

change of *esse* to *est* may naturally have impelled the scribe to emend the following *optandam* to *optandus*;²⁰ and accordingly to write *vita* instead of *vitam*, since the latter could not meaningfully stand after *hac est optandus*. Muretus's comment, 'tres postremi versus . . . ita varie leguntur ut appareat eam varietatem non aliunde quam ex corrigere volentium temeritate extitisse', is quoted approvingly by Fordyce.²¹ In this case, perhaps, the poet's own metrical temerity allowed the true reading of the last couplet to remain elusive for so long:

Quis me uno vivit felicior, aut magis hac esse
optandam vitam dicere quis poterit?

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²⁰ Lyne (498) writes 'a text that read *quis . . . vivit . . . aut . . . est* would almost inevitably attract *optand-* grammatically; so little weight should be accorded to the letters *-us*'. But note my proviso (n. 10) that *optandum* would be less likely to force a change to *optandus*.

²¹ Fordyce, 396.

WHAT DID VIRGIL'S SWALLOWS EAT?

nigra uelut magnas domini cum diuitis aedes
peruolat et pinnis alta atria lustrat hirundo,
pabula parua legens nidisque loquacibus escas;
et nunc porticibus uacuis, nunc umida circum
stagna sonat: similis medios Iuturna per hostes
fertur equis rapidoque uolans obit omnia curru.

(*Aeneid* 12.473–8)

Just as when a black swallow flies through the great house of a rich master and passes on the wing through the high halls, gathering small things to eat and food for its talkative nestlings; and now twitters in the empty colonnades, now round the wet pools: similarly Iuturna is borne by the horses through the middle of the enemy, and ranges over every part, flying along in the swift chariot.

Iuturna drives Turnus' chariot now here now there, hoping to throw off Aeneas' pursuit, but he follows the twisted circles (*tortos orbis*, 12. 481) of her course. Virgil compares her to a black *hirundo* flying through a rich man's house out into the colonnades and then round the pools or fishtanks. *Hirundo* can mean swallow, martin, or even swift.¹ All these birds eat insects and air-borne spiders; they do not eat human food. The common swallow chiefly eats flies, and feeds the nestlings on flies; it also eats wasps and bees. Its average prey size is much greater than the house martin's.² Virgil's *hirundo* gathers *pabula parua* for the nestlings. W. F. J. Knight in the Penguin translation writes 'tiny scraps of food'; C. Day Lewis translates 'crumbs of food'. If Virgil meant scraps of meat or crumbs of bread, stolen from the rich man's dinner table, then Virgil did not know what these birds eat.

According to Hough:

Of seventeen passages in the *Aeneid* that contribute to poetic imagery . . . one, though beautiful, is an ornithological curiosity. This is the elaborate simile in which Iuturna goes through the enemy lines like a black swallow that flies through the house of a rich man and crosses high atria

¹ Jacques André, *Les Noms d'oiseaux en Latin* (Paris, 1967), 92.

² *BWP* V 266. *BWP* = Cramp, S., and other ed., *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (Oxford, 1977–). *BWPC* is the concise edition, ed. D. W. Snow and C. M. Perrins (Oxford, 1997).

in quest of scraps of food, now in the empty portico, now in fishponds, so drives Juturna through thick foe and flies now here, now there. To an ornithologist the simile is hopelessly inept. No swallow eats food scraps and certainly not from the dining table; fishponds are fine places to catch insects on the wing, possibly also in the atria where insects might fly above a table, but not food scraps. No swallow in Europe is black; certainly it is a swift, and the blackness is intended to foretell the black doom of Turnus.³

I suggest that it is the translators who are wrong, not Virgil. The bird is catching flies, which are *pabula parua*, small edible things, suitable food for nestlings. *Pabula* need not mean food prepared for human consumption. Diomedes, king of the Bistones, regarded men as suitable food for his mares (Ovid, *Pont.* 1.2.120): *suis homines pabula fecit equis*.

Virgil calls the *hirundo* black (*nigra*). Hough is mistaken in thinking that only the swift could be called black. All these birds are blackish, or black in parts. The common swallow has 'upper parts shiny blue-black', and the upper parts of the house martin are 'blue-black' (*BWPC* II 1061, 1066). The common swift is a blackish brown; perhaps *atra*, a dull black, rather than *nigra*.

Virgil compares Juturna to a *hirundo* because she drives in twisted circles. It is the common swallow that is famous for its curving flight. It makes 'characteristic sweeps and swoops after insects', 'long curves and swoops' (*BWP* V 262–3; *BWPC* II 1061). Juturna skims over the plain. The common swallow skims over the ground even in sunny weather,⁴ whereas the other birds (house martin, red-rumped swallow, and common swift⁵) fly high in good weather.

The swallow in 12.475 is gathering food for the nestlings: *pabula parua legens nidisque loquacibus escas*. This line echoes *Georgics* 4.17: *ore ferunt dulcem nidis inmitibus escam*.

In *Georgics* 4 Virgil is saying that *merops* (the bee-eater) and red-breasted Progne (the red-throated common swallow)⁶ catch bees on the wing and 'carry them off in the beak as sweet food for their cruel nestlings'. The similarity between *Aeneid* 12.475 and *Georgics* 4.17 suggests that the *hirundo* in *Aeneid* 12 is a common swallow like Progne in *Georgics* 4.

The common swallow often nests inside a barn; the nest may be high up the wall, but never touches the rafters above. The bird that nests in a barn hunts for insects round the farmyard, but never enters the farmhouse. The house martin builds a mud nest against the outside wall of the house, under the eaves, so that the nest touches the rafters above. When Virgil says the *hirundo* 'suspends' its nest from the rafters (*Georgics* 4.307), he means a house martin.⁷ The house martin, nesting on the outside of the house, does not enter it to hunt for insects. The *hirundo* in *Aeneid* 12 does hunt inside the house. It begins the hunt inside, and then flies out to the colonnades and the pools or fishponds. I suggest that the *hirundo* in *Aeneid* 12 is nesting inside the rich man's house; that is why it begins the hunt indoors. The common swallow certainly nests in

³ John H. Hough, 'Bird imagery in Roman poetry', *CJ* 70 (1974), 6–7.

⁴ *The Encyclopedia of Birds*, ed. C. M. Perrins and A. L. A. Middleton (New York, 1986), 332–3.

⁵ Virgil meant one of these birds when he said it was a sign of bad weather if the *hirundo* flew low round the edges of the pond (*Georgics* 1.377).

⁶ Virgil is copying Aristotle (*H.A.* 626a7–9) who says the swallow eats bees as the *merops* does. When Aristotle says (*H.A.* 92b16–17) that the swallow eats flesh, he means minute flying creatures, says F. Capponi, *Ornithologia Latina* (Genoa, 1979), 296.

⁷ W. G. Arnott, *G&R* 14 (1967), 52 illustrates this with photographs of the nests.

the houses of the poor, in Cairo,⁸ in Greece,⁹ and in medieval England.¹⁰ Donatus, explaining how the *hirundo* resembles Juturna, calls it *domestica*, which suggests that he thought it was nesting in the house.¹¹

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⁸ Derek Goodwin, *Birds of Man's World* (University of Queensland Press, 1978), 25.

⁹ D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (London and Oxford, 1936), 316.

¹⁰ Brunsdon Yapp, *Birds in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 1981), 112. Alexander of Canterbury, companion of St Anselm, mentions two swallows nesting indoors, in *cenaculo*; quoted under *HIRUNDO* in *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Oxford, 1975-). See also Alexander Neckam, *De Naturis Rerum* 2.52.

¹¹ I warmly thank the anonymous referee who urged me to consult *BWP* and the books by André and Capponi.

TWO UNIDENTIFIED SENATORS IN

JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 19

Names of Romans in Josephus are notoriously liable to corruption. Two minor characters in his account of the assassination of Caligula have so far defied plausible emendation, 'Timidius' in *A.J.* 19.33-4 and 'Bathybius' in 19.91. The sources of Josephus' account of this dramatic episode were unquestionably high class—two, rather than one, Latin historians, as Wiseman has demonstrated, the main one (rather than the only one) being Cluvius Rufus, the other possibly Fabius Rusticus.¹

I. 'TIMIDIUS'

καὶ ἦν γὰρ Πομπήδιος συγκλητικὸς μὲν, τὰς ἀρχὰς δὲ διεληλυθὼς σχεδὸν ἀπάσας, Ἐπικούρειος δ' ἄλλως καὶ δι' αὐτὸ ἀπράγμονος ἐπιτηδευτῆς βίου. τοῦτον ἐνδείκνυσιν Τιμίδιος ἐχθρὸς ὢν ὡς λοιδορία χρησάμενον ἀπρεπεῖ κατὰ τοῦ Γαίου μάρτυρα παραλαμβάνων Κυντιλίαν γυναῖκα τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐπιφανείᾳ τοῦ ὡραίου περιπούδαστον πολλοῖς τε οὖσαν καὶ τῷ Πομπηδίῳ. καὶ τῆς ἀνθρώπου, ψεῦδος γὰρ ἦν, δεινὸν ἡγουμένης μαρτυρίαν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ τοῦ ἐραστοῦ παρασχεῖν, βασάνων ἐχρηζεν ὁ Τιμίδιος.

There was a certain Pompe dius, a man of senatorial rank who had held almost all the magistracies, but who otherwise was an Epicurean and because of that pursued a life free from state-affairs. He was accused by his enemy Timidius of having uttered disgraceful slanders against Gaius. As witness, Timidius called Quintilia, a stage performer, whose youth and beauty gave her many admirers, including Pompe dius. The charge was false, and the girl refused to give evidence that would send her lover to his death. Timidius demanded torture.

(trans. Wiseman, slightly modified)

Chaerea, who was to be the assassin, was obliged to carry out the torture, which Quintilia bravely withstood: in the event, she and Pompe dius were pardoned by Gaius.

¹ T. P. Wiseman, *Death of an Emperor* (Exeter, 1991), xii ff., 111ff. He attributes to Cluvius 24-61, 62-7, 70-93, 96-105, 109-57, 161-96, 198-211, 269-73, to the other source(s) (?Fabius Rusticus) 2-14, 17-23, 94-5, 158-60, 212-36, 237-45, 246-68, with minimal additional comment by Josephus himself (1, 15-16, 61, 68-9, 106-8, 196-8). He identifies in the second source 'a particular hatred of Claudius' over-powerful freedmen, and a disenchanting view of the rapacity, arrogance and incompetence of senators which contrasts conspicuously with the attitude of the main source' (xiii). If this is right, could not 62-7, or even 62-9, also come from this source, sc. Fabius Rusticus? The anti-Claudian freedmen motif is very pronounced here; and the whole section looks rather like an insertion.