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Roscius and the Roscida Dea

Clifford Weber

Kenyon College, webercliff@gmail.com

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Roscius and the Roscida Dea

Author(s): Clifford Weber

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ἐμοὶ... δαιμόνιον. Hence when Aelian wrote *φωνήν... θεία πομπή ἐγκεκληρωμένην αὐτῷ* he was modifying the text which he had before him, but in a systematic way that can be easily paralleled from many other ancient quotations from philosophical works: he has given nominal expression (*πομπή*) to the notion contained in the participle (*παραπεμπόμενον*) and, conversely, has transferred the idea of allotment from noun (*μοίρα*) to participle (*ἐγκεκληρωμένην*).³

On this assumption, *παραπεμπόμενον* cannot be simply the quirk of a late Aristotelian commentator but instead existed in the textual tradition of *Thg.* by at least the early third century A.D. Indeed, fluidity of transmission in precisely this portion of the text is evidenced also by the substitution of *παραγινόμενον pro παρεπόμενον* in the quotation of the passage by Aelian's older contemporary Clement of Alexandria, in *Stromata* I.21.133.3 = II.83.1 Stählin–Früchter (*γίγνεσθαι* would have occurred to Clement as the word which Plato regularly predicates of Socrates' sign, e.g. *Ap.* 31d1, *Euthphr.* 3b6, *Euthd.* 272e3, *Phdr.* 242b9, *Thi.* 151a4).⁴

Memorial University of Newfoundland

M. A. JOYAL

³ See J. Whittaker, 'The Value of Indirect Tradition in the Establishment of Greek Philosophical Texts or the Art of Misquotation', in J. N. Grant (ed.), *Editing Greek and Latin Texts* (New York, 1989), pp. 63–95, esp. 83–9; id., *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* (Paris, 1990), pp. xxii–v.

⁴ But Calcidius' use of *comes* in his quotation of *Thg.* 128d2–7 (in *Ti.* 263.20–264.2 Waszink) strongly suggests *παρεπόμενον* as his model (see Waszink's *apparatus fontium*).

ROSCIUS AND THE ROSCIDA DEA

Constiteram exorientem Auroram forte salutans,
cum subito a laeva Roscius exoritur.
pace mihi liceat, caelestes, dicere vestra:
mortalis visus pulchrior esse deo.

The verb *consisto* ('stop') can be used in the context of stopping to exchange greetings and conversation with an acquaintance accidentally encountered: 'confabulatum consistere', as it is defined in the *Thesaurus* (IV, 464.67–76). That this sense of *consisto* was common parlance in the late Republic is clear from its occurrence five times in Plautus and three times in Cicero,¹ both in the speeches and in a letter. This is also the meaning that *consisto* carries in the first line of the epigram of Q. Lutatius Catulus (Morel² p. 43; Courtney pp. 76–7) transcribed above.² Any of the examples cited in the *Thesaurus* will make this clear, but especially so the following lines from Plaut. *Aul.* 114–17:

me benignius
omnes salutant quam salutabant prius;
adeunt, consistunt, copulantur dextras,
rogitant me ut valeam, quid agam, quid rerum geram.

These lines suggest the *mise en scène* that the poet imagines for his encounter with Aurora. Like Plautus' Euclio, Catulus' Aurora is cast in a distinctly mortal role, as

¹ Cic. *QRosc.* 66, cited in *ThLL*, is irrelevant.

² Discussed most recently in A. Perutelli, 'Lutazio Catulo poeta', *Riv. Fil.* 118 (1990), 257–81, and in H. Dahlmann, 'Das Rosciusepigramm des Q. Lutatius Catulus', *Gymnasium* 88 (1981), 24–44. There is a new commentary on the poem in E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 77–8. These works are cited below by their author's name.

a woman to whom the poet stops to say hello.³ Note also *forte*, referring to the chance encounter that is built into the situation when two people stop to exchange greetings.⁴

If personification as a female acquaintance brings celestial Aurora down to earth in line 1, the converse occurs in the metaphorical cataracterism of mortal Roscius in line 2. Following in the wake of the breaking dawn, Roscius' advent in line 2 casts him in the role of the rising sun. Beyond the sheer timing of his sudden arrival, moreover, the metaphor of Roscius as sun is sustained by the verb *exoritur*. In sharp contrast to its frequent use with reference to the rising of stars and the like (*ThLL* V.2, 1571.12–1572.76),⁵ *exorior* applied literally to human beings is extremely rare. Indeed, apart from its application to Roscius in Catulus' epigram, only two examples of this usage (Plaut. *Rud.* 4,⁶ Stat. *Theb.* 9.701) are cited in the *Thesaurus*. Just as *exorior* in Plaut. *Rud.* 4 is transferred from Arcturus to the actor portraying that star, so does *exoritur* applied to Roscius enhance the contextual implication that this young actor here impersonates the rising sun.⁷

In line 2, then, the advent of Roscius is expressed in terms that would normally apply to a sunrise. Catulus' poem thus complements a pair of Hellenistic epigrams in which Meleager explicitly compares a *παῖς καλός* with the sun.⁸ To Catulus' implicit equation between Roscius and the sun, moreover, the phrase *a laeva* would also seem to contribute. That this phrase functions metaphorically seems likely a priori, for with reference to Roscius, *laevus* has no obvious point. Does Roscius, appearing on the left, arrive from the north, south, east, or west?⁹ If the concrete meaning of *a laeva* referring to Roscius is not completely unrecoverable, it is certainly unclear. What interested the poet was the connotation of *a laeva...exoritur*, and what that connotation was is evident from the following citations from Pliny's *Natural History*:

a laevo latere in dextrum ut sol ambiunt (2.128)
in India... sol dexter oritur (2.184, describing the norm reversed)
maxime mirum iis erat... solem... a laeva oriri et in dexteram occidere potius quam e diverso (6.87)

³ Interpreted otherwise in *ThLL* IV, 469.61–2. Mistranslations of this word are legion, e.g. H. C. P. McGregor, trans., *Cicero: 'The Nature of the Gods'* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 101.

Perutelli p. 272 subscribes to Dahlmann's thesis that line 1 refers to the allegedly widespread observance of *salutatio solis*; but Tac. *Hist.* 3.24.3 ('ita in Syria mos est') and Hdn. 4.15.1 (*ὡς ἔθος ἀντοῖς*, referring to non-Romans) only confirm the impression left by the other sources cited by Dahlmann, which are fairly extensive for barbarians, but scanty for Greece, and essentially non-existent for Rome (Dahlmann pp. 35–6): *salutatio solis* was a non-Roman custom and thus would be alien to so thoroughly Roman a context as that of the Roscius epigram (ibid. p. 32). Courtney p. 77 also posits 'morning adoration of the sun'.

⁴ There is a familiar example in Hor. *Sat.* 1.9. This satire begins *Ibam forte via sacra*, whereupon Horace's encounter with The Pest ensues two lines later.

⁵ That Aurora is to be included among these is clear not only from the first line of Catulus' epigram, but also from Lucr. 4.538, Catull. 64.271, Amm. Marc. 20.3.1, 27.2.5, and Martianus Capella 9.902. In all of these, *exorior* or its noun *exortus* is applied to Aurora.

⁶ Of an actor impersonating Arcturus, and hence an exception that proves the rule. Ribbeck actually took *exoritur* of Roscius literally (sc. *in scaenam*) and concluded from Catulus' lines that performances of Roman tragedy must have begun at dawn (Dahlmann pp. 36–7, n. 21).

⁷ For *exorior* used of the sun, see the citations in *ThLL* V.2, 1571.12–31.

⁸ In *A.P.* 12.127, the rays of the sun are no match for the sunbeams in Alexis' eyes. In *A.P.* 12.59, Myiscus outshines his peers as the sun obliterates the stars. See Dahlmann p. 42, Perutelli p. 272.

⁹ Dahlmann devotes five dense pages (36–40) to arguing for an eastern advent; but *quot homines tot sententiae*.

The expression *a laeva...exoritur* will thus allude to the rising sun¹⁰ and will consequently enhance the assimilation of Roscius to the sun that *exoritur* by itself brings about. That Roscius appears suddenly may also give to line 2 the secondary connotation that the boy is an *augurium oblativum* which, seen on the left, portends good things on that account.¹¹

Mortal and immortal roles are thus reversed in the first couplet of Catulus' epigram. After the poet has stopped to greet Aurora as he would a mortal acquaintance, the advent of Roscius is such as to bring to mind the rising of the immortal sun. This reversal of mortal and immortal, moreover, continues in the second couplet, reappearing in line 4 in a somewhat altered form. Now Roscius' beauty, surpassing that of divine Aurora, marks him a god, her, by comparison, a mere mortal. Indeed, the inversion of roles between Aurora and Roscius has a formal dimension. In the first couplet, the goddess precedes the mortal, but this sequence is reversed in the final pentameter, where the formal opposition between *mortalis* and *deo* is itself expressive. Similarly, in the first couplet, the word order of *exorientem Auroram* in line 1 is reversed in the second line in *Roscius exoritur*.¹²

Nevertheless, in one respect the exchange of roles between Roscius and Aurora is incongruous: the male Roscius is compared to a female immortal. Why is Roscius not rather compared to a celestial male such as, for example, Sol? Indeed, not a few scholars have been at least subliminally aware of—and one,¹³ frankly unhappy with—the apparent oddity of a comparison between Roscius and a female divinity. Accordingly, the first line has often been interpreted as if it did in fact refer to masculine Sol.¹⁴ In the last line as well, *deo* has been referred to Sol often enough to have prompted Courtney to reject this idea in his note on the word.

Why, then, did Catulus not write *Solem* if that was his meaning? Because that was not his meaning. Rather, Catulus equates Roscius with the sun but contrasts him with the dawn. The difference between equation and contrast is important. As his celestial analogue obliterates the dawn, so does Roscius as well seem to outshine her in beauty. However, in linking Roscius with Aurora by means of the verb common to them both, Catulus will have intended not only to raise Roscius up to the level of his divine competitor, but also—and this, I would argue, was paramount—he will have implied a fanciful derivation of Roscius' name from the noun *ros*, that is, from one of Aurora's stock attributes. The adjective *roscidus* in particular, differing from *Roscius* by only a single phoneme, serves as a standing epithet of Aurora at least as early as Ov. *Ars am.* 3.180, where an unnamed *roscida...dea* needs no identification.¹⁵

¹⁰ Roman writers perceive stars and constellations as also rising on the left (see Man. 1.380 and the additional sources cited in A. E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomica* [London, 1903–31] I 37–8 [ad 1.380]). So too is *exorior* regularly used of their rising, not to mention the long tradition of comparing a beautiful young person to a star (see Dahlmann pp. 41–2). All this notwithstanding, stars and constellations do not come up after dawn, but the sun and Roscius do.

¹¹ So Dahlmann pp. 37–40, Courtney p. 77.

¹² The formal ramifications of the epigram's argument are detailed in Dahlmann p. 32 and Perutelli p. 275.

¹³ R. Reitzenstein, s.v. 'Epigramm', *RE* VI.1.96, where the comparison with Aurora is termed 'recht ungeschickt'. The referee calls my attention to R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Oxford, 1949–53), I 73 (ad fr. 67.13): it is beautiful girls whom Callimachus and later poets compare to the dawn.

¹⁴ See, for example, Dahlmann pp. 33, 40.

¹⁵ After completing a first draft of this paper, I found in Perutelli p. 271, n. 1 that the possibility of a play on words between *Roscius* and *roscidus* had also occurred to Gabriella Moretti. That she and I have independently reached the same conclusion would seem a point in its favour.

To be sure, *roscidus* is not attested until, at the latest, c. 55 B.C.—in Egn. *poet.* 2.1 and Catull. 61.24—and, for us, the word is not applied to Aurora before Ovid.¹⁶ It is possible, therefore, that *roscidus* was unknown to Catulus even as a word, much less as an epithet of Aurora. It is far likelier, however, to be only an accident of transmission that, at the most, some six decades¹⁷ intervene between Catulus' epigram and the earliest attestation of *roscidus*. Indeed, the absence of prior attestation has not deterred editors from restoring the word in Catull. 61.24. As for the particular application of *roscidus* to Aurora, it is, quite simply, inconceivable that an intellectual aristocrat able to write elegiacs could yet be ignorant of the link between dew and dawn in literature and folklore,¹⁸ not to mention everyday experience.

Finally, J. Soubiran¹⁹ has suggested that the young Cicero, writing not long after Catulus' death in 87 B.C., implies an etymology that derives Aurora's name as well from the same noun *ros*. Soubiran finds this etymology reflected in the following line (fr. 4.7 Soubiran) from Cicero's *Prognostica*:

cum primum gelidos rores Aurora remittit²⁰

If the derivation of *Aurora* from *ros* was an etymology known to Catulus,²¹ then, with the erudition to be expected in a philhellene like himself,²² Catulus will have intended an observant reader to note that both his divine and his mortal protagonists share not only the verb *exorior*, but also names derived from one and the same noun *ros*. That *Auroram* and *Roscius* occupy the post-caesural position in successive lines would serve to highlight a cognate relationship between them. So too would their common placement next to the verb *exorior*.

An etymology deriving the name *Aurora* from the noun *ros* would have had to back it up the familiar reality of dew covering the ground at dawn. As Jeffrey Henderson has pointed out to me, it is not impossible that a similar (but less familiar) link may exist between dew and Roscius as well. In the words of the German scholar Bechtel as translated by E. Fraenkel, 'the comparison of young creatures with fresh drops of

In verse dating to the age of Ovid or later, *roscida* as an epithet of Aurora recurs in *Epic. Drusi* 281; *Sen. Thy.* 817; *Sil.* 1.576, 15.439; Corippus, *Iohannis* 1.243, 7.83, and *In laudem Iustini Augusti* 2.1; cf. *Ov. Am.* 1.13.10, where Aurora's reins are *roscida*, and *Sen. Med.* 101, where, unusually, *roscidus* is applied to a human being (a shepherd beholding the dawn).

¹⁶ For retrieving these data from the PHI computer concordance, I wish to thank Philip Forsythe of the Center for Epigraphical and Palaeographical Studies at the Ohio State University.

¹⁷ This is predicated on the assumption that Roscius, born c. 135 B.C., is unlikely to have been *pulchrior deo* much later than 115 B.C.; so Dahlmann pp. 24–5, Courtney p. 78.

¹⁸ See F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen* (Heidelberg, 1969–86), IV 387; VI 360. For dew and the dawn in Latin poetry, see, in addition to the citations in n. 15 above, *Cic. Arat. Progn.* 4.7 Soubiran; *Ov. Met.* 13.621, *Fast.* 3.403; *Sil.* 3.332; and *Stat. Theb.* 2.135–6, *Silv.* 5.1.34–5. On the Greek side, in D. Boedeker's monograph *Descent from Heaven: Images of Dew in Greek Poetry and Religion* (Chico, CA, 1984), mention of the dawn is confined to p. 49.

¹⁹ J. Soubiran, *Cicéron: 'Aratea', fragments poétiques* (Paris, 1972), p. 233.

²⁰ For the same etymology implied centuries later in a Christian epigram, see E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Christianae veteres* (Berlin, 1925–31), III 585 s.v. *ros*. In this paragraph I have relied on the references cited in Bömer, op. cit. (n. 18), IV 387.

²¹ Attested ancient etymologies derived *aurora* from *aurum* (Varro), *aura* (Priscian), and **eorora* (Isidore); references in *ThLL* II, 1522.66–76 and in R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies* (Leeds, 1991), p. 68.

²² For this aspect of Catulus' life, see the documentation in H. Bardon, *La littérature latine inconnue* (Paris, 1952), I 115–17; also D. O. Ross, Jr., *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), pp. 142–3, 151–2.

dew is peculiar to the Greek point of view'.²³ Thus, Catullus' etymology of the name *Roscius* may arguably be based on a perceived similarity between dew and a *παῖς καλός* of the sort that Roscius conspicuously was. The common etymon linking Aurora and Roscius would then extend beyond mere nomenclature and would reflect an actual association of dew not only with dawn, but also with youth and innocence. In any case, even if the perception of the young Roscius as *roscidus* was 'peculiar to the Greek point of view', no Roman of his day would have been more receptive to such a view than would Q. Lutatius Catulus.

Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio

CLIFFORD WEBER

²³ E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: 'Agamemnon'* (Oxford, 1950), II 83; see also J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* (New York and Oxford, ²1991), p. 145, n. 194 ('dewiness is frequently associated by the Greeks with freshness and innocence').

CATULLUS 61.90-6

talis in vario solet	
divitis domini hortulo	
stare flos hyacinthinus.	
sed moraris, abit dies.	90
⟨prodeas nova nupta.⟩	
prodeas nova nupta, si	92
iam videtur, et audias	
nostra verba. viden? faces	
aureas quatiant comas:	95
prodeas nova nupta.	

As the majority of the editors read the text of Catullus 61.90-6, it contains a couple of emendations, among which the most significant is the addition of the line *prodeas nova nupta* after v.90 in order to complete the strophe.

The presence of the refrain *abit dies: prodeas nova nupta* in the 22nd and the 24th strophes makes it quite obvious that the 19th strophe must also conclude with *prodeas nova nupta*. The corruption can be easily explained by haplography. But on the other hand there are some oddities. Firstly, those concerning the refrain. The last line of the 19th and the first seven syllables of the 20th strophe become identical; this is unique in poem 61. Nowhere else does the last line of a strophe and the first line of the following strophe have more than one word in common:

- a) vv.81/2: *flet* quod ire necesse est.
 flere desine...
- b) vv.193/4: perge, ne *remorare*.
 non diu *remoratus* es.
- c) vv.203/4: multa milia *ludi*.
 ludite ut lubet,...

Normally the refrains occur periodically in poem 61:

- a) str.(1), 8, 10, 12
- b) str.13, 14, 15
- c) str.(25), 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38

The refrain *prodeas nova nupta*, on the other hand, occurs in str.19, 20, 22, 24¹.

¹ This refrain cannot be supplied at the end of str.16, because it would introduce a second person between the transmitted third persons *adest* and *flet*.