Two Textual Notes on Maffeo Vegio’s *Antonias*

Mikhail Shumilin

In the recent edition of Maffeo Vegio’s *Antonias*, the manuscripts’ readings should be restored in two places, since the conjectures introduced by the poem’s editor distort both the text’s syntax and its metrical correctness.*

The corpus of Maffeo Vegio’s hexameter poems includes, beside his famous *Supplement* to Vergil’s *Aeneid* (1428) and several other texts, a 542-verses poem divided into four books entitled *Antonias*. It dates to 1436 or 1437 and tells the story of St. Antony of Egypt and his interaction with St. Paul the Hermit.1

James Hankins’ edition of the *Antonias* that appears in the *I Tatti Renaissance Library* volume of Vegio’s short epics that was edited and translated by M.C.J. Putnam is currently the only scholarly edition of the poem in existence.2 On two occasions Hankins’ text, which is otherwise generally quite sound, cannot be accepted: his corrections must be rejected and the manuscript text restored. As far as can be judged from his notation and his succinct apparatus, these corrections are his own conjectures: they find no support in any of the manuscripts and editions he used.3

* I would like to thank B. Kayachev, as well as *Humanistica Lovaniensia*’s editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

1 See S.A.O. Fojas, J. Hankins, “A Checklist of Manuscripts and Early Editions Containing Maffeo Vegio’s *Astyanax* (1430) and *Antonias* (1436/7) (with a Note on the Date of the *Antonias*),” *Scriptorium* 58.2 (2004), 265-273 (at 266-268).

2 M.C.J. Putnam (ed., tr.), Maffeo Vegio, *Short Epics* (Cambridge, MA – London, 2004), 130-165. All translations below are taken from this volume. From the remarks at 169-170 it is clear that the critical text of the *Antonias* was prepared by James Hankins.

3 I have checked two manuscripts and one of the early modern editions used by Hankins: Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat. lat. 3600, f. 14r, 15r-v; ms. Vat. lat. 1669, f. 57v, 58v-59r; and *Maxima bibliotheca veterum patrum, et antiquorum scriptorum ecclesiasticonum* (Lugduni [Lyon], apud Anissonios, 1677), 776-777. I have also inspected one manuscript and an edition not collated by Hankins: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 3341, f. 325v, 326v-327r; and *Dominici Mancini poëmata. Hieronymi Vallensis Patavini Jesuïti vel de Dominica passione liber I* (Antverpiae [Antwerp], apud Ioannem Bellerum, 1559, f. 131r, 132r-v.)
For verses 37-41 of book 4, Hankins prints (on pages 158-159):

Haec inter rex aetheriae sanctissimus aulae
cælestes vocat ad sese longo ordine turmas,
ut terraque petant, utque atro e corpore solvant
felicemque animam Pauli alta ad sidera manda\textsuperscript{\textit{n}}t 40
ut laeto applausu, laeto ut comitentur honore.

Meanwhile the most holy King of the palace of heaven calls His
celestial squadrons to Him in a long rank that they might be earth-
bound so as to release the fortunate soul of Paul from his darkened
body and to entrust it to the stars above, accompanying it with
joyous applause and joyous acclaim.

In verse 40 the transmitted mandat is emended by the editor to
mandant, so as to make the verb refer, along with the other plurals in the
nearby verses, to the celestial squadrons (“cælestes turmae”). However,
the other verbs belonging to this subject are all in the subjunctive, which
is indeed to be expected after ut, whether we take it as objective or final.

However, mandat is clearly a form of the first conjugation verb
mandare, “to consign”, not the third conjugation verb mandere, “to
chew”. This means that, if it referred to the angels, it should be mandent,
not mandant. The indicative suggests that God, not the squadrons, is the
subject, which also explains the singular. Mandat will thus be a second
predicate of the main clause, linked to vocat by the first -que (on Hank-
ins’ and Putnam’s reading, the two -que must be taken as a double -que,
but the second -que alone is sufficient to join the ut-clauses); it will also
introduce the (objective) ut-clauses, whereas the direct object
“felicemque animam Pauli” as well as the adverbial modifier “alta ad
sidera” will depend on comitentur (with the same direct object implied
for the preceding solvant). Petant, solvant and comitentur will thus all
be subordinate to mandat: “The King of the palace of heaven calls His
celestial squadrons to Him and charges them to be earthbound and to
release from the darkened body and accompany the fortunate soul of
Paul to the stars above with joyous applause and joyous acclaim.” This
interpretation seems to be the only real possibility and it makes Hankins’
conjecture unnecessary.
For verses 97-112 of book 4, Hankins prints (on pages 162-163):

Then [i.e. after completing funerary rites over the body of the deceased St. Paul the Hermit] he [i.e. St. Antony] attempted in vain to turn over the ground in which he might bury the bones of the saint. He grieved that he did not possess the means to do so. While he was debating in his changing heart what he should do, whether he should stay or at last return home and abandon the saintly father to lie there without the honor of a grave, lo, he sees two lions, manes flowing over their necks, come on a run from the interior of the desert. He was at first fearful at the sight. Then with his eyes turned to the heavenly beings above, he regained his composure. It passes belief, but with gentle demeanor and mildness of heart they sought out the body of the old man, worthy of veneration, and with a roar lay down by his feet, wailing for the dead with piety all but human. Then they vie with each other in rushing to scoop up enough earth with their paws to make a burial mound, and to come to the help of the father in his time of need and to relieve him of his worry.

Here we seem to face a similar situation. In verse 112, the transmitted singular forms eximeret and levaret are corrected by the editor so as to fit the number of the subject, which is supposed to be the lions.
However, the resulting text has two problems. First, the subjunctives imply that both verbs belong to a relative clause, and the only relative clause in this sentence is the one introduced by quantum. It is not clear how eximerent and levarent can fit in this clause. Putnam translates the phrase as if some logical ellipse like “et <ut> ipsum” were implied; indeed, it would be possible to conjecture ut for et. However, we also encounter a second problem: levare•n•t is unmetrical. In fact, the text with singular eximeret and levaret is quite plausible and even makes better sense: the subject of both verbs is quantum (terrae): “They vie with each other in rushing to scoop up with their paws the amount of earth that would be enough to make a burial mound and that would relieve him [sc. St. Antony] of his worry and come to the help of the father [sc. the deceased St. Paul the Hermit] in his time of need.”4 Again, no conjecture is needed here.

The Russian Presidential Academy for National Economy
and Public Administration, Moscow
shumilin-mv@ranepa.ru

---

4 I take ipsum in verse 111 to refer to St. Antony and patremque in verse 112 to St. Paul the Hermit, cf. patrem of St. Paul in verse 101.