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Vergil and the Messeniaca of Rhianus

M. Marjorie Crump

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VERGIL AND THE MESSENIACA OF RHIANUS.

IT has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the Messeniaca of Rhianus is summarised in Pausanias IV. 17. 6-24. 1.¹ In these chapters there are one or two points which suggest that Vergil may have been influenced to some extent by Rhianus.

Couat remarks that the night raid on the Corinthians, like the raid in *Aeneid* IX.,² is imitated from the raid on the camp of Rhesus in *Iliad* X. One or two details are common to Vergil and Pausanias, which are not found in Homer. Odysseus and Diomedes find the Thracians sleeping with their weapons and horses beside them. Diomedes kills thirteen men, of whom Rhesus is the only one named. No spoils are taken except the horses of Rhesus. In Pausanias and Vergil alike, the raid is made on men sleeping in disorder. The Latins killed by Nisus and Euryalus have fallen asleep after a drunken revel. Similarly, on one occasion, Pausanias narrates that Aristomenes, when taken prisoner, killed his captors, who had been made drunk by a maiden. Vergil names several of the slain leaders, as does Pausanias, and in both cases spoils are taken.

Pausanias' description of the taking of Ira has many details which remind us of the taking of Troy in *Aeneid* II. Both cities are surprised by night, the walls being left unguarded; there is confused fighting in the streets, and both the Messenians and the Trojans defend themselves desperately; both Aristomenes and Aeneas, though knowing that the cause is already lost, encourage the citizens to resist. Still more striking is the resemblance between the part played by Theoclus the seer, and Panthus the priest of Apollo.³ Theoclus warns Aristomenes that Ira is doomed, and bids Aristomenes save himself. The hero accordingly takes the secret treasure on which the fortunes of Messene depend, and buries it on Mount Ithome. So Panthus warns Aeneas and delivers to him the Penates. Though Vergil does not actually reproduce any passage in Pausanias there is a marked likeness in tone between the warnings of Theoclus and the speech of Panthus. Again, Hector's charge to Aeneas to flee bears a strong resemblance to that of Theoclus to Aristomenes.⁴

It cannot be claimed with certainty that Vergil imitated Rhianus; but, in view of the fact that he was in the habit of borrowing freely from his predecessors, it is not impossible that some details of treatment were suggested or supplied by the Messeniaca.

M. MARJORIE CRUMP.

QUINTILIAN, 9. 4. 101.

minus gravis erit spondeus praecedentibus et pyrrhichio ut iudici Iuniani.

THUS the cod. Bambergensis. The Ambrosianus reads *praecedenti* (followed by an erasure). . . . It is clear that the name of a metrical foot has fallen out. But whatever that foot may be there are grave difficulties, if with Halm we read *iudici*, since the phrase (1) contains no pyrrhic, and (2) is identical in rhythm with *ausus est confiteri*, which Quintilian has praised for its rhythm a few sections back (94). Halm suggests that *cretico* has dropped out before *et*, while Meister adopts Spalding's suggestion and supplies *iambo*. But the first syllable of *Iuniani* is long and not short as they appear to suppose. If, however, we read *iudicii*, the normal spelling in post-Augustan Latin (see Brambach, *Hilfsb. für lat. Rechtschreibung*, 1882, p. 10), it is easy to restore the passage by reading *praecedentibus pyrrhichio et palimbacchio* (or, if it be preferred, *palimbacchio et pyrrhichio*, starting from the final spondee and working back). The corruption of the text is easily explained by the similarity of the termination *-chio*. It is hard for the less sensitive English ear to judge of the truth of Quintilian's criticism, though the rhythm is clearly less weighty than that of the example which immediately precedes, *illud scimus, ubicunque sunt, esse pro nobis*. But in any case it is difficult to attach a very high importance to Quintilian's detailed remarks on rhythm, since they are palpably perfunctory and confused.

H. E. BUTLER.

LIVY, 1. 32. 12.

feri solitum ut fetialis hastam ferratam aut sanguineam praeustam ad fines eorum ferret et . . . dicere . . . id ubi dixisset, hastam in eorum fines emittebat.

IN this passage where Livy describes the ancient rite of declaring war, the words *sanguineam praeustam* have been regarded with suspicion. Two objections may not without justice be brought against the reading: (1) in place of *sanguineam* we naturally expect a word answering to *ferratam*; (2) the phrase implies that the *hasta ferrata* was not *sanguinea*. Too much importance should not be attached to the first objection as Livy is probably paraphrasing an ancient formula in which the niceties of style may well have been disregarded. With regard to the second objection it has been assumed that the *hasta praeusta* was stained with blood, while the *hasta ferrata* was not so stained on the ground that it was obviously a weapon of war, whereas the *hasta praeusta* was an obsolete weapon which might conceivably be regarded as having no such significance. But it is obvious that the throwing of the *hasta praeusta* is more primitive than the use of the *hasta ferrata*: consequently it is probable that, when the *hasta ferrata* took its place, a conservative people like the Romans would have continued to stain the spear-point as of old to avoid any breach with the earlier ritual. These difficulties can be

¹ Auguste Couat, *La Poésie Alexandrine sous les trois premiers Ptolemées*.

² *Aen.* IX. 314-366.

³ *Aen.* II. 318-335.

⁴ Cf. Paus. IV. 20. 1. *Aen.* II. 324-327. Paus. IV. 21. 7. *Aen.* II. 289-292. Also Venus' words, *Aen.* II. 617-619.