

CANTORES EUPHORIONIS AGAIN

O poetam egregium! quamquam ab his cantoribus Euphorionis contemnitur.

(Cic. *Tusc.* 3.45)

Why *cantoribus*? The reference of the phrase *cantores Euphorionis* has been much discussed, by the author of this note among others.¹ But what is the *sense* of *cantores*? The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Lewis and Short, and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* variously classify *Tusc.* 3.45 as an instance of *cantor* in the special sense of 'supporter', 'imitator', or 'eulogist'.² Recently, however, W. Allen suggested that this may be to read too much into the word: '... *cantor* could well have the standard meaning of personal and private recitation of poetry. Since sometime *cantare* and *legere* have a semantic identity, however, it may be possible that the word *cantores* *Euphorionis* has a meaning no more momentous than that of *lector*'.³ Allen is right to pose the question and force us to think about *cantores*. However, I believe that his solution is far too anodyne.

In the paper referred to in note 1, I argued that *cantores Euphorionis* is, by virtue of the use of the word *cantor*, intended to be pejorative. I would now wish to discard one of the arguments presented there and (more importantly) offer some new points about *cantor*.

First, the palinode. The fact that the unpalatable Hermogenes and Tigellius are called *cantores* by Horace⁴ does not necessarily reflect on the word *cantor*, which is merely their professional title. Of course, there may have been prejudice against the professional class of *cantores* (see below), but merely to say that (a) Horace did not like Tigellius and Hermogenes, (b) he calls them *cantores*, therefore (c) *cantor* is pejorative was wrong.

What then of *cantores Euphorionis*? There are two lines of enquiry to follow: (i) the strict sense of *cantor* and (ii) other metaphorical uses of *cantor* by Cicero.

(i) As remarked above, *cantor* can have the strict sense of a professional title. A *cantor* is someone who gives public vocal performances.⁵ That, of course, is not straightforwardly the sense in *Tusc.* 3.45 (Cicero is not simply talking about public performers of Euphorion). But, though this does not seem to have been remarked before, it is a sense which is surely relevant to the passage. For the context concerns theatrical performances. The passages of Ennius that provoke Cicero's outburst against the *cantores Euphorionis* are from a *canticum* of the *Andromacha*. That is, they would have been performed to some sort of musical accompaniment⁶ and the performer would have been a *cantor*—or, one might

¹ See my 'Cantores Euphorionis' in *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar 1976* (= *ARCA* ii, ed. and publ. by F. Cairns) (Liverpool, 1977), 1 ff.

² *TLL*: 'de poetarum asseclis vel imitatoribus; Lewis and Short: 'extoller, eulogist'; *OLD*: 'one who sings the praises of'. For the interpretation 'imitator' cf. also recently R. O. A. M. Lyne, *CQ* N. S. 28 (1978), 174 n. 25.

³ *TAPA* 103 (1972), 14.

⁴ *Sat.* 1.3.129; 1.2.3.

⁵ e.g. Cic. *Sest.* 118 (on which see below); Hor. *AP* 155; Sen. *Epist.* 84.10; Suet. *Calig.* 54; Arnob. *Nat.* 2.38; Prud. *contra Symm.* 2.647; Paul. *Fest.* 34; Diomed. *GL* 1.488,1; Reisch, *RE* iii. 1499.

⁶ Cf. H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 29.

say, a *cantor Ennii*. I suggest therefore that one thing to bear in mind in explaining Cicero's choice of *cantor* as a description for the people he is attacking is an implicit formal contrast between *cantores Euphorionis* and *cantores Ennii*.

(ii) Two passages are in question, *De Oratore* 1.236 and *Pro Sestio* 118. In the first Cicero writes: 'ita est tibi iuris consultus ipse per se nihil nisi leguleius quidam cautus et acutus, praeco actionum, cantor formularum, auceps syllabarum.' The point is that the juriconsult is someone who is familiar with forms but has no grasp of substance or principles. *Cantor* is chosen to suggest someone who merely performs without necessarily thinking about (let alone composing) what he is saying—in short, a *mindless* chanter. In the other passage Cicero describes an occasion on which Clodius was discountenanced by a line from the *togata Simulans*: 'sedebat exanimatus et is qui antea cantorum convicio contiones celebrare suas solebat cantorum ipsorum vocibus eiciebatur.' The second group of *cantores* are those on stage; the first might be literally *cantores* (the sort of people one might expect to support Clodius, cf. just above, 'cui tum petenti aedilitatem' *ne histriones quidem* coram sedenti pepercerunt'); alternatively, and preferably, the term is used metaphorically in a manner not dissimilar to that in *De Oratore* 1.236 and the reference may be either to the whole mob shouting mindlessly in support of their hero or to the mob's cheerleaders equally mindlessly directing their performance.⁷

There is another point to be made, perhaps not irrelevant to the use of *cantor* as a term of abuse. Men with names like Tigellius and Hermogenes were not out of the upper crust of late republican society. In *De Oratore* 1.236 the metaphorical *cantor* appears alongside a metaphorical *praeco*, another class of individual not to be highly regarded by the republican *nobilis*. And if *histriones* and *cantores* could be expected to be supporters of Clodius (see above), then, in view of the attitude that Cicero takes about the type of people who made up Clodius' mob,⁸ for him at least *cantores* were out of the dregs of society. The truth is that *cantores* were of slave/freedman class and (when suitable) could be viewed with total distaste.

We can now return to *Tusc.* 3.45. First of all, it is clear that by using the word *cantor* Cicero has indicated considerable hostility towards the opponents of Ennius. For, granted that we are not dealing with literal *cantores Euphorionis*, both the parallel metaphorical uses and consideration of the status of real *cantores* show that the phrase *cantores Euphorionis* must be intended to be pejorative. All that remains to be decided is what exactly the *cantores Euphorionis* were mindlessly mouthing. There are two possibilities: (i) Euphorion's name, or eulogistic slogans about him; (ii) Euphorion's poetry. If (i) were correct, there would be a plain contrast between *cantoribus* and *contemnitur*, that is between the praise of Euphorion and the condemnation of Ennius. No doubt it is the straightforwardness of such a contrast that has tempted lexicographers to recognize a special meaning of 'eulogist' or the like for *cantor*. It might also seem, at first sight, that the example of *Pro Sestio* 118 favours interpretation (i) in that the mob (or their leaders) could have been chanting 'Clodius' or adulatory slogans about their hero. However, they could equally well have been chanting other slogans, directed not so much at praising Clodius as damning his enemies (the

⁷ For the metaphorical interpretation cf. C. O. Brink on *Ars Poetica* 155.

⁸ Cf. e.g. *Sest.* 75–82 *passim*.

famous scene in February 56, reported in Cic. *Ad Q. Frat.* 2.3.2, naturally comes to mind, a scene that, as it happens, was in the immediate past at the time of Sestius' trial). In that case, the slogans would have been, ultimately, dictated by Clodius himself, which is, after all, what 'cantorum convicio contiones celebrare suas solebat' ought to imply; the *cantores* are under Clodius' direction, and the point of Cicero's jibe is that suddenly Clodius can no longer control them and make them say what he wants.

It seems therefore that in *Pro Sestio* 118, as in the other metaphorical example (*De Oratore* 1.236), the dominant idea in *cantor* is that of a performer of something dictated or otherwise laid down by someone else. Hence, when *cantor* is used metaphorically in relation to a poet, it seems most natural to suppose that the *cantor* is performing the poet's works. This conclusion fits in neatly (as the other interpretation would not) with the suggestion advanced above that there is an implicit contrast between *cantor Ennii* (i.e. performer of Ennius) and *cantor Euphorionis*. Although *cantor* might in any case have seemed an appropriate way of expressing what Cicero wanted to say about the despisers of Ennius, I suggest that it was the theatrical context of *Tusc.* 3.45 that made it seem particularly fitting—and perhaps even put it into Cicero's mind in the first place.

It emerges therefore, firstly, that of the interpretations offered in the lexica only *TLL's asseclae* (*disreputable* supporters) comes anywhere near the mark, while failing to define in what the support consisted, and, secondly, that the ideas of 'eulogist' and 'imitator' often wielded to solve this latter problem are not required. No doubt as a matter of fact the people Cicero has in mind did eulogize Euphorion and did imitate his poetry, but there is no need to suppose that Cicero was in any way concerned to convey these points. The sense of 'performer' is dominant, and to that extent Allen was right. But he was certainly wrong to hold that no more overtones are present than would have attached to *lector*. Cicero intended to be insulting, and this fact distinguishes *Tusc.* 3.45 from the references to 'new poets' in *Ad Att.* 7.2.1 and *Orator* 161.⁹

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⁹ Thus 'Cantores Euphorionis' (cit. n. 1), pp. 1–4. This is of course not to say that as a term of literary criticism *νεώτερος* or *novus* is not depreciatory, only that it is not personally insulting. Thanks are due to Robin

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