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The Poet Nemesianus and the *Historia Augusta**

JUSTIN STOVER AND GEORGE WOULDHUYSEN

In affectionate memory of Jim Adams,
lectissimus pensator verborum (Augustine, *De vita beata* 4).

ABSTRACT

Lurking in the Historia Augusta's life of the short-lived Emperor Carus is what appears to be a reference to the genuine contemporary poet Nemesianus and an extant work by him, the Cynegetica. Given the HA's predilection for 'bogus authors', this is rather surprising, but because some of what the HA says about Nemesianus is true, the otherwise unique details of his life and works that it provides have been generally accepted. We show first that the reference to the Cynegetica is an incorporated gloss in the text of the HA, one that reveals that the text was being read and studied in northern Francia. We then demonstrate that the name 'Olympius', which the HA gives to Nemesianus, is not authentic, offering an analysis of the text's onomastic habits more generally. We show that 'Olympius Nemesianus' is one of several invented authors in the HA, lent a superficial plausibility by borrowing the name of a real ancient writer. Finally, we reflect on the way that these conclusions might undermine two developing tendencies in the study of the Historia Augusta.

Keywords: *Historia Augusta*; Nemesianus; onomastics; transmission; manuscripts

I INTRODUCTION

The *Historia Augusta* (HA) is richly stocked with bogus authors.¹ It abounds with fraudulent compositions by invented writers, on whom it intermittently offers commentary, with a pose of critical sophistication. Many of these shadowy figures serve an obvious role as putative sources for the alleged *scriptores*: the *ephemeris* of that 'most noble and truthful man' Turdulus Gallicanus, indispensable for writing about the emperor Probus, springs to mind (*Probus* 2.2). Others seem simply to reflect the glee that the work's true author took in invention (not that the two goals were mutually exclusive). These imagined writers are a particularly marked feature of the latter parts of the HA, while by no means confined to them.² Given all this, it comes as something of a

* We would like to thank Professor Gavin Kelly, whose questions first started us down this track, Professor H. R. Woudhuysen for helpful comments and advice on signatures, Dr Franck Cinato for guidance on glossaries, Dr Myles Lavan for encouragement and advice generously given, and Professor Michael Kulikowski for his careful reading of a draft. We owe gratitude also to the anonymous readers for JRS, for their prompt, searching and helpful suggestions. This is one of a series of studies of later Latin historical texts and their reception; others include: Stover and Woudhuysen 2017; 2015 [2020]; 2021; and 2022. The literature on the *Historia Augusta* is vast and ever-growing. In what follows, we cite only items that are directly relevant to the arguments of this article. All translations are our own.

¹ The term 'bogus authors', which has become almost canonical, goes back to Syme 1976, the modern starting point for the HA's literary impostures.

² Syme 1976: 315–16; cf. Rohrbacher 2016.

surprise to find apparent mention of a genuine author and an authentic work in their correct historical context at almost the very end of the *HA*. In the text's account of the short-lived emperor Numerian (r. 283–284), son of Carus (r. 282–3) and brother of Carinus (r. 283–5), the author digresses on the boy-prince's poetic abilities (the text is Hohl's):

versu autem talis fuisse praedicatur [sc. Numerianus], ut omnes poetas sui temporis vicerit. Nam et cum Olympio Nemesiano contendit, qui ἁλιευτικὰ κυνηγετικὰ et ναυτικὰ scripsit qui[n]que omnibus coloribus inlustratus emicuit, et Aurelium Apollinarem φάμβορον scriptorem, qui patris eius gesta in litteras retulit, [h]isdem, quae recitaverat, editis veluti radio solis obtexit (*Carus* 11.2).³

He is said, however, to have been so talented at verse that he bested all the poets of his age; for he competed with Olympius Nemesianus, who wrote *Halieutica*, *Cynegetica*, and *Nautica*, and who was brilliantly illustrious on account of all his style. When he published what he had recited, like a ray of sun he overshadowed Aurelius Apollinaris, the iambic poet who had described the deeds of his father in writing.

Aurelius Apollinaris, the iambic poet *cum* historian of the emperor Carus, is a fairly obvious fiction.⁴ Nemesianus, however, really was a poet active in the joint reign of Carinus and Numerian. While the *Halieutica* and *Nautica* look like inventions of the *HA*, a *Cynegetica* by Nemesianus survives (alongside four *Eclogues*) and contains a miniature panegyric of the brother emperors (ll. 63–85).⁵

On the strength of this coincidence, most scholars have been prepared to accept that the *HA* offers a modicum of truth here. Even Sir Ronald Syme, most arch of the *HA* sceptics, concluded that 'nothing that the *HA* relates about authors and writings subsequent to Marius Maximus deserves credit, except for the reference to the poems of Nemesianus of Carthage'.⁶ François Paschoud, *doyen* of recent *HA* *Forschung*, echoes this judgement in the notes to his edition of the *Vita Cari*: 'Némésien est l'un des rares écrivains réels mentionnés dans les biographies de la seconde moitié de l'*HA*'.⁷ So too the author of the most recent English monograph on the *HA*, David Rohrbacher: 'the poet Nemesianus is the only person mentioned by name in the entire *Life* of Carus, Carinus, and Numerian (with the exception of the emperors themselves) who is not fictional'.⁸ At first sight, the *HA*'s recollection of Nemesianus is one of those awkwardly verifiable facts that keeps the work, even at its most extravagant, somewhere in the borderland between history and fiction.

That appearance is, however, deceptive. To understand what is really going on here, we need to look first at the text of this passage in the *HA* and then at the name — Olympius — with which it furnishes Nemesianus. What we will discover is far more interesting than a tale of the chance transmission of true information. The reference to the *Cynegetica* is not

³ On this passage, see Penella 1983, a perceptive article. For the relative youth of Numerian, see Eutropius 9.18.2 who calls him an *adulescens* at the time of his death.

⁴ Stein suggested (*PIR*² A.1453) that he was inspired by the brothers Aurelius Apollinaris and Aurelius Nemesianus, who plotted the murder of Caracalla (*HA* *Caracalla* 6.7 with Dio 79.5.3 for the *nomen*), a view accepted by e.g. Syme 1971: 279 and n. 2; Barnes 1972: 147; and Thomson 2012: 110 (where read 'Barnes 1972', for 1978). The argument of Domaszewski 1918: 19, that Aurelius Apollinaris was inspired by Sidonius Apollinaris, who did write about the deeds of Carus (*Carm.* 23.88–96), has been treated with greater contempt than it perhaps deserves. Is it possible that the theme of poetic contest was inspired by something so banal as a pun on *Numeri(anus)*, *numeri* meaning either poem or metre?

⁵ Nemesianus' works were edited by Volpilhac 1975 and Williams 1986 (with commentary). See also Jakobi 2014 (an edition of and commentary on the *Cynegetica*).

⁶ Syme 1971: 279.

⁷ Paschoud 2002: 367.

⁸ Rohrbacher 2016: 40. One might note that Diocletian, Maximian and the praetorian prefect Aper are all also mentioned in the *Vita Cari*.

authentic to the text of the *vita Cari* and the poet Nemesianus did not have the name Olympius. What we have here is a combination of the *HA*'s predilection for inventing bogus *scriptores* vaguely modelled after real authors, and of honest medieval scholarship floundering in the face of the work's addiction to bafflement.

II TEXT

For some 500 years, every edition of the *Historia Augusta* has printed ἁλιευτικὰ, κυνηγετικὰ, ναυτικὰ in this passage, three Greek words in Greek characters. It might, then, come as a slight surprise to students of the text that the most important manuscript of the *HA*, Vat. Pal. lat. 899 (P), produced in the ninth century and of uncertain origin, does not transmit all three in Greek letters.⁹ Instead it offers a strange hybrid (f. 214v):

nam & cum olympionemesiano contendit quialieutica KYNHGETIKA & nautica scripsit

This peculiar inconsistency is also found in all the manuscripts of the *HA* derived from P, including Bamberg Msc. Class. 54 (B) (f. 207r) and Paris lat. 5816 (L) (f. 109v).¹⁰ On this evidence, printing these three words in Greek might seem like a logical editorial decision, since all three are Greek words and one of them is written in Greek characters. Yet the reason why every edition since the early sixteenth century does indeed print them in Greek is not sound editorial practice — P, after all, was not widely known for more than a century after the first printed edition had been produced — but rather sheer textual inertia.

The *editio princeps* of the *HA*, which was published at Milan in 1475, did not print any of the words in Greek (or leave them blank to be filled in by hand).¹¹ Instead, it offered a (clumsy) Latin transliteration (sig. S8r):

nam & cum Olympio Nemesiano contendit: qui in halienitica cynegetica. & nautica. scripsit¹²

Now this is interesting because the sources of the *editio princeps* are L (or a derivative of it) and an unknown manuscript belonging to a widely dispersed fourteenth-century family known as Σ, which itself is probably ultimately derived from P with extensive contamination and tampering.¹³ The earliest manuscript of that family, Florence Laur. Plut. 20 sin. 6 (D), does not transmit any of the words in Greek (f. 103v):

⁹ A digital facsimile can be found online at https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_pal_lat_899. On the origins of P, see below.

¹⁰ Digital facsimiles can be found online at <https://bavarikon.de/object/bav:SBB-KHB-00000SBB00000112> and <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84469323>. On the Bamberg manuscript, copied at Fulda in the second quarter of the ninth century, see Bischoff, *Katalog* I.216. On L, which was annotated by Petrarch, see Malta 2014, especially n. 1.

¹¹ *Gesamtkatalog* M44203; *ISTC* is00340000, prepared by Bonus Accursius and printed by Philippus de Lavagna in two parts (20 July: Suetonius; 22 December: the *Historia Augusta* with Eutropius and Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*).

¹² The u/n confusion in *halienitica* suggests that the compositor could not clearly read what was in front of him.

¹³ On the *editio princeps*, see Stover 2020a: 172–3. The same study adduces evidence for Σ's ultimate descent from P, including misunderstood transposition marks and sutured intratextual lacunae. Valentini 2021 has restated the case for Σ's independence, without responding to these specific examples. The evidence she brings forward, with regard to textual arrangement and individual readings, can be equally explained as contamination from the non-P source, and does not disprove derivation from P. The fact that she brings up an entirely unexceptional case of an archetypal line (47 characters long) omitted in P and supplied in the margin by the corrector (f. 199r) with a tie-mark indicating the proper position after *cepit imperium*, correctly reinserted by B (f. 193r), as a 'frutto di trasmissione orizzontale derivante da una collazione con Σ' (223) does not inspire confidence; there are four other examples on ff. 17r, 44v, 75r, and 107v, all between 41 and 50

nam cum Olympio Nemesiano contendit: qui Alyeutika hynegetica et nautica scripsit¹⁴

For this reason, it seems very likely that the source for the Latin transliteration of the *cynēgetica* in the *ed. pr.* is its (unidentified) Σ source. The second edition of the *HA* was printed at Venice in 1489: as has recently been demonstrated, it is extremely valuable because it is based on the *ed. pr.* and a separate tradition of the text, independent of P and transmitting authentic information.¹⁵ Unfortunately, for this passage, it merely reproduces the reading from the *ed. pr.*, including the gross error in *halienitica* (sig. M6r).

The next edition, printed roughly 500 years ago, was (unlike its two predecessors) prepared by a respected humanist scholar with a critical eye for philological matters, Johannes Baptista Egnatius, and issued from the venerable house of Manutius in Venice in 1516. The basis for his text was the earlier Venetian edition of 1489, but Egnatius also had occasional recourse to yet another Σ manuscript, which was housed in the Marciana in Venice.¹⁶ More to the point, however, Egnatius was an adventurous editor, never hesitant to make radical changes to the transmitted text, where sense, order, or style demanded it.¹⁷ For example, he separated the lives of Caesars and usurpers from the main sequence of Augusti and printed them after the rest of the text, to make the first part read more like a normal imperial history, treating just the emperors in sequence.

For our purposes, however, the most relevant of Egnatius' interventions are on a rather smaller scale. In the life of Alexander Severus, the *HA* explicitly quotes the Greek of a proverb it has given in Latin (18.5, in Hohl's text):

idem addebat sententiam de furibus notam et Gr<a>ece quidem, quae Latine hoc significat: 'qui multa rapuerit, pauca suffragatoribus dederit, salvus erit', quae Graece talis est 'Ο πολλὰ κλέψας ὀλίγα δοῦς ἐκφεύξε[ν]ται.

He was in the habit of using a well-known *bon-mot* on thieves, indeed one in Greek, which means this in Latin: 'if he who has stolen a lot gives a little to his advocates, he will be acquitted', which in Greek is as follows: 'He who has stolen a lot and given a little will be acquitted'.

P did not transmit the Greek in Greek characters, but instead offered a curious Latin transliteration *opolla clepsas oligas ecfexente* (f. 107r). The first two printed editions just left a blank space where the Greek should be. This was not good enough for Egnatius, but his manuscript probably offered him no aid.¹⁸ Instead, he boldly inserted his own translation: ὅστις ἂν πολλὰ κεκλόπημεν [sic] ὀλίγα δὲ τοῖς βοηθοῦσιν ἔδωκεν σῶος ἔσται (sig. q4r, f. 124r).¹⁹ Hence it should come as no surprise that when Egnatius came to *Carus* 11.2, he chose *with no manuscript authority* to print all three titles in Greek (sig. 2g5v):

nam & cum Olympio Nemesiano contendit, qui ἀλιευτικὰ κυνηγετικὰ & ναυτικὰ scripsit

characters, not including of course the *sauts du même au même* on ff. 23v, 79r, 91v, and 196v. See below for two further cases where derivation from P looks most plausible.

¹⁴ A digital facsimile can be found online at <http://mss.bmlonline.it/s.aspx?Id=AWOMq8cMI1A4r7GxMYFT>. Incidentally, the Σ reading *hynegetica* may well offer further evidence for derivation from P itself, since P's first kappa is distinctly H-shaped.

¹⁵ See Stover 2020a.

¹⁶ On Egnatius' edition, see Hirstein 1998.

¹⁷ An admirable instinct in the face of the *HA*.

¹⁸ Most Σ manuscripts leave a blank space.

¹⁹ The Greek here is clearly confused, probably the result of an error by the compositor, rather than Egnatius himself. One of the reviewers for *JRS* proposes that the original read κεκλόπη μέν; we are indebted to them for the suggestion.

Every edition since, down to the Budé published by Paschoud in 2002, has followed suit. Hence, we arrive at the present paradoxical state of affairs: every edition prints *κυνηγετικά* not because P transmits *KYNHGETIKA*, but rather because of the bold liberties Egnatius took five centuries ago with his text.

As a result, no one has ever thought to question *why* P reads *KYNHGETIKA*. It is, in every respect, anomalous. The word stands out on the page: it is written in much larger letters than the surrounding Latin characters and the letter-forms are awkward and laboured. And no wonder, for they are, in fact, the only Greek characters written in the whole manuscript. In every other instance where the *HA* offers Greek, P transmits a Latin transliteration, as in the passage of *Alexander Severus* discussed above, or at *Pertinax* 13.5, where it offers the awkward *christologum* (f. 49v).²⁰ By chance, this passage survives in one of the few fragments from the other ninth-century manuscript of the *HA* written at Murbach (M), preserved in a list of collations included in the 1518 Froben edition of the text published at Basel: it has instead the (misspelled) *χρησόλογος*.²¹ In addition, according to Froben, the Greek of the saying in the life of Alexander discussed above was found in M.²² P's treatment of Greek is also generally anomalous. It is not uncommon for individual Greek words to be written in Latin characters by medieval scribes and indeed, in many cases, such transliteration may go back to the original author.²³ Writing out a whole line in Latin transliteration is, however, much less common and usually restricted to texts which were meant to be publicly recited in a liturgical, monastic, or pedagogical context. Extant examples include prayers like the *Pater noster* and Greek creeds.²⁴ These transliterations almost invariably reflect contemporary pronunciation of Greek.²⁵ We have, however, a few manuscripts which contain Greek passages with an interlinear Latin transliteration.²⁶ Sometimes these are individual words, such as in Adomnán's life of St Columba in London, British Library Add. 35110 (s. xii), f. 97r, where an original ΠΗΡΙCTHRA is transliterated above syllable by syllable as *pe ris te ra*, or in Jerome's commentary on Ecclesiastes in Montecassino MS 284, p. 355, where ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΠΟΙΕΙΑΝ is transliterated as *pros apo pogeian*.²⁷ Slightly longer passages of transliterated Greek can be found in Cologne, Dombibliothek Cod. 58, a ninth-century copy of Jerome's commentaries on Paul from Lorsch, on for example, f. 9v, which has ΑΠΟΤΟΥΕΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΚΕΙΝ, with the slightly comic misinterpretation *apo tu eu castu dochin* written above.²⁸ Another manuscript of Jerome, the commentary on Daniel, Sankt Gallen 120 (780–820) has frequent transliteration of Greek words.²⁹ So too do the remaining folios of a ninth

²⁰ The other instances of Greek in the *HA* are *Alexander Severus* 52.2 Ἀναίμακτον = P f. 107r *anematum*; *Gallieni duo* 18.5 διὰ τεσσάρων = P f. 160v *diatesserōn*; *Quadruga Tyrannorum* 2.1 αὐτοκράτορα = P f. 208r *autocratora*.

²¹ On the Murbach manuscript, see now Stover 2020b. The other independent ninth-century witness, the excerpts in Pal. lat. 886 (see Dorfbauer 2020), II, also offers *christologus*, but does not transmit the passage with the extended Greek quotation at all and breaks off well before the life of Numerian.

²² See sig. 11r. The whole letter is translated in Stover 2020b: 122–3.

²³ Peltari 2011: 480: 'late antique Latin authors were more willing to write Greek in Latin characters than has been generally acknowledged'.

²⁴ See Berschin 1988: esp. 21–7. On liturgical use of Greek texts, see Atkinson 1982.

²⁵ See, for example, Moran 2011.

²⁶ This practice is to be distinguished from the much more widely spread habit of writing interlinear *translation* of Greek passages.

²⁷ See Sneddon 2018: 48; Newton 1999, pl. 140.

²⁸ Bischoff, *Katalog* I.1895.

²⁹ CLA 7.980 (see e.g. p. 5). The same is apparently true of the Greek in Namur, Bibliothèque Communale Ms. 16 (St. Hubert, s. IX^{2/4}, Bischoff, *Katalog* II.3562), Jerome, *Commentarius in Oseam*. Souter 1935 (now rather dated) suggests that the transliteration of Greek words in Jerome's Commentary on Matthew is common in the manuscripts (without giving specific details).

Murbach manuscript containing his commentary on Isaiah.³⁰ Paris lat. 10910 (Fredegar), of the early eighth century, features a striking drawing of Eusebius and Jerome (with attendant goose) on f. 23v. There is a Latin caption written in Greek letters underneath them, which a ninth-century hand has transcribed.³¹ An alternation between writing in Greek characters and transliterating to Latin is also found in a glossary (which shows an interest in late ancient historical texts) which is plausibly associated with Saint-Denis and its abbot Hilduin (814–43).³² In all these cases too, there are hints of roughly contemporary pronunciation, Greek and Latin.³³ This may tell us something about the *Historia Augusta*. Three of our ninth-century witnesses – P, Π, and M – are derived from the same archetype. The natural explanation of their divergence is that that archetype offered Greek text for the (surprisingly few) points where the *HA* transmits Greek, with a Latin transliteration above the line. The conscientious scribe of M copied out the Greek, where the slightly hastier copyist of P generally offered the Latin.

What we have here, then, are three independent anomalies. One is the fact that the *HA*, in an utterly uncharacteristic fashion for one of the later lives, appears to transmit genuine literary lore in saying that Nemesianus wrote a *Cynegetica*. The second is that P puts this work's title into Greek characters, while transmitting the titles of the other two (invented) works in Latin letters. The third is that everywhere else P uses Latin transliteration for Greek, even for extended quotation, in a manner that is essentially unparalleled for the genre. Any one of these individually could be explained away through special pleading, but their conjunction exceeds the limits of credibility. One hypothesis, however, could explain all three: what if KYNHETIKA is an incorporated gloss?

Nemesianus' *Cynegetica* is a rare text, but we have hints that it was not quite so rare in the early ninth century.³⁴ In the course of a lengthy denunciation of his homonymous nephew, the bishop of Laon, Hincmar, archbishop of Reims from 845 to 882, tells us that he had read the work as a schoolboy:

... aliter respondere non potui, nisi, ut venatores ferae lustra sequentes agere auditu et lectione puer scolarius in libro, qui inscribitur Kynēgeticon, Cartaginensis Aurelii didici, hac illaque discurrendo, retrograda etiam vestigia repetendo anfractus tuos vestigando explicare studerem.³⁵

... I could not otherwise answer, except that I should hasten to unravel your circumlocutions by running about, also seeking out your backwards-hastening footsteps, and investigating them, as hunters do when seeking the lairs of wild beasts, which I learnt from listening and reading when a schoolboy in the book which is entitled *Cynegeticon*, written by Aurelius of Carthage.

A few lines later, he goes on to quote the poem's opening:

³⁰ Colmar, Bibliothèque municipale, 29 (+ Manchester, John Rylands MS lat. 15), cf. Bischoff, *Katalog* I.950; f. 1v has ΤΥΦΩCIN glossed with *tirosin*.

³¹ Bischoff, *Katalog* III.4667a.

³² Paris lat. 7651; our glossary begins on f. 218r, after the bilingual glossary of Ps.-Philoxenus. Some of the *lemmata* are drawn from the so-called *Epitome de Caesaribus* (on which see Stover and Woudhuysen 2021). On the connection to Hilduin, see Lapidge 2017: 770–1; Cinato (*per litteras*) has noted that there are also palaeographic features in the manuscript that would plausibly connect it to the region of Paris.

³³ Note for example the intervocalic 'g' in *pogeian*; this is the phenomenon that gave rise to such widely distributed forms as *Apulegius* in the Middle Ages (for the similar process by which intervocalic 'g' was omitted, see Stotz 1996–2004: III.VIII.§173.1–6). See also Kaczynski 1988: 31.

³⁴ On the transmission of the *Cynegeticon*, see Dolveck *forthcoming*. The three manuscripts are Paris lat. 7561 (s. IX, the last quarter, per Bischoff, *Katalog* III.4477) and 4839 (s. X and from England: Bischoff, *Katalog* III p. 103) and Vienna 3261 (s. XVI).

³⁵ Hincmar, *Opusculum LV capitulorum adversus Hincmarum Laudunensem* 24 (p. 247 Schieffer).

... et etiam cum tuam novam subscriptionem, quin potius tuam novam praesumptionem adiens, mille vias tristesque labores / discursusque citos, securi prelia ruris et sincero corde lites domesticas subire compellar.³⁶

... and since I am even compelled, approaching your new subscription, or I should say your new presumption, to undergo with a pure heart personal quarrels: 'their thousand ways and mournful toil; their swift running hither and thither, and the battles of the untroubled countryside'.

Hincmar of Reims is one of the Carolingian authors about whose life we know enough to understand exactly what he is saying in this reminiscence: he had read the *Cynegetica* during his education at Saint-Denis in Paris in the 810s, or perhaps even the early 820s, studying under Hilduin.³⁷ Somewhat disappointingly, the extant ninth-century manuscript of the *Cynegetica* (written in northern France, probably at Saint-Denis itself), Paris lat. 7561, does not transmit the name of the work in Greek characters (p. 18):

FINIT. M. AURELI NEMESIANI KARTAGINIENSIS CYNEGETICON³⁸

The rest of the slim manuscript tradition follows suit.³⁹ If, however, we take a closer look at Hincmar, we find him referring to the text in a garbled combination of Greek and Latin letters, at least according to the manuscript of his *Against Hincmar of Laon* produced at Reims during his lifetime (Paris lat. 2865, f. 115r), *KYNEGETICON*.⁴⁰ Evidently, the text of Nemesianus that Hincmar had read did have a title in Greek, or at the least, in his school-days there was a fashion for referring to it in Greek. This was rather a concession to Hellenism on his part, since elsewhere in the same work he fulminated against his namesake:

Although there are sufficient and adequate Latin words, which you could have put in those places, where instead you have put Greek and obscure ones, now and then even Irish and other barbarous, as you fancied, bastardised and corrupt things.⁴¹

It is a striking fact that the only two ninth-century mentions of Nemesianus' work *outside the actual manuscript that transmits it* spell the title *KYN-*. Chronologically speaking, Hincmar's halcyon schooldays take us awfully close to the period in which P itself was copied, probably sometime between 825 and 830.⁴²

In this context, it seems probable that in P's archetype somebody inserted the Greek word *KYNHĒTIKA* in the margin next to Nemesianus' name, because they recognised the name of the poet. Greek writing was popular in medieval scholia: a Venn diagram

³⁶ Cf. Nemes., *Cyn.* 1–2, which has *hilaesque* rather than *tristesque*. As de Gianni 2011 has argued, this is a deliberate alteration of the text by Hincmar to suit his polemical purpose.

³⁷ On Hincmar's life in general, see Stone 2015; and on his early life, see Devisse 1975–1976, ii.1089–97.

³⁸ There is no title in this manuscript. On its provenance, see Bischoff, *Katalog* III.4477.

³⁹ See above, n. 34 for details.

⁴⁰ For the manuscript, see Bischoff, *Katalog* III.4259: 'Reims, IX. Jh., ca. 3. Viertel'.

⁴¹ *Opusculum LV capitulorum adversus Hincmarum Laudunensem* 43 (p. 315 Schieffer): *cum suppeterent sufficienter verba Latina, quae in his locis ponere poterat, ubi Greca et obstrusa et interdum Scottica et alia barbara, ut tibi visum fuit, nothata atque corrupta posuisti*.

⁴² Pecere 1995: 337 dates it 'all'inizio del secondo quarto del secolo IX'. This is partially based on Bischoff's palaeographic dating to the second quarter of the ninth century, with the external constraints of the date of B, which Pecere wants to make before 842, in the abbacy of Hrabanus at Fulda, and the *De rectoribus Christianis* of Sedulius Scottus, which reflects his reading of P (see Dorfbauer 2020).

of pedants who enjoyed putting their rudimentary Greek skills on display and people who wrote glosses would have a very substantial overlap.⁴³ This would have produced a *mise-en-page* something like this⁴⁴:

fuisse praedicatur utomnes πο&cas suiteporis vicerit.
nam &cum olympionemesiano contendit qualieutica
&nautica scripsit quinque omnibus coloniis inlustratus

ΚΥΝΗΓΕΤΙΚΑ

P's copyist blithely incorporated the gloss in the text — as indeed he was wont to do on any number of other occasions.⁴⁵ Indeed, in one case on the culinary predilections of Aelius (*pernam* at *Ael.* 5.4), we have good evidence that P and M incorporated an interlinear gloss at two different places in the line.⁴⁶ In another, discussing the literary output of the Emperor Trajan, P transmits *nam et de suis dilectis multa versibus composuit amatoria carmina scripsit*. (*Hadr.* 15.9). Casaubon judiciously deleted *amatoria carmina scripsit* as an incorporated gloss. In the same passage, Π transmits *amatoria carmina versibus composuit* (f. 142v, shamefully not recorded in any edition since Gruter). The most reasonable interpretation of this passage is that *amatoria carmina* was an interlinear gloss on *de suis dilectis*, which displaced the original in Π and was incorporated into P with the addition of *scripsit* for sense. If ΚΥΝΗΓΕΤΙΚΑ were a gloss like these, it would not have been equipped with the usual transliteration above the line, and the scribe would have had actually to copy the characters as he saw them, hence why this is the sole word in Greek characters found in P.⁴⁷

From a conventional standpoint, this is a somewhat perverse suggestion: the normal process of editing seeks to purge errors that have crept into the text over the centuries of its transmission, not remove truths. The nature of the *HA*, however, forces a reversal: because the text, particularly in its later lives, is so determinedly fictive, we ought to be very suspicious of that in it which seems to be true, especially with regard to literary matters. The 'truth' of the *HA* is generally falsehood and invention and what is true in the usual sense of the term is normally error in the *HA*. What, indeed, are the chances that, of the literally dozens of invented authors and facts about literary history in the later lives, just one happens to be true? Given that we know Nemesianus was being read in one school, at least, and indeed recalled fondly by a former schoolboy, around the time that P was being copied, it seems far more likely that a Carolingian reader was telling the truth, and that the *HA* was engaged in its customary obfuscation. At any rate, the fact that the title is written in Greek characters in P, against its otherwise universal practice, demands some explanation, and one that respects what we know of ninth-century scribal habit.

If this hypothesis is true, it gives us a tantalising hint about the much-discussed question of the *Schriftheimat* of P, and where the archetype of the *HA* was preserved. The old idea that P was written in Italy has recently been discredited: indeed, the fact that its two siblings, M and Π, are both northern (the former written at Murbach, the latter at

⁴³ On the use of Greek in ninth-century scholia, see O'Sullivan 2012. The practice of rendering titles in Greek is related to the impulse Berschin 2020: 115 identified to use Greek 'for giving ornamental emphasis to proper names'.

⁴⁴ This presentation is based on the text of P.

⁴⁵ e.g. *Hadrian* 17.12 *dona* (deleted by Mommsen); *Avidius Cassius* 4.3 *id est materiam* (deleted by Casaubon), *Alexander Severus* 43.2 *vel dies vel tempora* (deleted by Casaubon); 44.8: *pecuniam* (deleted by Salmasius), *Maximus et Balbinus* 5.1 *vehicularius fabricator* (deleted by Paschoud), and *Claudius* 6.2 *in rep.* (deleted by Paschoud). Cf. Venturi 1973: 37 on *Caracalla* 5.5.

⁴⁶ Stover 2020b: 135–6.

⁴⁷ Incidentally, thinking of κυνηγετικά as an intruded gloss also resolves the slight awkwardness of a three-item list in the form *a, b, et c.* While such lists do occur elsewhere in the *HA* and in contemporary Latin texts, they were not the most correct form (on the use of conjunctions in lists, see Adams 2021: esp. 398).

Lorsch) makes it virtually impossible that P was copied from the same archetype close to the same time in Italy.⁴⁸ Perhaps instead we ought to look for the sort of centre which had the tradition of Greek study that might have inspired transliteration, and one in which Nemesianus' *Cynegetica* was used in schools. In other words, Saint-Denis itself, or a place closely associated with it.

III NAMES

The one obviously authentic detail about Nemesianus provided by the *HA* may very well be an interpolation. That has considerable implications for its other claims for him. Despite occasional attempts to identify the *Halieutica* and *Nautica* with extant Latin poems, it should now be even clearer that they are pure inventions, designed to pad the *résumé* of the poet.⁴⁹ The name 'Olympius' has, however, achieved broader acceptance. It was enshrined in the second edition of the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* and in *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*.⁵⁰ Similarly, both Syme and Paschoud were inclined to accept it.⁵¹ From these authoritative sources, 'Olympius' has bled into other more general works of reference and is now comfortably accommodated in the broader scholarly literature – not a bad career for a *datum* from one of antiquity's least reliable informants.⁵² Clearly, it requires more systematic treatment.

In the late third and fourth centuries A.D., the onomastic landscape of the Roman world had changed radically from that of the early empire.⁵³ Individuals were generally referred to by a single name – invariably their last if they had more than one – which scholarship has come to call the 'diacritic'. Trawling through the letters of Symmachus, for example, illustrates quite how ubiquitous this system of reference had become in even the stuffiest of circles.⁵⁴ In official usage, e.g. consular dates in papyri, the diacritic was often supplemented by one more name, always placed before it.⁵⁵ Depending on the bearer's background and the context, this additional name might indicate descent – usually a *gentilicium*, but sometimes also a *cognomen* that had come to play a similar role – or status: Flavius, the *nomen* of the emperor Constantine, is the obvious example.⁵⁶ Much more rarely, in elevated literary or epigraphic contexts, we find individuals with four, five, or even more names, generally *gentilia* but occasionally even *praenomina* as well,

⁴⁸ See Dorfbauer 2020; and Stover 2020b.

⁴⁹ For an overview of earlier efforts to identify extant poems as (fragments of) these, see Volpilhac 1975, 11–12. Verdière 1974: 19–27 made a quixotic attempt to revive the identification of *Anthologia Latina* 718 (Riese²), the *Ad Oceanum* and *AL* 720 (Riese²), the *Ponticon*, as part of the *Nautica*. This was briskly dismissed by Smolak 1993: 358, who correctly concluded: 'il est douteux qu'ils aient jamais existé'. For a more realistic estimate of the *Ad Oceanum*, see Canal 2013.

⁵⁰ *PIR*² A.1562 (Stein); *PLRE* I 'Nemesianus 2'. Somewhat surprisingly, they both also gingerly admitted the ἁλιευτικά and ναυτικά to historical reality with a parenthetical question mark.

⁵¹ Syme 1971: 279 and n. 2, 'there is no reason to doubt the "Olympius"'. Paschoud 2002: 366: 'Olympius n'est donné que par le présent passage de l'*HA*, mais il n'y a pas de raison sérieuse de mettre en doute l'authenticité de cette partie de son nom'.

⁵² Smolak 1993; Scourfield 2012; Uden 2018. In the literature, see e.g. Chastagnol 1976; Küppers 1987; Altmayer 2014: 27–8 – it is noteworthy that Jakobi 2014 omits it.

⁵³ On late antique names, see Cameron 1985 and (especially) Salway 1994.

⁵⁴ Most easily done through the helpful *index nominum* in Seck 1883: 342–52, where the names actually used by Symmachus are in small caps (a very useful practice which ought to be more widely adopted by editors).

⁵⁵ This is most easily grasped by looking at the entries in 'Appendix D' of Bagnall and Worp 2004. Procedure varied for emperors, but for private individuals the dual name is the normal pattern. Consular dating became regular in Egypt only from the Tetrarchic period onwards (Bagnall and Worp 1979: 282; 1982). See in general also the important article by Salway 2008: 280–5.

⁵⁶ See Cameron 1988.

something that hints that the ‘diacritic system’ conceals the full richness of late ancient onomastics.

The manuscripts of the *Cynegetica* call the poet M(arcus) Aurelius Nemesianus.⁵⁷ That was clearly true also of the text Hincmar had read, since he refers to him as *Aurelii*.⁵⁸ The archetype of those manuscripts of the *Eclogues* which attribute the poems correctly seem to have called their author Aurelianus Nemesianus, Aurelianus an easy slip from Aurelius by dittography.⁵⁹ There is nothing in the rich tradition of Nemesianus’ work — direct or indirect — that suggests he had any other names but these.⁶⁰ Moreover, the names transmitted by the manuscripts of Nemesianus are entirely compatible with what we know otherwise of late antique onomastics and obviously authentic. Nemesianus — a *cognomen* derived from the Greek names Nemesis or Nemesios — is a rare but attested diacritic in the Latin-speaking regions of the Roman world.⁶¹ Given the poet’s association with Carthage, it is perhaps particularly interesting that the bishop of Thubunae in Numidia in the time of St Cyprian was one Nemesianus.⁶² He was still being commemorated as a martyr in the middle of the fourth century and is mentioned (indeed quoted) by St Augustine.⁶³ The *gentilicium* ‘Aurelius’, sometimes with its attendant *praenomen* ‘M(arcus)’, was extremely common in the later Roman empire, including in Africa.⁶⁴ That was because it had been widely taken by those whom the *constitutio Antoniniana* of A.D. 212 had enfranchised, to commemorate their benefactor,

⁵⁷ For Paris lat. 7561, see above, Section II. Paris lat. 4839 (f. 20r) has MAURELII MENESINI KATAGINENSIS / CYNEGETICON. Vienna 3261 (f. 48r) has M. AURELII NEMESIANI / CARTHAGINENSIS / CYNEGETICON (and a similar notice at the end of the poem).

⁵⁸ This, a *gentilicium*, would not on its own have been the correct way to refer to someone in Late Antiquity, but it does usefully confirm the testimony of the manuscripts.

⁵⁹ The transmission of Nemesianus’ *Eclogues*, separate from the *Cynegetica*, is complex and bound up with that of Calpurnius Siculus, to whom alone the second family of MSS attributes them (see Reeve 1983 — Paris lat. 17903 f. 74r attributes the extracts of the poems it contains to one Scalpurius, presumably a mangling of Calpurnius — ark:/12148/btv1b52500967c). The two extant manuscripts of the first family, however, Florence, BML plut. 90 inf.12 and Naples V.A.8, call the poet Aurelianus Nemesianus (see e.g. Williams 1986: 9–10). The lost manuscript, which Niccolo Angeli saw, belonging to Taddeo Ugoletto seems to have done the same (Volpilhac 1975: 34). The twelfth-century catalogue from Prüfening mentions *bucolica Aureliani* (Manitius 1935: 120). Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 59 (s. XV) has the curious title CALPHURNII POETAE AD NEMESIANUM / CARTHAGINENSEM BUCOLICA INCIPIT f. 4r (oai:www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl:96643, cf. f. 27r).

⁶⁰ Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana MS C.VII.1 (c. 1450) has the title T. Calphurnii Siculi et M. Aurelii Olympii Nemesiani *bucolica*, but it has been added in a later hand (Williams 1986: 17) and must derive from the HA itself.

⁶¹ OPEL III does not register the name, but see ILD 545, IDR 3.2.17; CIL 6.22899 (a restoration but plausible) and 15.7414. PLRE I yields two other Nemesiani, though on ‘Ausonius Nemesianus’, see the important corrections of Bagnall 1992. Foraboschi 1967–1971: 204–5 has eleven entries and LGPN two (both Athens in the third century), to which add *I.Thespies* 180, *I.Cos Segre EF* 136, OGIS 708 and two instances where the name is a very likely restoration (*I.Olympia* 480 and *IGLS* 5.2106). The suggestion of Verdière 1974: 2 that the name was assumed in honour of the Nemesiaci, a hunting fraternity dedicated to Nemesis and Diana, might charitably be called courageous.

⁶² Nemesianus of Thubunae: see Cyprian, *Ep.* 62, 70, 76, 77 and *Sententiae Episcoporum* 5 (CCSL 3E pp. 15–21, ed. Diercks). On him in general, see Clarke 1986: 281. Turner 1901: 602–6 is an interesting study of his Biblical text. Note also L. Aurelius Nemesianus, *vir egregius* and *procurator Augusti*, who restored some baths at Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana under Severus Alexander.

⁶³ For his commemoration as a martyr: CIL 8.20600 and MEFR 1890.440 of A.D. 359 (Mauretania Caesariensis). Augustine: *De baptismo* 6.12.19.

⁶⁴ Kracker and Scholz 2012 assemble some statistical evidence from inscriptions for the diffusion of different imperial *nomina* in different provinces. While in general showing that the onomastic impact of the *constitutio Antoniniana* was considerable, their figures suggest a significant divergence between the Greek-speaking regions of the Empire (where Aurelius is the most common *nomen*) and the Latin- (where Iulius tends to predominate). It must, however, be borne in mind that the epigraphic evidence is likely to significantly underrepresent poorer citizens (as Kracker and Scholz 2012: 68 acknowledge; cf. Lavan 2016: 7), so the proportion of Aurelii probably represents (at best) a lower bound. Their figures for Africa Proconsularis (including Numidia), where they find 12.4 per cent of those named in inscriptions are Aurelii (behind only Iulii and Flavii), are unfortunately unreliable. They are based (67 and n. 5) on *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (IRT = Reynolds and Ward

the emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla).⁶⁵ Generally, though of course not in every individual instance, the Aurelii were the ordinary inhabitants of the Roman Empire, the broad mass of the population who had not achieved Roman citizenship before the early third century.⁶⁶ It is likely that (say) Nemesianus' grandfather was one of those suddenly elevated in status by Caracalla. This would make the poet, with his aristocratic interest in the chase and his transparently sophisticated literary culture, an interesting example of the rise of these 'new Romans' and their descendants to positions of power and privilege.

There is no particular reason to sully this coherent picture on the testimony of the *HA* alone. Given that it is a text famous for its made-up names, the economical solution is that this too has simply been invented. To instead accept that Nemesianus had the name 'Olympius', there are two routes that we could take, neither of which has much to recommend it. One option, canvassed occasionally in the early modern period, is that it was a genuine additional family name of Nemesianus.⁶⁷ There are two major reasons to reject this. First, it is difficult to understand how it would have been omitted from an archetype that was formal enough to include the poet's *praenomen* (a rare item indeed by Late Antiquity).⁶⁸ Second, in Late Antiquity Olympius was a common diacritic, but only very rarely used as an additional (familial) name, perhaps precisely because it was so common and thus not usefully distinctive.⁶⁹ It seems unwise to accept something that is inherently unlikely because the *HA* claims it. The alternative explanation of Olympius, superficially more plausible and adopted by both *PIR*² and *PLRE* I, is to treat it as a *signum*.⁷⁰ *Signa* were nicknames (a category sometimes referred to as *supernomina*), ending in *-ius*, used fairly widely in the third and fourth centuries, generally in high-status and literary contexts.⁷¹ They could replace the diacritic: hence

Perkins 1952) and on the onomastic index to *Inscriptions latines de la Tunisie* (ILT = Merlin 1944) by Abdallah and Ladjimi Sebai 1983 — it is not clear from what Kracker and Scholz say whether they have used the index to the *Inscriptions latines d'Afrique* (ILAfr = Cagnat *et al.* 1923) published in the same volume (it seems unlikely given the very low number of individuals they find overall). *ILT*, however, offers only a selective re-edition of and supplement to *CIL* VIII and its various supplements (*ILAfr* publishes texts not included in those supplements): it is not a comprehensive or representative sample of North African inscriptions (hence why Kracker and Scholz 2012, table 2, found only 258 individuals epigraphically attested in the region, under half the number they find for Britain!). In Salway 1994: 134 and n. 59, the statement that Aurelii account for 23 per cent of the *nomina* in the Christian inscriptions of Rome and Carthage appears to be a misreading of Kajanto 1963: 16, where the figures relate only to Rome. The *nomen* Aurelius was certainly very common in North Africa and its distribution would repay further study, though that would require that the Christian inscriptions be taken properly into account.⁶⁵ See the brief but perspicacious summary of Salway 1994: 133–6 and the more substantial overviews by Buraselis 2007: 94–120; Rizakis 2011; Besson 2020: 75–104. The important paper by Blanco-Pérez 2016 is of particular significance for M. Aurelii as a third-century phenomenon.

⁶⁶ The social status of the Aurelii was demonstrated for Egypt, the region where we can most confidently be more than impressionistic, in two classic studies by Keenan 1973; 1974. In North Africa, their relatively humble position is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in the Timgad Album, which lists members of the city's council in the 360s, there are a mere four Aurelii amongst the 204 individuals who have a *gentilicium* and one of those is a cleric (Chastagnol 1978: 49, 53, 94). There were evidently not many local landowners with the name. For the view that the overwhelming majority of the Empire's inhabitants were not enfranchised before 212, see the compelling paper by Lavan 2016 (cf. Lavan 2019, showing the limited numerical impact of enfranchisement through military service).

⁶⁷ See Volpilhac 1975: 7–8, who was rightly sceptical.

⁶⁸ On the decline of *praenomina*, see Salomies 1987: 390–413.

⁶⁹ *PLRE* I registers 18 bearers of it, with only two individuals using it before their diacritic. Of these, Tamesius Olympius 'Augentius 1' is a slightly doubtful case, as the name *Olympii* is actually detached on the inscription (ILS 4269) that attests it. *OPEL* III.112 does not register it as a *nomen*.

⁷⁰ Though it has not often been noted, Olympius is an attested *signum*: Kajanto 1967: 86. In contrast to *PIR*², *PLRE* I does not explicitly register Olympius as Nemesianus' *signum*, but its placement of it after his diacritic indicates as much.

⁷¹ On *signa*, see Woudhuysen 2019 and the literature cited therein. The terminology is in some senses unsatisfactory. Later Romans used *signum* to indicate some additional names (mostly but by no means always

the writer called Firmianus, generally known to us by his *signum* Lactantius. They could also be combined with it as a dual name, and the order *signum* + diacritic is attested.⁷² While sometimes ubiquitous, they were often used only occasionally: L. Aurelius Avianus Symmachus, father of the famous orator, had the *signum* 'Phosphorius', but though he is unusually well attested, the nickname is known to us only from a single inscription.⁷³ The rather slippery nature of *signa* is perhaps why the idea of 'Olympius' Nemesianus has seemed plausible. To see why it should be rejected, we must briefly consider the way that the *HA* used names.

The *HA* is justly famous for its fraudulent inventiveness when it comes to onomastics, but focus on this has perhaps led to a neglect of the more prosaic but important subject of the way that it uses names.⁷⁴ This is not the place for a comprehensive investigation: this would be a major work in itself, and one complicated by the fact that so many of the individuals named are invented. Nevertheless, a few important onomastic habits of the *HA* can usefully be picked out, seen most clearly when set against what was otherwise standard practice. Most Latin historians of the fourth century referred to the vast majority of individuals by a single name, their diacritic. They particularly avoided referring to figures of the third and fourth centuries by more than one name, though they were slightly looser with those of earlier periods, perhaps because polyonymy had an antique flavour. They were especially parsimonious with the (to them) traditional combination of *gentilicium* and *cognomen*, usual in the works of Tacitus or the letters of Pliny (for example).⁷⁵ In the *Res Gestae*, more than 90 per cent of the men named by Ammianus are given only a single name: of the remainder, a considerable proportion are figures of Roman antiquity, whose (usually) dual names were hallowed by long usage.⁷⁶ Amongst actors in the narrative, the majority of those referred to by two names receive a diacritic and a nickname.⁷⁷ Only a handful are identified by *gentilicium* and *cognomen*, and Ammianus had a partiality (perhaps rhythmical) for reversing their usual order.⁷⁸ Ammianus was an idiosyncratic author, but in his use of names he was remarkably ordinary. Festus shows a very similar pattern in his account of the Roman Empire's dealings with the Parthians and Persians (*Breviarium* 19–29). He names 33 individuals: only six of these (18 per cent), none later than the early third century, have more than one name and only two of those are referred to by a

ending *-ius*), but most of what we now think of as *signa* are not introduced by any formula at all, nor is there much explicit evidence for what they were called. Yet *supernomina* terminating in *-ius* are a clearly visible category in our evidence (see Kajanto 1967, 52–4).

⁷² Woudhuysen 2019: 851–2.

⁷³ PLRE I 'Symmachus 3'. The inscription is ILS 1275. In contrast, the praetorian prefect of the 360s Saturninius Secundus *signo* Salutius is more often called Salutius than Secundus by the sources (PLRE I 'Secundus 3').

⁷⁴ For 'bogus names', see, canonically, Syme 1966. As Burgersdijk 2016 has already noted, an *onomasticon* of the bogus names in the *HA* is a major desideratum — the closest work that currently exists is Domaszewski 1918, which deserves to be taken more seriously than it perhaps has, but is now seriously dated.

⁷⁵ Steele 1918: 113 says that for the 700 or so men for whom Tacitus offers a double name, about two-thirds are referred to by *gentilicium* and *cognomen*. Browsing in the very useful *onomasticon* by Fabia 1900 confirms the general point. Pliny: Vidman 1981; Birley 2000: 21–34 and the 'Index of Persons and Deities'.

⁷⁶ The figure is from Steele 1918: 114: the only detailed consideration of the matter.

⁷⁷ Mostly introduced by some form of *cognomentum*: Demetrius Cythras (19.12.2); Eusebius Mattycopa (15.5.4); Eusebius Pittacas (14.5.18); Gratianus Funarius (30.7.2); Paulus Catena (14.5.8; 15.3.4; 22.3.11); Petrus Valvomeres (15.7.4). In contrast, *signa* are generally not signalled by Ammianus: C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus is always referred to by his *signum* Lampadius (15.5.4, 27.3.5, 28.1.6); Saturninius Secundus *signo* Salutius is only once Secundus Salutius (22.3.1, otherwise plain Salutius); Q. Flavius Maesius Egnatius Lollianus *signo* Mavortius is once Lollianus (15.8.17) and once Mavortius (16.8.5), without any indication these are references to the same person.

⁷⁸ Aradius Rufinus (23.1.4, Rufinus Aradius); Vulcaci Rufinus (27.7.2, 27.11.1, cf. 21.12.24, Rufinus Vulcaci); Tarracius Bassus (28.1.7). See also Rusticus Iulianus (27.6.1). The reversal may also speak to the influence of Tacitus, who occasionally did the same (Goodyear 1972: 148). In general, on the phenomenon of *cognomen* + *nomen*, see Shackleton Bailey 1965: 402–3.

gentilicium and *cognomen*.⁷⁹ There is a similar pattern in the tenth book of Eutropius' *breviarium*, which covers 305–364. There are twenty-seven named individuals in the book. Of these, only three (11 per cent) have more than one name, only one of those is contemporary with the events described, and only one (much earlier) individual is given a *gentilicium*.⁸⁰

These were not habits that had suddenly emerged in the middle of the fourth century and thus likely to be avoided by any conscientious forger seeking to pretend their work was written in the era of Diocletian and Constantine. Our largest *corpora* of secular Latin prose from that period are to be found in the *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus and the nine contemporary speeches of the *Panegyrici Latini*.⁸¹ Firmicus mentions some forty-five historical individuals in the course of his lengthy astrological treatise.⁸² Of these, only two are referred to by more than one name: Germanicus appears as Julius Caesar and Cicero is called Marcus Tullius.⁸³ Firmicus always refers to contemporaries by a single name, even when he varies which of their names he chooses: his patron, for example, is either Mavortius (his *signum*) or Lollianus (his diacritic), but never both together.⁸⁴ The *Panegyrici* name some forty individuals from Roman history.⁸⁵ Of these, a mere five (12.5 per cent) receive more than one name: none of those five is later than the first century B.C. and only two of them are given a *gentilicium*.⁸⁶ We are not exactly over-endowed with Latin historiography from this period, but we do have Lactantius' *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* (c. 315). Lactantius was interested in names, sensitive (for instance) to the fact that Diocletian had changed his (9.11). Yet, while he names some thirty-nine individuals in his narrative, only two (5 per cent) can really be said to receive more than one name: Tiberius Caesar (2.1, the *praenomen* is written out in full in the only manuscript) and *Maximianus qui est dictus Herculus* (8.1). Lactantius even curtly refers to Tarquinius Superbus as 'Superbus' (28.4). Clearly, the diacritic system was already well established for Latin authors of the late third and early fourth centuries.

In contrast to all this, the *HA* delighted in multiple names and especially in fathering them on (putatively) contemporary figures. In the *Quadrige Tyrannorum*, for example, it names some fifty-seven individuals. This is one of the shorter lives (c. 2,300 words) and gives some flavour of the sheer number of named individuals that the text flings at its readers (contrast Lactantius' sparseness in the c. 11,000 words of the *DMP*). Of

⁷⁹ This section of the work was chosen because it is Festus' only sustained narrative of post-republican history in the *Breviarium*. 19: Octavian Caesar Augustus (*bis*, once Augustus Caesar) and Claudius Caesar (*bis*); 21: *Antonini duo, Marcus et Verus*; *Antoninus, cognomento Caracalla*; 22: Aurelius Alexander.

⁸⁰ 10.2.3: Maximianus Herculus (a *signum*), cf. 10.3.1: *Herculus tamen Maximianus*; 10.16.5: Marcus Antoninus; 10.17.2: Pontius Telesinus (the Samnite leader).

⁸¹ For the *Mathesis*, see Kroll *et al.* 1897–1913. The *Panegyrici* were edited by Mynors 1964. Both editions have helpful *indices nominum*.

⁸² The nature of the work — and indeed of the genre into which it falls — leaves any judgement about which figures are historical open to question (we have, e.g., excluded Nechepso and Petosiris), but a different arrangement would not alter the conclusions here.

⁸³ Julius Caesar and Marcus Tullius both appear in *Math.* 2.praef.2. The hero of the Trojan war is called 'Paris Alexander' (6.30.12). Firmicus' later and shorter *De errore* features no dual names at all.

⁸⁴ Mavortius: 1.proem.1, 6, 5.praef.1, 1.1, 7.1, 6.1.1, 1.10, 22.1, 28.2, 31.26, 37, 32.1, 33.1, 40.1, 7.1.2, 26.12, 8.1.1, 6, 4.14. Lollianus: 1.proem.8, 3.3, 10.1, 15, 2.29.20, 3.proem.2, 4.proem.3, 5.1.38. It is rather striking that (outside the first book, where both are found), Lollianus predominates in the earlier books and Mavortius in the later. On the relationship between Firmicus and Mavortius, see Woudhuysen 2018.

⁸⁵ They include the names of many mythical figures and divinities as well, invariably referred to by a single name. Our count of thirty-nine includes (e.g.) Perseus, the king of Macedonia, but not (for instance) Romulus or Remus.

⁸⁶ Julius Caesar is named as C. Caesar at *Pan. Lat.* 12.6.1. Fulvius Nobilior (the victor over the Aetolians in 189 B.C.: see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994: 159 and n. 1) appears as *Fulvius ille nobilior* at 9.7.3, Q. Maximus (Cunctator) at 12.15.5. Pompey the great appears as *Pompeiumque Magnum* at 7.5.2 and Cn. Pompeius at 12.8.1. Scipio Africanus the elder is P. Scipio at 7.13.5 and 10.8.1.

these, twelve (21 per cent) have more than one name.⁸⁷ The majority of those (eight) are made out to be contemporary with the author or with the events narrated: they are mostly putative sources or informants.⁸⁸ Most (nine) of those referred to by more than one name have a *gentilicium*. In fact, the *HA*'s author was something of a *connoisseur* of *gentilicia*, deploying some very rare ones indeed: Aurunculeius, Larcius, Masticus, Verconius.⁸⁹ All this suggests that when confronted by the need to invent figures, his usual practice was to give them a *gentilicium* and a *cognomen*.⁹⁰ This is obvious, for example, from the names of the six *scriptores* to whom the lives are attributed: Aelius Spartianus, Iulius Capitolinus, Vulcaci Gallicanus, Aelius Lampridius, Trebellius Pollio and Flavius Vopiscus.⁹¹ So, confronted by the 'Olympius Nemesianus', our default assumption ought to be that the name is supposed to mirror the usual pattern of *nomen* + *cognomen*, just as the invented Aurelius Apollinaris in the same passage does, than which it is no more authentic. Nothing licenses us to make the rationalising assumption that this just happens to be a disguised *signum*.

In fact, we can go somewhat further than this. Rather unsurprisingly, the *HA* had a fondness for nicknames. Yet its author did not generally introduce them to the reader without some flourish (where was the fun in that?). Instead, he tended explicitly to signal that they were nicknames, by using some formula: *cognomine*, *appellatus est*, *cognominatus*, *cognomento*, etc.⁹² He also delighted in offering (sometimes elaborate) explanations for them. So, we

⁸⁷ *HA*, *Quadrige Tyrannorum* 1.1: Suetonius Tranquillus, Marius Maximus; 1.3: Trebellius Pollio; 2.1: Marcus Fonteius, Rufius Celsus, Ceionius Iulianus, Fabius Sossianus, Severus Archontius; 6.2: Aurelius Festus; 6.4: Titus Annius Milo; 10.4: Marcus Salvidienus; 15.6: Gallonius Avitus.

⁸⁸ Only Suetonius, Milo and (murkily) Marius Maximus are clearly not.

⁸⁹ *Commodus* 7.5: Larcius Eurupianus. *Severus* 13.1: Masticus Fabianus and Aurunculeius Cornelianus. *Alexander Severus* 35.5: Verconius Turinus. *OPEL* lists three instances of Aurunculeius (I.105) and seven of Larcius (III.19). It has no entry for Masticus or Verconius (though see IV.157 for Verconius, cf. *Aurelianus* 44.2 for Verconius Herennianus), but see *MEFR* 1897.446 for a C. Masticus Saturninus, *CIL* 5.7222 for a Verconi(a) Segia, and *CIL* 11.884 for a Q. Verconius Agatho. On occasion, the *HA* referred to individuals by their *gentilicium* alone: Julia Domna is called 'Iulia' throughout; the Articuleius of *Hadrianus* 3.1 is Q. Articuleius Paetus cos. 101; the Fulvius of *Pescennius Niger* 6.2 is Fulvius Plautianus (elsewhere called Plautianus — *Severus* 6.10, describing the same events, 14.5, 7–8, 15.4; *Caracalla* 1.7; *Geta* 4.4; *Heliogabalus* 8.6); the Tigidius of *Commodus* 4.7 is Sextus Tigidius Perennis and is otherwise called Perennis (5.1, 2, 3, 6, 6.1, 2).

⁹⁰ cf. Domaszewski 1918: 4: 'In zweistelligen Namen hielt er es für unerlässlich, daß der erste Name auf ius, ia endete'.

⁹¹ In P, one *explicit* gives Aelius Lampridius the *praenomen* L(ucius) (f. 118v). Hohl signals this in his *apparatus*, but earlier editions did not generally include the *explicit*s — perhaps for this reason, the *praenomen* seems never to have attracted scholarly attention. Lampridius was a rare *gentilicium* (*OPEL* III.18 cites *CIL* 3.4370; add M. Lampridius Scaurus and his son L. Lampridius Scaurus from *CIL* 9.3100), but by the later fourth century was being used as a diacritic (*PLRE* II: 656–7 registers two Lampridii). Spartianus is a very rare name, but an estate that features in the Heroninos archive in the middle of the third century A.D. (on which see Rathbone 1991) had once belonged to someone who bore it: *P. Bingen* 111, *P. Flor.* 2.254, *P. Prag.* 1.116, 3.240, *SB* 6.9409 (5), 14.12054, 16.12381 (*P. Col.* 10.255 shows that it had existed since at least the second century). It is also a very likely restoration in *P. Petra* 5.60 (dated A.D. 530–600) and we might note too the [Στ]αρτεῖνα of *IG* XIV 339 and the Spartiatius of *CJ* 12.49.12 (the *Spartianorum princeps* in the Old Latin translation of 1 Maccabees 14.20 is also interesting). That Spartianus is an otherwise attested name suggests that efforts to emend it to Speratianus (most recently Baker 2014: 6) are misguided, especially considering that the hypothetical error presupposed by the emendation would have had to occur multiple times independently. *Syracusius*, which is found after the name of Vopiscus in one of the rubrics of P (f. 180v) is not a name, but rather a rare ethnic (cf. e.g. Cic., *Brut.* 66, *de Or.* 2.57; *Vitr.* 9.8.1). Vopiscus had of course begun as a *praenomen*, but by the early empire was being used as a *cognomen*, as e.g. by the ordinary consul of 114 P. Manilius P.F. Gal. Vopiscus Vicinillianus L. Elfurius Severus Iulius Quadratus Bassus, the P. Manilius Vopiscus of consular dates (Salomies 1992: 138–9). The names of the *scriptores* have been much discussed, but largely as an index of the author's capacity to pun or allude (e.g. Domaszewski 1918: 11–13; see Thomson 2012: 29–36 for a useful survey). They have received less attention as *names* (an exception is the very brief coverage in Lippold 1999: 155).

⁹² *Cognomine*: e.g. *Aelius* 6.9 (Pius). *Appellatus est*: e.g. *Heliogabalus* 17.5 (*Tiberinus et Tractatitius et Inpurus*). *Cognominatus*: e.g. *Antoninus Pius* 2.3 (Pius). *Cognomento*: e.g. *Gallieni duo* 2.4 (Thessalicus).

learn that Gordian I was nicknamed 'Africanus' not because he was proclaimed emperor in Africa, but because he was descended from the Scipios. The *HA*'s author further informs us that 'in very many books' he has found that Gordian and his son were also both nicknamed Antoninus or Antonius.⁹³ We get similarly elaborate explanations for why Antoninus was 'Pius', why Septimius Severus was nicknamed Pertinax, and why Aurelian mockingly suggested the Senate call him *carpisculum*, amongst many other instances.⁹⁴

Signa were, of course, a kind of nickname and crucially the *HA*'s author showed exactly the same desire to highlight and explain them as he did for other sorts of *supernomina*.⁹⁵ In fact, the *HA* provides one of our very few explicit ancient discussions of how someone gained their *signum*, in its account of the reign of Commodus:

Menses quoque in honorem eius pro Augusto Commodum, pro Septembri Herculem, pro Octobri Invictum, pro Novembri Exsuperatorium, pro Decembri Amazonium ex signo ipsius adulescentes vocabant. Amazonius autem vocatus est ex amore concubinae suae Marciae, quam pictam in Amazone diligebat, propter quam et ipse Amazonico habitu in harenam Romanam procedere voluit.⁹⁶

His flatterers even renamed the months in his honour: 'Commodus' for August, 'Hercules' for September, 'Invictus' for October, 'Exsuperatorius' for November, 'Amazonius' for December, from his *signum*. He was called Amazonius, moreover, due to his love of his concubine Marcia, whom he delighted to see painted as an Amazon and on whose behalf he himself wanted to enter the arena at Rome in the dress of an Amazon.

The *HA*'s author did not understand *signum* narrowly to be a nickname in *-ius* (as we would generally define it today).⁹⁷ He refers, for instance, to the emperor Aurelian as receiving in his army days the *signum* of *manu ad ferrum* to distinguish him from another tribune, also called Aurelian.⁹⁸ He also says that 'Antoninus' was the *verum signum* of the emperor Antoninus Pius, by which he must mean his 'real name'.⁹⁹ Yet the passage shows very clearly that what we would call a *signum* was not something to be introduced without some fanfare. The (very few) possible *signa* in the *HA* are all either brought up in discussions of nicknames, or explicitly marked as such.¹⁰⁰ So, we are told that Lucius Verus had on his staff an actor called Agrippus, *cui cognomentum*

⁹³ *Gordiani tres* 9.3–5.

⁹⁴ *Hadrianus* 24.3–4; *Severus* 17.6; *Aurelianus* 30.4–5.

⁹⁵ Like much else in the *HA*'s use of names, this is in contrast to other Latin historical texts: Ammianus and Eutropius (see above) both use *signa* without much indication that they are nicknames.

⁹⁶ *Commodus* 11.8–9, cf. *Clodius Albinus* 2.4.

⁹⁷ See Kajanto 1967: 52–3.

⁹⁸ *Aurelianus* 6.2.

⁹⁹ *Pescennius Niger* 8.5, cf. *Gordiani Tres* 4.8 (though we might understand Antoninus to be a nickname of the Gordian in question).

¹⁰⁰ e.g. *paenularius* in *Diadumenus* 2.8 (in a discussion of nicknames). Single names ending in *-ius* in the *HA*, which might be thought *signa*, are mostly attested elsewhere as names, usually Greek or *gentilicia* (which, as noted above, n. 89, the *HA* did occasionally use in isolation). A sample of the more interesting: Acholius (*Alexander Severus* 14.6, 48.7, 64.5; *Aurelianus* 12.3; a Greek name: *LGP*N lists five instances); Antistius (*Aurelianus* 50.3, a *nomen*: *OPEL* I.60); Cecropius (*Gallieni duo* 14.4, 7, 9; *Probus* 22.3; Cecropia is registered once as a *cognomen* by *OPEL* II.46, but add a Cecropius in *CIL* 6.30839; a Cecropius was bishop of Nicomedia in the middle of the fourth century, Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 75.1, and another, bishop of Sebastopolis, attended the council of Chalcedon in 451); Cordius (*Heliogabalus* 6.3, 12.1, 15.2; a *nomen*, but attested as a *cognomen*: *OPEL* II.75); Encolpius (*Alexander Severus* 17.1, 48.7; *OPEL* II.117 lists only one instance but add *CIL* 6.30810, 15963, 16588, 17159, 18048, 22951, 37322, 11.7249, 12.242; many for slaves or freedmen); Eugamius (*Maximini duo* 27.5, identified as a Greek rhetor, *LGP*N registers three women with the name Eugamia); Theoclius (*Aurelianus* 6.4; not attested but Theocles was a very common Greek name, with 191 instances in the *LGP*N); Toxotius (*Maximini Duo* 27.6, perhaps inspired by the senatorial Toxotii of the fourth century: *PLRE* I: 921); Tynchanius (*Gordiani tres* 14.7; a Tynchanius who was bishop of Apollonias featured prominently in the council of Chalcedon). Palfuerius, the Isaurian brigand (*Probus* 16.4) is

erat Memfi, informed that Clodius Albinus was nicknamed Porfyrius by his nurse because he was swaddled in purple, and introduced to Aurelius Victor, *cui Pinio cognomen erat*.¹⁰¹ In other words, were the *HA* trying to lumber Nemesianus with the *signum* Olympius, everything about its practice elsewhere suggests that it would tell us that was what it was doing, not leave us to work it out. We can conclude, with considerable confidence, that the *HA*'s 'Olympius Nemesianus' is not actually meant to be a genuine reference to M. Aurelius Nemesianus. Perhaps the name was just a weak pun, inspired by that more famous competition at Olympia, on the idea of Nemerian's poetic contests? In any case, if Olympius is not actually part of the historical Nemesianus' name, there is even more reason to suppose that KYNHΓETIKA is an interloper in the text.

IV SCHOLIA

There is one final piece to this onomastic puzzle. Anyone who consults *PLRE* I or *PIR*² will be told that Nemesianus is referred to as Olympius in the ancient *scholia* to Statius' *Thebaid*. At first sight, this seems powerful supporting evidence for the *HA*, one reason (perhaps) why scholars have generally taken the text at its word. In fact, however, this is a remarkable example of the durability of misguided early modern ideas. The *scholia* do not refer to Nemesianus by name. In a comment on *Thebaid* 5.388–9, they quote a poet called Olympius:

AB IUNCTIS ergo ὕφ' ἔν noli accipere. OPERTA autem pinus pellibus, ut mos est. ABIUNCTIS quidam ὕφ' ἔν legunt: divisis. Sic in Olympio: 'abiungere luna iunices'.¹⁰²

FROM THE CONNECTED [AB IUNCTIS]: do not understand this as a single word. The pine COVERED also with skins, as is the custom. Some read UNYOKED [ABIUNCTIS]: meaning divided. Olympius uses it so: 'to unyoke the young cows from the moon'.¹⁰³

There is absolutely no reason to associate this half-line with Nemesianus: it does not appear in his poetry, does not relate to themes that he discussed, and is not attributed to him by the text. It is the work of some unknown poet called Olympius, which was (as

a rare exception to this broad trend, but is clearly not a *signum*. One Cecropius is also identified as Ceronius (*Gallieni duo* 14.4) a name for which there is no parallel. Domaszewski 1918: 138 identified (besides Toxotius and Eugamius) four *signa*: Severus Archontius (*Quadriga Tyrannorum* 2.1), Claudius Eusthenius (*Carus* 18.5), Aelius Xifidius (*Aurelianus* 12.1), and Zosimio (*Claudius* 14.2). Zosimio is a well-attested Greek name (*LGPN* lists 16 instances of Ζωσιμίων). Aelius Xifidius is an editorial restoration for P's deeply corrupt *aelioxi fidio* (Hohl's apparatus is completely misleading on this point) (*cf.* also the Xifidius listed as a consul in the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, ed. Schöne 1866–1875: 1.227). There is a Eusthenius (which does not seem to be a *signum*) in the *Carmina XII sapientum*, argued by Friedrich 2002 to be of Tetrarchic date (Gregory of Tours also had a niece with the name: *PLRE* III 'Eusthenia'). Isidore of Pelusium's *Ep.* 1247 is addressed to a priest called Archontius (*cf.* 1807, to the children of Archontius), one Archontius was a subdeacon at Angers in the middle of the fifth century (see the letter of Lupus and Eufronius, *CCSL* 148 p. 140, ed. Munier), and the name occurs in two fifth-century inscriptions (*ICUR* N.S. 8.20819, another Gaul, and *AE* 1975 411b).

¹⁰¹ *Verus* 8.10; *Clodius Albinus* 4.9; *Macrinus* 4.1. In the case of Victor, the nickname is *Pinius*, since in the formula *cui cognomen erat*, the name is almost always in the dative: Livy 2.33.5, 3.12.8, 4.13.6, 23.34.16, 23.37.10, 23.39.3, 26.8.2, 26.39.15, (25.28.5 is a rare exception, but the nickname, for one Epicyles, is presumably Greek); Plin., *HN* 7.143; Suet., *Iul.* 59.1, *Claud.* 26.1; Val. Max. 1.5.9, 5.4.7; Verg., *Aen.* 1.267, 9.593. In *Tyranni Triginta* 8.3, Mamurius and Veturius are nicknames, but derived from Mamurius Veturius, the legendary smith.

¹⁰² The text is from Sweeney 1997, with some minor changes to orthography.

¹⁰³ The precise translation of this entry is not perspicacious, but the key point seems clear enough. The personified moon is shown driving a chariot pulled by heifers on the Parabiago Plate, *cf.* Auson., *Epist.* 15.3, 17.3 (*iuvencae*), Claud., *De raptu Pros.* 3.403 (*iuvenici*). The passage is not cited by the *TLL s.v.* 'luna' (7.2.1829.40–1837.34 (Maltby and Flury)), but does appear in 'iuvenix', without much explanation of what is going on (7.2.740.38–55 (Quadlbauer)).

we have seen) a common enough name. Similarly, in a comment on *Thebaid* 2.58, the *scholia* cite a poet called Olympus:

MEDIAEQUE S(ILENTIA) L(UNAE) philosophi lunam terram <aetheriam> esse dicunt, quae circa nostrum hoc solum circulo altiore suspensa est. Haec autem omnia corpora maiora gignit, utpote quae vicina sit caelo. Poetae denique omnes asserunt leonem de his polis ortum, quem Hercules prostravit, ut etiam Olympus ait.

THE SILENCE OF THE MIDDLE MOON the philosophers say that the moon is a <heavenly> body, which has been hung up on a loftier orbit around this our earth.¹⁰⁴ This moreover gives birth to all the greater bodies, namely those which are next to the sky. All the poets allege that the lion, which Hercules defeated, sprang from these heavens, as also Olympus says.

Once again, the origin of the Nemean lion is not a subject mentioned by Nemesianus, is not obviously relevant to the themes of his poetry, and is not here ascribed to him, or indeed even to ‘Olympius’. Modern editors generally insert an *i* into the name Olympus, but there is no particular reason so to do. While seemingly not so common as Olympius in Late Antiquity, Olympus is a very well-attested name in its own right.¹⁰⁵ Given that these are two references in the same set of *scholia*, both seemingly related to heavenly bodies, it might make sense to assume that they are references to the same poet, but there is no particular reason to favour Olympius over Olympus as the name of this presumably late antique author.¹⁰⁶

To understand why these two references have become part of the story of Nemesianus, we have to turn to the first volume of Johann Christian Wernsdorf’s *Poetae Latini Minores*, published at Altenburg in 1780.¹⁰⁷ This was principally taken up with the *Cynegetica* of Grattius and Nemesianus, extensively annotated, but also offered a selection of other works with a field-sports theme, and some short essays on points raised by them. Among the *testimonia* for Nemesianus, Wernsdorf printed the *scholion* to Statius, *Thebaid* 5.389.¹⁰⁸ His reasoning, as he explained, was that no other poet called Olympius was known from antiquity. He also silently assimilated the Olympus of the *scholia* to this composite figure: the source of the emendation in modern editions.¹⁰⁹ The identification of Olympius as Nemesianus, while obviously weakly grounded, is not so surprising in an era before Dessau, when the *HA* was still mostly taken to be more or less what it claimed.¹¹⁰ Wernsdorf, however, had a more daring aim than simply to ascribe another fragment to Nemesianus. In a substantial preface, he proceeded to argue on the basis of the *scholia* that Nemesianus was also the author of the *Laus Herculis* (*LH*), a late antique poem attributed to Claudian in the only surviving manuscript (of the eighth century).¹¹¹ The *Laus Herculis*, Wernsdorf suggested, was really a panegyric of the emperor Maximian, colleague of Diocletian, who was closely associated with Hercules.¹¹² As he explained, when he first noted the *scholion* about the Nemean lion, he began to hunt for parallels. This led him to the *Laus Herculis*, which says that the Cretan Bull came from the moon. He acknowledged that this was not the same

¹⁰⁴ Shackleton Bailey 2004: 99 translates *mediae* ‘full’ (as in a full moon), but the scholiast seems to understand it as a comment on its position in the heavens.

¹⁰⁵ *LGPN* registers 129 instances. *PLRE* I: 647–8 lists four individuals while *OPEL* III.112 has 16.

¹⁰⁶ These lines are not included in Courtney 1993.

¹⁰⁷ Wernsdorf 1780.

¹⁰⁸ Wernsdorf 1780: 86.

¹⁰⁹ As Wernsdorf 1780: 276 shows, his text did indeed read ‘Olympus’ and the change was conscious.

¹¹⁰ As Gibbon famously did, though his credulity has perhaps sometimes been overstated: the advertisement to volume I (Womersley 1994, I.5) already betrays some anxiety about the *scriptores*.

¹¹¹ Wernsdorf 1780: 275–82. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare CLXIII (150) (CLA 4.516). The poem is edited, with a very substantial introduction and commentary, in Guex 2000.

¹¹² Wernsdorf 1780: 280–1.

thing, but suggested that the *scholiast* wished to include Olympius as the poet who in particular had treated the labours of Hercules.¹¹³ Hence Olympius was the author of the *Laus Herculis*. That Olympius and Nemesianus were one and the same he deduced from some stylistic parallels between the *Cynegetica* and the *Laus Herculis*.¹¹⁴ From there he attempted to squeeze some biographical details from the *LH*, which he suggested were entirely compatible with what we know of Nemesianus.¹¹⁵

This is an argument of considerable ingenuity and is made with gusto, but it is also plainly wrong. Leave to one side the question of the *HA*'s reliability, and ignore the silent assimilation of Olympius and Olympus: Wernsdorf's theory is simply incompatible with the text of the *scholion* on *Thebaid* 2.58, the whole point of which is that Olympus had said that the Nemean lion came from the moon, something the *LH* conspicuously does not mention.¹¹⁶ There is, moreover, nothing remotely like the quotation in the *scholion* on 5.388–9 to be found in the *Laus Herculis*, so one has to posit that the *scholiast* had access to a different lost poem by Olympius, on a similar astronomical theme. The stylistic parallels invoked by Wernsdorf are barely worthy of the name: one of them is that both poets claim inspiration from the Castalian Spring.¹¹⁷ As Volpilhac also pointed out in the 1970s when there was an attempt to revive the theory, the author of the *LH* takes some liberties with quantities which are unthinkable in Nemesianus and difficult to imagine even in the considerably later Claudian.¹¹⁸ For these reasons (and others, no doubt), Wernsdorf's theory appears to have been very largely ignored by scholars of the *Laus Herculis*.¹¹⁹ They tend to locate the poem at some point after Claudian in the fifth or perhaps sixth century, without much certainty as to the precise date.¹²⁰ Yet, in spite of this, for some reason the idea that the *scholia* to Statius relate to Nemesianus has stumbled on.¹²¹ It is past time that it was put to rest.

V BOGUS AUTHORS

Hence, there is nothing that we can learn about our Nemesianus from the *HA*. Instead, the evidence suggests that the activity of the poet M. Aurelius Nemesianus in the time of Carus and his sons inspired the author of the *HA* to fabricate a *Doppelgänger*, Olympius Nemesianus. And this is hardly surprising: Nemesianus was an author widely read in Late Antiquity.¹²² A complete survey of his reception would be a major task in itself, but a few examples can give a sense of his popularity.¹²³ In his account of Carus and his sons (written c. 360), the historian Aurelius Victor describes how the father was made Augustus and Carinus and Numerian were 'clothed in the raiment of emperors (*augusto habitu*)'.¹²⁴ This rather awkward periphrasis is almost without parallel in

¹¹³ Wernsdorf 1780: 276.

¹¹⁴ Wernsdorf 1780: 277.

¹¹⁵ Wernsdorf 1780: 278–82.

¹¹⁶ The poem does mention the lion, l. 75.

¹¹⁷ Wernsdorf 1780: 277.

¹¹⁸ Volpilhac 1975: 13 and n. 1; Verdière 1974: 36–46 had returned to Wernsdorf's theory. On quantities, see further Guex 2000: 60–3.

¹¹⁹ See Guex 2000: 82–3.

¹²⁰ Guex 2000: 66–9, endorsed by Dewar in his review (2006).

¹²¹ It survived even the scepticism of Lenz 1935: 2334, though one can tell that the *scholia* made him uneasy.

¹²² There is a useful overview in Smolak 1993: 360. For his medieval reception, see e.g. Mustard 1916.

¹²³ For the *Eclogues*, Schenkl's edition (1885) offers a very extensive *apparatus* of parallels. Not all of these are convincing, but they give some sense both of the allusivity of Nemesianus' verse and the richness of his reception. The same can be said of the even richer collection in Korzeniewski 1976. For the *Cynegetica*, the commentary by Jakobi 2014 assembles many interesting possible borrowings.

¹²⁴ *De Caesaribus* 38.1.

Latin. Almost, because the one other place it occurs is in Nemesianus (*Cyn.* 80–1), who fancies that he can already see the ‘imperial raiment’ (*augustus habitus*) of the brothers. The rarity of phrasing and the context strongly suggest that Victor was consciously alluding to Nemesianus here. A few decades later, Ausonius quoted *Cynegetica* 268 in his *Gratiarum actio* (14.65).¹²⁵ Further allusions to the same work can be found in the poet Avienius, in Claudian and in Dracontius.¹²⁶ The *Eclogues* were also popular: known to the authors of the *Carmen contra Paganos* and the *Einsiedeln Eclogues*.¹²⁷ A line from one of them was even used in a Christian epitaph from Rome, of the fourth or fifth century.¹²⁸

There was a fair chance that any educated reader who came across the alleged poetic rivals of the emperor Numerian would feel a flicker of recognition at the name Nemesianus. Perhaps that was the point. The *HA* is crowded with ‘bogus’ authors, but when they are put under the microscope, they often transpire to have a ‘fake but accurate’ feel to them. The works cited or the names given are slightly wrong, but at least some of the core details, most often the rough date, are plausible. We can even sort the bogus authors into two general categories. In the first, we might put those who are indeed real authors, but to whom the *HA* attributes fake works. Examples include Gargilius Martialis, who may well have lived at the time of Alexander Severus, but actually wrote on horticulture; and Phlegon of Tralles who was a freedman of Hadrian and did write historical works, but whom the *HA* claims (almost certainly falsely) transmitted the letter of Hadrian that it reproduces.¹²⁹ In the second category, we might put bogus authors whose names are redolent of actual literary figures, but themselves invented: the historian Onesimus, for example, is very close to the name of the sophist Onasimus; and the Aurelius Victor, *cui Pinio cognomen erat*, mentioned above shares the first two names with the actual historian Aurelius Victor (since the chronological conceit means that he cannot actually refer to Victor, who was probably born c. 310–20). A particularly striking example is Suetonius Optatianus, a supposed writer of

¹²⁵ Nemesianus: *Verbera sunt praecepta fugae, sunt verbera freni* vs Ausonius: *mirabamur poetam, qui infrenos dixerat Numidias* [cf. Verg., *Aen.* 4.41] *et alterum* [i.e. Nemesianus], *qui ita collegerat, ut diceret in equitando verbera et praecepta esse fugae et praecepta sistendi*.

¹²⁶ Avienius: compare *Descriptio orbis terrae* 478, *tumet illic ardua Calpe* with Nemesianus, *Cyn.* 251, *Quin etiam gens ampla iacet trans ardua Calpes* (cf. Jakobi 2014: 147, who also, 59, suggests a connection between *Cyn.* 4 and Avienius, *Phaen.* 76, which is rather weaker). Jakobi 2014: 81–2 argues for the influence of *Cyn.* 58–62 on the prologue to Claudian’s *De raptu Proserpinae*; some of the other examples of Nemesianus’ influence on the later poet that he offers (90, 91, 127) are somewhat more persuasive. The best (cf. Jakobi 2014: 131) is perhaps *Cyn.* 204 *Quod seu caelesti corrupto sidere manat* vs Claudian, *De Bello Gildonico* 39–40, *Quid referam morbiue luem tumulosve repletos / stragibus et crebras corrupto sidere mortes*: no other poet seems to refer to a *sidus corruptum*. Dracontius: compare *Cyn.* 135–6, *Quis nondum gressus stabiles neque lumina passa / luciferum videre iubar* and Dracontius, *De laudibus dei* 1.421–2, *ast ubi purpureo surgentem ex aequores cernunt / luciferum vibrare iubar flammisque ciere* (cf. Jakobi 2014: 111) and *Cyn.* 292, *culmosque armarit aristis* with Dracontius, *Romulea* 3.6, *culmosque armarit aristis* (Jakobi 2014: 163).

¹²⁷ Compare *Carmen contra Paganos* 1–8 on the pagan gods with *Eclogues* 2.20–24, noting in particular *colitis* and *dicite* (sexual misconduct features in both). On the *Carmen*, see Cameron 2011: 273–319, who argues compellingly that the poem was written by Pope Damasus in 384 and that its target was Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. On the use of Nemesianus in the *Einsiedeln Eclogues*, see Stover 2015: 299. It is curious that both the *Carmen* (103) and the *Eclogues* (2.37) imitate the same line in Nemesianus (4.54).

¹²⁸ *ICUR* 7.17962 = *ILCV* 3431, *sidereasq(ue) colunt sedes mundoq(ue) fruuntur* = Nemesianus, *Eclogues* 1.40. Note also that *tu decus omne tuis* is from Verg., *Ecl.* 5.34. Assuming that the fragmentary line *et Albin* at the end is a consular date, then 335 and 345 are possibilities, given that the junior consul was called Albinus (Bagnall *et al.* 1987: 204, 224). So too are 346, the post-consulate of Amantius and Albinus in the West (Bagnall *et al.* 1987: 226) and 444, when an Albinus was again consul *posterior* (Bagnall *et al.* 1987: 422; in 493 an Albinus was consul *prior*: 520). 444 might be preferred, since *et Albin* occurs towards the end of the line and the titlature of Theodosius II, who was the other consul that year, might most easily have filled up the rest (*D.N. Theodosii Aug. XVIII*). On the use of Virgil’s bucolics in inscriptions, see Velaza 2019.

¹²⁹ Gargilius: Zainaldin 2020: 1–4. Phlegon: *pace* Galimberti 2010, who while acknowledging the letter’s fictionality tries to save some historical core.

(later) imperial biographies, whose first name is shared with the famous biographer, and whose second (coincidentally or not) is shared with a Constantinian poet Porfirius Optatianus.¹³⁰ Even sceptical scholars have been tempted to put Olympius Nemesianus in the first category — an actual author with fake works fathered on him — but since ‘Olympius Nemesianus’ cannot actually be the name of M. Aurelius Nemesianus, perhaps this instance might actually be better assigned to the second. The fact that Nemesianus was a real author with a known context was used to mint a new poet, who did not write on the terrestrial matters of husbandry and hunting, but on the maritime pastimes of sailing and fishing.

These made-up references to real authors and bogus authors fabricated on the model of genuine ones were the result not simply of a delight in pure invention, but rather of the need to lend a wash of authority to what the *HA* claimed about the history it described.¹³¹ That ought to make us take a closer look at some of the outwardly more respectable authors cited by the *HA* — Marius Maximus, for example, or Florus.¹³² Perhaps the imposture has just been particularly successful in such cases. Students of the *HA* ought, as always, to be on their guard.

VI CONCLUSION

Recent scholarship on the *Historia Augusta* has tended in two opposite directions. One strand, typified by Rohrbacher’s 2016 monograph *The Play of Allusion in the Historia Augusta*, has emphasised the literary qualities of the collection, even to the point of glossing over its historical fraudulence. Rohrbacher makes the reference to Nemesianus the centrepiece of a sophisticated engagement with the tradition of Latin pastoral in the *Carus*.¹³³ Were this true, it would provide a powerful counterpoint to the arguments we present here, showing that the *scriptor* definitely had the genuine Nemesianus in mind and expected the same of his readers. First, he adduces one Julius Calpurnius (mentioned earlier in the same life, 8.4) as the author of a letter about the death of Carus.¹³⁴ Following a well-worn, if unacknowledged, early modern track, Rohrbacher associates this figure with the (probably third-century) bucolic poet Calpurnius Siculus.¹³⁵ He then moves to the fact that, much later in the life, Numerian’s brother Carinus is described as having a jewelled belt (17.1 *balteum ... gemmatum* in P). Rohrbacher notes that there is also a belt with jewels in Nemesianus’ *Cynegetica*, used to describe the garb of Diana, *gemmatis balteus ... nexibus*, ‘a girdle with jewelled fastenings’ (*Cyn.* 92). In concluding, he points out, in very careful terms, that Calpurnius Siculus ‘has the same collocation, “balteus en gemmis”, in his seventh eclogue’.¹³⁶ Were this all true, then the *HA* would show a deep knowledge of Latin bucolic poetry in general and of Nemesianus’ works in particular, which might be thought to undermine the arguments advanced here. In fact, however, none of Rohrbacher’s arguments withstand scrutiny. Leaving to one side the

¹³⁰ See Rohrbacher 2016: 24–5.

¹³¹ Cf. Lippold 1999: 160, who actually uses the ‘reality’ of Nemesianus to suggest that Aurelius Apollinaris might have been a genuine figure.

¹³² For some bracing scepticism on Marius Maximus, see Paschoud 1999a.

¹³³ Rohrbacher 2016: 39–41.

¹³⁴ At *Carus* 8.4, P actually reads *iubus capurnius*, which Matoci corrected to *iulius calphurnius*. Σ reads *iubet caprinius* — a mistake that only makes sense if derived from an abbreviated version of P’s reading (e.g. *iub’ capurnius* in B) — yet another mark of the family’s ultimate derivation from P.

¹³⁵ Fabricius 1697: 152. On the date of Calpurnius Siculus, see still Champlin 1978, whose conclusions stand despite the recent challenge attempted by Nauta 2021.

¹³⁶ Rohrbacher 2016: 40.

fact that jewels in connection with belts is a rather common idea, there is no parallel between the two belts: Carinus' is evidently itself set with gems, where the one described by Nemesianus has jewelled clasps.¹³⁷ Indeed, *balteus* is used in two different senses in the two passages: sword-belt (i.e. ζωστήρ) in the *HA* and woman's girdle (i.e. ζώνη) in Nemesianus.¹³⁸ The real parallel with Carinus' belt is found in the *HA* itself, where the louche of emperors and a fitting antitype of the wastrel Carinus, Gallienus, is described as 'using a jewelled belt' (*HA Gallieni duo* 14.6: *gemmato balteo usus est*). Calpurnius' *balteus* has even less to do with Carinus'. The reason for Rohrbacher's slight obliquity in phrasing is that Calpurnius' *balteus en gemmis ... radiant* (7.47–8) has nothing whatsoever to do with clothing: instead, it refers to the aisle of an amphitheatre, probably the Colosseum (i.e. δίαζωμα). Hence, there is no connection whatsoever between Calpurnius, Nemesianus and the *HA* in this phrase. The whole notion that there is some obscure engagement with the bucolic tradition in the life of Carus and his sons depends upon the idea that the bogus Olympius Nemesianus is meant actually to refer to the real bucolic poet M. Aurelius Nemesianus. Take that away — as it must be when the *Cynegetica* is removed — and there is no reason to even bring pastoral to mind. Students of the *HA* inclined to find considerable literary subtleties in the work may be themselves victims of a much more basic imposture.

The second tendency in recent *HA* scholarship is to attribute varying degrees of the text's fraudulence to its Carolingian transmission. Shedd, for example, has recently argued that the six fake authors are not all intrinsic to the *HA* as composed, but actually the result of medieval tampering, or at least misguided scholarship.¹³⁹ Even more extreme, Baker has attempted a wholesale rehabilitation of the basic reliability of the *HA*, suggesting that its incoherence as a collection is due to it having been assembled in the Carolingian period.¹⁴⁰ Neither study can actually provide evidence that the transmission of the *HA* is not a straightforward case of medieval copying, like that of Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum*, a work of the same genre, with a parallel structure, and transmitted via the same milieu.¹⁴¹ By contrast, the evidence we have adduced here shows that if anything, medieval interventions in the text tried to tame its idiosyncrasies and introduce facts into the farrago of fantasy. Shedd is not wrong to note that the *HA* as we have it contains 'unprecedented fictions', but the genesis of those fictions is to be found in the text itself, whenever and by whomever it was composed, and not in medieval scholarship of the generation before our earliest manuscripts were copied.¹⁴²

This inquiry has brought us, by roundabout paths, to several fairly simple conclusions. (1) The text of *Carus* 11.2 should be printed *cum Olympio Nemesiano contendit, qui Halieutica et Nautica scripsit*, with ΚΥΝΗΓΕΤΙΚΑ bracketed or banished to the apparatus and the other two works rendered in Latin characters. (2) M. Aurelius Nemesianus should no longer be saddled with the name Olympius. (3) Olympius Nemesianus should be added to the list of 'bogus authors' in the *HA*. Alongside these, we have come to two more tentative findings which merit further exploration. (1) The onomastic practices of the author of the *HA* deserve further study: just because the people referred to are fake does not mean that the onomastic practice by which they are named is also. (2) The archetype of the tradition of the *HA* might have been housed and

¹³⁷ For jewelled belts, cf. Verg., *Aen.* 5.313, a golden belt with jewelled fibula; Sen., *Ep.* 76.14, a golden belt with a jewelled scabbard.

¹³⁸ Cf. *TLL* 2.1711.21–1712.68 (Ihm).

¹³⁹ Shedd 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Baker 2014: 312–15. The supposed accuracy of the name Olympius Nemesianus is one implicit argument in favour of this position he deploys (Baker 2014: 150).

¹⁴¹ Comparison with an actual Carolingian compilation of late antique materials is deeply revealing; Barrett and Woudhuysen 2016.

¹⁴² Shedd 2021: 20.

annotated in the first decade of the ninth century in a place like Saint-Denis, where Nemesianus' works were studied.

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- CLA = E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 11 vols, Oxford, 1934–1971.
- CCSL = *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*.
- ISTC = Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search).
- Gesamtkatalog* = *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (<https://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/>).
- OPEL = B. Lőrincz, *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum*, 4 vols, Vienna and Budapest, 1999–2005.
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