

Callimachus's Acontius as an Elegiac Metanarrative in the Eclogues

The love story of Acontius and Cydippe, which Callimachus adapted from the Coan historian Xenomedes to feature prominently in *Aetia* 3 (fr. 67–75), seems to have held special interest for the Latin poets of the 1st century BC. Vergil seems to adapt the narrative in *Eclogues* 2, 8, and especially 10 (Du Quesnay 1979, 48; Kenney 1983), and Propertius closely follows it in poem 1.18 (Cairns 1969). From the evidence of *Eclogue* 10 and Propertius's *Monobiblos*, Ross and others have argued that Gallus used the stories of Acontius and Milanion as exempla for his own situation as an elegiac lover (Ross 1975, 89–91; Rosen & Farrell 1986), and Llewelyn Morgan has argued more recently that Gallus may have invested these stories with metapoetic innuendo (Morgan 1995). By Ovid's day, Acontius and Cydippe were so well-known that their correspondence could be included among the *Heroides*, in terms, no less, that cast Acontius as the archetypal "elegiac hero", i.e. as a prototypical elegiac poet (Barchiesi 1993, 360–363).

This paper argues that Acontius functions as an archetypal elegiac figure in Vergil's *Eclogues* just as he later does in Ovid's *Heroides*, and that Vergil casts Callimachus's love story as the metanarrative of Latin love elegy. In *Eclogue* 10 Vergil casts Gallus as the arch-bucolic singer Daphnis, familiar from Theocritus, and gives him a soliloquy in which he dramatizes the choice between pastoral and elegiac lifestyles (see Conte 1986, 100–129), ultimately expressing his preference for elegiac by vowing to imitate Acontius: *certum est in silvis. . . | malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores | arboribus* (*Ecl.* 10.52–54). The metapoetic significance of these lines has been noted by scholars (recently by Harrison 2007, 59–74), but other related allusions to the Acontius story in *Eclogues* 2 and 8 suggest that Vergil deploys this narrative in contraposition to that of Daphnis as representative metanarratives of elegiac and pastoral poetry, respectively. This paper will focus primarily on *Eclogues* 2 and 10, both of which, I argue, use allusions to Callimachus's Acontius and Theocritus's Daphnis to metaphorically dramatize the choice between love elegy and pastoral poetry by invoking important narrative drawn from the Hellenistic pillars of each genre.

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