

The Poetics of Naevius' 'Epitaph' and the History of Latin Poetry

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In memoriam Calvert Watkins

ABSTRACT

An analysis of the formal features of the 'epitaph' of the poet Naevius reveals the handiwork of a later author who admired the older style of poetry represented by Naevius and used the allusive features of that style to reflect on the changing character of Latin poetics and its relationship to Hellenism. The very poetics of the epigram reveal a thoughtful attempt to admit Hellenic affect without sacrificing Roman sensibilities. Especially important is the relationship between divine and mortal and the proper hierarchy of the social world. The epigram is, in short, one literary reflection of the cultural and social struggles of the mid-second century B.C.

Keywords: Latin poetics; Naevius; Ennius; Hellenism; epigram; Saturnians

I INTRODUCTION

It is a truism of art historical study that the purely formal analysis of an artefact — say, the arrangement, poses and raiment of figures in a painting — can, in and of itself, illuminate the cultural moment from which the artefact comes. Such analysis requires appreciating what various formal features mean and gauging how their meanings relate to their cultural context. When cultural paradigms or formal repertoires are in flux, the task of such analysis is more complicated but also potentially richer, inasmuch as a single artefact can capture in itself a current of evolution and development. That is precisely the sort of analysis that is possible for a poem preserved in Aulus Gellius (1.24.2). The poetics of that poem capture one Roman's response to developing aesthetic ideals and give a vivid picture of the strains of a particular cultural moment.¹

The poem in question is an epigram in Saturnians commemorating the death of the poet Naevius (the lines are here divided into hemistichs for ease of later discussion):²

¹ I sincerely thank my colleague Martin Bloomer for a critique of an earlier draft of this paper; the three anonymous readers for their incisive criticisms and generous suggestions; and the Editor, Professor Woolf, for his helpful guidance and encouragement. With deep grief I dedicate this article to a teacher who knew and loved the oldest Indo-European languages and poetics very deeply.

² The text is that of K. Büchner, *Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum Epicorum et Lyricorum praeter Ennium et Lucilium* (1982²), 40 = J. Blänsdorf, *Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum Epicorum et Lyricorum praeter Ennium et Lucilium* (1995³), 73, with two exceptions. (1) I read *Orc-* for *Orch-* after E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (1993), 47. Cf. 'Die alte Schreibung und Aussprache ist sicher *Orcus*. Die Innenaspiration war im 1. Jhd. v. und im 1. Jhd. n. Chr. fast allgemein durchgedrungen, wird aber dann wieder aufgegeben' (PW² 35.908.45–9 s.v.). The aspiration of the voiceless stops, which Cicero noted as having taken place in some words in his lifetime (e.g. *pulc(h)er*, *triump(h)us*, *Cart(h)ago*, *Or.* 160), may be due to the *r* or the *l* (v. W. S. Allen, *Vox Latina* (1978²), 27). In an archaizing poem the archaic form may be cautiously preferred. (2) I also read *Romai*, that is *Romāi*, after T. Cole, 'The Saturnian verse', *Yale Classical Studies* 21 (1969), 65 n. 97 in order to produce the usual trisyllable (here, a Bacchius) after the *caesura Korschiana* (thus the name for the

^{1a}Inmortalis mortalis | ^{1b}si foret fas flere,
^{2a}Flerent divae Camenae | ^{2b}Naevium poetam.
^{3a}Itaque postquam est Orci | ^{3b}traditus thesauro,³
^{4a}Obliti sunt Romai | ^{4b}loquier lingua Latina.

If it were ever right that immortals weep for mortals,
 then the holy Camenae would have wept⁴ for Naevius the poet;
 and so after he was passed on to the trove of Orcus,
 at Rome they⁵ forgot how to talk in the Latin tongue.

Gellius believed that Naevius himself had written the lines for his own sepulchre.⁶ The metre was certainly Naevian, used for his *Bellum Punicum*. But that the poem is not Naevius' or even really an epitaph has long been clear, or clear enough, on technical and literary grounds. Though the metre is Naevian, its handling is not;⁷ and the sensibility, with nearly weeping gods, is that of a late Hellenistic epigrammatist, little resembling the surviving work of Naevius.⁸ There may have been a false archaism, if *Romai* was original to the text.⁹

The key to the meaning of the epigram is its form. The author of the epigram plainly meant the antique metre, assonant style and word choice (notably, *Camenae*) as a tribute to Naevius. But the form of the epigram, I submit, is also in and of itself a tribute, in a later age, to an older style of poetry — meant to lament its decline by showing its fine expressive power. In the generations after Naevius older poetic techniques, heavily reliant for their meaning on allusive figures of phonetics, metrics, syntax and structure, steadily lost ground to a restrained elegance that imitated Greek models in verbal form and not in content only. But that was no inevitable development. The older style might have been maintained, refined and adapted. The Naevius epigram, I suggest, is an attempt to do precisely that — an attempt, as it were, to show that

word break that occurs before the final three or four syllables in a Saturnian hemistich of seven or more; for a treatment, cf. Cole, op. cit., 19–21). The form is here a false archaism; cf. n. 9.

³ Most codices have *Orcho ... thesauro*, potentially 'to Orcus to his treasury' or 'to Orcus as a treasure'; for a critique of those possibilities, cf. Courtney, op. cit. (n. 2), 48. The lost codex Buslidianus had *orchi ... thesauri*.

⁴ In view of the subsequent *obliti sunt*, which relates to a historical event, I take the imperfect *flerent* also to refer to past time, as commonly in older Latin, perhaps with the common nuance 'would have been likely to'.

⁵ F. Leo, *Der Saturnischen Vers* (1905), 57 n. 1 conjectured *oblitae*, referring to *Camenae*; for a defence of the transmitted reading, built on the presence elsewhere of the 'Verwaisungsmotiv', cf. W. Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter: Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius* (1968), 35–6, 304–5.

⁶ Gellius doubtless encountered the epitaph in Varro's *de poetis*; cf. H. Dahlmann, *Studien zu Varros 'de poetis'* (1962), 65–8. The same letter, 1.24, records also an epigram for Plautus and an epitaph for Pacuvius, and expressly names Varro as the source of the former.

⁷ E. V. Marmorale, *Naevius Poeta* (1950²), 140–1 observed that the metre is too regular to be genuinely Naevian. To his arguments may be added the observation of Cole, op. cit. (n. 2), 24 that Livius and Naevius have no octosyllabic second hemistichs as found in 4b.

⁸ Suerbaum, op. cit. (n. 5), 31 n. 96, 36–9 points out that the content of the poem has its parallels in literary, not genuine sepulchral, inscriptions; in this he is followed by Courtney, op. cit. (n. 2), 49, who adds an aesthetic argument, observing, *inter alia*, that '[t]he alliterations in the second cola of the lines are remarkable; indeed they look like sowing with the whole sack, an imitator, as so often, overdoing things'. The authenticity of the epigram had been doubted at least since O. Ribbeck, *Geschichte der römischen Dichtung I: Dichtung der Republik* (1887), 26; cf. also F. Leo, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (1913), 438 n. 1; op. cit. (n. 5), 57 n. 2. For other earlier opinions, see Marmorale, op. cit. (n. 7), 141–2 n.

⁹ *Romai* is strictly a genitive; the archaic locative would have been *Romai*, with *-ai* scanned as a diphthong. But *Romai* loc. is possibly a false archaism, if the poem is the work, as I will argue, not of a speaker of archaic Latin, but of a later period; such a writer might have observed that *-ae* gen. comes from archaic *-ai* and wrongly extended the equivalence to the locative, where, furthermore, the ending *-i* regularly appears (*Corinthi*, *Carthaginī*, *ruri*, *domi*).

temperas still had something to say even in the age of oils. But the author's concerns were not only aesthetic. As a close formal reading of the poem reveals, it is deeply engaged with questions about the nature of divine and mortal and the nature of social prominence. The author admires temperas, to continue the image, because the vision of the world they create is, in his view, correct. The poetics of the poem thus reveal an author both profoundly sensitive to the expressive capacities of an older Latin aesthetic and alert to the strains put on Roman culture, literary and social, by Hellenism — a Hellenism with which, for all his antiquity of form, the author himself is deeply engaged.¹⁰

II THE POETICS OF OLDER LATIN: COMPLEMENTARY PAIRS AND PHONETIC PLAY

What effects did the author notice in the older style of poetry which he put to use in his own epigram? The relevant techniques can be briefly recalled by two famous texts. The well-known prayer for the *suovetaurilia* in Cato's *de Agricultura* reveals the importance of underlying structure, especially binary oppositions, in making surface expressions intelligible.¹¹ The prayer asks Mars to ward off 'morbos visos invisosque, viduertatem vastitudinemque, calamitates intemperiasque' 'diseases seen and unseen, unproductiveness and destruction, disasters and unseasonableness' (*Agr.* 141). *Visos invisosque* are obviously opposites. But, after a fashion, so are *viduertas* and *vastitudo*: the former describes reproductive failure, the loss of what might have been;¹² the latter, destruction and the loss of what already exists. That is, the nouns describe potential and actual loss. Perhaps *calamitas* and *intemperiae* can be analysed similarly, if *calamitas* referred originally to sudden disasters, like hailstorms,¹³ and *intemperiae* to unseasonable or unbalanced weather.¹⁴ That is, one refers to the raw power of weather (weather as a Behemoth, as it were) and the other to its variability (weather as a shape-changer). The expectation that pairs will fall into sets like *visos invisosque* almost forces the other sets to become opposites or complements of some kind. That was certainly a likely response for a second-century or later reader, schooled in the dualisms and complementations of rhetorical *amplificatio*, especially in its epideictic version.¹⁵

Visos invisosque and *viduertatem vastitudinemque* reveal another important aspect of prayer style, the use of phonetic figures to knit sets together. Such phonetic play was not merely imitated, but expanded into a significant literary device by Latin poets. The most striking examples, perhaps an accident of attestation, come from Ennius. For Ennius, particularly in tragic choruses, phonetic echo is not simply a linking device,¹⁶ still less a

¹⁰ Here, in using a close formal reading to explore the cultural meaning of an epigrammatic text, I follow the lead of J. van Sickle, 'The elogia of the Cornelii Scipiones and the origin of epigram at Rome', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 108 no. 1 (Spring 1987), 41–55.

¹¹ For summaries of various views of the structure of the whole prayer, see C. Guittard, *Carmen et prophéties à Rome* (2007), 206–20.

¹² *Viduus* is properly 'mateless' and therefore, potentially, 'unproductive'. That the latter is the meaning underlying *viduertas* here is suggested by its morphology: the usual abstract noun for *viduus* is *viduitas* but *viduertas*, attested only here, has borrowed its suffixation (*-ertat-*) from *ubertas* 'abundance, fertility'. *Viduertas* thus has two opposites in the poem: one expressed (*vastitudo*) and one unexpressed (*ubertas*); *vastitudo* is the complement to *viduertas* along the axis of real vs. potential; *ubertas*, along the axis of fertile vs. infertile.

¹³ In rural speech, according to Donatus, *calamitas* was a word for 'hail' ('calamitatem rustici grandinem dicunt', ad Ter. *Eun.* 79), which fits nicely with the probable original sense 'blow'. *Calamitas* also had wider applications in rustic language, including *robigo* or 'rust', cf. *TLL* 3.118.61–119.2.

¹⁴ For that sense of *intemperies*, cf. 'ex intemperie caeli, raptim mutatione in contrarium facta' 'because of the imbalance of the weather, which rapidly shifted from one kind to another' (Liv. 5.13.4).

¹⁵ I have tried to explore this effect in 'Binary phrases and the Middle Style as social code: *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.13 and 4.15', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 102 (2004), 237–74.

¹⁶ For the use of phonetics as a linking device in Saturnians, see S. Goldberg, *Epic in Republican Rome* (1995), 65 n. 6, 76.

decoration added after the fact, but appears to be purposefully chosen to highlight the structure and encapsulate the central ideas of a passage. For example, Andromache's famous lament for the destruction of Troy ends 'haec omnia vidi inflammari, | Priamo vitam evitari, | Iovis aram sanguine turpari' 'All these things I saw enflamed, | Priam's lifeforce by force unforced, | Jupiter's altar by blood befouled' (106–108W), with echoing infinitives in *-ari*. This is no empty flourish. The morphological equivalence sets parallel three stock elements of the sack of a city — destruction of property, murder of persons, and desecration of temples. That triplet, in turn, recalls an earlier part of Andromache's lament: 'O pater, o patria, o Priami domus, | saeptum altisono cardine templum' 'O father, O fatherland, O house of Priam, | temple bound by hinge sounding above' (101–102W):

<i>Destruction</i>	haec omnia inflammari	Priami domus
<i>Murder</i>	Priamo vitam evitari	pater
<i>Pollution</i>	Iovis aram turpari	templum

Thus, of the opening vocatives, only *patria* does not have a correspondent. But here another piece of verbal play has its effect. Destruction and murder and desecration directed towards a king and his palace makes the death of Andromache's father (*pater*) the like of the death of the fatherland (*patria*). The pun is a kind of gloss on Priam, turning him into the embodiment of his state. That sharpens the piquancy of yet another play on words: Priam is not simply 'killed'; rather his life (*vitam*) is 'unlived' (*evitari*) from him by violence (*vi*). First, the word order is iconic: 'violence' collides with 'life' and cleaves Priam from it:

Priam	\\VIOLENCE//	life
<i>Priamo</i>	\\vil/	<i>vitam</i>

Second, the phonetic similarity (*vi vi-*), like that of *viduer- ~ vasti-*, indexes a pair that is linked but opposed — here, death and life, perhaps the ultimate such pair. Andromache for her part did not have in mind any cosmic balance between life and death: that shows in her neologism *evitari* 'unlife', in which 'life' (*-vit-*) is utterly negated (*e-*). Whether Cicero, in whom these passages are preserved, read them quite this way cannot, of course, be known; but he was moved by their effects: 'Outstanding poetry! It embodies grief in content and word and metre' ('praeclarum carmen! est enim et rebus et verbis et modis lugubre', *Tusc.* 3.46); and he recognized that their style did not match the contemporary fashion for Alexandrian poetry: 'What an excellent poet! — even if these singers of Euphorion reject him' ('o poetam egregium! quamquam ab his cantoribus Euphorionis contemnitur', *Tusc.* 3.45).¹⁷

That Ennius meant his verse to be read this way perhaps requires further illustration, which is beyond the immediate purposes of this article. Here it suffices to note that certain later readers might well have had the response just described. Ennius' poetic technique recalls the method of the ancient etymologists. Two principles of that method are relevant — principles that typically strike moderns as fanciful but which are perfectly natural before the theory of the arbitrariness of the sign took hold. First, similarity of sound was taken to mean similarity of sense, as is clear from almost every ancient etymology.¹⁸ Second, phonetics can be iconic. Nigidius Figulus, in service of an argument that nouns were not *positiva* ('arbitrary') but *naturalia*, pointed out that the outward motion (*emovere*) of the lips in pronouncing *vos* 'you (pl.)' is like pointing to

¹⁷ Euphorion, n. 275 B.C., composed epyllia which were an inspiration to Cornelius Gallus and Catullus; surviving fragments show the Alexandrian interest in aetiology, etymology, glosses, sentiment and amplification of detail.

¹⁸ An accessible summary, with an emphasis on poetic practice, is J. O'Hara, *True Names* (1996), 7–56. Ancient Latin etymologies are gathered by R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies* (1991).

the addressees, whereas the restraint of the lips in pronouncing *nos* ‘we’ has an inward, self-referential quality (ap. Aul. Gel., NA 10.4). In Ennius these two principles are elevated to art: similarities of sound are used to suggest not etymologies, but nonce patterns of meaning; and iconicity is expanded beyond phonetics to include word order. A later reader schooled in the particulars of ancient linguistics would have been alert to those very effects.

III TECHNIQUE IN NAEVIUS’ EPITAPH: DIVINE AND MORTAL

In the poetics of older Latin, then, relatively simple techniques — phonetic figures and binary (or ternary) sets — were used to create sophisticated patterns and layers of meaning. The sets need not be obvious from the semantics of the component words, but the pressure of the structure may draw out, and even create, the required oppositions or complementations; and the phonetics, far from being mere surface decorations or chance frills, may establish structural patterns and even encapsulate the deepest and most essential ideas of a passage.

These are the very techniques that inform the epigram for Naevius. The entire epitaph rings changes on the opposition between divine and mortal. That opposition is established in 1a, in three distinct ways — semantically, lexically and syntactically. Semantically, there is of course the meaning of the two words, *immortalis* and *mortalis*. But *divos* or *deos* or some other word might have been chosen for the former, and *homines* or *humanos* for the latter.¹⁹ The particular lexemes *immortalis* ~ *mortalis* give a *figura etymologica*. That not only sharpens the contrast; it also sets up ‘death’ as a major motif of the poem. Obvious as the contrast may be, it is not in fact all that common²⁰ (probably because each of the words almost automatically implies its opposite).²¹ Third, there is a syntactic figure: the opposed pair is fronted around the subordinating conjunction *si*. That gives the pair an emphatic position. It also produces a metrical effect: the fronting lets the opposed pair fill its half-line, one word nestling on either side of the *caesura Korschiana*.

There was a reason for making the opposition of divine and mortal prominent: it is the main motif of the epigram, continuing through the rest of it in various forms. So in 1b: the ‘lawful’ (*fas*) is contrasted to ‘weeping’ (*flere*). Unlike *immortalis* and *mortalis*, *fas* and *flere* are not natural opposites. But they, too, contrast divine and mortal. Conventionally gods did not weep. Weeping is thus properly a human action. *Fas*, by contrast, is ‘divine law’, coming from and proper to the gods. Whatever the origin of the stricture against divine tears, it seems to have been imagined as reflecting the condition of gods as immune to vicissitude. Accordingly, if a god weeps for a mortal, he abases himself. Therein lies the *nefas*. A god must be true to his own superior nature. The exceptions are instructive. If gods do cry or come close to crying, it is typically when those especially dear to them suffer or die — that is, when their high indifference has already been breached by affection.²²

¹⁹ For example, *genus divum humanos* (with permissible hiatus at dipody break), *immortalis humanos*.

²⁰ Before Christian writers the words appear in close proximity chiefly in philosophical contexts, e.g. ‘expectare immortalis mortalia membra’ ‘that immortal [beings] await mortal limbs’ (Lucr. 3.778), ‘homo ad immortalium cognitionem nimis mortalis est’ ‘Man is too bound to death to understand deathless things’ (Sen., *Dial.* 8.5.7), ‘quid enim immortale manus mortales fecerunt?’ ‘What immortal thing have mortal hands ever made?’ (Sen., *Dial.* 11.1.1).

²¹ That is, ‘mortal’ is meaningful only or chiefly in opposition to ‘immortal’ and vice versa.

²² Euripides, *Hipp.* 1396 (Artemis nearly cries for Hippolytus); Callimachus *b.* 6.17 (Demeter cries for Persephone); Verg., *Aen.* 1.228, 8.380 (Venus nearly cries for Aeneas), 10.464–5 (Hercules cries for Pallas; on this, see D. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (1991), 156); Ovid, *Am.* 3.9.1 (Eos cries for Memnon; Thetis, for Achilles, cf. *Aen.* 8.383–4), *Am.* 3.9.46 (Venus perhaps cries for Tibullus), *Met.* 2.621–2 (Apollo almost cries

The opposition between *fas* and *flere* has another aspect especially relevant in a poem about gods and artful speech. Latin has a cluster of words in *fā-* derived from PIE **bheH₂*- 'speak': *fārī* 'speak', *fāma* 'saying; fame, rumour', *fābula* 'story', etc. (the root is also the source of Greek φημί 'say').²³ The prominence of that set induced ancient etymologists to refer other words in #*fā-* to the act of speaking. That is, the syllable #*fā-* acquired phonaesthetic associations with speech. Varro, for example, finds a way to connect the unrelated *fānum* 'shrine':²⁴ "Shrines" (*fana*) take their name from "speaking" (*fando*), because, in dedicating a shrine, priests "declared" (*fati sunt*) a boundary' ('hinc [sc. a fando] fana nominata, quod pontifices in sacrando fati sunt finem', *L.L.* 6.54).²⁵ *Fās* was etymologized in the same way: "Charm" (*fascinum*) and "lawful" (*fas*) are derived from "speaking" (*fando*) ('fascinum et fas a fando nominantur', Paul. ex Fest. 88).

The connection is not a mere fantasy of the etymologists. When Roman writers wanted to derive forms of *fas* and *nefas*, which are defective nouns without oblique stems, they turned, not to other nouns in *-ās*,²⁶ nor to the putative stem *fār-*,²⁷ which, if it ever existed, seems not to have survived, but to *fand-* and *nefand-*, the gerund(ive)s of *fari*, e.g. 'at sperate deos memores fandi atque nefandi' 'regard ye the gods, mindful of the just and the unjust' (Verg., *Aen.* 1.543).²⁸ The connection must have been that much easier because of *fātum* 'fate', another kind of divine declaration identical in form to another verbal noun of *fari*, its (remade) *-to- participle.²⁹ The semantic history of *fari* may also have played a rôle. By the time of attested Latin it was no longer the unmarked word for 'speak' or for 'say'; *loqui* and *dicere*, respectively, had assumed

for Coronis), *Met.* 1.3.689 (the nymphs cry for the Coronides Menippe and Metioche). The examples are gathered by F. Bömer, *Die Fasten* (1957), vol. 2 ad 4.251 and *Die Metamorphosen* (1969), vol. 5 ad 10.45.

²³ For other derivatives, see M. de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages* (2002), s.v. Languages often distinguish 'speak', which emphasizes the action, from 'say', which emphasizes the result of the action (Fr. *parler* and *dire*, Ger. *sprechen* vs. *sagen*; the difference underlies the organizational scheme of C. D. Buck, 'Words of speaking and saying in the Indo-European languages: first paper', *American Journal of Philology* 36 no. 1 (1915), 1–18). The outcomes of **bheH₂*- have both senses in Latin: *infāns* 'the one who cannot speak'; *facundus* 'fluent'; but *fāma* '*thing said', not 'power of speech'; *praefārī* 'say [a particular thing] first, make prefatory remarks'. In the sense 'speak' *fārī* was replaced by *loquor* and in the sense 'say' replaced or encroached upon, as the case may be, by *dicere* (the latter probably an Italic development, since Oscan and Umbrian have the same word).

²⁴ *fānum* < **fasnom* < **dhH₂sno-*, with the *ø*-grade of the root appearing in *fēriae* 'religious festival' (**dheH₂s-io-*), Oscan *fiśnú* [fēsno] 'fanum' (as if L. *fēsna*), Gk. θεός 'god'. Cf. de Vaan, op. cit. (n. 23) s.vv.

²⁵ cf. 'dies fasti, per quos praetoribus omnia verba sine piaculo licet fari' (Varro, *L.L.* 6.29), 'fasti, in quibus ius fatur, id est dicitur' (Isid., *Orig.* 6.18.1), cf. 'fasti dies sunt in quibus ius fatur, id est dicitur, ut nefasti quibus non dicitur', Isid., *Nat.* 1.4. For other etymological connections of *fārī* and related words, cf. Maltby, op. cit. (n. 18), s. vv. and the discussion of M. Bettini, 'Weighty words, suspect speech: *Fari* in Roman culture', *Arethusa* 41.2 (Spring 2008), 313–75. All the etymologies are gathered in *TLL* 6.1.1029.35–75.

²⁶ e.g. *ās*, *assis*; *mās*, *māris*; *vās*, *vāsis*.

²⁷ cf. n. 31.

²⁸ Serv. gloss: *īusti atque īiusti*. The choice of gerund(ive)s has the additional benefit of implying morphologically what *fas* expresses lexically, namely necessity. The *OLD* and *L&S* list *fandus* as a separate lemma (i.e. unconnected to *fas*); A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (1985⁴), ad loc. recognize the connection, as does the *TLL* (6.1.1032.7–19, cf. *velut pro genetivo huius vocis [= fas] ponitur fandi*, 6.1.287.83 and ff.). For comparable examples, cf. 'omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore' 'everything holy and unholy roiled in wicked madness' (Cat. 64.405), where the equivalence of *fanda* and *nefanda* to *fas* and *nefas* is suggested by close parallels in which the latter pair appears: 'fas nefasque | confusura ruit' 'She rushes off, soon to mingle right and wrong' (Ov., *Met.* 6.585–6); 'respersae fando nefandoque sanguine arae' 'altars sprinkled with holy blood and unholy' (Liv. 10.41.3); and 'ad fas nefasque miscendum coorti sunt' 'They have arisen with the aim of mixing right and wrong' (Sen., *de Ira* 2.9.2).

²⁹ The original *-to- participle, with correct *ø*-grade, survives in *fāteor* and *fātuus*; *fātum* and *fātus* show a generalized full grade. A line of Ennius with *fātum* was probably meant as a *figura etymologica*: 'neque me Apollo fatis fandis dementem invitam ciet me' 'and Apollo drives me, willingly mad, declaring dooms' (61W). Cf. Verg., *Aen.* 1.261–2 ('fabor enim ... | longius et volvens fatorum arcana movebo'); *fātum* is the technical name for Sibylline prophecies.

these rôles. As a marginalized and therefore marked variant, *fari* came to be used for special kinds of saying (like ‘prediction’ or ‘declaration’) or in marked contexts (standing for *dicere* in high poetry).³⁰ Divine pronouncement is, of course, also a highly marked kind of speech.³¹

In short, *fari* ‘speak’ and *fas* were felt to be connected, and the author of the epigram doubtless felt the same connection. And that reveals another aspect to the contrast between *fas* and *flere* in 1b. Whereas speech is formed of articulated vocal sounds, weeping retards clear articulation. Thus weeping and speaking are typically exclusive. That requires no illustration from ancient literature, though of course there are such (e.g. ‘atque ego ut primum fletu represso loqui posse coepi’, Cic., *Repub.* 6.15). That contrast is especially sharp in 1b. Where *flere* is a failure of speech, the replacement of words by sounds, *fas* is, not only speech, but the ultimate speech, divine declaration: the clear and timeless speech of the gods. The contrafactuality helps this effect: the goddesses ‘would have wept’, but lamentation and godhead belong to different worlds, mortal and divine. The alliteration (*f-fl-*, made more prominent still by *foret*) therefore indexes both sameness (two kinds of vocal expression) and difference (coherent vs. incoherent) — just like *viduertas* and *vastitudo*, both losses but of different kinds, potential and actual. To sum up:

^{1a} Inmortalis	mortalis	^{1b} si foret fas	flere,
DIVINE	MORTAL	DIVINE	MORTAL

The effect, of course, is to elevate the magnitude of Naeivus’ death. The stark opposition of the first hemistich comes near to collapsing: the order of things was almost torn; the goddesses of speech almost could not speak.

The second line is like the first: each half-line is informed by the polarity of divine and mortal established in 1a. In 2a half of the polarity is overt: the *Camenae*, Italic spring-goddesses used in the early Latin literary tradition to represent the Muses (on whom more presently), are explicitly *divae*. The other half of the polarity is covert, depending on 1b: there weeping was established as a human activity, gaining its meaning partly through the pressure of the structure. A phonetic figure assures that that meaning is carried over. 2a–b provide the apodosis to the protasis of 1a–b. The lines are, as such, logically linked. But they are also bodily linked, in the form of a grammatical figure, polyptoton, *flere flerent*:

^{1b} si foret fas	flere	^{2a} Flerent divae Camenae	^{2b} Naeivum poetam
DIVINE MORTAL	MORTAL	DIVINE	

That link is particularly close here because the infinitive is, as it were, incorporated into the imperfect subjunctive, so that the beginning of the second line quite literally echoes the ending of the first. That must have been a noticeable effect: such a collation, where an infinitive is juxtaposed to an imperfect subjunctive of the same verb, is vanishingly rare

³⁰ The *TLL* has it backwards: ‘vis prisca verbi elucet inde quod hic illic significat “loqui cum gravitate” “prophetari” ... , quamquam non desunt loci ubi nihil significet nisi facultatem naturalem’ (6.1.1029.75–8). Cicero, *de Orat.* 3.153 lists *effari* as one of several antiquated or poetic words, along with *tempestat* = *tempus*, *proles*, *suboles*, *nuncupare*, *rebar*, *opinabar*; cf. also Quint., *I.O.* 8.3.27 ‘quaedam [sc. vetera] et necessario interim sumuntur, ut *fari*’. For a treatment of the interrelated cultural associations of *fari* and *fas*, see Bettini, op. cit. (n. 25).

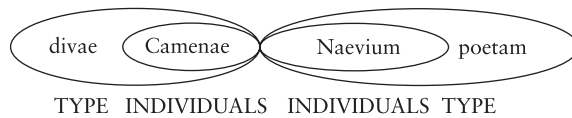
³¹ This connection of *fās* to *fārī* could be correct. The original meaning of *fās* might have been ‘saying, utterance’, from **bheH₂os* > *PItal* **faos* > *L* *fās*. From the fixed phrase ‘[that] is the saying, [thus] it is said’ (*fās est*) — ‘Also sprach [der Gott]’, as it were — arose the familiar meanings of ‘lawful, divinely ordained’, etc. In the oblique cases **bheH₂-os* would have made (to take the genitive as illustrative) **bheH₂-es-es* > *PItal* **faases* > *L*. **fāris*, like **gen-os gen-es-os* > *gen-us gen-er-is*.

in classical Latin.³² Plautus has one instance, Cicero another, in formulations broadly similar to that in the epitaph, setting a general possibility (expressed by the infinitive) beside a specific possible instantiation (expressed by the subjunctive).³³

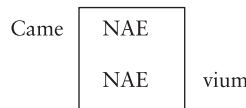
What merits the grief of the *Camenae*? They would have wept over the poet Naevius (2b). Here, too, the polarity between mortal and divine continues: Naevius is a mortal but his profession was a poet, and that, if not deifies, certainly sanctifies him. In the context of the epigram, in which goddesses come near to weeping for a lost creative genius, *poeta* is plainly meant to signal not simply a profession but an elevated status. The poet is conventionally inspired by the gods — an old idea, already in Homer (θεῖος ἰοιδός, *Od.* 4.17) and attested in Roman literature as far back as Ennius, who called poets *sancti* (*op. incert.* fr. 16 Skutsch). In short, our polarity appears in both halves of the second line:

^{2a} Flerent	divae Camenae	^{2b} Naevium poetam.
MORTAL	DIVINE	MORTAL DIVINE

At the same time, the author of the epigram falls short of *calling* Naevius *sanctus* in so many words; it is, rather, the structure not only of the line but of the whole epigram that elevates Naevius — a delicacy to which we will return. Here it is worth noticing another point of structure. 2a–b can be viewed as opposing not only the mortal to the divine but also the general to the specific: the epithet of the *Camenae* precedes their name, that of Naevius follows, giving a chiasmic order:



The chiasmus is important, because it gives a significant phonetic figure, another echo across a verse boundary like *flere ~ flerent*. Here it is the syllables across the caesura that match: *Camēnae Naevium*. That echo, too, must have been conspicuous. The sequence *-nae nae-* is rare in classical Latin — found, in fact, only in this passage, if the databases can be trusted. The rarity of the sequence as such is not surprising. Many words may end in *-nae*, but only a few begin that way, and rare words at that: *naevus* ‘mole’ and its derivatives, including *Naevius*; and *naenia*, a variant of *nēnia* ‘song of lamentation’; and *nae*, a generally late variant of *nē* ‘truly’. The sequence *-nae nae-* might thus have made itself felt in any case; but its presence here, I suggest, is meant to give a particular effect. It certainly seems to have been otherwise avoided: no Saturnian of Naevius or of Livius Andronicus features such an echo of identical syllables across the caesura. Here that echo bodily links the *Camēnae* to *Naevium*:



The phonetics symbolize the special relationship of the *Camēnae* to *Naevium*. Ennius’ use of phonetic figures, rather than Cato’s, is illuminating here. Just as *vi vitam* was

³² So suggest searches in the Brepols LLT-A database for *-Vre* near *-Vre(?t, m, s, ??s)* (where V represents *a, e, or i*), and the appropriate searches for *posse, esse, velle, malle, nolle*.

³³ ‘If that weren’t the case, I would be pleading with you to do whatever ill you could do to him’ (‘nam ni ita esset, tecum orarem ut ei quod posses mali | *facere faceres*’, Pl., *Bacch.* 554–5), ‘If I were at liberty to accuse, I would instead be accusing others that would enhance my position’ (‘nam si mihi liberet *accusare, accusarem* alios potius ex quibus possem crescere’, Cic., *Rosc. Am.* 83). Comparable is ‘unde sciret si quid sit *scire nesciret*’ (Aug., *trin.* 10.1.3). Echoes without the same syntax are ‘nisi se *sentire sentiret*’ (Aug., *lib. arb.* 2.4) and perhaps ‘hoc uno maestum, quod *adire nequires*’ (Sil. Ital., *Pun.* 13.455).

iconic — ‘force’ struck ‘life’ — so here *Camenae Naevium* is iconic: the Camenae touch or overlap or somehow come into contact with Naevius; somehow something of each is in the other. Furthermore, rather as the special position of *patria* in the exclamation ‘O pater, o patria, o Priami domus’ produces an identification of *pater* and *patria*, so here the juxtaposition *Camenae Naevium* implies, if not identity, then at least contact between the divine realm and the mortal, a spark bridging the gap rigidly established in 1a and bent, but not broken, in 1b.

This is not too much to take from a phonetic figure: the logic of the poem bears out this very implication. The surface argument of the poem is illogical: ‘The Camenae would have wept for Naevius; therefore when he died the Romans forgot how to speak.’ What is the force of the ‘therefore’ (*itaque*, 3a)? A middle step is implied: ‘The Camenae would have wept for Naevius [since he was a kind of Muse himself]; and therefore ...’ etc.³⁴ This is the very sort of implied middle step entirely familiar from Pindar’s and Horace’s lyric technique. Indeed, here it is more transparent than in many Horatian instances, because of the overt logical particle (*itaque*). Not only the phonetics, then, but also the logic of the poem, make Naevius out as a kind of Muse.³⁵ That is why, when he dies, the Romans forget how to speak.

The echo *-nae nae-* may have another iconic effect. In the very middle of a line that describes mourning is a syllable pattern that resembles the word for a ‘song of lamentation’: *nē-n-ia* or *nae-n-ia*. That word, like *ul-ul-āre* ‘wail’ or βάρ-βαρ-ος ‘*incomprehensible speaker; foreigner’ or, more precisely, like λαλέω ‘chatter’ (as it were ‘bab-babbler’) or *bū-b-ō* ‘owl’ (*‘hoot-hooter’), was doubtless felt to contain, and perhaps very well created by, a (partial) reduplication to represent a repeated sound.³⁶ The various meanings of *nēnia* — ‘lamentation’, ‘ditty’, ‘magical spell’, ‘nonsense’ (*nēnior* ‘*vana loquor*’, Gloss.; *nēniōsus* βραυτολόγος, *garrulus*, *nugax*, *nugator*’, Gloss.) — certainly support a core sense like ‘rhythmic speech with repeated syllables’.³⁷ That very effect of repeated syllables would be more pronounced in the epitaph if the composer did not speak standard late first-century B.C. urban Latin.³⁸ In a poem which

³⁴ Suerbaum, op. cit. (n. 5), 36 notes the logical flaw: ‘Die einfache Verknüpfung der beiden Gedanken “die Musen müßten eigentlich um Naevius weinen” und “die Römer ... haben nach Naevius’ Tod nicht mehr Latein gesprochen” durch “und so” (oder schlimmer noch durch “deshalb”) ist unverständlich. Ein Zusammenhang und eine Begründung für das *itaque* ergibt sich erst dann, wenn man den Zwischendanken einschiebt “er war nämlich ein Dichter, von dem allein man mit Recht sagen konnte, er versteh es, Latein zu sprechen”. Auf diese Weise wird die Fortsetzung des Gedankens sinnvoll: “und so kommt es, daß man sich selbst in Rom nach seinem Tod nicht mehr darauf verstanden hat, (wirkliches, gutes) Latein zu sprechen.”

³⁵ Perhaps this contact between the divine and mortal words, implied by a phonetic figure, opens up a detail of the first line? A word break usually follows the fourth syllable of the first half of a Saturnian line, as in 1a. Here the last syllable before that word break is the same as the last syllable before the caesura, *-is*: *immortalis* | *mortalis* ||. Rhyme occurs at that position in Saturnians but, in attested examples, at any rate, only with co-referential lexemes (‘argenteo | polubro || aureo eclutro’ [in] a silver basin [and] golden pitcher’, Liv. Andr., *Od.* 12W; ‘ferunt pulcras | creterras || aureas lepistas’, ‘They carry beautiful bowls, golden goblets’, Naev., *Pun.* 12W; ‘patrem suum | supremum || optimum appellat’, ‘She calls on her father, the highest [and] mightiest’, 16W; ‘onerariae | onustae || stabant in flustris’, ‘Freight-ships freighted stood in the calms’, 41W). In the Naevius epitaph, by contrast, the lexemes are from two different arguments, subject accusative (*immortalis*) and object accusative (*mortalis*) — but that is not entirely clear until the second hemistich. Until 1b sets them in their place, for an instant — paradoxically, given their meanings — the forms cling together.

³⁶ For other such roots, cf. PIE *m̥r̥-m̥r̥- > *murmurāre*, μορμύρω ‘roar and boil’; λαλέω ‘prate’, λαλαγέω ‘prate, babble, chirrup’; καυχόμαι ‘speak loud, boast’ (*χαυ-χου-); *pīp(i)āre*, *pīpīre* ‘chirp, cheep’; *susurrus* ‘humming, whispering’; *balbus*, *balbutīre* ‘stammer, stutter’, if from *b|b|l- (cf. de Vaan, op. cit. (n. 23), s.vv.).

³⁷ The instances of *nēnia* are gathered and sorted by J. Heller, ‘*Nenia* “παίγνιον”’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 74 (1943), 215–68, who argues for an original sense ‘plaything’. T. Habinek, *The World of Roman Song* (2005), 234–8, following Arnobius, argues for an original meaning ‘end of the intestines’ (implying a semantic chain like ‘end of the intestines’ > ‘final sacrificial bit’ > ‘final funeral song’ > ‘other kinds of rhythmic speech’).

³⁸ If, in the speech of the composer, *ī* from **ei* was still pronounced as *ē* (its probable intermediate stage before becoming *ī*) and *ae* had, even partially, smoothed to *ē*, as in rural dialects and eventually Vulgar Latin, then

describes an (avoided) act of lamentation, the sound of lamentation is allowed to echo distantly in the background — the sound of lamentation specifically associated with women.³⁹

At all events, the first two lines share a structural pattern: each half-line contains both elements of the polarity. But the order of the elements differs: whereas the first line sets up pairs in the order divine–mortal, the second line sets them up in the order mortal–divine, swinging as it were on the ‘hinge’ of *flere–flerent*. The polarity is worked out still differently in the last two lines, not only in structure but also in focus: each element of the polarity is given a whole line; and the focus is not on beings but places. The third line describes a divine place; the fourth, a mortal place:

	^{1a} Inmortalis	mortalis	^{1b} si foret fas	flere,
	DIVINE	MORTAL	DIVINE	MORTAL
	^{2a} Flerent divae Camenae		^{2b} Naevium poetam.	
	MORTAL DIVINE		MORTAL DIVINE	
PLACES	^{3a} Itaque postquam est Orchi		^{3b} traditus thesauro,	
		D I V I	N E	
	^{4a} Obliti sunt Romae		^{4b} loquier lingua Latina.	
		M O R T	A L	

The variation in the deployment of the polarity is not merely variation for its own sake (though in that, too, there is artfulness). Rather, the variation signals a difference in the distribution and dynamics of the polarity. In the first two lines divine and mortal are interwoven in every half-line. In the person of Naevius, they even touch (*Camēnae Naevius*). But when it comes to the two locales, each described in its own line, mortal and divine are kept firmly apart. When Naevius was alive, the divine was in the mortal world; after his death, the worlds again split asunder.

Lexical details reinforce that idea of separate worlds. First, *itaque postquam* ‘and thus, after ...’ introduces, with a certain prosaic exactitude, a strict temporal layering: Naevius enters the underworld; ‘then and thereupon’ the mortal world begins to suffer.⁴⁰ Second, Naevius’ death is described as his having been ‘passed on’ (*est ... traditus*) to the realm of Orcus. *Trado* is not commonly associated with death or the like and is not otherwise

the line would be dominated by *e*-sounds: *flerent dēvē Camēnē Nēvium poētam*. On the intermediate vowel $\bar{e} < *ei$, see A. Sihler, *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (1995), §57.2.b. For an example, cf. *Lebro* (CIL I² 381) = *Liberō*. That vowel still survived in rural dialects at the time of the Social War, if Cicero is any guide: ‘And that’s why it seems to me that our Cotta — whose broad pronunciation you sometimes imitate, Sulpicius, getting rid of *i*’s and saying full *e*’s — is more like farm workers (“reapers”) than the orators of old’ (‘qua re Cotta noster, cuius tu illa lata, Sulpici, non numquam imitaris, ut Iota litteram tollas et E plenissimum dicas, non mihi oratores antiquos, sed messores videtur imitari’, *de Orat.* 3.46). As for *-ae-*, that it could be pronounced \bar{e} - in casual urban speech in the late Republic is suggested by the *pedagogi* of *Rhet. Her.* 4.14, a deliberately somewhat colloquial passage which also has *oriculas* for *auriculas*, *aures*.

³⁹ Nonius Marcellus, 145, 24M: ‘nenia ineptum et inconditum carmen, quod a conducta muliere quae praefica diceretur, is, quibus propinqui non essent, mortuis exhiberetur’ citing Varro, *de Vita Populi Romani* 4: ‘ibi a muliere quae optima uoce esset perquam laudari dein neniā cantari solitam ad tibias et fides’.

⁴⁰ The combination is nowhere else in archaic poetry (comedy included) and virtually absent even in prose (Cic., *Tusc.* 2.26; Liv. 1.54.5, 9.45.11).

used with *thesaurus*. But it is a common word for ‘transferring’ or ‘delivering’ a person into ‘shelter, protection [or] imprisonment’ (*L&S* s.v. B.1). When Naevius died, he was, as it were, ‘turned over to’ or ‘remanded into the custody of’ Orcus. His death was not an annihilation but a passage or a transfer. *Mando* is occasionally used in a similar way.⁴¹ That is a vivid way of stressing, not only the finality of death, but the gulf between — and therefore the existence of — two distinct worlds. This is exactly the (to my ear, now somewhat faded) English metaphor of ‘pass on (sc. into the next world *vel sim.*)’ for ‘die’.

Thesaurus augments this effect of *est ... traditus*. *Thesaurus* is literally a ‘treasure-chest’, ‘storehouse’, etc. Here it is metaphorical for the House of Death — a very rare image elsewhere only in Ennius (252W; cf. below). In what way is death a ‘treasure-chest’? The metaphor depends upon the function and the form of a *thesaurus*. In form the *thesaurus* was a locked container of heavy stone — the very like of a Roman sepulchre.⁴² In function the *thesaurus* was a secure place of long-term deposit. What goes into a *thesaurus* drops out of circulation. That function is drawn out by the words *obliti sunt ... loquier* ‘people forgot ... how to speak’: when Naevius passed into Orcus’ treasure-chest, he fell out of circulation. In short, the phrases *itaque postquam, est ... traditus thesauro* and *obliti sunt ... loquier* underscore the cleft of mortal and divine implied by the third and fourth lines.

The last hemistich, 4b, plays a special rôle in this imagery of separate worlds. The line alliterates (allomorphs of) the liquid consonant *l* (*loquier lingua Latina*). The smooth sound represents not a beauty that is but a beauty that is no more. Elaborating a lost grace, a regular affect of death epigrams, in this epigram contributes to the sense of a gulf between worlds — all the more so in the presence of *thesaurus*, which also served to sequester valuables. There is something still more in the last hemistich: it is metapoetic. It describes ideal speech and is itself meant to exemplify the very techniques that the poet plainly idealized; the line embodies the aesthetic ideal it describes. There is a poignancy in the poet’s attempt probably not apparent to him: octosyllabic second hemistichs are not found in Naevian Saturnians.⁴³ The graces of antique speech really had crossed to the other side.

IV THE STANCE OF NAEVIUS’ ‘EPITAPH’: GREEK VS. ROMAN

In sum, the Naevius ‘epitaph’ is deeply indebted to the techniques of older Latin poetry. Underlying polarities give order to surface expressions, above all, the polarity between mortal and divine, signalled by the first half-line, which informs the entire rest of the poem — in the first distich, within lines; in the second, across lines. Phonetic and syntactic figures emphasize and themselves express the central ideas of the epitaph — the contact of human and divine (*immortales mortales, Camenae Naevium*); the near

⁴¹ Famously on a Scipio epitaph: ‘Annos gnatus XX is [loc]eis m[an]datus’ ‘Twenty years old handed over to the places [below]’ (*CIL* I² 11 l. 5, with Mommsen’s restoration *locis = locis infernis*; Ritschl has [*div*]eis ‘to the gods’). There is a pun with *mandatus* in another sense in the following line: ‘ne quairatis honore | quei minus sit mandatus’ ‘Seek ye not, why no honour was entrusted to him’ (with *honore[m]* in prolepsis).

⁴² ‘θησαυρός is a strongbox, where the sanctuary’s money was kept. ... Excavated θησαυροί are heavy stone monuments, usually provided with locks. An example with the word θησαυρός inscribed upon it was found in Athens, in its second use, during the demolition of a house. ... It is dated on epigraphical grounds to the early 4th century B.C., and was used for the collection of a money donation (ἀπαρχή) connected, in this case, with a wedding (προτέλεια γάμος). It is not a portable box (κιβωτός), but a heavy, stone monument that weighs 1,472 kg and locks with a key. We might therefore conclude that the difference between a θησαυρός and a κιβωτός is chiefly one of size and weight’, D. Adrianou, ‘Late Classical and Hellenistic furniture and furnishings in the epigraphical record’, *Hesperia* 75 (2006), 561–84. That sense is recognized for this passage by E. Forcellini, *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon* (1858–), p. 725 col. A s.v., under the heading ‘latiore sensu est locus, in quo aliquid servandum reponitur, apotheca, conditorium, ripostiglio [closet]’.

⁴³ cf. *supra* n. 2.

breach of the cosmic order because of an inspired poet's death (*si foret fas flere*); and the — now lost — ideal form of speech (*loquier lingua Latina*). But despite what, by the standards of later classical poetry, is antiquated technique in antiquated metre, it would be a serious mistake to see the epigram as purely 'Latin' or 'Italic' in spirit. On the contrary it is thoroughly infused with Hellenism — but with a carefully modulated Hellenism. Greek precedents and parallels are recalled but modified to reflect, not only a Roman, but a very particular kind of Roman, sensibility.

That sensibility is implicated in a literary polemic started by Ennius: how best to Hellenize in Latin poetry. Livius Andronicus had rendered the *Odyssey* into Latin in Saturnian verse, and that was the metre of Naevius' historical epic, the *Bellum Punicum*. But Ennius, pioneer of the dactylic hexameter, famously rejected Naevius' efforts as the verse of *Fauni* 'Fauns, rural goat-gods' and *vates* 'seers' or 'soothsayers',⁴⁴ and claimed to have met Homer himself, and perhaps the Muses, in a dream (*Ann.* 4–13W).⁴⁵ Ennius also, it appears, rejected Livius' use of *Camena*e for goddesses of poetry, preferring the transliterated *Musae*.⁴⁶ The author of our epigram — naming Naevius, writing in Saturnians, using *Camena*e — must have had this polemic in mind. Assigning true Latin speech to Naevius, the author pointedly rejects Ennius' claim that his texts were the new beginning that Ennius felt them to be.⁴⁷

But the author is more than a champion of Naevius. His own poetic practice takes on the central issue of the polemic by offering itself as a model of how to Hellenize. The technique of the epigram is integral to this message; for the poem, far from being a specimen of unreconstructed nativism, puts forward a distinctive approach to Hellenism — a Hellenism clearly present but by the same token deliberately muted. That restraint appears unmistakably in the depictions of the *Camena*e and Orcus and to some extent even in the mention of Naevius. In the epigram the *Camena*e plainly stand for the Muses. But the act of cultural translation is, so to speak, partial. The idea that the Muses should cry at the death of an artist has the feel of a pretty Hellenistic conceit.⁴⁸ And indeed it appears in the *Greek Anthology* from the third century forward. An epigram attributed to Damagetus (late third century B.C.) relates that at the death of Orpheus, 'The Pierian Muses themselves, with Apollo, the master of the lyre, burst into tears, mourning the singer'.⁴⁹ Antipater of Sidon (second half of the second century B.C.) has a similar image (7.8). Alcaeus of Messene (late third to early second century B.C.) has the Muses weeping at the death of Pylades, an actor.⁵⁰ An imperial epitaph follows

⁴⁴ 'Scripsere alii rem | vorsibus quos olim Fauni vatesque canebant' 'Others have treated the topic in the metre the Fauni and seers once used to sing' (*Ann.* 231–33W).

⁴⁵ For general discussion, see O. Skutsch, 'Enniana, I', *CQ* 38 no. 3/4 (1944), 79–86.

⁴⁶ 'Insece Musa manu Romanorum induperator | quod quisque in bello gessit cum rege Philippo' 'Queath, Muse, what each commander of the Romans achieved by force in the war with King Philip' (*Ann.* 322–3W) is, as argues S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (1998), 58–9, a correction of the opening of Andronicus' *Oduessa*: 'virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum' 'Queath me, Camena, the versatile man'. For the numerous disputes regarding another line with *Musae*, 'Musas quas memorant nosces nos esse <Camenas>' 'Thou wilt know that we *Camena*e are those whom they call Muses' (*Enn. var.* 43W), cf. Suerbaum, op. cit. (n. 5), 347–9; Hinds, loc. cit.

⁴⁷ 'For general reasons it seems unlikely that before Ennius' time the Romans were altogether unfamiliar with the name of *Musae*. Evidence, however, to show that they knew it is not available. Nevertheless, even if the name *Musae* was known, in invoking their patronage for his poem Ennius is making a departure from the habits of earlier poetry, of which he is both conscious and proud. In the beginning of the seventh book he speaks with scorn of his predecessor Naevius: "*scripsere alii rem | vorsibus quos olim Fauni vatesque canebant | cum neque Musarum scopulos ...*" Now the reign of the Muses begins, and the *grave virus* of the Saturnian line is driven out by the *munditia* of the hexameter' (Skutsch, op. cit. (n. 45), 79).

⁴⁸ Suerbaum, op. cit. (n. 5), 304–8 and Courtney, op. cit. (n. 2), 50 note some of the precedents repeated here.

⁴⁹ καὶ δ' αὐταὶ στοναχεῦντι σὺν εὐφώρμυγι Λυκείῳ | ἔρρηξαν Μοῦσαι δάκρυα Πιερίδες | μυρόμενα τὸν ἀοιδόν (7.10.5–7).

⁵⁰ Μοῦσαι δ' ἐκλάσαντο (7.412.5).

the lead of these poems: ‘When the Camenae wept for your premature death, the people of noble Ostia wept. Julius Nicephorus, unhappy father, built this tomb’ (‘ut te, Palladi, raptum flevere Camenae, | fleverunt populi, quos continet Ostia dia. | Iulius Nicephorus, pater infelix, fecit’, *CIL* 6.20152 = *CLE* 606). Divine beings may do more than weep. Alcaeus of Messene imagines Homer’s funeral rites performed by the Nereids (7.1); Hesiod’s, by the Nymphs (7.55). Dioscorides (second century B.C.) imagines a satyr charged by the Muses with guarding Sophocles’ tomb (7.37) and Sappho joining Aphrodite to mourn Adonis (7.407).

Such conceits plainly inspired the epigram; but in comparison to them, the *Camenae* of the epigram preserve a certain dignity. The crying of the goddesses is contrafactual: they *would have* cried, but they did not forget divine law (*fas*); Naevius’ status, special though it was (*poetam*), did not make them forget theirs (*divae*). In short, the epigram appropriates the Greek idea of a patron god moved by mortal deaths but also maintains a stricter division between god and man than that emotion might imply. Sentiment is allowed to appear but then kept at bay as inappropriate to the depiction of immortals. The contrafactual condition is a kind of symbol for that manoeuvre: such a condition may express a scene, and vividly so, even as it denies that the scene ever took place.

The depiction of Orcus and his *thesaurus* illustrates the same point. *Thesaurus*, as I suggested above, keeps its economic meaning. That image implies a god of the underworld with economic concerns. In that there is an intimation of Πλούτων and his Latin equivalent *Dīs pater*. Πλούτων was originally a separate god but became an epithet of Hades and eventually his chief title. Popularly linked to πλοῦτος ‘wealth’, the god was recognized in Roman state cult in 249 B.C. as *Dīs pater*, a name that expresses that very connection, *Dīs* coming from the same root as *dīves* ‘wealthy’, *dīvitiae* ‘riches’.⁵¹ In short, the metaphor of *thesaurus* signals an act of syncretism: the epigram’s *Orcus*, a distinctly Italic figure, is, as it were, secretly Pluto. Ennius’ *Mors* has been seen the same way: ‘Acherontem obibo, ubi Mortis thesauri obiacent’ ‘I shall meet Acheron, in the face of the treasure-houses of Death’, avers his Iphigeneia (252W), where *thesauri* may obliquely allude to *Dīs pater*.⁵²

But again the syncretism is not thoroughgoing. If the phrase *Orci ... thesauro* hints at Pluto, it is only a hint: the fullness of Pluto’s godhead is not present. Orcus is not here involved, as Pluto sometimes is, in the cycle of death and rebirth. Perhaps paradoxically for a god of the underworld, Pluto is often associated with life, since all life comes from the earth and returns to it. In this regard Pluto is typically linked to Prosperina and may even be depicted with a cornucopia. When *Dis Pater* was added to the Roman state cult (249 and 207 B.C.), it was together with Prosperina. But in the epigram there is no hint of that pair or of the cycle of life and its associated folk-tale elements. The flow of wealth goes straight down to Pluto, and there it stays. Indeed, the very metaphor of *thesaurus*, if it suggests wealth, also suggests a flow in one direction only. Here is a god of death without rebirth — Hades proper, the Orcus of the regular Latin expression (*de*) *mittere Orco* ‘send off to Orcus, kill’ and the Orcus of Catullus, whose ‘malae tenebrae | ... omnia bella devora[nt]’ ‘dark shadows consume every pretty thing’ (3.13–14).

Thus neither Orcus nor the *Camenae* are simple equivalents, by way of *variatio* or syncretism, for Πλούτων or Μοῦσαι. It is, rather, almost as if the old Latin names are

⁵¹ ‘There is a hint [in *thesauro*] at the traditional etymologies of *Dis* as *dīves* and Πλούτων as πλοῦσιος’, Courtney, op. cit. (n. 2), 48. *Dīs* for *dīves* is not a folk etymology but the genuine article. *Dīs* was back-formed as a nominative to the genitive *dītis*, contracted regularly from *dīvitis*. The *Dies-* of *Diespiter* is formally unrelated, coming from Italic **dijē-*, one stem of the PIE **diēus* seen in *Iūpiter* (cf. de Vaan s.v.). *Dispiter* for *Diespiter* is attested only in Paul. *ex Fest.* Πλούτων is also borrowed directly as *Plūtō*, but not before Cicero.

⁵² So H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (1967), 331. The connection was made explicitly by Ennius: ‘Pluto Latine est *Dis pater*, alii *Orcum* vocant’ (*var.* 31f. W).

emblematic of a restrained and partial Hellenization. One more possible example of restraint may be noticed. The epigram's Naevius, dear to the Muses and named *poeta*, is evidently an inspired poet of the Greek type. But the poem is much less bold on this point than it might have been.

The poem certainly does defend the poet's elevated status, by way of an intertext of a quite Alexandrian kind. A work of Naevius contained the line 'fato Metelli Romae fiunt consules' 'By fate the Metelli become consuls at Rome'. The line is said to have spurred a rejoinder from the Metelli's side, 'malum dabunt Metelli Naevio poetae' 'The Metelli will make trouble for Naevius the poet'.⁵³ The second line of the Naevius epitaph, ending with a form of *Naevius poeta*, beginning with the verb phrase, and setting a proper name before the caesura, is a deliberate echo of the Metelli's rejoinder. The poetics of the two lines are of interest here. In the original line the august name *Metelli*, pressing down on Naevius, and the fronted threat *malum dabunt* make the *poetae* of *Naevio poetae* into a mark of his insignificance: his crafted words will not protect him from real trouble; the *poetae* of the end of the line holds up poorly against the *consules* of the original verse. If *malum dabunt* affects the exaggerated outrage of comedy,⁵⁴ the line scripts Naevius into the rôle of a cheeky slave. The *Naevium poetam* of the Naevius epigram echoes *Naevio poetae*, but in that line, the almost weeping *Camenae*, linked by an echo of sound to the poet's name, instead ennoble his profession. In short, the epigram echoes a line that also expressed a difference of status but reverses the polarity: *Naevio poetae* marked a weaker party; *Naevium poetam* marks an honoured craftsman.

But stronger expressions of inspiration there are none. Ennius' claims of inspiration stand in contrast. As we have seen, he had depicted himself in the *Annales* meeting Homer in a dream. For that there were literary precedents in Hesiod and Callimachus and philosophical analogues in the thought and literature of Pythagoreanism. Ennius' images are more striking than anything that survives until Cicero, in poetry commemorating his consulship, has himself addressed by the Muse Urania (fr. 6 Blänsdorf), instructed by Minerva (fr. 17), and admitted by Jupiter into a council of the gods (fr. 17). Similarly, the epitaph, as I have suggested, makes Naevius into a Muse, whose people forget how to speak when he dies. But he is not called anything like 'the tenth Muse' or 'the mortal Muse' (θνατῶν Μοῦσων, *Anth.* 7.14.2; Antipater of Sidon on Sappho), or 'dearest companion of the deathless Muses' (ἀμβροσίησι συνέστιε φίλτατε Μούσαις, 7.41.1; Diodorus (?) on Callimachus), or 'servant of the Pierides' (ὁ λάτρις | Πιερίδων, 7.44.5–6; Ion on Euripides), or 'equal to the gods' (θεοῖς ἴσα, 7.407.9; Dioscorides on Sappho). The epigram implies much but says little.

In short, intertexts expose the particularity of the poem's stance. The conceits of Hellenistic epigram, in particular those associated with epitaphs of poets, and the tales of Greek myth generally show the sensibility of the epigram to be Hellenistic — but not quite. Neither the Muses nor Pluto nor the inspired bard is fully present, even as they make their presence felt.

Why did the composer of the epigram stop short, so to speak? The answer lies in the last line of the epitaph. That, too, is an instance of stopping short — or rather, in this case, taking a different turn. In the epitaphs of the *Greek Anthology* the world may be profoundly struck by someone's death. When, in Damagetus' epigram, Orpheus dies, not only do the Muses weep but so do the very stones and trees (*Anth.* 7.10.7–8). Alternately, to speak only of the epigrams on the death of literary figures, the essence of the poet somehow perdures. The poet may be imagined as still alive: Orpheus charms

⁵³ The exchange is sometimes taken as evidence of a feud between the Metelli and Naevius but is unlikely to represent a historical incident accurately. Cf. Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 33–6; E. S. Gruen, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (1996), 96–106.

⁵⁴ cf. Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 35 and n. 16.

Hades himself (Damag., *Anth.* 7.9.7–8); Erinna joins the dance of the Muses (Anon., *Anth.* 7.12.6); Anacreon receives from them immortality (Simonides, *Anth.* 7.25.1–2). It may be a poet's works that survive: Sophocles' life will last forever on his 'deathless pages' (Simias, *Anth.* 7.21.6); deathless is Sappho's 'artful diction' (σοφαί ... ῥήσεις, 7.16.2, Pinytos); Euripides, like an epic hero, will enjoy κλέος ἄφθιτον 'glory imperishable' (7.43.3, Diodorus). Another conceit is that the beauty or character of a poet's achievement may be, or ought to be, reflected by his tomb: Simias prays that Sophocles' tomb be adorned with ivy and roses (7.22); Simonides (?), that grapevines cover the tomb of Anacreon, who loved wine (7.24).

The Naevius epigram features no such sentiment or supernatural fantasy. The alleged result in the last line, if it is exaggerated, is entirely realistic in one respect: it sees the death of a prominent man in social terms; his people are affected. Among the epitaphs of poets in the *Anthology*, only Leonidas of Tarentum's simple couplet for Pindar has anything comparable, recording that he was 'agreeable to strangers and dear to his countrymen' (Ἀρμενος ἦν ξείνοισιν ἀνὴρ ὄδε καὶ φίλος ἀστοῖς | Πίνδαρος, εὐφώνων Περίδων πρόπολος, 7.35). Closer is the famous epitaph of Protogenes: 'Protogenes Cloul[ei] suavei heicei situst mimus | plouruma que fecit populo soueis gaudia nuges' (= 'Protogenes Cluli suavis hic situst mimus | plurima qui fecit populo suo gaudia nugis' 'Here lies Clulius' Protogenes, charming mime, | who by his jests provided his people with very many delights', *CIL* I².1861, IX.4463 = Bücheler *CLE* 361).⁵⁵ Here the skill of an artist, like that of Palladius above, is measured by his favourable public reception.

There is, then, a public turn in Naevius' epitaph: not, as with the *Camenae*, a reduced version of the literary fantasies of the epigrams in the *Anthology* but a step away from them — and a step towards the political world. It is to that world that public reception, as opposed to the infusion of divine graces, especially belongs. The oldest *elogia*, which of course have the political world firmly in mind, regularly feature the attitude of the citizen body, implicit or explicit.⁵⁶

Indeed, the last line of the poem not only represents a turn to the political world; it also rounds off a cosmology, another aspect of the poem's exquisite structure. Beneath the poem's two distichs, which focus on persons, then places, is a descending hierarchy, the first line describing a cosmic principle; the second and third lines, divine beings and an extraordinary man; and the last line, ordinary people:

COSMIC PRINCIPLE

GODS AND AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN

ORDINARY PEOPLE

{ special favour
no special favour

Inmortalis mortalis si foret fas flere,
Flerent divae Camenae Naevium poetam.
Itaque postquam est Orchi traditus thesauro,
Obliti sunt Romae loquier lingua Latina.

The workings of that cosmic order are clear. The singular men, like Naevius, depend for their inspiration on the gods who specially favour them and with whom they, somehow, interact; ordinary people depend for their inspiration on the extraordinary men. That, of course, is a social vision of a kind perfectly familiar in Roman society, in which the *patres* saw to the gods and the government, and the people looked to the *patres*. In short, the aesthetic cosmology of the epigram exactly parallels the political cosmology.

Or rather one particular political cosmology; for this is a very particular one, in which the flow of energy comes from the top down. Here there is no hint of the *vox populi* or

⁵⁵ For discussion and recent bibliography, see P. Kruschwitz, *Carmina Saturnia epigraphica: Einleitung, Text und Kommentar zu den Saturnischen Versinschriften* (2002), 108–15.

⁵⁶ Thus 'hunc oino ploirume **cosentiont** R[omai] | duonoro optumo fuise viro | Luciom Scipione' (L. Cornelius Scipio cos. 259; *CIL* I² 8, 9 = Bücheler *CLE* 6), 'consol censor aidilis quei fuit **apud vos**' (L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, cos. 298; *CIL* I² 6, 7 = Bücheler *CLE* 6), 'hunc unum plurimae **consentiant** gentes | populi primarium fuisse virum' (A. Atilius Calatinus, cos. 258, 254; *FPL* 7).

of the lively and even abusive spirit sometimes attributed to the real Naevius. Here, rather, is the air of an aristocracy both confident and realistic. On the one hand, extraordinary men are like the gods — creators and guarantors of the order of things. On the other hand, if gods and extraordinary men occupy analogous positions, that does not mean that the gods and men are equivalent. In particular, death attaches to men, even favoured men like Naevius, as not to gods. The poem is unwilling to void the *foedera naturae*, as happened, in the rhetoric of praise anyway, for the Hellenistic god-kings — or even for the Roman conquerors of the second century, as eventually for Augustus and, of course, his successors. The epigram is thus closely parallel to another poem both confident and realistic in its aristocratic worldview, Horace's first Roman Ode. Gods and extraordinary men occupy analogous positions: 'regum timendorum in proprios greges, | reges in ipsos imperium est Iovis' 'Fearful kings over their own flocks wield power — and over the kings, Jupiter' (C. 3.1.5–6). But richer or more popular or more noble though a man may be, necessity cares not; someday his name will fall from the urn and his days be ended (3.1.9–16).⁵⁷

In short, the aesthetic cosmology of the poem mirrors quite closely a particular kind of political cosmology. There, then, is the reason for the muted Hellenism of the epitaph: the author has a political ideal in mind, and that affects him as a reader of Greek. For the author, to embrace too fully the habits of expression of the *Greek Anthology* would be, as it were, to endorse an alien view of politics — virtually, an alien political theology. If, within the context of the well-worked idioms of Greek literature, the precious conceits of the *Greek Anthology* represent a striving for novelty and surprise, they might also be read, or perhaps misread, as implying a fantastic cosmos — the world of Ovid, to put it anachronistically — where gods mingle with men, the laws of nature are inverted, and passions rend the very order of reality. The composer of the epigram has avoided endorsing any aspect of that cosmos, even as he has borrowed its conceits. A modern scholar's pithy formulation is worth recalling: 'The epicists' use of myth and legend is not a descent into fiction but their way of thinking about reality.'⁵⁸ The author of the epigram felt this power of myth keenly.

The author's political ideal affects him not only as a reader of Greek but also as a writer of Latin. It is precisely for political, even ethical, rather than strictly aesthetic or poetic reasons that, I submit, the composer was drawn to older poetic forms. Metrically the very choice of the Saturnian, obsolete by the time of the composer, sets Hellenic fantasy in a context of antique gravity. Lexically, the Hellenism *poeta*, in the epigram an inspired bard, is, so to speak, kept grounded by *Camenae* and *Orcus*, who, respectively, love him — but not too much — and perform what is required, regardless of who loves him. Perhaps most important in the ethical stance of the poem are its phonetic, syntactic and structural figures. The divine and mortal may come into contact, somehow (*Camenae Naevium*), but they do not really mix (*si foret fas flere*), for ultimately they are separate worlds (*itaque postquam*). Ennius' bold claims of inspiration are, for the author of the epigram, excessive.

As with the cosmology, the impetus — and perhaps even a model — for this last delicacy lies in the political world. The Roman ruling class did not, as a rule, claim direct individual inspiration by the gods. In the state religion the gods were approached and appeased according to accepted rituals. The *pax deorum* was like a treaty with a foreign state, overseen by the appropriate priests and conducted on fixed terms. It is natural that witches, seers and soothsayers appear in literature as figures of scorn. It is

⁵⁷ 'Est ut viro vir latius ordinet | arbusta sulcis, hic generosior | descendat in campum petitor, | moribus hic meliorque fama | contendat, illi turba clientium | sit maior: aequa lege Necessitas | sortitur insignis et imos, | omne capax movet urna nomen' (3.1.9–16).

⁵⁸ Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 163.

not merely that they belonged to popular religion; rather, they were, so to speak, the ideological opposite of the civic priest, claiming individual, unmediated contact with the divine — and for immediate personal gain.

All this posed a problem for politicians who wished to claim some special personal favour from the gods. Hence a celebrated habit of Scipio Africanus. He was said to have spent time in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus before any major decision.⁵⁹ The story has been regarded sceptically. But there is no serious reason to doubt that Scipio did exactly as reported.⁶⁰ The artfulness of the gesture has not been stressed:⁶¹ it is both bold and restrained. Scipio grandly claimed inspiration — but not directly, only by implication. That stands in contrast to the other stories of Scipio's enjoyment of divine favour. His patent excellences attracted the usual sort of story that his birth had been attended by favourable omens (*de vir. illustr.* 49.1); these are plainly legendary. Less plainly legendary, and perhaps containing a grain of truth, is Scipio's claim, before the assault on New Carthage, to have been visited in a dream by Neptune, who suggested a plan and promised aid.⁶² The implication of divine favour by juxtaposition, on the other hand, reflects, if not perfect modesty, still a certain restraint, and for that reason, it seems to me, is very likely to be true. The unknown author of *de viris illustribus* seems to have appreciated the subtlety: 'quasi divinam mentem acciperet' 'as if he were receiving divine inspiration'. Gellius' account has a similar phrase: 'quasi consultantem de republica cum Iove' 'as if consulting Jupiter about politics'. This is the very balance of the epitaph, which implies close personal contact without being too precise about the mechanism.⁶³

The author of the epigram has thus in his own way anticipated the modern discussion. Ennius' confident claims of improvement shaped older literary histories into teleologies, seeing successive generations of poets as producing improvements on the path to some notionally perfect Hellenized poetic form.⁶⁴ Recent scholarship has complicated this simple picture. Verse of the *vates* the Saturnian may have been, but it could be a vivid and subtle metre, its literary version more artful than its inscriptional versions.⁶⁵ Even the oldest inscriptional Saturnians, for all their antique morphology, show the distinct influence of Greek epigram, thoughtfully adapted as an instrument of self-presentation⁶⁶. Livius' *Camenae* need not be taken as clumsy nativism but may be seen as an ingenious act of cultural translation:⁶⁷ the *Camenae*, like the Muses, were linked to springs and spoke clear truths.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Liv. 26.19.5, Gellius 6.1.6, *de vir. illustr.* 49.3.

⁶⁰ On the Scipio legend generally and the likelihood of his temple visits, cf. H. H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician* (1970), 18–23.

⁶¹ Livy appreciated Scipio's attempt to shape a public persona: in his analysis, not only was Scipio remarkable because of the virtues he really did possess, but he also carefully contrived to put them on display ('arte ... quadam ab iuventa in ostentationem earum [sc. virtutum] compositus', 26.19.3). Livy attributes the credence given to legends of Scipio's divine birth to this habit of self-display (26.19.6–7).

⁶² The incident is much discussed; see the references in F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 2 (1967), 196; Scullard, *op. cit.* (n. 60), 19.

⁶³ There is perhaps a much earlier parallel in Numa's alleged contacts with Egeria, but it is hard to know how the gesture would have been parsed; Livy's report is sceptical: 'qui [sc. Numa] cum descendere ad animos sine aliquo commento miraculi non posset, simulat sibi cum dea Egeria congressus nocturnos esse; eius se monitu, quae acceptissima diis essent, sacra instituere, sacerdotes suos cuique deorum praeficere' (Liv. 1.19.5). Cf. 'quo quia se persaepe Numa sine arbitris velut ad congressum deae inferebat, Camenis eum lucum sacravit, quod earum ibi concilia cum coniuge sua Egeria essent' (1.21.3); Cic., *Leg.* 1.4.

⁶⁴ Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16); Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 46), 52–98.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the aesthetics of the Saturnian, Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 58–82.

⁶⁶ van Sickle, *op. cit.* (n. 10).

⁶⁷ cf. also Hinds, *op. cit.* (n. 46), 60: 'Is it really self-evident that it marks an *advance* in Hellenizing innovation to transliterate a Greek goddess into the Roman alphabet rather than to seek an Italian cultural analogue to render her in her new context?'

⁶⁸ cf. J. H. Waszink, 'Camena', *C&M* 17 (1956), 139–48. The *Camenae*, properly, were goddesses of a spring, meadow and grove below the Caelian hill (cf. Suerbaum, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 32–3; 303–4 with lit.). One of them, Egeria, was the nymph who was said to have inspired King Numa (Liv. 1.19.5, 1.21.3).

Much of this more recent criticism shares an approach: aiming not to judge texts better or worse adaptations of their Greek counterparts nor to locate them along an evolutionary path to some ideal literary form, but to appreciate the deliberate creative choices of individual poets in rendering Greek texts and considering prior Latin ones. For there were always choices to be made, on every level of language — choices of syntax, semantics, lexicon, and even of morphology and phonology, to say nothing of metre, genre, and theme. To aim to appreciate these choices is to sympathize with a poet in the act of creation — an act of imagination that, if it has only recently gained broader currency in the critique of older poets, is the stock in trade of critics who read Vergil against Homer and the Alexandrian poets and later hexameter poets against Vergil.

The author of the Naevius epigram strikingly anticipates the stance of modern critics. He did not see Naevius as an 'archaic' author whose technique was to be avoided as being out of fashion; he did not see poetry as tending towards some perfection. Instead he attempted to appreciate archaic poetry on its own terms. He did not reject its phonetic play as the doggerel of seers but understood that patterns of sound, far from surface decoration, were a part of the way such poetry produced meaning, even as in his own time that technique was doubtless falling out of favour. He saw that the act of translation was a matter not only of translating, still less transliterating, but of considering how the translated product fits in a different cultural context. The implicit critique he thus produces is not literary in the modern sense; rather, as I have argued, he sees literature through the lens of ideal political life. Still, in my view, his sensitivity to literary choice is quite that of a modern critic's, and some measure of sensitivity to his own choices is required to understand his short but very rich reflection on the nature of Latin poetics.

V CONCLUSION

Both the poetic and the political positions of the text are thus very distinctive. What is more, they reveal many tensions — or rather, a delicate balance. Poetically, the epigram exploits the structural effects of the oldest Latin verse (quite like those in Cato's prayer) and fills them out with complex phonetic play (like that in Ennius' tragic choruses). From that point of view the technique of the epigram is both conservative and innovative. The same holds for the political or social orientation of the text. The epitaph expresses the confidence of an aristocracy by adapting the idioms of Greek poetry, but not without restraint, honouring the power of death and not allowing itself elaborate flights of fancy — a culturally conservative moderation. The epigram shares Ennius' bold phonetic technique but not his poetic stance.

To put all this another way, whereas the epigram plainly borrows from the idioms of the *Anthology*, the epigram is not so aesthetically Greek as not to be socially Roman, but neither so hidebound, aesthetically or socially, as to scorn the novelties made possible by Greek literature. The epigram is not so innovative as to reject the past, nor so archaizing as to be closed to adaptation and innovation. In that regard the epigram is perfectly emblematic of — and something of a solution to — the cultural struggles of the later second century, which scholars, on other grounds, have argued is the true date of composition. The epitaph is balanced quite exquisitely between old and new, and between Roman and Greek. It steers a middle course between indulgent and aggressive Hellenism and staunch and uncompromising conservatism.

Or, to be more precise, the epitaph turns Naevius himself into a figure for the resolution of these various tensions. The Naevius that the poem projects does have some resemblance to the real Naevius. In adapting the machinery of Greek epic he kept an eye on the Roman

social political world.⁶⁹ But this is not a special distinction of Naevius and is not the issue of the poem. In the poem Naevius becomes a kind of a symbolic figure, and that makes Naevius' epigram an epigram, not for the death of a man, but for the dying of a way of poetry embodied in the technique of the epitaph. The epigram is not unsophisticated in any sense of the word. It displays exquisite formal control — and that not for its own sake, a technical *tour de force* (though that it is), but to the end of representing the expressive power of a particular set of techniques and of asserting a very particular view of the nature and rôle of the poet and, indeed, of the society in which he worked. But Roman literary technique took a different direction. Poets came to value formal control, not of a traditional Italic kind, but of a thoroughly Greek kind — 'the *munditiae* of the hexameter'⁷⁰ — which generally eschewed phonetic effects and occasionally rough, but vigorous, metre. It would be wrong to say Roman literary technique 'developed', as if Vergil were the *telos*: on the contrary, the epigram for Naevius — and, indeed, much of Ennius' tragedies and *Annales* — illustrates what might have been possible, if the old techniques had continued to be molded into a vehicle for the expression of novel content. In that sense, after Naevius — and after Plautus and Ennius — the Romans really did forget how to speak Latin. The epigram on Naevius' death, an entirely appropriate vehicle for the task, can be no other than a later poet's reflection on — and of — precisely that shift.⁷¹

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⁶⁹ cf. e.g. Goldberg, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 162–3.

⁷⁰ Skutsch, *op. cit.* (n. 45), 79.

⁷¹ On the invention of grave epigrams, see Dahlmann, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 65–100, who compiles evidence for the practice of concluding the *vita* of a literary figure with such an epigram, some of which are plainly literary fictions.