

Where Did the Emperor Lurk?

HA, Hadrian 16. 3

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Floro poetae scribenti ad se:

*Ego nolo Caesar esse,
ambulare per Britannos,
latitare per . . .
Scythicas pati pruinas.*

rescripsit:

*Ego nolo Florus esse.
ambulare per tabernas,
latitare per popinas,
culices pati rotundos.*

Latitare per is generally added to Florus as his third line on the basis of Hadrian's riposte. Not all concur.¹ Some delete the corresponding line in Hadrian, reducing each poem to a tercet. Others make *Scythicas pati pruinas* the third verse in Florus, fabricating a new fourth one; Birt's *gladios pati cruentos* has earned some favor.²

I am one of those who opt for retention of *latitare*³ *per*, thereby preserving two quatrains but needing a supplement to complete Florus' third

¹ For a repertory of conjectures with extensive bibliography, as well as editions of Florus and the *HA*, see P. Steinmetz, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Literatur des zweiten Jahrhunderts nach Christi Geburt* (Wiesbaden 1982), p. 299; cf. H. Bardon, *Les empereurs et les lettres latines d'Auguste à Hadrien* (Paris 1940), p. 416; J. Schwartz, "Éléments suspects de la *Vita Hadriani*," *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1972/1974* (Bonn 1976), pp. 248–49.

² Cf. L. Cantarelli, "Gli scritti latini di Adriano Imperatore," *Studi e Documenti di Storia e Diritto* 19 (1898), 150.

³ Only here in the *HA*. I am not here concerned with the authenticity of these verses, most recently championed by Alan Cameron, "Poetae Novelli," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 84 (1980), 172. Skeptics might exploit the *HA*'s proclivity for denouncing emperors (especially Gallienus) who frequent *popinae*; cf. also *Tac.* 4. 7, *videte diligentius quam aetatem de cubiculo atque umbra in pruinas aestusque mittatis*.

line. Proposed emendations⁴ have been mainly geographical, although Bolisani⁵ put forward *cohortes* and Benario⁶ *paludes*, both of which I reject, wishing (unlike their proponents) to maintain the balance whereby three geographical names in Florus are answered by Hadrian with comic variants.

Of the geographical contenders, Roesinger⁷ proposed *Germanos*, with more patriotism than prosody—a bacchius (v--) is surely needed to preserve metrical concordance between the two pieces. Costa's⁸ *Achivos* is absurd: Hellenic sojourn would be no hardship to the *Graeculus* Hadrian! Steinmetz toys also with *Sugambros*, *Iberos*, or *Hibernos*. Nothing inherently wrong about any of these, though Sugambri may be too northern, Hiberni too close to Britain, and Iber⁹ too near Scythia, agreeing as I do with Clausen¹⁰ that an eastern allusion is, for geographical symmetry's sake, most probable. Clausen's own proposal is *Sabaeos*, in itself acceptable enough, though I do not share his belief in Florus' debt to Seneca, *Herc. Oet.* 1521–22, *dic sub Aurora positis Sabaeis / dic sub occasu positus Hiberis*.¹¹

My own tentative remedy is *Syriscos*, based on the following considerations:

1. It consorts with the metrical structure and balance¹² of the two pieces.

2. A diminutive, especially one used by the early writer Terence (*Adelph.* 763; *Eun.* 772, 775), not to mention pseudo-Virgil (*Copa* 1) would doubly commend itself to second-century taste.

⁴ Passing over Winterfeld's unhelpful transferral of *Britannos* down from line 2, leaving a blank there.

⁵ E. Bolisani, "Quel che rimane della poesia di Floro, uno dei neoterici o novelli dell'età adrianea," *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 122 (1963–64), 48.

⁶ H. W. Benario, *A Commentary on the Vita Hadriani in the Historia Augusta* (Chico, California 1980), p. 106—not registered by Steinmetz.

⁷ E. Roesinger, *De scriptoribus historiae Augustae commentatio critica* (Schweidnitz 1868), p. 4; upheld on grounds of assonance by L. Herrmann, "La réplique d'Hadrien à Florus," *Latomus* 9 (1950), 387.

⁸ G. Costa, "Floro e Adriano," *Bollettino di Filologia Classica* 13 (1908), 254.

⁹ Colchian Iberi, not Spaniards, who do not suit the frequent and obtruded eulogies of them by Florus in his *Epitome* of Roman History, accepting the identification of the poet with the historian, a popular though disputed conflation on which I am writing elsewhere.

¹⁰ W. V. Clausen, "Silva Coniecturarum," *American Journal of Philology* 76 (1955), 60–61.

¹¹ More interesting is his parallel of Virgil, *Ecl.* 1. 64–66, with that poet's counterpointing of Scythia with Britons. Doubters of the authenticity of the present verses might suspect a debt owed to Virgil by the *HA*. The former's concomitant reference to Africans does not help if poet and historian are also equated with the Florus who wrote the dialogue *Vergilius orator an poeta*, a character of African origins.

¹² To be sure, the desire for balance pervading this article is ultimately a matter of taste, albeit one shared by most writers on the subject; it is worth noting the symmetry of Hadrian's famous poem to his soul at *HA, Hadr.* 25. 9, admirably analyzed by R. Mayer, "Two notes on Latin poets," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 202 (1976), 57–59, a study sadly omitted by many bibliographies on the subject.

3. In view of the subsequent palaeographically similar *Scythicas*, the loss of at least the end of this line would be more easily explained.

4. It takes us geographically from one imperial frontier to another.

5. Hadrian was away in Syria and the East over a long period (c. 129–135), thus giving point to *latitare*.¹³

6. *HA, Hadr.* 14. 1, claims the emperor loathed the people of Antioch, chief city of Syria, thereby enhancing the diminutive force of *Syriscos*.

7. The association of Syria with oil, perfume, and roses heightens the humor of Hadrian's *popinae*, dubious establishments forever branded by Horace (*Epp.* I. 14. 21) in the phrase *uncta popina*.¹⁴

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¹³ Some take the British allusion as pointing to a date of ca. 122 for Florus' squib. If absolute topicality be thought necessary (I doubt it) to make the poem's point, then Hadrian's visit to Syria early in 123 can be readily substituted. Or might Florus also be evoking Hadrian's pre-imperial tenure as governor of Syria, where he was in 117 on the death of Trajan and his own adoption and accession (*HA, Hadr.* 4. 6–7)? Given the gossip surrounding his adoption and the role played by Plotina, *latitare* would achieve a sharp, indeed dangerous, point.

¹⁴ One final point, more dubious, hence separate. The Florus who compiled the *Epitome* around this time indulges in anti-Syrian prejudice, parading it above all at 1. 47. 17 (*Syria prima nos victa corrupit*) in the *anacephalaeosis* that divided his two books. If historian and poet be the same person (see note 9 above), *Syriscos* would be an almost predictable gibe.

