

(b) Ganymede's Horsemanship at *Orestes* 1392

ὄττοτοί  
 ἱαλέμων ἱαλέμων·  
 Δαρδανία τλάμων,  
 Γανυμήδεος ἵπποσύνα, Διὸς εὐνέτα.

1392

Students of the *Orestes* are fortunate to have two excellent commentaries at their disposal, by C. W. Willink (Oxford, 1986) and M. L. West (Warminster, 1987). Neither will help them to understand this line, which is 'the only allusion to Ganymede's horsemanship' (Willink *ad loc.*), because 'no story of riding by Ganymede is known' (West *ad loc.*). But we are repeatedly reminded that the scene with the Phrygian (1369ff.) has far fewer affinities with tragedy than with comedy, and *ἐυριπιδαριστοφανίζεται*. Comedy provides the clue, specifically at Ar. *Vesp.* 501f. and *Lys.* 676ff. The reference is to the variety of equestrianism for which Ganymede is far from unknown (he was too young to have established an association with any other kind). For *ἵπποσύνη* here describes a *σχῆμα ἐρωτικόν*, and the line means *Ganymedes concubinus, Iovis supini inguini insidens et equitans, sc. inter causas fuit malorum propter Iunonis invidiam Troianis immissorum*.

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## TURNING THE TABLES: VARIUS, VIRGIL AND LUCAN.

Of the four surviving fragments of Varius' *De Morte*<sup>1</sup> perhaps the most widely discussed has been the first:

Vendidit hic Latium populis agrosque Quiritum  
 eripuit, fixit leges pretio atque refixit (Fr. 1 Morel)

This is imitated by Virgil, whose Sibyl says of a soul in Tartarus:

Vendidit hic auro patriam dominumque potentem  
 imposuit; fixit leges pretio atque refixit (Aen. 6.621f.)

Most commentators, quoting Cic. *Phil.* 12.5.12, connect both passages exclusively with Antony,<sup>2</sup> and rightly point to Servius' words on v. 622, 'possumus Antonium accipere'. What should be stressed, however, is that Servius also thinks the words 'vendidit hic auro patriam' have a general reference, but are at the same time designed to recall historical individuals, of whom he names two:

etiam haec licet generaliter dicantur, habent tamen specialitatem: nam Lasthenes Olynthum Philippo vendidit, Curio Caesari XXVII. S. Romam: de quo Lucanus (4.820) Gallorum captus poliois et Caesaris auro.

Hollis is not convinced and remarks 'I doubt this; it seems to me that Virgil, in describing a whole category of the damned, has widened and generalized his model, leaving untouched "fixit leges pretio atque refixit" to confirm the imitation and recall Varius' reference to Antony.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All quoted by Macrobius as models imitated by Virgil: for references see Morel's edition. Macrobius, however, apparently did not notice that fr. 4, the simile of the hunting dog chasing a stag which lies behind *Ecl.* 8.88, is also imitated in the *Aeneid*: to fr. 4.3 'saevit in absentem' cf. *Aen.* 9.63 (Turnus as a wolf) 'saevit in absentis', and see W. Clausen, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry* (California, 1987), p. 162 n. 18.

<sup>2</sup> A. Rostagni, 'Il *De Morte* di L. Vario Rufo', *RFIC* 37 (1959), 380-1; A. S. Hollis, 'L. Varius Rufus *De Morte* (Frr. 1-4 Morel)', *CQ* 27 (1977), 188-9. <sup>3</sup> Art. cit. 188.

Although this is almost certainly correct, a moment's reflection on Servius' reasons for suggesting Curio<sup>4</sup> will give us an insight into the process of imitation in general and also its particular significance with regard to these passages in the work of a third poet. Servius' own words show that his inspiration for seeing a reference to Virgil to Curio comes from the splendid obituary on the infamous Caesarian tribune with which Lucan brings the fourth book of the *De Bello Civili* to an end. Though Servius quotes only v. 820, to see the full picture we must consider the triumphant conclusion to the obituary as a whole:

momentumque fuit mutatus Curio rerum  
Gallorum captus spoliis et *Caesaris auro*.  
ius licet in iugulos nostros sibi fecerit ensis  
Sulla *potens* Mariusque ferox et Cinna cruentus  
Caesareaeque domus series, cui tanta potestas  
concessa est? emere omnes, *hic vendidit urbem*. (Luc. 4.819–24)

This is a dense and learned form of imitation, and not just because two poets are being recalled simultaneously.<sup>5</sup> First, the words *auro* and *potens* come from Virgil, not Varius. Second, a considerable stylistic originality is scrupulously preserved by dividing the imitation into different parts and by giving the last enormous emphasis as the pointed half of a trenchant ironic sententia which concludes both obituary and book.<sup>6</sup> Third, *urbem* is not only a conscious variation on Virgil's *patriam* and Varius' *Latium* but is also intended to remind us of a previous scholarly allusion, since, as Rostagni shows,<sup>7</sup> Virg. *G.* 2.205f. 'hic petit excidiis *urbem* miserosque penates/ ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro' is 'la riduzione di ciò che da Macrobio e riportato in due frammenti distinti'.<sup>8</sup> All in all, then, a notable tour de force.

This manifold series of allusions is not, however, merely decorative: rather it underlines the difference between the themes of these two greatest of the Roman epics. Whereas Virgil alludes to Antony, whose defeat at Actium is in many ways the climax of the poem,<sup>9</sup> all the ignominy of treason perpetrated for base gold is transferred by Lucan to a leading representative of the opposing Caesarian party, and the propaganda of two Augustan poets<sup>10</sup> is thus brilliantly turned against itself. This is all the more effective if the reader is alert enough to remember that, in adapting Varius, Virgil said his traitor not only sold his country but also imposed a tyrant on it ('dominumque potentem/ imposuit'). Curio's greed, we realize, brought not one such tyrant, but many, the *Caesareae domus series*, from Caesar himself to Nero.

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<sup>4</sup> Lasthenes, a minor figure, is possibly Servius' own conjecture. He was the man who betrayed Olynthus to Philip II of Macedon: see *RE* 12.1.890 s.v. (1). According to Demosthenes (8.40) he was later killed by Philip.

<sup>5</sup> A Hellenistic technique: see Clausen, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> And hence possibly also recitation.

<sup>7</sup> *Art. cit.* 391.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. 1 Morel, above, and fr. 2 'incubat ut Tyriis atque ex solido bibat auro.'

<sup>9</sup> *Aen.* 8.675ff. The luxurious life led by Antony and to which Varius alludes (fr. 2, above) is also perhaps detectable in 'hinc ope barbarica' (8.685).

<sup>10</sup> Varius' Augustanism can be seen elsewhere in his having composed a panegyric on Augustus (fr. 7 Morel).