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Notes on the *Commonitorium* of Orientius

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tection of Zeus, her unknown paramour. I gather that it was Engelmann who first suggested that the scene depicted on the vases must have formed part of the story of the lost play of Euripides (Programm of 1882 and *Archaeologische Studien zu den Tragikern*, 1900, to which Mr. B. J. Hayes called my attention some years ago). The story has disappeared from literature; but it has left a trace behind in the allusion which Plautus makes to it in *Rud.* 86. In the *Amphitruo* of Plautus the thunder-storm which accompanies the birth of the twins belongs to a different version of the story: see lines 1094 ff., 1062, 1067. But it is worth noting that in both versions the tragic story of Alkmene is connected with a storm.

Wind is not necessarily accompanied by rain; and it may be objected that *Rud.* 86 speaks only of *ventus*. But the particular storm referred to was accompanied by rain; see l. 576 f., where the slave Supernio, who has not been shipwrecked, says (in reply to a request from the shipwrecked Charmides for some dry clothes) *Tegillum eccillud—*

mihi unum id aret: id si vis, dabo. Eodem amictus, eodem tectus esse soleo, si pluit. 'Here is a wrap—it is the only dry thing I have got,' etc. He had evidently been out in the rain. The *tempestas* of thé *Rudens* was *turbida* (l. 940: may not this mean 'dirty,' 'rainy'?); and in l. 96 there is a reference (rather obscure) to *lutum*. Compare also the metaphorical tempest in *Most.* 162-4 *quom mihi Amor et cupido in pectus perpluit meum*.

But while the general drift of the line of Plautus quoted above is clear, I admit that his form of expression is strange. Yet it is not unintelligible. Let us try one or two English parallels: 'Talk of a deluge! This was no ordinary deluge, but a regular Book of Genesis.' 'Talk of love at first sight! This was nothing less than a *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare.' The literary work in which the thing compared forms a prominent feature is substituted for the thing itself.

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NOTES ON THE COMMONITORIUM OF ORIENTIUS.

Non potuit (sc. Balaam) proprie motam sibi subdere linguam,

Ore aliud dicens, corde aliud cupiens,
Nam male dicturus nimie benedicere coepit,
Impendens aliis ora parata aliis (l. 35 sq.).

Ora is wrong. It has come in, as Dr. Purser pointed out, through the influence of 'ore,' and evidently covers some word like *vate*, on which it was a gloss. The point is that Balaam had lost completely the control of his tongue, which reversed all that seer's prepared utterances, meting out to 'these' the things prepared by the seer for 'those':

Impendens aliis vate parata aliis.

fata might also be a suitable reading, although not so easily explained.

Agmina venanti procumbunt densa ferarum;
Icta procul jaculis vel laqueata plagis
Prona petis ferro, canibus fugientia sistis;
Contundis frenis ora ferocis equi (l. 145 sq.).

The difficulty here is *prona*. Professor Ellis compares 'pronus lepores' (Ovid,

Met. X. 538). Bellanger renders 'blot-ties à terre.' Debrío explains 'prona' as *pascentia*, browsing cattle. But this is impossible, as Orientius is describing sport. The word *pronus* rather implies aggressiveness, cf. 'pronus pendens in verbera telo' (*Aen.* X. 586), of Lucagus bending forward to throw his weight into his stroke. The reference would then be to animals like the wild boar, which charged with head down, *ταυρηδὸν ἐγκύψας κάτω* (Aristoph. *Ran.* 804), and were hunted with spear and javelin. In the corresponding passage of Rutilius, l. 621 sq. we have—

Terribilisque cadit fulmine dentis aper.

In II. 181 sq. Orientius wrote a description of the catastrophe that had befallen the people of Gaul.

Mors, dolor, excidium . . . incendia, luctus,
Uno fumavit Gallia tota rogo.

The difficulty is to fill up the gap. *Sordes, strages, clades*, etc., have been

suggested. But the omission of such striking words is not satisfactorily explained. I would suggest that the two words *unda fames* have been lost through the confusion of *unda* with the termination of 'excidium' or the beginning of 'incendia.' 'Unda' having dropped out, 'fames' would naturally follow suit. These words complete the picture and the number *seven*, the line being possibly a reminiscence of 'the seven plagues.' They are suitable, for an inundation of the Garonne would add to the miseries of the Gallic nation and would be supported by the verses of Orientius, II. 190:

Praetereo gladiis quantum quantumque ruinis
Igni, graminibus, fluminibus liceat.

The point in favour of *fames* is that famine is the first evil that falls upon a conquered and devastated country. That there was such a famine in Gaul at this time the *Confession* of St. Patrick (19), 'Et XXVIII. dies per desertum iter fecimus et cibus defuit illis et fames invaluit super eos. . . . Quia nos a fame periclitamur,' is proof.

Continuing his description of the miseries of Gaul, he wrote:

Praetereo gladiis quantum, quantumque ruinis,
Igni *graminibus*, fluminibus liceat (II. 190).

Graminibus is explained as poisonous herbs. But such are not usually employed by invaders. It is also questionable if it can mean this without qualification. *Grandinibus* has been suggested. But the pentameter, like the hexameter, requires an antithesis, especially a word that is a natural contrast to water, such as lightning. Lucretius, *De R. N.*, VI. 201, described lightning as seeds of fire:

Et ignis
Semina convolvunt e nubibus. . . .

If Orientius wrote

Ignis seminibus, fluminibus liceat,

he would have a balanced verse and a phrase from his favourite, Lucretius. The reading *Igni graminibus* might also be explained. The loss of the *s* before the following *s*, or *vice versa*, is a frequent error. A scribe would make nothing of the reading *Ignis eminibus*, if

he was ignorant of the Lucretian phrase, and would write down some word that would scan even if he had the reading *Ignis seminibus* before him, especially as Orientius used the word *seminibus* in a good sense in II. 58, and strangely enough in conjunction with *gramina noxia*:

Protinus et lentas et *gramina* noxia messi
Seminibus victis heu male laeta feret.

One more emendation:

Intereunt decies qui terno vixerit annos
Atque illum vixit qui modo *missile sim*.

Various emendations have been offered for this 'locus vitiatus.' Professor Ellis suggests

Atque illum vixit qui modo mille simul.

Bellanger emends:

Atque dies luxit cui modo vix decimus.

The thought seems to be that we die daily no matter what our span of years may be. 'They pass away, both he who has lived thirty years, and he who has lived that year which has but lately sped.' This is evidently the meaning of the writer. He intends to contrast a short life with a moderately long life. And we have this by reading *missus erit* for 'missile sim' (A).

Atque illum vixit qui modo missus erit.

A² reads 'missile sim,' but has *si* marked for omission. The metaphor might be from the racecourse: 'Carcere misit equos' (Ovid), or from the phrase 'missa est ecclesia.' 'Missile' might be right. It certainly would puzzle the scribe. 'Missilia,' rarely if ever found in the singular (this would be no obstacle to Orientius, who used 'illecebra'), are largesse scattered among the people by the Emperor, 'Sparsa et populo missilia' (Suet., *Ner.* II.), and so would be metaphorically used of the gifts of fortune.

Atque illum vixit qui modo *missile sit*

might be a possible reading, but the rule is in such a case to keep the harder reading. However, 'missile sit' might easily have originated from 'missūerit,' (*missus erit*), which we prefer.

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