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QUO FERIMUR? THE ROMAN ORBIS UNDER TIBERIUS

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Рассматривается понятие *orbis* в связи с пространством римского завоевания и его развитие на протяжении довольно сжатого исторического периода. При Августе поражение Вара в Тевтобургском лесу (9 г. н. э.) ознаменовало один поворотный пункт. При Тиберии всемирная империя, проектируемая в Августовом Риме, была еще более поколеблена смертью Германика на Востоке (19 г. н. э.). Альбинован Педон и Манилий дают ключ к развитию двойственного понятия *orbis*. Веллей Патеркул предоставляет дополнительные свидетельства для переоценки понятия *orbis* в этот период. Отражая сложные отношения между Римом и Парфией, идея *orbis alter* имела долговременную судьбу. В какой-то момент она изменилась, поскольку Паулин из Нолы использовал его в христианской перспективе между IV и V вв. н.э.

Ключевые слова: Альбинован Педон, Манилий, Веллей Патеркул, *orbis*, Римский экуменизм, Тевтобургский лес, парфяне.

The concept of *orbis*, as the Romans intended it in relation to their space of conquest, changed as historic changes occurred, thus implying rapid developments within relatively short time frames. This paper sets out to focus on a specific case of the sort.

In the first place, I shall point out how, until the late Augustan principate, the ambition to have the whole *orbis* (world) coincide with a Roman *orbis* corresponded to the purpose of equalling – and possibly surpassing – the challenging model of Alexander the Great. An early Augustan poem, the *Panegyricus in Messalam*, gives us a neat depiction of the ideal. Nevertheless, the defeat of Quintilius Varus and the loss of three Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest (9 CE) marked an historic turning point. The expansion of Rome northwards stopped. Under Tiberius, the death of Germanicus in the East (19 CE) frustrated the Roman ambition of a worldwide Empire even further. Among our source material, two Latin poets, Albinovanus Pedo and Manilius – both composing in the first years of the Tiberian principate – help us to define the picture. I shall elaborate on such authorities, and try to show how they provide evidence of a conceptual shift of *orbis* under Tiberius; in particular, Manilius elaborates on a Parthian *orbis* as peer (*orbis alter*) to the Roman *orbis*.

In the second place, I shall focus on prose authorities, and especially on Velleius Paterculus. A direct witness of the nuances of Roman foreign diplomacy before and after Teutoburg, Velleius adds significant evidence of the reassessment underway. Such state of affairs endured far beyond the Augustan-Tiberian period. Although it was a long-lasting marker of the Roman surrender to the

ambition of an *orbis Romanus* corresponding to a *totus orbis*, the concept of *orbis alter* had even further developments. I shall conclude with a clue in this respect: between the 4th and 5th centuries, the juncture was used by Paulinus of Nola in exquisitely Christian terms.

1. Augustan ecumenism and Tiberian disillusion

quo ferimur? fugit ipse dies orbemque relictum
ultima perpetuis claudit natura tenebris.
anne alio positas ultra sub cardine gentes
atque alium bellis intactum quaerimus orbem?
di reuocant rerumque uetant cognoscere finem 20
mortales oculos. aliena quid aequora remis
et sacras uiolamus aquas diuumque quietas
turbamus sedes?

An anonymous sailor accompanying Germanicus during his navigation of the Ocean toward the extreme northern limits of the Roman world (16 CE) is wondering: *quo ferimur?* (“where are we being carried?” Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10. 670). As an expression of bewilderment and loss of control, where Nature overwhelms the Human, the complaint opens a discourse encompassing almost a half of a fragment of an epic poem. It is all that is left of the production of Albinovanus Pedo, through the mediation of Seneca the Elder (Albinov. 1 Blänsdorf [228 Hollis], 16–23 = Sen. *Suas.* 1. 15. 16–23) (Latin text taken from [1]). Albinovanus served as soldier during Germanicus’ expedition (Tac. *Ann.* 1. 60. 2) (see [2] and [3 with comm. ad loc.]).

To his verses, composed at the beginning of the principate of Tiberius, one may add those coeval of

Manilius' *Astronomica* (4. 671–680) (Latin text taken from [4]):

inde Asiae populi diuesque per omnia tellus:
auratique fluunt amnes gemmisque relucet
pontus, odoratae spirant medicamina siluae:
India notitia maior, Parthique uel orbis
alter, et in caelum surgentis moenia Tauri 675
totque illum circa diuerso nomine gentes
ad Tanain Scythicis dirimentem fluctibus orbes
Maeotisque lacus Euxinique aspera ponti.
[aequora et extremum Propontidos Hellespontum]
hanc Asiae metam posuit natura potentis. 680

In particular, lines 674–675 of Book 4 of the *Astronomica* offer an intriguing juncture: *orbis alter*. The *enjambement* refers to the Parthian Empire, counterposed to the Roman Empire. As such, it is unprecedented in poetry, as it neatly implies a duality¹. Some years before (around 2 CE), Ovid was the only poet using the juncture, in the *Remedia amoris* – thus in an utterly different context (*Rem.* 629–634) (Latin text taken from [5]):

quid iuuat admonitu tepidam recalescere mentem?
alter, si possis, orbis habendus erit: 630
non facile esuriens posita retinebere mensa,
et multam saliens incitat unda sitim;
non facilest taurum uisa retinere iuuenca;
fortis equus uisae semper adhinnit equae.

Ovid is mocking the unsatisfied lover, and prompts him to look for ‘another world’ (630) – perhaps for other *conquêtes amoureuses*?² – instead of pining for the woman who does not want him. To some extent, the use of *alter* resembles that found in the *Panegyricus in Messalam* composed after Messala Corvinus’ consulship of 31 BCE (4. 1. 79–81, 147–150) (Latin text taken from [6]):

Atque haec seu nostras inter sunt cognita terras,
fabula siue nouum dedit his erroribus orbem, 80
sit labor illius, tua dum facundia, maior.
[...]
(Quid moror?) Oceanus ponto qua continet orbem,
nulla tibi aduersis regio sese offeret armis.
Te manet inuictus Romano Marte Britannus
teque interiecto mundi pars altera sole. 150

While *orbis* is connected to the adjective *nouus*, *alter(a)* is referred to the noun *pars*. The panegyrist offers an explicit geographic dimension, and an apparent celebration of the Roman ecumenism resonates. In this respect, verses 151–176 of the *Panegyricus* are significant [7, p. 311–315]. The poet divides *tellus – toto orbe* – into 5 parts. The two extremes are frozen and uninhabited, as well as the

central one, which is extra-hot and extra-dry; in between are two temperate, inhabited lands:

nam circumfuso considit in aere tellus
et quinque in partes toto disponitur orbe.
atque duae gelido uastantur frigore semper:
illic et densa tellus absconditur umbra
et nulla incerto perlabitur unda liquore, 155
sed durata riget densam in glaciemque niuemque,
quippe ubi non unquam Titan super egerit ortus.
at media est Phoebi semper subiecta calori,
seu propior terris aestiuum fertur in orbem
seu celer hibernas properat decurrere luces: 160
non igitur presso tellus exsurgit aratro,
nec frugem segetes praebent nec pabula terrae:
non illic colit arua deus, Bacchusue Ceresue,
nulla nec exustas habitant animalia partes.
fertilis hanc inter posita est interque rigentes 165
nostraque et huic aduersa solo pars altera nostro,
quas similis utrimque tenens uicinia caeli
temperat, alter et alterius uires necat aer:
hinc placidus nobis per tempora labitur annus:
hinc et colla iugo didicit summittere taurus 170
et lenta excelsos uitis conscendere ramos,
tondeturque seges maturos annua partus,
et ferro tellus, pontus proscinditur aere,
quin etiam structis exsurgunt oppida muris.
ergo, ubi per claros ierint tua facta triumphos, 175
solus utroque idem diceris magnus in orbe.

One land is called *nostra*, i.e. Roman, the other (*huic aduersa*) *altera* (166). The description ends with the auspice for Messala’s ecumenic conquest, which will encompass both temperate parts of the *orbis* (176). In so doing, the poet says, Messala will surpass the glory of Alexander the Great, to whom the adjective *magnus* alludes. This makes it quite easy to identify the *altera pars* with the East. The distinction between the two parts of the inhabited world is neat. At the time when the *Panegyricus* was composed, the Parthians dominated over the East. Nonetheless, a fundamental difference stands out. The *altera pars* is still conquerable for the Romans. Therefore, the Parthians are still conquerable.

Now, if we step forward to Manilius and the Tiberian age, we may appreciate how a remarkable shift has occurred in the description of the relationship between East and West. By alluding to the Parthians as *orbis alter*, Manilius acknowledges not only their prominent role in the inhabited world, but also their participation in the division of world power. This is an unprecedented moment, and seems to mirror some common sense underway, implying the acceptance of a *de facto* polycentric world – or better to say, of a dual power over the oecumene. Such common sense, which Manilius may well have absorbed, may also depend on a

formal acknowledgment by the Roman administration. In this respect, one should probably emend the belief of those [notably 8, p. 209–210] who have seen Augustus as the inventor of the *diuisio orbis* theory. What may be argued instead is that the political, intellectual, literary environment coeval to Augustus provided fertile ground for the development of the concept between the end of Augustus' principate and the age of Tiberius, as we shall see. In all likelihood, the historic turning point of Varus' catastrophe in the Teutoburg Forest (9 CE) fed the ground. It was not only nefarious. It was memorable, and totally changed the perspective of Roman ecumenism.

2. Teutoburg, and beyond

If we expand the investigation to prose authorities, additional elements substantiate the picture. The historiographer Velleius Paterculus, a contemporary of Albinovanus and Manilius who published his work in 30 CE, may offer an interesting view of the process. Velleius reports a summit meeting on the river Euphrates between Augustus' nephew Gaius Caesar and the Parthian king Phraataces (1 CE). Having served as a military officer in the army of Gaius Caesar, Velleius witnessed the event directly. He depicts it as a meeting between peers. The phraseology is eloquent (2. 101.1–2) (Latin text taken from [9]. For a general assessment, see [10, p. 103–107]):

breue ab hoc intercesserat spatium cum C. Caesar, ante aliis prouinciis ad uisendum obitis, in Syriam missus, conuento prius Ti. Nerone, cui omnem honorem ut superiori habuit, tam uarie se ibi gessit ut nec laudaturum magna nec uituperaturum medicris materia deficiat. cum rege Parthorum, iuene excelsissimae ---, <in> insula quam amnis Euphrates ambiebat, aequato utriusque partis numero coiit, quod spectaculum stantis ex diuerso hinc Romani, illinc Parthorum exercitus, cum duo inter se eminentissima imperiorum et hominum coirent capita, perquam clarum et memorabile sub initia stipendiorum meorum tribuno militum mihi uisere contigit; quem militiae gradum ante sub patre tuo, M. Vini-ci, et P. Silio auspicatus in Thracia Macedoniaque, mox Achaia Asiaque et omnibus ad orientem uisis prouinciis et ore atque utroque maris Pontici latere, haud iniucunda tot rerum locorum, gentium urbium recordatione perfruor. prior Parthus apud Gaium in nostra ripa, posterior hic apud regem in hostili epulatus est³.

However, we know that Augustus had promoted the Romano-Parthian relations very differently. He rendered the Parthians as *supplices* in the *Res Ges-*

tae – the summa of Augustan ecumenism (*RG.* 29. 2, 32. 1–2) [11, p. 228; 12, p. 120–122; 7, p. 307; 13, p. 77; 14, p. 252–253]. This is not at all surprising, as Augustus went further, and celebrated the events after Teutoburg as a complete success for Rome over the Germans (*RG.* 26. 2–3). He did so because he was the head of the Roman state, and because the *Res Gestae* were his political testament.

Now Velleius' representation may have been decisively influenced by the new climate that developed under Tiberius – when the reception of the *Varusschlacht* was established. Manilius himself gives evidence on it (1. 896–903) [cf. 15, comm. ad loc.]:

quin et bella canunt ignes subitosque tumultus
et clandestinis surgentia fraudibus arma:
externas modo per gentes, ut, foedere rupto
cum fera ductorem rapuit Germania Varum
infecitque trium legionum sanguine campos, 900
arserunt toto passim minitantia mundo
lumina, et ipsa tulit bellum natura per ignes
oppositaque suas uires finemque minata est.

The impact of the disaster was manifest in Tiberius' foreign policy as well as in the public opinion [16, p. 307–309] – or rather, prior in the latter than in the former.

Interestingly, Velleius' standpoint meets that of the universal historiography of the Augustan period elaborating on the succession of Empires. The contradiction that one might see in it is illusory. The process allegedly culminated with Rome, but did not end with Rome. To many (Velleius included) Parthia appeared as a peer Empire. Such a dignity may have been recognized at an early stage – before Teutoburg – by Pompeius Trogus, though we read Trogus through the later (4th century) epitome of Justin (41. 1. 1): *Parthi, penes quas uelut diuisione orbis cum Romanis facta nunc Orientis imperium est* (Latin text taken from [17]. Cf. Strabo 6. 4. 2; 11. 9. 2. See [18, p. 100–110]). Again, this view does not coincide with that of Augustus. The *orbis pictus*, a world map designed by Marcus Agrippa and achieved after Agrippa's death (12 BCE), probably included Parthia (cf. Plin. *NH.* 6. 139). It justified the optimistic view of an entirely Roman world (see famously Verg. *Aen.* 1. 279) [11, p. 215–217].

Thus under Augustus some ambivalence had been undoubtedly on stage [cf. 7]. Teutoburg and the accession of Tiberius wiped it out. In accord with a sort of *Realpolitik*, the political praxis excluded any realistic possibility of conquering Europe and the East – so too much expensive and insecure an effort. Albinovanus and Manilius' verses mirror such a reality. With his northern view on the inefficiency of the Roman conquest, Albinovanus

matches with the eastern perspective of Manilius' *orbis alter*. Both of them share a disillusioned – somehow Lucretian (see [19] on Albinovanus) – assessment of the place of Rome in the world. Disillusion was as inevitable a result as the history of the Roman expansion had apparently come to an end at that point. Beyond the intermittent revival of Roman ecumenism under the Emperors (e.g. Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Caracalla), from the 2nd century onwards the space of the Roman dominion decreased until collapsing.

Besides, the concept of *orbis alter* flew into representing the Roman surrender to the idea of an *orbis Romanus* corresponding to *totus orbis*. In this respect, further evidence is worth some consideration – though coming from a much later time. When Christianity dominated throughout the Empire, between the 4th and 5th centuries CE, Paulinus of Nola used the juncture *orbis alter* in exquisitely Christian terms (*Carm.* 17. 289–296 Hartel – Kamptner = *Ad Nicetam Dolveck*) (Latin text is taken from [20]):

caritas Christi bene fusa caelo
cordibus nostris ita nectit intus, 290
ut nec abiuncto procul auferamur
orbe remoti.
nulla nos aetas tibi, <nulla> labes
orbis aut alter neque mors reuellet;
corporis uita moriente uita 295
uiuuet amoris.

In Paulinus' verses, *orbis alter* (294) identifies the 'other world' as the physical dimension of material life opposed to the transcendental dimension which matters in his view. So much is the latter metaphysical in nature, as is the former rooted into history. Times had definitively changed. No space of material conquest could be attractive in the declining Empire. The way was paved to an utterly different space, where the conquest could be exclusively spiritual.

Примечания

1. See [21] and [22] for the meaning of *orbis*. J. Vogt [23, p. 154] underestimated this aspect, which is by no means of secondary importance in the representation of the Parthian world. [24, comm. ad loc.] speak of a "qualifica di poco meno che *orbis alter*", thus devaluing the juncture, but their translation goes literally the opposite way ("e i Parti addirittura un altro mondo"). The inconsistency clearly depends on the interpretation of *uel*. In the first instance, S. Feraboli (who comments) interprets *uel* as a conjunction with an attenuated disjunctive strength. In the second instance, R. Scarcia (who translates) interprets it as an intensive particle.

2. The French phrase is from Molière's *Dom Juan* (1862–1863), Act 1, Scene 2.

3. Underlines are mine. See [9, comm. ad loc.]. See also [25, p. 484].

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QUO FERIMUR? THE ROMAN ORBIS UNDER TIBERIUS

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The paper pivots on the concept of *orbis* in relation to the space of Roman conquest, and on its development in the course of a rather condensed historical period. Under Augustus, the defeat of Varus at the Teutoburg Forest (9 CE) marked a watershed. Under Tiberius, the worldwide Empire envisaged in Augustan Rome was further frustrated by the death of Germanicus in the East (19 CE). Albinovanus Pedo and Manilius provide clues as regards the development of a dual concept of *orbis*. Velleius Paterculus provides further evidence of a reassessment of the concept of *orbis* in this period. Mirroring the complex relationship between Rome and Parthia, the idea of *orbis alter* had enduring fortune. At a given point, it changed, as Paulinus of Nola used it in a Christian perspective between the 4th and 5th centuries CE.

Keywords: Albinovanus Pedo, Manilius, Velleius Paterculus, *orbis*, Roman ecumenism, Teutoburg, Parthians.

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