

Ov. *Am.* 1,8,45 - An Emendation In Context

The text of *Amores* 1,8,45-48

Am. 1,8 describes the old bawd Dipsas lecturing the beloved of the narrator. The lines I am concerned with belong to the first part of Dipsas' speech to the *puella*, and have traditionally been taken as a slant against women who feign chastity but who are, nevertheless, unwilling to relinquish their attitude of moral superiority. The text of *Am.* 1,8,45-48 is printed in the same way in all twentieth century editions.¹ It reads:

ludunt formosae: casta est quam nemo rogauit; Ov. *Am.* 1,8,43 (Kenney, 1995, e.g.)
aut, si rusticitas non uetat, ipsa rogat.
has quoque, quae frontis rugas in uertice portant,
excute, de rugis crimina multa cadent.
Penelope iuuenum uires temptabat in arcu;
qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat.

(The beauties are out to play: she is chaste, who no one has asked, unless, if her provinciality doesn't stop her, she does the asking herself. Shake up even those, who wear frowns on their brows, and many a crime will fall out of the frowns. Penelope tested the powers of the young men by the bow; horny was the bow that proved their loins.)

However, this requires us to accept a conjecture in 45 originally suggested by Burmann in 1727.² The MSS³ transmit the text of 45 in the following way:

has quoque, quas frontis rugas in uertice portas, Ov. *Am.* 1,8,45 (MSS)
excute, de rugis crimina multa cadent.
Penelope iuuenum uires temptabat in arcu;
qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat.

(Get rid of those frowns that you wear on your brow, from the frowns many a recrimination will fall. Penelope tested the powers of the young men by the bow; horny was the bow that proved their loins.)

We shall turn presently to a discussion of the translation offered here, but first we must take note of the fact that the text of the codices is thus syntactically and, perhaps more importantly, metrically impeccable. Nevertheless, most editors and commentators accept Burmann's conjecture, emending *quas* with *quae* and *portas* with *portant*, without further explanation.⁴

I agree with Barsby, who addresses the question briefly, in that the MSS reading does not 'fit the generalized argument of the immediate context' and that it probably arose from an attempt

¹ So the Teubner-edition of Merkel and Ehwald, 1888 (repr. 1915); Brandt, 1911 (with commentary, repr. 1963); Munari, 1951 (repr. 1970); the Budé-edition of Borneque, 1961; Barsby, 1973; Kenney, 1961 (rev. ed. 1995), McKeown, 1989 and most recently, the Teubner-edition of de Verger, 2003. The exception is the Loeb-edition of Showerman, 1914, which keeps MSS reading.

² Burmannus, 1727.

³ There is only one noted correction in 45, emending *portas* to *portant*, by the 2nd hand in V3 (late 15th cent., sigla according to de Verger, 2003, xxxv), see further note 13. In 46 Burmann claims to have seen a correction of *de rugis* to *pro rugis* in the Frankfurt MS (F) of the 12-13th century.

⁴ There is, for instance, no mention of any problems in the establishing of the text in McKeown's 1989 commentary.

to make *has* refer to *rugas* (Barsby, 1973, 99), but an alteration in the text demands more careful examination. In this paper I propose to ascertain the necessity of Burmann's conjecture, and I will also show that a contextualised reading of the passage supports the decision to alter the text more effectively than do the arguments originally proposed by Burmann.

Translating the text of the codices

As it stands in the MSS the text poses several questions. The most pressing issue is the translation of *crimina* in 46. Are we to translate *crimina* with 'crime' or 'offence'? If so, who committed, or will commit, these crimes? Is perhaps 'recrimination' a better translation? Then, against whom are these recriminations directed? Who voices them?

If we assume that the recriminations are directed against the *puella*, or if we choose to translate *crimina* with 'crimes committed by the *puella*', we land ourselves in a quagmire of illogical structures. The distich would then either show Dipsas telling the *puella* that a change in her attitude would cause *crimina* (recriminations) to be directed at her. Alternatively, the distich would have Dipsas accuse the *puella* of an all too sanctimonious outward behaviour while she in fact has already been engaging in affairs dubious enough to be referred to as *crimina* (crimes). Though *crimina* is softened to 'naughtiness' rather than 'crime', this is in effect the interpretation Showerman offers in the Loeb-edition, the only modern edition to keep the MSS reading. The translation of *Am.* 1,8,45f thus runs "Those wrinkles, too, which you carry high on your brow, shake off; from the wrinkles many a naughtiness will fall."⁵ In the middle of a speech designed to encourage the *puella* to make herself available to more men in order to gain financially, such a statement seems very odd indeed.

Nor is it likely that *de rugis crimina multa cadent* has the *lena* claim that after she has adopted a new laissez-faire attitude, the *puella*'s old self will protest with (self-)recriminations. This might be psychologically conceivable, but would be evidence of a startling rhetorical inefficiency on Dipsas' part.⁶

Assuming that Dipsas is referring to the crimes or offences of other women, described metaphorically as causing the *puella* worry to the extent of marring her face with frowns, we could perhaps take *de rugis crimina multa cadent* to mean that if the *puella* gives up her sanctimonious behaviour, she will not have to waste time complaining about how adulterous other women are, but will be able to focus on things more important. The weaknesses of this interpretation are obvious: it is very strained, and literally the frowns remain etched on the *puella*'s brow. Furthermore, as we reach the end of 46 time and tide have yet to be mentioned.

One might consider this amended by the reference to Penelope in 47-48. One must then perceive the mention of Penelope as a negative example from Dipsas' point of view – in paraphrase 'look how stupid Penelope was. She tried her suitors out with a *bow of horn*, a bow, at that, she had reason to believe they would not be able to handle.' The example of Penelope is thereupon expounded in the following lines on the dangers of wasting one's

⁵ I'm hesitant to accept the translation of Showerman also because it limits the semantic field of the word *crimina* quite drastically. The *crimina* Dipsas is talking about might be mere trifles to *her*, but the word *crimina* in Ovid's poem carries associations ranging all the way from 'crime' to the specific 'adultery'.

⁶ Dipsas' speech has to be rhetorically effective since she otherwise would not be a worthy opponent of the narrator. This aspect is highlighted in the interpretation by Gross, *Classical World* 89, 1995-1996, 197-206.

rapidly passing youth (*labitur occulte* etc.),⁷ so that rather than closing the section on the nuisances of moral, it seems to form the beginning of the section on time.

Problems with the interpretation of the text of the codices

The interpretation outlined above lends itself to criticism on several points. Firstly, the beginning of line 45, *has quoque*, seems to me to imply that the general statements made in 43-44 (*ludunt formosae* etc) are to be developed further in the following distich. This is not, in fact, what the distich 45-46 actually does: instead it introduces a new argument where the *puella* stands completely in focus, whereas 47-48 will wrench the reader (and the internal addressee, not the least) back to the scrutiny of other women.

If we assume that the *rugae* referred to by *has* belong to the *puella* herself, then the command *excute* is directed at the *puella* personally and not intended as a generalized (impersonal) admonishment. Dipsas' ambition must be to free the *puella* from morally founded inhibitions, which demands us translate *excute* with 'throw off' or similar.⁸ It would be pointless to ask the *puella* to shake up her own frowns, take a look at the crimes or recriminations falling from them, but ultimately keep them and her old-fashioned attitude. Burmann found the phrase *excute rugae* in the sense of 'wipe out the frowns' spurious due to the lack of parallels, but as we may imagine a wider (and less precise) meaning of *excutere*, this alone is no valid reason to change the text.⁹

In my opinion a much more problematic part of the text is the result Dipsas predicts: *de rugis crimina multa cadent*. The MSS all have the future tense.¹⁰ This is not a general statement but connected directly to *excute* and to the actions of the *puella*. The interpretation I suggested above renders the distich enigmatic at best, as it cannot be properly understood unless read in the context of the following passage on the rapid passing of time. Time, however, is mentioned explicitly only in 49 (*labitur occulte fallitque uolatilis aetas*) and the retrospective interpretation of not only *crimina multa cadent* but also the understanding of Penelope as a woman wasting her youth depends on that line. The reader is left in the dark for an entire three lines before he is provided with relevant information to resolve the puzzle. In those three verses, the motive changes from chastity as outdated to the dangers of passing time. This could be Ovid's way of associatively connecting sections with disparate motives; still I think it grants us a weak and logically dubious ending to the section on moral standards. It seems distinctly unlike Ovid.

⁷ Ov. Am. 1,8,49-54 read in full *labitur occulte fallitque uolatilis aetas, / ut celer admissis labitur amnis aquis. / aera nitent usu, uestis bona quaeri haberi, / canescunt turpi tecta relicta situ: / forma, nisi admittas, nullo exercente senescit; / nec satis effectus unus et alter habent*. (Fickle time slips away secretly and fools us like the rapid stream runs, letting the waters flow. Bronze shines with use, beautiful clothing begs to be worn and once you have left them behind, old homes are ruined by shameful disuse. Beauty, if you don't let it shine, will fade as no one benefits from it – and one or two won't be enough.)

⁸ For *excutere* in this transferred sense, ThLL s.v. *excutio* I.a.b.; OLD s.v. *excutio* 3: "to throw or shake off (physical or mental conditions, attitudes etc)".

⁹ Burmann says "dubito vero an Latine dicatur, *excutere rugas frontis*, pro diffundere vultum, et a tetrico ad blandum transferre." (ad loc.) The reading *pro rugis* instead of *de rugis*, which Burmann claims to have seen in F makes the imagery less strained but does not contribute to our understanding of the phrase *excutere rugas*.

¹⁰ Emending *cadent* to present active, *cadunt*, does not help matters much. Though the sentiment that up-tightness causes a lot of trouble fits the character of a *lena* quite nicely, this would still have to be interpreted as *crimina* in the sense of a criminal waste of time and, and, again, the transition to the distich on Penelope would pose severe problems, since – as we shall see presently – Dipsas' appraisal of Penelope is a positive one.

If we are to be able to make sense of *crimina multa cadent* using the text given in the MSS, the distich on Penelope has to be about time and about the misuse of time. Let us look again at what Dipsas says:

Penelope iuuenum uires temptabat in arcu; 1,8,47
qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat.

(Penelope tested the powers of the young men by the bow; horny was the bow that proved their loins.)

If the Homeric Penelope perhaps set up the contest of the bow as an impossible obstacle for the suitors well knowing that no-one but Ulysses would be able to string the bow,¹¹ the understanding of the contest as an evasive movement does not carry to Dipsas' Penelope. On the contrary, Dipsas says that Penelope took action and openly displayed her interest in getting herself a new partner. She tested the strength of her suitors in order to assess their capacity. We do not need to invoke the sexual-erotic subtext¹² in the description of the contest in order to determine that Dipsas' appraisal of Penelope is basically positive, but if we do, then we have Penelope actively taking sexual advantage of the fact that she may choose among the young suitors, something we can safely assume is to Dipsas' liking.

The distich on Penelope is not about time. This incapacitates the already feeble link between *crimina multa cadent* (46) and *uolatilis aetas* (49). Thus, we are forced to find other strategies to make sense of *crimina multa cadent*. The material we have to work with, the distich 45-46 is fraught with expressions of, though not in and by themselves unintelligible, quite unusual and demanding character (*excute rugas*, *has quoque*, the loose ends of *crimina*, the connexion of *excute* and *cadent* etc). The resolving of such a problematical passage is only possible through careful consideration of the context and as the efforts to render the distich meaningful in the light of 49-54 have proven less than rewarding, we must turn again to the assumption that the distich belongs thematically to the passage on what a nuisance true chastity is.

Burmman's conjecture

The readings allowed by the MSS have already been rejected. Burmann's emendation of *quas* [...] *portas* to *quae* [...] *portant* in 45 has been widely accepted, and I think it does offer an elegant solution to the problem of translating *crimina multa cadent* in 46. The changes to the text are not dramatic.¹³ The extant MSS including the *Amores* go back on one single branch of transmission (though they have been transmitted independently of one another since),¹⁴ so if a metrically and grammatically impeccable corruption entered the tradition early enough, it is not unlikely that it would still be the only reading available to us. A close and critical reading of the poem would have been the only way to discover that the passage was dubious in any way.

¹¹ As suggested by Marquardt, 1985, 41. The question of whether Homer's Penelope recognizes her husband even before the contest cannot be addressed here. Katz, 1991, 93-113 provides an overview of historical and more recent scholarship, as does Doherty, 1995, 31-56.

¹² *uires*, *arcus*, *latus* and *corneus* may all carry sexual implications, as shown by McKeown, 1989, 226f; Adams, 1982, 21f.

¹³ Barsby, 1973, 99 n. 25. Even if it in all likelihood does not go back on any collation with MSS unknown to us, the correction of *portas* to *portant* noted in c by Munari, 1951, lends further support to the theory that this is indeed a damaged part of the text. By McKeown, 1987, 131-133 this MS is referred to as Jc, by de Verger, 2003, xxxv as V3).

¹⁴ McKie, 1986, 236-238.

If we accept Burmann's conjecture, *has* no longer relates to *rugas*, but to 'the women, who wear frowns on their foreheads'. *Excute* may be taken as a command directed either personally to the *puella* or as more generally, introducing a statement of universal truth. The word may be used in one of the its transferred senses, 'scrutinize' (*examinare*), or in a literal, yet more specific one, namely to 'shake up something, so that things fall out of it'¹⁵

Dipsas thus asks the *puella* to take a closer look at the women who display a stern and morally forbidding attitude. Then she predicts the result – from the frowns of these women, too, many a crime will fall. For this translation, one draws on the most basic meanings of the words. Furthermore, editors from Burmann and onwards have delighted in the secondary significance of *rugas* and *excute*, which additionally may be a reference to the creases in the *stolae* worn by the Roman *matronae*.¹⁶

A reference to chaste women with disapproving attitudes, who nevertheless engage in affairs of a dubious nature, follows seamlessly on the statement that Venus now rules supremely in the city which earlier was known for its strict morals (39-42) and that the only reason a woman living in contemporary Rome would remain chaste would be her hopeless *rusticitas* (44). It also renders Dipsas' positive appraisal of Penelope, which forms the next distich, meaningful. Penelope has the reputation of a paragon of virtue, but (such is Dipsas' claim) in the contest of the bow she cleverly went after that which she wanted.¹⁷ Due to her proverbial fame as the faithfully waiting wife, the statement that Penelope too took an active interest in other men, becomes the climax of Dipsas' argument and thus ends the section on chastity.

Moreover, it is structurally sound to consider 47-48 the end of the preceding section since Penelope's actions, as understood by Dipsas, turn out to be a close parallel to the beginning of Dipsas' speech against the overly chaste. By the contest of the bow, Penelope tested many suitors by one objective criterion. This is precisely what Dipsas sets out to convince the *puella* to do. In the second distich of the section, she admonishes:

cum bene deiectis gremium spectabis ocellis, Ov. Am. 1,8,37
quantum quisque ferat, respiciendus erit.

(All the while you'll look down on your lap with eyes lowered in good manners, you shall consider carefully how much each one might bring.)

¹⁵ Cf. *ThLL*, s.v. *excutio* II. 2.

¹⁶ Burmann states "lusus est in duplici significatione verbi *excute*. Sic enim excutimus et matronas, et ipsas *rugas* frontis, ut vestes excutimus, ne in *rugis* quid pulveris aut sordis haereat, sed inde cadat." See also Barsby, 1973, 97-99; McKeown, 1989, 224-226, both with further parallels.

¹⁷ There is at least one later parallel for this interpretation of the contest of the bow (as quoted by both Brandt, 1963, 64 and McKeown, 1989, 226) in *Priap.* 68, 29-45: *quae* (sc. Penelope) *sic casta manes, ut iam conuiuia uisas / utque futurorum sit tua plena domus. / e quibus ut scires quicumque ualentior esset, / haec es ad arrectos uerba locuta procos: / 'nemo meo melius neruum tendebat Vlix, / siue illi laterum siue erat artis opus. / qui quoniam periit, uos nunc intendite, qualem / esse uirum sciero, uir sit ut ille meus'*. (You, (sc. Penelope), who remain so chaste that you even visit the feasts and your house is full of men to sleep with. To find out which of them was the best, you said to the roused suitors: 'No one spanned the bow better than my Ulysses, whether it took force or cleverness. But as he has perished, now you span it, so I can tell which of you men is of such a kind, that he can be mine.'). On *Priap.* 68, cf. also Goldberg, 1992, 321-322; 340-344. The notion that Penelope betrayed Ulysses with one or several of the suitors or with a god was widespread above all in Hellenistic times, for an overview of this alternate tradition, see Jacobson, 1974, 246-248.

The similarities between Dipsas' admonishments in 37-38 and Penelope's actions bracket the section on chastity and make it even more likely that the distich on Penelope does indeed end the section.

We may refer not only to the structure of the passages on chastity and time to support the decision to alter the text, but further to the overall structure of the poem as well: the emendation renders Dipsas' speech rhetorically effective on two levels, namely both in relation to the internal 'reader' (the *puella*) and the external one (Ovid's reader). While the conjecture allows Dipsas rhetoric coherence and to end this section of her speech on a dramatic and irreverent note we would do well to expect of a *lena*. The surprise and possible apprehension that the external reader might feel at the notion of an erotically interested Penelope helps to denigrate Dipsas and indirectly makes the external reader more sympathetic towards the narrator, a narrator who is eavesdropping on the *lena*. Dipsas' interpretation of the events in Homer provides the end of the passage with a witty twist: this, of course, is very much like Ovid.

Bibliography

- Adams, J. N. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. London, 1982.
- Barsby, J., ed. *Ovid's Amores: Book 1*. Oxford, 1973.
- Borneque, H., ed. *Ovide. Les Amours*. 3 ed. Paris, 1961.
- Brandt, P., ed. *P. Ovidi Nasonis. Amorum Libri Tres*. Hildesheim, 1911. 1963.
- Burmanning, P., ed. *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Opera Omnia. Cum Integris Notis Const. Fanensis, H. Glareani, J. Micylly, Herculis Ciofani, Dan. Et Nic. Heinsiorum Et Aliorum, Quibus Et Suas Adnotationibus Adjecit Petrus Burmannus*. Amsterdam, 1727.
- de Verger, R., ed. *Carmina Amatoria : Amores, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris. P. Ovidius Naso, Edidit Antonio Ramírez De Verger*. München, 2003.
- Doherty, L. E. *Siren Songs. Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey*. Ann Arbor, 1995.
- Goldberg, C. *Carmina Priapea. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Interpretation Und Kommentar*. Heidelberg, 1992.
- Gross, N. P. "Ovid, *Amores* 1, 8: Whose Amatory Rhetoric?" *CW* 89, 1995-1996, 197-206.
- Jacobson, H. *Ovid's Heroides*. Princeton, 1974.
- Katz, M. A. *Penelope's Renown. Meaning and Inteterminacy in the Odyssey*. Princeton, 1991.

Kenney, E. J., ed. *P. Ovidi Nasonis. Amores. Medicamina Faciei Femineae. Ars Amatoria. Remedia Amoris*. Oxford, 1961. rev. 1995.

Marquardt, P. "Penelope Polutroponos." *AJPh* 106, 1985, 32-48.

McKeown, J. C., ed. *Ovid: Amores. Text, Prolegomena and Commentary in Four Volumes*. Vol. 1. 4 vols. Leeds, 1987.

McKeown, J. C., ed. *Ovid: Amores. Text, Prolegomena and Commentary in Four Volumes*. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Leeds, 1989.

McKie, C. S. "Ovid's Amores: The Prime Sources for the Text." *CQ* 36, 1986, 219-238.

Merkel, R., and R. Ehwald, eds. *P. Ovidius Naso. T. I, Amores ; Epistulae ; Medic. Fac. Fem. ; Ars Amat. ; Remedia Amoris*. Leipzig, 1888. 1915.

Munari, F., ed. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores*. Firenze, 1951. 1970.

Showerman, G., ed. *Ovid in Six Volumes. Heroides and Amores*. Cambridge and London, 1914. 1971.