VIRGIL, *AENEID* 2.349–50

A textual problem in Virgil, *Aen.* 2.349–50 has puzzled scholars since antiquity and still divides editors and commentators today.[1] Aeneas is exhorting his comrades to join him in the final battle for Troy, but the variants *audendi* and *audentem* leave it uncertain whether he says, 'si vobis audendi extrema cupido/ certa sequi, quae sit rebus fortuna videtis', or 'si vobis audentem extrema cupido/ certa sequi, quae sit rebus fortuna videtis'. The variant *audendi* has been discussed and defended in several commentaries and articles,[2] whereas *audentem*, though often the choice of editors, has yet to receive a detailed defence.[3] In this note, I will demonstrate that *audentem* is the correct reading and that the false reading *audendi* came about through a common scribal error.

Although ancient evidence for Virgil's text is in general extraordinarily good, the testimony to this passage is sparse and somewhat confused. The only legible manuscript reading from late antiquity is *audendi*, which appears in the fifth-century Medicean codex, *M*.[4] The first manuscripts to read *audentem* are the ninth-century manuscripts Bern. 167 and Vat. lat. 1570 (*e* and *v*, according to the sigla used by Mynors). Servius, early in the fifth century, attests that 'many' read *audendi* and *audenti* (the latter completely unintelligible reading is probably a corruption of the former). Finding neither reading satisfactory ('neutrum procedit'), he endorses *audentem* and takes the text to mean, 'si vobis cupido certa est, me sequi audentem extrema'. As Zetzel pointed out, Servius' knowledge of *audentem* was probably derived from an earlier scholiastic source.[5]

Most commentators who defend *audendi* base their argument on its status as the older reading in the manuscripts.[6] They may also favour it as the more difficult

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[1] Some of the editors and critics who have chosen *audendi*: T. Ladewig (Berlin, 1865); F. A. Hirtzel (Oxford, 1900); P. Lejay (Paris, 1919); R. Sabbadini (Rome, 1930); L. Castiglioni (Paravia, 1945); R. G. Austin (Oxford, 1964); R. D. Williams (London, 1972); M. Geymonat (Paravia, 1973). Among those who have chosen *audentem*: J. L. de la Cerda (Cologne, 1664); C. G. Heyne and G. P. E. Wagner (Leipzig, 1832); J. Conington (London, 1876); O. Ribbeck (Leipzig, 1894); T. E. Page (London, 1894); H. R. Fairclough (London, 1934); H. Goelzer and A. Bellesort (Paris, 1956); R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969); J. Perret (Paris, 1981).

[2] See Ladewig, op. cit. n. 1; E. Baehrens, 'Emendationes Vergilianae', *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Pädagogik* 131 (1885), 395–6; P. Deuticke, 'Vergil: 1884 bis 1888', *Jahresberichte des Philologischen Vereins zu Berlin* 14 (1889), 330; Lejay, op. cit. n. 1; W. Aly, 'Zwei Interpretationen aus dem zweiten Buch der Aeneis', *Philologische Wochenscrift* 48 (1928), 878–9; and Austin, op. cit. n. 1.

[3] Conington, op. cit. n. 1, in stating that he believes no construction is possible with *audendi*, comes closest to defending *audentem*, but this is the extent of his remarks.

[4] In the fourth or fifth century manuscript *P*, a hole in the parchment has destroyed the final syllable, leaving *auden*. The space is large enough for either two or three letters; cf. H. R. Fairclough, 'Observations on Sabbadini's Variorum Edition of Virgil', *TAPA* 63 (1932), 212.

[5] J. E. G. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (Salem, N.H., 1981), 132. It is worth noting that Tiberius Claudius Donatus read *audendi*, and the text quoted at Isid. *Etym.* 1.37.20 shows *audendi*, although Isidore's paraphrase (which is identical to Servius') presumes *audentem*.

[6] Austin (op. cit. n. 1), for example, in defending *audendi*, relies heavily on its 'obvious authority' in the manuscripts. Baehrens, Deuticke, and Aly (op. cit. n. 2) all argue that the reading *audentem* originated as Servius' 'conjecture' and can therefore be discounted.

reading:[7] in principle, the more difficult reading (the *lectio difficilior*) is more likely to have suffered corruption. That *audendi* is a difficult reading is certainly true. Most scholars agree in taking *audendi* as an objective genitive with *cupido* and *extrema* as its direct object (this construction itself has been accepted too readily; see below), but have been troubled by *certa sequi*. Some have even felt it necessary to emend the text.[8]

Among those who have offered interpretations without emending the text, Ladewig understood *sequi* as an imperative, arguing that Virgil was following Homer's use of the infinitive as imperative. But the other examples that he suggested of this usage in Virgil (*Aen.* 2.707, 3.405, 7.126) are not infinitives but middle imperative forms,[9] and the supposed imitation he cited from Valerius Flaccus ('tu socios adhibere sacris', 3.412) is so remote that it does not help the case for an imperatival infinitive in Virgil.

Lejay made *certa sequi* an infinitive clause dependent, along with *quae sit rebus fortuna*, on *videtis* ('si vous avez le désir d'oser une tentative suprême, vous en voyez la conséquence certaine'). He defends this use of a verb with two different types of objects by arguing that a similar construction appears in *G.* 1.252–6:

> hinc tempestates dubio praediscere caelo
> possumus, hinc messisque diem tempusque serendi,
> et quando infidum remis impellere marmor
> conveniat, quando armatas deducere classis,
> aut tempestivam silvis evertere pinum.

In this example, however, Virgil avoids the awkward juxtaposition of different forms of the direct object by articulating the passage with an *et* in line 254. Had Virgil intended the construction Lejay suggests for the *Aeneid* lines, he surely would have provided the line with similar articulation. He could, in fact, have added an *et* after *sequi* without changing the metre.[10]

Most recently, Austin has defended *audendi* by making *sequi* dependent on *certa*, translating the clause, 'if your passion for daring the uttermost is resolute to follow'. Austin himself notes, as a possible objection, that the infinitive construction with *certus* appears elsewhere only with a personal subject, but this objection can be countered by reference to *Aen.* 10.239–40, where *certa* with infinitive complement modifies *sententia* ('medias illis opponere turmas,/ ne castris iungant, certa est sententia Turno'). The pertinent question, however, is whether the expression *cupido certa sequi* makes any sense at all. *Cupido* is seen by Virgil as the driving force for human action. Here are some vivid examples: 'sed furor ardentem caedisque insana cupido/ egit in adversos' (*Aen.* 9.760), and 'vincet amor patriae laudumque immensa cupido' (*Aen.* 6.823). The modifying adjectives that occur with it are primarily intensifiers.[11] It makes no sense to say that *cupido* is 'resolved to follow', if *cupido* is – as Virgil believed it to be – a driving force. To circumvent the apparent meaning-

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[7] Although no commentator argues this in so many words, C. Hardie (review of R. G. Austin, *Virgil Aeneid II*, *JRS* 54 (1964), 244) believed that it underlay Austin's preference for *audendi*.

[8] Deuticke (op. cit. n. 2) changed *sequi* to *sedet*; Baehrens (op. cit. n. 2) endorsed this emendation and also suggested *ni* for *si*. Sabbadini (op. cit. n. 1) changed *certa sequi* to *certast qui*, which was adopted by Castiglioni and Geymonat (op. cit. n. 1). For an argument against this emendation see G. Funaioli, *Studi di Letteratura Antica* (Bologna, 1948), ii(1).237–40.

[9] Cf. R. D. Williams, *Virgil, Aeneid Book III* (Oxford, 1962), 142, on 3.405.

[10] Examples of elision of long *-i* with *et* are not uncommon in Virgil; the *-i* in *sequi* is elided with *et* in *Aen.* 7.300. Aly (op. cit. n. 2) suggested a similar interpretation to Lejay's, taking both *audendi extrema* and *sequi certa* as complements to *cupido*, but cited no parallels of this unusual construction.

[11] *Dira* is the most common adjective with *cupido* (e.g. *G.* 1.37, *Aen.* 6.373, 9.185), also *tanta* (*Aen.* 7.263), *immensa* (*Aen.* 6.823), *insana* (*Aen.* 9.760).

lessness of this phrase, Austin must propose an interpretation that departs signifi-
cantly from the text: 'si vos, audendi extrema cupidi, certi estis sequi'.

In retaining *audendi*, therefore, one must resort to impossible or improbable
explanations in order to construe *certa sequi*. But this is not the only objection; it is
doubtful that Virgil would have written *audendi extrema* to begin with. The gerund
with accusative object was uncommon throughout the archaic and classical periods.[12]
Virgil, in fact, uses it only once elsewhere in his works, and the gerund is in the ablative
('labores/ versando terram experti', *G.* 1.118–19). It is only in post-classical Latin that
instances of the gerund with accusative object exceed those of its counterpart, the
gerundive construction. From Curtius Rufus (first century A.D.) onward, most authors
preferred the construction with the gerund.[13] As we shall see presently, the later
preference for the gerund construction is in harmony with the likely cause of
corruption in our passage.

In contrast, *audentem* is preferable according to any criterion one might apply. The
reading presents no problems of grammar or interpretation. If we follow Servius'
interpretation and understand *sequi* as a complement to *cupido* and *audentem* as the
direct object of *sequi*, the text can be translated, 'if your desire to follow me as I dare
the utmost is fixed.'[14] Clearly *audentem* yields better structure and sense than *audendi*.

Audentem is also demonstrably the more difficult reading, if the text is considered
from the viewpoint of an ancient scribe or reader. With *audentem*, a hyperbaton
extends from the direct object (*audentem*) to its verb (*sequi*) in the next line. The relative
complexities of the intervening words and the ellipsis of *est* could make the sense of
the clause difficult to follow, if one were not reading attentively. We have only to
imagine a scribe with tunnel vision, concentrating on the text one line at a time as
he copies, to explain how *audentem* became *audendi*. When read by itself, line 349 with
audentem is meaningless, but a simple change to *audendi* makes sense of the line. The
change would have occurred all the more easily because the use of a gerund with
accusative object, although rare in Classical Latin and un-Virgilian (as was noted
above), would have been familiar to a scribe of the post-classical period. To the eyes
of an ancient scribe, therefore, *audendi* is actually the *lectio facilior*, even if it has
seemed the more difficult reading to modern scholars.[15]

Scribal errors apparently caused by reading the text one line at a time are not
uncommon in the Virgilian manuscripts and must often have occurred in the stages
of the manuscript tradition prior to the extant late antique codices. In *Aen.* 3.421, a
scribe changed *vastos* to *vasto* to agree with *gurgite*, instead of anticipating its noun
fluctus in the next line:

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[12] Cicero, for example, has 587 instances of the genitive gerundive but only 24 of the genitive
gerund with accusative object. Caesar has 280 of the former but 7 of the latter. Both Caesar and
Cicero use it mainly to avoid the awkward repetition of the *-orum* ending or for particular
emphasis. Cf. J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (Munich, 1965),
sect. C, 372–3; R. Kühner and C. Stegmann, *Ausfürhliche Grammatik der Lateinische Sprache*
(Darmstadt, 1976), ii(1).735–6.

[13] In Curtius Rufus, Books 5–10, there are 22 instances of the genitive gerund with accusative
object versus 9 instances of the genitive gerundive construction; cf. Hofmann and Szantyr,
op. cit. n. 12.

[14] The use of the infinitive with a noun expressing desire is Virgilian (e.g. *G.* 1.21, *Aen.* 2.10,
3.298–9, 6.133–4). Patterned after the infinitive complement to verbs of desiring, the construction
was employed as a metrically convenient alternative to the gerund form; cf. Austin, op. cit. n.
1, on 2.10.

[15] In support of this explanation are Servius' remarks on the 'obscurity' caused by the
'confusion' of the hyperbaton in these lines: 'obscuritatem autem facit hoc loco et synchysis,
id est hyperbati longa confusio, et falsa lectio.'

> atque imo barathri ter gurgite vastos [vasto *P*]
> sorbet in abruptum fluctus rursusque sub auras.

This error was known to Servius. In *Aen.* 10.322–3, *Pharo*, a dative singular with *intorquens*, was changed to *Pharon* (nominative singular) to serve as subject of the *dum*-clause:

> ecce Pharo (Pharon *PM²*) voces dum iactat inertis
> intorquens iaculum clamanti sistit in ore.

Servius knew of the variant *Pharon* too. In *Aen.* 1.703–4, *longam*, which modifies *penum*, was changed to *longo* by attraction to *ordine*:[16]

>   quibus ordine longam
> cura penum struere et flammis adolere penatis.

Evidence for the variant *longo*, which occurs in all extant late antique and early medieval manuscripts, dates back to Aulus Gellius (*NA* 4.1.15). Gellius himself comments on the 'shameful error' that can arise from reading poetry one line at a time (*NA* 6.2). According to Gellius, the grammarian Caesellius Vindex claimed that Ennius used *cor* in the masculine, basing his claim on the following lines (*Ann.* 371–3 Skutsch):

> Hannibal audaci dum pectore de me hortatur
> ne bellum faciam, quem credidit esse meum cor
> suasorem summum et studiosum robore belli.

Gellius says that Caesellius was 'carelessly' misled by the 'connection of the words' to construe *quem* as an interrogative pronoun with *cor* instead of recognizing it as a relative pronoun, referring to Hannibal, with its construction completed in the next line.

Audentem, then, is the correct reading for *Aen.* 2.349. Although the text with *audendi* suffers from several serious flaws that should have discounted it, for a scribe reading one line at a time it would have been easier to understand than *audentem*. Indeed, in this passage, the true *lectio difficilior* is the variant that no modern scholar has ever had difficulty explaining.*

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