The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Notes on Vergil and Tacitus

F.W. Thomas

The Classical Review / Volume 12 / Issue 01 / February 1898, pp 33 - 33

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00025312, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00025312

How to cite this article:

F.W. Thomas (1898). Notes on Vergil and Tacitus. The Classical Review, 12, pp 33-33
doi:10.1017/S0009840X00025312

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

NOTES ON VERGIL AND TACITUS.

Cuncta equidem tibi, rex, fuerit quodcumque
fatebor

Vera, inquit: neque me Argolica de gente
negabo.

Hoc primum: nec, si miserum fortuna
Sinonem

*Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba
finget.*

Verg. *Aen.* II 77-80.

In this passage all the commentators seem to me to have overlooked a point, though not unnaturally since it is one of Vergil's feeble strokes. *Finxit* is interpreted as 'has made me to appear,' and the same sense is ascribed to *finget*. Evidently however the two words are not placed in their emphatic positions, made more emphatic by the antithesis, without good reason. Now the only reason which I can see for this is that the words have a double sense (1) the obvious sense, (2) a covert sense. 'If fortune has *feigned* (i.e. (1) 'made to appear' (2) 'made falsely to appear') Sino unfortunate, it shall not *feign* him (i.e. (1) 'make him to appear' (2) 'make him *falsely* to appear') a vain liar! Thus in the *finxit* Sino insolently mocks those whom he is deceiving, and in the *finget* the poet by an employment of the Tragic Irony makes him express his own condemnation. 'Not falsely shall fortune make him out a liar.'

That this is what Vergil intended is, I think, clear; it is an imitation of Greek Tragedy, but wanting in vigour and out of place in the Epic, as the oversight of all the commentators seems to prove.

Silvia prima soror, *palmis percussa lacertos*,
Auxilium vocat et duros conclamat agrestes.

Aen. VII. 503-4.

In the note on this passage Conington states that the only quoted parallel to the words in Italics is Claudian *Rapt. Proserp.* II 248-9 *planctuque lacertos verberat*. But Facciolati gives us three references to Ovid's *Metamor-*

phoses (s. *lacertus*) and one to Lucan: we may add Statius *Silv.* II 6. 82. In all these passages some form of *plango* or its derivatives occurs, and Sidgwick explains the action in our passage as a 'natural gesture of horror.' Plainly, however, the gesture is in the *Aeneid* a signal and not a mere expression of horror, as appears from l. 504. Vergil therefore understands the gesture in a different sense from his successors. Whether 'natural' or not, it may be of great antiquity, since under the name *āspḥotanam* it was a form of challenge used by wrestlers, etc. in ancient India.

Mox cessere hostes et sequentibus diebus
crebra pro portis proelia serebant.—Tac. *Hist.*
V c. 11.

This phrase is usually explained as equivalent to *crebra proelia committebant*. But it is impossible to distinguish between the use of *sero* here and in

bella ex bellis serendo.—Sall. *Mithr.*

ex aeternitate causa causam serens.—Cic.
De Fat. 12.

alternum seritote diem concorditer ambo
—Ennius.

rerum humanarum ordo seritur. — Liv.
xxv. 6.

Therefore the meaning is 'they engaged in a *series* of combats' sc. from day to day. It is true that from *consero* we have not only

nocti conseruisse diem—Ov. *Am.* III. 6. 10,

but also *conserere pugnam*. This, however, is merely an accusative of result, and the things which are really 'strung together' are *manus*. *Serere pugnam* would be an impossible expression: the plural is wanted.

This explanation, let me add, seems to be accepted by Forcellini, from whom the above examples are cited.

F. W. THOMAS.