Notes on Ovid's poems from exile*

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The following modern editions are referred to: A. Riese (Leipzig 1874); S. G. Owen (Tristia, Oxford 1889); R. Ehwald (Leipzig 1889); A. L. Wheeler (Loeb edition, London 1924); G. Luck (Tristia, Heidelberg 1967-77). Reference is also made to S.B. = D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Classical Quarterly 32 (1982), 390–98.

Tristia

1. 2. 81:

quod faciles opto uentos, (quis credere possit?)
Sarmatis est tellus quam mea uela petunt.
obligor ut tangam laeui fera litora Ponti,
quodque sit a patria tam fuga tarda queror.
nescioquo videam positos ut in orbe Tomitas
exilem facio per mea uota uiam.

Ovid prays for an easy and swift journey—to his place of exile.

"I am trying to shorten the road by prayer" (Wheeler). This is certainly
the sort of sense we expect, and exilem has traditionally been taken "pro
breui et compendiosa" (Heinsius); under this rubric our passage stands by
itself in TLL 5. 2. 1482. 25 ff. But J. Delz, in his discussion of it in Mus.
Helv. 28 (1971), 54 ff., is justified in doubting whether exilis could have
this meaning, for which there is no parallel. Delz even doubts whether facio
combined with any predicative adjective would be acceptable, because it is
the gods, and not Ovid, who would make the journey easy or short; but this
objection ignores the common usage by which "qui facit per alium facit per
se." As an acceptable phrase I suggest en celerem facio, comparing Her. 16.
332, "iam facient celeres remus et una uias." I would explain the
corruption by the omission of the er syllable; similarly at Cicero, Fam. 10.
24. 3 I believe that celeris has been corrupted in our manuscripts to talis.

*I am very grateful to Professors J. B. Hall and J. A. Richmond for commenting on an earlier version of these notes.
2. 211:
altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus
arguor obsceni doctor adulterii.

Ovid's second offense was the composition of the Ars.
From the evidence presented by Luck it seems safe to conclude that the
paradosis is factus, and that the variants dictus, laeusus, and lectus are mere
conjectures. Most editors have in fact been content with factus, but the
resulting sense ("I am accused of having become the teacher") is impossibly
feeble; none of the manuscript variants is worthy of consideration, and the
same may be said of modern conjectures like Luck's lecto and Axelson's
luso. What I should expect is an indication of the recipients of Ovid's
"teaching," as at 244, where he says that his scripta do not "Romanas
erudiant nurus." I suggest castis, which makes an excellent contrast with
turpi, as at Pont. 1. 1. 7 f. (Ovid addresses his poems), "certe nil turpe
docetis: / ite, patet castis uersibus ille locus." The dative, instead of the
genitive, with doctor is no more surprising than the dative (elapsis, sc. dis)
with cultor at Her. 7. 131; cf. Hofmann-Szantyr, Lat. Synt. u. Stil. 91.

2. 331:

forsan (et hoc dubitem) numeris leuioribus aptus
sim satis, in paruos sufficiamque modos.

The fullest discussion of this passage is that of J. Diggle in CQ 30
(1980) 416; he objects to the subjunctive dubitem and supports the variant
dubito. But then et hoc dubito is scarcely necessary after forsan, which is
itself an "aduerbium dubitandi" (TLL 6. 1136. 69 f.). The proper
relationship between forsan and the verb dubitare can be restored by retaining
the paradosis dubitem and merely changing et to ut; then ut dubitem is a
parenthetic final clause like ut omittam, ut redeam, etc.

3. 4. 49 (=4b.3):

Bosporus et Tanais superant Scythiaeque paludes
uixque satis noti nomina pauca loci.

Beyond Tomis lie the Bosporus, etc.

Luck comments: "50 ist noch nicht befriedigend hergestellt; vielleicht
liegt ein ähnlicher Gedanke vor wie Pompon. Mela 3. 30 montium
alissimi Taurus et Retico, nisi quorum nominu uix est eloquiore
Romano." Heinsius long ago solved the problem by emending pauca to
rauca ("harsh-sounding"), but apparently no editor since Owen (1889) has
mentioned this solution. Even Owen did not report that Heinsius wanted
(I think rightly) to take nomina rauca in apposition to loci (plural),
comparing Trist. 3. 10. 5 f., "Sauromatae ... Bessique Getaeque, / quam
non ingenio nomina digna meo!" Similarly at Val. Flacc. 1. 330 raucos has
been corrupted to paucos in our oldest manuscript (V).
3. 8. 35:

haeret et ante oculos uelutii spectabile corpus
adstat fortunae forma legenda meae.

In his text Luck adopts tegenda (a conjecture first proposed by Riese), “die ich verhüllen sollte,” but a reference to Ovid’s determination not to reveal the nature of the “error” which had caused his exile seems here out of place. In his commentary, on the other hand, Luck is inclined to defend legenda, taken in the sense of “oculis legenda” (cf. TLL 7. 2. 1128. 19 ff.); this is quite otiose after the preceding line. The conjectures uerenda and querenda are scarcely convincing palaeographically, although the latter yields good sense. More satisfactory, I suggest, would be gemenda (the form occurs at Met. 13. 464); if this were reduced to genda by the omission (for an obvious reason) of me, the metre would have to be repaired by the addition of a syllable. With fortunae forma gemenda I compare 3. 11. 37, “fortuna potest mea flenda uideri.”

3. 11. 49:

“pro quibus inuentis, ut munus munere penses,
   da, precor, ingenio praemia digna mea.”
dixerat; at Phalaris “poenae mirande repertor,
   ipse tuum praesens imbue” dixit “opus.”

Phalaris gives Perillus his due reward for inventing the brazen bull.

Praesens is not adequately rendered by “in person” (Wheeler); Luck’s rendering, “du bist ja eben hier,” certainly is adequate but merely shows how otiose the word is. This was realized by Heinsius and Bentley, who agreed on emending to princeps (primus is already found as a humanist conjecture). Luck favours this, but I do not think that it is the answer: apart from palaeographical considerations, princeps is not required with imbuere, which by itself can mean “do something for the first time” (OLD sense 3); cf. Ars 1. 654 (likewise of Perillus), “infelix imbuit auctor opus.” Burman, I think, was right in suggesting praestans (apparently mentioned by no editor later than Owen 1889); this would qualify opus just as mirande qualifies repertor. For the confusion of the two words cf. Cicero, Fam. 1. 9. 1 praestantiores (praesentiores codd.) fructus.

4. 8. 5:

nunc erat ut posito deberem fine laborum
uiuere me nullo sollicitante metu.

The manuscripts vary between me and cum; modern conjectures are nunc (Withof), iam (Riese), and cor (Luck). Perhaps the simplest solution is to suppose that an original non ullo was changed to nullo and the resulting gap filled by conjecture.
4. 9. 1:

    si licet et pateris, nomen facinusque tacebo
    et tua Lethaeis acta dabuntur aquis
    nostraque uinctur lacrimis clementia seris,
    fac modo te pateat paenituisse tui.

    "I shall forget what you have done provided that you have clearly repented."

    There is no reason to question the soundness of clementia (of which the variant dementia is merely a slight miswriting). It has been proposed to substitute uementia (Postgate), sententia (Alton, followed by Luck), or constantia (S. B., p. 398) on the ground that clementia uinctur lacrimis cannot mean "my mercy shall be won by tears" (Wheeler); that is true, but the conclusion which I draw is that uinctur, not clementia, is corrupt. Nor need we look far for a satisfactory replacement which involves the minimum of change: iungetur, "my mercy shall follow closely on your tears." This sense of iungere is numbered 10 in OLD: "to cause (events, etc.) to succeed without a break"; examples are listed both there and in TLL 7. 2. 655. 66 ff. The supposed corruption, easy enough in itself, may have been helped by the recollection of a line (39) towards the end of the previous poem, "ipsaque delictis uitca est clementia nostris."

4. 9. 27:

    iam feror in pugnas et nondum cornua sumpsi,
    nec mihi sumendi causa sit ulla uelum.
    Circus adhuc cessat, spargit iam torus harenam
    taurus et infesto iam pede pulsat humum.

    Ovid threatens to attack his enemy if he does not repent.

    In Euphrosyne 16 (1988) 137, J. B. Hall points out that iam feror in pugnas, "already I am rushing into battle," cannot be right because what follows (Circus adhuc cessat and the image of the bull pawing the sand) proves that battle has not yet been joined; he therefore proposes moror for feror. It would be easier (a) to alter feror to the future ferar; (b) to adopt, instead of et, the less well attested variant sed, which, even if it is only an emendation, is a very easy change after the last letter of pugnas; battle will commence "soon" but has not yet done so. The fact that iam in lines 29 and 30 means "already" does not prove that iam in line 27 must likewise have that sense.

5. 6. 35:

    elige nostrorum minimum minimumque malorum,
    isto, quo reris, gradius illud erit.

    The least of Ovid's woes will be greater than his correspondent imagines.

    For the gemination of minimum the editors quote Her. 1. 41, nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum, but the adverb nimium lends itself much more
naturally to gemination than does the adjective *minimum*; indeed, “bei Adj. ist die rein intensive Gemination kaum zu belegen,” Hofmann–Szantyr 809. I suggest that the comma should be placed after *minimum*, not after *malorum*, and that *malorum* should be supplied with the first *minimum*; such *ἀπὸ κοινῶν* constructions are frequent in Ovid (a collection of examples is given by E. J. Kenney in *CQ* 8 [1958] 55). This punctuation guarantees *malorum* against the variant *laborum* (the other manuscript variations in the couplet do not affect the construction).

*Ibis*

23:

di melius, quorum longe mihi maximus ille est
qui nostras inopes noluit esse *uias*.

In banishing Ovid, Augustus had refrained from confiscating his property.

If *uias* is sound it must mean Ovid's journey into exile (so *TLL* 7. 1. 1755. 70): he had enough money to pay his travelling expenses. But is it credible that he should mention this, and nothing else, as the consequence of being allowed to retain his property? I suggest that *uias* should be *uices*, “my changed circumstances”; *uices* has either certainly or probably been corrupted to *uias* at Seneca, *Med.* 307 and *Phaed.* 965, Silius 15. 809.

*Epistulae ex Ponto*

1. 2. 63:


neq tamen ulterius quicquam speroue precoure
quam male *mutato* posse carere loco.

*Mutato* arouses justified suspicion, whether interpreted as “given in exchange” (so Wheeler . . . “even by a wretched change to be rid of this place,” but “even” is not in the Latin) or as “taken in exchange” (*sc.* for Rome; so the word is generally understood nowadays, although *male* is very feeble). Only one suggested emendation is worthy of consideration, that of T. Faber, *male me tuto*. This, I think, is on the right lines, but I should prefer *male munito*. Time and again Ovid complains about the inadequate defences of Tomis; so just above (22), “portaque *uix* firma submouet arma sera”; *Trist.* 5. 2. 70, “*uixque breuis tutos murm ab hoste facit*”; ib. 5. 10. 27, “*uixque castelli defendimur*”; ib. 4. 1. 69 f.; *Pont.* 1. 8. 61 f. The same corruption, of *munit-* to *mutat-*, has occurred at *Ciris* 105; also, in some manuscripts of Cicero, *Att.* 4. 16. 7, *munitos* has become *muratos*, a late-Latin word which editors have no business to foist on Cicero.

2. 3. 15:


nil nisi quod prodest carum est, sed detrahe menti
spem fructus auidae, nemo *petendus* erit.
Friendships are valued according to the profit which they bring.

Madvig (Adv. 2. 102), objecting to the use of petere in the sense of appetere or colere, conjectured uerendus. Why not the mot juste, which is colendus? The confusion of p and c is quite common (see note on 4. 1. 23 below).

2. 3. 33:

\[\text{te, nihil exacto nisi nos peccasse fatentem,}
\
sponte sua probitas officiumque iuuet.\]

No one has succeeded in emending the meaningless exacto or ex acto; the favourite modern reading, Ehwalld’s exactos (“I, the exiled one,” Wheeler), is quite unconvincing. I suggest ex toto (toto reduced to to by haplography, then wrongly expanded); the meaning would be “te, fatentem nihil ex toto nos fecisse nisi peccasse,” “acknowledging as you do that I was guilty of nothing whatever but an error of judgment, you stand by your duty to me.” This supposes an ellipse of facere with nihil nisi akin to the prose idiom with nihil aliud quam (less often, nisi), for which see Kühlner–Stegmann, Ausf. Gramm. 2. 564. For ex toto preceded by a negative cf. Pont. 1. 6. 28 and 4. 8. 72; Her. 16. 160; TLL 5. 2. 1125. 12 ff.

2. 5. 57:

\[\text{huic tu cum placeas et ueritie sidera tangas,}
\n\text{scripta tamen profugi uatis habenda putas.}\]

The addressee is Salanus, the tutor (in rhetoric) of Germanicus (huic). What does habenda mean? Wheeler says “worthy of consideration,” but this cannot be got from the Latin. It could mean “kept” in the sense of “given house-room,” but that is intolerably feeble. I suggest that it should be emended to alenda, “worthy of being fostered”; for alere used of fostering the poet’s inspiration cf. Trist. 3. 14. 37 f., “non hic librorum per quos inuiter alarque / copia.” The encouragement which Ovid owes to Silanus is expressed at 21 f., “ingenioque meo . . . / plaudis et e riuo flumina magna facis.” The corruption of alere to the colourless habere is not always recognized where some sort of sense can be extracted from the latter; e.g. at Statius, Silu. 1. 3. 23, habentes carmina somnos, apparently only Baehrens has adopted Heinsius’s alentes; at Gellius 11. 2. 2 (= Cato, Carmen de moribus frag. 1, p. 82. 10 Jordan), auaritiam omnia uitia habere, I have emended habere to alere in Glott. 62 (1984), 249.

2. 7. 43:

\[\text{nec magis assiduo uomer tenuatur ab usu}
\n\text{nec magis est curuis Appia trita rotis}
\n\text{pector a quam mea sunt serie caecata malorum.}\]

The main manuscripts vary between caecata and calcata. The latter seems impossible, because a heart cannot be “trampled upon” or “spurned” by an uninterrupted chain of misfortunes (the company which this passage
keeps in TLL 3. 138. 25 does not inspire confidence). In support of caecata (a word not elsewhere used by Ovid) editors adduce Culex 199, timor occaeauerat artus, of fear "benumbing" a man's limbs. If this is not accepted my solution would be cumulata, reduced to culata by the omission (for an obvious reason) of mu and thereafter variously "emended." I compare Trist. 4. 1. 55 f., "meque tot aduersis cumulant [sc. di] quot litus harenas / ... habet."

2. 7. 77:

sustineas ut onus, nitendum uertice pleno est;
aut, flecti neruos si patiere, cades.

S. B. (p. 397) finds it difficult to believe that pleno can mean "stiff" and emends to prono, thus shifting the load from the head to the back of the carrier. But it is on the shoulders that a load is most naturally carried (cf. Trist. 2. 222; OLD s. v. umerus, sense 1 d); and he who carries a load on his shoulders must keep the muscles at the back of his neck taut. The proper word, I suggest, is tenso (or tento); and there are stranger corruptions in these epistles than that of tenso to <p>len[s]o. This solution was proposed in 1895 (in a Leiden dissertation) by C. Schreuders, but it is never mentioned nowadays.

Wherever the load is carried, when the carrier relaxes his muscles it is much more likely that the load will fall off than that he himself will fall. Like Heinsius, therefore, I should adopt the less well attested variant cadet, and explain cades as being due to assimilation to patiere.

3. 2. 23:

sint hi contenti uenia, †sientque† licebit
purgari factum me quoque teste suum.

Ovid forgives his timid friends who failed to help him in his hour of need.

Our oldest manuscript (A) reads sientque, the other signentque or fugiantque; all three words are meaningless. Conjectures are numerous: iurentque, iactentque, scierintque (wrong tense), sperentue, fingantque, fidantque, and others. I add, as closer to the reading of A, si<mul>entque.

3. 4. 88:

alter enim de te, Rhene, triumphus adest.
inrita uotorum non sunt praesagia uatum:
danda foui laurus, dum prior illa uiret.

Ovid confidently prophesies for Tiberius a triumph over Germany soon after his Pannonian triumph of 23 October A. D. 12 (cf. r. Syme, History in Ovid, Oxford 1978, 53 ff.).

It is futile for editors to support inrita uotorum by Statius, Theb. 7. 314, manus inrita uoti. No one would deny the Latinity of this phrase for "disappointed of one's wish," but whereas that sense fits the Statius passage
excellently it does not fit ours: how can “prophecies” be “disappointed of their wish?” What is required is an epithet of uatum, and the later manuscripts offer three, notorum, magnorum, and uerorum; of these the last is best, but hardly convincing palaeographically. Heinsius added motorum, which has been adopted by some modern editors, but no one has produced a parallel for the adjectival use of motus in the sense of “inspired.” Yet that is the sort of sense which is required. I suggest doctorum, a standing epithet not only of poets (TLL 5. 1. 1757. 2 ff.) but also of prophets (ib. 1756. 76 ff.); and of these two meanings of uates it is the latter which here predominates. The confusion of d and u is not so common as some others, but it does occur; e.g. dirus/uirus (Seneca, Med. 718 and Phoen. 297), dactor/victor (Lucan 3. 71, Silius 9. 600).

3. 7. 21:

spem iuuat amplecti quae non iuuat inrita semper
et, fieri cupias siqua, futura putes.
proximus huic gradus est bene desperare salutem,
seque semel uera scire perisse fide.

To W. A. Camps belongs the credit for having made the first couplet intelligible. In CR 4 (1954) 206, he writes: “The quatrain distinguishes, as best and second best respectively for an unhappy man, two states of mind. The second of these consists in not hoping when hope is vain. It follows therefore that the first . . . must consist in hoping with some ground for hope.” Camps therefore proposes to replace non iuuat by non uenit, adducing Her. 2. 62, “quaecumque ex merito spes uenit, aqua uenit.” It is true that uenit could easily have been corrupted to iuuat, but that is not a strong argument since the second iuuat looks like an erroneous repetition of the first, and the word which it has displaced need not have resembled it very closely. Much more suitable in our passage would be cadit, which is used of spes at Pont. 1. 2. 62 and 1. 6. 36; Trist. 2. 148; Her. 9. 42 and 13. 124; and other passages listed in TLL 3. 26. 47 ff.

Camps is also clearly right in changing et at the beginning of the following line to ut.

4. 1. 23:

numquam pigra fuit nostris tua gratia rebus,
nec mihi munificas arca negauit opes.
nunc quoque nil subitis clementia territa fatis
auxillum uiae fertque feretque meae.

Ovid acknowledges his indebtedness to Sextus Pompeius for financial help (so too at 4. 5. 37 f.), a context in which clementia is out of place. S. B. (p. 398) would substitute constantia, not an easy change. I miss a possessive adjective corresponding to tua in 23, and suggest pia mens tua; for the confusion of p and c see note on 2. 3. 15 above. Both mens and pius occur earlier on in the epistle (7 f.), where they are used of the other
side of the relationship (Ovid's loyal devotion to Pompeius): “non potuit mea mens quin esset grata teneri: / sit precor officio non grauis ira pio.”

4. 7. 17:

sit licet hic titulus plenus tibi fructibus, ingens
ipsa tamen uirtus ordine maior erit.

plenus EO: plenis cett.

Addressed to Vestalis; the honour in question is his rank (ordo) of primus pilus.

The reading and punctuation given above is that of Ehwald, which with surprising unanimity all subsequent editors have followed, wrongly. On should return to the paradosis plenis and to the pre-Ehwald punctuation, which put the comma after, not before, ingens. Sense-pause at the end of the fifth foot is rare (Platnauer, Latin Elegiac Verse, Cambridge 1951, p. 25), and here spoils the obviously intended contrast between ingens and maior: “quamquam titulus est ingens, maior tamen est uirtus.”

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