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John B. Dillon

Some Passages in the *Carmina* of James Foullis of Edinburgh



Students of Scottish Literature owe a debt of gratitude to Professors J. IJsewijn and D. F. S. Thomson for providing them with an accessible and annotated edition of the *Carmina* of James Foullis of Edinburgh (ca.1485-1549).¹ Although Foullis is not a great poet, his work (or, rather, what remains of it) is of interest not only for the light it sheds on contemporary personages, conditions and events but also because of its strong moral qualities and occasional forcefulness of expression. Moreover, as one of the editors has noted elsewhere, Foullis is the first Scottish humanist known to have brought out a printed volume of his Latin verse,² and it is for this reason as well as for his being a forerunner of George Buchanan that he assumes importance in the eyes of a literary historian.

Unfortunately, Foullis is not always easy to read. He can be both irritatingly diffuse and crabbed almost to the point of incomprehensibility. Furthermore, his poems are marked by a number of disconcerting grammatical and lexical peculiarities, not all of which, however, may be his: only adequately served by the Paris printer of his early poems, Foullis was not an especially diligent corrector of his text. Thus his editors' task has not been altogether easy and, as they themselves admit, they have by no means resolved all of the difficulties. The present notes speak to some of these.

In fact, they are often directed specifically toward problems raised by the editors, either in their annotations or as a result of their constitution of the text. Although more could be done to elucidate the poems, e.g., by way of explaining some possibly unfamiliar words or phrases, this is not the place for such an apparatus.³ Instead, parallels are cited here only when their content is particularly relevant or when their phraseology may have had an effect upon Foullis's. References to Calepino are to the 1526 Venice edition of his *Dictionarium*, which first appeared in 1502; their function is simply to show that a given item, however obscure it may be to some today, was common property in Foullis's time. Unidentified opinions cited for rebuttal are those of the editors *ad loc.*; their edition of course constitutes the basis for all quotations from and references to the poems themselves.⁴ Like all pioneering work, that of IJsewijn and Thomson has its shortcomings. If some of them are remedied here, and Foullis is thereby made more comprehensible to his readers, then these notes will have served their purpose.

Calamitose pestis Elegia deploratio, 161-7:

Confestim attonito gelidus perlabitur ossa
 Sanguis, et amenti spiritus omnis abit.
 Contremit ac folium Borea stridente rotatum,
 Colla vel ensifera percutienda manu;
 Et veluti, rapidas fugiens quum nauta per undas,
 Impendet scopulis quassa carina feris,
 Stat trepidus...

The subject is the reaction of the sacristan of St. Giles, Edinburgh as he discovers that fire has broken out in the church. Verses 163-4 clearly contain a double simile, but as the text now stands they lack an adverb to introduce it. For *ac*, then, read *ut*. As shown by the apparatus both to line 20 of this poem and to *ad divam Margaritam reginam*, 102, Foullis's "u" could under some circumstances be misread as an "a;" presumably, that error having been committed here, the following "t" was then mistaken for (or corrected into) a "c." If the comma after *veluti* in line 165 is ignored, and if *quum* is understood to govern *Impendet*, etc., lines 165-7 make tolerable sense, but only that: although sacristan and sailor are indeed both *trepidus*, the motion of the one as he hastens to flee his shattered vessel stands in rather jarring contrast to the immobility of the other.

Ibid., 397-8:

Qui fuerit felix, nunc ipse miserrimus; egre
Sustinet Eoleas navis onusta minas.

These two lines do not mean that there is "hardly any seafaring." Rather, they exemplify that standard device in elegiac verse whereby an idea expressed in the hexameter is recapitulated somewhat differently in the pentameter (in this case, in emblematic form). Just as a heavily laden ship does not well withstand a storm at sea, so the formerly fortunate man is in the present calamity the most wretched of all (because his good fortune has not prepared him for adversity; for the concept cf., e.g., Seneca, *De providentia* 2. 6: *non fert ullum ictum inlaesa felicitas*, etc.). The paradox of prosperity as a burden is well conveyed by *onusta*: whereas the word here implies a cargo and thus wealth, its derivation from *onus* suggests disadvantages as well. The terms of Foullis's metaphor are of course extremely commonplace; the formulation itself looks proverbial, but if there is a particular source I have not been able to find it.

Ibid., 399-405:

Preterea tu visa mihi es mestissima tellus;
Fumea de tectis non volat umbra tuis.
Quando tibi occiduo fumarent culmina sole,
Consuevit raras cogere pastor oves.
Arte modo errantes alia sibi computat horas.
Vesper adest, nulla condere nube caput;
Interea,...

The meaning of line 404 might be clearer if the period at the end of the preceding verse were changed to a colon. The appearance of Vesper, the evening star, is the shepherd's new means of telling that it is time to gather in his scattered flock (since this now means waiting through to the end of the long Scottish day it also constitutes a hardship; in classical antiquity, on the other hand, the relatively early Mediterranean sunset made Vesper or Hesperus the *normal* sign for this activity--cf., e.g., Vergil, *Ecl.* 6. 86 and 10. 77). *nulla nube* is an ablative of attendant circumstance, on which the epexegetic infinitive *condere* depends; the sense is that in order for Vesper to be seen the dark clouds of evening (on which cf. *ad divam Margaritam reginam*, 17-20; also Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, 400-1, where the atmospheric phenomena are as usual those of the poet's homeland) must first

disappear. For *caput* used of celestial bodies cf. the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, III, 402. 33-41; for a slightly earlier vernacular expression of Foullis's idea cf. Henryson, *Fables*, 621-4, where Hesperous (*sic*) raises "his cluddie hude" from off his "Lustie Visage."⁵

ad divam Margaritam reginam, 61-4:

Virgo Phenicis trabeato nido
 Rarior! mira cumularis edes
 Mole scandentes liquidum Tonantis
 Aera laudi

A period should be supplied after *laudi*; the next strophe has a main verb of its own (*Miseris*, line 68) and begins with another reference to God. Since the previous strophes have celebrated Margaret's virtues and the next will record her translation to heaven, the suggestion that this one refers to Edinburgh Castle and/or to Margaret's building activities seems a little out of place. Rather, Foullis here constructs a transitional passage between the subjects just mentioned, employing in the process an extended metaphor whose ancestor is the famous Pauline statement, *vos enim estis templum dei vivi* (2 Cor. 6. 16). *trabeata* in its classical sense denotes Margaret's royal state, but deriving as it does from *trabs*, *trabis*, "a beam," it also suggests that she is as it were a building; it is in this sense that she is compared to the nest of the Phoenix, a symbol (as the editors note) of the Christian life. Margaret's building is also the temple (*edes*) of line 62, devoted to the praise of the Lord and capped by the marvellous magnitude of her virtues; this application of the Pauline idea to the individual Christian or Christian soul has many analogues, e.g., Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, 2; Minucius Felix 32. 3; Augustine, *De civitate dei* 10. 3; and Prudentius, *Cathemerinon* 4. 13-18, 25-7 and *Peristephanon* 10. 346-50. The structure's size and obvious visibility show Margaret to have been a paragon; both its reaching to the skies and the mention of the immortal Phoenix foreshadow her soul's voyage to heaven.

Ibid., 69-72:

Aureis corpus tegit archa fulchris.
 Pyramis cedat Rodopeia tante,
 Qua nitent regum generosa tractu
 Stemmata longo.

After her death in 1093 Margaret was laid to rest in a stone coffin, but in 1215 most of her remains were transferred to a silver shrine (ornamented with gold and precious stones) in Dunfermline Abbey, where they were honored by countless pilgrims. One of these seems to have been Foullis, who certainly means the later resting place when he speaks of her reliquary with its "golden feet." Cf. the account of the transfer appended by Papebroch to Turgot's life of St. Margaret.⁶ *Rodopeia* here derives not from Rhodope, the mountain range in Thrace (or from its eponymous nymph), but rather from Rhodopis, famed in antiquity for the pyramid she was said to have built for herself out of the proceeds of her trade as a prostitute. Foullis could have known the story either from Herodotus (2. 124-5; Valla's Latin translation had been in print since 1474) or from the elder Pliny (*Nat. hist.* 36. 17. 82); it is also in Calepino, s.v. *Rhodope*. The pyramid, an exercise in earthly *vanitas*, contrasts not only with the reliquary but also with the monumentality of that inner *edes* of virtue by which the sainted queen achieved her everlasting reward (cf. lines 61-4 and the previous note). Finally, since Rhodopis was a former slave, *Qua* in line 71 must refer through *tante* to Margaret's *archa*. The saint is thus paid a double compliment: unlike the ancient harlot, she was both a model of chastity (cf. lines 49-52) and also of the highest descent.

Ibid., 79-80:

Mitis enixe vocitata sepe
Tristia levis,

The single most common error in the Paris text is the confusion of "n" and "u" (cf., e.g., the apparatus to *Calamitose pestis Elegia deploratio*, 11, 69, 75, 103, 131, 179, 199, 232, 290, 296, 365, 432, and 483). Therefore, rather than assuming that *levis* is an otherwise unheard of form of the verb *linere* it seems better to suppose that it actually represents Foullis's *lenis*, misread by the printer. For *lenire* in medical contexts cf. the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, VII, 1142. 14-38.

Ibid., 89-96:

En, sub obscuro latitantis orbe
Lucis hic vitam tenebris opacam
Degimus; nostre maria et carine
Membra fatigant.

Nostra natalem peregrina campum
 Cymba distentis petit acta velis,
 Impedit dorso Caphareus alto
 Flammaque Naupli.

These two strophes and the three that follow do constitute a "final prayer to Margaret," but not "that she may protect ships sailing on the dangerous sea to Scotland." We may indeed conclude from line 93 that the hymn was "written by the poet on a homeward voyage"; however, if we interpret lines 95-6 as literally as IJsewijn and Thomson do the entire section then we must also conclude that Foullis was a native of Greece and that he lived in the heroic age, when Nauplius is said to have prepared his deception for the Argive fleet returning from Troy. Rather, the voyage of which the poet speaks is that both of himself and all other Christians, who (in a metaphor dear to Foullis) sail on the sea of life toward their heavenly destination. Nauplius's fire stands for the perilous deceptions of Satan (and hints at the consequences for those who are misled by them). *Phoebus* in line 98 is not simply "sunshine" but instead God himself, with whom Margaret is to intercede and whose divine aid the poet confidently expects her to bring. The conclusion of this poem is perhaps the finest piece of writing in the entire Foullis corpus; it seethes with true religious fervor and is both clearly and eloquently expressed. To denigrate it to the level of a mercantile epic borders on sacrilege.

de mercatorum facilitate, 16-17:

Vultu queque petit flebilis hernico
 Concedit;...

It may be doubted whether Foullis's international audience would be likely or even expected to recognize in *hernicus* a possible "British Latin word derived from the root *hern-/harm-*, meaning *to decorate, to mount*," especially when Giovanni Balbi's *Catholicon*, the standard large Latin dictionary by the end of the Middle Ages and a favorite of the fifteenth-century printers, glosses it as *saxosus*.⁷ For the derivation of Foullis's word for "stony" cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 7. 684 and both Festus and Calepino, s.v. *Hernici*.

Patricio Panther, oratori clarissimo, 31:

Nam tua Meoniis laus est celebranda cothurnis,

The connection of *cothurnis* with *Meoniis* ("Homeric") is no more awkward than Martial's phrase *cothurnati...Maronis opus* (*Epigr.* 5. 5. 8). Beyond its standing for dramatic poetry *cothurnus*, both singular and plural, has other meanings derived therefrom, including an *elatio* or *altitudo* of speech, which is what Foullis means by it both here and at *ad divam Margaritam reginam*, 2. Cf. the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, IV, 1088. 7-42; also Calepino, s.v. *Cothurni*, where the word is said to be used *Aliquando pro alto dicendi genere*.

Iacobo Hay, pontificii iuris doctori benemerito, 51-2:

Non illa vafro metitur lance Philippo
Premia; qua fratrum venditus arte capit.

vafēr Philippus is Philip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great), to whose treacherous capture of Olynthus in B.C. 348/7 Foullis here refers. The city had received two of Philip's brothers, whom he wished to kill (cf. Justin 8. 3. 10-11); in order to take it he bribed its chief magistrates, Lasthenes and Euthyrates (cf., e.g., Juvenal 12. 47, *callidus emptor Olynthi*, and the ancient scholia thereon; Diodorus Siculus 16. 53. 2-3; and the comment of Servius *ad Aen.* 6. 621, *Lasthenes Olynthum Philippo vendidit*). The passive participle *venditus* does not suit either Philip's or Lasthenes's role in the affair; moreover, it leaves *fratrum* with no possible antecedent but *arte*. Perhaps Foullis actually wrote *venditor*, but in such a way that it was misconstrued at the printer's; in that case the couplet would mean: "She (Iustitia) does not measure out rewards to cunning Philip on that set of scales by which his brothers' seller craftily obtained them (the rewards)." Foullis is obviously saying that Justice cannot be bought, but his play on her scales and those of the notorious Philip is somewhat confusing.

studioso iuveni Thomae Bellenden, 3-4:

Tertius immensi iamiam Cato venit honoris,
Attica quem bifido stringit alumna sinu.

As *iamiam* should indicate, *Cato* is not Cato Uticensis but rather Robert Caubraith (the subject of most of this commendatory poem to one of his pupils), who by his wisdom and strict moral code forms a third to the two famous Catos of old Rome (for the expression *tertius Cato* cf. Juvenal 2. 39-40, where, however, it is used ironically). Corinth and the Megarid, not Greece as a whole or even Attica (Foullis's word), lie between

the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf. Moreover, *bifidus*, used to denote a single entity with two prominent subdivisions, cannot really apply to the two bodies of water just mentioned: of what unitary gulf are they each a part? Rather, since Attica is "fostering" her *sinus* is surely her lap or bosom, to which she is said to draw Caubraith; it is *bifidus*, presumably, because to a Renaissance humanist learning (which is what Foullis means by *Attica*) comes in two tongues, Latin and Greek.

Ibid, 13-14:

Pullulat ambrosii redolentis magna saporis
Copia, et arvisii Chia Falerna cadi.

The first letter of *arvisii* should be capitalized. An "Arvisian" jar is one from the promontory Ariusium on Chios, where that island's best wine was produced; cf. Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 14. 9. 73, and Vergil, *Ecl.* 5. 71 with the comment of Servius thereon. Early Renaissance editions of all three authors regularly show Foullis's spelling, as does also Calepino, s.v. *Aruisius*.

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NOTES

¹ "The Latin Poems of Jacobus Follisius or James Foullis of Edinburgh," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 24 (1975), 102-52. Not all the poems in this corpus are certainly Foullis's; those that are date from his university days in France in the early 1500s. For the spelling of his name (generally given as "Foulis," after the practice of his descendants) cf. IJsewijn and Thomson, op. cit., pp. 102, preliminary note, and 106. For Foullis's later career cf. Hamilton's notice of him in the DNB, VII, 510.

² D. F. S. Thomson, "The Latin Epigram in Scotland: The Sixteenth Century," *Phoenix* 11 (1957), 63-78, p. 64.

³ The editors seem to presume an audience acquainted with such specifically Christian expressions as *typico more* (*Calamitose pestis Elegae deploratio*, 128) and *Verbigena* (*ibid.*, 129) but not with such standard classical ones as *Thetis* used

by metonymy for "the sea" (*ibid.*, 91; *ad divam Margaritam reginam*, 18) and *Trivia* for Diana, hence "the moon" (*ibid.*, 17). Whether this approach suits the needs of most modern readers is very doubtful.

⁴ Reference to the individual pieces, however, is by title (generally in abbreviated form) and not according to the editors' numeration, which is as follows: unnumbered (one poem), I-X, 1a, 1b, 1c (actually another version of IX, with only one substantive difference; though given this number the poem is not reprinted), 2, 3, 4a (two separate poems), 4b. The Roman and Arabic groupings reflect different sources already described in detail in the introduction; the system as a whole is simply too cumbersome to warrant its perpetuation here.

⁵ *The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, Schoolmaster of Dunfermline*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh and London, 1933), p. 25.

⁶ *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. novissima curante Joanne Carnandet, Junii tomus secundus (Paris and Rome, 1867), p. 334.

⁷ In the Venice edition of 1497-8 the word occurs on sig. v6^v. The anonymous compiler of the *Index Verborum Recentiorum* to vol. 24 of *Humanistica Lovaniensia* (p. 364) properly affixes two question marks to the editors' suggested meaning for *hernicus*. But his or her own suggestion, that one consult Antonius Bartal, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis Regni Hungariae* (Leipzig, 1901), s.v., is equally desperate: how the word could here mean either "heretical" or "heathen" (Bartal's lone citation is for a variant of *hetnicus*, i.e., *ethnicus*) is beyond me.