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CONTENTS

Editorial	9
Opening Adresses	11
Sanskrit: The Philosophy <i>Michael Zammit</i>	23
The Role of Slaves in Roman Land Surveying <i>Levente Takács</i>	33
Themistocles as a trickster in Herodotus <i>Nijole Juchnevičienė</i>	45
Drawing Distinctions in the <i>Laches</i>: the <i>Elenchus</i> as search <i>Jurgen Gatt</i>	63
Aristotle on History <i>Vita Pappas</i>	85
Changed Forms, Migrating Identities: Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> and the Posthuman <i>Gloria Lauri-Lucente</i>	101
The Appropriation of the Classical Pastoral Elegy in Milton's <i>Lycidas</i>, and Beyond <i>Peter Vassallo</i>	117
Ferrying Nothingness: the Charon motif in Murnau's <i>Nosferatu</i> and Dreyer's <i>Vampyr</i> <i>Saviour Catania</i>	125

Byzantine Greek on Maltese soil: evidence from <i>Tristia ex Melitogaudo</i>	
<i>Jerker Blomqvist</i>	141
Ovid on Gozo? <i>Metamorphoses</i> as a source for the <i>Tristia ex Melitogaudo</i>	
<i>Stephen J. Harrison</i>	169
<i>Οἱ Παῖδες Ἄγαρ Ἀθέου</i> The Arabs in Malta: 870-1150	
<i>Stanley Fiorini and Martin R. Zammit</i>	179
<i>Ḍuriba bi-Mālṭa</i> ‘Minted in Malta’: deciphering the Kufic legend on the Fāṭimid quarter dinar	
<i>Martin R. Zammit</i>	209
Through Western Eyes: Greek and Latin Sources for Byzantine-Iranian Relations	
<i>David Frendo</i>	217
The Cult of Hercules in Roman Malta: a discussion of the evidence	
<i>Anthony Bonanno</i>	243
<i>“Magnis nata triumphis insula”</i> Malta in the <i>Liladamus</i> of Jacques Mayre (1685)	
<i>Heinz Hofmann</i>	265
"The First Performance of a Greek Play in the Island’s History": Classical drama in Malta in the late 1940s	
<i>Carmel Serracino</i>	285

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Byzantine Greek on Maltese soil: evidence from *Tristia ex Melitogaudo*

*Jerker Blomqvist**

Preliminaries

The development of languages over time can be described succinctly by two words: continuity and change. At a given moment in its history, a language contains elements which have been inherited from previous stages of its evolution and which continue to exist in it beside those innovations that the constant processes of change have created. As for the Greek language, it is possible to claim that continuity is more dominant than change over long periods of its history. That becomes apparent when we compare Greek to other European languages. It is true, of course, that Italian and Spanish are almost as close to Latin as Modern Greek is to the classical language, but two other important Romance languages, French and Rumanian, have changed much more, and so have the Germanic and the Celtic languages. The Greek language, in particular the varieties appearing in literary and formal texts, is characterized by an “ingrained conservatism”,¹ and comparatively few innovations turn up in such texts.

I will try to substantiate that description of Greek by an analysis of a text that, chronologically speaking, lies somewhere in between the classical language and Modern Greek, the *Tristia ex Melitogaudo* that was published by three Maltese scholars in 2010.² This is a poem, a “lament in Greek verse”, as the editors specify it. It was written on Maltese soil,

¹ G. Horrocks (2010), 221, uses this phrase when characterizing the “official and administrative Greek” of the Byzantine period.

² J. Busuttill *et al.* (2010). Parts of the text have been printed or translated in E.Th. Tsolakis (1973), G. Luongo (1980), B. Lavagnini (1982), M. Puccia (2009), and H.C.R. Vella (2012).

or more specifically on the island of Gozo, some time around the middle of the twelfth century, probably in the 1140's, by a Greek who was in the service of King Roger II of Sicily but, because of some delinquency that he had committed—the precise nature of which is only hinted at in the poem—had been exiled and forced to spend a number of years in captivity on Gozo. The poem is not addressed to the king, but to his minister, George of Antioch. The poet entreats George to put an end to his exile and to allow him to return to the Norman court in Palermo. The choice of Greek as the linguistic medium for the lament must have been a natural one, since both the poet and the immediate addressee were of Greek origin, and Greek was, beside Latin and Arabic, one of the commonly used languages in the chancery of the Norman kings and in the Sicilian churches.³

Thus, the poem belongs to the genre of “letters from exile” with traditions from antiquity.⁴ The title given to it by the editors was of course inspired by the Roman poet Ovid's plaintive poems *Tristia* and *Epistula ex Ponto*, written during his exile in the city of Tomi on the west coast of the Black Sea.

In order to elucidate the intermediate position of this text between classical and Modern Greek, I have chosen to investigate three groups of words, viz., the infinitives and participles of the verbs and the prepositions. Common to these three categories is, first, that they occur frequently and, therefore, provide a rich and easily accessible material for an analysis, and, second, that the usage of both infinitives, participles and prepositions has undergone radical changes during the history of Greek from antiquity until today.

A verb in classical Greek had at least ten⁵ infinitives; in Modern Greek infinitives do not exist at all.⁶ Likewise, the classical verb had at least ten participles; only two of them survive in Modern Greek, both

³ J. Becker (2014), and V. von Falkenhausen (2014).

⁴ On literature of exile in antiquity, see J.-M. Claassen (1999).

⁵ When I speak of ten infinitives and ten participles in ancient Greek, I deliberately disregard the rare future perfect.

⁶ See J. Humbert (1930) and G. Horrocks (2010), *passim*.

in a transformed shape.⁷ The usage of prepositions in Modern Greek is different, too. One of the case forms that was governed by prepositions in antiquity, the dative, has disappeared from the language of today⁸ and, among the remaining case forms, the genitive appears with prepositions almost only in set phrases.⁹ Consequently, in Modern Greek, the accusative has become the normal case with prepositions.

It is a primary purpose of this investigation to find out if any of these Modern Greek innovations has left imprints in the text of the *Tristia*.

The poem consists of about 4,050 lines. For this investigation, I have not examined the whole poem in detail. The study is based on seven samples of the text, viz., 2.2r.1–14.8r.11,¹⁰ 68.35v.14–82.42v.6, 150.76v.1–152.77v.17, 164.83r.1–172.87v.17, 182.91r.1–190.95r.7, 204.103r.15–208.104v.7, 226.114v.4–238.120v.17. Together they make up 1,104 verse lines, which is a little more than 25% of the text. I judge this is enough to illustrate its general tendencies. Unless explicitly stated, what will be reported here about the usage of the *Tristia* refers to what is to be found—or not to be found—in these seven text samples.

As Professor Vella informs me,¹¹ the editors of the *Tristia* had the ambition to produce a diplomatic edition of the text as it appears in the only manuscript. Except when explicitly remarked in the critical apparatus, the printed text faithfully reproduces that of the manuscript with its—sometimes confusing—idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies. For the reader's convenience, when quoting the *Tristia* in this paper, I have

⁷ See A. Mirambel (1961) and G. Horrocks (2010), *passim*.

⁸ J. Humbert (1930) and G. Horrocks (2010), *passim*. On the still surviving set phrases with preposition plus dative in Modern Greek, see P. Bortone (2010), 253–254.

⁹ R. Hesse (1986) and P. Bortone (2010), 250–251. When the genitive is used productively with certain prepositions, e.g., κατά, ἐναντίον, and μεταξύ, this is due to *katharevousa* influence.

¹⁰ References to passages in the *Tristia* such as 14.8r.11 should be understood in this way: 14 = page number in J. Busuttill *et al.* (2010); 8 = folio number of the manuscript; r = recto (v = verso); 11 = line number on the folio page.

¹¹ Oral communication, December 12, 2014.

tacitly normalized spelling, accents and punctuation and occasionally disregarded text-critical signs.

Infinitives

Table 1 shows the number of occurrences of infinitives and their syntactic functions in the investigated text samples.

A large majority of the infinitives are present infinitives, 84 out of 126; aorist infinitives come next with 33 attestations. Perfect infinitives are scarce, futures even more so. The ancient tense forms for future and perfect do no longer exist in Modern Greek. The classical, monolectic future with a characteristic sigma in the suffix, was gradually replaced with alternative modes of expression in late antiquity.¹² In Modern Greek, future is expressed by the temporal particle *θα* combined with a finite verb form (which may be identical with the ancient future). Perfect and pluperfect in Modern Greek are expressed by periphrases with *έχω/είχα* plus a non-finite form of the main verb (*έχω/είχα γράψει/γραφτεί*). The periphrases are generally declared to be of post-Byzantine origin, and the pluperfect is assumed to have served as the model of the perfect, which was not common before the nineteenth century.¹³ However, there are earlier attestations.¹⁴ The gradual reduction of these tense forms may explain the scarcity of future and perfect infinitives in a Byzantine text.

In fact, even the sole example of a future infinitive may seem problematic to a Classicist: 172.87v.5–6: *ὁ Διὸς ἱερεὺς ταύρους φέρων... τούτους ὡς θεοῖς ἦρα*¹⁵ *θύσειν* ‘the Zeus priest, bringing bulls, wished to

¹² For a comprehensive survey of such alternative expressions, see J.O. Rosenqvist (1981), 68–84.

¹³ G. Horrocks (2010), 299–301

¹⁴ R. Browning (1969), 84, and J. Niehoff-Panagiotidis (2010), 217–218.

¹⁵ The editors print *ἦραθύσειν* and translate ‘began to sacrifice’. *ἦρα* must be the aorist of *αἶρω* (*ἀείρω*), but that verb is never construed with a dynamic infinitive as presupposed by the editors; the phrase *ἦραν λίθους βαλεῖν ἐπ’ αὐτόν* ‘they picked up stones to throw at him’ (Eusebius, *Generalis elementaria introductio* 221.15 Gaisford), with a final infinitive, is not comparable. By merely changing the diacritics we get *ἦρα* from *ἐράω* which can be construed with infinitives (L.S.J., s.v. *ἐράω* (A) II). Semantically, *ἦρα* is close to *ἦθελεν* in *Acts*

sacrifice them [to Paul and Barnabas] as if to gods'. With a verb meaning 'wish', classical usage demands an aorist or a present infinitive, not a future. However, in his monumental work on Atticism, H.W. Schmid records a considerable number of future infinitives in texts of the imperial period, where aorist or present would have been normal earlier.¹⁶ Actually, there are a few passages in Byzantine texts where precisely θύσειν seems to be used as if it were an aorist infinitive. One of them refers to the same event as the *Tristia* passage, with Paul and Barnabas in Lystra: John VI Kantakouzenos, *Orationes contra Mahometem* 3.4.246–7: ὡσπερ οἱ ἐν Λυκαονίᾳ βουλόμενοι ὁμολογήσαιτόν τε Παῦλον καὶ Βαρνάβαν θεοὺς καὶ θύσειν αὐτοῖς ὡς θεοῖς' as the people of Lycaonia, wishing to acknowledge Paul and Barnabas as gods and to sacrifice to them as to gods' (θύσειν coordinated with the aorist ὁμολογήσαι and both infinitives construed with βούλομαι). Cf. also John Arokaukos, *Notitiae et epistulae* 108.10: ὄσα ἀκάθαρτα καὶ θύσειν καὶ φαγεῖν ἐγκελεύεται 'urges [them] to sacrifice and eat what is unclean', and Eustathius, *In Iliadem* 2.252.7 van der Valk: 'Ἑλενος θύσειν τῇ Ἀθηνᾶ βούλεται 'Helenos wishes to sacrifice to Athena'.¹⁷ These parallels may indicate that θύσειν actually functions as an aorist in the *Tristia* passage, too.

Morphologically, the infinitives appearing in the *Tristia* follow the rules of classical grammar.

14.13 ὃ τε ἱερεὺς τοῦ Διὸς... ταύρους... ἐνέγκας... ἤθελεν θύειν, which served as a model for the *Tristia* passage. An alternative emendation of ἦρα would be ἦρ<ξ>α (from ἄρχω/ἄρχομαι 'begin'), which the editors seem to be thinking of when they translate "began to sacrifice". But ἦρ<ξ>α is less attractive than ἦρα, for it involves more tampering with the MS text than merely adjusting the diacritics, and it is not close to ἦθελεν semantically.

¹⁶ H.W. Schmid (1887–1897), 1.96, 241; 2.51, and 4.606, 619.

¹⁷ On another case of future infinitive with βούλομαι, see s. Wahlgren (2005), 180: Joseph Genesisius, *Regum libri* 1.3.11: ὡς μὴ τυραννήσειν ποτὲ βουλευθῆσομένου τοῦ Λέοντος 'Since Leo would never have wished to become a tyrant'.

Table 1. Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases:

occurrences and syntactic functions in the investigated portions of the text

tense/voice	subject	with verbs denoting					final	with ὡς / ὥστε	with article	?	total
		say	believe	see	will, desire	ability, habit, etc.					
present: active	4	4			27	12	4 [†]	1	2	4	58
med.-passive	2	1		2	13	2	1	2	2	1	26
future: active					1						1
medium											0
passive											0
aorist: active		4	1		10	6	2	1		2	26
medium				1	2	1	1				5
passive		1				1					2
perfect: active		3	2								5
med.-passive	1	1			1						3
total	7	14	3	3	54	22	8	4	4	7	126

[†]Two of these final infinitives are preceded by τοῦ.

Also as regards syntax, the infinitives are used with essentially the same functions as in classical Greek. Since, in Modern Greek, the infinitive no longer exists, its functions have been taken over mainly by subordinate clauses.¹⁸ Declarative infinitives¹⁹ occur in ancient Greek with verbs meaning either ‘say’ or ‘think’. An alternative construction with these verbs was an object clause with ὅτι or ὡς. In the classical period, verbs of saying appear both with infinitives and with ὅτι/ὡς clauses, whereas infinitives were mandatory after verbs meaning ‘think’, ‘believe’, etc., such as ἡγοῦμαι, νομίζω, οἶμαι, ὑπολαμβάνω, and ἐλπίζω.²⁰ In Modern Greek, such verbs are construed with object clauses introduced by ὅτι or

¹⁸ On the gradual disappearance of the infinitive in Byzantine Greek, see G. Karla & N. Lavidas (2003).

¹⁹ On the distinction between declarative and dynamic infinitives, see A. Rijksbaron (2002), § 31. In Modern Greek, clauses corresponding to declarative infinitives have the conjunction ὅτι or its equivalents, whereas those corresponding to dynamic infinitives have α.

²⁰ On this difference between verbs of saying and those of thinking, cf. R. Kühner & B. Gerth (1904), 2.356, and H.W. Smyth (1956), § 2018.

πως. Already in New Testament Greek, ὅτι or ὡς was a normal option not only with verbs of saying, but also with verbs of thinking.²¹

With verbs denoting will, desire, ability, habit, preparedness, etc. (κελεύω, θέλω, δύναμαι, εἴωθα, etc.), a dynamic infinitive²² was mandatory in the classical period. In Hellenistic Greek, some such verbs could be construed with a ἵνα clause instead, and that usage gradually prevailed in spoken Greek.²³ In Modern Greek such dynamic infinitives have been replaced with clauses introduced by the conjunction να, which developed out of ἵνα.

In the *Tristia*, these verbs practically always appear with infinitives, never with the alternative constructions that were optional in post-classical Greek, and became normal in the modern language. The only exceptions in the investigated text samples are two passages (238.120r.1–2,²⁴ 238.120v.12–13), where δείκνυμι is construed with ὅτι, ὡς and ὅπως, and a ὡς ὅτι clause dependent on the verbal noun ἔγκλημα (208.104v.3).

Thus, future and perfect infinitives are scarce in the *Tristia*, just as we may expect, since the classical monolectic futures and perfects are in the process of being substituted with other modes of expression. Present and aorist infinitives are just as common as in the classical language. Morphologically, they are identical with the classical infinitives, and they also appear with the same syntactical functions as in classical Greek. Alternative, post-classical constructions are absent.

The poet's ambition was to write impeccable classical Greek, and as regards infinitives, he may seem to have achieved his goal. However, it is not always easy to recognize how a certain infinitive is meant to be understood. In *Table 1*, I had to introduce a column headed by a question

²¹ B.D.R., § 397:2. Early examples of πῶς with the same function as ὅτι after verbs of saying appear in the New Testament; see B.D.R., § 396:1. On Byzantine usage, see J.O. Rosenqvist (1981), 58–64.

²² See A. Rijksbaron (2002), § 31:1.

²³ B.D.R., § 392, and G. Horrocks (2010), 156, 173–174.

²⁴ The ms. text needs some emendations here:... δείξης ὅπως γάμος τίμον τυγχάνει καὶ μηδ' ὅτι δεκτὸς μόνος σου τῆς ἀγαμίας βίος '... you [= Jesus] show that marriage is a valuable thing and that not only your [own] unmarried life is acceptable'.

mark; it lists seven occurrences. In those seven cases I have not been able to arrive at a convincing syntactical analysis of the text. That may be due to my own short-comings, but an alternative explanation could be that the poet was not able to handle infinitives perfectly. Infinitives did not belong to the Greek vernacular the poet is likely to have learnt as a small child. Presumably, he had been taught about infinitives only at school and told there how they were used in classical Greek. They did not come natural to him, and that may explain why he sometimes uses an infinitive in a way that defies grammatical analysis.²⁵

Participles

Table 2 shows the number of occurrences of the ten classical participle forms in the text portions investigated here, with a survey of their syntactical functions.

As far as pure numbers of occurrences are concerned, the table demonstrates that some of the morphological categories occur only infrequently. There are only six future forms, five active and one medium, and no passive. Aorist medium is also a rarity with only two attestations, i.e., there are only three distinctive medium forms among the participles. That illustrates one process that transformed the Greek verb system: medium forms were disappearing, and Modern Greek verbs have only two voices, active and passive. As appears from *Table 1*, medium infinitives are not frequent either—although not as patently rare as the participles—and that illustrates the same development.

The scarcity of future participles in the *Tristia* should not come as a surprise. As pointed out in the section on the infinitives above, the scarcity of future forms in a text of the mid-Byzantine period illustrates the fact that the classical, monolectic future was in the process of being replaced with other modes of expression.

In the section on infinitives, we noticed, too, that not only futures, but also perfect infinitives are uncommon. The participles of the perfect, on

²⁵ The poet evidently had problems also with the optative, another survival of the classical language with an artificial afterlife in Byzantine Greek.

the other hand, are unexpectedly frequent, in particular the passives. In fact, the passive perfect participle is the second most common category in the table with its 104 occurrences, surpassed only by the active present (with 188) and distancing—marginally—even the aorist active (100). Thus, there is a discrepancy between participles and infinitives that demands an explanation. The high frequency of perfect participles can be partly explained as an effect of a metrical rule that regulates the dodecasyllabic verse of the poem. In this verse, the second-last syllable of the line must have an accent.²⁶ Perfect participles, both active and passive, have the accent on the second-last syllable,²⁷ and in the *Tristia* they are often positioned as the last words of the verse lines. Their handiness in the verse-making process is likely to have contributed to their high frequency in the *Tristia* and, possibly, in other dodecasyllabic poems as well.

Table 2. Participles:

occurrences and syntactic functions in the investigated portions of the text

tense/voice	attributive/ substantivized	predicative	genitive absolute	nominative absolute	in peri-phrasis	adverb	total
present: active	57	112	11	3	1	4	188
med.-passive	14	15	2				31
future: active	2	3					5
medium	1						1
passive							0
aorist: active	8	85	5	2			100
medium	1		1				2
passive	5	29	1	5			40
perfect: active	16	12	1		1	1	31
med.-passive	53	38	6		4	3	104
total	157	294	27	10	6	9	502

Another factor that explains the frequency of the passive perfect participles is their continued presence in the language. Unlike all other

²⁶ See P. Maas (1903) and M.L. West (1982), 182–185. On metre in *Tristia*, J. Busuttill *et al.* (2010), xxxix–xl and, in more detail, G. Luongo (1980), 97–100.

²⁷ Except, of course, the nominative singular, masculine and neuter.

classical perfect and future forms, the passive perfect participles never disappeared from the language, but still exist even in Modern Greek *dimotiki*, although in a transformed shape. In Modern Greek *dimotiki* only two of the classical participles have a continued existence.²⁸ One is a declinable passive perfect participle with the suffix –μένος added to the ancient perfect stem, but without reduplication, e.g., γραμμένος -η -ο (cf. classical γεγραμμένος -η -ον). The other one is the so-called gerund, an indeclinable form ending in -οντας or -ώντας added to the imperfect stem of the verb (the old present stem), e.g., τρέχοντας (cf. classical τρέχων with genitive τρέχοντος). Thus, the two participles that occur most frequently in the *Tristia* have survived into Modern Greek.²⁹

In the *Tristia*, there are indications of the development that resulted in both these Modern Greek participle forms. Most passive present and perfect participles in the *Tristia* follow the rules of classical morphology, but a number of deviating forms appear. In these, the suffix –μένος has been added to the perfect stem of the verb, but their duplication syllable is missing:³⁰ 14.8r.9: σωσμένου, 32.17r.17: κακωμένοι,³¹ 48.25r.3: μνημονυμένα, 72.37v.15: χερσωμένων, 120.61r.16: χωνευμένος, 146.74v.16: φλογμένος, 160.81r.9: κορεσμένων, 176.92v.4: υπεργμένος,³² 176.92v.7: ιερωμένος,³³ 198.97v.14: άρμένας. A number of lines end with a present participle in -μενος, -μενον etc. in the ms., sometimes with accent on the -ε-: 8.5r.5: όχούμενοι, 14.8r.1: τιμώνμενον, 22.12v.3: ποντούμενον, 50.26v.5: ποντούμένος, 84.43v.1: άπαροιμένος,³⁴ 86.44r.11: μετρομένα

²⁸ D. Holton *et al.* (1997), 114–115, 234–237.

²⁹ In Greek texts of today, you also find sometimes active and passive present participles, but these are considered to be alien to the *dimotiki* and actually belonging to the *katharevousa*. See D. Holton *et al.* (1997), 235–237.

³⁰ These hybrid forms were not included in *Table 2*. The ambiguous ιδρυμένος and ιππασμένος (14.8r.15 and v.15, both last word of line) were counted as perfects.

³¹ κακωμένοι is the reading of the ms. The editors change it into κακουμένοι.

³² But this could be a *lapsus calami* for ύπηγγμένος; cf. 212.107v.16: ύπηγγμένων.

³³ ιερωμένος is the reading of the ms. The editors change it into ιερουμένος.

³⁴ άπαροιμένος is the—enigmatic—reading of the ms. The editors change it into άπαρουμένος.

(sic!), 92.47r.15: κυδρούμενον, 144.73v.2: ὀρώμενοι, 158.80v.10: πλανωμένος.³⁵ Such participles have their regular accent on the third-final syllable, whereas the metrical rules demand accent on the second-last syllable. Some of these presents may camouflage perfect participles of the Modern Greek type.

The non-reduplicated perfect participles in the *Tristia* represent a morphological phenomenon that points forward to the Modern Greek passive participles.

The indeclinable gerund of Modern Greek is foreshadowed in the *Tristia* by a syntactical phenomenon, viz., the so-called “nominative absolute”. Absolute nominatives are participles—with or without adjuncts—in the nominative that do not agree with the subject of the main verb of the sentence and that sometimes have their own subject added, also in the nominative.³⁶ The modern gerund can be used in the same way, e.g., Δύοντας ο ἥλιος ἄρχισε να πέφτει υγρασία ‘As the sun set, dampness started falling’ or Φεύγοντας ο δάσκαλος διέλυσε η τάξη ‘When the teacher departed, the class dispersed’ (or, with a similar participle phrase in English: ‘The teacher departing, the class dispersed’).³⁷ In these sentences, the subjects of the gerunds δύοντας and φεύγοντας are ο ἥλιος and ο δάσκαλος, respectively, but the subjects of the main verbs are υγρασία and η τάξη.

Syntactic constructions with absolute nominatives were not common in classical or Hellenistic Greek, and grammarians tend to regard them as irregular or incorrect. R. Kühner & B. Gerth treat the classical examples

³⁵ κυκλοσμένον 90.46v.10 is enigmatic. Scribe’s mistake for κυκλωμένον?

³⁶ Absolute nominative, which always involves a participle with predicative function, should be distinguished from the so-called *nominativus pendens* (or “topical nominative”; cf. G. Horrocks (2010), 148, 181), which is a substantive or a noun phrase. These two phenomena—and similar ones—were distinguished and skilfully analysed by W. Havers (1926) and (1928); on absolute nominatives, see especially W. Havers (1928), 121–127. Cf. also U. Ursing (1930), 65–68.

³⁷ On the formation and function of the modern gerund, see D. Holton *et al.* (1997), 114–115, 234–235, 439, and I. Manolessou (2005), 255–257, 260–267. Holton *et al.*, who provide the two quoted examples, point out that the modern gerund mostly has the same subject as the main verb; cf. I. Manolessou (2005), 256. On the morphological history of the gerund, see I. Manolessou (2005), 242–258, and G. Horrocks (2010), 181–183, 298.

under the heading “Wirkliche und scheinbare Anakoluthien” and deny that nominatives could express the same “adverbielle Verhältnisse” as the indisputably absolute participial phrases do.³⁸ By B.D.R., the sole New Testament example, *Acts* 19.34,³⁹ is bundled up with the more frequent *nominativi pendentes* and classified as an anakoluthon.⁴⁰ The absolute nominative is often regarded as a sign of linguistic incompetence, but a large portion of the recorded examples occurs in more ambitious and educated writers, e.g., the second- and third-century Atticists. W. Schmid lists a significant number of examples in Atticist literary prose, in particular, in Flavius Philostratus and Claudius Aelianus, and classifies the absolute nominative as a distinctive feature of Atticist style.⁴¹ It is perhaps symptomatic that Philostratus could use the construction when the issue was precisely correct Attic⁴² or in sentences with a syntactical structure that his approximate contemporary Sextus Empiricus declared to be solecistic.⁴³ In late antiquity and in the Byzantine period, the absolute nominative becomes a normal ingredient of literary language, in particular, in chronography and hagiography.⁴⁴

³⁸ R. Kühner & B. Gerth (1904), 2.108 with n. 2. Cf. also E. Schwyzler & A. Debrunner (1950), 403 (“anakolutische Satzkonstruktion”), 705.

³⁹ ἐπιγνόντες δὲ ὅτι Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν φωνὴ ἐγένετο μία ἐκ πάντων ‘when they realized that [Paul] was a Jew, there started a screaming from them all’.

⁴⁰ B.D.R., § 466: 4 with n. 5. On New Testament and contemporary texts, see I. Manolessou (2005), 245–246.

⁴¹ W. Schmid (1887–1897), 1.51, 249–250; 2.68–69, 315–316, and 4.113–115, 632.

⁴² Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum* 2.553.30–31 Olearius (on the variety of the Attic dialect spoken in the central part of Attica): ἡ Μεσογεία δὲ ἄμικτος βαρβάρους οὔσα, ὑγιαίνει αὐτοῖς ἡ φωνὴ καὶ ἡ γλῶττα τὴν ἄκραν Ἀτθίδα ἀποψάλλει ‘the *Mesogeia* being untainted by barbarians, their language is healthy and their tongue sings perfect Attic.’ On this passage cf. Blomqvist (2014), 49–54.

⁴³ With Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 5.20: καταβάς δὲ ἐς Πειραιᾶ, ναῦς μὲν τις ὥρμει πρὸς ἱστίοις οὔσα ‘when he came down to Piraeus, a ship, ready for sail, was anchored there’, cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Mathematicos* 1.214: σόλοικον δὲ τὸ ‘πολλὰ περιπατήσας, κοπιᾷ μου τὰ σκέλη’ [an example of a] solecism is “since I have walked much, my legs hurt”.

⁴⁴ For examples of absolute nominatives in late antiquity and in Byzantine Greek, see H. Ljungvik (1926), 19–20; W. Havers (1928), 121–122; U. Ursing (1930), 65–68, K. Weierholt (1963), 74; B.G. Mandilaras (1973), § 911; J.O. Rosenqvist (1981) 44; G.A. Karla (2002), 190–191; S. Wahlgren (2006), 307–308, and G. Horrocks (2010), 246.

The development of the modern gerund out of the ancient participles and their syntactic function in absolute constructions has been studied comprehensively by I. Manolessou.⁴⁵ The parallelism between the absolute nominative and the modern gerund had been pointed out by A. Mirambel, and G. Horrocks regards its usage in the Byzantine texts as an anticipation of the emergence of the gerund.⁴⁶ The participles used for absolute nominatives are mostly those with stem in -ντ-, just as the modern gerund. In the twelfth century, when the *Tristia* was composed, the use of an indeclinable gerund/participle in -οντα had become established and in the late Byzantine age the final -ς was added.⁴⁷

In the *Tristia*, there appear, as Luongo⁴⁸ points out, three absolute nominatives in the prayer to God that concludes the poem (i–iii). From the rest of the poem, I quote three other clear examples (iv–vi) and two that are less clear because of textual problems (vii–viii):

(i) 226.114v.17–228.115r.2:... σύνεσις κρίνουσα φαῦλον τυγχάνειν / περιπολεῖσθαι τὴν κτίσιν δεινῶ ζόφῳ, / εἶπας γενέσθαι δύο φωστῆρας μόνους.

‘[Your] wisdom deeming it inane that creation should exist in scary darkness, you [=God] ordained that two lights only come into existence.’

The subject of κρίνουσα is σύνεσις, that of εἶπας is the second-person addressee, i.e., God.

(ii) 232.117r.8–10:... πνεῦμ’ ἄρεσθὲν τοῦ προφήτου Δαυΐδος / ταῖς πρῶτησιν, ἐκ φονούσης κραδίης / υἱοῦ Σαούλ τε χειρὸς αὐτὸν ἐρρῶσω.

⁴⁵ I. Manolessou (2005).

⁴⁶ A. Mirambel (1961), and G. Horrocks (2010), 246. On defective declination of participles in earlier periods, see V. Langholf (1977); H. Petersmann (1979) and I. Manolessou (2005), 242–245.

⁴⁷ I. Manolessou (2005), 251.

⁴⁸ G. Luongo (1980), 88, 95–96, 126, 138.

‘[Your] spirit being delighted with the prophet David’s gentleness, you saved him from his son’s murderous heart and from Saul’s hand.’

In this passage, too, the subject of the main verb ἔρρῶσω is the same second-person addressee; the subject of ἀρεσθέν is πνεῦμα.

(iii) 232.117v.5–8: λάκκῳ δὲ μᾶλλον ὑποδύς τοῦ βορβόρου / Ἱερεμίας ἐκδοθεὶς τοῖς ἀνόμοις, / διὰ μό<νου> ἄσπονδον ἠθεωμένων / καὶ τοῦτον ἔρρῶσατο χεὶρ θεαρχία.

‘When Jeremiah had been surrendered to the unlawful ones and sunk into a cistern of mire, through only one man from among the implacably godless⁴⁹ the divinely powerful hand saved also him.’

The subject of the participles ὑποδύς and ἐκδοθεὶς is Ἱερεμίας, that of ἔρρῶσατο is χεὶρ θεαρχία.

(iv) 168.85r.6–8: ἐπιβαλὼν οὖν τῇ πυρᾷ τὸ φορτίον, / τῶν φρυγίων ἔξεισιν ἀπεινῆς ἔχης.

‘Putting his burden on the fire, a horrid viper came out of the firewood.’

The subject of ἐπιβαλὼν is Paul (in Malta, bringing firewood to the fire; cf. Acts 28.3), that of the main verb ἔξεισιν is ἔχης.

(v) 170.86r.6–8: κατ’ οὐρανοῦ γὰρ τοῦ σελασφόρου πτύειν / φρενοβλαβῶς θέλοντες, οὐκ ἀπεικότης / τὸ πτύσμα τούτων τοῖς προσώποις ἐστράφη.

‘For crazily wanting to spit at Heaven, the light-bringer, their spit was not unreasonably turned against their own faces.’

⁴⁹ The text and translation of l. 7 are uncertain because insects have damaged the MS; cf. Luongo (1980), 138–139. Here I simply reproduce what is offered by J. Busuttill *et al.* (2010). Their emendation μό<νου> ἄσπονδον does not recommend itself, for it creates an unnecessary hiatus. For the content of the passage, cf. *Jeremiah* 45 (LXX).

The subject of θέλοντες is King Roger's enemies, that of ἐστράφη is τὸ πτύσμα.

(vi) 172.87r.7–12: Λύστροις γὰρ ὄντες διδαχῆς θείας χάριν, / ἐπέιπερ εἶδον χωλὸν ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας / τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ προθυμοῦντ'⁵⁰ ἐκτόπως / καταξιοῦσθαι πίστεως εὐεξίας, / τοῦτον μὲν ἰάσατο Παῦλος εὐθέως.

'Being in Lystra for the sake of divine teaching, when they saw a man lame from his mother's womb and eagerly wishing to be deemed worthy of the health of faith, Paul at once healed him.'

The subjects of ὄντες are Paul and Barnabas (cf. *Acts* 14.8–10), that of ἰάσατο is Παῦλος alone.

(vii) 206.102r.5–9: καὶ μὴ θελοντῆς ὑποδύσης αἰθέρος / τὴν κρᾶσιν ἀνύποιστον ὡς ἐξ ἡλίου, / μήπως, φλογισθεὶς φλοξὶ ταῖς πυρεμφλόγοις, / εὐδιάλυτον διαλυθῆ κηρίον, / κόλπος δὲ καθέξει σε τῆς ὕγρας ἄπνουν.

[Daedalus advising Icarus before their flight:] 'Do not voluntarily enter the ether's region, unendurable because of the sun, lest, you being scorched by the scorching flames, the dissolvable wax dissolves and the bosom of the sea catches you lifeless.'

The ms. reads φλογισθεὶς. The editors emend that into φλογισθέν and take κηρίον as the subject of both φλογισθέν and διαλυθῆ. If we regard φλογισθεὶς as an absolute nominative with the addressee Icarus (or Ἰκάριος, as he is called in the *Tristia*) as its subject, that emendation becomes superfluous.

(viii) 206.102r.10–13: μηδ' αὖ γε ταύτη καθόλου γεινιάσης, / μήπως ὕγρανθὲν τὸ πτερόν ταῖς ἰκμάσιν, / ὕπτιον ἄπνουν κείμενον τῶν κυμάτων / ἔξει σε τάξις ἢ παλίρροια νέκυν.

[Daedalus' advising continues:] 'Nor come close to this [the sea] at all, lest, your wing becoming soaked by the moistures, the back- and

⁵⁰ The ms. reads προθυμοῦντ', which the editors accept, putting a comma after ἐκτόπως. The infinitive καταξιοῦσθαι is construed with προθυμοῦντ(α).

forth-flowing mass of waves will keep you, a dead body, lying on your back without breathing.’

The participle ὑγρανθέν is construed with τὸ πτερόν ‘the wing’. The main verb, on the last line of the quote, is, according to the ms., ἔξεισε, and the editors print that. Their printed text and the translation of it that they offer presuppose that τὸ πτερόν is to be understood as the object of ἔξεισε and, consequently, that τὸ πτερόν is qualified by ὑπτιον ἄπνουν κείμενον in line 12. But a thing such as a wing that never had individual life cannot sensibly be described as ‘not breathing’ and ‘lying flat on the back’. Those words can only refer to something that once was a living being, preferably a person. By dividing ἔξεισε into two words and changing a diacritic we get ἔξει σε with σε as the object of the verb. Σε refers to a person, i.e., Icarus, and can be properly qualified by ὑπτιον ἄπνουν κείμενον. The phrase ἔξει σε is close to καθέξοι σε of line 9, syntactically and semantically. Τὸ πτερόν is the subject of the absolute nominative ὑγρανθέν. The subject of ἔξει is ἡ παλίρροια τάξις τῶν κυμάτων; cf. καθέξοι of line 9 with its subject κόλπος τῆς ὑγραῖς.

We can now summarize our findings on participles in the *Tristia*. Typologically the variety of participles has been reduced: future forms and medium forms are scarce in the *Tristia*, and that mirrors the general development of the Greek verb system. The development will result in only two participles (or one participle plus the gerund) in Modern Greek *dimotiki*. That development is anticipated in the *Tristia*, morphologically by the appearance of passive participles of the modern type, with the perfect stem without reduplication, and syntactically by the appearance of absolute nominatives with a function similar to that of the Modern Greek gerund.

Prepositions

Table 3 lists the prepositions occurring in the investigated portions of the text and their number of occurrences.

For comparison, I have excerpted two other poetical texts that are approximately contemporary with the *Tristia*: (i) the *Versus iambici* of Eugenius of Palermo,⁵¹ whose poems originate in the same geographical and cultural environment as the *Tristia* and are also in dodecasyllabics (1,377 lines), and (ii) the *Versus in carcere scripti* by Michael Glycas,⁵² who was active in Constantinople and, like the author of the *Tristia*, was imprisoned by his master because of some offence and wrote a poem in order to become released from the incarceration. This poem (581 lines) is written in the so-called political verse, which has fifteen syllables per line, not twelve as the *Tristia* and the Eugenius poems.

The last column of the table shows that Modern Greek *dimotiki* preserves several of the classical prepositions. Some have been lost and others appear only in texts that are influenced by the *katharevousa*.⁵³

Prepositions that have almost totally disappeared from the *dimotiki* are ἐκ, ἐν, ἐπί, περί, ὑπέρ, and ὑπό. Of these, περί does not appear in the *Tristia* samples at all, and ἐπί only sparingly, but both are attested for the other two poets studied here. Two of them, ἐκ and ἐν, have in Modern Greek been replaced with two other classical prepositions, ἀπό and εἰς, which were semantically differentiated from ἐκ and ἐν in the classical language.

Theoretically, you might expect to find effects of the gradual disappearance of ἐκ and ἐν in the three twelfth-century poems discussed here. However, the evidence is ambiguous. Of the two prepositions that survive into Modern Greek, ἀπό is less common than its vanishing counterpart ἐκ, in the *Tristia* and in Eugenius even much less common. Εἰς, on the other hand, is more frequent than ἐν in the *Tristia* and in Glycas, but in Eugenius ἐν occurs nearly three times more often than εἰς. These statistical facts are, if anything, confusing and do not confirm the

⁵¹ Edition by M. Gigante (1964).

⁵² Edition by E.Th. Tsolakis (1959).

⁵³ The information of the last column is based on Holton *et al.* (2004), 370–408, who distinguish between “prepositions used in the common language” and those of “katharevousa origin used in formal discourse”.

Table 3. Prepositions:

occurrences in the investigated portions of the Tristia and in poems by Eugenius of Palermo and Michael Glycas, as compared to Modern Greek.

	Tristia	Eugenius	Michael Glycas	Standard Modern Greek ¹
ἀνά w. acc.	1			[+]
ἄνευ	4	3	2	[+]
ἀντί	1	1	1	+
ἀντικρύ	2			
ἀπό	4	9	5	+
διά w. gen.	9	10		+ (για) [διά]
w. acc.	1	1	1	
εἰς	20	21 + 3 ἐς	44	+ (σ(ε)) [εἰς]
εἴσω	3	1 (ἔσω)		
εἴσωθεν	2			
ἐκ/ἐξ	27	51	10	[+]
ἔκπαλαι	1			
ἐν	14	60	15	[+]
ἐνδοθεν	1	1		
ἐπί w. gen.	1	1	2	
w. dat.		4	7	[+]
w. acc.		1		
κατά w. gen.	8	4	8	
w. acc.	13	13	20	+
μέσον	2	3	1	
μετά w. gen.	1		3	
w. acc.	2	1	4	+ με 'with' μετά 'after'
μέχρι(ς)	7	4		+
ὄπισθεν	1			
παρά w. gen.	4	4	4	
w. dat.		11	2	+
w. acc.	3	2	7	
περί		2 (w. gen.)	1 (w. gen.)	[+]
πρίν	2			+
πρό	5	9	1	[+]
πρός w. gen.	12	2		
w. acc.	26	39	7	+
σύν	7	9	1	[+]
ὑπέρ w. gen.	1		1	
w. acc.	3	2		[+]
ὑπερθεν	1			

	Tristia	Eugenius	Michael Glycas	Standard Modern Greek¹
ὑπό w. gen.	12	8	1	[+]
w. acc.		4		
χάριν	12	7	3	[+]
χωρίς	1	1	3	+

¹ Explanations of signs in this column: “+” : used in common speech; “[+]” : used in formal discourse influenced by the katharevousa; “[διά]” : variant form used in the katharevousa; additional information in parentheses.

hypothesis that the usage of the two disappearing prepositions, ἐκ and ἐν, had been considerably reduced in the language of these poets.

The semantic distinctions are mostly respected, too. With a local sense in classical Greek, ἀπό was used about a movement from the approximate region of something, ἐκ about a movement out of the interior of something. That distinction was gradually fading away from the Hellenistic period onwards and, finally, only ἀπό remained of the pair.⁵⁴ The author of the *Tristia* has ἐκ more often than ἀπό, and in one case, 166.84v.17: ἐκ τῶν ὀρίων Αἰλίας ἤχθη μόνος ‘he [Paul] was brought from the region of Aelia [Capitolina, i.e., Jerusalem] alone’, ἀπό would probably have been more appropriate semantically, but would have made the line one syllable too long. Likewise, in 14.8r.2–3: οὐ πρὸς τινος, ἀλλ’ ἐκ δεσπότης, λαβόντα πρᾶξις ‘receiving your task not from anyone but from the despot’, we might have expected ἀπὸ δεσπότης, for ἀπό is the normal preposition with λαμβάνω in contexts such as this one.

A similar development occurred with ἐν ‘in’ and εἰς ‘to’. The distinction between them began vanishing in the Hellenistic period,⁵⁵ and in Modern Greek only εἰς survives, in the shape of σε, often elided (σ’) or as a single σ- joined to the definite article. In the *Tristia*, there is possibly a phrase with εἰς where ἐν would be more appropriate, viz., 204.103v.4:

⁵⁴ L.S.J., s.v. ἐκ I; B.D.R., § 209, and P. Bortone (2010), 184–185, 232.

⁵⁵ L.S.J., s.v. εἰς I.2, s.v. ἐν AI.8; B.D.A.G., s.v. εἰς Iσδ, B.D.R., §§ 205–206; E. Schwyzer & A. Debrunner (1950), 456, and P. Bortone (2010), 186–187, 232.

περιορισθέντες... εἰς νῆσον ‘detained on an island’.⁵⁶ In this case, εἰς has substituted ἐν, just as Modern Greek σε. The vacillation between the two prepositions could also give the opposite result, as 168.85r.2: ἐν ἧ καταβάς... ‘to which having disembarked...’, about Paul arriving in Malta; the antecedent of the relative ἧ is the island. Preposition phrases with καταβαίνω almost invariably denote movement to or from, so we would expect εἰς ἧν.

This survey of the four prepositions indicates that the poet was aware of the semantic distinctions between them and generally handled them correctly. His contemporary colleagues Eugenius and Michael Glycas demonstrate the same degree of competence.

Table 3 also shows that the dative appears relatively less often with prepositions than in earlier periods. This is in accordance with the general reduction of the dative in post-classical Greek. Some prepositions that could originally be construed with three cases dropped the dative at an early date, even before the general decline of the dative set in. Ὑπέρ practically never appears with the dative, μετά only in archaic or archaizing texts, and with περί, πρὸς, and ὑπό the dative was considerably reduced already in the Hellenistic period.⁵⁷ None of these appear with the dative in the *Tristia*,⁵⁸ nor do ἐπί, παρά or πρὸς. Contrary to the *Tristia*, the other two poems have dative with ἐπί and παρά.

The table lists a considerable number of so-called improper prepositions, i.e., words that were adverbs originally but were also used as prepositions, mostly with the genitive. Such improper prepositions existed early in the history of the Greek language, but their number increased in post-classical texts;⁵⁹ their frequency in Byzantine texts illustrates that development. The table includes the following ones:

⁵⁶ Cf. Cassius Dio 76.5.5: ἐν νήσῳ περιορισθείς; Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.25.33: ἐν αὐτῇ γὰρ τῇ νήσῳ περιορισθείς, and Theodorus Anagnostes, *Epitome historiae tripartitae* 4.322: ἐν Ῥόδῳ περιορισθείς.

⁵⁷ L.S.J., s.vv.; B.D.R., § 203; P. Bortone (2010), 177–178, 183; on ὑπό in particular, B.D.R., § 232, and E. Schwyzler & A. Debrunner (1950), 525.

⁵⁸ 182.91r.16: ὑπὲρ δὲ τῷ Κρόν must be corrupt, *pace* J. Busuttill *et al.* (2010), 365.

⁵⁹ P. Bortone (2010), 180–181, 222–225.

άντικρύ, εἴσω, εἴσωθεν, ἔκπαλαι, ἔνδοθεν, μέσον, ὀπισθεν, πρίν, ὕπερθεν, χάριν, and χωρίς. To these could be added ἀνέκαθεν, δίχα, ἔνδον, and ἐντός, which occur outside the tabulated text samples, and the phrase ἐν μέσῳ that functions as a virtual preposition with genitive in 232.117ν16 ῥιφθέντα λάκκῳ τῶν λεόντων ἐν μέσῳ ‘thrown into a cistern in the midst of the lions’.

The list of improper prepositions contains no less than five approximate synonyms of ἐν, viz., εἴσω, εἴσωθεν, ἔνδοθεν, ἔνδον, and ἐντός. Since ἐν was disappearing from the language, there was probably a need for synonyms in cases when the substitute εἰς/σε was not precise enough.

Only few of the improper prepositions attested in the *Tristia* survive into Modern Greek *dimotiki*, a few more into the *katharevousa*.⁶⁰ Some innovations occur, of course, in Modern Greek and, when greater precision is needed, so-called “complex” or “compound” prepositions can be used. These consist of an adverb combined with one of the proper prepositions.⁶¹ They are handy for replacing, when precision is desirable, such prepositions that no longer exist in the *dimotiki*, e.g., πάνω σε ‘on’ (for ἐπί), πάνω από ‘over’ (for ὑπέρ), or κάτω από ‘under’ (for ὑπό). Such combinations were used in the Byzantine vernacular,⁶² but there is no sign of them in the *Tristia*.

This survey of preposition usage in the *Tristia* has revealed certain signs of the on-going processes of change: some prepositions are rarely attested, or not at all; the dative has been reduced; there is possibly a certain degree of negligence when it comes to semantic distinctions, and improper prepositions are frequent. On the other hand, a number of prepositions that have disappeared from modern *dimotiki* are still in use, and prepositions are still construed with genitive and dative. On the

⁶⁰ Cf. also the “check-list of prepositions” in D. Holton *et al.* (1997), 407–408, and P. Bortone’s “prepositional inventory” (2010), 254.

⁶¹ The grammarians disagree on the systemic status of these combinations. D. Holton *et al.* (1997) classify them as adverb plus preposition and discuss them in their section on adverbs (365–369); the section on prepositions starts with a justification of that classification (370). P. Bortone (2010), 254–257, discusses them but signals that their status as prepositions has been questioned.

⁶² P. Bortone (2010), 218–222, and G. Horrocks (2010), 284–285.

whole, the usage of prepositions in the *Tristia* does not differ radically from the classical norm; contemporary vernacular must have deviated considerably more.

It should also be pointed out that the *Tristia* employs not only preposition phrases, but also case forms without prepositions in order to denote the location of an event or where a movements starts and ends. The most common expressions of this sort are separative genitives and locative datives.

Separative genitives appear both with verbs that denote an actual movement (i–ii), with such verbs when used metaphorically (iii–vi), and with expressions for other events that imply some sort of separation (vii–viii):

(i) 168.85r.7: τῶν φρυγίων ἔξεισιν ἀπεινῆς ἔχης ‘a horrid viper came out of the firewood’

(ii) 74.38v.2: πῦρ ἐξὶ τῶν ἐγκάτων ‘fire coming out of the entrails’

(iii) 10.6v.4: ἀπορριπίζει τοὺς ὕπνους τῶν ὀμμάτων ‘drove away the sleep from his eyes’

(iv) 12.7v.6: κακοῦργός τις βρόχων ἀποδράσας ‘an evil-doer having escaped from the noose’

(v) 230.116r.13: ἐξελούμενος χειρῶν ἀδίκων ‘having snatched away⁶³ [Lot] from unjust hands’

(vi) 4.3r.1: πάσης ἀλλαγὴν κυμάτων τρικυμίας ‘rescued from all violent swell of waves’

(vii) 74.38r.11: φωτὸς ἐστερημένον ‘deprived of light/eyesight’

(viii) 76.39r.7: τῶν οὐδαμινῶν μᾶλλον ἀποτυγχάνει ‘he is rather deprived of the things of little value’

Locative datives in the *Tristia* may denote both the position of an object (i–vi) and the goal of a movement (vii–xi):

(i) 172.87r.7: Λύστροις γὰρ ὄντες ‘while they were in Lystra’

⁶³ Ἐξελούμενος is properly a future; but in the context it must be translated with a past tense. The poet may have chosen ἐξελούμενος (instead of, e.g., the aorist ἐξελόμενος) for metrical reasons for, with the position that the word has in the verse, its third syllable must be long.

- (ii) 68.35v.15: μένων ὁ τλήμων τοῖς τόποις Βαρβαρίας ‘poor me, remaining in the lands of Barbary’
- (iii) 10.6v.10: διατρίβοντα τοῖς τόποις Θετταλίας ‘dwelling in the lands of Thessaly’
- (iv) 70.36v.16–72.37r.1: τῆ Σικελία... μέγαν τετέχθαι Ἴταλὸν βασιλέα ‘that in Sicily the great king Italus was born’
- (v) 228.115r.1: περιπολεῖσθαι τὴν κτίσιν δεινῷ ζόφῳ ‘that the creation should dwell in scary darkness’
- (vi) 80.41v.12–13: χρυσοτέκτω τῷ θρόνῳ φαιδρῶς ἴδρυται ‘is seated in splendour on his throne built from gold’
- (vii) 8.5r.10: ἄπεισιν Ἀριμῆνιδι πόλει ‘he went to the city Ariminum’
- (viii) 74.38v.5: θαλάτταις εἰσιόν [volcanic fire]running out into the sea’
- (ix) 170.86r.8: τὸ πτύσμα τούτων τοῖς προσώποις ἐστράφη ‘their spit was turned against their own faces’
- (x) 232.117v.16: ῥιφθέντα λάκκῳ ‘thrown into a cistern’
- (xi) 204.103v.7: ὁ Δαίδαλος τίθησι τῆ πήρα χέρα ‘Daedalus put his hand into his pouch’

These are archaizing features, most commonly appearing in poetry but, with some exceptions,⁶⁴ unusual in prose literature and alien to the vernaculars of the post-classical periods. Evidently, the author of the *Tristia* had the ambition to write a language with a manifest poetical flavour. The choice of stand-alone case forms instead of prepositional phrases was part of his strategy.

Conclusions

This focus of this study has been on the changes that occurred in the Greek language through the millennia. However, the development of the language is rather characterized by a high degree of continuity that is clearly manifest in the *Tristia*.

⁶⁴ On the relatively high frequency of separative genitives, in particular with verbs of movement, in prose of the imperial and early Byzantine periods, see C. Fabricius (1962), 24–53.

Our survey of the infinitives and participles demonstrated that the morphological system was largely intact. The ten classical infinitives and participles were nearly all present in the *Tristia*, even if futures, medium forms and perfect infinitives were less frequent. The only real deviation is the presence of the Modern Greek passive participles, formed with the original perfect stem and the ancient suffix, but without reduplication.

As regards syntax, both infinitives and participles appear with the same functions as in classical Greek. The nominative absolute, that anticipates the Modern Greek gerund, is only an illusory exception. It was extremely rare in the classical period and is mostly classified with anacolutha by traditional grammar. But in the literary prose of late antiquity it had become a normal phenomenon and, when the poet of the *Tristia* adopted it, he was probably influenced by literary models rather than by the innovative tendencies of contemporary Greek speech.

The infinitives are used with the same functions as in the classical period. It is noteworthy that the alternative constructions with ὄτι, (ἴ)να, etc., which were present already in classical Greek and became increasingly common, are almost totally absent from the *Tristia*. In fact, the infinitives may even seem to be excessively numerous and are not always easily understood. The poet may have favoured the infinitives because of their classical flavour.

Also the case system was intact and, even if the dative was somewhat reduced, prepositions are construed with all three oblique cases, not exclusively with the accusative as in Modern Greek. The *Tristia* also displays a number of the classical prepositions that were disappearing from the language. The semantic distinctions in the pairs ἀπό/ἐκ and εἰς/ἐν are upheld, on the whole. Improper prepositions are common, as was normal in post-classical Greek, but the compound prepositions of Modern Greek do not appear in the *Tristia*.

As alternatives for preposition phrases with a local sense, the poet sometimes uses case forms without prepositions. Such constructions belong to the archaizing language of poetry and reveal the poet's stylistic ambitions.

A classicist of today, i.e., a person who has learnt ancient Greek from texts of the classical period, will easily understand most of the *Tristia*, although this text was written almost 1,500 years after Plato's death.

That is an effect of the continuity that dominates the history of the Greek language.⁶⁵

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⁶⁶ Other classical and Byzantine authors than those listed here are quoted from the current standard editions. They were mostly accessed online in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* data-base (<http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>).

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