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# The Explanation of Erodius' Name in Antoninus Liberalis

By David Jordan, Athens

Αύτονόου τοῦ Μελανέως καὶ Ἰπποδάμειας ἐγένοντο υἱοὶ μὲν Ἐρωδιός, [καὶ] Ἀνθος, Σχοινεύς, Ἀκανθος, θυγάτηρ δὲ Ἀκανθίς, ἣ κάλλιστον εἶδος ἔδωκεν οἱ θεοί. 2. Τῷ δὲ Αύτονόῳ τούτῳ ἐγένοντο ἵππων ἀγέλαι πλεῖσται καὶ ἔνεμον αὐτὰς Ἰπποδάμεια <ἡ> τούτου γυνὴ καὶ οἱ παῖδες αὐτῶν. 3. Ἐπεὶ δὲ Αύτονόῳ γῆν ἔχοντι πλείστην οὐδεὶς καρπὸς ἐφαίνετο κατ' ὀλιγωρίαν ἔργων, ἀλλ' ἐφερεν αὐτῷ σχοινούς ὁ χῶρος καὶ ἀκάνθας, ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὀνόμασε τοὺς παῖδας Ἀκανθον καὶ Σχοινέα καὶ Ἀκανθίδα καὶ τὸν πρεσβύτατον Ἐρωδιόν, ἐπεὶ ταῦτὸν ἡρώησεν ὁ χῶρος†.

*Metamorphoses* 7.1–3

Thus the text in the excellent edition by M. Papathomopoulos<sup>1</sup>. Antoninus, his story taken, according to the unique manuscript, from the 'Ορνιθογονία 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, Autonous, 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 (*ǒχνος*) because he hesitated (*ǒχνησεν*), 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 names<sup>2</sup>. 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 Autinous gave to the eldest, Ἐρωδιός “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.

Papathomopoulos lists several conjectures: Αὐτόνοον ἡρώησεν ὁ χῶρος (Blum), αὐτὸς ἡρώησε τοῦ χώρου (*vel* τὸν χῶρον) (Oder), Αὐτόνοος ἡρώησε τὸν χῶρον (Knaack), καρπὸν ἡρώησεν 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 Papathomopoulos (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, Αὔτονόη and Ἰπποδάμεια.

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

The only scholar to come to the defence of the text has been G. Giangrande<sup>4</sup>, who understands the words to mean that “the field (ὁ χῶρος) ‘prevented from proceeding ahead’ (ἡρώησεν) Autonous, 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 Autonous 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 Erodius himself did or experienced, for “when Erodius was given his name at birth, he was a baby in arms.” The field, however, as Antoninus implies, became overgrown with rushes because Erodius 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 Erodius 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 ἄκανθαι to overtake the fields. There is no reason to think that when αὐτὸν ἡρώησεν ὁ χῶρος, the son who as a result was named Erodius was still a baby and could have played no part in whatever the phrase describes. Rather we should expect Erodius himself to figure there and that he is either the αὐτόν or the subject of ἡρώησεν; if the latter, then the χῶρος of the manuscript cannot be correct.

In either case, the question, however, is this: why did Autonous give Erodius a name unlike the plant-names of the siblings? Antoninus as much as tells the answer: Erodius was ὁ πρεσβύτατος, therefore presumably the first to do what any of them did. I should suggest that Antoninus wrote ἐπεὶ αὐτὸν ἡρώησεν ὁ πρῶτος, “since he (Erodius) was the first to neglect/abandon him (Autonous)” 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 destitisset 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 Papathomopoulos).

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.

Στησίχοος, 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 Ἀργιλος because the mouse ἀργιλος was first seen there<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Stesichorus: *Suda* s.v. Στησίχοος: Ἐκλήθη δὲ Στησίχοος, ὅτι πρῶτος κιθαρωδίᾳ χορὸν ἔστησεν. Phanes: *Orph. Arg.* 15–16 νυκτὸς ἀειγνήτης πατέρα κλυτόν, ὃν ὁ Φάνητα / ὅπλότεροι καλέουσι βροτοί πρῶτος γὰρ ἐφάνη (cf. *EM* 728.29ff. = *Orph. Fr.* 75 τὸν δὴ καλέουσι Φάνητα, ὅτι πρῶτος ἐν αἰθέρι φαντός [c]. Reitzenstein: φαντάς *A*, αὐτός *B*] ἐγένετο). Oeneus: *Apollod.* 1.64 Οἰνεύς δὲ βασιλεύων Καλυδῶνος παρὰ Διονύσου φυτὸν ἀμπέλου πρῶτος ἔλαβε. Argilos: *Favorinus apud Steph. Byz.* s.v. Ἀργιλος: ὡνομάσθη δὲ ἐπειδὴ ὑπὸ Θρακῶν ὁ μῆν ἀργιλος καλεῖται, σκαπτόντων δὲ εἰς τὸ θεμελίους καταβαλέσθαι πρῶτος μῆνς ὅφθη. I owe this last example to Margarethe Billerbeck.