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ALCESTIS BARCINONENSIS 67: SOME METRICAL PROBLEMS

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The papyrus here gives *perdedit Alpea natum*; Lebek *perdidit Alt<a>ea natum*, Oxonienses *perdidit Althaeae natum*, Marcovich (Mnem.Suppl. 103,1988), *perdidit Alt<ha>ea <g>natum*.

Though he does not in fact do so, Marcovich might have wished to justify his '*gnatum*' by reference to L.Müller, *de re metrica* (Leipzig 1861), 316 'at *gn* succedens efficit priorem' or to C.J.Fordyce on Cat. 36.13 'there is no evidence that a syllable could be left short before initial *gn*. See Housman'. Housman's discussion of the problems of orthography and prosody raised by words in *on-* and *gn-* is magisterial, polemical, elliptical (Class.Pap. 3,1136-46); he does not in fact reach the conclusion attributed to him by Fordyce, for nowhere does he cite a passage of Latin verse in which a naturally short final open vowel is lengthened by a following *gn-* and he shows clearly that at least in Horace's hexameters such a vowel might remain short: 1139-40, citing Serm. 2.5.28 *vivit uter locuples sine gnatis* and tentatively 2.3.199 *dulcem Aulide gnata*, if that is what Hor. wrote. The evidence of ThLL for words in *gn-* cannot be used; the editions on which those articles were based are in general orthographically inconsistent and uninformed. Author-lexica tell an interesting story: outside Hor.; note: CLE 986.11 *vestris ostendere gnateis* and 1076.5 *ereptam sibi gnata*, Aus. Dom.1 (de herediolo), 19 *quamquam difficile est se noscere γνῶθι σεαυτόν* (cf. Housman 1138). Seneca tragicus, for whom we now have an exemplary edition is particularly illuminating cf. at caesura tuto reverse *gnatus*, Phdr. 1165, *loquere gnate*, Oed. 1011, *gradere gnata*, Agam. 979. Contrast Tro. 247 *Priamique natam*, Med. 845 *ite, ite nati*, Thy. 1002, 1005, Med. 1004 where Zwierlein (p. 462) excludes the spelling *gn-'metro repugnante'*. *Gn-* appears therefore never to 'make position' in classical Latin poetry, as correctly printed. The phonological reasons are clear enough (cf. A.Traina, *L'alfabeto e la pronunzia del Latino* 4(Bologna 1984), 60-2), as Sebastiano Timpanaro has observed to me. So much then for Müller, Fordyce and '*gnatum*' at Alc.Bar. 67.

To the *Althaeae* of Oxonienses there is no objection; cf. Mart. Spect. 28 (27).3 *Nemee frondosa leonum*, where *Nemee* will not stand and for similar forms, cf. Virg. G. 4.338, Aen. 5.826, Prop. 2.26A,16, Ov.Met. 5.48, 9.452 D.C.Swanson, *The names in Roman verse* (Madison 1967), reverse index s.v. -ee.

Prof. Lebek does not defend his *Altaea* explicitly; I can see two lines of argument by which he might wish to do so and I have some difficulty about both: (i) cf. Enn. Ann. 139 *Sk et densis aquila pennis*, where the last letter of *aquila* is long; cf. Skutsch, 58. The Virgilian parallels for this lengthening are illusory (cf. Skutsch, l.c., Housman, Class.Pap. 3,1124; Williams on Virg. Aen. 3.464 is inadequate). But *Ignotus* is no discloser of exotic archaisms. (ii) As Prof. Lebek and I both well know, final short *a* is lengthened in the oddest

circumstances in late Latin poetry: cf. CLE 1988.5, Aus. Parentalia 2.6 annua ne tacita munera praetereas, Müller, 322-3, P.Colafrancesco Carletti Rend.Linc. 8.31(1976), 267-8. It would be very easy to swell the list of instances and modern discussions (Müller refers also to Prudentius, Venantius, Corippus). But to justify a lengthening of this kind in Alc.Barc. involves making an implicit statement about Ignotus' date and mastery of metre. It seems elsewhere more appropriate to associate him not with Ausonius, but (cf. Marcovich, 100-1) with Claudian, castigatissimus et quasi castissimus in metro (Birt, ccx). What Ignotus wrote at v.67 is quite clear, but not so, I suspect, just how he spelt it.

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As a matter of fact I kept the short *-a* because *Althaea* is the normal Latin form and the Alcestis Barcinonensis is not free from licenses in the penthemimeres, certainly not in vv. 22 and 35.

Köln

W.D.Lebek

I thank Prof. Lebek for his clarification; when, however, is a license a license? There are 17 cases of hiatus at penthemimeral caesura in Virgil, listed by Veremans, Enc.Virg.s.v. Iato, and a well-read poet such as Anon. Barcin. might insert them to show not his ignorance of the rules, but his knowledge of the traditions of transgression! Productio is essentially different .

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Corrigenda

S. 25, Z. 5 lies "succedens longam efficit"

Z. 8 lies "words in *cn-* and *gn-*"