

Omnis amans: A Curious Military Career

Ovid essentially patented the image of the elegiac lover as a soldier with the opening of *Amores* I.9:

Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido;

Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans.

Underscoring the importance of the theme, he echoes the opening hemistich at the end of the pentameter, which J.C. McKeown identifies as "a favourite trick of style with Ovid" and likely influenced by the rhetorical figure of *conduplication* (McKeown 1988: 260-261). A likely testament to the popular success of the phrase and image is a (now apparently lost) graffito at Pompeii that read: *militat omnes* (CIL 4.3149).

The phrase *omnis amans* is attested in classical Latin verse only two other times, both in the same metrical position. The first is Ovid quoting himself, though only McKeown in his *Amores* commentary seems to have noticed it, simply referring to it as an "echo." It seems to be a bit more than that, however, as Ovid moves from description to advice.

At *Ars Amatoria* I. 723-730 Ovid is giving advice on how his reader should perform the role of lover—and what he should look like while doing so. Ovid details the manly pursuits that should provide a healthy tan as proof: sailor, farmer, and athlete. His cheeky method of doing so is to denote a lack of tan as *turpis*, ringing several changes on this adjective. He positions it at the caesura of 723, as the penultimate word in 728, and most emphatically at the beginning of 725. While service at sea and pursuing athletic fame might not be central to traditional Roman self-definition, farming life certainly was. That makes it all the more intriguing that the other defining aspect of Roman citizenship (which would certainly provide a tan) is the outdoor pursuit missing

here: service as a soldier. The *turpis color* becomes the defining color for the lover in a phrase metrically identical to *Amores* I.9:

palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti;

hoc decet, hoc stulti non valuisse putant. 730

By substituting the hortatory verb for the descriptive one, *militat omnis amans* becomes *palleat omnis amans*. Ovid quotes himself without quite quoting himself while defining his amatory pupil in performance as the pale image of the absent soldier on actual campaign.

The one other use of *omnis amans*, again in the same metrical position, performs some remarkable ideological work on the original military image. It comes in *Hymn* 13 of Prudentius's *Peristephanon*, devoted to the martyrdom of St. Cyprian. The opening of the hymn emphasizes both Cyprian's role as martyr as well as teacher and writer. The first words give his origin as Punic (*Punica terra tulit*, 1), positioning him perhaps among Rome's traditional enemies but then as truly belonging to the Roman *patria* by love and language (*amore et ore noster*, 3). This amatory heritage might seem quite general, but the conclusion of the opening section enacts the fusion of the Roman and Christian identity (7-8):

dum liber ullus erit, dum scrinia sacra litterarum,

te leget omnis amans Christum, tua, Cypriane, discet.

(text Thompson 1953, cf. Lavarenne 1963)

The hyperbolic conclusion here is that as long as written literature lasts (*dum liber ullus erit*), every lover of Christ will read Cyprian. As Michael Roberts (1993: 122) notes, "The prophecy of immortality for Cyprian's writings ... takes a form that recalls the claims of pagan poets for the survival of their own works," going on to cite the most familiar topos of Horace *Odes* 3.30.8-9.

A more specific allusion, however, introduces line 8: *te leget omnis amans*. Written in the greater Archilochean meter, every line of the hymn opens with four dactylic or spondaic feet, followed by three trochees. Thus it accommodates perfectly the opening pattern of dactyl + *omnis amans*, wherein the dactyl contains the main verb. Prudentius innovates by giving the participle its own, tremendously important object: *amans Christum*. The Ovidian echo here thus alludes to the classical heritage as the same time as it implicitly proposes an entirely new literary education for the faithful Christian, in the new Christian classics and perhaps offers a further link to the soldierly martyrs for Christ.

Bibliography

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