

ON THE TEXT OF OVID, METAMORPHOSES 15, 566

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Ovid tells the story of Cipus, a legendary Roman commander. As he was marching at the head of his victorious army through the *Porta Raudusculana*, a portent happened: horns grew out of his head. The Etruscan *haruspex* who was consulted declared that Cipus was destined to be king of Rome, whereupon, in a fine display of democratic sentiments, he went into voluntary exile, not without having been generously rewarded by his grateful fellow-citizens. There is, I think, a textual corruption at the beginning of the episode which has not been noticed:

...sua fluminea cum vidit Cipus in unda
cornua (vidit enim) falsamque in imagine credens
esse fidem digitis ad frontem saepe relatis,
quae vidit, tetigit...

This is translated by Mary Innes (1955) as follows:

When (he) looked at himself in the waters of the river, ... he saw horns sprouting from his brow. Thinking it was a trick of reflection, he raised his hands repeatedly to his forehead, and there touched what he saw...

Michael von Albrecht (1994) renders:

Cipus... (sah)... in der Welle des Flusses die eigenen Hörner... -er sah sie tatsächlich-, und da er dem Spiegelbild nicht traute, führte er oft die Finger an die Stirn un betastete, was er sah...

Finally, the Spanish translation of Antonio Ramírez de Verger and Fernando Navarro (1995):

...Cipo cuando en las aguas de un río vio que tenía
cuernos (pues los vio) y creyendo que en el reflejo
había una falsa ilusión, llevándose los dedos a la frente
muchas veces, tocó lo que veía...

All these versions catch the essential meaning of vv. 566ff, but it is not exactly what the text has. And there is the problem, as we learn from Franz Bömer's commentary (1986: 405), that *falsa fides* is unparalleled (which is actually not surprising), whereas *falsa imago* is well attested. Read therefore:

...falsaque in imagine credens.

Cipus thinks that he trusts a false reflexion, i.e. a strange distortion of his real appearance (without horns) in the mirror of the water. But the horns are real. The phrase (*sibi*) *esse fidem in* (with the ablative) here takes the place of *fidem habere* (with the dative). The corruption is easily explained: *falsaque* became *falsaque* in an early witness.

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