
MEI NUCESQUE

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Bush Regales Dinner Guests With Impromptu Oratory On Virgil's Minor Works

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An effervescent Bush delights friends with tales of the poet Virgil.

WASHINGTON, DC—President Bush delighted an intimate gathering of White House dinner guests Monday, regaling the coterie of dignitaries, artists, and friends with a spirited, off-the-cuff discussion of the Roman poet Virgil's lesser-known works. "Ah, W. was in top form tonight," Spanish foreign minister Josep Pique Camps said. "We were all held captive by his erudition and charm. First, a brief history of the opium trade, then a bit of Brahms on the piano, then a rousing discussion of Virgil. That boy is a wonder, isn't he?" According to guests, the subject of Virgil arose serendipitously, when a servant opened a window in the Red Room, to which the group had retired for after-dinner drinks. Noticing the breeze, Bush raised his glass and delivered a toast to the changing of the seasons. He then apologized to "lovely Winter," explaining that he "meant no slight against her."

"The first blush of Spring always reminds me of Virgil's words," Bush said. "In early spring-tide, when the icy drip / Melts from the mountains hoar, and Zephyr's breath / Unbinds the crumbling clod, even then 'tis time / Press deep your plough behind the groaning ox / And teach the furrow-burnished share to shine."

"Book One of *The Georgics*, of course," Bush added.

Bush arranged the small, informal dinner in honor of Camps' unexpected arrival in America.

"It had been too long since I'd heard one of W.'s anecdotes, so I simply got on a plane," Camps said. "I showed up at his doorstep with a watercolor by Ignat Bednarik, whom I know he adores, just to make sure he'd let me in."

Bush confessed that he has "long held a fascination with the classical world," noting that his love of Roman history influenced his decision to enter politics.

"Virgil was born in the year 70 B.C.—let's see, that would be during the consulship of Gnaeus Pompeius The Great and Marcus Licinius Crassus, if I'm not mistaken," Bush said. "It is said that while Virgil's mother was with child, she dreamt she gave birth to a laurel branch, which, upon touching the ground, sprang up into a full-grown tree, its branches laden with ripe fruits and flowers. The next morning, she gave birth to Virgil. The legend goes that Virgil was born without crying, so mild was his countenance."

According to White House regulars, it is not uncommon for Bush to engage guests in discussions of whatever subject strikes his fancy, from the symphony playing in the background to the history of a style of jewelry a guest happens to be wearing.

"I love to hear George hold court on this or that," said Bush family friend and world-renowned physicist Norberta Münter. "I tell him he is such a spoiled brat, the way he demands our attention, but I must confess I can't take my eyes off him when he does."

As the group sipped apple martinis and, in Bush's words, "recovered" from the Chilean sea bass, the president continued.

"Most primarily associate Publius Vergilius Maro with *The Aeneid*," Bush told guests. "Yet so much pleasure is to be found in his lesser-known works—*The Eclogues*, completed in 37 B.C., and *The Georgics*, in 30 B.C., both of which praise the idyllic rural life."

"You have to remember I'm a bit of a farm boy myself," chuckled Bush, referring to his 1,600-acre ranch in Crawford, TX.

"*The Bucolics* are my personal favorite," Bush said. "They were basically a thank-you to Asinius Pollio for preventing the seizure of Virgil's land by the Triumvirate when they ordered the lands on the far banks of the river Po distributed to veterans of the victory at Philippi. They are so sublime, so inspirational. But why should I speak, when Virgil can do so himself? And far more eloquently, I might add."

Bush then recited a selection from *The Bucolics* in the original Latin, pausing occasionally to translate into French out of respect for his friend Amélie du Maurier, a young Parisian concert violinist in attendance. Earlier in the evening, a blushing du Maurier admitted to Bush that she did not know Latin. Bush eased the young woman's embarrassment with a joke.

"I wouldn't be surprised if your father forbade you from learning Latin, out of sheer distaste for *res publica*," said Bush, alluding to du Maurier's ancestors' place in the ousted French aristocracy.

Despite urging from dinner guests to continue his *Bucolics* recitation, Bush declined.

"I have already taken up far too much of your valuable time with my classical nattering," Bush said. "I dearly wish I could give you back this hour during which you so graciously indulged my dilettantism, but, as Plautus said, '*Factum est illud, fieri infectum non potest.*' Done is done, it cannot be made undone."

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Greek and Latin Tutor Corner: Obscure Uses of the Genitive Case

"I'm sick of this crap" – Defessive (or Exhaustitive) Genitive

"And Chronos' privies were cut off from him." -- Genitive of Demasculation (or Genital Genitive)

"The party of the people" -- Asinine Genitive

"The party of the rich" -- Elephantine Genitive (or sometimes variously "Belligerent Genitive" or "Genitive of Deficit")

"He's full of it." -- Manural Genitive

"Mrs. Trump filed for divorce, accusing him of infidelity." -- Expensive Genitive

"Honey, there are some things of which we need to talk about." -- Muliebral Genitive (or variously termed "Genitive of Interference" or "Pestilent Genitive")