FATALIS: A MISSING *MERETRIX*

Sunt qui...: Some catalogue senators, others prostitutes. Ronald Syme's famous "Missing Senators" produced an effluvium of notables not recorded in the RE; this note produces only one missing *meretrix*. Not a *meretrix* of flesh and blood – a proper *Prosopographia Meretricum* still awaits its compiler – but a missing description of the trade. Missing from a catalogue, linguistically fascinating and socially instructive, of a score of epithets denoting the profession that a decade ago graced the pages of this Journal[1]). The missing epithet is *fatalis*, a word with a curious history in antiquity, and a curious history in modern times.

Commenting on Horace's *fatale monstrum* (Carm. 1.37.21) Ps.-Acro offers *more scholiastarum* this triple interpretation[2]): *'Fatalem' dixit aut turpem, unde et prostantes fatales dicuntur ut est* (Lucan X 60): *'Roma⟨no⟩ non casta malo', aut uelut monstrum fatis sibi reseruatum, aut fato Romanis subiectum.*

Porphyrio has a similar, apparently traditional disquisition[3]): *Fatale monstrum aut[em] a fato sibi seruatum aut detestabile. ⟨An⟩ dictum hoc accipiamus: 'Quasi decreto fatorum nobis obiectum'?*

Porphyrio's *detestabile* is akin to Ps.-Acro's *turpe*, but he eschews the interpretation *fatalis* = *prostans*. Standard modern commentaries either do not concern themselves with the explanations of the epithet *fatale*[4]) or take it in the meaning 'bringing doom' rather than 'sent by the fates'[5]). They make no mention of

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1) J. N. Adams, Words for 'Prostitute' in Latin, RhM 126 (1983) 321–58.

2) Pseudoacronis Scholia in Horatium Vetustiora, rec. O. Keller, I (Lipsiae 1902) 133.

3) Pomponi Porphyrionis Commentum in Horatium, rec. A. Holder (Ad Aeni Pontem 1894) 50.

4) A. Kiessling–R. Heinze, Q. Horatius Flaccus, Oden und Epoden (Berlin ^{3}1898) 143. In the seventh edition (1930; later 'editions' are mere reprints) 157, Heinze interprets *fatale monstrum* as 'verhängnisvoll', and comments: "nur durch den Willen des Schicksals konnte sie solches Unheil bringen". He thus follows (perhaps rightly) in the footsteps of Porphyrio.

5) R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I (Oxford 1970) 417. This interpretation of *fatale* is clearly borne out by lines 6–8: *dum Capitolio / regina dementis ruinas, / funus et imperio parabat.*

Ps.-Acro's terminological excursion[6]). This excursion was clearly influenced by the tone of the Horatian description of Cleopatra and of her entourage: *contaminato cum grege turpium morbo virorum*[7]). Cleopatra was surrounded by the *turpes*, and herself was a *monstrum fatale* = *turpe*.

To bolster his equation *fatalis* = *prostans* Ps.-Acro adduces Lucan. The quotation is aptly chosen, but it is to be read in a broader context, Phars. 10.55–60:

> *Pellaea tutus in aula*
> *Caesar erat, cum se parua Cleopatra biremi*
> *corrupto custode Phari laxare catenas*
> *intulit Emathiis ignaro Caesare tectis*
> *dedecus Aegypti, Latii feralis Erinys*
> *Romano non casta malo.*

Lucan and Horace form two parts of a perfect ring composition: Cleopatra, the *Latii feralis Erinys*[8]), was unleashed on the Roman world when she induced the keeper of Pharos to lower the chains closing the port of Alexandria and proceeded to ensnare the unsuspecting Caesar; her designs came to an end when the New Caesar pursued the fleeing Queen to put the monster in chains: *Caesar ab Italia volantem remis adsurgens ... daret ut catenis fatale monstrum*. The loosened chains match the chains imposed; *biremi* echoes *remis adsurgens; feralis* corresponds to *fatalis*, and *Erinys* to *monstrum*[9]).

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6) The only scholar to notice it was W. Heraeus, Sprachliches aus Pseudoacronischen Horazscholien, RhM 58 (1903) 464. He remarks: "Schwierig ist die Erklärung ... *prostantes fatales dicuntur*, wofür mir kein Beleg zur Hand ist." The passage is also recorded in TLL (1915) 334, s. v. '*fatales*'.

7) Lines 9–10. Porphyrio comments (p. 50): *Id est, cum grege spadonum, quos Cleopatra satellites et cubicularios habebat, quos morbo turpes dixit, quia fere hi effeminati sunt*. Ps.-Acro follows Porphyrio, but rephrases the comment on *turpium* (p. 131): *Turpium* [*autem*] *aut malae uitae aut euiratorum*.

8) Formally an imitation of Verg. Aen. 2.573. Vergilian imitations and echoes have been assiduously collected, contacts to Horace languish strangely neglected, even in the erudite and perceptive commentary by M. G. Schmidt, Caesar und Cleopatra. Philologischer und historischer Kommentar zu Lucan 10,1–171 (Frankfurt a. M. 1986) 102–111 (with further literature). For Lucan's picture of Cleopatra, see also I. Becher, Das Bild der Kleopatra in der griechischen und lateinischen Literatur (Berlin 1966) 117–122. For the locution *Romano non casta malo*, cf. Iustinus, Hist. Philipp. 29.1.5: *fatale non tam Romanis quam ipsi Africae malum* (of Hannibal).

9) And Lucan's 10.62 *Hesperios auxit ... Cleopatra furores* finds its mirror image in Horace 1.37.12–13: *sed minuit furorem / vix una sospes navis ab ignibus*. This seems to be the only Horatian echo explicitly observed by the commentators.

Lucan's *Romano non casta malo* finds, however, no direct correspondence in Horace, only an oblique connection with the *grex turpium virorum*. In Lucan Cleopatra is a feral fury; but it was her wantonness that was ruinous to Rome. The incestuous queen seduced the Roman leaders; her *animus* to enslave Rome *nox illa dedit quae prima cubili / miscuit incestam ducibus Ptolemaida nostris* (10.68–69). But who would not forgive Antonius his insane love *durum cum Caesaris hauserit ignis pectus* (10.70–72)? Caesar: *sanguine Thessalicae cladis perfusus adulter* (cf. 367) who *miscuit armis inlicitosque toros et non ex coniuge partus* (10. 74–76). He was oblivious of his past conjunction with Pompey, and of his daughter, Pompey's wife (10.77–78): *oblitus Magni tibi, Iulia, fratres* [i. e. Caesarion] / *obscena de matre dedit*[10]).

Cleopatra was able to conquer the aging Caesar through her poisonous charms: *Expugnare senem potuit Cleopatra uenenis* (10. 360). The affair had a peculiarly Aegyptian incestuous flavor, with Caesar himself arranging her marriage to her younger brother Ptolemy XIV (10.357–59):

> *Nubit soror impia fratri;*
> *nam Latio iam nupta duci est, interque maritos*
> *discurrens Aegypton habet Romamque meretur.*

The verb *meretur* catches attention: it is etymologically connected with the denomination of prostitute, *meretrix*. Rome was the price for Cleopatra's sexual services. Florus (who unlike Lucan omits to mention Caesar's liaison with Cleopatra) so describes her dealings with Antonius (2.21.2–3): *Hinc mulier Aegyptia ab ebrio imperatore pretium libidinum Romanum imperium petit*. Propertius (3.11.39) employs the *vocabulum proprium* and calls Cleopatra *incesti meretrix regina Canopi*, "the harlot queen of the incestuous Canopus"[11]). He too mentions the price: (3.11.31–32): *coniugis*[12]) *obsceni pretium Romana poposcit / moenia et addictos in sua regna Patres*.

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10) Cf. Schmidt (above, n. 8) 119–31.

11) *Regina meretrix* also in Pliny, NH 9.119. Canopus was notorious as a *deversorium vitiorum* (Seneca, Ep. 51.3), but *incestus* may well have a particular reference to the sibling marriages within the House of the Ptolemies; this is the suggestion of P. Fedeli in his vastly erudite commentary, Properzio. Il Libro Terzo delle Elegie (Bari 1985) 377, and (with respect to Lucan) of Becher (above, n. 8) 119, n. 5. Schmidt (above, n. 8) 120–21, while admitting this flavor, points out that the term will certainly also refer to Cleopatra's liaison with Caesar.

12) Or perhaps *coniugii obsceni*. Fedeli (above, n. 11) 372 defends the reading *coniugis*.

Cicero (de div. 1.98) describes the *ortus androgyni* as *fatale quoddam monstrum*[13]). Curiously enough this passage has escaped the attention of Horatian commentators. The hermaphrodite was a *monstrum* because it disrupted the natural order. The appearance (or rather the discovery) of the *androgynus* was a terrifying *prodigium*, a sign that the equilibrium between gods and humans was shaken. The expiation, the *procuratio*, was necessary. As this foul creature (the operative word is *turpis*) through its very existence polluted the earth, the Roman ritual dictated that it either be drowned in a river or transported to the sea or (in some special cases) burnt alive.

Nisbet and Hubbard suggest that Cleopatra may have been the issue of a royal brother-sister marriage: that circumstance would certainly have made her a *monstrum* in the Roman eyes. That circumstance is, however, not mentioned explicitly, although we may perhaps detect allusions to it in the frequent use of the epithet *incestus* (cf. n. 11). Cleopatra was a *monstrum* because she disrupted the natural order of Roman dominance, her sexual wiles her fatal weapon[14]).

Cleopatra was *non casta, incesta, obscena,* and a *meretrix*[15]). She was also *fatalis, feralis*, an *Erinys*, and a *monstrum*[16]). It was

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13) See the learned commentary by A. S. Pease, M. Tulli Ciceronis De Divinatione Libri Duo (Urbana 1920–23, reprint Darmstadt 1963) 272. He adduces, naturally, the passage of Horace. To the various modern works he quotes, add now L. Breglia Pulci Doria, Oracoli Sibillini tra rituali e propaganda. Studi su Flegonte di Tralles (Napoli 1983) 67–88 ("L'androgino e i prodigi a Roma"). On the Roman concept of *monstrum*, see C. Moussy, Esquisse de l'histoire de *monstrum*, REL 55 (1977) 345–69.

14) Moussy (above, n. 13) 365, and n. 2, remarks on the equivalence of *scelus* and *monstrum*, and observes that "à cette acception d''acte monstrueux' se rattache celle d''amour monstrueux, contre nature', 'inceste' ". See also S. Montero, Los haruspices y la moralidad de la mujer romana, Athenaeum 81 (1993) 647–58, an interesting discussion of the correlation between the prodigies and the comportment of women. Neither Moussy nor Montero mentions Cleopatra as an example of *monstrum*.

15) For sexual invective, the assortment of terms, and of personages to whom they were applied, see I. Opelt, Die lateinischen Schimpfwörter und verwandte sprachliche Erscheinungen (Heidelberg 1965) 179–80.

16) Nisbet and Hubbard (above, n. 5) 417 adduce also Flor. 2.21.3 *in monstrum illud desciverat* (sc. Antonius) for the epithet *monstrum* applied to Cleopatra. The phrase refers (almost certainly) to Antonius: after his association with Cleopatra he himself became a *monstrum*; cf. Becher (above, n. 8) 81 and n. 3. *Fatalis* and *incestus* are joined by Horace, Carm. 3.3.19–21: Paris is *fatalis incestusque iudex* who together with Helen, the *mulier peregrina*, brought about the destruction of Ilion. Contemporary readers may have detected here an allusion to Antonius and Cleopatra (cf. Kiessling-Heinze ad loc.).

but a small step for Ps.-Acro to identify her (perhaps rather incongruously in view of the price she demanded) with a common prostitute[17]). The linguistic question remains. Is his equation *fatalis* = *prostans* merely an aberrant inference from Horace and Lucan or does it reflect a living Latin idiom[18])? There is no direct evidence to bear out his contention[19]).

The solution may lie in dreams. A large portion of Artemidoros' *Oneirocritica* (1.78, pp. 86–87, ed. R. A. Pack, Lipsiae 1963) is devoted to dreams pertaining to sexual intercourse. It is good for a man to dream of intercourse provided that the partner, be it wife or mistress, is willing; this bodes well for any enterprise. To dream of intercourse with prostitutes who 'stand' in brothels (γυναιξὶ δὲ ἑταίραις ταῖς ἐπὶ κασωρίοις ἑστώσαις μίγνυσθαι) signifies a little shame and a small expense, but it is also auspicious for all undertakings: for they are called 'working girls' (ἐργάσιμοι) and they offer themselves without any resistance. On the other hand it is inauspicious to dream of entering a brothel (πορνεῖον), and being unable to leave. Artemidoros proceeds to recount the story of a man who dreamt this dream, and died a few days thereafter. No wonder: a brothel, like a cemetery, is called 'a common place'[20]),

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17) For *prostare* (and *stare*) as referring to low-class prostitutes, see Adams (above, n. 1) 331. Curiously enough he lists only verbal forms and locutions (e. g. *quae prostitit* or *pupilli prostantis*), but not the substantival participle *prostantes* (which seems to be attested only in Ps.-Acro). The verb *prostare* is used of Cleopatra also by Auct. de vir. ill. 86.2: *haec tantae libidinis fuit ut saepe prostiterit*.

18) The method of Ps.-Acro need not inspire confidence. Horace's narrative at 1.37.12–13: *minuit furorem / vix una sospes navis*, is quite straightforward, and Porphyrio (p. 50) somberly comments: *una navis, qua scilicet effugit uicta ab Augusto*. In contrast, Ps.-Acro (p. 132) offers this allegorical explanation: *Aut navi qua fugit Cleopatra, aut per allegoriam ostendit Cleopatram primum corporis sui inlecebris Caesarem cepisse, secundum Antonium, Augustum deinde temptasse, sed eum eius uitasse conplexus; ideo 'una sospes nauis ab ignibus'*. Cf. Becher (above, n. 8) 149.

19) It may, however, be significant that Ps.-Acro uses the present tense (*dicuntur*). He took much of his information concerning the *realia* from Porphyrio, but for items that had become obsolete he normally changes Porphyrio's present tense into a past tense; cf. A. Langenhorst, De scholiis Horatianis quae Acronis nomine feruntur quaestiones selectae (Bonn 1908) 23, quoted by M. Schanz – C. Hosius, Geschichte der römischen Literatur II (München ^{4}1935) 156. It is thus possible that his information *fatales* = *prostantes* (missing from Porphyrio) reproduces the late Latin idiom.

20) This expression (as pointed out by Pack in app.) existed also in Latin: Seneca, Contr. 1.2.5: *Meretrix vocata es, in communi loco stetisti*. Cf. also κοινεῖον = brothel (LSJ s. v.). The idea that the places of prostitution are like corpses appears also in Christian literature, see Makarios, Hom. 12.2, lines 19–22 (H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, M. Kroeger, Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios [Patristi-

and many human seeds perish there (κοινὸς γὰρ ὁ τόπος οὗτος καλεῖται, ὡς καὶ ὁ τοὺς νεκροὺς δεχόμενος, καὶ πολλῶν σπερμάτων ἀνθρωπίνων ἐνταῦθα γίνεται φθορά). It resembles death. But the women themselves have nothing to do with the place: it is a good dream to see them plying their trade[21]).

To paraphrase Artemidoros, the brothel was a *locus fatalis*, but not the *prostantes* themselves; still his explanation is relatively close to Ps.-Acro's definition. Artemidoros writes from the point of view of a consumer bent upon enjoying life in all of its pleasures and dangers. Yet when we consider the stream of moralizing condemnation flowing from classical and particularly Christian sources[22]) the application of the epithet *fatalis* to *meretrices* appears logical and likely[23]).

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sche Texte und Studien 4], Berlin 1964): καὶ πορνεῖα καὶ τόποι, ὅπου ἀταξίαι γίνονται καὶ ἀσωτίαι are for the θεοσεβεῖς ... ὡς νεκρά. A comparison between tombs and τῶν πορνῶν τὰ καταγώγια, πολλῆς τῆς δυσωδίας γέμοντα, πολλῆς τῆς σηπεδόνος is found in Joannes Chrysostomos, In Matth. hom. 28.4 (Patr. Gr. 57, 355, 41–43). I owe these two passages to Herter, RAC 1193–94 (below, n. 22).

21) Cf. 4.9. Also in the waking state it bodes well to see a prostitute early in the morning; Joannes Chrysostomos inveighs against this prognostication, Ad illum. catech. 2.5 (Patr. Gr. 49, 240, 8–10): Ἐὰν ἀπαντήσῃ παρθένος, ..., ἄπρακτος ἡ ἡμέρα γίνεται· ἐὰν δὲ ἀπαντήσῃ πόρνη, δεξιὰ καὶ χρηστὴ καὶ πολλῆς ἐμπορίας γέμουσα. Cf. Herter, RAC 1194 (below, n. 22).

22) See the articles by H. Herter, Dirne, RAC 3 (1957) 1154–1213; Die Soziologie der antiken Prostitution im Lichte des heidnischen und christlichen Schrifttums, JbAC 3 (1960) 70–111. They contain a mine of information. He registers the passage of Artemidoros at RAC 1179.

23) Ps.-Quint. Decl. Maiores (ed. L. Håkanson, Stutgardiae 1982) 15.11 (p. 314, line 1) describes the *amor* toward a *meretrix* as *funereis facibus armatus*.