Seeing (not) seeing: the phenomenology of deviant standpoint as a function of gender and class in Paulinus of Nola, *Poems 18*

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In all revolutions there are some members of the privileged class who join the revolutionary class, and some oppressed individuals who remain loyal to the privileged class... This is because nation or class are neither fatalities that subjugate the individual from the outside, nor for that matter values that he posits from within. They are, rather, modes of coexistence that solicit him – Merleau-Ponty 1945 (2012), 380.

1. Introduction: phenomenology, deviant standpoint, metapoetics

This paper examines a cluster of intertexts that coalesce in the late fourth century CE Christian poet Paulinus of Nola but range backwards through the classical Roman poets, Horace and Catullus, and the archaic Greek lyric poet, Sappho. Through this range of authors, I develop a phenomenological approach to literary history, using a passage from

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Paulinus (c. 18.276-80) to wrest some Marxist and feminist possibilities from the earlier, largely patriarchal and always aristocratic tradition. I base my analysis on two well-established, literary and sociological concepts. The first is the Latinist Don Fowler’s description of “deviant focalization” in Roman poetry: this describes the incursion of perspectives ostensibly opposed to that of the narrator or author – that is, moments in which the questions “Who speaks?” or “Who sees?” become complex or irresolvable. The second is the concept of “double-consciousness” used by the Hellenist John Winkler to describe the complex experience of society expressed in Sappho’s lyrics: “Because men define and exhibit their language and manners as the culture and segregate women’s language and manners as subculture... women are in the position of knowing two cultures where men know only one.” Combining the literary and sociological concepts of Fowler and Winkler in the more comprehensive discourse of phenomenology, or “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view,” I use Paulinus’ impersonation of a rural laborer to recover from ancient literature and history dimensions of consciousness of the poor and marginal. Drawing on the resources of Marxist and feminist social theory, I call the object of this analysis “standpoint” because it comprises socially situated knowledge and understanding, based in but not limited to sociohistorically subjugated positions. I describe the standpoint as “deviant” because it differs from that of the dominant subject of perception and understanding in whom it appears – in this case, the author of the poem and onetime man of property, Paulinus of Nola.

The basic theoretical premise is that the combination of deviant focalization and double-consciousness in Paulinus opens the man of property to perspectives other than his own, enabling him to “take a point of view on his point of view” and recognize the contingency and tendentiousness of his own sociohistorical position and role in cultural production. There are two indications of this surprising self-knowledge in Paulinus: the unlikely and maybe even unintentional Sapphism in his prosopopoeia of the laborer in Poems 18 and his more general personal alignment with a subclass of fourth century aristocrats who radically challenged and changed

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1 — Fowler 2000 [1991], 31-33.
3 — Smith 2018.
Roman culture. Among the wave of moderate Christians who radicalized in the late fourth century, Paulinus proceeded to revolutionize, not only Latin literature, but also the institutional history of the Latin West. Renouncing wealth and status, Paulinus liquidated his ancestral estates in Gaul and moved to the southern Italian town of Nola where he dedicated himself to the local saint, Felix, in a series of building projects incorporating charity for the poor and in a series of poems called *Natalicia,* or “death-day” poems, which he probably performed every year for an economically mixed congregation. Other members of the aristocracy undertook comparably “revolutionary” actions; only Paulinus fused his project with classical poetics. In what follows, I assign classical poetics a formative role in Paulinus’ renunciation: first, as a repository of various “Others”, women and workers, constituted in the *reception* of Sappho in the earlier Roman poets; second, as a means of using the classical tradition to modify itself, so as to represent previously un-representable subjects, through *metapoetics,* the property of verbal artifacts whereby the product specially reveals its mode of production.

As even a brief sketch of the intertext indicates, Paulinus’ Christian phenomenology of labor finds a place in Roman poetry through the classical phenomenology of erotic and above all *embodied* experience. Combining the sociological and literary concepts of Winkler and Fowler, I suggest that the peculiar markers of the intertext that we find in Paulinus’ worker derive from the “silent women of Rome”, by way

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6 — Did Paulinus ever read Sappho? Or Longinus in whom Sappho is so fatefully analyzed? In fact, for theoretical reasons, Paulinus’ first-hand acquaintance with Sappho is not only irrelevant, it is positively promising: if Sappho represents the subaltern for Paulinus, and such a subaltern as she (a speaking Greek of canonical proportions) never was in the first place, *his* ignorance of *her* and *her* persistence in *him* are the very proof of *her* acquired subalternity. By this acquisition of subalternity, in the famous formulation of post-colonial theory, Sappho ceases to be able to “speak”, becomes subaltern, and thus capable of “representing” an “other” subaltern (even sub-subaltern), the rural laborer. See further n. 50, below. I thank Philip Hardie for pressing me on this point, even if this (perhaps casuistical) response may avoid the relevant empirical question.


10 — For Paulinus’ complex attitude to that which I call for lack of a better term “the classical”, in contrast with “the Christian”, see Trout 1999, 77-89, and Mratschek 2002, 423f. On the analogous role of biblical scripture as the source of allusive metapoetics in the *Letters,* see Conybeare 2000, 111-130; see also the Introduction of Hardie (forthcoming, B).
of Catullus and Horace’s responses to Sappho, fr. 31\(^{11}\). Appropriating their erotic appropriations of Sapphic embodiment, Paulinus develops a first-person account of labor through the eyes and mouth of another. In Sappho’s famous fragment, she first sees the object of her desire, “sweetly speaking/and laughing lovely” (31.4f.) and then sees “nothing in her eyes” (11) before, paradoxically, she somehow “appears to [her]self” (16), thus “seeing (not) seeing”\(^{12}\). The Roman-era critic Longinus described the complex verbal expression of this phenomenon as “a congeries of vexed emotions”\(^{13}\). Adopting a technical term from the same critical tradition and supplementing that term with Catullus’ translation of Sappho, I call it here the sunthesis (or com-position) of “all the senses”\(^{14}\). This comprises the marks of first-person experience, deviant focalization, a combination of participles, and the further definition of those participles with a privileged marker of aesthetic experience in the classical tradition, “sweetness”\(^{15}\). Stereotyped in the receptions of Catullus and Horace, this sunthesis of “all the senses” appears when the laborer, called rusticus in Paulinus, describes his cows, in fact his property (peculium), as “sweet to the one who sees” and “sweet to the one who labors” (c. 18.278f.)\(^{16}\).

In all cases, the sunthesis illustrates the fundamental concept of phenomenology: “the body as the subject of perception”\(^{17}\). The difference between the classical and Christian expressions of this concept reflect the different forms of difference, or alterity, that the poet of each era uses phenomenology to express: for the classical Latin poet, “the body as the subject of perception” expresses the difference in gender encountered in erotic life; for the Christian poet, it expresses the difference in class encountered in economic life\(^{18}\). The sunthesis of “all the senses” and the

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\(^{11}\) — Finley 1968.  
\(^{12}\) — To Catullus, c. 51, the translation of Sappho, Stevens 2013, 249 attributes “hearing (not) hearing”.  
\(^{13}\) — De subl. 10.3: παθῶν σύνοδος, trans. Porter 2016, 112, 120f., 126, 135f.  
\(^{14}\) — Porter 1995, 106-12, cf. 2010, 205f., 216f., 229f., 235-42, 244-7. For Catullus’ phrase, see §2, below. In the rhetorical theory of Seneca the Elder, sunthesis (compositio verborum) can bear a gender (mollior) and effect the speaker as it were against his will (pati, Cont. 2 Pref. 1).  
\(^{15}\) — E.g., Porter 2016, 145.  
\(^{17}\) — Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1949], 234.  
\(^{18}\) — Whether it is proper to use the term class of Greco-Roman society, is a big, fascinating, and probably empty question: Lukács 1971 [1923], 161 and Finley 1973, 35-61, did not think so; Ste. Croix 1981, 91-6 did; Hobshawn 1972, 6-11, was more nuanced, while Ehren 1997, 283-6 holds that class analysis of ancient culture may unduly stress the degree of activity of the resistance of which it was capable; cf. Clark 2005, 27f. Following the Marxist sociology of Wright et al. 1989, 272f. I think a fundamentally relational concept such as class is valid, not by virtue of corresponding with a historical state of affairs, as the students of antiquity argue it does or does not, but by virtue of the kinds of questions that it enables us to ask of that state of affairs.
“body as the subject of perception” thus present Paulinus with a vehicle for the recognition of an Other more other than Sappho in Latin literature: the rural laborer. Through attention to this extraordinary detail of his poetry – that is, then, through a “poetic” interpretation of history – I claim that Paulinus recognized the poor in a kind of cross-class solidarity that corresponded with a real redistribution of resources in his all but unexampled public works, and that his project was progressive, consistent with certain modern ideals of feminism and Marxism19.

In terms more familiar from the interpretation of Greco-Roman literature, this phenomenological approach resolves a longstanding problem in the study of Latin literature, specifically the problem of reflexivity, or metapoetics, as a supplement to reference or mimesis in classical Latin poetry, and the transformation of their relationship in Christian poetry20. Where, as representative scholarship on classical Latin poetry from the 1990s everywhere demonstrated, classical Latin poetry represents representation (e.g., ekphrasis, poetic “self-consciousness”, metapoetics), Christian literature produced in response to that literature intensifies the already intensified dynamics of self-reference in classical poetry21. The result, at least in the case of the prosopopoeia of the rural laborer in Paulinus, is not more poetry about poetry (about poetry, etc...). Rather, by subtly incorporating the intensely metapoetic dynamic of Sappho’s earlier entry into Latin literature, Paulinus’ prosopopoeia of the rural laborer refers to itself (like classical poetry) but also (“like” Christian poetry), in a dynamic that some have called “realism”, begins “again” to represent a world beyond itself (mimesis)22. Thus, where classical poetry risked running aground on its self-referentiality and allusivity, especially in heightened moments of reflexivity, such as the erotic deployment of the sunthesis of “all the senses”, Christian poetry takes a new position relative to reality (or reference), which is marked by the economic deployment of the sunthesis in non-classical perspectives, perspectives of proper “Others” – such as the rural laborer.

19 — See, e.g., Fraser and Honneth 2003, 8-26, with Anerkennung in Honneth 2008, 21-40, 52-63. Trout 1999, 150 outlines the form that Paulinus’ proto-welfare system may have taken.


22 — On the formation of Christian poetry in this period, see Vessey 2007, 29-40, cf. Fielding 2017, 50f. For realism, see Auerbach 1965, 37f., 63-5; cf. Hardie (forthcoming, A), esp. in the first paragraph and in the text at nn. 21-3, with further background in Fitzgerald 1996, 390f. On the generic and lexical basis of this new amplitude in Christian stylistics, see Fontaine 1988, 334-6, 329-30, 335, 341. Among the representatives of “classical Latin” here, we may include Paulinus’ immediate poetic predecessor and famous interlocutor, Ausonio of Bordeaux (cf. Fontaine 1981, Chapter 10, Rücker 2012, Chapter 2, Hardie [forthcoming, B], Chapter 1, Fielding 2017, Chapter 1).
Throughout the paper, I use the resources of phenomenology to explain the interrelation of these processes, mimesis and metapoetics, because that philosophy alone, especially in the class- and gender-conscious interpretations of Marxist, feminist, and race critical social theory, seems able to reconcile the paradoxes of sensory experience, such as the phenomenon of “seeing (not) seeing”, with more normal and normative, above all gendered forms of perception in Greco-Roman culture. Where the normal and normative modes amount to the masculine mode of objectification (vision), the gendered and deviant mode amounts to auto-affection, or the perception of the self by the self (“touching touching”). A leitmotif of modern and postmodern continental philosophy, this dynamic of self-reference parallels metapoetics in Latin literature and is associated, at least in the Sappho of Catullus and Horace, with “female body experience”. Metapoetics or self-reference is thus not opposed to poetics proper, or simple reference (mimesis); each, rather, presupposes the other, just as, in phenomenology, perception is the condition of auto-affection, and auto-affection is the condition of perception: “We indubitably communicate with ourselves by communicating with the world”. In just the same way, “masculine” and “feminine” modes of perception are not opposed to but rather presuppose one another. The presupposition of auto-affection by “proper” perception reveals that the latter was “deviant” to begin with.

Phenomenology thus demonstrates in a nuanced, specific, and explicitly political way how the reversibility of metapoetics and mimesis operates, filling the theoretical gap opened in practical criticism by the problem of self-reference. A Marxist-feminist phenomenology reveals

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27 — Frederick 2002a, 4-6, Sharrock 2002, 267-70, and esp. 280.


29 — Hinds 1998, 13 “resolves” the issue by “refus[ing]” to treat the choice [viz. between metapoetics and poetics, and thus by implication form and content] as a disjunctive one. This is a sensible resolution from the point of view of practical criticism, or criticism that seeks “the richest reading” of a Latin poem (Hinds, ibid.), but the theoretical basis for the “resolution” that Hinds proposes is not clear. Phenomenology will clarify it, in addition to making a contribution to “practical criticism”,
in addition the political dimension of the processes in question by encouraging us to consider their constitutive dynamics, “the tenors of signification” in the poem and the processes of auto-affection in the person, in terms of class and gender. The first approach to the intertext in the next section (§2) will explore the Sapphic-Catullan background of Paulinus’ prosopopoeia to establish the relevance of gender. The section after that (§3) will explore additional connections between Horace and Paulinus to establish the relevance of class and of a particular dimension of class difference that political theorists now term “precarity”, but that actually has its roots in the very Christian tradition of poverty and charity that Paulinus was seen to embody. Finally, in §4, against the background of Paulinus’ countercultural Christian project and in the immediate context of the rest of Poems 18, we’ll see how Paulinus implicitly fuses gender and class, which enables him to adopt a new political perspective on his own historically privileged position and finally imagine something different.

In sum, the medium-specific capacity of poetry to refer to itself without nevertheless distinguishing itself from its subject matter makes innovation in literary history possible, which, aligned with the phenomena of perception and auto-affection, makes innovation in social history possible. Thus, synchronically, in the context of cultural development of Christianity, the medium-specific capacity of poetry may exceed poetry and become political. On the other hand, diachronically, the revision of the earlier, “classical” instances of the sunthesis in the Christian context of Paulinus’ poem may itself transform the tradition on which it draws. If, in other words, reception exercises a reversely determining effect on literary history, as some of its diehard advocates suggest, then perhaps Paulinus makes Sappho, Catullus, and Horace “finally” progressive. At the very least, this “progressive” re-reading of Paulinus, aided by the radical tradition of phenomenology implied in Winkler’s appropriation of the concept of “double-consciousness”, may clarify progressive dimensions of since the poems considered here all fuse metapoetics and auto-affection in their poetic “practice”. Phenomenology thus offers a materialist (monistic) solution to the problem implied in the implicitly idealist (or dualist) distinction between “form” and “content”, “vehicle” and “tenor”, poetics and metapoetics, figure of speech and figure of thought, etc. See further Porter 1995, 98-102.

30 — See the “tradition and originality” of Williams 1968, with Basson 1999, 90-5, and Marxist discussion in Adorno 1997, 179.

31 — The phenomenological description of this “becoming political” may be more satisfying than the familiar apodictic assertion of politically committed classical scholarship, viz. “everything”, and therefore poetry, reading, etc., “is political”; cf. n. 61 below.

these poems, and certainly of Paulinus, *Poems* 18, which would otherwise remain invisible, ephemeral, or ambiguous.\(^{33}\)

2. The intertext itself: Paulinus and Sappho-Catullus (gender)

Based in but not limited to reflexivity in vision, deviant standpoint becomes phenomenological in the literal sense in the description of erotic paroxysm in Sappho’s thirty-first fragment. The poem begins with the dilation of subjective appearances that is the ground of phenomenology (phainetai mot)\(^{34}\). It culminates with the paradoxical loss of contact with reality through the very means by which reality is supposed to be experienced, the senses (5-12 Page 1955, trans. Carson 2003):

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\text{τό μ᾽ ἦ μὰν καρδιάν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν·}
\]

\[
	ext{ὡς γάρ ἐς σ᾽ ἱδὼ βρόχε’, ὡς με φώνας—}
\]

\[
	ext{σ᾽ οὔδ᾽ ἐν ἔτ᾽ εἶκεν.}
\]

\[
	ext{άλλ᾽ ἀκαίν μὲν γλώσσα ἔξαγεν λέπτον ἐξάκαν μὲν γλῶσσα}
\]

\[
	ext{ἐπιρρόμεις δ᾽ ἄκουαι.}
\]

oh it

puts the heart in my chest on wings

for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking

is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin

fire is racing under skin

and in eyes no sight and drumming

fills ears.

Here loss of vision and hearing (11f.) and haptic auto-affection (10)

follow and paradoxically express the speaker losing her voice, even as she persists in describing her condition, thus speaking (not) speaking (7-9).

In the famous turn of the final extant lines that follow these, this speaking (not) speaking finds a parallel in seeing (not) seeing: “Greener than grass/I

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\(^{34}\) Porter 2010, 196-205, esp. 198f.
am, and a little short of dying/ I appear to myself” (14-16: χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ’ ὀλίγω ’πιδεύης/ φαίνομ’ ἐμ’ αὕται). With this mortal turn and with her unaccountable appearance to herself, Sappho illustrates auto-affection as it appears in the modern philosophy of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], 426):

[T]he presence of self to self, being existence itself, is prior to every philosophy, but it only knows itself in limit situations in which it is threatened, such as in the fear of death or in the anxiety caused by another person’s gaze upon me.

Since she is not speaking at this point, and since she cannot see in the way described, Sappho’s statement of what she is seeing expresses Merleau-Ponty’s “limit situation”. Also implied in this limitation of philosophy is the limitation of speech, or logos, thematized in Sappho and her reception in Catullus and Horace.

Sappho’s presentation of this condition is even more intense than that of Merleau-Ponty because in fr. 31 the gaze of the other person is in fact her own. With the phrase, “I appear to myself”, the form of self-description in Sappho’s fragment requires others’ perspectives; it is, in literary critical terms, externally focalized35. But as a later poet said: “The trouble with the first person is that it cannot perceive itself”36. In confronting this problem, Sappho suggests that her experience and expression of herself already incorporate others. Another indication of this complex of identity and alterity is the precise parallelism of the last words of the above quotation and the first words of the poem: φαίνομ’ ἐμ’ αὕται (16), φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος (1)37. In the first line, the parties of the expression were the first and third persons (μοι κῆνος), the not-yet (grammatically) feminine speaker (μοι) in indirect connection with “that man” (κῆνος).

In the final lines, the speaker is explicitly feminine and appears as such to herself (ἐμ’ αὕται)38. If Sappho’s poetry more generally expresses “double-consciousness”, or the ability to comprise “several personal perspectives”, as Winkler suggested, Sappho here provides an anatomy of that condition: speaking (not) speaking, touching (not) touching, seeing (not) seeing, hearing (not) hearing – “all the senses”, in fact, except for smell –

35 — See now Purves 2014.
36 — Schwarz 1986, 80.
37 — Rösler 1991, 281. Purves 2014, 188-90 notes a parallel play between the lines of fr. 1.19f., juxtaposing τίτι ("who") and “Sappho” (as addressed by Aphrodite); cf. Taussig 1993, 129: “all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity”.
become so many sensuous interpretations of a women’s complex position in a patriarchal society. Where Sappho combined double-consciousness and deviant focalization in her own person(a) in fr. 31, Paulinus renders the combination an instance of deviant standpoint by adopting a different persona in c. 18. After thieves have stolen the laborer’s cows, he comes to the shrine of St. Felix to seek restitution, thereby beginning the central episode of perhaps the central poem of the Natalicia, written in 400 CE, and offering extended descriptions of the saint’s ascent to heaven and the first miracle that he commands therefrom. After a long introductory description of the ascent, we hear the case of the stolen cows from the cowherd himself. With a complex allusion of the kind that Latinists call a “window reference,” the rural laborer sounds the notes of Sappho through the combined background of Catullus and Horace (c. 18.276-80 Hartel and Kamptner 1999):

\begin{verbatim}
nunc et mea tecta uidentur
clausa mihi, abductis ubi desolatus alumnis
nil habeo, quod habere uelim, quod dulce uidenti,
dulce laboranti, non inrita gratia praestet,
oblectans inopem sensu fructuque peculi.
\end{verbatim}

Now even my house
seems closed to me where, bereft of my stolen wards, I have
nothing I’d like to have, which still legitimate grace presents,
sweet to the one who sees, sweet to the laborer, pleasing
the poor in the feeling and in the fruit of property.

In the present instance, Sappho’s expression of double-consciousness through deviant focalization reveals itself to be the means by which Paulinus achieves deviant standpoint, or the standpoint of the rural labor, within the discourse of the man of property. This happens when the Christian poet transforms the processes of erotic desire that Sappho and Catullus represented only subjectively in the alienation of the senses into the concrete and objective expropriation of the cowherd of his cows. With uidentur in l. 276, he too locates himself in the combined Sapphic-Catullan domain of appearances, or phenomena (φαινεται, uidetur).

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39 — Winkler 1990, 167, cf. 175f., also Stehle 1997, 290-3. On the tendentiousness of this particular canon of senses, which Paulinus will in fact supplement, see Peponi 2011, ad fin., Telb 2013, and n. 103 below.
40 — On its centrality, see Kamptner 2005, 8, 18f.
While the earlier poems open the way to the experience of radical embodiment that they describe with the senses feeling themselves and with the infinitesimal failure of language, I will argue in this section that they always fall short in their trajectory because of their metapoetic aspect. In Paulinus, in contrast, the metapoetic aspect will give way to poetics proper, not representation of oneself (Catullus, Horace) nor even representation of oneself as another (Sappho), but representation of another "tout court": in the man of property, the man without property. This will take place after the *sunthesis* of “all the senses” becomes an instrument for the poets to explore their relationship, not just with themselves (as lovers: auto-affection), but also with one another (as poets: metapoetics).

The metapoetic dimension that first opens in the *sunthesis* of the classical poets persists in the keywords of Paulinus’ intertext: *dulce uidenti, dulce laboranti*, “sweet to the one who sees, sweet to the one who labors”. Sappho described observing the experience of a man who observes the experience of a woman who appears “sweetly speaking/and laughing lovely” (31.4f.: ἄδυ φωνεῖ/σας ὑπακούει/καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν). In a marked parallel, the *sunthesis* of “all the senses” is prefigured here in a subtle paronomasia that subsequent Latin reception explicates: to Sappho’s subtle phonic combination of *φαίνεταί* and *φωνείσας*, there corresponds in Paulinus a more patent repetition, *uidentur* and *uidenti*. In his unconventional translation, Catullus adapts the *sunthesis* to Latin literature when, addressing “Lesbia”, he observes a man “who... repeatedly/sees and hears you/sweetly laughing (c. 51.3-5: qui... identidem te/spectat et audit/ dulce ridentem). With the addition of the word “repeatedly”, Catullus generalizes the process, thus marking not only his belatedness and innovation, but also his poetic process as such. At the same time, highlighting the political implications of his repetition and variation, he deprives the object of erotic attention in fr. 31 of the voice that Sappho gave her in her poem: here we only see and hear this once articulate woman, “Lesbia”, laughing.

The pattern of repetition and explication continues when, with one more gloss on the political implications of his adaptation, Catullus describes erotic experience as that “which steals from miserable me/all my senses” (5f.): *misero quod omnes/eripit sensus mihi*. With *eripit* (“steal”) and its object, the concrete entirety of the experience (*omnes sensus*), the classical poet furnishes the Christian poet with a model for the objective, explicitly material theft of the laborer’s cows, at the same time that he endows the *sunthesis*, the “all the senses” *topos*, with metapoetic and political dimen-

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44 — Hinds 1998, 120-2, cf. *identidem* (te) above: the *identidem* denotes repetition (“again and again”), and the *te*, echoing -*ti*, difference (N.B. the rare rhyme, *ridentem*, where a rhyme is a precise figure of identity and difference).
sions. On the one hand, Catullus “steals” the voice of Sappho’s lovely girl who in c. 51 stops speaking and only laughs; in the same gesture, Catullus steals the whole erotic topos (“all the senses”) from Sappho. On the other hand, Catullus inserts himself in the position of the victim of the crime, and Sappho becomes the perpetrator: the pseudonymous Lesbia of c. 51, a largely verbatim translation of Sappho, may after all refer both to the historical Clodia and to the “the Lesbian [poet]”, Sappho herself. Was Sappho then the one who robbed Catullus of “all the senses”, which now acts as a name for the trope of embodied knowledge, which in fact tropes “the body as the subject of perception” (see n. 17 above), throughout these poems of erotic subjectivity? With this implication, the poet suggests that his aesthesis, or the ostensible content of the topos “all the senses”, was in fact an aesthetic response – a response to reading Sappho.

Eliminating Sappho’s paradoxical sight of herself, Catullus next displaces the dynamic of duality that Sappho represents in terms of self and other, appearing and appeared to, and male and female, into the specious unity of his own male-male relationship with himself (13): “Leisure, Catullus, is what does you in” (otium, Catulle...). But even here, as he rejects the apparently effeminate paroxysm of the earlier poem, Catullus preserves the dynamic of Sappho with the vocative and second person address of the concluding stanza. The difference from Sappho is that Catullus remains a man in both instances. In the privilege of patriarchy, he appears paradoxically more at home in the self-expression that Sappho pioneered, but he does not expunge the alterity to which Sappho is vulnerable as a woman. In fact, he establishes it, or at least exploits it: silencing Sappho, Catullus makes her into that famous subaltern of postcolonial theory, whose speech was always a question and who the archaic Greek woman, as a function of her aristocratic privilege and poetic authority, never was, or was only in part, in the first place. This silent “Sappho”

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46 — See prev. n. For the two senses of the term aesthetic, “sensation and perception” and “art and aesthetic experience”, see Porter 2010, 40, 244, cf. 206f., 221f., 231, 245f. Again, Catullus is only explicating (or ‘stealing’) what Sappho originally enacted: “the synthesis performed by the author – applied now to her art, now to her pathology, to the point of the indistinctness of both” (Porter 2016, 121). For a phenomenological analysis of the ambiguity of embodiment and sensation implied in aesthetics, see Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], 170f.

47 — See above all C. Clark, cited and quoted in §4 below.


50 — For the application of post-colonial theory to late antiquity, see Shorrock 2013, 8, and Kaufman 2017, 170-3. For the debate on the famous category of the subaltern, see now Morris 2010, with helpful background in Chatterjee 2010 [1998], 294-6. The original, practical application of this
is the figure of radical alterity, which perhaps never existed, but which Horace and Paulinus use to understand and eventually challenge more immediate, economic differences.

3. Paulinus and Horace, Odes 1.22: metapoetics and precarity (class)

To judge by Paulinus' general practice and the repetition of *dulce* in c. 18.278f., the more immediate “source” of Paulinus’ phrasing was neither Sappho nor Catullus, but rather Catullus’ lyric successor, Horace, who, in two different poems, only intensifies the polyphonic play of metapoetics in the reception of Sappho by Catullus51. In this section, I review Horace’s response to Sappho in the context most immediately relevant to Paulinus, but perhaps divergent from Catullus: the appropriation of the originally erotic *sunthesis* of “all the senses” for understanding, not the more general difference of gender or of subjects and objects, but the more specific, above all social, political, and economic form of difference that we call “class”52. Here I will show that Paulinus’ appropriation of Horace’s appropriation (of Catullus’ appropriation, etc.) functions in two related ways: first, metapoetically to reveal the conditions of production of poetry; second, politically, to highlight the more specifically exploitative dimension of that form of production and of Paulinus’ own socio-historical position within it. This is the *precarious* condition of the cowherd’s existence, which he (the cowherd) declares (via metapoetics) as a distinct challenge to Paulinus.

The first instance of Horace’s reception of Catullus’ Sappho is the so-called *Lalage* ode, where the poet-lover appears as pseudo-exile, musing on desire and language, in his big Sabine backyard (Horace, c. 1.22.1-12, Wickham and Garrod 1901):

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\begin{align*}
\text{Integer vitae scelerisque purus} \\
\text{non eget Mauris iaculis neque arcu}
\end{align*}
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51 — Hartel and Kamptner 1999, 487 find seven allusions to Catullus in Paulinus; to Horace, in contrast, they record three pages: 491-3; see also Nazzaro 1993, 495-7. For discussion of the logics of these allusive dynamics in Late Antique Latin poetry, see Peltrati 2014, 26-30, 116, 122, 126, 129, 133, with further background in Pucci 1999, 70-8, and Hardic (forthcoming, B, esp. the Introduction and Ch. 8). On Horace’s debt to Catullus, see Putnam 2006.

52 — See n. 18, above.
nec veneratis gravida sagittis,
   Fusce, pharetta,
sive per Syrtis iter aestuosas
sive facturus per inhospitalem
Caucasum vel quae loca fabulosus
   lambit Hydaspes.
namque me silica lupus in Sabina
dum meam canto Lalagen et ultra
terminum curis vigor expeditis
   fugit inermem...

One clean of life and without touch of sin,
will need no Moorish bow or javelin
or quiver full of arrows dipped
   in venom, Fuscus, my friend,
although he wanders through hot shoals
of Lybia or incommodious
Caucasus or banks where laps
   the storied river Hydaspes.
For wandering in the Sabine woods
beyond the line and worry free,
unarmed I sang of Lalagé and found
a wolf flee me...

Due to the moral capacity of the word “sin” (*scelus*) in the first line
of this ode and Horace’s more general expurgation of erotic elements,
the poem was a favorite among later Christians⁵³. Paulinus will mine it
elsewhere for his fantasy of evangelizing the Basques: “Whoever goes spot-
less of sin and clean of life...”⁵⁴. This image of dubious but triumphant
immersion in alterity in Paulinus’ Basque fantastic makes the poet-lover
of the classical tradition the model for what Christians will come to call
the “sign of contradiction”⁵⁵. In Horace’s case, this figure of power in
weakness (*virtus in infirmitate*: see prev. n.) resorts once again to the phe-
nomenology of Sappho and Catullus (Hor. *c.* 1.22.21-4):

ponge sub curru nimium propinquii
   solis in terra domibus negata:
   dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
   dulce loquentem.

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⁵³ — Newman 2011, 12 compares “the story of St. Francis... and the ravenous wolf”. Cf.
⁵⁴ — *c.* 10.212: *quasi quisquis agit purus sceleris uitam integer*; cf. Cat. *c.* 76.19, and Fielding 2017,
   42.
⁵⁵ — Wotjyla, Pope John Paul II 1979, 124. See also Paul, 2 Cor. 12.9 with Paulin. *Ep.* 5.18:
   *virtus in infirmitate perfectior*, 38.3: *virtus in infirmitate carnis*. For further variations (e.g.,
   *gloriar in passionibus tuis*, 37.7), see Hartel and Kamptner 1999, index 1, s.v. Paul, *ibidem.*
Put me under the course of the sun
too near to a land denied to homes:
still, Lalage sweet in laughing will I love,
and sweet in speaking.

Here again repetition figures allusion. Where Sappho described the object of her desire “sweet in laughing... and lovely in speaking” and Catullus marked his own belatedness with *identidem* (“again and again he sees and hears you/sweetly laughing”), Horace stereotypes the belatedness in the more patent repetition of his formulation: “sweet in laughing...sweet in speaking”. At the same time, now that the woman has been more firmly restored to the position of the object (above all by means of Horace’s use of the third person), she may again begin to speak, like her Sapphic counterpart, where the woman in Catullus only laughed.

In phenomenological terms, in the transition from Sappho to Horace, auto-affection and metapoetics coincide. Where Sappho “see[s] nothing in the eyes” (11: ὀππάτεσσι δ’ οὐδὲν ὄρημ), in Catullus the “nothing” acquires substance and appears, so to speak, as night. A reference to doubling, the now familiar signpost of allusion in classical Latin, additionally marks this acquisition and appearance (11f.): “the lights of my eyes are closed/in double night” (*gemina teguntur/lumina nocte*) In his response to Sappho and Catullus, Horace once more makes auto-affection explicitly poetic: where the earlier poets draw attention to the medium of their experience through vision (*οὐδὲν, gemina...nocte*), Horace uses speech itself, the medium of poetry, to describe as herself speaking his possibly unreal lover whose name in Greek suggests speaking (*la la la*), thus (himself) speaking (not) speaking (c. 1.22.23f.): Lalagen...loquentem. With this speaking name, Horace thematicizes the inarticulate dimension of the intertext, the dimension in which I would suggest Sapphic alterity.
subsists, as all but immediate experimentation in *my* speaking here and now: say *dulce*. . . *dulce*.. (Catullus) *dulce* (Horatius), etc.59. Along with the participles of laughter, speaking, and eventually labor (*dulce laboranti* in Paulinus: more “la-la-la”), this *dulce* becomes both sign and specimen of phenomenology and of the ambivalence of embodiment and sensation, to say nothing of aesthetics as such, in the tradition (see n. 14, above). At the same time, the allusive figure of repetition itself figures that specific form of repetition, which we call “habit”, in first-person experience: the ground against which new experiences – erotic paroxysm, erotic poetry, or heightened political consciousness – are the figure60.

This proliferation of complexity in the discourse of the *sunthesis* of “all the senses” culminates in metapoetics, or the implicit complexity of poetry about poetry, and this proves more political than that simple withdrawal from the shared life of concrete reference associated with lyric poetry, by a number of canny Latinists, on the basis of Adorno’s famous essay61. Joseph Pucci has suggested that Horace’s ode is concerned with making originary song, or the bare sound of modulated voice, “emblematized”, as Gregson Davis writes, “in the vocable ‘Lalage’”, into poetic composition62. Horace’s poem is therefore literally metapoetic: it is not only an imaginative flight of literary erotomania but also, and maybe primarily, a representation of poetic production63. This metapoetic dynamic Paulinus recapitulates in the prosopopoeia. Where Horace follows Catullus and focalizes the erotic object through the erotic subject, Paulinus focalizes the laboring subject *through the laborer himself*. Paulinus thus *restores* the first-person elaboration of experience and the paradox of seeing (not) seeing from Sappho’s fragment. The withdrawal from the position of masculine dominance effected by Paulinus’ prosopopoeia of the rural laborer is therefore not *just* a passive withdrawal from political life, à la Catullus, Horace, Adorno; it is also an active reengagement with a new, non-dominant political position.

Who, after all, is the subject of the substantive participles: “nothing do I have that I would like to have/that grace would not render in vain, sweet to *one*me seeing [*uidenti*], sweet to *one*me working [*laboranti*]?”. Is it, in the paradoxical Sapphic fashion, the worker seeing himself seeing, and hence seeing (not) working? Is it the worker perhaps seeing workers as a *class*? Or is the impossible perspective of the worker seeing himself (and perhaps his

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60 — See, e.g., Merleau-Ponty 2013 [1945], 144f., 147f.
63 — See also Ancona 2002, 162; cf. Calame 2013, 46-8.
class) an improbable product of his expropriation of Paulinus’ perspective? In other words, is the laborer not here seeing himself through Paulinus’ sight of him (the laborer)? If so, we encounter a mimesis of mimesis that may well characterize colonial encounters, of more or less the kind that we find in Paulinus’ contact with the rural poor, in general: like the participants in the drama of colonial “first contact”, Paulinus the nobleman is imitating the “savage” laborer who is in turn imitating the “noble” Paulinus. The impossibly sensuous identity-in-difference that Sappho attained in her poetic strength-in-weakness is somehow simultaneously suspended and extended in a now mimetic paroxysm.

In this constellation of interfacing mimeses, the phenomenology of erotic paroxysm becomes more and more explicitly political, even materialist. With the appearance of a new participle (laboranti), Paulinus’ cowherd suggests that the fullness of the worker’s experience (sensu fructuque) derives from material property (peculi). In the classical representation of manual labor, in Vergil’s Georgics for instance, the whole process of labor, not least the laborer himself, is confined to a grammatical construction devoid of agency: “the bull... with the driven plow.” In contrast with the allusive appropriation of the classical poets, Paulinus’ prosopopoeia of the rural labor thematizes the fullness of the laborer’s experience, his own relationship to the means of production, and the very theft of that experience (which is what his relationship to the means of production may always become). At the same time, with the restoration of the Sapphic paradox of self-perception and in the context of the insecure material conditions of the Nolan “proletariat”, the narratological questions of “who speaks?” and “who sees?” are translated in Paulinus’ prosopopoeia into the preeminent question of Marxism: who enjoys the worker’s work?

Paulinus raises this question subtly. The cowherd raises the question more forcefully when he seeks redress from his patron saint in the remainder of the prosopopoeia. In both cases, the question, “Who enjoys the worker’s work?” highlights the vulnerability, and indeed precarity, of the cowherd’s existence: the answer is not necessarily, and never forever, the worker himself. Originally a term of art in Roman Catholic socialism, precarity is defined by Judith Butler as “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic net-
works of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death"\(^69\). In Roman law the definition relates more directly to the cowherd’s condition: ‘‘precarious’ denotes that which is conceded for use to the one who petitions with prayers [precarium... quod precibus petenti] for as long as the one who conceded it allows”\(^70\). My recourse to Roman law is not coincidental, since the cowherd takes the same recourse when he confronts Felix about the theft (c. 18.254-9, 268-69, 289-94, 302-308):

```
sancte deo Felix, inopum substantia, semper
pro miseris felix et semper diues egenis,
te requiem fessis deus adlictisque leuamen,
te posuit maestis ad saucia corda medellam;
propteram tamquam gremio confisa paterno
in te paupertas caput adclinat recumbit...
quo deceptus eam? quem crimer? an tibi de te
conqueror inmemoremque mei accusabo patronum?
...debitor hic meus est; ipsum pro fure tenebo
custodem. tu, sancta, reus mihi, conscius illis.
te teneo...
    sic diuide mecum
quae tua, quae mea sunt; indemnis stet mea per te
utilitas iuxtaque tuas clementia partes
uindicet aequatoque tuum libramine constet
iudicium; tibi solue reos, mihi redde iuuencos.
ecce tenes pactum, famuli iam nulla morandi
causa tibi; acelera tantis me soluere curis.
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Felix holy in God, wealth of the poor, O always bountiful (felix) for the wretched and rich for the needy, God sent you to the downtrodden as a relief and to the tired as a reprieve and as a balm for the wounded hearts of those in grief. That’s why as though she lay in the lap of her father, Poverty rests her head and reposes in you... Where will I turn, a victim of crime? Whom should I charge, or should I indict you to yourself on the grounds that my patron forgets me? ...The one on whom I have a lien is here. I will hold the protector himself for the crime. You, saint, are the guilty party. As their accomplice, it’s you I arrest...

\(^69\) — Butler 2015, 33, with background in Day 1952, with Wikipedia, s.v.
\(^70\) — Dig. 43.26.1 (pr.) = TLL 10.2.1145.29f.: precarium est, quod precibus petenti utendum conceditur tamdiu, quandoque infra, qui concessit, patitur.
Just divide with me
what’s yours and mine. On your part, let my interest remain
unharmed. With your mercy you can then reclaim
your share. You can let your judgment be
well-balanced. Free the culprits for yourself. To me, return the cows.
Now we have a deal. Don’t let the delay of your humble servant
be an excuse. Just hurry up and free me from my care!

These lines offer an unusual glimpse into patron-client relations of the
period, the desperation that probably characterized it, and the aberrance
of identification or deviant standpoint that facilitated Paulinus’ achieve-
ment of such a “realistic” representation of these relations. The precarity
of that situation becomes not only literal, but also etymological when
the laborer acknowledges the contingency of the cows, his only property,
on the saint’s dispensation, praying (precor) for their return: “praying
[precantem] all day without end,/the martyr heard him.../and he [the
cowherd] put no limit on his prayers [precibus] and tears.” Is “prayer”
here a spiritual or a political process? The use of “prayers” in the definition
of precarity in the Digest does not resolve the question.

In view of the modern extension of the term precarity from a condi-
tion of religious vocation to a condition of political-economic insecurity,
Paulinus’ prosopopoeia confounds spiritual and political dimensions of
ancient experience. As a result, the aggressiveness of the cowherd’s “prayer”
to Felix, his patron, is at least as “political” as Paulinus’ renunciation of his
wealth and installment of himself in Nola. At least since Peter Brown
wrote The World of Late Antiquity, it is a commonplace of historicist and
sociological studies to recognize Paulinus’ habitual identification of him-
self with Felix: both are, or have been (or will be), after all, patrons. If
this recognition is valid, then the cowherd here entertains the possibility
of legally prosecuting his patron as though they were engaged in an actually
economic (as opposed to patronal or indeed “precarious”) relation.

71 — See Hardie (forthcoming, A): “The rusiticus is a far more realistic character than the
herdsman of bucolic, not least because he is a small businessman, hiring out his animals (233 sub
aratra aliena locatis). His commercial cast of mind comes out in his prayer to Felix, in which he
attempts to strike a bargain with the saint”. For theoretical background, see Fitzgerald 1996, 390f.,

72 — c. 18.314-16, 320: totoque die sine fine precantem/audiuit... martyr.../ nec precibus dabat
ille modum nec flexibus. Note here too the accusative participle precantem, an analogue of uidentem,
ridentem, and loquentem in the synthesis: the cowherd in the saint’s perspective.

73 — On some of the legal background, see Griffin 2013, 57-8. By treating the precarity of
his gift from the saint as property, the cowherd may be “comically” misconstruing the patron-client
relationship as a financial transaction, or he may be seeing through the façade of “official” moral
discourse (Bourdieu 1990, 105-7, 126-9, cited in Griffin 2013, 54 n. 103).


76 — Carpino 2007, 364: “The suppliant becomes an anti-suppliant, and the patron (protet-
this not an implicit criticism of Paulinus of Nola? In in the tradition of Roman Catholic socialism from which the modern term precarity derives, this criticism becomes explicit (Day 1952):

Nowadays communities are good, I am sure, but they are mistaken about poverty. They accept, admit on principle, poverty, but everything must be good and strong, buildings must be fireproof. Precarity is rejected everywhere, and precarity is an essential element of poverty.

Isn’t this the very consideration that plausibly nullifies the progressively revolutionary character of Paulinus’ renunciation of property and status, viz. that he did not adopt a precarious position? With the representation of the standpoint of the rural laborer, Paulinus himself poses this challenge to my interpretation of his renunciation as a progressive process of recognition and redistribution. I advocate this interpretation in part because Paulinus poses such a challenge to himself.

In view of recent politically committed classical scholarship, we should not underestimate the significance of this metapoetic challenge that the cowherd presents to Paulinus. It is a commonplace of studies of Greco-Roman culture that men of property, as poets, expropriate the experience of a variety of subalterns — an argument familiar from post-Marxist and feminist criticism, which is to say, all sophisticated critical criticism of Roman poetry since historicism became “new” and “new historicism” became common sense in the 1990s. At the same time, we dismiss any incursion of subalternity or simple alterity in the poetic productions of dominant subjects (e.g., Catullus, Horace, Paulinus) as merely figurative, symbolic, and in effect inessential: giving “voice” to a woman in Roman poetry makes no difference to the experience of real women because “Ariadne was never there in the first place” and/or all puellae are scriptae. Stated more strongly, giving a voice to a woman in a poem may even amount to taking it from the real women who (never) spoke for them-

77 — This, at least, struck one of the reviewers of this article as a pressing question. See also Clark 2005, 32f., cf. Mratschek 2001, 515f.
78 — See n. 19, above.
79 — Of an explicit self-criticism in Paulinus’ Letters (Ep. 5.4), the sociological interpreter Mratschek 2002, 425 writes: “The accusation of falsa praeconia in Paulinus was...more a modesty-topos, to demonstrate Christian piety, than a genuine self-criticism”. A true and accurate evaluation of one dimension of Paulinus’ work, Mratschek’s insistence on the topical or generic character of Paulinus’ “self-criticism” nevertheless misprizes the specificity of literature and the materiality of consciousness: it presumes that consciousness aided by such technology is somehow false or inauthentic and that knowledge, to be genuine, cannot admit mechanical supplements such as tropes and figures. See Derrida 1981, 149-55.
80 — See, e.g., Gallagher 1989.
selves, as Catullus himself implies with his first figurative theft of “all the senses” from Sappho.

When we come to Paulinus, we add to the first, figurative theft (the appropriation of women’s voice) a second, literal theft (the theft of the cows from the cowherd), which together constitute a third theft, both literal and figurative, the twofold theft of Poems 18: the real expropriation that underlies the unequal conditions of cultural production in the ancient world and the symbolic, figurative, or cultural “theft” of each poet from the other that masks the first, literal theft of writers’ work from others’ labor. Unmasking all these thefts through one and the same complex intertext, Paulinus’ perspective on the worker becomes analogous to our own, literary critical and literally critical (sociological/Marxist-feminist) insight. What Stephen Hinds has influentially described as “the dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry” reveals its basis in the expropriation of real property, along with the subjective consequences of this expropriation for its victims.

4. Paulinus and Horace, Odes 1.13: comedy and class-consciousness

Horace’s second intervention in Sappho’s Roman reception uses the sunthesis of “all the senses” to express the category of class, and usually enters discussions of Poems 18 in the form of a question: “Is Paulinus’ presentation of the rural laborer supposed to be funny?” The assumption appears to be that, if it is, then the poet is once more expropriating the experience of a real or virtual subaltern. In this section, with the aid of the more familiar irony of Horatian self-fashioning, I will argue that Paulinus manages to achieve something similar to the classical lyric poet both for himself and for the cowherd. In other words, Paulinus does indeed present the cowherd ironically, but he also “uses” the cowherd to ironize his own position, which once again implicitly valorizes the cowherd himself and, because of commonalities of gender and class in Roman antiquity, once more, and on Paulinus’ own presentation elsewhere in Poems 18 (that is, then, also intratextually), endows the poet’s treatment of the two conditions of marginality with a degree of solidarity.

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84 — Hinds 1998.
85 — See nn. 102-6, below.
86 — See n. 90, below.
87 — The treatment of the cowherd in two excellent forthcoming pieces derives from this:
According to the classicist Christina Clark, Catullus in c. 51 omits the description of his own appearance that Sappho impossibly incorporates (seeing (not) seeing) for sociopolitical reasons: it is not appropriate for a Roman man to show himself losing control. Where Sappho saw herself, seeing (not) seeing and the rest, Catullus omits the details of his appearance to others in the poem: no sweat, no green complexion. In contrast, Clark notes, Horace’s adaptation of the Sapphic background elsewhere in Book 1 of the Odes reverses Catullus’ elite squeamishness (1.13.5-8):

\[
\text{tum nec mens mihi nec color}
\]
\[
\text{certa sede manent, umor et in genas}
\]
\[
\text{furtim labitur, arguens}
\]
\[
\text{quam lentes penitus macerer ignibus.}
\]

Then neither mind nor complexion
stay in set place and moisture in secret steals
across my cheeks, which proves
how intimately I’m scorched by dragging fire.

As if correcting Catullus’ omission, Horace explicitly marks the transition between inside and outside, first with the inner word mens and the outer word color, then with the participle of evincing, arguens. In both instances, the poet is more comfortable with self-exposure. Clark writes (2008, 274f.):

Perhaps he feels able to have his speaker do so not only because of the new imperial political reality (and hence the problematization of the performance of masculinity) but also because Horace himself was the son of a freedman, less constrained by (or able to participate in) the elite construction of Roman masculinity.

While Clark offers her explanation as a suggestion, I suggest that, from the point of view of the reception of Paulinus, it is absolutely true. Through the repeatedly “othered” feminine standpoint of Sappho, the men of property take up increasingly “other” perspectives: first, a man of property (Catullus), as compared with Sappho, a woman; second, a man...
of property whose father had been property (Horace); third, the Christian radical "as" a rural laborer, or a man without property.

Expanding the ambit beyond the cowherd in this section, I will insist on the significance of this diachronic trajectory of allusion by adducing some synchronic intratextual aspects of Poems 18 and other Natalicia. These clues mainly from elsewhere in the same poem highlight the appearance of the material substrate and political dynamics of allusion studies, suggested at the end of the previous section. On the strength of these parallels, I will argue that Paulinus does in fact identify in an aberrant and hence deviant way, not only with the rural laborer, but also, as we’ll see, with generally oppositional feminine figures – a poor old lady and a female sex worker. These broader intertextual references to effeminacy amplify and echo the otherwise subtle Sapphism of Paulinus’ worker

At the beginning of c. 18, Paulinus catalogues the luxuries that the super-rich devotees of Felix are bringing to the shrine, alongside those of their poor counterparts, "each with whatever resources of talent, tongue, and money that he can" (13: qua quis possit ope ingenii linguæque rei). In contrast (40-61):

cedo equidem et uacuo multis potioribus auro,
quis grauis aere sinus releuatur egente repleto,
qui locuplete manu promptaria ditia laxant
et uaris animam sponsantes dotibus adstant,
mente pares, ope diuersi; nec segnius illi
fercula opima cibis, ceras aulaea lucernas,
larga quidem sed muta dicant: ego munere linguæ,
nullus opum, famular de me mea debita soluens
meque ipsum pro me, ulis licet hostia, pendo.
 nec metuam sperni, quoniam non uilia Christo
pauperis obsequii libamina, qui duo laetus
aera, pia censum uiduae, laudata recepit.

I for my part do yield to those who are mightier in feckless gold,
whose cloaks are unfurled, heavy with coin, when the needy are filled.
They throw open their ready resources with magnanimous hand
while, betrothing their soul with various dowries, near they stand,
matched in attitude and distinct in capacity. With no less alacrity,
tables fat in food, paintings, tapestries, candelabra,
they dedicate – magnificent, silent. In contrast, with my tongue's office
zero in riches, I indenture myself in my debt's service

91 — Gender burlesque underlies Paulin. c. 18.261 vis-à-vis Verg. Aen. 4.323, noted by Fielding (forthcoming), at nn. 50-8, where note also parallels between the cowherd and Pasiphae, as well as other mythological heroines. In generic terms, the cowherd is acting like a woman, as Paulinus and Ausonius do when they "complain" to one another: Fielding 2017, 25, 27f. See also Knight 2005.
and, cheap offering though I am, myself for myself I pay.
I don’t fear rejection, because not cheap to Christ was
the outlay of devotion of the poor. Happy, with praise,
two coins, the pious widow’s net worth, he received.

The entire passage bears on the present discussion, not just because
of the obvious “salvation economics”, whereby Paulinus explores his own
personal exemplification of Christ’s injunction to sell what he has and
give to the poor92. Rather, the point of the present passage is that all these
equations of works and deeds, and people and debts, highlight the funda-
mental role of poetry in “salvation economics”93. Not only the coin in
which Paulinus pays his debt, poetry is the medium of correspondences,
even itself the economy, in which such equivalences are established94. On
analogy with Christ, poetry unifies otherwise disparate individuals with
one another and themselves; it makes innovation in the latter, otherwise
determinative identity (“the self”) possible. Such innovation occurs pre-
cisely when Paulinus identifies with the poor and acts in a way inconsistent
with his class-position95. This is, in the words of Merleau-Ponty from the
epigraph of this paper, the “solicitation” of Paulinus of Nola.

As an economic, aesthetic, and theological medium of corres-
pondences, poetry allows Paulinus to make the appropriate identification
when, in the quotation above, he explicitly equates himself with the so-
called “widow of the mites”96. Later, about to relate the case of the stolen
cows, Paulinus recalls exactly this image of the widow, with the addition
of the worker, and another possible signpost of the repetitive, even "gem-
native" character of allusion (213-26):

\[
et memores uiduae primo sermone relatae,
quam deus e pretio mentis, non munere cernens,
antetulit multum mittentibus, omnia dantem,
me quoque ferte leui dicentem magna relatu.
et mea namque illis sunt aemula uerba minutis,
quis pretium pietas et uilibus aurea fecit.
\]

For the phrase, and phenomenon, of “salvation economics”, see Trout 1999, 133-59.
94 — Paulinus, Ep. 32.21 with Brown 2016, 86-8, at 87. On the temporal dimension
of Paulinus’s symbolic exchange, see Kamptner 2005, 20, with Bourdieu 1990, 98-111, through
Engberg-Pedersen 2008, 18f.
95 — Based on recent developments in subaltern studies, Cherniavsky 2011, 151 describes
this as learning, or leaning to learn, from below, where learning denotes “the possibility of a relation
between elites and subalterns in which the terms of exchange are set (at least partially) by subalterns
themselves”; cf. 158-60. For such a dialectic in practice, see Trout 1999, 177: “Paulinus encouraged
indigenous religious assumptions and forms of piety at the same time that he sought to Christianize
them”; see also Fielding (forthcoming) at n. 62.
96 — Mark 12.41-4.
quidam homo re tenuis, plebeius origine, cultu rusticus e geminis angustam bubus alebat pauperiem mercede iugi...

If you remember the widow detailed in the first part of my story, whom, telling her apart, not from her resources, but the cost of her thought, as she was giving her all, God preferred to those who gave a lot, then bear me too as I speak things great in a slight account, for my words also compete with those her mites, which piety endowed with value and made gold cheap: There once was a person, slender in means, plebeian in origin, in upbringing rural, fostering on twin cattle his poverty, lean in the value of the pair...

Where the first three lines of the quotation recall the earlier episode, the next three lines present Paulinus himself (me quoque...) as parallel to the widow through their joint participation in divergent economic regimes of real and symbolic value: “for my words also compete with those her mites”97. She is poor in resources (munere) but rich in intent (mentis), while he is poor in poetic form (leuis dicentem... relatu) but rich in content (dicentem magna); the laborer himself meanwhile presents “twin cattle” on analogy with Catullus’ “twin night”.

In the same passage, we also see the extent to which “classical” meta-poetics is the condition of Paulinus’ (Christian) poetics. The buzzwords of Alexandrian, neoteric, and later Augustan poetics, “slight” and “narrow” (leuis and angustam), establish the symbolic correspondence or exchange between Paulinus qua widow and the rural worker: with quidam homo re tenuis... angustum pauperiem (“a person slender in means” in “poverty lean”), Paulinus equates himself through his “slight” and therefore (curiously) Alexandrian song, with the man who is himself slight (tenuis) in his substance – poet as widow as worker as Christian radical98. Thus,

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97 — See Mark 12.42, trans. NRSV: “A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins [duo minuta, whence ‘mites’], which are worth a penny”.

98 — Cf. Fielding (forthcoming) at nn. 29, 33, and 34, where note esp. Fontaine 1981, 170f. For the Alexandrianisms in general, see, e.g., Verg. Ecl. 1.23, with Roberts 1989, 22f., Hor. c. 1.6.9, and Prop. 2.1.40, with Lyne 1995, 100f. Cf. Paulinus, c. 21.545-50 at 553, with Hor. c. 1.6.9, with Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 86, and Verg. Georg. 4.176 through Ov. Trist. 1.6.28; the biblical epiphon, Paulinus, c. 6 (Laus Sancti Iohannis), refers to itself with the phrase: sed licitum magnis tenues inpendere curas. See also Paulinus, c. 27.320-2, cf. Æp. 2.1: ingenio tenues. On the proto-ascetic (“Epicurean”) dietary regimen of Alexandrian poetics in Rome, especially in Horace (c. 2.16.14, 38), see Mette 2009 [1961]. The poetics is fully politicized (cf. Fowler 2009 [1995], 254-6), against the biblical background of 1 Kings 2.5, not to mention Verg. Aen. 6.853 (parere subiectis et debellare superbos “spare the conquered, battle down the proud) at Paulinus, c. 27.265, trans. Walsh 1975, 279: “for God supplies plenty to the needy and deprivation to the proud” (dilatante deo tenues, tenuante superbos), where note also Catullus’ Alexandrian poetics of friendship and gushing water: Paulinus, c. 27.266-8, 327f., vis-à-vis Catull. c. 68.53, 57-66. See further Conybeare 2000, 60-8, esp. 66-8, on Paulinus, Æp.
where poverty furnished a model for *poetry* in Catullus and Horace (classical aestheticism), poetry furnishes a model for *poverty* in Paulinus (Christian asceticism)\(^9\). The aesthetic buzzwords of the bygone age, “slight” and “lean”, now find themselves in the very contemporary idiom of virtually statistical specificity: resources, cost, value, means, “plebeian in origin”, poverty, worth\(^10\). Just as paraphrasing Sappho proves the condition of the recognition of the cowherd, the austerity of Alexandrian poetics proves the condition of identifying (with) the poor. Once again, the earlier poets’ representation of their poetry *precedes and proves the condition of* the later poet’s representation of poverty; metapoetics precedes poetics.

Certainly Paulinus’ alignment of himself with the poor and downtrodden is questionable\(^10\). Rich Paulinus, voluntarily “poor”, offers “poor” song instead of riches. Relatedly, we may feel that Paulinus’ introduction of the cowherd is somehow *comica*\(^10\). So, of the cowherd’s illimitable despair and lovelorn haunting of the stables of his missing “wards”, the poet writes: “Stench doesn’t stink to a lover”\(^10\). Can this imposition of the barbed wisdom of classical arts of love, above all Lucretius and Ovid, be anything but a joke at the cowherd’s expense?\(^10\) The question imposes itself again when we see how the saint reacts to the cowherd’s plea (18.313-16, cf. 253):

\[
\begin{verbatim}
talia uoce quidem querula sed mente fidel
plorantem totoque die sine fine precantem
auduit laetus non blando subplice martyr
et sua cum domino ludens conuitia risit.
\end{verbatim}
\]

And thus he actually complained, with an irritable tone but a faithful mind, and the one who prayed all day without end the martyr heard, happy with the unpleasant supplicant, and making a joke with the Lord, he smiled at the rebuke.

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101 — Cf. Cherniavsky 2011, 155: “Indeed, *whose* jubilant emancipation if not our own is inscribed in this vision of a (non)subject without a will to domination”.
Sharing a joke with God, Felix appears to confirm that we should find the cowherd funny – but what kind of “funny?”

Here, too, intertextuality undoes the obviousness of the possible value judgment. Paulinus elsewhere attributes exactly the same “unpleasant” manner of all-too-human irritability with God and saint to himself: “Even my Felix himself, I confess, I began/to accuse in an irritable tone [querula... uoce]”.

The attribution of ambiguity to Paulinus’ comic presentation of the cowherd is supported by another consideration: his investment in an ambiguous self-presentation. After the explicit equation of himself and the widow of the mites, it’s not surprising that Paulinus elsewhere allusively equates himself with a marginal woman, the “symbolic harlot” (more or less his words: *meretrix sed mystica*, c. 26.143), named Rehab in the book of Joshua. Here is Paulinus on his choice to renounce his wealth (c. 15.10-14):

```latex
sic uoluit ditare pater bonus, ut male dites
criminibus uersa in melius uice diuitiarum
pro cunctis opibus cunctisque affectibus et pro
nobilibus titulis et honoribus omnia uanis
Felicem caperemus opes patriamque domumque.
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Our good Father willed us to be rich on the condition that our riches badly trafficked in our sins, in trade for better riches in exchange for all wealth and all ambitions and noble rank and empty offices – for them, we take Felix as all wealth and fatherland and house.

And here he is on Rehab’s apparent betrayal of her city on behalf of the angels (26.139-41):

```latex
uitam patriamque domum
praebato contempta deo mox cuncta benigno
repperit in domino.
```

Her life, fatherland, and house disdained in preference to God, as all she found...
soon enough in our good Lord.

With the repetition of the phrase *patriamque domum*, Paulinus not only speaks to the dispossession of the prostitute in the Roman imagination, but also to that imagination’s representation of his own choice to renounce his possessions as a choice for effeminization.\(^{107}\)

In the present context, this interpretation finds further support in the self-consciously countercultural connotation of the opening of the first quotation. In context, Paulinus is surely talking about “our good Father”, God, but with the antithesis between the good father and the bad riches, it’s hard to avoid thinking of Paulinus’s biological, and more importantly, legal parent — the traditional source of the wealth and status that the son renounced.\(^{108}\) More concretely, in his verse correspondence with Ausonius, the elder man of property, styled “father” by his protégée, insinuates that Paulinus was radicalized into monasticism at the suggestion of his wife, Therasia.\(^{109}\) Ausonius, in their correspondence, in fact, compares Therasia to Tanaquil (Aus. *Ep.* 22.30-1 Green), a view subsumed in Paulinus’ description of Rehab as “treacherous with a good trick, deceptive with an honest soul” (26.137: *fraude bona fallax, animo mentita fideli*).\(^{110}\) Paulinus’ description of this “whore with a heart of a gold” is another instance of double-consciousness, or the ability to comprise “several personal perspectives” in individual utterances: is the harlot good or bad, or “bad” because she is good or good because she is “bad?” In the context of this discussion, such formulations, paradox or oxymoron, reveal their basis in the narratological function of deviant focalization, while their consistent alignment with the poor and marginal and broader use by Paulinus to reflect on class difference make them instances of deviant standpoint. The next representative of this standpoint, the “mystical” prostitute, opts not to “have fallen embroiled in the ruins of the fatherland” (142: *patriis cece-disset mixta ruinis*), and instead “took her own salvation as her fatherland

\(^{107}\) — Cf. *Ep.* 5.2: *et populi et paternae domus oblita* (“forgetting her people and her father’s house”).


\(^{110}\) — Cooper 1992, 163: “there were those who viewed ascetic proposals as a wholesale betrayal of romanitas”; cf. Brown 2016, 82-4, 92f.

\(^{111}\) — Winkler 1990, 167; cf. Stehle 1997, 290f. For the commonplace deviant focalization of Christian subculture, see, e.g., Paulin. c. 10.134f.: *falsi caligine cernens/stulta deo sapiens* “astute in the darkness of untruth/and wise in foolishness to God”.
wasted away” (146: *exspectique suam patria Pereunte salutem*)\(^{112}\). In view of the possibility that Paulinus is alluding to his own choice to renounce his riches, the wasting away of the prostitute’s fatherland intimates the withering away of patriarchy\(^{113}\).

5. Conclusion: past empiricism, redeeming Paulinus

Of course, Paulinus’ total project – the poetry, the epistles, the public works – admits of multiple interpretations. I have claimed that his recognition of the poor, combined as it was with a form of redistribution in his Christian works, was progressive in nature\(^{114}\). One could just as easily (and more safely) claim that he was simply adopting a new strategy of self-promotion to consolidate his more or less traditional position in the quickly shifting terrain of aristocratic ideology in the late fourth century CE\(^{115}\). With the role that I suggest that Sappho’s femininity plays in his work, one could likewise argue that he was maintaining his masculine prerogatives by promoting “a virility that borrows from the feminine only what it needs in order to move beyond a merely carnal manhood”\(^{116}\).

Using a phenomenological approach to the literary history of the intertext, I have isolated those moments when, in spite of the “facts” that support these interpretations, things may have *appeared* otherwise\(^{117}\). Is an interpretation based on such appearances “correct”, in the sense of reflecting all the factors of Paulinus’ project or the immediate context of its reception? Does it give a satisfying impression “of a certain kind of vividness or... social-historical ‘full-bloodedness’”, or even account for all the details of Paulinus, *c. 18*\(^{118}\)? These are different questions. The value of the present effort does not derive from its historical accuracy, correctness, or exhaustiveness but from the extent to which it helps reclaim or repair the past, through poetry, for a certain Marxist and feminist position (a political concern), and to the extent that it allows us to describe the expe-

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\(^{112}\) — In contrast, in Joshua 2.12f., Rehab specifically intercedes on behalf of her father, her family, and their property: *cun domo patris mei... patrem meum et matremi fratres ac sorores meae et omnia quae eorum sunt* (“with the home of my father... my father and mother/my brothers and my sisters and all that is theirs”). On the changing values attached to property in Rome, see Garnsey 1980b, 36f.


\(^{114}\) — See n. 19 above.


\(^{117}\) — Cf. the sixth of the “Theses on History” of Walter Benjamin 1968, 255, with Taussig 1993, 39f.

\(^{118}\) — Vessey 1998, 382f., quoted in Burrus 2000, 199.
ential specificity of isolated moments with a quantity of precision (an aesthetic theoretical and phenomenological concern)\textsuperscript{119}. If this reparation also evinces alternative possibilities and excluded experiences in the past, so much the better.

On such a reconstruction, the appearance of deviant standpoint in the figure of the cowherd in Paulinus is the \textit{expression}, in the discourse of the man of property, of an \textit{intentional} dimension of the experience of real women and workers, viz. their constitutive incompleteness in a patriarchal system\textsuperscript{120}. Was that intentional dimension of the experience of women or workers somehow a part of the experience of men of property such as Paulinus? Was it even a part of the experience of the women and workers themselves? These are also different questions. It \textit{appears} in Paulinus in the application of aesthetic technology, which here promotes the dilation of the appearances that, in consciousness, replace being with phenomena: \textit{φαίνεται μοι}...\textsuperscript{121}... The result may not be the consciousness that “really” or “authentically” inhered in the socially subjugated historical subject, say the woman or worker of archaic Greece, classical Rome, or late antiquity; it is, rather, the \textit{kind} of consciousness that may have inhered in such a subject.

As to the “different questions”, if Paulinus can help us gain access to the consciousness of women and workers in the ancient world in this way, then we may ask: Were women and workers conscious of themselves – and did they thus have \textit{class-consciousness} – in the way that Paulinus was conscious of himself and of his class through them\textsuperscript{122}? For important reasons, in the primary Marxist accounts of standpoint theory, the individuals involved, the proletariat for instance, need not \textit{themselves} empirically experience the consciousness that theory ascribes to them\textsuperscript{123}.

\textsuperscript{119} — On such “reparative reading” (Sedgwick 2003), see Dressler 2016a, 249-55.
\textsuperscript{120} — In the French tradition of literary interpretation derived from existential phenomenology, this intentional dimension of experience, called a “theme”, is the object of \textit{la critique th\êmatique}: it “results from a formalization of experience [mise en forme de l’expérience], revelatory of a manner of being in the world that relates to the style of the writer in the same way as his manner of handling words” (Collot 1997, 32, with Iser 1989, 36f.). Far from being the guarantor of the poem that it once was rejected as being (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 472-4, 481f., with Iser 1985, 226 n. 8), such intentionality, or the theme, “is connoted, not denoted” (Collot 1988, 82). The flaw in the “supposed fullness of the object” (Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], 348, cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 477f., Iser 1985, 208f.), the intention of literary works appears not least in the dimension of reception, time (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 59): “The productions of the past, which are the data of our time, themselves once went beyond anterior productions towards a future which we are, and in this sense called for (among others) the metamorphosis which we impose upon them”; cf. 2012 [1946], 345-9, and Jauss 1982, 88f., and Compagnon 2004, 63-5.
\textsuperscript{121} — Rösler 1991, 292f., with the theoretical terminology of Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945], 310 in 308-11; cf. 347f. See also n. 32, above.
\textsuperscript{122} — See again n. 18, above.
\textsuperscript{123} — Hartsock 1998, 237. On “imputed class consciousness” (more presently), see Lukács 1971 [1923], xviii-xix, and 2000, 65f., 74-8, 81-5, with Hobsbawm 1972, 5-7, and Žižek 2000,
In a similar way, the class-consciousness that emerges in Paulinus may be a proper instance of what Georg Lukács, the Marxist who first formulated standpoint theory, called *imputed* (Lukács 1971 [1923], 51):

> Now class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions ‘imputed’ [zugerechnet] to a particular typical position in the process of production. This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up the class. And yet the historically significant actions of the class as a whole are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not by the thought of the individual – and these actions can be understood only by reference to this consciousness.

In the case of Paulinus’ cowherd, I think this peculiar form of consciousness, which need not exist in any actual person, is, as a consequence of the ambiguity of embodiment and sensation (*aisthêsis*), a distinctive mark of literature (or the aesthetic)124. “Literature” thus appears as the mode of imputation of consciousness *par excellence*. If this is so, then the “master-trope” of literature, qua imputation, is none other than prosopopoeia, which is just what we find in Paulinus’ impersonation of the rural laborer125. Whereas Lukácsean modernity achieves this progressive imputation of consciousness in critical theory, Paulinan late anti-quity achieves it in poetic practice. That practice is “literary” or “aesthetic” to the extent that its effects do not inhere in a given way in any historical subject. “An effect of artistry that is momentary and ephemeral”126, this “imputed consciousness”, or deviant standpoint, appears in complex and overlapping structures of different social positions combined in the first-person of the poet and produced in prosopopoeia.

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167-70.

124 — On these two faces of the aesthetic, see n. 46 above.

125 — See *De Man* 1986, 48, with *Paxson* 1994, 33f., and *Dressler* 2016a, 69.


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