

PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, OVID, AND PROPERTIUS

In the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth thematic resemblances to the Roman elegists in Paulus Silentarius (and other late epigrammatists) were explained as the result of the poets' reliance on a common Hellenistic source — usually this was identified as the so-called 'subjective Alexandrian love elegy'¹ — and this represented a departure from the views of earlier scholars such as Hertzberg and Postgate, who had maintained that Paulus knew and imitated the elegists.² In recent years the pendulum has swung back (partly, perhaps, because the whole notion of a 'subjective Alexandrian love elegy' has been abandoned), and the prevailing opinion seems to be that the Roman elegists were known to Paulus. This is the view of, for instance, Giovanni Viansino in his edition of Paulus, of Elmar Schulz-Vanheyden in his important work on Propertius' relationship to Greek epigram, and of Hermann Beckby in his edition of the Greek Anthology.³ Recently, too, Gordon Williams has put forward a very strong case for earlier epigrammatists like Antipater and Crinagoras imitating the Augustan poets.⁴ One would certainly be at odds with modern orthodoxy in postulating lost antecedents for shared themes or motifs in Paulus and the Roman elegists, and yet it has to be said that even if Paulus did read the Roman poets he and his contemporaries also knew and deliberately imitated a great deal of earlier Greek literature which is now lost to us. Their aim, as Averil Cameron has reminded us, was *παλαιγενέεσσιν ἐρίξεν*.⁵ Each case of supposed borrowing from a Roman elegist must, I would maintain, be examined on its individual merits without prejudice. In this paper I wish to consider two such instances, important ones because they are the two poems usually cited by the 'direct influence' supporters as conclusive evidence that Paulus imitated both Ovid and Propertius.

1. A. P. 5.248 (VIANSINO, *EP.* 53) AND OVID, *AMORES* 1.7

In this instance the 'direct influence' supporters adduce two arguments for their

* I wish to thank Professor W. J. Slater for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ See, e.g., F. Mallet, *Quaestiones Propertianae* (Diss. Göttingen, 1882), pp. 47 ff.; T. Gollnisch, *Quaestiones Elegiacae* (Vratislava, 1905), pp. 50 ff.; V. Hoelzer, *De Poesi Amatoria e Comicis Atticis exculpta ab Elegiacis imitatione expressa* (Marburg, 1899), *passim*. For further bibliography and a summary of the dispute, see K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (repr. Darmstadt, 1964), p. 23 n. 1, and Archibald A. Day, *The Origins of the Latin Love Elegy* (Oxford, 1938), pp. 50 ff.

² G. A. B. Hertzberg, *Sex. Aureli Propertii Elegiarum Libri Quattuor* (Halle, 1843–5), 1. 229–30; J. P. Postgate, *Propertius: Select Elegies* (London, 1881),

cxlvi.

³ G. Viansino, *Paolo Silenziario: Epigrammi* (Turin, 1963), pp. xii ff.; E. Schulz-Vanheyden, *Properz und das griechische Epigramm* (Diss. Münster, 1969), pp. 156 ff. (Schulz-Vanheyden is supported by E. J. Kenney in his review in *CR* 86 (1972), 111); H. Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca*, 1 (Munich, 1957), p. 66. See also R. Keydell, *Gnomon* 11 (1935), 605.

⁴ *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1978), pp. 124 ff.

⁵ Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), p. 26. On the broader question of the general absorption of Hellenistic literature (especially rhetoric) by the Byzantines, see Romilly J. H. Jenkins, 'The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), 39–52.

case.⁶ First, Paulus calls the battered girl *δέσποινα* and this seems to be a translation of the Latin *domina*. Secondly, the contrite Paulus, like the contrite Ovid, apostrophizes his hands (Paulus, 1 ff; Ovid, 27 f.). The latter argument, according to Viansino, 'vale a stabilire con certezza la dipendenza di Paolo da Ovidio.'⁷

At first glance these arguments may seem convincing, but they will not stand close scrutiny. Viansino himself has to admit that this example of *δέσποινα* in an erotic sense is not unique since such a usage is also found in Achilles Tatius 2.6 ('χαῖρε', ἔφην, 'δέσποινα' . ἡ μειδιάσασα καὶ ἐμφανίσασα διὰ τὸν γέλωτος ὅτι συνήκε πῶς εἶπον τὸ 'χαῖρε, δέσποινα'). One may add the similar use of *ἄνασσα* in the Anthology (A. P. 5.26.2 [Anon]) and the expressions *λάτρης*, *πάνδουλος*, and *ἐλευθερία* in an amatory context in an epigram of Rufinus (A. P. 5.22 = Page VIII). Later, Aristaeus uses the verb *δεσπόζειν* of a woman (Ep. 2.2). True, *domina* in this sense and the whole notion of the *servitium amoris* is far more common in Latin, but it is by no means rare in Greek literature,⁸ so the argument from *δέσποινα* is not a particularly strong one. Nor is the other argument conclusive, because, as I have suggested elsewhere,⁹ the apostrophizing of parts of the body is so common in Greek epigram that it is quite possible for Paulus and Ovid to have adopted the idea of addressing the hands (hand in Paulus' case) independently. Indeed addressing the hands goes back to earlier Greek literature and is frequently found in Euripides (cf., e.g., *Medea* 496, 1071, 1244; *Alcest.* 837, *Heracles* 268, etc.).¹⁰ It is a tragic gesture, and this, as we shall see, is significant.

There is also an important piece of evidence in favour of the 'common source' theory that seems to have been forgotten in this dispute. Philostratus, *Epistle* 61 is a letter to a girl who has had her hair cut off. The theme of the letter is quite clearly drawn from Menander's *Periceiomene*, which Philostratus also used in composing *Epistle* 16 (in which he refers to the play by name).¹¹ There are striking resemblances to Ovid's poem in the opening lines: Τίς σε, ὦ καλή, περιέκειρεν; ὡς ἀνόητος καὶ βάρβαρος ὁ μὴ φεισάμενος τῶν Ἀφροδίτης δώρων· οὐδὲ γὰρ γῆ κομῶσα ἦδ' οὐτ' ἔαμα ὡς γυνὴ κατὰκομος· φεῦ ἀναιδοῦς παλάμης· ὄντως πάντα τὰ ἐκ πολέμιων πέπονθας. The phrase ὡς ἀνόητος καὶ βάρβαρος recalls Ovid's 'quis mihi non 'demens', quis non 'barbare' dixit' (19), and φεῦ ἀναιδοῦς παλάμης recalls the address to the hands in Ovid (27 f.) and Paulus (1 ff.). One might even see a connection between the triumphal passage in Ovid (35 ff.) and ὄντως πάντα τὰ ἐκ πολέμιων πέπονθας.

It is not likely that Philostratus is borrowing from Ovid. The most reasonable assumption is that Philostratus, Ovid, and Paulus are all indebted to a single antecedent, one which was influential in all three periods concerned. That

⁶ Beckby (1. 682) claims that 'Das Gedicht lehnt sich stofflich an Ovid *am.* 1.3 an'. I assume he means *Am.* 1.7.

⁷ Viansino, p. 98.

⁸ Cf. also A. P. 12.81.5 (Meleager), 12.169.3-4 (Dioscorides) and see Page on Rufinus VIII (A. P. 5.22) 1. In comedy, cf. Menander, fr. 2K. (3 Sandbach) and fr. 568. 1K.

⁹ *Hermes*, 104 (1976), 127.

¹⁰ See further W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch* (Neue philologische Untersuchungen 13, 1: Berlin, 1926),

pp. 287 and 219 ff.

¹¹ That Menander was admired by the erotic epistolographers is also clear from Philostratus, *Ep.* 47, where a female addressee is told that she cannot be Athenian or she would have been acquainted with τὰς παννυχίδας, τὰς ἑορτάς, and τὰ Μενάνδρου δράματα (i.e. Menander is the representative of Athenian drama for Philostratus), and from Alciphron 4. 18 and 19, where the *Periceiomene* is referred to in allusive terms.

antecedent is the *Periceirromene*. It was known to Philostratus, as we have seen, and it must also have been known to Ovid and to Paulus (whose friend Agathias directly refers to it; see below). In a fit of anger the soldier Polemon inflicted violence on his beloved Glycera — he cut off her hair — and regretted his action in the now lost first scene of the play. This scene is the most plausible source for our three authors, a scene of regret in which Polemon accuses himself, refers to his 'barbaric' behaviour and, in tragic — one might say 'Euripidean' — style, addresses his guilty hands. One is tempted, too, to trace back to Menander the military content of Philostratus' epistle and Ovid's poem (the latter having expanded an original reference into a Roman triumphal scene) and the last line of Paulus' poem, *μᾶλλον ἐγὼ τλαίην φάσγανον ἀσπασίως*. All this would suit Polemon's occupation very well.

One final, but compelling, piece of evidence is the fact that Paulus' contemporary and friend Agathias quite clearly used this play in the composition of an epigram: cf. *A. P.* 5. 218. 1-4:

Τὸν σοβαρὸν Πολέμωνα, τὸν ἐν θυμέλῃσι Μενάνδρου
 κείραντα γλυκεροῦς τῆς ἀλόχου πλοκάμους,
 ὀπλότερος Πολέμων μμήσατο, καὶ τὰ 'Ροδάνθης
 βόστρυχα παντόλοις χερσὶν ἐλήισατο,

Agathias refers to the scene explicitly, and uses very appropriate vocabulary to describe it.¹² *σοβαρός* is an adjective used of Polemon in the Play (*Periceir.* 172-3 ὁ σοβαρός ἡμῖν ἀρτίως καὶ πολεμικός/ὁ τὰς γυναῖκας οὐκ ἔων ἔχειν τρίχας) and *γλυκερούς* is obviously a play on the heroine's name. One notices, too, the adjective *πάντολμος* to describe the 'new' Polemon's hands (*παντόλοις χερσὶν* (4)). The adjective occurs only here in Agathias, and in Paulus it occurs only in the expression *ὦ παλάμη πάντολμε* in the poem under discussion. It is possible that Agathias is borrowing from Paulus, but I suspect rather that this adjective also comes from Menander.¹³ It is a high-flown word deriving from tragedy (see *LSJ* s.v.), and in a scene of self-recrimination which is essentially tragic one would expect Menander to use, as he does elsewhere, the language of tragedy.¹⁴

2. *A. P.* 5.275 (VIANSINO, *EP.* 62) AND PROPERTIUS 1.3

These are the poems usually cited to demonstrate that Paulus directly imitated Propertius, for, it is argued, the two poems bear more than a vague similarity to each other. Both poets present a picture of their sleeping girls, both make (or contemplate) amorous advances on them and both are upbraided by them when they awake. Most striking of all is the resemblance in detail between Paulus 1-2 *Δειελῶν χάριεσσα Μενεκρατὶς ἔκχυτος ὕπνῳ/κεῖτο περὶ κροτάφους πῆχυν ἐλξαμένη* and Propertius 7-8 'talīs mihi mollem spirare quietem/Cynthia non certis nixa caput manibus'. Thus older scholars such as Hertzberg (*ad loc.*)

¹² Another epigrammatist who appears to have been familiar with this play is Fronto: cf. *A. P.* 12.233.4.

¹³ Ovid uses the adjective *sacrilegae* of his hands (28), perhaps recalling Glycera's description of Polemon's action as *ἀνόσιον* (*Periceir.* 724). They are also 'caedis scelerumque ministrae', and one suspects that similar language was used by Menander:

cf. Philostratus *Ep.* 16.4-5 *Κλαίει γοῦν καταπεσῶν [= Periceir. 174 κλαίει κατακλινεῖς] καὶ μεταγινώσκει τῷ φόνῳ τῶν τριχῶν.*

¹⁴ On Menander's use of tragic diction, see F. H. Sandbach, 'Menander's Manipulation of Language for Dramatic Purposes', *Ménandre (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique: Fondation Hardt, Geneva, 1970)*, pp. 126 ff.

believed that Paulus imitated Propertius, and some modern scholars, at least, seem to be returning to this view.¹⁵

There is no doubt that the two poems are related, but again one must ask whether this is a case of direct imitation or whether there is a common source for the two poets. Now since it is certain that Paulus imitated a great deal of Alexandrian poetry which is no longer extant while there is no *prima facie* case for his imitating Propertius, the burden of proof really lies with the 'direct influence' supporters, and Schulz-Vanheyden attempts to provide the kind of evidence necessary to tip the balance in their favour. 'Die hellenistische Liebes-epigrammatik', he argues, 'kennt den Typ des erzählenden Epigramms, das über mehrere Handlungsstufen führt, nicht. Ein solches musste aber hier als gemeinsame Vorlage angenommen werden.'¹⁶ But there are epigrams that *do* describe events: one thinks especially of *A. P.* 5.55 (Dioscorides) which is a description of sexual intercourse, from beginning to end; cf. also *A. P.* 5.35, 36, 61, 66, 75 (Rufinus = 11, 12, 22, 24, 29 [Page]); 5.167 (Asclep.); 12.8, 222, 250 (Strato); 12.127 (Meleager); 12.134 (Callim), etc. These, according to Schulz-Vanheyden, are somewhat different. For Dioscorides' poem (*A. P.* 5.55) he makes the claim (which I do not understand) that 'nur ein Punkt des Erlebens geschildert wird', while what we find in Rufinus (he quotes *A. P.* 5.61, 66 and 75) and Strato (he quotes *A. P.* 12.8, 222 and 250) are 'Ansätze zum erzählenden Epigramm'. His conclusion is that 'erst Agathias . . . und Paulus . . . bieten ausgeprägte Beispiele [i.e. of extended descriptions in epigram]'. Anyway, he continues, 'scheint mir auch der Inhalt von *AP* 5.275 dem hellenistischen Epigramm ganz fremd zu sein'.¹⁷

Let us now reconsider the poems. In fact, although the main theme is similar in both — assault, or contemplated assault, on sleeping girls — there are considerable differences between them. Paulus claims to have completed the act while the girl struggled; Propertius has rape in mind (13 ff.) but he 'doesn't dare' (17 f.). Paulus comes in the afternoon (1), Propertius at night (10. 31 f., 38), a significant difference because, with Cynthia's speech, Propertius' poem turns into what one might call an inverted *paraclausithyron*, with Cynthia utilizing the topoi of that genre (indeed, Francis Cairns has classified 1.3 as a *komos*¹⁸). Paulus' girl takes him to task for raping her and intending to go off subsequently to another girl (9 ff.); Cynthia's complaint is that Propertius has come to her place late for their arranged meeting (37–8), and she makes no mention of the assault he had considered upon her (naturally, since she was sleeping).

In fact, the resemblances between the two poems are not so remarkable and come down to lover attempting, or meditating, rape on girl asleep with her arm supporting (or wound around) her head, and being verbally attacked by the girl afterwards (for the rape, or for coming late). It is well known that the Byzantine epigrammatists tended towards longer and more descriptive epigrams, expanding suggestions and themes they found in earlier poets, and if we were to postulate

¹⁵ Viansino, p. 116, Schulz-Vanheyden, pp. 164 ff.

¹⁶ Schulz-Vanheyden, p. 164.

¹⁷ Schulz-Vanheyden, pp. 164–5.

¹⁸ 'Two Unidentified *komoi* of Propertius', *Emerita* 45 (1977), 325–53, especially pp. 328 ff. It must be noted, however, that 1.3 was not completely 'unidentified'. Cf.

Schulz-Vanheyden's comment (166): 'Dazu passt gut dass Properz in V. 39–40 einen Gedanken aus dem Motivbereich des Paraklausithyrons Cynthia in den Mund legt. Damit deutet er an, dass hier gleichsam die Situation des Paraklausithyrons umgekehrt ist.'

a lost Hellenistic epigram which both Paulus and Propertius used as a starting point, it would not have to be anything like as long or as detailed as Paulus'. As we have seen, a short epigram describing an event is not foreign to the anthology, and our hypothetical original need only be the brief description of the action (i.e. rape of sleeping girl) followed by a brief speech of the girl awake.

So we are left with the argument that the content of the poem is foreign to the Anthology. But there are other poems therein on similar themes. Agathias, for instance, describes a scene in which the girl and her 'protectresses' are asleep, and how he managed to reach her and make an assault upon her, though the 'assault' here comprises only kisses (*A. P.* 5.294). This is, of course, a late poem, but we do find rape in a much earlier epigram. *A. P.* 5.199 (Hedylus) is a dedicatory poem by a girl who claims that a surfeit of wine put her to sleep, and she was then assaulted by her lover. But again we are not restricted to epigram as the common source, for rape of the sleeping girl is found in other genres, too. It occurs twice in Nonnus (16. 264 ff., 48. 590 ff.), and in Longus we find a sentimental picture very similar to what we find in Propertius — Daphnis admiring the sleeping Chloe and being afraid to kiss her (1.25). And again what about Menander? One can well imagine such a scene in comedy, specifically in Menander's *Eunuchus*, for in Terence's version the exultant Chaerea gives a description of his assault upon the sleeping girl to his friend Antipho (*Eunuch.* 570 ff.). In the original, Chaerea delivered a monologue on the subject. We know this from Donatus' comments on line 539: 'in proloquio insinuatione personae eius est, cui narraturus est Chaerea, quae a se post scaenam gesta sunt . . . bene inventa persona est, cui narret Chaerea, ne unus diu loquatur, ut apud Menandrum.'

In short, the resemblances between Paulus and Propertius do not provide a conclusive case, and since the main theme of both poems can be paralleled elsewhere in Greek literature, especially in Menander, admired by the Augustan elegists and Byzantine epigrammatists alike, we would in this instance be well advised to leave the question of direct influence entirely open. It may well be that what we have in Paulus is, in the words of Geffcken (quoted, presumably with approval, by Beckby), a 'vergrößerte Nachbildung eines feinen alexandrinischen Musters'.¹⁹

The University of Calgary

J. C. YARDLEY

¹⁹ Beckby, 1. 683. Here, indeed, the 'direct influence' advocates seem to have found less support. See now Michael von Albrecht, *Römische Poesie: Texte und Interpretationen* (Heidelberg, 1977),

pp. 124–5; G. Petersmann, 'Properz 1.3', *Latomus*, 37 (1978), 957 n. 21. Cf. also L. C. Curran, 'Vision and Reality in Propertius 1.3', *YCS* 19 (1966), 199 n. 15.