DIRAE 93 AGAIN

BY

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tardius, a, miserae descendite monte capellae
(mollia non iterum carpetis pabula nota)
tuque resiste, pater: †et prima novissima nobis.

So runs the text printed by E. J. Kenney in Appendix Vergiliana (Oxford 1966). It has been recently maintained by E. Courtney in C.R. N.S. 18 (1968), 149, in his attempt to heal the thought and text of 93, that "The poet could order the he-goat to bring up the rear on the ground that the world of the goats is as topsy-turvy as that of their owner (thus et vobis would be tolerable), but this order could not be justified by the remark that the human world is as chaotic as that of the goats". Courtney also takes nobis to refer to both he-goat and goatherd, and while admitting that the lengthening of the final syllable of pater is not in itself objectionable (though unique in the Dirae and Lydia), he prefers to read iam in the place of et since in his view he thereby rectifies faulty sense and incidentally removes a metrical anomaly 2). If, however, a reasonable case can be made out that the sense of the passage as it stands is in fact sound, we should by no means feel a necessity to change et. It will be my aim in the sequel to offer an appreciation of this interesting passage and to endeavour to support the transmitted text.

1) I wish to record my thanks to Prof. E. A. Thompson (Nottingham) and Mr. R. D. Williams (Reading) who were kind enough to read an earlier draft of this note. The views here advanced are entirely my own.

2) Courtney ingeniously conjectures that "iā was read as iā, that is prima, the supposed dittography was omitted, and the metre was filled out with et". One wonders whether it would not have been equally, if not more natural, for a scribe to supply the implied sunt, thereby satisfying metre as well. It seems a better procedure for those who insist on regularising the metre to explain the presence of et by what already exists in the text. The final -er of pater, if copied twice, could have passed into et and ousted some such word as nam.
Courtney has failed to grasp not only the subtle artistry of composition in this passage, but also the relationship assumed between he-goat and master which it is necessary to understand before any pronouncement can be made concerning the soundness of the sense. The order *tuque resiste, pater* does not depend upon the fact that the world of the goats is blighted by misfortune, nor is the goatherd suggesting that the he-goat acts contrary to his wont because disaster has lighted equally upon the animal as upon the human world. The goatherd is simply requiring of the he-goat a symbolic demonstration of sympathy for his human master. The pivotal notion is quite at home in a pastoral setting—a relationship between man and beast so intimate that a calamity which befalls a human being may find reflection in an animal’s conduct. When we read at Theocritus *Idyll 1*, 74-5:

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\textit{πολλαὶ} \textit{οἱ πὰρ ποσὶ βόες, πολλοὶ δὲ τῷ ταῦρῳ,}
\textit{πολλαι δὲ δαμάλαι καὶ πορτίες ὁδύραντο,}
\]

the situation is not, as Courtney’s reasoning would demand, that the cattle are lamenting their own misfortune. They do so out of sympathy for Daphnis. It is therefore by no means compulsory that the he-goat should suffer the same experience as his master before he shows grief. He could presumably do so voluntarily, or be called upon to do so \textit{as a sign of mourning for his master}.

What complicates the issue in the *Dirae* passage, but should by no means obscure the lines of reasoning used, is the fact that the he-goat is only partially a parallel to the animals grieving for the love-crossed Daphnis. He is not an animal who, himself free from distress, shows sympathy for a hapless human being. He does indeed have powerful reasons of his own for sorrow and lamentation. In our poem the owner’s calamity naturally involves the *capellae* and the he-goat. They must all abandon their cherished abode and withdraw before the *impius miles*. That is certainly the situation from the \textit{realistic} point of view. What Courtney has missed is the fact that the \textit{artistic} emphases of this passage are quite differently contrived. The goatherd makes an artistically valid though logically unnecessary distinction between the *capellae* on the one hand and the he-goat on the other.