1. The Papyrus

The long P. Barcinonensis, Inv. Nos. 158ab, 159ab, 160ab, 161a (saec. IV?), comprises a fascinating late Latin poem of 122 hexameters (the original had at least 125 lines) dealing with the heroic death of Alcestis to save the life of her husband Admetus. The text of the poem spreads over six closely written pages of the papyrus (125 × 103 mm), with four lines on the seventh page. The script is early half-uncial with cursive elements, probably belonging to the second half of the fourth century. These four papyrus leaves were later incorporated into a codex mixtus (the property of the Foundation Sant Lluc Evangelista at Barcelona), as its fol. 33-36. Our Alcestis is preceded in the codex by Cicero’s Catilinarians 1 and 2 (fol. 1-24a); by a Latin Psalmus Responsorius (fol. 24b-28a); and by a Greek liturgical text (fol. 29b-32). The five papyrus leaves containing the Psalmus Responsorius are briefly described by E. A. Lowe, as No. 1782 of the Supplement to his Codices Latini Antiquiores (Oxford 1971), p. 32. Lowe dated the script of the Psalm to saec. IV. This is valid for the text of our Alcestis as well, since it is copied by the same scribe.

Dr. R. Roca-Puig deserves the gratitude of scholars for having published first the Barcelona Psalm (Barcelona 1965), then the Catilinarians 1 and 2 (Barcelona 1977), and now Alcestis as well (Alcestis. Hexamètres Llatins, Barcelona 1982). The papyrus is preserved in excellent condition: it shows no physical damage, and is written
in a relatively readable hand. The papyrus patch pasted on p. 158a, lines 12-16, does not affect legibility. The text of the poem is copied as if it were prose, all in one breath, with only an occasional dot marking the end of a line.

However, what makes the text difficult to read and understand is its scribe. Doubtless he was copying from a poor exemplar, plagued with textual corruptions and intrusive glosses. For example, in v. 3 of the poem the unmetrical gloss Apollo has ousted the original reading Arcitenens (if my guess is correct), and another explanatory gloss Apollo still stands above the word Lauripotens of v. 1. In line 13, the word iniquid seems to refer to the marginal gloss: Apollo inquit, as does the inquit of line 72: Alcestis inquit. In line 124 there is a blank space of three letters (mea) for a word illegible in the exemplar.

The scribe himself, however, is the main culprit. He is (1) illiterate, (2) negligent, and, even worse, (3) he sometimes assumes the role of a redactor, taking the liberty of deliberately changing the text.

(1) As for the scribe's illiteracy, Lowe's remark remains valid for the text of Alcestis as well: "... the scribe was unused to copying Latin," "... by a scribe who did not quite understand what he was copying." There seems to be more to it than this. Our scribe apparently knew the spoken Vulgar Latin, but not enough of the classical Latin of the poem he was copying. Both the phonology and morphology of our text seem to reflect a struggle between vulgar and classical forms. Consider these examples: 2 tuus for tuo, and 59 locus for loco; 9 famolus, and 109 famolos; 10 post crimen, and 76 post funere nostro; 24 requeret (for requirit), 67 perdedit ... perdedit; 96 moreor, and 123 rapeor; 116 desponit; 124 claudet (for claudiat); 43 dante (for ante); 41 tumulus (for tumulos), 78 atrus (for atros), 110 pictusque toros; 116 arsurusque omnes; 45 fletus for fletu, 118 manus for manu; 47 materna cernere morte; 48 ubira; 50 consumad; 55 urbis for orbis; 61 fratres for fratris; 67 Alpea for Althaea, and 113 palsa; 117 ratura; 119 oculos for oculis; 121 gremio for gremium. A redundant final -m also witnesses to the loss of declensions: 2 quem (for -que); 13 mors vicinam; 38 regnum dedi tibi; 39 ullam (for una); 45 nec pietatem ... vincitur; 52 aeternam sede (for terrena sede); 84 vestigiam.

(2) The scribe's negligence is reflected in such errors as: genitum (18) or genitur (26 and 29) for genitor; 24 lacrimarum causa for lacrimis (quaer) causa; 26 vides for dies (this may have stood in his exemplar as dies; compare 42 die'm for diem); 31 dignos natosque forigneris nateque; 36 sicut suum for siquod sum; 59 se for res (compare 90 [de]redunt); 72 niquid for neci; 81 tradere pulcris for trade sepulcris; 87 digna retinere for dignare tenere; 124 sembra soporem (Spanish?) for membra sopore.
(3) Deliberate attempts by the scribe to correct his exemplar, however, abound: 1 doli for Deli(e) and piant for P(a)ean; 5 relinquam (for -ant) and 80 recedam (for -at); 6 quando (from v. 3) luit for cum fugit (or cum fluxit); 8 vitam (for regna) induced by 7 vita, and 37 vitam (for vis iam) induced by 37 vita; 50 meae for mihi; perhaps 52 aeternam for terrena; 68 colligit illa cruentus for colligit ilia cruda. Here belong also the unwarranted additions to the text, such as: 9 si [non] te colui; 41 [con]cessisse[se]n; 69 [pre]cedunt; 87 f. [neve] . . . nec; 90 tecum [sub nocte] iacebo, inspired by 86 tecum sub nocte iacere; 100 si tibi (for me) dissimiles [hoc].

As a consequence, the P. Barcinonensis poses major problems of reading and interpretation. Dr. Roca-Puig has provided scholars with an accurate transcript of the papyrus, along with reasonably clear photographs. His attempt at reconstruction of the original poem, however, is far from satisfactory, since it fails to produce credible Latin poetry. After the publication of the papyrus (18 October 1982), three attempts at recovering the original poem were undertaken at the same time and independently of each other: one by Wolfgang Dieter Lebek at Cologne; another by a team of Oxford scholars (P. J. Parsons, R. G. M. Nisbet, G. O. Hutchinson); a third by myself (in the spring of 1983). The task was not easy. To quote only my Oxford colleagues: “Everything suggests an uncomprehending scribe with a difficult exemplar: the copy abounds in elementary errors and serious corruptions.”

In the fall of 1983, “the provisional text” of Alcestis prepared by Lebek and the Oxonienses appeared (Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 53 [1983], pp. 1-29 and 31-36, respectively). I then revised my reconstruction of the poem so as to incorporate their impressive scholarship wherever convincing enough. The result is the present tentative edition of the poem. As was to be expected, elementary scribal errors have found identical solutions in all three independent attempts. But in the case of the more serious corruptions differences in reading and interpretation persist. Thus I offer a different reading from either Lebek or the Oxonienses in the following lines: 2 lecta; 3 (Arcitenens); 6 cum fu(g)it; 7 ni; 8 (sit(n)) and (pallida regna?); 37 minimam vi tollere vi(s) iam?; 39 (vi)ta quia; 41 (g)rate cessissem (nato); 50 mihi lucis; 52 ter(r)ena sede; 55 nascitur, ac nobis iteratus fangitur orbis; 56 late: (ibi) te; 59 quo (r)es; 62 (T)ita(nu)um ex arte perisse; 67 Alt(h)a(ea) (g)natum; 68 dum colligi ilia cruda; 74 Admete, (ad)ventura; 80 dum; 95 ex te; 99 prodat, et (h)eu flentes; 100 si me dissimules, si; 101 paulum ad te veni(at) . . . ; 118 tractavitque manu. In addition, while Lebek recognizes no textual lacunas at all, and the Oxonienses
one lacuna (hiding in paones of P after line 110), I assume two textual lacunas—after line 110, and after line 101, hiding in ueniet, and containing the apodosis to the clause of 100 f.: Si me dissimules, si non mea dulcis imago / paulum ad te veni(at).

2. The Content of the Poem

The Alcestis Barcinonensis belongs to the genre of late Latin exercises in verse composition, ethopoeia, rhetoric, and mythological erudition. The Alcesta of the Anthologia Latina (No. 15; 162 hexameters) is its closest parallel. Dracontius’ Hylas and Orestis Tragoedia belong to the same genre. But what a difference between the Alcesta of the A.L. and our Alcestis! The former is basically a Vergilian cento, while the latter is the product of an inspired, skilled and learned poet. To quote again my Oxford colleagues: “Alcesta . . . : a flaccid pastiche which points up the merits of the Barcelona bard.” Nevertheless, the Alcesta is of relevance for the understanding of our poem (and has been taken into consideration in my Quellenapparat wherever appropriate).

In brief, once restored to its pristine beauty, the Barcelona Alcestis proves to be a skillful and convincing late Latin poem. Pace Hutchinson, it seems to be complete. It opens with a grandiloquent invocation of Apollo by Admetus; it closes with Alcestis’ death (just like the Alcesta of A.L.). The poem falls easily into four parts, arranged climactically:

(1) Admetus asks and Apollo answers (1-20);
(2) Admetus is rejected by his father and mother (21-70);
(3) The rhesis of Alcestis (71-103);
(4) Alcestis’ death (104-124).

In each one of the four parts the poet displays a sophistication which bears testimony to his aspiration to the status of poeta doctus.

Lines 1-20

Admetus invokes Apollo, eager to learn his exact day of death. In his epiclesis, he employs no less than six epithets for the invoked divinity, and takes good care to remind Apollo that he “owes him one” (do, ut des: 9-11; si te colui . . . succepi . . . accepi iussi<que>). The speaker identifies himself with 4 Admeti fatalia fila. It is worth pointing out that Admetus draws a distinction between his spirit (6 animus) and his very being (5 ego). After his death, Admetus is sure his spirit will ascend to “the starry sphere” (6 siderea<s> animus cum fu<g>it in auras). What he does not know, however, is where his own self will go—to Hades (8) or, say, to the Islands of the Blessed.
Apollo obliges his ex-master by revealing that his day of death is imminent: Admetus must approach the realm of Hades. However, if a substitute for him can be found (his father, mother, wife, or sons), Admetus’ death may be postponed. This is acceptable both to the Fates and to Apollo (27 ff.). Here our poet employs the motif expressed in 17, *tu poteris posthac alieno vivere fato*. That is to say, the remaining years allotted to the life of a relative may be transferred to the account of Admetus. The motif is known from Ovid, *Met. VII*. 168 (Jason to Medea): *deme meis annis et demptos adde parenti* (sc. *Aesoni*); *Prop. IV*. 11. 95 (our poet knew the *regina elegiarum*, cf. his v. 93); Tibull. I. 6. 63 f.

Lines 21-70.

Both father and mother categorically refuse to give up their lives for the son. Here the poet takes care to denigrate both the father and the mother, enabling him to extol and contrast Alcestis’ noble *ethos*. The father is an anti-father (32 *hie genitor, non ut genitor*), and the mother is depicted as *nocens, inproba* and *inproperans* (45 f.). The father adduces two arguments in his favor: (1) “I have already given my kingdom along with my court to you. What else do you want?” and (2) “Had you the power of restoring my life after death, I would yield to your wish, but you do not have such power.”

The mother’s rhetoric is more sophisticated (46-70). She adduces five different arguments for her refusal.

1. It is a *crime* for a son (hence 47, *tu, scelerate, potes . . . ?*) to cause the destruction on a pyre of his mother’s womb and breast, which had given him life in the first place.

2. “I would gladly give my life for my son, were I sure that afterwards he would live on earth *forever*. But this is not the case.”


4. “It would be a sacrilege for me to interfere with the decree of Fate” (64 *Cur ego de nato doleam, quem fata reposcunt?).

5. Finally, the inevitable set of *exempla priorum* (as old as *Iliad V*. 385-404). Even gods die (temporarily, but die): Zeus, Dionysus, Demeter, Aphrodite (60-64). “Even mothers of nobler birth than mine have lost their sons: Diomedes, Agave, Althaea, Ino, Procne. Why should I be exempt?” (65-68).

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Already v. 62 Bacc(h)um fama refert ⟨T⟩ita⟨nu⟩m ex arte perisse (cf. Clement, Protr. 17. 2; Arnob., Adv. nat. 5. 19) displays mythological erudition. But our poet also here draws two rare motifs from folklore. The first is at 54 f.: *ubi barbarus ales / nascitur, ac nobis iteratus fingitur orbis*. The birth of the strange, legendary bird the phoenix in the Orient is considered by mankind as the beginning of a new world era. This hints either at the Egyptian Sothis period of 1461 solar years, or at the *magnus annus* of 1000 or 500 years (Herodotus II. 73; Pliny, N.H. X. 5; XXIX. 29; Tacitus, Ann. VI. 28, and others). The second occurs at 59: *non est terra loco, quo ⟨r⟩es generaverat ante*, which I take to be a clumsy way of saying, “the aging Mother Earth is no longer in the same shape or condition in which she was when creating all these things.”

Lines 71-103.

Alcestis adduces three reasons why she wants to sacrifice her life for her husband. In the first place, this is dictated by her sense of duty—*pietas* (75). Pietas is the key word of the entire poem. We have already learned (45) that Admetus’ mother does not possess such *pietas* (*nec pietate, nocens, nec vincitur inproba fletu*). Alcestis outdoes both parents in *pietas* (75). In the memory of posterity she will live forever as a “pious wife” (78, *et coniux pia semper ero*). Moreover, she will remain a faithful mother, caring for her children *even in her grave* (99, *matris pia . . . umbra*). And her final injunction addressed to her husband comprises the emphatic phrase: *et tu pro coniuge cara / disce mori, de m⟨e⟩ disce exemplu⟨m⟩ pietatis* (102 f.), “. . . and you too learn to die for your (new) wife (if need be); learn from my example what a real sense of duty is.” The phrase *pro coniuge cara* refers to Admetus’ future, second wife; the one referred to at 84 f. as *coniux / carior*, and at 98 as the proverbial stepmother (*noverca*). Lebek, however, keeps the text of P: *et tu pro coniuge caro*, taking *tu* to be addressed to a young and married female *reader*, as a kind of *parabasis* (see his Commentary, p. 27). But this would destroy the close unity of the poem (nor is it any better to take *tu* as referring to Admetus’ future wife). A scribe who was able to write *futuri for futura* (v. 7), *car for cara* (v. 18), *quae for qui* (v. 20), *lacrimum for lacrimas or lacrimam* (v.

5 Lebek takes *est* to mean “eats,” and reads line 59 as follows: *Non est terra locos, quos generaverat ante?* (“Verschlingt nicht die Erde die Orte, die sie zuvor hervorgebracht hatte?”; with reference to Pliny, N.H. II. 205 *ipsa se comest terra . . .*). But such a seismic activity of the earth is not a self-evident truth; there is no Latin word *egenerare*; and the most natural sense of *est* is “is” (ignoring a strained interpretation of *locri* as “mountains”). In their turn, the Oxonienses read: *Non est terra loco quo se generaverat ante*. What can this mean? Does it mean that Mother Earth has her own birthplace, where she had created herself?
44), vadum for vadum (v. 63), is also able to write caro for cara in 102.

Alcestis' second reason for dying for her husband is that her glorious feat will be remembered by posterity forever (76-78); and her third reason is that by dying before her husband she will be spared a widow's wretched life of everlasting mourning (78-81).

Alcestis' last request to her husband (83-103) contains three significant elements. (1) She demands to be kept in lasting memory by her husband (83-92). (2) She entrusts to him the care of their sons (93-99). (3) Finally, she issues a threat in case he disobeys her last wish and consigns his dead wife to total oblivion (100-103). Each one of these three elements is intriguing.

(1) Euripides' Alcestis entreats Admetus not to remarry. Her main concern is her children, and she does not want them to have an evil stepmother (305, καὶ μὴ ἑπιγέμφῃ τοῖς δὴ μητρωιάν τέκνοις; her entire request is worth study, 299-310). So does the Alcesta of the Latin Anthology (125 f.; 127 f.). Our Alcestis, however, allows Admetus to remarry (84 coniux; 98 novercae; 102 coniuge). If one asks why our poet has changed the traditional myth, my answer would be: because Cornelia does not request Paullus not to remarry either (Propertius IV. 11. 85-90). Otherwise neither poet would have been able to exploit the touching motif of the traditional stepmother (Alcestis 98 f.; Propertius IV. 11. 86 ff.). Hear the voice of Euripides (Alc. 309-10):

ἐχθαρὰ γὰρ ἡ πιοῦσα μητρωιὰ τέκνοις
τοῖς πρόσθ', ἐχίδνης οὐδὲν ἡπιωτέρα.

However, his wild imagination launches our poet into troubled waters. First, his Alcestis urges her husband not to love his second wife as dearly as he did his first wife: ne post mea fata / dulcior ulla tibi, vestigia ne mea coniux / carior ista legat (83-85). I am unable to parallel this, but one may easily understand such a request in view of Alcestis' noble sacrifice for her husband. Her next request, however, takes us by surprise. Alcestis asks her husband literally (85, nec nominate tantum) to sleep with her ghost once she is dead (85-88 and 90). One is reminded at once of the myth of Laodamia, sleeping with the simulacrum aereum of her beloved and deceased husband Protesilaus (Hyginus, Fab. 104. 1; Apollodor., Epitome 3. 30; Eustath. ad Iliad. II. 701, p. 325. 25 ff.). But did our poet know this rather recondite myth? A closer source of his inspiration is to be seen again in the regina elegiarum (Prop. IV. 11. 81-84). However, our poet seems to combine the shade of Cornelia with the ghost of Cynthia (Prop. IV.
7). Consider the similarity between Alcestis 90, Si redeunt umbrae, veniam tecum<que> iacebo, and Propertius IV. 7. 3-4, Cynthia namque meo visa est incumbere fulcro, / . . . nuper humata; IV. 7. 89, noce vagae ferimur, nox clausas liberat umbras.

(2) With Alcestis' second request (93, Ante omnes commendo tibi pia pignora natos), our poet follows the poet of the Alcesta in his centonic zeal: Prop. IV. 11. 73, Nunc tibi commendo communia pignora natos. He also may prove my assumption correct that Propertius IV. 7 and IV. 11 is the main source of his inspiration for lines 83-99. However, here too he borrows a motif from folklore: the dead mother takes care of her orphans even from the grave (99, (ne) . . . / . . . (h)eu flentes matris pia vindicet umbra).4

(3) The sanction and revenge of the forgotten wife, I assume, is lost in the lacuna following the words of 100 f.: "And if you neglect me, if the sweet image of me does not come to your mind from time to time . . ." The most natural assumption seems to be that the ghost of the forgotten Alcestis would pursue the unmindful husband just as a Fury does. His source of inspiration might have been Aeneid IV. 384-86: Sequar atris ignibus absens (sc. Dido Aenean) / et, cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus, / omnibus umbra locis adero (cf. 520 f.; elsewhere our poet makes use of the diction of Aeneid IV).

Lines 104-124.

This final passage briefly describes Alcestis' preparations for her own pyre, and her death. The last night of her life she spends awake (104-07), just as Dido does (Aeneid IV. 522 f. and 529 f.). She repeatedly reminds her husband and children dutifully to mourn their deceased wife and mother; she takes care of her slaves in her will (if this is what the phrase 109 disponit famulos means); and, most of all, she gives orders concerning her bier and pyre. The poet pays special attention to exotic spices, perfumes, frankincense, saffron-essence, balsam, amomum-powder, and cinnamon, to be burnt on the pyre along with the young woman. I wonder why, unless this too is a display of erudition (e.g. the belief that amomum is derived from birds' nests: 114, ereptum nido praecidit pulver amomi: cf. Herodotus III. 111; Pliny, N.H. XII. 85).

A personified Hora (117), Alcestis' Hour of death (cf. TLL VI.

4 Compare Stith Thompson, Motif-Index F221.2.1; E323.2. H. Bächtold-Stäubli, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens VI (1934-35), p. 697; J. Bolte und G. Polivka, Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm 1 (Leipzig 1913, repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 96 (ad Grimm, Nos. 11 and 13).—Here again the regina elegiaria is at hand: Prop. IV. 11. 74 haec cura (sc. natorum) et cineri spirat inusta meo.
2963. 30-57), approaches the young woman to claim her prey. She just touches her with her cold hand (118, *tractavitque manu*), if my reading is correct (cf. 88 *tractare manu*, and Statius, *Silvae* V. 1. 88). Numbness starts taking hold of her every limb. Alcestis dies slowly, as one who has drunk hemlock. She can watch her fingernails growing blue, her freezing feet becoming heavy with cold. A fleeting shadow, woman no longer (if this is what the puzzling borrowing from *Aeneid* X. 656 and Silius XVII. 644, *fugientis imago*, means), she seeks her last refuge in her husband's lap (121). Finally, she utters her last words (122 "*Dulcissime coniux...*"), and slips into the eternal slumber of death (124).

3. The Diction

The poet of the *Alcestis* is building upon the best traditions of Latin poetry (notably, Vergil, Propertius, Ovid, Silius Italicus, Statius). His metrics are correct (notice, however; 6 *edoce* as a dactyl, and 26 *para* as a dibrach); his colometry is convincing enough for a late Latin poem. The flow of words is natural, and our poet has succeeded in producing a lively, informal, and pleasing Ovidian Latin. This is achieved in the first place by a frequent employment of *anaphora*: 3 da...da; 5 quae...qui(d); 10 f. / *succepit*.../ *accepit*; 18 *cum...cum*; 27 *hoc...hoc*; 29 *tu...tu*; 29 f. *si...si*; 32 *hic genitor, non ut genitor*; 45 *nec...nec*; 47 f. / *tu...tu* / *tu*; 50 f. *hostis.../ hostis*; 54 *quo...quo*; 56 *illic...ibi*; 57 *nihil...nihil*; 64 f. / *cur.../cur*; 65 *plangam...planxere*; 67 *perdidit...perdidit*; 72 me,...*me*; *me*; trade...trade; 74 *pro coniuge coniux/*; 75 f. / *si.../si*; 75 *vinco...vinco*; 81 f. *me.../me*; 83 f. *ne...ne*; 86 me...*meque*; 93 f. *pignora.../pignora*; 100 *si...si*; 103 *disce...disce*; 109 *disponit...conponit*; 123 *venit...venit*.

The same preference for a picturesque and colloquial anaphora, however, turns to be occasionally a *bathos* in our poet's style. Some of his repetitions are disturbing. It is to no avail that my Oxford colleagues try to get rid of some of them (notably, 27 *hoc Parcae docuere nefas*; 113 *destringit*). I think this time the poet is to blame, not the scribe. Consider these repetitions: 16 *possit* ("who may have the heart"): 17 *poteris* ("you would be allowed to"); 25 *edoct* : 27 *docuere* : 28 *edocuit*; 72 me...*trade seculpris* / ; 81 me *trade seculpris* /. Incidentally, the synonym *tumulus* appears too often for one poem (in 20; 30; 41; 48), in addition to 60 *tumulus* and 69 *contumulantur*. 86 *tecum sub nocte iaceere* : 90 *veniam tecum<que> iacebo*; 107 *peritura videbat / : 119 *moritura notabat* / ; 109 *disponit* ("gives orders in her will") : 116 *disponit* ("gives orders to servants"); 111 *odores* : 116 *odores*; 113 *destringit balsama* : 115 *destringit cinnama* (Lebek correctly remarks, "Spracharmut"), and others.
A certain sophistication and inventiveness, however, in poetic expression prevails. For example, the meaningful antithesis of 21' maestusque beato /, reflecting the old truth that wealth cannot buy happiness (compare the difference between εὐδαιμων and εὐνυχῆς at Euripides, Alcestis 1228-30, between ὅξι and εὐκλεῆς at Christus Patiens 1016-18). Or the rhyme at the line-end: 60 abisse / : 61 obisse / : 62 perisse / : 63 subisse, and other alliterations: 56 nate, late: (ibi) te; 60 tumulatus : 61 mutatus; 63 Cererem Veneremque. Or the device of a hiatus in the main caesura: 22; 35; 56. Finally, notice the emphasis expressed in this piece of Senecan philosophy: labuntur cedunt moriuntur contumulantur (69).

In conclusion, the Alcestis from Barcelona is a valuable acquisition for late Latin poetry. Its versification is skillful, its expression is picturesque, eloquent and fascinating. Doubtless, the poet stands under the spell of Propertius' Cornelia (IV. 11) and Cynthia (IV. 7), and he has succeeded in conveying all the ethos of Alcestis and all the pathos of Admetus' plight. The main value of the poem, however, rests in its rich use of motifs drawn from folklore, spread throughout the poem (lines 5 f.; 17; 32-34; 47-50; 54 f.; 56; 59; 64; 85-88; 90; 96 f.; 99; 117 f.). These motifs deserve a closer look than was possible in a brief introduction to an edition.5

5 Sigla. Since the papyrus shows no physical damage, deletions by modern scholars are indicated by square brackets [ ] (instead of by braces), while angle brackets ⟨ ⟩ denote supplements by modern scholars. Double square brackets [ [ ] ], however, indicate deletions made by the scribe himself. The papyrus abounds in dots placed all around the letters (some of them indicate wrong letters, others again the end of a line, etc.). In the present apparatus, only the dots relevant to the reading and understanding of the poem are reported. Therefore the dots placed above or after a letter reflect suprlinear or infralinear dots written by the scribe (or by an ancient reader), while the dots placed under a letter simply indicate that the letter is not clear enough (and the dots in the middle of a line denote completely illegible letters or blank spatia). Incidentally, our scribe sometimes writes a small o with a lineola beneath it ( hakkı) and also a b or an i with a dieresis above the letter.—Ed. stands for the editio princeps by R. Roca-Puig; Hutch. for G. O. Hutchinson; Leb. for W. D. Lebek; Marc. for M. Marcovich; Nish. for R. G. M. Nisbet, and Pars. for P. J. Parsons.—J. K. Newman and D. F. Bright have kindly polished my English, but for any blunder in Latin I am to blame alone: numquam est satis provide homini. Finally, Ed. offers a rich collection of poetic borrowings, not all of which are relevant.
Apollo — relinquant Siderea Ov. regna; Sil. me quum lectas. (ap. quandoluit latoniaeae implore cmn quae vita futuri animum quando legit homini discedit doliptant certas. qui lauripotens.uitam—

1 Lauripotens: solus Mart. Capella 1. 24 || 3 Arcitenens (i.q. Apollo): Naev. Poet. 30 (32). 1 (ap. Macrobr. Sat. 6. 5. 8); Hostius Poet. 4 (6) Apollo arquitrenens Latonius; Verg. Aen. 3. 75; Ov. Met. 1. 441; 6. 265; Sil. It. 5. 177; Stat. Ach. 1. 682; Silvae 4. 4. 45; Arnob. Adv. nat. 4. 22 arquitrenens Delius; Coripp. Johannid. 1. 458 / Arquitrenens; Sidon. Carm. 1. 7. 23. 266 || 4 fīla Sorores / : Sil. It. 3. 96; 17. 361; Stat. Silvae 1. 4. 123 || 5 mi. . . fata relinquant / : Ov. Met. 14. 153 || 6 animum cum fu(g)it in auras / : Lucr. 3. 221 spiritus . . . diffugit in auras; 3. 400 (anima) . . . discidet in auras; 3. 436; Verg. Aen. 2. 791 recessit in auras (sc. umbra Creusae); 5. 740 = Alcesta 33 fugit ceu fumus in auras; 11. 61 vitam dispergit in auras; Ov. Heroid. 10. 121; Met. 8. 524; 14. 432; Sil. It. 9. 167; 16. 54 dirus in invitas effugit spiritus auras; Verg. Aen. 3. 585 sq. aethra / siderea || 8 pallida regna: Sil. It. 11. 472; Verg. Aen. 8. 244 sq.; Lucan. 1. 456; Arator Act. apost. 1. 179 ||

SUCCPEI PECUDUMQUE DUCEM POST CRIMINA DIVUM
ACCEPO IUSIS(QUE) IDEM DARE IUBILA SILVIS.”

PR(A)ESCIUS (H)EU P(A)EAN: “DOLEO, SED VERA FATEBO(R):
MORS VICINA PREMIT M(A)ESTIQUE AC(H)ERON(T)IS ADIRE
IAM PROPE REGNA TIBI GRATAMQUE RELINQUERE LUCEM.

SED VENIAT, PRO TE QUI MORTIS DAMNA SUBIRE
POSSIT ET INSTANTIS IN SE CONVERTE CASUS,
TU POTERIS POSTHAC ALIENO VIVERE FATO.

IAM TIBI CUM GENITOR, GENETRIX CUM CAR(A) SUPERLAT
ET CONIUX NATIQUE RUDES, PETE, LUMINA PRO TE
QUI CLAUDAT FATOQUE TUO TUMULOQUE CREMETUR.”

ILLE LAREM POST DICTA PETIT M(A)ESTUSQUE BEATO
IACTAT MEMBRA TORO ET FLETIBUS ATRIA CONPLET.

(sc. Apollo) || 11 accepi iussi(que) idem: cf. Hygini Fab. 51. 2 Apollo autem, quod ab eo
(sc. Admeto) in servitutinem liberaliter esset acceptus, ... || 12 sed vera fatebo(r) / : Stat.
Ach. 1. 146; Ov. Heroid. 8. 97 || 13 mors vicina premitt: Lucan. 7. 50 mortis vicinae
proerantis admovet horas; Alcesta 53 sq. (Apollo): / Disce tuum ... / advenisse diem; nam
lux inimica propinquat | m(a)estique Ac(h)eron(t)is: Sil. It. 14. 243; cf. Lucan. 6. 782;
Culex 273 maesta ... Ditis ... regna || 16 qui possit: i. q. qui fortitudinem animumque
habeat; cf. Verg. Aen. 4. 418 sq. huac ego si potuit tantum sperare dolorem, / et perferre,
soror, potero; Prop. 3. 12. 1 | instantis: cf. Alcesta 75 fatuoque urgenti incumbere / || 17
alieno vivere fato: cf. Ov. Met. 7. 168 deme meis annis et demptos adde parenti; Prop. 4.
11. 95 quod mihi detractum est, vestros accedat ad annos; Tibull. 1. 6. 63 sq. proprios ego
tecum, / sit modo fas, annos contribuisse velit; Stith Thompson, Motif-Index E165 || 18 :
: cf. Apollodor. Bibl. 1. 9. 15. 3 ώς δὲ ἡλιων ἡ τοῦ θησαυροῦ ἡμέρα, μήτε τοῦ πατρὸς, μήτε τῆς
μητρὸς ἕπερ στόχον (sc. Αδαμητοῦ) θησαυρὸν δῆλοντων, Ἀλκεστὸς ὑπεραπταθεὶς; Hygini. Fab. 51.
5. 1. 227 sq. || 22 membra torno: Verg. Aen. 6. 220; Sil. It. 6. 90; Stat. Theb. 2. 92; 2.
125 | atria conplet | : Ov. Met. 5. 153 ||

10 succepi P : suscepi ed. | peg’udumque P | crinime P, corr. ed. || 11 iossi (i corr. ex o)
P, corr. ed. | -que add. Leb., Pars., Marc. | post silvis addit P f apollo in mg. dextra
(i.e., notam personae loquentis) || 12 prescius P | (h)eu coni. Leb. : eu P : en Pars. :
hic Leb., Hutch. (conl. v. 32) | P(a)ean Leb., Pars. (cf. v. 1) : pian P | doleo (o corr.
ex u) P | seo ... | fatebo P, corr. ed. || 13 post mors addit inquid P, del. ed. | vicinam P
| m(a)estique Hutch., Marc. : m estumque P : m(a)estumque Leb. | aceronis P, corr. ed.
(p. 49) || 15 subire P : subiret P | 16 possit P : poscat olim Marc. | casus ed. : casum
P || 17 posthaec P : ...iosthaci P (ut vid.) || 18 qum ... qum P | genitor Leb., Pars.,
Marc. : genitum P | car P | sus suspersit P | 19 -que ed. : quae P || 20 qui ed. : quae P |
claudat P : linquit Nisp. | cremetur P (cf. v. 48 flammae; v. 49 ignis; v. 116 arsuroseque):
prematur Nisp. || 21 m(a)estusque Pars., Marc. : mestumque P, m(a)estumque Leb.
(adverb.) | beato (b corr. ex u) P | 22 torno et : hiatum in caesura in vv. 35, 56 habes ||
Ad natum genitor triste(m) concurrir et alto pectore suspirans lacrimis (quaé) causa requirit.

Edocet ille patrem fatorum damna suorum:

"Me rapit, ecce, dies, genitor: para funera nato.

Hoc par(a)e docuere nefas, hoc noster Apollo invitus, pater, edocuit. Se(d) reddere vitam

tu, genitor, tu, sancte, potes, si temporas dones,

si pro me mortem subitam tumulosque subire

digne(r)is natoque tua(m) concedere lucem."

Hier genitor, non ut genitor: "Si lumina poscas,

concedam, grateque manum de corpore noster,

nate, velis, tribuam: vivet manus altera mecum;

si sine lumine (e)ro, a liquidus tamen esse videbor;

nihil ero, si qu(o)d sum donavero. Quanta senect(a)e

vita meae superest, minimam vi tollere vi(s) iam?

Quam propter mea regna dedi tibi, castra reliqui.


PULSUS GENETRICIS

volvitur ante pedes, vestigia blandus adorat
inque sinus fundit lacrimas. fugit illa rogantem,
nece pietate, nocens, nec vincitur inproba fletu,
haec super inproperans: "oblita mente parentum
tu, sCELERate, potes materna(m) cernere morte(m),
tu tumulus gaudere mei? haec ubera flammae
diripia(n)T, uterum(que) rogi vis ultimus ignis
consumat, quod te peperit(3), hostis mihi lucis,
hostis, nate, patris? vitam concedere vellem,
si semper posses ter(r)ena sede morari.

|| 45 : cf. Alcesta 76 sq. sed nullis ille (sc. Admeti pater) movetur / fletibus aut voce so ullastractabiles audit || 46 inproperans: cf. Petron. 38. 11; V7 Itala: Sap. 2:12; Ps. 73:10;
Met. 2. 846 || 53 Cur metui(s) mortem, cui nascimur?: cf., e.g., Sen. Ad Marciam 10. 5 mors
een illi (sc. filio tuo) denuntiata nascenti est; in hanc legem erat satus, hoc illum fatum
ab utero statim prossequatur: Eurip. Alc. 418 sq. γένωσε δὲ (sc. 'Δόμητε) / ως πέλαω
ήμων κοσμανέω οὐφαλέται ||

39 cont(r)istant tumul(3) Leb.: contustant tumultum P: conbusta . . . (dulcior urna) / Pars.
| (vi)ta quia Marc. (cf. v. 37 uitae P): tae (e ex corr.) quam (a ex corr.) P: nec vita
Leb. / dulcis una Hutch. / dulciorullam P: dulcior ulla Leb.: dulcior ulla Pars. || 40
41 (g)rate cessissem (nato) Marc. (cf. v. 33 grateque; v. 73 libens): nataeconcessissesem
P: nate, diru concessissem Leb.: nate, tibi cessisse velim Hutch. (cessisse velim Nisb.) /
tumulosque ed.: edtumulosque P / (h)abitassem(m) Leb., Marc.: abitasse P (hab- ed.) ||
: "dlandus (i.e., sive blandus sive adulandus) P || 44 inque (u corr. ex n) P: lacrinas
Leb., Pars. / fleus P, corr. ed. || 46 obita Hutch.: obitus P, retinet Leb. || 47 ante tu
notam personae mater addit P in mg. sinistra / maternacernemorte P, corr. Leb., Pars.,
Marc.: materna vvere morte Nisb. || 48 ubira flam.mae (finis versus) P || 49 diripia(n)t
Leb. / uis P || 50 consumad P / quod te peperi(3) Marc., Leb.: quodtepeperi P: quo te
peperi Leb., Newman: qui te peperi(3) Pars. / mihi lucis Marc.: meae lucis P: genetricis
Leb., Nisb. || 51 natae P || 52 semper P: superum Hutch. / posses Leb., Hutch.: possis
P || ter(r)ena Marc.: a.eternam P, retinet Leb. ("wenn du immer dem Grabe fernbleiben
könntest!"), vix recte: aeeterna ed.: corruptum Pars.: aeternum Hutch.: terrarum
Nisb. / sde P: sde(m) Leb. / murari P ||
CUR METUI($) MORTEM, CUI NASCIMUR? EFFUGE LONGE,
QUO PART($)US, QUO MEDUS ARAB(S)QUE; UBI BARBARUS ALES
NASCITUR, AC NOBIS ITERATUS FINGITUR ORBIS;
ILLIC, NATE, LATE: (IBI) TE TUA FATA SEQUENTUR.
PERPETUUM NIHIL EST, NIHIL EST SINE MORTE CREATUM:
LUX RAPITUR ET NOX ORITUR, MORIUNTUR ET ANNI;
NON EST TERRA LOCO, QUO (R)ES GENERAVERAT ANTE.
IPSE PATER MUNDI FERTUR TUMULATUS ABISSE
ET FRATRI($) STYGII REGNUM MUTATUS OBISSE;
BACC(H)UM FAMA REPERT (T)$ITA(NU)$UM EX ARTE PERISSE,
PER(QUE) VADUM LETH(E)$ GEREMERQUE VENEREMQUE SUBISSE.


CUR EGO DE NATO DOLEAM, QUEM FATA REPOSOCUNT?
CUR EGO NON PLANGAM, SICUT PLANEXERE PRIORES?
AMISIT NATUM DIOMEDE, CARPSIT AGAUE;
PERDIDIT ALT(ha)EA (<g>)NATUM, DEA PERDIDIT INO;
FLEVIT ITYN PROGNE, DUM COLLIGIT ILLA CRUDA.
NAM QU(A)ECUMQUE TEGIT (<CA>ELI V(1)S VEL VAGUS AER
LABUNTUR CEDUNT MORIUNTUR CONTUMULANTUR.
CONIUGIS UT TALIS VIDIT PELIEIA FLETUS,
"ME, (ME) TRADE NECI, ME, CONIUX, TRADE SEFULCRIS;"
EXCLAMAT. "CONCEDO LIBENS, EGO TEMPORA DONO,
ADMETE, (AD)VENTURA TIBI, PRO CONIUGE CONIUX.
SI VINCO MATREM, VINCO PIETATE PARENTEM,
SI M(OR)I OR, LAUS MAGNA MEI POST FUNERA NOSTRA.

64 fata reposocunt / : Prop. 2. 1. 71; Ov. Met. 13. 180; cf. Alcestae v. 82 sq. stat sua cuique dies . . . / utere sorte tua: patet atri ianua Ditis || 68 fleuit Ilyn Progne : Hor. Carm. 4. 12. 5 sq.; Mart. 10. 51. 4: Ov. Amor. 3. 12. 32 = Heroid. 15. 154 || 70 (<CA>ELI V(1)S : Ov. Met. 1. 26 signe convexit vis et sine pondere caele : vagus aer : Tibull. 3. 7. 21; (Catull. 65. 17)) || 72 trade neci : Verg. Georg. 4. 90; Ov. Fast. 4. 840 deo neci || 73 libens : cf. Hygini Fab. 51. 3 . . . ut pro se (sc. Admeto) alias voluntarie moreretur. Pro quo cum neque pater neque mater mori voluisset, uxor se Alcestis obtulit et pro eo viraciar morte interiit: Apollod. Bibl. 1. 9. 15. 2 av eros avos tis vpir oavit bov vos etvta || 74 pro coniuge coniux / : Ov. Met. 7. 589; Heroid. 3. 37 || 76 laus magna mei : cf. Alcestae v. 154 aeternam moriens famam tam certa tulisti (sc. Alcestis) | funera nostra : Prop. 2. 1. 56 ||

Miroslav Marcovich

Non ero, sed factum totis narrabitur annis, et coniux pia semper ero. Non tristior atros aspiciam vultus, nec toto tempore flebo, dum cineres servabo tuos. Lacroisma recedat vita procul: mors ista placet. Me trade sepulcris, me portet melius nigro velamine po(r)\(\theta\)(h)meus.

Hoc tantum moritura rogo, ne post mea fata dulcior ulla tibi, vestigia ne mea coniux carior ista legat. Et tu, ne\(\langle\) c\rangle\nomine tantum, me cole, meque putea tecum sub nocte iacere.

In gremio cineres nostros dignare tenere, nec timida tractare manu, sudare fa(v)\(\psi\)l(\(\lambda\) as unguento, titulumque novo pr\(\langle\) a\rangle\ecingere flore.


sat tibi sint noctes, quas de me, Paulle, fatiges, somniaque in faciem credita saepe meam: atque ubi secreto nostra ad simulcra loqueris, ut responsurae singula verba iace.

Hyginii Fab. 104. 1 itaque fecit (sc. Laodamia) simulacrum aereum simile Protesilai coniugis et in thalamos posuit sub simulatione sacrorum, et eum colere coepit. Quod cum famulus . . . per rimam aspexit viditque eam ab ampliis Protesilaï simulacrum tenenti atque asculantem . . . : Apollodori Epitome 3. 30 καὶ παύσασα (sc. Δαοδάμης) εἰδώλων Πρωτεστάλων παραπλῆς τῶτο τροφήν τρισωμαίλει: Eustath. ad Iliad. 2. 701 (p. 325. 25 = 1, p. 507. 3 van der Valk) εὑρεν (sc. Πρωτέσταλος) ἐκέινην (sc. Δαοδάμης) αὐτὸ περικυκλώμενην; 325. 50 = 507. 8 ἀλλὰ κατεχομένη ἐνυκτέριον μετὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός, μᾶλλον αἰρομένη τὴν πρὸς τὸν τπήνωτα, φαοῖ, αὐνοιαίαν ἡ τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ζώντας ὁμιλίαν || 88 tractare manu : Stat. Silvae 5. 1. 88 ||

SI REDEUNT UMBR(A)E, VENIAM TECUM(QUE) IACEBO.

QUALISCUMQUE TAMEN, CONIUX, NE DESERA(R) A TE, NEC DOLEAM DE ME, QUOD VITAM DESERO PRO TE.

ANTE OMNES COMMENDO TIBI PIA PIGNORA NATOS, PIGNORA, QUAE SOLO DE TE FECUNDA CREAVI,

EX TE SIC NULLAS HABE(A)T MORS ISTA QUERELLAS.

NON PEREO, NEC ENIM MORIOR: ME, CREDE, RESERVO, QUAE MIHI TAM SIMILES NATOS MORITURA RELINQUO.

QUOS, ROGO, NE PARVOS MAN(US) INDIANA(NDÆ) NOVERCAE PRODAT, ET (H)EU FLENITES MATRIS PIA VINDICET UMBRA.

SI ME DISSIMULES, SI NON MEA DULCIS IMAGO

PAULUM AD TE VENI(AT) . . .

90 si redeunt umbr(a)e, veniam tecomque iacebo: cf. Prop. 4. 7. 3 sq. Cynthia namque mea visa est incumbere fulcro / . . . nuper humana; 89 nocte vagae ferimur, nos clausas liberat umbrae || 93 ante omnes: Verg. Aen. 6. 667 | commendo tibi pia pignorae natos: Prop. 4. 11. 73 Nunc tibi commendam communia pigmenta natos || 94 solo de te: cf. Prop. 4. 11. 36 in lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar || 98-99 quos . . . ne parvos man(us) indigana(nda) novercae / prodat: cf. Eurip. Alc. 905-10

. . . , dum meus 'mignus' tóte démuroid tékakos, hétis kákios oúst' émou (y)nyf tébounó

tóv sóv toú kámov toú kárva prósfoðaí . . .

Prop. 4. 11. 85-90; Alcesta 127 sq. || 99 matris pia vindicet umbra: Stith Thompson, Motif-Index E221. 2. 1; E323.2; cf. Prop. 4. 11. 74 haec cura (sc.natorum) et cineri spirat anusta meo || 100 si me dissimules: cf. Ov. Ex Ponto 1. 2. 146 non potes hanc (sc. coniugem meam) salva dissimulare fide | dulcis imago / : Stat. Silvae 1. 2. 112; Theb. 5. 608; (Verg. Aen. 6. 695) || 101 post (si non) . . . paulum ad te vemi(at) exspectes talia verba: Sequar atris ignibus absens (sc. Dido Aenean) / et, cum frigidis mors anima seduxerit artus, / omnibus umbra locis adero. Dabis, improbe, poenas. Verg. Aen. 4. 384-86; cf. 520 sq. ||

Disce mori, de m(e) disce exemplum(m) pietas."

IAM VAGA SIDERIBUS NOX PINGEBATUR ET ALES

RORE SOPORIFERO CONPLEVE(ra)T OMNIA SOMNUS:
AD MORTEM PROPERANS, IN CONIUGE FIXA IACEBAT
ALCESTIS LACRIMASQ(UE) VIRI PERITURA VIDEBAT.
PLANGERE SAEPE IUBET SESE NATOSQUE VIRUMQUE,
DISPOSIT FAMULOS, CONPONIT IN ORDINE FUNUS
L(A)ETA BALSAMA Ov. ET Stat. de pallada.

PALLIDA SUNDANTI DESTRINGIT BALSAMA VIRGA,

†. • .ONES†

Barbaricas frondes (et) odores, tura crocumque.

103 : cf. Sil. It. 5. 688-40 / disce ex me pugnas, vel (si pugnare negatum) / disce mori:

dabit exemplum non vile futuris / Flamininus || 104-05 : cf. Verg. Aen. 4. 522 Nox erat et
placidum carpebant fessa soporem / corpora per terras . . . 529 at non infelix ani
Phoenissa; 3. 147 Nox erat et terris animalia somnus habebat; 2. 8 sq. | ales / . . . Somnus
matria moritura videbo / || 109 disponit | de testatorum voluntate, cf. TLL V. 1427. 20
sq.; e.g., Vulg. 2 Reg. 17:23 disposita domo sua . . . interit || 110 pictosque toros : Ov.
Heroid. 12. 30; Verg. Aen. 1. 708; 4. 206 sq. | pa(ratus) : cf. Ov. Fast. 3. 627 Tyrios
Verg. Georg. 1. 56 sq. Nonne vides, crocos ut Tmolus odores, / India mitti ebur, molles
sua tura Sabaei . . . ? || 113 sundant . . . balsama virga : Verg. Georg. 2. 118 sq. Quid tibi
odorato referam sundantia ligno / balsama . . . ? : Iustini Hist. 36. 3. 4 arbores opobalsami
certus annis tempore balsamum sundant; Tac. Germ. 45. 7 ubi (sc. in Oriente) tura balsamaque
sundantur; Prudent. Cathemer. 5. 117 illic et gracili balsama surculo desadata fluidunt;
Hieron. Epist. 107. 1-2 ut . . . viles virgulae balsama pretiosa sudarent (Lebek) ||

102 cara Nisb., Marc. : caro P, retinet Leb. (sc. "et tu, lector") || 103 de m(e) disce
exemplum Nisb. : disce ex m exempla P : (tu) disce exempla ex m(e) Hutch. || 104 ante
iam addit P poet(a) in mg. sinistra | ales Pars. : alis P || 105 soporiferro P | conplevere(rat)e
. . . Sundantia Pars. : complebent . . . somnum P || 106 mortem. P | prope.rans P | coniuge
108 plangere P || 109 famulos (u corr. ex o) P || 110 l(a)eta Leb., Pars. : leta P |
pa(ratus) / . . . †.tones† Marc. : paones P : paratus (sine lacuna) Leb. : <|tapetas> | Nisb.
et . . . (re)pomens / Pars. || 112 barbaricas (corr. ex waruar-) P : Arabicas Nisb. (at cf.
v. 54) | <|et> odores Leb., Hutch., Nisb., Marc. : odioresque P | crucumque P || 113 pallida
Pars., Marc. : pa.llada P : Pallada Leb. ("Öl streift sie vom balsamtiefenden Zweig")

Palsama P ||
EREPTUM NIDO PR(A)ECIDIT PULVER AMOMI,
ARIDA PURPUREIS DESTRINGIT CINNAMA RAMIS,
ARSUROSQUE OMNES SECUM DISPONIT ODORES.

〈H〉ORA PROPINQUABAT LUCEM RA(P)TURA PUELLAE,
TRACTAVITQUE MANU: RIGOR OMNIA CORRIPIEBAT.
CAPERULOS UNGUES OCULIS MORITURA NOTABAT
ALGENTISQUE PEDES, FATALI FRIGORE PRESSOS.

ADMETI IN GREMIU(M) REFUGIT FUGIENTIS IMAGO.
UT VIDIT SENSUS (LABI), “DULCISSIME CONIUX,”
EXCLAMAT, “RAPTOR: VENIT, MORI ULTIMA VENIT,
INFERNUSQUE DEUS CLAUDIT (MEA) MEMPRA SOPORE.”

114 nido . . . pulser amomi : Plin. N.H. 12. 85 Cinnamomum et casias fabulose narravit
antiquitas princepsque Herodotus [3. 111] avium vidi . . . ex invisi ripibus arbioribusque
decutii . . . (Oxon.) | pulser (neutro genere) : Carp. Lat. Epigr. 2222 = CIL VIII. 7277
419. 5 O.-H. (Lebek) || 117 Hora (sc. mortis) : cf. TLL VI. 2963. 30-57 || 118 rigor
omnia corripiebat : cf. Sil. It. 4. 456 corripuit pallor, Alcesta 133 = Verg. Aen. 4. 499
Haec effata silet, pallor simul occupat ora; 161 sq. Cui talia fanti / dilapsus color atque in
ventos vita recessit || 121 fugientis imago / : Verg. Aen. 10. 656 Aeneae fugientis imago
; Sil. It. 17. 644 Hannibalis campis fugientis imago / || 122 Dulcissime conuix : Alcesta 87
o pulcherhime conix /; 118 = 125 / O dulcis conuix || 123 : cf. Alcestae v. 161 “Tempus,”
aet (sc. Alcestis), “deus, ecce deus!” || 124 membra sopore / : Lucr. 3. 453; Sil. It. 3. 170;
Verg. Aen. 8. 406

genere), retinet Leb. : pulser Oxon. : culmen Nisb. || 115 pur’pureis P | destringit
ed. | ratura P || 118 tractavitque manu (sc. Hora mortis) Marc. (cf. v. 88) : tractatabaque
manus P : tractabatque manus ed. : corruptum Oxon. : attractasque vel frigebantique manus
Nisb. | omnia (sc. membra) P : extima Nisb. | corripiebat Nisb. : diripiebat P, retinet
Leb. : praeripiebat Hutch. || 119 eruleos P | oculos P, corr. ed. | moritura P (cf. vv. 83;
97; 107) : moribunda Nisb. || 120 algentisque P | pressus Hutch., Marc. : pressum P
pressos Nisb. : pressa Pars. : pressam Leb. (“Aus ihr, die von Todeskälte im Schoss
Admetis bedrängt wurde, flieht das Bild der Fliehenden”) || 121 admeti P (cf. vv. 4;
74) : conuigis Hutch. | gremium Hutch. : gremior, retinet Leb. | post imagio addit P
| alcestis in mg. dextra || 122 uidit P : cedit coni. Hutch. | sensus : in P litterae
nsus lineola transfixe | labi add. Hutch. | ante dulcissime addit P coniuix ex (x ex corr.)
: ut dissographiam del. et Hutch. || 123 rapeor P | moris P || 124 inferuusque P |
ed. || finem carminis deesse credit Hutch.
Translation

ALCESTIS

"O, Delian Paean, son of Latona! O prescient Lord of laurels! I invoke you along with the laurels select because of your name. O, Bow-bearer, grant me to know the day of my death; grant me to learn when the Fates will break the life-thread of Admetus! Tell me, what will be the end of my life, and what Destiny may have in store for me once my spirit has gone into the starry sphere. I know, unless a man's life after death is a blessed one, it is anguish for him to know this (is it going to be a life without light, a realm of shadows?). Nevertheless, tell me, if I worshiped you ever; if I ever offered you support when you came to me as a terrified servant after the gods' charge against you; if I ever accepted you to be my herdsman, and sent you to the forests to raise shouts of joy!"

(12) Alas! Such was the answer of the prescient Paean: "I grieve for you, but I must tell the truth. Death is pressing upon you: the time is close for you to abandon the dear light of day and approach the gloomy realm of Acheron. However, should somebody come forward having the heart to suffer death for you, to take on himself your impending misfortune, you will be granted henceforth to live the destiny of somebody else. Why, your father, your dear mother are still alive; and so are your wife and your young sons: go and ask them who may be willing to shut his eyes forever for you, to be burnt on the pyre as a substitute for your fate and grave."

(21) Having learnt this, Admetus withdraws to his home. Stricken with grief he cannot help tossing his limbs on the rich couch, and his weeping reaches every corner of the palace. The father hurries to his sorrowful son, and sighing from the depth of his breast asks him the reason for these tears. The son tells his father about his decreed death: "Father, my day of death is carrying me away: prepare a funeral for your son! This awful mishap was revealed by the Fates, it was reluctantly revealed by our Apollo. But you, father, you, venerable one, can restore my life, if you only would donate the rest of your days to me; if you would deign to grant your own life to your son, to suffer sudden death and approach the tomb for me."

(32) Hear now the father speaking unlike a father! "Should you ask me for my eyes, I would grant them to you. Should you want a hand from my body, my son, I would gladly give it to you. Still I would be left with the other hand, and though deprived of sight, I would still have the appearance of a living being. But if I grant you my very being, there will be nothing left of me. Little life is left to
my old age: are you after even this little, to snatch it away before its
time? Why, it was to enjoy this brief life that I have given my kingdom
to you, that I have left my court to you. Of the grave I dare not
think: there is nothing sweeter to my heart than life alone. I would
gladly yield to my son’s wish and go to the grave for him, if only
you had the power of restoring my life after death, enabling me to
see the daylight again!”

(42) Rejected by his father, Admetus throws himself before the
feet of his mother; embraces them in reverence and adulation, and
sheds tears in her lap. But she, in her wickedness, shuns the suppliant.
She, the heartless one, would be won neither by imploration nor by
the sense of maternal duty. Worse still, she starts casting reproaches:
“Are you out of your mind, you criminal wretch? How can you
forget your duty toward your parents? How can you watch the death
of your own mother and enjoy seeing her tomb? Is that what you
want—that the flames of the pyre devour these breasts, that the final
funeral pile take away the very womb which gave you birth? You,
son, a foe to my lifelight, a foe to your own father! Still, I would
gladly give my life for you if only I were sure you could remain on
earth forever!

(53) “Why are you afraid of death for which we all are born?
Escape to the end of the world—there where the Parthian or Mede
or Arab lives; there where the strange bird phoenix is born, so that
mankind may imagine the birth of a new world-era. Go, son, and
hide there: and there your fate will reach you! Nothing lasts forever,
nothing is born free from death. Daylight wanes, and night takes its
place; the seasons die, and even the (aging) Earth is no longer the
same as she was when creating all things.

(60) “The Father of the universe himself, they say, was buried and
gone: he changed his shape and went down to visit the infernal realm
of his brother. Bacchus perished—so the story goes—through the
guile of the Titans, and both Ceres and Venus crossed the stream of
Lethe.

(64) “Why should I grieve for a son who is claimed by Destiny?
Why should I be exempt from mourning when other mothers
mourned in the past? Why, Diomedes lost her son, and Agave tore
hers asunder. Althaea killed her son, and so did the goddess Ino.
Procne too bewailed Itys while collecting his bleeding entrails. For,
whatever lives under the heavenly vault and the roaming wind
perishes, passes away, dies, and is buried for good.”

(71) When the daughter of Pelias saw these tears of her husband,
she cried aloud: “I, I want to be sent to death! My husband, I want
to go to the grave for you! I grant you gladly, I donate my coming
days to you, Admetus, a spouse for her spouse! If I die for you, if
my sense of duty proves to be greater than that of your mother, than
that of your father, immense glory will be in store for me after my
death. True, I shall be no more, but my feat will be remembered
through centuries to come, and I shall live forever as a pious wife.
And besides, I shall not look at the sullen faces around me for the
rest of my life, I shall not weep each time I attend to your ashes.
May such a life of tears stay away from me! I prefer this death. Let
me be sent to the grave, let me be carried away by the Ferryman
attired in black!

(83) "Before I die, I have only one wish for you. After I am gone,
may you never love another woman as much as you did me, may the
wife to take my place never be dearer to your heart than I was! As
for you, keep loving me! I mean it, not in name only! Think that you
are sleeping with me during the night! Do not hesitate to take my
ashes into your lap, caress them with a firm hand! Take care that the
glowing ashes sweat with oil, and gird my tomb with fresh flowers.
If it is true that shades return, I shall come to lie down with you.
Whatever shape I may have then, my husband, abandon me not! Let
me not be sorry for leaving this daylight for you!

(93) "And before anything else, I entrust you with the pledge of
our love, our sons; the pledge which I have borne being pregnant
by you alone, so that you may have no complaint about this departure
of mine. I shall not perish, I shall not die: believe me, I am preserving
myself by leaving behind me the children resembling their mother
so much. They are still small: I beg you, may no unworthy hand of
a stepmother betray them! Alas! Know that the faithful shade of the
mother will come to avenge her crying children!

(100) "And if you neglect me, if the sweet image of me does not
come to your mind from time to time...*... and you too learn
to die for your (new) wife (if need be), learn from my example what
a sense of duty is."

(104) Stars had already begun to adorn the moving night, and the
winged god of Sleep had already dropped the slumber-bringing dew
in everybody's eyes, when Alcestis, hastening to die, was lying awake
gazing at her husband, watching him shed tears at her imminent
death. Now, she bids both her husband and sons often to mourn
loudly for her; she takes care of her servants in her last will; she
arranges for her own funeral, glad in her heart. Here is her ornate
bier, here her embroidered last garment...* (she piles up) foreign
plants, spices and perfumes, frankincense and saffron-essence. She
collects the pale balsam from the wet balsam-tree; she beats to powder the fragrant amomum, snatched away from a bird’s nest; she gathers the dry cinnamon from the purple-colored boughs, and she gives orders for all these spices to be burnt on the pyre along with her.

(117) The Hour of death was approaching the young woman to take away her daylight. She touched her with her hand, no more. Numbness started seizing her every limb. Dying slowly, she watched her fingernails becoming blue, her freezing feet growing heavy with the frost of death. A fleeting shadow, woman no more, she seeks refuge in Admetus’ lap. And when she felt that her senses were leaving her for good, she cries aloud: “Husband, my love! Death, death at the last has come: she is taking me away. The infernal god is enfolding my limbs with slumber.”

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