[19] Cf. Nisbet/Hubbard, ad 29.

perfect example of a theme so disfigured that it is no longer recognizable.

It ought to have become clear: I am seeking the fantastic and the marvellous, not where it is the theme,[20] but rather where the theme wonders at itself. This is always the case when it is exhibited as topic: think of all the places where we read *dicam*, *canam*, etc.[21]. It hides then for a sublime moment the 'proper' object of representation, or rather: drowns it out with the formulation, 'I will now sing of...,' 'My subject is...'. If this happens more frequently, or even in rapid succession, the names of the themes pass us by as the names of themes like the illusory figures which the puppeteer recalled by Plato at one point in the construction of the simile of the cave presumably causes to pass before the eyes of the astonished viewers. 'Look, these are my themes.' And the audience does not know whether it is meant to admire the brilliance of the themes or perhaps even more the brilliance of their exhibition (and of the exhibiting theme-puppeteer). *The measures of praise*[22]—they have already always opposed the fixing of themes. The themes also often disappear behind the rhetorical facade, they are mere repeated namings, *iterationes* (*iterare mella*, 12),[23] citations from literary history, and they would vanish forever if this vanishing was not itself marked in language—for example in the final images of Horatian odes where the themes find a basis, dissolve in the insistent gaze of the singer. The overly pointed representation of the themes becomes form.

Exhibition and overly pointed representation by means of instructions for seeing which defamiliarize a theme as theme are techniques we can observe in Horace's odes almost everywhere. If we were to use

[20] Cf. my interpretation of the related Bacchus ode 3.25 (Schwindt 2001: 19) and of the odes 2.13 (Schwindt 2004*a*) and 1.34 (Schwindt 2004*b*: 77–93).

[21] Interesting media-theoretical implications in Lowrie 1997: 55–70, who sees in 1.6 the primacy of 'singing' before writing—with ingenious presence-aesthetical conclusions. The undeniable anti-narrative disposition of the poem (see the astute analysis ibid.: 98–101) is undoubtedly connected with the athematicism discussed here.

[22] To quote the title of G. W. Most's book on Pindar (Most 1985).

[23] Cf. however the emphatic interpretation of the phenomenon by Krasser 1995: 111: '*cantare*, das als Wort des Singens und Sagens die reine Narration bezeichnet, wird durch *iterare*, das faktischen Nachvollzug impliziert, ergänzt. [...] Dies heißt nun nichts anderes, als daß Horaz mit seinem Gesang die gleichen Wirkungen hervorzubringen vermag, wie es die Epiphanie des Gottes selbst tut.'

technical terms to describe this kind of representational production, we would have to say that we are dealing, in 2.19, with the representation of a person who presents us with a description of how he catches sight of a god, who in turn produces representations, which are intended to be imitated by his followers: the mimesis, in other words, of a mimesis of a mimesis leading in turn to further mimeseis. That is also an insight into the precarious status of mimetic procedures. The self-confident iteration of a single finding, 'I compose Bacchic poems', is more important than the possible postulates of representational exactitude or digression on to new ground of whatever kind. The *momentum* of self-ascertainment via the statement, 'I sing', is valued more highly than the specific treatment of the subject matter.[24] The Bacchic ecstasy and madness leads thus precisely not to the creation of the extraordinary (this remains only a promise in 3.25 as well), but rather to the exaltation of a self that sees through the *thema* of the *thauma* to the foundation of the ecstasy, that mastery of language which draws its dignity not from themes, but rather from the proud gesture of the statement 'I sing'. The *thauma* consists in the demonstration of the mastery of language on the part of the speaking subject whose self-sufficiency lies in his singing. His song is the thaumatography. The Horatian odes present themselves as thaumatographical sketches, like the scenic fragments that introduce and conclude the ode 2.19.

Thaumatographical is, consequently, also the business of the philologist, concerned with the question of the 'how' of poetry. To be at a loss for a theme—that is something for which the philologist needs to be as little ashamed as the author who allows us to participate in the aporias of finding a theme. In 2.19, he has extended them into the silent picture of the lessons of Bacchus. Perhaps Bacchus didn't even sing. His *docere* is a clear indication that he, too, was rather demonstrating his singing, teaching it rather than enjoying the singing itself. The goat-legged companions will certainly have noticed this; even Cerberus lines up *insons* in the silent group. Why should we philologists experience anything else?

[24] The observations presented here can easily be related to the tendency, well described by A. Barchiesi, of Roman, in particular Horatian poetry to 'thematicize' and 'dramatize' the question of genre (Barchiesi 2000).

Philologists have, of course, the advantage that they—however tentatively—see last. They see all the seeing and hearing, speaking and silent, sensing and feeling creatures and the semiosis, that is the sign-producing procedures that emanate from them. Philologists are the conscientious thaumatographers of the thaumatopoiae of their texts. A thaumatography such as I envision it must therefore begin with the intellectual physiognomy and anatomy of the philologist, the preconditions, historical and intellectual-psychological, that make him or her suited or unsuited to the craft. The thaumatography must begin with the *Urgeschichte* of philology. We will scarcely be able to summon it up from the palaeobiological remains of earlier epochs of human history; instead, we must seek it in the texts which, *by virtue of their thaumatographical structure*, should speak about this as well. Precisely from poetic speech about poetic speech can we expect information about the hermeneutical position of the speaker—even if this is a position far from traditional hermeneutics. The poet-philologist is intent upon the didactic communication of a discovery: he writes for future generations (*credite posteri*). Happy is he whose understanding is based upon what he himself has seen (*uidi docentem*). That the moment of realization occurs *in remotis... rupibus* is not so very unusual. That the actors in what has been seen are clearly marked is self-evident, that particular attention is paid to the recipients (*nymphasque discentis et auris | capripedum Satyrorum acutas*) is equally clear. For the philologist, uncompromising self-analysis is a point of honour (*euhoe, recenti mens trepidat metu | plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum | laetatur*). He knows to whom he owes his *sujet* (*fas est*), can also name it clearly, and can present it from interesting and attractive perspectives (*Thyiadas... mella*); he knows the winding paths of the tradition (*beatae coniugis additum | stellis honorem*), does not, however, lose sight of the broad picture and provides, where necessary, summaries and characterizations of the most prominent features; he gives a balanced judgement of his subject (*quamquam... mediusque belli*) and is able, finally, to derive individual points of view from it (*ore pedes tetigitque crura*). He is even no stranger to the thaumatopoetic charisma of his theme, its ability to confer immortality.[25] Decisive, however, is something else:

[25] According to Krasser's apt observation: 'So verweist der Schluß auf den Anfang der Aretalogie zurück, die ja mit der von der Gottheit bewirkten Apotheose Ariadnes

the poet-philologist reflects on the foundations of his poetic-philological creativity.[26] He sings/writes about what motivates his vocation. Bacchus/philology is the object (*Bacchum uidi*) and the *causa* of this particular poetic production at the same time and is *as such* reobjectified.

How can it be that poetry reflects on its own philological retractation in the way I have suggested here? That we are confronted here with figures of interpretation is anything but astonishing: just as in tracing poetic procedures the philologist cannot dispense entirely with the instincts of poetry, so too the author cannot avoid engaging constantly in the immanent reflection of his own poetic work. The operations of poetry are like the reflections of their metapoetical, i.e. philological treatment. Every time a poet checks to see if what he has written is good, he does this *more philologorum.* But also: the processes of semiosis in which the figures *immanent* to the poetic text take part are not essentially different from those of philology. Inner-poetic observation and presentation of the processes of understanding points, as *mise en abîme*, forward to the observation and evaluation by third parties and back to the emergence of poetry by means of the disciplining of unformed language. Thaumatography is a method that can unfold the wealth of the texts in the interior space of the texts in a way which is multi- and at the same time intradisciplinary. It must not become lost in it, but should only mark the place where poetry sees itself. Philology must remain different from poetry. Otherwise it will merely add to the oddities of poetry a further one: itself.

begann. Sich selbst und anderen die Unsterblichkeit zu schenken, ist aber zugleich ein Grundmotiv und wesentlicher Anspruch horazischer Dichtung' (Krasser 1995: 122–3 (cf. also below, n. 26)). It is not without reason that in his explanation of the final strophe S. Commager compares the strophes 2.13.33–6 and 3.11.13–16 (Commager 1962: 340–1).

[26] V. Pöschl understood 'Dionysos [. . .] als Symbol der Idee der horazischen Dichtung [. . .] und die Wundertaten des Gottes als Analogie dessen, was der von seinem Gott erfüllte Dichter leistet' (Pöschl 1973: 228–9). See also the subtle development of Pöschl's interpretation by Krasser 1995: 120–7: 'Versteht man die Gottheit letztlich als Emanation des Dichters und als Widerspiegelung seines Werkes, so bedeutet dies, daß neben der primären Ebene der Aussagen über den Gott im aretalogischen Teil des Hymnus die mythologischen Elemente zeichenhaft auf das lyrische Konzept des Dichters verweisen' (127).

Let us return to the beginning of our remarks. We had taken as our point of departure two theses. These were:

1. That Horace's odes formulate at times a disquiet about thematic speech. The structure of the formulation of disquiet about thematic speech is thaumatography. The author observes and documents himself in his resistance to thematic speech.
2. The reaction to the thematic instability is the overcompensation of ancient and modern philology, to the extent that it tries to rethematicize the odes. Thaumatography protects it from being so intent on the theme that it misses 'the *thauma* of the *thema* that is astonished at itself'.

We must now, at the end of this paper, protect ourselves against the accusation that thaumatography is just an occasional invention, exemplified by means of three or four poems, but not applicable to the majority of the *carmina.* In most of the poems, so someone might argue, the author operates on thematically certain ground. I would reply by reminding my hypothetical interlocutor that we began with a poem from the not small group of poems concerned with the gesture of refusal, denial, rejection. The structures of the *recusatio* of a request made to the poet from outside revealed by Walter Wimmel[27] have not only shaped Horace's *œuvre,* but also that of the other Augustans. The major themes of courtly poetry are opposed to the delicate small works of art of a Hellenistic-neoteric kind. Detailism, so one might describe the tendency of the Alexandrians to dissolve the great thematic lines, is the setting of a theme in perspective as form. Just how programmatically one may take the self-limitations of the author of the odes can be seen from the final poem of the first book.[28] It has as yet scarcely been noticed that the speaker here appears, by way of the decisive mode of the refusal, to betray even the usual positive closing gesture. After we have heard, in repeated attempts, what the poet is not interested in or does not agree with (*Persicos odi* [. . .] *apparatus;* | *displicent nexae philyra coronae;* | *mitte sectari, rosa quo locorum* | *sera moretur,* 'I hate Persian luxuries;

[27] Wimmel 1960.

[28] To whose explanation once again Davis 1991: 118–26, Lowrie 1997: 164–75, and Oliensis 1998: 176–7 have made significant contributions.

garlands woven with lime tree bark give me no pleasure. There's no need for you to seek out the last rose where it lingers', 1–4), he also shows us what he is interested in, in the mode of privation of an inappropriate, or even disfiguring superfluity: *simplici myrto nihil allabores | sedulus curo. neque te ministrum | dedecet myrtus neque me sub arta | uite bibentem*, 'I'm anxious you shouldn't labour over the simple myrtle. Myrtle suits you as my cupbearer, and me as I drink in the dense shade of the vine' (5–8). Now, it is one matter (that of the impatient logician) to derive the theme of the poet from its converse; it is however quite another to observe that in actual fact, whilst the author does indeed suggest the conversion, he does not himself carry it out. His language only makes a theme either of the 'not' or of the litotes-like, i.e. doubly negated concentrate of life understood as 'private'. It is such a life which also appears in the fleeting hour which Horace evokes in his many *carpe diem* poems.

What I am saying here is that even the most important of Horace's themes and motives have to do, at their core, with this elementary, prethematic movement on the level of language, when language shows itself, hears itself, closes itself off to its communicative instrumentalization.

Even if the desire of the reader that for every poem a theme should be immediately identifiable is understandable, such thematicization does not do justice to the concern of poetry which generates its objects thaumatopoetically and represents them thaumatographically. The fact that later days had no hesitation in informing the readers of their time about our poet's themes would have provoked Horace to no more than a shrug of the shoulders. We should respond similarly. One has to work so hard to get to know Horace well that he should not escape us again just because we attempt to capture his protean activity under a however fleeting *titulus*—*non praeter solitum leves*.*

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9

Phaethon and the Monsters

Alessandro Barchiesi

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* could be identified as the ultimate text about *licentia* 'licence', the effect of liberating a visionary, unrestrained, transgressive, and unrealistic kind of imagination.[1] Words like *licentia, miracula* 'marvels', *fingere* 'invent', *non credendus* 'not to be believed' (in Greek *exousia, thaumasia* and *thaumasta, plasmata, apithanon*) are common in Ovid when he tries to express his poetic project in a synthetic programmatic statement.

The Phaethon episode has a particular importance in this context: it stands out even in the context of Ovid's licentious epic, because it brings the poetics of licentious imagination to the level of cosmic sublimity. This myth of flight and catastrophe[2] has in itself a quality of 'outrance' which is well brought out by the recent discovery of a fuller version of the script for the *maudit* Pasolini movie *Salò o Le 120 giornate di Sodoma*. One of the sadistic fascist deranged assassins ends the entire script by saying ominously 'What we did is not enough, is never enough. We should hijack the sun and crash it against the planet in a blaze of fire'.

In this paper I show that some of the visual and ideological effects of the Ovidian episode are substantiated and fuelled by an implicit analogy with the urban panorama of the city of Rome, and in

[1] For references, anticipations, and comments I thank Charles Brian Rose, Kathleen Coleman, Karl Galinsky, Alain Gowing, Philip Hardie, Eugenio La Rocca, Jocelyne Nelis-Clément, Damien Nelis, Grant Parker, Alessandro Viscogliosi, and Stephan Zink. A different version of this paper is also appearing, in Italian, in Nelis-Clément and Roddaz 2008: 521–37.

[2] In general, on the poetics of flight, see e.g. Boitani 2004; Quint 2004.