



Augustus and the Muses (Suetonius, Tiberius 21.4)

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in the next line (684): contrast 7.360 *primo gentes oriente* = 'the nations of the far east' (Duff). For Egypt viewed as the beginning of the east, cf. Mela 1.9 'Asiae prima pars Aegyptus', Plin. *Nat.* 5.47 '[Africae] adhaeret Asia, quam patere a Canopico ostio [Nili] ad Ponti ostium Timosthenes...tradidit', Mart. *Cap.* 6.675 'Aegyptus...Asiae caput,³ quae una ab ostio Canopi ad ostium Ponti habet...milia passuum'; cf. the close association of Egypt with the east in Virg. *Aen.* 8.687 'Aegyptum uiresque Orientis'. For the varied use of the word *primus* should be noted too Luc. 9.413f. 'nec...plus litora Nili / quam Scythicus Tanais *primis a Gadibus* absunt', 'from Gades in the far west' (Duff), 'Gades the first place in the west' (Haskins), i.e. the threshold of the Mediterranean.

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³ See *TLL* s. *caput* 411.38: 'terrarum, fundorum sim. fines (saepe i.q. exordium, initium finium)'.

AUGUSTUS AND THE MUSES (SUETONIUS, *TIBERIUS* 21.4)

Suetonius quotes a number of extracts from Augustus' letters, with the intention of showing that Augustus did not dislike Tiberius as much as some had held, and that he had a high opinion of Tiberius' military qualities. The first of these contains a somewhat vexed textual problem. It reads as follows (in Ihm's Teubner edition):

Vale, iucundissime Tiberi, et feliciter rem gere, ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς †μουσικαῖστ στρατηγῶν. iucundissime et ita sim felix, vir fortissime et dux νομιμῶτατε, vale.

I reproduce Ihm's apparatus for the obelised Greek:

ΜΟΥΪΑΚΑΔΙΤΕΤΡΑΘΗΓΩΝ *Met sim. rel.* (*Pro Δ habent GX'Y*; ΤΕΤΡΑΘΗΓΩΝ *VLS*, in quibus ss. mihi et meis tuisque commilitibus gere), ταῖς Μούσαις *στρ. vulg.*; post Μούσαις *legunt καλὰ vel ἄριστε Turn., ἄριστα Casaub., αἰεὶ Bentl.*; ταῖς μου ἴσα σαῖς *τε Roth, ταῖς (ἐ)μου πάσαις Büch.*

As far as I can make out, those who read ταῖς Μούσαις (the vulgate reading) generally interpret the passage as a reference to Tiberius' literary interests. It is difficult to see how such an allusion would fit into the context. It is unlikely that Augustus would be telling Tiberius to concentrate on literature when (as is clear from *feliciter rem gere*) he was evidently about to conduct a military campaign.

The emendations of Roth and Bücheler seem to make the text more obscure than it was before. They seem to drag in the ladies of the Imperial house with no obvious rhetorical or logical purpose. The Latin gloss in some of the MSS. may be thought to presuppose a text similar to one or other of these conjectures, although it speaks of soldiers rather than feminine persons; but it is similarly lacking in point. It seems most likely that the gloss was inserted in order to explain a text already corrupted.

R. Shaw-Smith (*Greece & Rome* 18 [1971], 212) proposed to emend the corrupt Greek to ἐμοῖς αἰσίοις οἰωνοῖς, a phrase which he will have found in Augustus' *Res Gestae* as a Greek equivalent for *meis auspiciis*. It is not clear when or where this Graeco-Latin equivalence was first established, but clearly it was a response to the administrative necessity of producing a Greek translation for the peculiarly Roman technical term. The phrase οἰωνοῖς χρῆσάμενος αἰσίοις is used in classical Greek (Xen. *Cyrop.* 3.3.22) for the act of obtaining a favourable augury before setting out on a military campaign, but it does not correspond exactly with the Roman term, which refers to the commander's legal position as one who has the right to take valid

auspices on behalf of the army. In short, the Greek phrase used in the *Res Gestae* is a makeshift translation. Given that this is so, it would be surprising to find Augustus dropping into Greek in order to express this idea. Nor is it clear that 'You are fighting under my auspices' – even if it accurately reflects the legal situation – meets the demands of the context as an expression of affection and encouragement.

E. Malcovati (*Athenaeum* NS 50 [1972], 385–9) reverted to the vulgate reading *ταῖς Μούσαις*, and suggested that 'warring for the Muses' meant fighting with an eye on the poetic celebration which Horace was preparing for Tiberius' return. If so, the mode of expression is rather obscure; and again one wonders whether it is really the appropriate thing for Augustus, writing to Tiberius at this point, to say.

Those who have discussed the passage do not, on the whole, seem to have paid attention to the origin of the phrase *ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις*. Cicero, in *Brutus* 187 (whence, presumably, Valerius Maximus 3.7, ext. 2) narrates the story of Antigenidas the music-teacher, who told a pupil who was unsuccessful in public to 'sing for me and the Muses'. This meant, clearly, that the pupil was not to worry about his lack of popularity, but was to perform (a) in order to gain approval from Antigenidas himself, and (b) for the Muses, i.e. in plain prose, for the satisfaction of doing the job properly.

Cicero quotes Antigenidas in Latin, 'mihi cane et Musis'. The Greek for this would be *ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις ᾄδε*. This provides us with an emendation of Augustus' Greek which is very near to the paradosis: *ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις ᾄδε στρατηγῶν*. The participle *στρατηγῶν* is sufficient to cancel any literal reference to literature or music, and to make it clear that the advice Augustus is giving to Tiberius in the field of generalship is the same as that given, in the field of music, by Antigenidas to his pupil. The meaning is that Tiberius is not to worry about popularity, but to concentrate on pleasing Augustus, and on doing his job well merely for the satisfaction of doing so.

This, surely, provides us with a sentiment and an expression appropriate to the situation and to the personality of Augustus. It is a genuine Greek quotation, so that there is no problem in accounting for Augustus' lapse into Greek; doubtless Tiberius would appreciate it as such. As for the content, it conveys a reassuring message to Tiberius on his departure: Augustus has confidence in him, and nobody else's opinion really matters.

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OCTAVIAN AND ORESTES AGAIN

In an earlier paper¹ it was argued that in the famous chariot simile at the end of the first Georgic, Virgil imitates a passage from the *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus describing the onset of Orestes' madness. It was also suggested that Virgil may have been intentionally drawing a parallel between Octavian and the son of Agamemnon. Orestes avenged his father by murdering his mother Clytemnestra, but in so doing he deepened the guilt that afflicted Argos and thus gave new life to the curse that lay on the house of Tantalus. So too, perhaps, Virgil is warning Octavian that in seeking to avenge his 'father' Caesar by killing his murderers at Philippi he is precipitating civil

¹ 'Octavian and Orestes in the Finale of the First Georgic', CQ 38 [1988], 563–5. For the identification of the charioteer with Octavian cf. Servius *ad loc.*: 'hoc vult dicere: res publica quidem habet optimum imperatorem, sed tanta sunt vitia temporum praeteritorum, quae in dies singulos aucta sunt, quemadmodum in processu equorum cursus augetur, ut ea, licet optimus rector refrenare non possit, sicut et auriga ferventi cursu equos non potest plerumque revocare.'