Ioannis Ziogas

Introduction: Power, Puns, and Politics From Horace to Silius Italicus

Wordplay is intricately enmeshed with powerplay in Latin language and poetry. The meaning of the Latin *uis* ranges from political power and physical violence to the significance and etymology of words. Unpacking the latent potential of words is to activate the entire scope of their semantic force. Take, for instance, Ovid's wordplay on *uis* in the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. In introducing her tale, Alcithoe, Ovid's internal narrator, promises to explain the origins of Salmacis, the spring whose waters had an emasculating force: *causa latet, uis est notissima fontis, Metamorphoses* 4.287 ('the cause is hidden, the power of the fountain is well- known'). [1] The ability of the spring to incapacitate men is notorious and behind its debilitating power lies the significance of the infamous lake *Salmacis*, a byword for weak and effeminate persons (see Cicero, *de Officiis* 1.61.9, quoting Ennius 347 Jocelyn). We can translate the line as 'the cause is hidden, the meaning of the fountain is well-known'. As is often the case, etiological narratives (*causa*) unfold vis-à-vis the origins and significance of words. And Alcithoe, whose name is semantically related to ἀλκή ('strength' 'force') and θοός ('quick' 'nimble'), is a particularly appropriate narrator for explaining the verbal and physical force of Salmacis' running waters.[2]

Frederick Ahl has analyzed the tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in his *Metaformations*, focusing on the ways in which changes in the shape of words or syllables coexist with changes in bodily shape (Ahl 1985: 239 – 44). The power of wordplay can shift from lexical to physical violence, depriving men of their virility. One needs to be aware of the power of words when swimming in the murky waters of Latin etymologizing. One of Ahl's major contributions to classical scholarship is his study of wordplay not as mere poetic ornament or display of Alexandrian learning but as fundamental to the politics of Latin poetry.[3] Instead of demarcating the limits of etymologizing, Ahl has opened new horizons

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1 Similarly to Ovid's *causa latet*, Strabo (14.2.16) notes the uncertainty about the origins of the spring's reputation (ἡ Σαλμακὶς κρήνη, διαβεβλημένη **οὐκ οἶδ' ὁπόθεν** ὡς μαλακίζουσα τοὺς πιόντας ἀπ' αὐτῆς 'the fountain Salmacis, slandered, **I don't know for what reason**, because it supposedly makes effeminate those who drink from it'). While the geographer dismisses this superstitious belief, whatever its origin, Ovid is interested in revealing the mythological *aition*.
2 Ahl is a pioneer in arguing that internal narrators are significant for interpreting embedded narratives. See Ahl (1985) 202 – 3; (1989).
3 See especially Ahl (1985) 64 – 99 and *passim*.

in examining how wordplay's inherent power for ambiguity and polysemy can destabilize the advertised certainties of authoritarian regimes. The use of puns for political purposes does not proclaim itself from the topmost levels of the narrative. It is rather, like so much of the art of Latin poetry, concealed. Not unlike a skilled sculptor, a poet versed in wordplay engraves (*caelare*) by concealing (*celare*) his art (cf. Ahl 1985: 64–9). Etymological wordplay is related to what Ahl calls the art of veiled speech and safe criticism (Ahl 1984a), yet it is a fascinating paradox that etymologizing is simultaneously associated with unveiling the truth. Etymology (from ἔτυμος 'true') lays a claim to disclosing the true power of words by tracing their original meaning; it is the art of authoritative derivations and that is why etymological wordplay is a trope of authorial powerplay.

The power of wordplay to undermine proclaimed certainties can be seen in the following lines from Ovid's *Fasti:*

> *assidet inde Ioui, Iouis est fidissima custos,*
> *   et praestat sine ui sceptra timenda Ioui.*
> *Fasti* 5.45–6
>
> She (*Maiestas*) sits by Jove, is Jove's most loyal guardian, preserves Jove's dread scepter without violence.

The Muse Polyhymnia is the speaker of these lines, in an episode in which the Muses contest the etymology of May (*Fasti* 5.1–110). For Polyhymnia, *Maius* derives from *Maiestas*, Ovid's daring personification of a key term under Augustus.[4] As a Muse that gives a Romanized version of Hesiod's *Theogony*, starting from chaos and ending with Romulus, Polyhymnia can be seen as praising Augustus' Jovian regime.[5] Her name suggests her generic affiliations with hymns and by extoling Jupiter's majesty she fulfils the role of her Hesiodic counterparts (*Theogony* 36–7).[6] At the same time, her Roman universe is an improved version of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Polyhymnia's statement that *Maiestas* is seated next to Jupiter *sine ui* is a revision of Hesiod, who had Bie ('Power') and Kratos ('Strength') sit by Zeus (πὰρ Ζηνὶ βαρυκτύπῳ ἐδριόωντα, *Theogony* 388 'Bie and Kratos sit beside loud-thundering Zeus'). *Maiestas* is enough for Jupiter/Augustus, who does not have to rely on force or violence once he prevailed upon his enemies

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4 On Julius Caesar's and Augustus' redefinitions of the republican value of *maiestas populi Romani* as integral to this episode of the *Fasti*, see Mackie (1992). On *Maiestas* in this episode, see also Pasco-Pranger (2006) 228–40.

5 On Polyhymnia and Hesiod, see Fantham (1985) 267–8; Boyd (2000) 66–71; Labate (2005) 196–8.

6 On Polyhymnia's affiliation with hymn, see Barchiesi (1991) 10.

and restored order. The hymnic polyptoton (*Ioui, Iouis...Ioui*) further adds to the solemnity of Polyhymnia's panegyric.

Yet in this laudatory passage, wordplay creeps in like a virus infecting imperial propaganda. The very august repetition of *Ioui, Iouis, Ioui* suggests that there is actually *uis* in *Iouis*; that it is paradoxical, almost absurd, to deprive Jove of his violence.[7] While Polyhymnia declares that her Jove rules without violent guardians, wordplay tells an entirely different story.[8] The gerundive *timenda*, tellingly yet unconvincingly emended by some to *tenenda*, further suggests that a scepter to be feared is barely a scepter wielded without violence. In fact, the issue of fear and freedom of speech is suggested by the very presence of *Maiestas*. Under Augustus, the law of *maiestas* extended to include libel and slander against the emperor.[9] And the punishment and consequences for verbally injuring the *princeps*' majesty were powerful and violent.[10] The hymn to *Maiestas* can be read as a covert comment on imperial censorship since it raises the question of how sincere a hymn to the divine incarnation of repression could be. [11] A poet whose freedom of speech is legally constrained can resort to wordplay, to the inherent power of words to defy imperial definitions, their playful potential for endless deferral. By punning on *Iouis-uis*, Ovid plays with the meaning of *uis* as physical violence and semantic force. In other words, *uis* as the basis of the wordplay draws attention to itself, to the semantic relation of *uis* with etymologizing. A Jove with guardians *sine ui* is an insignificant Jove, a Jove without meaning. Ovid's ingeniously self-reflexive pun highlights the paradox of his Muse's imperial declaration and undermines her authority. Wordplay exposes Polyhymnia's laudatory meaning to a causality that remains external to the speaking voice and thus destabilizes it. As Paul Allen Miller (2004: 161) puts it, every pun in Ovid reveals not a hidden truth but another series of double meanings that reflects back on itself to create a depthless *mise-en-abyme*.

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7 My reading here is inspired by Ahl (1985) 144 – 5, who argues that the wordplay between *uis* and *Iouis* is key to interpreting the story of Io in the *Metamorphoses*, the nymph who suffers from Jupiter's violence in a tale that forces us to interpret *Iouis* as a combination of *Io* and *uis*; Jove's name signifies the violence done to Io. Cf. Hinds (2006) 5 – 9 on the etymological wordplay on *Venus* and *uis*.

8 As Hinds (2006) 5 puts it, "etymological word-plays can unfix poetic meaning just as effectively as they can fix it."

9 Under Augustus' *lex Iulia maiestatis* (*Digest* 48.4; Suetonius, *Augustus* 55; Tacitus, *Annales* 1.72.2 – 73) allegedly subversive works became an act of treason.

10 The works of Ovid, Titus Labienus, and Cassius Severus were banned under Augustus. Ovid and Cassius Severus were banished, while Labienus committed suicide.

11 On the issue of free speech under the principate as central to the *Fasti*, see Feeney (1992).

In this volume, all the contributors have taken as their point of departure critical issues that have been at the center of Frederick Ahl's scholarship, especially how Latin poets employ linguistic tropes, in order to shape, reshape, deconstruct, and reconstruct the Roman world.[12] The volume covers a representative number of poets, whose works are intricately engaged with the Roman sociopolitical milieu. From Horace to Silius Italicus, all the poets under discussion have been the focus of Ahl's contributions to interpreting the deeply political nature of Latin poetry within the larger culture of imperial Rome. Critics point out that Latin poetry does not comment on politics from some distant vantage point, but is a political factor.[13] This approach does justice to poetry's power to form and not just comment on political realities, but still leaves open the question of whether poetic authority supports, undermines or competes with imperial power.

In answering this question, the contributors to this volume do not follow a uniform line of inquiry, but examine issues of poetic authority from various angles and draw different conclusions. Adopting a one-sided reading of poetic works whose political allegiance or defiance is notoriously hard to pin down would do injustice both to the poets under discussion and to our honorandus. Against the background of Ahl's pioneering work in interpreting the politics of Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, aka *Pharsalia* (Ahl 1976), Joy Connolly reads Lucan's epic not as a commentary on imperial politics but as a direct participant in constructions of political reality. Building of Mbembe's analysis of reiterative violence in postcolonial politics (Mbembe 2001), Connolly argues that the corrupt Romans of Lucan's iconoclastic epic are enamored with violent tyrants that wield dehumanizing power. Paradoxically, the obscene, the grotesque, and the absurd do not undermine totalitarian regimes but create a bond between tyrants and their subjects, between the sublime and the ridiculous. While acknowledging the farcical dimension of Lucan's praise of Nero, Connolly argues that the grotesque supports oppressive rulers instead of undermining tyranny.

The diversity of political interpretations in this volume is exemplified in the approaches of contributors who point out that Latin poets shift the onus of political interpretation from themselves to their readers. In his analysis of Horace's *Ode* 2.10, for instance, Alex Dressler concludes that it is up to the reader to pick a side and make Horace a member of the opposition against Augustus. Similarly, double speak and ambiguity forces Ovid's readers to choose whether the *Ars Amatoria* reforms or endorses Augustan legislation. Ovid can have it both ways, but

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12 See, for instance, Ahl (1984a); (1984b).
13 See, e.g., Kennedy (1992); cf. Feldherr (2010) 7 and *passim*.

his readers can hardly escape from a partisan interpretation (see Ioannis Ziogas). In Statius' *Siluae* 5.1, the poetics of imitation and representation dazzle the reader who is left to ponder the cognitive dissonance of excessive exemplarity (Martha Malamud). In a truly Ovidian fashion, Statius' poetry appropriates the imperial power to reshape reality through spectacle. Yet the identification of poetry with the imperial projections of illusory reality still leaves a crucial question open for the reader to decide: Does Statius expose the artificiality of this imperial mechanism or does he contribute to the authentication of imperial fantasies? Along those lines, Erica Bexley examines the stakes involved in reading and interpreting poetry in Seneca's *Oedipus*, who is cast both as a reader of poetry and a subject of interpretation. Bexley analyzes the tyrant's futile attempts to monopolize meaning and his downfall as a result of poetic ambiguity that lies beyond his control. Seneca's Oedipus can ultimately caution the readers or audience of the tragedy against interpretative bias.

Poetic ambiguity and interpretative indeterminacy can put the reader in the position of a paranoid tyrant such as Oedipus (see Dressler, Bexley). Paranoia becomes the default, if not the ideal, way of interpreting poetry under authoritarian regimes that suppress the freedom of expression.[14] Peter Davis examines the loss of *libertas*, this most valuable ideal of the Roman Republic, in the last years of Augustus' rule. Imperial censorship and the dangers involved in potentially subversive works define the interpretative parameters of the works under discussion in this volume. The hermeneutics of suspicion spread from insecure tyrants to their subjects and still affect the way we interpret Latin imperial poetry. Joshua Katz wonders whether the acronym he traces at Vergil's *Georgics* 2.475 (*M-VER-P*) is an authorial signature (Publius Vergilius Maro reversed) or an over-interpretation. Similarly, we can read the Mantuan Ocnus (from ὄκνος 'delay' 'hesitation') at *Aeneid* 10.198–203 as a figure of Vergil, whose cognomen *Maro* is an anagram of *mora* (see Jay Reed). Hidden acronyms that cover the author's identity in a self-referential gesture that waits to be decoded by attentive readers have always been the material of conspiracy theory, but the examples of authorial acronyms that Katz discusses provocatively suggest that the world of Latin poetry may not be entirely divorced from the world of political conspiracy (cf. Dressler).

The authorial powerplay in etymologies, puns, anagrams, telestichs, and acronyms features prominently in this volume (see Jay Reed, Emily Gowers, Michael Fontaine, Mathias Hanses, John Fitch). Jay Reed examines the deep thematic, verbal, narrative, and political interconnections between *Roma*, *amor*, and *mora* in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Far from being frivolous wordplay, this anagrammat-

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14 Cf. Hinds (2007).

ic nexus is central to the *Aeneid*'s narrative and imperial dynamics, which revolve around a passion for the foundation of Rome that bypasses the ominous delays of amorous inertia. Following Ahl's insightful connection of anagrammatic wordplay with semantic pluralism, Reed examines the polysemy of the *mora-amor-Roma* complex, a nexus whose significance depends on how one defines the terms under discussion and how internal and external readers focalize the narrative of Vergil's epic. Mathias Hanses traces a hitherto unnoticed telestich in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 3.507–10 that reflects the *Amor-Roma* palindromic wordplay of Roman graffiti. Similarly to Reed's chapter on the *Aeneid*, Hanses examines the anagrammatic cluster of *Amor-Roma-mora* in the *Ars Amatoria* and the ways in which anagrams and telestichs revolve around the ways in which *amor* has conquered *Roma*, a tension that is set against a generic interaction between martial epic and love elegy.

The issue of focalization, characterization, and the emotional state of internal and external narrators is the key to interpreting Vergilian wordplay according to Michael Fontaine. Arguing against the Freudian psychoanalytic model, Fontaine zooms in on Vergilian narrative, in order to interpret puns not as errors but as psycholinguistic instances of emotional self-consciousness. By focusing on puns' associations with guilt, the self-conscious emotion par excellence, Fontaine finds the notions of the unconscious inadequate in interpreting the significance of puns in Vergil and other Latin poets. Freudian slips give way to "Fredian" slips that tie these linguistic features to the narrative of empire.

Similarly to Reed and Fontaine, Emily Gowers further explores the potential of soundplay and wordplay to enrich Vergil's narrative by containing one meaning within another in an almost infinite series. The metamorphic power of wordplay turns Dido into *bubo* ('owl'), an ominous bird that forebodes death. The fantasies of avian transformations merge with Dido's metamorphosis into an avenger, which is fulfilled in Roman history with Hannibal. Birdcalls are cast as foreign speech, an imperialistic and Romanocentric perception of Dido's bird transformation. The unfulfilled potential of a narrative of desertion, exile, gender bending, and escape through avian transformation lurks behind Dido's semantic and sonic similarities with the owl. In Reed's, Gowers', and Hanses' papers, the poetics of Latin wordplay is inseparable from Roman politics.

Just as wordplay is integral to Vergil's narrative dynamics, etymologies of proper names are significant in Senecan drama. John Fitch examines instances of speaking names in Seneca in an attempt to interpret their function in the fabric of Seneca's tragedies and further tackle the question of whether the playwright intended these etymological wordplays. Fitch's systematic analysis of Seneca's etymologizing of proper names is related to Bexley's arguments about the powerplay and consequences involved in etymologizing Oedipus'

name in Seneca's tragedy. The question whether an etymology really is there may never be answered adequately (cf. Katz) but that is why the search for the significance of proper names is all the more fascinating. The discovery and interpretation of etymological wordplay implicates audience and characters in constructing meaning that has the potential of empowering or debilitating them.

Far from simply referring without signifying, a proper name is highly significant in literature. By focusing on the name Laelius in Lucan, Matthew Leigh argues that the speech of Lucan's centurion alludes to his namesake in Cicero's *De Amicitia*. Leigh examines the narrative and political implications of Laelius' speaking name (cf. Fitch). The Ciceronian intertext sharply contrasts with the value system of Lucan's centurion, who is ready to put Caesar above any form of Roman *pietas* (cf. Connolly's discussion on Laelius' attraction to power and the reiterative violence that underpins it). The junior officer rebukes his superior in a striking twist of Republican *libertas/parrhesia* (cf. Peter Davis) and his speech succeeds in inspiring a perverted passion for action and thus putting an end to delay and hesitation (cf. Reed). While Martha Malamud sees imitation as a form of *pietas*, Leigh reads Lucan's Laelius as the embodiment of impiety against the Ciceronian intertext.

Leigh's chapter shows how a speaking name can function as an intertextual marker, activating a dialogue with an important philosophical source. Far from being merely a literary game, intertextuality is an author's way of claiming mastery and control over tradition. Intertextual allusions are meaningful as appeals to previous authority or as polemical subversions of established norms. While intertextual references are often a trope of authorial constructions, their allusive nature shifts once more the onus of interpreting them from authors to readers. Malamud examines the potentially subversive and multilayered nature of intertextual references in Statius, while Arthur Pomeroy argues that Silius' references to Homer are culturally and politically charged since they are related to the classicism of the Flavian era. Peter Davis similarly examines the Roman concerns with freedom of speech against the Iliadic intertext.

Similarly to Peter Davis, Martha Malamud, and Arthur Pomeroy, David Konstan shows how Greek myth can allude to Roman politics by interpreting the subversive potential of Domitian's comparisons with Achilles in Statius' *Achilleid*. The transvestite Achilles recalls Domitian's similar disguise in the garb of a follower of Isis. Even though a comparison with Achilles should in principle be flattering for Domitian, Konstan argues that such a parallel may actually emphasize Domitian's mortality and his forbidden deification. Achilles is also the focus of Michael Putnam's chapter, which examines the ways in which Vergil's allusions to Catullus 64 contribute to Aeneas' characterization. The Catullan intertext opens a window to reading Dido as the abandoned Ariadne (cf. Gowers)

and Aeneas as Theseus. The figure of Achilles from Catullus' *epyllion* influences the representation of Aeneas at key moments in the *Aeneid*. In particular, the wrath and brutality of Catullus' Achilles are transferred to Vergil's Aeneas. The ferocious and pitiless Achilles from Catullus 64, who is responsible for the sacrifice of a helpless female victim (Polyxena), also colors not only Aeneas' relationship to Dido, who in turn becomes a type of Polyxena, a victim of Aeneas' Achillean journey toward Rome, but also the final act of the raging Aeneas, the sacrifice of Turnus.

Just as Achilles is an alter ego of Domitian in Statius (Konstan), Aeneas and Achilles may reflect back on the emperor Augustus in Vergil. Such a comparison would bring to the fore the ambiguities in casting Achilles as a model warrior and ruler. The inherent tension in the figure of Achilles throughout the history of Greco-Roman literature to be both virtuous and cruel, a saver of comrades' lives and responsible for countless deaths of his companions, an exemplary mortal of honest deeds and a semi-divine being of dangerous passions makes the best of the Achaeans a particularly useful figure for poets writing under the Roman Empire.[15] Achilles is an excellent model for composing poetry that can be interpreted both as apparent praise and veiled criticism of Roman emperors.[16]

The plurality of political interpretations of Latin poetry in this volume is exemplified by reading Michael Putnam's chapter vis-à-vis Gregson Davis' contribution. Even though the raging Aeneas is modeled on Achilles' vengeful wrath and cruelty when he kills the suppliant Turnus and thus the final episode of the *Aeneid* casts a dark shadow on the Augustan value of *clementia*, Gregson Davis argues that Aeneas' angry outburst is consistent with the Roman value system and evokes concepts of *ira* in Epicurean thought. For Gregson Davis, Aeneas' righteous anger contributes to his *pietas*. Vergil ultimately places his hero in the Augustan context of Mars Ultor. However such a pro-Augustan reading of the *Aeneid* may contrast with Ahl's interpretation of the poem, Gregson Davis examines the influence of Epicurean philosophy on Vergil, an aspect of the *Aeneid* on which Ahl comments repeatedly in his richly annotated translation.[17] Reading

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15 On this tension in the character of Achilles, see King (1987). Ovid may be picking up on this tension when he represents Augustus as another Achilles in *Tristia* 2.19–22, where the exiled poet becomes himself an abject Telephus in need of healing from the one who dealt the wound. Again, at *Metamorphoses* 15.856, Augustus is brought into comparison with Achilles, perhaps in relation to their shared divine status, but also in view of the (divine) anger they partake in.
16 Cf. Ahl (1984a); (1984b).
17 Cf. in particular Ahl (2007) 338, his comment on inclemency and impiety in Epicurean philosophy. See also Ahl (2007) 356, 357, 374. Ahl's commentary on the *Aeneid* is avidly anticipated.

the different approaches to the final scene of the *Aeneid* in this volume demonstrates the kaleidoscopic nature of Vergil's epic. Depending on the critical perspective, whether it is wordplay (Fontaine), intertext (Putnam) or philosophy (Gregson Davis), the death of Turnus is invested with different political resonances.

Philosophy plays an important role in the politics of defining ideals and redefining the significance of words. Etymologizing, for instance, was closely associated with Stoic philosophy in Rome. While Gregson Davis examines Epicurean definitions of *ira* in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Michèle Lowrie analyzes the Stoic background to civil war imagery in Seneca's *Thyestes*, focusing on the choral ode in 547–622. Lowrie's analysis complements Leigh's study of how the various forms of *pietas* problematize the politics of civil war and family conflict, which in turn relates to Gregson Davis' philosophical examination of Aeneas' *pietas*. For Lowrie, the political and philosophical dimension of civil war is not linked to the tumultuous era of Nero. Instead, Lowrie argues that the ode is a characteristic example of Roman political thought, which tends to project internal and familial conflict to a cosmic scale. By focusing on the politics of Senecan tragedy without limiting her research to Nero (see also Bexley), Lowrie traces obsessions and patterns of Roman political thought that exceed the immediate historical context (cf. Rhiannon Ash on Tacitus' interest on the immediate political context of poetic composition and performance). To the externalization of inner conflict, we may add the blurring of the private and public spheres, which Ioannis Ziogas sees as fundamental in the clash between Augustan legislation and Ovidian elegy, but is also a source of tension in Roman politics overall.

Philosophy and politics are the focus of Matthew McGowan's chapter, which deals with the recurring motif of exile in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in particular in the tale of Pythagoras and Numa. Pythagoras, an exiled philosopher who advocated the continuous reincarnation of souls, is closely related not only to the poetics of transformation in the *Metamorphoses* but also to the realities of Ovid's exile. The transmigration of the souls provides the exiled poet with the means of escape from the imperial constraints of his banishment. Such an approach complements Gowers' reading of Dido's avian transformation as a trope of exile and liberation from political, ethnic, and gendered restrictions. McGowan examines the legal background to the teachings of Pythagoras and Numa, Rome's second king whose name was etymologized from νόμος ('law').[18] Just as Pythagoras is the teacher of Numa in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid instructs

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[18] For the etymological connection between *Numa* and νόμος, see Maltby (1991) *s.v.*

the Romans about the recent legal reforms. McGowan's chapter raises issues that Ziogas examines in his paper, which argues that the *praeceptor amoris* in the *Ars Amatoria* acts as a legal authority by teaching Romans about love, a topic legally prescribed by recent imperial legislation. Ovid is simultaneously a teacher of law and love. In an ineluctable collision between poet and emperor, Augustus intrudes into the bedrooms of Roman citizens, while the elegiac *praeceptor* attempts to regulate sex, thus stepping into imperial territory. Elegy attempts to establish transgressive desire as the superior law. The legal dimension of love examined in this chapter can be read vis-à-vis Connolly's analysis of violence in the *Pharsalia*. Amatory passion in Ovid and violence in Lucan rename crime as law. Ziogas further traces Acontius' expertise in law (*Heroides* 20) against the profile of love elegy as a discourse of instruction and seduction. Acontius' letter legalizes elegiac love and ratifies literary tradition by casting sources as legal documents. This chapter reads allusion as a trope of authorization of previous texts and is thus related to the intertextual analyses of Michael Putnam, Peter Davis, Matthew Leigh, David Konstan, Martha Malamud, and Arthur Pomeroy.

In a collection focusing on the fundamental confluence of poetics and politics, Michael Paschalis' interpretation of Calpurnius Siculus' *Eclogues* stands out as an attempt to distinguish the political from the pastoral. For Paschalis, the crucial difference between Vergil's and Calpurnius' *Eclogues* is that while Vergil's bucolic poetry signals the conjunction of the pastoral and political world, Calpurnius organizes his collection on the basis of an antithesis between bucolic and panegyric. In contrast with Vergil, Calpurnius dissociates the lowly world of singing shepherds from the politics and poetics of imperial Rome.

It is the premise of the volume that the context of composition and reception defines interpretation.[19] In this respect, Rhiannon Ash's chapter on how Tacitus represents poets in his work picks out some important features of this collection. Tacitus is not interested in poets that live and create in a political vacuum, but is fascinated with the contexts of composition, performance, and reception. The poets in Tacitus are actively involved in the powerplay of the Roman politics. The immediate sociopolitical dynamics and performative parameters play a crucial role in constructing poetic voices as dissenting or supportive of the status quo. The context of performance becomes an issue of life and death. In a principate notoriously shaped by display (see also Malamud), showing can be more significant than telling (see also Bexley). Tacitus provocatively suggests that the framework of reception is more important than the very contents of poetic texts.

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19 On the hermeneutics of reception in Latin poetry, see Martindale (1992).

The volume comes out of a conference titled "*Ars Latet Arte Sua:* Speaking to Power in Latin and Greek Literature", which was organized in honor of Frederick Ahl at Cornell University in September 7–8, 2013. While the conference at Cornell had a wider purview, for the sake of a unified volume we restricted the topic to Latin poetry and invited a range of scholars not necessarily identified with Ahl, but all influenced by his readings and all engaging with his scholarship. In our view, one of the best ways to honor Ahl is to disagree with him and we trust that our "Fredschrift" is far from being a typical Festschrift. We should acknowledge, however, that in a volume aiming to honor a scholar as influential and diverse as Frederick Ahl, there will be inevitable gaps. In our attempt to achieve thematic coherence, we did not invite contributions on Greek poetry and comparative literature, even though Ahl's impact on these fields is well known. It is also well known that Ahl's translations of Sophocles, Vergil, and Seneca are proof that he is not only a scholar but also a poet.[20] The contributors to this volume could not match his unique skill in translating, but it should be noted that several of them (e. g. Reed, Gowers, Fontaine, Bexley) point out that in Ahl's translations lies a wealth of critical insights along with the beauty of poetry.

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20 Ahl (1986); (2007); (2008).

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