

NOTES ON OVID'S *TRISTIA**

The text is taken from Georg Luck's edition (Heidelberg, 1967). I have also consulted P. Burman (Amsterdam, 1727), S. G. Owen's *editio maior* (Oxford, 1889), A. L. Wheeler's Loeb edition (London and New York, 1924) in the 2nd edition revised by G. P. Goold (London and Cambridge, MA., 1988), and Georg Luck's commentary (Heidelberg, 1977). I have also had a preview of J. B. Hall's forthcoming Teubner edition and I have used his apparatus, in which the traditional sigla for the principal manuscripts are retained.

1.8.47–50

sed quoniam accedit fatalibus hoc quoque damnis,
 ut careant numeris tempora prima suis,
 effice, peccati ne sim memor huius, et illo
 officium laudem, quo queror, ore tuum.

Wheeler translates 48: 'that those early years fall short of consummation'.¹ In the context I find this almost meaningless. Ovid in the preceding twelve verses has not been speaking of his early years but of his friend's callousness. Even in 29–34, in which he refers to the friendship, there is no indication of when it began. Why then *prima*? It is the end of his life which is found wanting. I propose therefore:

ut careant numeris tempora summa suis,

to be translated: 'that my last years lack what is due to them', that is to say, the continuing affection of his friend.²

2.225–238

nunc tibi Pannonia est, nunc Illyris ora domanda,	225
Raetica nunc praebent Thraciaque arma metum,	
nunc petit Armenius pacem, nunc porrigit arcus	
Parthus eques timida captaque signa manu,	
nunc te prole tua iuvenem Germania sentit,	
bellaque pro magno Caesare Caesar obit;	230
denique, ut in tanto, quantum non extitit umquam,	
corpore pars nulla est, quae labet, imperii.	
Vrbs quoque te et legum lassat tutela tuarum	
et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis,	
nec tibi contingunt, quae gentibus otia praestas,	235
bellaque cum vitiiis inrequieta geris.	
mirer in hoc igitur tantarum pondere rerum	
te numquam nostros evoluisse iocos?	

Admitting that his own *carmen et error* (207) caused Augustus to sentence him to relegation, Ovid is representing in flattering terms that the *carmen* at least is beneath the emperor's notice (213–14), which is fully occupied with huge responsibilities at home and abroad. Unfortunately, in this sequence of lines the conclusion comes before the end. Certainly 231–2 conclude the list of Augustus' overseas commitments, but their position, especially in view of *denique*, enfeebles 233–6 to the point of anticlimax and also implies that Rome itself forms no part of its own *imperium*.

* I am grateful to the editors of *Classical Quarterly*, and the referee, for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ Luck's translation is: *Doch weil zu meinen Schicksalsschlägen noch dies eine kommt, dass mein früheres Leben keine Erfüllung fand.*

² Of other passages in which Ovid uses *numeri* in a metaphorical sense (for example, *Am.* 2.6.39–40, 3.7.18; *A.A.* 1.482; *Met.* 1.427–8) the most relevant here is *Her.* 4.87–8.

I suggest placing 231–2 after 236: Augustus is successful in foreign affairs, he exercises ceaseless vigilance at home—*denique*, to sum it all up, every part of the empire is flourishing. No wonder then (237–8) that the emperor has no time for trifles.³

3.6.15–6

sed mea me in poenam nimirum Parca trahebat,
omne bonae claudens utilitatis iter,

Almost without exception the MSS read *fata trahebant* in 15. Of the readings of 16—*bonae claudens* M: *bonae claudent* V2, Ehwald: *bonae claudunt* B C E F H K L4 P V: *bonum claudunt* G Q B2 P4:—*que claudebant* T—M's is unquestionably right; otherwise there is no possibility of transition from the hexameter to the pentameter. This, however, makes *fata trahebant* unquestionably wrong, although it is worth noting that this phrase appears elsewhere in Ovid.⁴ It is possible that *fata* was inadvertently borrowed from *fatum* in 18, forcing the plural verb, but it might also have arrived from *Tristia* 2.341, where it is again the subject of *trahebat*. To resolve the problem, Palmer and Postgate both proposed *Parca trahebat*, which mends the syntax without changing the sense.⁵

I think the solution lies elsewhere. It was not vague 'fate' which brought Ovid down, but *carmen et error* (2.207). According to his own account, and we have no other, Ovid's *error* had become known: *cum tibi quaerenti, num uerus nuntius esset, attulerat culpae quem mala fama meae* (*Ex Ponto* 2.3.85–6). These verses suggest an answer to the problem of 15:

sed mala me in poenam nimirum fama trahebat,⁶

fama has the advantage of being only a letter away from the MSS' *fata*. It also leads well into the possibility in 17 that Ovid might have been more careful, and lends more force to *fatum* in 18.

3.10.55–66

hostis equo pollens longeque volante sagitta	55
vicinam late depopulatur humum.	
diffugiunt alii, nullisque tuentibus agros	
incustoditae diripiuntur opes,	
ruris opes parvae, pecus et stridentia plaustra,	
et quas divitias incola pauper habet.	60
pars agitur vinctis post tergum capta lacertis,	
respiciens frustra rura Laremque suum;	
pars cadit hamatis misere confixa sagittis:	
nam volucris ferro tinctile virus inest.	
quae nequeunt secum ferre aut abducere, perdunt,	65
et cremat insontes hostica flamma casas.	

There are two obvious problems in this sequence of lines. One is the uncertainty about the subject of *nequeunt* (and therefore the meaning of *perdunt*, 65) and the other is the incoherence of the train of thought. The barbarians come and lay everything waste (55–6). Some of the locals run away and lose everything (57–60). Some are captured and some killed (61–4). Lines 65–6 lurch back to lost property, which is hardly relevant for those either captured or killed.

³ It is possible that the repeated *bellaque* (230, 236) might have caused confusion in an earlier copying.

⁴ *Her.* 6.51, 12.35; *Met.* 7.816.

⁵ Ovid has the phrase *mea Parca* at *Ex Ponto* 3.7.20.

⁶ For confusion between *meus* and *malus*, see *Tristia* 1.2.99, 2.16 and 2.109 (*illa nostra die, qua me malus abstulit error*).

It is evident that the lines have been transcribed in the wrong order. S. J. Heyworth⁷ proposes placing 57–60 after 64. This arrangement indeed makes the subject of *nequeunt* rather clearer. As he says: ‘The raiders are the notional agent for *diripiuntur* and become the natural subject in 65’. It is also clear that *perdunt* is to be understood as ‘they destroy’. However, the sequence is now anticlimactic: some captured, some killed, some running away and losing things. The dying fall is rather abruptly retrieved by the vivid final image of the blazing houses (65–6).

There are two other possible transpositions. One is to place 65–6 after 60. This makes a sensible account of the fate of property and then people, but the objection to it is the intolerably wide separation of *alii* (57) from *pars...pars* (61, 63). The other possible arrangement is to place 65–6 after 56. The subject of *nequeunt* is then beyond doubt the barbarians of the previous couplet, and thereafter the subject in 57–64 is uninterruptedly the locals. However, while there is no conceivable reason to suppose that Ovid did not write 65–6, the couplet does not easily sit anywhere in a logical sequence. There is also the slight awkwardness that *hostis* in 55 is singular and *nequeunt* and *perdunt* plural, and that cannot be got over by any juggling with verse order. No arrangement addresses all the difficulties, but my preferred version, short of excising them, would be to place 65–6 after 56.

4.1.91–4

ipse mihi—quid enim faciam?—scriboque legoque,
tutaque iudicio littera nostra meo est.
saepe tamen dixi ‘cui nunc haec cura laborat?
an mea Sauromatae scripta Getaeque legent?’

There is a slight hiccup in 93, occasioned by the word *tamen*. In the previous lines Ovid complains that he has no one to read to, no one who understands Latin, so he writes for and reads to himself. Why then *tamen*? And who is he talking to? I think Ovid wrote:

saepe mihi dixi ‘cui nunc haec cura laborat?’⁸

mihi is logical; it also supplies a progression: *ipse mihi* (91), *saepe mihi* (93), *saepe etiam* (95).

4.6.15–16

hoc etiam saevas paulatim mitigat iras,
hoc minuit luctus maestaque corda levat.

This poem concerns the effects of time, and *hoc* here signifies ‘time’, from *tempus* in preceding couplets. The only thing wrong is that 16 says the same thing twice. Burman⁹ also notes that ‘*Moesta corda levare & minuere luctus est unum*’. His own proposal was *vastaque corda domat*. I suggest that Ovid wrote:

hoc minuit luctus aegraque corda levat.

This introduces a subtle but real distinction, and the phrase has its precedent in *Tristia* 3.2.16: *fallebat curas aegraque corda labor*.

4.8.19–20

ne cadat et + multas palmas inhonestet adeptus +
languidus in pratis gramina carpit equus.

We have a number of MS. readings of 19: *multas...adeptus* H P: *multas...adeptas* Cp.c. D F G² T: *multas...ademptus* G? V: *multas...ademptas* B? Ca.c. E K Q V2:

⁷ *PCPhS* 41 (1995), forthcoming.

⁸ Since arriving at this conclusion, I have learned that *mihi* for *tamen* appears in Par. Bibl. Uniu. 1170 (P6 in Hall’s apparatus). It may be noted that the three minims of *m* and *m̄* can look very much alike.

⁹ P. Burman (Amsterdam, 1727), *Tom.* III, 633.

multas...ademptos A L4. No version of *adeptus* or *ademptus* holds water, whether applied to the horse or the palms. If the horse is likely to dishonour his palms, he must have won them—why labour the point? If he is out to grass, he has obviously been taken away from the races. If it is the palms which have been taken away, then he has none to dishonour. Luck obelises *multas...adeptus*. Heinsius and Bentley both preferred to delete the troublesome couplet. Perhaps that is unnecessarily drastic. The fear is that the horse may dishonour his palms by falling in a race. Surely it would be a dishonour only if the fall came about through clumsiness? I suggest:

ne cadat et multas palmas inhonestet ineptus.¹⁰

4.10.131–2

sive favore tuli, sive hanc ego carmine famam,
iure tibi grates, candide lector, ago.

Ovid is ending his autobiography with compliments to the reader. There are, however, three problems in 131: *sive...sive* calls for a disjunction which does not exist between *favore* and *carmine*; neither noun is qualified, which is not in Ovid's manner—two unqualified abstractions in the ablative in one line would be remarkable; *hanc ego* is superfluous—no one else and no other fame is in question.

It is clear from what goes before that *famam* here does mean literary fame and that Ovid's work was widely read. This makes *favore* and *carmine* mean virtually the same thing—he wrote poetry and it was popular. He was not famous for anything else.

I find convincing J. B. Hall's recent (as yet unpublished) proposal of *numine* for *carmine*: 'by the plaudits of the multitude or by the will of the gods', which supplies the necessary disjunction. The two remaining problems can then be resolved at a stroke. I suggest:

sive favore tuli, sive aequo numine famam

Ovid uses *aequus* of divinities on a number of occasions, for example *Tristia* 1.2.6, *Ex Ponto* 4.4.33, 4.9.39.¹¹ The word is found elsewhere in combination with *numen* and with *favor*: Valerius Flaccus 2.606 has the phrase *numine...aequo*, and Juvenal 16.56–7 reads: *...hunc favor aequus/provehit...* Whatever meaning is attached to *aequo*—'benevolent', 'in equal measure', 'advantageous'—it provides more than appropriate qualification for both nouns. The corruption to *hanc ego* would be one easily made. (*a*)*equo* (*eco*) was misread as *ego* and *hanc* introduced to put the metre right.

5.8.19–20

nos quoque florimus, sed flos erat ille caducus,
flammaque de stipula nostra brevisque fuit.

In this poem Ovid is reminding a detractor of the vicissitudes of Fortune (7ff.). A flower will wither and a fire will burn out. In 20 the pronominal adjective is unnecessary—after *nos quoque* in 19 there can be no doubt about who is represented by the flower or the flame. Its position in the line, which gives it predicative emphasis, is also suspect. As it stands, the couplet might be translated: 'I too have flourished, but that flower was fragile, and the flame of straw was mine and short'. If *de stipula* is taken as predicative in conjunction with *brevis*—'my flame was of straw and short'—the position of the otiose *nostra* is even more jarring.

¹⁰ Burman (*ibid.* 639) was troubled by the homoeoteleuton *multas palmas*, but confessed himself uncertain what to do with it. I share his disquiet, and his uncertainty. I note that in Hall's forthcoming Teubner edition, he proposes *casu...inepto*.

¹¹ For further examples, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1.1035.22ff.

I take *flamma ... de stipula* to be a composite phrase—as Luck has it, *Strohfeuer*—in which case a more positive adjective must precede *brevisque*. Ovid was likening his days of glory to a fire of straw. A fire of straw flares up spectacularly and quickly dies away. The meteoric career which was snuffed out, and the sustaining of the analogy, would be well served by:

flammaque de stipula clara brevisque fuit.

The translation now runs: ‘I too have flourished, but that flower was fragile, and the flame of straw was brilliant and brief’.

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