



Augustan Poetry and the Irrational

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The Magic of Counting

On the Cantatoric Status of Poetry (Catullus 5 and 7; Horace *Odes* 1.11)

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Abstract and Keywords

It is no chance that bucolics, georgics, epigrams, elegies, epodes, and lyrical songs, the most prominent genres which arose during the revolutionary time span between late republican and Augustan Rome, archaized, primitivized, and simplified the scenarios and sometimes even the media of their speech. They gave prominence to their most substantial themes through striking and memorable structural formulae. Hence, measurements are normally taken where things seem straightforward. However, something very strange happens with these simple and straightforward forms: steadily cultivated and frequently called upon, they very obviously become symbols of an elementary order (i.e. one providing structure), which may then incur quasi-idolatrous worship. Traces of irrationality appear in Augustan poetry where least expected: in numbers, the elementary configuration of rationality. The calculations (*rationes*) and numbers games (*numeri*) in some of Catullus' and Horace's famous poems enable an insight into how irrationality constitutes itself on the basis of rational components.

Keywords: Catullus, Horace, irrationality, counting, structure, magic

Modern interpreters have long had a devilishly hard time accounting for the irrational in Roman literature and culture. It could not be denied that the testimonials which come down to us from antiquity bear witness to the creative class's distinctive will to order: already the development of literature and its refined language of form seemed to follow an intrinsic plan resolutely

encompassing nearly all genres of Greek literature, thus leading them, one after the other, from the foundations of the inherited traditions to a new, *Roman* magnitude. Frequently, literary historiography of the early and middle Roman imperial age has done its part in ascribing intrinsic evolutions of their lives and works to individual outstanding writers. A case in point is Virgil, who, after puerile beginnings in 'light' epigrammatic poetry, is supposed to have gathered pace while composing the *Bucolics*, and then dealt with the *Georgics* under full sail, only to land at the mythopoetic *Hauptstaatsaktionentheater* of the '*Aeneid*': Suetonius' formula '*pascua, rura, duces*' ('pastures, countrysides, leaders') puts in a nutshell what the poet did to achieve perfection.¹

If we also consider the 'pre-history' of the classical time of 'maturation', in particular Lucretius and Catullus, the course of things, according to such an evolutionist, rational view, could have been **(p.118)** the following. The Roman classical era is supposed to have come of age in quite the same manner Goethe and Schiller emancipated themselves from the *Sturm und Drang* period, leaving behind their sentimental, baroque-neoteric beginnings and departing from the tumultuous *condicio* of the late-Republican fever of decadence, to eventually bring about a new type of refined and domesticated language of form, freed of any rank growth of unrestrained powers of imagination. It is this thesis that some of our colleagues have evolved rather naively in voluminous, but marketable historical narratives up until the 1970s. It sounds too good to be true. Examining randomly chosen passages quickly brings it to light: neither did Lucretius and Catullus fight against demons of darkness, nor are the Augustan texts guided by Apollonian measure throughout.² I am afraid it will be altogether difficult to make sensible or at least plausible decisions whether something should be taken as 'rational' or 'irrational'.

From time to time, it is a good idea to consult mathematicians, who have made their own experience in distinguishing the rational from the irrational. One knows the story of how irrational numbers were discovered. The Pythagorean Hippasus of Metapontum is said to have discovered this quantity,³ which cannot be expressed by the ratio of whole numbers ('integers'), thus bringing about the first fundamental crisis of ancient Greek mathematics.⁴ The subsequent public announcement of his discovery was, according to unwritten Pythagorean laws, a serious breach of secrecy.⁵ When Hippasus drowned in the sea later on, this was seen as divine punishment. It is not easy to think of a comparable case in which the discovery of mere numbers could lead to similar irrational events.

Non-relational *rationes* breaking into a mathematical worldview which, to put it crudely, projected the purity laws of Pythagorean diatetics (*abstine fabis* 'abstain from beans') on to the realm of numbers must have affected the pre-Socratic holistic thinkers seriously. If one could no longer do arithmetics with whole

numbers only, how should the foundations of ethics not also be shaken in most unpleasant ways?

(p.119) It does not seem all too surprising to us if numbers and figures all of a sudden ceased to be called upon as key witnesses for the world's reasoning.

In counting, one introduces an elementary structure into the world of things around himself or present in his mind. But of what type is this structure? Is it rational? Everyone will count the things around him in a different way; each one will start and end with different things respectively and arrive at different sets of numbers; each one will consider one thing countable and worth of being counted, another uncountable. What, however, does counting do to the things? First, it brings them into an imaginary, voluntarily or involuntarily constructed sequence. The former will be a matter for the philosopher or pedagogue, the latter for the artist. The psychologist is interested in both, the mathematician in none of them. Linking heads and chairs and pencils randomly by means of numbers and sequences is not really a question of genres. At those points, however, at which counting begins to bother about genres and genre limitations, first-degree orders are at once created, ontobiological dual-cellular organisms, so to speak, for which counting is linked to the action of ordering. In its extreme form, counting can become a political act: if enough is enough, the *one* number is complete, and any surplus is not taken into account.

Is thus anything that is not considered for inclusion into the one number, i.e. the surplus, the irrational? Is the irrational what does not count, does not pay off, the surplus, the supernumerary number?

Sometimes, the refined poetry of the Neoterics and Augustans acts as if it were nothing else but plainly woven folk-poetry. At such moments, it contemplates the measure of its own speaking and singing: the grammatical number and the number of its syllables and feet, verses and stanzas. In such moments, it is listening to the intrinsic regularity of language. Not everything we read in our old handbooks, which have been criticized again and again, is wrong. Schanz-Hosius, for instance, make numerous conjectures on the way poetry has once constituted itself, or, rather, come into being.⁶ There were the sailors chanting in time to their oars striking the water, the reapers singing in the vineyards, the ploughboys singing in the barns or on threshing floors while threshing corn. **(p. 120)** Such reconstructions can be supported by the self-conceptions, the disguised literary histories which the classical age tell us about. Let us also take into consideration the wet-nurse's cradle song, which accompanies the regular rocking of the baby, and the sayings and formulae on the lips of people who are marvelling at something, be it positive or negative.

This is not meant as a plea for a return to Romantic attitudes. Rather, it is the attempt to describe a trace of memory which now and then comes up all of a

sudden in some elaborate texts of Modernist poetry. The commentaries then comment on these passages in the following terms: ‘the tone of the song is popular’, the expression is ‘plain’, ‘natural’, ‘casual’, and the like.

What is it, then, that distinguishes the poet’s trace of memory from these ‘popular’ contexts? Not only elegiac poetry, but all Roman poetry of the literary phase that is of interest for present purposes is wooing of a very pronounced kind, because it is always obliged to make sure of its place in society, even if it is only the place of holding the mirror up to it. From time to time, however, poetry likes to see itself in the mirror of these big old narratives of the beginnings, these constitutive actions of society, puts on a gesture of being close to the folk, and reminisces about a time in which the culture of writing, urbanity and the subtle mechanisms of a professionalized world were still far away. It is not by chance that the *Bucolics* and *Georgics*, the epigrams and elegies, the epodes and lyrical songs, i.e. the most prominent genres of that time of radical change, archaized and made less complex the scenarios and sometimes also the media of their speech. In doing so, they gave prominence to their most substantial concerns by means of striking and memorable structural formulae. Hence, measurements are normally taken where things seem surveyable. Something very strange happens, however, with these surveyable and plain forms: steadily cultivated and frequently called upon, they obviously become symbols of an elementary order (i.e. one providing structure), which may now be incurring quasi-idolatrous worship. In the first numbers, the fundamental things of life can be recognized and worshipped. According to the Pythagoreans, they are not just similar to, but *are* the most fundamental things. Numbers assume an authority that is no longer dependent on the paratactic connection of the numerical sequence. They know neither extension nor reduction. Thus, numbers turn from relational into absolute quantities. Social routine does not hinder simple numbers (**p.121**) from remaining in place in common language as remnants of a primitive-magical life long thought to have been overcome.⁷

If one examines the corpus of Augustan poetry and Catullus’ poems with respect to their stocks of numbers, it becomes evident that open-ended counting does not normally occur in poetry. In fact, the *poeta numerans* usually has recourse to the simplest numerical sequences. Such statements as ‘In the front of the restaurant he met twenty-seven girls, and thirteen silver ornaments decorated the long table’ will not be found in our texts, apart from decidedly chronological historical narratives. The mention of eight potential litter bearers in Catullus 10 is, just as the mad promise of bliss to ‘visit’ the beloved nine times (*novem continuas fututiones*, c.32.8 ‘nine consecutive copulations’⁸), a *faux pas* that is due to the mimesis of everyday boasting: authenticity is meant to be guaranteed by means of numbers, which do not at first sight satisfy the all too trivial expectation.

In addition to these small numbers from one to twelve, we also have considerably big groups of bogus numbers that stand for the infinite number, such as *sescenti, milia*, and others. In some poems, they appear in close vicinity. Let us look at Catullus 5.

At the beginning, we have the verdict on the excessively stern old people; the speaker says about them: *omnes unius aestimemus assis*. Let the gossip of the others only mean one farthing to us—because, if at some time the brief light shining for us goes out, one never-ending night will await us.⁹ While the first half of the poem only provides examples of restricted numbers, i.e. the ‘only one!’ of the here and now, the second half initiates the number play with kisses to be kissed a hundred, a **(p.122)** thousand times over. These numbers, then, do not create order, but confusion—a confusion, however, that the wildly kissing man knows how to make use of: *conturbabimus*¹⁰ *illa, ne sciamus/aut ne quis malus invidere possit,/cum tantum sciat esse basiorum* (vv.11–13 ‘we will confuse our counting, that we may not know the reckoning, nor any malicious person blight them with evil eye, when he knows that our kisses are so many’).

Knowledge of the number of kisses is supposed to lead into disaster,¹¹ according to the speaker’s defensive thinking, since it would allow for control in a field that is decidedly not meant to be subject to the rules of counting and calculation. Nevertheless, the poet is counting and calculating—why is that?¹² Why does he make use of the bourgeois slide rule if the opinions of the narrow-minded calculators do not mean anything to him?¹³ *Omnes unius aestimemus assis!* Why does he summarize the horror of the night of death in one plain number?¹⁴ Why does he conceptualize his immeasurable desire via a catalogue of calculations of hundreds and thousands of kisses?¹⁵ Why does he, a conscientious economist of his desires, accumulate the kisses to a major *cumulus* (*cum multa milia fecerimus*, v.10 ‘when we have made up many thousands’)¹⁶ if he is determined to let no one **(p.123)** survey the exact number of his kisses? And why, finally, does he, at the end of his poem, all the same show consideration for the philistines, whose like-minded brothers he had already cursed and chased away at the beginning?

We are dealing here with an extraordinary contempt of numbers,¹⁷ which, in the end, still fails to escape from the narrow frame of counting. Or, rather, it is the point of this song that someone, by calculating and weighing things up, proves the alleged logic of the calculating people wrong¹⁸ and pays them back in their own coin.¹⁹ In their own coin? Perhaps one should rather say ‘in their own coin, but used in an inflationary way’. This way, one invalidates the calculating people’s money. Not to mention the material currency. Kisses are the capital of the high-spirited lovers—a capital, of course, whose exact numerical measure is only to be revealed to the kissing couple themselves: it is not a currency any more. And that is why they would probably betray the knowledge of the number of their kisses (...*ne sciamus/aut ne...*), and mislay the key, i.e. the access, to the

treasure of their felicitous barter. Where one neither supplies a security of money nor leaves commodities, but accumulates the symbolic and virtual capital of a love overexerting in insouciance, numbers become ciphers of an experience which, amidst the banal world of exchange, creates the image of a zone that can never be lost and is immunized against any jinx from outside.

The Catullan magic of counting is ambivalent: in a cantatoric gesture it conjures up the power of numbers, which cannot be lost, without being captivated by it.²⁰ What we have here is a song against the corrupting power of numbers—a power that is even more **(p.124)** corrupting if it falls into the wrong hands. The magic of counting is fighting against the disenchantment of this inner fictional world.²¹

He confronts the poor coin in the collection bag of the disapproving bourgeoisie with the forceful image on the other side of his weighing up: the one night to be slept. On the other hand, he takes the liberties to stretch the sum of manageable numbers to infinity—in a currency that is well and truly inadequate to purchase, buy, or exchange anything in this world. Yet, even here the miserable detractors are granted their entry; first, to guess the number of the given kisses, then, to make their attempt at jinxing them with their jealous gaze. The magic of the Catullan numbers in *c.5* can be found in the connection between the restricted usage of the (Pythagorean) non-number ‘one’ with the gigantic number of given kisses introduced as if in a frenzy. The grey uniformity of the ‘(only) one’ in vulgar opinion and of death is confronted with the harlequin-esque numbers of kisses, which, being only momentary intuitions, in turn evade any magical fixation.²²

Only two poems later, it has become evident that the ‘bourgeois’ number can never be adequate to grasp what is of importance for the speaker. The answer to the beloved’s question, *...quot mihi basiationes/tuae...sint satis superque* (*c.7.1-2* ‘how many kissings of you...are enough for me and more than enough’), is no longer phrased using numbers, but with images which are meant to demonstrate the infinity of kissing. In the two pieces of the answer, the poet always gives more information than would have been enough to answer the question sufficiently, thus marking a breaking point in thinking: the *quanta* of a mere numerical thinking are translated into the *tanta* of intensity—a mode of speaking that can be grasped by the intellectual no better than by the most simple person.²³ In both of its **(p.125)** parts, the answer opens up a vista to far-away places, first to the Libyan deserts, then to the stars of the night.²⁴ The lack of spatial precision that is natural if one compares something with a desert is compensated for by a curious indication of a place and distance,²⁵ which provides further clarification on at least three levels: 1) temporally: as a first target we have the oracle of *Zeus*, as a second the tomb of *old Battos*; 2) through distinguishing between profane and sacral space: Cyrene, the country of tradeable silphium, is identified through two places of myth-historical relevance, the oracle of *Zeus* and the tomb of *Battos*; 3) qualitatively: through emphasis on

the heat of the country, still further stressed by the transferred adjective *aestuosi*.²⁶

In *c.7*, the poet breaks the contract of numbers and lures the questioner into a geographical area that cannot be measured in plain numbers, but rather reveals the sheer impossibility of any satisfactory reply through combining the smallest thing, the poetic cipher known since Homer²⁷ as standing for the uncountable—sand—with the biggest—the vastness of the desert. Its borders mark this area as one that has preserved the traces of its time-honoured sacredness since time immemorial.²⁸

In the second part of the reply, a markedly unpretentious image corresponds with this blatant exoticism: *aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox, / furtivos hominum vident amores* (vv.7-8 ‘or as many as are the stars, when night is silent, that see the stolen loves of men’). Let us not underestimate the potential of speaking in simple images:²⁹ the poet does not offer us a reduced ‘there are many stars in the sky’, but depicts, not without a distinct allusion to the gestures of child-like wonder, a world in motion: stars that are not just there, but see; a night that is not just there, but keeps silent; and love affairs that one not just has, but that are ‘stolen’ and are familiar to the stars, the **(p.126)** night, and innocence betrayed.³⁰ How insignificant a thing a number must appear then! No curiosity-seeker will be able to re-count the myriad of kisses here translated into speaking images of the other and the secretly familiar (*quae nec pernumerare curiosi/possint*, vv.11-12 ‘which neither curious eyes shall count up’), nor will any evil tongue be able to jinx them (*nec mala fascinare lingua*, v.12 ‘nor an evil tongue bewitch’).

In order not to be jinxed, one either needs to have access to the uncountable number (*c.5*) or to employ an exquisite, but proven method: let us, for the sake of simplicity, call this the enchantment of the world. The enchantment of the world appears to be the antidote by means of which the lovers are able to prohibit others from accessing their luck. How completely the Catullus of *c.7* has already fallen prey to a certain ‘madness’ is indicated in the attribution *vesanus* (v.10). Magic calls for counter-magic. In fact, any poetry—any good poetry—is counter-magic in a way. One takes a piece of the world, transforms it into language and sets it up in and against this very world, not necessarily as a denial or a corrective, often as a snapshot or a memory picture, perhaps even more often as an attempt to maintain some partial power of control over that piece of the world which shows itself to us, and to set an *idion*, the signature of something personal, in the middle of all the fleeting phenomena. This fundamental ‘enchantment’ is mere assimilation of an interior or exterior thing, is transformation and metamorphosis of interesting objects.

The Catullan magic of numbers, on the other hand, does not shrink from facing the mechanisms of power and claims to power. It does so by immediately adopting the very sovereignty of interpretation over the numbers and supposed instruments of power of the others, at the same time carrying it away into infinity, or rather, replacing it by poetic images that are meant to force back the detrimental influence of banal magic.

In their singing against those interpretational claims from outside, Catullus' epigrams acquire their cantatoric structure, which identifies them on the level of content as quasi-magical practices, and on the formal level as documents of the innermost motivations of poetry. **(p.127)** Counting, these verses are empowering themselves to be of such a condition that they appear as closed entities *sui iuris*.

Let us record the fact that, at least as far as the two Catullan number plays under scrutiny here are concerned, the vital point is not the size of the numbers, but the power of controlling them. Even where the number of kisses extends into infinity, the lovers still have the final word. They decide for themselves whether they want to know the number or to kiss 'to numbers' at all. Despite all dissolution of boundaries, there must remain this final way of control!³¹

The paragon of a calculation doing (almost) without numbers is provided by Horace: *tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi/finem di dederint, Leuconoe* (*Odes* 1.11.1-2 'do not inquire (we are not allowed to know) what end the gods have assigned to you and what to me, Leuconoe').³² It seems evident that *scire nefas* reproduces the gesture of Catullus 5 and 7. The defensive attitude is no longer concerned with the exterior, i.e. some evil-minded odd people, but with the question that constitutes the poem itself. This question is not wittily directed at a high number of kisses any more, but at the measure and the limits the gods might have set up for the speaker and 'his' Leuconoe ('pure-minded').³³ Thus, the 'You ask' of the seventh epigram has turned into Horace's 'Don't ask' with which his poem begins. Those who presume to know the limits of their lives on earth, thus using the 'Babylonian numbers', are offending against divine law. Where Catullus is trying to evade the envious listeners through uncontrolled accumulation of the luck of kissing, Horace casts general suspicion on all witty number plays of oriental astrology.³⁴ In the same way that we cannot make the sands of the Cyrenaic **(p.128)** desert accessible for our calculation, it does also not befit us to know when the end of our days will come.

This does not exhaust all the points of contact between the two poems. We can find them not only along the lines of convergence, but also contrapuntally: the glowing desert sand invoked in Catullus 5, for instance, corresponds to the winter image in Hor. *Odes* 1.11. In both images, the notion of a season of the year is not merely developed as a season: Catullus' summer is semantically merged into Jupiter's peculiar attribution of being 'hot',³⁵ Horace's winter first

stands metonymically for the whole year and takes its full specific effect only in the attributive clause (*[hiems] quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare | Tyrrhenum* vv.5–6 '[a winter] that now wears out the Etruscan Sea against cliffs of pumice').³⁶ In both images, a Zeus is sitting enthroned—here Jupiter, the weather god, there Cyrenaic Jupiter Ammon. The latter has taken residence in the desert oracle, the former also assigns people their lots: *seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam* (v.4 'whether Jupiter has granted us more winters, or this is the last').³⁷ In both images, the view of a very concrete conception opens up; be it in the heat-glimmering desert or on the roaring sea, life is always latently present: here, in Horace, rocks that are imagined as tufa-like make their stand against the surging Mediterranean Sea, whipped up by storm, there, in Catullus, we are reminded of the fertility of a silphium-bearing land and of the noble history of a city (Cyrene founded by Battos).³⁸

While Catullus promises to offer an image of a dissolution of boundaries, Horace creates a space of immanence, however turbulent. Not only does Catullus' territory lead us to the southern borders of the empire (while Horace only invokes the western Mediterranean, otherwise just called *mare nostrum*), he also abstains from directly linking the exotic south to the imagination of his Roman readers. Horace, on the other hand, involves his readers immediately in the **(p. 129)** familiar experience of winter and brings his conception of time up to date by means of emphatic *nunc* (v.5).

That is to say, while Horace's image is at all times linked to the *memoria* of his contemporaries, Catullus decouples his space and depicts a dissolution of boundaries. Horace's image, by comparison, is configured close to the world of its addressees. It does not aim at a dissolution of boundaries. Rather, it aims—and in this it is closely related to the gesture of *Odes* 1.9, for instance—at an inward retreat. The expression *vina liques* clearly points in the direction so many other of Horace's songs also recommend. Ultimately, there is the manageable zone of domesticity and, connected with it, frugal life.

But we are going too fast. Things are put on the track one word before: *sapias* (v. 6). This key word of Horatian 'doctrine of wisdom' is endowed with unaccustomed sharpness and new contours if we read it together with its Catullan counterpart, *c.7.10: vesano satis et super Catullo est* ('[to kiss you with so many kisses] is enough and more than enough for your mad Catullus'). Here madness and frenzy, which can only come to a rest in an abundance of tenderness, there the call for prudent moderation. If this moderation, though, is articulated in an expression which in turn proceeds from physical senses ('to taste') and always remains based on them (*vina liques*) the connection to the frank sensualism of a 'Catullus' who completely relies on his physicalness, in the end even sacrificing his 'sanity', becomes even more clear.

Thus, it is only logical that the instruction arising from the admonition (*sapias*) is directed at the here and now. Of all the steps in the multitude of steps that need to be taken in order to produce good wine, the process of straining is singled out: *vina liques*. Should we remember what Catullus recommends to ‘his’ beloved and ‘himself’ at the end of the kissing in *c.5*? *Dein, cum milia multa fecerimus/conturbabimus illa...* It seems to me as if *conturbare* was the exact opposite of Horace’s advice to ‘his’ Leuconoe. I am not suggesting that Horace intended to rework the famous Catullan poems through a series of one-to-one oppositions. This can be ruled out since what we have here is a peculiar, but justified double reception and review. I am rather inclined to think that the treatment of the same subject-matter made two very different writers bring out different accentuations in their own characteristic ways. Thus, a type of intertextuality emerges that is not necessarily the result of deliberate imitation or distancing, but has its roots simply in the attraction of a problem that seems to **(p.130)** worry the contemporaries of two generations alike. *Zeitgeist*, however, is definitely something to which we would readily like to concede even enhanced power, but which we would rather not associate with precise rhetorical and literary form.

Is it just coincidence that Catullus’ songs on kissing and Horace’s ode ‘*carpe diem*’ correspond to each other in such a contrapuntal manner? We do not know. What we can see, however, is that the series of correspondences is not yet exhausted. In Catullus 5 and Horace *Odes* 1.11, the instruction that is put in the centre (*da mi basia mille...* ‘Give me a thousand kisses’ and *sapias: vina liques* ‘take my advice: strain the wine’) is linked to an experimental set-up that is of particular interest respectively: the Catullan instructions are completely *contra opinionem* since treasures are accumulated not to maintain, but to confuse them (*cum milia multa fecerimus,/conturbabimus illa...*); ‘Horace’ advises Leuconoe to ‘cut back’ her *spes longa* at all times only a little bit.³⁹ In both cases, we are surprised at the instrumental view⁴⁰ of events that elude human intrusion by their own nature. Neither can kisses be confused, nor can a time perspective (*spes longa*) be cut back.

What little influence we have on ‘our’ time immediately becomes clear from the ode itself when the speaker states: *dum loquimur, fugerit invida/aetas* (vv.7-8 ‘as we talk grudging time will have run on’). Here, we probably touch on the most striking aspect of the encounter of two variations of the same theme. It seems as if the speaker realizes that he has been speaking for too long. Already time is fleeing from him (and his addressee). Two things are startling here. *C.1.11* ranks among the shortest odes of Horace. Of all the other odes, it distinguishes itself remarkably through the choice of metre, which forces the writer to press his thoughts in very short cola. Hardly any other ode comprises so many succinct short phrases and thoughts in so small a space, starting with the ‘Don’t ask’ and the ‘It’s sin’ and *quidquid erit pati* through to *vina liques* and *carpe diem* in the end, to name but the most striking ones. The urged breathlessness of the **(p.**

131) erotodidactic speech is depicted in a metrical scheme that seems to be tailor-made for illustrating the unquiet which originates in the flight of time.

If the poet nevertheless, with all due respect to the economy of his speech, reminds one that with every single word 'he' uses time is trickling away and that the lovers might be lacking it later on, the form of his speech gains a status which, eventually, will decide the fate of the figures involved. What possesses the power to decide what will come or will not come is not any Babylonian arithmetic, but the poet's disciplined command of metre.

For Horace, the magic of counting already begins on the basic level of choosing a metre which frames the choriambic 'swing' in the middle of the verse with two double short syllables, thus creating the impression that the phrase in the centre echoes the preceding part and is itself echoed in the third double short syllable. In counting thus, we get an astonishing emphasis on the middle of the verse, which Horace in at least five of his eight verses uses in a remarkable way: *scire nefas, Leuconoe, vina liques, dum loquimur, quam minimum* all carry main accents in their verses. This mode of speech, constructed with calculated prosodic precision, beats the time in which the main points of the poem can accelerate.

The style of the poem is cantatoric because its very prosodic foundation suggests the captivating thought of the fundamental need of concentration. The number plays of ancient Babylon and the contingent acts of providence brought about by the weather god are supposed to be banished by the rushed and at the same time ordered staccato of the *sententiae*. Just as Catullus developed his antidote to the imminent danger of being jinxed from a banal outside, Horace refers us to the intrinsic crisis of our awareness of time, which we can only flee if we devise a technique or a practice of *living* the only time we probably really 'have' and of savouring the only fruit we have at our command—albeit only for the present moment.⁴¹

The interior-exterior-conflict of Catullus, whose *amator-persona* only had to evade the inquisitive outsiders, is radicalized in Horace. He shows us the necessity of a turn to ourselves. The very time that constitutes and rules our being (*aetas*) will, if we risk wasting it away (**p.132**) through our empty talking—and that is the second startling thing that this simple phrase expresses—enviously turn against us.

Have we not already come across envy in Catullus? *Ne quis malus invidere possit...*(c.5.12). Was the treatment of envy there not linked to an explicit 'speech act', too? *Lingua* was the last word of the second poem on kisses, describing and at the same time sealing the magic of counting!⁴² And yet: how comparatively easy the situation could be managed there! Countering magic with proper counter-magic only seemed to be a matter of the relevant knowledge

and power of control over the numbers. In Horace *Odes* 1.11, our own life turns against us if we risk it recklessly in the confidence that every day will be followed by another one (*credula postero*, v.8 'trusting in tomorrow'). There is no need of 'evil tongues' any more if our life is fading away while we are speaking (*dum loquimur*).

The impression we have from earlier research on immanent and transcendental strategies of late Republican and Augustan poetry can now be complemented.⁴³ Against the image of man overexerting himself while counting, just barely being able to return to discipline in Catullus 5 and 7, we can now set Horace's pointed minimalism. Numbers or even large numbers are of no importance any more. The Chaldean *numeri* have become as irrelevant as the answer to the question whether we will see many more winters or only this one winter. Man's measure is the day.

Let us not forget that Catullus, too, started from exactly the same knowledge (*nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux, / nox est perpetua una dormienda*, vv.5–6 'for us, when the short light has once set, remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night').⁴⁴ While this awareness of the finiteness of life is tied to the call for a dissolution of boundaries, Horatian speech generates a new measure: the measure of complete congruency of man and his fate available to him at a **(p.133)** given time. Catullus' lover makes his escape from the uniformity of predestined death through his explosive use of numbers,⁴⁵ Horace breaks down the multitude—in reverse, contrapuntal movement—to the one present day.

It seems as if the Catullan 'Catullus' stepped out of his never-ending night and developed the incandescent image of a 'summer of love' while the Horatian man, facing the tempestuous sea in winter, is forced to live on the frugal harvest of his day.

What, then, is the difference between the 'magic of counting' here and there? Obviously, the discrepancy is not to be found in the philosophical models chosen. Both soberly envisage the finiteness of all earthly pursuit. While the elder poet makes his bear dance in chains, the younger embeds his figures in prudent approbations of the things that are. Catullus offers his lovers the opiate of the dissolution of boundaries to allow for the free play of imagination.⁴⁶ Horace transforms the realization of the necessary into the guiding principle for his poetry and versification. Catullus' magic speaking about numbers attempts to ward off the demons from outside, Horace uses the Babylonian chaos of numbers to distil the numerical concentrate of his one single day. 'It's really magic', but the Augustan poet's 'minimal music' was capable of breaking down the irrational fears and hopes of an era to one, rational formula: *carpe diem*.*

Notes:

(¹) Suet.-Don., *vita Verg.* 36.

(²) See the introduction of Hardie 2009c: 1–18.

(³) See e.g. Fritz 1945: 242–64.

(⁴) See e.g. Brunschvicq 1937: 21–3, and the critical remarks in Burkert 1962: 431–40.

(⁵) See again Burkert 1962: esp. 433–40 for a critical assessment of the tradition, and van der Waerden 1979: 71–3.

(⁶) Schanz/Hosius 1927⁴: 13–15 (with references).

(⁷) There are plenty of studies treating the history and significance of ancient magic; they also consider literary texts. It is, however, not surprising that their focus is usually on the ‘real’ remains of the epoch, such as curse tablets, and, on the other hand, on the stock of characters of the literary texts, i.e. witches and magicians. The less obvious forms and practices of magical thinking (and—why not?—magical modes of writing poetry) have remained largely outside the focus of scholarly interest. Thus, I will not provide a long catalogue of the monographs and edited volumes on ‘witches, ghosts and demons’.

(⁸) The translation of Catullus’ poems here and in the following by F. W. Cornish (in the Loeb edition).

(⁹) If we follow a trace to which T. P. Wiseman has first drawn attention, we see that the logic of calculating, of weighing up and trading might already have begun earlier: Varro Men. 346B *vive meque ama mutuiter* is taken from a satire entitled ‘On Coins’ (Wiseman 1985: 139, n. 37).

(¹⁰) *Conturbare* is, just as *facere* in line 10, a technical term of financial business, meaning ‘to go bankrupt’. See the comments of Kroll, ³1959 and Fordyce 1961: *ad loc.*, and cf. now Baier 2010, who understands Lucr. 4.1058–72 in the light of the Catullan passage: ‘Catull geht es mit seinem *conturbare*...darum, durch Verwirrung/Bankerott jede Einflußnahme von außen abzuwehren. Lukrez dagegen verwirrt den Affekt selbst, setzt diesen durch inflationäre Liebesbeziehungen bankerott. Während Catull abergläubisch die Liebe vor böser Magie retten will, entlarvt Lukrez diese ihrerseits als eine Art Aberglauben’.

(¹¹) Dickie 1993: esp. 14–15, involuntarily demonstrates how little we know about the role and function of the magic of numbers at Catullus’ time.

(¹²) Pratt 1956 fittingly dubbed our poem ‘The numerical Catullus’ and interpreted the talk about numbers as *the* structural device of the poem.

(¹³) Far be it from me to revive the discussion about the *abacus*, a debate that, after Levy 1941, dominated the philological journals for thirty years. For a doxographical overview see Fredericksmeier 1970: esp. 434.

(¹⁴) And again, in the ‘one’! On the opposition between ‘one’ and the uncountable that cannot be surveyed, the dichotomy that constitutes the poem and is only hinted at in the oxymoron of *omnes unius* (v.3), Commager 1964: esp. 362 has the best comments.

(¹⁵) Évrard-Gillis 1976: esp. 174–6 examined the accumulation of terms in Catullus and demonstrated 18 cases only for the polymetric poems.

(¹⁶) ‘*Fecerimus*, a seemingly noncommittal word, is also a technical term from accounting’, Ferguson 1985: 22. In a similar vein, Wiseman 1985: 104 (making an interesting link to other articulations of Catullus’ ‘financial attitudes’).

(¹⁷) In a way completely different from e.g. the examples transmitted via the *A.P.*, following a remarkable tradition of the *epigramma arithmetikon* (14, 1–4, 6–7, 11–13, 48–51, 116–47), where ‘real’ number questions can really be answered. On this see Cairns 1973: esp. 15–17.

(¹⁸) See the very subtle symbolism of number and sign gestures at Ferguson 1985: 22–3 (and the older contribution by Pack 1956: 47–51).

(¹⁹) See Quinn 1959: 109, n. 21, and Commager 1964: 362.

(²⁰) Apart from Segal 1968, Rankin 1972: esp. 747 has advanced furthest in the field that is of interest here: his brief analyses of Catullus 5 and 7 were decisive in correcting the understanding of the poems as established by older scholarship. He describes c.5 as ‘a poem of anxiety’ and goes on to say that ‘[i]ts obsessive repetitive phrases about the number of kisses have something primitive and spell-like in them, as if the passionately repeated words would influence reality and make an insecure love secure’.

(²¹) The remark in Cairns 1973 that links the Catullan *fascinatio* with the *baskanía* of the prologue of the Callimachean *Aitia* is very helpful. Discerning observations on the language and form of the catalogue in c.5.7–9 can be found in Segal 1968: esp. 287–8. Commenting on lines 5, 7–11, the author writes about ‘the almost incantatory magic of his [*sc.* Catullus’] passion: *da mi basia mille, deinde centum...*’ (297).

(²²) Cf. the further-reaching interpretation of Schmidt 1985: ‘Und diese Liebe... kann als unersättliche Leidenschaft nicht dargestellt werden durch Liebesvereinigung als ihre Krönung, weil diese als ein Ende auch Tod und Nacht vergegenwärtigt, wie Horaz, c.3, 28 zeigt. Daher die Küsse und ihre großen Zahlen und das Zählen, spielerische “Quantifizierung” der Liebe in Intensität und Dauer.’

(²³) This is a differentiation that might go unnoticed in a mere stylistic analysis (see e.g. Évrard-Gillis 1976: 118). Schmidt 1973: esp. 94, by contrast, gets it right in his contribution.

(²⁴) See Segal 1968: 293.

(²⁵) In an analysis comparing Baudelaire's *Lesbos* poem and Catullus 7, Jacquier 2010: 74 observed how in the latter the 'Kontrollzwang der Außenwelt' is translated into 'die genaue Eingrenzung eines Landstrichs (V.5f....)'.

(²⁶) But cf. below, n. 38.

(²⁷) Merrill 1893: *ad loc.* rightly also mentions Gen. 13.16.

(²⁸) This is not the place to talk about the evident reference to Callimachus here; for this I refer to Cairns 1973: 17-20, and Arkins 1979: esp. 632.

(²⁹) I would like to bring to mind Fitzgerald's insight that '[h]idden learning is substituted for sexual secrets' (1995: 55).

(³⁰) Cf. Segal 1968: 296: 'The stars not only see men's loves, but provide a commentary—in the context, an almost pathetic commentary—on their futile efforts at concealment' (cf. also the remarks on page 299).

(³¹) Cf. Commager 1965: 84-6: 'The poem is not a lover's cry. It is intended to control the feelings that it expresses, and to control them by the very form in which it expresses them' (the formulation is similar to the one of the cognate article published one year earlier [as n. 15], 363). Also cf. Ferguson 1985: 28.

(³²) The translation of Horace's poems here and in the following by N. Rudd (2004).—Already Schmidt 1985 noted that 'beide Kußgedichte vereint...den besten Verständnishintergrund für Horaz c.1, 11 (bilden)' (112). Cf. also Citroni 1995: 353, n. 26.

(³³) Cf. the semantic analysis of the name in Lee 1964: 117-24, esp. 120. Lee, however, favours the meaning 'white mind' and pointedly connects the name with the sphere of death. The link meditated by Nisbet/Hubbard *ad loc.* between Horace's use and the name of a Minyad evidenced in Ps. Lact. Plac. (*fab. Ov.* 4.12) (with reference to *Ov. met.* 4.168, where the name is supposed to have replaced the corrupt *Leucothoe*) must also remain speculation.

(³⁴) Cf. Bollók 1993: 11-19.

(³⁵) I agree with Arkins' observation (1979), which, in turn, is based on an observation made by Moorhouse 1963: 418, that the attribute is likely to allude to the god's reputation as a lover, but I doubt his conclusion that '[t]he kisses then become those which would be appropriate from a divine being who enjoys love...To the human qualities of the *docta puella* are added the divine' (632).

(³⁶) See the attractive discussion of the passage by Dehon 1993: 149-51.

⁽³⁷⁾ On the co-presence of linear-teleological and cyclical conceptions of time see Davis 1991: 159.

⁽³⁸⁾ Cf. also above, nn. 26 and 29.

⁽³⁹⁾ But cf. Hulton 1958, and Grimm 1963: esp. 316, n. 14.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ D. A. West 1967: 59–64 is right in pointing to the consistent imagery in the concluding lines of the ode. *Reseces* and *carpe* once again bear witness to ‘Horace’s interest in the technical minutiae of arboriculture’. But cf. Lowrie 1997: 8: ‘It is hard to determine whether the image of the vine...is more a feature of the meaning of these words or of their close position. If the latter, does the image redound to the author or to the superadded capacity of words to resonate in proximity to one another?’

⁽⁴¹⁾ This can be corroborated by the linguistic and stylistic observations made by Traina 1973 and Bardon 1973: esp. 57.

⁽⁴²⁾ In an innovative reading, Wray 2010: 143–60, links the kissing poems with regard to the topic of the abominated bewitching with Catullus 6. In an older study, Bertman 1978 already demonstrated the prominence of images of speech and speaking in Catullus 7 (or rather, the linguistic connotations of the images and similes used there).

⁽⁴³⁾ I refer to an earlier paper delivered to the réseau ‘La poésie augustéenne’: Schwindt 2005.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The seventh poem also has, as Segal 1968: 295 has shown, a reference to the background presence of death: ‘(Death) is hinted at only obliquely in Battus’ *sacrum sepulcrum* (6) and in the phrase, *cum tacet nox* (7).’

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Commager 1964 and id, 1965 seems to have been the first to venture this interpretation; Schmidt 1985 followed him.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ One has to concede, however, that the image of a *vesanus Catullus* (7.10) could be linked to other concepts; cf. e.g. the fascinating observations that occur to Segal 1968: 300 in his philological analysis of the passage: ‘But his *vesano*... *Catullo* perhaps implies a momentary insight into the truth: the danger lies also *within* and he is already subject to a magical *fascinum* even more powerful, a magic that has transformed him from *Catullus* to *vesanus Catullus*’ (see also the short discussion of c.8 on page 301).

(*) A more comprehensive version of this paper, originally written for the colloquium of the réseau in Cambridge, has in the meantime been published as ‘Die Magie des Zählens. Zur cantatorischen Statur der Dichtung’ in a *Festschrift* on the occasion of Walter Wimmel’s 90th birthday (Dunsch/Prokoph 2013: 15–

35).—I would like cordially to thank my young research assistants Tobias Allendorf, Maximilian Haas and Lavinia Jungheim for translating my text.

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