

A SALLUSTIAN REMINISCENCE IN AURELIUS VICTOR

Hactenus Romae seu per Italiam orti imperium rexere, hinc advenae quoque; nescio an ut in Prisco Tarquinio longe meliores. Ac mihi quidem audienti multa legentique plane compertum urbem Romam externorum virtute atque insitivis artibus praecipue crevisse. Quid enim Nerva Cretensi prudentius maximeque moderatum?

[Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 11. 12–12. 1 Pichlmayr–Gruendel]

The influence of Sallust on Aurelius Victor's language has long been recognized.¹ One example is the echo of Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 53. 2, "sed mihi multa legenti, multa audienti" (cf. 53. 4: "mihi multa agitantī"), in the passage quoted above. But the Sallustian reminiscence here has not, to the best of my knowledge, been fully appreciated.

In *Bellum Catilinae* 53. 2 ff. Sallust is making some observations on Roman greatness and Roman virtue that lead up to his memorable comparison of Cato and Caesar. Rome's greatness was brought about by virtue, but by the virtue of only a few (53. 4: "ac mihi multa agitantī constabat paucorum civium egregiam virtutem cuncta patravisse"). In recent times Rome has been suffering from a lack of virtue, though Sallust acknowledges that Cato and Caesar were both *ingenti virtute*, even if *divorsis moribus*. Victor, too, is meditating on the connection between virtue and Rome's greatness, only he is thinking of the virtue of the *externi*, those not of Roman or Italian origin—a geographical limitation inevitably implied in the comments of Sallust, writing in the first century B.C. Victor's comments are elicited by his introduction of Nerva, whom he erroneously believes to have been the first emperor of non-Italian origin.² The highlighting of the role of the *externi* has an autobiographical dimension: Victor was himself an *externus*, an African provincial of relatively humble origins who rose high in the imperial bureaucracy.³

Victor, then, did not merely appropriate, in an adapted form, Sallust's "sed mihi multa legenti, multa audienti." He also "corrected" or elaborated on the observations on virtue that Sallust made in the passage that begins with those words. The Sallustian phrase at *De Caesaribus* 11. 12 was doubtless intended to make the reader think of the whole passage from which it was taken.

ROBERT J. PENELLA
Fordham University

1. See E. Wölfflin, "Aurelius Victor," *RhM* 29 (1874): 285–88; Th. Opitz, "Sallustius und Aurelius Victor," *Neue Jahrbücher Für Philologie und Pädagogik* 127 (1883): 217–22.

2. For a defense of the transmitted reading *Cretensi* at Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 12. 1, see S. D'Elia, "Per una nuova edizione critica di Aurelio Vittore," *RAAN* 43 (1968): 142–43.

3. Cf. H. W. Bird, "S. Aurelius Victor: Some Fourth-Century Issues," *CJ* 73 (1978): 223–25.

ELPIDA'S FAT HAND

In an earlier issue of this journal I argued that the phrase *χερὶ παχείῃ* at *Odyssey* 21. 6 means "full" (in a visually pleasurable sense).¹ Penelope, far from

1. "Penelope's Fat Hand (*Od.* 21. 6–7)," *CP* 73 (1978): 343–44.

being saddled with a massive hand, is being there complimented for having a plump wrist and hand. Youth and desirability are probably accessory notions. I wish here to provide additional support for this position, this time from modern Greek.

In his *Ἀρχαιολόγος* Andreas Karkavitsas twice has occasion to refer to his heroine's hand.² The first occurrence is at 3. 1305: *καὶ σύγκαῖρα τὸ παχουλὸν χεράκι ἐρράμφισε τὸ μεταξωτό, σὰν ἄσπρο περιστέρι ἀπάνω στῇ χλωρασιά*. "And at the same time her *plump little hand* plucked at the silk, like a white dove on the grass." W. Crighton glosses "fleshy, stout, plump, fat, bulky," clearly wrongly.³ The diminutive "little hand" excludes "bulky" and the like, as does the comparison with a dove, this quite apart from the ridiculousness of a heroine with a fat hand. D. Dimitrakos is better, glossing the word as *ὁ ὀλίγον παχύς, εὐτραφής*.⁴ He further cites a passage from *Digenis Akritas* 150: *εἶχεν καὶ χεῖλη παχουλά, κοκκινοβεβαμένα*. "She had pouting lips, dyed red"—clearly again not "fat lips." He also, without giving the source, cites the phrase *γυναικα παχουλή*.

The girl's hand is mentioned again at 3. 1340: *Ἡ κόρη χαμογέλασε· ἄπλωσε τὸ μεστωμένο χέρι της καὶ τοῦ χαΐδεψε τὸ μέτωπο*. "The girl smiled; she reached out her *fully developed* hand and stroked his forehead." The verb *μεστῶν* means "fill, ripen, develop bodily, be fully developed" and can refer to a fully developed or grown-up girl, for example.⁵ It is again clear that Karkavitsas is not making reference to an unattractive feature in his heroine.

The reader will doubtless grant me that Karkavitsas chose his words with care and does not refer to his heroine's hand in pejorative terms. He may well wonder, however, what this has to do with Homer. I assume, and invite the reader to assume, that a cultural attitude will remain constant unless there is some good reason to change it and a replacement is available. I assume, in other words, that the Greeks of Homer's day and the Greeks of ca. 1900 regarded a well-turned or fleshed-out female hand and forearm as an object of erotic attention.⁶

WILLIAM F. WYATT, JR.
Brown University

2. *The Archaeologist* was published first in Athens in 1904. I quote from N. Siderou's edition of Karkavitsas' complete works (Athens, 1973).

3. *Mega Ellino-Anglikon Lexikon* (Athens, n.d.).

4. *Mega Lexikon tis Ellinikis Glossis* (Athens, 1951).

5. It can also refer to men, as in the phrase cited by Dimitrakos: *παλλικάρι δεμένο, μεστωμένο* (well-built warrior) *με ἄρτιαν καὶ σφριγώδη σωματικὴν διάπλασιν* (with a fit and robust bodily constitution). One will again refer to the Homeric situation in which the same phrase can refer to both men and women with favorable connotations for both, but with different English glosses; cf. "Penelope's Fat Hand," p. 344 and n. 8.

6. Continuity between ancient and modern Greece has been denied as often as it has been assumed. That I am not alone in assuming (some) continuity can be seen from S. Vryonis, Jr. (ed.), *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture* (Malibu, 1978), particularly the articles by M. Alexiou, "Modern Greek Folklore and Its Relation to the Past: The Evolution of Charos in Greek Tradition" (pp. 221–36), and Vryonis, "Recent Scholarship on Continuity and Discontinuity of Culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, Modern Greeks" (pp. 237–56), both with rich bibliography.