

Love and Death: Epitaphic Intermediality in Ovidian Erotodidaxis

In a recent study of allusions to inscriptional formulae in Latin verse, Martin Dinter (2013) has convincingly argued that the apostrophe *tu quoque* (*te quoque*) may invoke epitaphic associations, adapted from Greek καὶ σὺ but already at home in Latin, a prime example being the poet's address to *Aeneia nutrix* in the opening of *Aeneid* VII (already recognized briefly by Merkelbach 1971), borrowing not just language but also material and generic associations from another medium (thus "intermediality"). Examples of this formula multiply in the bloody conflicts of the second half of Vergil's epic, although Virgil is also capable of playing against the generic expectation. Obviously not every *tu quoque* in Latin verse (even in initial position) operates as an "epitaph," but exploration of Ovid's use of this potential "systemic marker" for impending, most often metaphoric death in his didactic works in elegiac verse on eros offers the potential for seeing new, more comic associations to his advice.

Beginning with examples from the *Remedia Amoris* with its programmatic emphasis on terminating love may also help with reading the trope in the earlier *Ars Amatoria*. One of the most effective means to cure oneself of a love is to stop talking about it: *tu quoque, qui causam finiti reddis amoris, / ... parce queri; melius sic ulciscere tacendo* (RA 643-645). Ironically employing the language that attempts to revivify the dead by addressing them (or allowing them to address us), the poet prescribes silence. Less obvious, although potentially even funnier, is the advice to stop reading poets who talk about love, especially Callimachus and the allusively invoked but unnamed Philetas (*Callimachum fugito: ... et ... tu quoque, Coë, noces, RA 759-760*)—particularly if Coan Philetas is no longer available to be read, thus "dead" as a writer (so Luck 1969², Bulloch 1973).

The final book of the *Ars Amatoria* contains the most instances of *tu quoque*, five in total with four at line beginning. Fatal associations for the first two are either very subtle or ironic. 3.223-228 advises women never to appear without makeup or adornment (and thus “kill” the lover’s illusions?). Next, however, while the poet reassures his audience that he is not addressing such exceptional women of myth, the meiotic praise of Trojan Paris for retaining possession of Helen (*tu quoque non stulte, Troice raptor, habes*, 3. 254, taken as quite sincere by Gibson 2003), bodes well neither for Paris nor his wisdom. The final instances offer increasingly harsh advice to women of advancing age or failing response. The woman marked by childbirth should ride reversed like a Parthian (3.785-786)—a potentially deadly enemy (all the more so if we read *maenas* for *mater* at 783). Finally, he advises faking it to the woman who does not experience orgasm (3.797, *tu quoque, cui veneris sensum natura negavit ...*), and though the poet may seem sympathetic, the language marks this as the wrong kind of *petite mort*.

The first-time reader likely hears no epitaphic association to the first instance of *tu quoque* in the *Ars Amatoria*, but such associations gradually accumulate in the course of this poem and the *Remedia*. Thus a re-reader may find something less hopeful in that first address to one in search of a “long love”: “*tu quoque, materiam longo qui quaeris amori ...*” (1.49).

Works Cited

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