

DUCCIO GUASTI

Cercidas fr. 1 Lom.: Between Hipponax and Diogenes*

Summary – In this paper I identify both Hipponax and Diogenes as models for Cercidas’ fr. 1 Lom.

The double inspiration of Cercidas is clear from the very title of his book: Κερκίδα Κυνός [Με]λίαμβοι.¹ If μελίαμβοι² refers to the iambic character of his μέλη, establishing a poetic continuity with Hipponax, the nickname Κύων attests his philosophical affiliation to Diogenes’ ideas. The dual presence of both these two models is most visible in his satire against the affluent, where the tone is Hipponactean, but the conception of wealth is Cynic.

Here are the first readable lines in this meliamb, which is dedicated to pathological attitudes towards money (fr. 1, 41 – 44 Lom.):

οὐδ]εῖς [πο]κ’ αὐτῶν ³	[τὸν μὲν ὀ]λβοθύλακ[ο]ν
λάρον τε καὶ ἀκρασίωνα	θῆκε πενητυλίδα
Ξένωνα, ποτάγαγε δ’ ἄμιν	ἄργυρον εἰς ἀνόνατα ρέοντα. ⁴
κα[ῖ] τί τὸ κωλύον ἦς	αἶ τις <σ>φ’ ἔρο[ι]το;

“None of them (the gods) ever made the sea-gull Xeno, who has a purse full of riches and lives licentiously, into a poor man, nor did any of them grant us silver to pour out for useless purposes; and what would prevent that, if someone just asked them?”

The beginning of the poem being lost, we do not know if Cercidas himself is speaking or if he is using a *persona loquens*; one might suspect the latter given first person pronoun at verse 43 Lom., which will be discussed below.

* I want to thank profs. L. Bettarini (La Sapienza), K. Gutzwiller (Cincinnati), E. Magnelli (Firenze) for their many suggestions and improvements.

¹ Test. 4 Lom. = P. Oxy. 1082 fr. 4 II. 17. Unless otherwise specified, Cercidas’ text is printed as in Lomiento, Cercidas, Hipponax’ text as in Degani, Hipponax.

² This title is confirmed by testt. 7 and 9 Lom.

³ I.e. θεῶν.

⁴ Lomiento prints here a question mark. I prefer a semicolon or a full stop. Livrea, Studi, 13/14, proposes a different colometry for these verses.

The (probably) fictional character of Xeno is being used as proof that gods – if they exist – do not dispense real justice to the world. In order to understand what type of person Xeno is, we have to pay attention to what Cercidas says about him. The author describes the target of his invective with the phrase ὀλβοθύλακ[ο]ν λάρων τε καὶ ἀκρασίωνα, which requires elucidation. ὀλβοθύλακος refers to his affluence. Knox correctly translates it ‘of wealthy purse’,⁵ but the most recent scholars analyse the compound as endocentric, assuming that Cercidas is physically comparing Xeno to a bag,⁶ however, I do not see sufficient evidence to think that this compound is different from the many other bahuvrīhi adjectives in -ος we find in Cercidas.⁷ López Cruces’ proposal παν]ολβοθύλακον ‘the completely rich bag’ or ‘the bag full of all kind of richness’ is also interesting.⁸ It is followed by the apposition λάρως ‘sea-gull’, a bird with a reputation for rapacity and voracious behavior, refers to Xeno’s greed for pleasures of the flesh, especially food.⁹ Finally, ἀκρασίων refers to Xeno as unrestrained in lavishness (a wastrel); Wilamowitz translates it as ‘Verschwender’,¹⁰ Knox as ‘child of licentiousness’,¹¹ Lomiento as ‘incontinente’.

The name Xeno itself, although attested elsewhere in Greece,¹² is used here in all probability as a comic nickname.¹³ Martín García¹⁴ thinks it designates a rich stranger (however, here a stereotypical/exemplary figure would be expected rather than an actual person); Livrea sees it, on the contrary, as a speaking name for a homosexual.¹⁵ We might object that Xeno is presented as unrepentant sybarite and there are no allusions to sexuality and that Cercidas is always clear about the vices attacked in the individual μελίμβοι. Therefore, we should not expect a name based on amatory behaviour in a poem devoted

⁵ Knox, Herodes, 195.

⁶ Cf. Livrea, Studi, 19/20, who adduces many examples of men negatively compared to bags, cf. especially Bion fr. 42a Kindstrand (= Stobaeus 4, 31a, 33); cf. also Lomiento, Cercidas, 176/177.

⁷ Cf. fr. 60, 2 Lom. διπλοείματος ‘having a double vest’; fr. 62, 1 Lom. κριομύξιος ‘having mucus like a ram’; fr. 65 Lom. καλλιπύγων (gen. pl.) ‘having beautiful buttocks’.

⁸ López Cruces, Cercidas, 32 n. 8.

⁹ On gulls cf. Lomiento, Cercidas, 179.

¹⁰ Wilamowitz, Kerkidas, 146.

¹¹ Knox, Herodes, 195. Diehl, Anthologia, 141, followed by Livrea, Studi (who translates ‘sporaccione’, cf. also his commentary at p. 22), gives an erotic interpretation which does not seem coherent with the context (see below).

¹² Cf. Bechtel, Die historischen Personennamen, 342; LGPN vol. 1, 346; vol. 2, 347f. etc.

¹³ For comic nicknames in -ων cf. Lazzeroni, Storia, passim.

¹⁴ Martín García, Anotaciones, 350.

¹⁵ Livrea, Studi, 23.

to the wrong use of wealth (excessive greed or prodigality). The sobriquet Xeno might more likely refer to a person accustomed to giving luxurious parties and inviting an enormous number of guests (ξένοι), doing so neither for friendship or out of a sense of conviviality, nor for innate generosity, but, on the contrary, because he requires a narcissistic display of his lavishness. Xeno is probably similar to Petronius' Trimalchio, whose only satisfaction in life was every day to entertain a large number of guests at dinner, with the sole purpose of vulgarly showing off the insane abundance of his house, without any kind of amity between the host and his parasites.

My interpretation of this poem is supported by echoes of Hipponax and of the philosophical positions taken by Cynics.

The idea that the gods, if they really exist, are not helpful because they grant success to people who do not deserve it is taken from Diogenes the Cynic, as reported by Cic. nat. deor. 3, 83 (= test. V B 335 Giann.):

Diogenes quidem Cynicus dicere solebat Harpalum, qui temporibus illis praedo felix habebatur, contra deos testimonium dicere, quod in illa fortuna tam diu viveret.

“Diogenes the Cynic used to say that Harpalus – who was considered at that time a fortunate pirate – gave testimony against the gods, because he had flourished for such a long time.”

In the lines quoted above, Cercidas cites an example similar to that of Diogenes, simply replacing the historical Harpalus with the fictional Xeno and adding the complaint that the gods did not give money to Cercidas himself and his group (ἄμιν). This revision of Diogenes' statement can also be explained as an intertextual link to Hipponax; to my knowledge, no scholar has pointed out that the repudiation of the gods because they do not grant riches to good people is a reinterpretation, in more serious tones, of Hipponax fr. 44 Dg² (= 36 W²). The fragment is preserved by Tzetzes in a scholion to Aristophanes' Plutus 37 in order to explain the source of Aristophanes' image of Plutus' blindness:

ἔμοι δὲ Πλοῦτος – ἔστι γὰρ λίην τυφλός –
 ἐς τῶκί' ἐλθὼν οὐδ' ἄμ' εἶπεν· «Ἰππῶναξ,
 δίδωμί τοι μνέας ἄργύρου τριήκοντα
 καὶ πόλλ' ἔτ' ἄλλα»· δειλαιοὺς γὰρ τὰς φρένας.

“Plutus – he is really too blind! – never came to my home saying: ‘Hipponax, I give you thirty minas of silver and many other things!’; he is too cowardly in the heart.”

The idea that traditional gods are of no help to humans, which Hipponax seems to present only as a mocking provocation, is useful to Cercidas for proposing to the reader a deeper reflection, one that evokes Diogenes' belief, that, if the gods could bring justice to the world, they would always do so.¹⁶

The image of divine blindness as a metaphor for lack of equality on earth is also exploited by Cercidas in the same poem, 51 – 55:

μή ποτ' οὖν ὁ τᾶς Δίκας ὀφθαλμὸς ἀπεσπαλάκωται;
 ἥ ὦ Φαέθων μονάδι γλήνην παραυγεῖ,
 καὶ Θέμις ἅ λιπαρὰ καταχλύεται;
 πῶς ἔτι δαίμονες οὔτοι, τοῖ μήτ' ἀκούαν
 μήτ' ὅπᾶν πεπαμένοι;

“Hasn't the eye of justice become mole-sighted, and doesn't Phaethon look aside with his only pupil, and isn't bright Themis misted over? How can they still be considered divine, if they don't possess sight and hearing?”

In Cercidas it is not just the god of riches who has lost his sight, as in Hipponax and Aristophanes, but, more distressingly, three other deities: Dike, i. e. justice itself; Phaethon, identified with the Sun (traditionally the god who watches and listens everything, ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει,¹⁷ supervisor *par excellence* of human oaths¹⁸) and Themis, a deification of divine and human order.

The Hipponactean parallel explains also the first person pronoun ἄμιν (43 Lom.): Cercidas cannot include himself in the group of those who need money, unless we think that he is speaking through a fictional character.¹⁹ The claim of money for himself through a first-person pronoun is made in order to echo Hipponax' ἐμοί; probably the community to which this plural refers, is not Cercidas' social class, as proposed by Livrea,²⁰ nor his aristocratic ἐταιρία, whose members could hardly have economic problems;²¹ Cercidas is referring

¹⁶ On the Cynics' attitude towards the gods, see Goulet-Cazé, *Cynics* (esp. 69–74 on Diogenes) and Desmond, *Cynics*, 115–122. For Cynic indeterminism see Desmond, *Cynics*, 161–172.

¹⁷ λ 109 = μ 323 ≈ Γ 277.

¹⁸ Not only human, if we think of his role in revealing to Hephaestus the affair between Ares and Aphrodite.

¹⁹ Knox, Herodes, 195 assumes that after v. 5 (43) something meaning 'us (who deserve it)' was lost.

²⁰ Livrea, *Studi*, 3.

²¹ So Campos Daroca and López Cruces, *Κοινοκρατηρόσκυφος*, 31.

to righteous people who, in a justice-driven world, should be the ones who gain good fortune.

Cercidas' image of the gourmand who becomes poor as a consequence of his imbecility [41–43 Lom.] is also Hipponactean (fr. 36 Dg² = 26 W²):

ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡσυχῆ τε καὶ ῥύδην
θύνναν τε καὶ μυσσωτὸν ἡμέρας πάσας
δαινύμενος ὥσπερ Λαμψακηνὸς εὐνοῦχος
κατέφαγε δὴ τὸν κλῆρον· ὥστε χρὴ σκάπτειν
πέτρας ὀρείας σῦκα μέτρια τρώγων
καὶ κρίθινον κόλλικα, δούλιον χόρτον.

“One of them used to dine every day quietly and lavishly on tuna and savoury sauce and, like a eunuch from Lampsacus, devoured his property; as a result he has to dig mountain stones, gnawing scarce figs and a barley loaf, a slavish pasturage.”

The protagonist of Hipponax' fragment used to be a ὀλβοθύλακος λάρος τε καὶ ἄκρασιών (cf. 41/42 Lom.) like Xeno, but his behaviour led him to become a πενητυλίδης and an ἐπιτηδεοτρόκτης (cf. 42 and 49 Lom., for the meaning see the translation of the text).

At lines 46–50 Lom. (= 8–10 Li.) the destiny that Cercidas wishes on Xeno is extended to all who use money improperly:

	ἢ τὸν ῥυποκιβδοτόκωνα
καὶ τεθνακοχαλκίδαν	ἢ π[ὸ]ν παλινεκχυμένιταν ²²
τῶν κτεάνων ὄλεθρον,	τοῦτον κενῶσαι
τᾶς συοπλουτοσύνας,	δόμεν δ' ἐπιταδεοτρόκτα
κοινοκρατηροσκόφω	τὰν ὄλλυμέναν δαπάνυλλαν, ²³

“Or the dirty interest-falsifier and die-for-a-penny, or the back-up-chucker, ruin of property: [why cannot the gods] deprive him of the swine-money and give that wasted expense to the needy-eater, who fills his cup from the common bowl!”

Of the two categories of persons whom gods should deprive of their capital the second (παλινεκχυμένιταν), one who vomits it out, is a reinforcement of

²² Lomiento prints πάλιν ἐκχυμένιταν, translating ‘viceversa, lo sperperatore’, assuming an adversative meaning of πάλιν. I find more convincing Barber (Cercidas, 5, n. 7), according to whom παλιν- “seems to suggest that the spendthrift cannot retain his wealth. Comp. ἐξεμέσαι in same fragment (= v. 72; cf. also Livrea, Studi, 15, who translates ‘il retrovomitate’)”. Lomiento herself (Cercidas, 214), commenting on this last passage, recalls what Arsenius reports of Diogenes (= Diog. test. V B 220 Giann.), that wealth is the vomit of fortune (Ὁ αὐτὸς [= Διογένης] εἶπε τὸν πλοῦτον τύχης ἔμετον εἶναι).

²³ Lomiento ends this period with a full stop.

the *persona* of Xenos; the other, the dirty usurer,²⁴ who ‘would die’ for money, represents the opposite excess, but he is all the same a ‘ruin for the property’, because he takes it away from others without using it himself.

As in the earlier passage, here too Hipponax fr. 36 Dg² (= 26 W²) provides a model, since ἐπιταδεωτρόκτα ‘gnawing τὰ ἐπιτήδεα’ (where τρώγω is derogatory for ἐσθίω)²⁵ is inspired by the phrase σῦκα μέτρια τρώγων. Herodotus uses the term τὰ ἐπιτήδεα (2, 174) for food essential to survival, identified *par excellence* with figs.²⁶

According to Livrea, the contemptuous view of the poorer classes implied in the verb τρώγω ‘gnaw’ is a proof that this poem addresses an affluent audience;²⁷ however, in light of the dependence of this meliamb on the mentioned fragment, this derision of poverty is ascribable directly to Hipponax. Cercidas used the same verb in order to imitate him and all those who despise the poor; Hipponax despises the poor and mocks them.²⁸ Cercidas is, like Diogenes, sympathetic with them, as this meliamb shows; by echoing Hipponax’ language – like that of his narrow-minded contemporaries? – he

²⁴ Livrea, Studi, 23 notices that the first member of ῥυποκιβδοτόκωνα is inspired by ῥυποκόνδυλος ‘dirty knuckles’, an abusive word for people who are greedy of money reported by Eustathius (1828 = Suet. Blasph. 218 Taillardat); it is not clear if Eustathius/Suetonius attributes this word to Archilochus and Hipponax (cf. n. 203), together with συκοτραγίδης (Hippon. fr. 177 Dg² [= 167 W²]; Archil. fr. 250 W²). Lomiento, Cercidas, 187 compares ῥυπαρία ‘dirty greed’ (Ar. Eq. 426; Teles IV A, 7 [p. 37, 5 Hense]). For the second and third constituents, Gigante (Cercida, 287) finds a parallel in Plat. R. 6, 507a κίβδηλον ἀποδιδούς τὸν λόγον τοῦ τόκου metaphorically ‘giving back the words with a false rate of interest’.

²⁵ Cf. Livrea, Studi, 34.

²⁶ Eustath. 1828, 9ff. (= Suet. Blasph. 218 Taillardat) reports that Hipponax (fr. 177 Dg² = 167 W²) and Archilochus (fr. 250 W²) used συκοτραγίδης as a derogatory word for stingy people (cf. n. 18 above).

²⁷ Cf. Livrea, Studi, 34: “La prevalenza di questa connotazione spregiativa delle classi inferiori, di derivazione comica (cf. *Miccotrogus* Plaut. Stich. 242, e l’*Artotrogus* del Miles), si spiegherebbe bene nell’ambito di un banchetto cinico [...], in cui Cercida rivolge la sua paronesi, pur seria ed impegnata, a κτηματικοί non ancora convertiti dal Cinismo alla pratica della riforma sociale.”

²⁸ Fr. 21f. Dg² (= 13f. W²) mocks Arete and her boyfriend because they are obliged to drink from a bucket after having broken their only cup; fr. 15 Dg² (= 118a W²) makes fun of ‘virgin’ furniture (probably because the proprietor has nothing to put in it, cf. Degani, Ipponatte, 85); fr. 79 Dg² (= 79 W²) shows a man sweeping the floor with a bunch of thorny burnet because he does not own a broom. For the passages where Hipponax complains about poverty, they are too mocking to be taken seriously (cf. Degani, Studi, 22–24). For various interpretations of the Cynic ideal of equality, see Desmond, Cynics, 184–208.

offers a more philosophically advanced view, reminding us that poverty can be more consistent with a good life than is wealth.²⁹

It is clear from this analysis that Cercidas combines inspiration from these two famous moralists of the past. Both Hipponax and Diogenes condemn people who waste money; the first probably because of an élite ideology, hostile to the *nouveaux riches*, who cannot handle what they earn, the latter from an anti-hedonistic view, mixed with a sense of solidarity towards the poor. Like Diogenes, Hipponax was associated with a dog who attacks anyone who annoys him (cf. Leonidas of Tarentum AP 7, 408; HE 2327 = test. 16, 3 Dg² καὶ τοκεῶνε βαῦξας ‘barking even to his parents’), a testimony which is likely to be a direct allusion to Hipponax’ work. Not least, both of them liked to depict themselves in demeaning situations. Inspired by these two models, Cercidas chastises contemporary society, mixing serious issues and facetious expressions and allusions.

Bibliography

- Barber, E. A., Cercidas. In: E. A. Barber & J. U. Powell (eds.), *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature*, vol. 1, Oxford 1921, 2–11.
- Bechtel, F., *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen*, Halle 1917.
- Campos Daroca, J. -López Cruces, J.L., Κοινωνοκρατηρόστροφος. Comensalidad y política en la poesía cercidea, *Fortunatae* 2 (1991), 23–36.
- Degani, E., *Studi su Ipponatte*, Bari 1984.
- Degani, E., *Hipponax. Testimonia et fragmenta*, Leipzig²1991.
- Degani, E., *Ipponatte. Frammenti. Introduzione, traduzione e note*, Bologna 2007.
- Desmond, W., *Cynics*, Stocksfield 2008.
- Diehl, E., *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca*, fasc. 3, Leipzig³1952.
- Gigante, M., Cercida, Filodemo e Orazio, *RFIC* 83 (1955), 286–293.
- Goulet-Cazé, M. O., Religion and the early Cynics. In: M. O. Goulet-Cazé & R. B. Branham (eds.), *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, Berkeley et al. 1996, 47–80.
- Helmer, E., *Diogène Le Cynique*, Paris 2017.
- Knox, A. D., *Herodes, Cercidas and the Greek Choliambic Poets*, London-New York 1929.
- Lazzeroni, R., Per la storia dei sostantivi derivati in -ōn nelle lingue classiche, *SSL* 3 (1963), 1–48.
- Livrea, E., *Studi Cercidei. P. Oxy. 1082*, Bonn 1986.
- Lomiento, L., *Cercidas*, Rome 1993.
- López Cruces, J. L., Cercidas, I, 1–4 Livrea, *ZPE* 89 (1991), 31/32.

²⁹ For Diogenes’ ideal of mendicity as freedom, cf. Helmer, *Diogène*, 150–154.

- Martín García, J. A., Anotaciones al Meliampo 1 Diehl de Cércidas. Problemática y datación, *AMal* 4 (1981), 331–354.
- Wilamowitz, U. v., *Kerkidas*, *Sitzungsber. der preuß. Akad. der Wiss.*, 1918, 1138–1164 [reprinted in Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2, 128–159, Berlin 1941, from which I cite].

Duccio Guasti
Department of Classics
410 Blegen Library
PO Box 210226
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0226