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COLUMELLA 10.101: TWO EMENDATIONS*

Columella invites his readers to plant different flowers, including violets—which will be the main focus of the following discussion (10.94–102):

> uerum ubi iam puro discrimine pectita tellus
> deposito squalore nitens sua semina poscet,
> pangite tunc uarios, terrestria sidera, flores:
> candida leucoia et flauentia lumina caltae,
> narcissique comas et hiantis saeua leonis
> ora feri, calathisque uirentia lilia canis,
> necnon uel niueos uel caeruleos hyacinthos.
> tum quae pallet humi, quae frondes purpurat auro,
> ponatur uiola, et nimium rosa plena pudoris.

96 pangite *Heinsius*: pingite *SAR* || **99** nitentia *Gesner* || **101** frondes *SA*: frondens *R* | purpurat auro ϛ: purpura tabo *SAR*: purpura et auro *Ursinus*: purpurat albo *Heinsius*

This is the text of Rodgers's recent OCT, but with a somewhat modified apparatus criticus.[1] For the purposes of my argument, it will be useful also to quote from the outset a related catalogue of melliferous flowers from another book of Columella's treatise (9.4.4):[2]

> mille praeterea semina uel crudo caespite uirentia uel subacto sulco flores amicissimos apibus creant, ut sunt in uirgineo solo […] gladiolus narcissi. at in hortensi lira consita nitent candida lilia nec his sordidiora leucoia, tum Punicae rosae luteolaeque et Sarranae uiolae, nec minus caelestis luminis hyacinthus.

There are a number of more general similarities, but the relevant point is that the two catalogues list many of the same flowers and describe them in similar ways, which means that one catalogue can serve as an interpretative guide to the other. The first two items in the prose list of garden flowers (*nitent candida lilia nec his sordidiora leucoia*) correspond to *candida leucoia* and *calathisque uirentia lilia canis*, similarly listed in the first half of the verse catalogue; *nitent* (*lilia*) can thus support Gesner's emendation *nitentia* for *uirentia* (*lilia*), unduly neglected by recent editors.[3] The metaphoric periphrasis *gladiolus narcissi* can be compared with *narcissique comas*. Both texts describe the hyacinth as sky-blue, which seems to be otherwise unparalleled (*nec minus caelestis luminis hyacinthus* and *necnon* […] *caeruleos hyacinthos*: note also

* I should like to thank *CQ*'s anonymous reviewer for valuable criticisms and suggestions that prompted me to revise and expand my argument.

[1] R.H. Rodgers, *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae Res rustica* (Oxford, 2010), 406.

[2] The similarity of the two catalogues is noted by F. Boldrer, *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae rei rusticae liber decimus* (Pisa, 1996), 169, but without detailed discussion.

[3] J.M. Gesner, *Scriptores rei rusticae veteres latini*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1735), 702.

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that in both cases the reference is introduced by a litotes). Finally, just like the prose list (*tum Punicae rosae luteolaeque et Sarranae uiolae*), Columella's poem groups roses with two varieties of violet (note also that both passages are introduced with *tum*):[4]

> tum quae pallet humi, quae frondes purpurat auro,
> ponatur uiola, et nimium rosa plena pudoris.

The prose version makes it all but certain that the poem should likewise refer to a yellow and a purple varieties of violet.[5] While Columella's verse description of the former variety is fairly unambiguous (if not very informative), that of the latter raises questions.

The main problem concerns the expression *purpurat auro*. It is sometimes assumed that *purpureus* and *purpurare* can denote brightness rather than a specific colour; the phrase would accordingly mean something like 'the violet glows with gold'.[6] Yet, it is in general quite doubtful that the root *purpur-* can be devoid of any denotation of colour;[7] and even if it could, it would be inappropriate to use *purpurare* in this way in a context speaking of the violet, as it cannot but evoke the most prominent, purple variety.[8] More often scholars take the phrase to imply a combination of gold and purple, as in *Viola tricolor*, but I fail to see how it can be construed in that way.[9] If we wished to

[4] The epithet *Sarranae*, of course, refers not to the geographical origin of the variety but to its colour (*OLD* s.v. *Sarranus* 2: 'Dyed or coloured Tyrian purple').

[5] The attempt to establish the exact species implied by Columella is futile: see Boldrer (n. 2), 173, listing several alternative identifications; there is simply not enough detail in Columella's references, and it is not even certain that both species should belong to the genus *Viola* (Latin *uiola* could be used for flowers of quite other genera as well: see J. André, *Les noms de plantes dans la Rome antique* [Paris, 1985], 272; cf. id., *Lexique des termes de botanique en latin* [Paris, 1956], 330–1). Cf. in general Pliny's list of three varieties (*HN* 21.27): *uiolis honos proximus, earumque plura genera, purpureae, luteae, albae, plantis omnes, ut olus, satae*. For Columella's former variety, cf. Verg. *Ecl*. 2.47 *pallentis uiolas*, with W. Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 79: 'pale yellow […], for the pallor of an Italian is not white or ashen but yellowish'; on *pallere* and related terms as implying a yellow hue rather than paleness, see further J. André, *Etude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 139–47; cf. also R.G.M. Nisbet and N. Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace,* Odes*, Book III* (Oxford, 2004), 146.

[6] Cf. Boldrer (n. 2), 173: 'L'espressione *purpurat auro* indica secondo alcuni (che attribuiscono a *purpuro* semplice valore intensivo) un colore dorato.' E. de Saint-Denis, *Columelle: De l'agriculture, livre X* (Paris, 1969) is somewhat ambiguous: in the commentary he says that the violet has 'des fleurs de couleur or' (at 56), whereas the translation speaks of 'des fleurs d'un or rutilant' (at 33–4); cf. K. Ahrens, *Columella: Über Lanswirtschaft* (Berlin, 1972), 296, who translates: 'in purpurnem Gold'.

[7] See especially R.J. Edgeworth, 'Does "purpureus" mean "bright"?', *Glotta* 57 (1979), 281–91; cf. recently M. Librán-Moreno, 'Blood-coloured swans: Hor. *Carm*. 4.1.10 and Homer's purple death', *CQ* 67 (2017), 199–209, at 200. As concerns *purpurare*, the verb is fairly rare (see *TLL* 10.2.2714–15), which itself speaks against its having developed a meaning different from that inherent in the stem. Perhaps one occurrence may require a brief comment, Apul. *Met.* 6.24 *Horae rosis et ceteris floribus purpurabant omnia*: this might suggest that *purpurare* means 'to make bright, coloured', but the mention of roses makes it clear that the red colour is meant in the first place (as the colour par excellence, as it were); cf. 10.29 *purpureo nitore prata uestiret*, where flowers of different colours could be implied, but likewise only roses are named (*dirrupto spineo tegmine … promicarent rosae*).

[8] Note especially Hor. *Epist*. 2.1.207 *lana Tarentino uiolas imitata ueneno* and Ov. *Met*. 4.268–9 *est in parte rubor uiolaeque simillimus ora | flos tegit*, which show that the violet is naturally thought of as purple.

[9] See e.g. Boldrer (n. 2), 173: 'il verbo mantiene […] il proprio valore cromatico, offrendo con *auro* una combinazione di colori tipica della viola del pensiero o *viola tricolor*, in particolare della varietà *hortensis* con petali gialli macchiati al centro di purpureo'; but her translation 's'imporpora d'oro' (at 65) sounds as ambiguous as *purpurat auro*. E.S. Foster and E.H. Heffner, *Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, On Agriculture X–XII; On Trees* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), 15 offer: 'blooms with gold

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obtain this sense, we would have to write something like *mixto purpurat auro*. But even apart from these linguistic considerations, the catalogue of flowers in Book 9 shows that what we need here is a reference to the purple variety of violet.

This problem was recognized by earlier scholars, even though they failed to produce a satisfactory solution. For instance, Orsini conjectured: *tum quae pallet humi, quae frondent purpura et auro,* | *ponantur uiolae* (the text thus refers not to two but to three varieties, the same varieties as mentioned by Pliny [*HN* 21.27, quoted in n. 5]: white, purple and yellow).[10] This is too drastic an intervention to be convincing; moreover, *frondere* cannot mean 'to bloom', so we would also have to write something like *florent* or *splendent*. Heinsius proposed *quae frondes purpurat albo*, which is likewise implausible, but makes the important point that *auro*—a humanist conjecture—finds little support in the paradosis (*purpura tabo*).[11]

If *purpurat auro* is an impossible expression, how can the text be restored? It seems likely that *humi* in the first half of the line requires a counterpart in the second.[12] A possible option might be to write *alte* in place of (*t*)*abo*, so that (*purpurat*) *alte* would contrastingly parallel (*pallet*) *humi*.[13] However, this solution encounters two obstacles. First, such an exact syntactic parallelism appears inelegant; some variation would be preferable.[14] Second, (*t*)*abo* may not be the only corruption here; and if there are other textual problems, they should be taken into account before *alte* can be accepted.

Although editors seem to find no fault with it, *fronde*(*n*)*s* is arguably corrupt as well. Rodgers, who prints *frondes*, apparently takes it to mean 'petals' (surely the text cannot refer to the violet's leaves?), but, unlike *folium*, *frons* cannot have this sense.[15] Even if it could, or even if we substitute *flores* for *frondes*, the explicit reference to the violet's petals would be superfluous ('the violet that is purple in its petals'). Most editors print *frondens*, which may be an understandable decision, but still does not produce a

and purple blossoms crowned'. Similarly, W. Richter, *Lucius Iunius Moderatus Columella; Zwölf Bücher über Landwirtschaft; Buch eines Unbekannten über Baumzüchtung*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1982), 429: 'purpurn und golden emporwachsen'. D.J. White, 'Columella *Res rustica* 10: a study and commentary' (Diss., Univ. of Florida, 2013), 74 translates (without explaining the grammar): 'mixes purple with gold'.

[10] F. Ursinus, *Notae ad M. Catonem, M. Varronem, L. Columellam de re rustica* (Rome, 1587), 182.

[11] In P. Burman, *Titi Petronii Arbitri Satyricôn quae supersunt* (Utrecht, 1709), 114. It is of course not entirely impossible to imagine *auro* being corrupted to *abo*, but the conjecture by no means imposes itself.

[12] Cf. Columella 12.18.5 *aliter ea* [*sc*. *uasa*] *quae demersa sunt humi, aliter quae stant supra terram*; and especially *Arb*. 4.1 *uinearum autem fere genera in usu tria sunt: iugata, humi proiecta et deinde tertia … more arborum in se consistens*.

[13] For *alte* used of a flower, cf. Stat. *Silv*. 2.1.107 *mollibus in pratis alte flos improbus exstat*. I nevertheless have some reservations about the linguistic appropriateness of *alte* in this passage of Columella. In contrast to *humi* which expresses location in absolute terms ('close to the ground'), and thus can be paired with a verb devoid of any connotation of place or direction such as *pallere*, *alte* expresses location only in relative terms and in reference to some other (implied) object, and I think for this reason it is predominantly used with verbs denoting motion or position (such as *exstare* in the Statius parallel), so that *alte purpurare* may not be good Latin.

[14] Cf. e.g. 181 *altera crispa uiret* [*sc*. *lactuca*], *fusco nitet altera crine*, where the colour is first expressed with a verb (*uiret*), then with an adjective (*fusco*).

[15] *TLL* 6.1.1347–52 lists no instances of such usage. It has been suggested that *frondes* could refer to wreaths or garlands (*OLD* s.v. *frons*[1] 2c), so that the expression would mean 'the violet that (with its flowers) makes garlands purple'; however, this is merely a metonymical use of *frons* in its standard sense of 'foliage' for 'a wreath made of (branches with) leaves'; and in any event, in a context speaking of a plant, *frons* can only refer to the plant's own leaves, not to some other leaves.

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satisfactory sense.[16] It may be a matter of fact that, like most flowers, violets have leaves, but this is not a detail that warrants attention.[17] While in certain contexts the adjective may indeed have the pregnant sense '*lush* in foliage', I doubt that bare *frondens* is sufficient to draw contrast between one variety of violet that has lush leaves and another that does not.[18] These objections could be removed by writing *florens*, but that would merely be a stopgap.

If *fronde*(*n*)*s* is corrupt, and *flore*(*n*)*s* not a plausible correction, what has it replaced? As pointed out above, the second half of the line appears to be missing a counterpart to *humi* in the first half; while *alte* may be an option, it is quite possible that this counterpart has been ousted by *fronde*(*n*)*s* rather than by (*t*)*abo*. Palaeographically, *scandens* would be an easy correction (*ſ* → *f*, *c* → *r*, *a* → *o*), but *scandere* is only used of climbing plants.[19] The proper word to describe a (relatively) tall plant would be *surgens*:[20] this is, I think, the solution we should adopt, despite its being less than totally straightforward in terms of palaeography.

If, then, we have *surgens* in place of *fronde*(*n*)*s* to answer *humi*, *alte* proves redundant. I suggest that (*t*)*abo* has replaced a term for a purple substance, and *ostro* seems to be the only option that fits the metre. Although the expression has no exact parallels in classical Latin, we may compare Prop. 4.3.51 *Poenis nunc purpura fulgeat ostris*, *Aetna* 333 *purpureoque rubens surgat iubar aureus ostro*, *Ciris* 387 *coma Sidonio florens deciditur ostro*. Later on in the poem Columella uses this term to describe the rose: 287 *iam rosa mitescit Sarrano clarior ostro*; and he does in fact associate the idea of purple dye with the violet in the prose part of the treatise at 9.4.4, where, as we have seen, he uses the same adjective *Sarranus* ('Tyrian') as an epithet of the violet.

How can the corruption be explained? I suggest that *tabo* is not a mechanical error for *ostro* but an interpolated gloss.[21] A reader of the archetype's ancestor, mistaking

[16] See e.g. V. Lundström, *L. Iuni Moderati Columellae Rei rusticae liber decimus* (Uppsala, 1942), 8; de Saint-Denis (n. 6), 33; Richter (n. 9), 428; Boldrer (n. 2), 64.

[17] More or less the only context I know of where *frondens* is used of a flower (though, it may be noted, not when it is flowering) is Verg. *G*. 2.119 *bacas semper frondentis acanthi*, but here the point is that acanthus has evergreen leaves.

[18] Bare *frondens* can normally be used of objects that are naturally thought of as having leaves, such as trees; thus *arbor frondens* would mean 'tree in leaf' (as opposed to 'bare of leaves', as trees can also be), which can further develop the pregnant sense 'with lush foliage'. Since the notion of leaves is not an indispensable part of the concept of flower, bare *frondens* is not enough to convey a meaningful message about a flower's leaves. It may be instructive to compare Columella's other use of *frondens* in the poem, which occurs only ten lines after the present context (10.111): *teneris frondens lactucula fibris*, 'lettuce green with tender leaves'; bare *frondens* would mean 'when lettuce has full-grown leaves' (as opposed to 'when it has just been planted', for instance), and it is necessary to add *teneris … fibris* to indicate what kind of leaves lettuce has.

[19] See *OLD* s.v. *scando* 3b.

[20] See *OLD* s.v. *surgo* 8: the verb is predominantly used of plants sprouting from the ground (e.g. Prop. 1.20.37 *surgebant lilia prato*), but can also describe plants growing tall (e.g. Columella 6.23.2 *fruticem surrecturum in altitudinem*). In our context, its point will be secured by the opposition with *humi*.

[21] Columella's treatise has other instances of a gloss interpolated either in the archetype (as here) or in one branch of the manuscript tradition. Of the former type, perhaps the clearest case is 11.1.14 *ueneriis amoribus* for *ueneriis rebus* (Schneider), where *amoribus* is a gloss on the whole idiom but only replaces its second part. Other examples include (but are not limited to): 7.3.24 *sidus aestatis per emersum Caniculae*, where *sidus aestatis* (del. Hine) is a gloss on *Caniculae*; 8.5.3 *pulicibus atque aliis similibus animalibus* (*animalibus* om. AS), where *similibus* (del. Rodgers) is an exegetical gloss on *aliis animalibus*, which has replaced *animalibus* in AS but has been added to it in R; 9.13.2 *samaras ulmi semina sua promunt*, where *semina sua* (del. Iucundus) is a gloss on *samaras*; 11.2.52 *proscissum ueruactum*, where *proscissum* (del. Rodgers) is a gloss on *ueruactum*.

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ostro for *oestro*,[22] will have added above an explanation: *tabo*, which is a late and/or colloquial form of *tabanus*, 'gadfly'.[23] He may have remembered Servius' comment on Verg. *G.* 3.148: οἶστρος *autem Graecum est: Latine asilus, uulgo tabanus uocatur*. It may also be relevant that Columella himself cites the Greek word, even if in a different sense, as a term for the bee queen (9.14.4): *uerum quidam Graecorum auctores* οἴστρους *appellant* [*sc. reges*].[24] It is true that the form *tabo* is only attested in the manuscripts of the Carolingian poet Moduin (*Eclogues* 1.21 *in se forte furit* [*sc. aries*] *multo cogente tabone*),[25] but it also survives in the French *taon* (compare Lat. *pauo* → Fr. *paon*), which suggests that this form would have been familiar at least to some medieval readers from everyday use.

To sum up: *tum quae pallet humi, quae surgens purpurat ostro,* | *ponatur uiola*, 'then let the violet be planted: the yellowish one that blooms close to the ground, and the one that rises high, crimson with purple'.

Wolfson College, Oxford BORIS KAYACHEV
boriskayachev@gmail.com

[22] We may compare the reverse corruption at *Ciris* 184: *oestro* AR, *estro* H, *ostro* ρ.

[23] Alternatively, the gloss may have been *tabāo*, which was then changed to *tabo* for the sake of metre.

[24] This remark appears close to the end of the book immediately preceding Columella's poem, which makes it the more likely that the term could still be in the reader's mind when he came to 10.101.

[25] Moduin's *Eclogues* survive in two manuscripts, both from the ninth or tenth century (British Library Add. 11034 and Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek 3301). The first editor printed *tabano* (he published three editions, of which only the last was based on both manuscripts): E. Dümmler, 'Gedichte des Naso', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum* 18 (1875), 58–70, at 63; id., 'Nasonis (Muaduuini) ecloga', in id., *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1881), 382–92, at 388; id., 'Nasos (Modoins) Gedichte an Karl den Grossen', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 11 (1886), 75–91, at 86. But see L. Traube, 'Bombo. tabo', *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie und Grammatik* 16 (1889), 167–8, at 168, defending the transmitted form. In any event, it is of little importance for the present argument whether *tabone* is the original reading or merely the reading of the archetype, as in either case it attests to the existence of the form in medieval Latin.

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