

ON “ARTE ALLUSIVA” AND “OPPOSITIO IN IMITANDO”

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In *Class. Quart.* 2000 (vol. 50), p. 323 ff. S.C. Mc Gill has brilliantly shown that Achilles Tatius V, 7 and Antipater *A.P.* VII, 288 both utilize an ancient *topos* "in which death at sea results in mangled corpses whose parts are only partially recovered and interred". *Topoi* are aptly called, *loci communes*: they are, as McGill knows, "public literary property" over which each author offers his own variations.

Unfortunately, McGill is, like many Anglo-Saxon scholars, not familiar with the precise techniques of “arte allusiva” as explained and codified by me¹ and consequently cannot focus with the necessary precision the procedure adopted by Achilles Tatius: the novelist has offered an overt case of “*oppositio in imitando*”.

Antipater’s wording is θάλασσα καὶ χθών ... μοῖραν ἔχουσιν ἴσην, whereas Achilles Tatius neatly reverses this concept by writing οὐκ ἴση τῆς θαλάσσης πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἢ νομὴ (note the synonyms μοῖρα and νομὴ).

The connection between the two passages is not “more thematic than verbal”, as McGill strangely writes: it is pointedly verbal, ἴσην and οὐκ ἴση being diametrically opposed to each other.

1. Cf. H. White in *Myrtia* 2002, p. 402. Kenney of course underlined that I have expounded the Hellenistic concept of the so-called “arte allusiva”, entailing precise rules adhered to by ancient writers, whereas Campbell proclaimed –*risum teneatis, amici*– that such rules were a “catena” of precepts invented by me.

2. As Merkel put it, verbal choice in such cases is used *ut imitatio pateat*, not *ut lateat*.

3. The “aemulatio” exhibited by Achilles Tatius at V, 7, the existence of which is vehemently denied by McGill (p. 325), could not be more explicit: the *oppositio in imitando* which I have indicated shows that the novelist alludes solely to Antipater’s wording, and not in general to the *topos* of death at sea (cf. e.g. Leonidas, *A.P.* VII, 506, 1), as Mc Gill, *invita Minerva*, contends.

There is no need, therefore, to postulate and invoke such things as "a second mimetic register", "a second register of signification", as McGill does: we are clearly faced with a typical and explicit case of "*oppositio in imitando*". Chariton was "ein sehr belesener Mann", who wrote for an equally "belesen" public (cf. *J.H.S.* 1974, p. 197ff.): he expected his readers to recognize his pointed allusion² to Antipater's epigram, within the framework of the *topos* in question³.