Classical Quarterly **35** (ii) 430–448 (1985) *Printed in Great Britain*

AXELSON REVISITED: THE SELECTION OF VOCABULARY IN LATIN POETRY

Although it is now fifteen years since G. Williams'[1] thorough-going criticism of B. Axelson's *Unpoetische Wörter*,[2] his discussion has failed to elicit the adverse response which might have been expected in view of the widespread influence exerted by the earlier work.[3]

The reason for this may be that Axelson's theory is so widely accepted that any refutation thereof may be disregarded. Yet surely Williams was right to point to the dangers of total reliance on statistics and to the necessity of considering the contexts in which words occur in Latin poetry.[4] In this respect, he was not so much rejecting Axelson's work as pointing to its inadequacies: whereas Axelson would be content to label a word that occurs only rarely in poetry as 'unpoetisch', it is necessary, as Williams demonstrates, to take the further step of determining the effect that such a word has in a given context. This approach will be particularly helpful, for example, in the case of *parvulus* at Virg. *Aen.* 4.328, where the heightened pathos achieved by Virgil's use of a diminutive is better appreciated by the reader who is aware of the scarcity of diminutive adjectives in poetry and in epic above all. To recognise *parvulus* as an 'unpoetic word', with Axelson, is the essential first step, but we should proceed a stage further to inquire what effect was intended by the employment of a form not normally found in elevated poetry.[5]

Of greater importance is Williams' rejection of the 'hierarchy of genres' theory, taken for granted by Axelson, that is, that Latin poetry may be divided into a number of higher- or lower-ranking genres and that the more elevated a genre the less unpoetic vocabulary it is liable to employ. The assumption underlying this hypothesis is that the reason for the presence or absence of a word in a given genre is purely stylistic: for instance, an epic poet's failure to use the word *uxor* implies deliberate avoidance on the grounds that this word is not sufficiently elevated for the genre, whereas, on the other hand, an elegiac or lyric poet may not feel a similar constraint because his chosen genre is less 'high' and so permits lowlier vocabulary.

In dismissing this theory, Williams posits two factors which influence a poet's word selection: (a) the degree to which his own personality enters the work, (b) the subject-matter of the poem.

Now it seems a perfectly reasonable suggestion that considerations other than mere genre may have been operative, and Williams' discussion of these on p. 748 is worthy

[1] *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 743ff.

[2] Lund, 1945.

[3] Williams' discussion is briefly criticised by J. Perret for being 'beaucoup trop radicale' (*Latomus* 28 [1969], 718). For a favourable appraisal, see D. T. Benediktson, 'Vocabulary Analysis and the Generic Classification of Literature', *Phoenix* 31 (1977), 341ff.

[4] Williams was not the first to offer this criticism of Axelson: cf. A. Ernout in his review of *Unpoetische Wörter*, *Rev. Ph.* 21 (1947), 68, on the subject of diminutives: 'un simple index, une pure statistique, même comparative, sans examen des conditions d'emploi, ne peuvent, à eux seuls, fournir les éléments suffisants d'un jugement sur le style, ou la langue'.

[5] On diminutives in Augustan poetry, see A. S. F. Gow, *CQ* 26 (1932), 150ff. The comments on *Aen.* 4.328 of R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Oxford, 1955), echoed by R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1–6* (London, 1972), demonstrate that followers of Axelson have not been slow to proceed to this second stage.

of careful scrutiny. Let us begin with the second of his proposals, that the subject-matter of a poem helped to determine the vocabulary employed.

Axelson noted that the words *uxor*, *servus*, *ancilla* and *puella* are not generally found in epic but occur commonly enough in elegy and lyric, whilst *coniunx*, *famulus-a/minister-tra* and *virgo* are used in all three types of poetry. Let us assume, for the moment, that the words in the latter group are synonymous with those in the former.[6]

Williams' explanation for the absence of *uxor*, etc. in epic is based on context rather than genre: in his view, epic, dealing as it does with a 'far-off imaginary world', requires words suggestive of such a setting; lyric and elegy, by contrast, since they are concerned with 'factual reality', use vocabulary appropriate to their own milieu. Now *uxor*, for example, undoubtedly describes factual reality since it is the normal Latin word for wife.[7] But on what grounds does Williams base his notion that *coniunx* suggests 'a far-off imaginary world'? Presumably because *coniunx* is not the ordinary term for wife. If this is so, however, would not *coniunx* in the sense 'wife' have sounded unusual, dare one say poetic, to the reader? In other words, is there any real difference between stating that epic poets choose words suggesting a remote world and stating that they use elevated, poetic language, or between the affirmation that elegists/lyricists employ language descriptive of everyday reality and the affirmation that they use unpoetic words?

Williams comes perilously close, then, to saying the same thing as Axelson in another guise. There is, however, an essential difference between the two viewpoints. Axelson believed that, in the case of the word-pairs under discussion, genre alone determines word-usage; Williams that the subject-matter, regardless of genre, is the vital factor. The reason why the two explanations appear so close is that in the majority of instances subject-matter and genre are identical, that is, epic = an imaginary world and elegy/lyric = factual reality. Thus the use by epic poets of *coniunx* rather than *uxor* may in most cases be explained either by Axelson's approach, i.e. that *uxor* is insufficiently elevated for the high genre of epic, or by Williams', i.e. that the remote setting of epic demands a word that is not the everyday term for wife.

But epic poetry is not always set in the remote past (Lucan's *Pharsalia*, for example), while elegiac/lyric poets often make incursions into the world of myth. It is only in such cases that the validity of either theory can be tested. If Axelson is on the right track, the vocabulary of epic ought to be elevated even when 'factual reality' intrudes; conversely, lowlier words may be expected in any elegiac/lyric context, myth included. For Williams' approach to be vindicated, on the other hand, words such as *uxor* ought to occur in elegy and lyric only in everyday situations, nor would it be surprising if Lucan, for instance, used *uxor* of Pompey's wife. Let us begin, then, by examining the three word-pairs: *uxor/coniunx*, *servus-ancilla/famulus-a* (and *minister-tra*) and *puella/virgo*.

(i) *Uxor/Coniunx*

Uxor is almost completely absent from epic poetry (the sole exception being Lucan, *Phars.* 3.353); by contrast, it occurs 7 times in Horace's *Odes*, 4 times in Tibullus, 7 times in Propertius and 54 times in Ovid's elegiac writings.

The fact that the single instance of *uxor* in epic is found in a speech addressed by

[6] This assumption, which underlies both Axelson's and Williams' discussions, is not always valid, as I hope to demonstrate.

[7] Cicero, for instance, has *uxor* 84 times in his speeches; *coniunx* appears 34 times, but mainly in stock phrases such as *coniuges liberique*.

the Massilians to Julius Caesar might at first sight tell in favour of Williams' thesis: *uxor* can be employed where an epic poem deals with factual reality. On the other hand, *coniunx* in the sense 'wife' is used by Lucan 24 times, and since his subject-matter has little to do with the remote world of myth, it is surprising – if Williams is right – not that *uxor* occurs, but that it occurs so rarely. Rather, it seems a more feasible hypothesis that Lucan, because he is writing in the epic genre, generally avoids the everyday *uxor*: its appearance at 3.353 is perhaps a special case, the more homely term being deliberately employed in the midst of an emotional outburst to add to the pathos of the situation.[8]

In most places where *uxor* is used in elegy and lyric, the context is contemporary Rome, but the occurrence of the word 19 times with reference to characters from mythology calls for comment. Most of these may be easily explained: take, for example, Prop. 3.12.37, where the poet assures his friend Postumus, away at war, that his wife Galla will remain as faithful to him as did Ulysses' *uxor* Penelope. Here the everyday word is appropriately employed because the mythological heroine is being compared to a contemporary Roman wife. Twelve[9] other uses of *uxor* in elegy are similarly part of short mythological *exempla* related to illustrate a contemporary situation.

The remaining six cases belong to longer mythological narrations. Three of these passages might be viewed merely as extended *exempla*: for instance, the myth of Cephalus and Procris in the third book of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* – where *uxor* is used of Procris (732) – is narrated not for its own sake (as a myth would be in epic) but as a warning to contemporary *puellae* of 'quantum cito credere laedat'.[10] Thus the poet may use *uxor*, since, in relating the myth, he is thinking in modern terms.[11] This explanation will not do, however, in every case. For example, the word occurs in Juno's famous speech in Hor. (*Od.* 3.3.67), where – to quote Williams himself – 'the mythological vision extends the political reflections on to a higher poetic plane';[12] and in the Europa Ode (3.27), where *uxor* is used of Europa at line 73, although the myth is ostensibly presented as a warning to a contemporary girl, Galatea, the propemptikon only serves as a peg on which to hang the mythological narrative that is the real object of the poet's interest.[13] So too, at Ov. *Fast.* 4.604 *uxor* occurs during the description of the rape of Persephone. Again, the narrative is superficially related to its surrounding context, the festival of Ceres, yet it does not serve in itself any aetiological function; in other words, the myth is in no way linked with contemporary reality. The reason for the appearance of *uxor* in this passage, as in Horace's *Odes*, can only be that elegy and lyric, being lower genres than epic, admitted words which were considered insufficiently elevated for the more dignified genre. In other words, Axelson is vindicated, at least in the case of this pair of synonyms.

[8] The Massilians' impassioned appeal to Caesar for neutrality reaches its climax with a statement that they do not fear to suffer 'pro libertate' the fate of Saguntum: 'pectoribus rapti matrum frustraque trahentes | ubera sicca fame medios mittentur in ignes | *uxor* et a caro poscet sibi fata marito, | volnera miscebunt fratres bellumque coacti | hoc potius civile gerent' (3.351ff.).

[9] Prop. 2.28.22, 32.57, Ov. *Am.* 1.9.36, *A.A.* 2.362, 3.20, 110, *R.A.* 775, *Fast.* 2.627, *E.P.* 3.1.121, *Tr.* 1.6.19, 2.405, 5.14.37.

[10] *A.A.* 3.685f.: 'nec cito credideris: quantum cito credere laedat | exemplum vobis non leve Procris erit'.

[11] So also the examples at Ov. *A.A.* 1.556, 686.

[12] Op. cit., p. 166.

[13] Cf. E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), p. 193: 'when I have reached Aphrodite's serene speech at the conclusion of the poem [where *uxor* is found] I seem to have forgotten all about the girl Galatea'.

(ii) *Puella/Virgo*

Granted that *puella* is not in general used by writers of epic and tragedy, its occurrence at Virg. *Aen.* 2.238 and 6.307, 13 times in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in later epic (Statius, *Th.* 10.905, 12.761, *A.* 1.359, Silius 10.494, Val. Flacc. 8.142) and in Seneca's tragedies (*H.F.* 18, 466, *Ag.* 350, *H.Oet.* 553, *Oed.* 479) requires explanation. Axelson relied on the argument of metrical convenience, regarding *puella* as a substitute for the metrically intractable cases of *virgo*,[14] but it must be pointed out that the word is occasionally found in cases where *virgo* would have fitted the metre (e.g. Ov. *Met.* 1.712, 2.436, 9.544,[15] Stat. *Th.* 12.761 and several times in Manilius, who is not among the authors taken into consideration by Axelson). Williams, for his part, was ill advised to choose this word-pair as an example of the influence of context on vocabulary selection: *puella* simply does not describe 'factual reality', nor does *virgo* suggest a remote world. The ordinary term for a young unmarried woman in Comedy as well as in prose is *virgo*.[16]

In considering *puella* and *virgo*, it is necessary to bear in mind a complicating factor overlooked by both Axelson and Williams, namely, that the pair, though sometimes synonymous, are by no means so on every occasion. Apart from obvious differences, such as the technical use of *virgo* to denote a 'virgin' in the sense of one who is not sexually initiated, or the regular application of *puella* to babies or very small children, each word also possesses its own set of connotations. *Puella*, though it had ousted its positive *puera*, still seems to have retained the emotional associations of a diminutive – hence its use in love poetry as the regular term for girlfriend; it may also be employed in contexts requiring the implication of smallness or weakness. *Virgo*, by contrast, is a less emotive term for a young unmarried girl of respectable morals, a younger version of the *matrona*.[17]

It is this distinction between the words which best explains the appearance of *puella* in the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*. At *Aen.* 2.238 and again at 6.307, the phrase 'pueri...innuptaeque puellae' occurs at moments of great pathos: the description of the young Trojans soon to die, and later their tragic ghosts met by Aeneas in the Underworld. The use of *puella* with its diminutive colouring is an especially appropriate method of evoking pity; the same effect could not have been achieved by the word *virgo*. Similarly, on every[18] occasion in the *Metamorphoses* where *puella* is employed, its diminutive associations are to the fore; e.g. at 9.712 it refers to a baby, at 9.544 it bears the connotation 'poor weak girl', at 9.454 it has erotic associations (Byblis' fate is a warning to *puellae*). And when Statius (*Th.* 12.761) alludes to the Amazons as 'peltiferae puellae' *puella* bears the force of a contemptuous diminutive (the present battle is not to be fought with mere females: 'non cum peltiferis...haec...pugna puellis', but with men: 'hic cruda virorum | proelia').[19]

In elegy and lyric too, *puella* and *virgo* are frequently employed in quite distinct

[14] I.e. dat. sing., nom./voc./acc. pl. The gen. pl. would be possible before a vowel, but is not in fact so used.

[15] Here it is acc. sing.; *virginem* (before a vowel) is not used by Virgil but does occur at Ov. *Met.* 6.524.

[16] In Comedy, *virgo* is used 55 times by Plautus and 68 by Terence; *puella* 26 by Plaut., 6 by Ter., normally referring to babies (e.g. Plaut. *Cist.* 124, 135, Ter. *H.T.* 627) or, of older girls, to *meretrices* or *ancillae*. Among prose writers, *puella* is not used by Caesar, Cicero in his Speeches, or Sallust.

[17] I have discussed this word-pair in greater detail elsewhere; see *Glotta* 61 (1983), 119–43.

[18] A possible exception is the reference to Syrinx at 1.712.

[19] But contrast 762: 'virgineas ne crede manus'. The alliterative effect was also, no doubt, an important consideration in the choice of *puella* here.

contexts. Thus, *puella* refers on numerous occasions to an *amica* or to mythological heroines who are being compared with modern *puellae*.[20] *Virgo*, on the other hand, occurs less often and almost always with reference to respectable young women, mythological virgins, or virgin goddesses.[21]

Although in both poetry and prose there are cases where no distinction in meaning may be discerned between this word-pair, that is, where one or the other simply refers to a girl, with no special connotations,[22] only one obvious instance is to be found in elegy/lyric. In Ovid's narration of the Rape of Europa in *Fasti* 5, the heroine is called *puella* (line 605). There is no reason why *virgo* should not have been employed here; in fact, it is the word used in the poet's hexameter account of the same myth (*Met.* 2.868; cf. also *puellaris* at *Fast.* 5.611 but *virgineus* at *Met.* 2.867).[23] Given that epic poets employ *puella* – a diminutive in form and thus stylistically less elevated than *virgo* – only in contexts where a specific effect is intended, the appearance of the word in an elegiac narration where no such effect is apparent would suggest that, on this occasion at least, generic factors are to the fore.

In sum, the word-pair *puella/virgo* must be treated with great caution in any discussion of vocabulary selection, since (unlike *uxor/coniunx*, for instance) they are not exact synonyms. Nevertheless, the example from elegy just discussed, where either word might have been equally appropriate, points once more in the direction of genre rather than context as the determining factor in poetic word choice.

(iii) *Servus-Ancilla/Famulus-a, Minister-tra*

Whereas *famulus-a* and, to a lesser extent, *minister-tra*,[24] are employed freely in both epic and tragedy to designate servants, the terms *servus* and *ancilla* are entirely absent from these genres. They are, by contrast, admitted in elegy and lyric, with the notable exception of the *Odes*, where Horace has *famulus* twice but does not employ *servus* (though on the single occasion where a female slave is mentioned, he prefers *ancilla* to *famula*). Interestingly, *servus* and *ancilla* are very frequent in Horace's *Epistles* and *Satires*, from which the absence of *famulus-a* is noteworthy.

In the case of this word-group, Williams' thesis has, at first sight, much to recommend it on social grounds. In the world of the Homeric epics, slavery did not play the important role that it did in contemporary Rome, and the ordinary term to connote the legal position of a slave, δοῦλος, is avoided in these poems in favour of δμώς, a word which can be used of a household servant without emphasising servile status.[25] In a similar manner, Virgil may have avoided the ordinary[26] Roman term

[20] E.g. Prop. 1.1.15, 3.19.26, Ov. *A.A.* 1.109, 125, 458, 2.187, 3.631.

[21] The exception is Horace's *Odes*, where *virgo* appears twice with reference to unmarried women in an erotic milieu (1.6.17, 3.15.5: in the latter case the age factor is prominent, the young *virgines* being contrasted with the ageing 'uxor Ibyci').

[22] E.g. Cat. 64.86, 97, Lucr. 3.1008, Livy 3.44ff., Sil. 10.494, Plin. *Ep.* 1.14.8.

[23] For a similar distinction based on genre, compare Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.132, where the phrase 'castis cum pueris ignara puella mariti', is employed of the same persons who, in the more elevated opening lines of the *Carmen Saeculare*, are referred to as 'virgines lectas puerosque castos' (line 6).

[24] Many occurrences of *minister-tra* must be discounted, where it is not a synonym for *famulus/servus*. Often it has a specialised sense of waiters at a banquet (e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 1.705, Tib. 1.5.34, 9.25, Ov. *Met.* 11.119) or assistants at a religious ceremony (e.g. Ov. *Met.* 2.717, 9.233, Prop. 4.4.44); on many occasions it is used in the general sense of attendant (not of servile status), e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 2.100, Ov. *Met.* 2.837, 9.90.

[25] Cf. W. L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1955), p. 2; M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (London, 1956), p. 62; G. M. Calhoun in *A Companion to Homer*, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (London, 1963), p. 442.

[26] *Servus* is used to the exclusion of *famulus* by Caesar, and by Cicero in his Letters, Speeches and Rhetorical works.

for slave, *servus* (and the fem. *ancilla*[27]), when writing of the remote Homeric world, choosing the more neutral term *famulus*[28] (or, less often, *minister*).

Difficulties arise, however, when we turn to epic contexts dealing with events closer to contemporary reality. Ennius uses *famul* of a Roman slave (*Ann.* 313 V^3); the passage is echoed by Lucretius (3.1035), who also employs *famula* (4.1176) in an amatory setting. At Virg. *Aen.* 3.329, Andromache is relating to Aeneas how, after the death of her captor Pyrrhus, she was handed over in marriage to Priam's son Helenus, a fellow prisoner-of-war: 'me famulo famulamque Heleno transmisit habendam'. The use of the legal phrase 'transmisit habendam', suggesting the transfer of property,[29] together with the reference to Andromache's position as *servitium* two lines previously, indicates that in this case *famulus* and *famula* are used where the notion of slavery is to the fore, in other words, where *servus* and *ancilla* might have been expected if context rather than genre was the prime consideration. Lucan refers to servants on several occasions. In the case of a foreign king's retainers, the less specific *famulus* is appropriately used,[30] but the word is also employed of Roman slaves (e.g. 2.149, 4.218, 5.509; cf. *famula* of Roman maid-servants at 2.24, 8.63).

In the light of the above, it is clearly not possible to assert that *famulus* and *famula* are preferred by epic poets to *servus* and *ancilla* because the Homeric setting requires terms which do not suggest contemporary notions of slavery. Nor does the practice of elegy and lyric bear out this theory in every instance, despite the fact that *servus* and *ancilla*, when used in elegy and lyric, refer without exception to contemporary slaves, while *famulus-a* and *minister-tra* frequently occur in the context of myth. To find the latter group also in an everyday setting proves nothing in itself, but the following facts are suggestive: (i) *famulus* appears twice in the *Odes* (3.1.36, 17.16) with reference to contemporary Rome; it is not used in the 'lower' *Satires* and *Epistles*; (ii) most of the occurrences of *famulus-a* in Catullus' poetry are in the 63rd poem, notable for its use of elevated language;[31] (iii) on two occasions, Ovid employs *famula* for *ancilla* in passages where an effect of stylistic elevation is intended: these are at *Fast.* 6.481 and *Am.* 2.7.21. In both cases the setting is contemporary Rome, nor is there any question of *famula* being used to suggest the remote world of epic.

At *Fast.* 6.473 begins Ovid's description of the Matralia: myths will be related to explain 'quae dea sit, quare famulas a limine templi | arceat (arcet enim) libaque tosta petat' (481–2). After the first narrative on the nature of the goddess Matuta, the poet reiterates his intention of accounting for the exclusion of slave-women: 'cur vetet ancillas accedere quaeritis?' (551). It seems to me that a difference in tone can be discerned between these passages, the familiar, conversational style of the second standing in contrast to the first, forming as it does part of a stylistically elevated introductory section where the god Bacchus is invoked to aid the poet in his narrative (481–4 'quae dea sit . . . | . . . | . . . Bacche racemiferos hedera distincte capillos, | si domus illa tua est, derige vatis opus'). If *famula* was felt to be 'higher' than its synonym *ancilla*, then the reason for the use of the two words in this section is clear.

The same explanation applies to the employment of *famula* at *Am.* 2.7.21, where Ovid is defending himself against Corinna's accusation of infidelity with her maid Cypassis. Again, we may contrast the use of *ancilla* with reference to the same person

[27] *Serva* occurs twice in the *Aeneid* (5.284, 9.546) but may be regarded as an archaism.

[28] Ernout/Meillet s.v. suggest that *famulus* denoted a servant in some specific capacity (such as valet), whereas *servus* refers to the legal status of a slave.

[29] See R. D. Williams in his commentary on Book 3 (Oxford, 1962), *ad loc.*

[30] E.g. with reference to Achillas, Ptolemy's *praefectus regius* (10.522), or Pothinus (8.538, 10.100, 341), a eunuch acting as regent for the young king (cf. Caes. *B.C.* 3.108, 112).

[31] See C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 262–3.

in the following poem 8, where the sincerity of the poet's protestations is undermined. As in the *Fasti* passage, the variation in vocabulary reflects a change of tone: the self-righteous bombast of 7.21f. ('quis Veneris *famulae* conubia liber inire | tergaque conplecti verbere secta velit?') is wickedly undercut by the intimate, and considerably less elevated, address to the maid at 8.9f. ('quid quod, in ancilla si quis delinquere possit, | illum ego contendi mente carere bona?').[32]

The inevitable conclusion from the above discussion is that *famulus-a* was considered a more stylistically elevated term than *servus* or *ancilla*, and it was for this reason that it was preferred by writers of epic and tragic poetry.

In none of the three groups of synonyms examined thus far does Williams' thesis stand up to close scrutiny. Let us follow the same procedure with some further examples.

(i) *Cena*

The presence of this word in Horace's *Odes* and its absence from epic is explained by Williams on the basis that the former work contains elements of 'present reality'. Certainly, on the two occasions when *cena* is used there (*Odes* 2.14.28, 3.29.15), the setting is contemporary Rome, and in the second case, at least, the employment of *cena* seems appropriate in drawing a contrast between the rich and the 'parvo sub lare pauperum | cenae'. It is noteworthy, however, that none of the elegists uses *cena*, though they employ both *daps* and *epulae* with reference to a Roman dinner (Ov. *A.A.* 3.757, 2.227, *Am.* 1.4.1, Tib. 1.10.8, 1.5.34, 2.5.99).[33]

In this connection, Virgil's practice in the *Aeneid* is of interest. Whereas *cena* is never found, *daps* and *epulae* occur frequently (16 and 11 times respectively). In some cases one would not expect to see *cena*, for instance the sumptuous feast offered to the Trojans by Dido (*Aen.* 1.701ff.); in others, on the contrary, there is little reason, in terms of context, why it could not have been employed. The meal eaten by the Trojans at 7.109ff., for example, though set in the remote past, is nevertheless no more than a simple everyday affair (despite the ominous significance of the table-eating), yet not only is it referred to as *daps* (109, 125) and *epulae* (110), but the whole event is narrated in high style. A similar elevation of language occurs in the description of the scratch meal taken by the Trojans at 1.177ff. (see Austin's note *ad loc.*); it is also worthy of note that though Dido's banquet is described in very Roman terms, even down to the mention of humble dinner-napkins, these are called by the rare term *mantelia* rather than the more usual *mappae*. Surely the point here is that even when, or perhaps especially[34] when, describing mundane events, epic poets feel constrained to employ elevated language *in keeping with their genre*.

(ii) *Erus*

Another word commented on by Williams – though not mentioned by Axelson – is *erus*, which is found once in the *Aeneid* (3.324) and rarely elsewhere in epic. Williams explains the single occurrence in Virgil as a deliberate attempt to express the 'shameful

[32] On the stylistic difference between *Am.* 2.7 and 2.8, see further my article 'Ovid *Amores* 2, 7 and 8: The Disingenuous Defence' in *WS* 96 (1983) 91–103.

[33] Propertius uses *dapes* in a mythological context at 3.22.30.

[34] For Virgil's 'concern to invest commonplace notions with a distinction consonant with their place in a heroic narrative', see C. J. Fordyce's comments on *Aen.* 7.110ff., with the references to ancient rhetorical theory there quoted (*P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos, Libri VII–VIII*, Glasgow, 1977).

service to an enemy captor which Andromache...escaped', and this may well be so, though it is worth noting Virgil's failure to use *servus* to similar advantage five lines later ('me famulo famulamque Heleno transmisit habendam'). Also, what explanation can be offered for the appearance of *erus* at Ov. *Met.* 8.853, other than that it is used for variety (*dominus* occurs 5 times between lines 848 and 872)?

The interesting point about this word is not that it is avoided in epic, but that it is similarly eschewed by writers of elegy and lyric: it is not found at all in elegy (though *dominus* is used 4 times in Propertius, 2 in Tibullus and 11 times in Ovid's *Am.* and *A.A.*). Although some of these examples occur in mythological contexts, on 12 occasions the everyday context should not, to Williams' way of thinking, prohibit the use of *erus*. Finally Horace, though he has *erus* once in the *Odes* in a very Roman setting (2.18.32), none the less prefers *dominus* (used 8 times in the *Odes*; even in the *Satires* and *Epistles dominus* is found 17 times in contrast to 6 occurrences of *erus*).

(iii) *Unpoetic Words in the* Aeneid

Axelson (p. 144) noted, without attempting an explanation, that a good many of the 'unpoetic' words in the *Aeneid* are found in the second half of the poem. In Williams' view this phenomenon may be accounted for by the notion that 'the fighting in Italy brings the heroic world closer to factual reality'. The presence of *gladius* 45 times in Lucan's *Pharsalia* (where it is almost as frequent as the more 'poetic' *ensis*, used 53 times) might have been cited as corroboratory evidence here. On the other hand, even granted that the second half of the *Aeneid* is as a whole closer to factual reality,[35] an examination of the passages in which Williams' examples occur reveals that often an 'unpoetic' word is used where the surrounding context is completely divorced from the real world. Two of the five appearances of *gladius* in *Aen.* 7–12 may be mentioned in this connection: at 9.769 the word occurs in the middle of a Homeric description of deaths in a battle where a goddess is in attendance (note too the series of Greek names), and at 12.789 the context is likewise divine intervention. Similarly, *condicio* at 12.880 occurs in the speech of Juturna to Turnus, while at 10.641 the phrase *mortem obire* is used in the context of Juno's appearance on the battlefield. Two other instances of 'unpoetic' vocabulary are found in epic similes (11.811: *occido* – the simile forms part of the battle with the Amazon-like Camilla; 12.719: *imperito* – a simile based on Apollonius, 2.88).

Williams' explanation is unsatisfactory, then, since it is inappropriate in many instances. While not claiming to know the whole answer, I note the following facts. A word-count of all vocabulary in the *Aeneid* classified by Axelson as 'unpoetic' (based on Axelson's index and M. N. Wetmore's *Index Verborum Vergilianus* (New Haven, 1911)) confirms that the second six books of the poem contain a greater number of unpoetic words. The figures are Books 1–6: 30 words or forms used a total of 54 times, Books 7–12: 43 used 89 times.[36] On the other hand, of the verbs and nouns in both

[35] I cannot accept this premise, since the second half of the *Aeneid* is closer to contemporary Rome only in location, not chronology, and the conventional features of the epic world (e.g. divine machinery) are retained.

[36] The following is a complete list (each word occurs once unless otherwise specified): Books 1–6: *apud* (4), *atque* before consonants (8), *eos*, *etsi*, *horum*, *huius* (3), *idcirco*, *ideo*, *illius* (4), *iucundus*, *lassus*, *metuo* – forms from perfect stem (2), *mi* (2), *minime*, *nemo* (3), *obitus*, *obtrunco* (3), *omnino*, *onustus*, *palmula*, *parvulus*, *praeclarus*, *praeficio* (2), *pravus*, *propter* (2), *puella* (2), *quocirca*, *rogito*, *trucido*, *vero* (not in formulae); Books 7–12: *adficio*, *apud* (2), *atque* (27), *autem* (not in formulae), *cadaver*, *capillus*, *condicio*, *etenim*, *etsi*, *fortasse*, *gladius* (5), *horum* (7), *huius* (2), *illius*, *illorum*, *imperito*, *intersum*, *istius*, *lassus*, *metuo*, *mulier*, *muliebris*, *multo*, *mortem obeo*, *neco*, *nemo*, *obitus*, *obtrunco* (3), *occīdo* (3), *omnino*, *opera*, *prae* (2), *praeclarus* (3), *praesidium*, *praeter*, *profecto*, *proinde* (2), *propter*, *quivis*, *rogito*, *sagulum*, *sane*, *trucido*.

lists, many have to do with war and/or death: in the first half are to be found *obitus*, *obtrunco* and *trucido*, but in the second the following may be mentioned: *cadaver*, *gladius*, *imperito*, *mortem obeo*, *neco*, *obitus*, *obtrunco*, *occido*, *praesidium*, *sagulum* and *trucido*. If these words are discounted, the figures are much closer: 27 words used 49 times in the first half and 32 used 70 times in the second.

I would suggest that the greater preponderance of 'unpoetic' words in the last six books comes about, to some extent at least, not because the subject-matter is closer to factual reality but because there is simply much more fighting and killing in these books and consequently a need for a greater variety of terms to describe these events. In the case of *gladius*, for example, the five instances of which are confined to the second half of the poem, it is worth noting that swords are mentioned only 14 times in the first six books (where *ensis* is invariably used), but 55 times in the second. On this basis, since we could statistically expect *gladius* only 1·4 times in the first half, its absence there may be merely coincidental.[37]

The second factor suggested by Williams as lying behind vocabulary selection – the degree to which the poet's personality enters the work – may be dealt with more briefly.

Positing a distinction between 'impersonal epic description' and the 'subjective expression of emotion', that is, 'evaluative language', he demonstrates how this distinction may explain the poetic usage of (i) adjectives with the prefix *per*, (ii) the occasional use of *Graecus* rather than *Graius* in poetry and (iii) occurrences of *iste*.

Of the three examples, two are not especially apposite: (i) the frequency of *per* adjectives in Lucretius and Satire is best explained not as an expression of emotion (which fails to account for their absence from elegy, for example), but by viewing these forms as coinages for a special occasion, having the character of a dialogue or letter.[38] (ii) Williams' comment on *iste* – that it occurs frequently in the didactic and elegiac poets, where the second-person implications of the word are appropriate – will work in the case of elegy (Propertius, for instance, uses it 38 times, mostly in a direct address to a second person, and it is found 4 times in Tibullus, 24 in the *Amores* and 27 in the *Ars Amatoria*). Where didactic poetry is concerned, however, Williams has simply made a mistake: the word *never* occurs in Lucretius or Virgil's *Georgics*. On the other hand, it is used 31 times in speeches in the *Aeneid*.

Before leaving Williams' discussion, I would like to raise one further issue. In connection with the absence in epic poetry of words such as *uxor* and *servus*, Williams comments that it would be 'surprising' to find such terms there, suggestive as they are of 'factual reality'. Perhaps so, but much more surprising is the number of everyday words which *are* employed freely by epic poets, words like *pater*, *mater*, *mors*, *caelum* and *flumen*, for all of which 'poetic' equivalents were readily available. This phenomenon did not escape the notice of Axelson, though he notes the fact without attempting an explanation.[39] It may well be that it is simply impossible to know why an epic poet should avoid using *uxor*, but feel no such constraint in the case of *mater*, for instance. Nevertheless, this selectivity on the part of epic writers is worthy of note, and a careful distinction must be made between three classes of vocabulary: (1) words which occur very rarely, at most, in epic poetry, (2) words found in epic but not as frequently as their 'poetic' synonyms, and (3) everyday terms which are commoner in epic than their more elevated equivalents.

[37] Another factor that seriously affects the statistics is the preponderance of *atque* before a consonant in the second half. In fact, if this usage is discounted, along with words connected with war, the difference between the two halves is virtually cancelled out: we are left with 26 words used 41 times in the first 6 books and 31 used 43 times in the second.

[38] Cf. J. Marouzeau, *Traité de Stylistique latine* (Paris, 1935), p. 134.

[39] Op. cit., p. 50f.

Under the first heading come several words already examined: *uxor*, *servus*, *ancilla* and *cena*; to these we may add *capillus*, *plorare*, *formosus*, *stultus* and *iucundus*, all of which are treated by Axelson but not included in Williams' discussion. As with *uxor*, etc., this latter group is also – with the notable exception of *capillus*, which is favoured by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*[40] – generally avoided in epic but relatively common in elegiac poetry and, to a lesser extent, Horace's *Odes*. Here, the difference between genres is governed by a number of factors.

In the case of *stultus*, the virtual absence of the epithet from epic and its presence in elegy may be explained along generic lines, but Williams' criterion of subject-matter also applies, since the word is used in elegy only in everyday contexts. Although Horace's avoidance of the word in the *Odes* (in contrast to the *Epistles* and *Satires*) is at first sight interesting from a generic viewpoint, his failure to employ *stultus* in his lyrics can be accounted for by simple lack of opportunity. A check of the *Odes* for possible synonyms (*amens*, *brutus*, *fatuus*, *rationis expers*, *ineptus*, *insipiens*, *insulsus*, *stolidus*, *vecors*) fails to reveal a single example of any of these, and *demens*/*insanus* occur only in the stronger sense of mad, raging, burning.[41]

Considerations of context are inappropriate, on the other hand, in the case of *plorare*, which is eschewed by epic poets in favour of *lacrimare*/*flere*. On four occasions this verb is employed in lyric/elegy where the subject-matter might warrant the avoidance of an everyday term. Ovid, for instance, has *ploro* in a narrative from early Roman history (*Fast.* 4.856), while of the five occurrences of *ploro* in Horace's *Odes*, two are in mythological settings (3.3.68 – Juno's speech, mentioned earlier in connection with the occurrence there of *uxor*; 3.27.38 – the Europa Ode) and another in a context that is on a far higher plane than the everyday (4.2.22). It would appear that the distinction between epic and elegy/lyric in the usage of this word is generically based.

To turn to *iucundus*, if the word is unpopular with epic poets because they consider it too everyday, why then does Horace not use it in the *Odes*? Not through any lack of opportunity (in contrast to *stultus*), for many examples are found of *dulcis* and *gratus* where *iucundus* might have been equally fitting. Here the answer, it seems to me, lies in the fact that *iucundus* is an emotionally-charged term: take, for instance, its single appearance in the *Aeneid*, where it is used by Palinurus, as he begs Aeneas for proper burial, to describe the light of day in the world above (6.363). In elegy, likewise, it is often employed in situations in which strong personal feelings are being expressed; for example, Propertius has the epithet twice in his sentimental description of Gallus' first night of love ('o iucunda quies' 1.10.1; 'o noctem meminisse mihi iucunda voluptas' id. line 3), and in Ovid's narrative of Cephalus and Procris, the word expresses Procris' overwhelming relief and joy at discovering her mistake: 'ut patuit miserae iucundus nominis error,|et mens et rediit verus in ora color' (*A.A.* 3.729f.). The absence of *iucundus* in Horace's *Odes*, then, may be explained in terms of the relative emotional detachment of the poet in that work.

Another epithet with strong emotional colouring is *formosus*. Axelson (p. 61) explained its relative infrequency in Epic on the grounds that it possessed, in common with other adjectives terminating in *-osus*, 'ein etwas triviales Gepräge'. He contrasted *pulcher* – a term of which epic makes abundant use – presumably on the assumption that the two words are equivalent in meaning.

[40] He uses it there 64 times.

[41] *Brutus* does occur once (1.34.9), but in a different sense. *Demens* is found at 1.37.7 and 3.19.23 and *insanus* at 1.16.15, 3.21.3 and 3.7.6; none of these five examples, however, refer to persons, the normal application of *stultus*.

Observation of the contexts in which each of the pair is employed reveals, however, that they are by no means interchangeable synonyms on every occasion. Whereas *pulcher* is an objective term describing physical or moral beauty,[42] *formosus*, at least from Catullus[43] onwards, often bears the connotation 'attractive'; in other w s, it refers not only to outward appearance but also to the pleasurable feelings aroused thereby in another person.

Accordingly, *pulcher* is frequently applied to deities (e.g. Tib. 2.5.7, Prop. 2.31.5, Ov. *Am.* 2.9.51, *Fast.* 2.503, *Met.* 2.804, Virg. *Aen.* 3.119) or to heroes (e.g. Ov. *Am.* 3.9.14, *Met.* 7.514, Virg. *Aen.* 7.55, 477). In its non-aesthetic sense of 'fine', 'glorious', 'well-omened', it appears in a variety of contexts: to die in battle is *pulchrum* (*Aen.* 2.317; cf. 9.401); *pulchri* are a wife's fears for her husband's safety (Ov. *Met.* 11.389); the same epithet may refer to a day of good omen (e.g. Hor. *Od.* 1.36.10, 4.4.39) or, in a more concrete sense, to one's homeland (Prop. 3.22.39).

Formosus, by contrast, lacks the moral overtones of *pulcher*. When it is employed of inanimate objects or abstract concepts, therefore, the accent is on the physical attractiveness of the thing in question: seasons like autumn (Ov. *A.A.* 2.315) or summer (*R.A.* 187), for instance, are called *formosus*, and Propertius (2.19.25) uses the word of *flumina* that form part of a *locus amoenus*.[44]

Not unexpectedly, the most common use of *formosus* is as an epithet of humans who are sexually attractive. As such, it is firmly entrenched in the *sermo amatorius*, where it frequently refers to *puellae* or to the mythical heroines with whom they are compared.[45]

Bearing in mind the foregoing discussion, we may now return to Axelson's statement that *formosus* is avoided in epic poetry as being too lowly for the genre. Statistics do not support this notion, for although *formosus* is absent from the *Aeneid* and common in elegy, it is employed frequently by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (23 times: *pulcher* occurs 26 times), whereas in Horace *Odes* it appears only once, in contrast to 9 occurrences of *pulcher*. On the other hand, the distinction in meaning and connotations between the two words which has been noted offers a satisfactory explanation for these statistical anomalies: where *formosus* is used in the *Metamorphoses*, it is always in erotic contexts where *pulcher* would not be equally apt (e.g. 7.84 – Jason appeared *formosus* to Medea, 5.581 – Arethusa was attractive (*formosa*) to men, 13.797 – Galatea seemed *formosior* than a garden to Polyphemus, and so on).[46] Similarly, Virgil's failure to employ the adjective in the *Aeneid* may be explained by lack of opportunity rather than deliberate avoidance on generic grounds, since even

[42] For a full discussion see P. Monteil, *Beau et Laid en Latin* (Paris, 1964), pp. 71–109, and with particular reference to Axelson on this word-pair, see A. Ernout, op. cit., pp. 64–7.

[43] Cf. Cat. 86.5–6; 'Lesbia formosa est, quae cum pulcherrima tota est, | tum omnibus una omnis surripuit Veneres'; here *formosa* incorporates the notion of physical beauty implicit in *pulchra*, but with the additional ingredient of sexual attractiveness. On the semantic development of *formosus* see Monteil, op. cit., pp. 23–60.

[44] Instructive here is a comparison with Virg. *Aen.* 7.430f., where Turnus is urged to drive the Trojans from his native Tiber ('Phrygios qui flumine pulchro | consedere duces pictasque exure carinas'); here the sentiment underlying *pulcher* is one of patriotism rather than mere delight in the river's physical appearance.

[45] It is thus employed by Tibullus 9 times, Propertius 27 and Ovid in the *Am.* and *A.A.* 31. It may also refer to parts of the body, which are described as *formosus* in that they belong to a *formosus* person (e.g. Ov. *Am.* 1.18.12, of Corinna's feet).

[46] In the *Odes*, *formosa* is used once (appropriately) of an *anus* who wants to appear *formosa* (i.e. sexually attractive to men). *Pulcher* is employed either of inanimate objects, often in the sense 'well-omened' (e.g. 1.36.10, 4.4.65), or as an objective term for physical beauty, referring to women in whom the poet himself has no sexual interest (e.g. 1.16.1, 2.8.7, 4.13.8). The only erotic context where *formosa* might have been substituted is 3.9.21.

in the fourth Book, where we might most expect to find it, Dido's beauty is described objectively by the poet (4.60 *pulcherrima Dido*, 192 *pulchra Dido*); thus *pulcher* is the appropriate word rather than *formosus* with its connotations of sexual attractiveness.[47]

The practice of poets in regard to the words just examined offers ample evidence that a stylistic differentiation was made – for whatever reason – between epic on the one hand and elegy and lyric on the other. It was this class of words – terms generally avoided in epic – which Axelson used to demonstrate a distinction between epic and elegiac style (p. 143). Granted the existence of such a distinction, it may be interesting to test whether it applies in the case of the other two word categories alluded to earlier: everyday terms used in epic but less frequently than their poetic synonyms, and everyday words which are commoner than their poetic equivalents.

I have selected examples of synonyms[48] under both headings and offer the statistics in Table I for representatives of epic, lyric and elegiac poetry. Figures are provided to show the number of occurrences of each word or synonym group; the figure in brackets after each group of words indicates the frequency of non-poetic vocabulary, expressed as a percentage of the total, and is included to facilitate comparison between the different poetic works. For example, Virgil uses *gladius* in the *Aeneid* 5 times, or 7·35% of the combined total for *gladius* and *ensis*. Thus, the higher this percentage figure, the more often the unpoetic term is used in relation to its poetic equivalent(s).

Table I. *Occurrences of specific words or synonym groups in Latin poetry*

	Virg. *Aen.*	Ov. *Met.*	Luc. *Phars.*	Hor. *Od.*	Prop.	Tib. Corp.	Ov. *Am./A.A.*	Ov. *Fast.*
				Group 2				
gladius	5	13	45	0	0	0	3	7
ensis	63	40	53	4	5	2	7	13
	(7·4)	(24·5)	(45·9)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(30)	(35)
lassus	2	6	9	1	7	0	11	0
fessus	33	28	19	5	9	7	2	3
	(5·7)	(17·6)	32·1)	(16·7)	(43·8)	(0)	(84·6)	(0)
mare	61	46	70	28	23	13	15	7
aequor altum caerula fretum marmor pelagus pontus sal salum vadum	217	200	273	29	31	17	26	32
	(21·9)	(18·7)	(20·4)	(49·1)	(42·6)	(43·3)	(36·6)	(17·9)
navis	46	9	0	10	8	0	1	6
carina pinus puppis ratis trabs	72	83	200	8	39	12	26	22
	(39)	(9·8)	(0)	(55·6)	(17)	(0)	(3·7)	(21·4)

[47] *Pulchra* when applied to Dido reads like a stock Homeric epithet. The difference between Virgil's and Ovid's usage in respect to this word-pair can be attributed to the latter's more 'elegiac' attitude to love.

[48] In some cases, the words may have other uses: e.g. *pinus* meaning pine-tree rather than ship, *patres* for senators, *parentes* for parents/ancestors. Accordingly, the figures include only those examples where there is an exact correspondence in meaning.

Table I. (*continued*)

	Virg. *Aen.*	Ov. *Met.*	Luc. *Phars.*	Hor. *Od.*	Prop.	Tib. Corp.	Ov. *Am./A.A.*	Ov. *Fast.*
				Group 3				
terra	166	198	187	24	42	32	34	78
tellus	51	94	98	9	9	14	9	29
	(76·5)	(67·8)	(65·6)	(72·7)	(82·4)	(69·6)	(79·1)	(72·9)
pater	150	115	17	20	14	8	24	45
creator genitor parens sator	94	92	28	9	4	4	3	14
	(61·5)	(55·6)	(37·8)	(69)	(77·8)	(66·7)	(88·9)	(76·3)
mater	50	112	14	18	27	9	31	74
creatrix genetrix parens	29	40	6	0	1	0	9	15
	(63·3)	(73·7)	(70)	(100)	(96·4)	(100)	(77·5)	(83·1)
mors	71	62	129	15	26	9	7	10
letum	35	35	37	7	4	2	2	4
	(67)	(63·9)	(77·7)	(68·2)	(86·7)	(81·8)	(77·8)	(71·4)
caelum	142	114	86	10	16	17	24	54
aer aether aethra polus	73	106	126	5	4	6	12	21
	(66)	(51·8)	(40·6)	(66·7)	(80)	(73·9)	(66·7)	(72)
flumen fluvius	67	60	38	15	24	4	9	12
amnis	38	34	35	7	4	8	11	13
	(63·8)	(63·8)	(52·1)	(68·2)	(85·7)	(33·3)	(45)	(48)
vela	33	21	24	3	19	1	15	7
carbasus lintea	4	9	15	2	4	0	4	2
	(89·2)	(70)	(61·5)	(60)	(82·6)	(100)	(78·9)	(77·8)
equus	128	59	11	17	46	14	50	43
alipes cornipes quadrupes sonipes	9	6	13	0	0	1	2	0
	(93·4)	(90·8)	(45·8)	(100)	(100)	(93·3)	(96·2)	(100)

At first sight, Table I presents a bewildering and inconsistent jumble of statistics. Since the most obvious discrepancies occur in word class 2, this may be taken first.

Unlike category 3, where the figures for the three epic poets display no conspicuous divergences (except for Lucan's relative avoidance of *pater* and *caelum* and his fondness for elevated terms for 'horse'), the four word groups in the second class are treated quite differently by each of the three. Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, for instance, makes a greater use of *gladius* and *lassus* than does Virgil, while the opposite applies to *mare* and *navis*; Lucan's preferences are closer to Ovid's except for his curious avoidance of *navis*, especially striking in view of the number of occasions in the *Pharsalia* where ships are mentioned.

Likewise, no consistent pattern emerges among the elegists, apart from words for sea, where the *Fasti* is the only odd man out. Although Horace's practice is closest to that of Tibullus, there is a marked discrepancy in their choice of terms for ship.

These facts, of course, provide a major obstacle to any comparison between the genres. Thus, whereas Horace and the elegists might be expected to show a greater preference than the epic poets for the less poetic words in this class, this is not so in the case of *gladius* (apart from Ovid, who, to judge by his use of the term in the *Metamorphoses*, had a peculiar fondness for it) nor is it true of Tibullus with regard to *lassus* and *navis*, or of Ovid's love elegies in the case of *navis*.

Can any reasons be detected for the poets' choice of vocabulary in respect of these four word groups? Williams' theory of subject-matter will work in some cases: for example *lassus*, *mare* and *navis* occur in the *Amores* in everyday contexts, as does *lassus* in the *Odes* and Propertius, and *mare* in the *Ars Amatoria*.[49] In the case of *lassus* and *mare*, their usage is also consistent with the Axelson view of generic differentiation, though this does not apply to *navis* in Ovid's *Amores*, since it is used there even less commonly than in epic. The appearance of *lassus* in the *Ars* in a mythological narrative (3.696) is more appropriately explained following Axelson's approach.

Some usages, however, are still left unexplained. Take the case of *lassus* and *navis* in Tibullus. Neither word is employed by him, though the everyday contexts in which he generally uses *fessus* and *ratis/puppis/pinus*[50] ought, according to Williams, to offer opportunities for the employment of the less poetic terms. On the other hand, the Axelson thesis is not borne out in this case, since Tibullus here avoids totally two words which are used – if not as commonly as their poetic synonyms – by epic poets. Axelson[51] devoted an entire chapter to the relative purity of Tibullus' diction, of which the above is a clear example. Yet both Propertius, whose works contain in general a greater preponderance of unpoetic vocabulary than those of his elegiac confrère, and Horace in the *Odes*, fail to employ *gladius*,[52] though they use *ensis* in contemporary contexts[53] that ought not to preclude the more everyday term. In other words, neither generic nor contextual reasons apply here.

If I have lingered unduly over the words in this second category, it is because the statistics offer a striking illustration of several important points: (1) internal discrepancies within genres may make it difficult to talk of 'elegy' or 'epic'; (2) although epic poetry is in general more elevated than elegy and lyric, this distinction does not apply across the board; (3) in attempts to determine the reason behind vocabulary selection, both Williams' and Axelson's methods of approach are useful in many cases, while in others one or the other is more apposite; on other occasions, however, the idiosyncrasies of an individual author may be more relevant.

Now to the third category. Here, the pattern is more clear-cut: as a general rule, the epic poets use everyday terminology to a proportionately smaller extent than elegy and lyric. This result is not unexpected, but it is worth noting that in many cases the difference between epic and the less elevated genres is not very great. The most

[49] The passages alluded to are as follows: Ov. *Am.* 1.2.4, 5.25, 13.13, 14.22; 2.13.2; 3.5.1, 7.80, 11.8,13, Hor. *Od.* 2.6.7; Prop. 1.3.45; 2.13.28, 15.46, 26A.2, 33.26, 34.75; 3.7.69 (for *lassus*); Ov. *Am.* 1.15.10; 2.6.44, 8.20, 11.12, 39, 13.10; 3.2.34, 12.38, *A.A.* 1.388, 2.671, 3.94, 259, 311 (for *mare*) and Ov. *Am.* 2.11.50 (*navis*).

[50] *Fessus*: 1.2.2, 3.88, 8.68, 10.42; 2.5.45; 3.10.10, 17.2; *ratis*: 1.3.40, 4.46, 7.20, 9.10; 2.3.40; 3.3.10, 5.24, *puppis*: 1.4.45. Two exceptions are *ratis* at 2.5.40 and *puppis* at 2.5.45, both in a narration.

[51] Op. cit., chapter 5 ('Tibull Analogetiker?'), pp. 114–33.

[52] At Prop. 4.3.34, *gladios* is read by some editors (e.g. Fedeli, Richmond, Schuster, Rothstein), but the passage is much disputed (R. Hanslik in the latest Teubner [1979] edition has *radios*; others who do not accept *gladios* include Barber, Helm and D'Arbela).

[53] Prop. 1.21.7; 2.8.22; 3.14.11; 4.10.46, Hor. *Od.* 1.16.10, 37.23; 3.1.17; 4.15.19.

striking distinctions are in the words for horse, where we find an almost complete failure on the part of the elegists and Horace to avail themselves of poeticisms such as *sonipes* (note that the synonyms for *equus* are all compounds, a form more closely associated with epic).[54] Secondly, the epic poets, especially Virgil, show a marked preference over elegy/lyric for synonyms of *mater*, though curiously the latter genres (with the exception of Ovid's love elegies) are much readier to admit alternatives for *pater*.

The only significant divergence from the trend noted above is in the use of *amnis*, and even here the fondness for the word displayed by Ovid and Tibullus is not shared by the other representatives of the less elevated poetic categories. On the whole, though, the statistics for the three elegists show a fair degree of coincidence. But this does not extend to Horace's *Odes* (notably in the cases of *terra/tellus*, *mors/letum*, *vela/carbasus*[55] and *flumen/amnis*), and in every case but the last (which is complicated, as we saw, by the lack of consistency within elegy) his usage bears a closer affinity with that of epic. It is not always possible, therefore, to group elegy and lyric together.

Granted that, despite the variations alluded to above, there is a general trend for epic to show a smaller percentage of everyday words than elegy and lyric, how can this be accounted for?

Williams would say that the more everyday subject-matter of elegy and lyric affords greater opportunities for the use of everyday vocabulary, and less for the use of poetic synonyms. In many cases this explanation is not inappropriate; for instance none of the occasions when Horace uses *mater* are particularly elevated or divorced from contemporary reality,[56] and the same applies to Ovid's use of *mors* and *terra* in his erotic elegy.

Several factors, however, tell against the subject-matter thesis, in particular: (1) In almost every case, Lucan's word usage corresponds more closely to that of the Augustan epic poets than to the 'lower' genres, and in some instances he is even more 'poetic' (e.g. *pater* and especially *equus*). Yet the setting of his epic is the real world, not the remote world of myth. (2) Since the context of the *Fasti* is often myth rather than factual reality, one might expect the figures for this poem to lie somewhere between those for epic and elegy, but this is not so, with the exception of *mors/letum*, and even here Williams' hypothesis will not fit: Ovid uses *letum* only once in a mythological narrative, while *mors* occurs in this type of context 7 times: that is, the less poetical *mors* appears in 87·5% of references to death in a mythical setting, whereas in the poem as a whole it is employed only 71·4% of the time. Here, then, Ovid's practice in the mythological sections is *less* poetic than elsewhere in the work.

To summarise our discussion of category 3, the epic poets employ less everyday terminology than elegy or lyric; this may be accounted for partly by context, although often the only satisfactory explanation is a generic one. As was noted earlier, however, the distinction between epic and elegy/lyric is on many occasions not a prominent one. Nor in such cases would the observation be readily made by a reader not equipped with concordance and calculator that Virgil, for instance, uses *terra* less often than Propertius, especially since he *does* employ the word 165 times. The point with the vocabulary in this third category, in contrast to the first two categories, is that the

[54] Cf. D. O. Ross, Jr, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 18–19.

[55] In the case of this word-pair, the figures for Horace, and even more for Tibullus, are so small as to render them of dubious value.

[56] Possible exceptions are 3.6.40 (eulogy of early Rome in the last 'Roman' Ode) and 4.6.20 (mythological allusion in a hymn to Apollo).

everyday term in each case, for example *terra*, is not also to be classed as 'unpoetic', since it occurs regularly in all poetic genres. Here, especially in those instances where the difference between epic and elegy and/or lyric is marked, it is the presence of the poetic word (e.g. *genetrix*, *sonipes*) which is striking, not the relative absence of the everyday term. In sum, the statistics obtained in category 3 further confirm the existence of a stylistic distinction between epic and elegy/lyric, but this is not pronounced, with the exception of two cases. Axelson was right to concentrate on 'unpoetic' words, for it is there that the differences between the genres are most evident.

Up to this point, the discussion has been based upon Williams' remarks on pp. 747–8. An important area which was not referred to in those pages is the subject of diminutives, treated by Axelson (pp. 38ff.) under the heading of vulgarisms. Although, as demonstrated by Gow[57] and reiterated by Axelson, these forms are relatively rare in Augustan poetry, there is nevertheless an appreciable difference between their frequency in epic and in elegy, which needs to be accounted for.

Axelson's lists yield the following figures: in the *Aeneid*, Virgil uses two diminutive nouns, *palmula* and *sagulum*, and one adjective, *parvulus*. The list for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is only slightly longer: *lapillus* (5 occurrences), *sigillum*, *tabella* (7) and the adjective *gemellus* (used twice adjectivally and once as a noun). By contrast, Propertius has 15 diminutives used 50 times, the Tibullan Corpus 9 used 12 times; the figures for the Ovidian elegies which we have been considering are *Amores*: 6 diminutives used 33 times, *Ars Amatoria*: 13 used 34 times, and *Fasti*: 10 used 18 times. Interestingly, Horace in the *Odes* is far less fond of the formations: only 3 different diminutives (used 5 times altogether) are found, in clear contrast to the *Epistles* and *Satires*, which contain between them over 80 examples.[58]

For the relative frequency of diminutives in elegy various explanations might be posited.

(1) Given the emotional colouring often possessed by diminutives, one might expect to find them in a genre whose primary theme is the expression of personal erotic sentiment. A small number of different words may be explained in this light, including *ocellus*, a prominent component of the *sermo amatorius*, the use of which accounts for a reasonably large percentage of the total figures for Propertius and Ovid's *Amores*. (It occurs 18 times in Propertius and 11 in the *Amores*, besides being found once in the *Corp. Tib.*, 3 times in the *Ars* and once in the *Fasti*, all in erotic contexts.) Other diminutives with sentimental associations are *labellum* (once in Prop., 3 times each in *Am.* and *Ars*), *lectulus* (twice in Prop.), *auricula* and *vocula*: the two last, occurring in a Propertian paraklausithyron (1.16.27, 28) where the outraged house-door reports his version of the lover's lament, are used deliberately to satirise the besotted youth.

(2) A second possible reason for the appearance of diminutives in elegy is that often these words describe an everyday object, and that such objects are more likely to be encountered in this type of poetry than in epic. This hypothesis might be adduced in the case of *corolla*, a banqueter's garland (Prop. 1.3.21, 16.7, 2.15.51, 34.59), *facula*, a little torch (Prop. 2.29.5), *flabellum*, a fan (Prop. 2.24.11), *fiscella*, a small basket (Tib. 2.3.15), *lingula*, a shoe-strap (Ov. *A.A.* 1.515), *palliolum*, a hood (Ov. *A.A.* 1.734), *quasillum*, a wool-basket (Prop. 4.7.41, [Tib.] 3.16.3), *reticulum*, a net used in ball-

[57] Op. cit.

[58] I have omitted three words included by Axelson: *asellus*, *capella* and *masculus*. The first two are the normal words in poetry for ass and nanny-goat respectively (cf. Gow, op. cit., p. 153 n. 2), while the diminutive status of *masculus* is dubious.

games (Ov. *A.A.* 3.361), *scriptula*, the lines on a draught-board (Ov. *A.A.* 3.364), *scirpiculus*, a rush-basket (Prop. 4.2.40), *sigillum*, a small figurine (Ov. *A.A.* 1.407; cf. A. S. Hollis' note *ad loc.*), and *tabella* in the sense 'fan' (Ov. *Am.* 3.2.38, *A.A.* 1.161). It would indeed be appropriate in the case of words where no positive exists in the same meaning, in other words, where the diminutive is the *mot juste* (and for that reason has perhaps lost some of its diminutive force).[59] The subject-matter of elegy does not, however, explain 4 of the above words, *corolla*, *facula*, *fiscella*, and *quasillum*, since for each of these a positive form was available as a suitable alternative. (In the case of *corolla*, it is noteworthy that Horace avoids this term in the *Odes* but has 6 examples of *corona* in the same sense.)

Of the remaining diminutives, their inclusion is in three cases subject to qualification. *Lapillus* is used 3 times by Propertius, and 3 by Ovid in his love elegies; its use also accounts for 5 of the diminutive formations in the *Metamorphoses*. Now in all 5 instances in that poem, it means 'pebble', a sense which applies likewise in 4 of the elegiac examples, and which *lapis* does not normally include.[60] It is noteworthy that *lapis* in the *Metamorphoses* always means stone rather than pebble, and that Virgil's single use of *lapillus*, at *Georg.* 4.194, bears the meaning pebble, while *lapis* is employed by him 8 times (2 in *Ecl.*, 4 in *Georg.* and 2 in *Aen.*) with reference to rock or stone. Thus, the appearance of *lapillus* in the *Metamorphoses* and its absence from the *Aeneid* can be explained by the fact that Virgil had no occasion to refer to pebbles in that poem. We are left with the two instances in elegy (Prop. 1.15.7 and Ov. *A.A.* 3.129) where *lapillus* refers to gem-stones, a meaning that it shares with *lapis* (the latter is used in this sense in Ov. *Met.* 7.266, Tib. 1.8.39, Ov. *A.A.* 1.432, Hor. *Od.* 3.24.48, 4.13.14 – once again, note that Horace prefers the positive form).

Tabella is another diminutive which developed a specialised meaning that does not correspond to the positive *tabula*: that is, when it refers to the tablets on which *billets-doux* are written, or to their contents. Again, many of the occurrences of this word in elegy and in the *Metamorphoses* are to be explained in terms of the opportunities allowed by the context for the use of the word: in addition to 23 out of 37 instances in elegy, 6 out of the 7 appearances of *tabella* in the *Metamorphoses* refer to love-letters.

Finally, mention should be made of the common employment by elegiac poets of the term *libellus* to refer to their own poetry. Obviously, epic poets would have no occasion to use the word in this sense.

Two explanations have so far emerged for the relative frequency of the diminutive in elegiac poetry. Firstly, the emotional overtones often associated with the form assure the place in the *sermo amatorius* of words like *ocellus* and *labellum*. Secondly, the appearance of diminutives may frequently be attributed to context; this factor, we saw, is operative in the case of many terms for everyday objects, and of the three words, *lapillus*, *tabella* and *libellus*, discussed above.

Several cases, nevertheless, remain unexplained. Apart from the four words for everyday objects (*corolla*, *facula*, *fiscella* and *quasillum*) for which an alternative form was available, the following have not yet been considered: *agellus*, *camella*, *fabella*, *gemellus*, *lapillus* (in the sense stone), *novellus*, *parvulus*, *quantuluscumque*, *sacellum*, *tabella* (when equivalent to *tabula*), *tigillum* and *umidulus*. From this list we may immediately exclude *camella* and *sacellum*, which differ in sense from their corre-

[59] Cf. Gow, op. cit., p. 154.

[60] Catullus (68.148) uses *lapis* in the specialised sense of a pebble used to mark lucky and unlucky days; this is elsewhere designated by *lapillus* (e.g. Mart. 9.53.5; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 6.11.3 *calculus*).

sponding positives, and the use of *gemellus* (in the *Fasti*) is not significant in view of Ovid's predilection for the word in the *Metamorphoses*, mentioned previously.

Many of the above examples occur in everyday contexts. Yet this fact alone does not provide a satisfactory reason for the appearance of the diminutives, for why does Horace employ the form so rarely in the *Odes*, where the setting is often contemporary Rome? And in certain instances, this explanation is entirely inapposite: so *agellus* and *quantuluscumque* (twice) are used in the *Fasti* in the course of narratives set in the remote world of mythology.

Here, and in the case of the four terms for everyday objects discussed earlier, the only possible hypothesis is one based on generic distinctions: elegy, being a less elevated genre than epic, will sometimes admit diminutives, forms associated with the *sermo plebeius*.

Generic factors may similarly be brought to bear in connection with diminutives possessing emotional colouring. Whilst it has been shown that the presence of a word such as *ocellus* in elegy is related to the elegist's expression of personal sentiments, what is not thereby explained is the relative paucity of such forms in elegy. One has only to compare the extreme popularity of the closely related 'deflationary' diminutive in satire and epigram. The obvious solution here is that elegy, being less elevated than epic but on a far higher plane than satire/epigram, will use sentimental diminutives, but relatively sparingly.

The case of diminutives is an interesting one, for it offers a clear illustration of several important points: (1) Horace's avoidance of the formation in the *Odes* further demonstrates the danger of grouping elegy and lyric together when attempting generic differentiation; (2) it is important always to take account of individual instances and the contexts in which individual words are employed; (3) one single explanation is inadequate to explain all cases – thus the greater frequency of diminutives in elegy is to be accounted for partly on generic lines, but other factors are operative in some instances: subject-matter, degree of emotional involvement, cases where the diminutive has developed a specialised sense for which there is no answering positive form.

CONCLUSION

It is now time to summarise briefly our results. Firstly, a careful examination of the usage of those words discussed by Williams on p. 748 reveals little evidence to support his thesis that subject-matter rather than genre was the operative factor in poetic vocabulary selection;[61] on the other hand, the Axelson approach has in many cases been demonstrated to be the only one which adequately covers the facts.

Application of Williams' methods to a wider area than that covered by his discussion[62] similarly fails to confirm the validity of his approach. Here, though, especially in the area of everyday words such as *terra* (my third group) which are more common than their poetic equivalents, distinctions between genres are less clear-cut and the reasons for these harder to determine. In many cases, we saw, a variety of factors may have influenced the poets' choice of vocabulary.

In sum, Axelson's explanation of poetic word selection along generic lines is basically sound, though it is not universally appropriate, and in some cases the

[61] His second criterion – the degree to which the poet's personality enters the work – was capable of being dismissed more briefly (see above).

[62] Cf. my statistics in Table I and the discussion of Diminutives.

possibility of other determining factors must be considered. Williams was not wrong to question Axelson's methods, but his alternative solution does not stand up to detailed scrutiny.[63]

Sydney PATRICIA WATSON

[63] I would like to thank Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.