

Winter on the Steppes: Tristia 2.187-20; 3.10.7-16 & 58-60; 3.12.1-2

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Abstract: *We begin with the premise that the text of Ovid's Tristia is much more corrupt than has been imagined. To support our thesis we discuss Tristia 3.10.7-16, the passage in which Ovid describes the arrival of winter in Dobrogea. Hand in hand with our arguments for textual change we also discuss the literary merits of the emendations. This will take us into the territory of Ovid's overall poetic strategy in his exile poetry.*

We begin by calling into doubt received assumptions regarding Ovid's arrival in Dobrogea and the weather that greeted him. As our argument proceeds we analyse Ovid's geographical position viz-a-viz the northern polestar, as well as the effects of the winter wind on the populations of Dobrogea (including secondary effects produced by the freezing of the Danube).

In replacing 'opes' with 'oves' at Tr. 3.10.58, we re-establish the importance of sheep as the basis of the wealth of settled farmers. This leads us on to a consideration of the lifestyle of the nomads whose shadowy presence in the poetry is re-asserted through the word 'patulae' (Tr.3.10.12). By comparing passages of Strabo relating to the Desert of the Getae, we demonstrate how the names of four nomadic tribes had become corrupted at Tristia 2.191.

After a discussion of Ovid's portrayal of snowfall, we question the famous assumption that snow could remain on the ground for up to two winters. This will lead us into a discussion of Tr. 3.12.1-2 where the emendation 'Tanaitis' will be the catalyst for an exploration of themes as diverse as creative etymologies, the Golden Age, the orthography of Latin under Augustus, and the Roman calendar in January. This will bring the focus of our work back to the nomads and their role as a touchstone of the true Golden Age.

Our overall aims are to provoke interest in the profundity of Ovid's text and the manifold interpretations that can be extracted from within the compass of, very often, a single couplet.

Key words: *Tomis, text, emendation, nomads, Dobrogea, Tristia, Ovid, subtextual, winter, milk, Golden Age, life, Rome, exile, Tanaitis, Tyrogetae, metapoetic*

Introduction

The first part of this paper will attempt to suggest emendations for, and textual reconfigurations of, a passage in Ovid's Tristia, namely 3.10.7-16, which the author considers particularly corrupt. The main recommendations in favour of the changes will be the resulting improvements to the narratological coherence and literary interest of the passage concerned. One of the verses to come under scrutiny will be Tristia 3.10.16 which contains Ovid's well-known claim that, in certain places, the snow in Tomis, the location of his exile, could take up to two years to melt. This will involve consideration of further passages, in particular Tristia 3.12.1-2, which in our opinion are themselves in need of textual reconfiguration. The passage from 3.10, as it stands in the Oxford Classical Text of S.G. Owen (1915), is printed below¹. For ease of reference the words under suspicion have been highlighted in bold italics. During our analysis, all suggested emendations will be in bold.

¹ All translations in this article are the author's unless expressly credited to others and all line references mentioned in our discussions will be drawn from the passage as it appears on this page, unless expressly stated.

*dum tamen aura tepet medio defendimur Histro
ille suis liquidus bella repellit aquis.
at cum tristis hiems squalentia protulit ora,
terraque marmoreo est candida facta gelu,
dum prohibet Boreas et nix habitare sub Arcto,
tum patet has gentes axe tremente premi.
nix iacet, et iactam ne sol pluviaeque resolvant
indurat Boreas perpetuamque facit Tristia*

*ergo ubi deliquit nondum prior, altera venit,
et solet in multis **bima** manere locis’.*

Tristia 3.10.7-16

11 prohibet *Owen*; patet et *codd.*; parat et *Owen 1889*; petit et *Ellis*; habitare Γς: iniecta ς
dum volat et B e.n. agitata. A Voigel 12 patet] liquet ς 13 ne G; nec *AHPVω* resolvant
Ehwald resolu//nt G; resoluunt *cett. Codd.*

While however the breeze is warm, we are protected by the intervening Hister; when free-flowing he wards off attacks with his waters. But whenever grim Winter has thrust forth his scaly face, and the land has been made white by the marble-like ice, while Boreas and the snow prohibit one to live under Arctos, then it is clear that these tribes are hard pressed by the trembling axis. The snow lies and, once fallen, lest the sun and rain dissipate it, Boreas renders it solid, making it last for an indefinite period. Thus, when the first snowfall has not yet melted, another one arrives, and it is wont to abide for two years in many places⁷

In this famous poem Ovid describes the weather and the hardships of life in Tomis. We know he had travelled to Tomis during the December of this same winter (Tr.1.11.3). In this passage he concentrates on the combined effect of the wind and precipitation on the landscape. Somewhat surprisingly, the first two lines in the passage (7-8) detail the main effects of a mild breeze during which there is a degree of safety in Dobrogea thanks to the free-flowing Hister which prevents incursions from north of the Hister². Ovid is almost certainly writing this poem at the beginning of the spring following his arrival, as poem 3.12.1-2 seems to prove. However, as we shall see, the couplet 3.10.7-8 could relate both to his arrival in Tomis before the winter solstice (‘bruma’) and to the onset of the following spring.

The Late Onset of Winter and the Early Onset of Spring

Pliny (14.11) tells us something that was obvious to this author in Bucharest in 1978 and 1979. December can be a mild month in the Balkans. At one point in his *Natural Histories*, the geographer describes as follows the production of a specific type of Greek wine, ‘aegleukos’: ‘they put the must straight from the vat into jars which they store under water until the weather is regularly cold after the winter solstice’ (‘donec bruma transeat et consuetudo fiat algendi’)³. Here ‘bruma’ must mean ‘the winter solstice’, if the passage is to make any sense. Pliny dates the winter solstice to 24 or 25 December (18.221: ‘ad VIII kal.Ian. fere’ ‘around 25 December’). We would argue that lines Tr.3.10.7-8 effectively give us a ‘terminus ante quem’ for Ovid’s arrival in Tomis, because these lines refer *inter alia* to a period during the mildness of mid-December before the persistent cold takes a grip.

² The Hister is the ancient name of the Danube and is generally preferred by Ovid as a title

³ At NH 18.231 Pliny’s mention of Democritus’ view that the weather on the solstice predicted the weather for the rest of the winter also suggests December could be at least intermittently mild

In lines 7-8, the word ‘dum’, with the present indicative in both clauses, suggest that the events described have taken place on at least two occasions. That is, the conjunction suggests the author is making a justified generalisation (‘whenever and for as long a time as the breeze is mild, the Hister is free-flowing and prevents Dobrogea being invaded from Scythia to the north’). Ovid has witnessed two periods of light breeze (a) before the ‘bruma’ of late December and (b) at the coming of the following spring. In fact Ovid is writing this poem not much further into March than the Ides as we shall see. As he writes 3.12 meanwhile the spring westerlies (the breezes) will have been prevalent for some time since the Hister will not melt overnight (nor will it do so on any occasion that it is frozen). Meanwhile, the fact that Ovid begins the poem with a picture of mild weather suggests rather that it is mild as he look out of his window, than that mildness greeted him on arrival in Romania.

The dating of Tr.3.10 to mid-March is based on the following logic. Two poems later, at 3.12.1, Ovid dates the arrival of the spring Zephyrs to the period around the spring equinox (3.12.4). However he follows this poem with a poem about the unwelcome arrival of his birthday (3.13). We know from Tristia 4.10.11-15 that his birthday fell on March 20th because it coincided with the first day of the gladiatorial combats at Minerva’s Quinquatrus festival. The dates of the Quinquatrus are confirmed by Fasti 3.808-814. Ovid’s birthday then six days before Ovid’s date for the spring equinox, which is 26th March (Fasti 3.877-878). Thus, when in 3.12 (written before his birthday on 20th March) Ovid says that Aries ‘makes equal the times of day and night’ he must mean that Aries ‘is in the process of making the times of day and night equal’. Furthermore the words ‘frigora iam Zephyri minuunt’ (3.12.1) must mean that ‘already the Zephyrs are diminishing the cold’ because we have established above that, two poems earlier, at 3.10.7-8 Ovid had witnessed not only the departing mild winds of mid-December but also the arrival of the spring mild winds which had melted the Hister. Thus, winter in the Black Sea, considered as the season of sub-zero temperatures, lasts less than three months.

The Face of Winter:

We will return to this point in our discussion of Tr.3.12. Returning to Tr.3.10, the couplet on the mild temperatures of December and March should be followed by two pairs of balancing couplets, each pair introduced by ‘cum’ and ‘tum’ respectively. These clauses will introduce the opposite scenario, namely the arrival of winter and its main effects. The text, we suggest, should contain two perfect tenses after ‘cum’ (9-10) followed by two present tenses after ‘tum’, (‘once this and this has happened then this and this is what results ...’). This suggests that in line 11, the word ‘*dum*’ (or ‘nec’ in some editions)⁴ should be replaced by the ‘*tum*’ of line 12.

Now, the perfect tenses of lines 9-10 after ‘cum’, followed by the present tenses of lines 11-12, ought to enforce the meaning of ‘whenever’ upon ‘cum’. This in turn means that sub-zero winter temperatures had come and gone at least once since Ovid had arrived at Tomis. This tends to suggest that there had been a cold snap when Ovid arrived after which the intense cold had subsided only to return around December 25th. It is therefore hard to imagine Ovid arriving later than the 17th of December just before the start of the three-day Saturnalia (17-19 December) as defined by Macrobius (1.10.23).

Now Winter’s thrusting forth of his face does not prevent us supposing that (a) winter also comes and goes or that (b) Winter is also thrusting forth other faces than his own, faces such as those of tribesmen crossing the frozen Hister from the north bank. Whenever the Hister freezes they follow the instinct of their herds to seek water, grass, and warmer temperatures further south. The word ‘squalentia’ means ‘barren’ [of land] and ‘unkempt’ of

⁴ See A.L Wheeler’s Loeb edition as revised by C. P. Goold (1996): line 11: ‘nec patitur’

people⁵. Both of these nuances have a background role to play but we prefer the meaning ‘scaly’ or ‘chapped’ as this crystallises and anticipates the effect of a freezing wind in sub-zero temperatures on the human ‘face’ which is, in any case, the only part of the Sarmatians that is exposed to the elements (3.19.20). Thus winter encourages us to see the faces of nomads coming and going into Dobrogea.

The Conditions in Dobrogea for smallholders and nomads: Emendations 3.58-60

This brings us to line 10 (‘terraque marmoreo est candida facta gelu’). This indirectly summons up (a) the picture of nomads continuing south in search of grass (b) the plight of a smallholder in Dobrogea whose sheep cannot access the grass⁶. The lot of the small-holder (‘incola’) is described at lines 58-60 where we propose a number of emendations to improve the coherence of the passage⁷. Firstly the word ‘opes’ at line 58 should read ‘oves’. The repetition of ‘opes’ in ‘opes / ruris opes’ (58-59) has no point. However, the introduction of sheep, whilst producing a concrete focus for the vignette, will also necessitate a further two corrections. Strabo describes the sheep in the area of Lake Maeotis as ‘large’ (7.3.18) and indeed among native Romanian breeds, the Turcana is hardy, very large and very popular amongst sheep-farmers⁸. In calling the Dobrogean sheep ‘the small wealth’ (‘ruris opes *parvae*’) of the countryside, Ovid will be guilty of either not reading his sources or of not opening his eyes. If, instead, we were to read ‘ruris opes *parvi*’ the sheep would acquire the appropriate, if slightly mock-heroic, label of ‘the wealth of the small estate’. In defining the sheep lamely as ‘the small wealth of the countryside’ Ovid will have detracted from the personalisation of the vignette and devalued the importance of the sheep to the small-holder. Furthermore the words ‘pecus et’ introduce an unwanted addition to the peasant’s smallholding in the form of presumably cattle. This wholly undermines the point of the sheep constituting the ‘the wealth or resources of the small estate’. It makes better sense to substitute ‘*pecus et*’ with ‘*simul et*’ (‘the unguarded sheep - the wealth of the small estate - are plundered, along with the creaking carts and whatever wealth the peasant pauper owns’). The nexus ‘*simul et*’ may have come under suspicion in the mind of a scribe since, as the equivalent of ‘*simul ac*’, the phrase regularly introduces a subordinate clause. Here it seems to be a connective. Nevertheless it can be construed as though the ‘*et*’ has been advanced *causa metri* (effectively reading ‘*et simul*’)⁹. On a final literary note, the fact that the sheep are unguarded underlines the danger and the cold. Even the perennial shepherd is nowhere to be seen.

Returning to 3.10.10, in migrating in winter to Dobrogea across the Danube, the nomads are fleeing worsening conditions further north. Strabo (7.3.17) tells us that to the

⁵ Note that Ovid himself is correspondingly ‘squalidus’ (‘dirty, unkempt’) as accorded with the conventional appearance in Rome of a person accused of a capital offence whose pathetic appearance is designed to excite mercy. He is about to suffer the exile’s fate of ‘*deminutio capitis*’ which means ‘the loss of civic rights’ but also (literally) ‘the subtraction of his head’ a reading which equates Ovid’s exile with physical decapitation’. Thus his squalid appearance keys into the allegorical death sentence that exile imposed. The same appearance was expected of a son mourning a dead father. In Ovid’s case he will be mourning his own demise as he too (like the Sarmatians) is ‘brought forth’ (as if on a bier) ‘*egredior ... / squalidus inmissis hirta per ora comis*’ (Tr.1.389-390). The appearance of a person as ‘squalidus’ however, also had a positive side in evoking rustic simplicity. The force of this nuance is also alive in our passage.

⁶ It may also conjure up the marble flagstones of Augustan Rome.

⁷ ‘*incustoditae diripiuntur opes / ruris opes parvae, pecus et stridentia plaustra / et quas divitias incola pauper habet*’

⁸ Dobrogea is still a popular destination in winter for transhumance shepherds and their flocks

⁹ We suggest the same solution applies to the crux at Tr.5.5. 45-46 (‘*nata pudicitia est, moris probitasque fidesque / at non sunt ista gaudia nata die*’). By replacing ‘*moris*’ or ‘*mores, morum, morem*’, Owen ‘*virtus*’ with ‘*simul et*’, the sentence becomes less overblown with detail, whilst the three abstract nouns inject an appropriate sense of dignity into the character of the ‘*matrona*’ in Rome.

north, between the Borysthenes river (Dneipr) and the Hister, there is first the Desert of the Getae followed by the Tyregetae ‘coming into the midst of whom’ (‘μεθ’ οὖς’) are three other tribes¹⁰. We suggest that ‘μεθ’ οὖς’ means these tribes (Iazyges, Basileia, Urgi) occupy terrain *within* the area that nominally belongs to the Tyrogetae, who since the Desert of the Getae stretches north from Tyras (see below), will occupy lands between Tyras and the Hister. In any case these tribes will not be heading for the Desert of the Getae since we are told it is ‘waterless’ (7.3.14).

At 7.3.14 we learn the Desert of the Getae forms an intermediary land mass ‘in front of’ or rather ‘beyond’ the stretch of sea between the Hister and Tyras¹¹. Strabo’s syntax is awkward but he seems to mean that this area is beyond Tyras (Dneister) to the north. This explains in part the attraction for nomads of the lands south of the Hister in winter. Heading towards the waterless north is not an option. In entering Dobrogea however (lines 33-34) they risk encountering an equally severe winter whilst also leaving themselves open to others crossing the river behind them with more aggressive intentions. We will return to the identity of the Tyregetans, who it is all-too-readily assumed must derive their name from Tyras.

The Proximity of Ovid to Boreas and the Polar Axis

The unappealing appearance of winter should now be followed in Ovid’s poem by a description of its general effect on the tribesmen who are the victims of elemental forces in line 11 and 12. However the true nature of that effect has been lost, we suggest, through textual corruption.

Currently, we have examined these four lines with only one alteration so far:

*at cum tristis hiems squalentia protulit ora,
terraque marmoreo est candida facta gelu,
tum prohibet¹² Boreas et nix habitare sub Arcto,
[] patet has gentes axe tremente premi.*

Tr. 3.10.9-12

Unfortunately, in line 12, the notion that Boreas and the snow forbid the nomads (or anyone else) to live under Arctus runs counter to Ovid’s assertions that Tomis is situated ‘under the axle of heaven’ (Tr.3.10.3; 3.2.1-2; 2.190). Such a climate would also make the migration of tribes across the Danube pointless, and render their animals’ instincts wholly misguided. Ovid specifically says that Tomis lies under the stars of Ursa Major. However Tomis is far from constituting the end of the inhabitable world. Lying further north than Tomis is the river Bosphoros, followed by the river Tanais and the Scythian marshes (Tr.3.4b.3). The Cimmerian Bosphoros constitutes the southern entrance to the Sea of Azov¹³

¹⁰ Strabo 7.3.17: ‘μεταξὺ Βορυσθένους καὶ Ἰστρου πρώτη μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν Γετῶν ἐρημία, ἔπειτα οἱ Τυρεγῆται, μεθ’ οὖς οἱ Ἰάζυγες Σαρμάται καὶ οἱ Βασίλειοι λεγόμενοι καὶ Οὐργοί’

¹¹ Strabo 7.3.14: ‘μεταξὺ δὲ τῆς Ποντικῆς θαλάττης τῆς ἀπὸ Ἰστρου ἐπὶ Τύραν καὶ ἡ τῶν Γετῶν ἐρημία πρόκειται πεδία πᾶσα καὶ ἀνυδροσ’.

¹² We suggest that ‘prohibet’ is a borrowing from Tristia 2.192 (‘prohibentur’) where the geography of Dobrogea is again under discussion.

¹³ Ovid mentions the crossing of Sarmatians with their wagons. In writing ‘bridges’ (‘pontes’) in the plural he must be referring to the ‘new’ or ‘strange’ ways of crossing the channels of the Danube (Tr. 3.10.33-34). Meanwhile the word Bosphoros (Tr.3.4b.49) must have brought the etymology of ‘cow-crossing’ to Ovid’s mind. Here the poet refers to the Cimmerian Bosphoros which, as Strabo tells us, froze between Panticapaeum (modern Kerch) and Phanagoria. Strabo (7.3.18) says that ‘the severity of the frosts is shown most clearly by what takes place in the area of the mouth of Lake Maeotis: the waterway from Panticapaeum to Phanagoria is crossed by wagons, such that it is both ice and roadway’. Ovid mentions the cows pulling the carts (‘ducunt ... barbara plaustra boves’: Tr.3.10.34) presumably towards the more southerly and warmer climes of Tomis during the winter. The carts we suggest will have crossed back to the north by the time the Hister melts (Tr.3.12.29-30). However our main point is that the word ‘Bosphoros’ throws a general etymological patina across the text. It

whilst ‘Tanais’ alludes to the debouchment of the River Don at the north-east corner of the Sea of Azov. Given the order of Ovid’s itinerary, the Scythian marshes should refer to the area above the mouth of the Don in the north-eastern corner of the non-saline Lake Maeotis (today’s Sea of Azov).

It is only beyond the Scythian marshes that Ovid records uninhabitable cold (‘ulterius nihil est nisi non habitabile frigus’: Tr.3.4b.51). In support of this division of habitable and inhabitable, we note that Strabo mentions the nomads wintering far to the north in the marsh-meadows of Maeotis where there is grass (7.3.18). These seem likely to be the same Scythian marshes as those mentioned by Ovid in Tr.3.4b since both authors maintain they are habitable. Strabo seems to confirm the uninhabitable nature of the land beyond (that is, north of) these Tanaitan marshes when he mentions the Roxolani as the last race between the Borysthenes to the north-west of the Black Sea and the Tanais. Beyond there, says Strabo, the land is not certainly inhabited.

In general Ovid laments being *close to the edge* of the world. Meanwhile, in another poem (Tr.3.2.11), although he comments that he ‘endures extremes’ we take this to mean ‘extremes of cold, and of danger’ based on the context which relates to Ovid’s sensitive body and mind surviving unimaginable trials¹⁴. Meanwhile Ovid is not quite under the same constellation as the Taurians who live close by under the axle of *almost the same* constellation (‘paene sub eiusdem sideris axe iacent’: Tr.4.4.62). The two Bear constellations (‘Major and Minor’: Tr.4.3) each enjoyed separate identities as the Plaustra or Wagons. Each of these wagons will have had its own vehicle ‘axle’, which, in the case of Ursa Major, will have been visibly close to the ground when the constellation was low on the northern horizon. The Lesser Bear however has the axle closest to the north polar star, a star which was itself called the axle of the heavens being the point around which the heavens rotate. Both Ovid and the Taurians are under the polar axle but the Taurians are slightly closer in being under a different Wagon axle. Thus the Taurians and Ovid are nearly under the same Bear but not quite. Today the land of the Taurians is known as the Crimea which supports the notion that the Taurians lived under the more northerly Lesser Bear.

In sum, Ovid lives under the polar axle but is aware of tribes that are even closer to it. Nevertheless even these more northerly tribes are not prevented from surviving at extreme latitudes, as we know from Ovid himself (Tr.3.4b.51), and from Strabo’s nomads wintering around the marshes of Maeotis. Thus the mixture of the north wind and snow is not as insuperable as it sounds.

It will be objected however that the passage Tristia 2.187-204 seems to push Tomis further towards the edge of the world. In this passage Ovid insists that of those exiled under Augustus, none has been exiled to a more remote location. Meanwhile, Tomis, he says, clings to the edge of the empire. In the same vein, the melted waters of the Hister now, it appears, *scarcely* hold back the northern aggressors¹⁵. However it must be remembered that this book is addressed uniquely to Augustus. Ovid will be inclined to embroider his arguments here in order to gain his request of a transfer to an ‘easier land’ and one closer to Rome. And, in any case, not even here in Tristia 2 is the end of the empire presented as coterminous with the end of the world, a fact which Ovid may even be keen to press for its capacity to belittle Augustus, the so-called restorer of the Golden Age, who in Virgil’s Eclogue 4 was to ‘rule the pacified world with his father’s virtues’ (4.17). Thus, even in Tristia 2, where Ovid’s

evokes frozen river crossings and the passage of ox-drawn carts whether the location is the Hister or Panticipaeum.

¹⁴ See also Ex Ponto 1.2.25

¹⁵ Tr. 2.192: ‘mediis vix prohibentur aquis’

rhetoric is clearly self-serving, it is conceded that, beyond Tomis, there are enemies and the cold. The land is not deserted, and neither, to Augustus' chagrin, is it pacified.¹⁶

Living and Breathing with Boreas

In line 11 Goold prints '**patitur**' in the Loeb edition and this is a step in the right direction. However his '*nec*' introduces an awkward negative clause which we have replaced with '**tum**'. The initial cause of the corruption we suggest stems from the fact that the offending scribe seems to have forgotten the nuance 'even' contained in the word 'et'. As often in translating, it is the one word that does not occur to one as being the source of difficulty which in fact provides the stumbling-block which leads to a loosening of one's grasp on the text. The best solution here is to assume that 'et nix' is a corruption of 'vix et'. Following that, a synonym for 'habitare' is required in order to ensure that the line scans. Thus line 11, we suggest, should read:

*'tum patitur Boreas vix et spirare sub Arcto'
'then Boreas scarcely permits one even to breathe under Arctus'*

The word 'spirare' also means 'to live' and we suggest that at one stage it was glossed by 'habitare' in order to direct the reader towards the scribe's preferred meaning of 'to live'. 'Habitare' then replaced its synonym at some stage in transmission. Now the line as emended elicits the power of Boreas. As line 14 of the poem will soon demonstrate, Boreas, which is a clearing wind arriving in the wake of precipitation, is so strong that it reduces the water and snow it encounters to ice. Later lines of this poem reveal more of the almost intolerable effects of Boreas and of its equivalent Aquilo which flattens 'towers'¹⁷ Thus Boreas' power is a given, a fact which supports our emendation.

This brings us to the well-known effects of strong wind on one's capacity to breathe. Although it seems counterintuitive, high wind blowing in one's face creates an area of low pressure, lower even than the pressure in one's lungs. The lungs rely on a reflexive transfer of air from a higher pressure zone (non-windy conditions outside the body) to the low pressure cavities of the lungs. In strong wind this equation is reversed with the result that the little air there is in the lungs tries to escape. This makes breathing difficult.

We would also suggest that the verb '**spirare**' as a synonym of '*habitare*' applies its force to the settled habitations of the tribes south of the Danube. That is, Boreas in freezing the Danube is responsible for the influx of northern aggressors against Dobrogean habitations and the destruction of the farmers' settled existence. The peasants are marched off as prisoners looking back at their 'hovels' being set alight (Tr.3.10.66). The verse, that is, also stands as an example of the North Danube zone making settled habitation in the South Danube zone almost impossible. Boreas is the wind but also the 'dangerous north'. The farmers find it hard to breathe ('spirare') but also hard to lead a farmer's life ('spirare'). Ploughing, which was by no means unheard of in winter depending on conditions, is out of the question here¹⁸.

Thus in the light of this line, the words 'patitur ... vix et spirare' here metamorphose into 'he scarcely allows them even *to survive south of Arctos*'. That is 'sub Arcto' does not mean '*under Ursa Major*' (as it would normally) but 'below' (south of it) it geographically. Boreas comes from the axis. There would be little point suggesting he freezes his own 'back yard'. His influence has spread south. Thus the words 'et spirare sub Arcto' should all be taken together ('even to live south of the Great Bear'). This complements our picture of the

¹⁶ Ovid complains about the wave congealed by ice (2.195) even though it is clearly not winter

¹⁷ Tr .3.10.17-18

¹⁸ Georgics 1.63-65: 'ergo, age, terrae /pingue solum primis extemplo a mensibus anni / fortes invertant tauri ...'

farmers and nomads finding life in Dobrogea difficult. It also confirms Ovid's position as close to Arctos.

Fear and Freezing under the Axle

Now we turn to the next line (12) which should continue the theme of survival. First of all the nexus 'axe tremente' is an easy one to formulate on the pattern of 'ore tremente'¹⁹. Yet the proximity of the very similar word 'premi' hints at a possible confusion between it and 'tremente'. In fact, in the exile poetry, in a passage in which Ovid is 'oppressed by the axis', the axle (the Polestar) is found with the verb 'premo' not with 'tremo'²⁰. The axle that 'presses upon' Ovid is, in general terms, Polaris which, as we have seen, literally 'presses' hard on the northern horizon when Ursa Major is low in the sky. However, as someone who also lies beneath the vehicle axis of the Plaustrum of Ursa Major, Ovid is also crushed a second time by a second axle. At Tristia 3.11. 27-28, 4.3.29-30, and 5.4.11 Ovid compares himself to the deceased Hector of the Iliad, tied to the axle of Achilles' chariot. Hector's position, just under the axle, is very clear in scenes on Athenian Black Figure Vases of the Leagros Group.

Meanwhile, the only objects which tremble in the exile poems are the earth, Ovid's hands, and people's mouths and lips. If then the nexus 'axe premente' is accepted, the rest of the sentence can be reformulated in the present tense as a generic scene of life on the steppes in winter. The verb 'premi' should be emended to 'tremunt', which in turn will mean that the tribes ('gentes') will become the nominative and the need for 'patet' and 'has' will disappear. In regard to the words 'patet has', we suggest that the word 'patulae' should be inserted at their expense. This produces the line:

*'et patulae gentes, axe premente, tremunt'
'and the wide-spreading tribes, oppressed²¹ by the axis, shudder'*

This line now contains a reference to the difficulty the tribes have in breathing. The axle pressing hard on the nomads becomes another way of saying that Boreas, the North Wind, is putting pressure on their lungs²². In support of this, the allusion to the north wind in the axle of line 12, is guaranteed on the grounds that Boreas is identified with the northern axle of the sky ('cum suo Borea': Tr.4.8.41; 'me ... / cumque suo Borea Maenalis ursa videt': Tr. 3.11.7-8). To some eyes, the word 'patulae' may be thought unconvincing at first sight. Indeed 'pavidae' ('fearful') would seem a better choice in its anticipation of the verb 'tremunt' ('tremble'). However (a) 'patulae' is easier to relate morphologically to 'patet' and (b) 'patulae', being a curious word to use of 'tribes', constitutes *ipso facto* the sort of word that may have led to the original emendation. One might at first sight assume these tribes are 'patulae' in the sense of being 'far-flung. However its principle nuance must be 'nomadic'. This reminds us that as well as Getae living on both sides of the Hister in Strabo, there are also the nomadic Sarmatici who cross the frozen Danube with their wagons in this poem (lines 33-34). These are the two ethnic groups most mentioned by Ovid perhaps because they reflect the distinction first implied here through 'patulae' ('nomads') and settled farmers.

Nomads

¹⁹ Tr.1.3.44.

²⁰ Tr.2.190: 'axe premor'.

²¹ To summarise, the polestar inflicts pressure on those under it partly because the axle of heaven is also the axle of the constellation Plaustrum ('wagon') which is coextensive with Ursa Major. The axle of a wagon is very low. It will tend to bear down metaphorically upon those below it.

²² The pressure will be paradoxically 'low' but in the minds of the ancients it will seem 'strong'.

As we have seen, the Desert of the Getae lay north of the river Tyras (modern Dneister). Strabo meanwhile, at 7.3.17, mentions the lands to the north of the Danube as belonging to the Tyrogetans²³. We have seen that Tyrogetans stretch from Tyras to the Hister and their porousness allows other tribes to infiltrate their territory as a matter of course. However the prefix ‘Tyra-’ may not derive from Tyras but from the word ‘τυρος’ (‘cheese’) which will immediately characterise these Getans as Nomads. As ‘Cheese-Getans’ they are, as we shall see, peaceable. They certainly allow other nomads free access to their lands. Thus their relationship to the city of Tyras reflects, we suggest, a misunderstanding of the prefix of their name. Ptolemy in the second century CE suggests they were the northern neighbours of Lower Moesia which puts them directly north of the Danube²⁴.

Thus it is the Tyrogetan lands through which the winter waves of (effectively ‘transhumance’) approach the Hister²⁵. The tribes are ‘ever-spreading’ rather than ‘spread out’. In winter this nomadic lifestyle spills over into Dobrogea. The tribes cross the Hister, after Ovid arrives, and indeed *whenever* the Hister freezes. They are seeking (in vain it seems) water and grass as far south as possible (Tr.3.10.33-34). They will return north before the snows melt. Thus when Ovid uses the word ‘defendimur’ in line 8 he is speaking only on behalf of himself and the Tomitans. The nomads are not in Dobrogea when the breeze is mild.

The names of the Nomads and their Tribes

Now it seems as though Ovid was trying to summarise the ethnographic picture along the Lower Danube in lines Tristia 2.197-198 and 191-192 as printed in Ingleheart’s text. However to clarify this text we return to Strabo. As the geographer says at 7.3.13, the Bastarnae and Sauromatae drive refugees south of the river Hister. These refugees then live among the Triballi. It is implied these refugees are Getans who are used to being mixed amongst the Thracians, of whom the Triballi are a tribe. So the Triballi experience the fate of other Thracians in being mixed up with Getans. However due to pressure from Illyrians to the north who defeat those Bastarnae and Sauromatae that remain in the north, the latter are impelled to turn defence into attack by crossing the Danube and re-attacking those Getans they had previously driven south.²⁶ Thus the Bastarnae and Sauromatae tend to find themselves ‘in the islands’ (Strabo 7.3.13) which we take to mean the islands of the Danube Delta. Certainly the Bastarnae take over the island of Peuce there (Strabo 7.3.17: ‘Βαστάρναι ... οἱ δὲ τὴν Πεύκην κατασχόντες τὴν ἐν τῷ Ἰστρῷ νῆσον Πευκῖνοι’).

Thus, south of the Danube, this domino-effect begun by the Illyrians, leads to the Bastarnae and Sauromatae occupying the Delta. We suggest that this is reflected in line Tristia 2.198 (‘proxima Bastarnae Sauromataeque tenent’). The verb indicates control of an

²³ See above. *Contra* Strabo, the Desert of the Getae is placed between the Danube at Chilia and the so-called Harbour of the Isiaci by Pseudo-Arrian in his *Periplus* (p.89 Hoffman ed. 1852). The distance given is 222 kilometres (1200 stades) which would take one as far as the *Bug* river.

²⁴ Ptolemaeos *Geographia* 3.5.25

²⁵ We call this tribe henceforth the Tyrogetans, spelt with an ‘o’, on the assumption that the prefix derives from the word in Greek for ‘cheese’

²⁶ Note that the Bastrane & Sauromatae are those referred to by ἐπιδιαβαίνειν but it is also they who remain amongst the islands and Thrace; translators sometimes assume that it is the ones they attack who remain, but they are there already. Strabo 7.3.17: ‘καὶ τὸ τῶν Τριβαλλῶν δ’ ἔθνος, Θρακικὸν ὄν, τὸ αὐτὸ πέπονθε τοῦτο. μεταναστάσεις γὰρ δέδεκται, τῶν πλησιοχώρων εἰς τοὺς ἀσθενεστέρους ἐξαναστάντων, τῶν μὲν ἐκ τῆς περὶ τῆς Σκυθῶν καὶ Βασταρνῶν καὶ Σαυροματῶν ἐπικρατούντων πολλάκις, ὥστε καὶ ἐπιδιαβαίνειν τοῖς ἐξελαθεῖσι καὶ καταμένειν τινὰς αὐτῶν ἢ ἐν ταῖς νήσοις ἢ ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ: τῶν δ’ ἐκ θατέρου μέρους ὑπ’ Ἰλλυριῶν μάλιστα κατασχομένων’

area or occupation of land not strictly one's own. This area, the delta & Peice, is very close to Ovid's home in Tomis ('proxima') and fits very precisely with Strabo's picture.

Tristia 2 must have been written during the warmer months of Ovid's first calendar year in Tomis because he next mentions the Hister's waters keeping the northern tribes at bay ('Ciziges, et Colchi Matereaue turba Getaeue / ... 'prohibentur': Tr.2.191-192). These will be the nomads on the other side of the Hister living essentially in a parallel universe as spectators of the conflicts amongst the Getans, Bastarnae and Sauromatae. Yet Strabo whose text was so useful in identifying the Bastarnae and Sauromatae, has very different names for these tribes. He mentions the Tyregetae with the Sarmatic Iazyges, the Basileia and the Urgi all funnelling southwards and some even becoming farmers on the Danube ('ἔπειτα οἱ Τυρεγέται, μεθ' οὓς οἱ Ἰάζυγες Σαρμάται καὶ οἱ Βασίλειοι λεγόμενοι καὶ Οὐργοί, τὸ μὲν πλεόν νομάδες, ὀλίγοι δὲ καὶ γεωργίας ἐπιμελούμενοι: τούτους φασὶ καὶ παρὰ τὸν Ἴστρον οἰκεῖν': 7.3.17).

However at Tristia 2.191 some manuscripts support the reading of Iazyges instead of Ciziges, as Ingleheart points out. At Ex Ponto 4.7.9 the Iazygians are portrayed as quintessential winter nomads crossing the frozen Hister. At Ex Ponto 1.2.77 however their fierceness comes under scrutiny. This may confirm Strabo's indication that they were of Sarmatian extraction and perhaps one of those tribes who also formed raiding parties. This is supported by Pliny and Ovid again who mentions their spears (Ibis 135). Iazyges also appear as mercenaries in Tacitus (Annals 12.29). Ingleheart however discounts the theory that Iazyges could be the true reading for Ciziges, since elsewhere the word 'Iazyx, Iazyges' does not suffer synizesis in the combining of I and A to form a single syllable. However later in this article we will examine the word 'Tanaitis' which we claim has suffered synizesis of A and I at Tristia 3.12.2. Whilst this is not the same diphthong, it does reveal Ovid's openness to experimentation when justified on literary grounds.

If Iazyges were accepted, then the word Colchi might be a corruption for Strabo's Urgi. In Greek the two words appear thus with the same number of letters each: 'KOAXOI' and 'OYPTOI'. However the most striking coincidences arise in the two names of Strabo's other contingents when compared with the current text of the Tristia.

If we start at the end, the nexus '*turbaue Getae*' can be defended on the grounds that the Getae were renowned for their presence on both sides of the Danube (Strabo 7.3.13). However '*turba Getaeue*' looks very like a corruption of '*Tyrogetaeue*'²⁷. If, as we suggest, the prefix relates to their nomadic lifestyle in meaning 'cheese' then the first syllable will be long, as required. One could compare the word TŶROTARICHUS. This word ('a cheese and fish dish') may also suggest that the second syllable of '*Tyrogetaeue*' should be an 'O'.

This leaves the word '*Matereaue*' to be reconciled with '*Basileia*' which seems a forlorn hope. However there are two singular coincidences here both of them based on etymological derivations. If a scribe were nonplussed by a proper noun he could do worse than to note possible etymologies in the margin of the manuscript. Now the last three syllables of '*Basileia*' are LE-I-A as the Ionic version of the word in Homer's *Odyssey* shows²⁸. Herodotus spells the name 'βασιλήια' similarly as a neuter plural (*Histories* 4.20). Now a puzzled scribe might have taken 'LEIA' as the Latin transliteration of the Greek 'λήϊη' on the grounds that the latter reflected the trisyllabic nature of the former. This word λήϊη means 'booty, plunder' and is the Ionic dialect's version of 'λεία'. The scribe might have thought he had hit upon the essence of this tribe's predatory nature as presented by Ovid. He then perhaps added it as a marginal gloss to reveal his learning. However the next

²⁷ Spelt variously elsewhere as Τυραγγεῖται, Τυραγγέται, or Τυρεγέται,

²⁸ Od.16.401: 'δεινὸν δὲ γένος βασιλήϊόν ἐστιν'

scribe may have imagined that λήϊη was not ‘λεία’ but ‘λειᾶ’ meaning ‘smooth’ in the feminine case. In such circumstances he or his successor, may have taken it upon himself to declare his (quite mistaken) understanding of this etymology in Latin. For that, he would have written ‘TERES’ (‘smooth’). At the same time he, or another, might have looked at the prefix of ‘Basileia’ and understood it to derive from the Greek word ‘βασίς’. This can mean ‘a metrical unit’ or, in Latin, ‘metrum’. Perhaps instead the scribe began with the Greek ‘μέτρον’ and a later scribe or himself transcribed it into the Latin ‘metrum’. In any case one manuscript at one point contained the juxtaposed words METRUM TERES as Latin glosses on Greek etymologies of ‘βασιλεία’. A monk imposed order on the text by fusing METRUM (‘βασίς’) together with TERES (‘λειᾶ’) to produce ‘METERES’ (‘βασιλεία’). Soon afterwards this was rationalised further as an adjective ‘MATEREA’ deriving from the ‘Materoi’ tribe of the north Caucasus region. If we accept this logic we can reinsert the word ‘Basileia’ whilst dispensing with ‘que’ to leave a pleasing balance of two pairs of substantives. The line now reads: “**Iazyges et Urgi, Basileia Tyrogetaeque**” = ‘The Iazyges and Urgi, the Basileia and Tyrogetae’.

*‘Of course in order for the line to scan we would have to assume it begins’ Iazyges atque Urgi ...’. This would also make the gradual corruption of the text more understandable (ATQUE URGI > ATQU’URGI > ATC’URGI > AT CURGI > ET CURGI > ET COLCHI)’.

As such, it now proves Ovid was an avid reader of Strabo. In any case we now know the identity of the nomads pushing south during the Tomitan winter. Like their cousin Getans, the settled smallholders, the Tyrogetans’ resources are the sheep from whose milk they get their name ‘Cheese-Getans’. The other tribes also struggle southwards. Some of these 4 tribes settle as Strabo says.

In sum, the sense of shuddering fear produced by ‘tremunt’ (line 12) stands in stark contrast to the sense of security that was afforded by the flowing waters of the Danube in the previous couplet. The cold and the fear make the tribes in Dobrogea ‘shake’ in winter. Ironically the cold is the catalyst for the fear produced by the raiding horsemen²⁹.

The scenes described later in the poem are ones that might have been witnessed from the wall of Tomis in around 100 BC³⁰. An inscription of that era records the setting up of a 40-man team to guard the walls following a period of external threat. After the danger had passed, sacrifices to the Mother of the Gods and to the Dioscuri were increased as a mark of gratitude for prayers answered. The tone of the inscription is almost as pathetic as the scenes Ovid may have witnessed (‘when the people on account of the difficulties of the times, being in sore distress and being oppressed [‘θλιβομενος’] subsided into a state of utter despair...’) The word ‘θλιβομενος’ means ‘hard-pressed’ and is an exact translation of ‘premo’ in Latin (‘axe premente’). It is not impossible that Ovid had seen this inscription and drawn literary inspiration from it³¹.

The Snow

That the cold affects the nomads goes without saying but the strength of the wind also physically ‘shakes’ them because as nomads they are exposed to it. However, further emendations are required in this passage in order to flesh out the picture of the nomads. Following the earth becoming encrusted in ice, Ovid provides an explanation of this process in line 13f. The poet, however, will not have imagined ‘the snow lying’ in Tomis (‘nix iacet’), for he has already told us that the ground is covered in marmoreal ice. The snow is not left to lie as snow for Boreas, we soon learn, makes the snow long-standing. It is also odd

²⁹ These are the two factors that most disturb Ovid in exile

³⁰ See also Tr.4.1.65-85; Tr.5.2.69-72.

³¹ Thus the axle in Ovid may also stand for ‘the northern aggressors’.

that the snow is only described as having been precipitated after it is said to lie (‘nix iacet et iactam ...’). In fact what has failed to attract the attention of the scribe is one of Ovid’s favourite rhetorical techniques and one that he had demonstrated (for our attention) in the previous poem. At *Tristia* 3.9.27 we are told that Medea dismembers the body of Absyrtus at Tomis. She then scatters the dismembered parts across the fields (‘atque ita divellit divulsaque membra per agros’). Here the immediate repetition of the same verb in the form of its past participle is very striking. Ovid frequently uses such a combination to inject speed into the narrative. Another example comes from the *Heroides* (4.64: ‘me tua forma capit, capta ...’). Meanwhile, in the text as we have it, the morphological similarity of ‘iacet’ and ‘iactam’ encourages us to seek the answer to the textual difficulty in the rhetorical trope mentioned above. Thus our preferred reading is:

*‘nix iacitur; iactam’ ne sol pluviaeque resolvant,
indurat Boreas perpetuamque facit*

‘the snow is deposited; having been deposited’, lest the sun and rains dissolve it, Boreas hardens it and renders it enduring for the time being’

We note how the juxtaposition of ‘iacitur; iactam’ reflects the sudden onset of Boreas. No sooner does the snow fall than Boreas descends to frustrate the best efforts of rain and sun to dissipate it.

The Myth of the Double Winter

We now come to an emendation which will be considered particularly controversial. Line 15 expands the description of Boreas as the freezer of snow (‘ergo’). When the first snow has not yet melted, another fall of snow follows with the result that the snow lasts two years in many places. Our view is that this is a hyperbole that Ovid would not have countenanced given his clear indications of the changing of the seasons³². Indeed to have snow continuing (‘to lie’) *in many places* is a clear sign of corruption in the text since the scribe is thinking of upland areas particularly sheltered mountain combs where snow will lie until at least May. There are no such combs around Tomis (at least certainly not ‘many’ beyond the Macin Mountains). Tomis is a place where the symptoms of winter should hardly vary from area to area. The scribe is perhaps influenced by the lying of the snow (‘nix iacet’) which we have suggested is itself a scribal error. Meanwhile a reference to the snow lying for two years cannot but jar when we are told Ovid has only recently arrived in Tomis. To speak in general terms about a truly remarkable phenomenon is unlike the author. He sets great store by his credibility as an eye-witness of ‘mirabilia visu’ (‘vidimus ... nec vidisse sat est ... vidimus’: 3.10.37, 39, 49). The story of a two-year Tomitan snow deposit is in our opinion an invention of the scribes³³.

Nevertheless, this famous hyperbole does have something to recommend it. It can be defended by *Ex Ponto* 1.2.24 (‘et quod iners hiemi continuatur hiems’; ‘and the fact that the lifeless winter is prolonged into another winter’). However we consider that this verse too has been altered to bring it into line with the earlier reference to a double winter. That is, a second mistake has been committed by a scribe relying on an earlier passage that he thought was genuine. In defence of the scribe, it is hard to forget a reference to a double winter once one reads about it. Thus another minor domino-effect has been set in train here to complement the effect of ‘nix iacet’ on line 13.

³² *Tristia* 3.10.7-10.

³³ If the Tomitan cold is severe all year round, one wonders why the snow only lasts two years and not many years in a row.

We consider first of all that the line Ex Ponto 1.2.24 should be emended as follows: ‘et quod iners *veri* continuatur hiems’ (‘and the fact that the sluggish winter is prolonged *into spring*’). The letters ‘IEMI’ should be replaced by ‘VERI’. This is precisely the sentiment expressed in Tristia 3.12.1-2. In that poem, the first two lines suggest that the local winter had encroached on spring:

*frigora iam Zephyri minuunt, annoque peracto
longior antiquis visa **Maiotis** hiemps Tristia 3.12.1-2*

*‘now the westerlies diminish the cold, and the year having finished,
the Maiotic winter seemed longer than those of yore’*

Tomitis Lachmann; antiquis vim moderatur Vogt; abscedit vix Tanaitis: Owen OCT 1889

Unfortunately of all doubtful passages in the Tristia line 2 of this poem is among the most disputed. specifically in regard to the word ‘Maeotis’. It thus behoves us therefore to attempt an emendation so that we may have a working assumption as to the location of this ‘winter’.

The Etymology of Tanaitis

We propose a reconfiguration of this line following a suggestion of Unger which was adopted by Owen at one stage. The word ‘*Maeotis*’ we suggest was another marginal gloss which found its way into the text at the expense of the original word, namely ‘Tanaitis’ with synzesis of the diphthong (‘longior antiquis visa **Tanaitis** hiemps’ = ‘the winter of [or perhaps ‘in’] Tanais has seemed longer than the ancient ones’). The grounds for our adoption of this suggestion are manifold. The word ‘Tanaitis’, despite the metre enforcing the synzesis of the diphthong ‘ai’, is perfectly chosen for its creative etymology, namely ‘the stretched year’. The Greek word ‘τανυω’ (‘tanuo’) means ‘I lengthen by stretching’ whilst ‘ταναιος’ means ‘stretched long’. The word ‘ταναιος’ evokes specifically that which is not naturally long but which has been ‘stretched’. Meanwhile ‘ετος’ (‘year’) equates to the word ‘winter’ or ‘hiemps’ which in Latin can express the passage of a ‘year’ and which here signals the end of the equinoctial year as indicated by ‘annoque peracto’ in line 1 (see also Tr.4.7.1-2: ‘... sol ... / suum tacto Pisce peregit iter’). Thus a combination of ‘tana- and -etos’ produces ‘Tanaitis’³⁴. This stretching is allegorically reflected in the double-letter length of the syllable ‘ai’ of Tanaitis which ought to be scanned as one short and one long syllable but has obeyed the force of its word’s etymology by stretching its ‘ai’ unnaturally viz-a-viz the expected ‘Tanāitis’. At the same time the etymology of the ‘stretched year’ is glossed by ‘longior antiquis ... hiemps’ (‘a year longer than those of yore’ = ‘stretched’).

This opens up another interpretative front. If this etymological analysis has any merit it must mean that Ovid was (also) thinking of the word ‘hiemps’ as meaning ‘a year’. Now there is also evidence that Ovid might have wished the reader to associate Tanais more closely to the Danube than we imagine. Seneca shows awareness of the cold 7-mouthed Tanais which correlates with the normally 7-mouthed Hister (‘septemlicem’: Tr.2.189). Zosimus writes Tanais three times at 1.23 when clearly referring to the Danube. Most interestingly Pseudo-Acro, a commentator on Horace says ‘Tanais flumen Scythiae dicitur, qui et Danubius est’ (‘Tanais is a river in Scythia, which is also called the Danube’).

Now as we have seen Ovid may have experienced the whole of a rather brief Tomitan winter if the mild wind he caught on arrival (3.10.7-8) had occurred at both the end of autumn and the start of spring. Moreover he can only interpret the current sentence as applying to himself if he takes ‘antiquis’ as meaning ‘than the bygone winters of Rome’. This would allow Ovid to make a witty point. The Romulan calendar year began on March 1st.

³⁴ The version of the text that adopts the nuance ‘year’ for ‘hiemps’ will we suggest provide a subtextual commentary on the year-round cold of Pontus.

Moreover the absence of January and February from that year technically made its winter very short. The Romulan year only lasted 304 days with 61 days unaccounted for in the winter. Thus one way of interpreting Ovid's couplet is to assume Ovid is making fun of the incompetence of the old Roman calendar. Certainly the Romulan and Numan calendar represented winters that could be described as 'antiquis' ('of days gone by')³⁵. On this reading of the poem, the word 'visa' should mean 'was visibly' (longer). All Ovid had to do was to check the Romulan calendar to 'see' that Romulus' winter was much shorter. In fact this comparison will hold good in relation to the Romulan 10-month year ('hiems') viz-a-viz the Numan (and Tanaitan) 12-month year (as well as in relation to the winter that lacks its two months ('hiems') viz-a-viz the full winter.

'Antiquis' as the dative referring to those to whom the Tanaitan winter had seemed longer

Alternatively 'antiquis' could be seen as referring to bygone generations or to the old Tomitans with whom Ovid has talked. It could, in other words, be a dative which no longer refers to winters of old but to the impressions of those who have experienced such winters. Once however we privilege the dative as the meaning of 'antiquis' we no longer know which Tanaitan winter/year is being thought of as longer. This is because 'tanaitis hiemps' could now relate to a Tanaitan year which seemed longer to the older people (or to past generations) rather than the winter just gone.

Thus, in sum, the poem opens with a Fastian notice about a change in the weather in the remotest part of the known world where winter is eating into spring (or autumn). As we have seen, Strabo knew of no certain human habitation north of the Roxolani whose domains stretched as far as Tanais. This will suggest the longest winters of the inhabitable world are Tanaitan (= Tomitan) ones. Alternatively with the Tanaitans/Tomitans as the judges of the length of the winter, this winter is going to seem reasonably short (assuming the latter experienced the same winter as Ovid). Certainly those on whom this impression is made should be those, like Ovid, who are now senior citizens (he is over 50 as Ibis 1 tells us). Only the old can decide whether a winter is longer or shorter than those of old. This brings the various meanings together. If 'antiquis' is an ablative ('than the winters of old'), then that comparison can only be done by an elderly person assuming 'visa' means 'seemed'. If 'antiquis' is a dative then the comparison *is* being done by an elderly person. If 'visa' means 'it was visible to' then the people to whom the Tanaitan winter was visibly longer could be those with the objective means of checking (by using a Romulan calendar).

We have seen how Ovid's subjectively-experienced winter in Tomis was rather stop-start thanks to the Hister's waters returning to normal flow at some stage perhaps after he Saturnalia. Winter 'put forth' its face more than once ('protulit ora': 3.10.10). However the official length of winter though disputed will have exceeded Ovid's curtailed first winter in Tomis/Tanaitis. The official start of winter varied from astronomer to astronomer. Thus Eudoxus claimed winter began on the day before the Nones of November, whilst Euctemon located the same day on the third day before the Nones of December (Oxford Parapegmata). Most people located winter at the morning setting of the Pleiades around November 11th after which sailing was inadvisable until March 10th (Vegetius, Hesiod). In any event winter by these standards is a protracted affair.

Thus to recapitulate further, the subjective evidence suggests that the winter, recently finished, had been shorter than those of yore. The objective evidence however suggests the winter and year had been much longer than any Romulan year. Meanwhile, if 'antiquis' is interpreted as 'to the ancients/elderly' then the first of the above sentences applies (assuming

³⁵ See Fasti 3.75 and 135f.

the Tanaitan winter/year is an ancient that is recalled or that had been [or would have been]³⁶ experienced by these people). Otherwise if ‘antiquis’ is ‘than the ones of yore’ then the second sentence above applies. Perspective is everything, including the perspective of the reader.

However there is a more literary reference at the heart of this couplet. The passage should remind us of *Metamorphoses* 1.107f. Here the Golden Age produces a spring that is eternal and in which the Zephyrs stroke the spring flowers that are (naturally) always in abundance. With the dawn of the Silver Age however, Jupiter who has deposed Saturn decides to ‘shorten the times of the ancient spring’ (‘antiqui contraxit tempora veris’) and to introduce the long seasons of summer and winter. Autumn is rendered ‘variable’ (‘inaequalis’) which suggests that winters could be extended if necessary. What is most striking is the point that, until Jove arrived, there had been no ‘ancient winters’ to eat into the timeless spring of the Golden Age.

A corollary of this is that, at *Tristia* 3.12.1-2 Ovid can be read as referring to a winter longer than those introduced by Jove (*Met.*1.116). This takes us back to the ‘antiquis’-as-ablative and Romulan discourse where the year and winter were visibly shorter in ancient times. Now in a similar comparative vein, it appears that the recent winter is similarly longer than Zeus’ early years of winter. This can only constitute a satirical aside on the failure of Augustus’ regime to reinstate the Golden Age in which spring should be (conventionally) eternal. With the spring eternal there is no ‘renewal’ or ‘ploughing’ to be done. Essentially there is no time. Thus to reach this blessed state means above all that winter should start receding from its encroachment on spring. In fact in the light of the *Metamorphoses* and *Tristia* passages Augustus’ so-called ‘aurea aetas’ will be even further from view than it had been the previous year. With winters visibly getting longer at spring’s expense, it is apparent that the Iron Age of *Eclogues* 4.8-9, namely the ‘transitional phase’ leading to the ‘aurea aetas’, has become instead the decadent *status quo* in spite of the ‘birth of the boy’ who was to have ruled the world and to have moved amongst gods and heroes (*Ecl.* 4.15, 17).

Meanwhile the materialistic debasement of the Iron Age is evident in the urban sophistication in Rome with its theatre, forum, Circus Maximus (*Tr.*3.12.17-24)³⁷. In particular the references in *Tr.*3.12 to foreign conquest over Germania and merchant ships plying the seas in spring will evoke the salient features of Ovid’s Iron Age (*Met.*1.132f & 142f) as well as the transitional period to which *Eclogues* 4.31f alludes. As part of the restored Golden Age, Italy was to have heralded the return of the Saturnian kingdoms and the goddess of ‘Iustitia’, Virgo (*Eclogues* 4.6; *Aratus Phaenomena* 96-136) both Virgo and Saturn being guarantors of a culture of righteousness. This new (tenth and last ‘age’) was to have been presided over by Apollo (*Georgics* 2.173 & 536-538; *Aeneid* 6. 794-796). It was to be a ‘fruit-bearing generation’ symbolised by the cornucopia and Augustus’ birth sign of Capricorn (‘saeculum frugiferum’).

In *Tristia* 3.12 there is short-lived allusion to the Golden Age in the spontaneous growth of violets (lines 5-6). However Iron Age decline sets in with the reference to mothers, in the shape of the swallow³⁸ Procne, murdering her children (*Met.*1.149: ‘victa iacet pietas’). The whole passage could be compared to *Fasti* 1.149f where the Golden Age of Spring is given a Virgilian twist at the end with the mention of the ploughing which etymologically defines the ‘New Year’ (annus < ‘ab innovatione; renovatur semper annus’)³⁹ but which represents a decline from the Golden Age. The decadent ploughing of the land is also implied

³⁶ Reading ‘visa [esset]’

³⁷ Compare the urban sophistication of *Georgics* 2.461-468

³⁸ Swallows were thought to accompany the West Wind as it blew in to Italy in early February.

³⁹ *Isidore Etymologiae* 36.2

at Tr.3.12.11-12. Meanwhile the treeless and grape-less land of Pontus (14; 16) gives the lie to any notion of an empire-wide Golden Age with its cornucopia. Finally the lack of bucolic simplicity in Rome renders it the antithesis of the Golden Age. Neither Rome nor its empire are experiencing the fertility of a Golden Age. Indeed the ploughing implies a constant ‘renewal’ of what will otherwise be moribund.

Tanaitis’ from a different perspective

There is more than meets the eye here however. First of all ‘hiems’ (‘winter’) itself has been semantically stretched, by the etymology we have proposed, to mean ‘year’. Then there is the alternative allegorical meaning of ‘Tanaitis’. With its number of syllables reduced to three, it might be longer than Tanais but to no avail. It only seems (‘visa’) longer. This will be a thread running throughout the following analysis of Tanaitis. Life is longer, life is extended, but to no avail. What appears (‘visa’) to make life ‘longer’ is proved another step along the path of at best stagnation.

‘Tanaitis hiemps’ as words: ‘Tanais hiems’ as words

Now the words ‘longior antiquis visa’ could also allude to a perceived elongation in *the phrase* ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ compared to earlier manifestations of the two words. This will involve the word ‘antiquis’ being translated as ‘[seemed] to the men of a bygone era’. This takes us into a grammarian’s discourse. The ‘old timers’ are often evoked by etymologists in regard to their outdated orthography which is found useful by the grammarian in explaining an etymology that would otherwise be difficult to argue⁴⁰. The spelling of Latin under Augustus had changed substantially (e.g ‘quo’ became ‘cu’, VV represented iiu and vtc, words such as ‘metuunt loquuntur’ no longer contained ‘-ont’, the alphabet was standardised)⁴¹. Thus a comparison of the merits of the new and the old orthography would not be surprising at some stage in the course of Augustan Literature.

Into this grammarians’ discourse we will carry over the sense of ‘antiquis’ as ‘old-but-not-dead’ as well as the sense ‘of a former age’. Thus we should analyse the grammarian’s version of the text minutely taking great care to distinguish the different meanings of ‘visa’ in the context of ‘seeing’ words on a page. It will either mean (i) ‘seen’ objectively with one’s eyes or (ii) ‘absorbed through one’s senses to produce an impression’ (‘seemed’). Effectively category (ii) will mean ‘hearing’ the word with one’s inner ear’ whilst category (i) will relate to the objective viewing of what one sees. The argument can be broken down into the following stages:

(i) ‘the words ‘Tanaitis hiemps’⁴², were (each individually) visibly longer [or ‘will have been visibly longer’] to the older generation / previous generations’. That is, the changes in orthography or scansion affecting ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ are recent and have produced /would have produced a clear impression upon those older people still alive (or those deceased) in the sense that (a) ‘Tanaitis’ now visibly has an extra syllable viz-a-viz ‘Tanais’ (b) ‘hiems’ has visibly become ‘hiemps’.

(ii) the words ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ ‘seemed/will have seemed’ longer to the older generation/previous generations in the sense that (a) a word like ‘Tanaitis’ in olden times (very like Varro’s ‘Tanaidis’⁴³) will have been pronounced with four syllables (instead of the three by synizesis) and will therefore have seemed longer and (b) ‘hiems’ will have been

⁴⁰ The non-doubling of consonants by ‘older generations’ is a standard observation made by grammarians (Paulus Festus 6 s.v. ‘anus’: ‘antiqui non geminabant consonates’).

⁴¹ See Isidore *Etymologiae* 1.4.14 re ‘X’

⁴² We assume hiems is spelt hiemps for reasons that will become clear

⁴³ OLD s.v. ‘Tanais’

pronounced with full value given to every letter including the unwritten but keenly felt ‘p’, thereby making it again seem longer to the mental ear of the reader.

This finding brings many assumptions in its train. That is, ‘hiems’ will have once been pronounced with a ‘p’ but not spelled with a ‘p’. Conversely, in recent times, ‘hiems’ will have begun to be spelled ‘hiemps’ in order to reverse a trend which was threatening to drive the audible ‘p’ out of circulation. In a nutshell the old-timers now see a ‘hiemps’ (on the page) that is longer but also have the audible impression that if they pronounce this ‘hiemps’ to themselves it will seem longer than if it were pronounced by a young contemporary this being due to contemporary pronunciation having drifted away from pronouncing the ‘p’ and not yet having had the time to re-establish the ‘p’ following the corrective effort of introducing the written ‘p’.

Of course, in this grammarian’s discourse, line 2 must also mean ‘the words ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ were seen / seemed to be longer *than the ancient words* [‘Tanāis’ and ‘hiems’]. Here the same arguments will be valid as above, the only difference being that now we must assume the existence of ‘the old-timers’ as the ones who see and (internally) hear the words being read or pronounced.

Antiquis

It will be clear that when a new nuance of a word is applied to the text the text has the adaptability to adjust itself to the interloper and to produce a new, as it were, kaleidoscopic ‘still’. Now the word ‘antiquis’ can also bear a spatial nuance (‘that which lies in front or before’). In the context of the status of ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ as words, we suggest that examples of these words from ‘in front of’ or ‘before’ 3.12, but within *Tristia* 3, will be found to be shorter than the ‘Tanaitis hiemps’ of *Tr.*3.12. There are three examples of ‘hiems’ in *Tristia* 3 all of which come ‘before’ 3.12 (3.8.30; 3.10.9; 3.10.44) they are spelt variously as ‘hiems’ and ‘hiemps’ depending on the publishing house. Yet we suggest that the appearance of the very unusual ‘Tanais’ at 3.4b is enough evidence to suggest that this interpretation will be correct both of ‘Tanais’ and ‘hiems’. That is ‘hiems’ should be spelled ‘hiemps’ in 3.12 but ‘hiems’ in earlier poems of book 3. Meanwhile in book 3, ‘Tanais’ is self-evidently not just ‘in front of’ *Tanaitis* but also exists in a form (‘Tanais’) that is ‘time-honoured’ (‘antiquis’) by other authors and has a ‘simplicity’ (‘antiquis’) that *Tanaitis* lacks. Crucially of course *Tanais* is ‘longer than the ‘Tanais’ from *Tr.*3.4b.

Thus we suggest that Ovid deliberately wrote ‘hiems’ at *Tr.*3.8.30, 3.10.9, and 3.10.44 in order that this ‘shorter’ form of ‘hiemps’ should be available for him to refer to in the text when it came to writing 3.12. He did the same in his positioning of ‘Tanais’ at 3.4b.49. The ‘time-honoured’ and ‘simple’ characteristics attaching to these words are evident in their form, scansion and usage ‘*Tanaitis*’, we suggest, will not have existed as a form until Ovid used it as a parallel substantive to accompany ‘hiemps’⁴⁴. By contrast ‘*Tanais*’ in Greek is universally the correct form (and scanned as anapaestic) as attested by Strabo (11.2.2: ‘*Τάναις Τανάιδος*’). Similarly ‘hiemps’ was, we suggest, universally written as ‘hiems’ until such time as the ‘p’ sound began to evanesce. Thus ‘hiemps’ is a late-in-the-day means of shoring up the pronunciation of the letter ‘p’.

The Allegory of the Unrealised Golden Age

There is much in the substructures of poem 3.12 which points to an allegory of the Golden Age having subsided into the Iron Age. The word ‘*Tanaitis*’ itself with its baroque scansion and - along with ‘hiemps’ - its overstepping of the ‘simple time-honoured’ forms

⁴⁴ We read ‘*Tanaitis hiemps*’ in the same way as Tacitus reads ‘*ab amni Tanai*’ (*Annals* 12.17). These words are two juxtaposed nouns, or simply a name in apposition to a substantive. Seneca reuses ‘*Tanaitis*’ in *Phaedra* 401 as a name of an Amazon.

(‘longior antiquis’) is a touchstone of this ever-descending drift. Things, like syllables, are longer but worse. Meanwhile the etymological aspect of this line is not exhausted. If we are correct in adopting ‘έτοϛ’ as the root of the suffix of Tanaitis then we are obliged to consider its homonyms as candidates for the privilege of defining Tanaitis. Thus the word ‘έτοϛ’ also means ‘in vain’ ‘idly’ and (especially) ‘falsely’ which would cast an unfavourable light on the powers who dictated the ‘stretched’ length of winter. In relation to Rome, this would seem to be a comment on Augustus and his unconscionable overweighting of official holy days specifically for his own aggrandisement (‘feriae ex senatus consulto’) during the winter months of December and January, as shown on the Praeneste Fasti⁴⁵. Another nuance of ‘έτοϛ’⁴⁶ (‘truly, genuinely’) makes an acerbic comment on the endlessness of the January holy days. The verbal point depends on the antithesis implied in the word ‘visa’ in the text. The winter might have ‘seemed’ long in other respects. For the attendees at Augustus’ January days of observation, the winter *was* ‘truly stretched out’. It was longer but worse.

Even the Roman spring, the symbol of the Golden Age, is awash with activities and behaviour drawn from Ovid’s Iron Age in Met.1. At Tr.3.12.19, games are said to be ‘joined one after the other’. There is a constant surfeit of activity and venues. The theme is brought to a climax and encapsulated by Ovid’s inflation of his literary currency. Instead of Aeneas’ and Odysseus’ famous ‘thrice and four times blessed’ estimation of those who had died at Troy, Ovid begins his blessing with ‘four times’ and ends with an indefinite number. And far from honouring the dead in this way he is blessing merely the Roman consumers of an orgy of free spectacles⁴⁷.

Three final elements of the poem give us pause for thought. We noted how the Golden Age was meant to see the return of Virgo to earth with her Aratean sense of ‘Iustitia’. Ovid seems to have transmuted her persona into the aqueduct called Virgo which Marcus Agrippa had constructed and which ran *underground* for much of its length. Since Aratus’ evocation of her disappointment with the descent of man from the Golden Age, Virgo was imagined to leave the earth, head for the mountains, and then to reach the sky. At Tr.3.12 as an aqueduct, she brings the rain from the sky (Zeus), takes it below the earth and is permanently oriented to never leave the earth but to always flow in the direction of Rome and mankind *in order that* mankind can be decadent. Far from bringing back the Golden Age this Virgo is used as an unseen underground facility for those concerned only with ‘winning’ at their sport. The youths waste water that would have been considered precious in the ‘waterless’ steppes we

⁴⁵ See http://www.attalus.org/docs/cil/add_8.html: 7th Jan: Augustus [first took up the fasces], when Hirtius and Pansa [were consuls] 8th Jan: [Tiberius Caesar dedicated] the statue of Augustan Justice . . . [when Plancus] and Silius were consuls. 10th Jan: Tiberius Caesar. . . 11th Jan [Imp. Caesar Augustus put an end to all wars, for the third time] since Romulus, and closed the gate of Janus, [when he was consul for the fifth time, with Sex. Appuleius]. 13th Jan [The senate decreed] that a chaplet of oak should be placed [above the door of the home of Imp. Caesar] Augustus, because he restored [the republic] to the Roman people. 14th Jan: By [decree] of the senate an unlucky day: [the birthday of Antonius]. 16th Jan: Imp. Caesar was called [Augustus], when he was consul for the 7th time and Agrippa [was consul for the 3rd time]. 16th Jan: The temple of Concordia Augusta [was dedicated] when P.Dolabella and C.Silvanus were consuls. Tiberius Caesar [dedicated] it when he returned from Pannonia. 17th Jan: The pontifices, [the augurs, the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, and the septemviri] epulum sacrificed victims to the [the godhead of Augustus at the altar] which Tiberius Caesar dedicated. 29th Jan: A public holiday, by [decree of the senate, because on this day . . .] by Imp. Caesar [Augustus the pontifex] maximus [. . .] of the sea . . . The deified Caesar added [this and the following day] in order to increase the number of days in the year. 30th Jan: Public Holiday. A public holiday, by decree of the senate, because on [this] day the Ara Pacis Augustae was dedicated [in the Campus] Martius, when Drusus and Crispinus were consuls 5th February: Public Holiday. To Concordia on the Capitol. A public holiday, by decree of the senate, because on this day Caesar Augustus the pontifex maximus, when he held the tribunician power for the 21st time and was consul for the 13th time, was given the title pater patriae by the senate and people of Rome.

⁴⁶ Hesychius Lexicon s.v ‘ουκ έτοϛ’. Note that ‘beatus’ also means ‘sumptuous’ ‘rich’. This would undercut any panegyric in the words.

⁴⁷ Aeneid 1.94

met in the Desert of the Getae⁴⁸. Then there is the ‘trochus’ or spinning wheel mentioned as a game. This we suggest is a cryptic reference to the trochaic metre which is considered to have formed the basis of Saturnians in the early period of Roman Literature (e.g. Livius Andronicus *Odyssea* frg 1). Thus Saturn & Virgo, the joint moral backbone of any serious revocation of the Golden Age (Ecl.4.6), have been suborned into servicing the decadence of the Iron Age and its instinctive competitiveness. However we suspect Ovid arrived in Tomis during the Saturnalia (17-19 December). This would align Saturn programmatically with an Ovidian poetics of ‘iustitia’. What Saturn and Virgo are made to do in Rome may not reflect their role in the poetic world of Tomis / Tanitis.

This brings us to the real Golden Age⁴⁹. If Ovid is aligning himself with the reading the Tanaitan/Danubian winter ‘had *in the past* seemed longer to the people of yore [‘antiquis’]’ (and hence as a corollary the current one will ‘have seemed’ shorter to those of advanced age like Ovid [‘antiquis’]) then Ovid’s own advance towards the Golden Age is taking place in Tanais / Tomis. Amongst the milk and cheese-eating nomads praised by Strabo, there is mention of the Abii as the most just of people. At Iliad 13.5 it is them to whom the jaded Zeus turns when he leaves the Greeks and Trojans to suffer toil and woe without ceasing at the (symbolically Iron Age) ships⁵⁰. Such nomads, including the Hippemolgoi, are regularly called milk-eaters since they relied on their herds for dairy products. Strabo too (7.3) associates justice with these same tribes, a justice developed through frugality, lack of interest in money, orderly behaviour, having all things in common, their wives, children, the whole of their kin, but also remaining invincible and ‘unconquered by outsiders, because they have nothing to be enslaved for’. This is the antithesis of the picture drawn in 3.12 where unsaturated indulgence is the key-word. One inevitably also implicitly contrasts this milk-drinking with the wine-drinking culture of the Greeks & Romans.

The interesting name is that of the Abii. In Greek it could mean (and could even *be* the adjective) ‘no life’ (‘ἄβιος’) or ‘without subsistence’. Strabo notes the derivation ‘without a hearth’ (= ‘living on wagons’) and ‘bereft’(7.3.4). It could also be interpreted etymologically as ‘all life’ ‘rich’ depending on whether the alpha is intensive or negativising. In the end it is both. Because the Abii have nothing, they have everything. Similarly, because the Tyrogetae allow all and sundry through their lands they have no enemies.

From yet another point of view ‘Ovid’s ‘antiquis’ are also his predecessors as writers. Homer’s passage at Iliad 13.5 puts him squarely in the camp of the admirers of the Nomads. We know from Strabo that Eratosthenes and Hesiod also knew of the Scythians as Hippemolgoi (‘drinkers of mare’s milk’). So did Aeschylus according to Strabo (17.3.7)⁵¹. Lastly ‘antiquis’ could also refer spatially to ‘those winters lying in front’ namely Ovid’s account of the short winter book-ended by lines 7-8 of 3.10. ‘That is’, says Ovid ‘the Tanaitan winter had seemed longer than the ones that lie to the front [of this book]’. And here

⁴⁸ There is a relationship between this poem and Horace Odes 3.29.28 where the ‘discordant’ or ‘factional’ Tanais is paralleled by the theatres and forum at Rome

⁴⁹ The equestrian and light-armed skirmishes recall the Lusus Troiae (Tr.3.12.19). They also recall (Suetonius 83) Augustus’ sporting activities before the end of the civil wars after which he contented himself with the ball (line 20). This change should parallel the change from the transitional Iron Age of Eclogues 4 to the post-civil war ‘pax’ and the Golden Age. Augustus the child born to bring this to fruition having served his time under arms has won control over the bathetic ‘pila’ (‘balls’) rather than over the ‘orbis’ (‘ball’ but also ‘world’).

⁵⁰ Ships represented a decline from the Golden Age

⁵¹ Strabo, Geography H.C. Hamilton, Esq., W. Falconer, M.A., Ed.7.3.7: ‘Hesiod is a witness in the words which Eratosthenes has quoted: “He went and saw the Ethiopians, the Ligurians, and the Scythians, milkers of mares.’... children, who were cared for by the whole community according to the system of Plato. Aeschylus too seems to plead the poet’s cause, when he says, “But the Scythians, governed by good laws, and feeding on cheese of mares’ milk.’

we should not forget the nuance of ‘antiquis’ as ‘time-honoured’. Thus the writers of yore and the elderly writers of today (Ovid) all have a view that justice is returning with the retreat of winter but only in Tanais and the Danube where the exponents of justice are alive and well. Indeed it is possible that the obscure word ‘θητιον/α’ (= T[h]ĀNIA) could have been considered an underlying etymology of the word TANAIIS. It means ‘milk’ in Hesychius. And Ovid’s extension of the word this time is not otiose (‘Tanaitis’). The suffix ‘-itis’ has the closest morphological fit with the word ‘ΙΤΗΣ (transliterated as ‘ITIS’). This word, in Hesychius, means ‘prudent’ ‘wise’, but also ‘just’ and ‘righteous’ (as synonyms of ‘ἐπιστημων’, ‘ιστωρ’). Just as the Tyrogetae are Cheese-Getae, so the people of Tanaitis are the ‘just milk-drinkers’. They show the way to the true Golden Age.

A last emendation will, it is hoped, be accepted. The line ‘et solet in multis *bima* manere locis’ (Tr.3.10.16) will read more logically if ‘*bima*’ is changed to ‘*bina*’. This will give the sense that the ‘snow is left [i.e. remains frozen] in two layers’. This is an ideal description of the freezing together of two snow falls into one compacted double layer. It also allegorically reflects our understanding of Ovid’s glacial poetics. Even on a superficial level there are two levels of meaning in Ovid’s text. They so compacted that they can hardly be prised apart. Yet beneath these levels we must expect even further subtextual, subglacial meanings.

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