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## BANQUETING

JERZY LINDERSKI

### 1. *Triumphus alicuius ... aut collegiorum cenae*

Still another marvellous contribution to scholarship from Helsinki: the article by Mika Kajava on *visceratio*, a rich blend of epigraphy, philology and social history.<sup>1</sup> It has been an often held belief that *visceratio* normally denoted the distribution of sacrificial meat. Kajava demonstrates that the term and the procedure must be separated from a sacrificial context, and that the fundamental meaning of the word was either "public distribution of meat" or "a meal (based on meat)". And thus, "rather than suggesting a connection with sacrificial meat, *visceratio* mostly belongs to the category of *largitio* and *munificentia*" (pp. 109–111, 120, 124–125). "Mostly" – this limiting adverb is a prudent insertion. For certainly we should not attempt to claim (in a complete departure from previous orthodoxy) that *visceratio* never referred to the *profanatio* of sacrificial flesh. But the aim of this note is rather to offer support to Kajava's interpretation, and to call attention to an important text not included in his argument.

He observes that "most of the evidence, literary and epigraphic, couples *visceratio* with a banquet (*epulum*)" (p. 123). And among public banquets of particular importance were those associated with a triumph (pp. 125–131). Concluding his remarks on the consumption of meat at the *cenae triumphales* Kajava writes: "But even if only one *visceratio* is explicitly recorded during the festivities [viz. Suet. Iul. 38], it is likely that doles of meat were now and then added to the more normal *epula*. It may even be that Caesar was not the first triumphator to do so. However, the meat needed for the *visceratio* did not necessarily come from sacrificed animals, even if sacrifices did play an important role in Roman triumph" (p. 130).

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<sup>1</sup> M. Kajava, "Visceratio", *Arctos* 32 (1998) 109–131.

Now it can indeed be positively shown that Caesar was not the first to include dishes of meat in his triumphal banquets,<sup>2</sup> and that some meat could specially be purchased for that purpose. The source in question is Varro, *rust.* 3,2,14–16 (Varro speaking):

*Certe nosti ... materterae nostrae fundum in Sabinis qui est ad quartum vicesimum lapidem via Salaria a Roma. (15) ... Atque in hac villa qui est ornithon, ex eo uno quinque milia scio venisse turdorum denariis ternis, ut sexaginta milia ea pars reddiderit eo anno villae ... (16) ... Sed ad hunc bolum <ut> pervenias, opus erit tibi aut epulum aut triumphus alicuius, ut tunc fuit Scipionis Metelli, aut collegiorum cenae<sup>3</sup>, quae nunc<sup>4</sup> innumerabiles excandefaciunt annonam macelli. Reliquis annis omnibus si <non><sup>5</sup> hanc expectabis summam, spero, non tibi decoquet [non]<sup>6</sup> ornithon; neque hoc accidit<sup>7</sup> his moribus nisi raro, ut decipiaris. Quotus quisque enim est annus, quo non videas*

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<sup>2</sup> On Caesar's triumphal *epula*, see now the excellent study by J. H. D'Arms, "Between Public and Private: The *epulum publicum* and Caesar's *horti trans Tiberim*", in M. Cima and E. La Rocca (eds.), *Horti Romani* (BCAR Suppl. 6), Roma 1998, 33–43. He refers in passing (p. 38, n. 18) to the passage of Varro reproduced below in the text, but only as evidence for the general proposition that "the public banquets, triumphs, and the ever proliferating dinners of the *collegia* pushed up food prices in Roman markets".

<sup>3</sup> On the repasts of the *collegia* (and on Varro's indication), see the still indispensable J. P. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains* 1, Louvain 1895, 325.

<sup>4</sup> The paradosis is *tunc*, but *nunc* is a convincing and necessary emendation by H. Keil in his edition of Varro, Lipsiae 1884, rightly accepted by subsequent editors, most recently by C. Guiraud, *Varron, Économie rurale, Livre III* (Collection Budé), Paris 1997. Very instructive is H. Keil, *Commentarius in Varronis Rerum rusticarum libros tres*, Lipsiae 1891, 230–231, where he discusses the *Textgestaltung*, his own and of his predecessors.

<sup>5</sup> Keil (1884) reads *reliquis annis omnibus et hanc expectabis summam, <et> spero, non tibi decoquet non ornithon*, which does not make much sense (cf. below, n. 6); <non> was added by G. Goetz (ed. Teubneriana 1912, and ed. altera, 1929), who also changed the paradosis *et* to *si* (cf. ed. 1929, praef. p. XXII), accepted by Guiraud.

<sup>6</sup> [non] was already deleted by J. M. Gesner in his *Scriptores rei rusticae veteres latini*, I, Lipsiae 1735 (a second edition with minimal revisions by J. A. Ernesti, Lipsiae 1773, and various further republications, the last as the editio Bipontina in 1787), re-instituted by Keil (1884), but rightly again deleted in his Teubner edition of 1889 (cf. *Commentarius* 230), and duly secluded by Goetz and Guiraud.

<sup>7</sup> An old correction of Victorius (1541) for *accedit*.

*epulum aut triumphum aut collegia non epulari [quae nunc innumerabiles incendunt annonam]?<sup>8</sup>*

Thus in one of the years preceding the dramatic date of the dialogue in book III Varro's maternal aunt succeeded in selling from her aviary five thousand thrushes, for three denarii apiece, so that her total income from that single division of the villa was in that year sixty thousand sesterces.<sup>9</sup> But Varro makes it clear that it was rather an unusual haul (*bolus*): it occurred in the year of the triumph of Metellus Scipio,<sup>10</sup> who must thus have given

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<sup>8</sup> The bracketed words were deleted by J. G. Schneider (in his *Scriptores rei rusticae veteres latini*, I, Lipsiae 1794, non vidi), followed by Goetz and Guiraud. Keil (1884) keeps this intrusion in the text, but removes it in 1889 (and in *Commentarius* 231 he describes it as "ex superiore loco inepte repetita"). Obviously it is a marginal gloss elaborating on the unusual *excandefaciunt*.

<sup>9</sup> For the fattening of *turdi*, see Varro, *rust.* 3,5,7; Plin. *nat.* 10,60 who reports that according to Cornelius Nepos *turdos paulo ante saginari coeptos*; and especially the extensive account of Columella (8,10). At 8,10,6 he refers (with some exaggeration) to Varro: *M. Terentius ternis saepe denariis singulos emptitatos esse significat avorum temporibus, quibus qui triumphabant populo dabant epulum*.

<sup>10</sup> As I have argued in another place (*Historia* 34 (1985) 248–254, esp. 253 = Roman Questions, Stuttgart 1995, 100–106, esp. 105), the dramatic date of Book III is 50 B.C., and the triumph of Metellus Scipio (as a praetor from an unknown province) is to be dated to 54 or 53. Cf. also C. F. Konrad, "Notes on Roman Also-Rans", in J. Linderski (ed.), *Imperium sine fine: T. Robert S. Broughton and the Roman Republic* (*Historia Einzelschriften* 105), Stuttgart 1996, 139–140. Guiraud (above, n. 4) is confused: he is utterly unaware of the recent literature on the dramatic date of Book III (pp. 56–57), and he believes that the passage cannot refer to the consul of 52 for "loin de célébrer un triomphe, il fit l'expérience de la défaite des Pompeiens à la bataille de Thapsus" (p. 63). A peculiar argument to impugn Varro's clear testimony – as if Metellus Scipio's defeat in 46 precluded any possibility of an earlier triumph. Guiraud concludes that "le triomphe ne peut concerner que son père adoptif, qui triompha dans le dernier jours de 71". But as this Metellus "ne s'appelait pas *Scipio*, il s'agit donc d'une erreur de Varron". Not at all: the error is not of Varro but of Varro's commentator. This piece of misinterpretation is in fact a piece of purloined misinterpretation. B. Tilly, in her otherwise valuable *Varro the Farmer*, London 1973, 280, presents the same errant idea, in identical phrases, only in English: "Scipionis Metelli: the name in this form presents a difficulty. The reference can only be to that Metellus who celebrated a triumph in 71 B.C. ... His adopted son who was consul in 52 B.C. ... is usually called Metellus Scipio, but far from celebrating a triumph, experienced the defeat of the Pompeians at the battle of Thapsus in 46 B.C." On the name-forms Metellus Scipio and Scipio Metellus, see J. Linderski, "Q. Scipio Imperator", in *Imperium sine fine* 155–156: in reality the latter form is more common with at least eight attestations against five attestations of the former.

particularly lavish *epula*, and specifically must have purchased a good number of *turdi*.

Now the bird in question, *turdus* ("thrush", "fieldfare", It. "tordo", Fr. "grive", Germ. "Drossel"), of which some three hundred species exist, is a relatively small bird weighing at the most slightly over 200 g (7.5 oz.).<sup>11</sup> Thus it was a sort of delicacy,<sup>12</sup> and not the main course of a meat dish, but more importantly it never served as a sacrificial animal. We have clear proof that at least some meat consumed at the *cenae triumphales* did not derive from sacrificial offerings but was purchased specially and solely for the purpose of banqueting.

## 2. *Auctoritas Caesaris*

No, this is not another study about the concept of *auctoritas Caesaris* or *Augusti*; our subject is not constitutional history but something much more important: wine. In an erudite article on the triumphal *epula* John D'Arms contrasts the almost total silence enveloping the banquets of Pompeius with the truly extraordinary din of publicity surrounding Caesar's prandial triumphs. One would almost wish to say that Caesar gained not only the dignity of *magister populi* (an old Roman term denoting the office of dictator) but also that of *magister epuli*. In the course of his argument D'Arms makes the following statement:

"there is the Elder Pliny's emphatic assertion – an assertion which he claims he based on his reading of Caesar's own correspondence – that

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<sup>11</sup> See e.g. C. M. Perrins and A. L. A. Middleton (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Birds*, Oxford (also New York) 1985, s.v. Thrushes. For ancient testimonies, see J. André, *Les noms d'oiseaux en latin*, Paris 1967, 157-158; F. Capponi, *Ornithologia latina*, Genova 1979, 495-499. For those linguistically inclined there is a recent and excellent piece on the i-e etymology of the bird-name: R. Bracchi, "Turdus e i suoi corrispondenti: l'uccello 'che cova nel fango inaridito'", *Athenaeum* 87, 1999, 79-92.

<sup>12</sup> See Hor. epist. 2,15,40-41: *cum sit obeso nil melior turdo*; cf. sat. 1,5,72; 2,2,74; 2,5,10-11; Mart. 13,51 and 92. Cf. Copponi [above, n. 11] 499. At the dinner of Trimalchio (Petron. 69,7) there were served pastry thrushes stuffed with raisins and nuts (*turdi siliginei uvis passis nucibusque farsis*).

Caesar was the first in Rome to create official sanction for public feasting".<sup>13</sup>

In note 25 the source reference is duly produced: "Plin. nat. 14,66: *is enim primus auctoritatem (sc. publicis epulis) dedit, ut epistulis eius apparet*".

The statement that Caesar "created official sanction for public feasting" appears so extraordinary and so improbable that the reader would do well to bestir himself to consult the full text of Pliny. For *auctoritas* in the sense of "sanction" makes its gingerly debut only under the Empire;<sup>14</sup> on the other hand it certainly would not make much sense to claim that all pre-Caesarian *epula publica* were staged without any official consideration, sanction or permission either explicit or implicit in the custom.

A similar opinion had been expressed also by N. Purcell: he contends that the practice of communal public feasting "is very likely to have spread in imitation of the great public banquets of Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.", and he continues:

"Pliny (nat. 14,66) asserts that official sanction for such occasions was formally given by the dictator, as was to be found in his published letters".<sup>15</sup>

This interpretation is based on a misreading of Pliny's text. But let Pliny speak for himself (nat. 14,66, ed. C. Mayhoff, Teubner 1875):

*Quartum curriculum publicis epulis optinere a divo Iulio – is enim primus auctoritatem his dedit, ut epistulis eius apparet – Mamertina circa Messanam in Sicilia genita.*

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<sup>13</sup> D'Arms (above, n. 2) 37.

<sup>14</sup> See the classic study by A. Magdelain, *Auctoritas Principis*, Paris 1947, esp. 87–90, and for the republican times, see another book of renown, J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république*, Paris 1963, 295–314, 330–335 (cf. esp. 308, where *auctoritas* is defined as "l'influence politique sous toutes ses formes", and pp. 309–310, where the term is contrasted with *potestas* and *imperium*).

<sup>15</sup> N. Purcell, "Wine and Wealth in Ancient Italy", *JRS* 75, 1985, 14, n. 65. In view of the striking stylistic similarity between the enunciations of Purcell and D'Arms, the latter must have been influenced by the former, and indeed D'Arms quotes Purcell's article though in a slightly different context (p. 38, nn. 38 and 39).

This statement of Pliny constitutes the concluding paragraph in his disquisition (14.59-66) on the *genera vini*.<sup>16</sup> He distinguishes four classes of wine, each class comprising several specimens. To the first class (to which belonged the *vinum Pucinum*, *Setinum* and *Caecubum*) he artfully gives no specific denomination, but it must have been *nobilitas prima*, for he next continues with *nobilitas secunda* which was due to the *Falernus ager* and *maxime Faustianus*. Then he lists wines that *ad tertiam palmam varie venere*, and finally we arrive at the *quartum curriculum*, the wines that occupy in Pliny's classification the fourth place.<sup>17</sup>

Once we have before our eyes the full context and not merely a snippet of a phrase,<sup>18</sup> it becomes immediately obvious that the pronoun *his* does not refer (as Purcell and D'Arms take it to refer) to *publicis epulis* but to *Mamertina* (sc. *vina*). It was Julius Caesar who introduced the custom of serving at public feasts the *vina Mamertina*.<sup>19</sup>

Now the phrase *ut epistulis eius apparet*, "as appears from his letters", appears at first blush unusual (although Mayhoff does not indicate any textual problems), so that one rather wonders that an editor or commentator had not tried to change *epistulis* to *epulis*, and connect it with a form of *apparo* (not *appareo*; cf. TLL s.v. *apparo*, lines 60–80), e.g. *ut epulis eius apparantur*, "that they be served at his banquets". For the construction with dative (however with respect to *mensae* not *epula*), see Cassiod. var. 12,18,3: *quae (species) mensis regiis apparantur*. And in fact according to the apparatus in the Budé edition by J. André (1958) two (fairly old but lesser) manuscripts

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<sup>16</sup> On the wines mentioned by Pliny and on his classification, see A. Tchernia, *Le vin de l'Italie romaine* (BEFAR 261), Paris 1986, 29, 345–347 (and in many other places of his monograph).

<sup>17</sup> This peculiar meaning of the the term *curriculum* is not recorded either in the Dictionary of Lewis-Short or in OLD, but it duly figures in TLL s.v. *curriculum*, col. 1506, lines 53–54.

<sup>18</sup> Regrettably the pernicious custom spreads whereby scholars tend to adduce only the tiniest fragments of texts under discussion or only translations or just the merest of references. In this way, as few readers will have ready access to all classical authors, and fewer still will bother to check references for themselves, errors take root and produce a progeny of false assertions.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Tchernia (above, n. 16) 345, who judiciously observes: (Caesar) "qui mis à mode le Mamertin, quatrième grand cru classé". So also the translations of H. Rackham (Loeb 1945), J. André (Budé 1958) and R. König (Tusculum, München 1981).



display the reading *epulis*. On further consideration the phrase *ut epistulis eius apparet* turns out after all to be grammatically sound; it is fittingly vindicated by a passage in another silver Latin author, Quintilian, as revealed through a search in The Packard Humanities Institute Latin Data Bank. We read at Inst. 1,7,34: *M. Tullius orator ... in filio, ut epistulis apparet, recte loquendi asper ... exactor*.<sup>20</sup> Grammar apart, doubts of substance subsist. What kinds of wine Caesar served on various public occasions was a matter of public record: *constat*, as Pliny himself puts it.<sup>21</sup> He will hardly have had to learn this very fact from Caesar's letters. The reading *epistulis* can be saved only if we place the stress on *primus*: what Pliny may have learned from the dictator's letter (it would be nice to know its addressee!) was Caesar's explanation of the reason that prompted him to give his *auctoritas* to the *vina Mamertina*. It was a bold innovation, very much in Caesar's style, but also – if his choice should have met with popular displeasure – a political risk.

Freed from this Plinian philological infelicity the articles of Purcell and D'Arms and the banquets of Caesar may now be safely savoured, with Caesar appearing rather much less of a bureaucrat and rather much more of a wine connoisseur.

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

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<sup>20</sup> The passage of Quintilian has problems of its own. This is the reading adopted by the editores Teubneriani E. Bonnell (1854) and L. Radermacher (1907), but the principal codex, the Ambrosianus, has *ut in epistulis apparet*, and this lectio, as V. Buchheit helpfully observes in his addenda to the reprint (1959, and further reprints) of Radermacher's edition, was endorsed by no less an authority than W. A. Baehrens, Beiträge zur lateinischen Syntax, Philologus, Suppl. 12,2, 1912, 444. F. H. Colson in his commentary to Book I (Cambridge 1924, 103; cf XCII) reports that this was also the reading of [F. O.] Meister in his edition, [Lipsiae et Pragae] 1886-1887. In any case the phrases in Pliny and Quintilian shed stylistic light on each other: we are free to read in Quintilian either *epistulis* (supported by Pliny) or with the Ambrosianus *in epistulis*, and in Pliny either *epistulis* or <in> *epistulis* (supported by the reading in Quintilian's Ambrosianus).

<sup>21</sup> Plin. nat. 14,97: *idem* [i. e. Caesar] *Hispaniensi triumpho Chium et Falernum dedit* [a. 45], *epulo vero in tertio consulatu suo* [a. 46] *Falernum, Chium, Lesbium, Mamertinum, quo tempore primum quattuor genera vini adposita constat*. This account presents various problems of chronology; cf. the comments by André [above, n. 19], 125.