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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

PROPERTIUS AS *CANTOR EUPHORIONIS* IN 2.1.12

L'importance de la culture du poète est si grande que son art allusif à la fois embrasse d'innombrables connaissances littéraires et en même temps les réduit à des formes d'allusion parfois très indirectes: ainsi apparaît l'esprit d'un art qui cherche à dire beaucoup avec peu de mots, à suggérer plus qu'à développer et à insérer un maximum d'images dans un minimum de distiques.

—Jean-Paul Boucher, *Études sur Properce*¹

sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere cerno,
totum de Coa veste volumen erit;
seu vidi ad frontem sparsos errare capillos,
gaudet laudatis ire superba comis;
sive Lyrae carmen digitis percussit eburnis
miramur faciles ut premat arte manus;
seu cum poscentis somnum declinat ocellos,
invenio causas mille poeta novas;
seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,
tum vero longas condimus Iliadas;
seu quicquid fecit, sive est quodcumque locuta,
maxima de nihilo nascitur historia.

Suppose she steps out glittering in silks from Cos,
Her Coan gown speaks a whole volume.
Suppose I spot an errant ringlet on her brow,
Praise of the lock makes her walk taller.
Suppose her ivory fingers strike a tune on the lyre,
I marvel at her hand's deft pressure.
Or if she closes eyelids exigent for sleep
I have a thousand new ideas for poems.
Or if, stripped of her dress, she wrestles with me naked,
Why then we pile up lengthy *Iliads*.
Whatever she may do, whatever she can say,
A saga's born, a big one, out of nothing.²

(Propertius 2.1.5–16)

1. Boucher 1965, 5.

2. The Latin is Heyworth's Oxford text (2007), the translation from Lee (1994, 27), and the latter by permission of Oxford University Press.

In an article published in 1983, James Zetzel proposed that the lines above (Prop. 2.1.5–16) comprise a largely allusive catalogue of poetic genres that the poet claims can accommodate his erotic themes. In the description of Coan silks in the first couplet, Zetzel found a “riddling” allusion to the elegy of Philetas of Cos. In the next couplet, where Propertius lauds the stray locks of his *puella*, Zetzel perceived “the poetry of praise, an important genre in both archaic and Hellenistic times.” When the *puella* displays uncommon skill on the lyre in the third couplet, Zetzel took this to suggest the genre of lyric. In such a context, *causas* in the fourth couplet was quite naturally interpreted as alluding to aetiological poetry in general and to the *Aetia* of Callimachus in particular.³

Zetzel’s ideas would now seem to have become a consensus, to judge by Stephen Heyworth’s matter-of-fact comments in his monumental commentary.⁴ In lines 11–14 in particular, the static vignette of a drowsy *puella* with drooping eyelids contrasts with the action-packed scene of a naked *puella* engaged in friendly combat with the poet in bed. For the latter, Propertius claims to be capable of composing “long *Iliads*.” Concerning the static tableau, however, while the slender style might seem to deserve mention as the contrasting style that suits the contrasting subject, there is nothing so explicit as “long *Iliads*.” This note will propose that lines 11–12 are in fact congruent with the allusive nature of the preceding couplets and refer implicitly to two Hellenistic poets and their Roman acolytes, whom Propertius views as exemplars in writing of his *puella* falling off to sleep.

In the patently literary-critical context of a catalogue of genres, *invenio* at the head of 2.1.12 reads as the rhetorical term denoting the first of an orator’s canonical five tasks.⁵ Here, its application to the composition of verse is consistent with the view expressed by Cicero, who, without using the word, asserts that there is no difference between poets and orators as far as the range of their *inventio* is concerned.⁶

With regard to *causas* as the object of Propertius’ *inventio*, there now seems to be general agreement that this word, as Zetzel proposed, alludes to the *Aetia* of Callimachus.⁷ Adrian Hollis goes so far as to assert that *causas* “clearly suggests” Callimachus’ poem.⁸ If proof of the equivalence of *causae* and αἴτια is needed, it can be found in several sources cited in *TLL* 3.554.29–35, beginning with Quintilian *Institutio*

3. Zetzel 1983, 92.

4. “Propertius adumbrates the genres his work will necessarily encapsulate” (Heyworth 2007, 104).

5. Cic. *De or.* 2.79; Reinhardt and Winterbottom 2006, xxiii–xxiv; Kennedy 1994, 120.

6. Cic. *De or.* 1.70. For terms of literary analysis that neoteric and elegiac poetry share with forensic oratory, see Keith 1999 and Batstone 1998, 132–33. The verb *invenio* is used of poets and of their verse as early as Ter. *Phorm.* 14 and Plaut. *Pseud.* 405, where a slave facetiously aspires to a poet’s *inventio*. Subsequent examples include Hor. *Ars P.* 275 (of Thespis), 377; Sen. *Ep.* 79.6; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.69 (of Menander); Plin. *Ep.* 1.9.6 (the sea and seashore imaged as poets, and the poet *propremet dit* as their stenographer); and Porphyrio on Hor. *Epist.* 1.18.36 (of Horace). Among Catullus and the Augustan elegists, *invenio* in a technical sense is apparently unique to Prop. 2.1.12. According to Fedeli (2005, 43), the poem begins with a *sermocinatio*, defined in *Rhet. Her.* 4.65. For Propertius and rhetoric in general, Reinhardt 2006.

7. First proposed, as far as I know, in Wiggers 1976–77, 336, followed by King 1980, 63; Zetzel 1983, 92; Miller 1986, 155; Wyke 1989, 137; and Hollis 2006, 105 and 110 n. 65. Butrica (1996, 109 n. 46) disagrees, while Hubbard (1975, 100) takes *causas* as a reference to Hesiod. In Fedeli’s note on the word (2005, 55), no allusion is mentioned. Does Propertius here propose the novel *Kreuzung der Gattungen* of erotic aetiology? In his discussion of Prop. 2.1, Ross (1975, 116–17 n. 7) writes that “we may well wonder precisely how” Propertius passes for a Callimachean poet in this context. Later in the same elegy, Callimachus is invoked by name, and the *Aetia* echoed, in 2.1.39–40.

8. Hollis 2006, 110 n. 65.

oratoria 3.11.6. It is shown in practice in Ovid's *Fasti*, where, beginning with the opening line, *causae* refers to the aetiologies in that poem.⁹ Likewise, in the first line of Propertius 4.10, *causae* announces an aetiological project of the Roman Callimachus himself.

Following in the wake of an allusion to Callimachus, *poeta novas* in the same line, despite having no syntactical connection, takes on the appearance of a pun on *poeta novus*. To be sure, it is not universally agreed that the *poetae novi* whom Cicero mentions in *Orator* 161.6 (46 BCE) are a group of poets sharing Callimachean ideals. Some scholars hold that *novi* rather refers to chronology alone. On this question, however, it is difficult to refute the argument advanced by Hollis. When Cicero remarks that *poetae novi* avoid elision of final *s*, this is demonstrably untrue, Hollis argues, if *novi* is understood as referring only to chronology. In that sense, Lucretius was as new as Catullus or Calvus, yet his elisions of final *s* number forty-nine.¹⁰

The likelihood of punning is enhanced by two other possible cases in the same passage. In 2.1.8, Zetzel suggested that *laudatis . . . comis* is a bilingual pun on ἐγκώμιον, *comis* echoing the Greek noun and *laudatis* glossing it.¹¹ Heyworth thinks that Callimachus' *Coma Berenices* is "evoked" as well.¹² Further, in the couplet following *poeta novas*, Nancy Wiggers speculated that *longa condimus ilia* lurks in *longas condimus Iliadas*.¹³ This too has now found acceptance in Heyworth's commentary.¹⁴ Whatever may be the likelihood of this pun, it is not subject to the charge of being too crude for the euphemistic elegance of a genre in which even the unbuttoned Ovid breaks off with *cetera quis nescit?* in *Amores* 1.5.25. Indeed, Tibullus, *tersus atque elegans maxime*, does not flinch from comparably indecent double entendre in 1.4.51–52 and 1.5.61–62, as has finally been recognized in Robert Maltby's commentary.

Finally, if *poeta novas* is a pun alluding to the collective name of specific poets, there may be a rough parallel in Virgil *Eclogues* 3.42, where, in Heinz Hofmann's view, the noun *arator* is a pun on the name of the poet Aratus. This sort of punning allusion to an implicit name is, Hofmann writes, "typisch neoterisch-allusiver Manier."¹⁵

At the opposite extreme of Book 2 as we have it, Propertius expresses the ambition that his future fame include him in the company of four Roman poets who are named, one per couplet, along with the name of their *puella* (2.34.85–92). The commonality of

9. "Its very first line pays it [the *Aetia*] tribute" (Herbert-Brown 1994, 8–9). For further examples, see Shechter 1975, 350 ("ordinarily *causa* was the Latin translation for αἴτιον, as a comment in Servius (*Aen.* 1.408) affirms").

10. Hollis 2007, 1–2. This brief note will not accommodate a review of the extensive bibliography concerning the neoterics. For current views and for references to earlier work, see Nelis 2012, 8–9; Knox 2011, 192–93, and 2006; Wray 2009, 253–55; Johnson 2007, 175–76, 188. Lyne 1978 remains fundamental. For the *cantores Euphorionis* in Cic. *Tusc.* 3.19.45 (45 BCE), see Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xii, 12–13 nn. 31–33.

11. Zetzel 1983, 92. Familiar comparanda are *lepidus* echoing λεπτός and *cura* as a play on κοῦρη, the latter discussed in Ross 1975, 69. It does not matter that the quantity of the vowel in *coma* differs from that in ἐγκώμιον: see O'Hara 1996, 61–62, and the sources cited there in n. 317; also Thomas 1988, 1: 80, and Nisbet 1990, 261.

12. Heyworth 2007, 104.

13. Wiggers 1977, 336.

14. Heyworth 2007, 104; reaffirmed ("a climactic pun") in id. 2009, 277. A hint of *ilia* in *Iliadas* would create a double entendre in *condimus* as well, for this verb is a *vox propria* for composing elevated verse (Giardina 1977, 93; Colaizzi 1993, 136 ["this grand verb"]; Fedeli 2005, 56–57). All the same, *condere* is applied to a *Graecum poema* in Cic. *Att.* 1.16.15; to an *amabile carmen* in Hor. *Epist.* 1.3.24; to *bona carmina* opp. *mala carmina* in id. *Sat.* 2.1.82, 84; and to pentameters in Ov. *Pont.* 2.5.1.

15. Hofmann 1985, 475.

these poets is not limited to their shared genre. Without exception, they are neoteric poets no less than love poets. When Propertius thus associates himself with the neoterics at the end of our Book 2, he would only be making explicit an affinity that a likely pun at the beginning of the book would already have implied.¹⁶

Cicero's well-known denigration of *cantores Euphorionis* in *Tusculan Disputations* 3.19.45 (45 BCE) would suggest that these poets owed as much to Euphorion as to Callimachus. Not so long ago, Catullus, Cinna, Gallus, Virgil, and Ovid were the first-century Roman poets who were known or thought to have "made use," as David Ross puts it, of Euphorion's verse.¹⁷ Recently, however, it has been argued that Propertius too belongs among the poets whom Euphorion influenced. Indeed, in a chapter titled "Propertius and Hellenistic Poetry," Hollis stresses the fact that he begins with Euphorion.¹⁸

It is indeed difficult to resist Boucher's argument that, active between the floruit of Gallus and the reign of Tiberius, Propertius must actually have read Euphorion.¹⁹ Quite apart from Propertius' temporal proximity and well-known indebtedness to the Roman author of Chalcidic verse, Suetonius reports in *Tiberius* 70 that Euphorion was one of three Greek poets whom Tiberius held in the highest esteem. Parthenius was another. Not only did the *Princeps* imitate these poets in his own Greek verse, but he had their works placed in public libraries along with their images, prompting scholars to study them and to dedicate the results to Tiberius. Writing in the period between an acknowledged *cantor Euphorionis* and an imperial poetaster who strove to imitate Euphorion, a protégé of Maecenas is unlikely to have had only a vague knowledge of the Greek poet's oeuvre. The special influence of Gallus on Propertius, documented anew by Francis Cairns, would also imply a lively interest in Euphorion on the part of the younger poet.²⁰

This inference is consistent with the traces of Euphorion that have been found or suspected in Propertius. In 1.1.24, Theodore Papanghelis suspects a source in Euphorion, either directly or via Gallus, for the proper name.²¹ In 1.9.5–6, Hollis thinks that "Propertius has the poet of Chalcis [fr. 48 Powell] in mind."²² In 1.20.16, the same writer observes that the Ascanius, though nowhere mentioned in Apollonius or Theocritus,

16. For Propertius' debt to the neoterics, Johnson 2007, 187 (Propertius "more truly loyal to his neoteric fathers" than Horace or Virgil); Knox 2006, 141–43; Sullivan 1976, 121 (Propertius assigned to "the second generation of *poetae novi*"); Ross 1975, 54–57 ("we can properly speak of Propertius as a neoteric poet"), 61–64, 76–78, 80, 117, 121, 123, 167; Tränkle 1960, 22–30. In 2.1 in particular, Ross finds Propertius reaffirming "his acceptance of Alexandrian-neoteric poetics," which Ross (1975, 117) considers a constant throughout Propertius' oeuvre. On the other hand, citing linguistic data such as the absence of diminutives in Books 3 and 4, Tränkle (1960, 29) concludes that "ein Dichter nach Art des Catull und seiner Generation ist er von Anfang an kaum gewesen, und vor allem ist er immer mehr ihr abgerückt."

17. For Gallus, Ross 1975, 40–43; Keefe 1982; Ballester 1989, 121–24; for Catullus, Fordyce 1961, 283 and Tuplin 1981, esp. 127–29 on Euphorion's *Chiliades*; for Cinna, Watson 1982 and Hollis 2007, 19–20; for Virgil, Barigazzi 1985; Hofmann 1985, 469, 474, 476–77, 479; Hollis 1992, 274–75; Dix 1995; Canetta 2008 and 2011; Magnelli 2010, 173–75; Cucchiarelli 2012, 387, 457; Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xvi; for Ovid, Barigazzi 1962; Hollis 1996, 70; Livrea 2002, 36 n. 8. Debts that Lipka (2001, 91–92, 96, 101) alleges are owed to Euphorion by Virgil in *Ecl.* 2.24, 6.29–30, and 8.44 are rejected as a "tissue of Euphorionic speculation" in Mayer 2003, 248. In Canetta 2011, 297 n. 18, there is an up-to-date bibliography on the relation between Euphorion and Latin poetry. To it could be added Courtney 1990, 105–9 and Alfonsi et al. 1965.

18. Hollis 2006, 97.

19. Boucher 1965, 225–26.

20. Cairns 2006.

21. Papanghelis 1987, 38 n. 48.

22. Hollis 2006, 98–99.

does appear in Euphorion fragment 74 Powell.²³ In 2.20.8, where Propertius has allowed the odd construction *lacrimas defluit*, Hollis conjectures that he had his eye on fragment 108 Powell (Euphorion or Callimachus?).²⁴ Hollis also suggests that 2.26A may owe something to Euphorion's *color*—"melancholy but melodious, learned but (at least in Propertius) not oppressively so."²⁵ In 2.34.91–92, whether indebted to Euphorion directly or via a Gallan intermediary, scholars "have long drawn a parallel" with Euphorion fragment 43 Powell.²⁶ Finally, Enrico Livrea has shown that 3.7.21–24 and 39–40 likely derive from Euphorion's *Philoctetes* (frag. 44 Powell).²⁷

The sheer number of these traces of Euphorion in Propertius makes it extremely likely that the elegist knew the Greek poet's *Chiliades* at least by name. Indeed, if Boucher is right, he will even have read it. It is one of only three works by Euphorion that are mentioned in the *Suda*, our principal source for the poet's biography. It might be inferred from this that the *Chiliades* was among Euphorion's best-known works,²⁸ even if it is named as the source of only four surviving fragments. It was a curse poem, in which Euphorion specialized,²⁹ and took its name from its subject, a collection of prophecies fulfilled within a millennium. Whether it comprised five books or only one is disputed.³⁰ As late as the twelfth century, it supplied the title of a major work of Tzetzes, whose knowledge of Euphorion's writings was extensive.³¹

In Propertius 2.1.12, a line alluding to Callimachus and to the Roman *cantores Euphorionis*, only Euphorion himself would seem to be missing. Thus, it would be natural to assume that the modifier *mille*, located between an allusion to the *Aetia* and a pun on *poeta novus*, is likely a veiled allusion to the *Chiliades* of Euphorion. Indeed, *mille* is no less exact an equivalent of Greek *χιλιάς* than *causae* is of *αἴτια*. Zetzel's description of the Coan silks in 2.1.5–6 as a "riddling allusion"³² would be apt here, where a subtle intimation of Euphorion's poem would be altogether consistent with the allusive nature of the catalogue to which it belongs, "one of Propertius' most ingenious passages."³³

Further, if a pun is to be found in *longas condimus Iliadas*, Pamela Bleisch has proposed *per litteras* another play on the same words. In Propertius' catalogue of genres, only the *Iliad* is identified explicitly by name. Also, but for the presence or absence of an initial consonant, *Iliadas* and *Chiliadas* are identical phonetically. Dr. Bleisch suggests that, in naming names with *Iliadas*, Propertius could be confirming with a

23. Hollis 2006, 101.

24. Hollis 1997.

25. Hollis 2006, 99–101.

26. Hollis 2006, 97–98.

27. Livrea 2002, 37–39.

28. It is Magnelli's view (2002, 94), however, that the text of the *Suda* is corrupt and its list of Euphorion's works truncated.

29. Hollis 1998, 70; Magnelli 2002, 97–98; Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xx–xxii.

30. See Magnelli 2002, 94 n. 5.

31. For an up-to-date survey of Euphorion's life, works, and reception, see Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xi–xxii and 134 n. 422; also Lightfoot 2009, 191–99, where there is the caveat that "what Euphorion *represents* for the Roman poets is not necessarily the same thing as what he *was*" (p. 198; see also Clausen 1982, 186–87).

32. Zetzel 1983, 92. For the same view, Miller 1986, 155; Wyke 1989, 137 ("Cynthia [rather, an unnamed *puella*] is decked in the poetic discourse of Philetas"); Colaizzi 1993, 132–33 ("in her Coan dress, Cynthia is a walking book"); Hollis 2006, 105 (Philetas "plays a part" in 2.1.5–6); Heyworth 2007, 104. In the passage as a whole, Tarrant (2006, 57 n. 57) (sic) finds "coded" references to "Philetan elegy; encomium; lyric; aetiological poetry." Contra, Butrica 1996, 109 n. 46.

33. Hollis 2006, 105.

pun his allusion to the unnamed *Chiliades* in the preceding couplet. She adds that the epithet *longas* suits a poem named *Thousands* no less than an epic running to thousands of lines.³⁴

The juxtaposition of Callimachus and Euphorion in *causas mille* would also exemplify a general tendency for these two poets to be paired. This is evident not only in verse but in citations from their works as well. As an instance of the former, Benjamin Acosta-Hughes and Christophe Cusset point to the sixth *Eclogue* of Virgil.³⁵ In the realm of ancient scholarship, the same editors observe that, when Callimachus is cited, Euphorion tends to be adduced as well. They give five examples of this. Therefore, for a pentameter alluding to Callimachus and Euphorion in combination, a good number of parallels exist. Indeed, in the opinion of Acosta-Hughes and Cusset, “cette association, due aux savants de l’Antiquité, nous offre un témoignage de valeur sur la façon dont Euphorion et Callimaque étaient lus (comme chez Virgile).”

In combination with a pun on *poeta novus*, an allusion to Euphorion’s *Chiliades* would be of a piece with a passage in which “coded,” “ridding” allusions to Hellenistic poetry are prominent, and plays on words are thought to be. In 2.1.12, Propertius has arguably achieved the technical tour de force of alluding in a single pentameter both to the Roman neoterics and to their two principal Hellenistic exemplars. In this single line, he would represent himself as a neoteric poet wearing the mantle of a *cantor Euphorionis* no less than of a Roman Callimachus.³⁶ In view of the almost complete loss of Euphorion’s verse, the case advanced here is necessarily circumstantial. Nevertheless, the circumstances supporting it are many and, as such, worth considering. A pun in *poeta novus* would also serve to support the view that *poetae novi* was in fact an established term for denoting neoteric poets.³⁷

Even if *mille* has nothing to do with Euphorion and rather conveys only its usual, straightforward meaning, Propertius 2.1.12 will yet assert the poet’s neoteric credentials, albeit in a different way. Among poets professing Callimachean ideals, the number 1,000 has decidedly negative associations, thousands of lines serving as a symptom of unenlightened verse both for the master himself in fragment 1.4 Pf. and for his adherent Catullus in 95.3. Viewed in this context, *causas mille* acquires a

34. In Magnelli’s opinion (2002, 97–98), the five books assigned to the *Chiliades* in the *Suda* are an “estensione sorprendente” for a collection of curses; so he is led to speculate that Euphorion conceived of the poem as his *opus maximum* (Magnelli’s term) in the realm of curse poems. If so, that too would justify *longas*. It would at least establish the *Chiliades* as its author’s masterpiece and, as such, suited to stand beside the *Aetia* of Callimachus, as *mille* does beside *causas* in Prop. 2.1.12. “Ma ovviamente questa rimane un’ipotesi!” (Magnelli 2002, 98). An association between the *Iliad* and the *Chiliads* (the vocalic quantities in both names are identical) could lie behind Athenaeus’ labeling Euphorion an ἑπτοκοῖός (Ath. 4.80, 4.82, 6.84).

35. Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xviii.

36. This comes close to Verg. *Ecl.* 10.50–51, where another *poeta novus* is portrayed as indebted equally to Euphorion and to Theocritus. See Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xiii–xiv. Pace Ross 1975, 44 n. 3, the words of Diomedes in Keil, *Gramm. Lat.* 1.484.22 state that Propertius, Gallus, and Tibullus imitated Callimachus and Euphorion. No other Greek models are named. The later misperception of Euphorion as *elegiarum scriptor* is likely to reflect his ubiquity in Roman elegy (otherwise Cucchiarelli 2012, 503, where the mistake is attributed to Euphorion’s influence on Gallus alone). See Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012, xv, and the citations in Barigazzi 1985, 421.

37. It is useless to speculate whether double entendre has anything to do with the fact that Prop. 2.1.12 is the only instance of *poeta + novus* in verse, convenient though this combination is at the end of a pentameter. On the other hand, *causas mille* is quite common both in verse (*Ov. Rem. am.* 572; *Tr.* 4.7.23, 25; Phaedrus *Appendix Perottina* 15.20) and in prose (Petron. 10.5.3; Plin. *HN* 2.174.2). This might suggest that Propertius has transformed common parlance into an esoteric allusion to poems by Callimachus and Euphorion—a double entendre in itself.

tinge of irony in asserting that a thousand αἴτια are a proud boast, even as thousands of lines are quite the opposite.³⁸

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