

21 – 22 March 1998 at Freckenhorst, Germany
Biduum "Latine loquamur": see L.V.P.A. above

16 April 1998 in Heidelberg, Germany
Conventus DAV Heidelbergensis: see L.V.P.A. above

24 April – 1 May 1998 in Montella, Italy Disputationes Montellenses:
Luigi Miraglia, contrada S. Vito, n. 5, I-83048, Montella, Avellino, Italy.
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24 – 31 May 1998 and **23 – 31 July 1998** in Kentucky, USA
Conventiculus Latinus Lexingtoniae:
Prof. Terence O Tunberg, Dept of Classical Languages, 1015 Patterson
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8 June – 1 August 1998 in Rome, Italy
Aestiva Romae Latinitatis:
Reginaldus Foster, Piazza san Pancrazio, 5A, I-00152, Roma, Italy
tel: 0039-6/58 54 02 06

19 - 25 July 1998 in Marburg, Germany
Septimana Latina Amoeneburgensis:
"Latine loqui - romane coquere"
Thomas Gölzhäuser, Kleebergerstrasse, 40, D-35510, Butzbach
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25 July – 1 August 1998 in Tainach, Carinthia
Feriae Latinae Tinienses:
Mag. Michael Huger, Kath. Bildungsheim Sodalitas, A-9121, Tinje/
Tainach, Austria tel: 0043-4239/2642

31 July – 7 August 1998 in Prague, Czech Republic
Seminarium III LVPAE:
Inga Pessara-Grimm, Nordstr. 39, D-59174, Kamen or Marius Alexa,
Burgstr. 3, D-59368, Werne, Germany tel: (0049) 02389/45334
Thema praecipuum: "*Poetae scriptoresque Latini saeculi nostri*"

2 – 8 August 1998 in Morschach, Switzerland
Morsacense Seminarium Helveticum:
Societas Latina,
Universität, FR 6.3, Postfach 151150, D-66041, Saarbrücken, Germany
tel: 0681/302-3192

2 – 16 August 1998 in Patrai, Greece
Dialogoi Hellenikoi (Colloquia Graeca in Graecia ipsa):
Andreas Dreakis, GR-25100, Selantika/Egion Tel: 0030-691/72488

17 – 22 August 1998 in Nice, France
Feriae Latinae Nicense XII:
Clemens Désserard, Résidence des Collines C.9, 500, rue Léo Brun,
F-06210, Mandelieu. tel: 0493 490191 vel: 0493 086793

18 – 25 August 1998 in Madrid, Spain
Matritense Seminarium Hispanicum: Vox Latina
Dr Guy Licoppe, avenue de Tervueren, 76, B-1040, Brussels, Belgium
tel: 0032-2/7350408

31 August – 4 September 1998 in Rimini, Italy
Symposium Latinum III, Arimini:
Academia Scientiarum internationalis Sanmarensis
Dr Vera Barandovska, Kleinenbergerweg, 16, D-33100, Paderborn,
Germany. Tel: +49/5251-163522

OVERNIGHT TRIPS TO ROMAN SITES (*expertae credite!*) Lynda GOSS

If you live within striking distance of Bath or Bignor or Birdoswald, you are very fortunate. However, no-one can live a stone's throw away from all three. A day visit to an accessible site is probably a regular event for your school but it is worth considering a longer trip to sites further afield to enhance both the students' experience and the kudos of Classics. The following notes may suggest ways of avoiding foreseeable pitfalls. Having undertaken thirty-four trips, I have at least acquired a fund of anecdotes!

When? June/July, after external examination classes have departed, is a good time for any outdoor site, such as Hadrian's Wall. Advance booking of three months will be necessary to secure your chosen times and dates at the sites. November, perhaps surprisingly, is the time I always choose to visit Bath, Cirencester and Chedworth, the advantages being (a) that sites and roads are much less crowded and (b) eight weeks into the autumn term, a change of scenery is very welcome. Also in recent years winter seems to arrive somewhat later.

Where? To cover a cluster of sites on any one trip is the ideal. In three days we visit Chesters, Corbridge, Housesteads, the Roman Army Museum and Vindolanda and in two days Bignor, Fishbourne, Lullingstone and St Albans or Bath, Chedworth and Cirencester. Going north from southern England or vice versa, you could visit Wroxeter, Wall or the Lunt en route, perhaps.

Travel . . . If you like driving, the school minibus will certainly be the cheapest option. If you wish to use a coach, it is useful to shop around, as prices can vary considerably. There is no need to fill the coach, provided that you can break even without doing so. Students from another school where Latin is taught or non-classical students from your own school can solve the economic problem. Many coach firms will offer a package deal of travel and accommodation, the great benefit being less administration for you. On the other hand, it is not always an unmixed blessing. The coach firms will pass on the cost of telephone calls to hotels and 'labour' on to you. It is well worth considering, however, if the budget stretches to it.

Accommodation . . . We always stay in Travelodges or Travel Inns which can accommodate large numbers in multiple rooms, unlike smaller hotels. The price is per room of three or four students, respectively. You will also have to pay for the coachdriver's room. All rooms have bathrooms en suite, a factor which is not the unnecessary luxury it might seem at first sight to be. The fewer legitimate reasons students have for leaving their rooms, particularly at night, the better! These motels no longer provide any food, but a Little Chef or similar is available in a separate building on site. When breakfast used to be included, students generally left it almost or completely untouched.

Food / money . . . It is wiser to tell students what they will need to

buy rather than how much money to bring: ie that they will need x meals and may wish to take home souvenirs or presents, such as pencils, mugs, etc., from the sites. A packed lunch for the first day and non-perishable items such as biscuits and apples for the rest of the trip help keep costs down. To my knowledge, a third (and the proportion is probably higher) of my present Latin students are from single-parent families where sacrifices have to be made to allow them to pay for the trip. Invariably teenagers, when left to their own devices, live on a monotonous diet of burgers, crisps, coke and confectionery, all of which are easily obtainable. But they should be warned that prices at service stations – which is where they will mainly be eating – are above average.

The more trips you take, the more you discover that nothing can be taken for granted. For example, on the first morning of our recent visit to the Wall, we were all waiting in the coach while the mother of a student tried unsuccessfully by phone to coerce the motel receptionist to accept *her* credit card number as receipt for handing over cash to her almost impecunious son! She had panicked when he had rung and had erroneously led her to believe that he had used up all his money on the journey north. We then had a further delay as he rang home to assure his family that he was not in fact going to starve for the next two days. At the other end of the scale one boy thought nothing of spending £36 at Vindolanda on a Roman dagger. Our too-obliging coachdriver (of whom more later) had to purchase it on his behalf, since it was classified as a dangerous weapon sold to an underage person!

Health and safety . . . All coaches carry first-aid equipment by law, but it is sensible to have a small kit with you at all times, as someone is bound to be stung by a wasp late at night after the coach has been locked. Standard teenage uniform of t-shirt, jeans and trainers is fine for most Latin trips, but not where hill-walking is involved. Whenever I have led a party from Steel Rigg to Housesteads, there has been either torrential rain or blazing sunshine. The former causes great discomfort for those without a waterproof, especially as jeans dry slowly, whereas the latter can be positively dangerous, owing to risk of sunstroke. Last time we did not attempt this walk because so few students were appropriately clad. Sunhats, sunscreen, sunglasses and cagoules are essential items to pack now the British weather has become less predictable.

Make sure beforehand that students have a clear idea of whether the activities of the trip are within their capacity. To say that there will be a moderate walk of up to four miles – which to many teenagers would be like a marathon – is insufficient, as I discovered to my cost. Many of you will know the short incline up to Walltown Crags near the Roman Army Museum. After walking only a few yards of it, a 15 year old was soon gasping painfully and struggling to proceed. When asked why, since she was an asthmatic, she had not brought her ventilator on the trip, she replied innocently, ‘Oh, I thought it would be like Bath.’

Professional associations supply booklets of information on taking students off-site; these make a daunting read. Did you know that on the first evening of an overnight stay, a fire drill should be arranged? Or that visiting a large city, eg Bath, constitutes a ‘dangerous activity’ and the ratio of staff to students should be 1:5. Whoever arranges cover is going to love that!

Colleagues . . . If you are not the only classicist, your departmental colleague will probably accompany you and, even better, take turns at organising a trip. But for many of us in one-person departments, the question of a travelling companion needs careful consideration. The ideal person will cope well in a crisis, show some interest in the sites without seeing them as ‘just a load of old stones’, pull their weight without taking over and be pleasant company, bearing in mind that you will be together all day – and probably sharing a room as well – for several days. Most particularly, you both need to impose the same code of conduct, agreed upon before the trip takes place. Otherwise students will say to you ‘Oh, but Mr/Mrs/Miss . . . said we could go to the restaurant for breakfast at 5.00 am if we wanted to.’

Once a colleague made a private arrangement for the coachdriver to drop her almost at her front door before he took the whole party back to

school. This detour meant driving through the suburbs of Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton during the rush hour and made our arrival much later than parents had expected. Entente cordiale must be preserved at all times, but after three months of donkeywork organising the trip, the last thing you want is someone who views the experience as a couple of free days off school at their convenience. It is not necessary to rely on teachers to accompany you, which is useful if your school is reluctant to provide staff cover. I have taken non-teaching friends, teachers who have retired early, parents and governors. But, according to recent legislation, the school’s insurance policy may not cover such people. So checking is essential.

Coachdrivers . . . They are an interesting species, differing in some respects from most of the human race. Even if you send a detailed itinerary to the coach firm’s office in advance, you cannot assume that the coachdriver will (a) read it or (b) imagine that you do not know exactly how to find all the places on the trip. So you must be sure that you do know! A coach cannot do U-turns as a car can, and you may be sure that if you take a wrong turning you will end up in a single-lane, muddy farm track at milking time or have to go under a low bridge or worse. Once we missed the guided tour we had booked at Vindolanda because the coachdriver, having got lost on an unscheduled run around an industrial estate, landed us there too late.

Secondly, the opposite of the morose, taciturn, teenager-hating coachdriver is not necessarily any better. Our last one announced to the students, as soon as we set off, ‘I know this is an educational trip, but I want you to have FUN!’ He spent the next three days demonstrating this philosophy by engaging in jocular banter, playing his tapes at disco volume even when the coach was stationary and emulating Tina Turner as he bawled out with the cassette, ‘River Deep, Mountain Hi-i-igh!’ in such a way that my colleague and I in the front seat could not hear each other speak.

Thirdly, drivers have a very proprietorial, almost maternal, attitude towards their coaches. I know one who was out at dawn each morning splashing a very clean coach thoroughly with a giant mop. The ‘fun’ driver above said to me, ‘I wish you wouldn’t call the coach a bus. She doesn’t like it.’

‘Autoraeda, mea culpa,’ I replied, penitentially.

‘Wha-what’s that?’ stammered the driver, losing his cool for once.

‘It’s all right. I’m apologising to your bu- er, coach in Latin,’ I said, giving the vehicle a reassuring pat. My students were highly amused. It is as well to warn students to behave as if the coach were the driver’s home. They should therefore not cram apple-cores into the ashtrays, drop sweet papers on to the floor or inflict their choice of ‘music’ upon him without asking first.

Discipline and PSE . . . In my starry-eyed ingenuous days I allowed four sixth formers on the Bath trip to go to a nightclub and never even checked that they had returned. Nowadays I am on the alert every ten minutes to note whether anyone is involved in some nefarious activity. It is not so much that Latin students are more deviant or rebellious than they used to be, but teenagers seem to find freedom harder to handle because they are more protected at home and therefore less responsible outside it. Also, society at large has become more dangerous, so if anything goes wrong on a trip, you will never be allowed to forget that you were in loco parentis.

Once my students went for a stroll in broad daylight in a quiet residential area near the hotel. Without any provocation they were attacked by a local gang – no doubt direct descendants of the chiefs of the Brigantes – who recognised them as aliens from another territory. They were struck with metal dustbin lids and pelted with stones. Two required hospital treatment followed by a long police investigation until 2.00 am. Eight of the gang, but by no means all of them, were eventually arrested. This salutary tale is told to all students before each trip.

I no longer allow students to visit each other’s rooms, partly for their own safety and partly to protect other guests from the inevitable banging of fire doors; nor should they go outside the motel, e.g. to the service

area, without at last two companions. One spin-off is that trips represent PSE in action. Students learn how to budget their money, share a room whilst respecting the space and property of others and organise themselves without parental supervision. Most need to be reminded to treat motel and museum staff with respectful courtesy and to thank the coachdriver.

Sites ... Details of opening times, party rates and educational facilities are easily available. Some sites offer a guided tour, worksheets or a video. Most have refreshments for sale. There are particularly good sandwiches at Vindolanda and home-made cakes at Chesters! English Heritage sites are free for school parties, provided that advance booking is made. The

top four sites in the students' eyes are Chesters and Lullingstone for their taped commentaries, the Roman Baths for its talk and 'mobile phone' commentary and the guided tour at Bignor.

One student always presents me with a large box of continental chocolates after each trip. As a distinct feeling of nausea increases, I glance again at the tag 'Thanks for a great trip. When's the next one?', smile at the implied bribery and remember how much I too have enjoyed it.

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JUVENAL: LAUGHTER AND LOATHING

Ian Hislop

Nearly 2000 years ago Decimus Junius Juvenalis was asked why he wrote satire. He looked around him at the streets of the city of Rome and said "*difficile est satiram non scribere.*" (I, 30). "It is difficult *not* to write satire." It's a good answer and it is one of the reasons I have always enjoyed Juvenal and wanted to make a programme about him for television. (BBC 2, 1995). In his first published poem he grabs the reader and demands: "Don't you want to cram whole notebooks with scribbled invective when you stand on the street corner?" (I, 62-3) It is this immediacy that is so attractive. Juvenal was a man revolted yet fascinated by the crowded city at the heart of the Roman Empire with its extremes of wealth and poverty, its luxury and squalor, its beggars and whores, slaves and immigrants, citizens and merchants, soldiers and politicians. He had to get it down on paper. "Though talent be wanting indignation will drive me to verse" (I, 79) he ranted.

Juvenal ended up writing sixteen *Satires* and his talent and his indignation set a pattern for satirical writing that stretches from Imperial Rome down to the present day. The satirical tradition in English from the Middle Ages through the Elizabethan and then the Augustan periods descends in a direct line from a bad-tempered man in a grubby toga. Jonathan Swift, the most famous satirist of all, had the words "*saeva indignatio*" ("savage indignation") carved on his tombstone. John Donne was influenced by Juvenal, John Dryden translated him. Dr Johnson wrote imitation of Juvenal's *Satires*, merely substituting eighteenth-century London for first-century Rome. It worked perfectly, and Juvenal in the twentieth century still appears incredibly modern. To read him complaining that there is too much heavy traffic going through Rome at night, or accusing his crooked landlord of failing to maintain his apartment block properly, or worrying about being mugged in a crime wave is to recognise a contemporary.

Like most satirists Juvenal believed that nothing could be worse than the time he lived in. He wrote: "Today the earth breeds a race of degenerate weaklings who stir high heaven to laughter and loathing". Laughter and loathing is a fair summary of Juvenal's work and the mixture of the two is what he passes on to posterity in a bitter, comic picture of his own times. In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the historian Edward Gibbon described this period as the one "during which the human race was most happy and prosperous". Gibbon however did not have to live in it, unlike Juvenal, who seems to have been neither happy nor prosperous. His jaded view of first-century Rome under the Emperors is quite unrecognisable from the agreeable portrait painted by the eighteenth-century historian.

Of Juvenal's own life almost nothing is known. Scholars had more or less to invent biographies, and they created stories about him doing military service in Britain and being exiled to Egypt after offending the Emperor's favourite actor. Sadly there is no basis for any of this and apart from a few clues in the poems the only one solid piece of evidence

about Juvenal is a letter from a friend. Appropriately enough it is a rude letter from the poet Martial in the form of an epigram. Martial described Juvenal trudging up a hill in Rome, sweating profusely in a heavy toga, on his way to pay his respects to a rich man, i.e. being forced to suck up to some patron of the arts because he was so poor. So we can be sure that when Juvenal sounds bitter about the poverty of the decent, well-educated, middle class Roman citizen, he is speaking from experience. Later in life, we gather from the *Satires*, Juvenal acquired a farm at Tivoli outside Rome which suggests his financial circumstances improved somewhat. He could afford to retreat occasionally into the countryside and live a provincial rural idyll away from the big bad city.

But there is no more definite basis for a biography. Juvenal wrote about Britain and Egypt and indeed many other parts of the vast empire but there is no evidence that he went to any of them. He lived in Rome and Rome is what lives in his writing. The old city-state of the republic had become an Imperial capital and Juvenal saw the austere values of the early Roman citizenry giving way to a riot of materialism and urban decadence. "Who could endure this monstrous city, however callous at heart, and swallow his wrath?" (I, 30-1)

Juvenal of course does not even try to swallow his wrath but starts in his very first *Satire* by being rude about the person nearest him on the street. This turns out to be a very rich and very fat lawyer. It is somehow very comforting to think that lawyers have always been unpopular. But, as with most of the people Juvenal singles out as they pass him in the street, it is their ostentatious wealth that infuriates him. Wherever he looks he sees the corrupting effect of money on all aspects of Roman life. He says he is amazed that Rome doesn't have an altar to Cash alongside all its other deities, as this is the one god in whom people actually still believe.

Juvenal is serious about the love of money and his description of it as "the root of most evil" endeared him greatly to the early Christians who later saved his work from obscurity. Wealth is what everyone seems to want, and it was top of the list of people's desires in his tenth *Satire* which Dr Johnson rewrote as "The Vanity of Human Wishes". Juvenal blames the conspicuous consumption of the rich for infecting the rest of society and he describes them guzzling peacock, sow's paunch, lobster, lamprey, eels, bass, pheasants, boar, antelope, hare, gazelle, and even at one point, flamingo. To complete the picture, the food is all served by expensive Asiatic servants and eaten from tables carved out of ivory into the shape of leopards. After the guzzling comes a rest on the bed with the tortoiseshell headboard or the silver inlaid couch to watch the Spanish dancing girls or have a massage with oil from a rhino-horn flask.

Juvenal sees the degeneration of duty, public service and responsibility into greed, bribery and licence. The poet therefore starts his satiric assault at the top of the social pyramid with the Emperors – though not the Emperor in power when he was writing. The degree to which free speech

has been curtailed under the Imperial system means an end to what Juvenal calls "Our outspoken ancestral bluntness" (I, 151-3) and Juvenal has no desire to face the sort of censorship that he describes in his first *Satire*. "Name an Imperial favourite and you will soon enough blaze like those human torches half-choked, half-grilled to death, those burnt corpses they drag with hooks from the arena and leave a broad black trail behind them in the sand" (I, 155-8)

This is satire for real. Political jokes or anti-Royal jokes in those days meant not libel suits or fines or damages but instant painful death. So Juvenal sticks to the regimes of Nero and Domitian from the past rather than Trajan and Hadrian who were in power when his work appeared. Domitian for example is accused of incest with his niece and the Empress Messalina is accused of spending her nights as a voluntary whore in a cheap brothel. The Emperor Otho, Juvenal tells us, was a homosexual who took a mirror into battle to check his hair and the Emperor Nero apparently slaughtered his entire family.

If the Emperors were decadent, then so were the next layer down in society, the old Roman aristocracy. The satirist however has a solution. He suggests that the aristocracy should be treated just like racehorses. The bloodstock and the names are all very well but if they don't win any races they should be sent off to the knacker's yard, particularly aristocrats like Lateranus who is memorably fat, drunk and lecherous. "You'll find Lateranus sprawled in the biggest shadiest tavern, beside some hired killer with a bunch of thieves and matelots and fugitive criminals among hangmen and coffin-makers and a castrated priest who has passed out on the job . . ." (VIII, 171-6)

This vision of Rome makes twentieth-century Soho look rather tame but where does this aristocratic failure leave the next tier down in society, the middle-class professionals? Juvenal writes of one, Umbricus, giving up entirely and leaving Rome for good. Umbricus complains in a monologue: "There's no room in this city for the decent professions. They don't show any profit . . . So farewell, Rome; I leave you to sanitary engineers and municipal architects". (III, 29-30) It all sounds remarkably familiar and even though Juvenal deliberately made the character of Umbricus rather a whinger, he genuinely lamented people like Umbricus being overtaken by the spivs and the wideboys of the empire's new plutocracy. Juvenal's point is that whilst the worthless rich flourish, academics are paid almost nothing. Professors are poverty-stricken. Teachers make less money in a year than a jockey does in one race. And these poor teachers are expected to perform miracles by parents, irrespective of the example the parents set. One teacher, records Juvenal, was recently beaten up by his yobbish pupils! This may ring a few bells with readers of this journal.

The Roman masses, meanwhile, in the words of Juvenal's great phrase, are interested only in "*panem et circenses*". Bread and circuses, cheap food and cheap entertainment is what the plebeians want and the common people are emulated by a philistine aristocracy who are equally keen on the thrills of the arena. There is little room in this society for the middle classes with all their education, literature, culture and morality.

Juvenal saw a callousness based on unbridled commercialism replacing what he considered the old Roman values of mutual duty and respect. This is most obviously shown at the very bottom of the Imperial pyramid, in the master / slave relationship and Juvenal paints a particularly savage picture of a sadistic owner called Rutilus who tortures his slaves. In fact slavery brings out some of Juvenal's most powerful writing. In one passage of the sixth *Satire* he describes a slave-girl in charge of her mistress's elaborate hairdo being whipped because there is a curl out of place. In another passage he describes a similarly wealthy Roman wife who wants to crucify a slave on a whim. The husband urges delay since a man's life is at stake, and she replies, "So a slave is a man now is he, you crackpot?" (VI, 222)

Juvenal is not however a revolutionary. Like many satirists he is essentially a conservative challenging the operation of a system rather than the system itself. If the owners were humane and virtuous, he would argue, then all slaves would be fine. He is not calling for a Spartacus-

style revolt but for humanity and dignity in the status quo. However the savagery of the observation suggests that at some level he did not convince even himself of this.

Juvenal was not a slave, though there were times when he claimed to feel little better than one; the patron / client relationship was the area that affected him most personally. As a poet he complains very forcefully about the meanness of the rich who are supposed to subsidise the arts. Juvenal did not share any romantic notions about true artists having to starve in a garret. Quite the contrary. He claimed that his great predecessor Horace only wrote well because he did so on a full stomach and that it was unfair to expect Juvenal or any of the contemporaries to finish anything good when they were so hard up. There is a certain element of self-deprecation here but he is in earnest about the responsibilities of the rich towards the rest of society and he feels that they have failed, reducing all relationships to the level of prostitution.

This applied particularly to marriage, to which Juvenal devotes the whole of his longest and most infamous *Satire*, the sixth. The argument of this poem could be briefly summed up thus: wives were different in the old days but now women are all whores, gold-diggers and murderesses. It is an amazing piece of sustained splendid misogyny, probably qualifying as the least politically correct poem ever written. Much of this may be a mask or satirical persona designed for effect. Still there is no denying the fierceness of the attack on the corruption of sexual morality. And some of it is very familiar. When a husband discovers his wife in bed with another man, she merely says: "We agreed long ago to go our separate ways. You were at liberty to do as you pleased and I could have my fun on the side." (VI, 281-3) It is a very modern marriage. In the opening lines of this *Satire* he asks his friend Postumus why he is getting married and wonders if there is no rope left in town with which to hang oneself, no windows left out of which to leap, or no bridges left from which to drown oneself rather than submit to marriage. He describes women as having "ever-moist groins", unable to control themselves at the sight of muscular gladiators in the arena or moaning with ecstasy at the performance of pretty actors in the theatre. Many of the older editions of Juvenal do not translate this sort of passage. I found an edition of Juvenal from St Paul's School which was called simply *The Thirteen Satires of Juvenal*. The other three had simply been excised.

Women in the Sixth *Satire* are at it all the time with their lovers, or if not them their slaves, or if not them the nearby watercarriers, and if not them, well then Juvenal reckons they won't stop at the donkeys. Women prefer eunuchs because then there is no need to have abortions. Women like camp Greek actors because their husband think that they're homosexual and don't realise that in fact the Greeks are all randy adulterers. Women pretend to be interested in music but are actually interested in the musicians. Juvenal even makes some of the earliest recorded mother-in-law jokes about how they make a husband's life hell. And so it goes on with amazing over-the-top invective. Women, in conclusion, cheat on their husbands, they spend all their money, they make them miserable . . . and then they kill them. It is more or less completely mad at this point or you would be forgiven for concluding that Juvenal is nothing but a pathological misogynist, the archetypal Dead White European Male of feminist nightmare. But then just when you have him down for banning for ever you come across the character of the moralist who appears in Juvenal's Second *Satire*. This moralist makes similar complaints about the state of Rome's women and is then answered by the prostitute Laronia. "How lucky we are today," says she with a grin, "in having you to look after our morals! Rome had better behave — a real old-fashioned killjoy has dropped on us out of the skies. Do tell me darling, where did you buy that divine perfume I can smell on your bristly neck? Come, come, don't be ashamed to tell me the name of the shop. If we must rake up old laws, surely our list should be headed by the Sodomy Act"*. (II, 38-44)

Not for the first time in history the sternest of Judges and Censors is revealed to be a closet homosexual. The defender of the family is the one who is out at the gay bars. Laronia continues: "What's more you should

first examine the conduct of men, not women. Men are worse by far but their numbers protect them". (II, 44-46) That's the problem with satire. Juvenal the misogynist ranter is equally capable of presenting himself as Juvenal the proto-feminist. Like most satirists, strict consistency is not his strong point, more a consistency of overall view. And that view includes the dilemma of a moralist. To use another Juvenalian tag, it is a question of: "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" (VI, 347-8) "Who will guard the guards themselves?" In the original context Juvenal asks: if you put your wives and daughters under guard, then who is going to check up on the guards? In its wider sense the question is: who guards the guardians of public morality? There is no answer given to this rhetorical question but the satirist seems to be grudgingly volunteering himself for the job.

However Juvenal, the satirist who decries superstition, accepts no organised religion or formal philosophy and is left with only a rather vague set of positives. This is often the case with satirists, who are generally better at pointing out what is wrong than in coming up with alternatives. For Juvenal, when forced to locate the virtue which is his touchstone against corruption, finds it vested in the lost simplicity of the

past, in a picture of the ideals of the old Roman Republic, and in a belief in the virtues of the countryside as opposed to the city. With few small variations through the ages these tend to be the same things to which all satirists cling in the wreckage of the present. Writing as contemporary urban cynics, they are all emotionally drawn to a historic pastoral idyll.

Because what can anyone hope for from the present? Juvenal after comprehensively establishing the Vanity of Human Wishes suggests only a modest aspiration: "*mens sana in corpore sano.*" (X, 356) A sound mind in a sound body. This must be Juvenal's most celebrated quotation of all but fortunately for him, very few people ever do ask for this out of life. Juvenal lived in a city full of unsound minds in unsound bodies. As many of us do. And his reaction to them was the same as that of all those satirists in the tradition he began. What else can you do? *Difficile est saturam non scribere.*

All passages quoted use Peter Green's translation (Penguin Classics).

Ian Hislop
Editor, Private Eye

NERO: TRUE OR FALSE?

Christopher Kelly



The Imperial Image: copper neme from mint at Lugdunum in Gaul, AD 64-66

Sometime around July A.D. 69, a curious thing happened in southern Greece. A man – said to be a slave or a freedman – claimed to be the emperor Nero. His contention, at least for some, was confirmed by his evident skill in singing and playing the lyre, and by his close physical resemblance to the (really) dead emperor who had committed suicide in Rome twelve months earlier. This “false Nero” attracted a considerable following. He was only stopped on his way to Syria by a storm which forced him to land on the island of Cythnus in the Cyclades where he was killed by troops loyal to the emperor Galba. (Tacitus *Hist.* 2.8.1) Ten years later, in A.D. 80, Nero re-appeared. According to the early third-century Greek historian Cassius Dio, this Nero too allegedly ‘resembled the emperor both in appearance and in voice – for he sang to the accompaniment of the lyre’. (66.19.3) With an ever-growing band of supporters, he made his way towards the Euphrates and sought the help of the Parthian king Artabanus IV. It was later rumoured that Artabanus (thought by some to be no more than a pretender to the Parthian throne) planned to support this false Nero in a revolt against the real Roman emperor Titus.

These stories are disturbing. At first sight, it seems strange that any rebel might think of increasing his chances of success by choosing to portray himself as a resurrected Nero; or that such a representation might in turn inspire enthusiastic and wide-spread support. Clearly, there were some in the Roman Empire who did not immediately think of Nero as a tyrant, a matricide, or a madman. In place of these traditional images, these stories offer a tantalising glimpse of an alternative version of the emperor: a populist hero fighting on behalf of the ordinary provincial struggling against the oppressive agents of Roman rule. Strikingly too, what lent credibility to the claims of these false Neros was their apparent ability to sing and play the lyre – just like the real thing. By contrast, for many in Rome, it had been precisely the real Nero’s embarrassing decision to take to the stage and publicly perform his own compositions which had most clearly exposed the falsity of his claims to imperial power. In truth, alleged the late first-century imperial biographer Suetonius, Nero was no more than a sham emperor who during the great fire in Rome could think only of dressing up and reciting his own epic poem on the sack of Troy. (Suet. *Nero* 38.2)

But we should be slow to assume that all unquestioningly accepted such brilliantly exaggerated images. After all, in A.D. 80, it was precisely the false Nero’s ability to act which for his supporters made his claims of liberation ring true. Such a view – at least in the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean – should not seem so surprising. In 66-67, in a sixteen-month tour of Greece, Nero had competed (and been crowned victor) in chariot races and singing contests held at all the great Panhellenic sanctuaries. No doubt, for all concerned, a Roman emperor participating in a Greek cultural and religious event was a remarkable sight. But many perhaps also saw it as a powerful statement of the importance of Greece within the Roman Empire; an open and public admission of Greek cultural superiority. From this point of view, Nero’s tour validated the importance of Greek traditions. His victory cry – “Nero Caesar wins this contest and crowns the Roman people and the inhabited world, which is his own” (Cassius Dio 62.14.4) – could be understood as setting Greece in its proper place at the centre of a world stage. Only a victory in Greece could legitimate a Roman emperor’s claim to world-wide dominion. Moreover, Nero’s grant of taxation immunity to Greece in November 67 underlined the superior status which many locals felt their province deserved. With

evident pride, a leading member of the small community of Acraephia (in north-eastern Boeotia) set up an inscription which both reproduced Nero's grandiloquent speech proclaiming the "liberation of Greece" from the financial burdens of Roman rule and honoured the emperor with the splendid title of "Nero Zeus The Liberator".



"Quo Vadis?" One great performer interprets another (Peter Ustinov as Nero in the 1951 film)

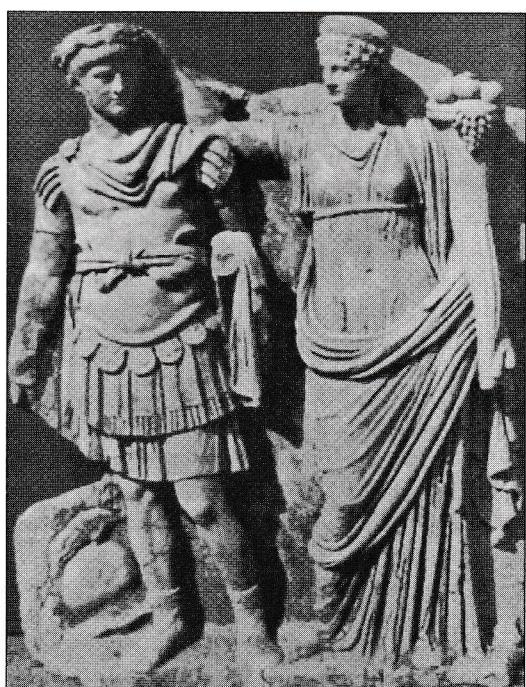
Of course, many in Rome reviewing Nero's recitals in Greece – and perhaps nervous of his recognition of the superiority of Greek culture – were eager to claim that the applause which the emperor enjoyed had a hollow ring. The tour was a trivial charade which need not be taken seriously either politically or culturally. Like the emperor's favourite set-pieces, provincial enthusiasm was carefully scripted. In Greece, the real actors were in the audience. These skilled performers knew, with a keen sense of timing, when to cheer, when to award the victor's prize, and when to erect a suitably impressive inscription commemorating the glorious event. As Nero's tour clearly exposed, what above all marked out Greek culture was its untrustworthiness and its threatening ability to dress up the false as true. According to Suetonius, in Greece it was those in the audience, not the emperor on stage, who provided the best *extempore* performances. *While the emperor was singing, no one was permitted to leave the theatre even for the most pressing reasons. As a result, it is said that some women gave birth while seated there, while many who were worn out with listening and applauding, secretly leaped from the walls of the theatre (since the exits were barred) or feigned death and were carried out as if for burial.* (Suet. Nero 23.2)

A concern with the emperor's dramatic ability, and the audience reaction it provoked, was also central to the most influential account of Nero's reign. Cornelius Tacitus (writing his *Annals* at the beginning of the second century A.D.) presented Nero's willingness to act out a variety of roles on stage as a public expression of a set of skills continually rehearsed in the more private world of the imperial palace. Here too the emperor performed. Here too a small audience of courtiers and the imperial family tried to second guess the plot in order to know when to applaud, when to speak next, and when to remain silent. For Tacitus, what above

all made the real Nero false was his ability to act. Worse still, others equally deeply engaged in the serious business of politics were forced to play along too.

One of the most famous scenes in the *Annals* (13.16) opens with the imperial household dining together in a seemingly convincing picture of familial conviviality. Amongst the company was Agrippina, Nero's mother, as well as the young Octavia and her brother Britannicus – who as the surviving son of the emperor Claudius represented the most serious dynastic threat to Nero's imperial position. During the dinner, Britannicus collapsed. Speechless, he fell desperately gasping for breath. This (at least in Tacitus' account) is a murder scene. A hot drink, already tasted by Britannicus' attendant, had been cooled by cold water containing a fatal poison. As the young prince expired, Nero – ever on cue, like the best of actors – observed that nothing unusual was happening. The boy was epileptic and would soon recover. As it became clear that Britannicus was not acting up (but was really dead), those less practised in the artifices of courtly etiquette hurriedly left the room. The more adept stayed in their places. Britannicus' loving sister Octavia did not flinch – 'despite her youth and inexperience, she had learned to hide her grief, her affections, her every emotion'. All kept their gaze fixed on Nero and followed his lead. 'And so after this brief interval, the convivial pleasures of the meal were resumed.' (13.16.4) After all, no matter what happens, the show must go on.

In Tacitus' version, Nero's court is an actor's world in which even silent observers like the innocent Octavia collude in disguising their real feelings. This is a dramatic world of appearances where things are never quite what they seem. Soon after Britannicus' death, Nero invited his mother to holiday with him at Baiae on the fashionable Campanian coast. (*Annals* 14.3-10) Agrippina agreed, genuinely expecting (according to Tacitus) to enjoy herself. Moreover, Nero had ordered a new and lavishly-appointed boat to convey her across the bay following a banquet at which he had been particularly attentive and loving. Nero played Agrippina's last act with style – *sive explenda simulatione*. (14.4.4) On a bright starlit night, not far from the shore, disaster struck. All seemed to go as Nero had planned. The boat collapsed – as it was really designed to do. This was to be another murder. But Agrippina and her maid Acerronia, saved by the stout sides of the couches on which they were reclining, were not crushed to death. Instead, they were pitched into the water. Acerronia (thinking it would help her cause) shouted that she was Agrippina.



Nero and Agrippina: relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor

But Acerronia's acting was too good. She was beaten to death by the crew with boat hooks and oars. Agrippina herself remained silent and, only slightly wounded, made it safely to the shore. Although suspecting what had happened, she sent her freedman Agermus to announce to Nero that she had survived a freak accident. The emperor, in panic, resorted to a second-rate, pantomime sham – *scaenam ultro criminis parat*. (14.7.6) Throwing a sword at Agermus' feet, Nero proclaimed that he had narrowly avoided assassination. Troops were sent to kill Agrippina who had, so the emperor alleged, clearly intended the death of her own son. Those at court wondered how best to re-act to the news. Some celebrated the emperor's good fortune. But Nero himself (like the best of actors, always choosing the most difficult role) went tearfully into mourning for the death of his mother. Naturally too, following the emperor's lead, many of his closest associates played along.

In Tacitus' *Annals*, Nero's ability to act fatally deforms his world. Not even portents may be trusted. 'Many prodigies occurred. A woman gave birth to a snake... The sun suddenly went dark. All fourteen *regiones* in the city were struck by lightning. But these portents meant nothing... Nero continued his reign and crimes for years to come.' (14.12.2) Under Nero, Rome is a dark and treacherous place where nothing is ever what it seems. A place where all involved can only guess at the plot and try to predict the emperor's whims. Where all – some knowingly, some accidentally, some unwillingly – are inescapably implicated in a web of dissimulation and deceit. In this world, all are in constant danger of becoming (morally) bad actors. Poisoned by the orders of Nero, Burrus, once one of the emperor's closest advisors (and in his time a skilled player of the political game), knew how to answer when the emperor came with all solicitude to enquire after his health. Averting his eyes, Burrus insisted that he was doing just fine – "ego me bene habeo". (14.51.1) Soon after, Seneca (Burrus' colleague, and Nero's former tutor) was forced to leave court. His position was weakened after Burrus' death and made more dangerous by the accusations of his enemies who were encouraged by the emperor himself. (14.52) Seneca sought Nero's leave to retire from the capital. But the emperor professed himself shocked at such a suggestion. It was tantamount to a breach of friendship. In the end, Seneca – trapped in this Looking Glass world – found himself thanking the emperor for reluctantly permitting him to retire. Nero had his way, but Seneca had had to beg for it. (14.56.3)

For cynics or ardent republicans, Tacitus' *Annals* is an admonitory vision of the effects of autocracy; an unremitting exposé of a system which corrupts not only the powerful, but which poisons the very processes of government itself. In Tacitus' *Annals* there are no heroes. Even one of its most admirable characters, the stoical senator Thrasea Paetus, is shown (like the emperor himself) acting ambiguously. Following Agrippina's death, news of her alleged plot against Nero and a catalogue of her other crimes (all carefully scripted by Seneca) was read out to the Senate in Rome. Paetus – with a superb sense of timing – had waited for the right moment and risen from his place. He had walked silently out of the assembly. (14.12.1) But for Tacitus this was a futile gesture. It placed Paetus in greater danger, while inspiring no finer feelings in his fellow senators. Paetus had misjudged his audience. What remained was not a noble act, but merely an over-dramatic gesture. Paetus had not changed anything. At best, he had briefly up-staged the emperor.

But for all the *Annals'* seductive moralising on the inescapable terrors of autocracy, one should be careful of being completely taken in. Through his magnificent prose, Tacitus (like the very best of nineteenth-century novelists) can sometimes make his readers forget that he simply could not have known many of either the actions or the motives which he presents as undisputed fact. If Nero, or Octavia, or Agrippina, or Seneca, or Burrus were indeed concealing their feelings it is difficult to see how Tacitus (or his sources) could have known how they really felt. How could the important details of the attempted murder of Agrippina (if that's what it was) have been gathered, or researched, or checked? How can we be certain that Tacitus could securely sift fiction from fact? History – even without footnotes – has its limitations. And like any good moralist, Tacitus ignores them.



Nero: Vatican Museums inv. no. 9963

Importantly too, Tacitus' account is deliberately monolithic. No other interpretation is permitted. In part, because no reader can ever share (nor ever dare) Tacitus' self-claimed privileged access to his characters' real feelings. In part, because of his brilliant use of Nero's own much celebrated ability to act. By making this the central theme of his version of Nero, Tacitus represents the emperor's actions as a series of stagy shams. In this world, all is skilfully contrived; all carefully pre-scripted. There is no room for a genuinely cheering crowd; no room for any real support – aristocratic, popular, or provincial. No room for a different interpretation of Nero's actions. No room for wondering whether some might have approved of a Roman emperor prepared publicly to display his respect for Greek culture.

Of course, other versions of Nero may be as equally implausible (or as ultimately unknowable) as the one offered by Tacitus. But as the later enthusiasm for the false Neros intriguingly hints, it may be possible to find other ways of thinking about the emperor's reputation. At the very least, we should start by questioning the suffocating self-sufficiency of Tacitus' Nero. Beside his account we might seek to set a range of other views – some conflicting, some complementary, some overlapping. In so doing we may not come any closer to understanding the real Nero. But we might come closer to appreciating the clever subtleties and the brilliantly contrived limitations of Tacitus' unremittingly powerful version. Indeed, in the face of a wider range of possibilities for understanding the emperor and his over-dramatic actions, we may (ruefully) have to accept that it is perhaps Tacitus' Nero – even more than the real emperor himself – who has truly played us false.

THE REAL & THE FABULOUS: DESCRIPTIONS IN VIRGIL

Jean Mingay

There are many descriptions of works of art in Virgil, very precisely seen in detail, like the cups in *Eclogue 3*:

pocula ponam
fagina, caelatum divini opus Alcimedonitis,
lenta quibus torno facili superaddita vitis
diffusos hedera vestit pallente corymbos. (ll.35-39)

(My beechwood cups which Alcimedon, the master-craftsman, carved. Effortlessly he chiselled upon them a supple vine And wreathed its branching clusters of grapes with livid ivy.)

The magnificence of Helen's *ornatus* shines out of two lines in *Aeneid 1*:

pallam signis auroque rigentem
et circumtextum croceo velamen acantho. (ll.648-9)

(A cloak stiff with gold-embroidered figures and a dress with a border woven of yellow acanthus flowers.)

This clarity of vision builds up to a strong impression that Virgil not only could see these things in his mind's eye but had actually seen many of them, that he was often describing contemporary objects. The works of art he delights to envisage are mostly not imaginative reconstructions of antiques, but products of late Hellenistic luxury, on a lavish scale. The most striking, the series of Trojan War pictures on the walls of Juno's temple in Carthage (*Aeneid 1*, 456-493), presents in serial narration¹ the story of the war, just as the frescoes from the Esquiline, now in the Vatican Library (Museo Gregorio Profano), present episodes from the *Odyssey*, Books 10 and 11. These are wall-paintings of the type common by Virgil's time in houses of standing, but done in an impressionistic style not found elsewhere. They show eight scenes, mainly of the Laistrygonians and the Sirens, in a continuous landscape setting, but with the episodes expressed in what Sir Mortimer Wheeler called the "anecdotal"² style, where the protagonists are repeatedly recognisable. These paintings date from the late first century BC, perhaps from the last decade of Virgil's life, and in their organisation they strongly recall the temple pictures described in *Aeneid 1*.³ The human figure in the Esquiline paintings often seems lost against Nature, as were Aeneas and his followers in *Aen. 1*.

Over a wide range, in fact, Virgil's sensitivity to works of art responds most readily to those contemporary with himself. There is very little antiquarian interest in the remains of the early works; Evander's hut is simply small and low, evoking not charm and quaintness, but a moral message:

Aude, hospes, contemnere opes et te quoque dignum
ringe deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis."
dixit, et angusti subter fastigia tecti
ingentem Aenean duxit stratisque locavit
effultum foliis et pelle Libystidis ursae. (*Aeneid VIII*, 364-8)

("You are my guest, and you too must have the courage to despise wealth. You must mould yourself to be worthy of the god. Come into my poor home and do not judge it too harshly." With these words he led the mighty Aeneas under the roof-tree of his narrow house and set him down on a bed of leaves covered with the hide of the Libyan bear.)

As Dryden said, of this passage: "I contemn the world when I think of it", and Virgil certainly meant that Aeneas must do the same; Evander's home stands for heroic simplicity, in any period. The antiquarianism sometimes ascribed to Virgil is in fact confined to Rome's touching primitivism, here in Book VIII, and to the outmoded but hardy ways of Italy in Book VII 623-40 or the crude boasting of Remulus at IX 612-15.⁴ When Virgil really wants to fill his readers' minds with images of the past, he goes back much further, and when for instance he calls up the Odysseian fables he does not use them as episodes of antiquity. They appear, rather, as guides to the future – for example the Harpies, (*Aen. III*

245-58), linked to the sojourn with Helenus and Andromache 294-508); or they may be distanced by being indirectly reported Cyclops episode is described with marked distaste by Achaemenes III 69-81), or by the moonlit, magical lines (*Aen. VII* 9-20) which voice of Circe in a dreamtime unrelated to any period of history. Virgil is rightly characterised (by Quintilian, I.7.18) as *amantem vetustatis*, though he shows this not by recreating the *human* achievements of past periods, but by plunging his imagination into the dark uninhabited caves and forests.

The Underworld on Book VI is entered through the cave of Avernus, itself gloomy and uncanny, and the essential passport Golden Bough, only to be found in the dense forest around the Lake is fitting, for here the upper world is closest to Hades, smouldering, exhaling poisonous vapours. It carries Virgil's thoughts back to the beginning of time and the formation of the Universe.

How surprising, then, to find this very area interesting the young Virgil in a quite different way. In *Georgics II* Virgil had described massive engineering works being carried out in haste by Agrippa in 36 BC. He deepened the shallow Lucrine Lake near Cumae and a the sea to flow in only through a narrow opening; the overflow through a canal from the inner shore to lake Avernus further inland would thus form a safe harbour for Agrippa's navy. This passage *Tyrrhenusque fretis immittitur aestus Avernus* (I.164) (And Tyrrhenian flow through a canal into Averno) – comes shortly after the "prologue to Italy":

adde tot egregias urbes operumque laborem
tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis
fluminaque antiquos subterlabentia muros. (ll. 155-7)

(Our noble cities and all the works of our hands,
The towns piled on toppling cliffs, the antique walls,
And the rivers that glide below them.)

New engineering projects are here linked with laboriously built the beauty of Italy, Virgil here feels, is only enhanced by the work of man. Later, in the *Aeneid* as at VI, 179 he shrinks at the cost of this loss in despoiling its primeval forest, *stabula alta ferarum*, "where wild things lurk". The tone of the passage is definitely one of distress, the dark backward and abysm of time, that earlier despoiling for the foundation of Misenum was forgiven, indeed enjoined, by the gods; its purpose religious; it enabled the Golden Bough to be found, so that the hero could visit the dead and foresee the future triumphs of Rome, achieved by *operum laborem*, by technical development, with all its cost, as well as by bravery. But will that future cost always be in accordance with the will of the gods? Will it always be justified? The question will be again and again in the *Aeneid*.

This technical achievement of the future is matched already in Carthage Aeneas sees rising before his eyes. He sees *strata viarum* (paved streets) I.422, the theatre to come (*scaenis futuris*) I.421-9, the "sky-lift" (*aequataque machina caelo*) at IV. 89; yet the city as described here seems less like Tyrian Carthage than the founding of some great cities of the Roman provinces,⁶ perhaps even the re-founding of Carthage in Virgil's own day.⁷ *Magalia quondam*, "where once were shanty-towns" I.421, would indeed give way to a pillared theatre in a new Roman city, but in Tyrian Carthage, according to the conventional view of Virgil, perfidy, barbarity and irreligion left no room for culture,⁸ or perhaps for qualms about simplicity lost.

The proscenium pillars of the Carthage theatre were monolithic, hewn from the rock (*rupibus excidunt*) I.429, another up-to-date technological achievement of Augustan times. All the palaces described in the *Aeneid*

share in the Baroque atmosphere of Hellenistic or contemporary Roman buildings, consisting in much decoration, luxury and great size. Latinus' temple-palace has the most old-fashioned touches: "A sacred building, massive and soaring to the sky with a hundred columns . . . A building held in great awe because of an ancestral sense of the presence of the divine in the grove that surrounded it. Here the omens declared that kings should receive their sceptres and take up the rods of office for the first time. This temple was their senate-house . . . this the hall in which they held their sacred banquets . . . Here too, carved in old cedar wood, stood in order in the forecourt the statues of their ancestors from time long past⁹ . . . all the other kings from the foundation of the city . . . Many too were the weapons hung on the posts of the temple doors, captured chariots, curved axes, crests of helmets, great bolts from the gates of cities, spears, shields and beaks broken off the prows of ships." (VII. 170-186)

These features are very close to the details Livy and others give¹⁰ of the uses of the Capitoline Temple, where the consuls were inaugurated, and the Senate partook of the *epulum Iovis* as guests of the Capitoline Triad. So this palace of Latinus performs the functions of the holiest political temple of them all, authenticating the constitution of Rome, and is also the private home of Latinus, massive, sprawling, (at VII. 619 [Latinus] *caecis se condidit umbris* – "shutting himself up in the darkness away from the sight of men"), and enclosing a sacred laurel in *penetalibus altis* ("deep in the innermost courtyard", VII.59). This sounds like the peristyle of a grandiose Roman town-house of Virgil's time, in another world from the exiled Evander's thatched hut which Aeneas was soon to enter (VIII, 98-100). Servius' comment on *Aen.* VII, 170 runs: *domum, quam in Palatio diximus ab Augusto factam, per transitum laudat*, "he praises by contrast the house which we said Augustus built on the Palatine". When Augustus in the 20s BC built himself that modest home, he chose a site identified with that of Evander's house, close to the new temple of Apollo and the *Scalae Caci*¹¹ – he obeyed Evander and "despised possessions", as Hercules and Aeneas had done. That at least is the message conveyed. Latinus by contrast, for all his archaic military decor, lived like a first-century Roman grandee. The Senate, when Augustus was infirm, often met in the Palatine Temple of Apollo, or in its Library (Suetonius, Augustus 29.3.) Augustus may have summoned the Senate to the Palatine during his serious illness of 23 BC. (Dio 53, 30.1.) Servius comments on *Aen.* 11.223 (Latinus summoning his leaders to his palace) that Virgil may have thought of Augustan parallels.

Priam's palace, which looms out of the din and darkness of the sack at *Aen.* II. 437-558, bears very little resemblance to Homer's description of the palace at *Iliad* VI. 242-250, when Hector retires to it from the battle. Both are large, certainly, and handsomely built in stone, but Homer's recalls a Minoan palace in its replication of similar "sleeping chambers" for the married sons and daughters of Priam, each with their spouses, an image of the peace and security of Minoan times. In Virgil there is indeed a quotation of this image: *quinquaginta illi thalami* – "those famous fifty sleeping-chambers" II, 503 – but they are absent in Virgil's nightmare image of the floods smashing all barriers and sweeping over a wide expanse (469-9) as the Greeks batter down the door and crash into the *enfilade* of the private rooms – *apparet domus intus et atria longa patescunt* – "There before their eyes were the long colonnades and the inner chambers". (483) At Pompeii the Casa Menandri has this long perspective through several rooms, the *porticibus longis* and *vacua atria* through which the wounded Polites slithers in his own blood to his death (528) before the very eyes of his father Priam, in *penetalibus* (508), seated at the altar. There is also, on the outskirts of Pompeii, a pre-imperial villa with a tower like the one which Aeneas and his friends dislodge onto the attackers (460), and paintings of about 40 BC from the villa of Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale show several such towers.¹²

Virgil's taste for the grandiose is of course most readily displayed in these architectural set pieces, and the details are very much in keeping. Sculpture and carving, like the frescoes, are showy and sophisticated; the doors of the *immania templa*, the "huge temples" (VI,19) at Cumae, built by Daedalus himself, are covered with carvings of technical mastery

(VI,27) and emotional power, conveying a tragic death, the suspense of the choice of Athenian victims for the Minotaur, the shame of Pasiphae, the passion of Ariadne (VI, 20-30). It is through doors like these "*foribus . . . superbis*" (*Georgics* II, 461) that the waves of clients flow to salute the Roman aristocrat; in the *Aeneid* they are set in "the gilded beams and richly ornamented ceilings of their ancestors" (*Aen.* II, 448-9) which nonetheless are ruthlessly torn down to use as lethal weapons in the sack of Troy.

Metalwork for peaceful uses is ubiquitous, even perhaps incongruously on the table of Helenus in his miniature Troy at Buthrotum, where he gives a feast on golden plates (*Aen.* III, 355), and Aeneas' fleet carries away "gifts of solid gold and carved ivory... and stowed a great quantity of silver in their [ships'] hulls with cauldrons from Jupiter's temple at Dodona" (III, 464-6). Table ware is usually gold or silver, elaborate in style: "I shall give you two solid silver embossed cups" (IX, 263). Family heirlooms of this kind offer a crucial opportunity for personal display and ancestral claims: "The silver was massive on the tables, with the brave deeds of their ancestors embossed in gold, a long tradition of feats of arms traced through many heroes from the ancient origins of the race" (I, 640-642). On the other hand, armour and weaponry,¹³ the smith's major products, figure largely in all epic and occupied a good deal of Homer's attention too, their craftsmanship perhaps more prominent in Virgil. The contrasts and similarities between the Shield of Achilles and the Shield of Aeneas alone would merit a lengthy discussion of their own.

Flamboyant jewellery matches Virgil's elaborate decor. "Rescued from the ruins of Troy" (I,647) . . . was "a sceptre which had once been carried by Ilione, the eldest daughter of Priam, a necklace of pearls and a double gold coronet set with jewels" (I,653) The piece of "Indian ivory stained with blood-red dye" (XII, 67-8) is either for personal adornment of domestic display; it gives the same extravagant impression as does Pallas' sword-belt: "The huge heavy baldric. On this great belt an abominable crime was embossed, how in one dark night, the night of their marriage, a band of young men were foully slain, and their marriage-chambers bathed in blood, all worked by Clonus, son of Eurytus, in a wealth of gold." (X,469-9)

Clothes are in keeping: "Two robes stiffened with gold and purple threads" (XI, 72-50 form an offering worked by Dido and found worthy to be Pallas' shroud. Camilla covets the magnificent clothing of Chloreus, no less than his armour, and notes every detail of it: "On that day he had gathered the rustling linen folds of his saffron-yellow cloak into a knot with a golden brooch. He wore an embroidered tunic and barbaric embroidered trousers covered his legs." (XI, 775-70). Andromache presents to Ascanius "robes embroidered with golden thread" (III, 483). Above all Dido equals her reputations and her surroundings with the brilliance of her hunting-habit: "She was wearing a Sidonian cloak with an embroidered hem. Her quiver was of gold. Gold was the clasp that gathered up her hair and her purple tunic was fastened with a golden brooch" (IV, 137-9). This is the climax of her dazzling style. At the earlier banquet with which she greeted Aeneas she was regal, but the detail of purple and gold was lavished on the furnishings: *aulaeis superbis* – "a rich awning", and *strato ostro* – "purple coverlets" (I, 697,700) and the gold and silver tableware, the choicest *gravem gemmis auroque . . . pateram* – "a golden bowl heavy with jewels" (I,728-9). Hundreds of attendants, brilliant lighting from chandeliers hanging from *laquearibus aureis* – "the gold-coffered ceilings" (I,726) combine to form an impressionistic rendering of some lavish contemporary banquet. Virgil, who died a wealthy man, would have attended such banquets. This whole passage (I, 697-711 and 723-30) also has interesting points of comparison with Alcinous' hall and banqueting facilities at *Odysseus* VII, 81-102.

One striking feature of all these glittering descriptions is the amount of representation of myth and history which Virgil takes for granted. By his time, in the Roman world the eye was filled with representation;¹⁴ there were sculptures, carvings, painted friezes and mosaics on all building surfaces, furniture was decorated with reliefs, gems cut with portraits, small figurines of terracotta or metal were displayed on tables and shelves,

lamps found space for decorative reliefs, and metal implements or weapons would have applique figures- in fact models for Aeneas' Shield surrounded Virgil on every side. Even glass, when cast or mould-blown, had relief decoration, and pottery vases might have cameo-cut relief scenes. Scenes from Homer, and, in his turn, from Virgil himself, and the exploits of Hercules, were immensely popular, as were animal figures. *Trompe-l'oeil* mosaic designs (such as the unswept floor and preening doves by Sosos) were also much admired at this time. The Christian world must have been partly impelled to create the burgeoning mythology of the saints in order to compete with the multifarious pagan imagery on every available surface¹⁵, of which Virgil gives us such a compelling impression. It is partly prophetic, since the confidence and wealth which brought about the Romanisation of the whole Empire was still to come. But that Baroque world existed already in the sumptuous and competitive kingdoms of the East, newly brought under Rome's sway, and it fired the imagination of Virgil through the imports and copies of its works of art which surrounded him. It would be interesting to consider which works of art he could or must have seen with his own eyes.

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Notes

1 cf D. West, *P.V.S. xxi* (1993) p.4.

2 *Roman Art and Architecture* (London, 1964) p. 176. See also note 1 above.

3 It may be that these temple wall pictures were not frescoes but carved panels; see C.C. van Essen, 'L'Architecture dans L'Énéide de Virgile', *Mnemosyne vii* (1939) and F.H. Sandbach, 'Anti-Antiquarianism in the Aeneid,' *P.V.S. 5*, 1965-66; also in *Oxford Readings in Virgil's Aeneid*, Oxford, 1990, p.453.

4 H. MacL. Currie, 'The Sense of the Past in Virgil', in *Meminisse*

Iuvabit, BCP 1988, p.47, on the accuracy of Virgilian descriptive weaponry and burial customs. For Virgil's "cultural diversity", see M. Leigh, 'Romans and Trojans in Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Omnibus 31*, Jan. 5 of S. Medcalfe, *Virgil and the Turn of Time*, p.217, referring to Conway's suggestion that Agrippa's tunnels near Cumae and Aenaria added to the Underworld atmosphere.

6 A.G. McKay, *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World*, 1982, cf. E.L. Harrison, 'The *Aeneid* and Carthage', in Woodman and

Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus, Cambridge 1984, p.107.

7 Augustus in 29 BC sent out 3,000 settlers to rebuild Carthage. See Morwood, *Aeneas, Augustus and the Theme of the City*, G. and R. xxii, 2, 1991, and Dio 52.43.1.

8 Livy XXI.4.9 and P.G. Walsh, *Livy*, Cambridge, 1961.

9 Pliny (*NH XXXIV.34*, cf XVI, 216, XXXV 157-8) records that the earliest statues were of wood or terracotta.

10 Livy XXXVIII.57.5. cf. W.A. Camps, *Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* p.153, note 14.

11 Probably that of the so-called House of Livia, as argued by Richmond, *JRS 4* (1914) 193-226. Is there also a hint of a pun in *Aeneid* VII.170 "tectum augustum" describing the temple-palace of Latinus? Octavian was given the title of Augustus as part of the constitutional settlement of 27 BC.

12 See C.C. van Essen, 'L'Architecture dans L'Énéide de Virgile', *Mnemosyne vii* (1939) quoting M.M.F. Noack and K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Untersuchungen am Stadtrand von Pompeii*, where the towered villa was reconstructed.

13 F.H. Sandbach points out (p.451, cf. note 7 above) that Plutarch (*Bellum Iugurthinum* 38.3) says that Brutus' army at Philippi was unsparingly furnished with gold and silver weapons.

14 cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, tr. David West, Penguin Books 1991, Introduction p.1x.

15 cf. Martin Henig, *A Handbook of Roman Art*, Phaidon 1983, especially chs. 3-6, 8-10.

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