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(in)ampla

This word-study will focus on verse 20 of Gerald's prologue to the *Waltharius*, specifically the word *inampla*:

> Perlectus longaevi stringit inampla diei.[1]

This verse is, as noted by editors and commentators alike,[2] fraught with difficulties. It is commonly translated as "when read through, it shortens the long hours of the day."[3] Problems occur with *longaevi*, which, in addition to being a textual problem,[4] is most often used with persons, rather than with an abstract noun such as "time" or "day".[5] Another difficulty is posed by *stringit* and by *inampla*. *Stringo*, according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*,[6] means "to draw or tie tight; skin, brush; graze; pluck, strip off; prune". However, *stringo in* means to "unsheathe (a weapon, usu. sword or knife)" in hostility towards something. This would mean that we would have to take *inampla* as *in ampla*. There are, however, two objections to this: firstly, all examples listed by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* using *stringo in* in this sense, have an expressed object (a sword or other weapon that is unsheathed for the attack of something; in the examples where it is used in a figurative sense, it is used passively);[7] secondly, there is one other occurrence of *inampla*, in Walther of Speyer's *Passion of Christopher*:

> Haec series mecum vigilet per inampla dierum[8]

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[1] The edition used here is Strecker 1937 (reprinted 1978).

[2] Beck 1908, *ad loc.*: "Probeübersetzung der schwierigen Stelle," Althof 1905, vol. 2, *ad loc.*: "Der Vers ist eine *crux interpretum* und hat zu mancherlei Konjekturen veranlassung gegeben. Vor allem machen die Worte *stringit in ampla diei* Schwierigkeit."

[3] Cf. Kratz 1984, *ad loc.*: "Read through, it makes the lengthy day a little shorter," Vogt-Spira 1994, *ad loc.*: "verkürzt seine Lektüre die müssigen Stunden eines lang dauernden Tages."

[4] It appears as *longe vi* in several manuscripts.

[5] Cf. Beck's (1908, *ad loc.*) translation (he sees *longaevi* as pointing to the bishop Ercambald, referred to earlier in the prologue): "wenn man es gelesen hat, rührt es bis in die ehrenvolle (weitentfernte?) Zeit der hohen Alters."

[6] S.v. *stringo* (1).

[7] Ov. *Rem.* 377: *liber in adversos hostes stringatur iambus* and Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.87: *strictae in iurgia leges*.

[8] Strecker 1937, Liber VI, p. 57, v. 83.

However, Walther of Speyer could have been familiar with the prologue to the *Waltharius*, of a manuscript that had the words closely written together.[9] This may well conform to his usual practice of picking up rare and obscure words for his poetry.[10] In any case, *in amplum* is preferable to *inamplum*, as the prefix *in-* generally denotes a negation of the adjective,[11] which is not the sense required. Since *inampla* is unacceptable, we may suppose that *stringit* is used here, not only in a figural sense, but also uniquely construed without an accompanying grammatical object, providing us with the tentative translation "when read through, it (sc. the *libellus*) unsheathes (sc. a weapon) towards the long (sc. hours) of the day".

Having thus argued for *ampla* as opposed to *inampla*, it is now necessary to discuss the specific usage of *ampla* here with *diei*. Originally, *amplus* referred to a large, open space, describing it as large, vast, long, broad, expansive. As is often the case of words describing space,[12] *amplus* also came to be used of quantity: numerous, copious; and also of quality: honorable (when used of people).

Just as "expansive spaces of time" is less natural than "great amounts of time" in English, so *amplus* is used very rarely to describe lengths of time in Latin: the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* only lists one occurence,[13] which happens to be in the *Shepherd of Hermas*:

> Vides ergo exiguum esse tempus dulcedinis ac voluptatis, poenae vero ac tormentorum amplum.[14]
>
> (You see, therefore, that the time of pleasure and delight is short, but that of punishment and torment, long.)

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[9] See Strecker's commentary to the quoted verse of Walther of Speyer: "Man wird anehmen müssen, dass Walther diesen Prolog kannte."

[10] Cf. Raby 1932, vol. 1, 393: "Walther loved curious words, for which he searched in glossaries, and he mingled Graecisms as well."

[11] Used as a prefix, *in-* either has negative or intensive force. However, the intensifying force is usually restricted to the usage of *in-* with verbs or nouns with verbal force, but with adjectives, only the privative function is available (cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *in-²*).

[12] Cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *magnus²*. For the difference between *magnus* and *amplus* in describing space, see Mar. Victorin. *Rhet*. 1.5 (*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1.1.2006.42): "magnum est quod in cumulum sui et magnitudinem crescit, amplum quod late patet et per multa diffunditur."

[13] 1.2007.18.

[14] *Sim*. 6.4.4. The edition is Vezzone 1994.

Although it is here used with *tempus* and not with *dies*, there are some striking similarities. The passage in the prologue of the *Waltharius* mentions how playful delight may be used to shorten the long hours of the day (if indeed this is the proper interpretation of *stringit*);[15] the parable in the *Shephard of Hermas* describes how those who have 'played around' in life must suffer an equal amount of time in the afterlife, and how this is still a harsh punishment, since times of delight always last shorter than times of sorrow. Both passages, then, treat the theme of the shortening effect delight has on time, and it is perhaps not unremarkable that a manuscript of the *Shephard of Hermas* was present in the library at St. Gall.[16]

I have found four other instances where the adjective *amplus* is used to describe a period of time, three of which occur in the *Acta Sanctorum*.[17] Two occur in the phrase *amplum temporis spatium*,[18] and there is one instance where it is used with *tempus*: *amplo tempore*.[19] The last instance I found was in the *Hisperica Famina*: *amplo temporalis aevi stadio*.[20] Although the influence of these occurrences cannot be excluded, it is noteworthy that none of these texts were present at the monastic library of St. Gall.

In conclusion, *inampla* in Gerald's prologue to the *Waltharius* must clearly be *in ampla*, as the first would mean "short," and would not provide any sensible interpretation when taken with *stringit* ("shortens the short hours"?). Furthermore, *amplus* is used in conjunction with *dies* to refer to a large extent of time. Gerald, in claiming that the poem of the *Waltharius* may be used to shorten these "long hours of the day," embellishes upon the theme of the experience of a time of pleasure as short in comparison with a time of displeasure, and turns this side-effect of delight into a virtue.

Literature

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[15] In this paraphrase, I have included here the preceding verse, v. 19: "Ludendum magis est dominum quam sit rogitandum" (when it is time for playing rather than praying to the Lord). Though see Althof 1905, *ad loc*. for a discussion of this grammatically difficult verse.

[16] Listed as codex 151, pp. 195-316 in Scherrer 1975, p. 57. It is dated to the tenth century.

[17] Accessed through the *Patrologia Latina* database on October 12, 2009 (http://pld.chadwyck.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/).

[18] Sep. 2, Day 6, Sanctus Zacharias propheta in Judaea, c. 3; Oct. 4, Day 9, Sanctus Abraham patriarcha in Palaestina, c. 9.

[19] Aug. 1, Day 3, S. Petrus episc. Anagniae, c. 3.

[20] *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 90 col. 1188D.

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