

THE 'NACHLEBEN' OF THE *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS*

The above topic is briefly discussed e. g. by P. T. Eden in his commentary (Cambridge 1984) 17–19. Naturally he lists Cassius Dio and Ausonius, but rightly or wrongly dismisses claims of influence on Juvenal and on Julian's *Caesares*¹. Oddly, he does not mention Petronius, who in my view had certainly read the work². There was one other notable contemporary reader. All editors note the similarity between the death-bed words of Claudius (4.3 *uae me, puto, concacavi me*) and those of Vespasian (Suet. Vesp. 23.4 *uae, puto, deus fio*), a similarity which would be still greater if dittography caused the addition of *me* in Seneca or haplography its omission in Suetonius. However, apparently only J. Gil in his edition (Madrid 1971) is willing to assert that Vespasian, with typical self-deprecating humour, was explicitly basing his joke on the *Apocolocyntosis*³. The similarity in diction and setting surely place the recall beyond doubt.

Three other writers need to be considered. First is Calpurnius Siculus 4.137 ff.:

*di, precor, hunc iuuenem, quem uos (neque fallor) ab ipso
aethere misistis, post longa reducite uitae
tempora, uel potius mortale resoluite pensum
et date perpetuo caelestia fila metallo.*

Compare this with Seneca 4.1 (the spinning of the Parcae):

*mutatur uilis pretioso lana metallo, 8
aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo . . .
plus solito neuere manus humanae fata 19
laudatum transcendit opus. 'ne demite, Parcae,'
Phoebus ait, 'uinat mortalis tempora uitae'.*

Be it added that this resemblance has no bearing on the controversial dating of Calpurnius; a topic of imperial panegyric like this could be applied to any emperor,

1) For the latter however see J. C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore 1993) 22–23 and 122–27.

2) See my *Companion to Petronius* (Oxford 2002) 21–22, 33, 76.

3) I say 'apparently' because I have not been able to see Gil's edition and rely on the report in the edition of O. Schönberger (Königshausen 1990) 35.

as my next item will show, and late daters (of whom I am one; REL 65 [1989] 148) can and do argue that Calpurnius has chosen to set his poems in Neronian times (e.g. Horsfall, RFIC 125 [1997] 192).

On the same theme there are also striking parallels in Sidonius Apollinaris. First is the Panegyric on Maiorianus, carm. 5:

iam tunc imperium praesentis principis aurea 312
uoluebant bona fata manu ...
... uerbisque deae famulante metallo
aurea concordēs traxerunt fila sorores.

Next the Panegyric to Avitus, carm. 7:

felix tempus neuere sorores ... 600
fulua uolubilibus duxerunt saecula pensis. 602

These two poems are both addressed to emperors. One will notice that two of the lines quoted are ‘Golden’, ending with the word-pattern $- \acute{ } - / \acute{ } \sim \sim / \acute{ } -$ or $- \acute{ } - / \acute{ } \sim \sim / \sim -$. In Seneca’s poem as far as line 21, after which the Apolline praise of Nero is not suitable for imitation by Sidonius, there are three line-ends on this frame, two Golden lines, and three near-Golden; I will adduce just 9 (quoted above) and 13 *mollia contorto descendunt saecula filo*. I suggest that Seneca framed his lines so as a tribute to the song of the Parcae in Catullus 64; Catullus’ formal style is marked by these very features. While I cannot prove imitation by Sidonius beyond all doubt, his lines set up a strong Senecan resonance in my mind.

One other passage invites comment. In 2.1–2 Seneca writes an elaborate hexameter description of nightfall in early winter, and follows it in prose with *puto magis intellegi si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III Idus Octobris, horam non possum certam tibi dicere*. As editors duly note, this is imitated by Ausonius, Ep. 17 Green (Oxford 1991), who after a similar description of nightfall in mid-December continues *nescis, puto, quid uelim tot uersibus dicere. medius fidius neque ipse bene intellego; tamen suspicor. iam prima nox erat ante diem XIX Kal. Ian.* Green ad loc. (p. 633), Relihan 209 and n. 51, and C. F. Russo in his commentary on the *Apocolocyntosis* (Florence 1985) mention a similar passage in Fulgentius, Mit. pr. 1.23–25 (p. 13 Helm), where we have again an elaborate description of nightfall followed by *et, ut in uerba paucissima conferam, nox erat*. Relihan states that Fulgentius is imitating Seneca; I think rather that he is imitating Ausonius. The similarities are:

(1) Ausonius uses the topos of the hot sun hissing as it sinks in the Atlantic; Fulgentius speaks of the sun as heating the sea (*gelidumque rotis tepfecerat orbem ... quasque soror linquit, frater pede temperat undas*).

(2) After first speaking of the horses of the moon’s chariot, Fulgentius then refers to it as drawn by bulls. Ausonius had represented it drawn by heifers here and in Ep. 15.3; other writers mention bullocks⁴. Apparently no literary source for this conception, which clearly draws on the symbol of the moon’s ‘horns’, is earlier than

4) Further information about this may be found in W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie* s. v. Mondgöttin 3137; Daremberg / Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités* s. v. Luna 1387a n. 9; *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* s. v. Selene p. 711 nos. 58–66.

the second century AD. My colleague Dr B. G. Hays points to the reminiscence of Ausonius, Cupido Cruciatu 42 (*cum face et astrigero diademate Luna bicornis*) in the poem of Fulgentius 8 (*astrigeroque nitens diademate Luna bicornis*; the v.l. *bicorni* is wrongly adopted by Helm), and remarks that above on the very same page of Helm's text Fulgentius refers to Ausonius by name.

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