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IN AND OUT OF THE RUT: CALLIMACHUS FR. 1.25–28 AND ANNICERIS OF
CYRENE

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 110 (1996) 40–42

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πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ' ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἄμαξαι
τὰ κτεῖβειν, ἐτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά
δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν μηδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθου
ἀτρίπτ]ους, εἰ καὶ κτεινοτέρην ἐλάσει.

It is well known that the terms in which Apollo commends originality to the budding poet Callimachus are, paradoxically, traditional. The “untrodden path” is a symbol found as early as Parmenides and Pindar,¹ and the image of poetry as the Muses’ chariot is a familiar motif in Pindar and other poets.² Choerilus of Samos used this imagery to express the difficulty of achieving anything new in poetry:

ᾧ μάκαρ, ὅστις ἔην κείνον χρόνον ἴδρις ἀοιδῆς,
Μουσάων θεράπων, ὅτ' ἀκήρατος ἦν ἔτι λειμών·
νῦν δ' ὅτε πάντα δέδασται, ἔχουσι δὲ πείρατα τέχνη,
ὑστατοὶ ὡς τε δρόμου καταλειπόμεθ', οὐδέ πη ἔστι
πάντηι παπταίνοντα νεοζυγῆς ἄρμα πελάσσει.³

It seems likely enough that Callimachus’ words contain an allusion to this passage.⁴ But there is another possible reference in the phrase ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά / δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν which commentators have not adduced: both the author of the Lucianic *Encomium on Demosthenes* and Aelian relate an anecdote concerning the virtuoso skills in driving which Plato’s friend Anniceris of Cyrene ostentatiously displayed. The relevance of this might be further enhanced if one accepted Chamoux’s suggestion that Anniceris was not merely a fellow-citizen of Cyrene, but one of Callimachus’ ancestors.⁵

¹ Parmenides 28 fr. 1.27 DK; Pindar *Ol.* 6.23 κελεύθῳ ἐν καθαρῷ, *Pae.* 7b.15–20 Sn. Ὀμήρου [. . . τρι]πτόν κατ' ἄμαξιτόν; cf. O. Becker, *Das Bild des Weges . . .* (Berlin, 1937) 68ff., esp. 79–80; W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1960) 109–111; A. Kambylis, *Die Dichterweihe und ihre Symbolik* (Heidelberg, 1965) 157–158.

² Wimmel, op. cit. 107–108, M. Simpson, “The Chariot and the Bow as Metaphors for Poetry in Pindar’s Odes”, *TAPA* 100 (1969) 437–473, esp. 437–449.

³ *SH* 317 = fr. 2 Bernabé.

⁴ Cf. G. Huxley, *GRBS* 10 (1969) 16.

⁵ See the family tree proposed by F. Chamoux *apud* C. Meillier, *Callimaque et son temps . . .* (Lille, 1979) 337, according to which Anniceris would be the great-grandfather of Callimachus; cf. Chamoux, *RÉG* 73 (1960) xxxiii–iv.

The pseudo-Lucianic⁶ passage occurs in *Enc. Dem.* c. 23: the narrator, who is feeling anxious about his ability to do justice to the memory of Demosthenes (cc. 2–3), rejects what he sees as the unhelpful and hackneyed encouragement of his interlocutor Thersagoras, who retorts, unabashed, that “That’s what makes a cure; as with a road, the more familiar it is, the more you can trust it”. The narrator proceeds:

τὴν ἐναντίαν γάρ . . . προὔθεμην, ἥ⁷ φασιν Ἀννίκεριν τὸν Κυρηναῖον φιλοτιμηθῆναι πρὸς Πλάτωνά τε καὶ τοὺς ἐταίρους· τὸν μὲν γε, τὸν Κυρηναῖον,⁸ ἄρματηλασίαν ἐπιδεικνύοντα πολλοὺς περὶ τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν ἐξελαύνειν δρόμους ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἄρματοτροχιᾶς ἅπαντας μηδὲν παραβάντας, ὥσθ’ ἐνὸς δρόμου σημεῖα κατὰ τῆς γῆς ὑπολείπεσθαι· τοῦμὸν δέ γε τὴν ἐναντίαν κεύθει, τὰς ἄρματοτροχιὰς ἀλεεῖν· οὐ μάλα ῥάδιον, οἶμαι,⁹ καινουργεῖν ὁδοὺς τῶν τετριμμένων ἐκτρεπόμενον.

This is clearly an elliptical form of the anecdote: there is no explanation of the role of Plato in the incident, or indication of what view the great man took of Anniceris’ feat. It is noteworthy though that it is seen as having a literary-critical significance; the learned (if sometimes tedious) author of the dialogue is clearly well-versed in the motifs and idioms of Hellenistic literary debates.¹⁰

Some of the missing ingredients are supplied by Aelian in his fuller account of the incident at *Varia historia* 2.27:¹¹

Ἀννίκερις ὁ Κυρηναῖος ἐπὶ τῇ¹² ἵππειᾳ μέγα ἐφρόνει καὶ ἀρμάτων ἐλάσει. καὶ οὖν ποτε καὶ ἐβουλήθη Πλάτωνι ἐπιδείξασθαι τὴν τέχνην. ζεύξας οὖν τὸ ἄρμα περιήλασεν ἐν

⁶ On the authorship of this piece, which is not crucial to my point, I here accept the *communis opinio* as represented by M. D. Macleod, *Lucian*, vol. viii [Loeb Classical Library] (London and Cambridge, Mass. 1967) 237.

⁷ Macleod prints ἦ, but surely the adversative ἥ is needed after τὴν ἐναντίαν.

⁸ Macleod, both in his Loeb edition and in his Oxford Classical Text, vol. iii (1980) 272, has conjectured τὸν μὲν γε τὴν Κυρηναίων ἄρματηλασίαν ἐπιδεικνύοντα, which he translates “he exhibited Cyrenean skill in chariot-driving”. This would surely require the article (τῶν Κυρηναίων), and in any case, the anecdote, in both of its versions, turns on Anniceris’ virtuosity and exhibitionism being a personal not a national trait. It is easier to see the transmitted phrase τὸν Κυρηναῖον as appositional to τὸν μὲν and to punctuate accordingly.

⁹ Macleod prints ἀλεεῖν, οὐ μάλα ῥάδιον (ὄν), οἶμαι, καινουργεῖν κτλ.; one might also consider ἀλεεῖν – οὐ μάλα ῥάδιον – (καὶ) καινουργεῖν . . . But the asyndeton presented by the *paradosis* is tolerable, given that this clause is emphatically restating the preceding one; cf., in this same work, § 9 ταῦτα ἐὰν ἐν ἀσαφεί κείμενα. περὶ στενὸν δὴ μοι κομιδῆ τὸ ἐγκώμιον . . . or the last sentence of § 17, where the transmitted asyndeton has been obscured by Lehmann’s supplement (καὶ), accepted by Macleod. For the frequency of asyndeton in this dialogue, cf. W. Schmid, *Atticismus* (1887) i 420.

¹⁰ Cf. his passing reference to the painting of Homer as Oceanus in c. 2 (which I intend to discuss elsewhere), and his use of the phrase τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ κάλλους ἄχραντὸν τε καὶ καθαρὰν ἰδέαν (c. 13), recalling Callimachus, *h.* 2.111 καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράντος in the context of an allusion to the “two-Aphrodites” motif, best known to us from Cercidas fr. 2 Livrea.

¹¹ I am indebted for discussion of this passage to Mr N. G. Wilson, who is preparing an edition and translation of the *VH* for the Loeb series.

¹² Koraes, followed by Dilts (Teubner-Edition, 1974, p. 30) deleted τῇ; I do not see why.

Ἀκαδημία δρόμους παμπόλλους, οὕτως ἀκριβῶς φυλάττων τοῦ δρόμου τὸν κτίβον¹³ ὡς μὴ παραβαίνων τὰς ἀρματοτροχιάς, ἀλλ' ἀεὶ κατ' αὐτὸν ἰέναι. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι πάντες ὡς περ εἰκὸς ἐξεπλάγησαν, ὁ δὲ Πλάτων τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν αὐτοῦ σπουδὴν διέβαλεν εἰπὼν “ἀδύνατόν ἐστι τὸν ἐς μικρὰ οὕτω καὶ οὐδενὸς ἄξια τοσαύτην φροντίδα κατατιθέμενον ὑπὲρ μεγάλων τινῶν σπουδᾶσαι· πᾶσαν γὰρ αὐτῷ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐς ἐκεῖνα ἀποτεθεῖσαν ἀνάγκη ὀλιγωρεῖν τῶν ὄντως θαυμάζεσθαι δικαίων.”

Aelian records Plato's dismissive verdict, which gives a point to the anecdote, that a man who was so serious about trifles could not be in earnest about important matters.¹⁴ While the judgement is expressed in moralizing rather than literary-critical terms, the note of scorn in Plato's words seems in keeping with Apollo's magisterial injunction to Callimachus ἐτέρων ἴχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά / δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν.

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¹³ Dilts's conjecture for the κτοῖχον or κτίχον of the mss. Cf. κτεῖβειν in Call. fr. 1.26.

¹⁴ See A. S. Riginos, *Platonica* (Leiden, 1976), anecdote 108, p. 152–153. Cf. her anecdote 142 (p. 191–193), that Plato declined an invitation to act as legislator for Cyrene because of their affluence, and the story that Anniceris had ransomed Plato when he was enslaved by Dionysius (p. 88–89).