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Reading and Writing Gellius: The Act of Composition in the Attic Nights

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Reading and Writing Gellius: The Act of Composition in the
*Attic Nights*

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Abstract

Here I argue that Gellius uses the loose design of his Attic Nights to interact both playfully and instructively with his reader, and that he does so in such a way that the purpose of the Nights is found to be reproductive, replicating the activities of its author (Gellius) in the minds and, ideally, the activities of its readers. To demonstrate how Gellius creates this unique author-reader relationship as the ordo of the text unfolds, I read the Nights sequentially. In close readings of three books of the Attic Nights (Books 1, 2, and 14), I explore how Gellius develops themes over the course of each book and uses those themes to articulate his relationship with the reader. In order to pick out sequences that supply meaning to a sequential reading of such an apparently disordered text, I take advantage, at least initially, of the approach of Gibson and Morello (2012) to the Letters of Pliny the Younger, where a multitude of units (epistles, in Pliny’s case) are placed so as to appear well-mixed but also create sequences in which certain patterns emerge, suggesting a loose design. Following Gibson and Morello’s model, I begin by noticing a more-or-less obvious pattern in Book 2 and “re-read” the book with that pattern in mind; through that re-reading, I discover that Gellius highlights a father-son relationship as an analogue for the relationship between himself and his reader. In Book 14, I follow a sequence, sustained through the entire book, that serves as a reflection on the nature of the miscellany-genre and on Gellius’s evolution from reader to author. Finally, returning to Book 1 to begin a re-reading of the Attic Nights as a whole, I observe how Gellius uses the structure of that book to represent a seemingly infinite expansion of knowledge.
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I. Introduction: How to Read the *Attic Nights*.

A. Thesis.

Aulus Gellius, born in the 120s AD and composing his *Noctes Atticae* in its final form probably in the 170s or 180s, spent the intervening decades reading books, listening to teachers, and most importantly, taking notes. These notes (*annotationes*), refined into essays (*commentarii*), comprise the chapters of the *NA*. Their arrangement, Gellius claims, is governed by chance (*Usi autem sumus ordine rerum fortuito...*, Preface 2). This statement has led the great majority of scholars to assume that the *NA* was thrown together haphazardly, or was at least deliberately made to appear to have been thus heaped up.

But *ordo fortuitus* plays antecedent to a disquieting relative clause: *quem antea in excerpendo feceramus* – “I employed for my material the chance arrangement that I had made earlier when taking excerpts.” He continues: *Nam proinde ut librum quemque in manus ceperam seu Graecum seu Latinum vel quid memoratu dignum audieram, ita quae libitum erat, cuius generis cumque erant, indistincte atque promises annotabam...* (Pref. 2). The *ordo fortuitus* goes all the way back to the books and teachers from which he obtained his material. He took books into his hands and listened for memorable sayings; then, in exactly the same way (*proinde ut ... ita*), he made notes on them, with no regard for types or distinctions; finally, his excerpts became the *commentarii* which we

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1 See Holford-Strevens 2003, 16-21, for the dates – according to Holford-Strevens’s calculations, Gellius published the *NA* sometime between 170 and 192.
2 He was also a judge in Rome (e.g., 13.13.1, 14.2.1), but Gellius scarcely ever writes of his *negotium*, the *NA* being a product of his *otium*.
3 The basic assumption of classicists in general has mirrored the view of Nettleship (1883) that the order of chapters in the *NA* is truly haphazard. Marache (1967, xvi-xvii, with n. 2) marks a great difference of opinion on this subject, arguing, with Maréchal and against Mercklin and Faider, that Gellius’s assertion of disorder is genuine. I fall on the side of those, such as Faider (1927, 200-201: “Les Nuits Attiques ont ... été ‘composées’”), who take the plethora of remarkable juxtapositions in the *NA* as evidence that some kind of design (the extent of which is debatable) is at work. See below (I.B.) for a summary of the most significant modern approaches to Gellius’s *ordo fortuitus*. 
now read in our 20th-century editions, original ordo fortuitus faithfully preserved. Thus, on the face of it, to read the NA in the order in which it is presented is to perceive its construction.

But, given the breadth of his reading, Gellius cannot have been ignorant of the centuries of collection-literature lying before him. From the Hellenistic poetry anthologies to Horace’s *Odes* to Pliny’s *Letters*, the acts of composing and arranging are, in themselves, arts. And, like these forebears, the NA is also a work of literary ambition, if the genre-grumblings and Greek-quoting pretensions of Gellius’s Preface are any indication – which is to say that the NA is, despite Gellius’s overt protestations, more than a useful compendium of useful knowledge. It is this, of course, but it is also, constantly and from the very beginning of the Preface, a text that actively interacts with readers, often teasing them with suggestions of design. The contention of this dissertation is that Gellius uses the loose design of his NA to interact both playfully and instructively with his reader, and that he does so in such a way that the purpose of the NA is found to be reproductive, replicating the activities of its author (Gellius) in the minds and, ideally, the activities of its readers. To demonstrate how Gellius creates this unique author-reader relationship as the ordo of the NA unfolds, I read the Nights sequentially. In close readings of three books of the NA (1, 2, and 14), I explore how Gellius develops themes over the course of each book and uses those themes to articulate his relationship with the reader. In order to pick

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4 The manuscript tradition of the NA is not without problems; but the placement of the Praefatio at the front (not the back), the position of the chapter headings at the tail of the Preface (not distributed throughout the books), and the correct order of Books 6 and 7 have all been restored, leaving us with Gellius’s original design mostly intact. See Holford-Strevens 2003, 333-53.

5 Krevans 1984 is an excellent inquiry into the ways in which ancient authors and editors (who were sometimes one and the same person) created unity in the diversity of their poems. The same questions that she regards as central to understanding a poetry book’s structure may be applied just as easily to the structure of Gellius’s books: “Which aspects of the collection tend to unite the poems? Which tend to distinguish them? What is the resulting tendency of the book as a whole?” (p. 10) She gives examples of the different kinds of unity that poets such as Callimachus, Horace, Vergil, and Propertius achieve in their collections. When we compare with Gellius, we find that the kind of unity in the NA has some commonalities with these poetic unities; for example, as I discuss in chapter IV, Book 1 holds itself together with a numerological unity, although not to the degree of consistency that Vergil achieves in his
out sequences that supply meaning to a sequential reading of such an apparently disordered text, I take advantage, at least initially, of the approach of Gibson and Morello (2012) to the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger, where a multitude of units (epistles, in Pliny’s case) are placed so as to appear well-mixed but also create sequences in which certain patterns emerge, suggesting a loose design. Following Gibson and Morello’s model, I begin by noticing a more-or-less obvious pattern in Book 2 and “re-read” the book with that pattern in mind; through that re-reading, I discover that Gellius highlights a father-son relationship as an analogue for the relationship between himself and his reader. In Book 14, I follow a sequence, sustained through the entire book, that serves as a reflection on the nature of the miscellany-genre and on Gellius’s evolution from reader to author. Finally, returning to Book 1 to begin a re-reading of the *NA* as a whole, I observe how Gellius uses the structure of that book to represent a seemingly infinite expansion of knowledge.

B. Approaches to the Gellian *ordo*.

In trying to navigate the *ordo fortuitus* of the *NA*, one is often tempted to create order where none is explicitly offered. Indeed, one of the challenges of reading this collection is to create an order (i.e., a means of understanding the *NA* in a structured way) that would not be alien or incomprehensible to Gellius.\(^6\) Walking this fine line, a number of scholars have

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\(^6\) I do not accept dogmatically the dictum of Barthes that “the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author” (Barthes 1967, 6). It is, however, especially tempting to think in the case of the *Attic Nights* that “the writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original; his only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to oppose some by others, so as never to sustain himself by just one of them” (*ibid.*, 4). Without question, the structure of the *Nights* offers readers a kind of freedom in reading that would be denied to them in many other ancient genres; but the protreptic cast of the Preface, together with the recurrence of a commanding, judging authorial voice, continually asserts a direct relationship of the author (as the creator of the text) with the reader (as the recipient of the text) through the text.
attempted to find (and have succeeded in creating) order. Here I highlight six who do this in different ways: Henry Nettleship, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Madeleine Henry, Stephen Beall, Eleanor Rust, and Erik Gunderson.

Henry Nettleship wrote his article “The Noctes Atticae of Aulus Gellius” in 1883, introducing the work to the world of Anglophone classical scholarship after a long period of disinterest. In the service of Quellenforschung, he chops up the chapters of the NA and rearranges them into categories of subject matter – e.g., Philosophy, Exempla, Natural Philosophy, Human Pathology, Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, History and Biography, Lexicography, and among other things, some “hardly admit[ting] of any logical arrangement”: mirabilia (remarkable natural phenomena), remarkable events, “res memoria dignae”, anecdotes. The hope is that such a method will allow him to more effectively hunt down a common source for a number of disparate, and often far-separated, passages. Occasionally, he notes, two adjacent chapters draw from the same source or even from the same passage in the same source – this is surely the most exciting phenomenon in the NA. But, even so, such delights do not contribute to the composition of the work; indeed, Nettleship finds in Gellius a “want of skill ... in the composition of the Noctes Atticae.” Aside from the great sin of carelessness in the extraction of materials, inter alia, repetitions of certain facts (such as introductions of interlocutors) cannot but mar the work with otiose excess.

Leofranc Holford-Strevens published his magnum opus on Gellius in 1988 (entitled Aulus Gellius) and updated with a second edition in 2003, this time augmented with the subtitle An

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7 “We may now approach the central question, from what authors and from what works does Gellius mainly derive his information?” (p. 397)
8 The justification is exactly as follows: “Perhaps the best way of getting an approximate idea of the character of the works consulted by Gellius will be to analyse his whole book according to the subjects of which it treats.” (Nettleship 1883, 399)
9 Unfortunately, “[t]he Noctes Atticae is a work of such miscellaneous contents that it is impossible to make an entirely satisfactory table of them.” (ibid. 399) Nevertheless, a rough categorization comprises the rest of the article.
Antonine Scholar and His Achievement), a little over 20 years after René Marache published his Budé opus, which itself followed Marache’s many years of illuminating and rehabilitative studies into Gellius. In this new era of respect for Gellius, Holford-Strevens saw the Noctes Atticae as a tool created for an age concerned more with the manageable collection and display of knowledge than with the invention and discovery of new knowledge and original literature. But, despite this appreciation for the social utility, even desirability, of works like the NA, Holford-Strevens also finds fault with Gellius – not so much for lack of compositional skill as for carelessness in following up certain promises he makes in some chapters. And yet, Holford-Strevens does believe that Gellius intentionally disorders many other things: for example, he often separates things taken from a common source, placing them in a different order in random places in far-apart books (e.g., “Four explicit quotations from Cicero’s Orator, standing in the original at §§158, 159, and (two extracts) 168, appear respectively at 15.3.2-3; 2.17.2; 13.21.24; 18.7.8.”). The kind of order most discernible to Holford-Strevens, however, is “that the initial chapter of each book of the NA shall afford a seat of honour for a favoured person or be of especial interest in its content.” Favorinus is the favorite person in a handful of initial chapters, and so are revered teachers (such as L. Calvenus Taurus and Sulpicius Apollinaris). Other initial chapters begin with a striking quotation or especially interesting etymology. But beyond this, Holford-Strevens does not claim any overarching order imposed by the author. As a reader and explicator, he treats Gellius not very differently from the way that

10 Ibid., 396.
11 The Introduction in the first volume of the Budé Gellius summarizes Marache’s previous work. Especially noteworthy are his researches into the archaisms of Gellius and Fronto (Mots nouveaux et mots archaïques chez Fronton et Aulu-Gelle, 1957).
12 Holford-Strevens 2003, 30-36.
13 Ibid., 34-5.
14 Ibid., 35-6.
Nettleship treated him: by categories of content. His major contribution is the attention that he pays to Gellius’s social context, an attempt to understand the man and his world.

Madeleine Henry, who wrote her article “On the Aims and Purposes of Aulus Gellius’ ‘Noctes Atticae’” in 1994, finds certain clues in Gellius’s Preface that inform a reading of the whole. The first thing that should be obvious to any reader of the NA’s Preface, she asserts, is Gellius’s promise to make his content useful, educational, and pleasant: “[he] invites his readers to plumb each anecdote for the source of the pleasure, the focus of the education, the use to which each remark may be put.” Another interest that she detects expressed in the Preface is a “paternal, if not paternalistic, impetus”, based on Gellius’s claim to be composing the NA for the benefit of his children. Finally, Henry seeks to know the hidden preoccupations that drove Gellius to compose the NA in the first place:

What preoccupations does Aulus Gellius have, and what purpose may lie behind his particular farrago? Though he claims his work lacks both a principle of selection and an order, it is abundantly clear that order itself preoccupies this busy man. Order in speech is of parallel importance with societal order and harmony, if any message can be gleaned from the frequency of anecdotes which illustrate the importance of knowing when and when not to speak as well as of the correct sort of speech. Also dear to Gellius’ heart are anecdotes which illustrate the importance of the subordination of women to men and sons to fathers. But playing counterpoint to the notion of subordinate order is the notion of balance – of reciprocity and opposition. Many times in his anecdotes Aulus will balance mind against body, greed against parsimony, pragmatism against speculation. (p. 1920-1)

Henry proceeds to comment briefly on each book of the NA (roughly one page per book), highlighting a handful of chapters in each one, showing how each demonstrates one or more of the principles listed above.


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compositional style. It is obvious to Beall that this is a conscious choice, for Gellius’s chapters are not organized by source as would be expected of someone having written a compilation directly from his notes without altering anything.\textsuperscript{17} Having decided on variatio as the essential characteristic of his composition, Gellius gives some order to that composition by ensuring that each book contains roughly the same proportion of each kind of chapter. Miraculously, the effort of such distribution is hardly noticeable, and as Beall claims, it successfully creates the illusion of casual scholarship, an easy hobby for Gellius’s supposedly casual reader.\textsuperscript{18} Beall also argues that in order to distinguish the \textit{NA} from other miscellanies, Gellius varied the form of each chapter (by following rules associated with the genre each chapter was to take) rather than fitting them into a large-scale structure that requires the form of each chapter to conform to a rigid set of standards (such as happens in Pliny the Elder’s \textit{Historia Naturalis} and Athenaeus’s \textit{Deipnosophistae}).\textsuperscript{19} This radically different notion of structure prompts Beall to devote his entire third chapter to an analysis of the ways in which Gellius’s diverse kinds of chapters follow rules associated with their respective genres.

Finally, Eleanor Rust’s 2009 dissertation “\textit{Ex Angulis Secretisque Librorum}: Reading, Writing, and Using Miscellaneous Knowledge in the \textit{Noctes Atticae}” follows up on Beall’s rather positive outlook on Gellius’s ordo fortuitus as a constructive tool,\textsuperscript{20} by treating it as a way to

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 1920.
\textsuperscript{17} Beall 1988, 40-41.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 43-44.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 112-113. Cf. 128-129, where Beall observes that Gellius adopts ordo fortuitus as a principle of organization much as Plutarch did in the \textit{Sympotic Questions} (σποράδην δ’ ἀναγέγραται καὶ οὐ δωκακριμένος ἁλ’ ὡς ἐκαστὸν εἰς μνήμην εἰσήλθεν) while at the same time rejecting the sympotic setting as a frame for the \textit{NA}, using it only in miniature, in individual chapters.
\textsuperscript{20} Rust’s rehabilitative thrust is articulated most pointedly in 1-5. See especially her chapter 3 (“Miscellaneous Time and Chance Encounters”) for the mechanics of Gellius’s ordo fortuitus.
promote one kind of intellectual lifestyle.\textsuperscript{21} The disorder of the notes is meant to reflect a life of frenetic, enthusiastic, expansive learning, and readers, in reading as Gellius supposedly wrote (in disordered fashion), have a model right in front of them.\textsuperscript{22} In order to reflect such a life, Gellius creates a “radical disorder” that has to be different from other models, which have regular organizing principles that represent a stage of reading/writing more distant from the stage where knowledge is first encountered and digested. Rust then compares the \textit{NA} with three other collections of varied material, in order to show how he has made his application of disorder different from other systems of order: Gellius has polemical relations with Pliny the Elder’s \textit{Naturalis Historia} (an encyclopedic collection) and Seneca’s \textit{Epistulae Morales} (a collection of moral essays in the guise of epistles), and Macrobius’s \textit{Saturnalia} (a knowledge-collection in the form of a dialogue, like Athenaeus’s \textit{Deipnosophistae}) takes the \textit{NA} as the basis for a different kind of polemic.\textsuperscript{23}

An interesting postmodern addition to these orderings of Gellius is Erik Gunderson’s 2009 book \textit{Nox Philologiae: Aulus Gellius and the Fantasy of the Roman Library}. Gunderson does several things at once. He treats Gellius by theme (Authority, Logic, Usage). He mimics his penchant for wordplay (chapters 6-8 and the Appendix are entitled, respectively, “Book Six: Books of Books”, “Book Seven: Authors of the Author”, “Book Eight: Readers of Readings”, and “Appendix: It Was to Be/It Is to Be”). And he plays with quirks of the physical structure of the \textit{NA}: there come, in order, three prefaces (Gellius only had one, but it may reasonably be asked whether the so-called Table of Contents is part of the Preface or an addendum to it; he

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. Vardi 2004, 173-174: “[B]ecause of the haphazard arrangement of the material, anyone who reads Gellius’ book consecutively will experience the same random occurrence of diverse erudite items. Gellius thus manages to compel his readers actually to adopt his model of a varied life of learning if only for the duration of their reading.
\textsuperscript{22} Passim: Rust analyzes Gellius’s narrative chapters in order to put together a picture of how he models the ideal intellectual lifestyle.
\textsuperscript{23} Chapters 4 and 5.
plays also on the addition of editorial prefaces in modern editions, the Table of Contents (on page 45), then two “volumes” (Gellius’s OCT is divided into two volumes, but the medieval transmission also carried down the work through several centuries in two volumes: Books 1-7 and Books 9-20, Book 8 having been lost very early). Each volume contains “Books” (in the place of the usual chapters), and there are eight of these, playing on the fact that Book 8 is lost to us.

We see therefore that different scholars have different ways of treating the Noctes Atticae as a text, in the sense of a work of literature at the intersection of the author’s intentions and the readers’ interpretations. We see also that attempts to understand (the) order in the NA often lead to varying interpretations and varying presentations. Such a multiplicity of opinions is guaranteed, if not by any greatness of quality in the NA, then at least by its ordering principle of disorder. It seems, then, that what we have in the NA is a text with devious authorial intentions and a structure that encourages widely divergent and even idiosyncratic uses on the part of the reader. And yet, in order to understand and explicate Gellius’s text, one must engage with it in a way that makes sense out of it. As I have just sketched it, the past couple of centuries have produced a number of strategies that aim to order the NA, and in the present dissertation, I follow this tradition of imposing order for the sake of interpretation. But in my approach to the reading of the Nights, I have focused on the experience of reading the collection from one end (the Preface, followed by Book 1) to the other (the final preserved chapter of Book 20).

On a cursory reading of the Preface, the potential reader may be put off from a sequential reading by Gellius’s claims to a disordered order – it is not difficult to imagine that the reader uninterested in variatio for its own sake would soon derive tedium from reading a series of randomly placed notices (a fate that Gellius himself suffered, as he says, in reading the big Greek
miscellanies. But a careful reading finds more than a mere quantum soup, despite the apparent carelessness that drove source-hunters such as Nettleship to the very summit of frustration. In 1967, Marache noticed that, in addition to the occasional noteworthy juxtaposition, the first chapter of each book seems to enjoy some pride of place in that each is usually a dialogue or “mis en scene”. Holford-Strevens, twenty years later, repeats the observation that the first chapter of each book possesses some marquee quality (for Holford-Strevens, those chapters stand out as showpieces for important figures in Gellius’s contemporary intellectual pantheon). Neither of these scholars admits the possibility of any more complex structure, at least on the basis of content-arrangement, but they at least take the individual book as a unit of structure. This is a basic yet important observation: ever since the Hellenistic scholars chopped up Homer, Herodotus, and others into book-rolls, the individual book became a kind of molecular unit for the presentation of written work, so that (to name only three examples) each book of the Aeneid has its own memorable focus, each book of Horace’s Odes is organized in its own way, and each book of Pliny the Elder’s Natural History treats a different area of scientific inquiry. That book-rolls were used not only for the convenience of distributing Gellius’s chapters and indeed not only as handy buckets for Gellius’s stream of verbal ruminations, is shown by Beall in his dissertation when he finds that Gellius has taken care to give each book nearly the same

24 Pref. 11-12. Gellius’s major bone of contention with the bulky Greek miscellanies is that they fail to leaven the dulce with the utile.
25 “Sometimes, as Mercklin and Kretzschmer have pointed out, the form of the dialogue is not consistently maintained through a whole chapter. ... There are other marks of carelessness in composition. Gellius is apt, for instance, to introduce one of his interlocutors twice over ... . An extract is sometimes so carelessly torn from its context that marks of the rent are still visible. ... Sometimes Gellius alludes or seems to allude to things which he has nowhere said, or proposes discussions which are nowhere started. ... It should further be observed that the same point is sometimes treated twice in much the same words. ..” (pp. 396-397)
26 Marache 1967, xvii.
27 Marache denies meaningful structure (p. xvii with n.2); Holford-Strevens simply describes the realia of the collection’s structure (pp. 30-36).
28 For a general overview, see Gutzwiller 1998, 227-322.
proportion of chapter-types. Thus, each book is composed of the same atoms, as it were. It must also be observed, however, that the atoms do not occur in exactly the same mixture in each book, so that, if each book is to be a molecule, the different orders and different combinations of atoms produce books that each bear properties peculiar to themselves. Henry noticed something like this in 1994 when she sketched out the predominant themes of each book – while some themes were shared in multiple books, giving the NA as a whole some philosophical cohesiveness, each book nevertheless was found to highlight more particular ideas by means of the unequal distribution of themes; I would add that the presence of salient juxtapositions does much to anchor some of the dominant themes of each book.

One may try to object that poetry-book architecture ought not be sought in un-metrical genres, such as the Gellian brand of miscellany. But the artful arrangement of textual items, such as epigrams, need not be the province solely of poetry, as the above observations on recent Gellian scholarship suggest. A look at the neighboring realm of studies on Pliny the Younger will give us some idea as to how scholars may treat the structure of a prose work featuring short compositions arranged in no immediately discernible order. These new works (Ilaria Marchesi’s *The Art of Pliny’s Letters* [2008] and Roy Gibson and Ruth Morello’s *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger: An Introduction* [2012]) have found in the *Letters* elements of structure that are sometimes taken for granted in poetry collections. Juxtapositions of similar and contrasting elements in neighboring letters can, for example, trigger an intertextual relationship between Pliny and Vergil or, more generally, create small-scale structures of text that often do little

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29 pp. 43-44.
30 Marchesi 2008, 27-36: a line quoted from the *Aeneid* in letter 1.2 is alluded to in 1.3; the two letters collaborate, says Marchesi, to reinforce Pliny’s leisure-time objective: to study and create literature, which is a task for only the greatest minds. Cf. Henderson 2002 for a reading of Book 3, seen as focused tightly around the statue in *Ep.* 3.6.
more than reinforce a sense of the ongoing “epistolary life”. On the level of the individual book-roll, the use of bookends (some element shared between the first and the last letter of the book) suggests structure and may prompt re-reading. Repeated use of a single character may also color an individual book, as happens with the Regulus-cycle of letters in Book 6. On the scale of the collection as a whole, there are a number of things that can unite the work. The consistent voice of the author’s persona centers the collection on a single point of view; even the continued commitment to variety grounds the collection in its adherence to an aesthetic imperative; extended arcs, or thematic cycles, give the collection a personality; the juxtaposition of two books with contrasting dominant themes works similarly to the atomic-level juxtapositions, presenting large-scale ruminations on two sides of the same issue (for Gibson and Morello, Book 7 offers an illuminating contrast to Book 6 by focusing on otium after Book 6’s focus on negotium); finally, the first letter of Book 1 and the last letter of Book 9 echo one another, book-ending the entire collection.

The detection of such meaningful structures emerges from sequential reading. This dissertation employs such a methodology of reading throughout, so as to discern the structures of the Attic Nights and the ways in which Gellius interacts with his readers. Sequential reading has not always been recognized as a fruitful approach to the NA, and indeed it was not so long ago

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31 Gibson and Morello 2012, 234-6. For these two authors, Pliny fashions the “epistolary life” by building a kind of social network through the addressees and personalities in the letters while situating his own literary persona amid a variety of themes and ongoing stories. By interweaving all these threads over the course of nine books instead of grouping the letters thematically or chronologically, Pliny is able to convey the sense of a life lived and remembered in real time.

32 In their second chapter, Gibson and Morello find echoing Ciceronian reminiscences in the first and final chapters of Book 6. This discovery prompts them to re-read the book. More on this below.


34 Gibson and Morello 2012, 13ff.


36 Barchiesi 2005, 330-332, reads 1.1 and 9.40 as bookends for Pliny’s collection and therefore as markers of a structured text. Nevertheless, he situates his reading within a cautionary essay against “the search for the perfect book” in Roman poetry. His points are well taken, especially as it would be outlandish to suggest that either Pliny or
that Pliny’s *Letters* suffered the same kind of neglect. In trying to nail down a chronology for the letters, Sherwin-White noticed some connections related to sequential reading, but he did not elaborate on them.\(^{37}\) Thirty years later, Ludolph proposed that the first eight letters of the collection form a “Paradebriefe” in homage to the sequence of “parade odes” (the first nine) in Horace’s first book of *Odes*.\(^{38}\) In the following decade or so, Marchesi and Gibson and Morello found more substantial and broad-based ways to make sequential reading fruitful. Marchesi suggests that Pliny’s fragmented text is best approached by striking a balance between paradigmatic and syntagmatic reading methods: the former seeks to compare letters that have common elements (such as letters about death), while the latter finds cycles of letters with the same addressee, each later one depending on knowledge of the earlier ones. A sequential reading is necessary for the latter method of reading, but sequential reading is also necessary on the smaller scale if one is to detect adjacent letters that are strongly tied together, such as successive letters that share allusions to the same author and/or work. The final aim of this approach is to establish Pliny’s poetic aspirations and to show that he makes good on his allusions to Neoteric and Augustan poetry (as well as his own hendecasyllables) by giving his epistolary collection some of the character of a poetry collection. Gibson and Morello offer a somewhat more articulated typology of reading methods for Pliny, dividing them into the categories of “anthologizing” and sequential. They practice all of them throughout their book, although they

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\(^{37}\) Sherwin-White 1966, 22: “Historians have generally paid little attention to the interrelationship of the letters that have no special historical significance. The miscellaneous character of the collection has discouraged the study of it as a whole. But in the course of such a study as the present a remarkable number of obscure links and connexions emerge, concerning the journeys and holidays, and the literary development of Pliny, which put the question of serial order and chronology in a new light.”

\(^{38}\) Ludolph 1997, 20 (the proposal) and 92-208 (the interpretation).
explicitly favor the sequential approaches.\textsuperscript{39} The anthologizing methods are the more traditional approaches to the study of Pliny, by which readers follow cycles of addressees or themes, or simply pick out their favorite letters to collect in a school anthology. The practice of anthologizing thus fragments the collection in ways that Pliny himself did not. Approaching the collection by way of sequential reading allows the reader to experience the tension between the autobiographical unity of Pliny’s life and discontinuities of all sorts. Gibson and Morello find significance in three different levels of sequential reading: the reading of juxtaposed letters that interact with each other, the reading of an entire book (such as Book 6, above), and the reading of the entire collection. In the last and highest level, they find that Pliny establishes a “pool of time” in Book 1, sketching events of the years 96-97, into which he later drops specific references that illuminate those events, and readers may insert this new information into what they remember of Book 1, especially if they re-read the collection. The overall goal is to get a sense of Pliny’s “epistolary life” as it develops across the collection. More specifically:

It may not be too fanciful to suggest that although the letters purport to show Pliny engaging in literary study, the object of his contemplation which is most obviously on show, and which is most appropriately sketched and annotated in this genre, is the study of man and how man learns to act out ordered and controlled movements through life’s variegated chaos. (p. 199)

The structure of Pliny’s collection is not very different from that of Gellius’s miscellany of learned items, although there are many doctrinal differences, as it were, between the two. Marchesi’s description of Pliny’s structure works almost equally well for the N\textsc{A}’s structure:

Pliny works by juxtaposition of fragments and tesserae, rather than organized, clearly structured lines of argumentation. The search for coherence in Pliny’s collection is frustrated by the author’s own resistance to it. Pliny’s epistles are neither a treatise nor a novel, nor even a dialogue in the classical sense; however, they are also far from being a chaotic assemblage of casually collected fragments. The epistles are suspended between the options of paradigmatic and syntagmatic reading. Pliny proceeds through the addition

\textsuperscript{39} Gibson and Morello 2012, 3. “We believe that we do a disservice to Pliny by stripping his most attractive letters from their original context, namely as part of a deliberately sequenced and artistically constructed book or cycle of letters.”
of heterogeneous elements, but he also connects these fragments on a deeper level. Continuity is built allusively rather than ‘organically’; it is of a secondary, meditated nature. (p. xi)

The *Attic Nights*, as a whole, comes off as even less structured (or more “disorganized”) than the *Letters*, especially since it seems to lack a recognizable bookend effect for the collection as a whole\(^{40}\); but it generally holds to the same artfully-disheveled aesthetic as its older cousin. The *NA*’s Preface also claims that the current 20 books do not represent a complete artifact, but that Gellius will produce more in proportion to the number of able years remaining to his life (Pref. 22-24).\(^{41}\) This claim bears some similarity to Pliny’s prefatorial promise that he will continue to add more letters\(^{42}\) beyond the first book, and indeed the publication history of the *Letters* confirms the sincerity of his promise.\(^{43}\) There is ultimately, however, one significant difference between Gellius’s claim and Pliny’s promise: while Pliny promises to one addressee (Septicius Clarus) that more published letters are in the pipeline, Gellius claims to his readership that more books will be on the way, but he does so in the prefatorial context of a strong admonition to the readers that they study and make notes as Gellius did when he was laying the groundwork for the *NA*.

In meditating on the role of the *NA* as a model for intellectual life, the present dissertation shares a spiritual affiliation with Rust 2009 (see above, pp. 7-8), where it was argued that the reader reads, through Gellius’s disordered presentation, a life saturated with the pursuit of intellectual cultivation, and that the disorder leaves unvarnished the origins of nearly every bit of

\(^{40}\) It is true that we lack the end of Book 20, the last book of the *NA*, but there does not seem to be any significant amount missing from the end, just as there is little missing from the beginning of the Preface. See below, IV. X [fn. x].

\(^{41}\) (22) *Volumina commentariorum ad hunc diem viginti iam facta sunt.* (23) *Quantum autem vitae mihi deinceps deum voluntate erit quantumque a tuenda re familiaris procurandoque cultu liberorum meorum dabitur oitum, ea omnia subsiciva et subsecundaria tempora ad colligendas huiuscemodi memoriarum delectatiunculas conferam.*

\(^{42}\) (24) *Progredietur ergo numerus librorum diis bene iuventibus cum ipsius vitae, quantali quomque fuerint, progressibus, neque longiora mihi dari spatia vivendi volo, quam dum ero ad hanc quoque facultatem scribendi commentandique idoneus.*
the NA, especially when compared to other collections of a similar nature. Where my approach differs lies primarily in its methodology, for it is my aim to show that, in the process of reading sequentially, an attentive reader actually finds patterns that suggest an architecture of sorts, resisting the collection’s powerful forces of disorder and at the same time building an almost tangible framework to house various expressions of the NA’s didactic program. Indeed, when Gellius claims *usi ... sumus ordine rerum fortuito, quem antea in excerpundo feceramus*, he is already defining his *ordo* more fully than Pliny did in rejecting chronological order (*collegi non servato temporis ordine ... sed ut quaeque in manus venerat*, 1.1.1). The surface value of Gellius’s *ordo*-statement is thoroughly positive, while Pliny’s is negative. Pliny in turn was likely adapting to prose the claim made by Ovid in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.9.53: *postmodo collectas utcumque sine ordine iunxi*. If Gellius is alluding to Pliny, then Gellius’s description of the NA’s *ordo*, as he details it in the Preface, is the most finely articulated statement of disordered *ordo*, which is to say that Gellius’s statement of *ordo fortuitus* binds itself more intimately to the programmatic thrust of its text than do its predecessors.

C. Gellius’s approach to his *ordo*: The Praefatio.

Besides what is revealed in the gradual unfolding of the books of the *Attic Nights*, which a reader may best come to know by sequential reading of the books themselves, the Preface of the text does much to ground that *ordo* with programmatic authority, and it even begins to generate the *ordo* with the inclusion of its *capita rerum*, commonly known as the Table of

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42 *Ita enim fiet, ut eas quae adhuc neglectae iacent et si quas addidero non supprimam.* (1.1.2)
44 See Marchesi 2008, 20-22, for the impact of the Ovidian allusion on Pliny’s program. While it is a negative statement (*non servato ... ordine*), she says, the allusion in it has a positive impact on how readers are to understand the collection’s structure. Pliny’s irony, inherited from Ovid’s, invites readers to seek to understand the nature of
Contents. In this section I discuss first how Gellius folds his *ordo fortuitus* both into a polemic against other miscellany-writers and into the didactic program of his work; I then discuss his *capita rerum* as a peculiar textual phenomenon that encapsulates both the form of the text and the ways in which its structure provokes readers to discover connections between chapters.

1. Prefatorial comments (Præfatio 1-24).

The Preface of the *Attic Nights* brims with conventional elements,\(^{45}\) but here I concern myself with Gellius’s unique program. The first few sentences in the Preface tell us how the *NA* came to be:

(1) *** iucundiora alia reperiri queunt, ad hoc ut liberis quoque meis partae istiusmodi remissiones essent, quando animus eorum interstitione aliqua negotiorum data laxari indulgerique potuissent. (2) Usi autem sumus ordine rerum fortuito, quem antea in exserpendo feceramus. Nam proinde ut librum quemque in manus ceperam seu Graecum seu Latinum vel quid memoratu dignum audieram, ita quae libitum erat, cuius generis cumque erant, indistincte atque promisce annotabam eaque mihi ad subsidium memoriae quasi quoddam litterarum penus recondebam, ut, quando usus venisset aut rei aut verbi, cuius me repens forte oblivio tenuisset, et libri, ex quibus ea sumpseram, non adessent, facile inde nobis inventu atque depromptu foret. (3) Facta igitur est in his quoque commentariis eadem rerum disparilitas, quae fuit in illis annotationibus pristinis, quas breviter et indigeste et incondite ex auditionibus lectionibusque variis feceramus.

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\(^{45}\) See Janson 1964 for the conventions of prefaces in Latin prose works. Janson makes no observations on Gellius’s preface, but it worth noting here how Gellius’s preface fits into the tradition. He follows a number of old prefatorial conventions in defining his ideal readers, dedicating the work (possibly to his children), stating the purpose and nature of the work, promising innovation (both by way of attacking his genre-mates and by explaining how his collection will be better) as well as brevity and variety, advertising its usefulness, and apologizing for the low quality of the work’s style. But it is his departures from the norm (I submit) that make for some interesting reading. In addition to my primary discussion of the Preface, I note here two examples of Gellian peculiarity: first, he refrains from addressing the Preface to the emperor (in fact, there are no hints of the second person to be found in the Preface except in the Aristophanes quote) – rather than deriving some authority from the emperor’s power, such as Pliny the Elder does, Gellius directs attention both to himself and to his erudite sources as the text’s authority. The other peculiarity of interest is his avoidance of the flower motif, a well-known metaphor for poetic anthologies and a popular one for prose collections as well, as evidenced by Gellius’s flower-laden list of generic rivals (Preface 6-9; cf. the bee-and-flower metaphor for reading and writing in Seneca the Younger’s *Letter* 85.3-5, which, centuries later, Macrobius would apply to his *Saturnalia*). Gellius avoids the flower motif so as to affirm his image of the *NA* as a work that can satisfy with its plainness and leaness; he stresses too the *penus* metaphor, meant to reflect the utility of the *NA*. For more on how Gellius might have thought himself innovatory, see Vardi 2004, especially 159-165.
(1) *** other, more entertaining things can be found, so that my children too may share in relaxations of this sort whenever they get some break from their duties, allowing their minds to indulge in recreation. (2) Now, I employed for my material the chance arrangement that I had made earlier when taking excerpts. For, in the same way that I had picked up each book, Greek or Latin, or heard something worth remembering, I also kept notes on whatever struck my fancy, whatever kind of thing it was, paying no heed to boundaries and mixing it all together; I stored it away as a reserve for my memory, as though it were a kind of literary stockroom, so that whenever there came a need to use a topic or a word that I had suddenly happened to forget and the books from which I’d gotten them were not at hand, I could easily then find it and bring it out. (3) Accordingly, the essays here have the same diversity of material that was present in the original notes, which I had drawn from lectures and readings and made to be short and of unrefined, unrefined texture.

In the first fully intact sentence of the *Noctes Atticae*, Gellius begins to outline the progression of his work from mere ideas to finished product. In §3 he traces this evolution explicitly, informing us that the *commentarii*, which constitute the present shape of the *NA*, are descended from the *annotationes*, which in turn were the product of *auditiones lectionesque*. These are, for Gellius, the stages of authoring a miscellany. But as he explains these processes in §2, he entwines them intimately with his *ordo fortuitus*. The *ordo* of the *annotationes* (the notes that he had taken on things he had heard or read), he says, exactly reflects the supposedly random order in which he picked up a book or heard something worthy of remembrance. The purpose for preserving his learning experience in this manner was to back up his active memory with a kind of reserve force (the original meaning of *subsidium* probably being a military one)\(^{46}\) or to construct a stockroom from which he could draw pertinent information.\(^{47}\) We know, of course, that the *NA* is not an encyclopedia in the way that we imagine them today (i.e., as books with articles on topics organized alphabetically or thematically), and when we treat the *NA* purely as a mine of information about the ancient world, we scarcely search the *NA* by means of its “Table of

\(^{46}\) Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 5.89: *Pilani triarii quoque dicti, quod in acie tertio ordine extremi subsidio deponebantur; quod hi subsidebant ab eo subsidium dictum, a quo Plautus: “Agite nunc, subsidite omnes quasi solent triarii.”

\(^{47}\) Contrast this use of the *NA* with the use that Gellius intends for his readers: that it both kindle in them a desire for learning and serve as the first stage of a new life of learning (Pref. 13-18).
Contents” but instead take recourse to modern indices. Gellius did not make an index to the NA – how, then, is he to use his collection of *annotationes* as an auxiliary to his memory? Given the randomness (at least *prima facie*) in the order of the NA and the fact that readers must already know where a particular fact is before they may seek and find it, and given that, as Beall observed (above, p. 10), there is a more or less even distribution of types of chapter in each book, I believe we must assume that the utility of Gellius’s original notes lay not in the accessibility of particular facts but rather in their general applicability to whatever *usus* for which Gellius required them. The apparently random order, then, is no hindrance to the augmentation of the author’s active memory.

We have described the *annotationes* – but these are not the same as the finished *commentarii*. After all, if the finished product too reflected the order in which books came to hand and memorable sayings were heard, we would find that the NA’s autobiographical chapters appear in chronological order. This is not the case. The *commentarii*, rather, preserve the *rerum disparilitas* of the *annotationes*, as Gellius tells us in §3. He does not say that the *ordo fortuitus* of the original extracts survives all the way into the *commentarii*. What does survive is the *disparilitas*, the spirit of dissimilarity or of variety. By not binding himself to the order in which he made extracts, Gellius gives himself the freedom to engineer a new order for the NA even as he endows it with an atmosphere of randomness. As we will see throughout this dissertation, the tension inherent in the activity of engineering randomness is productive of many

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49 Faider 1927, 201: “Il a ici le sens général de ‘variété’, mais avec une nuance que nous faisons tenir dans le mot ‘contraste’.”
ludic possibilities⁵⁰ (the NA was indeed a plaything for Gellius in his own nights in Attica, where he began to ludere ac facere the collection – §4).⁵¹

It is not only this peculiar statement of ordo that distinguishes the NA from other miscellanies, for Gellius will have us know that the NA’s origin is important enough to be reflected in the title⁵²:

(4) Sed quoniam longinquus per hiemem noctibus in agro, sicuti dixi, terrae Atticae commentationes hasce ludere ac facere exorsis sumus, idecirco eas inscripsimus noctum esse Atticarum nihil imitati festivitates inscriptionum, quas plerique alii utriusque linguae scriptores in id genus libris fecerunt. (5) Nam quia variam et miscellam et quasi confusaneam doctrinam conquisiverant, eo titulos quoque ad eam sententiam exquisitissimos indererunt. (6) Namque alii Musarum inscripserunt, alii silvarum, ille πέλαγον, hic Ἀμαθεῖας κέρας, alius κηρία, partim λεμόνας, quidam lectionis suae, alius antiquarum lectionum atque alius ἀνήθρον et item alius εὐρημάτων. (7) Sunt etiam, qui λόγχους inscripserint, sunt item, qui στροματεῖς, sunt adeo, qui πανδέκτας et Έλικόνα et προβλήματα et ἐγχειρίδια et παραξιφίδας. (8) Est qui memoriales titulum fecerit, est qui πραγματικά έν πάρεγγα et δίδασκαλικά, est item qui historiae naturalis, est qui παντοδαπής ίστορίας, est praeterea qui πραττα, est itidem qui πάγκαρσον, est qui τόπων scripserit; (9) sunt item multi, qui coniectanea, neque item non sunt, qui indices libris suis fecerint aut epistularum moralium aut epistolarum quaestionum aut confusarum et quaedam alia inscripta nimirum lepida multasque prorsum concinnitates redolentia. (10) Nos vero, ut captus noster est, incuriose et inmeditate ac prope etiam subrustice ex ipsi quoque inscriptionis laude cedentes, quantum cessimus in cura et elegantia scripsionis.

(4) Now, since it was during the long winter nights in the land of Attica that I started to play around in creating these chapters, I have entitled them Attic Nights, thus avoiding the wittiness of the titles that most other writers, both Greek and Latin, have devised for books of this kind. (5) Indeed, because they had pursued learning of a varied, mixed, and (I daresay) be-muddled nature, they also gave their books accordingly recondite titles. (6) For instance, some have titled their works Muses, others Woods; one called his book

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⁵⁰ Gellius’s disparilitas is ludically productive especially for Gunderson (2009), whose Nox Philologiae returns repeatedly to the irony that the NA’s ordering principle is described by disparilitas. See, in particular, Gunderson’s chapter Auctoris Auctores, which chronicles the efforts of Gellius’s later readers, from Macrobius to Holford-Strevens, to engage with his difficult disparilitas.

⁵¹ The words ludere and facere together have a literary ring about them: ludere, in the context of writing literature, had long been associated with the writing of light literature (such as Cicero claimed that his Paradoxa Stoicorum was – §3); and facere, as also the Greek ποιεῖν, may refer to the “making” of literature (q.v. OLD 5).

⁵² See Vardi 1993 on the generic implications of the title Noctes Atticae. In brief: “It is novel and ingenious enough to attract attention, while at the same time conveying polymathy, thereby both advertising the work and hinting at its genre. The use of the plural in the title would have been a further indication of the work’s miscellaneous character, especially in a period when this genre was so common. Once Gellius’ title became familiar to readers, it was frequently imitated without risk of misapprehension.” See also Ker 2004 on the culture of night-writing in the imperial period, with focus on the prefaces of Seneca (the Epistulae Morales), Pliny the Elder, and Gellius, especially pp. 236-239 on Gellius’s title.
Robe of Athena, another Horn of Plenty, yet another Honeycombs; a few have Leas, and a few have The Author’s Reading; one wrote Antique Readings, another Blooms, still another Findings. (7) And there are some who titled their books Lamps, some too Quilts, some again The Universal Receptacle and Helicon and Questions and The Handbook and The Pocket Knife. (8) There is one who made his title Memoranda, one Factoids and Appendices and Teachings; yet another who wrote An Inquiry into Nature, one A Sundry Inquiry, another yet a Meadow, another still a Bumper Crop, and one a Passages. (9) There are many too with Assemblages, and there is no shortage of those who have titled their books Moral Epistles or Epistolic Questions or Random Questions as well as certain other excessively clever titles positively reeking with ingenuity. (10) I, however, in keeping with my ability, applied my title carelessly and thoughtlessly, one might even say uncouthly, for I called my work Attic Nights after the place and time of my winter vigils, conceding as much to all other authors in excellence of titling as I did in studious elegance of writing.

We were concerned before with the process of making the miscellany, how Gellius guided its maturation from things heard and read to the carefully written essays that comprise the collection. Gellius turns our attention now (sed...) to a discourse concerned more with generic orientation, respective to rival works, yet still wholly grounded in the importance of the genesis of the Attic Nights. He uses the quoniam and idcirco clauses to steer this discursive transition: the long winter nights in Attica serve as the temporal and spatial origins of the text at hand, and the title for that text is drawn accordingly from that place and time of genesis. Gellius explicitly contrasts his own title-extraction with the title-invention in which other writers in the genre indulge; thus begins his genre-polemic, which, as he continues it, remains rooted in an aesthetic of earthy simplicity that respects origins above much else, especially stylistic elegance.

And yet, even as proudly as Gellius proclaims his work’s simplicity and honors the process of making the miscellany, he cannot resist the seductions of elegance; for, after finding the cause of the titles’ excessive wittiness in their fetishization of certain metaphors of abundance and inquiry, Gellius himself carefully produces a list rife with a pleasing variatio of expression, then ends the present phase of the polemic with a surprisingly elegant pun. But

53 Note the wordplay on the last two: ἐγχειρίδια (Handbooks but also Daggers) and παραξεφίδας (Pocket Knives). The idea of accessibility is the primary attraction in these titles for potential readers (Vardi 1993, 299).
Gellius is not being entirely hypocritical here, for the list is a catalogue of laughing-stocks, much in the mode of the few chapters devoted to the mockery of other miscellanies’ follies (e.g., 9.4 and 14.6). To a receptive reading audience, Gellius brings a smile as he calls attention, by way of example, to the broad variety of recondite silliness in miscellany-titles. When skimming the names of these collections, readers will find metaphors of gaudy abundance, advertisements of polymathy, and promises of usefulness. While he eschews abundance, Gellius does, in his Preface, promote the *NA* as both erudite and useful. These seem to be the usual selling points in collections of learned notes, but Gellius’s aim here is rather to de-emphasize these conventional elements of the genre.54 With the strong contrast delivered in the words *nos vero* (§10), Gellius brings into focus the real idea behind his title, again belittling his own capacity for eloquence and re-iterating the importance of the place and time of literary genesis. All of this works to push the reader’s image of the author away from elegant frivolity to circumscribed *otium*.55 But, even as Gellius extols the virtues of a stylistically honest work in a sentence that neatly summarizes his argument, the very same sentence betrays some inclination to elegance: the typically Gellian ascending tricolon of *incuriose et inmeditate ac prope etiam subrustice* (a humble improvement over *variam et miscellam et quasi confusaneam*, §5) shows off a facility with words,56 and the subtle, complex relationships between *inscripsimus*, *inscriptionis*, *cedentes*, *cessimus*, and *scriptionis* in the second half of §10 betray likewise a facility with the construction of phrases and clauses. He says that his *inscriptio* deserves no *laus*, and yet he has just explained how

54 See above, nn. 45 and 51.
55 Thus Gellius enters himself into a tradition of virtuously intellectual *otium* that goes back at least to Cicero’s dialogues. See Ker 2004, 223, for a delineation of positive and negative *otia* as conceived by the Romans.
56 Faider 1927, 202-203. As Gellius often does when clustering synonyms, one is classical (here, *variam*), one is archaic (*miscellam*), and the other post-Augustan (*confusaneam*); some or all are rare, a taste that Gellius shares with Fronto (Marache 1967, xix-xxiii).
exquisitely fitting it is for his work; he says that his *scriptio* lacks both *cura* and *elegantia*, and yet the protestation itself is impressive for its careful elegance.\(^{57}\)

Gellius is playing with his readers in §§4-10, but he has by no means gotten lost in his literary games: having introduced an ironic undercurrent, he now takes on a more serious tone as he expands his polemic.

(11) Sed ne consilium quidem in excerpendis notandisque rebus idem mihi, quod plerisque illis, fuit. Namque illi omnes et eorum maxime Graeci multa et varia lectitantes, in quas res cumque inciderant, “alba” ut dicitur “linea” sine cura discriminis solam copiam sectati converserant, quibus in legendis ante animus senio ac taedio languebit, quam unum alterumve reppererit, quod sit aut voluptati legere aut cultui legisse aut usui meminisse. (12) Ego vero, cum illud Ephesii viri summe nobilem verbum cordi habemem, quod propecto ita est: πολυμαθηνουνουδιδασκαι, ipse qui dem volvendis transeundisque multis admodum voluminibus per omnia semper negotiorum intervalla, in quibus furari otium potui, exercitus defessusque sum, sed modica ex his eaque sola accepi, quae aut ingenia prompta expeditaque ad honestae eruditionis cupidinem utiliumque artium contemplationem celerique compendio ducerent aut homines aliis iam vitae negotiis occupatos a turpi certe agrestique rerum atque verborum imperitia vindicarent. (13) Quod erunt autem in his commentariis paucia quaedam scrupulos a et anxia vel ex grammatica vel ex dialectica vel etiam ex geometrica, quodque erunt item paucula remotiora super augurio iure et pontificio, non oportet ea defugere quasi aut cognitu non utilia aut perceptu difficilia. Non enim fecimus altos nimis et obscuros in his rebus quaestionum sinus, sed primitias quasdam et quasi libamenta ingenuarum artium dedimus, quae virum civiliter eruditum neque audisse unquam neque attigisse, si non inutile, at quidem certe indecorum est.

(11) Even my approach to excerpting and note-taking was different from that of most others. All of them, especially the Greeks, read through a great variety of things and then, drawing a “white line”, as they say, paying no regard to distinctions, seeking only abundance, they swept up whatever they happened upon; in reading such things, the mind will age and tire itself into a torpor before it can find even one thing that is pleasant or edifying to read or useful to recall. (12) I, however, kept to heart the famous saying of the distinguished gentleman of Ephesus, which is of course πολυμαθηνουνουδιδασκαι; for while I did exhaust my energies by unrolling and traversing a great many volumes in every break from my duties when I could steal a spare moment, I took from them a limited number of things, only those things that could either lead quick and ready minds, by a fast and easy shortcut, to a desire for ennobling education or rescue otherwise busy men from an indubitably shameful and provincial ignorance of things and words. (13) Now, there will be in these essays a few exacting and meticulous details from Grammar, Logic, or even Geometry, and there will also be just a few things a bit more abstruse about augural and pontifical law – but one ought not avoid them on the assumption that

\(^{57}\) Cf. Gunderson 2009, 29: “Even as Gellius ends this section by declaring his own artlessness, he produces a jingle with *scriptionis*, the last word of the passage, picking up on *inscriptionis* in the preceding clause. In fact, the somewhat mechanical *scriptio*, ‘writing down,’ has had to have its meaning stretched in order for the sense of the phrase to work while satisfying the exigencies of the rhyme.” Cf. Holford-Strevens 2003, 27-28.
they are useless to learn or difficult to grasp. In fact, in these matters, I have not made the recesses of my inquiries too deep and dark; I have instead offered up first fruits and libations, as it were, of the noble arts, and if a man with the education of a citizen has never heard nor touched upon these things, it is perhaps not useless, but it is most certainly indecent.

With a second *sed*, Gellius takes another fork in the road. In these sections he departs from making judgments on titles and builds on what is perhaps the more significant part of his polemic against other members of the genre. Now it is the “approach to excerpting and note-taking” (*consilium in excerpendis notandisque*) that marks his collection as something different and better. Here Gellius outlines the *NA*’s guiding aesthetic as one that values economy of time (for the reader) and space (for the writer). He begins this part of the polemic with a focus on his activities as a reader, which were burdened (unnecessarily, in his view) by the miscellanists’ tendency to sweep up all kinds of trivia indiscriminately; the aesthetic of multitude and variety, he is saying, actually inhibits one’s ability to take pleasure in deep study. This is not to be Gellius’s guiding principle (*consilium*); as a reader, he has discovered how intellectually stifling it can be for the reader when the author neglects the virtues of economy.⁵⁸

In §12 he turns the corner from reader to author. First, he restates the reader’s problem: he quotes an ancient authority on the trouble with having knowledge without wisdom, and he explains that the process of unrolling his way through the volumes has exhausted him.⁵⁹ Then, after complaining of the partial waste of his own *otium*, he becomes the author that will make his readers’ *otium* well-spent – he gives his readers a shortcut and a helping hand towards a willing acquaintance with the liberal arts. The intended effect of the *NA*, then, is quite the opposite of the

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⁵⁸ See Vardi 2000 on the perceived virtues of *brevitas* in Roman prose and poetry, especially as they pertain to Gellius’s aesthetic preferences.
⁵⁹ I note in passing that the former of these is a technique that Gellius, as author, will go on to use in bolstering his own authority, and the latter is a casual notice on the method by which a reader (or Gellius, at least) naturally reads a miscellany: from one end of the roll to the other. This last observation authorizes the reader to engage with the text through a sequential-reading approach – the effects of book structure, variety, and recurring themes manifest themselves most easily *via* this kind of reading.
actual effect of the miscellanies that Gellius has read: rather than falling into a torpor, his readers’ minds will take the first steps toward an ennobling education.60

Indeed, in reading through the *Attic Nights*, readers will not lose their way in the *sinus* of Gellius’s research (§13); they will find only the *primitiae*, the first fruits, of the author’s vast harvest of literature. By building his *commentarii* around *primitiae*, Gellius is able to avoid excessive depth and more easily keep the casual reader’s attention – brevity is a virtue because it lends itself to variety, which is itself a virtue because it lends itself both to entertainment and to breadth of knowledge. This element of selectivity also highlights as a virtue Gellius’s focus on good, useful knowledge, especially as a remedy against the unfocused obsession with abundance that will be found in other collections; thus is he able not only to hold the attention of readers but also direct them toward things worth knowing rather than cluttering their minds with trivia.61 But *primitiae* are also “beginnings” – Gellius’s *penus* of literature holds only the cream of the crop, choice enticements to spur readers to investigate more deeply on their own. Gellius’s hint here that readers may provide greater depth themselves will find fuller explication in §17, where readers are instructed on how they may go beyond the *NA*.

It is here too that Gellius begins to define his ideal readers— in §13 they are those who have a basic education, for whom it is at least embarrassing to lack certain kinds of knowledge. Gellius implies that his text can fix this problem. In the next few sentences, Gellius goes further,

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60 We must also note here that, in saying *ex his ... accepi ...*, Gellius reveals that his miscellany consists, at least in part, of other miscellanies. It is probable that those miscellanies likewise borrowed material from other such collections, but the difference with Gellius’s collection is, he claims, that it is useful for self-education, and that its usefulness is a direct result of the would-be author’s selectiveness in making excerpts.

61 Here it is important to observe that the principles of brevity and variety serve a structural purpose as well, for they are especially useful at ensuring that readers derive pleasure from the act of reading the *NA* sequentially. Readers will also, like Gellius, want to avoid having to encounter long stretches of text that fail to hold their attention or offer useful knowledge. Cf. the value placed in variety by the Neronian-era miscellanist Pamphile of Epirauros, considered broadly to have been a likely model in some way for Gellius in his *NA*: Photius (*Bibliotheca* 175, 119r27-33) writes that she avoided easy thematic arrangement because she considered a miscellaneous order more delightful (ἐπιτερπέστερον δὲ καὶ χαριστέρον τὸ ἀναμεμιγμένον καὶ τὴν ποικιλίαν τῶν μονοειδοῦς νομίζουσα).
molding his ideal reader, giving that reader a place in the intellectual life into which the \textit{NA} is interwoven.

(14) Ab his igitur, si cui forte nonnumquam tempus voluptasque erit lucubratuunculas istas cognoscere, petitum impetratumque volumus, ut in legendo, quae pridem scierint, non aspernentur quasi nota involgataque. (15) Nam ecquid tam remotum in litteris est, quin id tamen complusculi sciant? et satis hoc blandum est non esse haec neque in scholis decantata neque in commentariis protrita. (16) Quae porro nova sibi ignotaque offenderint, aequum esse puto, ut sine vano obiectatu considerent, an minutaie istae admonitiones et pauxillulae nequaquam tamen sint vel ad alendum studium vescae vel ad oblectandum fovendumque animum frigidae, sed eius seminis generisque sint, ex quo facile adolescent aut ingenia hominum vegetoria aut memoria administrantium aut oratio sollertior aut sermo incorruptior aut delecto in otio et ludo liberalior. (17) Quae vero putaverint reprehendenda, his, si audebunt, succenseant, unde ea nos acceperim; sed enim, quae aliter apud alium scripta legerint, ne iam statim temere obstrepant, sed et rationes rerum et auctoriitates hominum pensent, quos illi quosque nos secuti sumus.

(14) And so, if I happen to have any readers who never have the time or inclination to acquaint themselves with late-night study, I should like to ask them, when reading things they already know, not to push them aside as common knowledge. (15) Indeed, is there anything in literature so recondite that most people cannot know it? I would even be flattered if my material has not been thoroughly recited in the schools and worn to tatters in essays. (16) At the same time, if they find anything new and unfamiliar, I think it is fair that they should consider without idle criticism whether these small, minute notices are, on the contrary, neither poor motivators for study nor tepid amusements for the refreshment of the mind, but rather a seed and stock from which the human wit might grow easily more active, the memory better furnished, rhetoric more skillful, diction more authentic, after-work amusements more enlightened. (17) And, as for what they will find too unclear or abbreviated, I insist that they should understand that my essays were written both to instruct and to suggest: they should be content with my pointing out of the tracks and pursue them later, at their pleasure, when they have found books or teachers. (18) But if there is anything here they think worthy of censure, I suggest that they direct their displeasure (if they’re up to it) at the sources from which I drew it; in fact, if they have a different reading from a different source, they should make no spur-of-the-moment criticism, but weigh instead the arguments of the material and the credibility of the authors that each of us has used.

These several sentences are structured so as to both deflect the criticisms anticipated by Gellius and instruct the wary reader on how to appreciate the \textit{NA}. These instructions, if followed, will result in the reader’s transformation into the kind of amateur scholar that Gellius himself was, the
kind who will, given time and effort, become an author in the mode of Gellius.\textsuperscript{62} He deflects the first anticipated criticism in §14 and §15, targeting those who never have (or make) the time for \textit{lucubratio}culae (late-night studies). Here Gellius argues (somewhat obscurely, on account of his rhetorical modesty) that even with restrictions on their free time, his busy readers ought to pay attention even to material that seems trite, for they will find a little something more than what is commonly taught by other books and teachers. Thus, his first instruction urges the reader to make time, that is, to steal it from the night and give it to \textit{lucubratio}culae – certainly the mark of a cultured man,\textsuperscript{63} but not an excessive burden, as the diminutive suffix suggests. Besides, the brevity and variety of the \textit{NA}’s essays ought to afford readers plenty of opportunities to dip their toes into the intellectual waters before taking the plunge.

Following this exhortation to the cultured night-life, Gellius marks out the remainder of his list of potential objections and, in counterpoint, his instructions to the reader, with \textit{Quae porro} (§16), \textit{Quae autem} (§17), and \textit{Quae vero} (§18). First, a reader may encounter things previously unknown to him – do not, says Gellius, avoid the unknown simply because it is unfamiliar; in fact, these modest notes will improve the mind in a number of ways. His instruction now is simply to keep an open mind when approaching the \textit{NA}, remembering the promise that the collection will spur the mind to improve itself both in quantity of knowledge and in quality of wit. In §17, anticipating frustration at things not fully explained by himself, Gellius reminds readers that the \textit{NA} is only the starting point in their self-education. Although Gellius does not urge readers to seek books and teachers just yet, he considers them an integral part of the plan, a second stage after the reading of the \textit{NA}. Finally, in §18, supposing there to be a scholarly impulse on the part of the reader, Gellius addresses any potential \textit{ira philologica}: if the

\textsuperscript{62} See chapter 3, below, on Gellius’s transformation as it appears in Book 14 of the \textit{NA}.
\textsuperscript{63} Ker 2004. See also \textit{NA} Pref. 12: \textit{in quibus furari otium potui}. 

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two of us, he says, have found different readings, let us not find fault in one another but compare instead the merits of our sources. The reader is now on a level with Gellius, as both active reader and scholar. Gellius will, in the following sections, go on to define his ideal reader in more explicit terms, but by the end of this list, it is apparent how a reader might be transformed from sceptic to scholar: first, he reads with an open mind in the hopes that his wit, memory, rhetoric, diction, and amusements will be thereby improved; he then makes plans to pursue in his own independent studies whatever he did not satisfactorily understand in reading the NA; finally, having matured into a litterateur, he understands that literary arguments hinge on the correct use of the sources. Thus the protreptic function of the NA makes itself evident – later, in chapter 3 of this dissertation, we will explore how Gellius uses the structure of Book 14 to dramatize such a maturation.

Now, having given shape, in negative fashion, to his ideal reader, Gellius goes further: in concluding the main part of the Preface, he makes the tone of the discourse take a decidedly more ludic turn (not unlike the tone of the title polemic in §6-10); indeed Gellius plays at a mystic tone as he appropriates the law of an Aristophanic parodos (Frogs 354-6, 369-71):

(19) Erit autem id longe optimum, ut qui in lectitando, percontando, scribendo, commentando numquam voluptates, numquam labores ceperunt, nullas hoc genus vigilias vigililarunt neque ullis inter eiusdem Musae aemulos certationibus disceptationibusque elimati sunt, sed intemperiarum negotiorumque pleni sunt, abeant a noctibus his procul atque alia sibi oblectamenta quaerant. Vetus adagium est: “nil cum fidibus graculost, nihil cum amaracino sui.” (20) Atque etiam, quo sit quorundam male doctorum hominum scævitas et invidentia iritatio, mutuabor ex Aristophanæ choro anapaestæ paucæ et quam ille homo festivissimus fabulae suæ spectandæ legem dedit, eandem ego commentariis his legendis dabo, ut ea ne attingat neve adeat profestum et profanum volgus a ludo musico diversum. (21) Versus legis datae hi sunt:

εὐφημεῖν χρή κάξιστασθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροις χοροῖς,
όστις ἄπειρος τοιῶνδε λόγων ἢ γνώμη μὴ καθαρεύει
ἡ γενναίων ὄργια Μουσῶν μήτ’ ἐἴδεν μήτ’ ἐχόρευσεν,
τούτοις αὐδῶ, καθός ἀπαντᾶ, καθάς τὸ τρίτον μᾶλ’ ἀπαντῶ
ἐξίστασθαι μύσταισι χοροῖς· ύμεῖς δ’ ἀνεγείρετε μολῆν
cαι παννυχίδας τάς ἡμετέρας, αἳ τῇδε πρέπουσιν ἔορτῇ.
In fact, it will be best, by far, if those who have never taken pleasure nor pains in reading, researching, writing, and commenting nor spent entire nights in this way nor polished themselves by contending and debating with rival followers of the same Muse, but are filled rather with folly and toil, should stay far away from these *Nights* and find themselves other amusements. As the old saying goes: “there’s no harp for the crow, no fragrance for swine.” (20) And, just to provoke even further the blundering envy of certain pseudo-intellectuals, I shall borrow a few anapests from Aristophanes’s chorus and impose upon the reading of these essays the same law that that legendary wit imposed upon the watching of his play: the crowd of the uncultivated, the uninitiated, those whose backs are turned to the Muses’ game, shall neither touch nor approach this work. (21) Here are the verses of the law imposed:

*One must keep his silence, keep his distance from our dances,*  
*If he’s unacquainted with this logic or unclean in spirit*  
*Or he neither sees nor celebrates the noble Muses’ rites;*  
*Men like this I bid — I forbid, and thrice I do forbid:*  
*One must keep his distance from the mystic dances — you, though: start the beat,*  
*Keep us going through the night: it suits this festival.*

These sentences may seem to turn some readers away, for Gellius is saying that some pseudo-intellectuals, full of folly and toil, are no better than the artless crow or the malodorous pig. Indeed, there are many chapters in the *NA* that expose those who falsely claim expertise in the field of literature.\(^{64}\) In keeping with this spirit of exclusion, some have thought Gellius unwelcoming here, or snobbish at best.\(^{65}\) It is true that he appears to rebuff readers who do not match the ideal, and the law of Aristophanes comes off as grave and forbidding. He also describes, more explicitly here than anywhere else, the nature of his ideal readers: such people read, research, write, and make commentaries, and they participate eagerly in a competitive intellectual environment (Pref. 19). They do what Gellius did, and they do it in the order in which he did it (cf. §§2-3). Indeed, in appropriating the comic poet’s authority and using him to employ at last a second-person address, Gellius seems to directly separate his ideal reader from

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\(^{64}\) The scholarly literature concerning this intellectual shame-culture is expansive. For Gellius’s place in it, see most recently Keulen 2009; cf. Anderson 1994. See Johnson 2010 for a more general overview of the kind of book-centered culture in which Gellius participated (ch. 6 on Gellius). On the cultural milieu as a whole, see especially Gleason 1995 and Anderson 1993.

\(^{65}\) Recent scholarship in particular has striven to prove that Gellius focuses his efforts mainly (even exclusively) on those already deeply familiar with the Greek and Latin classics: Johnson 2010, 100-101; Gunderson 2009, 40-41; Keulen 2009, 208-209. Another vein of scholarship, more sympathetic to Marache’s notion of *humanisme Gellien,*
the crowd of the uninitiated: ὑμεῖς δ’, ἀνεγείρετε μολπήν / καὶ παννυχίδας τὰς ἠμετέρας, αἱ τῇ δὲ πρέπουσιν ἔορτῇ. Channeling the Old Comic, Gellius invites his ideal readers to join his Musical, nocturnal activity, at a time not only well-suited to *otium*, but also sacred (*ἔορτῇ*), where the *volgus professtum et profanum* does not belong. But let us also not forget that, throughout the Preface, Gellius has made it clear that the purpose of the *NA* is that readers may enlarge their knowledge and improve their mental faculties – that they may, in short, educate themselves. The text at hand, moreover, by Gellius’s own admission, is meant to rescue the busy and the boorish from a shameful lack of knowledge (§12 *fin.*). Are his readers not, then, ignorant in the beginning, but also curious? Why else read the *NA?* Those reading the *NA* for the first time may well be uninitiated into the intellectual life; but the *NA* will shape them into the kind of *litterati* that would fit into Gellius’s circle. It is therefore probable that at least some of Gellius’s target audience consists of the ignorant but curious. Gellius’s “laws” will serve as provocations rather than prohibitions. Besides, when Gellius uses Aristophanes to turn from talking about the uninitiated (in the third person) to a direct address to readers (suddenly using the second person), he allows himself to assure his readers that they are, in fact, part of the club, as pursuers of erudition.

These sentences serve also as the concluding remarks of the Preface’s argument. Here Gellius reiterates the nature of his ideal reader (which he defined in §§13-17), using language that recalls material from the beginning of the Preface, where he outlined his own process of reading and text-creation. After exhorting his readers to use the *NA* as a stepping-stone toward intellectual activity of a higher degree, he now invites them into the mysteries of intellectual re-creation. From there, readers may compose the right kind of miscellany, doing better than the

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finds Gellius more welcoming to the uninitiated, interested in improving them with his educational program – see Beall 2004 and Holford-Strevens (whose view sits between these competing strands) 2003, 42-43, with n. 75.
failures listed in §§6-10. Accordingly, Gellius sets an example for the meaningful composite in these final sentences: as he brings his themes of reader-improvement and miscellany-creation to a close, he borrows (responsibly) the authority of an old saw and an Old Comic to give point to his own remarks. As he often does at the end of a section or a chapter, here he uses the words of another to cap his own argument. And indeed he does so artfully: first, he marries his lex to that of Aristophanes with almost exactly parallel syntax (*quam ille homo festivissimus fabulae suae spectandae legem dedit, eandem ego commentariis his legendis dabo*)⁶⁶, and then he uses the Aristophanes quote to expand on his rejection of the vulgar, unmusical rabble (*profestum et profanum volgus a ludo musico diversum*). That crowd is *a ludo musico diversum* because it “neither sees nor celebrates the Muses’ noble rites”; it is *profanum* (opposed to sacred things) because it does not participate in the “mystic dances”; it is *profestum* (opposed to the festal occasion) because it is not a part of the holy festival (*ἑορτή*). Finally, Gellius ends with Aristophanes’s most powerful exhortation: by connecting ὑμεῖς and ἡμεῖς via the παννυχίδες, Gellius establishes a community of author and reader with the *Noctes*, a mystic endeavor, at its center.⁶⁷ With these words, at the climax of his Preface, he establishes an authoritative and challenging, but welcoming, relationship with his readers; in other words, he becomes a teacher and a model to his readers. This will be the primary author-reader relationship throughout the *NA*, whether one reads paradigmatically or syntagmatically, thematically or sequentially.

The Preface continues with a kind of epilogue, as Gellius begins to discuss the size and shape of the *NA* – first he comments on the size of the collection and its relationship to the span of his life:

(22) Volumina commentariorum ad hunc diem viginti iam facta sunt. (23) Quantum autem vitae mihi deinceps deum voluntate erit quantumque a tuenda re familiari

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⁶⁶ Note the felicitous assonance between *legem dedit* and *legendis dabo*.

⁶⁷ Cf. *NA* 1.9, on which see below, IV.B.
As of this day I have produced twenty volumes of essays. (23) And, however much life I will be granted henceforth by the will of the gods, however much time I will have free from managing the estate and seeing to my children’s education, will all be spare bits of time that I will devote to gathering up delightful little memoirs of the sort found here. (24) The number of books, then, will advance, should the gods favor me, in step with the progress of my life (however much of that there will be); and I do not wish to be given a span of life longer than I can retain the ability to write and to compose essays.

These concluding words point to the future life of the NA while also drawing a kind of boundary. So far, Gellius says, the NA consists of 20 volumes. A look at the capita rerum at the end of the Preface attests to this assertion, and the presence of 20 volumes proves it. Gellius’s provisional boundary has been drawn: the words of §22 imply a physical limit for the work, measuring its current size. But the same sentence suggests (ad hunc diem) that the work’s size is not at all limited to 20 volumes. The Preface, then, has been produced at the midpoint of Gellius’s project.

Gellius, however, does not limit this essay-project to the production simply of some number of volumes. All his life and all his leisure will be time devoted to the collection of further gobbets. In fact, the number of forthcoming volumes is directly proportional to the amount of life left to Gellius. He is therefore mapping the physical scope of his project onto the temporal boundaries that define the span of his life.68 In particular, the part of his life that is given to otium will be devoted to this miscellany-making task. Even so, since the project consumes all the spare bits of his free time, it is a serious hobby, and its magnitude grants his otium-life a strongly literary cast. But, besides its literary bent, the life on record in the NA is one of frequent research and intellectual display, and the NA, in all the stages of its composition, partakes of that life, recording examples of intellectual pursuit and displaying some of the

results. Finally, beyond its status as a product of his *otium*, the *NA* is also a display of what Gellius *does* with that *otium*: as we saw above, he explains in his Preface the process of miscellany-making, which lies at the heart of his intellectual persona. He implies here, at the close of his preface-essay, that the very essence of his life is the ability to write notes and develop essays (*facultas scribendi commentandique*).

From a cursory reading of this sort, it is apparent that in §§22-24 Gellius connects the number of forthcoming books in the *NA* to the amount of time left in his life and thus the collection’s physical presence to the activities of his *otium*-life. But he also suggests that the project will continue beyond the bounds of his life. As we have seen in reading earlier parts of the Preface, Gellius clearly marks a protreptic program in which the reader is expected to participate in the kind of life on record in the *NA*, i.e., the life of reading, listening, taking notes, and making essays (destined, perhaps, for artful compilation). The final words, then, of this section of the Preface (*ad hanc quoque facultatem scribendi commentandique idoneus*) call to mind not only Gellius’s methods (§3) but also his characterization of the ideal reader in §19, the one who takes pleasure in laboring *in lectitando, percontando, scribendo, commentando*. These activities form the virtuous core of Gellius’s *otium*-model. He also points to the future by mentioning the education of his children. While he separates their upbringing here from the making of future volumes of the *NA*, his mention of them recalls the first extant sentence of the Preface, whereby we understand that he has composed the collection in part for the relaxation of his children’s minds. Their *otium*-life is foreordained in his.

2. The Book of Books: Gellius’s *Capita Rerum* (§§25ff.).
Having given the *NA* the size of 20 volumes and the shape of his *otium*-life, Gellius now appends what many have misleadingly called a Table of Contents. It would, of course, be churlish to claim that the headings that follow do not give succinctly some idea of the contents of the collection; on the other hand, readers will be hard pressed to find a tabular format to guide their researches.⁷⁰ We rely on modern editors for such conveniences. Here is how Gellius himself introduces his post-prefatorial listings:

(25) Capita rerum, quae cuique commentario insunt, exposuimus hic universa, ut iam statim declaretur, quid quo in libro quaeri invenire possit.

(25) Here, all in one place, I have laid out summaries of the things that are present in each essay, so that it may be made clear at once what can be sought and found and in what book.

The summaries (*capita*) follow immediately. First, before discussing how readers may use them, it is worth noting that the *capita* really do come directly after Gellius’s preface essay, at least as Gellius himself wrote them. The best (by far) manuscript family (P) for the first seven books contains the Preface with *capita* just before Books 1-7. The inferior family R has for §25 *capitula primi libri hic relinco* (“Here I leave the summaries of the first book”), and most MS families relocate the *capita* severally to the beginnings of the chapters that they summarize. But the oldest extant MS (A, a 4th century palimpsest, Vat. Pal. lat. 24), known now for almost two centuries, clearly places all the *capita* together in one place, before the main body of the *NA*, and not at the beginnings of chapters.⁷¹ None of this is controversial, and yet it bears repeating even now, because all the modern editions of the *NA* place the *capita* both in the Preface and at the

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⁶⁹ Cf. Gunderson 2009, 43: “The *Attic Nights* is a book that never ends. ... The book is a bid for the author’s immortality in the here and now.” See also Gunderson’s chapter on the *NA*’s afterlife (or, in this case, future life): pp. 252-286).

⁷⁰ Cf. the cautionary remarks of Doody (2001, 2) on the treatment of Pliny the Elder’s *summarium*: “The usual equation of Pliny’s idea of a *summarium* with an index or a table of contents elides a long history of scholarly methods ... .” Riggsby (2007, 88-89) sensibly heeds these misgivings, and he accordingly defines his use of the term “table of contents” somewhat broadly: “A ‘table of contents’ ... is a summary of the contents of a work by means of listing its contents in abbreviated form and in the order of the text.”
beginnings of chapters, for our convenience but with scarcely a note of caution that Gellius himself did not do this. The fact of the matter is that Gellius seems to have separated his chapters only with numerals (just as he does in the *capita rerum*), with the significant (but sometimes ignored) result that the paratextual configuration of the *NA* in its original form allowed for a far less searchable text than does the medieval and modern presence of intertitles.

We must therefore begin to look askance at the practice of calling these *capita rerum* a Table of Contents. The latter term suggests an ease of use that does not prove itself when a reader tries to use the *capita* to access particular chapters. As stated above, the lack of distinctive markings between chapters in the papyrus rolls would have made this a cumbersome way to use the *NA*. Nor are the *capita* easy to use if one is looking for information on a particular topic – Pliny the Elder’s headings are more helpful to the reader in this respect.\(^{72}\) Readers may, of course, reorganize Gellius’s chapters under categories for their own benefit, as many have done,\(^ {73}\) but a virgin reading of the *NA* must venture into the sea of the author’s thoughts without this kind of direction.

If Gellius intended the *capita rerum* to be a handy tool for the purpose of accessibility (i.e., an index), he falls short not only by modern standards, but even by the standards of his fellow Roman Pliny. Let us, then, consider the *capita* as fulfilling some function other than, or beyond, indicial. I take a sample so as to illustrate:

\(^{71}\) On the manuscript tradition of the *NA* see the excellent appendix in Holford-Strevens 2003, 333-353; cf. the notes on the *NA’s* structure on pp. 30-31. See also Marshall 1983. On the palimpsest see Fohlen 1979.

\(^{72}\) So too Vardi 2004, 176-177. Small (1997, 17) finds even Pliny’s *summarius* no easy aid for the ancient reader, there being no line-breaks or even word-breaks in either the content-listings or the book-rolls that contain the chapters in full.

\(^{73}\) Genette (1997, 304-305) reproduces an interesting letter *a propos* to the redistribution of the *capita*. In a letter to a typist regarding *Les Jeunes Filles*, Proust writes: “Almost a month ago, I asked Gaston Gallimard whether he agreed that I should intersperse the text with chapter headings giving the same information as that in the printed summary. He replied that he didn’t much like the idea, and, after thinking the matter over, I am inclined to agree with him. We are of the opinion that the *** which I have introduced throughout wherever a fresh piece of narrative begins, will
CAPITVLA LIBRI PRIMI

I. Quali proportione quibusque collectionibus Plutarchus ratiocinatum esse Pythagoram philosophum dixerit de comprehendenda corporis proceritate, qua fuit Hercules, cum vitam inter homines viveter.

II. Ab Herode Attico C. V. tempestive deprompta in quendam iactantem et gloriosum adulescentem, specie tantum philosophiae sectatorem, verba Epicteti Stoici, quibus festiviter a vero Stoico seiuinxit volgus loquacium nebulonum, qui se Stoicos nuncuparent.

III. Quod Chilo Lacedaemonius consilium anceps pro salute amici cepit; quodque est circumspecte et anxie considerandum, an pro utilitatis amicorum delinquendum aliquando sit; notataque inibi et relata, quae et Theophrastus et M. Cicero super ea re scripsentur.

IV. Quam tenuiter curioseque exploraverit Antonius Iulianus in oratione M. Tullii verbi ab eo mutati argutiam.

V. Quod Demosthenes rhetor cultu corporis atque vestitu probris obnoxio infamique munditia fuit; quodque item Hortensius orator ob eiusmodi munditias gestumque in agendo histrionicum Dionysiaec saltatricibus cognomento compellatus est.

VI. Verba ex oratione Metelli Numidici, quam dixit in censura ad populum, cum eum ad uxorres ducendas adhortaretur; eaque oratio quam ob causam reprehensa et quo contra modo defensa sit.

VII. In hisce verbis Ciceronis ex oratione quinta in Verrem “hanc sibi rem praesidio sperant futurum” neque mendum esse neque vitium, erroreque istos, qui bonos libros violant et “futuram” scribunt; atque ibi de quodam alio Ciceronis verbo dictum, quod probe scriptum perperam mutatur; et aspersa pauca de modulis numerisque orationis, quos Cicero avide sectatus est.

VIII. Historia in libris Sotionis philosophi reperta super Laide meretrice et Demosthene rhetore.

IX. Quis modus fuerit, quis ordo disciplinae Pythagoricarum, quantumque temporis imperatum observatumque sit discendi simul ac tacendi.

X. Quibus verbis compellaverit Favorinus philosophus adulescentem casce nimis et priscie loquentem.

BOOK ONE SUMMARIES

I. The sort of ratio and reasoning by which, according to Plutarch, the philosopher Pythagoras made conclusions about describing the bodily height of Hercules when he lived among mortals.

II. The words of the Stoic Epictetus that the Hon. Herodes Atticus opportunely brought to hand against a certain boastful, arrogant young man, a student of philosophy in appearance only, words by which he wittily separated from the true Stoic the mob of jabbering airheads who declare themselves Stoics.

III. The difficult decision that Chilo of Sparta made in order to save his friend; that it is a matter of close and deliberate consideration whether one must sometimes do wrong in order to benefit friends; and in that connection are noted and recounted the things written by Theophrastus and M. Cicero on the topic.

IV. The subtle, careful way in which Antonius Julianus explored M. Tullius’s genius in changing a word in a speech of his.

V. That the orator Demosthenes bore a bodily refinement and dress liable to mockery, as well as a notorious fanciness; that the orator Hortensius too, on account of the same kind...
of fanciness and theatrical gesticulation in speeches, was teasingly nicknamed Dionysia, after the dancer.

VI. Words from the speech that Metellus Numidicus made to the People when he was censor, exhorting them to take wives; why that speech has been criticized and, conversely, how it has been defended.

VII. That there is no mistake or error in the following words of Cicero from his fifth speech Against Verres – hanc sibi rem praesidio sperant futurum – and that those who mar good copies and write futuram are wrong; and in that connection another word of Cicero’s is mentioned, which, though written rightly, is altered wrongly; also, a smattering about the rhythms and measures of speech that Cicero eagerly strove for.

VIII. A story found in the books of Sotion the philosopher, about Lais the courtesan and Demosthenes the orator.

IX. What the method and order of Pythagorean education was, and how much time was ordained and observed for silent learning.

X. The words by which Favorinus the philosopher scolded a young man whose speech was too hoary and antiquated.

As it turns out, this excerpt is representative of the kinds of things readers will find in the NA: diversity of the branches of learning, censure of pseudo-intellectuals, ethical conundrums, anecdotes, and investigations into correct diction are all on display here. The capita rerum, moreover, continue in this fashion, so that the list as a whole is a reliable guide to the contents and structure of the NA. They also, in their succinctness and apparently randomized arrangement, display the virtues of brevity and variety, both of which Gellius has connected, in the body of the Preface, with the otium-morality that suffuses the text of the NA. On the macro-level, then, the summary-list acts as a preview for the collection together with its primary virtues; or, if one sees the capita rerum as distillations of the NA’s chapters, then, taken together, they present the text in miniature. In this last sense, the capita rerum go beyond a purely paratextual function and become a kind of supertext, containing within the Preface-volume all the other volumes and chapters of the text.

74 Cf. Vardi 2004, 177: “I believe, therefore, that his table of contents was designed less as a search tool to be consulted by those who know what they are looking for, and more as a general repertory of the topics discussed in his work. It is thus meant to be read through, to exhibit the rich variety of material that learning consists of, and to invite the reader to open the occasional chapter as the fancy takes him.”

75 Riggsby (2007, 102) senses something like this when he compares Gellius’s capita against Pliny the Elder’s summarium: “Gellius’ writing is the opposite of duty, being a matter of recreation (pr.1). Its function is the enhancement of liberal education in the most general sense (pr.13). His is a private, individual project. Gellius, then,
These ten *capita* also illustrate, in miniature (or at least, as preview) some of the mechanics of the *NA*. To begin, the heading of chapter 1 of Book 1 promises a geometrical inquiry. Being the first heading in the list, it is both likely to be seen before the reader tires of reading summaries and is close to the body of the Preface, where Gellius promised (§13) that there would be only a few discussions of the more arcane subjects, of which geometry is one (... *vel ex grammatica vel ex dialectica vel etiam ex geometrica* ...). That he chooses to begin the collection with a discussion of one of these more obscure subjects is striking and suggests, among other things, that readers ought to expect that Gellius will sometimes unexpectedly elevate mathematical questions (and the like) to positions of significance. At this point in reading, it remains to be seen exactly what that significance is, and I will consider it below (IV.A). In any case, the rest of the first ten *capita* provide reassurance that geometry plays only a small part in the grand scheme of Gellius’s educational program.

Another significant feature of these first ten *capita* is that certain names recur even in this representative sample. Cicero appears in three of them as either Cicero or Tullius (3, 4, and 7), Demosthenes appears in two (5 and 8) , and Pythagoras appears in two (1 and 9). Cicero is ever-present in the *Nights* as exemplary of good diction, and his prominence here marks him in his function as stylistic model. Since Cicero was already a classic in Gellius’s time, it is no surprise to see Gellius using him to boost his own authority in settling debates over word choice and usage. That Demosthenes has a repeated presence here is somewhat more surprising, and Pythagoras’s double appearance is more surprising still. Demosthenes appears in two anecdotes...
(so, his function thus far is different from Cicero’s), and Pythagoras appears in the context of mathematics and education. These recurrences of important men, while forming no coherent pattern in the *capita rerum*, do signal a kind of continuity in the *Nights* whereby certain characters, performing certain functions, emerge repeatedly. A glance through the remainder of the *capita* reveals that at least Cicero and Demosthenes, alongside many others, appear multiple times. Not so, however, in the case of Pythagoras: his only other appearance in the *capita* is at 4.11. The rarity of his double appearance in Book 1, therefore, stands out and suggests that he will play some important role there. Indeed, he will, and a cover-to-cover reading of Book 1 will unveil other significant connections, some of them centered on these intellectual figures, that remain unmarked in the *capita* (e.g., the fact that Plutarch furnishes bookends for Book 1 is invisible in the *capita*, for he gets no mention in the *caput* for chapter 26 despite his importance in the text of the chapter). Here we get only a taste of the kinds of connections that Gellius can make between chapters.  

I conclude by way of a metaphor: the *capita* function as *primitiae* to the chapters in the body of the *NA*. Gellius claimed in §13 that he had provided his essays as *primitias quasdam et quasi libamenta ingenuarum artium* (“first-fruits and libations, as it were, of the noble arts”) rather than deep explorations of a smaller number of topics. From these beginnings (*primitiae*), readers may then proceed as they please to pursue further research by finding books and teachers for themselves (§17). But before they do all that, Gellius means for them to survey the list of chapter-summaries, so that they may see what can be found in each chapter and each book (§25). These lie at the beginning of a research-path that has no definite end. The *capita* thus serve as not only a miniature of the contents and structure of the *Nights*, but also as a miniature of the mechanics of the reader-motivated research project that the *NA* represents. It is fitting, then, that

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76 More on the function of recurring names as anchors below, chapter IV.
Gellius has so many of the \textit{capita} point to the sources that he used in his own research, a good habit for his readers to adopt as they become initiated into his cult of learning.
II. Finding a Pattern: Reading and Re-reading Book 2

In this chapter I will show what kind of pattern can emerge from reading the *NA* sequentially. In short, a sequential reading may find series of chapters that build on one another by means of shared elements. Some themes become more dominant than others, so that by the time a reader reaches the end of a book of the *NA*, the book may be said to be “about” something. The relationships between some themes and others may not be immediately obvious to the reader, so I approach Book 2 first by reading through the book and noticing the most obvious repetition that establishes connections between chapters, and then I re-read the book, paying more attention to how Gellius establishes thematic unity for Book 2 and the extent to which he does this.

A. Building a reading (2.21-30).

1. Noticing a pattern (2.21-22).

   Depending on a number of things (the time of day, the weather, what he ate for breakfast, what she read just a few minutes ago), there are many places in the *Noctes Atticae* where a reader may notice a pattern. Our hypothetical sequential reader, serendipitously experiencing the same moment of realization as did the author of this dissertation, notices a striking verbal echo between two adjacent chapters about halfway through Book 2. In chapter 21, Gellius recounts a calm summer evening from his school days in Greece, when he and several classmates are on a boat trip from Aegina to the Piraeus. Stargazing, they ask a man learned in astrological lore (who happens to be in the boat with them) a number of questions about the constellation called ἅμαξα (the “wagon”). Their learned friend tells them, among other facts, that this constellation is known by the Romans as *septentriones*. There follows a discussion on the etymology of this

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77 Book 2 is about 47 pages long in its OCT text; our encounter happens 26 pages into Book 2.
78 The Big Dipper – also called The Wain in English and Der Wagen in German.
word, with two competing explanations. Gellius ends by telling us which explanation the group preferred. The next chapter (22) also has a dramatic setting, this time with Gellius and friends at table at the house of Favorinus listening to readings from poetry and history, in both Greek and Latin. The name of a wind (iapyx) comes up in one of the Latin poems, and someone asks about it. Everyone wants to know, so Favorinus goes on at length about the winds, their number, names, and origins. Among these, the north wind comes up several times: septentriones (in sections 3, 4, 15 (twice), and 18). This is not a word commonly seen in the NA, and especially after the heavy focus placed on it in chapter 21, its presence here in chapter 22 seems to mark a potentially significant juxtaposition.

But what could this mean? Both chapters investigate words that signify observable natural phenomena, but that juxtaposition, in itself, seems to be nothing more than the grouping of two like things. This does something to undermine (however gently) Gellius’s prefatorial claim of chance order (usi autem sumus ordine rerum fortuito, quem antea in excerpendo feceramus), 2), but no more than the conjunction of chapters 8 and 9, the back-to-back criticisms of Plutarch’s criticisms of Epicurus (on which see below, B.3). 21 and 22, however, do stand out for the ways in which they are connected. First, the motif of the septentriones is realized differently than the motif of Plutarch/Epicurus. Whereas chapters 8 and 9 have Plutarch finding fault in two different sayings of Epicurus, chapters 21 and 22 discuss the septentriones as two phenomena different in every way except that they both happen somewhere in the “north” – a northern constellation, then a northern wind. Thus we already see that Gellius is capable of various kinds of varietas (a value expounded in the Preface and indeed part of the general

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79 One of these is that the –triones part signifies a team of oxen, making its etymology a cousin to that of the Greek ἀμαξα.
80 It appears also in 2.30 (on which see below, A.5), 3.10, and 9.4.
81 “I employed for my material the chance arrangement that I had made earlier when taking excerpts.”
aesthetic of poetry collections and some prose collections). But, besides the natural-phenomena connection, one may observe a Greek-Latin connection: both chapters compare Greek and Latin words that designate the same things: ἅμαξα – septentriones in chapter 21 and, e.g., ζέφυρος – favonius in chapter 22. The bilingual connection is highlighted further by the first sentence of each of the two chapters: (21) Ab Aegina in Piraeum complusculi earundem disciplinarum sectatores Graeci Romanique homines eadem in navi tramittebamus, and (22) Apud mensam Favorini in convivio familiari legi solitum erat aut vetus carmen melici poetae aut historia partim Graecae linguae, alias Latinae. Greeks and Romans (as well as the Greek language and the Latin) are set side-by-side at the beginning of both chapters. The setting of each chapter also has some bearing on their juxtaposition: 21 situates the action on the waterway between Aegina and Piraeus, and 22 sets its own action at the table of Favorinus – both are the opening phrases of their respective chapters. This is significant because the cross-lingual comparison in chapter 21 comes from the mouth of a speaker who begins his address to the students with quin vos opici dicitis mihi, quare, quod ἅμαξα Graeci vocant, nos “septentriones” vocamus? The word opici is a derogatory term implying stupidity, but it is also a Latin word for “Oscan”. The picture of cross-cultural dialogue is complicated now. Chapter 22 similarly complicates this dialogue by being set at the house of Favorinus, famously a native Gaul who adopted Greek as his language of choice and taught Roman students, fluent in both Greek and

82 See I.A, with n.5.
83 (21) “A good number of us, both Greek and Roman, who were students of the same disciplines, were crossing from Aegina to Piraeus in the same boat” and (22) “At private dinners in the house of Favorinus, it was customary to have readings in lyric poetry or history, sometimes in Greek, other times in Latin.”
84 The speaker is Gellius himself, and this is one of the few times when Gellius, as a character in a dramatic setting, speaks up in the Noctes, especially in such a challenging tone. He gently prods his fellows to think of an answer, but he also challenges their competence in the languages of the empire.
85 “Why don’t you oscans tell me why the constellation that is called ἅμαξα in Greek is called septentriones in our language?”
86 s.v. TLL; see also opicizo. Cf. Keulen 2009, 11 n. 32, on this satirical use of opicus (Keulen explains mostly via Marcus Aurelius, however).
Latin. Accordingly, he discusses Greek and Latin wind-names, with the brief intrusion of a Gaulish wind (the *circius*). To our hypothetical reader, this will seem to be an attractive theme on which to meditate – the differences between Greeks and Romans fascinate modern readers, but were of course important to ancient readers, who were Romans and Greeks themselves. To be able to exhibit intellectual control over the two languages and their connections with the world was to be culturally competent in an empire that encompassed the world (and its languages – cf. 17.17 on the legendary multilingualism of both Ennius and Mithridates). For a reader at this point in the *NA*, this theme seems potentially important. But when the reader reaches chapter 23 (a comparison between Caecilius’s *Plocium* and Menander’s play of the same name), the Greek-Latin theme will become ever more important, shifting now into the literary dimension. For a collection claiming fortuitous order, this revelation will feel extraordinary, and meaning will arise from these varied juxtapositions.

2. Noticing a series (2.23)

In its first few sentences chapter 23 exhibits the most outstanding characteristic that we have noticed in the previous two chapters: it compares something (not just a word) Roman with something comparable in Greek.

(1) Comoedias lectitamus nostrorum poetarum sumptas ac versas de Graecis Menandro aut Posidippo aut Apollodoro aut Alexide et quibusdam item aliis comicis. (2) Neque, cum legimus eas, nimium sane displicent, quin lepide quoque et venuste scriptae videantur, prorsus ut melius quoque posse fieri nihil censeas. (3) Sed enim si conferas et componas Graeca ipsa, unde illa venerunt, ac singula considerate atque apte iunctis et alternis lectionibus committas, oppido quam iacere atque sordere incipiunt, quae Latina sunt; ita Graecarum, quas aemulari nequiverunt, facetiis atque luminibus obsolescunt.

(1) We read a lot of comedies by Roman poets adapted and translated from Greek poets – Menander or Posidippus or Apollodorus or Alexis and certain other comic poets as

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87 Rolfe’s Loeb translation is misleading (“I often read comedies which...”), for two reasons. First, it is clear from §5 that in comparing the *Plocium* of Caecilius with that of Menander, Gellius is present with others (*Caecili Plocium*)
(2) And whenever we read them, they do not offend much at all; in fact, their writing feels clever and attractive. In short, you would think it couldn’t be improved at all. (3) But, the truth is, if you were to put the Greek originals next to them and compare them, and pit one against the other, carefully and appropriately choosing the passages that correspond, then the Latin versions start to become really quite low and foul; they lose their luster in the face of the wit and brilliance of the Greek versions they failed to match.

Once again, the first sentence sets the stage with a juxtaposition of Greek and Latin. But now the juxtaposition becomes a comparative value judgment between something Greek and something Roman that is derived from the Greek original. This is itself a new development in the Greek-Latin theme: previously we saw that Gellius had his speakers simply list the two languages’ words for the same signified phenomena; the present chapter begins not only by saying that the author has read both the Latin and the Greek version of the same play, but also by finding that the Greek version handles the same material in a superior manner. It may be worth observing here that these first few sentences are congruent with the aesthetic that is at this point beginning to emerge: that the ability to understand one item is more than doubled when that item sits next to a comparable item – in this case, the Latin plays seemed fine until the Greek originals were set beside them for comparison. So too with the Noctes Atticae: read one chapter, and you will know something; read the chapter(s) next to it, and you will know much more. The act of juxtaposition allows comparison and creates a new value that was not present before.

The added value of reading these three chapters together becomes more apparent upon finishing chapter 23. After the general statements of the first few sentences, Gellius recounts a particular instance, in which he and others find Caecilius’s Plocium inoffensive (hautquaquam ... displicebat, §5) until they compare some salient passages with the corresponding ones in

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legebamus; hautquaquam mihi et, qui aderant, displicebat;); second, the sequence of chapters 21 and 22 places Gellius among a group of intellectuals, and given that chapter 23 shares much in common with these chapters already, it is no great stretch to assume that the social dynamic continues. Therefore, the pluralis maiestatis is not to be preferred here. Cf. Johnson 2010, esp. 121-122.
Menander’s original. Even Glaucus got a better deal when he exchanged arms with Diomedes (Diomedis hercle arma et Glauci non dispari magis pretio existimata sunt, §7). Menander is consistently found to be more successful at expressing nuances of character, while Caecilius tends to aim for the cheap laughs. By the end of the chapter, after comparing two pairs of passages, Gellius presents a third set and challenges the reader to find anything humane in the poetry of Caecilius. He concludes by lamenting that while he may enjoy Caecilius’s work on its own, it will never be good when compared to its Greek forebears; he even insists that Caecilius’s reach exceeds his grasp (non puto Caecilium sequi debuisse, quod assequi nequiret, 22). By the end of this three-chapter sequence, the comparison of particular manifestations of the Greek and Latin languages has shifted from simple juxtapositions of words to more involved valuations of literary talent. No longer are we only fascinated by different words for constellations and winds; we are now in the contentious territory of literary evaluation. There has come to be a competition between the two languages, and the victor in this contest is clear, but it is not yet easy to understand what the Greek victory means for a mostly Latin antiquary collection. The chapters to come will present more sides of this prism of Greek-Roman comparisons.

3. Interlude (2.24-25).

Chapter 24 is about the thrift (parsimonia) of the ancient Romans and its decay into indulgence as sumptuary laws were gradually stripped of their severity. There is nothing in this

88 Gunderson 2009, 142-143, discourses intriguingly on the unusual presence of the 2nd-person in 2.23.3, concluding that Gellius implicates his reader in his communal act of reading (which, as Gunderson notes, begins as misreading, which is then corrected by Gellius and his group).

89 11-12: Praeter venustatem autem rerum atque verborum in duobus libris nequaquam parem in hoc equidem soleo animum attendere, quod, quae Menander praecclare et apposite et facete scriptis, ea Caecilius, ne qua potuit quidem, conatus est enarrare, sed quasi minime probanda praetermisit et alia nescio qua mimica inculcavit et illud Menandri de vita hominum media sumptum, simplex et verum et delectabile, nescio quo pacto omisit. Also, 19: Hi omnes motus eius affectionesque animi in Graeca quidem comedia mirabiliter acres et illustres, apud Caecilium autem pigra istae omnia et a rerum dignitate atque gratia vacua sunt.
chapter comparing the Romans to the Greeks, although the idea of decline compared to an ancient standard seems to have been carried over from the previous chapter, where Caecilius failed to match the humane quality of Menander’s comedy. The next chapter (25), however, returns to a Greek-Latin comparison. For now, chapter 24 will seem to be an interlude breaking up a sequence of chapters touching on the same theme.  

But when readers are looking for connections with other parts of the NA, they will find in 24 an echo of the themes of proportion and moderation in Book 1, which were prevalent in Book 1 (see below, IV). The first sentence of chapter 25 continues the Greek-Latin thread established in chapters 21-23: In Latino sermone, sicut in Graeco, alii ἀναλογία sequendam putaverunt, alii ἀνωμαλίαν (“In Latin speech, as in Greek, some have thought it necessary to follow the principle of analogia, others anomalia”). There follow two sentences defining these principles, one sentence for each, the first of which translates ἀναλογία into Latin: Ἀναλογία est similium similis declinatio, quam quidam Latine “proportionem” vocant. As in 21 and 22, a Greek word and its Latin equivalent are set side-by-side; but here in 25, the tension between two theories takes center stage. Thus, the conflict has been moved from the languages to the theories of language. Accordingly, the next sentence, verbally and structurally, pits against one another the two famous advocates of the opposing theories: Aristarchus (analogy) and Crates (anomaly) – Duo autem Graeci grammatici illustres Aristarchus et Crates summa ope, ille ἀναλογίαν, hic ἀνωμαλίαν defensavit. But the rest of the chapter takes an unexpected turn: Gellius cites, at

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90 See Vardi 1996 for comparative literary criticism generally in Gellius. I focus here on the sequence in Book 2.  
91 Cf. Henderson 2002 on filler letters in Pliny the Younger.  
92 That this overt juxtaposition of something Greek with something Latin (or Roman) is not simply a common habit of Gellius can be seen in the fact that, while it is not uncommon for him to compare the two in some way (even in the opening sentences – this happens usually once or twice per book), it is rare to see them arranged in antithesis explicitly as Latin—... Graec—, so that the series in Book 2 is all the more outstanding. One other Greek-Latin series stands out elsewhere in the NA, in Book 9, where Greek-Latin antitheses tie together a series of chapters on translation (9.3 and 9.9) and the chapter (9.4) in which Gellius, on the fringe of the Greek and Roman worlds, finds books stuffed with mirabilia.
some length, a passage from Varro’s *De Lingua Latina* on the tenacious hold of the principle of anomaly (*consuetudo*) in the Latin language, with numerous examples. In the end, Varro says that there is much to say for both sides of the debate. Thus, the two theories are once again in equilibrium, as was the case at the beginning of the chapter. But the discussion has, in large part, been mediated by Varro, a Roman authority. In a sense, then, the Romans come out on top in this struggle, being the peacemakers.

There is still another way in which this chapter becomes intratextual as the reader reads in sequential order: it is here that the attentive reader is likely to notice a connection with Book 1. In that book’s tenth chapter, Gellius relates an anecdote about Favorinus chiding a precocious youngster for indiscriminate use of ancient words, advising him that it is more important to imitate the ways of the past and speak with the words of the present. Favorinus caps his admonishment with a famous quote from Caesar’s *De Analogia*. Spurred by the repetition of the word ἀναλογία in 2.25, readers may ponder the significance of its echo of 1.10, where Gellius is keen on a proper, modest use of language complemented by “noble, good, temperate, moderate” behavior (*quod honesta et bona et sobria et modesta sit*). Such behavior reminds one of the ideally frugal (that is, moderate) behavior sanctioned in 2.24, which immediately precedes

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93 Among these are: *Item cum dicamus ab “Osco”, “Tusco”, “Graeco” “Osce”, “Tusce”, “Graece”, a “Gallo” tamen et “Mauro” “Gallice” et “Maurice” dicimus*. The list echoes, albeit faintly, the “Oscans” (opici) of chapter 21 and the Gallic wind (and speaker) of 22, a reminder of the ethnic juxtapositions of Book 2.

94 *Sed idem Varro in aliis libris multa pro ἀναλογίᾳ tuenda scripsit. Sunt igitur ii tamquam loci quidam communes contra ἀναλογία dicere et item rursum pro ἀναλογίᾳ.*

95 Gellius does share with Fronto a taste for *insperata et inopinata verba*, which would situate him on the side of anomaly, but he often strives to understand just what the rules are (or ought to be) for the Latin language on the basis of the authority of the “good” writers: not only Cato and Plautus and Ennius, but Cicero too, as well as Quadrigarius and Vergil. See Marache 1967, xix-xxiii, on Gellius’s moderation of Fronto’s more extreme position. Caesar himself, though a proponent of analogy (*ratio*), insisted that the *ratio* must be imposed upon the usage (*consuetudo*) of his day. Again, Gellius situates himself in a more moderate position (paying all due respect to Caesar by citing *De Analogia*), finding himself probably closer to the position of Cicero’s Crassus (in *Brutus*), allowing a judicious use of neologisms and archaisms (particularly, in Gellius’s case, neologisms based on archaic usage). See Garcea 2012’s chapter 5 (‘Cicero and Caesar’s *De Analogia*’), esp. 98-106. On Gellius’s balance of the principles of *ratio, consuetudo*, and *auctoritas* (especially *vetustas*), see Holford-Strevens 2003, 172-192.

96 *Tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum.*
the comparison of analogy with anomaly – two rival theories governing the application of rules to language. As will be seen below (chapter IV), this nexus of ideas represents one of the elements of the NA’s loose architecture: a projection of one of the main ideas of Book 1 (anxiety over limits) into one of the main ideas of Book 2 (the Greek-Latin comparison or competition). But, for now, our reader can see at least that something of Book 1 ripples into the flow of Book 2. The greater structural and programmatic implications will become clearer after a re-reading of the NA, but let us, for now, continue with the single book as the artistic unit: if one simply continues from 2.25 to 2.26 and onward to the end of the roll, the book’s Greek-Latin theme will be seen to become ever more complex.


The next three chapters move the Greek-Latin theme through more shades of comparison, but the sequence will take an unexpected turn if the reader has been expecting to see a linear development of the contest between the two languages. The sequence beginning in 21 and proceeding through 25 began by merely setting Greek words next to their Latin equivalents; in 23, there was an outright competition between a Latin play and its Greek original; and finally in 25, a Latin authority mediated a conflict between Greek experts. In chapters 26-28, we will see the return of the first two of these modes of comparison, with some miscegenation and transformation, and we will even see other themes intruding into this sequence. The appearance of this nexus will lead readers to consider the complexities of the final stretch of Book 2 and then to re-read the whole book to find what cohesion there may be.

Beginning with chapter 26, then, the Greek-Latin theme experiences a new kind of expansion. Here Gellius tells us that Favorinus once insisted that he accompany him on a visit to
the ailing Fronto. At the latter’s house, a group of learned men happen to be discussing Greek and Latin words for the colors, lamenting in particular the inability of any language to represent faithfully the full range of colors visible to the human eye (1-2). Favorinus notes that some colors enjoy too few words, while others seem to have an overabundance; but, he says, the Latin language mishandles even this disparity, for it names different shades of, e.g., *rufus* (red) according to the things to which the color may be applied, not by using vocabulary peculiar to the shades themselves. Greek, on the other hand, has plenty of vocabulary to fill this need (3-6). Fronto replies first by conceding that the Greek language is generally richer in vocabulary (*prolixior fusiorque*, 7), but then he insists that Favorinus has overlooked a great many Latin words that cover the myriad shades of *rufus*. He explains how each word represents a stronger or weaker version of *rufus* or a combination with another color, marshaling to his aid the words of Ennius, Vergil, Pacuvius, and Nigidius (7-19). Finally, Favorinus grants enthusiastically (with a verse of Homer) that Fronto certainly has a way with words, but the Latin language has not shown the same richness or elegance. Nonetheless, Fronto’s exposition, he admits, helps him to appreciate a couple of verses in the *Annals* of Ennius which he had never properly understood before.

This chapter is, on the surface, another comparison of something Greek with something Latin, but there are some notable differences in its design. The first is the absence of the words that have visibly marked the Greek-Latin comparisons in the sequence so far: *Graec-* and *Lat*-. Instead, the first sentence of 26 is *Favorinus philosophus, cum ad M. Frontonem consularem pedibus aegrum visum iret, voluit me quoque ad eum secum ire* (“On his way to visit the former consul Marcus Fronto who was having trouble with his feet, the scholar Favorinus wanted me to

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97 Postquam haec Fron to dixit, tum Favorinus scientiam rerum uberem verborumque eius elegantiam exosculatus: “absque te” inquit “uno forsitan lingua profecto Graeca longe anteisset...”
come along with him”). As the reader will soon see, however, the chapter does indeed continue the Greek-Latin theme, so that even without the formal markers of the last few chapters, the words Favorinus and Frontonem can stand in for “Greek” and “Latin”, respectively. Gellius may well be weaning his reader off these markers – a quick check of the incipits of the next few chapters reveals that such help will no longer be offered. Another difference lies in the mode of comparison: Gellius combines the first two approaches listed above, setting Greek words next to their Latin equivalents, but also judging them (through the characters of Favorinus and Fronto) in terms of their value as descriptive language. The desire here for language to accurately describe observed phenomena reflects perhaps an anxiety to be judged competent according to the main criterion of good quality in chapter 23, the comparison between Menander and Caecilius, where the quality of each playwright’s language was judged according to the extent to which it represented the protagonists’ emotions. Fronto’s assertion, too, at section 18, that (Vergilius) maluit verbo uti notiore Graeco, quam inusitato Latino (“Vergil was more inclined to use a recognizable Greek word than an unusual Latin one”), reminds a sequential reader of the sentiment expressed in the De Analogia quote of 1.10 (the memory of which was also spurred by the analogia/anomalia discussion in 2.25) – tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum (“As though it were a cliff, you ought to steer clear of a word unheard and uncommon”). Thus, the correct use of Latin, even in something as innocuous as color-words, is at stake in this chapter. But this tension is tempered by the friendly, complimentary nature of the scholarly competition, as well as by the curiosity and excitement aroused by the study of natural phenomena and the comparison of the two dominant cultures’ designations of them. The sequence of chapters focusing on the Greek-Latin theme seems now to have reached a climax: the elements of naming, natural phenomena, accurate description, and evaluative comparison all
combine here in chapter 26, falling into orbit around the compeer languages. The competition between these languages also appears to have reached a kind of detente in the chapter’s final sentences, where a better knowledge of both tongues enriches Favorinus’s understanding of a puzzling piece of literature.\(^9\)

As in chapter 23, so in chapter 27 there is a comparison between a passage from Greek literature and one from Latin. First, Demosthenes describes (De Corona 67) the honorable way in which Philip of Macedon carried his war wounds:

> Ἐώρων δ’ αὐτὸν τὸν Φίλιππον, πρὸς δὲν ἦν ἡμῖν ὁ ἁγών, ὑπὲρ ἀρχῆς καὶ δυναστείας τὸν ὀφθαλμόν ἐκκεκομμένον, τὴν κλεῖν κατεγόστα, τὴν χεῖρα, τὸ σκέλος πεπηρωμένον, πᾶν ὁ τι βουλήθειν μέρος ἢ τόχη τοῦ σώματος παρελέσθαι, τούτο προϊέμενον, ὡστε τὸ λοιπὸν μετὰ τιμῆς καὶ δόξης ζῆν.

I saw that Philip himself, the opponent in our struggle, had for the sake of imperial power gotten his eye cut out, his collarbone broken, his hand and leg mangled; in short, every part of his body that fortune decided to remove was lost, so that he lived the rest of his life with honor and glory.

Gellius then immediately pairs this excerpt with a passage from Sallust’s Histories (1.88 Maurenbrecher) written about Sertorius in imitation of Demosthenes’s passage about Philip:

> Magna gloria tribunus militum in Hispania T. Didio imperante, magno usui bello Marsico paratu militum et armorum fuit, multaque tum ductu eius iussuque patrata primo per ignobilitatem, deinde per invidiam scriptorum incelebrata sunt, quae vivus facie sua ostentabat aliquot adversis cicatricibus et effosso oculo. Quin ille dehonestamento corporis maxime laetabatur neque illis anxius, quia reliqua gloriosius retinebat.

As a military tribune in Spain under the command of Titus Didius he was quite renowned, and in the Social War he was quite useful in the procurement of troops and arms. Much that was then accomplished by his command has been neglected, at first because of his low birth and later because of the historians’ low opinion, but in his lifetime he displayed all these accomplishments on his face, with numerous scars in front and one eye gouged out. Nevertheless, he found the greatest joy in the disfigurement of

\(^9\) Contra Holford-Strevens 2003, 65-66: “In 2.26 Favorinus, the Gaulish devotee of Greek culture, declares that Greek is richer in colour names than Latin, but Fronto, the master of Latin who rebuked Marcus for composing in Greek (Ep. M. Caes. 3.9.2–2.3), convinces him that Latin is superior in nuancing red and green.” But (230) “Favorinus ... overlook[s] the counterfactual force of κέν [in the Homer quote]”, so that, even if Favorinus concedes victory, it is at least not in the indicative mood. Gunderson 2009, 172, remarks pithily: “Favorinus yields without yielding to Fronto.” See also Swain 2004, 32-33, on Favorinus’s mastery of Latin throughout the NÀ (which makes his concession in 2.26 all the more remarkable).
his body, and those blemishes did not worry him, for he kept the rest intact with even greater renown.

Finally, Gellius enters the opinion of Titus Castricius (an instructor of rhetoric, among whose students Gellius counted himself\(^99\)), who takes issue with Sallust’s phrase *dehonestamento corporis laetari* (“find joy in the disfigurement of the body”) because he thinks this beyond the limits of human nature. He finds Demosthenes’s πᾶν ὁ τι βουλήθειν μέρος ἢ τύχῃ τοῦ σώματος παρελέσθαι, τοῦτο προϊμένον (“every part of his body that fortune decided to remove was lost”) better suited to the description of the human condition because it shows that, far from delighting in his wounds (*quod est insolens et inmodicum*, “which is strange and excessive”\(^100\)), Philip scorns the loss of limbs if he is compensated by the gain of glory.

Here ends the reading. Gellius presents a Greek passage, a Latin imitation, and a Latin criticism, with the barest of connecting threads and no commentary in Gellius’s own voice. We are still, of course, in a series of Greek-Latin comparisons (although there are no *Graec/-Lat-* markers, readers may easily associate this chapter with preceding ones because of its content), but the presentation has changed. Rather than situating himself in a dramatic setting, witnessing or participating in a live evaluation of Greek and Latin literature, Gellius merely compiles the two passages and a piece of criticism written by another party. This chapter thus plays a new role in the sequence: while it presents similar material, it does so in a different way, in a more compilatory mode, which is not an uncommon mode in the *NA*, but it is striking as a counterpoint to a series of several chapters in which the more dramatic mode is predominant. One thing, however, has not changed: as in the Menander-Caecilius comparison of 23, the Greek in this comparison is found to represent human feeling better than the Latin does.

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\(^{99}\) *NA* 13.21.1: *T. Castricius, rhetoricae disciplinae doctor, qui habuit Romae locum principem declamandi ac docendi, summa vir auctoritate gravitatisque et a divo Hadriano in mores atque litteras spectatus, cum me forte praesente – usus enim sum eo magistro – discipulos quosdam suos senatores vidisset...*
The last chapter in this sequence, chapter 28, treats the Greek-Roman relationship in a different manner still. Here, Gellius tells us that no one knows exactly how earthquakes happen, but that the Greeks seem to have thought that they were caused by the vagaries of subterranean winds or waters, and that perhaps Poseidon was the god responsible and therefore the appropriate deity to propitiate. The old Romans, on the other hand, being more cautious, would always, in the event of a quake, dedicate a sacrifice *si deo, si deae*, so as not to risk arousing jealousy in whatever god or goddess was responsible by naming the wrong deity.

My description has perhaps given the impression that Gellius is making explicit a difference in the religious practices of the old Greeks and Romans. The truth is that there are no explicit signals in the opening sentence marking a salient difference between Greeks and Romans, and this chapter’s heading in the heading-list of the Preface (*Non esse compertum, cui deo rem divinam fieri oporteat, cum terra movet*) does not promise such a comparison. The structure of the first sentence\(^\text{101}\) privileges the fact that the ancients did not know to what god or force one ought to attribute the phenomenon of earthquakes. That the Greeks seemed surer of the god responsible and the Romans were more cautious is presented as incidental to the main concern of the chapter. In fact, the final sentences of the chapter are a better indication of what

\(^{100}\) Another echo of 1.10’s *De Analogia* (*tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum*)?

\(^{101}\) *Quaenam esse causa videatur, quamobrem terrae tremores fiant, non modo his communibus hominum sensibus opinionibusque incompertum, sed ne inter physicas quidem philosophias satis constitit, ventorumne vi accidant specus hiatusque terrae subeuntium an aquarum subter in terrarum cavis undantium pulsibus fluctibusque, ita uti videntur existimasse antiquissimi Graecorum, qui Neptunum σεισικχθον apellaverunt, an cuius aliae rei causa alteriusve dei vi ac numine, nondum etiam, sicuti diximus, pro certo creditum.

“Most people cannot understand or even guess at what exactly appears to be the reason that earthquakes happen, and not even the natural philosophies agree on much: is it the force of the winds that makes them happen, when they go down into the caves and chasms of the earth, or is it the ebb and flow of underground rivers (as the ancient Greeks, who called Neptune *seisichthon*, seem to have thought), or is it for some other reason, or the power of a different god? As yet, again, opinions on this are still uncertain.”

Observe that the overall structure of the sentence is that of an indirect question, a structure common in the heading-list of the Preface. The question-words, coming at the head of the sentence, followed by the various clauses of explanation, emphasize the problem itself as the central concern of the chapter. The fact that the Greeks have an opinion is rather deeply subordinated, and the only arguably apparent marker of Greek-Latin comparison is the *Neptunum σεισικχθον* juxtaposition.
Gellius seems to think is important here. Gellius ends the chapter, as he sometimes does, by adding something only marginally connected to the main idea of the chapter: scientists are also unsure of the causes of solar and lunar eclipses, but Marcus Cato, a man otherwise interested in every kind of learning, dismisses these inquiries as the stuff of pontifical tablets. This adscript is puzzling given, on the one hand, Gellius’s occasional interest in the workings of natural phenomena (and generally positive attitude towards the measured acquisition of all kinds of knowledge) and on the other hand, his consistently high opinion of Cato.\textsuperscript{102} It is especially puzzling given Gellius’s recent interest in natural phenomena – constellations in chapter 21, winds in 22, and colors in 26, where he and his comrades display an entirely un-ironic appreciation of these phenomena and how humans (Greeks and Romans) understand them. Upon reflection, however, the reader may find an irony in this adscript, in that Cato’s dismissive words about natural philosophy do not prevent Gellius from returning in chapter 30 to the movements of waters and winds, even as his Greek-Latin theme appears to have been wholly abandoned. I will eventually revisit the problem of this misdirection (below, V), but suffice it to say now that in this chapter Gellius phases out the Greek-Latin theme, abruptly and seemingly without conclusion, and phases back in the study of natural phenomena.

\textbf{5. An unexpected ending (2.30).}

Chapter 28 left us with more thoughts on natural phenomena than on the relationship between Greeks and Romans. The next chapter (29) appears to be an innocent bit of \textit{variatio} (an

\textsuperscript{102} Holford-Strevens 2003, 244, notes that, ironically, Cato’s mention of eclipses comes from a context in which he assures that eclipses can be explained rationally; this “despite his anti-intellectual and traditionalistic pose.” Holford-Strevens takes Gellius’s interest in this passage to be purely linguistic. In light of this, it is especially odd that Gellius does not seem sensitive to the context, given his interest at the beginning of the chapter in the causes of earthquakes. On the other hand, he does put the linguistic curiosity \textit{si deo, si deae} at the center of the chapter. On Gellius’s use of Cato the Elder, especially as a linguistic and moral authority, but also as a symbouleutic authority for the imperial court, see Keulen 2009, 246-267.
Aesopic fable on the reliability of the father-son relationship – but not irrelevant to the architecture of Book 2, on which see below, II.B). The final chapter of Book 2 (chapter 30) returns to the investigation of natural phenomena (a pattern visible even in the Preface’s heading-list: *Quid observatum sit in undarum motibus, quae in mari alio atque alio modo fiunt austris flantibus aquilonibusque*). But the first couple of sentences are also packed with verbal echoes of material from recent chapters:

(1) Hoc saepenumero in undarum motu, quas aquilones venti quique ex eadem caeli regione aer fluit, faciunt *** in mari austriae africi. (2) Nam fluctus, qui flante aquilone maximi et creberrimi excitantur, simul ac ventus posuit, sternuntur et conflacescunt et mox fluctus esse desinunt.

(1) Oftentimes, in the motion of the waves which the north winds, as well as the air that flows from the same part of the sky, make *** in the sea, the south and south-west winds. (2) For waves that are stirred up in great size and number when the north wind blows are made smooth and languid and soon cease to be waves, as soon as the wind stops.

Any expectations of unity in a book of the NA must be tempered by Gellius’s claim in the Preface that the ordo is fortuitus. Therefore, attentive readers ought to be wary of expecting a tidy ending to Book 2, much less a conclusion that unravels “the meaning” of this book. But the same attentive reader may well recognize a number of verbal echoes, a type of connective marker that the sequence currently under consideration has trained them to recognize. This recognition, as we have seen, is the first step in seeking and then constructing a pattern. In chapter 30’s first couple of sentences, the words undarum, aquilones, venti, austriae africi, fluctus (twice), and ventus (again) recall especially the chapter on the names of the winds (22), but also, in the joint presence of undarum and venti, the first sentence of the chapter on the possible

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103 Noticing a lacuna here, Mommsen suggested *animadversum est ut diversus sit ab eo quem faciunt* (“it has been observed that [the motion] is different from that which [the southerly winds] make”). Such a restatement of the chapter-heading is not at all alien to Gellius’s normal practice.
causes of earthquakes (28). Later in the chapter, more and different connective markers become visible: the beginning of section 4 (Eius rei causa esse haec coniectatur, quod...) reminds our reader of the cause-seeking kind of inquiry that Gellius uses to structure chapter 28 (Quaenam esse causa videatur, quamobrem..., §1), further strengthening the connection between these two chapters. The quod-clause of the same sentence re-introduces the word septentrionibus, establishing a connection with not only the above-mentioned chapter on wind-names (22), but also the chapter on the constellation called septentriones (21), where we first noticed a pattern. Finally, at the end of the chapter (§11), Gellius reports the observation that austris spirantibus mare fieri glaucum et caeruleum, aquilonibus obscurius atriusque (“when the south winds blow, the sea grows grey and blue; when the north winds blow, dark and gloomy”), which connects this chapter, both thematically and verbally, to the one on color terms (26). Taken as parts of the argument of chapter 30, their home chapter, they are framed in terms of movement, which was also an object of interest in 28, on the causes of earthquakes. Taken together, these verbal echoes point to chapters concerning the human observation of natural phenomena.

This is indeed one of the recurring themes of Book 2, and thus the final chapter acts as an architectural element standing opposite chapter 21, on the names of the constellation septentriones. But, what of the book as a whole? If readers are seeking greater unity, can it be found here? The theme of natural phenomena is not enough to justify regarding this chapter as an end-piece for the entire book. But there is another way in which chapter 30 may qualify as such a piece. In its final sections (6-10) it cites three separate verses from Homer’s Odyssey that are

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104 2.28.1 – ... ventorumne vi accidant specus hiatusque terrae subeuntium an aquarum subter in terrarum cavis undantium pulsibus fluctibusque ...

105 It is also significant for the pattern-seeking reader that no forms of septentriones occur anywhere else in the NA except in 3.10 and 9.4. The concentration and placement of them in Book 2 are therefore remarkable.
meant to support the earlier observations about the impact of winds on waves: *Id autem ipsum, quod dicimus, ex illis quoque Homericis versibus, si quis non incuriose legat, adminicularem potest* – “Now, what I have mentioned can be supported also by the following Homeric verses, if they are read carefully”. One of these verses is preceded by the words *Contra autem de borea, quem “aquilonem” nos appellamus, alio dicit modo* (“And, on the other hand, he speaks differently about the *boreas*, which we call the *aquilo*”), recalling the Greek-Latin comparisons of the last several chapters. So, even as Gellius ends Book 2 on a natural-science note, the Greek-Latin theme echoes softly.107 This is, then, a good place for the reader to take stock of the book as a whole: on the surface, it is apparent that Gellius has interwoven themes of natural science and of Greek-Latin comparison. At the same time, however, he has, perhaps to the reader’s frustration, left these themes without explicit gestures of unity (such as, e.g., an essay comparing Greek and Latin scientific writing connected to the literature of the two civilizations).

The curious reader, and especially the curious reader with experience of poetry books or the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger,108 will want to return to the beginning of Book 2 and find anything that would unify the book or at least suggest a nexus of themes that, in their connectedness,

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106 Cf. especially sections 18 (*glaucum*) and 21-22 (*caeruleum*).
107 Incidentally, the final sentence of the chapter (and the book) is *Cuius rei causam, cum Aristotelis libris problematorum praeceperemus, notavi* (“I noted down the cause of this phenomenon as I was taking excerpts from Aristotle’s books of *Problems*”). This is an unexpected adscript, given that the more obvious connection for Gellius to make would be to Favorinus’s discovery in chapter 26 that a proper understanding of the color terms just mentioned by Gellius (in the sentence just before he admits the Aristotelian source for chapter 30) has illuminated some of Ennius’s verses. But the fact that Aristotle (a Greek) is the author and that his *Problemata* is also a compilatory collection hints at another kind of Greek-Latin comparison – Gellius’s *Noctes Atticae* with Aristotle’s *Problemata*. Gellius does not, however, explore any such connection, and it is left to the reader to decide the significance of this last sentence.
108 For the experience of reading poetry books: Gutzwiller 1998 and Barchiesi 2005; for the experience of reading Pliny’s *Letters*: Marchesi 2008 and Gibson and Morello 2012. See I.B, above. In all of these, readers may notice that a book has structure when they encounter book-ends, i.e., a pair of poems or letters that frame the book in some way (by means of shared literary allusions or verbal echoes, for example). This recognition, especially as explained by Gibson and Morello on Book 6 of the *Letters*, is a powerful spur for the reader to re-read the book and evaluate the interior in terms of the book-ends. In my reading of Book 2 of the *NA*, I have gone in the opposite direction (from the inside out), discovering connections across a series of chapters. Cf. Marchesi 2008, 27-52, on reading a sequence of letters in Book 1 of Pliny’s *Epistles* that are connected through a network of allusions to Vergil, Horace, and Catullus.
convey more meaning than would a purely chaotic arrangement. I will therefore in the next section follow the curious reader and enact a reading of the first half of Book 2, in which an old theme re-surfaces and a new one parts the surface for the first time.

B. Building a re-reading (2.1-20, 29).

1. The *Attic Nights* (2.2-3).

The first chapter of Book 2, being a brief anecdote on Favorinus imitating Socrates in his extraordinary ability to stand for great lengths of time, seems irrelevant to our search for the origin of the second book’s Greek-Roman theme.\(^ {109} \) We therefore skip it (for now – it is relevant to other considerations, for which see below, V) and proceed to the next two chapters, where Greek-Roman juxtapositions are to be found the more easily because of the reader’s knowledge that the theme is significant.

The search for this theme leads to a reconsideration of the opening sentences of chapter 2:

(1) Ad philosophum Taurum Athenas visendi cognoscendique eius gratia venerat V.C., praeses Cretae provinciae, et cum eo simul eiusdem praesidis pater. (2) Taurus sectatoribus commodum dimissis sedebat pro cubiculi sui foribus et cum assistentibus nobis sermocinabatur. (3) Introivit provinciae præses et cum eo pater; (4) assurrexit placide Taurus et post mutuam salutationem resedit. (5) Allata mox una sella est, quae in promptu erat, atque, dum aliae promebantur, apposita est. Invitavit Taurus patrem praesidis, uti sederet. (6) Atque ille ait: “Sedeat hic potius, qui populi Romani magistratus est.” (7) “Absque praejudicio” inquit Taurus “tu interea sede, dum inspicimus quaerimusque, utrum conveniat tene potius sedere, qui pater es, an filium, qui magistratus est.” (8) Et, cum pater assedisset appositumque esset alius filius quoque eius sedile, verba super ea re Taurus facit cum summa, dixit, honorum atque officiorum perspansione.

(1) To see the scholar Taurus and make his acquaintance, the Honorable governor of Crete had come to Athens, and along with said governor came his father. (2) Taurus had just dismissed class and was sitting before the entrance to his bedroom, conversing with

\(^ {109} \) 2.1 is not, however, unimportant in the scheme of the *NA*, for it sets Favorinus into a kind of intellectual genealogy connecting Gellius to Socrates. Cf. Keulen 2009, chapter 7 (esp. 179), where 2.1, 3.1, and 4.1 form a triptych of the Socratic Favorinus. See also Beall 2001, 91, and, most recently, Lucarini 2012, 415-416.
us as we stood by. (3) The governor entered with his father; (4) Taurus rose quietly, and
when they had greeted one another, he sat back down. (5) Presently, the one nearby chair
was brought up and set near them as more were being fetched. Taurus invited the
 governor’s father to have a seat. (6) But he replied, “Actually, this man, a magistrate of
the Roman People, ought to have a seat.” (7) “Let’s not make a hasty judgment,” said
Taurus. “You have a seat; in the meantime we will look into the matter and investigate
whether it is more appropriate for you, the father, or your son, the magistrate, to have a
seat.” (8) And when the father had taken his seat and a second chair had been placed
nearby for the son, Taurus spoke upon the matter with (good gods!) absolutely the most
exact balancing of ranks and duties.

On one level, these sentences set the scene for a chapter investigating the details of a social
protocol. The location of the action is established, as are the characters (including Gellius, who is
one of the extras, as often), and the problem is stated. The rest of the chapter will solve the
problem in a familiar way: Taurus figures out the protocol, and Gellius ends with the results of
his own studies. But on this second journey through the book, the reader’s focus shifts to take
into account the rest of the book – the setting is Athens, and the visitors are Romans; the problem
is framed in the language of the Roman civil administration (6: Sedeat hic potius, qui populi
Romani magistratus est; 7: ... an filium, qui magistratus est; 8: cum summa, dii boni, honorum
atque officiorum perpensatione). After Taurus solves the problem in abstract terms (9-10),
Gellius’s adscript explains the protocol more concretely, by means of an anecdote from Roman
history (11-13). With this juxtaposition of Attic setting and Roman anecdote, the old
Greek-Roman theme resurfaces, although not marked as such. The search for Greek-Roman
juxtapositions highlights the early presence of the theme here, where it now becomes apparent
that a question about social protocol is answered in the seat of Greek learning (Athens – §1), and
then again (end of chapter) in the annals of Roman history. A reader may notice here a new facet
in Gellius’s prismatic take on the Greek-Roman relationship: this chapter, in its background and
structure more than in its content, suggests Greece (Athens, in this case), as a place of origin for
the knowledge of Romans (Gellius, in this case). Indeed, it is Athens and Attica that are the
source of much of Gellius’s knowledge, whereby they are also the source of the Noctes Atticae,
as he told us in the beginning (Sed quoniam longinquis per hiemem noctibus in agro, sicuti dixi,
terrae Atticae commendationes hasce ludere ac facere exorsi sumus, idcirco eas inscripsimus
noctium esse Atticarum ..., Pref. 4).

A similar movement is now visible in chapter 3, which examines the ratio by which the
old Romans would add an “h” sound to an initial vowel:

(1) “H” litteram sive illam spiritum magis quam litteram dici oportet, inserebant eam
terres nostri plerisque vocibus verborum firmandis roborandisque, ut sonus earum esset
teridior vegetiorque; atque id videntur fecisse studio et exemplo linguae Atticae.

(1) The letter “h” (or perhaps it ought to be called a breathing rather than a letter) – our
ancestors used to add it to a great many words to strengthen their pronunciation, that they
might sound more lively and vibrant; as a matter of fact, they seem to have done this out
of an enthusiasm to follow the model of the Attic tongue.

While, once again, the focus is (at least nominally) on something other than a Greek-Roman
comparison, the chapter turns to Athens, asserting that the old Romans’ predilection for initial
rough breathings was consciously derived from the same tendency in the Attic dialect.111 Indeed
the entire chapter echoes with the influences of the Greeks: it goes on to claim (§2) that everyone
knows (satis notum est) that the Athenians were unique among the ancient Greeks in doing this.
There follows a series of Latin words exhibiting this feature, and Gellius explains that the only
reason for this (both for the Athenians and the old Romans) was firmitas et vigor vocis (4). Thus,
we see that, for almost moral reasons, the forefathers of Gellius’s contemporaries inherited a
dialectical preference from the most intellectually advanced of the Greeks, again the Athenians,

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110 Holford-Strevens 2003, 92: “At least in Gellius’ account, [Taurus] discusses the matter in Roman terms (‘privata
actio’): but a Roman citizen should do no otherwise.”
111 Holford-Strevens 2003, 188: “Neither the general statement nor the particular instances hold water, but Greek
grammarians both asserted Attic love of aspiration and appealed to the ear.”
just as in the previous chapter Gellius learned something about social protocol in Athens and then transferred that knowledge to a Roman context.

The chapter ends with an example drawn from the grammarian Fidus Optatus, who had shown Gellius a remarkably old manuscript of the *Aeneid* in which someone (presumably Vergil himself) had added an “h” to the word *aena*. Gellius, in a kind of reverential awe, reproduces the lines (*vestibulum ante ipsum primoque in limine Pyrrus / exultat telis et luce coruscus aena*, 2.469) and then produces another line, from the *Georgics*, showing that he has found the “h” added to *aenum* elsewhere in Vergil’s work. Thus, in his adscript, Gellius finds a wonderful Latin example of a phenomenon that he has just derived from the Greeks. But he also draws it from a work that tells the story of Rome as an empire risen from the seed of Greek legend. The very book from which he draws it (Book 2) tells of the fall of Troy and from it the emergence of the founder of Rome. This emergence of things Roman from things Greek has now become a new theme in Book 2 of the *Attic Nights*, and combined with the sequence of chapters in the latter half of the book, on Greek-Roman comparisons, makes a good case that Book 2’s chief concern is the Attic origin of the *Nights*. In the next few readings, we will find that the theme of ancestry enjoys even further enrichment.

2. Fathers and progeny (2.7).

Soon the reader comes to chapter 7, which begins as follows:

(1) Quaeri solitum est in philosophorum disceptationibus, an semper inque omnibus iussis patri parendum sit. (2) Super ea re Graeci nostrique, qui de officiis scripserunt, tres sententias esse, quae spectandae considerandaeque sint, tradiderunt easque subtilissime diiudicarunt.

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112 *aut foliis undam trepidi despumat aheni*, 1.296.
113 See Vardi 1993 and below, II.C, on the significance of the word *Atticae* in the title.
It has often been asked in philosophers’ debates whether one ought to always obey his father in all his commands. Greek and Roman writers on duties have taught that on this matter there are three opinions worthy of examination and reflection, and they have made very precise distinctions among them.

At this point two things of relevance to the present discussion may be noted: that (1) the question involves a consideration of social protocol with respect to one’s father, and (2) the question has been treated by both Greeks and Romans (Graeci nostrique). The second of these observations connects the chapter with the series marked verbally by words for “Greek” and words for “Roman”. The first connects this chapter with chapter 2, on seating (and other) priorities between a father and his son.

After these opening sentences, Gellius goes on to outline the three positions (tres sententias): (1) that one must obey all of the father’s commands, (2) that one must obey some commands but not others, and (3) that one must never obey a father’s commands. The first and third of these positions are rejected outright, and the virtues of the second are praised (3-13). The remaining half of the chapter is devoted to explaining why the third position is ill-considered and how it can be refuted (inperfecta est refutarique ac dilui sic potest, 14). In the process of this refutation, Gellius has recourse to some Greek philosophical terms: μέσα (18), ἀδιάφορα (18), ὑγιές et νόμιμον διεζευγμένον (22). The argument’s form too is familiar from Greek philosophy, with its two extremes and preferred middle.114 The Greek-Latin theme enriches the power dynamic under consideration in the father-son theme. Indeed, at this point, readers may consider similarities between the power dynamics explored between Greeks and Romans vis-à-vis those between fathers and sons. In both chapters 2 and 7, the father does not hold absolute sway over his son’s behavior; instead the behavior of both is regulated by a system of rules de officiis.

114 The philosophical approach is Stoic (so too in 2.27 and 2.28); see Holford-Strevens 2003, 280, on this chapter, and 274-281 generally on Gellius’s Stoicism – “Gellius is a Stoic only when Romanity and common sense allow.” But cf. Keulen 2009, 168, on Gellius’s pose of Academic Skepticism.
which grant power to the one or the other depending on the conditions of the interaction. Meanwhile, in the sequence making up much of the second half of the book, we have seen a struggle between the two cultures (mostly in a linguistic field), where, although Greek tends to have the advantage over Latin when character must be expressed (23, where Menander prevails over Caecilius, and 27, where Demosthenes is better than Sallust), Roman elements nevertheless either hold their own (26, where Fronto’s defense of Latin color terms teaches Favorinus a lesson about underestimating the Latin tongue’s copia) or successfully mediate Greek problems (25, where Varro appreciates the merits of both analogy and anomaly, and 28, where the Romans linguistically improve on sacrifice to gods responsible for earthquakes). Thus, by formally interweaving the two in a couple of his chapters and by linking them thematically to ideas of power dynamics, Gellius combines the two themes that now visibly dominate the NA’s second book.

3. Interlude II (2.8-9).

The next two chapters are not concerned with fathers and sons or Greek and Latin, but they do display a remarkable affinity for one another, which brings up the question of the ordo of the NA. When one reads chapters 8 and 9 back to back, one cannot help noticing that the two were composed as companion pieces and meant to be read in the order in which they appear in the manuscripts. First, in chapter 8, Gellius first notes that Plutarch finds fault with Epicurus in the use of a syllogism, and then he demonstrates that the criticism was unfair. (1) Plutarchus secundo librorum, quos de Homero composuit, imperfecte atque praepostere atque inscite synlogismo esse usum Epicurum dicit (“In his second book On Homer, Plutarch says that
Epicurus used a syllogism in an incomplete, backwards, and foolish manner”) – Epicurus had left out what Plutarch considered to be an essential element in understanding the syllogism. But, (6-7) Sed Epicurus, cuiusmodi homost, non inscitia videtur partem istam synlogismi praetermisset, neque id ei negotium fuit synlogismum tamquam in scolis philosophorum cum suis numeris omnibus et cum suis finibus dicere... (“But Epicurus was not that kind of man, for he does not seem to have neglected that part of the syllogism, and it was not his job to express the syllogism as though he were in the philosophers’ schools with all their Numbers and Ends”). The very next chapter is a shorter essay (by half) that finds Plutarch once again unjustly criticizing Epicurus: (1) In eodem libro idem Plutarchus eundem Epicurum reprehendit, quod verbo usus sit parum proprio et alienae significationis (“In the same book the same Plutarch criticizes the same Epicurus for using an inappropriate word that actually means something different”). The punch-line of the chapter lies in Gellius’s witty criticisms of Plutarch’s criticisms, wherein he concludes that Plutarch is on a wild word chase (λεξιθηρεῖ). Meanwhile, Epicurus is more than capable of seizing the quarry: Has enim curas vocum verborumque elegantias non modo non sectatur Epicurus, sed etiam insectatur (“For not only does Epicurus not simply aim at verbal precision and elegance, he hits the mark”).

But the punch-line of greater interest for the sequential reader occurs rather at the beginning of the chapter, when Gellius (with some cheek) informs us that the essay herewith involves all the same actors in all the same places. This open mockery at the prefatorial promise of happenstance order rarely occurs in the NA,116 and has not happened at all for the reader who

115 There is no scholarly literature of which I am aware that attempts to explain juxtapositions of this kind in the NA. Holford-Strevens 2003, 35, is typical, merely stating that the two chapters exemplify Gellius’s occasional habit of putting in proximity chapters derived from the same source.

116 A notable example is that of 3.5-6, where Plutarch is again the source for both. But the connection there is weaker than the one between 8 and 9 in Book 2 because 3.5-6 treat different topics and are taken from different books of Plutarch. See also 13.15-16 (ch. 16 begins: Idem Messala in eodem libro de minoribus magistratibus ita scripsit...).
has only finished Book 1. And so, Gellius’s outburst here is significant because it calls attention to the problem of structure in the *NA*, and this is perhaps the first place in the body of the *NA* where its structure is problematized. Here, in Book 2, the pair stands out as a structural element that attracts notice because it is incongruent with the rest of the book – Book 2, as has become apparent by now, is mainly concerned with relationships between fathers and their children and between Greeks and Romans, with the usual leavening of chapters about things unrelated to the main themes. Outside of Book 2, the reader has encountered a different, less apparent but still notable structural element at the opposing ends of Book 1. There, chapters 1 and 26 (the first and last chapters) had as their common source Plutarch (albeit on different topics and from different writings). That book did not seem to be “about” Plutarch in any way, so that the “bookends” do not function as unifying elements, but the structural pattern is still noticeable. When compared with the reverse phenomenon in Book 2, which shares the element “Plutarch” but makes the chapters abut one another rather than face one another on opposite ends of the field, it seems that Gellius is playing some kind of structural game. The reader is entitled to think about how exactly Gellius has put the book together, a problem that depends entirely upon how sincere one believes that Gellius is when he makes the prefatorial claim to *disparilitas* and *ordo fortuitus*. It should be apparent by now that there is a good deal of disorder in the collection, but that very disorder is continually disrupted as the author (on one side of the text) plays at maintaining a tension between order and chaos while the reader (on the other side of the text) tries to learn the rules of the game, if there are any. Perhaps the best place to start looking is Book 2’s “end”, where one may search for finality of some sort.

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117 Rust 2009, 63, also detects a significance in the bookending of Book 1: “The first chapter of book one thus signals Gellius's alignment with Plutarch, who is author of the *Quaestiones Convivales* and other

But before we return to Book 2’s end, we observe how Gellius further develops his Father-Son (or, rather, Ancestry-Descent) theme. In a series of four chapters, we will find Gellius forming a group of loose associations around a few words pertaining to children, parents, and generation(s) – here he interrogates in particular the word *liberi* (children, chapters 13 and 18), and he asks questions about relationships of age (honors for old age in 15, the meaning of the name of Aeneas’s descendant Postumus in 16). These will round out the first half of the book, resulting in a thematically-oriented structural divide roughly halfway through the book, which we will assess at the end of this section.

Chapter 13, the first in this sequence, does little more than quietly associate itself with the already-established Father-Son theme: it is a brief chapter noting the fact that the writers of yesteryear (*antiqui oratores historiaeque aut carminum scriptores*) used the plural *liberi* even for a single child (*etiam unum filium filiamve*). An example follows (from Sempronius Asellio about Tiberius Gracchus), and the note ends. The focus on the word *liberi* connects this chapter to the aforementioned theme, as does the text of the Asellio quote, but the chapter is short and scarcely has much to offer by itself – even so, it marks a return to the theme and aligns itself fruitfully with the next few chapters.

In chapter 15 we learn that the old Romans paid greater respect to age than to lineage or wealth, and that one’s elders were revered on a level with one’s gods and parents (§1). These miscellaneous works in the *Moralia*, while the last chapter in book one traces Gellius’s genealogical relationship with Plutarch the philosopher.” 2.8-9 and 3.5-6 are perhaps also signals of this alignment.

118 Gellius points out that Asellio was military tribune under Scipio Africanus at Numantia (§3) – this association with one of the key figures of model Latin from the 2nd century BC lends more credit to the assertion that *liberi* as plural for singular was an acceptable, even preferable form.
customs, tradition tells us (*traditum est*), were borrowed by the Romans from the Spartans (2). In these opening sentences, Gellius recalls some of the themes that we encountered earlier in Book 2: he equates elders with parents, implicating them in the Father-Son theme; he establishes a framework for a social protocol, invoking chapter 2’s concerns about the seating precedence of a retired father and a magistrate son; he also links this chapter to the Greek-Roman theme by claiming the Spartans as the originators of the Roman custom of treating elders with exceptional respect. Here we see the continuation of the idea of deriving things from Greeks and making them Roman, for in chapter 2, Gellius derived the seating-precedence procedure from Taurus in Athens, and in chapter 3, the old Romans received from Attic Greek their tendency to aspirate initial vowels; now it is morals that the old Romans received from another group of Greeks.

The rest of chapter 15 lays out in more detail the rules concerning priority among the various kinds of elders, in particular as they relate to the evolution of the Roman legal system (in which Gellius, being a judge, often shows great interest\(^\text{120}\)). Gellius begins his calculations as follows:

(3) Sed postquam suboles civitati necessaria visa est et ad prolem populi frequentandam praemiiis atque invitamentis usus fuit, tum antelati quibusdam in rebus qui uxorem quique liberos haberent senioribus neque liberos neque uxoribus habentibus.

(3) But when offspring were deemed necessary for the state and recourse was had to rewards and inducements to encourage the people to multiply their progeny, then those who had a wife and those who had children were preferred in certain matters to older men who had neither children nor wives.

Here Gellius adds a Roman twist to the old Spartan tradition – he makes it clear that children (*suboles, prolem, liberos*) became at some point the *raison d’être* of the codification of honors.

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\(^{119}\) *Orare coepit id quidem, ut se defenderent liberosque suos; eum, quem virile secus tum in eo tempore habebat, produci iussit populoque commendavit prope flens.*

\(^{120}\) On Gellius’s knowledge of and treatment of the law in the *NA*, see the discussion in Holford-Strevens 2003, 294-301.
owed to the elders. Four of the five remaining sentences in the chapter contain the word *liberi* in some form as Gellius takes the office of consul as a case study (per chapter 7 of the *lex Iulia*) and explicates the rules that determine which of the two consuls receives the *fasces* first at the beginning of the consulship: the first is the one with more children, and the second is the one that had at some time in the past had more children; some tie-breakers follow.

If chapter 15 is about the importance of children and *iuniores* as both helpmeet and honor-badges for the *seniores*, chapter 16 looks at children as markers of immortality. Here a debate over the meaning of Aeneas’s son’s epithet (Postumus) stands as an interesting companion piece to chapter 15. It will be worth quoting the chapter in full, so that we may watch as Gellius first recalls the previous chapter and then enriches the “children” concept with the idea of immortality.

(1) *Vergilii versus sunt e libro sexto:*

   *ille, vides, pura iuvenis qui nititur hasta,*
   *proxima sorte tenet lucis loca. primus ad auras*
   *aetherias Italo commixtus sanguine surget*
   *Silvius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles,*
   *quem tibi longaevo serum Lavinia coniunx*
   *educet silvis regem regumque parentem:*
   *unde genus Longa nostrum dominabitur Alba.*

(2) *Videbantur haec nequaquam convenire:*

   *tua postuma proles,*
   *et:*
   *quem tibi longaevo serum Lavinia coniunx*
   *educet silvis.*

(3) *Nam si hic Silvius, ita ut in omnium ferme annalium monumentis scriptum est, post patris mortem natus est ob eamque causam praenomen ei Postumo fuit, qua ratione subiectum est:*

69
quem tibi longaevo serum Lavinia coniunx
educet silvis?

(4) Haece enim verba significare videri possunt Aenea vivo ac iam sene natum ei Silvium et educatum. (5) Itaque hanc sententiam esse verborum istorum Caesellius opinatus in 
commentario lectionum antiquarum: “‘postuma’ inquit ‘proles’ non eum significat, qui 
patre mortuo, sed qui postremo loco natus est, sicuti Silvius, qui Aenea iam sene tardo 
seroque partu est editus.” (6) Sed huius historiae auctorem idoneum nullum nominat; (7) 
Silvium autem post Aeneae mortem, sicuti diximus, natum esse multi tradiderunt. (8) 
Idcirco Apollinaris Sulpicius inter cetera, in quis Caesellium reprehendit, hoc quoque 
eius quasi erratum animadvertit errorisque istius hanc esse causam dixit, quod scriptum 
ita sit “Quem tibi longaevo”, “‘Longaevo’” inquit “non seni significat – hoc enim est 
contra historiae fidem –, sed in longum iam aevum et perpetuum recepto immortalique 
facto. (9) Anchises enim, qui haec ad filium dicit, sciebat eum, cum hominum vita 
dissessisset, immortalem atque indigetem futurum et longo perpetuoque aevo potiturum.” 
(10) Hoc sane Apollinaris argute. Sed alid tamen est “longum aevum”, alid 
“perpetuum”, neque dii “longaevi” appellantur, sed “inmortales”.

(1) Vergil’s lines from Book 6:

That young man there, you see him, leaning on his ceremonial spear;
he holds, as he is fated, the next place of glory. He’ll be the first
of mixed Italic descent to rise to the airs of heaven –
Silvius, an Alban name, your late-most progeny –
Lavinia, your wife, will raise him in the woods for you
late in your long years, himself a king, and of kings a father:
from him our kind will come to rule and master Alba Longa.

(2) The following passages seemed completely inconsistent: “your late-most progeny”
[tua postuma proles] and “Lavinia, your wife, will raise him in the woods for you late in your 
long years” [quem tibi longaevo serum Lavinia coniunx / educet silvis]. (3) For if 
this Silvius, as is written in the records of nearly all the annals, was born 
after his father’s death and for this reason had the epithet Postumus, then why was this added: “Lavinia, 
your wife, will raise him in the woods for you late in your long years”? (4) Indeed, these 
words can seem to mean that Silvius was born and raised while Aeneas was alive and still 
an old man. (5) So it is that in his Commentary on Ancient Readings Caesellius 
interpreted the words as follows: “‘Late-most progeny’ [postuma proles],” he says, 
“signifies one who was born not with a dead father but as the last child, just as Silvius 
was, who was brought forth in a late birth when Aeneas was still an old man.” (6) But he 
does not name a suitable authority for this story; (7) and moreover, as I said, many have 
written that Silvius was born after Aeneas’s death. (8) For this reason, among all the 
other faults he found in Caesellius, Sulpicius Apollinaris has noted yet another mistake 
and said that the cause of the error was “for you in your long years” [quem tibi longaevo].
“Long-yeared [longaevo],” he says, “does not mean ‘old man’ [seni] – this goes against history – but ‘received into long, eternal years [longum iam aevum et perpetuum] and made immortal’. (9) For Anchises, who says this to his son, knew that he, upon departing human life, would be an immortal, native god and would obtain a long, eternal age.” (10) What Apollinaris says is certainly clever, but “long years” [longum aevum] is one thing, and “eternal” [perpetuum] is another, and the gods are not called “long-yeared” [longaevi] but “immortal”.

In and of itself, this chapter could serve as a paradigm for Gellius’s brand of argumentative charm, with its brevity and its narrow (perhaps myopic) focus on single words. And yet, those single words, out of all the words that Vergil wrote and later generations studied, happen to fall into line with a major theme of Gellius’s second book. Indeed, it is this narrow focus that enlarges them beyond their place in the syntax of their native sentences. When Gellius confronts us with the verses of Vergil, we find ourselves immediately faced with a iuvenis, one who would have revered the elders of the previous chapter. As we continue reading the Vergilian passage, we are impressed by the markers of his lineage: first to the airs of heaven (primus ad auras / aetherias), he is a pioneer like his father, who was first from the shores of Troy (Troiae qui primus ab oris). He, Silvius, is Aeneas’s “late-most progeny”, necessary for the continuation of the royal lineage of Alba Longa and for the race of Romans as well. Such proles will in time, as we know from chapter 15, become a necessity too in the Republican age. The words longaevus, coniunx, parens, and genus also conjure up generational concerns that are (at the least) cousins to those of chapter 15.

After the Aeneid passage, Gellius raises to our attention the phrases containing the words proles, longaevus, and coniunx, and he problematizes their relationship, asking whether Silvius (Postumus) was born during or after Aeneas’s life. The problem in the previous chapter has now been transfigured into a different one: the question there concerned how many children a man had in his lifetime, which was important because it was directly related to the amount of honor
that a man received during his life. This chapter’s question is important, so far, in fixing the chronology of Rome’s royal forebears. But as Gellius continues to explore the meanings of these words, another connotation becomes apparent. The remainder of the chapter hinges on the definition of *longaevus*, whether it means that, when Silvius was born, Aeneas was “long of years” (old but still a mortal) or immortal (departed already from the world of mortals). Gellius does not think that *longaevus* could bear the meaning “immortal”; but by bringing up these ideas of immortality and the continuation of the lineage that laid the foundations for Rome, he does take the previous chapter’s idea of children as badges of honor in their fathers’ lifetime to a further stage, namely, that children, whether born before or after their fathers’ death, play a part in immortality.

As in chapter 3, Gellius invokes the *Aeneid* as a text of origin, and with many of the chapters before chapter 16, Gellius makes his own text a patchwork of approaches to ideas of origin (Greek practices influencing Roman, Greek language influencing Latin, fathers and sons in questions of priority, rank, and posterity). But, as if preserving his commitment to the *ordo fortuitus*, Gellius now suddenly breaks off this series of serious questions with a more light-hearted play on words. Chapter 18 consists of a number of very brief notices to the effect that some philosophers who were once slaves became free (*liber*) at some point. In one of these Gellius transmits a clever pun:

(9) Diogenes etiam Cynicus servitutem servivit. Sed is ex libertate in servitutem venum ierat. Quem cum emere vellet Ξενιάδης Κορίνθιος, ecquid artificii novisset, percontatus “novi” inquit Diogenes “hominibus liberis imperare”. (10) Τum Ξενιάδης responsor eius demiratus emit et manu emisit filiosque suos ei tradens: “accipe” inquit “liberos meos, quibus imperes”.

(9) The Cynic Diogenes also served as a slave. But he had been free before he was sold into slavery. Now, Xeniades of Corinth wanted to buy him, and so he asked him what
skills he knew; Diogenes said, “I know how to command free [liberis] men”. (10) Then
Xeniades, impressed by his response, bought him, freed him, and entrusted his children to
him, saying “take my children [liberos], to command them”.

The mention of liberi, children, recalls chapter 13, in which Gellius noted how the ancients used
the plural form of this word even to signify the singular. Now the word generates a pun with its
look-alike liberi (“free”). The connection here of freedom with children is only suggestive, but it does serve a structural purpose: the return of liberi as a word of interest makes chapters 13 and 18 the two ends of an arch with 15 and 16 at its apex. Gellius has now rounded off a
sequence of chapters exploring different facets of the father-son relationship and the meaning of
words signifying children. This arch, in turn, counter-balances the longer chapters on the other
side of the “interlude” divide (2, 3, and 7), which combine the Father-Progeny theme with the
Greek-Latin theme. This pattern, on the scale of Book 2 as a whole, marks its first half as the
“Father-Progeny” half, which stands, as we have seen, adjacent to the “Greek-Latin” half, where
we first noticed a pattern. Thus, a bipartite structure emerges, and it remains for us, as readers, to
synthesize the halves, so that, if not at the behest of the author, then at least on the basis of
readerly action, Book 2 may begin to acquire, with some degree of finality, a meaning.

5. An ersatz ending (2.29).

The return journey through the Greek-Latin sequence of 2.21-30 runs back through
chapter 29, which takes on more importance now that the Father-Progeny theme of the first half

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121 This pun cannot be made in Greek – see Rolfe 1927, ad loc., and Holford-Strevens 2003, 80. Perhaps the Greek
letters of Xeniades’s name are meant to lend an air of Greek authenticity to the scene.
122 Keulen 2009, 212 with n.54, notes that the spirit of 2.18 (that slaves can move upward to become philosophers)
reflects the general idea underlying the NA that one may become upwardly mobile with the help of some wit and
wisdom (acquired from sources such as the NA). So, the pun on liberi has some social significance: freed men may
move into positions enjoyed by men born free.
has become apparent. At first, the chapter does not seem to be strongly connected with any of the other chapters of Book 2: Gellius notes that Aesop, unlike the philosophers, told stories that were both edifying and entertaining (§1). There is one particular story that Gellius would like to recount: Velut haec eius fabula de aviculae nidulo lepide atque iucunde promonet spem fiduciamque rerum, quas efficere quis possit, haut umquam in alio, set in semetipso habendam (“For example: his story The Bird’s Nest advises, with wit and charm, that if you can get something done, you should never expect or trust anyone to do it but yourself”, 2). But the story quickly reveals itself to be about not self-reliance but reliance on one’s immediate family (in this case, parent and child).

The story begins at harvest-time, when a mother bird must find food for her still-flightless chicks; she tells them to watch for any developments while she is gone and to inform her of them upon her return. Meanwhile, a farmer shows his son that the crop is ready for harvest, telling him to round up some friends to help for the harvest at first light the next morning. The chicks, terrified, report this news to their mother, but the mother assures them that nothing will be harvested. The next day comes, no friends appear, and the farmer decides to call on cousins instead of friends. The chicks again fearfully report, and the mother denies that cousins would come as soon as tomorrow. Unsurprisingly, no one shows up the next day, and the farmer finally says to his son that they will simply have to harvest the crops on their own:

“Afferes primo luci falces duas; unam egomet mihi et tu tibi capies alteram, et frumentum nosmetipsi manibus nostris cras metemus.” Now is the time for the birds to leave: “In ipso enim iam vertitur, cuia res est, non in alio, unde petitur.” Gellius goes on (17-20) to affirm that one cannot rely on friends or cousins to get something done if one can do it oneself. To illustrate this
wisdom epigrammatically, he borrows the wit of Ennius, from one of his *Satirae* commenting on the very same Aesopic fable.

Gellius claims, both at the beginning and the end of the chapter, that the moral of this story is self-reliance, which he sums up well in Ennius’s verse *Ne quid expectes amicos, quod tute agere possies*;¹²³ but the content of the story itself seems to be at odds with Gellius’s claim. As it happens, this discrepancy is meaningful for the consideration of the Father-Progeny relationship, for it is not himself that the farmer relies upon, but rather his son.¹²⁴ Nor is this merely an incidental detail: the pattern of the story’s narrative consists of exchanges between a mother-bird and her chicks (a parent-child relationship) alternating with exchanges between the father-farmer and his son – these relationships mirror one another, in that the parents’ goals are the same (to gather food for the family) and the parents and children rely on each other without question. Moreover, the language that Gellius uses to introduce the fable is reflected in the language that the farmer uses to urge his son to take up the sickles: *spem fiduciamque rerum, quas efficere quis possit, haut unquam in alio, set in semetipso habendam* (2); *unam egomet mihi et tu tibi capies alteram, et frumentum nosmetipsi manibus nostris cras metemus* (14).

Gellius’s analysis of the fable suggests that one may only trust oneself, and the grammar of *in semetipso* (singular) suggests that only one “-self” is meant, and yet the farmer’s exhortation includes *egomet mihi et tu tibi ... nosmetipsi*. An inconsistency when the chapter is read by itself, this seeming error becomes an interesting conflation of father and son into one “self” when read in context with the rest of Book 2, one of whose major themes is the exploration of the relationship between a father and a child.

¹²³ The fable “agrees with the teachings of (Stoic) philosophy” (Holford-Strevens 2003, 214).
¹²⁴ Anderson 2004, 113, explains the dissonance: “In this version too the father plausibly teams up with his son, rather than operate single-handed: *a plausible interlocutor is thus made available.*” (emphasis mine)
While tensions between the two sides of the power-relationship existed earlier in the book (and were resolved by social protocols), the present chapter resolves the two into a single unit always behaving in concert. By resolving the story in this way, Gellius achieves a kind of finality. The book’s first theme, then, has culminated in a fable underscoring the value of the parent-child relationship, despite Gellius’s attempt to interpret the fable otherwise. This pattern does not, however, bring the book completely full-circle, because chapter 29 is not the last chapter but the penultimate one. But the book’s first theme appeared for the first time not in the first chapter but in chapter 2: we therefore have a “bookend” effect, once-removed. The chapters on the very ends of the book have nothing in common with respect to their content, but the last chapter does touch on the Greek-Roman theme, albeit only as that theme (which appeared for the first time also in chapter 2) fades away (see above, A.5). The resultant structure is one of thwarted endings: the important themes of the book appear one chapter removed from the front end; the Father-Progeny theme concludes one chapter removed from the back end; the Greek-Roman theme never really concludes, only recedes into nothingness in the last chapter; the recently-emerging theme of natural science acts as a kind of bass line in the second half of the book, although there is no grace note for either it or the Greek-Roman theme that it accompanies. None of this, however, is truly unsatisfying, for Gellius has never promised any kind of narrative or encyclopedic order, even if he does not fulfill his promise of an unqualifiedly fortuitous order. Readers may indeed derive satisfaction from the observation that Gellius has found new ways to vary his structural orders. The largest-scale manifestation of this variety, insofar as readers have by now only encountered the first two books, is that the first book constructed its artificial “Plutarch” bookends with its first and last chapters (see above, B.3, and
below, IV.A), while the second book, despite visibly integrating its important themes into its bookend-structure, disrupts the prospect of a tidy ending, and in multiple ways.

C. A post-reading analysis.

In his ordering of Book 2, Gellius has allowed the recurrence and mixture of multiple themes, two of which we have picked out in our reading as significant. Their significance lies especially in the way that they have the potential to be synthesized by the reader. Having picked out these themes by way of reading and then re-reading, we now attempt, in a “post-reading”, to synthesize them.

First, to recapitulate: on our re-reading, we found a number of approaches to fathers and sons (and others involved in generational relationships): a father and son confront an issue of seating priority (chapter 2); children must decide when it is right to obey a father (chapter 7); *liberi* is good Latin for one child, and Gracchus’s son is an example (chapter 13); the number of children a man has is an important factor in how much honor he receives (chapter 15); Aeneas’s son Silvius “Postumus” was born either in last place when his father was old or after the death of his father, now immortal (chapter 16); Xeniades of Corinth entrusts his children to Diogenes, challenging the philosopher to *liberis imperare* (chapter 18); and finally, a farmer and his son rely, in the end, only upon each other, while a bird and her chicks rely, from the beginning, only upon each other (chapter 29). Broadly, we saw three kinds of relationship between father and son: the father’s authority is balanced by social or moral considerations ( chapters 2 and 7); the father’s honor is enriched by the number or quality of his sons ( chapters 15 and 16); parent and child depend heavily on one another (chapter 29). In the world of the *NA*, parent and child enjoy

125 Although Rust 2009, 63 (see above, n.34), sees meaning in these bookends for the *NA* as a whole, I call them
a harmonious relationship, where power can nevertheless be negotiated to some degree, and the honor of the one redounds to the credit of the other.

Aspects of the relationship between Greek and Roman culture inhabit the other major thematic cycle of Book 2. On re-reading, we noticed that a Greek-Roman relationship was already present in chapter 2, where the father-son dynamic also makes its first appearance; here, Gellius, a Roman, is in attendance in Athens as the Greek philosopher Taurus considers a question posed by Roman visitors, a governor and his father. Already the re-reading begins to work toward a thematic synthesis. Chapter 3 exhibits the addition of the letter “h” to some words beginning with a vowel, a practice of both old Romans and the speakers of Attic Greek; together with the quote from Book 2 of the Aeneid, this historical-linguistic note invokes the Greeks as cultural forebears. Greek philosophy finds its way into chapter 7, where it helps to clarify a question of paternal authority. The language of this philosophical tradition continues into chapters 8 and 9, where Gellius uses Greek terms to refute Plutarch before finishing him off with a Latin witticism. A few chapters later, the tradition of granting greater honor to greater age is passed down from the Lacedaemonians (15), and the Romans’ mythical lineage is again recalled in an Aeneid passage (16). Even a pun that cannot be made in Greek somehow finds its way into a Latin translation (18).

So far, the re-reading reveals that the two major themes are entwined on a structural level. Returning to the second half of the book, we see that the Greek-Roman relationship is explored in more detail, as Gellius has already done with the father-son relationship in the first half. Chapter 20 manifests an interest in Greek-Latin comparative vocabulary: in seeking to establish the correct terminology for various kinds of villatic animal enclosures, Gellius records that vivaria are παραδείσιοι and mellaria are μελισσονές, and leaves the reader to figure out the artificial because they have little effect on the thematic unity of Book 1.
correct translations for ἀμπελῶνες and δαφνῶνες.\textsuperscript{126} The next several chapters announce their connection to the Greek-Roman theme in their opening sentences and then proceed to confront some issue involving a comparison between the two cultures. Chapter 21 compares the Greek and Roman names for the constellation called \textit{septentriones} as its Roman students cross the sea at night from Aegina to the Piraeus (a place connected to Athens, which has been a foundational site for Gellius’s learning in Book 2 – \textit{NA} 2.2-3). Wind names are compared in chapter 22 (by none other than Favorinus, the master of cultural juxtapositions). In chapter 23, a Greek play is found to be unquestionably superior to its Latin descendant. But the judgment of the \textit{NA} does not find the Romans to be generally inferior in matters of linguistic taste: chapter 25 takes on the centuries-old Greek analogy-anomaly debate, resolving it with a Latin authority. The rest of the book-ending sequence, although not announcing the Greek-Roman connection in the first sentence, continues to confront Greek-Roman comparisons: Favorinus and Fronto do linguistic battle in chapter 26, on the names of the colors, where the confrontation ends in something of a truce. The tides of battle turn in favor of the Greeks in chapter 27, where Demosthenes’s Philip is better articulated than Sallust’s Sertorius. But in the final two chapters of the sequence, 28 and 30, Greek and Roman knowledge of natural phenomena appear side-by-side in amity.

So, the second half of Book 2 generally sees Greeks and Romans competing on a level playing field, each enjoying for a time the pride of victory. Their strife continues forever, always embroiled in stalemate. This much is apparent in the initial reading of the book; when we re-read the book, we see that the Greek-Roman theme is connected, by the book’s structure, to the Father-Progeny theme. As a result, the two relationships themselves exist in an almost analogous relationship: Greeks act as intellectual “fathers” or forebears to the Romans. Sometimes at odds,

\textsuperscript{126} This chapter has inspired some musing, both etymological (Cavazza 2004, 72-74) and metaliterary (Gunderson 2009, 168-169) – the latter suggests, tantalizingly, that \textit{mellaria} / μέλισσῶνες recalls the Preface’s honey-titles.
they nevertheless exist in harmony; each culture is found to have its own strengths, and the two even rely on one another for mutual enrichment.

Most importantly for Gellius’s own development as an author, Greece becomes an intellectual parent to the knowledge that he uses as material for the *Attic Nights*. As one may see in reading the Preface, a tension between Greeks and Romans permeates the thought-world of the *NA*. It is in Book 2 in particular that Gellius runs this tension through a set of variations, linking them loosely and entwining them with other themes of interest. The most important of these themes is that which explores the father-son relationship, which, as I have argued, dovetails analogously with the Greek-Roman relationship, so that not only does Gellius focus on the Greek-Roman competition and the close but negotiatory relationship between fathers and sons, but he also makes the Greeks cultural forebears for the Romans. Nor does he shy away from giving himself a place in this intellectual genealogy: he was there in Athens when Taurus told the Roman father/proconsul and son/governor who ought to sit down first, and he was there sailing to port near Athens when he and his fellow learners mined their memories for the Greek and Latin names of the Big Dipper. Indeed, this Gellius character has often been in Athens (ever since 1.2.1, strolling with Herodes Atticus), and Athens is ultimately, as far as the *Noctes Atticae* is concerned, the genesis of the entire process that results in his knowledge-collection. Like the son and the chicks in the Aesopic fable, he relies on his “parent”, and like the young men of Lacedaemon, he respects the elder knowledge of Greece. But like the sons who must decide when they may obey their fathers or not, he finds that the Greeks are not always supremely authoritative. In these respects, Gellius acts consistently with the thought-world established in the Preface, where he found the Greek progenitors of his generic project unsatisfactory, their collections lacking the essential elements of *brevitas* and *utilitas* (which
make the variatio worthwhile), but also respected the authority of Aristophanes, using the Old Comic’s voice to express the mystic initiations of the noctes/παννυχίδες.

We too, as readers, participate in Gellius’s genealogy. His own first ideal readers (beyond himself, that is\textsuperscript{128}) are, as he says, his children (Pref. 1: ... ad hoc ut liberis quoque meis partae istiusmodi remissiones essent ...). He never develops the idea of his own children as immediate receptors of the \textit{NA}, but his mention of them does invite (albeit quietly) an interpretation of the \textit{NA} as a text meant to satisfy the educational aspirations of a father with regard to his sons.\textsuperscript{129} But they are not, as it turns out, the audience to whom he pays the most attention, an honor that goes instead to those who are particularly avid consumers of knowledge, those who peruse literature, collect its gems, and possibly even arrange them idiosyncratically into coronets.\textsuperscript{130} Nevertheless, these kinds of people match the posture that Gellius adopts for himself – the middle-ranking Roman bureaucrat with good literary taste who wishes to improve his capacity for self-education. Perhaps they will someday compose a collection not unlike the \textit{NA}. Gellius will then have replicated himself, producing intellectual children.

As discussed above, Gellius places himself, especially through Book 2, into an intellectual genealogy, and in the Preface his target audience become potential Gellii. The reader is now in a position to reflect on his\textsuperscript{131} own place in this Nocturnal genealogy. He may choose,

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\textsuperscript{128} Pref. 2: ... eaque mihi ad subsidium memoriae quasi quoddam litterarum penus recondebam ... .
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\textsuperscript{129} Kaster 1988, 67: “Gellius and Macrobius dedicated their works to their sons and in so doing took their places in a long and broad tradition, putting their accumulated wealth of learning and wisdom at their sons’ disposal as part of their patrimony.” Cf. Janson 1964 on fathers’ literary legacies to their sons.
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\textsuperscript{130} Such connoisseurs are indicated negatively in Pref. 19: qui in lectitando, percontando, scribendo, commentando numquam voluptates, numquam labores ceperunt, nullas hoc genus vigilias vigilarunt neque ullis inter eiusdem Musae aemulos certationibus disceptationibusque elimati sunt, sed intemperiarum negotiorumque pleni sunt.
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\textsuperscript{131} The gender of this pronoun should probably be construed as masculine rather than common: Gellius’s elite literary circle is all male, as is evident from the text itself, and the literary lineage into which he places himself (the list of miscellanist rivals in Pref. 6-9) is likewise populated exclusively by men, as far as the Quellenforschung has been able to determine (Holford-Strevens 2003, 65-80, discusses Gellius’s sources; Rust 2009, 215-220, is an exceptionally useful table) – with the possible exception of the 1st-century AD Epidauran miscellanist Pamphile, the extent of whose contribution to Gellius’s model is as yet unclear: see Holford-Strevens 2003, 29 with n. 15; Vardi
\end{flushright}
perhaps not wrongly, to enjoy the *NA* purely on its merits as a (professedly) utilitarian collection of knowledge pertaining in some way to one’s advancement to ever-more inner circles of the socio-cultural system of Imperial Rome. But if the reader were to willingly participate in Gellius’s program of miscellanistic procreation, he would use the *NA* as an incitement to create his own comparable work.¹³² Thus would the reader become an author comparable to Gellius; thus would his text become, like the *NA*, the product of a kind of textual union. Gellius has in fact successfully sired this kind of lineage: witness the proliferation of *NA*-quotes in later literature and the multiple attempts at making new *Noctes* for new generations.¹³³ Like Aeneas, Gellius is *longaeus*.

¹³² Broadly speaking, the idea is not new in Greco-Roman antiquity: Plato’s Socrates (*Symposium*) speaks of philosophically-inclined people “fathering” ideas.
III. A New and Miscellanized History of Gellius: The Narrative of Book 14 of the Noctes Atticae

A. Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the second book of the Noctes Atticae, which was notable for the fact that it rewards sequential reading by fitting related things together in the same book and allows them to achieve some unity by the end of the book. I now turn to Book 14, a unique book in the NA for its own reasons. First, its structure is noticeably different from that of other books in the collection: a glance at the contents section of the Preface reveals that this book has only 8 chapters, the fewest in the collection by far. Furthermore, in reading Book 14, it becomes apparent that these chapters are longer than most chapters in the NA. The first two chapters in particular make quite an impression with regard to length and consequently how much time one spends on them (at least, on the first reading). This is especially true if one has just read Book 13, which has a high number of chapters (31), most of those being of average or short length. Nevertheless, Book 14 ends up being short overall, about half the length of its neighbor Book 13, and this is in fact shorter than most books of the NA. The relative brevity of this book, along with the greater size of its chapters, makes it seem a tighter, tidier package than is usual for the NA (a trend that readers will notice if they have been going in order). The themes and connections, therefore, have the appearance of greater consistency throughout.

133 The best exploration of Gellius’s post-antique reception may be found in Part III of Holford-Strevens and Vardi 2004, chapters by Holford-Strevens, Heath, and Grafton. Ker 2004, 209 n.2, summarizes the nearly two millennia of titular descendants of the Noctes Atticae. See also Holford-Strevens 2003, 28 n.9.
134 By comparison, the next lowest total is 11, in Book 20, but that book has been curtailed in transmission, so that the number of its chapters cannot be certain; beyond that, the next lowest total is 14, in Book 19.
135 14.1 is massive by Gellian standards (8 OCT pages) and 14.2 is also long (4 OCT pages), with the other chapters in the book being of substantial length as well, on the upper end of average (about two pages or so each).
136 Most of them are one or two pages long, often shorter, with the exception of one long chapter: 13.25 is 5 pages long.
137 Book 14 is 21 pages long, and Book 13 is 42.
The content of this book also marks it as different from its fellows, for it is the only book that devotes itself in large part to interrogating the enterprise of the *NA* itself. It presents a movement from ignorance to knowledge, with some questioning and reflection along the way, thinking on what it means to be a good judge and what kinds of things make a good knowledge-collection. Many things are of interest to Gellius, of course, but these two are especially personal, the former representing his *negotium* and the latter his *otium*. Book 14 thus tests the *Noctes Atticae* (Gellius too, to a significant extent) and finds it acceptable.

Given its tight structure and more-or-less continuous movement from beginning to end, I will present an entirely sequential reading of Book 14, tracking the development of Gellius’s knowledge and self-confidence from early doubts in chapters 1 and 2 to a return to form, finally, in chapters 7 and 8. Each chapter will be considered individually and in pairs (1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8) because each of these pairs represents a productive juxtaposition. Finally, viewing the book as a whole, I will consider the implications of the final movement (chapters 7 and 8) for both Book 14 and the *NA* as a whole.

**B. Ignorance (14.1 and 14.2).**

Book 14 of the *Noctes Atticae* opens with an uncharacteristically long chapter, almost the longest one in the entire collection (6.3 and 20.1 being the longest, by one *OCT* page). Like several other opening chapters, 14.1 is a showcase for a special man of intellect, this time for Favorinus (whom Gellius grants this privilege multiple times). Here Gellius describes (§§1

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138 One should remember here, as always, that each chapter will recall things not limited to the immediately preceding chapter.

139 Holford-Strevens 2003, 35-36: pride of place goes to Favorinus in books 2, 3, 4, 12, 14, 18, and 20, Antonius Julianus in 9 and 15, and Musonius Rufus in 5 and 16. Holford-Strevens also sees topics of special interest in the inaugural chapter of each of the remaining books: fate in 7 and 13, a storm at sea in 19, a defense of Cicero against
and 2) how he once heard Favorinus in Rome declaiming in Greek against the *Chaldaei* (also known as “birthday-calculators” – *genethliaci*), who claim to be able to tell the future from the position of the stars at one’s time of birth. Not surprisingly, for readers who have by this point read many other bits of Favorinus, our author praises his friend’s speech (*disserentem egregia atque illustri oratione*). Perhaps more surprising is Gellius’s hesitation as to whether this speech was performed as a serious argument or simply for the sake of showing off, since we have often seen Gellius treat Favorinus with a great deal of reverence.¹⁴⁰ But whether or not Gellius truly means to call into question his mentor’s sincerity, his younger persona quickly sets to jotting down the chief points and the best bits of the speech: *Capita autem locorum argumentorumque, quibus usus est, quod eius meminisse potui, egressus ibi ex auditione propere adnotavi* (14.1.2).¹⁴¹ These “headings” are what we shall be reading nearly until the end of the chapter. But before we get to these, we see already how Gellius frames these arguments: he is with Favorinus in Rome, hanging on to his every word against a group of false intellectuals – this mode, in general, is nothing out of the ordinary for Gellius, since he establishes himself, time and again, as an admiring listener of a master intellectual discoursing against those who profess false knowledge. So, we see him here in a familiar hierarchy. Another unsurprising element comes in here as well: Gellius, setting aside the question of Favorinus’s sincerity, gains a great deal of useful notes alongside the pleasure that one naturally derives from hearing an outstanding and brilliant oration. Anyone could have enjoyed this or any other speech of Favorinus: they were

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¹⁴⁰ Keulen 2009 (*passim*) interprets Favorinus in the *NA* as the butt of Gellian intellectual satire, given Favorinus’s worldly reputation (cf. his biography in Philostratus). If this interpretation is on the mark, 14.1.2 would make a valuable piece of evidence, for it is one of the few sly jabs that Gellius makes against his favorite *philosophus*. Contrast Beall 2001, where Favorinus is Gellius’s intellectual hero, a man that Gellius reveres too much to satirize. ¹⁴¹ Gunderson 2009, 70, comments, most intriguingly, that a similar occurrence in 14.2 (but this will do just as well) is a manifestation of Gellian compression: he distills a lecture into its *capita* (chief points), just as the *Noctes Atticae* compresses Gellius’s lifetime of knowledge into *capita* of its own (see Pref. 25: *Capita rerum*...).
regularly applauded by the people of Rome, even those who had no knowledge of Greek.\textsuperscript{142} Gellius appreciates its entertainment value, of course, but he focuses our attention with the bulk of the chapter onto the more intellectually stimulating aspects of the speech – indeed, it is easy for readers to forget about Favorinus’s impressive turns of phrase when Gellius, in translating the original, sophistical Greek into his own plainer style of Latin, “has pruned the luxuriating verbiage”.\textsuperscript{143}

Now, having set the stage with these familiar elements, Gellius moves on to present the substance of Favorinus’s arguments, in summary form. Alternating between direct and indirect discourse, Gellius runs through a number of arguments against astrologers and the false knowledge that they profess (§§2 to 31). Most of these arguments aim to undermine the basis of the astrologers’ \textit{disciplina} (“science”, more or less) in different ways. For example: the positions of stars are different in different parts of the earth, so that strictly \textit{Chaldean} observations can only apply to Chaldean astrologers; we cannot be certain that we have observed all possible stars, planets, and combinations thereof, since there may be some celestial bodies still undiscovered and humans have not been observing long enough to have seen all possible combinations. Moreover, one cannot be certain which observation determines a person’s fate: is it when he or she was born? conceived? when his or her parents were born? when \textit{their} parents were born? (\textit{ad infinitum}). What about twins? Indeed, if the stars and their combinations determine the outcomes of all human activities, then humans cannot be considered, as Favorinus’s Greek had it, \textit{λογικὰ ζῶα}, creatures governed by their own reason. This last fault of the astrologers’ \textit{disciplina} is most disturbing, especially for Gellius, a judge, who adds to one of these summarized arguments an example involving disputes before a judge (§4):

\textsuperscript{142} Philostratus, \textit{Lives of the Sophists} 1.8. \\
\textsuperscript{143} Holford-Strevens 2003, 108.
Esse autem nimis quam ineptum absurdumque, ut, quoniam aestus oceani cum lunae curriculo congruit, negotium quoque alieius, quod ei forte de aquae ductu cum rivalibus aut de communi pariete cum vicino apud iudicem est, ut existimemus id negotium quasi habena quadam de caelo vinctum gubernari.

(Favorinus also said that) it is far beyond foolish and senseless to suppose that, just because the ocean’s tides are in alignment with the course of the moon, even someone’s dispute before a judge, maybe with competitors over a water-line or with his neighbor over a shared wall, that even that dispute is somehow harnessed and steered by the heavens.

Our author puts this in the mouth of Favorinus, but the judicial example gives the sentence a particularly Gellian ring. This personal bit of flavor will resonate especially with the next chapter of Book 14, where Favorinus advises the young Gellius on a question of justice, as well as with several of the other chapters of the book, which concern justice or judgment and Gellius’s own struggle to become a good iudex.

After some more arguments along the same lines, chapter 1 ends, finally, in a way not unfamiliar to readers of Gellius: in §§32 and 33, Gellius apologizes for rendering Favorinus’s oratio in jejune fashion (Haec nos sicca et incondita et propemodum ieiuna oratione adtingimus), but then he has the orator add one last thing, on a slight tangent from the main speech, on avoiding sycophants (a class to which the astrologers belong). Gellius himself then adds a couple of pertinent verses, one from Pacuvius and one from Accius (§34), then finally (§§35-36) adds yet more from Favorinus, a kind of conclusion in that Favorinus urges more adamantly and more concisely that one ought not have recourse to fortune-tellers. The disjointedness of the finale to these arguments is not unusual for Gellius. But, rather than dismissing this structure as a failure of organization, we should at least recognize that it is a common element of Gellius’s technique to represent the cobbled-together nature of the Noctes Atticae even on the small scale in individual chapters. Besides representing the general mise-en-scène, though, the effect of this structure (Gellius’s presence with the master; Favorinus’s long speech, with addition; then Gellius’s slight offering; then Favorinus’s final
push) is to establish Gellius in a hierarchy of knowledge and judgment – that is to say, Gellius makes his persona an enthusiastic follower of Favorinus, taking part in his own small way in the master’s judgment of a group of false professors of knowledge.

In the next chapter, 14.2, Gellius faces another crisis of knowledge and judgment, but this time he is the pilot, at first. Favorinus will eventually take the rudder, but Gellius himself is left to his own devices in the important opening sections of 14.2. We see him at the beginning of his career as a judge in Rome:

(1) Quo primum tempore a praetoribus lectus in iudices sum, ut iudicia quae appellantur privata susciperem, libros utriusque linguae de officio iudicis scriptos consquisivi, ut homo adulescens a poetarum fabulis et a rhetorum epilogis ad iudicandas lites vocatus rem iudiciariam, quoniam vocis, ut dicitur, vivae penuria erat, ex mutis, quod aiunt, magistris cognoscerem. Atque in dierum quidem diffensionibus conperendinationibusque et aliis quibusdam legitimis ritibus ex ipsa lege Iulia et ex Sabini Masurii et quorundam aliorum iurisperitorum commentariorum commonti et adminiculati sumus. (2) In his autem, quae existere solent, negotiorum ambagibus et in ancipiti rationum diversarum circumstantia nihil quicquam nos huiuscemodi libri iuverunt. (3) Nam etsi consilia iudicibus ex praesentium causarum statu capienda sunt, generalia tamen quaedam praevisita et praecerta sunt, quibus ante causam praeundi iudicibus praeepararique ad incertos casus futurum difficultatum debeat, sicut illa mihi tunc accidit inexplicabilis reperiendae sententiae ambiguitas.

(1) As soon as the praetors selected me to be a judge, to take on what they call “private” cases, I started to hunt down books written in both languages on the duty of a judge – as a young man called away from his poets’ tales and rhetoricians’ perorations to the judgment of legal suits, I intended to learn the art of judgment from the “mute masters”, there being a lack of the “living voice”. And so, whenever there was a one- or two-day deferral or some other legal procedure of like duration, I bolstered my memory with the Julian Law and the commentaries of Sabinus Masurius and certain other legal experts. (2) But in view of those legal ambiguities that tend to crop up and the difficulties involved in divergent opinions, books of that sort helped me not one bit. (3) For, even if judges are to base their opinions on the cases at hand, there are still some general rules and recommendations with which a judge ought to fortify himself and prepare himself before a case, with an eye to the unpredictable pitfalls of future difficulties. It was at that time that I ran into just such an intricate conundrum in devising a sentence.

Gellius, as we see him here, has put away his childish things and matured to the point of starting his legal career. This is a laudable professional goal for an ancient Roman man of dignity, but Gellius faces a problem for the kind of man his miscellany has promised he should be: he needs to learn the fundamentals of his profession. Strangely enough, there are no living, breathing
teachers to be found for this endeavor, so, as often with Gellius, enlightenment must be sought in books. But, while books are Gellius’s constant companions and helpers, now they are insufficient: the young Gellius is impatient with their difficulties, ambiguities, and inconsistencies. Indeed, Gellius’s frustration exists now on at least two levels: there are no living teachers to be found, and there are no books that give him the answer. There is a real sense of impatience here on the part of the young Gellius, one that we do not often see. This is important because it characterizes the fictionalized Gellius as different from the more mature narrator Gellius, and as the chapter progresses, we will see how the young (character) Gellius tries to deal with his legal conundrum and how the mature (narrator) Gellius finds a solution more easily – in between, we will see how Gellius develops from the one to the other.

The next few sentences (§§4-8) outline the problem: a man of known integrity claims that a man of known turpitude failed to repay the loan that the former had made. But the man of integrity has no evidence and weak arguments; so, says the man of turpitude, since the claimant cannot prove anything in the usual ways, he ought to be condemned for making false accusations (de calumnia damnari). Finally, says the shameless defendant, a comparison of the litigants’ moral lives has no place in a trial concerning the repayment of a loan; that sort of thing belongs in a case before the censors. Gellius is thus characterized as a judge who, at least in his youth, is concerned with putting moral character on equal footing with physical evidence and the testimony of witnesses. Otherwise, this case would not present a problem, for the claimant’s case could be thrown out for lack of evidence. These concerns are consistent with Gellius’s judicial

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Holford-Strevens 2003 (p. 295, n. 26) is “amazed to read” that such teachers could not be found in Antonine Rome. Indeed, it is surprising, but Gellius’s penuria fittingly leaves the field of the vox viva open to Favorinus, who, with 14.1, will now seem to be a great (the greatest?) living authority on all things intellectual.
philosophy elsewhere in the *NA*: he sometimes finds legal systems unsatisfying on ethical questions.¹⁴⁵

So, finding the legal commentaries insufficient preparation for the case before him, Gellius seeks advice from friends (§§9-11):

(9) Tunc ibi amici mei, quos rogaveram in consilium, viri exercitati atque in patrocinis et in operis fori celebres semperque se circumundique distrahentibus causis festinantes, non sedendum diutius ac nihil esse dubium dicebatur, quin absolvendus foret, quem accepsisse pecuniam nulla probatione sollemni docebatur. (10) Sed enim ego homines cum considerabam, alterum fidei, alterum probri plenum spuriissimaeque vitae ac defamatissimae, nequaquam adduci potui ad absolvendum. (11) Iussi igitur diem diffindi atque inde a subselliis pergo ire ad Favorinum philosophum, quem in eo tempore Romae plurimum sectabar, atque ei de causa ac de hominibus quae apud me dicta fuerant, uti res erat, narro omnia ac peto ut et ipsum illud, et cetera etiam, quae observanda mihi forent in officio iudicis, faceret me, ut earum rerum esset prudentior.

(9) At that moment my friends, whom I had asked for advice, experienced men who were prolific in representations and court work and always rushing around, with their cases dragging them all over, said that there was no longer need to sit in judgment nor any doubt that the man should be acquitted, for his alleged receipt of the money was not being argued by the customary means of establishing proof. (10) But, to be honest, when I thought about the men, one full of credibility, the other full of vice and a thoroughly foul, disreputable life, I could in no way be moved to acquit him. (11) So, I ordered that the date be postponed, then went on my way from the bench to the philosopher Favorinus, whom I used to follow a great deal at that time in Rome. I told him everything: the case, the men involved, their statements, the current situation; and I begged him to better my judgment in the current quandary, and in everything else too that I would need to watch out for in my judicial service.

A pattern begins to emerge: Gellius’s first hoped-for source of knowledge with regard to judicial difficulties was living teachers. None were to be had, so he resorted to books. These at least existed, but they were unhelpful. Perhaps his friends in the legal profession could help? No, they were too busy running from one case to the next.¹⁴⁶ Finally, as a last resort, Gellius goes to the

¹⁴⁵ This is especially true in 1.3, where Gellius tells the story of the Spartan Chilo, who, as *iudex* with two others, must decide whether or not to spare a friend’s life: the friend had been convicted of some crime for which the punishment was death, and Chilo is torn between his friend and the law. His solution is to recommend to the other two that the man be acquitted, but to vote with them in favor of condemnation. Gellius spends the rest of the chapter (a somewhat long one) seeking wisdom from a number of ethical sources, mainly Cicero and Theophrastus *de Amicitia*. For a comparison of 14.2 and 1.3, see Keulen 2009, 221-233.

¹⁴⁶ This busy lifestyle that cannot find time for ethical questions reminds one of Gellius’s warning in *Pref*. 19, that those who take no pleasure in intellectual pursuits because of either wild behavior or professional obligations, ought to stay away from the *NA* and find entertainments better suited to their lifestyles. Keulen (2009, 175ff.) notices this connection to the Preface, finding that Gellius faces a dilemma in which his professional colleagues are too
philosopher whom he had been following around in his youth at Rome, Favorinus. Readers know from having read other parts of the NA (most recently, 14.1) that Favorinus is a proven authority in many realms of knowledge, and so there is good reason to believe that young Gellius will be in capable hands. However, the pattern established so far may plant seeds of doubt: having already seen Favorinus deal with a general topic (adversum istos..., 14.1.1) we will see just how far Favorinus can help Gellius on this particular question of law and ethics.

The next several sentences represent Favorinus speaking to Gellius on this topic in a way that actually resembles much of the speech in 14.1: there are many capita but scarcely any elaborations. The difference here is that Favorinus announces that he will speak in this way:

(12) Tum Favorinus religione illa cunctationis et sollicitudinis nostrae conprobata: “id quidem”, inquit, “super quo nunc deliberas, videri potest specie tenui parvaque esse. Sed si de omni quoque officio iudicis praecipe tibi me vis, nequaquam est vel loci huius vel temporis; (13) est enim discceptatio ista multiitiae et sinuosae quasionis multaque et anxia cura et circumpiciientia indigens. (14) Namque ut paucus tibi nune questionionum capita adtingas, iam omnium primum hoc de iudicis officio quaeritur: si iudex forte id sciat, super qua re apud eum litigatur, eaque res uni ei, priusquam agi coepta aut in iudicium deducta sit, ex alio quodam negotio casuve aliquo cognita liquido et comperta sit neque id tamen in agenda causa probetur, oporteatne eum secundum ea, quae sciens venit, iudicare an secundum ea, quae aguntur? (15) Id etiam” inquit “quaeri solet, an deleat atque conveniat iudici causa iam cognita, si facultas esse videatur conponendi negotii, officio paulisper iudicis dilato communis amicitiae et quasi pacificatoris partes recipere? (16) Atque illum amplius ambigi ac dubitari scio, debeatne iudex inter cognoscendum etiamsi, cuius ea dici quaerque interest, neque dicat neque postulet? Patrocinari enim prorsus hoc esse aiunt, non iudicare.”

(12) Then Favorinus commended me for my scrupulous hesitation and anxiety. “What you’re deliberating about now,” he said, “may seem to be of slight and trifling character. But if you want me to give you guidance on all of a judge’s responsibilities, this is neither the time nor the place, (13) for that kind of discussion involves varied, complicated inquiry and requires much careful attention and examination. (14) So, to touch upon a few question-headings for you: the very first question regarding a judge’s responsibility is, If a judge happens to know what the lawsuit being brought to him is about and he alone has come to a clear understanding of the matter from some other business or occasion before the action has begun or the matter has been taken to court but it hasn’t been proven in conducting the case, should he make his judgment based on what he came intellectually shallow (like those in the Preface) while Favorinus is too intellectual to be of any help. I disagree with the second leg of the dilemma, as will become evident in the discussion above, but the connection with the Preface is nonetheless notable as a signal playing to its audience as people willing to take the time to think such things through.

147 This progression recalls 2.30, where a father could rely not on friends, nor on relatives, but only on his son. The roles here are reversed, with Favorinus taking the position of the authority figure. Gellius could be said to be part of an intellectual genealogy through Favorinus – see below on how Gellius imitates Favorinus’s capita.
in knowing, or should it be based on the current case? (15) Another common question is,” he said, “Is it fitting and proper for a judge, when he fully understands the case and thinks there is an opportunity to settle the matter, to set aside his judicial responsibility for a moment and take on the role of mutual friend and ‘peacemaker’? (16) I am also aware that there is often some uncertainty over whether a judge in the middle of his inquiry ought to say and ask what needs to be said and asked even if the one to whose advantage it is that those things be said and asked, neither says them nor demands them. Indeed, they say this is really just being an attorney, not a judge.”

Several similar quaestionum capita (“question-headings”) follow in the same manner. Favorinus does seem to treat Gellius’s question seriously, seeing that the topic is too big to deal with in the interstitio negotiorum (as the Preface puts it), especially since Gellius is, ultimately, looking for a set of general rules that can guide him through difficult courtroom situations. Favorinus’s solution is to give him what amounts to a list of the most important judicial questions, asked succinctly (one sentence each). Recently, scholars have taken a few different approaches in trying to understand Favorinus’s presentation here: Keulen thinks that, by saying id quidem super quo nunc deliberas, videri potest specie tenui parvaque esse, Favorinus is not in fact being serious and that Gellius is thus setting him up as an unreliable authority. Holford-Strevens takes this as one of those cases of Gellius opening up the field for discussion, encouraging the reader to pick up where the author leaves off. Finally, Gunderson lays emphasis on the significance of the word caput in the phrase quaestionum capita, implicitly inviting the reader to think back on the capita rerum (the so-called “Table of Contents”). From the literary perspective of the present discussion, Gunderson has struck an important note in recalling the capita rerum: here, Favorinus is presenting his questions in “heading” format, in exactly the same way that Gellius presented the material of his collection in the Preface. Now, if we read sequentially and keep Gunderson’s connection in mind, the formal similarity between 14.2 and

148 Keulen 2009, 175-178. This chapter is one of many in which Keulen sees Gellius undermining the authority of many intellectuals, but especially that of Favorinus.
149 Holford-Strevens 2003, 297: “Nevertheless, the chapter serves to stimulate debate.”
150 Gunderson 2009, 70.
its immediate predecessor, 14.1, should be instantly recognizable: Favorinus presented a format that was absolutely convincing (to Gellius) in 14.1. So, in 14.2, the reader should expect Favorinus to have similar success. At this point in Book 14, then, Gellius makes Favorinus anticipate the methodology of the *Noctes Atticae*. The presentation of knowledge that Gellius gains from this interstitial conversation is so useful that he will go on, in his maturity, to use it for his own collection, giving readers knowledge in easily accessible bits in their spare time.

But the young Gellius characterized in 14.2 is not yet mature: in §§20-23 he has another lesson to learn from Favorinus about the presentation of knowledge.

(20) “Sed de his” inquit “et ceteris huiuscemodi iudicialis officii tractatibus et nos posthac, cum erit otium, dicere, quid sentiamus, conabimur et praeccepta Aelii Tuberonis super officio iudicis, quae nuperrime legi, recensebimus. (21) Quod autem ad pecuniam pertinet, quam apud iudicem peti dixisti, suadeo hercle tibi, utare M. Catonis, prudentissimi viri, consilio, qui in oratione, quam pro L. Turio contra Gn. Gellium dixit, ita esse a maioribus traditum observatumque ait, ut si, quod inter duos actum est, neque tabulis neque testibus planum fieri possit, tum apud iudicem, qui de ea re cognosceret, uter ex his viri melior esset, quaeque tabulis et uter ex his viri melior esset, tum illi, unde petitur, crederetur ac secundum eum iudicaretur. (22) In hac autem causa, de qua tu ambigis, optimus est qui petit, unde petitur deterrimus, et res est inter duos acta sine testibus. (23) Eas igitur et credas ei qui petit, condemnnesque eum de quo petitur, quoniam, sicuti dicas, duo pares non sunt et qui petit melior est.”

(20) “But later on, when I have free time, I’ll tell you what I think about these and all the other similar discussions on judicial responsibility, and I’ll also review the rules of Aelius Tubero concerning the duty of a judge. (21) Now, as for the money you said was being claimed in court, by Hercules, I recommend that you take the advice of M. Cato, a very wise man! In the speech he made *For Lucius Turius* against Gn. Gellius, he said that his predecessors had passed down a rule that they had kept, to wit: if a dispute between two men could not be clarified either by records or by witnesses, then it should be inquired before the judge examining the case, which of the two was the better man, and if they were equal (equally good or bad), then the defendant of the suit should be believed and the judgment should be made in his favor. (22) Now, in the case about which you are in doubt, the one suing is an excellent man, while the one sued is contemptible, and both have argued their case without witnesses. (23) So, go and believe the one suing, and convict the one being sued, since, as you say, the two are not equal and the one suing is better.”

For Gellius, this is the climactic moment of Favorinus’s instruction. Having established some questions that will ideally guide Gellius’s personal inquiry into judicial ethics and now reminding him that there will be plenty of time later to discuss these things (not to mention
Aelius Tubero’s general rules), Favorinus now briefly turns to Gellius’s question of the day. He answers with a summarized opinion of Cato the Elder on exactly the topic of deciding which party wins in a case of debt when certain limiting parameters are in place. Favorinus is reaching back to antiquity for the opinion of Cato, and Cato himself is reaching back to the unwritten tradition of unnamed ancestors. Gellius, in his capacity as author of knowledge, thus learns the second important lesson of the day: seek an authoritative antecedent for what you do and what you argue, and make sure that it is rooted firmly in antiquity. So, in writing 14.2, Gellius has Favorinus introduce a second level of methodological wisdom for the *NA*: in 14.1, Favorinus had shown him the “question-heading” format, which he continued into 14.2, but in 14.2, he adds an extra dimension by modeling the use of ancient authority.

But this is a false climax: as often happens in these Gellian movements, there is no tidy recapitulation; rather, the themes of the chapter undergo an unexpected development. Here, the twist is more jarring than usual. Perhaps the reader expects either that this seeming climax will be the end of the chapter or that Gellius (the author) will add the choicest fruits of his further reading. For our ending, we instead get character-building first, then Gellian fruits (of a different sort) last:

(24) Hoc quidem mihi tum Favorinus, ut virum philosophum decuit, suasit. (25) Sed maius ego altiusque id esse existimavi, quam quod meae aetati et mediocritati conveniret, ut cognovisse et condemnasse de moribus, non de probationibus rei gestae viderer; ut absolverem tamen, inducere in animum non quivi et propterea iuravi mihi non liquere atque ita iudicatu illo solutos sum.

(26) Verba ex oratione M. Catonis, cuius commemininit Favorinus, haec sunt: “Atque ego a maioribus memoria sic accepi: si quis quid alter ab altero peterent, si ambo pares essent, sive boni sive mali essent, quod duo res gessissent, uti testes non interesserent, illi, unde petitur, ei potius credendum esse. Nunc si sponsonem fecisset Gellius cum Turio, ni vir melior esset Gellius quam

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151 As a matter of fact, Favorinus’s *quaestirion capita* seem to have been lifted from Tubero’s handbook itself: Keulen 2009, 222 n.20.

152 Holford-Strevens (2003, 126) is right to stress the reliance on ancient authority: “Favorinus’ discussion of a judge’s duty in 14.2 is purely Roman; no other treatment was appropriate, for the *iudex* in a suit between citizens must, at least in public, prefer the *mos maiorum* to peregrine speculations.” I, in my turn, would like to stress this as part of a cumulative learning process that Gellius undergoes over the course of Book 14.
(24) That is what Favorinus recommended to me at that time, as was fitting for a man of
philosophy. (25) But I considered it more eminent and lofty than was appropriate for my age and
humble position to be seen to come to a decision and make a conviction based on character
instead of the evidence of the action just completed. Still, I could not convince myself to absolve
him; so, I swore on oath that the matter was Unclear to me, and that is how I absolved myself
from that decision.
(26) Here are the words from M. Cato’s speech, which Favorinus cited: “And I have learned the
following from the men of old: if a man should sue a thing, one man from the other, if they both
be equal, be they good or evil, but the two conduct their business such that witnesses be not
present, then to the man from whom the thing is sued, to him rather shall credit be due. Now, had
Gellius made a wager with Turius (‘if Gellius be not a better man than Turius’), no one, I think,
would be so mad as to judge Gellius a better man than Turius: if Gellius is not better than Turius,
credit ought rather be due to him from whom the thing is sued.”

… ut virum philosophum decuit. Favorinus’s advice is good, as far as philosophy goes. But to the
young Gellius, this seems insufficient for the real world of tough decisions in the courtroom.
This is a disheartening failure on the part of Gellius’s favorite mentor: either his advice is too
idealistic for real-world problems, or it is too weighty to be applied by a novice. Even worse,
from the perspective of Gellius the author, who echoes absolverem with solutus sum, the judge
becomes the judged. What this move says about Gellius himself (whether as the present author or
as the semi-fictionalized version of his past self) has hardly been touched in the secondary
literature: he is strangely “unheroic”,153 or the blame rests mainly on Favorinus for being an
ironically ambiguous (non)hero.154 At this moment in Book 14, we witness a foundational crisis
in the early stages of Gellius’s intellectual life, wherein he finds that his understanding of a
whole range of authorities is inadequate to the task of deciding the place of ethics in a court of
law. Not only do books and colleagues fail him, but even his favorite mentor, who cites the most
authoritative of ancient authorities (who himself cites the maiores), fails him. Indeed, there is

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153 Holford-Strevens 2003, 297. The question of why Gellius should be heroic is bypassed because
Holford-Strevens’s discussion is concerned with Gellius’s take on law rather than his take on himself.
154 Keulen 2009, 175-177. Favorinus, not taking Gellius’s question seriously, becomes a mere sophist, whose
authority Gellius then overturns by offering the Cato quote. Thus Gellius accesses the rock-solid authority of the
maiores and proves his mentor’s to be hollow.
something of an irony in the fact that in 14.1 Favorinus deconstructed the authority of others (astrologers), while in 14.2 his own authority (as well as, implicitly, the authority of those he cites) is in jeopardy. Is Gellius truly facing disillusionment with trusted sources?

We would seem to be at an impasse, an *aporia*. But, again, this is not the end, for one final theme needs to be addressed – Gellius returns to Gellius. If the title of a speech by the knowledge-hero Cato includes *contra Gellium*, it is likely to raise eyebrows for readers of *Gellii Noctes Atticae*. As we have just seen, Gellius implicates his younger self in a kind of moral judgment for having failed to come to an official decision. By raising in the mouth of Cato the name of another Gellius, he simultaneously raises the question of whether (Aulus) Gellius is the better man. Is he better than Turius, or for that matter, anyone? At this point, Gellius seems to have shifted to his capacity as author (his present self), rather than commenting on his time as a judge (his past self). The mature Gellius does something the younger one could not have done: he readily quotes Cato’s words, which, one presumes, he looked up sometime after his conversation with Favorinus. By skipping to the present day he shows the reader how much his intellectual depth has grown since then. And so, in the long run, Favorinus did not fail Gellius, and his authority remains intact. Still, by putting a Gellius on trial, he does not skirt around the implication that a Gellius is guilty.

To sum up so far: the first two chapters of Book 14 of the *NA* revolve mainly around two themes, centered (as it happens) on the character of Favorinus: first, the difficulty of gaining sure knowledge, and second, a methodology of inquiry. In 14.1, the first theme is made manifest in Favorinus’s dismantling of the professed knowledge of astrologers, and the second theme appears in his methodology in doing so (the brief questions or criticisms neatly encapsulated in

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155 Gunderson (2009, 71) comments on the title of the speech, but not on the *verba* at the end. “And here [§21] Favorinus tells Gellius that Cato told a Gellius just such a thing.”
caput form). In 14.2, the first theme shifts somewhat away from Favorinus and focuses instead on the story of a younger Gellius wrestling with an ethical conundrum in his early courtroom days, trying many sources, including books and friends and ultimately Favorinus, all of which leave something to be desired. But the idiosyncratic ending of the chapter reminds readers that Gellius the author is now mature in his knowledge, owing in part to the direction in which Favorinus had pointed him. This validates the methodology (quaestionum capita) that Favorinus used, for a second time, to guide Gellius’s inquiry. Through the rest of Book 14, Gellius will continue to confront these questions of the methodology of inquiry and the difficulties of securing knowledge, but it is worth noting now that 14.2 introduces an autobiographical element in that it situates the character Gellius in a narrative spanning the stages of his adult intellectual development. The addition of this element personalizes the search for knowledge and the struggle to organize it; in this way Gellius offers a model of learning, not only for himself, but for the reader as well.

C. Critical Thinking (14.3 and 14.4)

In the next two chapters of Book 14 we witness the growth of Gellius’s critical faculties in the spheres of literary history (14.3) and judicial philosophy (14.4). In chapter 3, Gellius judges those who base their claim of a real-life dispute between Plato and Xenophon on evidence from their publications.

(1) Qui de Xenophontis Platonisque vita et moribus pleraque omnia exquisitissime scripsere, non afuisse ab eis motus quosdam tacitos et occultos simultatis aemulationisque mutuae putaverunt et eius rei argumenta quaedam coniectatoria ex eorum scriptis protulerunt. (2) Ea sunt profecto huiuscemodi: quod neque a Platone in tot numero libris mentio usquam facta sit Xenophontis neque item contra ab eo in suis libris Platonis, quamquam uterque ac maxime Plato complurium Socratis sectatorum in sermonibus, quos scripsit, commeminerit. (3) Id etiam esse non sincerae neque amicæ voluntatis indicium crediderunt, quod Xenophon incito illi operi Platonos, quod de optimo statu reipublicae civitatisque administrandae scriptum est, lectis ex eo duobus fere libris, qui primi in volgus exierant, opposuit contra conscripsitque diversum regiae administrationis.
genus, quod παιδείας Κύρου inscriptum est. (4) Eo facto scriptoque ei usque adeo permotum esse Platonem ferunt, ut quodam in libro mentione Cyri regis habita detractandi levandique eius operis gratia virum quidem Cyrum gnaveum et strenuum fuisset dixerit, παιδείας δὲ οὖκ ὤρθῶς ἠφθαν τὸ παράπαν; haec enim verba sunt de Cyro Platonis. (5) Praeterea putant id quoque ad ista, quae dixi, accedere, quod Xenophon in libris, quos dictorum atque factorum Socratis commentarios compositum, negat Socraten de caeli atque naturae causis rationibusque unquam disputavisse, ac ne disciplinas quidem ceteras, quae μαθήματα Graeci appellant, quae ad bene beatique vivendum non pergerent, aut attigisse aut comprobasse, idecircoque turpiter eos mentiri dicit, qui dissertationes istiusmodi Socrati adtribuerent. (6) “Hoc autem” inquit “Xenophon cum scripsit, Platonem videlicet notat, in cuius libris Socrates physica et musica et geometrica dissert.” (7) Sed enim de viris optimis et gravissimis si credendum hoc aut suspicandum fuit, causam equidem esse arbitror non obtrectationis nec invidiae neque de gloria maiore parienda certationis; haec enim procul a moribus philosophiae absunt, in quibus illi duo omnium iudicio excelluerunt. (8) Quae igitur est opinionis istius ratio? Haec profecto est: aequiperatio ipsa plerumque et parilitas virtutum inter sese consimilium, etiamsi contentionis studium et voluntas abest, speciem tamen aemulationis creat. (9) Nam cum ingenia quaedam magna duorum pluriumve in eiusdem rei studio inlustrium aut pari sunt fama aut proxima, oritur apud diversos favores eorum industriae laudisque aestumandae contentio. (10) Tum postea ex alieno certamine ad eos quoque ipsos contagium certationis adsident, cursusque eorum ad eandem virtutis calcem pergentium, quando est compar vel ambiguus, in aemulandi suspiciones non suo, sed faventi studio delabitur. (11) Proinde igitur et Xenophon et Plato, Socraticae amoenitatis duo lumina, certare aemularique inter sese existimati sunt, quia de his apud alios, uter esset exsuperantior, certabatur et quia duae eminentiae, cum simul iunctae in arduum nituntur, simulacrum quoddam contentionis aemulae pariunt.

(1) Those who have in great detail written most of the things about the life and character of Xenophon and Plato have thought that there absolutely were some unspoken, secret feelings of animosity and rivalry between them, and they have advanced some arguments for this on the basis of their writings. (2) Of course, they go something like this: Plato did not mention Xenophon in his great number of books, nor did Xenophon mention him in his own books, even though both of them, especially Plato, told of a great many of Socrates’s disciples in the conversations that they wrote down. (3) They have also believed that it is indicative of an unwholesome and unfriendly attitude that Xenophon, having just barely read the first two published books of that famous work of Plato about the best type of government and civic administration, wrote against it with a different kind of government (monarchical), which he entitled Παιδείας Κύρου. (4) They say that this inscriptive act of his disturbed Plato so deeply that in one of his books he mentioned King Cyrus in order to belittle and make light of Xenophon’s work, saying that Cyrus was, of course, a vigorous and energetic man, παιδείας δὲ οὖκ ὤρθῶς ἠφθαν τὸ παράπαν – these are Plato’s words about Cyrus. (5) They also say that there is this too in addition to what I have spoken of: in the note-books that he compiled of the sayings and doings of Socrates, Xenophon says that Socrates never discussed the origins and the systems of heaven and nature, and never even touched upon or commended the other disciplines called μαθήματα by the Greeks, on the grounds that they did not lead to a good, happy life; therefore, he says, those who attribute such discussions to Socrates are filthy liars. (6) “And when Xenophon wrote this,” they say, “he was clearly referring to Plato, in whose books Socrates discussed natural philosophy, music, and geometry.” (7) But, the fact is, if we must believe this about noble and serious men, I do not think that the reason was for spite or envy or to compete for greater glory; these things are far from philosophical character, in which those two men excelled, according to everyone’s judgment. (8) What, then, is the reason for their opinion? No doubt it is because oftentimes the comparability and likeness of similar virtues, even if there is no desire or passion for competition, still creates the appearance of rivalry.
when the great minds of two or more men who are illustrious in the same field are equally famous, or nearly so, a competition arises between their supporters in rating their diligence and merit. (10) Then, later, starting with an external rivalry, the contagious spirit of competition reaches them too; and, as they head for the same goal of virtue, when their race is close or too close to call, it slips into suspicions of rivalry, not because of their own zeal but because of their supporters’. (11) So also are both Xenophon and Plato, the two stars of Socratic charm, believed to be competitors and rivals, because other people debate over which is superior, and because when two pre-eminent men join together and struggle toward a lofty goal, they create an image of jealous competition.

Gellius undergoes at least two kinds of evolution in this chapter. The first comes in the way in which he presents the arguments of his target intellectuals and then dismantles them. In §§2-6, Gellius shows us, in brief, the pieces of evidence that would seem to point towards a rivalry between the two former students of Socrates. Just as in 14.1 and 14.2, each argument or piece of evidence is summed up concisely in its own sentence. Gellius is also careful to appear to treat these arguments fairly, even as he distances himself from them: he refrains from coloring them with disparaging language, he reports them in indirect discourse, and he gives the final argument (his argument) the privilege of direct statement. Then, for the rest of the chapter, he develops an argument that attempts to undermine the basis of the opposing arguments summarized in the first part of the chapter. In the presentation of the arguments in favor of the Plato-Xenophon rivalry, Gellius has learned from Favorinus how to concisely sum up source material. But in responding to them, Gellius develops a single argument that takes up about as much space as the several arguments to which he is opposed. This is where he diverges from Favorinus, and through the rest of book 14, where Favorinus does not reappear, we will see Gellius maintain the ability to make more substantial arguments.

The second kind of evolution that Gellius undergoes is the growth of his role as judge. Whereas 14.2 told of his attempt to judge two litigants on the basis of character, 14.3 makes Gellius a judge of the character of literary figures. He is still judging character, but the possibilities in making a decision are now broader. He may judge either Plato or Xenophon to be
at fault, he may choose not to decide, or he may throw out the entire case. In 14.2, his options seemed limited, various factors weighing against deciding for one litigant or the other. In the end, he judged the entire situation unclear (*mihi non liquere*), thus avoiding a difficult decision. In 14.3, his confidence has grown, for now he can argue, rather forcefully (*equidem ... arbitror*, §7) that there never were any grounds for contention in the first place. 156

At this point, one could well object that Gellius has not in fact grown as an *iudex*, in its strictly legal sense, but is instead inhabiting a role that he has been shown throughout the *NA* to be comfortable with: a somewhat contentious intellectual demonstrating that the common run of semi-learned men are deluded by their half-knowledge into thinking that they can get away with making certain baseless arguments. But at the very least, Gellius represents himself (in 14.3) metaphorically as an *iudex*, or at least *arbiter*, of historical facts relating to philosophy and literature. In 14.4, considering a philosophical element of justice, Gellius contemplates the meaning and usefulness of Chrysippus’s word-painting of Iustitia:

(1) Condigne mehercule et condecere Chrysippus in librorum, qui inscribuntur περὶ καλοῦ καὶ ἡδονῆς, primo os et oculos Iustitiae vultumque eius severis atque venerandis verborum coloribus depinxit. (2) Facit quippe imaginem Iustitiae fierique solitam esse dicit a pictoribus rhetoribusque antiquioribus ad hunc ferme modum: “forma atque filo virginali, aspectu vehementi et formidabili, luminibus oculorum acribus, neque humilis neque atrocis, sed reverendae cuiusdam tristitiae dignitate.” (3) Ex imaginis autem istius significatione intelligi voluit iudicem, qui Iustitiae antistes est, oportere esse gravem, sanctum, severum, incorruptum, inadulabilem contraque improbos nocentesque inminerisceretem atque inexorabilem erectumque et ardum ac potentem, vi et maiestate aequitatis veritatisque terrificum. (4) Verba ipsa Chrysippi de Iustitia scripta haec sunt: Παρθένος δὲ εἶναι λέγεται κατὰ σύμβολον τοῦ ἁδιάφθορος ἐνν’ καὶ μηδαμῶς ἐνδιόν τοῖς κακοῦργοις μὴ προσίσθαι μήτε τοὺς ἐπειεικῆς λόγους μήτε παρατίθηναι καὶ δέχον μήτε κολακεῖαι μήτε ἀλλο μηδὲν τῶν τοιοῦτων ὡς ἁκολούθως καὶ σκληρωτῇ γράφεται καὶ συντετηκὸς ἔχουσα τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ἐντόνον καὶ δεδορκὸς βλέπουσα, ὡστε τοὺς μὲν ἁδίκους φόβον ἔμπωσιν, τοὺς δὲ δικαίους θάρσος, τοὺς μὲν προσφιλοῦς ὄντος τοῦ τοιοῦτον προσώπου, τοὺς δὲ ἐτέρως προσάντους.

156 Holford-Strevens (2003, 268-269), having already found Gellius’s decision in 14.2 “unheroic”, believes that he displays here a kind of naïveté that is unwilling to see philosophers descend to the level of petty rivalry, and he finds Gellius’s handling of the textual evidence for or against this rivalry unsatisfying, declaring his naïveté unworthy of a judge. Holford-Strevens is surely right to interpret this passage in light of Gellius’s professional role, but one would do well to compare his judgment in 14.3 to his judgment in 14.2 and thus observe that Gellius has at least made a kind of advancement in judging.
(5) Haec verba Chrysippi eo etiam magis ponenda existimavi, ut prompta ad considerandum iudicandumque sint, quoniam legentibus ea nobis delicatiorum quidam disciplinarum philosophi Saevitiae imaginem istam esse, non Iustitiae, dixerunt.

(1) Very worthily, by Hercules, and very gracefully did Chrysippus in the first book of his Περὶ Καλοῦ καὶ Ἡδονῆς portray the face and eyes of Justice, as well as her expression, with austere and venerable word-colors. (2) He is indeed visualizing Justice, and here is how he says that painters and rhetors of old often visualized her: “form and figure of a maiden, powerful and fearsome appearance, a piercing light in her eyes, a dignified melancholy which is neither humbled nor cruel, but awe-inspiring.” (3) And, by communicating such an image, he wanted it to be understood that a judge – a high-priest of Justice – ought to be grave, august, stern, immune to bribery and flattery, pitiless and merciless in the face of the wicked and the criminal, upright and lofty and powerful, terrifying in the might and grandeur of fairness and truth. (4) Here are the words Chrysippus wrote about Justice: She is called a maiden, as a token of her being incorruptible and never giving in to evil-doers, nor admitting any unkind words, prayers, or requests, or insincerity, or anything else of the sort. Accordingly, in art, she is somber, with a firm expression and a keen, perceptive gaze, so that she instills fear in the unjust and courage in the just, such an expression being friendly to the former and hostile to the others. (5) I thought it best to lay down these words of Chrysippus especially in order to have them at hand for consideration and judgment, because when we were reading them, some philosophers of the daintier schools said that this was an image of Cruelty, not Justice.

This makes a good companion piece for chapter 3 (and to some extent, chapter 2) because of its new approach to the idea of justice. In chapter 2, the young Gellius struggled with the application of ethics to judicial practice; in chapter 3, he expanded the purview of his judgment to the realm of literary history. Now in chapter 4, he approaches the concept of justice itself by personifying it with an adaptation of the words of the Stoic Chrysippus, describing her as if she were represented in a painting. At first Gellius simply admires the dignified quality of Chrysippus’s description. But he soon reveals the significance of such an image: he says that Chrysippus wants the reader to understand that these are in fact the qualities of ideal judges, for they are the high priests of Justice. This actually goes beyond the rhetoric of the quoted Greek, in which Chrysippus describes Justice in terms of her relationship to the wicked and the just – in his description, it is not judges that are stern, incorruptible, and immune to flattery, but rather justice itself. The direction of Gellius’s rhetoric transfers the powers of Justice to the person of the judge, who then becomes a figure seemingly possessed of divine authority. Finally, at the end of
the chapter, Gellius underlines his claim for the pertinence of the Chrysippus material by implying that it would be useful in countering the softness of other schools of philosophy.

With this chapter, Gellius accomplishes something particularly Gellian. First, on the level of the chapter itself: he takes a quote from a text that he has read and then turns its rhetoric to the dual ends of (1) application to the activities of the judge and (2) ammunition against other intellectuals (the final sentence). The latter is consistent with the social environment of the Latin Sophistic; the former dovetails with the phenomenon of unity through variety. That is to say, Gellius uses variety (as a property valued in the NA’s genre) to show the continued growth of the character/author Gellius. The variety of subjects in chapters 14.1-4 is anchored by the twin threads of miscellanistic methodology and the growth of Gellius’s ability to judge. We have learned in chapters 3 and 4 that Gellius does have some critical faculty: his ability to judge extends at least to the realm of literary history, and his understanding of justice is now bolstered by Stoic philosophy and nearly concretized into a painted image. Set one after the other, these chapters enact the ideal expressed in the Preface that the reader ought to have a broad base of knowledge. And, as we will see at the end of Book 14, this breadth of knowledge (expressed as it is in multiple dimensions) will make Gellius a competent judge.

D. Reflections on the Utility of the Noctes Atticae (14.5 and 14.6).

Chapters 5 and 6 shift the focus onto another facet of Gellius: for now, his function as judge gives way to that of miscellany-writer. He will now take the reader to a place where the processes of writing and reading (and literary judgment) happen simultaneously. The judge Gellius is now (also) the author Gellius – he now appears to be a man thinking about the proper contents of a miscellany and about its continual creation. And, just as we have observed the
maturation of Gellius’s character from chapter 1 to chapter 4, we will also observe that the juxtaposition of chapters 5 and 6 suggests a movement in which Gellius progresses from doubt to control.

Chapter 5 begins in ambulatory fashion:

(1) Defessus ego quondam diutina commentatione laxandi levandique animi gratia in Agrippae campo deambulabam. Atque ibi duos forte grammaticos conspicatus non parvi in urbe Roma nominis certationi eorum acerrimae adfui, cum alter in casu vocativo “vir egregi” dicendum contenderet, alter “vir egregie”.

(1) Once, when I had grown weary from a long period of composing notes, I went for a stroll in the Campus Agrippae to relax and unburden my mind. And there I happened to see two grammarians who were of no small repute in the city of Rome; so I stayed for their debate, which was very fierce, one of them arguing that “vir egregi” is the proper vocative, the other “vir egregie”.

This, especially the first sentence, is a provocative opening: Gellius is tired of writing the NA, and moreover, he needs to take a walk to relax his mind. The Preface told us, in its opening (at least, as we have it), that the NA is to be read for pleasure (remissiones) in those moments when the mind has leave to relax (laxari). Our author brings up a disturbing possibility: after a while (be that 13½ books or the lengthy chapters of Book 14) writing and reading the NA can occasionally be tedious, failing in its stated purpose of providing mental relaxation. But perhaps a walk will refresh his (and the reader’s?) spirits. After all, walking has many productive associations in ancient Roman society. Roman elites walked with one another to discuss learned topics and cement social and political bonds. Romans could even walk alone, after the fashion of the Greek philosophers, engaging in theoria (contemplation, solitary philosophical inquiry).157

And, indeed, as a similar remark at the end of Cicero’s De Oratore reveals, walking can relax the

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157 O’Sullivan 2011. The whole book is concerned with outlining the reasons Romans walked and the various significances of ambulatio, the two primary associations during the Imperial period being with social interaction in villa culture and with Greek philosophy (especially Peripatetic and Stoic).
mind after long sessions of intellectual disputation. Gellius has, of course, not been engaged in live intellectual debate, but we have seen him constantly engaged with his sources throughout the NA, so that there is some value in comparing his post contentionem walk to that of the group at the end of De Oratore. In the latter work, the call for an ambulatio was the very last sentence, a concluding summons to turn the mind from an intensive activity to a refreshing one. It stands to reason that such an activity could be just the remedy for Gellius’s tedium. But he will get no rest – he sees two renowned grammarians involved in a dispute on the proper form of a vocative. It will be some time before Gellius expresses his feelings on this kind of dispute, but already his hopes for a refreshing walk (perhaps with the aim of philosophical speculation) are on the point of being dashed – this grammatical inquiry is exactly what he is trying to escape, even if only for the moment.

The situation escalates in the next few sentences, leading us to a witty climax:


158 After their long debate on oratory, Crassus suggests that the group should take a relaxing walk: “Sed iam surgamus,” inquit, “nosque curemus et aliquando ab hac contentione disputationis animos nostros curaque laxemus.” (Cic. de Orat. end).
(2) Now, here is the rule of the one who thought that “egregi” was the correct form: “All nouns or words that end in ‘us’ in the nominative singular whose penultimate syllable is the letter ‘i’ end in the letter ‘i’ in the vocative case, such as ‘Caelius Caeli’, ‘modius modi’, ‘tertius terti’, ‘Accius Acci’, ‘Titius Titi’ and all others like that. So too ‘egregius’: since its final syllable is ‘us’ in the nominative and the letter ‘i’ precedes that syllable, it will have to have ‘i’ for its final letter in the vocative; and this is why ‘egregi’, not ‘egregie’, is more correct. Indeed, the final syllable of ‘divus’ and ‘rivus’ and ‘clivus’ is not ‘us’ but rather what ought to be written with two ‘u’s, and owing to the pronunciation of that syllable, a new letter was invented, called the digamma.”

(3) When the other man heard this, he said, “Why, you outstanding (egregie) grammarian! Or, if you prefer, most outstanding (egregissime)! Tell me, I beg you: ‘inscius’ and ‘impius’ and ‘sobrius’ and ‘ebrius’ and ‘proprius’ and ‘propitius’ and ‘anxius’ and ‘contrarius’, which end in ‘us’ and whose penultimate syllable is the letter ‘i’ – what’s their vocative? I myself am too bashful to pronounce them according to your rule.”

(4) Then the other man, disturbed, momentarily fell silent in the face of those nouns, but he soon gathered himself and held fast to the rule that he had defined, fighting for it, saying that “proprius” and “propitius” and “anxius” and “contrarius” ought to have the same vocative as “adversarius” and “extrarius”, that even “inscius” and “impius” and “ebrius” and “sobrius” in said case ought to be pronounced with the letter “i” not “e”. And this quarrel between them went on at length, so I judged (arbitratus) it not worth the effort to hear these same things any longer, and I left them to their shouting and fighting.

§§2 and 3 represent the meat of the argument, which is itself of grammatical interest, not least for the digamma.159 No doubt, this seemingly trifling detail would be of great interest to the kind of grammarians who argue over the proper vocative form of a certain class of adjectives and nouns in the nominative singular masculine. Gellius is now getting into his intellectual-satire mode, which is not uncommon in the NA,160 and §3 neglects no opportunity for satire, with Grammarian B’s vocatival zinger (o egregie grammaticc – perhaps too biting for Grammarian A, so a conciliatory egregissime is added), a pile of adjectives beginning with inscius (“ignorant”) and ending with contrarius (“antagonistic”), and a mocking question that usurps Grammarian A’s own words. A pinch of pretend pudor completes Grammarian B’s assault. All well and good. But Gellius is ready to trump them both: the final sentence musters a sed with which to counter them, followed by a bulky cum-clause capturing in one moment the tedium of their argument, and finally Gellius’s own judgment of its worth. He leaves the scene with an up-turned nose.

159 This sign, an upside-down F (an inverted form of the Greek digamma), was introduced by the emperor Claudius to represent the sound made by the semi-vowel u. See Suet. Claudius 12.3 and Rolfe 1927, III.40 n.1.

160 1.3, 1.10, 4.1, and 19.1 are prime examples. See Keulen 2009 for more on intellectual satire in the NA.
This is, by itself and in the context of the collection as a whole, an amusing anecdote both to read and to comment on. The scene is a picture of pedagogical strife in the High Empire. It is indicative too of its author’s philosophical position. But it is also laden with irony: first, even though Gellius tries to present himself as above this sort of nugatory quibbling, he still reproduces it for us; and second, it is obvious even to a dabbler that the NA is positively stuffed with exactly this kind of morphological lore. But besides these general observations, we may notice two things that, in a more or less explicit way, establish continuity between this chapter and other parts of the collection. The first, its opening sentence expressing fatigue at the process of building a miscellany, broadly connects it with the collection at large; Gellius could have placed it anywhere, but a position in the later parts of the collection would be appropriate (Book 14 is a satisfactory environment, then). At this point, in the latter half of the NA, we may perceive a mildly comic situation for Gellius: by the time we reach Book 14, we can understand Gellius’s fatigue and his need for some fresh air. But his walk achieves the opposite of its goal: there is no rest or relaxation, only more grammatical debate. The second signal of continuity is the word arbitratus near the end of the chapter. We have seen the growth of Gellius’s abilities as judge in the first four chapters, and here he drops a quiet reminder of his competence in judging the right and wrong kinds of grammatical inquiry. Still, all of this does not come without the

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161 Kaster 1988, 50-51. Gellius expresses contempt for grammatici as a class. This is part of an ongoing battle for prestige both among grammarians and between the grammarians and the elite amateurs. Gellius belongs to this latter group.

162 Beall 2004, 212. Gellius presents both sides of the argument in the rhetorical tradition of utramque in partem, which he may have picked up from Favorinus. “After stating both cases in some detail, Gellius walks away, like a true sceptic, from this pointless contest.” Beall sees 14.5 as indicative of a Skeptical world-view on the part of Gellius, where everything is open to inquiry, and dogma is usually too stifling to the mind; readers should instead weigh the evidence for themselves.

163 Anderson 2004, 114: “In such episodes we sense Gellius wishing to have the best of both worlds: to home in on any grammatical debate, since that is in his own view where the action is; then to affect contempt of the excess and misapplied enthusiasm of others.”
ironic suggestion that a significant part of the NA’s enterprise is “not worth the effort” \textit{(non ... operae pretium esse)}. 

Chapter 6 follows effortlessly from its predecessor as a companion piece, for it too is concerned with the process of creating a miscellany, the hopes and the anxieties of stocking it with the right content. It will be similarly judgmental and similarly ironic. And it will, with no less than Homeric authority, announce a positive solution to the problem of content in the miscellany.

The chapter begins with a mysterious benefactor\textsuperscript{164} who seems to share Gellius’s tastes:

(1) Homo nobis familiaris, in litterarum cultu non ignobilis magnamque aetatis partem in libris versatus, “adiutum” inquit “ornatumque volo ire noctes tuas” et simul dat mihi librum grandi volumine doctrinae omnigenus, ut ipse dicebat, praescatentem, quem sibi elaboratum esse ait ex multis et variis et remotis lectionibus, ut ex eo sumerem, quantum liberet rerum memoria dignarum. (2) Accipio cupidus et libens, tamquam si Copiae cornum nactus essem, et recondo me penitus, ut sine arbitris legam.

Having taken his un-refreshing walk in chapter 5, Gellius has now returned to the writing of his miscellany. This process, as we know from the Preface, includes reading other miscellanies; 14.6

\textsuperscript{164} There has been some argument over the identity of this friend, summarized in Holford-Strevens 2003, 116-118. Briefly: in his 1868 study of the sources of Diogenes Laertius, Friedrich Nietzsche identifies this man as Favorinus, assuming that \textit{doctrinae omnigenus} is a translation of \textit{Πανοδαπὴ ἱστορία}, the title of Favorinus’s work (which does not survive but is probably a miscellany). Many scholars have accepted this identification, including most recently Keulen (2009), who bases his reading of 14.6 on the identity of the \textit{familiaris} as Favorinus, arguing that Gellius satirizes him as a rival miscellanist with whom he may “adorn” the NA “with his comically ambiguous presence.” (173-174, and cf. 189) Sotion, the author of the \textit{Κέρας Λαμαλθείας} (\textit{Copiae Cornum} in Latin), has also been suggested since this title was mentioned in the Preface’s list of rival works. But, after arguing against the Favorinus identification, Holford-Strevens suggests instead: “rather than posit an actual book, whether by Favorinus, Sotion, or anyone else, one might more reasonably surmise ... that Gellius drew on a moralistic tract, perhaps supplemented by his reading in Homeric scholarship, the place-names in §4 being added from another source itself indebted to the collections of \textit{μετονομασία} by Callimachus and by Nicanor of Cyrene.” (118)
is a window into this activity. The very prospect of reading a friend’s miscellany is enough to excite in Gellius a passionate curiosity, especially since his friend is described as a highly literate man. When he receives the book, he takes it eagerly, but in his excitement he seems to be unaware of some warning signs: first, it is characterized by a grande volumen: possibly the work consists of one large roll, but the word may also be used metaphorically to suggest great convolution, of the sort that the arrogant young sophist of 9.15 employs. In any case, he seems to have not yet traversed the endless volumina of Pref. 12 (ipse quidem volvendis transeundisque multis admodum voluminis ... exercitus defessusque sum). Likewise, praescatentem (“full gushing”) heightens the sense of excess. That his friend had gleaned his chapters ex multis et variis et remotis lessonibus reminds us of the tasteless Graeci multa et varia lecitantantes (Pref. 11); nor does the recherché (remotis) nature of these readings inspire hope, given that in Pref. 13, Gellius has even expressed reservations on his own use of “somewhat recherché things on augurial and pontifical law”. Oblivious to the warnings of his Preface-writing persona, Gellius rushes into the book, looking for res memoriae dignae, hoping that he had just gotten his hands on the Cornucopia of books (again ignoring that those tasteless Greeks had likewise “chased only abundance”). Perhaps the book will be useful, Gellius seems to think as he shuts himself deep within his house (et recondo me penitus) – cf. Pref. 2: eaque mihi subsidium memoriae quasi quoddam litterarum penus recondebam. With this verbal echo, he seems to suggest that his

165 The changing sequence of tenses in §2 (nactus essem ... legam) even seems to illustrate the continuing presence of miscellany-reading, both in the author’s present (at the time of writing) and in the reader’s present (at the time of reading, and indeed of taking notes or extracts).
166 Holford-Strevens (2003, 117) is convinced of the necessity of this, another point against the friend’s identification as Favorinus, for the Παντοδαπὴ ἱστορία, written in 24 libri, would not easily fit a single volumen.
167 9.15.9: ... incipit statim mira celeritate in eandem hanc controversiam principia nescio quae dicere et involucra sensuum verborumque volumina vocumque turbas fundere ... .
168 Gunderson (2009, 238-239) notes that Gellius is playfully describing the “outlandishly recondite” book in rare, almost outrageous words, such as: praescatentem and omnigenus.
169 ... quodque erunt item paucula remotiora super augurio iure et pontificio ...
170 solam copiam sectati, Pref. 11; the more troubling translation, “disciples only to abundance”, is possible too.
friend’s miscellany has a connection to the kind of literary collecting that Gellius does in the time and space of his private life, that it may become a worthy addition to his literary penus, and here he goes into that penus, hoping to find a place for his new acquisition. In short, he thinks that he has found a book that will share the values of the NA and therefore make a valuable contribution to it. At the same time, Gellius seems momentarily unaccountable for the results of his act of literary selection, for in his private quarters, there will be no one to witness and no one to judge as he reads and makes his selections (sine arbitris legam). Together with the hints that the gift miscellany will be disappointing at best, this last clause signals a crisis in literary judgment.

But Gellius comes to his senses soon enough:

(3) Atque ibi scripta erant, pro Iuppiter, mera miracula: quo nomine fuerit, qui primus “grammaticus” appellatus est; et quo fuerint Pythagorae nobiles, quot Hippocratae; et cuiusmodi fuisses Homerus dicit in Vlixis domo λαύρην; et quam ob causam Telemachus cubans iunctim sibi cubantem Pisistratum non manu adtigerit, sed pedis ictu excitarit; et Euryclia Telemachum quo genere claustri incluserit; et quapropter idem poeta rosam non norit, oleum ex rosa norit. Atque illud etiam scriptum fuit, quae nomina fuerint sociorum Vlixis, qui a Scylla rapti laceratique sunt; utrum ἐν τῇ ἔξω θυλάσῃ Vlixes erraverit κατ’ Ἀρίσταρχον an ἐν τῇ ἔξω κατὰ Κράτημα. (4) Item etiam istic scriptum fuit, qui sint apud Homerum versus isopsephi; et quorum ibi nominum παραστίχις reperiatur; et quis adeo versus sit, qui per singula vocabula singulis syllabis increscat; ac deinde qua ratione dixerit singulas pecudes in singulos annos terna parere; et ex quinque opeinentis, quibus Achillis clipes munitus est, quod factum ex auro est, sumnum sit an medium; et praeterea quibus uribus regionibusque vocabula iam mutata sint, quod Boeotia ante appellata fuerit “Aonia”, quod Aegyptus “Aeria”, quod Creta quoque eodem nomine “Aeria” dicta sit, quod Attice Ακτη, quod Corinthus “Ephyre”, quod Macedonis Ήμαθία, quod Thessalia Αἰμονία, quod Tyros “Sarra”, quod Thracia ante “Sithonia” dicta sit, quod Paestum Ποσειδόνιον. (5) Haec atque item alia multa istiusmodi scripta in eo libro fuerunt.

(3) And, by Jupiter, the things written in it were just curiosities: the name of the first man to be called “grammaticus”; how many famous Pythagorases or Hippocrateses there were; what kind of λαύρη Homer said there was in the house of Ulysses; why Telemachus did not touch Pisistratus with his hand but roused him with a kick of his foot as they lay side-by-side; what kind of lock

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171 See the OLD entries on both arbiter and lego, legere for the double meanings of both words. It is of particular interest that sine arbitris, remotes arbitris, ab arbitris, and the like seem to have an especially judicial meaning, “without witnesses”, and as a synonym for testament, at least since Cicero (OLD, s.v. 1). But arbiter is also a kind of judge, albeit with powers (at least at one time) different from those of a iudex (OLD, s.v. 2). Picking up on both meanings of arbiter, Gunderson (2009, 239) finds that Gellius “invites us to watch and to judge his reading.” Indeed, we may find that Gellius invites us to watch and judge both his reading and his selection.
Euryclia used to lock up Telemachus; why the same poet did not know about roses but did know about oil made from roses. And there was also written the names of Ulysses’ confederates whom Scylla caught and shredded; whether Ulysses meandered ἐν τῇ ἔσσω ὀσλόσσῃ, κατ’ Ἀρίσταρχον, or ἐν τῇ ἔξω, κατὰ Κράτιτα. (4) Likewise, there was also written in it what verses in Homer are isopsephic; what names are found in παραστιχίς; moreover, what verse it is in which each word is one syllable longer than the last; and then, by what principle he said each head of cattle bears three offspring each year; of the five layers of which Achilles’s shield was fortified, whether the one made of gold was on top or in the middle; besides these, what cities and regions have had their names changed, that Boeotia used to be called “Aonia”, Egypt “Aeria”, that Crete too was called by the same name “Aeria”, Attica Ἀκτή, Corinth “Ephyre”, Macedon Ἡμαθία, Tyre “Sarra”, that Thrace used to be called “Sithonia”, and Paestum Ποσειδώνιον. (5) These and many other similar things were also written in that book.

Gellius’s hopes are dashed as the contents reveal themselves: mera miracula! But, as an author conscious of his place in a genre, he cannot pass up this opportunity to tell the curious reader what is to be found in that miscellany. It is, of course, ironic that he breaks his own rule about providing only useful information, but the irony serves to position the Na against other literature of its kind, not unlike the list of titles in Pref. 6-9. And, for our own purposes it will prove useful to examine the contents (as Gellius presents them) of the book in hand. The first item in the list is appropriate to the progression of chapters in Book 14: the previous chapter had Gellius looking on (nonplussed) as rival grammatici debated vocatives. There we noticed an irony in the fact that Gellius himself has shown on many occasions that he finds such material fascinating but he could not bring himself to hear the closing arguments, suffering a kind of grammar-fatigue. As if the first item were a bridge conveying into chapter 6 the irony of chapter 5, we detect a similar irony (in addition to the one discussed above) in the next item, as well as at the end of the list. This next item, “how many famous Pythagorases or Hippocrateses there were”, recalls Gellius’s interest in Pythagoras and in particular the chapter in which he lists (in all seriousness) the supposed reincarnations of the ancient philosopher. Next up is an item of Homeric trivia (what kind of “passageway” was in Odysseus’s house), followed by another and another – in

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172 4.11 (especially §14). This chapter is essentially a list of interesting facts about Pythagoras that Gellius found in Aristoxenus and Plutarch.
fact, this collection seems to be concerned mainly with Homeric trivia, if Gellius’s selection is to be taken as representative. Perhaps it is the relative weight of all this trivia, Homeric and otherwise, that makes the collection so different from Gellius’s own: while Gellius may easily be said to have been interested in things such as grammatical lore and sophistic history, it is far more difficult to accuse him of harboring a passion for Homeric scholarship, especially not the trivial questions that he presents here in an entertainingly rhetorical manner. Indeed, we will see Gellius turn a Homeric verse to his favor in the closing sentences of the chapter, as a gesture of difference between the NA and his friend’s book. But here we may already surmise that Gellius is displaying a competence in miscellanistic writing, for he does not merely select representative lemmata from the rival miscellany (the process implied in the word legam, §2); rather, he turns the facts of Homeric trivia into an elegantly arranged catalogue of absurdities. Gellius’s summation of his friend’s content assumes an amusingly arch tone with its rhetorical flourishes, even as it orders them according to a kind of progression familiar to sequential readers of the NA: after the two items that establish two kinds of connections with other chapters of the NA, the long catalogue of Homeric trivia begins with things related to Odysseus’s domestic life, focusing soon on his son (Telemachus), then transitioning to a couple of items related to Odysseus’s wanderings. From these plot elements we fall into metrical questions, which then, by the polyptoton of singula ... singulis, singulas ... singulos, morph into numerical trivia. At this point, we have a Homeric miscellany, NA-style, in miniature.

But Gellius is not yet done. This chapter is not really about Homeric trivia; rather, it is about defining the NA against other miscellanies, with Homeric trivia as a site of contention. But first, before moving on to his Homeric battlefield, he returns to the irony I mentioned above, in a

173 Note, for example, the vivid chiasmus of Telemachus cubans iunctim sibi cubantem Pisistratum and the pithy assonance of claustri inclusterit.
somewhat unexpected way. Pretending that he is still enumerating the trivialities of his friend’s book, he appends a list of changed place-names. These he lists in detail (i.e., instead of *quid Boeotia ante appellata fuerit*, he writes *quod Boeotia ante appellata fuerit* “Aonia”), so that they are no longer questions to be listed but answers to be provided, for those interested (primarily himself). This fact, along with the presence of *praeterea* connecting this list to the Homeric list before it, casts the place-name list in a somewhat different light than what came before it. But the irony of appending this list comes out most fully when the reader compares Gellius’s rhetoric of disgust in the body of the chapter with the text of the *lemma* in the chapter-list of the Preface. There Gellius wrote *Cuimodi sint, quae speciem doctrinarum habeant, sed neque delectent neque utilia sint; atque inibi de vocabulis singularum urbium regionumque inmutatis* (“What kind of things have the appearance of learning but are neither entertaining nor useful; also therein: concerning individual cities’ and regions’ names that have changed”). The *lemma* advertises vaguely a discussion about things unworthy of inclusion in the *NA*, but also promises with more particularity a discussion about geographical name changes. The body of the chapter delivers on this promise, so that the place-names stand out as a genuine point of interest among what is otherwise trivial knowledge. So, here, just as in chapter 5, Gellius presents a subtle irony, a playful challenge to himself as a miscellany-author, and, it is worth noting, a challenge to readers to decide whether such things ought to be included in a miscellany, should they choose to follow the author’s lead and produce something of their own.

In the final sentences of chapter 6 Gellius advances the sequence of Book 14 on two levels simultaneously, first capping the present chapter with a witty ending, and second, gaining confidence in his literary judgment, which seems to go some way toward resolving the problem of judgment that he has faced since the early parts of the book.
Immediately rushing to return it, I said, “ὀναίο σου, you learned of men, ταύτης τῆς πολυμαθίας, and take this most sumptuous book, which is not at all suited to our impoverished writings. My Nights, you see, which you wanted to help and adorn, base their enquiries especially on that one verse of Homer which Socrates used to say he kept closer to heart than anything else: ὧτι τοι ἐν μεγάροις κακίν τ’ ἀγαθόν <τε> τέτυκται.”

This last paragraph begins with a thorough rejection of the miscellany-type that his friend’s book represents. This act of rejection resembles Gellius’s fatigued abandonment of the battling grammarians in chapter 5. But the difference here is that Gellius is actively polemical in his rejection, returning the book as hastily as he had received it, and then trying to smooth over the hasty return by thinly veiling the insult in backhanded praise (in the Greek tongue, no less).

“Ὅναίο σου has a double meaning: it is a congratulatory remark, “bless you for this breadth of knowledge”, but also, being a form of ὀνίημι, it advises the listener to “take advantage” of or “reap the benefits” of something. Gellius sarcastically wishes his friend’s own polymathy against him.174 Expressing it in Greek, he recalls the Preface’s warning against πολυμαθία, that it “educateth not the intellect”, and in doing so, he also seems to recall that this saying of Heraclitus is one of the most important guiding principles of the N.A.175 This rejection of excess carries on into the second half of the sentence, where Gellius gives back his friend’s liber opulentissimus and returns to his own paupertinae litterae. This stark opposition highlights

174 Cf. Gunderson 2009, 241, where the double meaning is also noted, with a similar interpretation.
175 Pref. 12: Ego vero, cum illud Ephesii viri summe nobilis verbum cordi haberem, quod profecto ita est: πολυμαθή γόνο οὐ διδάσκει, ipse quidem volvendis transeundisque multis admodum voluminibus ... exercitus defessusque sum, sed modica ex his eaque sola accepi, quae ... . Gunderson (2009, 241) notes that Gellius uses similar language in describing how important these maxims are: Gellius keeps Heraclitus’s saying to heart (cordi haberem), and likewise, Socrates keeps Homer’s verse to heart (sibi esse cordi). Gunderson sees these admonishments against polymathy as paradoxically contrary to Gellius’s advice to keep a penus of all sorts of knowledge, with which readers may improve themselves. This is certainly a valid concern for Gellius, but the rejection of polymathy and the push in the direction of limited but useful knowledge is often counterbalanced by the
mainly, in its falsely modest way, what Gellius believes makes the NA superior: the one is superlatively opulent, while the other is “impoverished” (but, as we know by now, virtuous). Furthermore, his friend’s superlatively opulent work is characterized as a liber, while the NA is litterae – when these two are thus opposed, we are invited to consider the difference. The liber is a physical artifact, the material object of the friend’s knowledge-culture fetish, while the litterae are the letters on the page, literature, words and ideas, meaningful in important ways regardless of the poverty of their medium.

The final sentence delivers the coup de grace. His friend wanted to increase the splendor of the NA, but Gellius reveals why such generosity is ultimately unhelpful: there is only one verse of Homer that is particularly useful to the enterprise of the NA, and it is one that Socrates always kept close to his heart. All the Homeric trivia of a voluminous miscellany still does not equal this one line: “What good and ill’s been done in your halls”. The fact that it was a favorite of Socrates lends the line some authority already and elevates it to the level of those things that are useful for living the good life, but it also recalls the Preface’s warning that readers may find both good and bad things in the NA (§§13-18, especially 17-18). There the bad things are to be blamed on Gellius’s sources. By implication, Gellius himself is to be praised for having the taste to find good material and incorporate it into his collection. Gellius has thus established himself as a competent practitioner of his miscellanistic art – what began as gullible excitement at new source material has morphed into sarcastic criticism and finally a judicious pull of variety in the structures and types of knowledge. The Preface itself exhibits this balance, and the tension between the two forces is evident throughout the collection.

176 Od. 4.392. The Homeric context (Menelaus’s story to Telemachus about his delay in Egypt) does not appear to be important to Gellius here, unless one finds significance in the fact that Telemachus seems to be disproportionately represented in the list of trivia.

177 Μέγαρα is also a happy metaphor: Gellius has already described his collection as a penus, a physical structure, in the Preface and referred to it earlier in this chapter (recondo me penitus).
use of classical literature (proven by its direct contrast with an incompetent use of the same literature).

In the two chapters presently under consideration, we have noticed several points of intersecting interest. In both, Gellius suffers an encounter with poor erudition, once when he tries (and fails) to wait out contending grammarians, and again when he excitedly reads a fellow’s miscellany and finds it lacking. Likewise, we also find that Gellius positions himself, as author, somewhat ironically: in chapter 5, he goes into some detail representing the arguments for one grammatical form or another, letting it slip quietly by that he himself has often shown interest in morphological problems, and in chapter 6, he shows off the trivial follies of his gift book and at the same time advertises some of its information as useful (or at least interesting). These ironies are instructive, challenging the reader to consider seriously what things belong in a miscellany. Gellius does not completely absolve himself of harboring potentially useless items in the NA – indeed, attentive readers will notice the irony and thus actually be given the opportunity to think Gellius a hypocrite – but this ambiguous position seems to require readers to fill in the answer to the crucial question of acceptable contents. If readers need to know how this is to be done, they need only read the final sentences of chapter 6, where Gellius exercises judgment in a way that he did unsatisfactorily at chapter 5’s end. The finale of 6 exercises positive judgment (finally), assuring us that the best way to know what content is best for a miscellany is to hold fast to the solid principles of good judgment. One must be well-versed in literature but also know what is most important about that literature – its best lines, its most edifying injunctions. By demonstrating these things Gellius shows that he is a competent judge not only of philosophy and literature, but also of quality selection in his genre.
E. Procedure (14.7 and 14.8).

Gellius will show greater mastery of legal lore in chapters 7 and 8, suggesting competence at last in the judicial realm. But his first, and last, concern has more to do with his genre than his own judicial competence. We will discuss this first but will see these concerns as evidence of Gellius’s mastery over his profession as well.

Chapter 7 begins, as its lemma had promised, with an account of Pompey’s receipt of Varro’s “introductory” (εἰσαγωγικός) commentarius:

(1) Gnaeus Pompey was elected consul for the first time with M. Crassus. (2) When Pompey was about to enter office, having had no part during his military campaigns in convening and consulting the senate or in affairs of the city, he asked his friend M. Varro to make an εἰσαγωγικός notebook (this is what Varro calls it) to instruct him on what to do and say when convening the senate. (3) This notebook that he had made for Pompey on the topic was lost, according to Varro in the letters he sent to Oppianus, which are in the fourth book of his Epistolarum quaestionum; in these letters, since what he had written earlier was not available, he once more instructs on many things that are connected to that topic.

It has been noticed that these opening sentences touch on the importance of the commentarius (a thing that Varro here has written, and which Gellius too may be writing178) for men of political ambition.179 But, in light of the irony present in the preceding chapters (discussed above), I will argue that Gellius’s concern here is less with political reality and more with the NA as commentarii. While the first two sentences describe the treatise’s raison d’être as a political necessity, Gellius adds a sentence summarizing the source-history for the information which is to

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179 Keulen 2009, 27 and n. 33: Varro is paradigmatic as a “political advisor”, a role that Keulen stresses for Gellius passim.
follow. As a whole, the chapter comprises mostly technical information on convening and consulting the senate, and when giving information of this sort, Gellius usually confines his explanation of the sources to a brief notice of the author’s name and the title of his work, and sometimes a notice of where that author derived his information. This chapter deviates from the norm, for here Gellius conveys to us that what he is about to present is not Varro’s original *commentarius* but some instructions on closely related matters (*docet rursum multa ad eam rem ducentia*). The *commentarius* was lost, so that when Varro wanted to reproduce the knowledge of convening and consulting the senate, he had to rework it somehow into epistolary form – perhaps from memory, or from the notes with which he had constructed the original *commentarius*. This source history verbally recalls the Preface in at least three places: first, the fact that Varro wrote a *commentarius* recalls that the *NA* are *commentationes* (*Pref. 4*), and second, Gellius seems to have gotten the present information from Varro’s *Epistolicae Quaestiones*, one of the titles to which he contrasts the *NA* in *Pref. 6*-9; third, Varro had to record the information (again) in his collection of letters because “what he had written earlier was not available”, reminding us of one of the reasons given in the Preface for composing the *NA*, that is, to remind Gellius himself of things that he had forgotten and for which there were no materials at hand to jog the memory.

The progression of teaching and learning also reminds us of Gellius’s growth as a judge over the course of Book 14: Pompey’s legal inexperience echoes the young Gellius’s judicial inexperience in chapters 1 and 2. Each then learns from commentary-like sources, Pompey from Varro’s treatise and Gellius from Favorinus’s question-lists (in addition to his own reading). These are not exact parallels, but they do demonstrate similar processes of learning.

What we (and Pompey, and Gellius) learn is here listed as a series of facts, not unlike the presentations of material that we found earlier in Book 14:
(4) Primum ibi ponit, qui fuerint, per quos more maiorum senatus haberi soleret, eosque nominat: dictatorem, consules, praetores, tribunos plebi, interregem, praefectum urbi; neque ali praeter hos iusuisse dixit facere senatusconsultum, quotiensque usus venisset, ut omnes isti magistratus eodem tempore Romae essent, tum quo supra ordine scripti essent, qui eorum prior aliis esset, ei potissimum senatus consulendi iusuisse ait, (5) deinde ...
(6) Postea scripsit de intercessionibus ...
(7) Tum adscriptis de locis, in quibus senatusconsultum fieri iure posset ...
(8) Post haec deinceps dicit senatusconsultum ante exortum aut post occasum solem factum ratum nonuisse ...
(9) Docet deinde inibi multa: quibus diebus haberi senatum ius non sit; immolareque hostiam prius auspicarique debere, qui senatum habiturus esset, de rebusque divinis prius quam humanis ad senatum referendum esse; tum porro ... . (10) Praeter haec de pignore quoque capiendo disserit ...
(11) Haec et alia quaedam id genus in libro, quo supra dixi, M. Varro epistula ad Oppianum scripta executus est.

The syntax of these senatorial regulations mirrors that of chapter 6’s Homeric trivia, and indeed that of Favorinunus’s question-list in chapter 2. It mirrors, too, the chapter-headings in the Preface, with its collection of indirect questions, de-phrases, and various means of expressing indirect discourse. Gellius introduces the structural element of connecting-words, such as deinde and postea, in order to interweave what would be a capita-list into an expository chapter of his own composition. Having noticed the similarity in syntax between this list and the ones already encountered in Book 14, we may assume that we are invited to compare them. In chapter 2, Favorinus helped Gellius make a difficult judgment by offering him questions for consideration, after which the young Gellius still could not make a final decision, leaving his older, authorial
self to demonstrate competence. In chapter 6, a friend’s miscellany is distilled into a sampling of question-headings, mostly dealing with Homeric trivia, but ironically catching the interest of Gellius; his content-anxiety, however, could be redeemed by his judicious use of a single programmatic line of Homer at the end of the chapter. Now, in chapter 7, a list of topics preserved in a letter of Varro informs us on the rules concerning the who, what, when, and where of proposing and passing decrees of the senate. Have we now found, in contrast to chapter 6’s list, a collection of things worthy of inclusion in the *NA*? Is the right kind of miscellany one that provides information useful to ambitious politicians, like Varro’s *commentarius*? The knowledge given here is certainly useful for gentlemen of the Republic, but the *NA* is composed well into the time of the Principate, so that procedural lore like this becomes antiquarian knowledge more than political armament. But, of course, antiquarian knowledge (as well as scholastic trivia) is useful in its own right, helpful for those wishing to hold their own among the cultural elite of 2nd-century Rome. This is essentially what the question of usefulness comes down to in the *NA*—no longer is a literary entity like this directly useful for those wishing to orate their way into senatorial power circles; it is useful rather for those wishing to have elegant conversations at the dinner-table, make impressive show-speeches, and possibly even impress local or imperial power brokers. The impact of these kinds of knowledge on the acquisition of certain kinds of social capital has been well discussed by others,\(^\text{180}\) so let it suffice to say here that, with his lists in chapters 2, 6, and 7, as well as the arcane debate of chapter 5, Gellius has shown us a sample of the anxieties involved in writing *commentarii*.

Even as Gellius displays signs of anxiety over the content of his creation, it is the structure of it that he will soon display mastery of. The final lines of chapter 7 begin to show this:

Sed quod ait senatusconsultum duobus modis fieri solere aut conquisitis sententiis aut per
discissionem, parum convenire videtur cum eo, quod Ateius Capito in coniectaneis scriptum
reliquit. Nam in libro con. IIII Tuberonem dicere ait nullum senatusconsultum fieri posse
non discissione facta, quia in omnibus senatusconsultis, etiam in iis, quae per relationem fierent,
discissio esset necessaria, idque ipse Capito verum esse adfirmat. Sed de hac omni re alio in loco
plenius accuratusque nos memini scribere.

Now, what he says about a senate-decree often being passed in two ways – by seeking
opinions or by vote – evidently does not agree with what Ateius Capito wrote in his Miscellanies.
For he says in his book that Tubero, in his fourth consulship, said that no senate-decree can
be passed without a vote, because a vote is necessary in all senate-decrees, even those passed by
report; and Capito himself confirms that this is true. But I recall writing about this whole subject
somewhere else more fully and carefully.

Having closed off the section summarizing the contents of his source (in the same way as he had
done in chapter 6), Gellius now contributes his own reading to the discussion, adding by way of
objection, that Ateius Capito differs from Varro on one of his points. As often in the NA, we
have moved to another level of discourse, on which the author adds another voice to those
recorded before. The difference here is the enrichment provided by having read the rest of Book
14, where we have seen Gellius struggle with judicial competence but can now demonstrate
more competence by this extra level of discourse. But yet another level of discourse,
communicated in a different way, abruptly ends the chapter. Gellius’s own voice, fully in the
first person (memini), arises now, only to direct its addressees onto another path, telling us that
he has treated that topic “elsewhere” (alio in loco). Where is this place? Perhaps, if readers are
willing to make a detour into the capitula in the Preface, they may find it; they may find it, too, if
they have taken good notes. Still, Gellius gives no more immediate guidance than to say that this
information is alio in loco. Scholars have diligently followed his cryptic invitation and found that
this place is in Book 3, chapter 18.\footnote{Needless to say, this modern scholarly aid, found in dutiful footnotes at the bottom of the page in the modern editions, fundamentally alters the relationship between Gellius and his reader. The note “3.18” breaks the game, as it were.} However, the fact that this place is actually the
“elsewhere” is not so easily determined by even the attentive reader of the NA: neither the lemma
nor the opening phrases of 3.18 reveal that this chapter is about the necessity of votes in certain situations, and its main attraction is the phrase *pedari senatores* (which, in turn, spurs him to talk about *discessiones*). Gellius is no help in this respect; his remark seems to be meant rather to end his chapter, to curtail discussion (for now). It is, nevertheless, a surprising way to finish off the typical Gellian adscript.

It is in fact this phenomenon of the adscript that can be seen as a marker of Gellius’s development over the course of Book 14 – as goes the adscript, so goes Gellius. Chapter 1 has Favorinus perform the adscript, with Gellius almost completely unseen; this is representative of Gellius’s apparent lack of agency in that chapter. In chapter 2, spurred by Favorinus’s talking points, Gellius adds the words of Cato, following up (later in life) on Favorinus’s citation. But here we have also observed a lack of confidence on the part of Gellius, as he wonders how *bonus* or *malus* he is, relative to others. Chapters 3 through 5 do not have these kinds of adscript, but they do end with negative assertions of some kind: Gellius refutes those who imagine a struggle between Plato and Xenophon (chapter 3), then rejects the idea that Chrysippus’s description of Justice was rather one of Cruelty (4), and then abandons a morphological argument in a display of disgust (5). He ends chapter 6 with both a rejection and a positive assertion, that, in place of trivial Homerica, the *NA* follows just one Homeric verse, and that is enough. Finally, in chapter 7, the type of adscript with which readers are familiar (from other books of the *NA*) has returned; or rather, within the confines of Book 14, it has finally made its debut. Gellius now has sufficient judicial experience not only to discuss Varro’s legal knowledge but to productively add the fruits of his own reading, to clear up a dubious claim of the Varro text. The abrupt curtailing of this adscript-discussion does not actually make the adscript any shorter than the usual one, but does
seem to be positioned so as to disconcert the reader. However, it does grant the next chapter, itself a seeming adscript, a firm sense of finality:

(1) Praefectum urbi Latinarum causa relictum senatum habere posse Iunius negat, quoniam ne senator quidem sit neque ius habeat sententiae dicendi, cum ex ea aetate praefectus fiat, quae non sit senatoria. (2) M. autem Varro in IIII epistolcarum quaestionum et Ateius Capito in coniectaneorum IIII ius esse praefecto senatus habendi dicunt; deaque ea re adsensum esse <se> Capito Tuberoni contra sententiam Iunii refert: “Nam et tribunis” inquit “plebis senatus habendi ius erat, quamquam senatores non essent ante Atinium plebiscitum.”

(1) A man left as prefect of the city on account of the Latin Festival cannot convene the senate, according to Junius, because he is not actually a senator and does not have the right to speak an opinion, for he is made prefect at an age unsuited to the Senate. (2) But M. Varro in Book 4 of his Epistolary Enquiries and Ateius Capito in Book 4 of his Miscellanies say that the prefect does have the right to convene the senate; and Capito says that he agrees on this matter with Tubero, against the opinion of Junius: “For”, he says, “tribunes of the plebs also had the right to convene the senate, even though they were not senators until the plebiscite of Atinius.”

Placing a note such as this at the very end of the book, as an adscript-chapter to the previous chapter, reverberates in a couple of ways on the scale of the N.A at large; or, to put it differently, this ending can be interpreted as an ending in two different ways, one informed by viewing it in context with Book 14, the other by looking for implications at farther range. First, Gellius wraps up the themes of Book 14, showing that he is now a master of legal lore as well as miscellanistic structure at the level of the book. By naming the Epistolae Quaestiones and Coniectanea here, he links chapter 8 to chapter 7 but also recalls the Preface, so that it now becomes relevant for the reader to think about the N.A’s relationship to other works of its genre. Having encountered alternate versions of the “collection” in this book (from Favorinus’s “question-headings” to the Homeric trivia-catalogue to the Varronian epistolary recapitulation), we may now look back over Book 14 as a whole and observe that Gellius’s collection is different in that it exhibits variety of subject-matter as well as variety of structure on the small scale. Remarkably, it accomplishes this feat of varietas even as it develops associations between chapters such that both author and reader exert more-or-less equal control over the book’s direction. At a longer range, too, this chapter partakes of one of the major themes of the N.A. In Book 1 we will observe (below, IV)
the phenomenon of the (possibly infinite) expansion of knowledge for both the author and reader of the NA. The Preface, moreover, hinted at the possibilities of expansion for the project of the NA (above, I.C). The chief concerns of Book 14 involve the construction of the miscellaneous knowledge-collection and the progression of professional and authorial talent (at least on the part of Gellius). If one takes to heart that Gellius has encouraged readers to use the NA as a starting point in the quest for knowledge, then the final chapter of Book 14 may be understood as a gesture of expandability – this rare kind of structure (using a separate chapter as an adscript, unto itself, for the previous chapter) provokes readers to consider how they might add something productively to this product that is at the same time both finished and incomplete.
IV. The *Attic Nights*, waxing: Proportionality in Book 1

We return now to the beginning of the *Noctes Atticae*. As first-time readers of the collection as a whole, we have begun to notice patterns amid what was, *prima facie*, chaos. We discovered that individual books, when read and re-read, add up to more than the sum of their individual parts. As we have seen above, Book 2 combines the motifs of parent-child and Greek-Roman, suggesting through links to the Preface a genealogical relationship between Gellius and his sources and Gellius and his readers (and their readers, and so forth). We found also that Book 14, the most tightly organized of the books of the *NA*, sketches an intellectual journey from student/reader to teacher/writer as Gellius strives to articulate the make-up of a good miscellany. We now study Book 1 under the presumption that having read the rest of the *NA* will enrich our understanding of this first and potentially very programmatic book. In particular, it will become apparent that Book 1, as do Books 2 and 14, gestures toward the infinite, the never-ending continuation of the life of learning and the life of the knowledge-collection. But it also cautions, mainly through *exempla*, that the forward thrust of learning ought to be guided by a principle of order, so that the learned man’s discourse, in speech and in writing, may be both delightful and useful.

A. A new beginning, a new ending (1.1 and 1.26).

The first chapter of the first book, as one may fairly expect in an artful collection, has some significance.¹⁸² The last chapter also appears to be significant, because the figure of

¹⁸² By now, we may take it as a given that the *NA* has some claim to literary artistry. Scholars have, of course, commented upon this first chapter of the collection, rightly assuming that it ought to have some programmatic significance. But since the *NA* has not traditionally been treated as a manifestation of literary ambition, and more specifically, since 1.1 has not usually been treated in the intimate context of its immediate fellow-chapters, there has been some general consternation over the surprisingly “light” content of the opener. The best that we can get comes mostly from the last decade. Holford-Strevens (2003, 36 with n.50) counters Cavazza (1985, 21 n.11): “Rather than a lightweight subject inviting us to dip into the work, not read it through ..., I see an engaging chapter that shall
Plutarch appears as an important focus in both chapters; we therefore detect a book-ending effect, a sure sign of artful organization. Let us, then, examine the two book-ends, both as chapters in their own right and as pillars in the structure of Book 1. Beginning with chapter 1:

here we find signals pointing both backward to the Preface and forward to the rest of Book 1.184

(1) Plutarchus in libro, quem de Herculis, quædiu inter homines fuit, animi corporisque ingenio atque virtutibus conscripsit, scite subtiliterque ratiocinatum Pythagoram philosophum dicit in reperienda modulandaque status longitudinisque eius praestantia. (2) Nam cum fere constaret curriculum stadii, quod est Pisis apud Iovem Olympium, Herculem pedibus suis metatum idque fecisse longum pedes sescentos, cetera quoque stadia in terra Graecia ab alis postea instituta pedum quidem esse numero sescentum, sed tamen esse aliquantulum breviora, facile intellexit modum spatiumque plantae Herculis ratione proportionis habita tanto fuisse quam aliorum procerius, quanto Olympicum stadium longius esset quam cetera. (3) Comprehensa autem mensura Herculani pedis secundum naturalem membrorum omnium inter se competentiam modificatus est atque ita id collegit, quod erat consequens, tanto fuisse Herculem corpore excelsiorem quam alios, quanto Olympicum stadium ceteris pari numero factis anteiret.

entice us into reading on. Berthold, noting how Castiglione cited this ch. to praise the court at Urbino (Il cortegiano 3.1), reads back into it the implication ‘even so does my miscellany surpass its rivals [but in quality, not in quantity] ...’ Morgan (2004, 191) find it “curious and erudite, which makes it a neat gobbet for dinner-party conversation, and as such socially useful.” For her, it is the kind of thing that, if one knows it and can show it, gets one into the circle of good people, and Gellius’s mission is to create wider access to this kind of socially improving knowledge, so that those who read the NA may join (his vision of) the intelligentsia.

183 Krevans (1984, 13-27) discusses the features (both conventional and innovative) of the opening and closing poems of Hellenistic and Roman poetry books. Some of these, such as meter, cannot apply to the Attic Nights, and the programmatically significant beginning for the NA is its Preface, not 1.1; but it is worth considering the relationship of book-end pieces to the internal structure of the individual book. For the new Posidippus papyrus, Gutzwiller (2005, 288-289) recognizes points of opening and closing as markers of literariness. For Gellius in particular, see Holford-Strevens 2003, 35-36, on the significance of the first chapter of nearly every book in the collection. No one, to my knowledge, has discussed final chapters in the NA (let alone the connections between a first and a last chapter) beyond the brief discussion in Rust 2009, 63.

184 Strangely, I have found it difficult to track down any direct scholarly discussion of connections between 1.1 and the Preface or between 1.1 and the rest of Book 1. Its programmatic significance for the work as a whole has been discussed (see nn.1 and 2, above), and Gunderson (2009, 43-44 with n.44) hints only tantalizingly at a connection between 1.1 and the Preface.
Three things in this chapter are worth discussing because of their participation in the more general trends of the NA’s first book: Plutarch, proportion, and geometry. Of these, Plutarch appears first, and indeed, *Plutarchus* is the first word of the entire body of the *NA*, excluding the Preface. Plutarch had probably already died around the time that Gellius was born (the 120s AD), and so it is likely that Gellius, his circle, and his readers had access to some or all of Plutarch’s vast and varied corpus. Knowing that Plutarch wrote on many topics, including biography, philosophy, and rhetoric, the reader may assume that Gellius will somehow work with that broad intellectual tradition, perhaps try to emulate this learned Greek. The reader would also be aware that Plutarch wrote a collection of *Sympotic Questions*, essays on various topics organized as questions that come up at a dinner party. Although this text was not among those to which Gellius compares the *Attic Nights* in the title list at Pref. 6-9 and the *NA* is not structured around a dinner party (although there are some sympotic situations in the collection), a reader may justly add it as a possible *comparandum* because of the brevity, variety, and sweet utility of its essays. Finally, Plutarch’s frequent (and friendly) comparison of Greek and Roman figures points to another common element in the *NA*, Gellius’s juxtapositions and sometimes comparisons of things Greek with things Roman. In the Preface, he had disparaged Greek collections for their unseemly bulk and paucity of useful knowledge, but this does not mean that a reader of the *NA* should believe that Gellius’s attitude toward the Greeks is, on the

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185 Gellius was born sometime between 125 and 128, published the *NA* probably sometime in the 170s, and perhaps died in the 180s. See above I.A, n.1.
186 Cf. Rust 2009, 63, where the prominent position of Plutarch in 1.1 marks a connection in an “intellectual genealogy” involving both Gellius and Plutarch.
187 Keulen (2009, 69-70) comes close to saying that the *NA*’s title is symposiastic; in any case, he makes much of the occasional symposiastic setting in some chapters of the *NA*. This misplaces the overall focus of the *NA*, which rests rather more on the collection’s generic status as *commentarii* than on its settings of intellectual discourse (only some of which are symposiastic). More on point is Keulen 2004, 225-226, where he notes, interestingly, that Apuleius too pays prefatorial homage to Plutarch (*Metamorphoses* 1.2.1), claiming actually to be part of Plutarch’s family. For Keulen (2004), both Gellius’s and Apuleius’s use of Plutarch situates them as part of the symposiastic tradition embodied in Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Convivales*.
whole, disparaging. In our reading of Book 2, we discovered otherwise. At the very least, Plutarch’s appearance in this position of great prominence (1.1.1, *incipit*) makes him an important point of comparison for Gellius, whether or not the Roman shows any respect for the Greek.\textsuperscript{188} In more general terms, the presence of Plutarch here marks the importance that Gellius places on intellectuals – in fact, it has been noted that Gellius shines the spotlight on some prominent intellectual in the opening chapter of most of the books of the *NA*.\textsuperscript{189} In this collection, knowledge almost always comes from someone acknowledged explicitly, and if that person sits at the head of a book of the *NA*, he is all the more special.

Reading the rest of the first sentence of this opening chapter, one notices also the name of Pythagoras, another intellectual, from whom Plutarch gets *his* information. One may wonder legitimately what Pythagoras has to do with Gellius,\textsuperscript{190} but the concern about size and proportionality in 1.1 echoes a similar concern in the Preface, where Gellius explicitly tried to avoid the bulk that makes the Greek miscellanies such a chore to read (*Pref.* 11-12). As we will see later after reading more of Book 1, Pythagoras returns in two more places (chapters 9 and 20) that are both significant for the theme of proportionality. Indeed, it was the study of proportion that secured some of Pythagoras’s great fame.\textsuperscript{191} At present, though, the invocation of

\textsuperscript{188} As the reader of the whole *NA* would know at this point, Gellius shows a great deal of respect to Plutarch, citing him several times, and with laudatory introductions – 1.3, (Περὶ Ψυχῆς), 1.26 (Περὶ Ἀφορησίας), 2.8 and 2.9 (*De Homero*), 3.5 and 3.6 (*Quaestiones Convivales*), 4.11 (*De Homero* and *Quaestiones Convivales*), 11.16 (Περὶ Πολυπραγμοστόντης), 15.10 (Περὶ Ψυχῆς), 17.11 (*Quaestiones Convivales*), 20.8 (*Commentarius in Hesiodum*).

\textsuperscript{189} Holford-Strevens 2003, 35-36.

\textsuperscript{190} Gellius himself does not appear to have been a Pythagorean, Neo- or otherwise. He is, of course, interested in the sage in the way that many Romans seem to have been (see n.11, below), but was not a believer, as it were. Holford-Strevens (2003, 262) sums it up well: “Gellius too pays tribute [to Pythagoras], but to the mathematician and the moralist, not the magician or the speculator.” Accordingly, despite the ubiquitous citations of Varro (a prominent Pythagorean) and Nigidius Figulus (the Roman Pythagorean *par excellence* of the 1st century BC), Gellius has neither Varro nor Nigidius say anything about Pythagoras, at least directly, even when there is plenty of opportunity to do so (especially in 4.11, a relatively long chapter on the strange practices of the Pythagoreans).

\textsuperscript{191} Hornsby 1936, 115: “Pythagoras was also particularly famed for his work on proportion, and his whole system is supposed to have covered the ground of *Euclid*, Books i, ii, iv, and vi.”
Pythagoras calls to mind not only his associations with mathematics, but also his mystic following and his mythic presence in Rome's own antiquity.\textsuperscript{192}

The first chapter also brings us something of a surprise, or a challenge, at least from the point of view of a reader fresh out of the Preface: even though the Preface had promised (13) to keep the really nit-picky (\textit{scrupulosa}) topics to a minimum (\textit{geometrica} among them), Gellius begins his collection with one of those very topics, geometry. For seasoned readers of the \textit{NA}, this kind of material is, on the contrary, no surprise – the collection is in fact peppered with chapters dealing with arcane material such as the ceremonial restrictions on the \textit{flamen dialis} (10.12), the causes of unintentional bowel-loosening (19.4), and which day was a person’s birthday if he or she was born at night (3.2). For first-time readers, however, this is a bold beginning – either a surprise, causing them to re-evaluate Gellius’s claims to accessibility (thus preparing the way for expecting the unexpected all the way through the \textit{NA}), or a challenge, asserting by its very prominence that Gellius will indeed write about these difficult subjects in order to spur readers to increase their knowledge in a variety of fields, or at least to save them from the embarrassment of ignorance:

\begin{quote}
Quod erunt autem in his commentariis paucâ quaedam scrupulosa et anxia vel ex grammatica vel ex dialectica vel etiam ex geometrica, quodque erunt item paucula remotiora super augurio iure et pontificio, non oportet ea defugere quasi aut cognitu non utilia aut perceptu difficilia. Non enim fecimus altos nimis et obsuros in his rebus quaestionum sinus, sed primitias quasdam et quasi libamenta ingenuarum artium dedimus, quae virum civiliter eruditum neque audisse umquam neque attigisse, si non inutile, at quidem certe indecorum est. (\textit{Pref.} 13)
\end{quote}

Now, in these chapters there will be a few nit-picky things from Grammar or Logic or even Geometry; there will also be a few little things more recondite, concerning augurial and pontifical law – but one ought not avoid such things as if they were useless to learn or difficult to grasp. In

\textsuperscript{192} See Zhmud 2012 (an updated version in English of his 1994 Russian work) for a survey of what is known and especially what is not known about Pythagoras and his following. His place in Rome’s legendary antiquity is apparent especially from Plutarch’s \textit{Life of Numa}. But the story goes back much further than Plutarch – see Cic. \textit{Tusc.} 4.1-2, where he finds Pythagorean influence not only in Numa’s discipleship, but also in the realms of early Roman music and poetry. See also Rawson 1985, 291-294, and Kahn 2001, 86-93, on Pythagoras’s impact on Rome, as a philosopher that the Romans could claim as their own. Specifically relevant to Gellius is the fact that in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC, when Cicero and Varro (sources of towering importance for the \textit{NA}) were active, Pythagorean book-collecting became a popular hobby among Rome’s elite.
fact, I have not made the intricacies of the investigations on these topics too deep and dark; I have instead offered them as “first fruits”, if you will, and “libations” of the noble disciplines. Of course, it may not be impractical for a well-educated citizen to have never heard of or come into contact with such things, but it is at the very least improper.

There is another good reason to choose geometry for the beginning of the *NA* over all the other difficult subjects: the idea of proportion, mentioned above, can come in many different forms and so can be represented in many different ways, but to do it in this way, so mathematical and so unexpected, prepares readers to encounter a real variety of subject-matter. That is to say, if one was expecting to find some broad treatment of one of the major themes of the Preface (such as sensible proportions), one would most likely be taken by surprise on reading the more particular, more nit-picky treatment in 1.1. Subsequently, one would expect to find other such unexpected (yet *a propos*) treatments of the big themes. Curious readers will also be expected to try to make sense of these difficult topics by using the *NA*’s content as a starting point and expanding their knowledge in the direction and to the extent of their choice. Thus, even the presence of upturned expectations contributes to the thematic unity of the *Attic Nights* – it works as a mechanism to enforce Gellius’s admonishment to the reader to go beyond the *primitiae*.193 Again the seasoned reader is reminded of the push toward independent learning represented in Books 2 and 14.

Finally, I turn to the theme most immediately relevant to Book 1: proportion. This *proportio* is announced even in the *lemma* in the *Capita Rerum* as the main topic of 1.1.194 On the basis of the Preface and this first chapter alone, it is apparent already that proportion (of some

193 See especially Pref. 17: *Quae autem parum plana videbuntur aut minus plena instructaque, petimus, inquam, ut ea non docendi magis quam admonendi gratia scripta existimem et quasi demonstratione vestigiorum contenti persequantur ea post, si libebit, vel libris repertis vel magistris.* (“Now, if they [my readers] think anything insufficiently clear or not fully explained, I emphatically entreat them to consider it written just as much for suggestion as instruction, and to be happy that I have pointed to the tracks and to pursue it later, if they wish, by finding books or teachers.”)

194 *Quali proportione quibusque collectionibus Plutarchus ratiocinatum esse Pythagoram philosophum dixerit de comprehendenda corporis proceritate, qua fuit Hercules, cum vitam inter homines viveret.*
sort) has programmatic value in the NA. It also has special value for Book 1. Chapter 1’s focus on proportion spurs readers both to compare the local treatment of the theme with the broader approach taken already in the Preface and to keep its importance in mind when reading the rest of Book 1. While the Preface focused on the difference in size between Gellius’s collection (reasonable) and those of the Greeks (enormous), this first chapter focuses on the difference in length between the Olympic stadium and that of all the others, as well as other layers of comparison: the proportion of the foot to the rest of the body and the proportion of the human foot to the Herculean foot must all be taken into consideration before one can determine the proportion of the typical stadium to the Olympic stadium.\textsuperscript{195} This dizzying orrery of proportions (matched by the layers of indirect statement: I read that Plutarch wrote that Pythagoras wrote…) suggests perhaps even more layers of meaning with regard to the general concept of proportion. With words such as *pedum*, *numero*, and *breviora*, Gellius may recall (for some readers, at least) the size-anxiety of the Callimachean aesthetic. In any case, Gellius demonstrably (from the Preface if not from 1.1) expresses some anxiety over the size of his collection. If 1.1 is a variation on that theme, we find ourselves confronted with questions concerning relative size: is the NA bigger than all the other miscellanies? If so, is it too big, or is it the right size (a size that has a *secundum naturalem membrorum omnium inter se competentiam*)? Or perhaps if the NA is *excelsior* in relation to other miscellanies, the word implies that it surpasses (*anteiret*) not in

\textsuperscript{195} Cf. Vitruvius *De Architectura* 4.1.6-10, where the different orders of columns in temples are measured out in proportions analogous to different human bodies (Doric is masculine, Corinthian is feminine). See especially 4.1.6: *in ea aede cum voluisissent columnas conlocare, non habentes symmetrias earum et quaerentes quibus rationibus efficere possent uti et ad onus ferendum essent idoneae et in aspectu probatam haberent venustatem, dimensi sunt viridis pedis vestigium et id retulerunt in altitudinem. cum invenissent pedem sextam partem esse altitudinis in homing, idem in columnam transtulerunt et qua crassitudine fecerunt basin scapi, tantas sex cum capitulo in altitudinem extulerunt. ita dorica columna viridis corporis proportionem et firmitatem et venustatem in aedificiis praestare coepit.*
quantity but in quality. As we have already seen in Book 14, Gellius sometimes returns to the matter of appropriate size and content for the miscellany.¹⁹⁶

Proportion becomes a recurring theme over the course of Book 1, as Gellius presents it in different manifestations. For example: in 1.1, proportio means “spatial relation”, one of the many varieties of order that Gellius will confront throughout the NA. But there is one other important meaning of proportio that connects this geometrical relationship to the lexical relationships of which Gellius is so fond: proportio, as Gellius himself later attests, is the Latin word for the Greek ἀναλογία (the principle that languages operate on certain sets of rules that are often parallel to one another, and that language users ought to follow those rules so as to avoid corrupting the language).¹⁹⁷ This analogia comes to the fore in 1.10, serving at the same time as a counterpart to the ordo atque ratio Pythagorae of 1.9. But this is not to say that mathematical proportio disappears (even though Gellius has promised so little of geometria) – in fact, it moves to center stage in chapter 19 and especially in chapter 20. These become important architectural elements in Book 1 and will be discussed below (IV.D).

Now, in order to understand the book-ending of Book 1, we turn to its final chapter, where the name of Plutarch signals the book-ending effect. But this final chapter shares with the first chapter more than simply the name of Plutarch, as we see in reading it (and when we study the rest of Book 1, we will find other connections):

(1) Interrogavi in diatriba Taurum, an sapiens irasceretur. (2) Dabat enim saepe post cotidianas lectiones quae-rendi, quod quis vellet, potestatem. (3) Is cum graviter, copiose de morbo affectuave irae disseruisset, quae et in veterum libris et in ipsis commentariis exposita sunt, convertit ad me, qui interrogaveram, et: “haec ego” inquit “super irascendo sentio; (4) sed, quid et Plutarchus noster, vir octissimus ac prudentissimus, senserit, non ab re est, ut id quoque audias. (5) Plutarchus” inquit “servo suo, nequam homini et contumaci, sed libris disputationibusque

¹⁹⁶ See especially 14.6, which presents the negative example of his friend’s miscellany. Besides most of the Preface, cf. 9.4.
philosophiae aures inbutas habenti, tunicam detrahi ob nescio quod delictum caedique eu loro iussit. (6) Coeperat verberari et obloquebatur non meruisse, ut vapulet; nihil mali, nihil sceleris admisisse. (7) Postremo vociferari inter vapulandum incipit neque iam querimonias aut gemitus eiulatusque facere, sed verba seria et obiurgatoria: no ita esse Plutarchum, ut philosophum deceret; irasci turpe esse; saepe eum de malo irae dissertavisse, librum quoque περὶ ἀφορησίας pulcerrimum conscripsisse; his omnibus, quae in eo libro scripta sint, nequaquam convenire, quod provolutus effususque in iram plurimis se plagis multaret. (8) Tum Plutarchus lente et leniter: ‘quid autem,’ inquit ‘verbero, nunc ego tibi irasci videor? ex vultune meo an ex voce an ex colore an etiam ex verbis correptum esse me ira intellegis? mihi quidem neque oculi, opinor, truces sunt neque os turbidum, neque inmaniter clamo neque in spumam ruboremve effervesco neque pudenda dico aut paenitenda neque omnino trepido ira et gestio. (9) Haec enim omnia, si ignoras, signa esse irarum solent.’ Et simul ad eum, qui caedebat, conversus: ‘interim,’ inquit ‘dum ego atque hic disputamus, tu hoc age’.

(10) Summa autem totius sententiae Tauri haec fuit: Non idem esse existimavit ἀφορησίαν et ἀνάλγησιν et ἀναλγητον et ἀναίσθητον, id est hebetem ac stupentem. (11) Nam sicut aliorum omnium, quos Latini philosophi “affectus” vel “affectiones”, Graeci πάθη appellant, ita huius quoque motus animi, qui, cum est ulciscendi causa saevior, “ira” dicitur, non privationem esse utilem censui, quam Graeci στέρησιν dicunt, sed mediocritatem, quam μετριότητα illi appellant.

(1) I asked Taurus at school whether philosophers get angry. (2) Every day, you see, after the readings, he allowed his students to ask whatever they wished. (3) One day after discoursing eloquently and in depth concerning the emotional failing of anger (a topic discussed in the books of the ancients and in his own Commentaries), he turned to me after I asked my question, and said, “That is what I think about getting angry; (4) but the opinion of our Plutarch, a man of deep learning and wisdom, is also relevant – you should hear it too. (5) Plutarch had a slave who was worthless and insubordinate but steeped in philosophical books and arguments; he commanded that the slave be stripped of his tunic and whipped on account of some offense. (6) The whipping commenced and he started protesting that he did not deserve a beating, had done nothing wrong, committed no crime. (7) Eventually, as the beating continued, he started shouting – and his shouts were not complaints or groans and wails, but serious and reproachful words – that Plutarch was not behaving as a philosopher ought, that it was indecent to get angry, that Plutarch had oftendiscoursed on the evil of anger, that he had even composed a very fine book περὶ ἀφορησίας [On Lack of Anger], that it was entirely inconsistent with what he had written in that book to punish him with so many lashes after having slipped into anger. (8) Then Plutarch said coolly and calmly, ‘Now, why do I seem to you be angry, you scoundrel? Is it my expression or my voice or my complexion or even my words that make you think I’m in the grip of anger? I don’t really think my eyes are fierce or my countenance troubled; I’m not yelling savagely, I’m not foaming and fuming, I’m not saying things I’ll come to regret, and I’m certainly not trembling with anger and gesticulating wildly. All these things, you know, tend to be the signs of anger.’ (9) In the same moment he turned to the man administering the beating and said, ‘Do keep it up as he and I continue our discussion.’”

(10) The gist of Taurus’s opinion was as follows: he thought that ἀφορησία [lack of anger] and ἀνάλγησια [lack of feeling] were not the same thing, and that it was one thing for a mind to be disinclined to anger and another for it to be ἀνάλγητος and ἀναίσθητος, that is, dull and numb. (11) For it is the same with all the other emotions (which Latin philosophers call affectus or affectiones and the Greeks call πάθη) as it is with the emotion which, when it rages for vengeance, is called “anger”: Taurus thought that its removal, which the Greeks call στέρησις, is much less useful than its moderation, which they call μετριότης.
The presence here of Plutarch is the obvious connection with the chapter on the other end of Book 1. The positioning of Plutarch at both ends of the book seems to mark him as important – he is a prolific writer on a variety of topics, and Gellius reveres his wisdom. As a Greek man who adapted himself to the Roman imperial system (like Favorinus, a Gaulish man fluent in Latin and Greek), Plutarch joins an elite club in the NA of men whose intellect encompasses the entire Roman world, men who rank among Gellius’s intellectual heroes and serve as models of learning.¹⁹⁸

However, when we compare the last chapter of Book 1 to the first and then consider Book 1 as a whole, it is the process of learning that is the more significant common element. Plutarch was dead by the time Gellius pursued his studies in Athens,¹⁹⁹ but he plays a part in multiple types of knowledge-transmission for Gellius. In 1.1, Plutarch is the author of a book transmitting the knowledge of Pythagoras, while in 1.26, Taurus verbally transmits knowledge about Plutarch to Gellius, including a reference to Plutarch’s book περὶ ἀφοργήσιας,²⁰⁰ which may well be the source, directly or indirectly, of the ethical philosophy that underlies 1.26.²⁰¹ As noted above (n.5), this source-tracing is a neat example of Gellius outlining an intellectual genealogy for himself (and, potentially, for his readers). These two book-ends also play out the principal means, expressed in Pref. 17, of independent acquisition of knowledge: if readers want to know more about things that they have read in the NA, Gellius says, persequantur ea post, si

¹⁹⁹ Gellius was born in the 120s, around the same time that Plutarch died – s.v. OED².
²⁰⁰ This liber is preserved for us as the essay in Moralia 452F-464D. It is a pity that Gellius did not include more from this essay, for, as Hornsby (1936, 206) reports, Plutarch not only explains that it is necessary to restrain one’s anger when beating slaves, but also rejects the old Etruscan method of beating slaves to the tune of a flute. As I suggest below (IV.C), music becomes an important part of Book 1’s nexus of themes subjoined to the main theme of order.
libebit, vel libris repertis vel magistris (“they should follow up on them later, if they like, by finding either books or teachers”). Just so, in chapter 1, Gellius uses a book, and in chapter 26, he uses a teacher, following his own readerly/writerly advice.

By now, the reader knows that the NA is, in large part, about extra-curricular learning and the organization and presentation of that learning. 1.1 and 1.26 fit well into this macroscopic arc, but they also contain within themselves manifestations of the twin thematic pillars that hold up the edifice of Book 1: mathematical proportion and moral order. In 1.1, Pythagoras figures out (ratiocinatum) and measures (modulanda) Hercules’s height by means of proportio; in 1.26, Gellius describes Taurus’s argument as favoring mediocritas / μετριότης over privatio / στέρησις. Indeed, μετριότης is the focus of the final phrase of Book 1. There is a similarity between, on the one hand, being able to describe the geometrical relationship between two measured phenomena (1.1) and on the other, controlling one’s passions (1.26) – both of these activities are governed by the will to describe and impose limits. The interior of Book 1 explores both mathematical description (chapters 19 and 20) and the morality of prescribing limits (passim). Chapter 9 in particular stands as a landmark of order, describing an order of learning in which Gellius implicates himself both in chapter 9 and, as we will see, in chapter 26. It also exists as a node in a series of chapters touching on silentium as a state that has an impact on order. I explore this network of notions below and in so doing tie them to the pillars of 1.1 and 1.26.

B. Order (1.9 and 1.10).

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201 Holford-Strevens (1997, 104) assumes, probably rightly, that “it is no wild leap of Quellenforschung to suggest that the source for everything here put in Taurus’ mouth, the Plutarchean anecdote included, came from his writings [commentariis].”
I move next to chapters 9 and 10 of Book 1, where Gellius begins to develop his themes of order and proportion, in ways that both echo the Preface (and 1.1) and are themselves echoed later in Book 1. Chapter 9 hearkens to the Preface with its interest in defining a kind of ordo and to 1.1 with its focus on Pythagoras’s ratio, but it also heralds a number of themes that return at various points in the first book, which I discuss below. Chapter 10 extends the idea of proportion from the geometrical realm in 1.1 to the linguistic realm, paving the way for Gellius’s moderate position in the analogy-anomaly debate (2.25); meanwhile, Gellius marks by their juxtaposition a positive (1.9) and a negative (1.10) model for the behavior of young men as students. When we reach chapters 19 and 20 (below, IV.D), Pythagorean numerology comes into play, bringing with itself important implications in the numbers 9 and 10 and, more broadly, the geometric properties of Book 1 (and, by extension, the NA) as a whole.

Chapter 9 begins by taking the reader into a world defined by a particular kind of ordo:

(1) Ordo atque ratio Pythagorae ac deinceps familieae et successionis eius recipiendi instituendique discipulos huiuscemodi suisse traditur: (2) Iam a principio adulescentes, qui sese ad discendum obtulerant, ἐφυσιογνώμοναι. Id verbum significat mores naturasque hominum coniectatione quadam de oris et vultus ingenio deque totius corporis filo atque habitu sciscitari.

(1) The order and the system that Pythagoras (and later his school and successors) had of receiving and educating students was, according to tradition, as follows: (2) At the very beginning, he ἐφυσιογνώμονα the young men who had offered themselves up to be taught. This word means to ascertain someone’s character and nature by making certain inferences from the disposition of his countenance and his expression and from the build and the carriage of his whole body.

The words ordo atque ratio open the chapter, the first of them being a marked word in the Preface, where Gellius claimed to have used a chance arrangement (ordo fortuitus, Pref. 2) for the chapters of the Attic Nights. Readers who have just read chapter 8 may recall that Sotion’s Horn of Plenty (κέρας Ἀμαλθείας) was the distinguished source for that chapter’s content and that it was one of the works to which Gellius compared the NA in the Preface. And so, when

202 The two kinds of measure, due and mathematical, are united too in Plato’s Statesman. Cf. Kahn 2001, 57: “this is normative mathematics.”
these readers come to chapter 9 and see its first word, ordo, they may rightly be mindful of the nature of ordo in miscellaneous collections. This nature, if we are to think Gellius sincere in his prefatorial protestations, is a matter of contention, for he gives the impression that many other miscellanies, especially those of the Greeks, have been concocted hastily and that his own, by contrast, is a more wholesome confection (Pref. 11-12). Accordingly, he has sprinkled Book 1 generously with words pertaining to order, mean, and proportion, as well as themes related to them. As I have discussed above (IV.A), the first chapter of Book 1 makes a good case for itself to be the opening chapter of the collection when it looks back to the Preface to suggest a controlled, proportionate nature for the entire work. Since it also introduces the major theme of Book 1, it can be said to be the first element in shaping readers’ understanding of one of the governing principles of the NA: variety controlled by proportion.

Thus, in marking the status of ordo as a literary quality of the genre of the miscellany, the juxtaposition of 1.8 and 1.9 becomes piquant when one finds that chapter 9 deals with a very different kind of ordo – Pythagoras’s order of accepting and training his philosophy students is laid out in detail and is marked by discrete stages. §2 introduces Pythagoras’s ordo by showing him as the master who examines (ἐφυσιογνωμόνει) the young men who wish to learn (qui sese ad discendum obtulerant). Like Gellius in the Preface, Pythagoras has a way of distinguishing those who are worthy of his instruction from those who are not. Those who are deemed worthy go through a kind of initiation, as Gellius claims is the kind of thing demanded by his brand of

203 These words include, but are not limited to: any word with the mod- root (such as modus, moderatio, and modulatio), proportio, ratio, and ordo. Henry (1994) has already noticed the thematic importance of order in Book 1 but denies the programmatic implications of putting this theme at the front of the collection: “Because we cannot know the order of composition it is improper to speak of the first book of the ‘Noctes’ as programmatic in the ordinary sense. Yet it is possible to detect and identify certain Gellian habits of mind which surface here. Book One illustrates Gellius’ concerns with order.” (p. 1921)
learning. If, in re-reading the NA, we remember Gellius’s evolution in Book 14 from reader/student to author/teacher, we also recognize that Gellius himself must have had to go through a similar sort of initiation in his younger days. Compare the Pythagorean rites:

(3) Then, if after this test the young man was deemed worthy, Pythagoras commanded that he be accepted immediately into the school and that he be silent for a certain amount of time: not everyone for the same amount, but different people for different amounts of time, depending on what he thought to be their capacity for ingenuity. (4) Now, in this time of silence, the young man would listen to what others were saying, but it was forbidden either to ask questions if he did not understand something or to discuss what he had heard; in fact, no one was silent for less than two years. And during the stage of silence and listening, they were even called ἀκουστικοί. (5) Then, when they had learned how to be silent and listen, which are the most difficult things of all, and when they had just begun to be educated because of their silence (which was called ἐχεμυθία [speech-curbing]), they were allowed to talk and make inquiries and write down whatever they had heard and express their opinions. (6) At this stage they were called μαθηματικοί, no doubt from the skills they had already started learning and pondering – for the ancient Greeks called Geometry, Gnomonics, Music, and all the more advanced studies μαθήματα (though the majority of people call the Chaldeans “mathematicals” even though they should only be called by their ethnic name). (7) Then, enhanced by these studies, they would go on to observe the workings of the universe and the guiding principles of nature, and then at last they were called φυσικοί.

This process of being inducted and advancing in the ranks of learning closely parallels the order of composition that Gellius laid out in the Preface (especially Pref. 3). There, his preparation for the NA began with auditiones and lectiones (things heard and read), which became the source

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204 “[A]dmission to the study of philosophy is frequently compared to initiation into sacred religious mysteries.” Hornsby 1936, 118. Cf. Hornsby 1936, 114, on silence as a mechanism of self-control among the Pythagoreans, taken perhaps from the silence of the mysteries. The mystic initiation in Gellius’s Preface, drawn from Aristophanes’s Frogs, demands silence, invokes the Muses, and encourages its initiates to participate in its rites well into the night. Note especially the importance of silence in the cults of both Gellius and Pythagoras – more on silence below (IV.C).
material for his *annotationes* (notes), which were then fashioned into *commentarii* (essays, or the chapters of the *NA*). Here in 1.9, the student begins by listening and remaining silent (*audiebat* and *tacuit* – the ἀκούστικοι stage, §4). He is then allowed (*potestas erat*)205 to speak, ask questions, take notes, and express his opinions (*verba facere et quaerere quaeque audissent scribere et, quae ipsi opinarentur expromere* – the μαθηματικοί stage, §§5 and 6). In the final stage, the student’s knowledge gives him the mental tools necessary to understand the world (*his scientiae studii ad perspiciendi mundi opera et principia naturae procedebant* – the φυσικοί stage, §7). The first two stages mirror Gellius’s intellectual experience in creating the *NA*, for he begins by listening and reading, then he writes notes for himself, sometimes expressing his own opinion, and finally, equipped with his knowledge, he gives himself and his readership some basic knowledge (*scientiae studia*) with which they may face the intellectual challenges of the world.

Now, the real, historical difference between ἀκουστικοί (also known as ἀκουσματικοί) and μαθηματικοί is a matter of great controversy in Pythagorean studies.206 Most sources seem to view the two groups as rival sects of Pythagoreanism, the “acousticals” being devoted to the ritual, cultic aspects of the following (such as vegetarianism), and the “mathematics” being devoted to the philosophical aspects (such as number theory and harmonics), but the exact nature of their disagreement remains unknown. Another tradition has it that Pythagorean pupils underwent successive stages as the degree of their discipleship increased. Gellius follows this latter tradition to such an extent that he completely elides any schismatic tension between the

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205 Cf. 1.26.2: *Dabat quaerendi, quod quis velit, potestatem* – the teacher’s magisterial authority verges into the magistral, laying down a *lex* of learning, as Gellius himself does in Pref. 20, imitating Aristophanes (*mutuabor ex Aristophanea choro anapaesta paucu et quam ille homo festivissimus fabulœ suae spectandæ legem dedit, eandem ego commentariis his legendis dabo...*), and as Taurus’s philistine students comically attempt in 1.9.8 (*legem dant, qua philosophari discant*).

206 Burkert 1972, 192-208, is an exceptionally clear exposition of the problem. See also Zhmud 2012, 175-192. The φυσικοί are even more problematic, as Gellius seems to be the only one who attests this third group.
groups. The result of this elision is the construction of a convenient parallel, for he shows his readers a group living in harmony and following a sage in a holy quest for cosmic wisdom, a group whose members advance through discrete stages, as Gellius himself has advanced through the stages of his learning/composition process.

Indeed, it is Gellius’s own learning experience to which he links this exposition.

Immediately following his description of the Pythagorean education is this personal anecdote:


Suddenly, as §8 would have it, the first seven sections of chapter 9 are actually the substance of one of Taurus’s lectures. No doubt, critics of a certain stripe would find this sort of swerve a sign of the author’s sloppy thinking or contempt for his readers’ intellect. It is, in truth, a signifier, but the signified is rather more remarkable than that; consider the first eight words of this new paragraph: Haec eadem noster Taurus super Pythagora cum dixisset. The first pair actually serves a function akin to that of a paragraphos-mark. Haec, of course, marks a turning point in Gellius’s discourse here, but eadem tells us that the words of 1-7 were not themselves the words of Taurus, only that they are, by themselves, the words of Gellius to us about a certain topic about which at some point in the past Taurus imparted knowledge to Gellius. In other words,
Taurus taught Gellius about the Pythagorean education, and now Gellius is teaching us too on the same topic, replicating the substance of Taurus’s lesson, but not necessarily the words. The level of discourse implied by eadem therefore produces the effect not only of Taurus apud Gell. 1.9 (as Pythagorean scholars have used the text of NA 1.9.1-7) but also Gell. 1.9. What this all means is that Gellius is implying a connection between the substance of the Taurus-anecdote (which he is about to tell) and the substance of the Pythagoras-exposition (which he has just told). The next two pairs (noster Taurus super Pythagora) directly juxtapose Gellius’s teacher and the master about whom Taurus teaches, thus delineating the paideutic genealogy and further strengthening the connection established by haec eadem. Finally, cum dixisset gives Taurus the words that had until then been assumed to be Gellius’s, and at the same time, as a cum-clause, it situates Taurus’s discourse in a temporal framework. Nunc, autem, and the rest of Taurus’s complaint construct, and at the same time undermine, the possible ideal of similarity between Pythagoras’s students and Taurus’s students: the sobering, ideal-busting nunc autem describes a reality in which Taurus’s students fail to understand that beyond mere listening and reading there lies the kind of philosophical epiphany that can improve the learner’s soul.209

207 See, e.g., Burkert 1972, 193 n.6.
208 There is more to the adjective idem in the NA. In chapter II (above, II.B.3), we observed that chapters 8 and 9 of the NA’s Book 2 are linked by chapter 9’s opening words In eodem libro idem Plutarchus eundem Epicurum and that these words constituted a kind of joke (or at least scherzo) on the Preface’s notion of ordo fortuitus. And, irony aside, the idem-forms served to mark a connection with the previous chapter. Gellius does, however, sometimes use an idem-form to mark an additional block of text, within a chapter, as relevant but in some way tangential to the main substance of that chapter (e.g., 2.12.5 Hoc idem Favorinus philosophus inter fratres quoque aut amicos dissidentis oportere fieri censebat). Compare my discussion (above, III.E) on the phenomenon of the Gellian addendum, where I argued that Book 14 shows, in part, the development of the addendum as a feature of the NA, that it appears most of the time as an extra sentence or two at the end of a chapter, but sometimes as a mini-chapter unto itself. In 1.9, I think that eadem marks a kind of addendum, in that Gellius has already delivered what, on some level, is the main attraction of the chapter (facts about the Pythagorean education) and is now adding a new dimension of understanding to it, that the Pythagorean education is relevant to his own program. Interestingly, 1.9 has one further addendum after this one, when it discusses common property (§12), which is also a topic explicitly made relevant both to the Pythagorean cult and to Roman society.
209 Gellius may be implicating himself as not just one of the group of superficial disciples, but as the one guilty of the most heinous offense of demanding to read Plato for the enhancement not of life but of language (Est etiam pro Iuppiter! qui ...) – cf. 17.20, where Plato’s Symposium is being read in Taurus’s home and Gellius takes a direct interest in translating a particular passage so as to bring out the eloquence of the Greek. Taurus scolds him for being
Taurus’s complaint, especially in §8, also does some work toward separating the in-group of enlightened students from the out-group of the boorish. Coming to *philosophi* with unwashed feet (*pedibus inlotis*) is a kind of ritual infraction, so that Taurus’s words here echo the sentiment of *Pref.* 19-21, where Gellius, like Aristophanes in the *Frogs*, urged those of poor taste and incurious intellect to stay away from the *Nights*. Taurus’s unwashed also lack interest in philosophical speculation (*ἀθεώρητοι*), the wisdom of the Muses (or music – *ἂμουσοι*), and geometry (*ἀγεωμέτρητοι*), all important parts of the intellectual pursuits of the Pythagoreans (or at least the μαθηματικοί among them). And, in an instance of productive intratextuality, this trio of derogatory alpha-privatives recalls Hortensius’s trio only four chapters earlier in 1.5, where he decisively silenced Torquatus’s attacks on his manhood by saying that he would rather accept Torquatus’s insults (e.g., calling him names such as *Dionysia*, the scandalous *saltatrix*) than be what Torquatus is: *ἲμουσος*, *ἂναφρόδιτος*, *ἁπροσδίόνυσος*. This trio works to great effect as the punch-line for 1.5, but it also adds a divine dimension to its sister in 1.9, marking the unwashed as both unpythagorean (or unphilosophical) and ungodly.

All this must weigh heavily on Gellius, as 1.9.11 makes it obvious that Taurus’s tough talk compares contemporary students unfavorably with the serious philosophers-in-training that Pythagoras had the pleasure of teaching. Gellius, of course, did not remain a student forever, as we have witnessed in studying the evolution of his intellectual maturity in Book 14. So it is more interested in bringing out its eloquence than in understanding its philosophy, but this only makes Gellius all the more eager to translate it eloquently – and this he does, ending the chapter with his eloquent translation. Indeed, Gellius’s frequently expressed anxieties concerning the balance between content and style make him a sort of double agent in the ongoing strife between philosophy and rhetoric, so that it may be humorous to observe him juggling the demands of both. Incidentally, the *lemma* for 17.20, in the *Capita Rerum*, does not mention Taurus’s name, leaving readers to discover the confrontation on their own.

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210 This word may actually refer to astronomy. Hornsby 1936, 119: “ἀθεώρητοι, ‘unversed in contemplation,’ probably has special reference to astronomy....” She compares Diogenes Laertius 4.10, where Xenocrates rejects a potential student as μὴ τε μουσικὴν μὴ τε γεωμετρίαν μὴ τε ἀστρονομίαν μεμαθηκότα.

211 Hornsby 1936, 119: “Ἄμουσοι signifies not only ‘unmusical’ but also ‘devoid of refinement and aesthetic appreciation.’”
that here, at the very end of 1.9, he lets drop his student persona and dons fully the instructor’s
garb:

(12) Sed id quoque non praetereundum est, quod omnes, simul atque a Pythagora in cohortem
illam disciplinarum recepti erant, quod quisque familiae, pecuniae habebat, in medium dabat, et
coibatur societas inseparabilis, tamquam illud fuit anticum consortium, quod iure atque uerbo
Romano appellabatur “ercto non cito”.

(12) But it ought not be passed over that, once they had been accepted by Pythagoras into that
compny of knowledge, they would share their estate and their money, and an indissoluble
association formed, like the old partnership that was called in Roman legal parlance ercto non
cito.

Like the passage on Pythagorean education, this one is presented as fact (this time, though,
Gellius will not surprise his reader with a sudden change of voice), and with id quoque non
praetereundum est, Gellius is again in professorial mode. He makes another comparison between
a Pythagorean social structure and a similar one in Roman society. Perhaps, given the foregoing
sentences on Taurus’s instruction, there is a hint here also of this societas inseparabilis being a
metaphor of Gellius’s student-group. Strictly speaking, they are not the same, for Gellius’s group
does not share money and property in common; they do, however, share time and effort in the
cultivation of the mind. At the very least, the sentence shows the Pythagoreans’ total devotion to
their company of knowledge (cohortem disciplinarum), which reinforces Taurus’s demand that
his students work to better their lives. Finally, the tamquam-clause that links the Pythagorean
societas to a Roman consortium and ends the chapter offers something of an intellectual
challenge: what does ercto non cito mean? The phrase clearly refers to shared property, as is
evident from Gellius’s text, but its grammar is uncertain.²¹³ Gellius does not explain its

²¹² It may all be ironic, especially in light of n.28, above, but the anxiety over appropriate knowledge is still present.
²¹³ The phrase actually seems to refer to the division of property held in common by the sons of a deceased
paterfamilias. Ercto was regarded as the ablative of a noun erctum, with cito as a participle (from cieo) in
agreement: “the divided inheritance not being divided”, where cieo somehow means “divide”. See Hornsby 1936,
121-122; Marache 1967, 40; Cavazza 1985, 366-367.
difficulties. As often, Gellius explains some things here in detail and others hardly at all, leaving curious readers to do their own research if they so desire.

The next chapter, 1.10, exhibits with wit and brevity another teachable moment:

(1) Favorinus philosophus adulescenti veterum verborum cupidissimo et plerasque voces nimas priscas et ignotas in cotidianis communibusque sermonibus expromenti: “Curius” inquit “et Fabricius et Coruncanius, antiquissimi viri, et et antiquiores Horatii illi trigemini plane ac dilucide cum suis fabulati sunt neque Auruncorum aut Sicanorum aut Pelasgorum, qui primi coluisse Italiam dicuntur, sed aetatis suae uerbis locuti sunt; (2) tu autem, proinde quasi cum matre Evandri nunc loquare, sermone abhinc multis annis iam desito uteris, quod scire atque intellegere neminem vis, quae dicas. Nonne, homo inepte, ut quod vis abunde consequaris, taces? (3) Sed antiquitatem tibi placere ais, quod honesta et bona et sobria et modesta sit. (4) Vive ergo moribus praeteritis, loquere verbis praesentibus atque id, quod a C. Caesare, excellentis ingenii ac prudentiae viro, in primo de analogia libro scriptum est, habe semper in memoria atque in pectore, ut ‘tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum’.”

(1) Favorinus the philosopher once said to a young man who was exceedingly enamored of old words when he was pulling out a good many antiquated expressions unknown in ordinary, everyday language: “Curius and Fabricius and Coruncanius, men of yore, and even farther back, the Horatius triplets, spoke to each other in simple and transparent language. They did not use the words of the Auruncians or the Sicanians or the Pelasgians, who are said to be the first to have lived in Italy; they used the words of their own time! (2) You on the other hand – it’s as if you’re talking with Evander’s mother right now – you’re using language that people stopped using many, many years ago, because you don’t want anyone to know and understand what you’re saying. Silly – if you really want to reach your goal, why don’t you just be quiet? (3) You say you like antiquity because it’s noble, good, sober, and moderate. (4) So, live in bygone ways, but speak with current words. And always keep in your mind and your heart what C. Caesar, a man of superior wit and good sense, wrote in his first book On Analogy: ‘Avoid like a reef the unheard-of and unusual word’.”

1.10 distills the point of 1.9 with an almost epigrammatic focus: Gellius carries over the contrast between improvement of life and refinement of words, using Favorinus (who uses Caesar) to make the point elegantly. Favorinus, the self-controlled wise man, makes his point to a young man who has an unseemly lust for old words.\(^{214}\) This is the first contrast to which Gellius draws attention. Notice the contrasts in the chapter’s inaugural words: Favorinus philosophus

\textit{adulescenti veterum verborum cupidissimo. Favorinus and the adulescens} face one another as

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \footnotesize 214 Some will find irony in Gellius’s presentation of an archaism-fond young intellectual being berated by Favorinus, Gellius’s greatest hero (see Hornsby 1936, 122: “In this very chapter he himself has just used the word ‘casce!’”), and indeed we have just seen Gellius almost satirizing himself in 1.9 and 17.20 for loving words more than wisdom. Gellius’s point, however, is that one ought to balance one’s love of words with the wisdom that they
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opposites, in their capacity as *philosophus* and *cupidissimus*; at the same time, the *adulescens* has an unnatural attachment to *vetera verba.* Favorinus corrects the young man’s misunderstanding first by scolding him and arguing that speaking like the ancients means not using the very same words that they used but rather using the words contemporary to one’s own generation, for this is acting as the ancients did, which is better than imitating their actual words. He finishes his argument pointedly with a brief and witty *sententia:* *Vive ergo moribus praeteritis, loquere verbis praesentibus.* The balanced, heavily-marked contrasts of this sentence highlight distinctions between living and speaking, past and present, recalling Taurus’s admonition in the previous chapter to improve one’s life more than one’s speech, and at the same time pointing out ways in which one ought to engage with the past.

Finally, in Gellian fashion, Favorinus adds an interesting, somewhat unexpected, yet not irrelevant coda to his presentation: he quotes Caesar’s *De Analogia* (*tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum*.), giving him the last word.

The Analogy-Anomaly debate had been raging for quite some time before Gellius wrote, having started centuries earlier among the scholars of the Hellenistic period, and was important enough in Rome to merit the attention at least of Julius Caesar (his treatise in favor of Analogy) and Varro (books 8-10 of his *De Lingua Latina*, outlining the arguments of both sides), who was one of the sources used most by Gellius. By mentioning Analogy here, demanding consistency of language use, and using one of its major texts to cap his argument, Favorinus seems to be taking the side of Analogy. Gellius

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215 Cf. the juxtaposed words in section 2, *proinde quasi cum matre Evandri nunc loquare.*

216 He learned this fashion from Favorinus, as we discovered in Book 14 above (see especially 14.2, the chapter containing Favorinus’s *quaestionum capita*).

217 For Gunderson (2009, 95), Caesar is brought in to end the argument abruptly: “We are not treated to a discourse on the actual rules and *rationes* of linguistic propriety. Instead, the chapter, itself a memorable little nugget of prose, encapsulates an encapsulation of an aesthetic issue without actually explaining it. The politics of propriety are
seems to be doing the same by quoting Favorinus favorably (other chapters, however, will see him treading a fine line between Analogy and Anomaly). Analogy represents a kind of order, the Latin word for which is *proportio*, recalling 1.1’s geometrical content (and perhaps, by extension, 1.1’s focus on Pythagoras, who was prominent also in 1.9 as a *philosophus*). So now we see that Gellius is interested in both grammatical and geometrical order, and the Pythagorean *ordo* of induction and training in 1.9 – which is itself analogous to the way in which Gellius purports to “train” his readers, together with the injunction to live *moribus praeteritis* – is a sign of Gellius’s interest in social or moral order as well.

**C. Silence and Order (1.9, 10, 11, 15, 2, 23).**

We now detect another common thread linking 1.9 and 1.10 with 1.26: in all of these chapters, Gellius is in a live learning environment, witnessing Favorinus’s correction of a precocious youngster’s archaisms (10) or sitting in Taurus’s class (9) or asking a question after Taurus’s class (26). As a student and young man, Gellius is in a position to consider the examples of other intellectuals, as possible role models. Certainly, he has had to consider bad behavior (such as that of Plutarch’s philosophical slave and Favorinus’s lover of archaisms), but there is good behavior as well, in that the students of Pythagoras live an orderly life as philosophers and Taurus encourages his own students (including, especially, Gellius) to do so. Yet another connection, an element in the evaluation of good student behavior, becomes apparent as one re-reads Book 1 of the *NA*, and, formed initially between chapters 9 and 10, it

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218 E.g., 1.16, where Gellius negotiates between two different *rationes* on the question of whether *mille* is indeclinable or not – if one chooses to follow “the rules”, one must also be aware that different sets of rules are available. See 2.25 for a more explicitly stated theoretical position.

219 See p. 8, n.16.
becomes more important as it resurfaces later in the book. It is the motif of “silence” (indicated by tac- words and the word silentium), which appears in both chapters. In 1.9, as we have noted, silence is an important part of the intellectual maturation of young philosophers: they begin in silence and remain silent for some years as they listen and take notes; only when they have mastered silence and listening do they proceed to the next stage, the asking of questions and expression of opinions (1.9.3-5). In 1.10, silence plays a different role: when Favorinus is berating the archaist, his main complaint is that the young man is speaking in such a way that his listeners cannot understand the substance of his utterances; the same goal, he says, may be accomplished by being silent (Nonne, homo inepte, ut quod vis abunde consequaris, taces?). Silence, therefore, in these two chapters, reflects either well or poorly on its user, being treated in 1.9 as an implement for learning and in 1.10 as a hindrance to intelligibility.

This contrast is only marked lightly by Gellius himself, but a look at four other chapters in Book 1 shows that Gellius is concerned more heavily with the ways in which silence is sometimes useful and sometimes not. The chapter immediately following this pair, 1.11, invokes silence briefly, both recalling the opposite silences of the last two chapters and incorporating the theme into the topic of chapter 11. The chapter discusses music as a moderating force in military formations and oratory, neither exciting nor depressing them but controlling them. Gellius explains with examples, first a long one from Thucydides on the Lacedaemonians’ use of the aulos in battle, where an aulettes plays calming, regular notes to keep the soldiers in formation, lest they become disorganized and thus vulnerable to enemy maneuvers. Shorter examples follow, featuring the Cretan and Lydian armies, then Homer’s Achaeans and the Romans. The Achaeans are remarkable for their silent advance (sed enim Achaeos Homerus pugnam indipisci

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220 Cf. Gellius’s progression from 14.1 to 14.2 – in the former, he does his best to remember an auditio of Favorinus, at which the young Gellius was presumably silent; in the latter, he asks a question of Favorinus.
The Romans’ simple battle-cry evinces some discomfort from Gellius, for in his example, these Romans seem to use no music, but rather (perhaps barbarically) roar at their enemies:

(9) Quid ille vult ardentissimus clamor militum Romanorum, quem in congressibus proeliorum fieri solitum scriptores annalium memoravere? contrane institutum fiebat antiquae disciplinae tam probabile? an tum et gradu clementi et silentio est opus, cum ad hostem itur in conspectu longinquo procul distantem, cum vero prope ad manus ventum est, tum iam e propinquo hostis et impetu propulsandus et clamore terrendus est?

(9) What means the Roman soldiers’ blazing cry that, as the annalists recall, was often raised when the ranks closed in battle? Did they not do this contrary to the highly commendable precepts of ancient teaching? Or is it rather that they required silence and a quiet advance as long as they were advancing on an enemy far in the distance, at the edge of sight, but as soon as they closed to melee range they had to get in close and then push back the enemy with a charge while terrifying him with the cry?

Gellius is uncharacteristically full of interrogative statements here as he tries to justify the Romans’ simple tactic, emphasizing the silence that precedes the cry, which is made all the more effective by the silence. In the sentences that follow, Gellius links the music strategy to Gracchus’s public speaking, wherein Gracchus employed a piper to play notes that would regulate the tone of his voice (the question there is over how much music was used in regulating Gracchus’s speech). There is no mention of silence for the rest of the chapter, and Gellius’s treatment of it here is relatively minor. It does at least recall the different uses of silence in the previous two chapters, so that now silence begins to emerge, slowly and in a variety of scenarios, as a thing of relative value – it is good for a novice philosopher, bad for a public speaker (at least in the sense that silence, by itself, is a lack of direct communication), and now a tactic of psychological warfare. In the next two chapters under consideration (1.15 and 1.23) we see Gellius tie the idea of silence more intricately into the web of themes in Book 1.

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221 Holford-Strevens 2003, 322 n.84: “[T]he mighty Roman war-cry seems to fall foul of Greek contempt for barbarian noise; it is resolved by contrasting a silent approach and a roaring charge.”
In 1.15, as in 1.11, the idea of silence manifests itself as the repetition of *tac*- words but does not dominate the discourse of the chapter. Here silence is one idea among many that support the chapter’s arch-idea of judiciousness in speaking. On the surface, chapter 15 is a collection of quotes satirically attacking those who speak too much, with Gellius adding explanatory commentary. Silence makes a few appearances among this amalgamation of wit, coming up first in §§9 and 10, where Gellius quotes Cato attacking the vice (*vitium*, §8) of talking a lot but saying nothing:

(9) Namque in oratione, quae inscripta est *si se Caelius tribunus plebis appellasset*: “numquam” inquit “tacet, quem morbus tenet loquendi tamquam veternosum bibendi atque dormiendi. Quod si non conveniatis, cum convocari iubet, ita cupidus orationis conductat, qui auscultet. Itaque auditis, non auscultatis, tamquam pharmacopolam. Nam eius verba audiuntur; verum se nemo committit, si aeger est.” (10) Idem Cato in eadem oratione eidem M. Caelio tribuno plebi vititatem obprobrans non loquendi tantum, verum etiam tacendi: “frusto” inquit “panis conduci potest, vel uti taceat vel uti loquatur.”

(9) For in his speech entitled *Si se Caelius tribunus plebis appellasset* he says: “He who is in the grip of the talking sickness is never silent, just like a man chronically lethargic from drinking and sleeping. Now, even if you did not gather at the summons of such a man, he would hire someone to listen, so eager is he to speak. So, you hear, but you don’t listen, as though he were a quack doctor – people hear his words, but no one puts himself in his care when sick.” (10) The same Cato reproached in the same speech the same M. Caelius, tribune of the plebs, for the low quality not just of his speaking, but of his silence as well, saying, “for a crumb of bread a man can be paid to be silent or to speak.”

Silence is not a good thing, *per se*, this time; at best, it is what one sometimes wishes were present when a man is taken by the “talking sickness”. Sometimes silence is necessary, to counterbalance all the talking, because otherwise one is heard but not listened to. But there is both a *vilitas loquendi* and a *vilitas tacendi*: sometimes talk is cheap (and so is silence). A quote of Epicharmus, along with its Latin equivalent, follows in §15, conveying a similar idea.223 Silence, then, is the opposite of talking, but neither is desirable in excess or in low quality. Of course, the desire to avoid excess and to establish boundaries lies at the heart of Book 1, but

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222 It is disputed whether the *se* in this title refers to Caelius or to Cato. See discussion and bibliography in Cugusi 1982, 259-60. Hornsby (1936, 157) discusses other problems related to the title.
there are other ways in which 1.15 integrates itself into the world of its home book. First, its opening sentences cite Homer for words of approbation on the kind of man who speaks from his heart (pectus) rather than (only) his mouth (os) and keeps his statements in check with the fence of his teeth. Gellius distinguishes here between heart and mouth as origin of utterances, recalling Taurus’s passionate contrast in 1.9.11 between the man who wants to read Plato to improve his life and the one who wants to read him to improve his tongue or language (lingua). A stronger verbal echo lies in the trio of alpha privatives in §11, where Gellius writes that Homer unum ex omnibus Thersitam ἀμετροεπὴ et ἀκριτόμυθον appellat verbaque illius multa et ἄκοσμα strepentium sine modo graculorum similia esse dicit. These Greek adjectives suggest that Thersites and his words lack measure, judgment, and order, like “jackdaws shrieking beyond measure”. These Greek opprobations put Thersites in the same boat as Torquatus (1.5) and Taurus’s unwashed (1.9), all of whom are men of deficient character who also, to varying degrees, prefer words over substance, thus earning their alpha-privatives. The alpha-privatives return again at the end of 1.15, with some abandon, in Gellius’s quote of Aristophanes’s Frogs (837-839), suggesting, as at the end of the Preface (Frogs 354-356, 369-371), a connection between Gellius and that facetissimus poeta. The Hesiod quote (Works and Days 719-720), too, in §14, establishes more connections with the Preface, with θησαυρός and Gellius’s signal words recondendam and thesaurum. Here a tongue that speaks κατὰ μέτρον is a treasure to be

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223 (15) Epicharmium quoque illud non inscite se habet: οὗ λέγειν τυγ’ ἐσσί δεινός, ἀλλὰ σιγὰν ἀδώνατος. (16) ex quo hoc profecto sumptum est: “qui cum loqui non posset, tacere non potuit.”
224 Marache (1967, 53 n.1) also sees a connection here between the heart and knowledge of language: “Le coeur, dans tout le chapitre, comme souvent chez les Latins est l’organe de l’intelligence et non pas du sentiment. Cf. Ennius disant qu’il avait trois coeurs parce qu’il savait trois langues (17, 17, 1).”
225 “He singled out Thersites as ἀμετροεπὴ [of unmeasured words] and ἀκριτόμυθον [of poorly-judged speech] and said that his many and ἄκοσμα [disordered] words resembled jackdaws shrieking beyond measure.”
226 Cf. Keulen 2009, 108: “Gellius’ subsequent quotation of the verbal attack on chatterers made by the ‘facetissimus poeta’ Aristophanes may point to the Aristophanic nature of his own chapter.”
227 γλώσσης τοῦ θησαυρός ἐν ἀνθρώπωσιν ἄριστος. / φειδωλῆς πλείστη δὲ χάρις κατὰ μέτρον ιούσης. “Yea, a mortal’s tongue is his noblest treasure; it wins its fullest favor sparing and proceeding in due measure.”
stored. These links with the Preface lend the well-ordered tongue the power of programmatic authority, which feeds into the importance of the more general theme of order. The Hesiodic phrase κατὰ μέτρον, combined with Gellius’s words modesta and modulata (describing the lingua of Hesiod’s verses), rings powerfully with the many other mod- and med- words of Book 1, especially the moderatiores modulatioresque of 1.11.1 (describing the soldiers’ animi as they are regulated by music), the opening sentence of 1.1 (modulanda, Pythagoras’s measuring of the height of Hercules), and the final words of 1.26, which include mediocritatem and μετριότητα.228

The wide scope of chapter 15’s critical jabs is balanced by the more focused situations in chapters 2 and 23, each touching on silence in a dramatized social-intellectual setting. The episode in 1.2, almost the locus classicus of the Gellian social-intellectual scene,229 features Herodes Atticus picking apart a young boaster’s pompous claims. His big talk does not impress Herodes’s entourage:

(3) Erat ibidem nobiscum simul adulescens philosophiae sectator, disciplinae, ut ipse dicebat, stoicae, sed loquacious inpendio et promptior. (4) Is plerumque in convivio sermonibus, qui post epulas haber solent, multa atque inmodica de philosophiae doctrinis intempestive atque insubide disserebat praesque se uno ceteros omnes linguae Atticæ principes gentemque omnem togatam, quodcumque nomen Latinum rudes esse et agrestes praedicabant ...

(3) There was among us at that time a young man, a student of philosophy (the Stoic sect, according to him) but rather too talkative and brash. (4) Oftentimes at symposium, in the post-dinner conversations, he would go on at length, indeed interminably, about philosophical teachings, with no sense of timing or taste; he also declared that, with the exception only of

229 The dismissal in Marache 1967 (16 n.2: “Ce chapitre est en réalité l’illustration d’un chapitre d’Epictète (2,19) .”) has deterred no one in commenting on this chapter. Discussion usually revolves around the social significance of the scene; Anderson (1993, 11-12) sums it up with the greatest elegance and brevity: “I cite it because it crosses so many cultural boundaries and barriers: between Greek and Roman (and Greek and Latin), between rhetoric and philosophy, between ethics and politics, between narrative and satire.” It is treated as typical of the poser-exposure scene by Holford-Strevens (2003, 140-141) and Johnson (2010, 112-113 – see Johnson’s list of similar scenes in his n.28); the interpretation of Keulen (2009, 272-287) is political and heavily satirical, where not only the Stoic pretender but even Herodes himself is exposed (by Gellius)! Beall (2004, 210) interprets the scene as somewhat more friendly, seeing in it a delicate balance “between ‘symptotic’ philosophy and moral diatribe.” Finally, for Gunderson (2009, 229-231), the scene’s attractions are less satirical and more bookish, illustrating the multi-layered presence of books in the life of an intellectual.
himself, all the other authorities in the Attic language and the whole togate race, all that can be called Latin, were crude and rustic.

He goes yet further, brimming with *inanés glorias* (6), showing off his vast knowledge of dialectical trivia. But, for our present purposes, it is sufficient to note a handful of things about his character as described by Gellius. Although he is, like Gellius, a *sectator philosophiae*, he is *loquacior*, too talkative (something one could hardly say about the Gellius we see in the *NA*). He is representative of the type of person targeted in chapter 15, the one who talks without substance. Specifically, his words are *multa atque inmodica* (like Thersites’s words in 1.15) – they are many, and they observe no bounds. Note that, once more, there is a *mod* - word in connection with the idea of proper limits. Meanwhile, the neighboring adverbs, *intempestive atque insubide* (“with no sense of timing or taste”), connect the excessiveness of his words with the graceless quality of his behavior.

As often happens in the *NA* (we have already seen it happen in 1.10), the young boaster gets shown up. In this instance, Herodes Atticus, aware that his entourage has seen quite enough ostentation (*cum ... omnes finem cuperent verbisque eius defetigati pertaeduisissent*), orders up Arrian’s digests of Epictetus, in which the wise old sage berates youngsters who deceive themselves in thinking that they understand Stoic philosophy:

(7) Lecta igitur sunt ex libro, qui prolatus est, ea, quae addidi; quibus verbis Epictetus severe simul et festiviter seiuixit atque divisit a vero atque sincero Stoico, qui esset procul dubio ἀκόλυτος, ἀνανάγκαστος, ἀπαραπόδιστος, ἐλεύθερος, εὐπορῶν, εὐδαιμονῶν, volgus alius nebulonum hominum, qui se Stoicos nuncuparent atraque verborum et argutiarum fuligine ob oculos audientium iacta sanctissimae disciplinae nomen ementirentur.

(7) A reading was made, then, from the book that had been brought forth; I have added it below. There, Epictetus, in both stern and humorous fashion, distinguished between the true, genuine Stoic, who is incontrovertibly ἀκόλυτος, ἀνανάγκαστος, ἀπαραπόδιστος, ἐλεύθερος, εὐπορῶν, εὐδαιμονῶν [unhindered, unconstrained, unentangled, free, able, blessed], from that other mob of airheads, who call themselves Stoics but soot the eyes of their audience with verbal tricks, thus misrepresenting that venerable sect. [The Epictetus reading follows]
This Epictetus reminds us instantly of Gellius’s Taurus in 1.9, where Taurus distinguishes those who really want to learn philosophy from those who care more for rhetoric. There he even uses a trio of alpha-privative adjectives, just as Epictetus does here. The target in both cases is young men following the philosophers as students. Also, as in 1.9.11 (Haec Taurus dicere solitus novicios philosophorum sectatores cum veteribus Pythagoricis pensitans), Gellius ends the scene by stating more or less explicitly that these attacks apply just as well to the particular offenders in the present situation as to the generalized group that is named in the attacks themselves:

(13) His ille auditis insolentissimus adulescens obticuit, tamquam si ea omnia non ab Epicteto in quosdam alios, sed ab Herode in eum ipsum dicta essent.

(13) Upon hearing this, that arrogant young man fell silent, as if it had not been Epictetus saying all that to some other people but Herodes saying it to him in particular.

The young man here falls silent (obticuit) when faced with the sage’s hard wisdom. Such a response fits well in the context of Book 1. First, the young semidoctus has violated the code of moderate conduct that is the standout feature of this book, and the group registers its disgust (perauduissent, 1.2.6). Then the situation is remedied when a truly learned man intervenes with a witty phrase from some authority (chapters 2 and 10, and 15 if one counts Gellius as the learned man acting at a distance) or, apparently, of one’s own invention (chapter 9). Against the background of this variously manifesting scenario runs the thread of silence. In chapter 2, the young boaster is well and truly silenced, and he would undoubtedly have served himself better (as Favorinus suggests to another young boaster in chapter 10) by keeping silence in the first place. But keeping due silence in this kind of social-intellectual hierarchy requires that one be aware of one’s own mental limitations, a lesson enforced from the beginning in chapter 9, where Pythagoras’s students are forced to keep silence until they become intelligent enough to start

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230 Cf. Pref. 11, where, after reading the vast Greek miscellanies, a mind wilts from age and disgust – animus senio ac taedio languebit.
asking questions and eventually to speak from a position of authority themselves. Ultimately, the key to maintaining a good reputation in such a world is to be found in the successful regulation of one’s own speech, as Gellius illuminates via quotes in chapter 15, keeping in mind that silence can also be a powerful tool when used at the right time, as the Roman soldiers do in chapter 11.

The properly balanced use of silence is dramatized, finally, in chapter 23, where Gellius tells the charming story (historia ... cognitu iucunda, 1.23 lemma) of Papirius Praetextatus:

(1) Historia de Papirio Praetextato dicta scriptaque est a M. Catone in oratione, qua usus est ad milites contra Galbam, cum multa quidem venustate atque luce atque munditia verborum. (2) Ea Catonis verba huic prorsus commentario indidissem, si libri copia fuisset id temporis, cum haec dictavi. (3) Quod si non virtutes dignitasesque verborum, sed rem ipsam scire quae est, res ferme ad hunc modum est: (4) Mos antea senatoribus Romae fuit in curiam cum praetextatis filii introire. (5) Tum, cum in senatu res maior quaepiam consultata eaque in diem posterum prolata est, placuit, ut eam rem, super qua tractavissest, ne quis enuntiaret, priusquam decreta esset, mater Papirii pueri, qui cum parente suo in curia fuerat, percontata est filium, quidnam in senatu patres egissent. (6) Puer respondit tacendum esse neque id dici licere. (7) Mulier fit audiendi cupidior; secretum rei et silentium pueri animum eius ad inquirendum everberat: quaerit igitur compressius violentiusque. (8) Tum puer matre urgente lepidi atque festivi mendacii consilium capit. Actum in senatu dixit, utrum videretur utilius exque republica esse, unusne ut duas uxores haberet, an ut una apud duos nupta esset. (9) Hoc illa ubi audivit, animus compavescit, domo trepidans egreditur ad ceteras matronas. (10) Pervenit ad senatum postridie matrum familias caterva; lacrimantes atque obscurantes orant, una potius ut duobus nupta fieret, quam ut uni duae. (11) Senatores ingentes in curiam, quae illa multum intemperies et quid sibi postulatio istic vellet, mirabantur. (12) Puer Papirius in medium curiae progressus, quid mater audire institisset, quid ipse matri dixisset, rem, sicut fuerat, demurrant. (13) Senatus fidem atque ingenium pueri exosulcatur, consultum facit, uti posthaec pueri cum patribus in curiam ne introeant, praeter ille unus Papirius, atque puer postea cognomentum honoris gratia inditum “Praetextatus” ob tacendi loquendi in aetate praetextae prudentiam.

(1) The story of Papirius Praetextatus was told (and written down) by M. Cato in his speech To the Troops, Against Galba, with a great deal of charm and clarity and elegant style. (2) I would have included Cato’s own words in this very note, had the book been available to me at the time when I composed this. (3) But if you wish to know more about the actual content than the virtues and qualities of the words, the content is approximately as follows: (4) It was the custom in the past at Rome for the senators to enter the senate-house in the company of their praetextate sons. (5) One day, when a major issue had been deliberated on in the senate and put off to the next day and they had decided that no one should openly discuss the issue that they had considered, the mother of the boy Papirius, who had been with his father in the senate-house, asked her son what it was that the fathers had been working on in the senate. (6) The boy replied that the matter was hush-hush and that he was not allowed to talk about it. (7) The woman desired even more to hear it; the secret nature of the issue and the boy’s silence spurred her mind to enquiry: her questions then came in a mad flurry. (8) It was then that the boy, under his mother’s pressure, devised a

231 Cf. Marache 1953, 86 (cited in Keulen 2009, 92) on the typicality of Gellius’s ending the debate with a final, authoritative quote. See Keulen especially on Gellius’s exercise of auctoritas in such situations.
neat and witty deception. He said that the senate had been considering whether it seemed more useful and beneficial to the state that one man should have two wives or one woman be married to two men. (9) When she heard this, she felt abject terror and left home trembling, and went to the other ladies. (10) The next day a throng of matrons descended on the senate; weeping and beseeching, they begged that one woman be married to two men rather than two women to one man. (11) Entering the senate-house, the senators wondered what madness had gotten into the women and what was the meaning of these supplications. (12) The boy Papirius stepped into the middle of the senate-house and told the whole story: what his mother had insisted on hearing and what he had said to his mother. (13) The senate adored the boy’s loyalty and ingenuity, and they decreed that thenceforth boys should not enter the senate-house in the company of their fathers, with the sole exception of Papirius; and afterwards they granted the boy the honorary title Praetextatus, on account of his good sense in knowing when to keep quiet and when to talk, even in his praetextate years.

As is often the case with Gellius’s chapters, he does more here than the Preface-lemma promised (Quis fuerit Papirius Praetextatus; quae istius causa cognomenti sit; historiae ista omnis super eodem Papirio cognitu iucunda). In his first three sentences, the ones acting as preface to the Praetextatus-story, Gellius makes some suggestions about order, as it is manifested in speaking and writing. While praising the venustas, lux, and munditia of Cato’s verba, he affects not to have the luxury of repeating the speech verbatim, resorting to the bare res (there is, he implies, no style here, only substance; story, not narrative). These protestations align 1.23 with the spirit of the Preface, where he disavowed for himself any festivitates (4), cura (10), or elegantia (10). In short, the kind of order that Gellius upholds here is self-restraint, an ideal present throughout Book 1 (especially, for our purposes, in the chapters involving young philosophy students (1.2 and 1.9), in 1.26 on Plutarch and the philosophical slave, and in 1.11, where Gracchus has the means to control the tone and tempo of his speech). The presence of self-restraint on the part of Gellius himself, as author, is also apparent in how he deals with his lack of libri copia (2). Here, copia must mean “availability” – since Cato’s book was not at hand

232 Indeed, he imputes much of the virtue (and faults) of his material to the material itself or to the source from which he got it – Pref. 11, quod sit aut voluptatii legere aut cultui legisse aut usu meminisse, and Pref. 18, Quae vero putavere reprehendenda, his, si audebunt, successor, unde ea nos acceperimus; sed enim, quae aliter apud alium scripta legerint, ne ian statim temere obstrepant, sed et rationes rerum et auctoritates hominum pensent, quos illi quosque nos seculi sumus.
for Gellius, he works either from memory or from notes to summarize Cato’s story. That he can do this, even with relish, implies a (almost righteous) readiness to make do with externally imposed limitations. But, in the context of the other prefatorial reverberations of these opening sentences, one could easily be forgiven for thinking that copia means “abundance” – the relevant passage in the Preface is in §11, where the Greek miscellanists have no patience for filtering their material (sine cura discrimininis solam copiam sectati).

The rest of the chapter (§§4-13) is the story itself (rem ipsam). The mother’s voracious inquisitiveness is met first by Papirius’s absolute silence (tacendum esse; silentium pueri), then by a witty (lepidi atque festivi) lie. The outrageous content of the lie causes an uproar amongst the noble ladies233, but Papirius successfully negotiates both the women’s intemperies234 and the senators’ grave bemusement by explaining the story of what happened (rem ... denarrabat). He receives his honorary title on account of his thoughtful balancing of silence and talk (ob tacendi loquendique ... prudentiam). Silence seems to be the hinge of this story, being both a catalyst to the confusion and an essential factor in demonstrating the boy’s wisdom. The boy could keep the senate’s secret, but his ability to forego complete silence in favor of strategic misdirection is what ultimately wins the senate’s adulation. Papirius, then, becomes a hero of silence, achieving the golden mean idealized in chapter 15 and mastering the perfect use of silence as he one-ups the Pythagorean novices of chapter 9. To put it in more general terms, he uses ordering tendencies to resist more chaotic tendencies (which manifests itself as the woman who demands,

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233 Vessey (1994, 1880-1881) analyzes well the comically vivid language of the women’s reactions.

234 Cf. Xanthispe’s intemperies only a few chapters before this one, in 1.17. See also Henry (1994, 1922) for some of the programmatic value of 1.23, with an emphasis on the narrative treatment of women: “[T]his story gathers together many of the key Gellian preoccupations, with its stress on obedience, silence, the importance of the state, and the temperamental and verbal excesses of women. Papirius’ mother, like Xanthippe, is intemperate. Yet, she has fulfilled her marital duty by producing this exemplary son, one who will not violate the patres’ rule of silence concerning senatorial conversations. He is praised for lying to his mother in order to maintain the fathers’ ownership of discourse.”
peremptorily, to know what was not to be disclosed, respecting no limits)\textsuperscript{235}. If we proceed now to a metaliterary level, we may compare Gellius himself to Papirius: Gellius always restrains his disclosures of knowledge, and in this particular case, he communicates only the res, as Papirius did for the senators. Both of them get quickly to the point. Gellius, too, is tempted to reveal too much, his anxiety about copia being evident.\textsuperscript{236} Thus, in several chapters and on multiple levels, Gellius is modeling balanced behavior, with silence always present as an important consideration.\textsuperscript{237}

**D. Ordered expansion (1.19 and 1.20).**

So far, we have examined various kinds of measured behavior in Book 1 of the *Attic Nights*. Much of the theme of “measure” in the book has moral implications, as we saw especially in the discussion of silence (above, IV.C; see also n.21), where silence was a manifestation of self-control, or at least of submitting to the authority of a hierarchy (1.9). We have also seen “measure” in the idea of proportion, which is both linguistic (1.10, with its reference to Caesar’s *De Analogia*) and mathematical. It is the latter that now interests us. 1.1 began the body of the *NA* with a brief discussion of some proportions (man’s foot : Hercules’s foot :: stadium : Olympic stadium). Besides playfully breaking the Preface’s promise that geometrical discussion would be kept to a minimum, the chapter also set up a theme of proportionality. Now, having seen aspects related to the idea of proportionality in the theme of

\textsuperscript{235} Cf. again 1.17, where Xanthippe exists as a foil for Socrates – her intemperies serves, he says, to thicken his skin for the prickly encounters of public business (*cum illam domi talem perpetior, insuesco et exerceor, ut ceterorum quoque foris petulantiam et injuriam facilius feram*).

\textsuperscript{236} Never mind that, in an argument (6.3) with Cicero’s Tiro, Gellius preserves massive chunks of Cato’s speech pro Rodiensibus – but that is a different Book, and the length of 6.3 is exceptional.

\textsuperscript{237} One wonders, too, whether Gellius is setting a kind of example for his own children, who are the immediate beneficiaries of the *NA* (*Pref.* 1). Certainly, Gellius is not one of the patres conscripti, but as a father composing his text and giving it to his children and hoping that they will use it for the cultivation of their minds, he would not be
“measure”, we return in chapters 19 and 20 to a strictly mathematical manifestation of the idea. Here, Gellius uses squares and cubes (both as numerical operations and as geometrical figures) to suggest a mathematical model that allows exponential growth but also establishes a rule by which that expansion takes place. There are also echoes of the non-mathematical chapters, so that a reader may rightly think about mathematics in a metaphorical way: if proportio can describe both geometrical and linguistic relationships, perhaps it has something to say about intellectual behavior as well.

1.19 is a short chapter, a memoria, as Gellius calls it, of the ancient Sibylline books (1.19.1). Like 1.23, it is a story told in simple prose, exemplary of Gellius’s many antiquarian chapters, but for our present discussion, its idea of proportions is of the most interest. As the story begins, a strange old woman comes to the king Tarquinius Superbus, offering nine books for sale, which she claims are prophetic. Tarquin finds her price to be exorbitant, so he dismisses her as a fool. She does not improve the king’s impression of her when she tosses three of those books into a nearby burning brazier and asks exactly the same price for the remaining six. When Tarquin laughs at her, she tosses another three into the fire and demands the same price for the three that are left. Tarquin suddenly realizes that the old woman, whose constantia and confidentia impress him, may be offering a treasure that he would be foolish to reject. And so, he pays the original asking price and gets three for the price of nine. The woman leaves, never to be seen again, and the three books, now called “Sibylline”, are kept for times when the quindecimviri need to consult the gods.

Once again, the lemma is insufficient for the full appreciation of this chapter: Historia super libris Sibyllinis ac de Tarquinio Superbo rege. The charm of the story lies in its inverse
disappointed if his sons turned out to be modern-day Papirii. See Hornsby (1936, 192) on the sources for the origin of the tradition that the senate-fathers took their sons with them to work.
proportion:\textsuperscript{238} the value of each book increases as the quantity of the books decreases. The real significance of this proportion is that the old woman radically alters the king’s valuation of the books – she turns him from a skeptic into a collector. As we have seen, 1.1 established the theme of proportionality by giving an example and explaining what a mathematical proportion is. Here, in chapter 19, an inverse proportion breaks down the number 9, by threes, into its square root, 3. It is probably no coincidence that this chapter, invoking the mathematical proportionality of chapter 1, also recalls chapter 1’s Pythagoras with its 3 sets of 3s, the number 3 being integral to Pythagorean cosmology.\textsuperscript{239} The number 9, being the square of 3, also recalls Pythagoras, and indeed it is in chapter 9 that Pythagoras’s pedagogical \textit{ordo atque ratio} are explained. We saw there the moral dimension of Pythagoras’s system for young followers of philosophy; we saw also that Gellius connected that system to Taurus’s system, implicating himself in an educational progression from silence and ignorance to wisdom and authoritative writing. Although Gellius does not explicitly write himself into this chapter, it is possible to see some programmatic relevance to the \textit{NA} itself in a story about the value of books and the ignorance of scoffers. At first, Tarquin finds the asking price for the nine books to be \textit{inmensum} ("not of due measure"); “out of all proportion”). He is at that point ignorant of the true value of the books. But, as the old woman performs the inverse-proportion operation, the once undervalued books now become exponentially more valuable. The once skeptical Tarquin finally realizes (in either sense of the word) the value of the Sibylline books. Likewise, a reader may scoff at the value of the \textit{Attic}

\textsuperscript{238} Anderson (2004, 107-108) recognizes the charm of the “folktale rule of three”, but his evaluation of the chapter as a whole is typical of Gellian scholarship: “The reason for Gellius’ telling is in the last sentence: it explains an established custom of antiquarian religious lore, how the quindecimuirí came to consult the Sibylline Books in the first place. In Gellius we cannot always say ‘the tale’s the thing’ or ‘it’s how you tell it’; often he may be just as interested in whatever nugget he can attach to it.”

\textsuperscript{239} Kahn 2001, 56-57: The two series 2-4-8 and 3-9-27 represent the perfect structure of the κόσμος. Cf. \textit{NA} 3.17, where the story (\textit{memoria}) is that Plato spent 10,000 \textit{denarii} on Philolaus’s three books on Pythagoras, and that Aristotle bought the books of Speusippus, who wrote on Pythagorean numbers, for three Attic talents.
Nights, as the self-deprecating Gellius invites us to do in the Preface, but those willing to take a closer look will understand its modest charms and great usefulness.

It is true that the NA, if reduced to only three books, or even just one, would still be valuable on account of the fact that each book contains a little bit of everything, a first-fruit (libamenta, Pref. 13) for the reader to taste before exploring a subject more deeply from other sources. Often, in the world of the NA, less is more.240 Sometimes, however, more is more, as long as it is governed by some rule. For this, we turn to the next chapter, 1.20, an introduction to elementary geometry:


(1) There are two kinds of shapes, which geometricians call σχήματα: “planes” and “solids”. (2) They call these ἐπίπεδον καὶ στερεόν. A “plane” has lines in only two dimensions, which give it width and length – for example, triangles and squares, which are made on a flat surface, without height. (3) It is a “solid” when the quantities of the lines produce not only two-dimensional length and width but also bring up height – for example, triangular cones, which they call “pyramids”, or shapes that have squares on all sides, which the Greeks call κύβοι and we call cubes [quadrantalia]. (4) For a κύβος is a shape with squares [quadrata] on every side, “such as”, says M. Varro, “dice, which are used when playing on a game board; this is why they too are called κύβοι.” (5) In the same way there is also a κύβος in arithmetic when each factor of a number is equally resolved into that number, just as happens when three times three is calculated and then that number is tripled. (6) Pythagoras said that this number’s cube is equivalent to the lunar circuit, because the moon traverses its orbit in twenty-seven days and the number three, which is τριάς in Greek, produces the same result when cubed. (7) Also, what we call a “line” the Greeks call a γραμμή. (8) Marcus

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240 See especially Pref. 11-12 on the value of brevity in a miscellany.
Varro defines it this way: “A line”, he says, “is length without width and height.” (9) Eukleides, however, says it with more brevity, leaving out the height: he says, “γραμμή is μήκος ἀπλατές” – this last word cannot be expressed with a single Latin word, unless you ventured to say “widthless”.

The number three returns here, where we encounter two-dimensional objects and square numbers first (we may add to Gellius’s present examples that three squared equals nine, as we saw just now in chapter 19). But we move quickly into the realm of three-dimensional objects and cube numbers – unsurprisingly, Gellius’s example of a cube number is three to the third power. Then, to bring the connections between numbers, proportions, and Pythagoras full-circle, Gellius tells us that Pythagoras observed that the moon completes its orbit in twenty-seven days: three cubed.241 Thinking back to the Preface, we recall Gellius’s exhortations that we as readers make more of the Attic Nights than what is there, that we use it as a starting-point, as ready-made commentarii, for our own intellectual work. We have seen this idealized activity play out in Book 14, and more recently (1.9) we have noted the connections made by Gellius between Pythagoras’s students and himself (and, by extension, his readers). In chapter 20, Gellius does not tell us that three squared equals nine, but the fresh memory of chapter 19 will almost inevitably bring this mathematical fact to mind when he tells us that three cubed equals twenty-seven. In setting these two chapters together, 19 first and then 20, our author has nudged us to step from one dimension to the next.

If we think more about the numbers themselves, we observe a kind of mathematical chiasmus between chapters 19 and 20: first we go in descending order, from 9 to 6 to 3 (subtraction, achieving the same result as a square-root operation); then we go in ascending order, from 3 to 27 (with 3 to 9 to 27 implied by the discussion of both square and cube numbers). In the first case, instances of subtraction lead to an instance of a square root; in the

241 To Holford-Strevens (2003, 263), the fact that the lunar orbit equals three-cubed is “no deep mystery”.

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second case, instances of multiplication lead to an instance of a cube number – Gellius is adding new dimensions of mathematical complexity as the scroll turns.\footnote{The math does rather abruptly become a great deal simplified at the end of chapter 20 when Gellius names the one-dimensional line in both languages, and he veers into the grammatical realm when the Greek word ἀπλατές fascinates him with its resistance to an elegant calque. But this curtailment is entirely consistent with the intent of the Preface, which celebrates a well-rounded education but also deflects the potential criticism of treating anything too deeply, especially the difficult or obscure subjects like geometry (Pref. 13), by promising only primitiae and libamenta. Thus, Gellius banishes any worry that might have arisen in chapter 1, where it seemed possible that he would devote too much attention to geometry. He has devoted some attention to it in Book 1, but it has never been overwhelming to the reader. Cf. 16.8.15-17 and 16.18.6 for the dangerously seductive nature of the study of, e.g., dialectics and geometry.} One may also observe that the number of chapters in Book 1 is 26, just one short of the magic number of \(3^3\).\footnote{Thanks are due to Susan Prince for this observation.} If we take it as a given that numbers in Gellius are sometimes significant (especially in Book 1, where the famous number-sage Pythagoras is more prominent than in any other book of the \(NA\)) and add to this proposition that Gellius is always nudging the reader to follow up on what the author has left undone, then we may with some confidence assert that Gellius intentionally avoids making his book numerically perfect, so that the reader may finish the job.\footnote{Cf. the unfulfilled numerical series in Book 18: there, chapter 14 explains that a hemiolus is a number made up of one number plus its half (e.g., \(2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3\)) and an epitritus is a number made up of one number plus its third (e.g., \(3 + 1 = 4\)). Book 18 has 15 (10 + 5) chapters, just one short of 16 (12 + 4). The hemiolus is there, but the epitritus that would follow it is not. As for the \(NA\) as a whole, we cannot know for certain, given the present state of the evidence, its total number of chapters. Holford-Strevens (2003, 30) calculates: “After various losses we know of 398 chapters including the fifteen recorded for book 8, of which only the lemmata and a few fragments survive; if the original total was 400, squaring the number of books, two are lost—perhaps after 20.11, but a fragment of book 8, ‘Historia ex libris Heraclidae Pontici iucunda memoratu et miranda’, though conceivably relating to the tale of Socrates and Xanthippe in chapter 11, looks more like a lemma. In any case, Gellius may not have intended the round number, or may have miscounted if he did.” The phrase that Holford-Strevens thinks a lemma is attested in Priscian (\(GLK\) 2.246.6) as an example of the Latin genitive singular form of Greek personal names; Priscian says only that it comes from the eighth book of the \(NA\) of a certain “Agellius” but does not say whether the phrase is a lemma or not. By the time of Priscian (6th century AD), the capita rerum would probably have already been distributed from the Preface to the commentarii themselves, so that the question still cannot be resolved. If this is a lemma, as Holford-Strevens is most likely right to assume, given the style of the phrase (cf. 1.23 lemma, above), we can account for 399}
and that Gellius will continue to add more as the span of his life permits. Of course, only the 20 (minus Book 8) have come down to us, and we have no evidence that Gellius ever published or even composed any more. Perhaps it is left to the reader to continue the project, even if that project manifests itself as somehow less Gellian than the NA. Whatever the case, as long as the display of learning in such a miscellany regulates itself in accordance with a sense of proportion and due measure, it will be, like the Attic Nights, an example to follow.
V. Recapitulation.

A. The unity of the Gellian book.

When a book is unified by theme or structure, it satisfies with its artistry. Much of the pleasure that readers can derive from reading the classics of history, oratory, and poetry depends on the readers’ experience of the more or less carefully constructed order of these texts. A miscellany, however, by virtue of its random-seeming arrangement, resists the notion of order as a structural pattern that guides the development of the overall argument. Studies of the *Attic Nights* have therefore often resorted to the grouping and categorization of themes, characters, sources, and genres in order to make sense of the guiding principles of Gellius’s work. This dissertation has found irony in the author’s claim that his work’s *ordo is fortuitus* – for the order of essays in the *NA* does not actually reflect the order in which Gellius noted down each bit of knowledge, but is engineered to appear reflective of a life spent chasing knowledge in all directions. Nevertheless, we have seen, in each of our three case studies, that Gellius maintains some themes throughout the work, the most important of which is the self-motivated expansion of knowledge. We have seen, furthermore, that Gellius manipulates the arrangement of each book so that it emphasizes and develops certain dominant themes, each of which serves the overall protreptic bent of the *Attic Nights*. In brief, despite the air of disorder that surrounds it, the *NA* possesses both thematic and structural unity.

But it is a slippery unity: beyond the previewing (or miniaturizing) function of the *capita rerum*, structural unity in the *NA* exists not at the macro-level of the collection, but rather on the level of the individual book, where the organization of themes forms patterns unique to each book. Early in the *NA*, Gellius furnishes Book 1 with bookends, a traditional structuring device. These bookends each feature Plutarch in some way, situating him in the role of source literature
But these bookends are enriched by Book 1’s focus on proportionality as a theme. The inclusion of Pythagoras in the lineage of sources in 1.1 prefigures his role as anchor for ideas of mathematical proportion in 1.9 and 1.19-20. The ubiquity of the proportion-theme, not just in the world of mathematics but in human behavior as well, together with the important juxtaposition of 1.9 (Pythagoras’s *ordo atque ratio* of accepting students) and 1.10 (Favorinus’s citation of *De Analogia*), establishes proportion as not only the dominant theme of Book 1, but also as the element that provides the book with its structure.

Even the thematic unity of the *NA* as a whole, with its call to readers to expand their learning, actively invites readers to speculate on numerical significances in this book: the numbers 9 and 27 become important as a square and a cube (respectively), and chapter 9 describes Pythagorean initiation, while chapter 27 is an essay that would exist had Gellius written only one more chapter – a gap that readers can fill. At this point, instead of tying up his loose end(ing)s, Gellius moves on to Book 2, whose structure is different. Here, there are no traditional bookends, although the second and second-to-last chapters (2.2 and 2.29) mirror one another in that they both address questions of social priority between parents and children. But this structural facade is complicated by Book 2’s twofold division into a series of chapters dominated by the parent/child theme (2.1-19) and a series dominated by a Greek/Latin comparison theme (2.20-30). Both halves of this book examine relationships in which power is far from fixed but is always negotiable to some extent. The once-removed bookend of 2.29 (the Aesopic fable on the mother bird and her chicks), appearing on the Greek/Latin side of the book, gestures at the unity of the two themes, even if it does not achieve complete unity between them. The book is, therefore, left open, to a degree. Such unfinished-ness, pervasive in the *NA*, takes on a more self-reflexive quality in Book 14, whose 8 chapters describe, more or less metaphorically, the
development of Gellius from reader and student to teacher and author. This relatively simple structure, now resembling a linear progression, is deepened by the themes of Book 14. As the character of Gellius in the book grows more intellectually sensitive (as both judge and litterateur), the author Gellius presents multiple facets of the miscellany-making enterprise. In the first two chapters, his younger-self character consults Favorinus, who makes his points in caput-fashion, as Gellius tends to do, especially in his capita rerum in the Preface. In chapter 6, he trudges through a Homer-obsessed miscellany that his friend has insisted will be useful for Gellius’s own miscellany – Gellius, of course, learns not to repeat the mistakes of what he has just read. Finally, in chapters 7 and 8, Gellius displays his competence in both the legal realm, by researching a judicial problem, and the authorial realm, by writing an adscript. This last is a typical structural element in the NA, found at the end of a chapter, but here Gellius makes it a chapter in its own right that, moreover, rounds off the entire Book 14. And so will readers, if they are like Gellius, make their own adscripts, in the form of notes that may someday evolve into essays (commentarii), perhaps even a miscellany.

B. Adscript.

The NA ends its books in more ways than have been discussed in this dissertation. Therefore, just as the end of a talk with Favorinus served as the inception of Gellius’s research into Cato (14.2), it behooves the present study to suggest further avenues for research into the art of the Gellian ending. Here I propose brief readings of two remarkable Gellian endings, one almost certainly intended by Gellius (3.19), the other a provocative accident (20.11).

1. The end of Book 3.
The nineteenth chapter of Book 3 performs two functions related to endings. First, it recalls 3.1, for these chapters, unlike the rest of Book 3, both feature Favorinus in a dramatic setting interacting with material that is being read to him. In the textual world of the NA, such an alignment makes for more than mere coincidence. Moreover, Favorinus strives in both chapters to understand strange arguments and then offers either clarification or correction. 3.1 has him at the Baths of Titus, trying to understand how Sallust can argue that greed (avaritia) renders effeminate not only the soul (a fair point, in Favorinus’s mind) but even the body as well. Favorinus asks Gellius for an answer, but Gellius, of course, defers to the literature veteran of the group (in litteris veterator). The veteran and the sophist work out the problem and conclude that either a devotion to greed causes neglect of the body or Sallust was simply wrong. In 3.19, Gellius witnesses one of the philological dinners that were frequently held at the house of Favorinus. There, a slave is reading from Gavius Bassus’s book de Origine Verborum et Vocabulorum, and Favorinus expresses his doubts about the passage’s etymology of parcus, rejecting Bassus’s argument that the word is derived from par arcae (“like a coffer”). The situations of the two chapters are similar, and there is even a thematic connection between the two, since the first chapter is concerned with greed and the last examines the possible connection between parcus (“sparing”, “tight”) and arca (“coffer”). Thus, there is a bookending effect, just as we saw in Book 1.246

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246 With the word arca, one may also imagine a boxing-in effect for these bookends. Like the contents of a box, the material between the bookends has nothing to do with them, but there are at least two series of thematically related chapters within the bounds of Book 3: 3.7-9 form a triptych of colorful stories about marvelous deeds performed in war, and 3.10 and 3.16 both discuss the human gestation period. There are also three pairs of adjacent chapters drawn from the same source: 5 and 6 both come from Plutarch, 7 and 8 from Quadrigarius’s third book of Annals, and 10 and 11 from Varro’s Hebdomades. Book 3 even looks back to Books 1 and 2 by resurrecting remarkable words and ideas from some of the most outstanding chapters in those preceding books: 3.9.9 recalls 2.26 by
The other ending-function of this chapter is something that we have not yet seen in the *NA*. 3.19 creates a juxtaposition across the book-roll boundary with 4.1: in both of them Favorinus is featured in a dramatic setting engaging in grammatical dispute on the meaning or origin of a word. Moreover, 4.1, the chapter in which Favorinus debates the declension and meaning of *penus* (a programmatically charged word since in the Preface (§2) Gellius used it as a metaphor for the *Attic Nights* – *quasi quoddam litterarum penus*), provides a further connection with 3.19, for both *penus* and *arca* are words pertaining to storage, the latter being a container and the former being the stockpile itself. The reader proceeding directly from the end of Book 3 to the beginning of Book 4 may notice a magnification of scale from 3.19 to 4.1. While 3.19 featured Favorinus at dinner in his own home quibbling with Gavius Bassus’s *Commentarii* on the etymology of *parcus*, 4.1 has the same Favorinus, among a crowd of all the social orders at the vestibule of the Capitoline temple awaiting Caesar’s Salutation, setting an upstart grammarian straight by arguing the unimportance of the declension of *penus* and the importance of its meaning, namely that it is a stock of food and drink, useful to its owner. The nourishment metaphor with *penus* reminds readers of two places in the Preface, where Gellius compared the *NA* to a *penus* (§2) and insisted that the *NA* would be good nourishment for the mind (§16). 4.1 thus takes on great programmatic relevance and is all the more remarkable for the way in which it uses character, setting, and textual juxtaposition to elevate a theme from near-triviality in one chapter to greater heights in the next.\(^\text{247}\)

\(^{247}\) Readers who continue through Book 4 will notice that Gellius is concerned with proper definitions in the next couple of chapters and that, moreover, the legal material at the end of chapter 1 inaugurates a series of chapters in Book 4 that concern legal matters (2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20). The final chapter (20) also recalls a number of

\(^{247}\)\footnotetext{reporting that the color of the Seian horse was *poeniceus* (known to the Greeks as φοίνιξ or σπάδιξ, and the *palma* tree’s branches are *spadix* in color – for the palm tree’s amazing resilience, see 3.6), 3.10 has Varro’s remarking that the number 7 is extraordinarily powerful in part because \(7 \times 4 = 28\), which is the phase of the moon (calculated differently as 27, the cube of three, by Pythagoras in 1.20), 3.16 recalls 2.23 by once again comparing Menander’s and Caecilius’s *Plocium*, although on a smaller scale this time, and 3.17 relates the stories of Plato and Aristotle buying a small number of books for rich sums, just as Tarquin did in 1.19.}
2. The End of the *Attic Nights* (as we know it).

The accidents of history have modified the shape of the *Attic Nights*, so that the 20 books that Gellius advertised in *Pref.* 22 are now 19, with 1-7 and 9-20 still extant. Book 20 is the end of Gellius’s “first installment”, as it were (seeing that he promised more books, the number in proportion to the years of his life). But we have seen many times already how Gellius’s beginnings and endings, however significant, are always subject to sophisticated manipulation, since it is indeed his aim to preserve the appearance of an *ordo fortuitus*. And so, we must lament the loss of the end of Book 20, for as things stand, we are deprived of the opportunity to evaluate Gellius’s manipulation of the final extremity of the *NA*. Even so, the 10½ extant chapters of Book 20 (20.1.1 – 20.11.5, making up 20 pages in Marshall’s *OCT*) provide hints of that peculiar Gellian brand of organization. 20.1 is a massive chapter (filling nearly 9 pages) featuring Favorinus arguing with Sextus Caecilius on various points in the *Twelve Tables*. Surprisingly, Favorinus loses the argument, clearly outmatched by Caecilius’s mastery of legal lore. In the end, though, Favorinus happily congratulates Caecilius (*ipsa quoque Favorino adprobante atque laudante*, §55), setting a fine example of intellectual curiosity for Young Gellius and, by extension, his readership. This showpiece chapter stands more or less on its own in its book but finds fellows in the series of other marquee chapters at the beginnings of other books of the *NA*. If it is structurally connected to the rest of Book 20, then perhaps, just as in Book 3, it has a thematically related companion piece at the end of the book? Only Gellius knows. In any case, besides the verbal connections in two pairs of adjacent chapters (the assonance of

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themes and situations that appear in Book 4. For all the impressive effects brought about by the bookending of Book 3 and the juxtaposition between Book 3’s end and Book 4’s beginning, those chapters are bound up in a web of even greater complexity. For a different approach to the juxtaposition of 3.19 and 4.1, see Keulen 2009, 126-134, where the two chapters’ significance rests on their participation in the *NA*’s Favorinus series, which is furthermore (in Keulen’s view) an exercise in the ironic presentation of Favorinus as comically avaricious and sexually outrageous. See Holford-Strevens 2003, 333-337, for the MS history.
sicitines/sicinistae in 2 and 3, educational Aristotle in 4 and 5), there is a programmatically significant theme running through what survives of the book. Chapter 10 features Gellius in a confrontation with a typically arrogant grammarian, in which the *Twelve Tables* comes up (immediately recalling 20.1, since the majority of references to the *Twelve Tables* appear there).\(^{249}\) Here the grammarian is claiming that Ennius never used the legal phrase *ex iure manum consertum*, but Gellius proves otherwise. Unsatisfied, however, Gellius later seeks out books to research further the poetic use of legal language, thus enriching his appreciation of Ennius. In so doing, Gellius picks up on the theme of legal language from chapter 1, but he also incorporates the idea of poetic language, used in various ways in chapters 7-9. Finally, the remains of chapter 11 discuss the correct way to pronounce the legal term *sequester* (not as the crowd does, *sculna* or *seculna*).

Although, owing to the loss of the end of Book 20, we cannot appreciate fully the development of this law/poetry theme, we nevertheless detect the existence of a theme that has programmatic resonance. This theme is most visible in the first and tenth chapters of the book, where Favorinus and Gellius, respectively, exhibit the primary virtue espoused by the *NA*: they seek to expand their knowledge, both in breadth and depth, by seeking out books and teachers (cf. *Pref.* 17). The *NA*, then, as it is ending, also sets an example for the continuation of its mission, for if readers follow their author in making authors of themselves, the *NA* will continue, in spirit at least. And, if I believed in fate as determined by the courses of the stars (14.1) or the kind of fate that brings about ends (13.1), I would say that it is a fateful end that our transmission history has cut off 20.11 (and the *Attic Nights*) at the word *atque*.

\(^{249}\) Regrettably, 8.1 is lost – there, according the lemma in the *capita rerum*, Gellius writes on the use of the phrase *hesterna nox* (or *hesterna noctu*) in the *Twelve Tables*. Since 8.1 is an inaugural chapter and discusses the thematically charged word *nox*, we have probably lost an opportunity to read it not only in the context of the rest of
Book 8 but also with other inaugural chapters, especially 4.1 (on *penus*) and 20.1, with its discussion of the *Twelve Tables*.
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