

NOTES ON OVID'S *TRISTIA*

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Se ofrecen algunas notas críticas sobre los *Tristia* de Ovidio.

Some critical notes on Ovid's *Tristia* are offered.

1.2.51-6

Nec letum timeo: genus est miserabile leti.
demite naufragium: mors mihi munus erit.
est aliquid fatouē suo ferroue cadentem
in solida moriens ponere corpus humo,
et mandare suis aliqua et sperare sepulcrum
et non aequoreis piscibus esse cibum.

line 54 solida: solita v. l.

In this passage, Ovid compares death at sea to death on land. James Diggle has discussed the possible meanings of the two variant readings *solida* and *solita* in line 54¹. I would like to point out that the reading *solita* makes perfect sense and recalls Virgil, *Aeneid* 9.213-14 “sit qui me raptum pugna pretiove redemptum / mandet humo solita”. Nisus hopes that somebody will return his dead body to its “familiar country”, i.e. his home. Similarly, Ovid states that it is important to die in your native land (*solita...humo*), and to avoid being eaten by fishes due to dying in a shipwreck. The wish to die and be buried in one's own country is a

¹ Cf. *CQ* 30 (1980) 405f.

topos in Greek poetry. Moreover, at *Tristia* 1.1.34 Ovid expresses a wish to die *sedibus in patriis*.

1.2.100-1

Stultaque mens nobis, non scelerata fuit,
quod licet et minimis.

quod licet in minimis v. l.

Diggle (*op. cit.* 407) was puzzled by the meaning of these lines. I would like to point out that perfect sense is provided by the variant reading *quod licet in minimis*. Ovid states that his mind was stupid, but not criminal, and then adds that this is “permitted in trivial matters”.

1.7.5-6

hoc tibi dissimula, senti tamen, optime, dici,
in digito qui me fersque refersque tuo.

Scholars² have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage. I would like to suggest that Ovid means that his friend talks about him secretly. Cf. *Tristia* 2.453 *digitis saepe est nutuque locutus* (“he often spoke by means of his fingers and by nods”). We should translate as follows: “Hide the fact –yet feel it, too– that this is said to you, my best of friends, you who repeatedly talk about me with your fingers (*in digito ... tuo*)”. For instrumental *in* with abl. (*in digito*) = instrum. abl. (*digitis*) cf. Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr, II, 126. Note that Ovid has employed the poetic singular (i.e. *digito*)³.

1.7.33-4

hos quoque sex versus, in prima fronte libelli
si praeponendos esse putabis, habe.

Diggle (410f) explained that Ovid is referring to the *Metamorphoses*. I would like to suggest that the adjective *prima* means here “distinguished”⁴. Ovid wants six verses to be inscribed “on the distinguished front of his book” (*in prima fronte libelli*)⁵, i.e. at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*. Note that Ovid has

² Cf. Diggle, *op. cit.* 409f.

³ Cf. P. Fedeli, *Propertius* (ed. Teubner 1984) 332.

⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *primus* (B): “First in rank or station, chief, principal, most excellent, etc.”.

⁵ Cf. *Tristia* 2.545, where Ovid calls the *Ars Amatoria* “vetus libellus”.

employed adjectival *enallage*⁶. In other words, the adjective *prima* refers to the fact that the *Metamorphoses* was Ovid's most important work: cf. *Tristia* 2.63, where Ovid refers to the *Metamorphoses* as his *maius opus*.

1.11.15

fuscabatque diem custos Atlantidos Ursae

Diggle (411) notes that, according to some ancient sources, Callisto was a descendant of Atlas. Ovid has therefore followed Hellenistic practice and alluded to an obscure legend concerning Callisto's lineage⁷. Diggle points out that "in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, and in the common account, Callisto (The Great Bear) was the daughter of Lycaon and so did not trace her descent from Atlas". I would like to add that by referring to an obscure account of Callisto's lineage Ovid achieved *Selbstvariation*⁸.

Diggle adds that at *Fasti* 3.659-60 Anna Perenna is said to be descended from Atlas – *invenies qui te nymphen Atlantida dicant, / teque Iovi primos, Anna, dedisse cibos*. Diggle objects to the reading *Atlantida* and argues that we should accept the alteration *Azanida*. Thus Anna Perenna is called an "Arcadian" nymph. I would like to point out, however, that there is no reason why Anna Perenna should not have been said to be a descendant of Atlas. Similarly, according to Tibullus (4.1.77), the nymph Calypso was the daughter of Atlas: cf. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *Calypso*. The crucial point is that Atlas, according to some, lived in Arcadia (cf. Roscher, s.v. *Atlas*, 708, 30ff., and Smith, *Dict. Mythol.*, s.v. *Atlas*).

2.63-4

inspice maius opus, quod adhuc sine fine tenetur,
in non credendos corpora versa modos.

Diggle (412) notes that the critics have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage. I would like to suggest that Ovid means that the *Metamorphoses* have been "convicted" (*tenetur*)⁹ "without explanation" (*sine fine*)¹⁰. In other words,

⁶ For a similar case of adjectival *enallage* cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius* (Athens 2002) 164. The reader will note that at Propertius 4.9.29 Housman's alteration *glaucis* is not necessary.

⁷ For the fact that Hellenistic poets often alluded to obscure versions of a myth cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 9 (1992) 44.

⁸ For a similar example of *Selbstvariation* cf. my *New Studies in Greek Poetry* (Amsterdam 1989) 137. Cf., moreover, my *Studies in the Text of Propertius* (Athens 2002) 102, where I point out that Propertius followed two different versions of the myth concerning Circe and Aeaea. It should, furthermore, be noted that Ovid *hellenistico more* adopted an allusive narrative technique: cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 10 (1996) 51. Cf. especially G. Giangrande's review of Calderón's edition of Euripides' *Her. Fur.* and *Iph. Aul.* for this type of *Selbstvariation* (*Myrtia*, in the press).

⁹ Cf. Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *teneo* I, B, g: "to be convicted".

¹⁰ Cf. Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *fnis* II, B, 2: "In rhet. lang. a definition, explanation".

his book has been convicted like a criminal but no satisfactory charge has been brought against it. Cf. *Tr.* 2.63 *damnatas...Musas*.

2.173-6

per quem bella geris, cuius nunc corpore pugnas,
 auspicium cui das grande deosque tuos,
 dimidioque tui praesens +et respicis urbem,
 dimidio procul es saeuaque bella geris.

In this passage Ovid addresses Augustus and Tiberius. Diggle (413) notes that the critics have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 175-6. I would like to suggest that Augustus is said to fight for Tiberius and to bestow power and divinity on him. Augustus is said to look after Rome and to fight savage wars. We should translate as follows: “(Tiberius) for whom you wage war, and for whose body you now exert yourself, to whom you give great power (*auspicium...grande*) and your divinity (*deosque tuos*). Half of you (*dimidioque*)¹¹ is propitious (*praesens*) and looks after the city (i.e. *Rome*), and half is remote (*procul*) and wages cruel wars”. Cf. Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *praesum* E: “*Praesens* ... Present, aiding, favoring, propitious”. Cf. also Lewis and Short, *op. cit.*, s.v. *procul* II: “Far, distant, remote”.

2.279-83

ut tamen hoc fatear, ludi quoque semina praebent
 nequitiae: tolli tota theatra iube.
 peccandi causam multis quam saepe dederunt,
 Martia cum durum sternit harena solum.
 tollatur Circus...

line 281 *multis quam* Riese: *multis quoque* E

Diggle (414) prints the alteration *multis quam* in line 281. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary, since perfect sense is provided by the reading *multis quoque*. Ovid states that the games offer opportunities for wickedness and therefore the places where they are held should be abolished: *tolli tota theatra iube*. Note that *theatra* means here “places of exhibition”. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.288 *mediaque in valle theatri / circus erat*. We should translate as follows: “Even should I admit this charge, the games (*ludi*) also furnish the seeds of wrongdoing; order the abolition of all places of exhibition (*theatra*)! A pretext for sin has also often been found for many (*multis quoque*) when the hard earth is covered with the sand of Mars; abolish the Circus!”.

¹¹ Cf. Horace, *Sat.* 2.3.318 *maior dimidio*.

2.301-2

omnia perversas possunt corrumpere mentes:
stant tamen illa suis omnia tuta locis.

Diggle (415f.) was puzzled by the meaning of these lines and suggested that we should “read *ipsa* for *illa*”. His conjecture is accepted by Goold, in his Loeb edition. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. Ovid is alluding to women (*quaedam*, line 285; *Amores* 2.1.3 *severae*; *castae*, line 308), who are inclined to fault (*in culpam siqua est ingeniosa suam*). Perfect sense can be obtained from the transmitted text if we punctuate it as follows:

omnia perversas possunt corrumpere. Mentēs
stant tamen. Illa suis omnia tuta locis.

The sense is: “Everything can corrupt wicked women (*perversas*). However, moral reasonableness (*mentes*) holds its own (*stant*). All those things are safe in their own place”. Ovid is referring to the minds of those who are not perverted. Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*, s.v. *mens*, 5. The poet is, moreover, alluding to all those instances which he has mentioned above (i.e. episodes from mythology which give rise to salacious thoughts in a non-chaste mind (cf. lines 311-312).

2.357-8

nec liber indicium est animi sed honesta voluntas
plurima mulcendis auribus apta feret.

line 257 voluptas v. l.

These lines have puzzled the critics¹². I would like to suggest that we should print the variant reading *voluptas* and translate as follows: “Nor is my book evidence. But the distinguished pleasure (*honesta voluptas*) of my mind (*animi*) will offer many things suited to charm the ears”. Ovid stresses that his character is different from his poetry, which is the product of his fertile imagination.

2.493-6

his ego deceptus non tristia carmina feci,
sed tristis nostros poena secuta iocos.
denique nec video tot de scribentibus unum,
quem sua perdiderit Musa; repertus ego.

Diggle (418f.) noted that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. I would like to point out

¹² Cf. Diggle, *op. cit.* 417f.

that Ovid has employed the historical present¹³. We should translate lines 495-6 as follows: “Finally I did not see (*video*) one man, out of so many writers, whom his own Muse had destroyed. I am the one who has been sought out”. Note that the historical present (*video*) follows the perfect indicative (*feci*) in line 493. Ovid states that he did not write serious poetry and unfortunately for him a grim (*tristis*) penalty followed his jokes.

Conclusion. I hope that I have demonstrated to the reader that textual alteration is often not necessary if we have sufficient knowledge of Ovid’s *Sprachgebrauch* and of his employment of Hellenistic literary *topoi*¹⁴.

¹³ For other cases of the historical present cf. my *Studies in the Text of Propertius*, 69. Cf. moreover my paper entitled “Language and Style in Ovid” (*Myrtia*, forthcoming). I have suggested that at *Heroides* 21.153 *timeo* means “I was afraid” and that at *Amores* 3.8.11 *eo* means “I went”.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Giangrande, “Hellenistic *Topoi* in Ovid’s *Amores*”, *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 4 (1981) 25ff.