

6.16) and in that case the reading *septifluus* is apt: in the language of epic and tragedy this could easily mean the septuplet delta of 'a Nile'. The overstated periphrasis for the region's major river would thus turn Pactolus, which is not even a Nile-of-the-north, into a Nile and such exaggeration fits the parody of Petronius well. The verb *adorat* then echoes the seven implied mouths of the river.¹⁵ But whichever reading is chosen, Petronius' intent, I contend, is humorous.

Moreover, to add insult to injury, Encolpius says that a shrine has been erected for Priapus in *tuis* ... *Hypaepis* (v. 4). Not much is known of this town (see L. Büchner, *RE* 9.1.195–6), but when it is mentioned its insignificance is often emphasized: *Ov. Met.* 6.12–13 (contrasting the lowly origin of Arachne with her renown throughout Lydia) *quamvis l orta domo parua paruis habitabat Hypaepis*; *ibid.* 11.152 (on the location of Tmolus) *Sardibus hinc, illinc paruis finitur Hypaepis*; *Tac. Ann.* 4.55 (on the unsuccessful attempt of Hypaepa, among others, to be chosen as the site for a temple for Tiberius and his mother) *Hypaepeni ... tramissi ut parum ualidi*.

Small wonder, then, that for a cure of his impotence Encolpius depends on *dii maiores*, Mercury in particular (*Petr.* 140.12), not Priapus.

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doi:10.1017/S0009838808000827

¹⁵ G. Fiaccadori, 'Priapo in Egitto (Petronio, *Sat.* CXXXIII 3)', *PP* 36 (1981), 373–8, even suggests emending *Lydus* ... *†semper flauius†* (vv. 3–4) to *litum* ... *septifluum* so as to make the phrase refer to the Egyptian Nile, but this is not necessary.

THE VIRGILIAN REMINISCENCES AT TACITUS *HISTORIES* 3.84.4

Scholars have long noted Tacitus' allusions to Virgil when he describes Vitellius' wandering through the Palace as Rome falls to the Flavians (*H.* 3.84.4):

Vitellius capta urbe per aversam Palatii partem Aventinum in domum uxoris sellula defertur, ut, si diem latebra vitavisset, Tarracinam ad cohortes fratremque perfugeret. dein mobilitate ingenii et, quae natura pavoris est, cum omnia metuenti praesentia maxime displicerent, in Palatium regreditur vastum desertumque, dilapsis etiam infimis servitiorum aut occursum eius declinantibus. **terret solitudo et tacentes loci**; temptat clausa, inhorrescit vacuis; fessusque misero errore et pudenda latebra semet occultans ab Iulio Placido tribuno cohortis protrahitur.

Tacitus had at least two Virgilian passages in mind, possibly three. Schmaus pointed to *loca nocte tacentia late* (*Aen.* 6.265) and *horror ubique animo simul ipsa silentia terrent* (*Aen.* 2.755). Baxter added *nunc omnes terrent aerae* (*Aen.* 2.728) and observed that the two passages in *Aeneid* 2 are closer in context to Tacitus.¹ No one, however,

¹ H. Schmaus, *Tacitus: ein Nachahmer Vergils* (diss. Erlangen; Bamberg, 1887), 22. R.T.S. Baxter, 'Virgil's influence on Tacitus in book 3 of the *Histories*', *CP* (66), 1971, 93–107, at 106. J. Henry, *Aeneidea* 2 (Dublin, 1878), 340, had already caught Tacitus' borrowing from *Aen.* 2.755. R.G. Austin (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis, Aeneidos, Liber Secundus* (Oxford, 1964), 267, lists re-workings of *Aen.* 2.728 by Lucan 8.5, Silius Italicus *Pun.* 6.58–9, and Juvenal 10.21. He also finds an echo of *Aen.* 2.755 in Valerius Flaccus, 2.41. Seneca also quotes *Aen.* 2.726–9 verbatim at *Ep.* 56.12. Given the currency of these Virgilian phrases, we can safely assume, then, that the

has discussed the purpose of these reminiscences. Tacitus has chosen these quotations with the Virgilian context in mind to evoke various emotions and associations in the reader as he contemplates the last hours of Vitellius and the capture of Rome by the Flavians. These allusions add to Tacitus' nuanced portrayal of Vitellius in the second half of *Histories* 3, with its complex blend of compassion for his plight and harsh judgement on his ineptitude as *princeps*.

Tacitus' account at *H.* 3.84.4 is a fitting conclusion to his portrait of Vitellius as fearful and inconstant.² The historian has already alluded to Vitellius' *mobilitas ingenii* when he awards equestrian status to his freedman Asiaticus at a banquet after refusing this request in public (*H.* 2.57.2). Moreover, Vitellius' own commanders alternately fear and despise him, *subitis offensis aut intempestivis blanditiis mutabilem* (*H.* 2.92.2). Finally, in his obituary, Tacitus criticizes Vitellius' misunderstanding of the nature of friendship (*H.* 3.86.2: *amicitias dum magnitudine munerum, non constantia morum contineri putat, meruit magis quam habuit*). Given all this, the Virgilian reminiscences add little to our understanding of Vitellius' character or his reaction to the immediate situation, especially as Tacitus has already alluded in 3.84.4 to the emperor's fear (albeit in a *sententia*) and isolation. The allusions to the *Aeneid* do, however, enhance the pathos of the scene, where the audience is induced to empathize with Vitellius' fears and pity him.³

Let us now examine the Virgilian passages in their original setting. Both describe Aeneas' trepidation; the first when he is setting out from Troy with his family (*Aen.* 2.725–9):

ferimur per opaca locorum,
et me, quem dudum non ulla iniecta movebant
tela neque adverso glomerati examine Grai,
nunc omnes terrent aurae, sonus excitat omnis
suspensum et pariter comitique onerique timentem.

The second describes his frantic return to Troy in search of Creusa (*Aen.* 2.752–7):

principio muros obscuraque limina portae,
qua gressum extuleram, repeto et vestigia retro
observata sequor per noctem et lumine lustro:
horror ubique animo, simul ipsa silentia terrent.
inde domum, si forte pedem, si forte tulisset,
me refero...

Aeneas and Vitellius are both walking in fear of everything, even silence. But there are striking differences. Aeneas is leading his family from Troy to safety and then returning to the city in search of Creusa who has become separated from them on the journey. On this dangerous return trip, Aeneas is distraught but also purposeful (*Aen.* 2.750–1):

ancient reader would be used to engaging with them and would not miss Tacitus' nuances. I thank Rhiannon Ash for this observation and for advice that has improved this paper.

² R. Ash, *Ordering Anarchy. Armies and Leaders in Tacitus' Histories* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 124.

³ D.S. Levene, 'Pity, fear and the historical audience: Tacitus on the fall of Vitellius', in S.M. Braund and C. Gill (edd.), *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (Cambridge, 1997), 128–49, at 144. For Tacitus' use of Virgil to evoke pathos and horror in *Histories* I, see N.P. Miller, 'Virgil and Tacitus again', *PVS* 18 (1986), 87–106. Levene, at 144, observes that Tacitus, unlike Suetonius, Dio/Xiphilinus and Josephus, omits or mitigates degrading aspects of Vitellius' capture and death. For Tacitus' portrayal of Vitellius as a tyrant, see E. Keitel, 'Foedum Spectaculum and related motifs in Tacitus' Histories II–III', *RhM* 135 (1992), 344–51, and n. 9 below.

stat casus renovare omnis omnemque reverti
per Troiam et rursus caput obiectare periclis.

Earlier Aeneas had been fearful for himself, but also for his father and son (*Aen.* 2.729). Vitellius, on the other hand, is wandering alone in the Palace to which he has returned after reaching his wife's house. Aeneas leaves Troy alive; Vitellius is killed in the heart of Rome.

While Tacitus makes no mention at *H.* 3.84.4 of Vitellius' concern for his family, this is one of the few good qualities he allows the *princeps*.⁴ On their account, he had rejected appeals to fight it out with the Flavians and so die bravely (*H.* 3.67.1):

Surdae ad fortia consilia Vitellio aures: obruebatur animus miseratione curaue, ne pertinacibus armis minus placabilem victorem relinqueret coniugi ac liberis. erat illi et fessa aetate parens; quae tamen paucis ante diebus opportuna morte excidium domus praevenit, nihil principatu filii adsecuta nisi luctum et bonam famam.

When he tries to abdicate on 18 December, Vitellius asks the people to remember him and have pity on his brother, wife and innocent children (*H.* 3.68.2). As he speaks, he holds out his son, commending him to the crowd.⁵ Unlike Aeneas, Vitellius, once the city is captured, makes no effort to save his family. Aeneas cannot save his wife, but at least tries to rescue her and is able to learn her fate and say goodbye. Vitellius reaches Galeria's house, but is only concerned about his own flight from there. Tacitus does not say whether Vitellius saw his wife or not.⁶

The contexts of the Virgilian and Tacitean passages suggest that Tacitus also uses Virgil here to remind us of the emperor's fecklessness and unfitness to rule. While Aeneas is forced to revisit fearfully the destruction of his city when he tries to find Creusa, the reader knows he has fought bravely there and has been instructed by the gods to move on. Tacitus, on the other hand, juxtaposes the Vitellians' defence of the praetorian camp (*H.* 3.84.1–3) with Vitellius' aimless anxiety. They fall with wounds in front: *ea cura etiam morientibus decori exitus fuit* (*H.* 3.84.3). Thus we are reminded once again that his army deserved a better emperor than Vitellius (*H.* 2.89.2). By the end he is no longer the emperor, with the power to command or forbid, but only a cause of war (*H.* 3.70.4).⁷

Finally, let us consider the possible relevance of *Aen.* 6.265 to the Tacitean Vitellius' situation. Virgil invokes the deities and places of the Underworld as Aeneas begins his journey there (*Aen.* 6.264–5):

Di, quibus imperium est animarum, umbraeque silentes
et Chaos et Phlegethon, loca nocte tacentia late...

⁴ Levene (n. 3) at 143.

⁵ For Vitellius' concern for his family, see *H.* 1.75.2. Others play on this concern at *H.* 3.38.3 and 3.66.2; for his honours to his mother, see *H.* 2.89.2. L. Vitellius, the emperor's brother, is killed soon after him (*H.* 4.2.3), while Mucianus has Vitellius' son put to death the next year (*H.* 4.80.1).

⁶ Suetonius (*Vit.* 16) has Vitellius setting out for *Aventinum et paternam domum*. As Vitellius' wife's house was also on the Aventine (*H.* 3.70.1), it is unclear whether the discrepancy is a mistake or a deliberate change by Tacitus to underscore the Vitellius–Aeneas, Galeria–Creusa connections.

⁷ At *H.* 2.59.1 Vitellius is *impar curis gravioribus*. At *H.* 3.36.1 he fails to fulfil the duties of a general. At *H.* 3.56.2 in camp he is grossly ignorant of military life. For the contrast between the deaths of the praetorians and Vitellius, see K. Wellesley (ed.), *Cornelius Tacitus. The Histories Book III* (Sydney, 1972), 186, and Levene (n. 3) at 146.

This Virgilian evocation could merely add to the funereal air that has attended Vitellius since he tried to abdicate.⁸ While Aeneas will return to the land of the living, Vitellius' end is nigh. But Tacitus may also be underlining his portrait of Vitellius as a man who has not been truly alive for some time. While Aeneas revisits his past in the Underworld and learns something of the future of Rome and comes to a better understanding of what he must do as leader of a war in Italy, Vitellius is depicted as shunning the duties of a commander. Instead he conceals his anxieties with *luxus* and hides in the shade of his gardens, *ut ignava animalia, quibus si cibum suggeras, iacent torpentque, praeterita instantia futura pari oblivione dimiserat* (*H.* 3.36.1).⁹ Tacitus consistently depicts Vitellus as a slave to his own gluttony.¹⁰ Sallust reckons the lives and deaths of such men as the same, since they do nothing by which they will be remembered (*Cat.* 2.8). Vitellius, who lives only for the moment, oblivious to past and future, is the antithesis of Aeneas, who devotes his whole life after Troy to sowing the seeds for the future greatness of Rome.

While Tacitus may temper considerably the negative portrait of Vitellius established by Flavian propaganda and does pity him his squalid end, he never acquits him of unfitness to rule or the damage he caused to Rome. While sounding a note of pathos, the comparisons of Vitellius to Aeneas are also a damning judgement.¹¹

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doi:10.1017/S0009838808000839

⁸ See *H.* 3.67.1, quoted above. Also, Vitellius' son is carried in a *lecticula* to the attempted abdication *velut in funebrem pompam* (*H.* 3.67.2) while Vitellius himself wears mourning (*pullo amictu*, *H.* 3.67.2).

⁹ Tacitus places the second battle of Bedriacum out of chronological order just before *H.* 3.36, thus making Vitellius' obliviousness and failure to cope seem all the more shocking. At *H.* 2.67.2, Vitellius is never so intent on his worries that he forgets his pleasures; at *H.* 3.63.2, he is so sunk in torpor that he would forget he is the emperor if others did not remind him. On Vitellius' living only for the present, see also *H.* 2.95.3. For Tacitus' depiction of Vitellius as not truly alive, see E. Keitel, 'Feast your eyes on this: Vitellius as a stock tyrant (*Tac. Hist.* 3.36–39)', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Oxford, 2007), 441–6, at 444–5.

¹⁰ Vitellius had attended Nero's recitals willingly because he was *luxu et saginae mancipatus emptusque* (*H.* 2.71.1). For his gluttony and self-indulgence, see also *H.* 1.62.2; 2.31.1, 62.1 and 95.3.

¹¹ Baxter (n. 1) at 105–6 believes that Tacitus evokes the death of Priam for Vitellius' death, just as he has for the death of Galba. (On the various associations Tacitus activates when recounting Galba's death, see Ash [n. 2] at 79–83.) On a more optimistic note, R. Guerrini, 'Tito al santuario Pafio e il ricordo di Enea (*Tac. Hist.* 2.4)', *Atene e Roma* 31 (1986), 28–34, argues that Titus' consultation with the priest at the Temple of Venus Paphios is meant to recall Aeneas consulting the Sibyl in *Aen.* 6.

LIBER MANET: PLINY, *EP.* 9.27.2 AND JEROME, *EP.* 130.19.5

Jerome is one of the most famous late antique readers of the correspondence of Pliny the Younger.¹ Over the years scholars have identified a number of Plinian echoes

¹ On other late antique readers of Pliny, such as Ambrose of Milan, see A. Cameron, 'The fate of Pliny's *Letters* in the Late Empire', *CQ* n.s. 15 (1965), 289–98, esp. 290, 293–4; H. Savon, 'Saint Ambroise a-t-il imité le recueil de lettres de Pline le Jeune?', *REAug* 41 (1995), 3–17.