

## *corde capessere* (Ennius, *Ann.* 42 Sk)

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At Ennius, *Ann.* 42 Sk, *corde* in the phrase *corde capessere* poses severe interpretive difficulties, as Skutsch has shown. Given the grasping/embracing motif typical of such dream sequences, Marx's *corpus capessere* is not as "feeble" as Skutsch suggests. Vergil, in his evocation of Odysseus' attempt to embrace his mother (via Aeneas' encounter with Creusa), introduces a specification referring to the neck: *ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum* (*Aen.* 2.793, imitated by Silius). A more natural solution, then, is to read *colla capessere*, cf. *captavi ... colla* in Ovid, and the desiderative idea implicit in the phrase *collum/colla petere* (Cael. apud Quintil., Ovid, Silius). The fact that Old Latin allegedly shows a masc. *collus*, vis-à-vis later *collum* (and generally *colla* in poetic contexts), is only an apparent problem. Neut. *collum* is attested early, and *colla* is in any event best explained via a Latin collective plural; thus Ennius may well have used *colla*, in anticipation of later poetic practice.

*Ita sola*  
*postilla, germana soror, errare videbar*  
*tardaue vestigare et quaerere te neque posse*  
*corde capessere: semita nulla pedem stabilibat.*  
(Ennius, *Ann.* 39–42 Sk)

In his recent edition of the *Annals* of Ennius, O. Skutsch has argued convincingly that the "very difficult phrase" *corde capessere* (*Ann.* 42 Sk = 43 V), in the famous sequence known as "Ilia's Dream", is problematic, since "*capere* and its derivatives used with the instrum. abl. *corde* denote understanding rather than perception", and therefore "[t]he meaning 'to perceive (see, hear) you' is ... ruled out. So, by the lack of even a remote parallel, is the sense of *sinu complecti*."<sup>1</sup>) Skutsch concludes that the phrase must somehow mean "to reach you", except that "[t]he addition of *corde* ... strains

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<sup>1</sup>) O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Quintus Ennius* (Oxford 1985) 199. The idea (not mentioned by Skutsch) that *corde* is a locative ablative (e.g. L. Valmaggi, *Q. Ennio, I frammenti degli Annali*<sup>2</sup> [Turin 1947; 1900<sup>1</sup>] 11, followed by E. M. Steuart, *The Annals of Q. Ennius* [Cambridge 1925] 108) cannot be correct, under any normal interpretation of the meaning of *capessere*; all of the cited parallels are specious, involving, as they do, sequences like *corde amare* (Plautus, *Capt.* 420, *Truc.* 177, etc.).

this sense".<sup>2)</sup> As for emendations: Skutsch no doubt rightly rejects Havet's *corda capessere* "to take heart"; but we must slightly qualify his characterization ("unsatisfactory from every point of view"), since Havet takes pains to state a perfectly valid assumption, namely that the transitive *capessere* must be given a direct object, which may not exactly be the preceding *te*.<sup>3)</sup> Marx provides a plausible object with his suggestion of *corpus*,<sup>4)</sup> but Skutsch asserts, without explanation, that *corpus* is "feeble" in the Ilia context, as compared with its more natural usage at Ovid, *Met.* 11.675 (*corpusque petens amplectitur auras*). This assessment, however, seems overly severe. The Ovid passage not only describes a dream (Ceyx and Alcyon; *per somnum corpusque petens amplectitur auras*), but in fact a dream that is itself partly evocative of Ilia's dream, among other dream passages in Latin literature.<sup>5)</sup> Indeed, the comparison Skutsch adduces is highly instructive, and points the way to a possible improvement of Marx's original suggestion.

One of the several motifs typical of such dream-passages is that of attempting to embrace or grasp the loved one (*corpusque petens*), which has a well-known Homeric pedigree in Odysseus' encounter with his mother's ghost (*λ* 206–9), and an equally famous analogue in Aeneas' encounter with the ghost of Creusa (*Aen.* 2.790 ff.).<sup>6)</sup> It is striking that Vergil, in his otherwise fairly close rendering of Homer's scene (including the thrice-repeated ineffectual grasping: *ter conatus ... / ter frustra ...*), introduces a physical specification referring to the neck: *ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum* (793).<sup>7)</sup>

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<sup>2)</sup> Skutsch's idea that "[i]f *corde* should be wrong it might conceal the name of the sister" is not, in my opinion, a serious possibility: another vocative (after *germana soror*, 39) would be otiose, and an accusative would imply a discordant shift from second-person (*te*) to third-person address.

<sup>3)</sup> *Revue de philologie* 2, n. s. (1878) 93.

<sup>4)</sup> Apud Iohannem Vahlen, *Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae*<sup>2</sup> (Leipzig 1903) 8, ad loc.

<sup>5)</sup> See the list of passages cited by F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphosen X–XI* (Heidelberg 1980) 415–16.

<sup>6)</sup> In addition to its undisputed phraseological echoes of the Homeric topos, the Creusa scene has a striking affinity with Ilia's dream, as has occasionally been noted (e. g. R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus*, Oxford 1964, 287). On the grasping motif, see especially A. Grillone, *Il sogno nell'epica latina*, Palermo 1967, 82 n. 21 and F. Bömer, *Gymnasium* 64, 1967, 129.

<sup>7)</sup> Interestingly enough, this is followed also by Silius in his evocation of the same Homeric passage: *His alacer colla amplexu materna petebat / umbraque ter*

I suggest, then, that for Ennius' *corde capessere* we read *colla capessere*. For *colla* with *capio* / *capessere*, cf. Ovid's *non ego captavi brevibus tua colla lacertis* (H. 8.93), as well as the desiderative idea implicit in the pattern *collum* / *colla petere* (Caelius apud Quintilian 4.2.124 *proximae cuiusque collum amplexu petebat*, cf. Ovid, *Met.* 4.597 *dabat amplexus assuetaque colla petebat*, and Silius 13.648 *His alacer colla amplexu materna petebat*, already cited). Thus the phrase *colla capessere* develops, in a natural way, the general motif of searching (*quaerere te*) via the specific embracing motif typical of such dream topoi. The semantic strain of *corde* is thereby eliminated, so that we may retain Skutsch's attractive interpretation that the phrase must mean something like "to reach you". Note also that *colla* – like *corde*, *corda* and *corpus* – conforms to the alliterative pattern of the passage, a factor that must enter into any evaluation of the text, as already noted by Skutsch.<sup>8)</sup>

The neuter gender of *colla* poses a minor problem, since Old Latin mostly attests a masc. *collus*, versus the later *collum* (and generally *colla* in poetic contexts).<sup>9)</sup> But *colla* in Ennius is easily defended. To begin with, the masc./neuter gender fluctuation for this word – which belongs to a recognized type<sup>10)</sup> – may well be relatively old within Latin. In Plautus, a masc. *collus* is transmitted unambiguously at *Capt.* 357, 902 and *Persa* 691. But at *Amph.* 445, where Nonius read *collus*, all MSS have only the neuter *collum*;<sup>11)</sup> similarly *Rud.* 888 (MSS *collum*, versus *collus* recorded by Priscian). In any case, given the masc. Germanic cognate (Gothic *hals* = German *Hals* "neck"), the neuter gender of *collum* is probably best explained via a Latin collective plural *colla*.<sup>12)</sup> Thus Ennius – in anticipation, as

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*frustra per inane petita fefellit* (13.648–9). Homer (λ 206) has simply *τρὶς μὲν ἐφορμήθην, ἔλεειν τέ με θυμὸς ἀνώγει*.

<sup>8)</sup> See further the detailed analysis by A. Grilli of the complex alliterative fabric of this passage – including *corde capessere* as an example of the frequent type in enjambement – in his *Studi enniani* (Brescia 1965) 226–8.

<sup>9)</sup> See *ThLL* 3.1658.73 ff. for citations from Naevius, Plautus, Caecilius, Cato, Accius, Lucilius, and Varro, largely derived from a single entry in Nonius (294.14 L = 200 M).

<sup>10)</sup> Thus *aevus* ≈ *aevum*, *dorsus* ≈ *dorsum* etc.; see A. Ernout, *Morphologie historique du latin*<sup>3</sup> (Paris 1974) 3.

<sup>11)</sup> A. Meillet and J. Vendryes, *Traité de grammaire comparée des langues classiques*<sup>4</sup> (Paris 1966) 543.

<sup>12)</sup> Cf. A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*<sup>4</sup> (Paris 1967), s. v. *collum*: "le succès de *collum* a pu être déterminé par le collectif pluriel *colla*, qui est fréquent, et en partie par le fait que beaucoup de noms de

often, of later poetic technique – was free to make use of a form *colla*.<sup>13)</sup>

If *colla* is correct, the error of *corde* for *colla* is not likely to go back to Cicero,<sup>14)</sup> and should probably be laid to a relatively remote stage of the manuscript tradition (there is no trace of a problem at the source of the quotation, *De Div.* 1.40–1). It is worth noting, however, that the similar alliterative phrase *corde cupitus* appears five lines later (*Ann.* 47 Sk)<sup>15)</sup>, and that *corde* appears yet again in the very last line (*aegro cum corde meo*, *Ann.* 50 Sk). There is, moreover, a striking degree of verbal repetition and parallelism throughout the entire passage:

35 lacrimans		49 lacrimans
35 somno		50 somnus
36 prognata		44 o gnata
36 pater	43 pater	46 pater
40 germana		46 germana
43 voce		49 voce
42 [corde?]	47 corde	50 corde

Under the circumstances, then, a replacement of *colla* by *corde* in 42, under the burden of these repetitions (including the twice-repeated *corde* itself), can to some extent be motivated.

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parties du corps sont neutres en latin"; similarly Ernout, *Morph. hist.* 4, and M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (Munich 1977) 276. On the Indo-European collective plural, see most recently H. Eichner, "Das Problem des Ansatzes eines urindogermanischen Numerus 'Kollektiv' ('Komprehensiv')", in B. Schlerath (ed.), *Grammatische Kategorien: Funktion und Geschichte* (Wiesbaden 1985) 134–169, and Jón Axel Hardarson, "Zum urindogermanischen Kollektivum", *MSS* 48 (1987) 71–113.

<sup>13)</sup> The fact that masc. *collus* resurfaces, as it were, in Imperial times (Fronto, *Tab. devot.* Audoll. 135 a 5, etc.; see *ThLL* loc. cit.) may indicate that by Ennius' day the masc. was already mostly characteristic of the Umgangssprache, and hence a form Ennius might well have sought to avoid. (Apart from a single occurrence in Accius, the recorded instances of *collus* in Old Latin poetry are restricted to comedy and satire.)

<sup>14)</sup> Cf. Skutsch's discussion of Cicero's general reliability, *op. cit.* 27–8.

<sup>15)</sup> Note Skutsch's observation (*op. cit.* 199) that *corde* in *corde capessere* "seems to convey the sense of *cupitam capessere*; compare *corde cupitus* 47".