

## Fragments and 'The Ruin of Time'

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As Alessandro Barchiesi reminds me April 25<sup>th</sup> is an important day for Italy; Liberation day, marking as he puts it 'the end of Nazi-Fascist terror'.<sup>1</sup> So I have attempted to suit some of my arguments to the occasion, and I hope that my argument as a whole is a liberating one.

My interest in this topic of flux and fragmentation was first spurred a couple of years ago by Don Fowler's wonderful essay in his *Roman Constructions* book, 'The Ruin of Time', hence the title of this paper.<sup>2</sup> Here I attempt to tie together some thoughts on poetic and monumental fragmentation and flux of interpretation with the ways in which both texts and history fragment.

In his essay, Don examines how monuments fall apart and lose their 'original' meaning, and of how we may reconstruct fragmentary monuments and create different meanings from them. Further, Don looks at how those very monuments that we see in pieces today have always been subject to varieties of interpretation – the argument of Ovid of course, in the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Tristia*, that the monuments of Augustus are always subject to deviant readings just as are the works of poets, and in neither case can the author control what reception and interpretation his work will receive.<sup>3</sup> Ovid's reading of the monuments of Augustus as good places for picking up girls is clearly deliberately provocative, but it is a reading there waiting to be given to them. It is as Don says, how monuments are used that gives them their meaning. Ovid comes close in his defence of the *Ars Amatoria* in *Tristia* 2, to accusing Augustus of being responsible for the supposed corruption of Roman morality that Augustus charges him with, since he provided such useful places of assignation,<sup>4</sup> and this is a reading that almost any traditional Roman moralist would agree with: it is, they would say, the new wealth,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally delivered as the second Don Fowler Memorial Lecture on April 25 2002, Examination Schools, University of Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> Don Fowler, 'The Ruin of Time: Monuments and Survival at Rome', in id. *Roman Constructions*, (Oxford, 2000), 193-219.

<sup>3</sup> See Ovid's tour of Roman monuments 'misreading' them as places of romantic assignation in *Ars Amatoria* 1.51-228, and his defence of the *Ars Amatoria* to Augustus in *Tristia* 2.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse*, (Berkeley, 1997).

leisure and luxury that came with success and peace, that has corrupted the morals of the Roman people, and Augustus' monuments of lavish gleaming marble are clearly symbols of that new wealth and leisure.<sup>5</sup> Augustus then, by his very success in providing the Roman people with his much-vaunted *Pax Augusta*, is, ironically, responsible for the state of affairs that we see in the *Ars Amatoria*.

Don also explores a favourite conceit of Roman poets: that their works are also monuments, just like the stone monuments of great men, and the conceit that, paradoxically, poetic monuments will outlast the concrete monuments of the great, simply because they are written in water. That most fragile of media, papyrus, is able to give eternal life to a poem, while the marble monuments of the great will crumble into nothing.<sup>6</sup> Only poetry can grant immortality: a claim made famously by Horace and by Ovid, most notably at the end of the *Metamorphoses*:<sup>7</sup>

*Metamorphoses* 15.871-9:

iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis  
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.  
cum volet, illa dies, quae nihil nisi corporis huius  
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:  
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis  
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,  
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,  
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,  
si quid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

Now I have accomplished a work that neither the anger of Jupiter nor fire nor iron nor devouring age can wipe out. Let that day, which has rights over nothing other than this body, finish the space of my uncertain time when it wishes: I shall be borne nevertheless in the better part of me immortal above the high stars, and my name shall be indelible. Wherever Roman power is spread over the conquered lands, I shall be read by the mouth of the people, and through all the centuries in fame, if the prophecies of poets have any truth, I shall live. (Trans. Fowler).

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Tacitus in similar vein, *Annals* 1.2: *militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit [Augustus]*.

<sup>6</sup> Ennius *Ann.* 16 fr. 411-13 Vahlen=405-7 Skutsch, Horace *Odes* 3.30, Propertius 3.2.25-6, Martial 8.3.3-8, 10.2.4-12, Juvenal 10.142-6.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Barchiesi, 'Endgames: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15 and *Fasti* 6', in D. Roberts, F. Dunn, and D. Fowler, *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*, 181-208.

Ovid just before this has just been predicting the future deification and immortality of Augustus. Augustus may be a god, and he may be immortal,<sup>8</sup> but so is Ovid, and his immortality is ensured by the constant rereading of his work. A much firmer basis for immortality than Augustus' own. And with lovely irony, Ovid and his work will avoid *damnatio memoriae*, and the book-burning of tyrants, precisely because of Augustus' success in the promulgation of Roman culture by conquest. Ovid prophesies truly of course, becoming at the end of the poem a *vates* just like Pythagoras earlier on in the book who gives us a sermon the text of which reads: all is in flux, everything must change. This is the dominant principle of the *Metamorphoses*: the only fixed certainty is change.<sup>9</sup>

As this is Liberation Day, given Mussolini's admiration for and emulation of Augustus,<sup>10</sup> I think it may be fitting to say a few words here about how Ovid's approach to literary theory and monumentality may impact upon political ideas. I'm not going to claim that Augustus was a fascist, but there are strong thematic parallels between certain of the central motifs of fascism and those of the Augustan age – we may point in particular to the notion of the dawning of a new age, the coming of a new golden age under one great leader, the clock set back to zero as it were, restoration of former grandeur, and even, if we want to give the ending of the *Aeneid* a fascist reading: a terrible beauty born from blood. But perhaps above all it is in the seeking after permanence of the two eras, and the expression of such permanence in monumental form that one of the greatest parallels lies. Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* of course expresses

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<sup>8</sup> For Ovid's deliberately ambiguous attitude to Augustus' divinity cf. *Fasti* 2.144: *caelestem fecit te [Romule] pater, ille [Augustus] patrem*, in his wicked comparison of Romulus and Augustus in which the latter ends up as better than Romulus since Romulus was a murderer, criminal thug and rapist.

<sup>9</sup> See Sarah Myers, *Ovid's Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor, 1994), Garth Tissol, *The Face of Nature: Wit, Narrative, and Cosmic Origin's in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Princeton, 1997), G. Lively, 'Cleopatra's Nose, Naso and the Science of Chaos', *Greece and Rome*, Vol. 49.1, 2002, 27-42.

<sup>10</sup> Syme's main spur behind the publication of *The Roman Revolution* in 1939. See Clive Foss, 'Augustus and the Poets in Mussolini's Rome', in P. Know and C. Foss (eds.), *Style and Tradition. Studies in Honor of Wendell Clausen* (Stuttgart/Leipzig, 1998), 306-325, M. Wyke, 'Sawdust Caesar: Mussolini, Julius Caesar and the Drama of Dictatorship', in M. Biddiss and M. Wyke (eds.), *Uses and Abuses of Antiquity* (Bern/Berlin, 1999), 167-186, Luisa Quartermaine, '“Slouching Towards Rome”: Mussolini's Imperial Vision', in T. J. Cornell and Kathryn Lomas (eds.), *Urban Society in Roman Italy*, (London, 1995), 203-215, E. Christian Kopff, 'Italian Fascism and the Roman Empire', and the articles by P. Aicher, J. T. Quinn, and R. F. Thomas in *The Classical Bulletin* vol. 76.2 (2000).

this conceit that the new age is to be eternal and that history has somehow come to an end:

Horace, *Carmen Saeculare* 9-24:

alme Sol, curru nitido diem qui  
promis et celas, aliusque et idem  
nascaris, possis nihil urbe Roma  
visere maius.

rite maturos aperire partus  
lenis, Ilithyia, tuere matres,  
sive tu Lucina probas vocari  
seu Genitalis:

diva, producas subolem, patrumque  
prosperes decreta super iugandis  
feminis prolisque novae feraci  
lege marita,  
certus undenos deciens per annos  
orbis ut cantus referatque ludos  
ter die claro totiensque grata  
nocte frequentes.

Nurturing Sun who, with your shining chariot,  
Bring and close the day, ever new yet changeless.  
May no greater thing than this Rome, our City,  
Rise in your prospect.

Duly open wombs at their proper season,  
Ilithyia, gently attending mothers,  
Or, with your approval, be named Lucina  
Or Genitalis.

Goddess, rear our children, uphold the laws our  
Leaders have enacted to govern wedlock,  
Laws we pray may yield generations also  
Fruitful in offspring,

So that through our eleven recurrent future  
Decades there may be, without fail, repeated  
Hymns and games of holiday thrice by daylight,  
Thrice after nightfall.

(Trans. Shapiro).

In subverting this notion of permanence then, and in mocking the monumental expressions of the permanence of the new era, Ovid strikes at the underlying principles of Augustus' regime. It is not surprising then, as Don says in 'The Ruin of Time', that the end of the fascist era was marked by a re-labeling of the roads, buildings and monuments of fascist Rome: such re-labeling, forcing a monument to alter its meaning, is a political act in that it underlines the fact that regimes, monuments, and monumental meaning are all unstable, and insists that the regimes these monuments express and represent, similarly must one day fall. Ovid's attitude to literature and monuments is then a political stance, and so I think the topic of this lecture is suitable for this great day.<sup>11</sup>

Ovid's poetic monument, the *Metamorphoses*, then, is one in eternal flux, and eternal flux is actually the material out of which it is constructed. The monuments of the great must also suffer eternal flux, both of their fabric and of their meanings. But Ovid's work is immortal *because* it is in flux: it does not as the concrete monuments do, try to fight against the laws of nature that demand change. This brings to mind Shelley's use of the topos of monuments that, due to the ruin of time, end up as monuments only to the vanity of human wishes, in his *Ozymandias of Egypt*:

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

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<sup>11</sup> Luisa Quartermain op. cit., 207-8 quotes P. de Francisci, *Augusto e l'imperio*, (Quaderni, 1937) who saw Augustus as the first of a long line of great leaders culminating in Mussolini, and also quotes (212) a speech delivered by Mussolini in 1925: 'My ideas are clear, my orders precise. I am absolutely certain that they will become reality. In five years from now, Rome will appear wonderful to the world: vast, orderly, powerful as she was at the time of her first empire under Augustus. You must clear the trunk of the great oak tree ... and all that grew around during the years of decadence must disappear ... you will also free the majestic temples of Christian Rome ... the thousand year old monuments of our history must stand out in isolation as giants ... The third Rome will then spread over the hills, along the sacred river as far as the Tyrrhenian sea.' (Cited in L. Patetta, *L'architettura in Italia 1919-22*, (Milan, 1972), 192.)

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Our first thought is that the joke is on Ozymandias: his vainglorious boast that he has outdone all others by the grandeur of his monument, stands now only as a memorial to his foolish vanity, and perhaps also to his status as an irony free zone. He cannot, as the poets can, see the ironic futility of seeking to gain immortality through such an ephemeral work as a stone monument. But of course if Ozymandias had foreseen the inevitable future fate of his statue when he wrote the inscription, we would have to read it differently: the mighty would then be invited to despair precisely because Ozymandias is teaching them the truth of Pythagoras' sermon in *Metamorphoses* 15. Even the works of the mighty tyrant Ozymandias are not immune from the ruin of time. The monument would then have been designed to teach its message by example as it decayed. It had crossed my mind that perhaps Ozymandias had gone one step better than this and had actually built his statue deliberately as a ruin. The building of Romantic ruins for their contemplative value of course is hardly unknown. Sadly though, Diodorus Siculus tells us otherwise. He describes Ozymandias' statue when it was still standing. Diodorus, *Library of History* 1.47.4:

Τὸ δ' ἔργον τοῦτο μὴ μόνον εἶναι κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ τέχνῃ θαυμαστὸν καὶ τῇ τοῦ λίθου φύσει διαφέρον, ὡς ἂν ἐν τηλικούτῳ μεγέθει μῆτε διαφυάδος μῆτε κηλίδος μηδεμιᾶς θεωρουμένης. ἐπιγεγράφθαι δ' ἐπ' αὐτοῦ·

Ἐπιγεγράφθαι δ' ἐπ' αὐτοῦ·  
'Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων Ὀσυμανδύας εἰμί. εἰ δέ τις εἶδέναι βούλεται πηλίκος εἰμὶ καὶ ποῦ κεῖμαι, νικάτω τι τῶν ἔμῳ ἔργων.'

And it is not merely for its size that this work merits approbation, but it is also marvellous by reason of its artistic quality and excellent because of the nature of the stone, since in a block of so great a size there is not one single crack or blemish to be seen. The inscription upon it runs:

'King of Kings am I, Osymandyas. If anyone would know how great I am and where I lie, let him surpass one of my works'.

(Trans. Oldfather).

Ozymandias seems after all to be the traditional tyrant seeking permanence and immortality through monument building. For Diodorus the message that Ovid teaches seems to be there under erasure, as it were, since he is impressed that of all monuments, this particular one seems immune to the ruin of time.

But in any case, whether or not we can divine Ozymandias' authorial intentions behind the building of the statue and the writing of the inscription, the irony works because we are forced to interpret that inscription quite differently in the present from the way it would have been interpreted when the statue was new. Both the meaning of the inscription and of the statue have changed due simply to the inevitable process of time.

My mention of Diodorus leads me on to a link I will attempt to make between monumental fragmentation, textual fragmentation, and the fragmentation of history and historiography. Both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Diodorus' *Library of History* configure themselves as universal histories.<sup>12</sup> Ovid tells us at the beginning of book one that he will take us from the creation of the world down to his own day. In this way then the work is conceived as a far grander project even than the *Aeneid* which is a snapshot of mythological history. And indeed the *Metamorphoses* cannot but help competing with the *Aeneid*, whether we want to see it as an anti-*Aeneid* or not. Ovid does what he promises and begins at the beginning of the world and 'ends' in his own day with the prophecy of his own and Augustus' immortality. So it is a *carmen perpetuum* in a historical sense: it doesn't end at the end. Ovid's immortality as the author of the poem and as the creator of the world of which the poem stands as a *simulacrum* ensures that the work will always defy closure.<sup>13</sup> Ovid's world as I say is one in perpetual flux, and of course this flux is mirrored by the fluctuations of the journey we take through the work from the creation of the world to Ovid's rising above the stars – it is not a linear journey though, unlike that of the *Aeneid*. We could end up anywhere on this journey as the stories branch and swirl in different directions, just as for one who tries to escape from Daedalus' labyrinth.<sup>14</sup> Just as Ovid's myths are in flux so the history they relate is

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<sup>12</sup> *Met.* 1.4-5: *primaque ab origine mundi / ad mea perpetuum [di] deducite tempora carmen.* Diodorus 1.1.: Τοῖς τὰς κοινὰς ἱστορίας πραγματευσαμένοις μεγάλας χάριτας ἀπονέμειν δίκαιον πάντα ἀνθρώπους.

<sup>13</sup> Barchiesi op. cit. 195 notes the acrostic in 15.871-5: *incip.*

<sup>14</sup> *Met.* 8.159-68. See Barchiesi, op. cit. 181-2 who notes the importance of this Ovidian labyrinth metaphor for the poetics of Italo Calvino. The parallels between Ovid and Daedalus of course did not go

indeterminate in its directionality and there is very little sense of what we might demand of a 'proper' history: a linear narrative that begins at point  $\alpha$  and moves through to point  $\omega$ , establishing all the letters of the alphabet in nice neat orderly manner and above all establishing them in *fixed* positions. If as in the *Metamorphoses* the letters of the alphabet of history are not followed in order, and further if they refuse to stay put but instead wander around, our historical sense may be outraged: how *can* this be a history? Ovid's history tells and retells itself, and is different each time it is read. History for Ovid, just like any other story, is always subject to chaotic flux. But then again, just as there are different types of histories, histories also have their different uses and are read in different ways for different purposes. Diodorus' history fulfils the requirements of linear directionality and the establishment of order out of the chaos of source material that we might demand of a 'proper' history but it is used as a proper history remarkably little. Indeed the *Library of History* has a long history itself of being used as a library of the fragments of other histories. Diodorus has often been a playground for the exponents of *Quellenforschung* more often than it has been used as a work of history valuable in its own right. Diodorus' history has been treated as if it were a collection of the fragments of *serious* historians such as Ephorus, and it has often been the reconstruction of Ephorus that drives study of Diodorus.<sup>15</sup> Diodorus is left lying in pieces as rejoicing scholars

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unnoticed by James Joyce who quotes 8.188: *et ignotas animum dimittit in artes*, as the introduction to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, leaving the final phrase of the sentence, *naturamque novat*, highlighted by its erasure.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. J. Stylianou, *A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus Book 15*, (Oxford, 1998), 1:

'The cardinal fact about Diodorus is that he was a second-rate epitomator who generally used first-rate sources. Had these survived the Bibliothek would have been of interest only as an example of a first-century BC work of compilation. Unfortunately, however, the abridged historians are mostly lost and we must perforce do what we can with Diodorus. The problem is to discover the principles that should be applied. It is imperative to know in each instance if the information is Diodorus' or his source's; and the extent to which he mishandled it if the latter.'

See also C. A. Volquardsen, *Untersuchungen über die Quellen der griechischen und sicilischen Geschichten bei Diodor, Buch XI bis XVI*, (Kiel, 1868), G. L. Barber, *The Historian Ephorus*, (Cambridge, 1935), esp. 21ff. (I owe these references to Brian Sheridan). On the history of fragments in classical scholarship generally see A. C. Dionisotti, 'On Fragments in Classical Scholarship', in G. W. Most (ed.), *Collecting Fragments / Fragmente sammeln*, (Göttingen, 1997), 1-33. On the history of the collection of historical fragments see S. C. Humphreys, 'Fragments, Fetishes, Philosophies: Towards a History of Greek Historiography after Thucydides', *ibid.* 207-23. For a defence of *Quellenforschung* in the study of philosophical fragments see J. Mansfeld, 'Doxographical Studies, *Quellenforschung*, Tabular Presentation and Other Varieties of Comparativism', in W. Burkert, L. Gemelli Marciano, E. Matelli and L. Orelli (eds.), *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte der Antike / Le raccolte dei frammenti di filosofi antichi*, (Göttingen, 1998), 16-39.



carry off excised chunks of Ephorus. This abuse of poor Diodorus is now being strenuously resisted, especially by my colleague Brian Sheridan who is seeking Diodorus' rehabilitation as a serious historian, and to whom I am grateful for the Diodorus quote. There are, I think, curious parallels between Ovid's and Diodorus' universal histories: both are works in a state of flux, both made up of fragments in flux and both subject to a constant interpretative flux. Here I am attempting to draw a parallel between the way histories fragment, and the way literary and historical texts are always subject to a flux of interpretation, and in the case of Diodorus, I think we might take this further and also see a parallel with the way history itself fragments. Diodorus' *Library of History* survived antiquity and was preserved until the Renaissance at Constantinople. However in the sack of Constantinople in 1453, much of the second half of the work was destroyed leaving Diodorus in a fragmentary state in a physical sense. As I understand it Diodorus' was the only ancient work lost during the sack of Constantinople. But further, because Diodorus was one of the main repositories for Greek histories by lost authors at that date, not only was much of Diodorus' work rendered fragmentary but also much of Greek history itself was rendered fragmentary by that very fragmentation of Diodorus' text. Sadly the *Library of History*, unlike the *Metamorphoses*, was not entirely immune from fire and the sword. History itself then is subject to fragmentation in a way parallel to the fragmentation of historians' texts.

This sort of fragmentation of history is very much the subject matter of the next historical work I would like to look at, Sellar and Yeatman's *1066 and All That*.<sup>16</sup> In the preface to their memorable history of England they write:

'History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember.'

This is the guiding principle of the history that follows – it is a collection of memorable 'facts' from English history as taught at schools in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, all of them half-remembered and mis-remembered. As memory fragments so, driven by the inexorable

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<sup>16</sup> W. C. Sellar, and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That: a Memorable History of England, Comprising all the Parts You Can Remember, Including One Hundred and Three Good Things, Five Bad Kings and Two Genuine Dates*, (London, 1931).

force of their proposition 'History is what you can remember', history itself also fragments. One of the finest illustrations of this process can be found in chapter 5:

#### Chapter V Alfred the Cake.

King Alfred was the first Good King, with the exception of Good King Wenceslas, who, though he looked 4<sup>th</sup>, really came first (it is not known, however, what King Wenceslas was king of). Alfred ought never to be confused with King Arthur, equally memorable but probably non-existent and therefore perhaps less important historically (unless he did exist). There is a story that King Arthur once burnt some cakes ...

Here King Arthur and King Alfred have become interchangeable – King Alfred's best known monument, the burning of the cakes, is now transferred to the non-existent King Arthur, who is equally memorable, and so, by Sellar and Yeatman's definition equally a part of the only real possible history.

So *1066 and All That* is a collection of the fragments of history, and these fragments create history itself, they are history: they are what we can remember. But since in this paper I try to draw parallels between literature and history, I would like to draw a parallel between the fragmentary and mis-remembered nature of the history that *1066 and All That* presents and the status of the book itself. It is in fact itself a restoration of half-remembered fragments of an earlier lost original. The original manuscript was left in a taxi on the way to the Bodleian library, and so the work had to be reconstructed from the notes of the original. *1066 and All That* is a restoration of one version of *1066 and All That*. Other misremembered reconstructed versions of the misremembered 'facts' of English history would be possible and they would all be equally as true in their presentation of history as the one we have. *1066 and All That* is a history in flux, a picture of memory fragmenting; memory that creates history itself. Interestingly, it works less well nowadays as a subversive satire of school history than it originally did. Fewer and fewer of us can remember the sort of history that the book satirizes, and I myself have already forgotten some of the 'facts' distorted here that I was taught at school in the 1960's. Because my memory of what I learned thirty-five years ago is fading and fragmenting, I am no longer sure whether Horsa was Hengist's horse or his wife, or whether it was the Bruce or the Wallace who won the battle of Bannockburn (or

Flodden). So there are various sorts of parallel fragmentation going on, and it is hardly the only literary work that is a restoration of fragments of a lost original. Famously T. E. Lawrence left the manuscript of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in the waiting room at, I think, Paddington station. The manuscript of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is in a state of flux in a rather different way in that it was composed as a sort of patch-work quilt of different versions of different chapters: Joyce wrote at least three versions of each and sent them out to friends and publishers, emending the different versions differently as they did or didn't come back to him. In the meantime he also revised and rewrote various sections independently, so ensuring that the task of reconstructing an authoritative 'original' text of *Ulysses* is impossible.<sup>17</sup> *Ulysses* was composed by a process of flux and so must remain a text in flux, in a way that fittingly expresses the wanderings of Leopold Bloom around Dublin on 16 June 1904. Terence Killeen complains, as I imagine, ironically:<sup>18</sup>

The situation regarding the text of *Ulysses* is catastrophic. It has now become a serious obstacle to reading the book at all. There is a bitter irony in the fact that one of the masterworks of Modernism, a monumental text supposedly under complete authorial control, more permanent than bronze, should now lie dispersed, in fragments, outside anyone's control. What is the point of being told, as we once used to be, that every word in the book has its special place and its particular function if we cannot be sure what those words are?

But to return to classical literature, I would like to look briefly at flux and indeterminacy in another historian, Herodotus. Herodotus begins book one of his *Histories* by laying out his purpose and approach to history: it is as he says to ensure the deeds and monuments of the great do not fade in memory.<sup>19</sup> His history then is itself an exercise in monumentality - his work intends to mirror and supplement the deeds and monuments it describes. Clearly physical monuments and memory alone are not enough to preserve the exempla of the past, literary monuments must supplement and reinforce

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<sup>17</sup> On the problems of the text of *Ulysses* see Duncan Kibberd's introduction to James Joyce, *Ulysses*, (London, 1992), lxxxi-lxxxviii. Concerning the 'scandal' of Gabler's 1984 text see John Kidd, 'The Scandal of *Ulysses*', *New York Review of Books*, 30 June 1988, 1-8, and id. 'An Inquiry Into *Ulysses*: The Corrected Text', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82, December 1988, 411-584.

<sup>18</sup> Terence Killeen *Dyoublong*, online at <http://www.ireland.com/literature/dyoublong/ulysses/mistakes.htm>

<sup>19</sup> 1.1.1: 'Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέως ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θαυμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι

the didactic action of monumental deeds and physical monuments in preserving the message they wish to teach. Given this we might expect Herodotus' concerns to be with fixing and preserving memory in literary stone, but curiously, he takes quite a different approach in the first book. There he invents a fictitious episode of history to provide us with a monument of history with which to teach his message. He wheels Solon onto stage to meet Croesus king of Lydia.<sup>20</sup> Croesus is a model of a successful man who in his overweening pride thinks his success and happiness are permanently fixed and assured. Solon teaches him, and us, that nothing is permanent or certain, fate is fickle and fluctuating. Accordingly his motto is 'call no man happy until he is dead'. We do not know what is in store. Croesus mocks Solon's words and has to learn the hard way. It is not until he is about to be burned alive that he understands the truth of Solon's words, and accepts his fate as part of the natural order of things. Further, Herodotus explains that he will write of cities both great and small because cities that were once great are now fallen, and cities great now were once insignificant. The fate even of great cities and civilizations is not fixed or constant. So then his world is also in a sort of flux. Croesus' downfall indeed is caused by a desperate seeking after permanence and reassurance in an obsessional consultation of oracles, in an attempt to ascertain the fixed will of fate. He too struggles against the laws of nature and the gods, and his desperate desire for permanence is eventually hubristic and he is justly punished.

Herodotus is happy to invent the chronologically impossible meeting between Solon and Croesus in order to teach his message. For him the reality of the monuments of history is less important than the message they teach. To put it another way, in Herodotus the 'Croesus and Solon' episode becomes history by being made one of the monuments the work seeks to preserve. So the 'father of history' institutes the grand tradition of inventing history for didactic purposes.<sup>21</sup> The same tradition that informed

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ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται ... Don Fowler quotes Andrew Ford on the topos in Homer (A. Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past*, (Cornell, 1992), 146.

<sup>20</sup> 1.30-3.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 1.23-4 where Herodotus seeks to grant historical validity to the story of Arion and the dolphin by appealing to a statue of the event he has seen at Taenarum. I shall not get involved here in the 'Father of History' vs. 'Father of Lies' dispute. See D. Boedeker, 'Herodotus Genre(s)', in M. Depew and D. Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons and Society*, (Cambridge Mass., 2000), 97-114, D. Fehling, *Herodotus and His 'Sources'*, (trans. J. G. Howie), (Leeds, 1989), F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, (trans. J. Lloyd), (Berkeley, 1988), G. S. Shrimpton, *History and Memory in Ancient Greece*. (With an

the history I was taught at school, and the same tradition subverted in *1066 and All That*. For Herodotus then just as for Ovid, the one fixed and certain principle is uncertainty and indeterminacy. The fate of humanity is fluid, as is history itself: the historian can invent and reinvent history, and the invented history becomes as real as any other.

I would like now to come back round again to the theme of change in the *Metamorphoses* because I want to provide myself a route by way of literature from history to philosophy and to look at how literary and philosophical flux may interact. In book fifteen of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid presents a set piece speech to provide philosophical underpinning to the stories of metamorphosis his universal history is composed of. This is the speech of Pythagoras of course, and clearly Ovid's Pythagoras is in competition with Vergil's speech of Anchises in the underworld in book six of the *Aeneid*.<sup>22</sup> Anchises also draws upon Pythagoreanism, strangely given the text of the sermon of Ovid's Pythagoras, to give legitimation to the weird picture of the souls of future great Roman leaders waiting in the underworld, ready to take the places allotted to them in a predestined, permanent and fixed chain of Roman history stretching from Aeneas to its culmination in Augustus. In a parallel way, Ovid's Pythagoras supplies the philosophical legitimation for the world-view of constant indeterminate flux that the *Metamorphoses* presents. History is going nowhere in particular. The fact that it has ended up here is entirely accidental, and Rome is not the eternal city.<sup>23</sup>

Pythagoras preaches to the people of Crotona:

*Metamorphoses* 15.175-84:

Et quoniam magno feror aequare plenaque ventis  
vela dedi: nihil est toto, quod perstet, in orbe.  
cuncta fluunt, omnisque vagans formatur imago;  
ipsa quoque adsiduo labuntur tempora motu,  
non secus ac flumen, neque enim consistere flumen  
nec levis hora potest, sed ut unda impellitur unda  
urgeturque eadem veniente urgetque priorem,  
tempora sic fugiunt pariter pariterque sequuntur  
et nova sunt semper; nam quod fuit ante, relictum est,

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Appendix on Herodotus' Source Citations by G. S. Shrimpton and K. M. Gillis), (Montreal, 1997), S. West, 'Herodotus' Epigraphical Interests', *CQ* NS 33 (1983), 278-305.

<sup>22</sup> *Met.* 15.75-478, *Aeneid* 6.724-853.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Met.* 15.418-37 and 3.131-7.

fitque quod haud fuerat, momentaque cuncta novantur.

Since I have set sail upon a wide ocean and spread my canvas to the winds, let me continue further. Nothing is constant in the whole world. Everything is in a state of flux, and comes into being as a transient appearance. Time itself flows on with constant motion, just like a river: for no more than a river can the fleeting hour stand still. As wave is driven on by wave, and, itself pursued, pursues the one before, so the moments of time at once flee and follow, and are ever new. What was before is left behind, that which was not comes to be, and every minute gives place to another. (Trans. Innes).

Pythagoras draws a picture of a world undergoing constant organic evolution in which the directionality of change is never certain, and the phenomenal world seems to arise as an illusion of order which is underlain by chaos. Ovid of course has been criticized for stringing together commonplace platitudes drawn from popular misapprehensions of Pythagoreanism. Karl Galinsky has argued that we need not take the speech too seriously as Ovid is not presenting 'proper' Pythagoreanism. Philip Hardie on the other hand, has shown in his excellent article on this speech that in fact Ovid uses material drawn from many sources in composing the speech of Pythagoras, especially from Empedocles.<sup>24</sup> Also present are Lucretius, Ennius and Vergil, who had all already drawn upon Empedocles in the passages of their works that Ovid draws upon in constructing his speech of Pythagoras. The directionality of the intertextual relationships between these sources is a complex web of citation, allusion, influence and re-influence. For example, Ovid may draw upon Vergilian material already borrowed by Vergil from Lucretius who in turn had borrowed it from Ennius, and Ennius in his turn may well have found it in Empedocles. Further each writer may also have gone back independently to the earlier source and also to Empedocles. We now know from the Strasbourg fragments of Empedocles that Lucretius at least certainly did use Empedocles directly as well as importing Empedoclean material indirectly through Ennius.<sup>25</sup> Ovid's speech of Pythagoras then does not simply describe a world in flux, but mirrors that flux in the swirling intertextuality of its very construction and fabric.

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<sup>24</sup> K. Galinsky, 'The Speech of Pythagoras in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15', *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* (1997), P. R. Hardie, 'The Speech of Pythagoras in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15: Empedoclean Epos', *Classical Quarterly* NS 45.1 (1995), 204-14.

<sup>25</sup> A. Martin and O. Primavesi (eds), *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg: (P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665-1666)* (1998), Berlin/Strasbourg. Fr. a(ii) 26-8 cf. DRN 2.1081-3.

Further indeterminacy is granted to the speech by the fact that the philosophical topos of 'all is in flux' itself already had a long prehistory of different uses and recontextualisations. It is found perhaps first in Heraclitus who uses it seemingly, as far as anyone can be certain about what he means, to show that there is some underlying permanence beneath endlessly fluctuating appearances:

Heraclitus fr. DK22 B30:

κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀεὶζῶνον, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.

This world-order [the same of all], did none of gods or men make; but it always was and is and shall be: an everliving Fire, kindling in measures, and going out in measures. (Trans. KRS).

Lucretius similarly uses it to illustrate the flux of nature and to show that the earth originally produced all life spontaneously, but then like a woman worn out by age she ceased bearing large animals.<sup>26</sup>

*DRN* 5.828-36:

mutat enim mundi naturam totius aetas,  
ex alioque alius status excipere omnia debet,  
nec manet ulla sui similis res: omnia migrant,  
omnia commutat natura et vertere cogit.  
namque aliud putrescit et aevo debile languet,  
porro aliud succrescit et e contemptibus exit.  
sic igitur mundi naturam totius aetas  
mutat, et ex alio terram status excipit alter,  
quod tulit ut nequeat, possit quod non tulit ante.

For time changes the nature of the whole world,  
and one state of things must take up from another,  
nor does anything stay the same as it was: all things move,

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. 1.250 ff, 2.62-79, 3.964-77, 5.1113-4, 5.1273-80.

nature transforms everything and forces it to change.  
For one thing decays and grows weak with feeble age,  
another grows up and emerges from contempt.  
Thus, therefore, time changes the nature of the whole world,  
and one state of the earth takes up from another,  
so that what bore was no longer able to, what did not bear before is now able.<sup>27</sup>

We may notice one of Lucretius' techniques here; the repetition with slight variation of the lines that frame the passage:

5.828-9:

mutat enim mundi naturam totius aetas,  
ex alioque alius status excipere omnia debet

For time changes the nature of the whole world,  
and one state of things must take up from another,

5.834-5:

sic igitur mundi naturam totius aetas  
mutat, et ex alio terram status excipit alter

Thus, therefore, time changes the nature of the whole world,  
and one state of the earth takes up from another

The fabric of the passage then mirrors the argument: the medium matches the message. A metapoetic technique we could perhaps describe by David West's term syntactical onomatopoeia.<sup>28</sup> The world, just as Lucretius' verses do, undergoes a constant organic evolutionary change, the results shown graphically on the page are the slight gradual, but inevitable change of the lines. In just the same manner the world too constantly evolves in a process the reverse perhaps of that described by Heraclitus: Lucretius' world is entirely chaotic at the atomic level, but this chaos expresses itself in a certain order and

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<sup>27</sup> I translate 5.836 following D. West, 'Two Notes on Lucretius', *Classical Quarterly* NS 14 (1964), 95-102.

<sup>28</sup> D. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius*, (Edinburgh, 1969), 116-23.



regularity at the phenomenal level.<sup>29</sup> All things change, yes, but they do so gradually and by degrees. If we want to push the analogy between the changing atomic and phenomenal worlds and the changing letters on the page, we have of course Lucretius' own authority to see just such an analogy between letters and atoms, both able to create and recreate meaning and reality by interchange of position.<sup>30</sup> There are of course different ways of viewing this process. Italo Calvino puts it in terms of lightness:<sup>31</sup>

The *De rerum natura* of Lucretius is the first great work of poetry in which knowledge of the world tends to dissolve the solidity of the world, leading to a perception of all that is infinitely minute, light, and mobile. Lucretius set out to write the poem of physical matter, but he warns us at the outset that this matter is made up of invisible particles. He is the poet of physical concreteness, viewed in its permanent and immutable substance, but the first thing he tells us is that emptiness is just as concrete as solid bodies. Lucretius' chief concern is to prevent the weight of matter from crushing us. Even while laying down the rigorous mechanical laws that determine every event, he feels the need to allow atoms to make unpredictable deviations from the straight line, thereby ensuring freedom both to atoms and to human beings. The poetry of the invisible, of infinite unexpected possibilities – even the poetry of nothingness – issues from a poet who had no doubts whatever about the physical reality of the world. (Trans. Patrick Creagh).

However, Lucretius did not invent this technique of using the physical form of a poem to illustrate the process of the flux of nature, and we also find it in one of his main sources, Empedocles, especially in fragment 17.

Empedocles, DKB31 17.1-29 (text Martin and Primavesi):

Δίπλ' ἑρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ἠὺξήθη μόνον εἶναι  
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφθυ πλέον' ἐξ ἐνός εἶναι.  
Δοιῆ δὲ θνητῶν γένεσις, δοιῆ δ' ἀπόλειψις·

<sup>29</sup> Of course below this level of chaos there is another form of permanence and stability: the immortality of the atoms.

<sup>30</sup> *DRN* 196-7, 1.823-9, 907-914, 2.688-99, 2.1013-22. On the principle of metathesis in Lucretius and Epicurean literary theory see P. Friedländer, 'Pattern of Sound and Atomistic Theory in Lucretius', *AJPh* 62 (1941), 16-34, I. Dionigi, Lucrezio, *le Parole e le Cose* (Bologna, 1988), J. Porter, 'Philodemus on Material Difference', *CErc* 13 (1989), 25-8, David Armstrong, 'The Impossibility of Metathesis: Philodemus and Lucretius on Form and Content in Poetry', in D. Obbink (ed.), *Philodemus and Poetry*, (Oxford, 1995), 210-32, R. Janko, *Philodemus On Poems Book One*, (Oxford, 2000), 159-64. Empedocles uses the simile of the painters (DK31 B23).

<sup>31</sup> Italo Calvino, 'Lightness', in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (London, 1992), 8-9.

τὴν μὲν γὰρ πάντων ξύνοδος τίκτει τ' ὀλέκει τε,  
ἡ δὲ πάλιν διαφυομένων θρεφθεῖσα διέπτῃ.  
Καὶ ταῦτ' ἀλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,  
ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν' εἰς ἓν ἅπαντα,  
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ δίχ' ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει.

Ἡ δὲ πάλιν διαφύντος ἐνὸς πλέον' ἐκτελέθουσι,  
τῆι μὲν γίγνεται τε καὶ οὐ σφισιν ἔμπεδος αἰών·  
ἦ δὲ διαλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,  
ταύτῃ δ' αἰὲν ἔασιν ἀκίνητοι κατὰ κύκλον.  
Ἀλλ' ἄγε μύθων κλύθι· μάθη γάρ τοι φρένας αὖξει·  
ὥς γὰρ καὶ πρὶν ἔειπα πιφάυσκων πείρατα μύθων,  
δίπλ' ἔρεώ· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἓν ἠύξῃθη μόνον εἶναι  
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφυ πλέον' ἐξ ἐνὸς εἶναι,  
πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἠέρος ἀπλετον ὕψος,  
Νεϊκὸς τ' οὐλόμενον δίχα τῶν, ἀτάλαντον ἅπαντῃ,  
καὶ Φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν, ἴση μῆκός τε πλάτος τε·  
τὴν σὺ νόωι δέρκευ, μηδ' ὄμμασιν ἦσο τεθηπῶς·  
ἦτις καὶ θνητοῖσι νομίζεται ἔμφυτος ἄρθροις,  
τῆι τε φίλα φρονέουσι καὶ ἄρθμια ἔργα τελοῦσι,  
Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἠδ' Ἀφροδίτην·  
τὴν οὐ τις μετὰ τοῖσιν ἐλισσομένην δεδάηκε  
θνητὸς ἀνὴρ· σὺ δ' ἄκουε λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν.  
Ταῦτα γὰρ ἴσα τε πάντα καὶ ἠλικά γένναν ἔασι,  
τιμῆς δ' ἄλλης ἄλλο μέδει, πάρα δ' ἦθος ἕκάστωι,  
ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπλομένοιο χρόνιοι.

A twofold tale I shall tell: at one time it grew so as to be alone out of many,  
at another time in turn it grew apart to be many from one.  
Double is the generation of mortal beings, and double their passing away;  
for the one generation is brought to birth and destroyed by the coming together of  
all things, the other was nurtured and flew apart as they grew asunder again.  
And these things never cease their continuous change, at one time,  
through Love, all coming together into one, at another time, in turn,  
being each carried apart by the hatred of Strife. So insofar as many are formed  
out of one as it grows apart again, to that extent they become and have  
no stable life; but insofar as they never cease their continuous interchange,  
to that extent they always are, changeless, in a cycle.  
But come, hear my words, for learning increases wisdom.  
As I said already before in revealing the scope of my words,  
a twofold tale I shall tell: at one time the one grew to be alone out of many,  
at another time again it grew apart to be many out of one – fire and water  
and earth and the immense height of air, and cursed Strife apart from them,

equally balanced in every direction, and Love among them, equal in length and breadth. Do you look upon her with your mind, and do not sit with eyes dazed; she it is who is thought to be innate even in mortal limbs, and through her they think friendly thoughts and accomplish harmonious deeds, calling her Joy by name and Aphrodite. No mortal is aware of her as she whirls among them; but do you mark the undecieving development of my account. All these are equal and coeval in origin, but each governs a different prerogative, and each has its own character, and they prevail in turn as time comes round. (Trans. Martin and Primavesi)

Again we may notice the repetitive style, here much more marked than in Lucretius. And again, just as in Lucretius, the fluctuating process of the cosmos is mirrored by the swirling pattern of words on the page. Again many lines are repeated with variation. For example:<sup>32</sup>

17.1-2:

Δίπλ' ἔρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ἠύξῆθη μόνον εἶναι  
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφθυ πλέον' ἐξ ἐνός εἶναι.

A twofold tale I shall tell: at one time it grew so as to be alone out of many, at another time in turn it grew apart to be many from one.

17.13-15:

ὡς γὰρ καὶ πρὶν ἔειπα πιφάυσκων πείρατα μύθων,  
δίπλ' ἔρέω· τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ἠύξῆθη μόνον εἶναι  
ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ' αὖ διέφθυ πλέον' ἐξ ἐνός εἶναι

As I said already before in revealing the scope of my words, a twofold tale I shall tell: at one time the one grew to be alone out of many, at another time again it grew apart to be many out of one

Empedocles' cosmology describes an endless succession of creations and destructions of the world: two cosmic forces act upon the four elements. One cosmic force, Love draws all the elements together and a world is created, and then when all the elements are drawn completely into a sphere the world is destroyed. Then Strife separates out the elements

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<sup>32</sup> Empedocles justifies this repetitive technique in B25: 'for what is right is worth repeating'. For its value as a didactic device see M. Gale, 1994, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 1994), 64 and 116-7, and D. Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca, 1983), 176-86.

again and another world is created. When Strife has completely separated the elements the world is again destroyed, and so on for eternity. Empedocles' world is a world in endless flux, just as Pythagoras says in *Metamorphoses* 15, everything in the world is a transitory appearance, even birth and death are not real, but simply a coming together of elements, and a falling apart of elements.

And Empedocles *Physics* is also a universal history: in the passage above in fact we see many ages of the earth described from creation to destruction and back again to creation. Just as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the world is an eternal flowing together and separating out of flowing, swirling elements in an evolutionary process of constant change. Again, as with Lucretius, Empedocles' phenomenal world has a certain stability, but beneath it there is endless chaos. But that surface stability is essentially illusory: time changes the nature of all things. Lucretius' *On the Nature of the Universe* may also be seen as a universal history, especially in books five and six where we are taken from the creation of the world to its future inevitable destruction, but also, as has often been observed, the arrival of Venus in spring in the proem to book one is also a picture of the original creation of the world and of all life, just as the plague at Athens at the end of book six may be read as an Empedoclean allegory of the destruction of the world: Love creates the world in book one and Strife destroys it at the end of the work. So reading from within Empedoclean cosmology, Lucretius' poem, just like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, defies closure since we know the cycle is eternal and Love will again arrive on the first day of spring and the world, the day, the poem, and our journey as readers will begin again.<sup>33</sup>

As I was saying earlier, there are many different ways a history may be presented, and many different ways in which it may be used and interpreted. The problems of interpreting Empedocles' history of the cosmos are notorious, and for example even the sketch of the cosmology I have just given is highly controversial. I prefer to see two worlds coming into creation and being destroyed, others prefer to see only one world described: certainly a more economical sort of cosmology.<sup>34</sup> There are various reasons

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<sup>33</sup> See D. Fowler, 'The Didactic Plot', in M. Depew and D. Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons and Society*, (Cambridge Mass., 2000), 205-19 at 213-5.

<sup>34</sup> See C. Osborne, 'Empedocles Recycled', *Classical Quarterly* NS 37 (1987), 24-50, D. O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle* (Cambridge, 1969), F. Solmsen, 'Love and Strife in Empedocles' Cosmology',

for this difficulty of interpreting Empedocles. First and most obviously, Empedocles *Physics* is a reconstruction of a lost original. It is a collection of fragments garnered mainly from quotations of it in other ancient authors. So the fragments are out of their original context to start with, and to reconstruct that original context we must look closely at how and why they are quoted and by whom. Aristotle is fond of quoting Empedocles, often in a polemical manner, but he seems to quote from memory often, and is not above distorting Empedocles' arguments for effect. Often Empedocles is quoted simply for his language and style, and so again finding where the fragment came from and what it might mean is tricky. And what context we prefer to set each fragment in will of course inevitably affect the meaning of each fragment: how we interpret a fragment and thus the work as a whole depends upon a prior assumption about the structure and meaning of the work. Arguments here often become circular. I may want to put a particular fragment in a certain place in the *Physics* because I prefer the story the poem then tells, others may want to read a different story in Empedocles and so will put the same fragment somewhere else, and perhaps order all the fragments differently.<sup>35</sup> I came upon this problem recently while teaching an MA seminar on philosophical fragments and while simultaneously teaching Empedocles in an undergraduate course on didactic poetry. For the MA seminar I carefully ordered the fragments of Empedocles according to the best scholarly evidence I could find for placing each one, showing how and why different editors had placed them in different places in the text. For the undergraduate course, to make things simpler for the students, I placed them, in an unscholarly manner, in the order in which I thought they told the best and clearest story, but without distorting Empedocles' teaching as I interpret it (a circular argument, of course!). When I had done this I noticed that by recontextualizing them I had made certain fragments tell a quite different story than they had before. This was the case with fragment 15:

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*Phronesis* 10 (1965), (repr. in R. E. Allen and D. J. Furley (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy II* (London, 1975)).

<sup>35</sup> There are many different numbering systems in existence, e.g. those of Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin, 1952), J. Bollack, *Empédocle* (Paris, 1965-9), and M. R. Wright, *Empedocles the Extant Fragments* (London, 1995). See Wright's concordance of fragment numbers (1995, 87-9). I use the Diels-Kranz numbers merely for convenience.

DK31 B15 (fr. 106 Wright. Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1113d):

οὐκ ἂν ἀνὴρ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς φρεσὶ μαντεύσαιτο,  
ὡς ὄφρα μὲν τε βιώσι, τὸ δὴ βίον καλέουσι,  
τόφρα μὲν οὖν εἰσὶν, καὶ σφιν πάρα δειλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά,  
πρὶν δὲ πάγειν τε βροτοὶ καὶ < ἐπεὶ > λύθεν, οὐδὲν ἄρ' εἰσὶν.

A man who is wise in such matters would not surmise in his mind that men are, and good and ill befall them, for as long as they live, for a lifetime as they call it, and that before they were formed, and after they have disintegrated, they do not exist at all. (Trans. Wright)

Empedocles of course is often thought to have written two poems, the *Physics* and another poem *The Purifications* on religious matters.<sup>36</sup> First I put fragment 15 in the *Purifications*, as Wright does. There it teaches the message of the immortality of the soul: if we know the nature of the soul, 'if we are wise in such matters', we know that when we die we are not destroyed completely. Our soul will survive. Then I put it in the *Physics*, as Diels-Kranz do, where it told a story about the elements: if we study physics, 'if we are wise in such matters', we will know that we are not completely destroyed because the elements that make up our bodies are eternal and will go on to create other bodies. There is little external evidence to guide us in choosing which poem to place this fragment in: we have to rely on content and context.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, when I put fr. 11 DK in the proem to the *Physics*, as Diels-Kranz do, it told a story of the elements, but when put in the *Purifications*, as Wright does, it spoke of the immortality of the soul. Another case was fr. 111 DK (fr. 101 Wright), which when placed at the end of the *Physics* (as in both Wright and DK) promises the student a future ability in wonder working if he continues his studies, but if placed near the beginning of the proem, as Bollack does, makes the didactic purpose of the whole poem on physics the instruction of Pausanias in the working of magical wonders.

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<sup>36</sup> I leave aside here the question of whether our fragments are from two poems or only one, except to say that since fr. 17 begins at line 233 of the *Physics*, there would seem to be plenty of room for the *Purifications* material in the proem, but then again, if we find religious material in the *Physics*, could Empedocles not have cut and pasted physical material into the *Purifications*?

<sup>37</sup> Wright comments on fr. 11 (her fr. 104): 'This fragment and 106 (DK 15) come close together in Plutarch, and although they are quoted from E. in support of the interpretation of 13 (DK 9) as a factual

One problem is that Empedocles uses very similar language when describing the flux of the elements and when he describes the journey of the soul in its successive reincarnations. He will use religious seeming language when talking of the flux of elements, and describe the journeyings of the soul in terms he uses for physics.<sup>38</sup> This is a very similar technique to that used by Ovid's Pythagoras. It is difficult to pin Ovid's Pythagoras down but he seems to be drawing a close parallel between the flux of all nature and the flux of the soul. And Empedocles of course has close connections with Pythagoreanism: his psychology is essentially Pythagorean. So, for Empedocles, a story about physics and the flux of the four elements may actually be at the same time a story about the soul and its wanderings. The physics could well be the groundwork then for the theology and ethics, and he may well see no great divide between physics and psychology,<sup>39</sup> and this will inevitably affect our attempts to reconstruct his work. Fragment 15 then, could be telling a very similar story whether we put it in the *Physics* or the *Purifications*: our difficulty of deciding whether it is about the soul or the elements is not accidental. Empedocles' essential message is of flux: his text describes that flux, and it also mirrors that flux on the page. His language is the same whether speaking of the journey of the soul or of the flux of nature. And so here the student of Empedocles who seeks to establish some permanence and order on this fragmentary swirling text, and to place each fragment firmly and permanently in its correct place, runs into a problem. It is as if the fragments want to retain their freedom of movement and freedom to recontextualise themselves. If we do not heed the lesson taught us by Pythagoras and by

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denial of generation from and destruction into the nonexistent, there is no indication of which poem they are from.'

<sup>38</sup> On the journey of the soul cf. fr. 115; flux of elements cf. frs. 6, 17. Similarly he uses divine and prosaic names interchangeably for the elements, cf. 6.2-3: Ζεύς, Ἥρη, Νῆστος, Ἄιδονεύς, 17.18: πῦρ, ἀήρ, ὕδωρ, γαῖα.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 112, 113, 115, 117, 126, 121, 118, 119, 127, 129 (praise of Pythagoras), 137, 139 (now fr. d. 5-6 Martin and Primavesi), 141 (of doubtful provenance), 146, and 147. See W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition*, (Oxford, 1995). Martin and Primavesi op. cit. 87-97 see a direct identification between the journey of the *daimon* and the cosmic cycle in Strasbourg ensemble d (cf. O. Primavesi, 'Editing Empedocles', in W. Burkert, L. Gemelli Marciano, E. Matelli and L. Orelli (eds.), *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte der Antike / Le raccolte dei frammenti di filosofi antichi*, (Göttingen, 1998), 63-88). Against this see D. Sedley, 'Lucretius and the New Empedocles'. Martin and Primavesi remove ensemble d from the proem and place it in book two of the *Physics*, while Sedley argues for its inclusion in the proem. Further as both Martin and Primavesi and Sedley argue, it may not be at all a coincidence that a papyrus passage from the *Physics* was chosen as a funerary crown, and that the *Physics* was seen as having an important religious dimension.

Empedocles we may be in danger of making the same mistake that Augustus and Ozymandias did. They both seek permanence and stability in an impermanent and fluctuating world by fixing their immortality in stone. As students of poetry we know this will not work, and also in our own readings and interpretations of literature we accept the constant flux of interpretation and reinterpretation. We know that permanence is impossible. But as students of fragmentary texts on the other hand, seeking to reconstruct an authoritative original text, and as students of fragmentary history seeking to establish order and permanence on the past, we are in danger of forgetting that very lesson taught us by the poets, the philosophers and historians. We could reflect that we are ourselves, according to Empedocles, merely collections of fragments – the separate wandering limbs of fr. 20 – subject to creation under Love and destruction under Strife when our limbs will wander apart on the shores of life.<sup>40</sup>

It may be objected that my preference for allowing Empedocles' text to remain in a state of flux, and to allow his text to reflect the ethos of his teaching, runs counter to reality: there must surely have been once a non-fragmentary fixed Empedocles, and to allow his fragments to wander at will is simply perverse. I could counter that we have to work with what we have – fragments - and to impose too rigid order on those fragments can distort more than illuminate his philosophy. But we now have real papyrus fragments for the first time, and Alain Martin and Oliver Primavesi have shown that fr. 17 begins at line 233 of book one of the *Physics*. Supposing a complete Empedocles came out of the sands of Egypt or out of a tomb? Then I think we would find just the same technique used in fr. 17 and others: repetition of lines and whole passages with slight variation from one section of the book to another, from physical arguments to psychological arguments, illustrating the parallel nature of the flux of matter and of souls. Empedocles constructs his text, it seems, from fragments of himself, and we may well find that we are able to place the same fragment in more than one place, and even in more than one poem. With Empedocles we are dealing with both inter- and intra-textuality.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. 35, 96, 57, 59, 61, 71. Similarly, the embryo is constructed by the assembly of tiny fragmentary limbs, cf. Aristotle *Gen. an.* 722b17-30.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lucretius *DRN* 2.1081-3 ≈ Empedocles a(ii) 26-8 Martin and Primavesi. D. Sedley ('Lucretius and the New Empedocles') argues that Lucretius does not translate these exact lines of Empedocles but a repetition of them with variation from elsewhere in the *Physics*.



So, as I see it, there is a long tradition of seeing parallels between the way the world fragments and is in a constant state of flux, the flux of literature, of letters and words on the page, the flux of history and the impermanence of all things, the fragmentation of the monuments of history and the fragmentation of texts themselves, and the constant flux of interpretation of texts, of monuments and history. Empedocles' text is now fragmentary, but it always was a text that by its very nature resisted permanence and fixity. Empedocles', Lucretius' and Ovid's worlds are worlds of possibility and openness, and their texts defy closure and fixity.

To come back round to where I began, with politics, just as Ovid's, Lucretius' and Empedocles' vision of universal flux will always be present to rescue us from the tyranny of permanence and fixity,<sup>42</sup> so Ozymandias will always end up lying shattered in the sand, and Mussolini's 'monuments of savage pain' will always be subject to the inexorable and welcome ruin of time.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Lucretius *DRN* 5.1120-30 on the futility of politicians seeking permanence and stability. For Lucretius' attitude to politics see D. Fowler, 'Lucretius and Politics', in M. Griffin, and J. Barnes (eds.), *Philosophia Togata* (Oxford, 1989), 120-150. Neanthes (in Diogenes Laertius 8.72) credits Empedocles with putting down a tyrannical coup at Acragas and instituting a Democracy.