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## VIRGIL'S WOODEN HORSE: WHICH WOOD?<sup>1</sup>

NEIL ADKIN

### 1. The wood of the Wooden Horse itself

Which wood Virgil's Wooden Horse was actually made of is a notorious *crux criticorum*. In *Aeneid* 2,16 Virgil says the horse was made of fir: *sectaque intexunt abiete costas*. In less than a hundred lines however he flatly contradicts himself by saying it was made of maple: *trabibus contextus acernis* (2,112). Austin's influential commentary offers three different explanations of this discrepancy: either it "may simply be a poet's variation for the woodenness of wood, or possibly the Horse had an outer sheath of *abies* (softwood) and an inner frame of *acer* (hardwood)", or perhaps the *acer* is "a deliberate inaccuracy, a brilliant Virgilian touch to lend colour to Sinon's 'act' by a pretence of innocent ignorance".<sup>2</sup> The multiplicity of these explanations would seem to indicate Austin's awareness of the inadequacy of each. Such an agnostic view was evidently shared by Williams: his own commentary, which appeared just eight years after Austin's, suggested that the inconsistency was in fact due to "lack of revision".<sup>3</sup> The thesis that the horse was made of different woods was nonetheless revived by Losada a decade later.<sup>4</sup> This view is rightly dismissed by Hexter;<sup>5</sup> however he himself puts for-

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<sup>1</sup> Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*, Leipzig 1990<sup>2</sup>, and its online *Addenda* at <http://www.thesaurus.badw.de/pdf/addenda.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber secundus*, Oxford 1964, 69.

<sup>3</sup> R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books 1–6*, London 1972, 218.

<sup>4</sup> L. A. Losada, "Maple, Fir, and Pine: Vergil's Wooden Horse", *TAPhA* 113 (1983) 301–10.

<sup>5</sup> R. Hexter, "What Was the Trojan Horse Made Of? Interpreting Vergil's *Aeneid*", *YJC* 3,2 (1990) 118 with n. 36 ("any ... scholar who might wish to distribute the woods over various parts of the horse will still have to explain why Vergil decided to leave us with enough information, or with too much, to imagine nothing but a muddle").

ward the unhelpful hypothesis that Virgil's aim was deliberate incomprehensibility.<sup>6</sup> Horsfall's recent commentary marks no advance: like Austin, he too is unable to make up his mind between the explanations offered so far.<sup>7</sup>

Austin opens his discussion of the problem by stating that "it seems most improbable that Virgil has forgotten the *abies* of 16". So far from such forgetfulness on the poet's own part, he would in fact appear to have taken great pains to ensure that his audience did not forget *abies* either. This term is employed in Virgil's very first mention of the horse. The passage at issue here may be quoted *in extenso*:

*fracti bello fatisque repulsi*  
*ductores Danaum tot iam labentibus annis*  
 15 *instar montis equum divina Palladis arte*  
*aedificant, sectaque intexunt abiete costas;*  
*votum pro reditu simulant; ea fama vagatur.*  
*huc delecta virum sortiti corpora furtim*  
*includunt caeco lateri penitusque cavernas*  
 20 *ingentis uterumque armato milite complent.*  
*est in conspectu Tenedos, notissima fama*  
*insula, dives opum Priami dum regna manebant,*  
*nunc tantum sinus et statio male fida carinis:*  
*huc se propecti deserto in litore condunt;*  
 25 *nos abiisse rati et vento petiisse Mycenae.*  
*ergo omnis longo solvit se Teucra luctu;*  
*panduntur portae, iuvat ire et Dorica castra*  
*desertosque videre locos litusque relictum:*  
*hic Dolopum manus, hic saevus tendebat Achilles;*  
 30 *classibus hic locus, hic acie certare solebant.*  
*pars stupet innuptae donum exitiale Minervae*  
*et molem mirantur equi ... (Aen. 2,13–32)*

In this passage the opening sentence (13–16: *fracti bello ... abiete costas*) is nothing less than the *rectum operis initium*.<sup>8</sup> In this sentence Virgil sums up the whole of the Trojan War, describes the horse as being "as big as a mountain", and identifies its author as none other than the Olympian goddess Pallas Athena; it might

<sup>6</sup> Hexter (above n. 5) 121: "In the face of this interpretive conundrum, arena for a debate that has now resounded at least 1600 years, we might wonder if Vergil's purpose was not the creation of just this insoluble puzzle". This theory has now been repeated in the edition for students by R. T. Ganiban, *Vergil: Aeneid Book 2*, Newburyport, MA 2008, 31.

<sup>7</sup> N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 2: A Commentary*, Leiden – Boston 2008, 60f.

<sup>8</sup> So Serv. *Aen.* 3 *praef.*

therefore be thought somewhat anticlimactic for such an impressive period to end by merely specifying the particular type of timber that the horse's sides happened to be made of. *Abies* is moreover carefully highlighted by its conspicuously penultimate *locus* in the period. The word is further set off by the two progressively shorter asyndetic clauses which after this ambagious 4-line period share between them the one single line that follows immediately: *votum pro reditu simulant; ea fama vagatur* (17). Virgil must accordingly have had a very good reason for giving such prominence to a mere dendrological detail like *abies*. What can it have been?

The present passage finds no place in O'Hara's monumental study of Virgilian etymologizing.<sup>9</sup> *Abies* was however derived from *abire*:<sup>10</sup> hence *abies* means "you will go away".<sup>11</sup> It would seem that this etymology is being exploited by Virgil here.<sup>12</sup> The first clue to Virgil's etymologizing purpose in this use of *abies* would appear to be supplied by the immediately ensuing clause: *votum pro reditu simulant* (17). This employment of *reditus* in the singular is a Virgilian hapax, which requires annotation.<sup>13</sup> *Reditus* is separated from *abies* by only three words: both nouns occupy the penultimate position in adjacent clauses. The etymon of *abies* is *abire*, which is linked by *derivatio* to *reditus*.<sup>14</sup> A wood whose etymological meaning is "you will go away" is accordingly just right for a *votum pro reditu*.<sup>15</sup>

The second clue to Virgil's *jeu étymologique* on *abies* occurs just eight lines later: *nos abiisse rati et vento petiisse Mycenae* (25). Servius' note on *abiisse*

<sup>9</sup> J. J. O'Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay*, Ann Arbor 1996. *Abies* is wholly absent from his "Index of Words Glossed".

<sup>10</sup> Cf. R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies*, Leeds 1991, 1.

<sup>11</sup> On this heteroclitite form of *ire* as 4th-conjugation cf. F. Neue – C. Wagener, *Formenlehre der lateinischen Sprache* III, Berlin 1897<sup>3</sup>, 326–9.

<sup>12</sup> For his similar use of another such 2nd-person (*ares*: "you are dry") as an etymon cf. N. Adkin, "Wet Rams: The Etymology of *aries* in Virgil", *WS* 122 (2009) 121–4. For his employment of *abire* in a similarly etymological context in the previous book (1,195–202) cf. id., "Virgilian Etymologizing: The Case of *Acestes*", *AC* 69 (2000) 205–7.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Gloss.*<sup>L</sup> I Ansil. PR 2776: *pro reditu*: *p. reversione*.

<sup>14</sup> On *derivatio* ("die etymologisierende Stammwiederholung") cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Stuttgart 2008<sup>4</sup>, 328f. (no. 648).

<sup>15</sup> Hexter (above n. 5) 111 has argued that in this passage *reditus* could mean "return to Troy". This view has been accepted recently by Horsfall (above n. 7) 62. Here however Virgil's use of *reditus* to gloss *abire* as the etymon of *abies* would appear to show that *pro reditu* simply means "going back home" to Greece.

points out that the correct form is *abisse* with just one "i". Here Virgil's use of two *i*'s is sufficiently significant to make this text the standard example of *barbarismus per adiectionem syllabae*.<sup>16</sup> The inconcinnity is exacerbated by the same addition of *-ii-* to another monosyllabic stem in the same line: *petiisse*. Horsfall is puzzled: "The repeated ending *iisse* ... *iisse* apparently only here in V. In fact, in all class. Latin, of extreme rarity ..., though it is hard to credit that here of all places V. would have permitted himself a sound-sequence generally viewed as harsh or awkward".<sup>17</sup> The inelegance of *abisse* could easily have been avoided by the reading *et abisse* recorded in Heyne's apparatus.<sup>18</sup> This adscititious "i" of the perfect infinitive does however draw attention to the corresponding "i" of the 2nd-person future: *abies*.

*Abisse* is not only "barbarous", but also unnecessary. Virgil says: *nos abisse rati*. If the Greeks are no longer there,<sup>19</sup> it is obvious that they have "gone away". What the Trojans "thought" was that the Greeks had gone home to Greece.<sup>20</sup> The real point is accordingly made by the second half of the line: *vento petiisse Mycenae*. Pleonastic *abisse* is moreover highlighted by the commatic and elliptical form of expression: both *eos* and *sumus* are omitted from a clause of just three words (*nos abisse rati*),<sup>21</sup> which is introduced by asyndeton and ends with strong elision at the second diaeresis.<sup>22</sup> In consequence *abisse* is directly juxtaposed with *rati*. By Virgil's day *reor* had disappeared from the ordinary language:<sup>23</sup> it is altogether absent from *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.<sup>24</sup> Use of such lofty language to express self-evident content is noteworthy: to conclude from "deserted places" and "abandoned shore" (l. 28) that the Greeks have "gone away" does not need much ratiocinative effort, which in turn hardly calls for a grand lexeme like *reor*.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. (e. g.) Don. *gramm. mai.* 3,1 p. 653,9; Char. *gramm.* p. 350,11f. (ex Comin.).

<sup>17</sup> Horsfall (above n. 7) 68.

<sup>18</sup> C. G. Heyne – G. P. E. Wagner, *Publius Virgilius Maro* II, Leipzig – London 1832<sup>4</sup>, 269.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the immediately ensuing *desertos ... locos litusque relictum* (28).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the paraphrase ("putant abisse ad Graeciam") in J. L. de la Cerda, *P. Virgilio Maronis Aeneidos libri sex priores*, Cologne 1642, 148 n. "c".

<sup>21</sup> By contrast there is no ellipse of any sort between this line (25) and l. 17 (*reditu*).

<sup>22</sup> Of the clause's resultant six syllables no fewer than four belong solely to *abisse*.

<sup>23</sup> It is included by Cicero among words that make the discourse appear *grandior atque antiquior* (*de orat.* 3,153).

<sup>24</sup> The verb is a Catullan hapax, which significantly occurs only in the "learned" *carm.* 63 (l. 55). For a summary of the word's history cf. A. Yon, "*Ratio*" et les mots de la famille de "*reor*", Paris 1933, 23–5.

Evidently Virgil's purpose in thus highlighting the superfluous *abiisse* is again to call attention to this word as the etymon of *abies*.

Two further points may be made in connection with Virgil's use of *abies* here. In a note on *votum pro reditu simulant* (17) Servius refers to the passage of Accius giving the inscription to Minerva which the Wooden Horse was said to bear: <deae> *Minervae donum armipotenti abeuntes Danai dicant*.<sup>25</sup> Austin's own note on the same line affirms that "Virgil silently passes over the tradition that the Horse bore a dedication to Minerva".<sup>26</sup> This view would appear to be mistaken. Virgil's use of *abies* in conjunction with its etymon *abiisse* shortly afterwards is evidently an allusion to the *abeuntes* of the inscription: the type of wood is accordingly being employed as a particularly ingenious way of evoking the dedication.<sup>27</sup> Horsfall in turn complains: "With reference to the tradition regarding the dedicatory inscription on the T[rojan] H[orse], V.'s position is studiously unclear".<sup>28</sup> It would seem on the contrary that Virgil's position is quite clear, but expressed with great subtlety.

The other point regarding *abies* likewise concerns the dedication's reference to the horse as a *donum Minervae*. The next sentence but one after Virgil's *abiisse* begins thus: *pars stupet innuptae donum exitiale Minervae* (31). Austin finds the line "puzzling".<sup>29</sup> *Exitiale* in particular is felt to be problematic. Virgil's use of the word in this passage needs to be glossed on two separate occasions.<sup>30</sup> Horsfall regards the epithet as superfluous.<sup>31</sup> It may accordingly be significant that Varro had recently etymologized *exitium* from *exitus* (*ling.* 5,60), which is synonymous with *abitus*: both mean "departure".<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps possible therefore that Virgil's adjective is also meant to evoke *abire* as the etymon of *abies*,

<sup>25</sup> *Acc. trag.* 127 R<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Austin (above n. 2) 36.

<sup>27</sup> For a comparable instance in which Virgil addresses an issue with the same kind of indirectness later in this book cf. N. Adkin, "More Yukky Virgil: *Aeneid* 2,410–5", *Hermes* 134 (2006) 400–6, where it is argued that Virgil again has recourse to etymology in order to set out his stance on the question whether the Lesser Ajax raped Cassandra when he dragged her from Athena's temple.

<sup>28</sup> Horsfall (above n. 7) 62.

<sup>29</sup> Austin (above n. 2) 41.

<sup>30</sup> *Viz. Gloss.*<sup>L</sup> I Ansil. EX 651 (*exitiale ... : funestum, mortale*); *Gloss.*<sup>L</sup> III Abstr. EX 59 (*exitiale: mortiferum, mortale*).

<sup>31</sup> Horsfall (above n. 7) 72.

<sup>32</sup> So *OLD* 7 (s. v. *abitus*, 1); *ib.* 645 (s. v. *exitus*, 1).



from which the *donum* it qualifies was made.<sup>33</sup> Such amphibolies were considered especially clever.<sup>34</sup>

Just ninety-five lines after Virgil has stated that the Wooden Horse was made of *abies* he says instead that it was made of *acer*. Again the passage in question may be cited in full:

*saepe fugam Danai Troia cupiere relictā  
moliri et longo fessi discedere bello;  
110 fecissentque utinam! saepe illos aspera ponti  
interclusit hiems et terruit Auster euntis.  
praecipue cum iam hic trabibus contextus acernis  
staret equus toto sonuerunt aethere nimbi.  
suspensi Eurypylum scitatum oracula Phoebi  
115 mittimus, isque adytis haec tristia dicta reportat:  
"sanguine placastis ventos et virgine caesa,  
cum primum Iliacas, Danai, venistis ad oras;  
sanguine quaerendi reditus animaque litandum  
Argolica". (Aen. 2,108–19)*

Austin points out that here reference is made to the horse "almost casually".<sup>35</sup> It is therefore noteworthy that in such a "casual" mention the poet should find it necessary to specify the particular sort of timber the horse was made of: *trabibus contextus acernis* (112). Such a specification is all the more surprising, since it fills the whole hemistich and takes up most of the clause that deals with the horse. As with *abies*, Virgil evidently goes out of his way to highlight the type of wood: this time *acernis* is given additional prominence by its emphatic final position in the line. Again the reader is obliged to ask why the poet should attach such importance to a merely silvicultural spec, particularly since this time it flatly contradicts the one he has just given.

Besides this specification of the precise variety of the horse's timber it is also noteworthy that in the same connection Virgil should take the trouble to mention the seemingly quite unrelated topic of the weather: *praecipue cum iam hic trabibus contextus acernis / staret equus toto sonuerunt aethere nimbi* (112f.).

<sup>33</sup> *Abies* occupies the same penultimate *locus* in the line as *exitiale*, which is juxtaposed with *Minervae*, while the corresponding *Palladis* is similarly placed in the same *sedes* as the *abies* of the next line. Both *abies* and *exitiale* are linked respectively to the matching syntagms *montis equum* and *molem ... equi* at the main caesura of the contiguous line.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Cic. *de orat.* 2,253: *ambigua sunt in primis acuta*.

<sup>35</sup> Austin (above n. 2) 69.



This information has recently been dismissed by Horsfall as mere "verbosity".<sup>36</sup> Additional data about the weather also occupy the preceding line and a half: *saepe illos aspera ponti / interclusit hiems et terruit Auster euntis* (110f.). Here Horsfall similarly finds no more than "traditional/literary nonsense".<sup>37</sup> This dismissive standpoint would seem however to be erroneous. In the line and a half just cited it may be noted that the same emphatic final *sedes* as *acernis* in the next line is here occupied by *euntis*. This participle puzzles Servius, who feels obliged to gloss it as *ire cupientes*: the Greeks were in fact prevented from "going" by the weather, as the first word of the same line makes clear – *interclusit*. Here Virgil's use of this weightily epitritic hapax is significant enough to prompt Forcellini to an individual gloss:<sup>38</sup> "h. e. impediit, ne discederent". Since *discedere* is in turn glossed by Forcellini as *abire*,<sup>39</sup> here the sense of *intercludere* is "impedire, ne abeant". If however the Greeks are unable to *abire*, the wood of the horse cannot now be *abies*: "you will go away".<sup>40</sup> Timber and weather accordingly turn out to be related after all. In this connection Virgil stresses that the weather which prevented departure was "especially" bad when the horse was there.<sup>41</sup> In such inclement conditions it is therefore "especially" inappropriate for the horse to be made of a wood that means "you will go away".<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Horsfall (above n. 7) 131.

<sup>37</sup> Horsfall (above n. 7) 130.

<sup>38</sup> A. Forcellini, *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis* II, Padua 1940, 895 (s. v. *intercludo*).

<sup>39</sup> Forcellini (above n. 38) 145 (s. v. *discedo*, C).

<sup>40</sup> Virgil's use of impossible *euntis* in the same etymologically significant *locus* as *acernis* is evidently meant to evoke *ire* as the etymon of similarly inadmissible *abies*. Shortly afterwards Virgil employs *reditus* (118), which had likewise occurred in similarly central position shortly after the mention of *abies* (17): these are the only two instances of this noun in the whole of the first half of the *Aeneid*. This time however *reditus* is qualified by *quaerendi*; for this verb's "implication of being unable to find" cf. *OLD* 1533 (s. v., 2). On this occasion the Greeks cannot "go back home".

<sup>41</sup> 112f. (*praecipue cum iam hic trabibus contextus acernis / staret equus toto sonuerunt aethere nimbi*). Significantly Horsfall (above n. 7) 131 points out that *praecipue* is "not common": here this important word is positioned immediately after *euntis* and at the beginning of the line that ends with *acernis*.

<sup>42</sup> E. Paratore, *Virgilio, Eneide I: Libri 1–2*, Rome – Milan 2008<sup>8</sup>, 266f. maintains that the poet wishes to "sottolineare col motivo religioso delle repentine tempeste la tragica ὕβρις dell'inganno del cavallo". Here Paratore compares the biblical account of the Passion (cf. [e. g.] Lk. 23,44: "there was a darkness over all the earth"). Virgil's storms would however seem to have less to do with hybris than with etymology.

146 lines later Virgil again specifies the type of wood that the Wooden Horse was made of: this time it is pine. The text at issue here reads in full:

255 *et iam Argiva phalanx instructis navibus ibat*  
*a Tenedo tacitae per amica silentia lunae*  
*litora nota petens, flammis cum regia puppis*  
*extulerat, fatisque deum defensus iniquis*  
*inclusos utero Danaos et pinea furtim*  
*laxat claustra Sinon. illos patefactus ad auras*  
 260 *reddit equus ... (Aen. 2,254–60)*

Again mention of the kind of wood is associated with *ire*. The same sentence that ends with *pinea ... claustra* (258f.) employs this verb in its opening line: *Argiva phalanx ... ibat / a Tenedo ... / litora nota petens* (254–56). Again the use of *ire* is odd: this time Servius has to gloss it as *veniebat*.<sup>43</sup> Here *ibat* occupies the same emphatic final *sedes* in the line as *euntis* in 111. Again this employment of *ire* is evidently intended to put the reader in mind of the same verb as etymon of *abies*.<sup>44</sup> Once again however *abies* itself cannot be the wood of the Wooden Horse: just as in line 111 the Greeks were prevented by the weather from "going away", so now they are not "going away", but on the contrary "coming back" to Troy.

If the *pinus* of this passage is lexically different from *abies*, these two trees are in practice regarded in classical texts as virtually the same.<sup>45</sup> Such is not however the case with the *acer* of line 112. The question accordingly arises why Virgil should there have singled out this particular wood. The clue would appear to be supplied by the ensuing *pinus*. This lexeme was etymologized from *pinnus*, which is an old word for *acutus*.<sup>46</sup> *Acutus* is synonymous with adjectival *ācer*,<sup>47</sup> which is in turn the obvious etymon of the noun *ācer*.<sup>48</sup> If then *pinus* is

<sup>43</sup> Cf. also Claud. Don. *Aen.* 2,255 p. 182,5–7 (ad loc.): *iter per terram dicimus fieri, hoc tamen loco ibant inquit, hoc est navibus ferebantur*. Horsfall (above n. 7) 225 remarks in connection with this instance of *ire* that "the use with a collective noun as subj. seems not directly paralleled".

<sup>44</sup> For Virgil's concern with etymology in this section cf. N. Adkin, "Exiting Virgil's Trojan Horse: *Primusque Machaon*", *AC* 78 (2009) 195f., which deals with the very next sentence.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. R. J. Edgeworth, "'Inconsistency' in Vergil and in Homer", *Glotta* 59 (1981) 142 n. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Maltby (above n. 10) 476.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* I, 364,80–365,9 (s. v. *ācer*).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. A. Walde – J. B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I, Heidelberg 2008<sup>6</sup>, 6f. On such indifference to vocalic quantity in classical etymologizing cf. O'Hara (above n. 9) 61f. The Virgilian *acernus* was duly recognized as a derivative of *ācer*; cf. N. Adkin, "Further

dendrologically equivalent to *abies*, it corresponds etymologically to *ācer*: hence all three woods of the Wooden Horse turn out to be really the same.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. "Woody" Thyrsis (ecl. 7,55-68)

The same etymological wordplay would appear to shed light on three other Virgilian passages that are regarded as problematical. The first occurs already in *Eclogue* 7. Here the singing-match between Corydon (C.) and Thyrsis (T.) which is the subject of the poem ends with the following lines:

- |    |    |  |
|----|----|--|
| C. | 55 | <i>omnia nunc rident: at si formosus Alexis</i><br><i>montibus his abeat, videas et flumina sicca.</i>   |
| T. |    | <i>aret ager, vitio moriens sitit aeris herba,</i><br><i>Liber pampineas invidit collibus umbras:</i><br><i>Phyllidis adventu nostrae nemus omne virebit,</i>  |
|    | 60 | <i>Iuppiter et laeto descendet plurimus imbri.</i>   |
| C. |    | <i>populus Alcidae gratissima, vitis Iaccho,</i><br><i>formosae myrtus Veneri, sua laurea Phoebō;</i><br><i>Phyllis amat corylos: illas dum Phyllis amabit,</i><br><i>nec myrtus vincet Veneris, nec laurea Phoebi.</i>                      |
| T. | 65 | <i>fraxinus in silvis pulcherrima, pinus in hortis,</i><br><i>populus in fluviis, abies in montibus altis:</i><br><i>saepius at si me, Lycida formose, revisas,</i><br><i>fraxinus in silvis cedat tibi, pinus in hortis. (ecl. 7,55–68)</i> |

The last quatrain (65-68) is felt to "n'[avoir] plus rien de la fantaisie de celui qui précède".<sup>50</sup> The same commentator likewise censures the second line of the whole passage (56) as "prosaïque et sans fantaisie".<sup>51</sup> This line 56 runs: [*si*] *montibus his abeat, videas et flumina sicca*. The second line of the quatrain that is said to lack "fantaisie" reads in turn (66): *populus in fluviis, abies in montibus altis*.

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Supplements to Marangoni's *Supplementum Etymologicum*: The Commentators on Horace", *InvLuc* 30 (2008) 262.

<sup>49</sup> Since *pinus* is evidently the key to the conundrum, E. Baehrens, "Emendationes Vergilianae", *JKPh* 31 (1885) 392f. is clearly wrong to delete as a *Binneninterpolation* the words *et pinea furtim / laxat claustra Sinon. illos* (258f.).

<sup>50</sup> So J. Perret, *Virgile: Les Bucoliques*, Paris 1970<sup>2</sup>, 83.

<sup>51</sup> Perret (above n. 50) 83. Cf. already A. Cartault, *Étude sur les Bucoliques de Virgile*, Paris 1897, 196: "un vers assez plat". The same negative view has recently been repeated by E. Kraggerud, "Transpositions in the *Bucolics*? (On *Ecl.* 7,53–60)", *PVS* 26 (2008) 107.

It would seem that these two lines which are supposedly "sans fantaisie" are in fact linked by an eminently imaginative *jeu étymologique*: *abies* is again being etymologized from *abire*.

Virgil has taken great care to point up the etymology by ensuring that a very close correspondence marks this pair of texts that are exactly a decad of lines apart. *Abies* and *abeat* are themselves positioned in emphatically central *sedes* on either side of the main caesura.<sup>52</sup> The relationship between *abies* and *abeat* is further highlighted by the juxtaposition of each of these words with exactly the same ablative plural *montibus*. In connection with *abeat* this use of *montibus* is surprising.<sup>53</sup> Additional emphasis is given to the interrelation of *abies* and *abeat* by mention of "rivers" in the other half of each of the respective lines: homoeocatactic *flumina* and *fluviis* are etymologically identical.<sup>54</sup> These two words for "river" are themselves highlighted: in connection with *flumina* Servius uses the term *hyperbolicos*, while the employment of *in* with *fluviis* is qualified by Clausen as "strange".<sup>55</sup> Like the *montibus* of line 56 the occurrence of *flumina* in this same line is surprising.<sup>56</sup> A final link between *abies* and *abeat* is the use of *formosus* in the contiguous line. In each case the epithet is placed in the same penultimate *sedes* from fourth *biceps* to trochaic caesura in the fifth foot. In both texts this modifier is directly juxtaposed with a proper noun, which is the subject of a *verbum eundi* in a conditional clause introduced by *at si*.<sup>57</sup>

This section of the poem would seem to contain further etymologizing. If *abies* is being derived from *abire*, the antonymous *venire* would appear to be serving as the etymon of *Venus*. This etymology had been set out very recently

<sup>52</sup> On the importance of this *locus* in etymologizing cf. F. Cairns, "Ancient 'Etymology' and Tibullus: On the Classification of 'Etymologies' and on 'Etymological Markers'", *PCPhS* 42 (1996) 33 = *Papers on Roman Elegy 1969–2003*, Bologna 2007, 317.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. R. Coleman, *Virgil: Eclogues*, Cambridge 1977, 222 (on 55f.): "*Montibus* cannot belong to a Mantuan location".

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Varro *ling.* 5,27. This fluvial parallelism shows that l. 66 should start with *populus in fluviis*, not with *fraxinus in silvis*; for the latter as a *varia lectio* cf. Servius Auctus on l. 65.

<sup>55</sup> W. Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil, Eclogues*, Oxford 1994, 231.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. A. Forbiger, *P. Vergili Maronis opera* I, Leipzig 1872<sup>4</sup>, 128 (ad loc.), who glosses *flumina* as follows: "Unum tantum commemorat e multis, quae commemorari poterant: sensus enim est: tunc omnis naturae habitus mutetur". Here rivers have evidently been deliberately singled out in order to point up the parallelism.

<sup>57</sup> The verb at issue in the first passage is *abeat*, which occurs in the third foot of the adjacent line. In the second passage the same third foot of the adjacent line has the etymologically related *abies*: the arrangement is accordingly chiasmic.

by Cicero on two different occasions.<sup>58</sup> *Abeat* is followed after an interval of only two lines by *adventu* (l. 59) in exactly the same *sedes* immediately before the main caesura. After a further interval of two more lines *adventu* itself is then followed by *Veneri* (l. 62) in the same *sedes* as *abies* on the other side of the main caesura. Very recently it has been argued that in the next line but one (64) the variant reading *Veneris* reported by Servius Auctus should be preferred to *corylos* in the same emphatic *sedes*.<sup>59</sup> The line which separates these two occurrences of *Venus* is marked by metrical and syntactic *redditio*:<sup>60</sup> *Phyllis amat ... Phyllis amabit* (63). Here Virgil's purpose is evidently to highlight the etymological link between *Phyllidis adventu* and *Venus*, goddess of Love.<sup>61</sup>

Here Virgil's ultimate source is Theocritus (8,43 and 47), who uses βαίνειν, ἀφέρπειν and ἐπινίσσεσθαι. It may however be observed that not a single one of Theocritus' verbs is found as a gloss of the language employed by Virgil himself.<sup>62</sup> It would in fact seem that here Virgil's aim is to outdo his Theocritean source. In lines 64 and 66 [v]eneris and abies present the form of a 2nd-person singular of a future perfect and future verb respectively.<sup>63</sup> Similarly in line 62 [v]eneri['] could be another such 2nd-person singular future perfect with the elision of final "s" that was normal in Older Latin.<sup>64</sup> In this connection reference may also be made to *revisas* in the line immediately after *abies*. This hapax in the *Eclogues* that is positioned in emphatically final *sedes* in line 67 has been impugned on grounds

<sup>58</sup> Viz. *nat. deor.* 2,69 and 3,62.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. E. Kraggerud, "Textual and Exegetical Issues in Vergil's First and Seventh *Eclogues*", *SO* 81 (2006) 49: "In conclusion, then, having found the reading *Veneris* superior to *corylos*, I wish it re-established in future texts of the poet". This use of *Venus* is accordingly separated from *abies* and the first *Venus* by just one line respectively: all three nouns occupy the same etymologically significant *locus* after the strong 3rd-foot break.

<sup>60</sup> On this figure ("Wiederholung als Klammer") cf. Lausberg (above n. 14) 317f. (nos. 625–7).

<sup>61</sup> This etymological connection is an argument against transposing ll. 53–56 and 57–60, as mooted by Perret (above n. 50) 82f. *Adventus* and *Venus* would then be too far apart.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* I, 65,81–83 (s. v. *abeo*); I, 830,40–42 (s. v. *advenio*); I, 837,18f. (s. v. *adventus*). For the large number of possible alternatives to the lexemes Virgil does use cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* I, 65,83f. (s. v. *abeo*; add J. Menrad, "Abeo", *ALLG* 4 [1887] 471); I, 834,3–10 (s. v. *advenio*); I, 840,41f. (s. v. *adventus*). It is noteworthy that Virgil's use of *abire* in this passage has to be glossed; cf. Philarg. *Verg. ecl.* 7,56 *rec.* I & II: *abeat: idest discedat*. It may also be noted that for Virgil's *abeat* the Palatinus instead gives the metrically equivalent *aberit*.

<sup>63</sup> For the unimportance of vowel length in these matters cf. O'Hara (above n. 9) 61f.

<sup>64</sup> Here the desiderated final "s" is in fact supplied by the start of the next word: *sua*.



of both content<sup>65</sup> and form.<sup>66</sup> It may however be pointed out that *revisas* does provide a further 2nd-person singular of a *verbum eundi*. We accordingly have *veneri, veneris, abies* in alternate lines straight after the main caesura; *abies* is then followed by *revisas* in final position in the very next line. The meaning is: "you will have come, you will have come, you will go away, you would come back to see".<sup>67</sup> So far therefore from being "unzureichend", *revisas* caps the foregoing sequence of *verba eundi* very effectively. This kind of wordplay is eminently suited to the sort of playful *grammaticus* that Virgil is increasingly turning out to be.<sup>68</sup>

### 3. "Rolling on the (woody) river" (*Aen.* 8,86–96)

Similar play on words would seem to mark the second of the three passages where Virgil exploits the etymology at issue in his description of the Wooden Horse. This time he is recounting the voyage of Aeneas' party up the Tiber to visit Evander:

*Thybris ea fluvium, quam longa est, nocte tumentem  
leniit, et tacita refluxens ita substitit unda,  
mitis ut in morem stagni placidaeque paludis  
sterneret aequor aquis, remo ut luctamen abesset.  
90 ergo iter inceptum celerant rumore secundo:  
labitur uncta vadis abies; mirantur et undae,  
miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe  
scuta virum fluvio pictasque innare carinas.*

<sup>65</sup> The idea expressed by *revisas* "contrasts somewhat coarsely" with Corydon's foregoing lines according to Coleman (above n. 53) 224.

<sup>66</sup> V. Pöschl, *Die Hirtendichtung Virgils*, Heidelberg 1964, 141 complains that here the caesura after *formose* "verleiht dem durch sie abgehobenen Wort *revisas* ein Gewicht, das vom Gedanken her nicht berechtigt scheint. Es wird eine Erwartung geweckt, die *revisas* nur unzureichend einlöst".

<sup>67</sup> For this basic sense of *revisas* cf. A. Forcellini, *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis* IV, Padua 1940, 136 (s. v.): "*Reviso* est ... redeo ut videam, redeo ad videndum ... Angl. ... come back to see".

<sup>68</sup> One might compare his *jeu* on the wood of the Wooden Horse. It is tempting to associate both instances with Agrippa's characterization of Virgil as a *novae cacozeliae repertor, non tumidae nec exilis, sed ex communibus verbis atque ideo latentis* (Don. *vita Verg.* ll. 181–83). On each of these occasions all the words in question are notably "common". For another case which likewise involves *verba eundi* as well as etymology cf. Adkin (above n. 12; "Acestes"). For a conspectus of other attempts to understand Agrippa's remark cf. W. Görler, "*cacozelia*", in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* I, Rome 1984, 597.



95 *olli remigio noctemque diemque fatigant*  
*et longos superant flexus, variisque teguntur*  
*arboribus, viridisque secant placido aequore silvas. (Aen. 8,86–96)*

Here two specific texts call for comment. The first consists of lines 90f.: *ergo iter inceptum celerant rumore secundo: / labitur uncta vadis abies*. Here the words *labitur uncta vadis abies* prompt Henry to a complaint of "baldness".<sup>69</sup> Such criticism would seem however to be unwarranted. The term *vadum* is defined as follows: *vada ... sunt per qua in mari vel in fluminibus homines vel animalia pedibus vadunt, quae Vergilius brevia appellat, Graeci βραχέα*.<sup>70</sup> In the present passage *vadum* is not therefore entirely appropriate, since here Virgil is instead at pains to stress the "depth" of the water.<sup>71</sup> The Virgilian form *vadis* does however produce another 2nd-person singular of a *verbum eundi* used in conjunction with *abies*: this time "you go".<sup>72</sup> When the etymology of *abies* is given by Isidore, he expresses himself as follows: *abies dicta quod prae ceteris arboribus longe eat (orig. 17,7,32)*. The particular sense of *abies* is accordingly "you will outgo", "you will go faster". Virgil has here positioned *abies* in the etymologically significant *locus* directly after the main caesura. The same *sedes* in the immediately antecedent line is filled by similarly anapaestic *celerant*: "they make faster". The object of *celerant* is *iter*, which had recently been etymologized by Varro from *ire*.<sup>73</sup> Since *ire* is synonymous with *vadere*,<sup>74</sup> *iter* corresponds to *vadis* in the next line. *Iter ... celerant* accordingly parallels *vadis abies*: both syntagms evince the same sequence of "go, go faster".<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> J. Henry, *Aeneidea* III, Dublin 1883, 650.

<sup>70</sup> So Isid. *orig.* 13,18,6.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *pleno ... flumine* (l. 62); *lacu ... alto* (l. 66); *fluvium ... tumentem* (l. 86). The last of these three epithets is particularly important, since it occupies emphatic final position in the first line of this section and of the immediately preceding sentence. The river is in fact "in flood" (so P. T. Eden, *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*, Leiden 1975, 53 [on l. 96]).

<sup>72</sup> Such a reading is favoured by the above-mentioned derivation of *vadum* from *vadere*; cf. in addition Eutyech. *gramm.* V 459,21: *vado vadis vadum*. The connotation of *vadere* itself is "to ... go (esp. with rapid ... movement)" (so *OLD* 2003 [s. v., 1a]).

<sup>73</sup> *Ling.* 5,35. *Ire* is also the etymon of the second half of *abies* after the *ab* denoting the *prae ceteris* in the afore-cited etymology.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* V 2, 627,47f. (s. v. *eo*).

<sup>75</sup> The phrase *ergo iter inceptum celerant* is repeated from *Aen.* 6,384 with the significant substitution of *celerant* for *peragunt*. In the present passage the etymologizing parallelism with the next line confirms *celerant* against the variant readings *peragunt* and *celebrant*. It also shows

The collocation *labitur uncta* has been taken from Ennius: *labitur uncta carina per aequora cana celocis*.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand *vadis abies* is Virgil's own addition. Significantly this is the earliest instance of the metonymic use of *abies* to signify "a ship".<sup>77</sup> It was argued in the preceding paragraph that the Virgilian *vadis abies* answers to *iter ... celerant* in the previous line. The adjective corresponding to *celerare* is *celer*, which was regarded as the etymon of Ennius' term *celox*.<sup>78</sup> It would seem that Virgil's appendage of *vadis abies* to Ennius' *labitur uncta* in place of the latter's *carina ... celocis* is a playful bid to outdo his source: Virgil's metonymically naval *abies* "outgoes" even the celerity of Ennius' *celox*.

The other text requiring particular comment in this section occurs in the next sentence: *variisque teguntur / arboribus, viridisque secant placido aequore silvas* (95f.). Here *secant* is a problem. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* documents a use of this verb to mean "cleave a path through", but never in connection with trees.<sup>79</sup> When on the other hand *secare* does have such an arboreal reference, it instead always has the specific sense of "chop".<sup>80</sup> The difficulty entailed by the idea of "cutting woods" has evidently prompted Servius' odd suggestion that instead the woods' reflection in the water is meant. This view has been rejected inter alios by Eden, who however feels obliged to propose the equally odd notion that the words mean "they row between small islets of clumps of trees".<sup>81</sup> The oddness of Virgil's language would in fact seem due to a desire to evoke his earlier application of *secare* to a tree at 2,16: *secta ... abiete*. In the present passage *abies* has just been used in the immediately foregoing sentence.

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those editors to be wrong who place a full stop instead of a colon after *rumore secundo* at the end of this line. Henry on the other hand punctuates before *rumore secundo*, because in his view this adverbial phrase is needed in order to "clothe with hair" the afore-mentioned "baldness" of *labitur uncta vadis abies*. These latter words would seem however to have been shown instead to be remarkable for their etymological crinosity: Henry's punctuation is accordingly unnecessary.

<sup>76</sup> *Ann.* 478. Cf. *ann.* 386 (*labitur uncta carina, volat super impetus undas*).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. C. J. Fordyce, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos libri VII–VIII*, Oxford 1977, 216.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Maltby (above n. 10) 118. Ennius' *carina* was derived from *currere*; cf. Maltby (above n. 10) 109.

<sup>79</sup> *OLD* 1717 (s. v. *seco*, 5a).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *OLD* 1717 (s. v. *seco*, 2a). For the use of *silva* itself in connection with such "cutting" cf. in particular the set phrase *silva caedua* with the gloss of (e. g.) Gaius *dig.* 50,16,30 *pr.* (*silva caedua est ... quae in hoc habetur, ut caederetur*).

<sup>81</sup> Eden (above n. 71) 53.

Corroboration for this view would appear to be supplied by the preceding clause: *variisque teguntur / arboribus*. These words are censured by Wagner as "satis otiosa".<sup>82</sup> Peerlkamp agrees.<sup>83</sup> It may also be felt that *teguntur* – they are actually "covered" – is rather strong vocabulary for the present nautical context. This verb does however fit those who enjoy the protective cover of Virgil's Wooden Horse, since they have been depicted in Book 2 in just such terms: *variis tecti arboribus*. In the present passage Virgil's *variisque teguntur / arboribus* would accordingly appear to be a further witty allusion to *abies* along with its etymological and dendrological counterparts, *acer* and *pinus*.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4. The wood of the Magna Mater's wood (*Aen.* 9,85–89)

The third and final Virgilian passage that employs the etymological play involved in the account of the Wooden Horse occurs in the ensuing book. Here the celebrated episode in which the Trojan fleet is turned into sea-nymphs contains a notorious crux. When the Magna Mater asks Jupiter to protect these ships, she gives the following description of the wood from which they are made:

85     *pinea silva mihi multos dilecta per annos,  
lucus in arce fuit summa, quo sacra ferebant,  
nigranti picea trabibusque obscurus acernis.  
has ego Dardanio iuveni, cum classis egeret,  
laeta dedi ... (Aen. 9,85–89)*

Here the problem is twofold. In the first place Servius states categorically that maple is not used in ship-building.<sup>85</sup> Secondly the types of wood at issue are self-contradictory. The Magna Mater starts by announcing that she had a grove

<sup>82</sup> C. G. Heyne – G. P. E. Wagner, *Publius Virgilius Maro III*, Leipzig – London 1833<sup>4</sup>, 192.

<sup>83</sup> P. H. Peerlkamp, *P. Virgilio Maronis Aeneidos libri VII–XII*, Leiden 1843, 91: "*Variisque teguntur arboribus*. Wagnerus haec satis otiosa putat. Et sunt".

<sup>84</sup> On *variis* Fordyce (above n. 77) 216 observes: "Probably 'all manner of trees' ... rather than a picturesque epithet which makes the trees, in the play of light and shade, 'mottled' or 'dappled'". No reason is given for this preference. It is now possible to supply one: here we evidently have an oblique reference to the "various" woods of Virgil's Wooden Horse.

<sup>85</sup> Serv. *Aen.* 9,87: *de acere naves non fiunt*. Virgil's *acernis* is however followed immediately by plural *has*, which cannot accordingly refer only to singular *picea*. The poet is therefore emphasizing that these ships did consist of *acer*.

of pine;<sup>86</sup> however she then proceeds to affirm that this pine-grove was instead "dark with maple".<sup>87</sup>

Heyne wished to athetize lines 86f. (*lucus ... acernis*).<sup>88</sup> Other editors instead delete line 85 (*pinea ... annos*).<sup>89</sup> There would however seem to be no reason to interfere with the text. This tristichic sentence is carefully framed by two adjectives denoting the two types of wood: *pinea ... acernis*. Exactly the same pair of *épithètes rares* had been employed in Book 2 to describe the wood of the Wooden Horse: *acernis* (2,112) ... *pinea* (2,258).<sup>90</sup> As well as deliberately re-deploying the vocabulary used for the Wooden Horse, here Virgil would also appear to be again availing himself of the same etymology, which resolves the twin problems of *acer* as a ship and as "darkening" a grove of *pinus*: this word *pinus* is etymologized from *pinnus*, which means *acutus*, which is synonymous with *ācer*, which is in turn the etymon of the *ācer* at issue here. As with the wood of the Wooden Horse, this whole *quaestio vexata* of the wood of the Magna Mater's wood accordingly turns out to be just another very smart *jeu étymologique*.

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<sup>86</sup> *Pinea* (l. 85) is equivalent to *picea* (l. 87), since the latter was etymologized from *pix*, which was in turn derived from *pinus*; cf. Maltby (above n. 10) 474 (s. v. *picea*); 478 (s. v. *pix*). For additional evidence cf. N. Adkin, "Further Supplements to Marangoni's *Supplementum Etymologicum*: Servius and Servius Auctus on Virgil", in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* XV, Brussels 2010, 486 (s. v. *picea*).

<sup>87</sup> *Obscurus* is glossed as *densus* by A. Forbiger, *P. Vergili Maronis opera* III, Leipzig 1875<sup>4</sup>, 229. It may be noted that this use of *obscurus* would seem to entail a hitherto unidentified *jeu étymologique* on *lucus* at the other end of the same distich; cf. Quint. *inst.* 1,6,34 (*lucus quia umbra opacus parum luceat*). This etymology would appear to go back to Aelius Stilo (*fr.* 59 F.).

<sup>88</sup> Heyne – Wagner (above n. 82) 313. Heyne was accordingly obliged to replace *has* (l. 88) with *hanc*.

<sup>89</sup> Thus very recently M. Geymonat, *P. Vergili Maronis opera*, Rome 2008, 497.

<sup>90</sup> While M. N. Wetmore, *Index Verborum Vergilianus*, New Haven – London – Oxford 1911, 365f. lists 24 instances of the noun *pinus*, Virgil elsewhere uses the adjective *pineus* only in the late Book 11. Similarly Wetmore (p. 6) records only one other example of adjectival *acernus*. In the present passage *trabibusque obscurus acernis* reproduces closely the description of the horse at 2,112 (*trabibus contextus acernis*): on each occasion *trabibus ... acernis* occupies the same final *sedes* in a hyperbaton produced by an antibacchic epithet. The use of *trabes* in the later text is moreover noteworthy: "nur hier verwendet Vergil *trabes* für die Stämme von Bäumen, die (noch) nicht gefällt sind" (so J. Dingel, *Kommentar zum 9. Buch der Aeneis Vergils*, Heidelberg 1997, 72).