

A NOTE ON *ILLE EGO QVI QVONDAM . . .*

Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
carmen, et egressus silvis vicina coegi
ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis
arma virumque cano . . .

I AGREE with R. G. Austin, who in his recent paper (*CQ* N.S. xviii (1968), 107 ff.) showed that Virgil did not write this proem to the *Aeneid*, and suggested (p. 115) that it was produced in the first half of the first century, perhaps prompted by the problem mentioned by Servius on *A.* 1. 1: 'multi varie disserunt cur ab armis Vergilius coeperit.' I wish here to comment briefly on the content of the lines.¹

(a) *gracili*

qui . . . carmen refers to the writing of the *Eclogues*. As Austin points out (p. 112), Virgil has *gracilis* only in *E.* 10. 70 ff., the conclusion of the whole of the *Eclogues*:

Haec sat erit, divae, vestrum cecinisse poetam,
dum sedet et gracili fiscellam textit hibisco,
Pierides . . .

Perhaps the author of *ille ego . . .* ('X') used *gracilis* because it occurs here, giving it both its physical meaning and the literary significance it had for Servius, who comments ad loc.: 'GRACILI . . . HIBISCO . . . allegoricos autem significat se composuisse hunc libellum tenuissimo stilo.' This interpretation may well have existed in some form in X's time. *gracile* in Schol. Veron. *E.* 6. 5 'DEDUCTUM CARMEN tenue gracile subtile, quale Bucolicis convenit'² may also be influenced by *E.* 10. 71.

The possibility that X was influenced by *E.* 10. 71 is strengthened by the fact that he did not write 'qui quondam *tenui* meditatus avena / carmen', although *E.* 6. 8 'agrestem tenui meditabor arundine musam' and *E.* 1. 1 f. 'Tityre, tu . . . / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena' might very easily have prompted this way of referring to the *Eclogues*.³ In 6. 8 Virgil refers to his writing of them, and 1. 2 might be given the same interpretation, if Tityrus was thought to represent the figure of Virgil himself (see below). It is unlikely that X would have written *gracili* and not *tenui* if it had not been for *E.* 10. 71; we shall come to his preference for *modulatus* rather than *meditatus* later.

While it cannot be proved that X derived *gracili* from *E.* 10. 71, it is worth observing in support of this suggestion that the word is not a very common stylistic term. *T.L.L.* vi. 2132 gives examples of its use as a term describing poetry (27-39), and as one of rhetoric (39-50); the two categories cannot be rigidly separated. The only example of its use in poetry which can be confidently claimed as earlier than *ille ego . . .* is Prop. 2. 13. 3 '(Amor) me tam

¹ I must thank Professor R. G. Austin and Professor G. W. Williams for their interest and their comments.

² It has dropped out of the corresponding notes in Servius and the Scholia Bernensia.

³ No doubt it is owing to the influence of *E.* 1. 2 and 6. 8 that in the text of *ille ego . . .* in the *Vita Donati* (42) G reads *tenui* and E *meditatus*.

graciles vetuit contemnere Musas'.¹ I assume that X did not draw on the similar line *Culex* 1 'Iusimus, Octavi, gracili modulante Thalia', though a defence of this view is best left until the end of the article. Servius' words on *E.* 10. 71, 'tenuissimo stilo', doubtless refer to the first of the three styles *λαχνόν, μέσον, and ἀδρόν*, cf. *Prooem. in Buc.* 'tres enim sunt characteres, humilis, medius, grandiloquus: nam in Aeneide grandiloquum habet, in georgicis medium, in bucolicis humilem pro qualitate negotiorum et personarum'. X may not have intended such a specific meaning, but we may note that before *ille ego* . . . there is only one example of *gracilis* (*gracilitas*) used in this context, in Varro ap. Gell. 6. 14. 6 'exempla . . . M. Varro esse dicit ubertatis Pacuvium, gracilitatis Lucilium, mediocritatis Terentium', if indeed it is certain that Gellius preserves the actual terminology of Varro.² Cf. also Cic. *Brutus* 64 '(Lysias) habet certos sui studiosos, qui non tam habitus corporis opimos quam gracilitates consecretur, quos, valetudo modo bona sit, tenuitas ipsa delectat'. Here *gracilitas*, like *gracilis* in *ille ego* . . ., retains its physical meaning, in a literary context. (Cicero never uses *gracilis*.)

(b) *modulatus avena*

Austin (p. 110) compares *E.* 10. 51 'carmina pastoris Siculi modulabor avena'. This line, which comes from the same *Eclogue* as *gracili fiscellam textit hibisco*, probably influenced X; both it and *qui* . . . *carmen* refer to the writing of bucolic poetry. This suggestion is supported by the fact that, as was noticed before, he did not write '... tenui *meditatus* avena / *carmen*'.³ In *E.* 1. 2 and 6. 8 *meditarius* and *meditabor* govern *musam*, but in *E.* 10. 51 *modulabor* governs *carmina*, just like *carmen* in *ille ego* . . .³

Compare Calpurnius Siculus 4. 62 ff.:

Cor. 'Tityrus hanc [fistulam] habuit, cecinit qui primus in istis
montibus Hyblaea modulabile carmen avena.'

Mel. magna petis, Corydon, si Tityrus esse laboras.

With *Hyblaea* cf. *Siculi* in *E.* 10. 51; Calpurnius clearly recalls this line here. Like X, he draws on the *Eclogues* themselves for language with which to refer to them. He uses 'Tityrus' to stand for Virgil, recalling *E.* 6. 4 f. 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis / pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen', and *E.* 1, in which Tityrus' experiences to a limited extent suggest those of Virgil himself.⁴ The resulting ambiguity was later crystallized by Servius, who (on *E.* 1. 1) identified Tityrus with Virgil: 'hoc loco Tityri sub persona Vergilium debemus accipere; non tamen ubique, sed tantum ubi exigit ratio.' It is interesting that a view found in Servius should have a forerunner already in the time of Nero, and this provides some encouragement for the thesis that X may have been influenced by other views or comments which are found in Servius, but may have been current very much earlier.

¹ Ovid, *Ex P.* 2. 5. 25 f. 'dum tamen in rebus temptamus carmina parvis, / materiae gracili sufficit ingenium' may well be earlier than *ille ego* . . ., but is not quite parallel, as *gracili* here refers to the subject-matter of the poem rather than the poem itself.

² The other terms found before *ille ego* . . . are *extenuatus* (*Ad Her.* 4. 11), *subtilis* (Cic. *De*

Or. 3. 177), *tenuis* (*De Or.* 3. 199, 212, *Orat.* 20) (cf. *extenuatus*), and *humilis* (*Orat.* 75).

³ It may be owing to the influence of *E.* 10. 51 that the Z group of manuscripts of the *Vita Donati* (42) and the manuscript L of Priscian (Keil iii. 191) read *carmina*, not *carmen*.

⁴ Cf. Leo, *Ausg. kl. Schr.* ii. 19.

(c) *egressus silvis*

Austin (p. 110) compares *E.* 4. 3 'si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae'. X may have drawn on this line in particular; compare Calpurnius' recollection of it (4. 76 f.) 'canales / exprime qui dignas cecinerunt consule silvas', though here Calpurnius is not referring to the *Eclogues* as a whole, but contrasting the fourth with the second. But X may have been influenced by other passages, especially *E.* 6. 1 f. 'Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu / nostra neque erubuit silvas habitare Thalia', and 1. 1 f. 'Tityre, tu . . . / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena'. The fact that in the first line of the *Eclogues* (cf. *G.* 4. 566) Tityrus lies under a beech doubtless helped their association with woods. The shepherd Corydon prefers woods to cities in *E.* 2. 60-2 ('nobis placeant ante omnia silvae'), and the *Eclogues* are *par excellence* the poetry of shepherds, cf. *G.* 4. 565 'carmina qui lusi pastorum'. Other passages too might be mentioned.

Woods suggest the writing of the *Eclogues* also in Calpurnius 4. 160 ff.:

tum mihi talis eris, qualis [i.e. Maecenas] qui dulce sonantem
Tityron e silvis dominam deduxit in urbem,
ostenditque deos et 'spreto' dixit 'ovili,
Tityre, rura prius, sed post cantabimus arma.'¹

Cf. *ibid.* 36:

ecce nihil querulum per te, Meliboeae, sonamus;
per te secura saturi recubamus in umbra
et fruimur silvis Amaryllidos.

Here a recollection of *E.* 1. 4 f. 'tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra / formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas' suggests the writing of bucolic poetry. Cf. also *Laus Pisonis* 230:

ipse per Ausonias Aeneia carmina gentes
qui sonat, ingenti qui nomine pulsat Olympum
Maeniumque senem Romano provocat ore,
forsitan illius nemoris latuisset in umbra
quod canit, et sterili tantum cantasset avena
ignotus populis, si Maecenate careret.

In 233 f. the poet refers to the writing of the *Eclogues*, and he may well have associated Tityrus (*recubans sub tegmine fagi* (*E.* 1. 1), *in umbra* (*ibid.* 4)) with Virgil himself.²

(d) *vicina . . . colono*

With *avido colono* Austin (p. 110) compares *G.* 1. 47 f. 'illa seges demum votis respondet avari / agricolae'. X no doubt drew on this passage, impressed by the striking expression *avari*. Servius *auctus* ad loc. has 'AVARI id est quamvis avari'. Perhaps *quamvis avido* was prompted by a comment of this kind; though it makes sense, it is not an easy expression,³ and so it may well have had some such origin.

¹ Cf. Nemesianus, *Ecl.* 2. 82 ff. 'cantamus avena, / . . . , qua dulce locutus / Tityrus e silvis dominam pervenit in urbem'.

² Propertius associates woods with the *Eclogues* in 2. 34. 67 f. 'tu canis umbrosi subter pineta Galaesi / Thyrsin', though the

Galaesus is not mentioned in them and was probably prompted by *G.* 4. 126.

³ Dryden, in his *Dedication of the Aeneis*, says that *quamvis avido* is 'too ambitious an Ornament to be Virgil's'.

The words *coegi ut parerent* forcefully express the idea of the obedience of the soil. X is surely making a genuine, if clumsy, attempt to reproduce the force of *G.* 1. 99 'exercetque frequens tellurem atque imperat arvis'. The two parts of the line are related in sense, and the subjection of the land to the will of the farmer is clearly brought out. Similarly a Roman army (*exercitus*) was expected to obey its general (*imperator*), and doubtless Virgil here uses a military metaphor. Servius ad loc. compares this line with line 47: 'ATQUE IMPERAT ARVIS . . . et hoc est, quod ait supra "votis respondet avari agricolae".' A similar comment may have led X also to associate the two lines.

In this article I have suggested that much in *ille ego* . . . was drawn from Virgil himself. If this is so, it may help in the problem formulated by Fraenkel (*Kleine Beiträge*, ii. 195): 'Unfortunately we cannot say whether the first line of the *Culex* "Iusimus, Octavi, gracili modulante Thalia" depends on the first line of the faked proem to the *Aeneid* "ille . . . carmen", or whether this proem draws on the *Culex*.' If X was drawing on Virgil himself, the possibility that he depended on *Culex* 1 can be rejected. I would urge in support of my view that it helps explain not only *qui quondam* . . . *carmen*, but also *et* . . . *colono*. And it seems unlikely that X, in wishing to refer to the *Eclogues*, should draw on another poem, rather than the *Eclogues* themselves, even if the *Culex* was in existence and regarded by him as a work of Virgil. Moreover *qui* . . . *carmen* is closer than *Culex* 1 to *E.* 10. 51 'carmina pastoris Siculi modulabor avena'. In *E.* 10. 51 and *qui* . . . *carmen* the verb is in the first person, the subject in each case being the poet himself, Gallus or Virgil, but in *Culex* 1 the verb goes with the Muse, in the third person. In *E.* 10. 51 and *qui* . . . *carmen* the verb governs *carmina/carmen*, whereas in *Culex* 1 it has no object. And *E.* 10. 51 and *qui* . . . *carmen*, but not *Culex* 1, contain *avena*. The hypothesis that in imitating *Culex* 1 X happened to produce an imitation which was closer to *E.* 10. 51 than to *Culex* 1 itself is artificial.

On the other hand it seems quite likely that the author of the *Culex* was drawing on *ille ego*. . . . *Modulor* takes an object much more commonly than not (see *T.L.L.* s.v.); the author of the *Culex* may have been led to use the unusual construction in his efforts to fit what lay before him into his own composition. And it is possible that he was influenced by the *Eclogues* directly, his *Thalia* being prompted by *E.* 6. 2.

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