

TEXTUAL PROBLEMS IN ROMAN POETRY

Heather White
London University

Se examinan y explican varios fragmentos de poetas latinos hasta ahora no bien entendidos por los críticos.

Various fragments of Latin poetry, which have not been understood by the critics, are analysed and explained.

In this article I shall discuss various textual and interpretative problems which are presented to us by the fragments of Roman poetry. I have used Prof. Adrian Hollis' excellent commentary as the starting point of my research¹.

Frag. 29

Vaga candido
nympha quod seceat ungui

Line 1 (*lilium*) suppl. Broukhusius ad Prop. 1.20.39

The reader will note that Broukhusius supplied *lilium* at the beginning of line 1. It should be noted that Broukhusius used mss in order to correct the text of Propertius². Note also the employment of adjectival *enallage*³. The nymph is said

¹ For the convenience of the reader, I print Hollis' text: cf. A. S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry c. 60 B C-A D 20* (Oxford 2007).

² Cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius* (Athens 2002) 10, n. 1.

³ For adjectival *enallage* cf. my *Studies*, p. 164.

to cut the flower with her beautiful nail (*candido...ungui*). The adjective *candido* refers to the fact that the nymph was herself beautiful⁴. Similarly Propertius states that Hylas cut flowers with a tender nail (*decerpens tenero...ungui*)⁵.

Frag. 30

Hesperium ante iubar quatiens

Hesperium ed. Ald.: *Hesperum* codd.

Hollis (*op. cit.*, pp. 73 f.) noted that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of this fragment. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to this passage if we understand that the poet is referring to a wedding torch. We should translate as follows: “brandishing (*quatiens*)⁶ before (*ante*)⁷ Hesperian (*Hesperium*)⁸ radiance”.

The wedding torch is said to be brandished before the appearance of the evening star.

Frag. 43 A

roscida noctivagis astris labentibus Phoebe
pulsa loco cessit, concedens lucibus altis

Scholars⁹ have been puzzled by the meaning of line 2. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. Phoebe is said to give way, vanishing (*concedens*)¹⁰ from heaven (*altis*)¹¹ due to the daylight (*lucibus*).

⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s. v. *candidus* I, A 5: “Of resplendent beauty of person, splendid, fair, beautiful... *puella*, Cat. 35.8”.

⁵ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 5.392: *candida lilia carpit*. Of course *ungui* could be used here in the sense manu: cf. Forcellini, s. v. *unguis*, II 1. Cf. especially Forcellini, s. v. *candidus*, I e.

⁶ Cf. Catullus 61.15 *pineam quate taedam*.

⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *ante* I B: “Of time, 1. Before”. Cf. also Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.51 *ambulet ante / noctem cum facibus*.

⁸ Note that the reading *Hesperium* has been preserved for us by the Aldina: cf. *Habis* 33 (2002) 130.

⁹ Cf. Hollis, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁰ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *concedo* I A: “With abl. ... *caelo*, Verg. *A.* 10.215”.

¹¹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *altum*: “Esp. The height of heaven, high heaven, the heavens: *ex alto volavit avis*”. Note that the poet has employed the poetic plural: cf. my *Studies*, p. 142.

Frag. 78

nomine quemque ciet; dictorum tempus adesse
commemoratur

line 1 *dictorum: factorum* Hollis

Hollis (pp. 133 f.) notes that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of the words *dictorum tempus*. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. The poet states that the time for commands (*dictorum*)¹² has now arrived. He means that the troops must obey the commands of their leader. Note the use of *falsa anaphora*¹³. *Dictorum* means “orders”, whereas *dictis* in frag. 79 means “words”.

Frag. 84

si quis forte mei domum Catonis,
depictas minio assulas, et illos
custodis videt hortulos Priapi,
miratur quibus ille disciplinis
tantam sit sapientiam assecutus,
quem tres cauliculi, selibra farris,
racemi duo tegula sub una
ad summam prope nutriant senectam.

This poem refers to Cato’s house and garden. I would like to suggest that the poet has employed a pun in line 6. The noun *caulis*¹⁴ means both “cabbage” and “membrum virile”. Cato’s-garden is protected from thieves by statues of Priapus¹⁵, which are painted red. Thus the poet states that Cato is sustained to the verge of old age by three cabbages (i. e., three *mentulas* or statues of Priapus).

Frag. 85

Catonis modo, Galle, Tusculanum
tota creditor urbe venditabat.
mirati sumus unicum magistrum,
summum grammaticum, optimum poetam
omnes solvere posse quaestiones,

¹² Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *dictum* B 5: “An order, command... cf. Verg. *A.* 3.189”.

¹³ For *falsa anaphora* cf. my *Studies*, p. 163.

¹⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *caulis* D: “= *membrum virile*”.

¹⁵ Cf. Hollis’ note on p. 138, quoting Nisbet. Cf. also Tibullus 1.1.17-18.

unum deficere expedire nomen.
en cor Zenodoti, en iecur Cratetis!

Line 6 deficere Toup : difficile codd.

Hollis (*op. cit.*, p. 139) explains that Cato had been forced to sell his country estate. In line 6 Hollis prints the alteration *deficere*. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should translate as follows: “We wondered that this supreme teacher and excellent poet should be able to solve all conundrums, but it was difficult (*difficile*)¹⁶ for him to extricate one reputation (*nomen*)”¹⁷. The poet means that Cato was forced to sell his estate, and thus failed to save his own reputation.

Frag. 126

ibi (sc. in insula Cea) existimatur pestilentia fuisse pecorum et armentorum gravis propter interitum Actaeonis (Icarii coni. Hollis). Aristaeus monstrante Apolline patre profectus est in insulam Ceam.

Hollis translated as follows: “(On the island of Cea / Ceos) there is thought to have been a grievous plague affecting flocks and herds on account of the death of Actaeon (? : perhaps rather ‘Icarius’). At the indication of his father Apollo, Aristaeus set off for the island of Cea”.

Hollis (p. 204) was puzzled by the fact that the Ceans appear to have been punished for the death of Actaeon. He therefore suggested the alteration *Icarii*. I would like to point out, however, that perfect sense can be restored to the transmitted text if we place a full stop after *armentorum* and translate as follows: “Serious (*gravis*)¹⁸ on account of the death of Actaeon¹⁹, Aristaeus set off for the island of

¹⁶ Cf. Lewis and Short, s. v. *difficilis* (I): “Prov.: difficile est, crimen non prodere vultu, Ov. *M.* 2.447”.

¹⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *nomen* II, A: “Name, fame, repute, reputation, renown”. Hollis notes (cf. p. 142) that *expedire nomen* was used of settling debts. Thus the poet has made a pun based on the fact that *nomen* means both “debt” and “reputation”. Cato lost his reputation because he could not pay his debts, and, being bankrupt, was forced to sell his estate.

¹⁸ Cf. Cic. *Lael.* 25.95 *civis severus et gravis*.

¹⁹ Actaeon was the son of Aristaeus: cf. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Middlesex 1972) I, 277. According to ancient tradition, distressed by the death of Actaeon, Aristaeus left Boeotia which he hated, and sailed to Libya: cf. R. Graves, *op. cit.*, 278.

Cea, at the indication of his father Apollo". In other words, Aristaeus went to Cea when he was still mourning the loss of his son Actaeon²⁰.

Frag. 129

desierant latrare canes,urbesque silebant;
omnia noctis erant placida composita quiete.

Scholars²¹ have been puzzled by the meaning of line 1. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. The poet has employed the poetic plural. We should translate as follows: "Dogs had ceased to bark and the city (*urbesque*²²) was silent".

Frag. 139

Chalcidico ... versu

In the commentary on Virgil, *Ecl.* 10.50 it is stated that the elegiac poet Euphorion came from Chalcis and that Cornelius Gallus seems to have adopted the style (*colorem*) of Euphorion. I have suggested that according to Virgil, Gallus states that he will set to the music of the shepherd's pipe songs which have been written due to Chalcidic verse. He means that he has been inspired to write elegies by the poetry of Euphorion²³.

Frag. 149

quem non ille sinit lentae moderator habenae
qua velit ire, sed angusto prius orbe coercens
insultare docet campis, fingitque morando.

Line 2 *orbe* Torrentius: *ore* codd.

Hollis printed the alteration *orbe* in line 2. I would like to point out, however, that the mss reading *ore* makes perfect sense. The trainer of the horse restrains it

²⁰ Cf. especially *O.L.D.*, s.v. *gravis* 7 c ("oppressed by sorrow, anxiety").

²¹ Cf. Hollis, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

²² Cf. my *Studies*, 142, and Flower Smith's note on Tibullus 1.1.4. Cf. also my *Studies in the Poetry of Nicander* (Amsterdam 1987) 72. In other words, the poet has used *urbes* as a poetic plural.

²³ For the importance of poetic inspiration cf. *Habis* 29 (1998) 393.

“with brief speech” (*angusto*²⁴...*ore*²⁵). The horse is, in other words, trained to obey simple commands.

Frag. 150

ceu canis umbrosam lustrans Gortynia vallem,
 si veteris potuit cervae comprehendere lustra,
 saevit in absentem et, circum vestigia latrans,
 aethera per nitidum tenues sectatur odores;
 non amnes illam medii, non ardua tardant
 perdita nec serae meminit decedere nocti. 5

This fragment was imitated by Virgil at *Ecl.* 8.85-88. Virgil describes a heifer (*bucula*) which goes in search of a bull. I would like to suggest that the author of the fragment under discussion is referring to Io²⁶, who was turned into a heifer, and was forced to travel all over the world, because she had been stung by the gadfly. Io is compared to a Gortynian hound in lines 1-4. We should translate lines 5-6 as follows: “Rivers in the way and heights do not slow her (i.e. Io) down, and ruined (*perdita*) she does not think to give way to far-advanced night”.

Frag. 166

Codrusque ille canit quali tu voce solebas,
 atque solet numeros dicere, Cinna, tuos,
 dulcior ut numquam Pyllo profluxerit ore
 Nestoris aut docto pectore Demodoci

Hollis (p. 294) notes that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 2. I would like to suggest that we should translate as follows: “The famous Codrus sings with a voice like that of yours in the past, and is accustomed to celebrate (*dicere*²⁷), Cinna, your verses (*numeros...tuos*)”.

Codrus is said to praise the poetry of Cinna²⁸, who was the author of the famous *Smyrna*.

²⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s. v. *angustus* II, H: “of discourse, brief, simple”.

²⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s. v. *os* II, C: “Speech”.

²⁶ Cf. Robert Graves, *op. cit.*, I, 190.

²⁷ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *dico* B, 4: “To describe, relate, sing, celebrate in writing”.

²⁸ Cinna’s poetry was also praised by Catullus at poem 95.

Frag. 186

ni te visceribus meis, Horati,
plus iam diligo, tu tuum sodalem
hinnulo videas strigiosorem.

line 3 *hinnulo* Oudendorp : *ninnio* P. Pithoeus : *nimio* AC: *ninio* D

In this poem Maecenas addresses Horace. Hollis (p. 321) notes that the text of line 3 is uncertain. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to the transmitted text if we print the reading *ninnio* and translate as follows: “Horace, if I do not love you now more than my innermost self, may you consider (*videas*²⁹) your friend more tasteless (*strigiosorem*³⁰) than Ninnius (*Ninnio*³¹)”.

Frag. 187

debilem facito manu, debilem pede coxo,
tuber adstrue gibberum, lubricos quate dentes:
vita dum superest, benest; hanc mihi vel acuta
si sedeam cruce sustine.

line 1 *coxo* : *coxa* v. l.

Hollis (pp. 322 f.) explains that in this fragment Seneca attacks Maecenas’ desire to prolong his life at all costs. I would like to point out that the variant reading *coxa*, in line 1, makes perfect sense. We should translate as follows: “Make me crippled in my hand, crippled in my foot; add a humped swelling to my hips (*coxa*)³². The poet is referring to the fact that Maecenas, who is old, is unable to achieve an erection. His *mentula* is crooked (*gibberum*) rather than straight, and he is therefore impotent.

²⁹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *video* II, B, 1: “To look at, look to, consider, to think or reflect upon”.

³⁰ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *strigosus* II: “Trop., of an orator, meagre, dry, tasteless”.

³¹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *Ninnius*, 1: “L. Ninnius Quadratus, a tribune of the people”. As a tribune, Ninnius must have been an orator; he was evidently jejune: cf. O.L.D. s.v. *strigosus*. Hollis points out that Fraenkel printed *ninnio* in this passage. Cf. frag. 89, where the readings *Osce* and *Cumana* were preserved for us by Pithoeus.

³² The *Wortstellung debilem manu, debilem pede, lubricos dentes, tuber gibberum* shows that *coxo* cannot be an epithet referring to *pede*. For *coxa*, “hip” cf. e.g. Juvenal 15.66. Here *a(d)struo* governs the ablative *coxa*: cf. O.L.D. s.v. *astruo* 5.

Frag. 235

Luna, deum quae sola vides periuria vulgi,
 seu Cretaea magis seu tu Dictynna vocaris

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of line 2 (cf. Hollis, p. 399). Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. The poet is referring to the fact that witches were said to be able to draw down the moon³³. We should translate as follows: “Moon, you who alone of the gods observe the common people’s perjuries, whether you are called Lady of Crete (*Cretaea*) or *Dictynna*³⁴ by witches (*magis*³⁵)”. The poet, in sum, wonders whether Diana is given the title *Cretaea* or *Dictynna* when witches invoke her.

Frag. 236

fortia neglecti velabant colla capilli,
 et per neglectos velabant colla capillos.

Hollis (pp. 400 f.) notes that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 2. Textual alteration is once again not necessary. Here, *colla* means “head and neck”³⁶. The sense is “untended hair veiled his head and neck, and his head and neck concealed him (i.e. his identity) because of his untended hair”. The omission of the personal pronoun is of course common in Latin poetry. Note the *falsa anaphora*³⁷: *velabant*, v. 1 = “veiled” and *velabant*, v. 2 = “concealed”.

Frag. 237

suspendit teneros male fortis aranea cassis

Hollis translates as follows: “The feeble spider hangs out its soft nets”. I would like to suggest that better sense can be made of this fragment if we understand that the poet is referring to the fact that Arachne³⁸ was not afraid to challenge Minerva to a contest in weaving. We should translate thus: “The unfortunately

³³ Cf. Flower Smith’s note on Tibullus 1.8.21-22. Cf. also Ovid, *Met.* 7.207 *te quoque, Luna, traho*.

³⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *Dictynna* II: “An appellation of Diana”. Cf. also Lewis and Short s.v. *Dictynnaeus*: “A promontory on the N.W. coast of Crete, where a temple of Diana stood”.

³⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *magus* and *maga* II: “In the fem., a female magician, enchantress: *cantusque artesque magarum*, v.1. *Ov. M.* 7.195 (al. leg. *magorum*)”.

³⁶ Cf. O.L.D. s.v. *collum*, 3.

³⁷ For the employment of *falsa anaphora* cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, p. 163.

³⁸ Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 6.45 *sola est non territa virgo*.

(*male*³⁹) brave spider (*arana*⁴⁰) hangs out its soft web (*cassis*⁴¹)". Virgil refers to the myth of Arachne at *Georgics* 4.246 f.:

aut invisa Minervae
laxos in foribus suspendit aranea casset.

Arachne is said by Virgil to be hated by Minerva and to hang up her web.

Frag. 238

tuque Lycaonio mutatae semine nymphae
quam gelido raptam de vertice Nonacrino
Oceano prohibet semper se tingere Tethys
ausa suae quia sit quondam succumbere alumnae

line 3 thetis ed. Micylli, corr. Muncker

Muncker's correction *Tethys*, accepted by Hollis, is not necessary, in view of the well-known confusion in mythography and in poetry between *Thetis* and *Tethys*⁴². Professor Giangrande draws my attention to Catullus 64.29, where Thetis is attested instead of Tethys, and Cat. 88.5, where the variants Tethys and Thetis coexist. It is, however, also possible that the poet is in fact referring to Thetis and not to Tethys in this fragment. According to a rare version of the myth, Thetis punished Callisto because she had dared to have an affair with Jupiter, and thus to rival her foster-mother⁴³.

We should translate as follows: "And you (i.e. Arcas), together with the Lycaon-sprung race (*semine*⁴⁴) of the transformed nymph (= Callisto), whom after her abduction from the chill summit of Nonacris, Thetis forbade forever to bathe in Ocean because she once had the audacity to supplant her nourisher (*alumnae*⁴⁵, i. e. Juno)".

³⁹ Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *malus*, 2.

⁴⁰ For the fact that Arachne was turned into a spider cf. Ovid, *Met.* 6.145 *et antiquas exercet aranea telas*.

⁴¹ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *casset* B: "Meton., a spider's web".

⁴² Cf. Forcellini, *Onomasticon*, s.v. *Tethys*, a.

⁴³ Cf. Robert Graves, *op. cit.*, I, 270. Juno (= Hera) was the foster-mother of Thetis.

⁴⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *semen* II, 2: "A stock, race". Arcas was the progenitor of the Arcadians: cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *Arcas*, 1.

⁴⁵ Cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *alumna* II: "... subst., nourisher". For the fact that poets often preferred to follow an obscure version of a myth cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 9 (1992) 44.

For the scansion of *Thētis* cf. Catullus 64.29 (as quoted above). The confusion between Thetis and Tethys led to the name of the goddess Thētis being scanned Thētis.

To sum up: In view of the known alternative use in mythographical and poetic texts of the forms Thētis or Thētis and Tethys, it is prudent to leave the reading Thētis in line 3, for two reasons. The poet either thought that this hybrid form Thētis was the correct spelling of Tēthys, or if he was alluding to Thētis, he used the scanning Thētis.

Frag. 240

Lucili, quam sis mendosus, teste Catone
 defensore tuo pervincam, qui male factos
 emendare parat versus; hoc lenior ille
 quo melior vir (et) est longe subtilior illo
 qui multum puerum est loris et funibus udis 5
 exhortatus, ut esset opem qui ferre poetis
 antiquis posset contra fastidia nostra,
 grammaticorum equitum doctissimus

line 5 *puerum est* Reisig : *puer et* codd. line 6 *exhortatus*, *exoratus* v. 1.

The reader will note that Hollis printed the alteration *puerum est* in line 5. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We should print the variant reading *exoratus* in line 6, and translate as follows: “He is a better man and more refined than that famous man (*illo*), who having often (*multum*) been persuaded (*exoratus*) as a boy (*puer*) by both straps and wet ropes, so that there should be someone capable of rescuing the old poets from our disdain, is⁴⁶ the most learned of scholarly knights”.

APPENDIX

Prof. G. Giangrande points out that since Maecenas (Hollis, p. 322) allowed his line to begin with ~- (84.7, 85.1, 86.1), perhaps the reading *nīmto* in frag. 186 (cf. Kühner-Holzweissig, p. 148, Anm. 1) is correct.

⁴⁶ Note the ellipse of the *verbum substantivum*: cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, p. 67. Cf. also *exorata* “persuaded” Ovid *Met.* 5.418.