

Holt N. PARKER

The Recreation of Time in the Augustan Secular Games

Attempts to reduce the Secular Games of 17 BC to "propaganda" are anachronistic and sterile. I prefer to examine the festival, from the initial votes to the striking of the stages, as a site-specific Gesamtkunstwerk, using the insights of cultural poetics that have been so fruitful for Renaissance spectacle. Here, I can only touch on the theme of permanent impermanence and three of the ways in which the Games represented and recreated history.

First, the temporary stages, which recalled the conspicuous expenditures of the Republic, but freed from strife. They also served ritually to recreate primitive Rome in an act of symbolic magic. Yet the extended Games ended in the permanent Theaters of Pompey and Marcellus, binding old to new.

Second, I recreate the fragmentary monumental inscription not as document but as monument. The vote to remember was made before the acts themselves. Four meters high, prominently displayed at the bend of the Tiber, the Pillar preceded the deeds it recorded. The ritual was performed in order to become a text; the text inscribed in order to become a monument.

Third, Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, which recreated Roman literary history. It reached back to the primal rites of Roman poetry, especially Andronicus' expiatory carmen (Fraenkel was wrong here). Unlike the mercifully mangled hexameters on the monument of the Severan Games, Horace's carmen was deliberately not inscribed. Augustus chose Horace because he knew his poems would last (*mansura*). *Exegi monumentum*, but the voice is that of Augustus.