



Cinna, Calvus, and the Ciris

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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.¹ 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.²

CINNA

I

caeruleas sua furta prius testatur ad umbras;
nam qua se ad patrium 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,³ 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;⁴ 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 *ἀγρυπνία*, and usually in the setting of a paraclausithyron:⁵

¹ 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.

² 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'.

³ By S. Sudhaus, 'Die *Ciris* und das römische Epyllion', *Hermes* 42 (1907), 487 ff.; W. Ehlers, 'Die *Ciris* und ihr Original', *MH* 11 (1954), 81–2; Lyne, *Ciris*, Introduction, pp. 40–4; also on lines 274, 324–5, 342–3.

⁴ Eur. *Elec.* 54, *Andromeda* fr. 114N, *Hec.* 68–72.

⁵ Other examples abound; for these see R. F. Thomas, 'New Comedy, Callimachus, and Roman Poetry', *HSCP* 83 (1979), 183–4, 195–206.

ὦ Νύξ – σὺ γὰρ δὴ πλείστον Ἀφροδίτης μέρος
μετέχεις θεῶν, ἐν σοὶ τε περὶ τούτων λόγοι
πλείστοι λέγονται φροντίδες τ' ἐρωτικάι.

(Men. *Misoum.* A1 – A3)

* Ἄστρα καὶ ἡ φιλέρωσι καλὸν φαίνουσα Σελήνη
καὶ Νύξ καὶ κώμων σύμπλανον ὄργάνιον,
ἀρὰ γε τὴν φιλάσωτον ἔτ' ἐν κοίταισιν ἀθρήσω
ἄγρυπνον λύχνῳ πόλλ' ἀποδυρομένην;

(Meleager, *A.P.* 5. 191. 1–4)

non ego item facio ut alios in comoediis
<vi> vidi amoris facere, qui aut Nocti aut Dii
aut Soli aut Lunae miserias narrant suas.

(Plaut. *Merc.* 3–5)

Cinna was certainly familiar with this tradition; for, as we know, he drew from Callimachus' poetic application of it:

χαίρετε λεπταί
ρήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἄγρυπνίης.

(Callim. *Ep.* 27. 3–4)

haec tibi Arateis multum invigilata lucernis⁶
carmina.

(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 (*qua se ad patrium tendebat semita limen | vestibulo in thalami paulum remoratur*, 216–17). In such a setting the address to Night (*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, *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.⁷

In support of this suggestion it may be noted that Ovid's Myrrha, although not actually before Cinyras' door, also suffers from ἄγρυπνία (*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.

II

tabidulamque videt labi per viscera mortem

(*Cir.* 182)

Scylla is wasting away with love. As Lyne observes, *tabidulus* is both striking and original (the word occurs nowhere else). Elsewhere, conveying the same sense, and again in the Nurse Scene, we find *tabescere* (249), which is in turn followed closely by *tabis* (254). Lyne, as had Sudhaus, sees Cinna at this last instance, which is certainly correct.⁸ In the light of this, it seems reasonable to suggest that the metaphor existed in Cinna's poem, and that the unusual diminutive was his coinage. This is supported

⁶ *λύχνοι*, familiar in the setting of amatory ἄγρυπνία, are absent from Callimachus' lines; the presence of *lucernis* in Cinna's version may stand as his acknowledgement of the tradition from which Callimachus drew.

⁷ Of the numerous examples (*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. *Aen.* 4. 171–2: *nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem: | coniugium vocat, hoc praetextit nomine culpam*.

⁸ Lyne notes (*Cir.* ad loc.) that the genitive *tabis* is rare, and reports Charisius' observation: *Cinna autem in Zmyrna huius tabis dixit nullo auctore* (*Gram. Lat.* 193. 25 = Cinna, p. 89 Morel).

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

iam fessae tandem fugiunt de corpore vires
et caput inflexa lentum cervice recumbit,
marmorea adductis livescunt bracchia nodis.

(*Cir.* 448–50)

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*, *Ov. A.A.* 1. 285–6; again of Ovid's *Myrrha: in magnos bracchia ramos... duratur cortice pellis*, *Met.* 10. 493–4; of Scylla's actual transformation: *marmoreum volucris vestivit tegmine corpus | lentaque perpetuas fuderunt bracchia pennas*, *Cir.* 503–4; lastly, of a tree, the collocation (in this same metrical position) *bracchia nodo*, *Aetn.* 364.

CALVUS

I

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

(*Cir.* 81–2)

Tyndaridae niveos mirantur virginis artus

(*Cir.* 399)

On the basis of parallels in Ovid¹¹ 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 *bustum | excipiet niveos percussae 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:

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

(*Ecl.* 6. 47–52)

We know, of course, that the first halves of the opening and closing lines of this 'panel' (*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 *Cir.* 399) as an epithet of bovine description. I have no

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').

¹⁰ Generally, on diminutives in neoteric verse, D. O. Ross, *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 22–6.

¹¹ *Her.* 14. 89 ff. (of *Io*), *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', *CP* 74 (1979), 337–9.

doubt that Calvus used the word to describe Io the heifer,¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ The tricolon will presumably have referred to Io's happier days as priestess of Juno.¹⁶ 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*).¹⁷

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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): εἰς δὲ βοῦν μετεμόρφωσε λευκῆν: There were, however, variants, reflected in the Suda (s.v. Isis, 2. 669. 4 Adler); ποτὲ μὲν εἰς λευκῆν βοῦν, ποτὲ δὲ εἰς μέλαιναν, ποτὲ δὲ ἰάζουσαν. For this, see F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen I–III* (Heidelberg, 1969), ad l. 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; *mirantur et undae, | miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe | scuta virum fluvio pictasque 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), *mirastisque 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 *Καλλιθέσσα*. Whatever the precise meaning of the word (it appears only in the supplement of *LSJ*⁹ and is given no translation), the suggestion seems to be that Io was in some way a successful priestess; cf. *Anth. Pal.* 6. 240, *καλλιθυτῶν κάπρον ὄρειονόμον*.

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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