

OVID *MET.* 13.882-884 AND
GÓNGORA *FÁBULA DE POLIFEMO Y GALATEA* 489-490¹

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The Ovidian text, as read by Góngora², reads as follows:

*insequitur Cyclops partemque e monte revulsam
mittit et, extremus quamvis pervenit ad illum
angulus e saxo, totum tamen obruit Acin;*

He was pursued by the Cyclops, who threw at him *a part* torn from the mountain, and although it was the *tip of the rock* that hit him, yet Acis was buried completely;

Ovid, in turn, took his inspiration from some lines referring to the Homeric Cyclops in *Odyssey* 9.480-484:

ὥς ἐφάμην, ὃ δ' ἔπειτα χολώσατο κηρόθι μᾶλλον·
ἦκε δ' ἀπορρήξας κορυφὴν ὄρεος μεγάλοιο,

¹ I owe special thanks to J. J. Zoltowski for his kindness in translating this textual note; also to Professor Luis Rivero for reading and commenting most helpfully on this note. To the DGICYT (PB97-0442-C02-01) in Madrid I record my thanks for financial support.

² Góngora could also have read contemporary translations of Ovid's text: Pedro Sánchez de Viana (Valladolid, 1589), Antonio Pérez Sigler (Burgos, 1609) or Giovan Andrea dell'Anguillara (Venice, 1563). Apart from the Ovidian source, Góngora must have been familiar with the following lines from Virgil's *Aeneid*, 10.127-9 (cf. Harrison, 1991: 91, 94):

*fert ingens toto conixus corpore saxum,
haud partem exiguum montis, Lynesius Amon,
nec Clytio genitore minor nec fratre Menestheo.*

The Virgilian and Ovidian tradition was taken up by Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 9.466-8.

καὶ δ' ἔβαλε προπάροιθε νεὸς κυανοπρώροιο
 τυτθόν, ἐδεύησεν δ' οἰήιον ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι.
 ἐκλύσθη δὲ θάλασσα κατερχομένης ὑπὸ πέτρης·

Thus I spoke to him, but he was more angered at heart, and, tearing off *the peak* of a lofty mountain, he threw it, and it fell down almost in front of the dark-prowed ship, though it did not reach *the tip* of the rudder: and the waters were stirred up by the falling rock.

When Góngora picks up the Ovidian scene in his *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*, he opts for the following text:

Con violencia desgajó infinita
 la mayor *punta* de la excelsa roca, 490
 que al joven, sobre quien la precipita,
 urna es mucha, pirámide no poca.
 Con lágrimas la ninfa solicita
 las deidades del mar, que Acis invoca:
 concurren todas, y el peñasco duro 495
 la sangre que exprimíó, cristal fue puro.

490 *punta codd., plerique edd. : parte Salcedo, Pellicer*

The only editors who read *parte* in line 490 are the early commentators of Góngora's *Polifemo*. Don García de Salzedo Coronel notes in his commentary (1629: f. 116v): "Con infinita violencia arrancó la mayor parte de la excelsa roca, donde estava: imitó a Ovidio en 13 de sus Met. ... Mas galante anduvo don Luis que Ovidio en describir la grandeza desta parte de la peña, que arrojó sobre Acis Polifemo: assi dixo Ovidio en el libro citado...". Don José Pellicer³ de Salas y Tovar in his *Lecciones solemnes* notes: "Algunos M.S. y la edición de Madrid leen *Punta*, pero mal. Está imitado de Ovidio *lib. 13. Met. Insequitur ... Acim*" (Pellicer, 1630: 343).

Pellicer's reference to "algunos manuscritos" might imply that there are other manuscripts with the reading *parte*. I fear that there are none with such a reading and that his reference to "algunos manuscritos" is due to the small number of them which he had had the opportunity to read. What is quite clear is that all the manuscripts⁴ of Góngora in the

³ On Pellicer, see the chapter by D. Alonso "Todos contra Pellicer" (1982: 462-87).

⁴ Other important manuscripts are Ms. 1323 of the Biblioteca de Palacio (f. 40: Anotaciones a las bellezas del Polifemo de Pedro Díaz de Ribas), the Barcelona Ms. of the Biblioteca Sedó and the Antequera Ms. edited by Toledo y Godoy (IV, ff. 230-246).

Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid (Jauralde, 1998) read *punta*: Ms. 3726⁵ (31v), 3906⁶ (f. 102v), 4078 (f. 88r), 4130 (f. 492v), 8645 (f. 324r), 22.585 (f. 372v), Res. 45, one of the manuscripts of D. Antonio Chacón Conde (p. 137) and the Vicuña manuscript⁷. In addition, what seem to be the two oldest manuscripts, Ms. 3959 (f. 11v) and Ms. 4075 or Ms. Alba⁸ (f. 233v) both read *punta*. However, Ms. 3959 (no earlier than 1612) has the first two lines with two variants unknown in the other manuscripts I have read:

Y con violencia desgaxo infinita
La maior punta de *una* excelsa roca,

Similarly, all the other later commentators (such as Hoces, Foulché-Delbosc, Reyes, Vilanova⁹, Dámaso Alonso and Parker) are in no doubt that what our Andalusian Pindar wrote in line 490 was *punta*. The obstinacy of both Salcedo and Pellicer in keeping *parte* can be explained by a rapid reading of Ovid's text, since, although it is true that Ovid makes the term *partem* stand out in line 882, it is no less certain that Góngora took his inspiration, not from line 882, but from lines 883 and 884. *La mayor punta de la excelsa roca* is in effect an adaptation of, and improvement on, Ovid's *extremus ... angulus e saxo*. By *la mayor punta* the poet does not mean that the rock had more than one tip or peak, but that it was "the highest and sharpest part of the rock", just as *summus mons*¹⁰ in Latin (Hofmann-Szantyr, 1972: 161) is not "the highest mountain" but "the mountain-top". Góngora has therefore avoided the term *partem/parte*, which is cold and unpoetic, as Dámaso

⁵ Ff. 180-220 include the *Discursos Apologéticos por el estylo de Poliphemo y Soledades, obras poeticas del Homero de españa don Luis de Gongora y Argote*. Por Pedro Diaz de Ribas natural de Cordoba. Con anotaciones y deffensas al mismo Polipheno y Soledades y a la canción de Alarache por el mismo Pedro Diaz, anno de 1624.

⁶ Ff. 68-91 include the *Discursos Apologéticos* de Pedro Díaz de Ribas, while ff. 282-320 contain the *Notas al Polifemo del Licenciado Andrés Cuesta*.

⁷ Matritensis BN, R-10673, R-8641, R-3720. The text is reproduced in *Obras en verso del Homero español, que recogió Juan Lopez de Vicuña*, Madrid, 1627 (= ed. facsímil de Dámaso Alonso, Madrid: CSIC, 1963).

⁸ Cf. Millé, 1933: 363-89.

⁹ Vilanova (1957: 740-4) defends the reading *punta*. In addition, he quotes the text of Virués (Madrid, 1588), predating Góngora: *Al alto punto de la excelsa cumbre*.

¹⁰ The *locus classicus* is Caes. Gall. 1.22.1: *Prima luce, cum summus mons a Labieno teneretur, ipse ...* This construction is usually found with adjectives of the type *citerior, extremus, imus, infimus, interior, intimus* and *medius*.

Alonso has pointed out (1994: 621-622¹¹), to pick up and expand upon Ovid's *extremus...angulus e saxo* in *la mayor punta de la excelsa roca*, where the adjective *extremus* finds an echo in both *la mayor* and *la excelsa*. Vilanova is also right in observing that it is more consistent and logical to say that Polyphemus tore off "*la mayor punta de la excelsa roca*", that is, 'the biggest or highest peak', than *la mayor parte de la excelsa roca*" (Vilanova, 1957: 741).

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¹¹ Dámaso Alonso vehemently defends the reading *punta* for reasons "preferentemete de carácter poético".