

THE WOODEN HORSE AND CHARON'S BARQUE: INCONSISTENCY IN VIRGIL'S "VIVID PARTICULARIZATION"

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IN HIS TALE OF WOES Aeneas mentions that the Trojan horse was made of fir (*intexunt abiete costas*, *Aen.* 2.16).¹ Soon afterwards he has Sinon describe it variously as maple (*trabibus contextus acernis*, 2.112) and as oak (*roboribus textis*, 2.186). Later it is again oak (2.230, 260), and we learn that it had doors of pine, or perhaps fir (*pineae . . . claustra*, 2.258-259).

In these shifts Servius (*ad* 2.16) recognized symbolism. For Sidgwick (1894, *ad* 2.16) it was "a natural poetic variation"; for T. E. Page (1894, *ad* 2.112), "a curious illustration of Virgil's *art*." Conington (1872, *ad* 2.112) adduced as a parallel *Aeneid* 2.577, where "Mycenae" is used for "Greece"; but that is a simple synecdoche. Most readers have recognized it as a product of two common literary devices, "elegant variation" and "vivid particularization" (*species pro genere*).

To be sure, Priam's subjects are indifferently called Dardanians, Ilians, Phrygians, Teucrians, or Trojans; the words are, for historical reasons, synonyms. Or again, fine arrows are dignified by the epithets Cydonian (*Ecl.* 10.59), Gortynian (*Aen.* 11.773), Lycian (*Aen.* 8.166), Gnosian (*Aen.* 5.306), or Thracian (*Aen.* 5.312). But these words are not synonyms; the actual arrows are different, and belong to Gallus, or Chloreus, or Evander, or are two prize-sets given by Aeneas for the footrace. Similarly instead of saying baldly "fine wine," Horace specifies Caecuban, or Calenian, or Falernian, or Formian, or Massic. But here too the names are not interchangeable; Horace does not label an amphora with disparate brand names. This is different from the horse, with its woodiness described by four contradictory epithets.

More thoughtful is R. G. Austin's interpretation (1964, *ad* 2.112):

We must remember that this is Sinon speaking: I suspect that *acernis* is a deliberate inaccuracy, a brilliant Virgilian touch to lend colour to Sinon's 'act' by a pretence of innocent ignorance—and the Trojans, knowing pinewood when they saw it, would feel superior to this simpleton.

¹In an earlier and more diffuse form this note was presented on 26 February 1968 to a seminar organized by the Subject Council (Latin) for District 7 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation. Subsequently, much abbreviated, it was read at the One Hundredth annual meeting of the American Philological Association, in Toronto, 29 December 1968. The writer wishes to express his gratitude to the referees appointed by the Editor of this journal.

This suggestion, attractive as it is, is made at the cost of ignoring the mentions of *oak* and *pine*, or rather of insisting (*ad* 2.186) that *roboribus* means "‘timber planks’: no specific wood here"; and (*ad* 2.258) that "*pineae* here corresponds to the *secta abies* of 16." These assertions both seem to be special pleading.

A parallel occurs in the descent into Hades. As Aeneas approaches the Styx, he glimpses Charon's rust-red skiff (*ferruginea* . . . *cumba*, *Aen.* 6.303). When the golden bough is displayed, the ferryman steers his sky-blue boat towards Aeneas (*caeruleam* . . . *puppim*, 6.410). Commentators from Servius (*ad* 9.582) on have persuaded themselves that "the (orange) colour of rust" can mean "the (blue) colour of tempered steel" (Munro *ad* *Lucr.* 4.76)! But surely Mackail was right (1930, *ad* 6.303) to insist that the colours are different.²

²The problem of identifying ancient colour terms is a morass into which one ventures with reluctance. Cf. Goethe, *Farbenlehre* (ed. Ernst Beutler, Zurich 1949) 288: "Ihre (i.e., Greek and Roman) Farbenbenennungen sind nicht fix und genau bestimmt, sondern beweglich und schwankend, indem sie nach beiden Seiten auch von angrenzenden Farben gebraucht werden." In the present writer's opinion, the current dogma (deriving chiefly from Serv. *ad* *Verg. G.* 1.467 and *Aen.* 9.582, Non. p. 549 Merceri, H. A. J. Munro *ad* *Lucr.* 4.76, and C. J. Fordyce *ad* *Catull.* 64.227) that *ferrugineus* means "blue/purple" is ill founded. The etymological significance of *ferrugo/ferrugineus* is patent; of the citations in *ThLL*, s.vv., no passage earlier than Ovid demands a tint outside the range of rust, from yellowish orange to dark red—a vain assertion unless the relevant texts are discussed once again. Plaut. *Mil.* 1179: Pleusicles is to clothe himself *ornatu* . . . *nauclerico*; his hat and mantle are to be *ferrugineum* (*nam is colos thalassicus*); *thalassicus* means not "sea-coloured" but "suitable to a seaman" (so, e.g., Alfred Ernout, in the Budé edition [vol. 4, 1942] *ad loc.*; Mason Hammond, Arthur W. Mack, and Walter Moskalew, in their edition [Cambridge, Mass. 1963] *ad loc.*; cf. *Mil.* 1282, *ornatu* . . . *thalassico*). *Lucr.* 4.75–76: theatral awnings are called *lutea russaque vela et ferrugina*; all three colours are in the red-yellow part of the spectrum. *Catull.* 64.227 and *Verg. Aen.* 9.582: Theseus' sail and the chlamys of the anonymous *Arcentis filius* are dyed *ferrugine Hibera*—apparently with an ochre from the Spanish iron mines; see Robinson Ellis (2nd edition, Oxford 1889) *ad loc.*, with the excursus on pages 347–348; and Gustav Friedrich (Leipzig 1908) *ad loc.*; also (on the natural occurrence of *rubrica* in iron mines) Plin. *H.N.* 35.15.30. *Verg. G.* 1.467: at Caesar's death the sun *caput obscura nitidum ferrugine texit*; this is now generally taken to refer to the eclipse (e.g., H. H. Huxley *ad loc.*, Fordyce *ad* *Catull. loc. cit.*); but older commentators recognized it as the *dimming* of the sun noted elsewhere (*lurida* . . . *lumina*, Ov. *Met.* 15.785–786; *pallore continuo*, Plin. *H.N.* 2.98; ὥχρὸς, Plut. *Caes.* 69.4). *Verg. G.* 4.183: *ferrugineos hyacinthos*; cf. *Ecl.* 3.63, *suave rubens hyacinthus*; on the identification of the hyacinth, see most recently Elfriede Abbe, *The Plants of Virgil's Georgics* (Ithaca 1965) 53–63. *Verg. Aen.* 11.772: Chloreus was *peregrina ferrugine clarus et ostro*; possibly a hendiadys; at all events *ostrum* seems to be red; J. André, *Etude sur les Termes de Couleur dans la Langue latine (Etudes et Commentaires 7, Paris 1949)* 102–103. Tib. 1.4.43: the rainbow tints the sky *picta ferrugine (picea*, quoted in *ThLL*, André, *op. cit.* 109, Fordyce, *loc. cit.*, is a humanistic conjecture, by no means universally accepted; see the *app. crit.* in Lenz' edition). Ov. *Met.* 15.789: at Caesar's death, *caerulus Lucifer* was spattered *ferrugine atra*; on *ater* as "dark" but not "black," see

Here are two contradictions, utterly trivial. The only reason for noting them is that Latin is a precise tool, and Virgil, with his two-and-a-half lines a day, is no unconscious craftsman. If there is an explanation it may lie in his use of his predecessors.

Homer is of course the model for Roman epic—a fact established by the alien metre. In addition, every reader of Homer observes certain idiosyncrasies. His ancient disciples accepted them as hallmarks of the epic, and strove to preserve the integrity of the genre by copying their example. Such a one was Virgil; to the tradition he owed not only the heroic *mise-en-scène*, the divine machinery, and individual episodes, but also details of expression (similes³ as well as other passages,⁴ recurrent phrases⁵), and even matters of accident (tmesis,⁶ archaisms,⁷ variable quantities,⁸ heterocclisis⁹).

André, *op. cit.* 47. And *ferrugo* is regularly associated with the underworld or the uncanny: the realm of Dis, *Cul.* 273; Charon's boat, *Verg. Aen.* 6.303; Pluto's reins, *Ov. Met.* 5.404; the hand of the demonic hag *Invidia*, *Ov. Met.* 2.798; the rags, snatched from an accursed pyre, with which at his birth the Eumenides swathed the victim of the poet's ire, *Ibis* 233; for the range of associations, cf. *luridus*. *Ov. Met.* 13.960: Glaucus' beard and hair are *viridem ferrugine* (metonymy for *aerugine*). See J. W. Mackail (Oxford 1930) *ad Verg. Aen.* 6.303, and Abbe, *op. cit.* 58.

Contra, an anonymous reader points out that people of the sunny Mediterranean climate may not see colours as northerners do, surface texture or sheen being more important than hue; he refers to Norman Douglas, *Old Calabria* (London 1938) 69–71 (on the colour perception of peasants of southern Italy); and to Fordyce on Catullus 45.12.

³Cf., e.g., Macrobius *Saturnalia* 6.3.7. Footnotes 3 to 9, with their desultory references, are intended only to elucidate the text by reminding readers of what they already know.

⁴Georg Nikolaus Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer (Hypomnemata 7, Göttingen 1964)*.

⁵J. Sparrow, *Half-lines and Repetitions in Virgil* (Oxford 1931) 79 ff. (*non vidi*).

⁶Usually called an archaism; A. Meillet, *Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue latine*⁸ (Paris 1948) 196. But while tmesis was no doubt native to some prehistoric phase of Latin it is not attested as a living form in the earliest Latin or indeed in any of the Italic dialects (e.g., C. D. Buck, *Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* [Chicago 1933] 363). It therefore seems preferable to see literary tmesis as an imitation of Homer.

⁷Admittedly epic poets drew on the language of religion and law for their archaism; and indeed all poetry employs archaisms to some extent. But evidently Virgil in his use of them followed tradition. Already Ennius had recognized this principle; thus *olli*, *A.33 V.*, but *ille*, *A.391 V.*; *vias* (genitive), *A.441 V.*, *Albai Longai*, *A.33 V.*, but *vitae*, *A.160 V.*, *aquae*, *A.379 V.*; *divum* (genitive), *A.249 V.*, 580 *V.*, *virum*, *A.276 V.*, but *multorum*, *A.249 V.*, *cirorum*, *A.285 V.*; *laudari*, *A.560 V.*, but *fari*, *A.19 V.*, *solicitari*, *A.334 V.*, *cremari*, *A.359 V.*; *dies* (genitive), *A.413 V.*, but *fidei*, *A.338 V.* For the suggestion that, in this, early Latin epic consciously followed Greek, see now Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968) 693, 736–737; cf. L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London 1954) 97–98; Meillet, *Esquisse* 221.

⁸E.g., *Sŷchaeus* (*Aen.* 1.343) *vs.* *Sŷchaeus* (1.348, etc.); cf. *Ἄπες Ἄπες* (*Il.* 5.31 = 455), a typical example of Greek unprincipled versatility in Martial's eyes (9.11.15). Virgil followed Homeric rules in the use of vowels in hiatus; Meillet, *Esquisse* 218–219.

⁹E.g., *Daren* (*Aen.* 5.456) *vs.* *Dareta* (5.460, etc.); cf. *Πατρόκλῃος* (*Il.* 17.665) *vs.* *Πατρόκλῆος* (17.670).

Another debt was the Homeric epithet, "swift-footed Achilles," "shining Achilles," "swift-footed shining Achilles," and the rest. Their use in Homer is said to reflect a time when the epic was orally composed; apparently the noun-plus-epithet proved itself a convenient building block for improvisation. Whatever their origin, Virgil observed them and imitated them: *pius Aeneas* (19 times), *Saturnia Iuno* (7 times), *Messapus equum domitor* (4 times), *fortemque Cloanthum* (3 times), and many others.

Generally speaking, Homer has only a single noun-epithet combination for each hero, for each metrical fraction of the line, and for most cases. Virgil exhibits no such economy. Metrically interchangeable with *pius Aeneas* are *pater Aeneas* (17 times), *bonus Aeneas* (twice), and *Tros Aeneas* (once).¹⁰ In place of *fidus Achates* (5 times), Virgil uses *fortis Achates* once. At the beginning of the line, Aeneas is *magnanimus Aenean* twice, *ingentem Aenean* twice, and *Dardanium Aenean* twice. At the end of the line, *regia Iuno* occurs four times, *maxima Iuno* three; *pulcher Iulus* four times, *parvus Iulus* three; *Sidoniam Dido* four times, *pulcherrima Dido* twice; *altus Apollo* and *auctor Apollo* twice each, *augur Apollo*, *magnus Apollo*, and *Phoebus Apollo* once each. The practice of Virgil, founded though it be on Homeric usage, is strikingly different.

One other peculiarity of the Homeric epithet is relevant to the problem under discussion. The "given essential idea" expressed by "swift-footed Achilles" is simply "Achilles"; the phrase is used to fill a particular part of the line even when the fact that he is swift-footed is not germane to the action. The poet is not vividly aware of the import of the epithets; and they vary according to the case required and the part of the line to be filled. In this regard, proper names have received the most attention; but what is true of them holds equally for common nouns.

Poseidon, for instance, is referred to

in H₂ (i.e., filling the line after the hephthemimeris), nominative, as *κρείων ἐνοσίχθων* (8 times);¹¹

in B₂, nominative, beginning with a vowel, as *ἐννοσίγαιος* (5 times; also twice in dative, and 10 times in accusative);

in B₂, nominative, beginning with a consonant, as *κυανοχαίτης* (twice).

A parallel series exists for "horses":

καλλιτριχες ἵπποι (14 times, including also accusative);

ὤκεες ἵπποι (30 times, including also accusative);

μῶνυχες ἵπποι (34 times, including also accusative).¹²

¹⁰Milman Parry, *L'épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* (Paris 1928) 39, 212-215.

¹¹The abbreviations are adapted from A. Severyns, *Homère 2: Le Poète et son oeuvre* (Brussels 1946) 49 ff.: T₂ = the half-line after the caesura at the third trochee; H₂ = after the hephthemimeris; B₂ = after the bucolic diaeresis. There is a violation of economy here, with *κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος* (9 times, including accusative).

¹²See Parry, *L'épithète traditionnelle* 140.

Similarly, *inter alia* Zeus is,

- in T₂, genitive, Διὸς νεφεληγερέταο (6 times);
- in T₂, accusative, beginning with a consonant, κελαινεφέα Κρονίωνα (4 times, including dative);
- in B₂, accusative, εὐρύοπα Ζῆν (20 times, including nominative and vocative);
- in B₂ (epithet only), τερπικέραυνος (14 times, in nominative, dative, and accusative).

Correspondingly, for “boat(s)” we find

- νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο (9 times);
- νέας φοινικοπαρήους (*Od.* 11.124 = 23.271);
- νῆα μέλαιναν (43 times, including dative);
- μιλτοπάργοι (twice).¹³

The Catalogue states that twelve vermilion-cheeked ships accompanied Odysseus to Troy (*Il.* 2.637). Of them only a single one survived the attentions of the Laestrygonians. And it was sent to the underworld by Circe:

[Odysseus speaks:] When we came down to our ship and the sea, first we dragged the ship into the shining brine, and we put the mast and the sails in the *black* ship, and we took the sheep and drove them on board, and we ourselves went, grieving and shedding a big tear; and she sent a favouring breeze behind our *blue-prowed* ship.¹⁴ [*Od.* 11.1–7]

Here is a contradiction, unimportant and unnoticed, which owes its existence to the manner of composition. Nor is this the sole example.

The essential idea “Greeks” is expressed

- in H₂, genitive, by Δαναῶν ταχυπώλων (9 times);
- in H₂, accusative, beginning with a consonant, by (φ)ἐλίκωπας Ἀχαιοὺς (6 times, including nominative);
- in B₂, accusative, beginning with a consonant, by λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν (19 times, including nominative);
- in B₂, accusative, beginning with a vowel, by νῆας Ἀχαιῶν (63 times, including nominative).¹⁵

“Wine” has an equivalent series:

- μέλανος (φ)οἶνοιο (3 times);
- μελιγδέα (φ)οἶνον (5 times);
- (φ)οἶνον ἐρυθρόν (7 times, including nominative);

¹³See Parry, *L'épithète traditionnelle* 136–137; cf. also the prepositional formula μέλαινων ἀπὸ/ἐπὶ νηῶν (T₂, 7 times). There is a breach of economy between νέας φοινικοπαρήους and νέας κυανοπρωρείους (*Od.* 3.299); the latter looks like an attempt to decline νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο.

¹⁴Odysseus' boat is black, *Il.* 1.433, 2.170, 8.222, 11.5, *Od.* 10.169; blue-prowed, *Od.* 9.482, 539, 10.127, 12.100, 148, 354.

¹⁵Parry, *L'épithète traditionnelle*, 124; Denys Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (*Sather Classical Lectures* 31, Berkeley 1959) 280–282, n. 64.

αἶθρα (φ)οῖνον (16 times).¹⁶

The potion which eventually fuddled Polyphemos is described by Odysseus:

I had a goatskin bottle of sweet *black* wine, which Maron gave me . . . [7 lines omitted] . . . sweet, unmixed, a divine drink; no one of the servants in his house knew of it, but he himself, and his wife, and one housekeeper. And when they drank this honey-sweet *red* wine, he would fill one cup and pour it in twenty measures of water, and a sweet bouquet would rise from the bowl.¹⁷ [Od. 9.196-210]

Solvitur comparando.¹⁸ Virgil knew his Homer, and borrowed from him many formal details. He saw Odysseus' ship which was "red," "black," and "blue," and his wine, "black" and "red." In them he found dispensation for his wooden horse, made of fir, maple, oak, and pine, and for Charon's barque, which was "blue" and "red."

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¹⁶Page, *op. cit.* 268-269, n. 32; he explains the doublet μελιθδέος οἶνου (H₂, twice).

¹⁷It is again black, Od. 9.346; cf. Calypso's wine, which is "red" at 5.165, but "black" at 265. Similar examples, less neat: the spear with which Menelaus wounded Helenus is bronze (χάλκεον ἔγχος) in Il. 13.595, and ashen (μείλινον ἔγχος) two lines later—metrical equivalents (see now William Whallon, *Formula, Character, and Context* [Cambridge, Mass. 1969] 42); Agamemnon's sword has silver rivets in Il. 2.45 and gold rivets in 11.29-30 (noted by the "A" scholiast to 2.45; as parallel he cites the pins which transfixed the ankles of the infant Oedipus, which are "iron" in Eur. *Phoen.* 26 and "gold-bound," *ibid.* 805).

¹⁸It is probably not significant that the Homeric contradictions noted above are restricted to noun-epithet combinations, while the Virgilian ones occur in clauses as well. To begin with, Homer employs such combinations more frequently. Nor did either poet regard them as different in kind from other utterances; the notion expressed in a noun-epithet phrase is often expanded into a clause. Thus, e.g., with ῥιγεδανῆς Ἑλένης, cf. πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν, Il. 24.775 (noted by William Whallon, *YCS* 17 [1961] 115); with ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων, cf. τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνεν ἀπ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο, Il. 24.605 (and cf. 1.49); with βωμός τε θυῆς, cf. *centumque Sabao ture calent arae*, Aen. 1.416-417 (in a passage closely imitating Od. 8.362-365; cited by Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* 162); with Zeus . . . ξείνιος, cf. *Iuppiter, hospitibus nam te dare iura loquuntur*, Aen. 1.731; with Κρήτην ἑκατόμπολιν, cf. *centum urbes habitant magnas*, Aen. 3.106; with φιλομειδῆς Ἀφροδίτη, cf. *risit Cytherea*, Aen. 4.128; with Διὶ τερπικεραυνῷ, cf. *an te, genitor, cum fulmina torques, nequiquam horremus*, Aen. 4.208-209; with ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις (for greaves), cf. *levis ocreas lento ducunt argento*, Aen. 7.634; with caelifer Atlas, Aen. 6.796, cf. *Atlas . . . caeli qui sidera tollit*, Aen. 8.141; and with δουράτεον . . . ἵππον, cf. Aen. 2.16, 112, 186, quoted above. Further apt examples are now added by Whallon, *Formula, Character, and Context* 26-27, 64-65.

A device superficially similar to the one discussed in the present paper is found in Ugaritic and Early Hebrew verse: nominally synonymous half-lines which exhibit poetic parallelism are sometimes contradictory; W. F. Albright, *History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism* (New York 1964) 95-96 (DeCoursey Fales Jr. provided the reference).