

somebody could eventually be content with excerpts, i.e. a mere summarisation of his golden words.

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A HIERONYMIAN CRUX: *EPIST.* 60.11.2¹

Jerome's celebrated letter of consolation to Heliodorus on the death of his young nephew and fellow-cleric Nepotianus has been the object of a very distinguished commentary by David Scourfield.² Chapter Eleven of this *consolatio* depicts Nepotianus' delight over Jerome's fifty-second epistle, which had been addressed to him as a vade-mecum of the priestly life. In this connection Jerome speaks of Nepotianus as follows (*Epist.* 60.11.2): *si vero peregrinorum, si amicorum quispiam venerat, laetabatur super se nostro testimonio et, quidquid minus in opusculo* (sc. *Epist.* 52) *erat, distinctione moderata et pronuntiationis varietate pensabat, ut in recitando illo ipso vel placere vel displicere cotidie videretur*. The second half of this sentence is a notorious crux. Scourfield himself provides such an excellent synopsis of previous attempts to make sense of it that quotation of his commentary *in extenso* is the best introduction to the problem (pp. 164–5): 'I cannot extract satisfactory sense from this passage as it stands. The problem lies partly with whether *ipso* or *ipse* (or neither) should be read, partly with *displicere*. The earlier editors printed *ipse DΦB*, which puts the emphasis on Nepotianus: 'in reading it out it was *he* [not Jerome] who each day seemed to please or displease'. Whether *illo* is taken to refer to the whole *opusculum* or only to the weaker parts of it (cf. *quidquid...erat* above), this comment has little point. In neither case does it make sense for Jerome to say that Nepotianus sometimes failed to please; and in the latter case, it is absurd to stress Nepotianus in contrast to Jerome, as if Jerome could have given any pleasure by the shortcomings in the letter. Hilberg read *ipso GKα.c.m2Ψ* without substantially improving the sense. The meaning must then be something of this sort: 'in reading out those very parts [i.e. *quidquid minus in opusculo erat*] he seemed to please or displease, varying from day to day'; i.e. if he was on form in his recitation, he could make the less satisfactory parts of the letter appear good, whereas, if he was not, all the weaknesses would stand out. But it is doubtful whether *cotidie* can bear the required sense, 'according to the day'; and again one would have expected Jerome to say that Nepotianus' delivery always made the poorer passages seem good, without any notion of displeasure'. Scourfield himself, who places *ipso...displicere* in *cruces*, suggests that 'the solution may be to delete *vel displicere*'. Such a proposal is however open to three main objections. In the

¹ Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*² (Leipzig, 1990).

² J.H.D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford, 1993). For its quality cf. M. Winterbottom's review of the present writer's *Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus de Virginitate Servanda (Letter 22)* (Cambridge, 2003) in *JThS* n.s. 55 (2004), 722–4, at 722, where Scourfield's commentary is described as 'the best of its predecessors'.

first place it subjects the paradosis to substantial interference, which will be argued below to be unnecessary. Secondly for *vel placere* Scourfield posits the meaning 'really to please'. There would however appear to be no warrant for such a sense of *vel*.³ Finally Scourfield's athetisation of *vel displicere* fails to accommodate *cotidie*: if *vel placere* could in fact mean 'really to please', it would be taken for granted that such was the case 'every day'. The adverb only has point if on some occasions Nepotianus did not please. If then Scourfield's own attempt to resolve the problem must be deemed unsatisfactory, what can be the correct interpretation of this vexatious and long-standing crux?

In the words *quidquid minus in opusculo erat, distinctione moderata et pronuntiationis varietate pensabat* Scourfield takes *distinctio* to signify 'the careful separation of words and phrases from each other, resulting in clarity of diction'. It would seem, however, that here Jerome is instead using the term *de moris, pausis pronuntiandi*.⁴ Jerome's ensuing *pronuntiatio* would likewise appear to be used with particular reference to such *distinctio*.⁵ To the noun *distinctio* Jerome attaches the participle *moderatus*. The meaning of this verb is defined by *TLL* as *in oratione...fere i. q...variare*.⁶ Jerome's use of this participle here in the same sense is confirmed by his ensuing application of *varietate* to *pronuntiationis*: the whole phrase *distinctione moderata et pronuntiationis varietate* is accordingly an appropriately tautologous instance of the figure of *expolitio*.⁷ These words therefore refer to Nepotianus' attempts⁸ to improve the text by varying the *distinctiones* in it.⁹ Between *distinctione moderata et pronuntiationis varietate pensabat* and *vel placere vel displicere cotidie videretur* Jerome then inserts the words *illo ipso*, which will accordingly be an instrumental ablative denoting Nepotianus' need to try out different *distinctiones*, some of which sounded right, while others did not: for that very reason (*illo ipso*) he seemed on

³ Cf. *OLD* 2021–2 (s.v.). As a putative parallel Scourfield adduces Cic. *De Orat.* 2.325: *atque eius modi illa proliis debet esse, non ut Samnitium, qui vibrant hastas ante pugnam, quibus in pugnando nihil utuntur, sed ut ipsis sententiis, quibus proluserint, vel pugnare possint*. Here however *pugnare* stands in ironic antithesis to *in pugnando nihil utuntur*. The antecedent *vel* accordingly bears its normal sense of 'even'; cf. *OLD* 2022, sect. 5a.

⁴ So J.B. Hofmann in *TLL* 5 col. 1521.32. He continues (35–6): *hinc apud gramm. fere i. q. punctum, interpunctio*. In this connection reference is made to *Gloss.* 4.332.49: *distinctio: sensus separatio*. The present passage of *Epist.* 60 is adduced under the same rubric (col. 1521.60–1).

⁵ For a contemporary instance of *pronuntiatio* employed in a similar way cf. (e.g.) Iul. Vict. *Rhet.* p. 16.6–8 (on the sentence *periurus ter dena milia solvat*): *hic...totum in distinctione consistit, utrum pronunties 'periurus ter', an vero 'periurus'*.

⁶ 8 col. 1216.32–3, referring specifically to a passage of the similarly fourth-century Hilary of Poitiers (*In Psalm.* 51.7): *ut (sc. lingua)...motu vario eodemque moderato (var. l.: variato) vocem in verba distinguat*.

⁷ Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*³ (Stuttgart, 1990), 413–9.

⁸ The imperfect *pensabat* is conative.

⁹ For differing *distinctiones* of the same passage cf. *TLL* 5 col. 1521 (s.v.; among the *exempla* under the heading *de moris, pausis pronuntiandi...i. q. punctum, interpunctio*) lines 47–50: *incerta*; 50: *obscura*; 53–5: *ambigua*; 55: *varia*; 55: *gemina*; 55–6: *mutata*; 57: *diversa*; 57–8: *mala* (cf. 34: *vitiosa*). For a different *distinctio* each time a text is read cf. the extreme case described by Jerome himself at *Adv. Iovin.* 1.3: *quotiescumque eum legero, ubi me defecerit spiritus, ibi est distinctio*. By contrast Scourfield's own interpretation of *distinctione moderata et pronuntiationis varietate* assigns to it the meaning (p. 59) 'well-regulated articulation and variety in tone'. Since however these would presumably have been applied to the letter as a whole, it is hard to see how they could have made much difference to the poorer parts. On the other hand the right *distinctio* in the sense of *mora pronuntiandi* could produce a significant improvement; cf. (e.g.) Auson. 322.49–50, p. 263: *distinctio sensum / auget et ignavis dant intervalla vigorem*.

some occasions to please, while on others he failed to do so.¹⁰ The syntagm *illo ipso* appropriately follows *distinctione...varietate*, to which it refers,¹¹ and immediately precedes *vel placere vel displicere*, which it explains.¹² Scourfield's puzzlement over *displicere* is accordingly unwarranted, since this sustained meiosis firmly saddles Jerome with the blame for obliging Nepotianus to have recourse to different *distinctiones*.¹³ In conclusion it may be said that the efforts of commentators to make sense of this passage recall Nepotianus' own: here too we need a correct *distinctio*.

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¹⁰ Scholars are therefore wrong to link *illo ipso* with *in recitando*. The way in which Jerome juxtaposes these two phrases would seem to be meant as a sly illustration of the sort of problematic *distinctio* that Nepotianus himself had to face.

¹¹ For such 'resumptive' use of *illud ipsum* cf. *TLL* 7.2.1 col. 355.77 (s.v. *ipse*; *addit notionem identitatis ad pron. ille*), esp. 80–1: *usu anaphorico pronominis ille* (where *anaphoricus* means that *ipse* 'pertinet ad...aliquid...ante memoratum'; cf. col. 300.43–4).

¹² For *placere* and *displicere* 'cum abl. instrumenti' cf. *TLL* 10.1 col. 2267.24–7 (s.v. *placeo*); *ibid.* 5.1 col. 1417.23–7 (s.v. *displiceo*). Here these two infinitives are linked by *vel...vel*, which in Late Latin is widely used without a markedly disjunctive force (cf. J.B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* [Munich, 1965], 502): Jerome's point is simply that some *distinctiones* seemed better than others.

¹³ At the same time Jerome also contrives to qualify his self-castigation (*quidquid minus in opusculo erat*): for *minus* used 'ratione quadam ironica vel mitigativa' cf. *TLL* 10.1 col. 580.36–7.