

GENERIC CONSCIOUSNESS
AND DICTION IN OVID:
A READING OF *AMORES* 3, 1

Abstract: The paper focuses on the linguistic/stylistic and metrical means Ovid makes use of in order to 'undermine' Tragedy in her *ἀγὼν λόγων* with the personified Elegy of the programmatic first poem in the third book of the *Amores*. Tragedy is depicted as assimilating colloquial and archaic linguistic features in her diction and, thus, distancing herself from the ideal of *urbanitas*, as cultivated by the neoteric circles of Rome. Various metrical irregularities in Tragedy's speech also contribute to this effect. The elegiac poet, on the other hand, proves competent in the handling of stylistic features closely associated with the *genus grande*, thus foreshadowing, in turn, his willingness to devote himself to elevated literary *genera* in the future.

Keywords: archaism, colloquialism, Neoterics, Callimacheanism, *urbanitas*, metrical irregularities, *genus grande*.

Ovid's choice of love-poetry over the *genus grande* (epic, tragedy) is emphasized in all his programmatic elegies (the elegies dealing with poetics, especially the first poems of each of the three books of the *Amores*). Generic rivalry is thus the main subject of the programmatic elegy of the third book as well; in opposition, however, to the first elegies of Books 1 and 2, in this third programmatic Elegy, the rejection of the tragic genre is more a matter of choice which rests with the poet himself, not an outcome necessitated by factors external to him (*e. g.* Cupid, the elegiac *puella*). Ovid describes an *ἀγὼν λόγων* between Elegy and Tragedy (modeled on Prodicus' parable on Arete and Kakia), in which the two personified genres vie with each other, as they try to persuade the poet to choose one of them as the object of his poetic career.

Ovid's 3, 1 has formed the topic of several philological investigations, focusing mainly on issues of interpretation, textual criticism, structural analysis (both internally to the poem and with respect to its proemial position within the whole of the 3rd Book of the *Amores*), as well as on the various ways in which it

is permeated by Callimachean poetic ideals¹. The aim of the present paper is to build on these discussions and reinforce their conclusions, through a close reading of the text, on the basis of a comparative linguistic (morphological, syntactic, lexical) and stylistic analysis, together with a closer look at Ovidian metrics². This with a view to examining in which way the poet underlines Tragedy's clumsiness and thus foreshadows her final defeat, in the sense that Ovid asks Tragedy to allow him a short respite, so that he can occupy himself with the elegiac genre.

A first necessary point is the abundance of lexical items char-

¹ Cf. P. Ovidi Nasonis *Amorum libri tres: Text und Kommentar*, hrsg. von P. Brandt, Leipzig 1963, ad 3, 1, 11; E. Reitzenstein, *Das neue Kunstwollen in den Amores Ovids*, «RhM» 84, 1935, 81-82; P. H. Schrijvers, *O tragedia tu labor aeternus. Études sur l'élegie III, 1 des Amours d'Ovide*, in *Miscellanea tragica in honorem J. C. Kamerbeek*, coll. J. M. Bremer, S. L. Radt, C. J. Ruijgh, Amsterdam 1976, 407-413; K. E. Berman, *Ovid, Propertius and the elegiac genre: some imitations in the Amores*, «RSC» 23, 1975, 14-22; F. Bertini, *Ovidio: Amori*, Milano 1983, 227; G. Lee, 'Tenerorum lusor amorum' in *Critical essays on Roman literature: elegy and lyric*, ed. by J. P. Sullivan, London 1962, 169; G. Mazzoli, *Tragedia vs. Elegia. Genesi e rifrazioni d'una 'scena' metapoetica ovidiana (Am. 3, 1)*, in *Ovid. Werk und Wirkung. Festgabe für Michael von Albrecht zum 65. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von W. Schubert, Frankfurt am Main 1999, 137-152; R. F. Thomas, *Ovid's attempt at tragedy (Am. 3.1.63-4)*, «AJPh» 99, 1978, 447-450, who proposes, on poetological grounds, the reading *contracto* in place of *contacto* in v. 64; W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerkzeit*, Wiesbaden 1960, 295-297. For Ovid's reworking of Prodicus' well-known story, see also B. W. Boyd, *Ovid's literary loves: influence and innovation in the Amores*, Ann Arbor 1997, 197-200.

² Some initial methodological points are in order here, since 'archaic' and especially 'colloquial' are two terms often employed in the stylistic analysis of Latin poetry, although their precise content is at times left vague, or defined on the basis of different criteria by different scholars (for an overview of the problem, cf. e.g. *Aspects of the language of Latin poetry*, ed. by J. N. Adams, R. G. Mayer, Oxford 1999, 5 ff.). For the purposes of the present study, priority is given to the distribution of linguistic features in the corpus of Latin literature. Thus, 'archaic' refers to items which are common in Old Latin, and all but disappear in Classical Latin with the exception of its archaising register (mainly poetry and historiography). The term 'colloquial', on the other hand, applies to features which are frequent in lower registers (comedy, satire, epistolography, etc.).

acteristic of Callimachean poetic meta-language in the speech of Elegy. The meaning, function and use of these terms in Callimachean and Ovidian poetics is of course well-known, but their use in Elegy 3, 1 of the *Amores* perhaps merits a brief mention, as they provide the evaluation framework within which the linguistic-metrical points which will be discussed below acquire significance. The items in question are: a) neoteric positive markers: *tenuis*, *decorum* (v. 9), *levis* (v. 41), *non rustica* (v. 42), *breve* (v. 68), *teneri* (v. 69) and b) neoteric negative markers, *ingens* (v. 11), *gravis* (v. 35), *labor aeternus* (v. 68), *grandius* (v. 70), *multas... vias* (v. 18)³. The contrastive application of these terms to Elegy and Tragedy, respectively, foreshadows Elegy's final victory in the ἀγὼν λόγων, as she is the one who conforms to the Callimachean poetic ideal which Ovid up to a point adopts in the case of the *Amores*. Under a different perspective, Ovid's adoption of the Callimachean ideal, and therefore his ultimate choice in favour of Elegy, is foreshadowed by the very use of the ἀγὼν λόγων as the medium of his declaration of allegiance. The vocabulary of the agon, full of terms applicable to both physical female attributes and to poetic notions, brings forcefully to mind the motif of the Beauty Contest, the parallelism of which with literary contests is a well-known Neoteric motif. An interesting parallel could be drawn with the Quintia of Catullus' 86 as well as with the Ameana of poem 43, in which a literary contrast develops into a beauty contest where the two large women, Quin-

³ Tragedy describes Ovid's worthless ways as being the talk of the crossroads (v. 18 *narrant in multas conpita secta vias*); she observes on how often people seem to notice that he is in love (vv. 19-20 *saepe aliquis... ait hic, hic est, quem ferus urit Amor*), and she comments that Ovid's behaviour is the 'news of the day' (v. 21 *fabula... tota iactaris in Urbe*). These terms (*multas vias*, *saepe*, *tota urbe*) suggest, I think, the opinion of οἱ πολλοί, common opinion and taste, which Ovid does not share; at the end he decides to follow Elegy in opposition to common feeling, i.e. against the traditional Roman conservative attitude towards life (*gravitas*), which Neoteric poetry combats par excellence. This well-known Callimachean notion (cf. Call. *Aet.* 1, 25-32 and especially *Ep.* 28 Pf.), which has been previously unequivocally proclaimed by Ovid at *Am.* 1, 15, 35 *vilis miretur vulgus*, is also adopted by the Neoteric Catullus. In c. 86, the Veronese poet concedes Quintia's beauty, but cannot refrain from observing that *Quintia formosa est multis* (v. 1). He adopts a similar stance also in the case of the Formian girl in c. 43: although public opinion holds her beauty in high esteem (*provincia narrat esse bellam*, v. 6), Catullus scorns her for her malformation.

tia and Ameana (the Callimachean μεγάλη γυνή in the prologue to the *Aetia*, vv. 9-12 Pf.), are defeated by the poet's beloved, Lesbia, who is characterised by a subtle (κατὰ λεπτόν) beauty⁴. Similarly, Ovid transforms a literary contest into a contrast of charm where, as in both Callimachus and Catullus, size does matter!

Turning now to the closer reading of the text, I shall attempt to bolster the Neoteric analysis of Ovid's poetic choice through the examination of his use of language, style and metre. In particular I shall focus on a) the formulation of Tragedy's opening lines and their significance in terms of Callimachean and Neoteric poetics, b) the archaic and colloquial linguistic features, discernible in the speech of Tragedy, as a conscious means on the poet's part for intensifying her lack of *urbanitas*, that is the Neoteric value par excellence, in opposition to both *gravitas* and *rusticitas*, antineoteric qualities noticeably alluded to in the present poetological elegy, as associated, up to a point, with Tragedy, c) the metrical slips Tragedy commits and their import in terms of Roman Callimacheanism again and d) Ovid's use of epic forms.

1. TRAGEDY AND CALLIMACHEAN POETICS

The superiority of Elegy in relation to Tragedy, foreshadowing the latter's loss in this contest, is evident from the very first lines of their contrast in the poem (vv. 7-9) both as female figures and personified literary genres. In opposition to Elegy's filmy (*tenuis*) dress, Tragedy is characterized by *ingens passus* (v. 11), which, along with *tenuis*, demonstrably alludes, as often noticed, to Callimachean / Neoteric aesthetics that Ovid also follows, at least in the *Amores*, and the condemned notion of 'big', suggested by *ingens* vs. *levis* alluding to the properties of a Callimachean slender Muse⁵. Yet the syntax of the formulation is quite revealing, when considered from the viewpoint of Neoteric-Callimachean poetic techniques; the second position of the con-

⁴ Cf. also T. D. Papanghelis, *Catullus and Callimachus on large women*, «Mnemosyne» 44, 1991, 372 ff.; T. D. Papanghelis, *Η ποιητική των Ρωμαίων Νεωτέρων*, Athens 1994, 117 ff.; M. Tartari Chersoni, *Catullo e Properzio: poetica implicita e poetica esplicita*, «Euphrosyne» 7, 1975-1976, 51-53. Cf. also M. Wyke, *The Roman mistress*, Oxford 2007, 122, 125 and *passim*.

⁵ Thus, whatever is in tune with Neoteric poetics has a positive colouring within the *Amores*, whereas whatever is described by means of terms denoting Anti-Callimachean aestheticism is often seen in a negative light.

junction *et* in v. 11 *venit et ingenti violenta Tragoedia passu*, which is the first line of Tragedy's presentation and description in the poem, is in all probability not accidental. It is a common technique of Hellenistic poets and of Callimachus in particular to place the coordinating conjunction (καί, οὐδέ) in the second place in the line, as is evidenced e.g. by Callimachus' *Aet.* 1, 15 Pf.: Μασσαγέται καὶ μαχρὸν οἰστεύοιεν⁶. Similarly the Neoteric Catullus uses *atque* in c. 64, 93 *funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis* (cf. also the second position of *at* in c. 64, 43; 58, of *nec* in c. 64, 173; 210; 379, of *nam* in c. 64, 301⁷). Tragedy is thus undermined from her first appearance in the poem, not only with respect to her external form as a personified female deity, but also on a linguistic / stylistic level, i.e. as a literary genre too; the deity representing serious poetry is being introduced here by the poet through a technique characteristic of Callimachean / Neoteric poetics. This remark acquires further significance, if one takes into account that out of six instances of *et* at the first half of the verse (cf. vv. 4, 8, 10, 15, 47, see also *atque* in v. 52), this is the only instance of its having the second position in the Neoteric manner.

2. ARCHAISMS / COLLOQUIALISMS (*GRAVITAS VS URBANITAS VS RUSTICITAS*)

Tragedy is clearly depicted as an old woman. She wears the

⁶ This is possibly an analogical extension of Wackernagel's Law of clitic placement in the second position in the clause. Further information on the function and interpretation of Wackernagel's Law in CL can be found in J. N. Adams, *Wackernagel's law and the position of unstressed personal pronouns in classical Latin*, «TPS» 92, 1994, 103-178 and J. N. Adams, *Wackernagel's law and the placement of the copula esse in classical Latin*, Cambridge 1994. It must be emphasized that the positioning of *et* in second place is not a direct result of Wackernagel's law (even under its novel interpretation by Adams, i.e. in order to further highlight a focused element), since *et* is not a clitic. It behaves in this instance as a *clitic* in conscious imitation of other connecting particles, which however are clitics (*que*, *ve*); therefore the interpretation of its place here is not a matter of linguistics but a conscious stylistic choice with specific literary implications.

⁷ Cf. Κάτουλλος, *Ο Νεωτεριχός ποιητής της Ρώμης*, ed. by L. Tromaras, Thessaloniki 2001, ad c. 64, 43; Papanghelis, *Η ποιητική* cit., 156 ff.; Catullus: a commentary, ed. by C. Fordyce, Oxford 1961, ad c. 23, 7. For the postposition of καί in Callimachus, see also Call. *Aet.* fr. 43 Pf.,

palla (v. 12), and this is the image of Tragedy adopted also by Horace at *Ars* 232. This mantle however is reserved only for *matronae*, who, as stock characters of Latin literature, especially of the *genus tenue* (Comedy and Elegy), are of a comparatively advanced age. Yet apart from her depiction, Tragedy's advanced age is also implied in the course of the present poem by a number of obsolete linguistic features occurring in her speech⁸, as linguistic conservatism is associated in Roman mind with old people, especially old women. For example at Cic. *De Orat.* 3, 45 the orator remarks on the speech of Crassus' mother in-law: *equidem cum audio socrum meam Laeliam - facilius enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant ... eam sic audio, ut Plautum mihi aut Naevium videar audire*⁹. In v. 23 Tragedy says: *tempus erat, thyrso pulsum graviore moveri*, using a passive infinitive clause as a complement of the impersonal expression *tempus est* instead of the gerund(ive) complement of

vv. 48, 53, 64, fr. 178 Pf. v. 3, Pf. Cf. also *Vict. Sosib.* fr. 384 Pf. vv. 24, 27, fr. inc. sed. 681 Pf. v. 1.

⁸ While the association of Tragedy with old age is quite evident and has been commented upon in the relevant bibliography, further attention must be paid to the rationale underlying this depiction: it can be read as a conscious choice on the elegist's part, with concrete poetological undertones involving the Callimachean / Neoteric poetical program. In Catullus' programmatic poems, old people are termed *senes severiores* and *mali* (cf. e. g. c. 5, 2) or *curiosi* (c. 7, 11) characterized by *invidia* (c. 5, 12) or *mala fascinare lingua* (c. 7, 12), evoking the Callimachean Τελχίνες who, being βάσκανοι, γόνετες and φθονεργοί, reproach Callimachus for his poetics. Just as Catullus' invidious old people censure the poet's love for Lesbia, and just as Callimachus' Τελχίνες attack him for his poetological views, Tragedy, depicted as an old lady, criticises Ovid both for his love affairs and his love-poetry. Note that this is the only instance within the Ovidian corpus, where it is claimed that the poet's private love life was negatively commented upon within his community (vv. 17-22). Elsewhere Ovid claims that, despite his occasional love affairs, his attitude was never a scandal to public opinion, cf. e. g. *Tr.* 4, 10, 67-68. *cum tamen hic essem minimoque accenderer igni, nomine sub nostro fabula nulla fuit*. It seems, therefore, that Tragedy's disapproving attitude towards Ovid's personal life is deliberate here. By ascribing such a disposition to Tragedy, Ovid underlines her invidious character, thus bringing her closer to the behaviour exemplified by Catullan *senes* and anti-Callimachean critics.

⁹ For linguistic conservatism in the speech of aged women, cf. also R. Maltby, *Linguistic characterisation of old men in Terence*, «CPh» 74, 1979, 138.

Classical Latin (genitive of the gerund / gerundive, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 5, 10: *cuius de disciplina aliud tempus fuerit fortasse dicendi*)¹⁰ or an equivalent *ut* clause. Similar in function is *ecquis erit... tibi finis amandi* (v. 15). In his commentary on Vergil, Servius D plausibly considers the similar expression *sed quis erit modus?* (Verg. *Aen.* 4, 98), where *modus* does also have the notion of *finis*, as an archaism¹¹.

Such archaisms seem to add to Tragedy's *gravitas* (v. 23) and *gravitas* of appearance is thus conjoined here with *gravitas* of diction. Complaining that she is wearied by heavy words, Elegy asks Tragedy, vv. 35-36, *quid gravibus verbis, animosa Tragoedia ... me premis? an numquam non gravis esse potes?* The characteristic of *gravitas* however, which Elegy attributes to her opponent, is a term that, apart from its potential poetological connotations, contrasts with the notion of *urbanitas*, which was associated with polished behaviour and style¹² and, therefore, was praised within Roman Neoteric literary circles. Elegy, on the other hand, presents herself as *non rustica* in v. 43, when she asserts that without her, Cupid's mother would be rustic (*rustica sit sine me lascivi mater Amoris*). *Rusticitas* is yet another

¹⁰ For these syntactic alternatives, cf. mainly J. B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik*, Munich 1965, 349, 351, 375. The combination of the *passive* infinitive with the impersonal expression *tempus est* is productive in old Latin as well as in the archaizing register of CL only, especially that of historiography, Plaut. *Mil.* 1218, Cato *Agr.* 33, 2, Verg. *Aen.* 5, 638, Liv. 4, 51, 5; 21, 43, 9; 25, 32, 3; 30, 4, 5, Nep. *Dat.* 11, 1, 2, Val. Max. 2, 7, 15. The few random instances of the construction in the CL register seem to occur either due to the presence of a further gerund construction in the passage, cf. Cic. *Att.* 10, 8, 1: *finem inter nos scribendi fieri tempus esse*, or may have a specific stylistic effect, cf. Ov. *Tr.* 4, 8, 24, where the archaizing construction is again associated with the notion of *senecta*.

¹¹ Cf. J. C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores: book three. A commentary on selected poems*, Diss. Cambridge 1978, *ad loc.* The expression seems to occur only in this Vergilian locus, and again in the epic poetry of Silius Italicus, *Pun.* 12, 70, in the *Priapea* 26, 1 (for the archaic colouring of the line, cf. also C. Goldberg, *Carmina Priapea*, Heidelberg 1992, 154) and in Quint. 10, 1, 38, 5. The evidence seems to be insufficient to allow safe conclusions on whether the expression indeed constitutes an archaism; note however that three out of four attestations come from literary sources prone to archaizing diction; for the archaistic tendencies of Silius Italicus, cf. e. g. D. Vessey, *Statius & the Thebaid*, Cambridge 1973, 47 and n. 7.

¹² Cf. also Quint. 2, 5, 8; 4, 1, 49 and *passim*.

technical term, often held up, especially in rhetoric, as the opposite of *urbanitas*. In other words the *non-rustica* Elegy possesses *urbanitas* and therefore compares very favorably to Tragedy, who is characterized by the lack of this *urbanitas*, i. e. by *gravitas*. Ovid once again draws attention to Tragedy's inelegance.

Tragedy is thus characterized by *gravitas*, which comes in direct opposition to the Neoteric *urbanitas* and thus corresponds to a kind of *rusticitas*, also eschewed by Neoteric aestheticism, especially by Ovid¹³; in what follows, this will be shown on the basis of specific linguistic markers present in Tragedy's speech. Archaisms, as pointed out above, may add *gravitas* to her language, but also, more importantly, make it diverge from urbane diction, which regularly lacks archaisms, obsolete linguistic features as well as features of the *sermo plebeius*¹⁴. What is more, what appears as an archaism in a literary text may at the same time be found in the colloquial / rustic register. It is a rule that rustic speech, being conservative, retains several archaic linguistic features otherwise avoided in standard / urbane language¹⁵. As to colloquialisms, a case could perhaps be made for the adjective in *-osus*, *vinosa convivium* in v. 17¹⁶. Adjectives in

¹³ *Rusticitas*, as a poetological term, is a harsh insult in the mouth of a poet aspiring to Callimachean / Neoteric poetics; it becomes harsher in the case of Ovid, who clearly bases his poetic excellency on the overcoming of any kind of poetical *rusticitas*; he is so intent on eliminating any features of *rusticitas* in his poetic diction that he overshadows even the λεπταλέος Callimachus himself. The *docta puella* of *Am.* 2, 4, 19-20 claims of Ovidian elegies: *est quae Callimachi prae nostris rustica dicat carmina*.

¹⁴ Cf. E. S. Ramage, *Early Roman urbanity*, *AJPh* 81, 1960, 65-72. As to archaisms in particular and their opposition to urban speech, see especially 69.

¹⁵ Cf. R. Maltby, *A comparative study of the language of Plautus and Terence*, Diss. Cambridge 1976, 13; Adams, Mayer, *Aspects* cit., 10.

¹⁶ *Vinosus* in the sense of 'fond of / intoxicated with wine' is frequent in colloquial sources only, cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 79, Hor. *Ep.* 1, 13, 14; 1, 19, 6, Iuv. 9, 113, Gell. 4, 9, 12. For the colloquial character of Gellius, see especially L. Holford-Strevens, *Aulus Gellius: an Antonine scholar and his achievement*, Oxford 2003, 48-64. In Ov. *Fast* 3, 765 the word also occurs with reference to the comic old age again. It is of course true that not all adjectives in *-osus* are colloquial; however, if the textual distribution of an *-osus* derivative shows predilection for colloquial sources, this constitutes an indication of its colloquial status as a word, which is the case with *vinosus* here.

-osus¹⁷, although occasionally creeping up in high literature, mainly abound in the early writers as well as in the rustic authors, and are also prevalent in Christian authors such as Augustine and Tertullian, who often use colloquial features in their speech. The same penchant for them is displayed by the veterinary and medical writers, a further source of *sermo plebeius*, whereas classical authors use them sparingly. In Cicero, this suffix is not productive in opposition to more popular writers such as Pliny the Elder¹⁸. In addition, the *Probi Appendix* recommends using the suffix -idus instead of -osus, *rabidus non rabiosus*. One may, naturally, not be entitled to label as colloquial all adjectives in -osus; yet, the particular distribution of *vinosus*, as shown in n. 16, testifies to the rather colloquial character of the adjective in the particular sense it occurs in *Am.* 3, 1. Colloquial seems also to be an additional word combination, possibly further evoking Tragedy's *rusticitas*, in the last line of her speech (v. 30); namely the use of the expression *implere leges* in the sense of «to carry out the terms of the elegiac verse» with reference to the personified Tragedy¹⁹.

Such a mixing of styles (colloquial with elevated-archaic, suggested here by the two archaisms and the hellenising *thyrsos*), however, is a technique that occurs in Neoteric poetry as well, when attempting to undermine the stylistic dignity of epic and / or tragic diction: for example in c. 36, when attacking Volusius' *Annales*, a long epic against the spirit of Callimachean poetics²⁰, Catullus mingles the epic expressions *tardipedi deo* (v. 7),

¹⁷ F. T. Cooper, *Word formation in the Roman sermo plebeius. An historical study of the development of vocabulary in vulgar and late Latin, with special reference to the Romance languages*, New York 1895, 122.

¹⁸ For the sources of *sermo plebeius*, cf. also K. Vossler, *Einführung ins Vulgärlatein*, München 1954, 55 ff.; H. F. Müller, P. Taylor, *A chrestomathy of vulgar Latin*, Boston 1932, III ff.; J. Herman, *Le latin vulgaire*, Paris 1967, 27 ff.; R. A. Haadsma, J. Nuchelmans, *Précis de latin vulgaire*, Groningen 1963, 13 ff.; V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire*, Paris 1967, 13 ff.; L. R. Palmer, *The Latin language*, London 1954, 148 ff.

¹⁹ For the colloquial character of the expression, cf. also McKeown, *Ovid: Amores* cit., *ad loc.* On the basis of the similar colloquial Petronian syntagm *tragoediam implere*, *Sat.* 108, 11, 4, it may be surmised that the collocation *implere leges*, which seems to be a *hapax* in Latin literature and does also refer to tragedy, also has a colloquial colouring.

²⁰ For a poetological reading of the poem, cf. V. Buchheit, *Catulls Dichterkritik in C. 36, «Hermes»* 87, 1959, 309-327.

caeruleo creata ponto (v. 11)²¹, the archaic imperative *face* in place of the classical *fac* (v. 16) and the religious formula *redditumque votum* (v. 16) with the vulgar *cacata carta* (v. 20). However, whereas in Catullus' poem it is the Neoteric poet himself, i.e. the enemy of traditional epic techniques, who thus reviles and undermines Volusius' epic, in Ovid it is Tragedy herself, the representative of serious poetry, who thus undermines herself, in the last line of her speech, and, furthermore, does so by means of Neoteric techniques.

3. ELEGIAC METRE AND TRAGEDY'S DEFECTS

Tragedy's lack of *urbanitas*, Neoteric value par excellence, as suggested by both the archaizing and the colloquial features discerned in her speech, is further emphasized by means of the metrical slips occurring in her diction. Two metrical irregularities occurring in Tragedy's speech seem to contribute further to a general impression of clumsiness and ineffectiveness on her part: in v. 16 Tragedy says to the poet *o argumenti lente poeta tui*, protesting against his insistence on writing love poetry. In the first part of the line she commits the *faux pas* of a hiatus in *o* with a spondaic four-syllable word (*o argumenti*) which, furthermore, consists of the extremely rare succession, as Schrijvers (*O tragedia* cit., 419) points out, of a long -o and a long -a in hiatus, also censured by Quintilian (9, 4, 33-34) in his discussion on the *vocalium concursus*²². The second metrical irregularity occurs in v. 25 *materia premis ingeni / um; cane facta virorum*, where there is no caesura after the third foot, an obligatory pause, marking the line as non-caesural (term of Platnauer, *Latin elegiac verse* cit., 6), avoided in Ovid to much greater extent than in the other Latin elegists²³. It cannot be accidental that Tragedy slips into this metrical 'anomaly' just before *cane facta virorum*, a cliché expression in the higher poetic genres in general and epic in particular. Moreover, it occurs before the expression *area meo*²⁴ (v. 26 «*haec animo*», *dices*, «*area digna meo*

²¹ Cf. also Tromaras, *Κάτωλλος* cit., *ad loc.*

²² Hiatus after *o*, *heu* and *a* is common in elegy: cf. M. Platnauer, *Latin elegiac verse*, Cambridge 1951, 57. What matters here is the unusual metrical character of the specific vowel-sequence.

²³ 0-1% in Ovid in comparison with around 2% in the other two elegists; other instances of non caesural lines in the *Amores* include 2, 10, 25; 3, 9, 53; 3, 15, 5. Cf. also Platnauer, *Latin elegiac verse* cit., 7.

²⁴ Elsewhere Ovid uses *area* to designate poetry of many lines in the

est») which might be taken to allude to the Callimachean image of lengthy poetry, not aspiring to Callimachean poetological rules, as a large and crowded street (Call. *Aet.* 1, 27-28 Pf.)²⁵. Tragedy asks Ovid to excel in elevated metres, expressing, however, her thoughts by means of the metre of love poetry. Her speech, therefore, exhibits several metrical slips, which betray her inability to express herself in lines she is not accustomed to. In this respect, she is culpable of *inelegantia* in her diction, something that, by Neoteric standards, is a serious defect. Tragedy resembles the Neoteric Ameana of Catullus' 43, who, being *nec sane nimis elegante lingua* (v. 4), renders all those who admire her *saeclum insapiens et infacetum!* (v. 8).

What is more, the use of metre as a means of adding to Tragedy's negative depiction, as suggested above, has a further significance, if considered within both Neoteric ideology and the history of Roman Callimacheanism. Cicero views metre as one of the major features differentiating Neoteric aesthetics from the previous literary tradition: at *Att.* 7, 2, 1 he points out the tendency of Neoteric poets to use spondaic hexameters²⁶, something which also characterises the hexameters of several Hellenistic poets and of Euphorion in particular²⁷. More importantly, in the *Orator* 161 Cicero observes a metrical feature of Neoteric poetry which contrasts unfavourably with traditional epic metrics: whereas both Ennius and Lucretius (heroic and didactic epic) tend to exhibit *apaloiphe* of the final -s before words beginning with consonants, Neoteric poets fail to do so. The insistence of Cicero on metrical issues as (negative) evaluational criteria with respect to Neoteric poetry entails both the subtle awareness of

Callimachean manner at *Am.* 3, 15, 18; for this, see also Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom* cit., 106. For the image of the big and bustling street used in a poetological context, cf. also Verg. *Georg.* 3, 291: *deserta per ardua*, Prop. 3, 1, 14: *non datur ad Musas currere lata via*.

²⁵ Similarly at *Am.* 1, 15, 19, when introducing the names of Ennius and Accius along with the descriptive adjective *animosus* (a standard term for describing the poetic grandeur of the epic style) in his elegiac couplet, Ovid undermines the use of this marker of the epic style in elegiac lines through the metrical elision in *animosique Accius oris*, which is extremely uncommon in this position of the elegiac verse. Cf. also J. C. McKeown, *Ovid Amores. Volume II: a commentary on book one*, Leeds 1989, *ad loc.*

²⁶ For spondaic lines as a Neoteric novelty, cf. also D. O. Ross, *Style and tradition in Catullus*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1969, 131-137.

²⁷ Cf. also B. A. van Groningen, *Euphorion*, Amsterdam 1977; Panghelis, *Η ποιητική* cit., 99.

metre in the literary criticism of the period and the necessity of employing similar metrical arguments in the defence or praise of Neoteric or elegiac poetry. In the poem under discussion here, Tragedy is deliberately shown to exhibit a similar metrical behaviour with the counterparts of Neoteric poetic diction, in that she too is guilty of metrical 'imperfection'. What distinguishes epic diction from Neoteric poetry is the different handling of a specific metrical feature. Similarly what contrasts Tragedy, representing serious poetry in the poem, and Elegy, is their dissimilar manipulation of a specific metre: Tragedy displays metrical irregularities avoided by the elegists. The above metrical analysis reveals that in vv. 35-36 Elegy scorns Tragedy not only for having attacked her by means of elegiac lines, but also for her inability to use the elegiac metre properly.

Metrical irregularities however, *i. e.* deviation from standard scansion, is a practice mainly adopted by Hellenistic poetry, in Theocritus' *Idylls* (primarily with Callimachean metrical rules), as a marker of 'roughness' and *rusticitas*, and is often associated with colloquial diction, as is also the case here with Ovid. The majority of the breaches of Naeke's Law for example (11 out of 13 instances), a strict Callimachean rule prohibiting a word break after a fourth-foot spondee, occur in conversational / colloquial lines of *Id.* 15 and the Theocritean *Idyll* 11, mainly in the speech of the 'unsophisticated' Cyclops²⁸. What is more, at *Id.* 3, 1, in *κομάσδω ποτὶ τὸν Ἀμαρυλλίδα, ταὶ δέ μοι αἶγες*, the unnamed goat-herd of the *Idyll* uses the caesura of the line between the article and the noun it modifies, thus splitting up a syntactic and semantic unit. A similar metrical irregularity appears in *Id.* 2, 8; 97, in the speech of Simaetha²⁹, and in *Id.* 10, 29 in a rustic song on the harvest, uttered by the rustic reaper Boukaios³⁰, in whose speech we also find the breach of a further

²⁸ Cf. also A. F. Naeke, *Hecale*, in *Opuscula philologica* II, Bonn 1845, 104; M. L. West, *Greek metre*, Oxford 1982, 154-155; P. Maas, *Greek metre*, transl. in English by H. Lloyd-Jones, Oxford 1962, § 92. See also P. E. Legrand, *Étude sur Théocrite*, Paris 1898, 336; M. Fantuzzi, *Variazioni sull'esametro in Teocrito*, in *Struttura e storia dell'esametro greco*, a cura di M. Fantuzzi, R. Pretagostini, Roma 1995, 231, 239; R. Stark, *Theocritea*, «Maia» 15, 1963, 373-374. Cf. also R. L. Hunter, *Theocritus and the archaeology of Greek poetry*, Cambridge 1996, 30.

²⁹ Simaetha is the name of a comic character of Old Comedy. Her name suggests a 'low character', namely an ἐντάφα. See *Theocritus: select poems*, ed. by K. J. Dover, London 1971, 94-95.

³⁰ Cf. also *Theocritus: a selection. Idylls 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13*, ed. by R. L. Hunter, Cambridge 1999, 110-111 and *passim*.

strict Callimachean law, Hermann's bridge³¹, whereby word-end is avoided after the first short of the fourth biceps, in v. 27 ἰσχ-νάν, ἀλιόκαυστον, ἐγὼ δὲ μόνος μελίχλωρον. This break of the bridge appears also at *Id.* 15, 25 in the speech of the uneducated Syracusan Gorgo and at *Id.* 14, 64; 70 it is uttered by a Syracusan Θυώνιχος³² Boukaios' fellow-reaper, Milon (*Id.* 10), exhibits a further strong breach of the Callimachean Naeke's Law in his speech (v. 58 μῦθ' ἰσθεν τᾷ ματρὶ κατ' εὐνὰν ὀρθρονοῖσα), and, what is more, in a line of a very rare verse-form (*ssdss*), entirely avoided in the Callimachean corpus. It appears that Ovid adopts a similar technique of metrical characterisation in order to underline Tragedy's harshness and rusticity, already implied by the colloquial character of her diction. Theocritus' rustic characters fail to adhere to Callimachean metrical practice³³; in other words, they fail to use properly the metrical rules of a poet (Callimachus) whom Theocritus admires and whose (Callimachus') poetics he seems to adopt up to a point (cf. *Id.* 7, 45 ff.). In the same vein, Ovid's Tragedy, shown as not urban on the level of language as suggested above, fails to adhere to the metrical habits of the Elegy, and, by implication, of the elegiac genre, described, within this poem, by means of Callimachean poetics.

4. OVID'S USE OF EPIC FORMS

Naturally, there can be no question of Ovid's opposition to the *genus grande* in general. He has composed a tragedy, *Medea*, and an epic – though not in the Vergilian trend –, the *Metamorphoses*. In opposition to both Propertius and Tibullus, who never attempted the composition of a real tragedy or epic, Ovid does not invoke lack of ability in the *genus grande* as an excuse for his present choice to write elegies; and this is evident in his programmatic pieces too, where his skill in the *genus grande* is

³¹ Cf. G. Hermann, *Orphica*, Leipzig 1805, 692-696; G. R. McLennan, *The metrical form of the hexameter in Callimachus*, «QUCC» 17, 1974, 63.

³² For the uneducated / rustic character of Praxinoa and on Syracusan Dorie in general, cf. also Hunter, *Theocritus and the archaeology* cit., 119 ff.

³³ For 'Callimachean metrical rules', cf. *Callimachus, hymn to Demeter*, ed. by N. Hopkinson, Cambridge 1984, 51-55; *Callimachus, Hecale*, ed. with introduction and commentary by A. S. Hollis, Oxford 1990, 15-23.

not at issue, since he is impeded from writing 'higher poetry' mainly due to external interventions. His decision here is rather presented as an arbitrary choice of the moment, which nevertheless does constitute a *recusatio*: he must justify, as all other elegists of the Augustan period do, his decision to write, at least for a period, poetry of the *genus tenue*. It is a temporary though, not a permanent choice; it is, however, a choice, no matter its – somehow – comic depiction.

Both his ability and his intention to compose in the *genus grande* though becomes evident from the very first lines of the poem, in accordance with the well known Hellenistic model to use first lines of a literary work as a means for programmatically denoting the stylistic trends to be followed: thus at the very start of the elegy there occurs the image of a very old grove, unfelled, through many years (v. 1 *stat vetus et multos incaedua silva per annos*), recalling clear epic intertexts, namely Verg. *Aen.* 6, 179 ff. and its model, Enn. *Ann.* 175-179 Sk³⁴. This description, alluding to epic intertexts, is furthermore developed here by means of epic techniques, as revealed by a closer look at the linguistic structure of the passage: the first line of the poem begins with a monosyllable verb (v. 1 *stat*) which is extremely unusual for the elegists. Epic poetry, on the other hand, often begins lines with monosyllabic verbs or even monosyllabic nouns. For *stare* more particularly, it should be noted that monosyllabic forms of the cognate verb (στῆν, στῆ) stand first in the line even in Homer, and this is also the case with forms of the Latin *stare*, which tend to be found at the beginning of the line in the Roman epic³⁵. These rather epic reminiscences on the level of both imagery and language / style may further be read as a programmatic statement on the poet's part of both his ability and willingness to expand the elegiac code and write in the *genus grande*, although not for the present, and his readiness to avail himself of a 'generic interplay' between various literary genres (*genus grande* discourse (epic, tragedy) intermingled with the neoteric discourse of the *genus tenue* (elegy, pastoral) etc.), as evidenced throughout the Ovidian, Protean – from a generic point of view –, epic poem³⁶.

³⁴ Cf. also S. Hinds, *Allusion and intertext. Dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry*, Cambridge 1998, 11-12.

³⁵ Cf. also McKeown, *Ovid: Amores* cit., *ad loc.*; A. Bartalucci, *Encyclopedia Vergiliana*, Romé 1988, 1026-1027.

³⁶ Cf. S. Hinds, *The metamorphosis of Persephone: Ovid and the self-conscious Muse*, Cambridge 1987.

CONCLUSION

Elegy 3, 1 of the *Amores* is a poetic contest between the major literary genres of antiquity: the *genus grande*, as represented by tragedy, on the one hand, and the *genus tenue*, as represented by elegy, on the other. From a sporting point of view, the match seems an unfair one, at least at the beginning: the terrain (literary / beauty contest) is made to order for one of the contestants, the rules of the game (neoteric metalanguage) also seem to favour elegy, and the referee (the poet Ovid) expresses himself clearly in her favour. The result, therefore, seems to be a foregone conclusion. However, already from the very beginning of the game, we seem to have the clear promise of a re-match: Ovid is both capable and willing to embark on an epic and tragic poetic career. It is hoped that the present discussion has helped to highlight both the thematic and lexical, as well as the linguistic, stylistic and metrical devices, which construct the story of this *agon*.

EVANGELOS KARAKASIS

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