

Sallustian Politicians and Virgilian Villains

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Virgil is, if not himself properly an historian, then an interpreter of Roman history of the very first rank.¹ As such, he had read very widely in the historians, Greek² and Roman, and, when appropriate, delights his informed readers with a display of allusion to remind them that he is at a given moment writing in the historical mode,³ often not generally, but in precise reference to one historian. Here it does not need to be argued over again that we do not have, unexpectedly, certain proof that he used Cato's *Origines* when writing the *Aeneid*,⁴ but it might be timely to suggest that a lot of the old discussion of whether Livy used Virgil or *vice versa*⁵ is fundamentally misconceived: thus, first, both authors knew their Ennius intimately⁶ and, secondly, the question of their reciprocal influence has to be considered in terms of relative chronology: the poet wrote his twelve books in eleven years,⁷ while the historian managed, roughly, 142, between Actium and some time perhaps after Augustus' death.⁸ Nothing suggests they moved 'in the same circles', with comfortable previews of each other's work,⁹ but it becomes ever clearer that for the later books of the *Aeneid*, the first decades of the *ab urbe condita* become an important source of military tone and language.¹⁰ The debt of Livy to Caesar is still clearly to be defined,¹¹ while for Virgil we do not yet have enough detailed commentary on the battle narrative to be able to do more than say that Virgil uses a fair amount of fairly technical military language that is also familiar to us from the text of Caesar.¹²

¹ Cf. J. Zetzel in *Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. C. Martindale (Cambridge 1997), 188ff., Horsfall, *Prudentia* 8 (1976), 82ff. Conversation with Dr. C.S. Kraus has done much to clarify my thinking on some of the issues here discussed.

² On Hdt. and V.(?), cf. Horsfall, *Athen.* 66 (1988), 31, n. 6, *L'epopea in alambicco* (Napoli 1991), 45. Thuc. probably via Lucr. (G.3, the Noric plague), as Tim. via Varro.

³ Horsfall, *cit.* (1991), 103ff. and comm. (Leiden 2000) on *Aen.* 7.37-45, 45-57. In particular, 7.37f. *rerum/ ... status* (where vd. my note), which should never have been divided by uninformed punctuation, for the phrase is an historical catchphrase, altogether appropriate to the narrative tone of the passage.

⁴ Horsfall, *cit.* (1988), 39f., after M. Cancellieri, in *Enea nel Lazio* (Roma 1981), 78.

⁵ For a summary, vd. P.G. Walsh, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 3 (Roma 1987), 236.

⁶ See O. Skutsch ed. *Enn. Ann.* (Oxford 1985), 13f., 22ff.

⁷ Horsfall, *Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden 1995), 14.

⁸ C.S. Kraus, ed. *Livy* 6 (Cambridge 1994), 1-9, S. Oakley ed. *Livy* 6-10 (Oxford 1997), 109f., after Walsh.

⁹ Kraus, *cit.*, 3.

¹⁰ Cf. (e.g.) the nn. on *Aen.* 11.460, 467, 474, and in particular 522-9 (V. and Livy's Caudine Forks) in my forthcoming commentary on *Aeneid* 11.

¹¹ Cf. Kraus, index s.v. Caesar, Oakley, 138f.

¹² My notes of V.'s use of (e.g.) *dare tempus, educere castris, iubet...duci, substitit, subuectare*

Readers of Bolaffi's old *Sallustio e la sua fortuna nei secoli* (Roma 1949) would not know that Virgil was a devoted reader of Sallust, and those who consult the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* s.v. 'Sallustio' will fare little better. But some reading on the old question of the priority of *Buc.* 4 and *Epd.* 16 was what first suggested that a very different conclusion might in fact be correct: Virgil is in this case clearly earlier than Horace.¹³ The Allobrox of *Epd.* 16.5f. *nec Spartacus acer/ nousique rebus infidelis Allobrox* could so easily come from Sall. *Cat.*, though that would be a mere guess, were it not for 41f. of the same poem: *arua, beata petamus/ arua, diuitis et insulas*. That is, Sertorius and the Canary Islands out of Sall. *Hist.* 1 (fr.117 Maur., etc.), whose *terminus post quem* is 37 BC, which in turn settles the question of dating. This observation was made by a persistent and acute reader of Latin poetry, Sir Ronald Syme.¹⁴

In discussion of *Aeneid* 11, a great deal of ink used to be wasted on discussion of whether or not the figure Drances was intended to recall Cicero, a suggestion first made by Turnebus; after two splendidly negative discussions by Antonio La Penna,¹⁵ there is no need to rake over the ashes of a debate well and truly closed. When Drances accompanies the Latin embassy which asks Aeneas for a truce to bury the dead, he is presented as an elderly man and a personal enemy of the young Turnus (*Aen.* 11.122ff.): that may in retrospect prove relevant, in as much as Catiline notoriously *appealed* to the young (Sall. *Cat.* 14). Drances is further described as (11.122f.) *odiis et crimine Drances/ infensus*, what was called by contemporaries *criminosus*, given to personal feuds. So Virgil introduces Drances, an invented character if ever there was one, in a minor key, but from the first with a definite suggestion of recent history. The reader must wait until Drances' second appearance, in the Latins' debate: unusually, he enjoys two introductory sketches (11.122-3, 336-41) and in the end we shall think as much of Catiline himself and Sempronia as of Homer. The peculiar origin and flavour of these lines overall has escaped notice, though a couple of details have been remarked in passing.

336	<i>gloria Turni</i>	Sall. <i>Cat.</i> 1.3 <i>uirium opibus gloriam quaerere</i> ¹⁶
337	<i>largus opum lingua melior</i> (cf. 390 <i>uentosa in lingua</i>)	<i>Cat.</i> 3.4 <i>audacia largitio avaritia vigeant</i> <i>Iug.</i> 44.1 <i>lingua quam manu promptior</i>

(taken from the clearer instances in *Aen.* 11.1-100 alone) will show the poet's taste for words with a (perhaps perceptible) Caesarian flavour.

¹³ The issue summarised, *RFil.* 119 (1991), 357.

¹⁴ *Sallust* (Berkeley 1964), 285. Compare Juvenal, borrowing the historical exempla of *Sat.* 1 out of the current best-seller, Tac. *Hist.*: see G.B. Townend, *JRS* 63 (1973), 148ff.

¹⁵ In *Vergiliana*, ed. H. Bardon, R. Verdière (Leiden 1971), 283ff., *Enciclopedia virgiliana* 2 (Roma 1985), 138ff.

¹⁶ Tu.'s entirely Sallustian love of glory contrasts with the poet's pessimistic criticism.

- 337f. antithesis of tongue and sword *Or. Macri* 57 *impigrae linguae, animi ignaui*,
[Sall.] *Rep.* 2.3.6 *uirtus in lingua*, 2.9.2, *Inv.*
Cic. 5 *lingua uana*¹⁷
- 340 *seditione potens* Cf., but not distinctively, *Cat.* 51.32
genus...superbum *Iug.* 5.1 *superbia nobilitatis*¹⁸
- 345 *dicere mussant* The rare verb Sallustian, *Orat. Phil.* 3,
Macr. 8
- 364 *inuisum* For the motif of hatred, cf. *Cat.* 17.7¹⁹
- 390 *pedibusque fugacibus* [Sall.] *Rep.* 2.9.2 *pedes fugaces*, *Inv. in Cic.* 5
pedes fugaces, *Inv. in Sall.* 10 *fugacem*,
Rutilius Lupus (late Augustan) 1.18 (citing a
fragment of Lycurgus, fr. 6 Conomis) *pedes*
*ad fugam*²⁰

This concentration of distinctive echoes is atypically dense and prolonged, applied not systematically but most heavily, where most usefully visible, that is, at the outset, and hitherto neglected because of the lack of detailed lexical analysis available. Such a concentration is to be read both as a signal to the reader (cf. n. 3) and a tribute to an author it now becomes clear that he greatly admired, for Drances emerges not just as a late republican *popularis* politician, but as distinctively and recognisably Sallustian.

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¹⁷ Note too Cic. *Cat.* (3.16): *consilio autem neque lingua neque manus deerat* and his regular use of disapproving *loquax*.

¹⁸ So A. Traina, *Enciclopedia virgiliana* 4 (Roma 1988), 1073.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire des relations et des partis politiques* (Paris 1963), 195 with n.10.

²⁰ On the tricky problem of the relationship between these texts, cf., for now, Syme, *cit.* 348f., La Penna, *cit.* (1971), 385, (1985), 139, R.G.M. Nisbet, *JRS* 48 (1958), 31, Horsfall, *cit.* (1995), 247f.