

LAKE NEMI AND LONDON: TWO RETRACTIONS

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A palinode is an embarrassing exercise which I would willingly spare myself, but since I have twice blundered in the presence of our *Vereinli*, it is only fitting that I should make a clean breast of it before the same audience and should say with Ovid, *Confiteor, si quid prodest delicta fateri*.

1 In Vol. II of our *Acta*, pp. 5—12, I presented twenty-five fragments of sigillata, most of them signed, allegedly from the ships at Lake Nemi but at that time in the Terme Museum. In discussing their chronology, which in the nature of the case was their most significant aspect, I relied heavily upon Uccelli's 1940 publication of the ships, not knowing that after the War the same author had issued a second edition with the same title but a substantially different text. It was Ann Brown of Oxford who first alerted me to the error of assigning these fragments to the ships at all, and others have subsequently dealt with me kindly but deservedly. In the summer of 1972 I attempted to clear up the matter at the Terme Museum itself, where Prof.ssa Lisa Lissi Caronna personally escorted me through the records attempting to locate these sherds and another smaller group, briefly noted in the same article, which really is from the ships. Alas, none of them were in the Terme. Signora Lissi Caronna kindly volunteered to pursue the matter out to the new small museum at Nemi, and did so, but with equally negative results; in a letter of March 1973 she wrote, »Per il momento non so proprio come fare per trovarli, ma non escludo che un giorno, quando ormai ho perso tutte le speranze, vengano fuori«, — a hope which, in gratefully acknowledging her trouble in this matter, I share. The sherds which I published are from Lake Nemi all right, but presumably from the shore-line as the lake was being drained in the 1930's, and are quite independent of the ships and their chronology.

2 The other matter is a trifle less painful only because it has not actually appeared in print, though I have given occasional intimations of it in *Hommages Grenier, Collection Latomus* 58 (1962) pp. 448—456, and elsewhere. Some may recall that at Speyer I proposed that the sigillata found in London and, by inference, on some other British sites, — though not all, — had to be dated in or after A. D. 43, the year of Claudius's conquest. A great deal of the evidence is to be found in the *British Museum Catalogue of Roman Pottery* and in the article on early Roman London by OSWALD and PRYCE in *Archaeologia* 78 (1928) pp. 73—110. Once more alas! Digging into the evidences of provenance at the British Museum with the generous assistance of Catherine Johns and in the library of the

Society of Antiquaries of London, I found one after another of the principal exhibits resting on poorly documented foundations, including the very interesting moulded bowl allegedly from Wroxall Villa which G. SIMPSON had unearthed in the Devizes Museum and which I showed in another connection also at our Nijmegen meeting. I do not mean to assert that all, or even any, of these sherds are modern intrusions from the Continent, dressed up with a persuasive provenance and passed off upon collectors, and there are indeed a few modernly and solidly excavated bits of reliable British evidence from other sites, — most of which are unfortunately ambivalent chronologically. Nor am I yet prepared to abandon the theory that *Publius Cornelius* and others were in fact active as late as *Claudius*. But I must confess that most of the evidence hitherto accepted as having London and some other British sites as provenance has, as we say, a fishy smell. One may not be wholly free to reject this evidence, but neither can one build an honest case upon it.

This is not the time to go into further detail, as I hope to do elsewhere. The present purpose is merely to tell those whose thinking may have been influenced, not to say misled, by anything that they heard at Speyer to lay it away on a shelf because we have to start all over again with a different set of data. If the answers should happen to be the same, the reasons will be different.

JEZERO NEMI IN LONDON: PONOVRNO

Povzetek

1 Žigi na aretinski sigilati iz jezera Nemi, objavljeni v *RCRF Acta* 2 (1959) 5—12, so domnevno z obalnega pasu jezera, ki je bilo ok. leta 1930 izsušeno, in nimajo prav nobene zveze z ladjami in njihovo kronologijo.

2 Za aretinsko keramiko iz Londona, ki je večinoma objavljena v *British Museum Catalogue of Roman Pottery* in v članku OSVALDA in PRYCEA o zgodnjnerimskem Londonu v *Archaeologia* 78 (1928) 73—110, in podobno keramiko iz raznih drugih najdišč v Britaniji (seveda ne vseh), manjkajo zanesljivi podatki o provenienci. Del te keramike — ali pa celo vsa — je lahko prišel v Anglijo preko prekupčevalcev s starinami, zato je treba biti skrajno previden pri postavljanju teorij, ki bazirajo na ustanovitvi Londona po Klavdijevi invaziji leta 43 n. e.