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CINNA, CALVUS, AND THE CIRIS

Among other things, R. O. A. M. Lyne's recent edition and commentary of the Ciris (Cambridge, 1978) has established the general method of composition followed by this pseudo-neoteric poet: he demonstrably lifted wholesale and applied to his own poem words, phrases, lines, and even entire sequences from the works of the neoterics and the poets of the following generation. Accordingly, one of the poem's chief attributes is that it serves as a means for recovering the general content, and at times the actual wording, of earlier, more important poetry. This paper offers some additional areas in the Ciris where such influence may exist. I confine myself to Cinna and Calvus, whose poetry may justly be considered the missing two-thirds of the neoteric movement.

CINNA

caeruleas sua furta prius testatur ad umbras;
nam qua se ad patrum tendebat semita limen,
vestibulo in thalami paulum remoratur et alte
suspicit ad † caeli † nictantia sidera mundi,
non accepta piis promittens munera divis.

(Cir. 215–19)

Scylla is approaching her father's bedroom, intent on stealing his magical lock, and admitting as much to the night sky. As has been amply demonstrated, the sequence to which these lines belong (the 'Nurse Scene', 206–385) is almost certainly indebted to, and in parts probably plagiarized from, a similar scene in Cinna's lost epyllion, the Zmyrna. In this context the precise nature of these particular lines has not been investigated.

I begin with a question: what business has Scylla in telling the night of her theft? Lyne correctly refers to examples of such an address occurring in fifth-century Attic drama; but this is only the beginning of a long tradition. More relevant are instances from New Comedy, Greek Epigram and Roman Comedy, all in the context of amatory ἀγάπη, and usually in the setting of a paraclausithyron:

With this poem it is a matter not merely of a poet's re-shaping literary tradition, but rather, to use Lyne's term (p. 47), of 'pillaging'. Since the Ciris is so grossly derivative, there is complete justification for suspecting, and indeed for seeking, elements which may belong to other poetic contexts. For all of this, see Lyne pp. 36–7.

The day when such expressions needed an accompanying apology is now past. Although it is true that other poets (e.g. Valerius Cato or Cornificius) may qualify for this title, as Lyne has noted ('The Neoteric Poets', CQ n.s. 28 (1978), 171), programmatic reference to Cinna and Calvus in the poetry of Catullus 'suggests an identifiably Callimachean faction of Catullus, Cinna, and I think Calvus'.


Other examples abound; for these see R. F. Thomas, 'New Comedy, Callimachus, and Roman Poetry', HSCP 83 (1979), 183–4, 195–206.
non ego item facio ut alios in comoediis
\(<\text{vi}\rangle\) vidi amoris facere, qui aut Nocti aut Dii
aut Soli aut Lunae miserias narrant suas.

(Cinna, fr. 11. 1–2 Morel)

I suggest that at Cir. 215–19 we have the remnants of a compressed paraclausithyron,
specifically that of Cinna’s heroine before her father’s chamber (\textit{qua se ad patrium

tendebat semita limen | vestibulo in thalami paulum remoratur, 216–17}). In such a
setting the address to Night (\textit{caeruleas sua furta prius testatur ad umbras, 215}), rather
pointless in the Ciris, would make perfect sense. I suspect this entire line is Cinna’s,
\textit{furta} originally referring not to any real theft, but to Zmyrna’s imminent clandestine
affair with her father – perhaps the primary meaning of the word in this type of poetry.\footnote{Of the numerous examples (\textit{ThLL 6. 1649. 68 ff.; also s.v. furtivus, 6. 1644. 42 ff.}),
the following will suffice: Cat. 68. 136 (of Lesbia’s lapses), 140 (of Jupiter’s); perhaps most suggestive
is Virg. \textit{Aen. 4. 171–2: nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem: | coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit
nomine culpam}.}

In support of this suggestion it may be noted that Ovid’s Myrrha, although not
actually before Cinyras’ door, also suffers from \textit{aypvrrvla} (\textit{Met. 10. 368–82; cf. 369,
pervigil}). Finally, it would be a typically neoteric touch to have Zmyrna deliver the
conventional address of the lover to Night in a totally original setting – before her own
father’s door.

\footnote{Lyne notes (\textit{Cir. ad loc.}) that the genitive \textit{tabis} is rare, and reports Charisius’ observation:
\textit{Cinna autem in Zmyrna huius tabis dixit nullo auctore} (\textit{Gram. Lat. 193. 25 = Cinna}, p. 89 Morel).}

II

\textit{tabidulamque videt labi per viscera mortem}

\textit{(Cir. 182)}
by the fact that all the ‘meaningful’ diminutives of the Ciris\(^9\) (i.e. excepting those which through constant use lost their diminutive force; ocellus, labellum)\(^10\) appear in passages which have, at one time or another, been suspected of being derived from neoteric verse.

III

Scylla’s arms, as she is towed behind Minos’ boat, are chafed by the ropes. A tentative suggestion: read nodis arboreally, and with minimal changes (e.g. marmorea obductis durescunt bracchia nodis) we have, at line 450, (Zmyrna’s?) metamorphosis. This would perhaps be overly fanciful without the following parallels: Myrrha... obducto cortice pressa latet, \(\text{Ov. A.A. 1. 285–6}\); again of Ovid’s Myrrha: in magnos bracchia ramos... duratur cortice pellis, \(\text{Met. 10. 493–4}\); of Scylla’s actual transformation: marmoreum volucrum vestivit tegmine corpus | lentaque perpetuas fuderunt bracchia pennas, \(\text{Cir. 503–4}\); lastly, of a tree, the collocation (in this same metrical position) bracchia nodo, \(\text{Aetn. 364}\).

CALVUS

I

(heu quotiens mirata novos expalluit artus
ipsa suos, quotiens heu pertimuit latratus)

Tyndaridae niveos mirantur virginis artus

\(\text{Cir. 81–2}\)

\(\text{Cir. 399}\)

On the basis of parallels in Ovid\(^11\) Lyne suggests that the first of these may have its source in the Io; on the second (there should be a cross-reference) he notes: ‘The source is very possibly Catull. 64. 364 bistum | excipiet niveos percusae virginis artus.’ While this is quite possible, I suspect the two have a single common source, which is, indeed, the Io. For consider Virgil’s well-known lines:

\[\text{a, virgo infelix, quae te dementia cepit!} \]
\[\text{Proetides implerunt falsis mugitibus agros,} \]
\[\text{at non tam turpis pecudum tamen ualla secuta} \]
\[\text{concubitus, quamvis collo timuisset aratrum} \]
\[\text{et saepe in levi quaesisset cornua fronte.} \]
\[\text{a! virgo infelix, tu nunc in montibus erras.} \]

\(\text{Ecl. 6. 47–52}\)

We know, of course, that the first halves of the opening and closing lines of this ‘panel’ \(\text{(a, virgo infelix) are from the Io (fr. 9 Morel);}\(^12\) Virgil altered heifers, but Calvus’ heroine is supposed to come to the reader’s mind. Now in the two lines preceding and following these two (46 and 53) Virgil artfully used the adjective niveus (both in the same metrical position as at \(\text{Cir. 399}\)) as an epithet of bovine description. I have no

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\(^9\) For a useful compilation and discussion of the poem’s diminutives, together with other notable stylistic features of the poem, see Lyne, Ciris. Introduction, pp. 25–31 (‘Style’).


\(^11\) Her. 14. 89 ff. (of Io), \(\text{Met. 1. 635 ff. (of Io), Met. 14. 59 ff. (of Scylla the monster),}\)

\(^12\) On the extent to which Virgil reworked the line of Calvus, see Thomas, ‘Theocritus, Calvus and the Sixth Eclogue’, \(\text{CP 74 (1979), 337–9.}\)
doubt that Calvus used the word to describe Io the heifer, and little doubt that behind the phrase *niveos mirantur virginis artus* at Cir. 399 stand her transformed limbs, which are therefore an object of wonder.

**II**

*a virgo infelix, herbis pasceris amaris*  
(Calvus, fr. 9 Morel)

_Infelix_ appears in the _Ciris_ seven times, three times at the beginning of the line in the expression _infelix_ _virgo_ (71, 167, 517), and four times (without _virgo_, but always in reference to the heroine’s plight) in the same position as the example from Calvus (155, 190, 318, 402). Three of these, moreover, are preceded by the same elision that occurs in the line from the _Io_. The opposite word, _felix_, appears three times, all in a tricolon abundans at Cir. 27–8: _felix illa dies, felix et dicitur annus, felices qui talem annum videre diemque_. Lyne has convincingly argued that the passage in which this couplet occurs is largely lifted from the _Io_, and that the specific phrase _felix illa dies_ is Calvus’ own. The tricolon will presumably have referred to _Io’s_ happier days as priestess of Juno. Taking all this together, it seems plausible to suggest that Calvus made much of the contrast between his heroine’s more fortunate past (_felix_) and her subsequent situation (_infelix_).

But what of the actual collocation in the _Ciris_—_infelix virgo_? Did Cinna use it? Ovid’s _Myrrha_ is described (over two lines, _Met._ 10. 443–4) as _infelix_... _virgo_. If the phrase did appear in the _Zmyrna_ (and this is of necessity speculative) it may be that the variants in the _Ciris_ reflect a ‘rivalry’ of sorts between Calvus (_a virgo infelix_) and Cinna (_infelix virgo_).

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13 At least by Ovid’s time _Io_ is consistently considered to have been white in colour. This detail in fact appears as early as Acusilaus of Argos (ap. [Apollod.] _Bibl._ 2. 1. 3 = FGH 2 fr. 26): _eis _δε _βοῦν_ _μετερόφωσε_ _λευκὴν_. There were, however, variants, reflected in the _Suda_ (s.v. _Isis_, 2. 669. 4 Adler): _ποτὲ_ _μὲν_ _εἰς_ _λευκὴν_ _βοῦν, ποτὲ_ _δὲ_ _εἰς_ _μέλαναν, ποτὲ_ _δὲ_ _νάρκωσαν_. For this, see F. Bömer, _P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen i–iii_ (Heidelberg, 1969), ad 1. 610; he suggests solidification of the detail may have been Ovid’s contribution, but its presence in Calvus’ _epyllion_ would also have ensured dissemination.

14 In 399, then, as in 81, _miror_ would carry a more sinister force: ‘marvel at the strangeness of’ (cf. 81, _novos_ , ‘new and strange’). It can have such a force, particularly in this type of poetry: _aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes, Cat._ 64. 15; _miratur et undae, miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe | scuta virum fluvio pictaque innare carinas, Virg._ _Aen._ 8. 91–3. In neither of these is there any sense of admiration; rather one of surprise at a new and unexperienced phenomenon. Since the context we claim for the _Ciris_ is one of surprise at a transformed object, a third parallel is particularly relevant: _Virg._ _Geo._ 2. 82 (of a tree which has suffered grafting and subsequent transformation), _miratasque novas frondes et non sua poma._

15 _Ciris_, _ad loc._ I suspect, in fact, that the whole couplet is Calvus’; it is just too good: in addition to the chiasmus noted by Lyne (dies...annus...annum...diem), there is the artful repetition in the second line (felices...annum...diemque). All of this in a strictly expanding tricolon, which Calvus (if, indeed, the couplet is his) will have perfected in his capacity as an orator. In this connection, Cicero’s comments on him ( _Brut._ 283) are not irrelevant.

16 Probably as early as _Hesiod_ (fr. 125 Merkelbach and West), and at least by the time of _Callimachus_ (fr. inc. sed. 769 Pf.), _Io_ is given the epithet _Καλλιθέασα_. Whatever the precise meaning of the word (it appears only in the supplement of _LSJ_ and is given no translation), the suggestion seems to be that _Io_ was in some way a successful priestess; cf. _Anth._ _Pal._ 6. 240, _καλλιθήσαν κάρπον ἄριστον_.

17 A possible reflection of this: _Virgil_ used _infelix_ (nom. or voc.) of _Dido_ six times, three times in each of these two positions (_Aen._ 1. 749, 4. 68, 4. 450, 4. 529, 4. 596, 6. 450).

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