

discussion by quoting the relevant passage according to the modern edition of FEDELI (1984):

testis erit Dirce tam uero crimine saeua
Nycteos Antiopen accubuisse Lyco.
a quotiens pulchros uulsit regina capillos
molliaque immites fixit in ora manus!
a quotiens famulam pensis oneravit iniquis 15
et caput in dura ponere iussit humo!
saepe illam immundis passa est habitare tenebris,
uilem ieiunae saepe negauit aquam.
Iuppiter, Antiopae nusquam succurris habenti
tot mala? corrumpit dura catena manus. 20
si deus es, tibi turpe tuam seruire puellam:
inuocet Antiopae quem nisi uincta Iouem?
sola tamen, quaecumque aderant in corpore uires,
regalis manicas rupit utraque manu.

Dirce will prove this: she was quite mad with jealousy at the well-founded charge / that Antiope, daughter of Nycteus, had slept with Lycus. / How often, alas, did the Queen pull her lovely locks / and pinch her tender face with merciless hands! / How often, alas, did she burden her maid with harsh tasks / and order her to lay her head upon the hard ground! / Often she suffered her to live in unclean darkness, / often she denied her even filthy water when she thirsted. / Jove, will you not succour Antiope who is suffering / so many evils? The hard chain ruins her hands. / As truly as you are a god, it is shameful for you that your girl serves as a slave: / fettered as she is, whom can she invoke but Jove? / Alone, however, by whatever strength was in her body, / she broke open her manacles with both hands.⁴

The Challenge

This passage actually exhibits not only the word offered in HOUSMAN's challenge but no less than three different problems, as identified by modern editors: on line 11 *uero* ("true") is unanimously offered by the manuscripts, but *uano* ("groundless") and even other emendations have been proposed as a more credible reading; on line 13 *uulsit* ("pulled")⁵ originally proposed by Roberto Titi, a Florentine scholar of the 16th century, is offered by FEDELI against *ussit* ("singed" or "burnt"), which is the reading of the manuscripts; and finally on line 14 we find the problem stated by HOUSMAN, viz. a choice between *immites* ("merciless") proposed by FEDELI and others as an emendation of *immittens* ("slapping") of the manuscript tradition.

HOUSMAN only touches upon the third of these readings, and we shall therefore begin our discussion here. Unavoidably, however, the two first two problems will form part of the subject-matter of our discussion. We shall, in fact, attempt to

⁴ All translations into English are by the author of the present paper, this being the only way to ensure that the various points under discussion can be followed by readers without Latin.

⁵ By translating *uulsit* by "wrench out" GOULD 1990 is rather overstating the action, as *vellere* has a multitude of meanings, from "pull or tug at, pluck" to "pull or pluck out" (OLD). Propertius uses the same verb in 3,24,33 (= 3,25,13) *uellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos* "then you may wish to *tear out* your white hairs *by their roots*", the words *a stirpe* confirming the action of tearing out rather than just pulling.

demonstrate that it is difficult to isolate one of the problems from the two others and that they are most profitably discussed if considered as a single complex.

If we follow the wording of FEDELI's edition we have very strong stylistical arguments ready at hand: in the six lines quoted we have a series of no less than six pairs of words, containing one noun and its attribute: *uero crimine* ("well-founded charge"), *pulchros capillos* ("lovely locks"), *mollia ora* ("her tender face"), *immites manus* ("merciless hands"), *pensis iniquis* ("harsh tasks"), *dura humo* ("the hard ground"). Line fourteen offers us a stylistically satisfying contrast of Dirce's "merciless hands"⁶ pinching Antiope's "tender face". If, on the other hand, we prefer to follow the reading of the manuscripts, *immittens fixit manus*, we lose this contrast (and one element of repetition) but gain instead the picture of Dirce's first slapping and then pinching Antiope's tender face: an image of battering that increases the force of the image offered on line 13, where Dirce pulled (*uulsit*) or, possibly even singed (*ussit*) the girl's "lovely locks".⁷

Back to HOUSMAN

When formulating his statement, HOUSMAN obviously took a number of things for granted: that his readers would be able to identify the passage at once,⁸ that they would recall the mythological background to the situation described, and that they would be able to identify the underlying learned controversy. Four questions therefore offer themselves: 'what reading did HOUSMAN consider "right"', 'what did Propertius actually write?', 'what was the mythological background', and 'did HOUSMAN take part in a learned controversy over the choice of *immites* and *immittens*, and, if so, with whom?'

Tackling last question first — as this will inevitably give us a clue to HOUSMAN's position concerning the first question —, we soon realise that there is no immediate answer, for in the Index to *The Classical Papers of A.E. Housman*⁹ (vol. III, p. 1287-1307), enumerating all the classical passages discussed by him in 194 papers, long and short, we look in vain for reference to the problem under discussion.¹⁰ We assume, nonetheless, that HOUSMAN was opposed to a theory propounded by some other

⁶ It may be argued that the expression *immites manus*, although formally the object of *fixit*, actually only serves as an adverb of method, and should be translated: "mercilessly pinched". The hands are not described as physically hard or pitiless but rather as the instruments of violent action.

⁷ To HOUSMAN this lengthy explanation of the problem would in all likelihood have appeared ludicrously superfluous and pedantic; we owe no apology to his *manes*, however, as we do not write our paper for the same readers as he did.

⁸ Were HOUSMAN's words caused by a reminiscence? Seneca, *Phaedra*, 227: *immitis etiam coniugi castae fuit: / experta saeuam est barbara Antiope manum* "He was ungentle even to his chaste wife: foreign Antiope had to endure his cruel hand." Seneca's Antiope, however, was not the daughter of Nycteus, but the Amazon queen, seduced by Theseus and eventual mother of Hippolytus (therefore often called Hippolyta), and it is hardly to be believed that Seneca would have confused the two ladies. If we believe it possible that he considered *immitis* and *saevus* as proper qualifiers of any disagreeable thing happening to a Hippolyta, we should recall the same work, line 273: *meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum / mentemque saeuam flectere immitis uiri* "it is my very own task to approach that wild youth and turn the cruel mind of that ungentle man", a passage where Hippolyta is not mentioned.

⁹ DIGGLE & GOODYEAR 1972.

¹⁰ He only mentions three textual problems belonging to Elegy 3,15 (cf. DIGGLE & GOODYEAR 1972:243f, 232, and 300). It is quite possible he intended to offer his own solution in the edition of Propertius he is known to have prepared; following the polemic with J.P. POSTGATE, he shelved his plans to publish his edition, and the manuscript is known to have been destroyed after his death (BUTRICA 1978:8-10, with note 30).

Did she sing or merely pull at Antiope's hair? Did she mercilessly pinch Antiope's tender cheeks or did she slap and pinch them?

On the other hand, we may prefer to formulate two theories that appear to be mutually exclusive, each of which comprises all three questions first formulated; the first is that Dirce, driven by well-founded jealousy towards Antiope, singed her "lovely locks" and battered her face by slapping and pinching it; the second is that Dirce gave vent to her unfounded jealousy by pulling at Antiope's hair and mercilessly pinching her face.¹⁵ The theories may be varied, as will become clear when we study the readings offered by different modern editors, commentators, and translators, but there are — in the eyes of the author — valid reasons for setting up these two theories as polar opposites: one offers a consistent picture of a violent jealousy, one that is, moreover, justified (as Cynthia's jealousy of Lycinna was not, according to Propertius' protests); the other is a polite, toned-down version, where Dirce's jealousy is unfounded and her means of expressing it are milder.

Our choice between the two inevitably dictates our choice of readings in the Latin text; if we adhere to the former theory, we will believe in and retain the readings offered by the manuscripts: *uero*, *ussit*, and *immittens*; if we adhere to the latter, we will print *uano*, *uulsit*, and *immities*. Quite fortuitously, the former theory will make us conservative critics, in the sense that we hold on to the wording offered by the two manuscripts, while the latter will make us radical critics, the kind who emend the text offered by the manuscript sources on the strength of an opinion of what the author actually wished to or ought to have written, against the evidence of the manuscript sources.

Some slight help may be culled from words given in the sequel, as from line 17, Propertius continues the story of Antiope: her flight, her prayers for help from Jove, the father of her twin sons, Zethus and Amphion. These two, after some initial hesitation, capture Dirce and, on lines 39-40, punish her severely: "Antiope, recognize Jove: as an honour to you Dirce is led away to find her death in many places." The cruelty of this punishment suggests that the original crime was commensurate. Furthermore, Propertius' comments on lines 43-44

*at tu non meritam parcas uexare Lycinnam:
nescit uestra ruens ira referre pedem.*

But you must stop giving pain to Lycinna, / who has not deserved it: you women rush headlong in your anger and know of no retreat.

are a hint that Cynthia's jealousy, as perceived by Propertius, was not of the everyday kind that is manifested by the slapping of cheeks and a storm of tears, but of the continuous kind that is as cruel as the grave.

The stand we finally take on the question of Dirce's jealousy and the reading of Propertius Elegy will be guided by many factors: the quality of our intellects; our knowledge of Latin and Roman literature; our assessment of the nature of Dirce's jealousy (this, in its turn, is dictated by any preconceived notions we may have of women's ways of expressing jealousy, assuming that this can be considered a constant through the millennia); our propensity for believing that a Greek King of

¹⁵ Hyginus (*Fabulae* 8,4), notes: *Antiopa Dirce uxori Lyci data erat in cruciatum; ea occasione nacta fugae se mandavit*, "Antiope had been given to Dirce, wife of Lycus, for torment; when a chance appeared, she escaped". Brief as it is, this passage rather supports the theory that Antiope was tormented cruelly rather than merely slapped.

Classical Antiquity must inevitably seduce or be seduced by an attractive woman¹⁶ slave, who was also the daughter of his brother; and finally our opinion on how seriously Propertius, a Roman nobleman of the early Principate, ranked his current lady-love's fits of jealousy towards the woman whom he describes as the object his very first erotic experience. In the last-mentioned instance we have to query whether Propertius considered Cynthia's jealousy to be so fiery as to constitute a physical danger to Lycinna, or whether he thought himself the witness of a minor outbreak of peevishness. Our way of answering these questions inevitably affects our view of Dirce's actions against Antiope, and therefore our selection of readings in this elegy.

It will be clear by now that the author of the present paper has, willy-nilly, found himself to take a conservative stand on this question, as he cannot find any really weighty reason to depart from the text as handed down by our manuscript sources.

HOUSMAN's conundrum is, of course, not of major importance, but it has nonetheless turned out to be difficult enough to merit discussion, not only by itself but as part of a larger issue; it therefore seems rather remarkable that four modern commentators, viz. BUTLER-BARBER 1933, SHACKLETON BAILEY 1956, CAMPS 1966, and BUTRICA 1994, pass this passage by without any explicit discussion of the problems it offers.

Having noted this, we will find it interesting to study how a number of modern editors, commentators, and translators, publishing their works before and after HOUSMAN's conundrum appeared in print, handled this group of problems.¹⁷ Did they, or did they not, notice and attack the challenge he offered? We shall answer this question by drawing a chronological table showing the choices they made¹⁸ in the matter of the three readings:¹⁹

KEIL 1867	<i>vero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>inmittens</i>
MUELLER 1874	<i>vero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>inmittens</i>
BAEHRENS 1880	<i>uero</i>	<i>uulsit</i>	<i>inmites</i>
PHILLIMORE 1907	<i>sero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>immittens</i>
BARBER-BUTLER 1933	<i>uero</i>	<i>uulsit</i>	<i>immites</i>
PAGANELLI 1947	<i>vero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>immittens</i>
CAMPS 1966	<i>sero</i>	<i>uulsit</i>	<i>immitis</i>
BARBER 1960	<i>uero</i>	<i>uulsit</i>	<i>immitis</i>
HANSLIK 1979	<i>sero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>inmites</i>
FEDELI 1984	<i>uero</i>	<i>ussit</i>	<i>immites</i>
GOOLD 1990	<i>vano</i>	<i>vulsit</i>	<i>immitis</i>
BJÖRKESON 1992	<i>vano</i>	<i>vulsit</i>	<i>immites</i>
LEE ²⁰ 1994	<i>vano</i>	<i>vulsit</i>	<i>immites</i>

¹⁶ It would be wrong to think of Antiope as a young girl: she was, after all the mother of two grown-up sons, both sired by Jove. Propertius does describe her as a girl (*puella*), but only at the end of the elegy (lines 21 and 34).

¹⁷ Propertius' modern Swedish translator, BJÖRKESON 1992, reads *uano*, *ussit*, and *immites*, thus choosing a middle way; the translation like its Latin original is in elegiac couplets and therefore, by necessity, rather free in its wording.

¹⁸ In the case of Latin texts with parallel translations (PAGANELLI 1947, BJÖRKESON 1992), we follow the Latin text without regard for the translation.

¹⁹ Cf. also *TLL*, s.v. *immitis* (vol. VII 1,467,57ff.), where this passage is quoted. The editors of *TLL* clearly take a stand in reading *immitis* instead of *inmittens*. It is perhaps necessary to remark that *inm-* and *imm-*, *-is* and *-es* (*immitis* — *immites*, and *immittens* — *inmittens*, are orthographic variants and offer no difference in meaning.

²⁰ LEE's translations "untrue charge" — "tore" — "cruel hands", demonstrates which Latin readings he prefers.

BUTRICA 1994 ²¹	<i>vero</i>	<i>vulsit</i>	<i>immites</i>
HEYWORTH 2007A	<i>uero</i>	<i>uulsit</i>	<i>immites</i>

The table gives us clues to the controversy concerning *inmittens* – *immites*, and what stand HOUSMAN probably took. It shows that KEIL and MUELLER, the two earliest among the editors listed, took a conservative stand, radicalism only setting in with the edition of BAEHRENS. This scholar’s influence – for better or worse – on HOUSMAN is described by BUTRICA (1978:7), who in his paper of 1994 comments on *vulsit*: “Titius’ necessary correction of *ussit*”. PHILLIMORE²² prefers to believe that Antiope was charged with an accusation that came late (*sero crimine*), rather than with one that was true, *uero*, or unfounded, *falso*, but otherwise reverts to the conservative list; thereafter the radical editors form a majority, at least when it comes to choosing between *ussit* and *uulsit*; CAMPS and HANSLIK follow PHILLIMORE in printing *sero*. BUTRICA and HEYWORTH follow BARBER. PAGANELLI is actually alone, among the later editors, in holding on to the readings offered by the manuscripts themselves; his translation – demonstrating exactly how he read this passage – is therefore worth quoting:

J’en atteste l’histoire de Dirce ; sa cruauté cependant s’exerçait contre une coupable: la fille de Nyctée, Antiope, avait partagé la couche de Lycus. Ah ! que de fois la reine brûla les beaux cheveux, que de fois elle marqua de ses mains le tendre visage!

“... contre une coupable”: PAGANELLI makes a point of stressing Antiope’s guilt – probably as against the innocence of Lycinna (here, he was probably thinking of the wording of line 43 *non meritam ... Lycinnam*) –, but he also finds it reasonable to assume that Cynthia’s jealousy was expressed in a way that Propertius found excessively and intentionally cruel; his translation of *inmittens fixit*, “marqua de ses mains”, is, on the other hand, rather free.

The tendency, among the radical editors, appears to follow a tendency towards a more polite diction, toning down expressions of harsh and cruel behaviour. We have no way of knowing, at this stage, whether this is a general tendency, possibly adopted during the Victorian era.

As already stated, our own observations on the passage just quoted have led us independently to the same readings as those most recently printed by PAGANELLI; our view of the episode is therefore that Propertius viewed Cynthia’s jealousy with grave concern, that he expressed Dirce’s battering of Antiope in the gravest possible terms as a warning example for Cynthia against making excessive demonstrations and that, therefore, we are compelled in this instance to defend the readings offered by the manuscripts against any attempts to amend them.

Having reached this conclusion we may sum up our discussion: this short passage offers, in a nutshell, a very good illustration of the difficulties besetting the critical editor of a classical text. Having managed to translate the text as it is offered by the manuscript, we may remark, with a certain sense of wonder, that so many modern editors have considered it necessary to change in so many places the wording of this Elegy. We also wonder at the fact that the modern attempts at emendation so easily gain the same status as the transmitted text. This observation leads us to the further

²¹ BUTRICA 1994:138, note 11, remarks that FEDELI “reads *vero* in his Teubner text but *vano* in his commentary”.

²² BUTRICA 1978 lists PHILLIMORE’s edition of 1901 (not that of 1907) but does not appear to discuss it.

conclusion that a new edition of Propertius would profit making a completely new start, founded on a new reading of the five manuscripts necessary for reconstructing the text of the archetype. That this work can be undertaken is very much to the credit of BUTRICA (1978); he himself published a set of sample texts, which do not include *Elegy* 3,15. Following his results we know “that the archetype and its exemplar were probably in Carolingian minuscule” (BUTRICA 1978:170); for *Elegy* 3,15, the tradition follows two lines of descent, one represented by the still extant **N** (Wolffenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Guelferbytanus Gudianus Lat. 224), and the other by **A** (Leiden, University Library, MS. Vossianus Lat. O.38); as the latter in its extant state is only a fragment that ceases after 2.1.63, its text can be reconstructed by means of its indirect²³ daughters, **F** (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana plut. 36,49), **L** (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Holkham Misc. 36), and **P** (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. Lat. 7989).

Conclusion

As will be clear from our reasoning above, we do not follow HOUSMAN in trusting that the problem he poses really admits of an incontrovertible solution. We are nonetheless in debt to him for compelling us to abandon “the sloth and distaste for thinking which are the common inheritance of humanity”²⁴ in general, and editors of classical texts in particular. The subtitle he gives to his editions of Juvenal and Lucanus, *editores in usum*, is therefore best understood as meaning “to the profit of editors.” By provoking our anger he has forced us to think; even though we do not reach the same conclusion as we suspect that he did, his provocation – bridging the space of over a century – did serve its purpose.

As this paper was never intended to expand into a monograph we will take the liberty of halting the discussion of the main problem at this point. Two quite obvious questions, fundamental to the understanding of this text, will therefore be left unanswered, the author hoping that some younger scholar will find an opportunity here. The first question is, how women’s jealousy is normally described by male authors of Greek and Roman love lyrics and elegies. The second question is, how men express their ambition to chastise jealous women, also in Greek and Roman love lyrics and elegies. Taking into account the possibility – or even likelihood – of modern editors’ having trivialized the text, we must remember that whoever accepts the task of examining these questions, will only receive meaningful results by paying strict attention to questions of textual tradition and textual criticism – this is another result of the present paper.

In this paper we have challenged, to our own satisfaction, HOUSMAN’s provocation which was our original inspiration. As we have restricted our discussion to this *Elegy* alone, without entering into a monograph-length treatise on jealousy in Classical Antiquity, we cannot state that we understand the poem as HOUSMAN, with his superior literature, undoubtedly did. We hope, however, that we have pointed at the difficulties besetting the editor of a critical edition; although we found ourselves taking a conservative line in our treatment of the four lines that form the nucleus of HOUSMAN’s conundrum, this does not necessarily mean that we would take a

²³ Between **A** and its surviving daughters stands “a lost copy made for and perhaps by Petrarch, who both annotated and emended the text” (BUTRICA 1978:37)

²⁴ HOUSMAN, *Juvenalis Saturae*, Cambridge 1905:p. v.

conservative stand on all problems offered by the textual tradition. Any reader of Propertius should, however, do well to ponder the significance of the words of PHILLIMORE:²⁵

But if, all in all, we reject the trustworthiness of the manuscripts, on what will one then stand? ... If everybody takes the liberty of restoring – not understanding – according to his own judgement the Poet's thoughts, there will be as many Propertiuses as there are editors.

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²⁵ PHILLIMORE 1907: Praef. (end): *Quid si in summa re codicum fidem respuerimus, quo denique stabitur? ... Sin autem poetae cogitationem suo cuique arbitrio resarcire licet, non interpretari, quot editores tot Propertii.*

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