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## TWO VERGILIAN NOTES

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### I. AENEID, ii. 124 ff.

Et mihi iam multi crudele canebant  
Artificis scelus et *taciti ventura videbant*.  
Bis quinos silet ille dies tectusque recusat  
Prodere voce sua quemquam aut opponere morti.  
Vix tandem, magnis Ithaci clamoribus actus,  
Composito rumpit vocem et me destinat arae.

In this passage, the word *taciti* (125) had been a storm centre ever since we have a record of the commentary upon it. Following the lead of Servius, most of the commentators have held that *multi* (124) and *taciti* (125) refer to two different groups of people,— thus avoiding an apparent clash in predicating *canebant* and *taciti* of the same group. To quote the words of Servius: “‘*multi*’ *bis intellegendum; id est multi videbant taciti, multi etiam dicebant, ne sit contrarium ‘canebant taciti’.*”

This is a not impossible interpretation, though even those who adopt it admit freely that Vergil has not expressed himself very well, if this really is his meaning. A second difficulty lies in the fact that it would run counter to the style of the passage as a whole to have a change of subject in a sentence constructed as this is. Everywhere in the neighborhood, periods abound in which the second clause carries on the subject of the first, adding items so closely related that in some cases tautology might well be charged. For example, in the citation above, *Bis quinos silet ille dies* is carried on by *tectusque recusat prodere voce sua*; and again, within that second clause itself, *prodere voce sua* is carried on by *aut opponere morti*. Cf. also

77 ff.: *Cuncta . . . fatebor . . . neque . . . negabo.*

- 94 ff: Nec tacui demens et me . . . . promisi ultorem.  
 106: Prosequitur pavitans et ficto pectore fatur.  
 130 ff.: Adsensere omnes et . . . . tulere.  
 134: Eripui . . . . leto me et vincula rupi.  
 145: His lacrimis vitam damus et miserescimus ultro.

Even when the grammatical subject changes, the thought carries on in the same way; e. g.

- 309 ff.: Tum vero manifesta fides Danaumque patescunt  
 Insidiae.

Under the stress of this "swing" in the composition, we advance with certain step through a period like the following (259 ff.):

- Illos patefactus ad auras  
 Reddit equus, laetique cavo se robore promunt  
 Thessandrus Sthenelusque duces et dirus Ulixes.

Just as in this last cited passage the style of the whole context inclines us instinctively to interpret *laetique* as carrying on *Illos* (and not as introducing a new subject of discourse), so, in the passage which is the basis of this note, *et taciti* is most naturally felt as appending a second detail regarding the same subject.

Though they do not state their reasons, it probably is on some such ground as this that both Conington and Page reject the Servian interpretation, and undertake to discover a means of reconciling *canebant* and *taciti* as applied to one subject. Page tries to find a way out through *canebant*, which, he says, may here refer merely to prophetic foreboding and not to speech. Hence he renders "And against me already many were divining the schemer's cruel crime, and silently foreseeing the future." Conington trains his guns on *taciti*, with the remark: "'*taciti*' is not strictly consistent with '*canebant*'; but Vergil probably means that the forebodings were privately whispered, not openly expressed, for fear of Ulysses."

It must be confessed that both of these interpretations leave much to be desired. Conington's note, however, offers a useful suggestion, namely, that while the whole sentence refers to the attitude of the same group of people (*multi*), its first clause re-

flects their relation to Sinon, and the other their relation to Ulysses. This helps in the interpretation of *taciti*; but I very much question whether Vergil meant to suggest that the remarks to Sinon were whispered.

Rather, I fancy that our difficulty here is due, in part at least, to the unnatural limitations which we are inclined to put upon the meaning of words because most of us have learned Latin in an artificial way. At one stage in the process it was helpful, no doubt, to 'distinguish synonyms'; but if this process leaves the impression that these "distinctions" are as the laws of the Medes and Persians, the procedure is not without its disadvantages.

It is all very well to learn 'that *vetus* refers to the old that still exists, while *antiquus* is used of the old that has passed away'; but the student will not find that the rule sheds much light on Horace, Epod. 2.23:

Libet iacere modo sub *antiqua* ilice.

And while *accido* and *contingo* often allow of clear distinction, this can hardly be said of the following cases:

Tac. Dial. 23: Porro ne in corpore quidem valitudinem medici probant, quae animi anxietate contingit.

Cic. De Leg. ii. 42: quo quid accidere potuit homini praeclarior?<sup>1</sup>

So we have a rule in regard to *taceo* and *sileo*, whereby the former is said to be confined to cases where speech merely is refrained from, the other being more general in its scope. It is interesting that both these verbs are found in the passage now under discussion. Of Calchas it is said: *Bis quinos silet ille dies tectusque recusat prodere voce sua quemquam aut opponere morti*. On the face of it, *silet* here is used in the narrower sense of refraining from speech (note *voce sua*); and if there were otherwise room for doubt it might be observed that his change of policy at the end of the specified period is designated by *rumpit vocem* ('he broke into speech').

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Caesar, B. G. iv.22; *satis opportune accidisse*.

Conversely, there is no reason why we should not expect *taceo* at times to show a wider meaning; cf. Hor. Car. iii. 29. 23ff.:

Caretque  
Ripa vagis *taciturna* ventis.<sup>2</sup>

It is suggested therefore, that in the Virgilian passage *taciti* means not simply that many who warned Sinon of the fate in store for him failed to register a spoken protest with Ulysses; they abstained from *any* effort in behalf of the threatened man, though they saw what was impending; as Sinon himself is made to say bitterly a little later (130 ff.):

quae sibi quisque timebat,  
Unius in miseri exitium conversa tulere.

On this basis, *taciti* would mean something like 'non-interfering' or 'impassive': "And even then many were predicting to me the villany of the cruel schemer, and impassive were watching my oncoming doom."

Another passage in the same book in which *tacitus* seems to require a similar interpretation is found in 254 ff.:

Et iam Argiva phalanx instructis navibus ibat  
A Tenedo, *tacitae* per amica silentia lunae  
Litora nota petens.

Here we have a closely parallel situation. The Trojans are sleeping, all unconscious of danger, and the moon is blamed for not intervening. The adjective *amica* shows that *luna* is personified; but does *tacitae* indicate that she shows her partiality by refusing to break into speech? This seems very unlikely. Rather we think of iii. 147 ff., where the bright light of the moon rouses Aeneas to a half-wakeful state in which he receives the message of the Penates. So here, had she been so disposed, the moon perhaps might have shot a beam into the eyes of some slumbering guard that would have roused him to a sense of the impending danger; but she refrained. Hence apparently we should render: 'through the friendly silence of the impassive moon'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Verg. Aen. iv. 525; *Cum tacet omnis ager.*

## II. AENEID ii. 309 ff.

Tum vero manifesta fides, Danaumque patescunt  
Insidiae.

Of the general bearing of this sentence there can be no doubt; but the exact meaning of *fides* is by no means clear.

Beginning with Servius, the general consensus has been that it signifies 'proof' or 'ground for belief'; and a very apt parallel is cited from Livy vi. 13. 7, where, through such verbal force, the word is made to govern indirect discourse<sup>3</sup>. With this interpretation, the question arises: Proof of what? Conington and Page agree in thinking that the reference is to the warning uttered by Hector in the vision from which Aeneas has just been aroused. With less plausibility others have referred it to the Laocoön incident or to the prophecies of Cassandra.

It is a matter of surprise that Servius' own preference has been given so little consideration. His note reads: "*Manifesta fides; — non somnii, ut quidam volunt, sed fraudis Graecorum; nam et hoc sequitur 'Danaumque patescunt insidiae'.*"

It is noteworthy that he has caught the 'swing' of the composition in this long passage. He feels that he is dealing with the type of sentence described in the previous note, wherein the first clause carries on into the second, even to the extent of tautology. Hence his impulse here is to interpret the first clause in the light of the second.

This is an attractive line of interpretation; and I suggest that it would be even better, if we assign to *fides*, not the meaning 'proof', but rather the sense seen in the familiar *Punica fides*, i. e. 'perfidy'<sup>4</sup>.

In further support of this view, it should be noted that the episode of Sinon throughout is a tale of bad 'faith', interspersed with protestations of good 'faith' and appeals to the 'faith' of the

<sup>3</sup> On this basis, one school edition has the following legitimate note: "*fides*: freely, 'truth'; strictly, 'proof'." Others define *fides* directly as 'truth,' which would make the word a synonym for *res*; and, while that results in good sense, no parallel is forthcoming for such a use of *fides*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Heitkamp ad loc.

Trojans;— the key-note of the whole narrative at this point is *fides*. Observe the following:

- 60: hoc ipsum ut strueret Troiamque aperiret Achivis.  
 62: seu versare dolos.  
 65 ff.: Accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno  
           Disce omnes.  
 77 ff.: 'Cuncta equidem tibi, rex, fuerit quodcumque, fatebor  
           Vera,' inquit.  
 79 ff.                  Nec si miserum Fortuna Sinonem  
           Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.  
 106: Ignari scelerum tantorum artisque Pelasgae.  
 107: Prosequitur pavitans et ficto pectore fatur.  
 141 ff.: Quod te per superos et conscia numina veri,  
           Per si qua est quae restat adhuc mortalibus usquam  
           Intemerata fides, oro, . . . . .  
 152: Ille, dolis instructus et arte Pelasga.  
 160: Tu modo promissis maneat servataque serves,  
           Troia, fidem, si vera feram, si magna rependam.  
 195 ff.: Talibus insidiis periurique arte Sinonis  
           Credita res, captique dolis lacrimisque coactis,  
           Quos . . . . .  
 252: Myrmidonumque dolos.  
 264: doli fabricator Epeos.

When finally, as Aeneas stands upon the roof, the true inwardness of the situation dawns upon him, what more natural climax than

Tum vero manifesta *fides*, Danaumque patescunt  
 Insidiae?

In thus understanding *fides*, attention may be called to the fact that Aeneas has twice above used the expression *ars Pelasga* (106 and 152), which certainly is analogous to *Punica fides*.

Another point worth noticing is the fact that this part of Aeneas' narrative is virtually an oration. To him, to speak of Troy's fall means to open old wounds; he has not reached the point, where, in retrospect, past troubles loom up

'Like mountain-summits overpast  
 In purple distance fair.'

His words glow with hatred of the treacherous Greek; indeed we might not go so very far astray, if we were to refer to some soldier fresh from the battlefield for an adequate translation of such a phrase as *multos Danaum dimittimus Orco* (398). And when we come to one of the high points, such as 241 ff. (*O patria, o divum domus Ilium et incluta bello moenia Dardanidum!*), somehow we lose sight of the guest reclining on a sumptuous couch toying with a wine-cup, and entertaining attentive strangers with a story; rather, we hear the impassioned voice of a Roman orator of Tacitean impressiveness.

Hence there may be a touch of bitterness in the use of the word *fides* in the passage now under discussion. If so, a close parallel would be found in the words of Nero as he lay dying by his own hand. According to Suetonius,<sup>5</sup> a centurion, under orders to take the emperor alive, burst into the room, and, seeing the flow of blood, made a pretence of a friendly attempt to staunch it. But the dying man was not deceived, saying bitterly with his last breath: "Too late", and "Here's 'loyalty' for you" ("*Sero*", *et* "*Haec est fides*").

<sup>5</sup> Nero, 49. 4.