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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica**

Band (Jahr): **62 (2005)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **11.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-47939>

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The Explanation of Erodius' Name in Antoninus Liberalis

By David Jordan, Athens

Αὐτονόου τοῦ Μελανέως καὶ Ἴπποδαμείας ἐγένοντο υἱοὶ μὲν Ἐρωδιός, [καὶ] Ἄνθος, Σχοινεύς, Ἄκανθος, θυγάτηρ δὲ Ἄκανθίς, ἣ κάλλιστον εἶδος ἔδωκεν οἱ θεοί. 2. Τῷ δὲ Αὐτονόῳ τούτῳ ἐγένοντο ἵππων ἀγέλαι πλείσται καὶ ἔνεμον αὐτὰς Ἴπποδάμεια <ἦ> τούτου γυνὴ καὶ οἱ παῖδες αὐτῶν. 3. Ἐπεὶ δὲ Αὐτονόῳ γῆν ἔχοντι πλείστην οὐδεὶς καρπὸς ἐφαίνετο κατ' ὀλιγορίαν ἔργων, ἀλλ' ἔφερον αὐτῷ σχοίνους ὁ χῶρος καὶ ἀκάνθας, ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὠνόμασε τοὺς παῖδας Ἄκανθον καὶ Σχοινέα καὶ Ἄκανθίδα καὶ τὸν πρεσβύτατον Ἐρωδιόν, ἐπεὶ †αὐτὸν ἠρώησεν ὁ χῶρος†.

Metamorphoses 7.1–3

Thus the text in the excellent edition by M. Papatthomopoulos¹. Antoninus, his story taken, according to the unique manuscript, from the Ὀρνιθογονία of the poet Boeus, went on to tell that Erodius, especially fond of the horses, brought them into a meadow for pasture, and when his brother Anthus undertook to drive them out, they began to eat the brother. The father, Autonomous, was too dismayed to be of any ready help; the mother, Hippodameia, did try to stop the horses, but she was too weak. Zeus and Apollo, taking pity, then changed the whole family into birds, the father into a bittern or hawk (ὄκνος) because he hesitated (ὠκνησεν), the mother into a lark (κορυδός) because she began to equip herself (ἐκορύσσετο). The father, who could not make up his own mind to help his son and therefore was not αὐτόνοος, and the mother, who could not δαμάζειν the ἵπποι, thus acquired more appropriate names². The birds into which the younger children were changed evidently all had the same names as the plants after which the father had called them: ἄνθος “yellow wagtail?”, ἀκανθίς “goldfinch/linnet”, even if σχοινεύς is *hapax* and ἄκανθος is not otherwise quotable as the name of a bird. The name that Antinous gave to the eldest, ἔρωδιός “heron/bittern”, was not that of a known plant, and its explanation as transmitted is obscure, so much so that readers have long regarded the text as corrupt.

Papatthomopoulos lists several conjectures: Αὐτόνοον ἠρώησεν ὁ χῶρος (Blum), αὐτὸς ἠρώησε τοῦ χῶρου (*vel* τὸν χῶρον) (Oder), Αὐτόνοος ἠρώησε τὸν χῶρον (Knaack), καρπὸν ἠρώησεν ὁ χῶρος (Kaibel), ἐλώδης ἦν ὁ χῶρος (Jacques *dub.*). The ἐλώδης I should reject in favour of the verb, which is evi-

1 *Antoninus Liberalis, Les Métamorphoses*, texte établi, traduit et commenté par Manolis Papatthomopoulos (Paris 1968).

2 S. M. Pitcher, “The Anthus of Agathon”, *AJPh* 60 (1939) 145–169 at 156. Simply because I have not found it mentioned in print, I note here that as a pair the original names of the father and mother have antecedents in those of Penelope’s two handmaids at *Od.* 18.182, Αὐτονόη and Ἴπποδάμεια.

dently intended as a transparent *etymon*, however fanciful we may find the derivation. “Mais aucun des sens connus du verbe ἐρωέω ne convient au contexte, et l'on ne trouve aucun secours dans les étymologies transmises par la littérature grammaticale.”³

The only scholar to come to the defence of the text has been G. Giangrande⁴, who understands the words to mean that “the field (ὁ χῶρος) ‘prevented from proceeding ahead’ (ἠρώησεν) Autonomous, the owner of the field (αὐτόν), insofar as the thorns penetrated, and held back, his clothes, and the rushes wrapped themselves around his legs, so that Autonomous could not possibly proceed ahead”. It is not my purpose to discuss whether the Greek can mean this, but if it does here, then this is not what Antoninus wrote. Giangrande’s first premiss as he presents it is that the phrase could not relate to anything Erodus himself did or experienced, for “when Erodus was given his name at birth, he was a baby in arms.” The field, however, as Antoninus implies, became overgrown with rushes because Erodus and the younger children neglected it; there would have been no such overgrowth when he was still a baby. Further, is it necessary to assume that the name Erodus was given at birth rather than acquired because of some characteristic or achievement? The father seems to have named the younger children for what they themselves did: they were so attentive to the horses that they allowed σχοῖνοι and ἄκανθαί to overtake the fields. There is no reason to think that when αὐτόν ἠρώησεν ὁ χῶρος, the son who as a result was named Erodus was still a baby and could have played no part in whatever the phrase describes. Rather we should expect Erodus himself to figure there and that he is either the αὐτόν or the subject of ἠρώησεν; if the latter, then the χῶρος of the manuscript cannot be correct.

In either case, the question, however, is this: why did Autonomous give Erodus a name unlike the plant-names of the siblings? Antoninus as much as tells the answer: Erodus was ὁ πρεσβύτατος, therefore presumably the first to do what any of them did. I should suggest that Antoninus wrote ἐπεὶ αὐτόν ἠρώησεν ὁ πρῶτος, “since he (Erodus) was the first to neglect/abandon him (Autonomous)” for the horses; for the verb in the required sense LSJ cite Theoc. 13.74, 24.101. χῶρος is probably no more than a scribe’s inadvertent substitution here of the word from a line or so before: it is something of a *topos* for a name to be given to someone for being the first to do a thing: we may compare

3 The editor, who translates “car ses terres avaient trahi ses espérances”, quotes other attempts to extract sense: “quod ipsum destituisset terra” (Xylander, ed. pr., 1568), “weil ihn sein Gebiet zu sehr in der Bewegungsfreiheit beschränkte” (Tümpel, “Erodios”, *RE* 6, 1907, 483), “because his land went back on him” (Pitcher 150), “weil der Boden ihn im Stich gelassen hatte” (L. Mader, *Griechische Sagen*, Zurich/Stuttgart 1963, 203); I may add “perchè quelle terre avevano tradito le sue speranze” (G. Mordenti, *Antonino Liberale, Metamorphoses*, Imolo 1998, evidently following Papatomopoulos).

4 “On the text of Antoninus Liberalis”, in: P. Bádenas de la Peña (ed.), *Satura grammatica in honorem Francisci R. Adrados* (Madrid 1987) II, 363–373 at 367f.

Στησίχορος, first to establish the chorus, the Orphic Φάνης, first to appear, and Οἰνεύς, first to cultivate the vine, as well as the Thracian city called Ἄργιλος because the mouse ἄργιλος was first seen there⁵.

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- 5 Stesichorus: *Suda* s.v. Στησίχορος: Ἐκλήθη δὲ Στησίχορος, ὅτι πρῶτος κιθαρωδία χορὸν ἔστησεν. Phanes: Orph. *Arg.* 15–16 νυκτὸς ἀειγνήτης πατέρα κλυτὸν, ὃν ῥα Φάνητα / ὀπλότεροι καλέουσι βροτοί· πρῶτος γὰρ ἐφάνθη (cf. *EM* 728.29ff. = Orph. *Fr.* 75 τὸν δὴ καλέουσι Φάνητα, ὅτι πρῶτος ἐν αἰθέρι φαντὸς [cj. Reitzenstein: φαιτὰς *A*, αὐτὸς *B*] ἐγένετο). Oeneus: Apollod. 1.64 Οἰνεύς δὲ βασιλεύων Καλυδῶνος παρὰ Διονύσου φυτὸν ἀμπέλου πρῶτος ἔλαβε. Argilos: Favorinus *apud* Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἄργιλος: ὠνομάσθη δὲ ἐπειδὴ ὑπὸ Θρακῶν ὁ μῦς ἄργιλος καλεῖται, σκαπτόντων δὲ εἰς τὸ θεμελίους καταβαλέσθαι πρῶτος μῦς ὄφθη. I owe this last example to Margarethe Billerbeck.