

THE TEXT OF *PERVIGILIUM VENERIS* 90: A PROPOSED EMENDATION<sup>1</sup>

The manuscripts read (without punctuation):<sup>2</sup>

S[almasianus]:	quando fiam ut chelidon ut tacere desinam
T[huaeus]:	quando faciam ut celidon ut taceret desinam
V[indobonensis]:	quando faciam ut chelidon ut tacere desinam

This paper examines the long-debated textual crux in the first half of the line. Rivinus' economical emendation *uti*, adopted by most modern editors, solves the metrical problem by removing the unacceptable hiatus: *quāndō fīam ūtī chēlīdōn*, etc. Though this corrects the metre, it leaves the awkwardness of *uti* and *ut* in the same line,<sup>3</sup> and the crux continues to attract emendation.<sup>4</sup> Some modern editors, most recently Cameron,<sup>5</sup> have adopted TV's *faciam* for its sense, in combination with the metrical smoothness of Rivinus' *uti*. The reading remains weak, however, and in accordance with the doctrine of the probable direction of change<sup>6</sup> *faciam* appears to be a deliberate correction.

Corruption seems therefore to reside in *ut*, not in the verb. Though both hiatus and repetition occur elsewhere, their collocation here in the transmission of the single word *ut* points unmistakably to corruption. A monosyllable beginning with a consonant is required to replace the metrically faulty and gracelessly repetitive *ut*. We propose the emendation *vel*, 'introducing what might be thought an extreme or unlikely possibility',<sup>7</sup> which seems appropriate for a fantasy involving metamorphosis. Verg. *A.* 11.259 *vel Priamo miseranda manus* provides an illustrative parallel. Diomedes envisions the unlikelyhood of being able to arouse Priam's sympathy in order to emphasize his soldiers' sufferings.<sup>8</sup> We therefore would read *quando fiam vel chelidon*, and translate 'when shall I become—a swallow, even?'

Here at the climax of the poem the traditional narrative of rape and subsequent metamorphosis of Procne and Philomela has been drastically revalorized. The narrator envies the birds' ability to sing and desires such a fate for himself. The nightingale's song is so sweet that it makes the listener 'think that tunes of love issued from her melodious mouth, and not a sister's complaint of her brutal husband' (trans. Mackail). Our emendation emphasizes the difference in generic register between the song of the nightingale and those of lesser singers. Roman poets traditionally associate the nightingale, who produces songs of love and lamentation, with the

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<sup>2</sup> Salmasianus = Paris, B.N. Lat. 10318, 8th/9th century; Thuaeus = Paris, B.N. Lat. 8071, 9th century; Vindobonensis = Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 9401, 16th century.

<sup>3</sup> L. Catlow, *Pervigilium Veneris* (Brussels, 1980), 97, criticizes the second *ut* as 'not . . . particularly elegant'. We argue that Catlow suspects the wrong *ut*.

<sup>4</sup> C. Clementi, *Pervigilium Veneris* (Oxford, 1936<sup>3</sup>), ad loc. lists earlier emendations.

<sup>5</sup> A. Cameron, 'The *Pervigilium Veneris*', in *La poesia tardoantica: tra retorica, teologia e politica*. Atti del V Corso della Scuola Superiore di Archeologia e Civiltà Medievali (Messina, 1984), 209–34.

<sup>6</sup> *utrum in alterum abiturum erat?* Cf. M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique applicable to Greek and Latin texts* (Stuttgart, 1973), 7–9.

<sup>7</sup> OLD s.v. *vel* 5.

<sup>8</sup> 'A band that even Priam must pity.' Other parallels include Propertius 4.5.5 *docta vel Hippolytum Veneri mollire negantem* and Martial 8.55.6 *vel tua rura dabunt*.

elegiac genre.<sup>9</sup> The narrator does not aspire to emulate this greater singer; rather, he hopes only to have the humbler voice of the swallow.<sup>10</sup> He will not produce elegiac lamentations, rather trochaic praise of Venus and the world's rebirth. *vel* underlines the distinction between the enchanting lament of the nightingale (lines 85–7) and the twittering of the swallow. Used to 'offer a suggestion', and meaning 'for instance', or 'if you will',<sup>11</sup> *vel* distinguishes and emphasizes the nuance in the alternatives: '[I cannot become the lovely-voiced nightingale;] when shall I become—a swallow, even?'<sup>12</sup>

The corruption of *vel* to *ut*, we propose, will have occurred in the common ancestor of our manuscripts. Obviously, the scribe of that ancestor could have been influenced by the presence of the *ut* later in the line. A palaeographical factor also facilitated this particular corruption. *Vel* and *ut* can be confused for each other in late ancient and medieval minuscule. In early minuscule hands, *vel* is often abbreviated as *ut*. To signify the abbreviation, the scribe draws a stroke through the ascender of the *l*,<sup>13</sup> often making the final character virtually indistinguishable from the letter *t*.<sup>14</sup> The scribe of the ancestor of our manuscripts, we suggest, will have misread this abbreviation as *ut*, and copied accordingly. Lowe mentions that the single scribe of the venerable S, our oldest witness to the *Pervigilium Veneris*, often changes to minuscule at line ends from his formal late uncial.<sup>15</sup> Spallone's discussion of the manuscript found this phenomenon already from the book's opening, as early as page 2, line 19, where the final *-tis* of *fatis* is in minuscule.<sup>16</sup> Thus there is no palaeographical bar to the conclusion that S could have had a minuscule ancestor in which the corruption described above occurred.

A parallel example of this corruption occurs in the preface to the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, uniquely preserved in Monte Cassino 204 (11th century). The readings that Van Beek prints,<sup>17</sup> *vel* at *Passio* 1.2 and *ut* at *Passio* 1.5, are confirmed by the Greek text (ἤ and ἴνα respectively), thought to be a free translation of the Latin.<sup>18</sup> The scribe of Monte Cassino 204 wrote the same set of characters in both places, however; he misread the *ut* of the exemplar at *Passio* 1.5 and incorrectly wrote *vel* (*ut*). Van Beek made the opposite mistake: his understanding of *Passio* 1.5 and the confirmation of the Greek led him to interpret the characters before him as the meaningful *ut* instead

<sup>9</sup> Cf. G. Rosati, *CQ* 46 (1996), 214–15; A. Sauvage, *Étude de thèmes animaliers dans la poésie latine* (Brussels, 1975), part II, ch. 4.; A. Steier, *RE* 13.1864.42ff.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the opposition of swan and bee at Hor. C. 4.2.25–32, which 'epitomizes the disavowal of the grandiloquent style'; cf. G. Davis, *Polyhymnia: The Rhetoric of Horatian Lyric Discourse* (Berkeley, 1991), 133ff.

<sup>11</sup> *OLD* s.v. *vel* 4b. Cf. A. L. Sihler, *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Oxford, 1995), 230–1, 539–41.

<sup>12</sup> Parallels include, among many others, Plaut. *Mil.* 25 *edepol vel elephanto in India*.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. M. Lindsay, *Notae Latinae* (Cambridge, 1915), § 396.

<sup>14</sup> We add the instance below from the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* to the examples cited by L. Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale appliquée aux textes latins* (Rome, 1911), § 772.

<sup>15</sup> *CLA* 5, no. 593. Examples include page 67, line 19 (the last three letters of *hostis*) and page 180, line 18 (the final letters *-rientem* in *carientem*).

<sup>16</sup> M. Spallone, *IMU* 25 (1982), 49–51.

<sup>17</sup> C. I. M. I. Van Beek (ed.), *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 1 (Nijmegen, 1936), 4 and 6.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. Fridh, *Le problème de la Passion des Saintes Perpétue et Félicité* (Göteborg, 1968). We have benefited from the discussion of N. Bernstein, S. Findley, M. Drinkwater Ottone, K. Peterson, and G. Renberg, 'Southern Italy and the transmission of the *Passio Perpetuae*: a study of the unique manuscript Monte Cassino 204' (forthcoming).

of the meaningless *vel*. The mistakes of both scribe and editor were due to the similar appearance of the characters.

This is a palaeographical reconstruction of the corruption that, we suggest, also occurred in the transmission of *Pervigilium Veneris* 90. The double mistake in the case of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* demonstrates the ease with which confusion between *ut* and *vel* could arise, as the difference involved is slight. Rivinus' emendation, the restoration of '*unica . . . literula*',<sup>19</sup> appealed to him because it observed the principle of minimal emendation. Our emendation is equally minimal, though it may seem more complex. Like Rivinus we assume that the scribe misread a single stroke, in this case the extended and crossed shaft of *l* for *t*.

To sum up, we recommend this proposed emendation of *Pervigilium Veneris* 90 because:

1. the reading *vel*, for STV's *ut*, mends the metre and the sense in a satisfactory fashion;
2. it clarifies the sequence of rhetorical argument in the poem's ending; and,
3. it explains the origin of the erroneous reading by a simple scribal misunderstanding found in similar manuscripts.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Clementi (n. 3), 262.

<sup>20</sup> In a forthcoming companion study, 'The reception of *Pervigilium Veneris* in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*', we examine the effects of this textual corruption on the modern reception of the poem.