A Hellenistic influence in *Aeneid* IX

J.D. Reed  
University of Michigan. Department of Classical Studies  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109 USA  
josephdr@umich.edu

Abstract

Attention to certain passages shows that the episode on the death of Euryalus in *Aeneid* IX owes much to the poetry of Bion of Smyrna, not only his *Epitaph on Adonis* but also the fragments from his poem on the Evening Star and perhaps from those on Orpheus and Hyacinthus. The result is a characteristically Hellenistic mixture of love and death.

**Key words:** Virgil, Bion, Nisus and Euryalus, *Aeneid*, Hellenistic poetry, Adonis.

**Resum. Una influència hel·lenística a Eneida IX**

Com es veu per l’estudi d’uns quants passos, l’episodi de la mort d’Euríal en *Eneida* IX té molt a veure amb la poesia de Bió d’Esmirna, no sols el seu *Epitafi d’Adonis*, sinó també la seva obra fragmentària, incloent-hi poemes sobre l’estel vespertí i possiblement Orfeu i Jacint. En resulta una barreja de l’amor i la mort típicament hel·lenística.

**Paraules clau:** Virgili, Bió, Nisos i Euríal, *Eneida*, poesia hel·lenística, Adonis.

Aphrodite’s lament in the *Epitaph on Adonis* by Bion of Smyrna has been cited for some two hundred years as a close precedent for Juturna’s lament for her own immortality (compare *Aeneid* 12.880-81 to *Adonis* 53). More recently, Brenk has explored the similarities between Anchises’ lament for Marcellus (*Aeneid* 6.883-4) and Bion’s appeal to heap flowers on the corpse of Adonis, together with his references to crimson flowers (*Adonis* 75 with 35, 65-6); the assimilation of Marcellus to Adonis, Brenk observes, both idealizes the youthful beauty of the Roman and places «the tragic loss of Venus’ descendant in the context of her earlier sorrow for the Adonis of myth.» A similar comparison, traceable in the death of Euryalus in Book 9, is the object of the present study. I begin by looking at a series of young deaths in the *Aeneid*, including that of Euryalus, that use...

1. Heyne *ad loc.*; see also Barchiesi 118 n. 27, Boella. The authorship of the *Epitaph on Adonis*, which in the MSS is anonymous or mistakenly ascribed to Theocritus, was first made by Camerarius in 1530 and is virtually certain; see Reed 15, 77-8, 194, 202.
2. Brenk 222-3 = 91-2.
Imagery and wording from Bion’s *Epitaph on Adonis*; then I move to echoes of Bion’s fragments in the Euryalus episode, and finally, more speculatively, to potential influence from Bion’s lost works. In passing I shall notice a few other recollections of Bion in Virgil’s work. Since Virgil’s close repetitions from Bion guarantee the place of the Greek poet in the background of the Roman epic, I move from his clearest use of Bion to his least clear (where possible I cite other poets’ use of a Bionean passage to show that Virgil was not alone).

I

The general setting of the Euryalus episode parallels that of Bion’s *Adonis*. In his search for Euryalus, Nisus wanders through a forest of oak trees and dense thorn bushes (9.381-2 *silva fuit late dumis atque ilice nigra / horrida, quam densi complarent undique sentes, 393 dumisque silentibus errat*); likewise in her search for the dying Adonis Aphrodite wanders through oak forests and dense thorn bushes: 20-22 *ἀνὰ δρυμῷ άλαλῆται/πενθητων άσανδαλ/ωικρονς ἀσάνδαλ/ωικρονς, αἱ δὲ βάτοι νυκτέριμεναν κείροντα (note also the similarity in sound between *dumus* and *δρυμ/ωικρονς*). The closest similarities, however, are with Bion’s initial description of Adonis (*Epitaph on Adonis* 7-11):

κεῖται καλὸς Ἀδωνις ἐν ὤρεσι µηρὸν /οκταντὸς τυπεῖς καὶ Κύπριν ἀνι/καὶ τ/ὸ δέ µέλαν εἴ/µα νέας κατὰ σαρκ/τὸ δὲ µέλαν εἴ/µα νέας κατὰ σαρκ/τὸ δὲ µέλαν εἴ/µα νέας κατὰ σαρκ/τὸ δὲ µέλαν εἴ/µα νέας κατὰ σαρκ/

With this passage the death of Euryalus shares not only turns of phrase and patterns of description, but the general tone of erotic appraisal (*Aeneid* 9.431-7):

sed viribus ensis adactus
transadigit costas et candida pectora rumpit.
volvitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
it crurum inque umeros cervix conlapsa recumbit:
purpureus veluti cum flos succissus aratro
languescit moriens, lassove papavera collo
demiserse caput pluvia cum forte gravantur.

The blood that runs over Euryalus’ «beautiful limbs» is like the blood that runs over «beautiful» Adonis’ «snowy flesh.» Both stricken parts (thigh, chest) are

3. The silence of Nisus’ surroundings, explained by commentators since Servius as contrasting with the clamor he hears in the ensuing lines, also contrasts with the natural setting that loudly mourns for Adonis (31-9).

4. The similarities were first noticed, to my knowledge, by Martin (on *Ad.* 9), who also compares *Aen.* 11.67 to *Ad.* 71 and *Ad.* 40 to *Aen.* 11.39, intertexts I too shall deal with. He cites many other Latin scenes of mourning and is not concerned specifically with the imagery that we are studying.
white (λευκόν, candida). Both passages enumerate body parts. Virgil’s flower-similes, which come from Homer and Catullus and use the red flowers commonly associated with the death of a youth, can also be considered to enlarge upon the trope whereby Bion calls the vanishing color of Adonis’ lips a «rose» (11; note also the flower imagery at 35 and 76). The death of Euryalus thus anthologizes in miniature the three great traditions that Virgil’s epic subsumes: the Homeric, the Latin, and the Hellenistic. Bion-like, in general, is Virgil’s emphasis on Euryalus’ body and its beauty. Certain elements in the Latin intensify the eroticism: *recumbit* exposes a sensuality latent in *κεῖται* (which here means primarily «lies dead or dying»), and *pulchros* recalls Adonis’ characteristic epithet *καλός* (repeated often in Bion’s poem from the first line onward). The *candor* of Euryalus’ chest is not the paleness of death, but a gleaming, beckoning fairness of complexion, preserving the sensual connotations of Bion’s *χοιρέας*.

Indeed, it is the sensibility of the passage — the erotic gaze on a dying youth, reinforced by elements of the *sermo amatorius* — that seems traceable to Bion (even more compellingly than any accumulation of parallel words or images), and for which Virgil adapts Bion’s words even more explicitly in passages on other dying warriors. A prominent example is the death of Camilla at 11.818-19, which virtually translates *Adonis* 10-11 (as Ahrens 1855 notices):

> labitur exsanguis, labuntur frigida leto
> lumina, purpureus quondam color ora reliquit.

It is noteworthy that these lines pick up where the looser reworking in the Euryalus passage left off. *Frigida* even transmits Bion’s odd usage of *νομισμα*, «go numb,» for eyes. Were we cannily to look for a displacement of the metaphor *φυγείς* (ousted by *reliquit*), we would find it just below in Camilla’s death (831 *vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras*), where it replaces *πταµένη...βεταςκεί* in the Homeric model (*Iliad* 16.857 = 22.263). The verb simultaneously recalls the words of Aphrodite at *Adonis* 50-51, where *φυγείς* is almost equivalent to «die»: *σύ µε...φυγείς...καὶ ἔρκει εἰς ᾿Α/)χέροντα*.

Although *fugit* seems natural in context, and the reuse of the line for the death of Turnus (12.952) has made it even more familiar, it is a notable catachresis — a syllepsis, in fact, of Bion’s two catachreses. Like those on Euryalus, the lines on Camilla impart a gaze upon physical beauty. The repeated verb *labor* makes her descent gentle, like *cervix conlapsa recumbit* in Euryalus’ death; but it is the «crimson color» (*purpureus color*), a reduction of Bion’s trope *ῥόδον*, that seems to concentrate the diffuse sensuality of the lines on her person. *Purpureus* evokes the blushing glow of youth: compare the *lumen inventae purpureum* bestowed on

5. On individual terms see Pichon.  
6. Cf. Ov. *Am.* 3.9.49 *fugientis pressit ocellos*, in an elegy deeply imbued with Bion’s influence. For this sense of the verb *TLL* VI 1482.33-40 lists other post-Virgilian passages (with or without a directional phrase like «to the shades»). Ctesias *FGH* 688 F 24 already uses *πέφυγε* absolutely, in the sense «is dead».
Aeneas at 1.590-91 (the purpureus flos to which Euryalus is compared at 9.435 has this connotation too). We are made to see the signs of Camilla’s youthful beauty as they disappear forever.

Consider now Aeneas’ first view of the dead Pallas (11.39-41):

ipse caput nivei fultum Pallantis et ora
ut vidit levique patens in pectore vulnus
cuspidis Ausoniae, lacrimis ita fatur obortis…

The paiderastic attractiveness (rightly noted by Servius) that is signalled by the «smooth chest» of «snowy Pallas»7 recalls Euryalus’ candida pectora, and the two youths share not only the sensual imagery but also Bionean wording. Pallas’ «snowiness» recalls Adonis’ χιονετό αογόξ (the first attested use of that adjective for complexion)8; the allusive economy characteristic of Virgil’s style should have made us expect to find the exact epithet elsewhere.9 The structure of these lines «when he saw» with the wound as object, introducing a lament in direct speech) closely follows the section of Bion’s poem where Aphrodite first sees the dying Adonis (Adonis 40-42):

ὡς ἴδεν, ὡς ἐνικρέντος Αδώνιδος ἄσκετος ἔλκε,
ὡς ἴδε /πτω/ίνι αἷµα µαραινίων περὶ µηρίων,
πέρεως ἔµπετάσσα κανύρετο, “µεῖν Ἀδωνι…”10

The same structure is also evident in Aeneas’ reaction to the dead Lausus (10.821-3):

at vero ut vultum vidit morientis et ora,
ora modis Anchisiades pallentia miris,
ingemuit miserans…

(The separation of Bion’s ὡς ἴδεν…ὡς ἴδε —recalled by Virgil’s ora, ora— into two instances of ut vidit exemplifies what Wills calls «divided allusion»). The sensual «languishing» or «wilting» thigh of Adonis in 41 implicitly likens him to a dying flower, as do lines 11 («the rose flees from his lip») and 75-6 (cast flowers on his bier: «with him, since he has died, all flowers too have wilted»). One

7. See Putnam 10-11.
8. See Papanghelis 64 on Prop. 2.13.53-4, where Adonis is called niveus in a passage that shows other debts to Bion. It is easy to imagine Virgil and Propertius discussing the Bionean passage together.
9. On Virgil’s allusive economy see Wills, esp. 279-81 (in a discussion of the problems of recognizing and delimiting a «divided allusion,» one diffracted into diverse parts of the imitating text) and 296-302.
10. Ovid reworks the same lines for his Adonis myth at Met. 10.720-21. Another Bion-influenced poem where the formula «when she saw…» persists is the late Anacreonteaum El οίς νεκρον Αδωνιν 1-2 Αδωνον ἢ Κυθήρησάτι εἶδε νεκρον ἵπτι…
remembers Euryalus’ flower-similes, especially 436 *languescit moriens*. Virgil uses this trope again at 11.67-70, where Pallas, lying on his bier, is like a plucked flower that has not yet lost its beauty:

hic iuvenem agresti sublimem stramine ponunt  
qualem virgineo demessum police florem  
seu mollis violae seu languentis hyacinthi  
cui neque fulgor adhuc nec dum sua forma recessit.

The voluptuous passivity of the «soft» violet and «languishing» hyacinth liken Pallas to the dying Euryalus (note the recurrence of the verb *langueo*). The motif of beauty persisting after death recalls the corresponding passage of the *Epitaph on Adonis* (68-71):

µηκέτ᾿ ἐνὶ δρυµ/omikronῖσι τ/omikrongraveν ἀνέρα µύρε/omikrongraveν ἀνέρα µύρε, Kύπρι/periodcenteredgreek  
/omikrongraveὐκ ἀγα/thetatwoὰ στι/betatwoάς ἐστιν ᾿ Αδώνιδι /phitwoυλλὰς ἐρήµα.

But the real tip-off to Bion’s influence at *Aeneid* 11.67-70 is Virgil’s odd mention of an *agreste stramen*. The noun, unattested before this passage (*stramentum* is old), stands out, and the rustic motif is not obviously motivated in the episode; but the usage replicates Bion’s peculiar use at 69 of *στι/betatwoάς* (normally an improvised pallet of leaves and branches) for a proper bed, in contrast to a pile of leaves, on which the dead Adonis is to be laid out.

The use of Bion intricately interconnects these scenes. In 11.39-40, for example, the specification of both Pallas’ face and chest-wound as objects of Aeneas’ gaze forms a bridge between Aphrodite’s view of Adonis’ thigh-wound (relocated to suit Pallas’ condition) and Aeneas’ view of Lausus’ face. A similar bridge: in Camilla’s death, the word *ora*, which can denote either «mouth» or «face,» neatly conflates Camilla’s intertextual and intratextual comparanda, the lips of Adonis and the faces of Lausus and Pallas (10.821-2, 11.39). The *purpureus color* that deserts her *ora* seems to exchange the boldly concrete floral metaphor of Adonis’ lips for a more abstract «crimson color» —yet when we read Camilla’s death against those of the others, *purpureus* resumes distinct floral associations from the «crimson flower,» *purpureus flos*, to which Euryalus is compared (9.435). These connections could also lead us into other parts of the *Aeneid*. Pallas’ wound (11.40 *in pectore vulnus*) recalls, by both wording and metrical position, Bion’s description of the metaphorical «wound in the heart» that assimilates Aphrodite to her beloved (Adonis 16-17):

11. In 69 ὐκ is Ahrens’s emendation for MS ἔστ᾿ (presumably a dittography): see Ahrens 1854:66-7, Fantuzzi 105-6, Reed 234. Elements of 68-9 are strongly recalled by Aen. 11.843-4 (on Camilla’s death) nec tibi *desertae in damis coluisse Dianum* / *profut*…
We could compare the two wounds of Dido: 4.66-7 *est mollis flamma medullas/ interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus* and 4.689 *infixum stridit sub pectore vulnus*. Those wounds, one metaphorical and one corporeal, hearken back to the word-play of the *Epitaph on Adonis* and revise Bion’s line-end ποτικάρδιν ἔλκς using Bion’s own model, Theocritus 11.15 ὑπικάρδιν ἔλκς (a «window-reference» in miniature). Pallas’ *in pectore vulnus* changes Dido’s *sub pectore vulnus* exactly as Bion’s ποτικάρδιν changes Theocritus’ ὑπικάρδιν.

The connection with Dido’s story recalls the combination of eroticism and death found in these images and its place not only in the wider sphere of the epic, but in a Hellenistic tradition; if I have emphasized the element of direct influence in these intertextual comparisons it is to bring out the historical sense of a process, a transfigurative effect of Virgil’s reading of Bion. Isolated stories of love ending in death, received from Classical tragedy and elsewhere, became in later Hellenistic hands the vehicles for a new sensibility. Clua traces in Euphorion’s *Thrax* a treatment of death (alongside betrayal) as «el fruit de l’amor,» the crystallizing precedent for the stories of doomed love taken up by the «New Poets» and Ovid: «En efecte, el contrast ‘amor’-‘mort’ esdevé un dels temes preferits dins el corrent poètic que neix a Euforió, passa a través de Parteni fins a arribar a Roma, on influeix en la formació del gust per l’horrible i macabre»,13 Bion’s Adonis and the Virgilian figures that reflect him present less a contrast than a morbid superimposition of love and death, with the element of the horrible and macabre enveloped in the sensual. Bion contributes to this tradition by transvaluing a Homeric motif, the beauty that tragically marks a warrior fallen in his prime,14 to the realm of ἐρως; Adonis’ (and Pallas’) beauty abiding in death, for example, is prefigured in the divine preservation of Hector’s corpse (*Iliad* 24.418-20). The focalization by Adonis’ lover Aphrodite, who commands the narrative viewpoint almost from the first line (although she does not actually speak until line 42), enables this thematic shift; following Bion, Virgil’s style of narrative puts the reader in the place of a desirous viewer (not always to be strictly identified with a stated viewer like Nisus or Aeneas). His erotic death-imagery will in turn become part of later epic; the death of Statius’ Parthenopaean combines studied readings of Euryalus, Pallas, and Camilla (*Thetis* 9.877-85); the death of Silius’ Sarmens telescopes that of Euryalus (*Punic* 4.203-5), his Bibulus follows Camilla (7.631-3), and his Cinyps combines details from all four of Virgil’s figures (12.225-50).

12. Thomas 1986: 188-9 = 1999: 130-32 (on Virgil’s practice): «the very close adaptation of a model, noticeably interrupted in order to allow reference back to the source of that model».
14. This is the usual connotation of καλός of warriors in early Greek poetry; see II. 22.71-3, 21.108-10 (cf. 22.370); Tyrt. fr. 10.27-30 West.
The special status of Euryalus and the others is thrown into relief by comparison with another death for which Virgil uses imagery from the Epitaph on Adonis, that of Misenus at 6.218-24:

pars calidos latices et aëna undantia flammis
expedient, corpusque lavant frigentis et unguunt.
fit gemitus. tum membra toro defleta reponunt
purpureasque super vestis, velamina nota,
coniciunt. pars ingenti subiere feretro,
triste ministerium, et subiectam more parentum
aversi tenuere facem.

The image of different mourners at different tasks recalls the more rococo tableau at Adonis 79-85, where various Erotes (γὼ µέν …δὲ δὲ….; cf. Virgil’s pars…pars…) busy themselves about the bier, making offerings of their arrows, bow, and quiver and performing different funereal tasks, including the bathing of the corpse (but with a golden basin, not bronze as in Virgil).15 Even Virgil’s switch between verb tenses reproduces a mannerism Bion employs there. Memory of Adonis 79 κέκλιται ἁ/betatwoρ/omikrongraveς ῎Aδωνις ἐν εἵµασι π/omikronρ/phitwoυρέ/omikronισιν,
«gorgeous Adonis lies in crimson-dyed sheets» (but literally «crimson-dyed garments»), accounts for Misenus’ being placed purpureas super v

Those textiles are velamina nota—a pathetic touch, indicating that they were Misenus’ own, familiar possessions («ipsi cara,» as Servius explains)—reminds us that the dead Adonis was laid out on Aphrodite’s bed, upon the very sheets in which he had often passed the night with her (Adonis 72-3). The word for bier in 6.222, feretrum, attested here for the first time in verse, puns on Bion’s ὑφίστανα ἐν πεπλοῖσιν καλύπταντε µαλακίσιν (cf. Ad. 72 κάτ’ θεν µαλακίσιν ἐν ἱρίσιν).


15. This scene became a staple of artistic depictions of Adonis’ death; see LIMC i.1.226 no. 35, Schober, Koortbojian 38. Cf. the late Anacreontea Εἰς νεκρὸν ᾿Aδωνίν 11-14.

16. Behind Bion and Virgil lies Il. 24.796 (of the cremated Hector’s bones) πορφυρίως πᾶλιν καλύπτοιται σκούφοις καλύπτοντας (cf. Ad. 72 κάτθεθι νυν χαλασμὸς ἐν γέλασιν).
frigentis Misenus effectively chills any eroticism aroused by the reminiscence. Reponunt replaces the softer κέκλιται. Instead of Catullus’ epithalamia (which will echo in the flower-similes Virgil provides Euryalus and Pallas), one hears Catullus’ epigram on the death of his brother (101.7-10):

\[
\text{nunc tamen interea haec, prisco quae parentum tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias, accipe…}
\]

More parentum is in the same metrical position; Virgil’s triste ministerium is like tristi munere. The themes of Catullus 101 that resonate at Aeneid 6.223 are ancient tradition, weary journeying, and the unresponsiveness of the deceased (Misenus—unlike his doublet in misfortune, Palinurus—never gets the chance to account for himself). Catullus’ Trojan setting is the source of the mos parentum in Virgil; and the Odyssean intertext that the opening of Catullus’ poem heralds is part of the background of Aeneas’ travels too, especially now when he is about to repeat Odysseus’ furthest-flung adventure. We are being prepared for the journey through the Underworld, where Aeneas will hear a thing or two about the mores parentum and the need to hand them down to future generations, and where all the Trojan ceremony of Misenus’ exequies will come to seem etiological for the Roman funerals Anchises foretells, particularly that of Marcellus. In favor of these themes, Adonis’ sensuality is blocked in Misenus.

Yet it would be a mistake to let these themes cut Misenus off from Euryalus, Lausus, Pallas, and Camilla. Those characters, too, are charged with themes of tradition and regeneration (note, for example, the emphasis on their parents’ hopes) and so join Marcellus as glamorous symbols of frustrated posterity (a theme that resonates strongly in the Bionean elements Brenk finds in Anchises’ lament at 6.883-4); Turnus is another such figure who is assimilated to Bion’s Adonis (by Juturna’s lament). Adonis himself is a powerful symbol of such frustration, and in this regard the Aeneid passages might be considered to enlarge upon Bion’s references to the lost marriage of Adonis and Aphrodite (Adonis 24, 59, 87-90). In repeatedly evoking a paradigmatic description of Adonis, Virgil not only assimilates his characters to a literary paragon of beauty and untimely death, but unites a group that symbolizes the contingencies and sacrifices (or, more pessimistically, waste) involved in Aeneas’ national foundation.

II

Euryalus’ death-scene stands apart from the others in one respect: its borrowings from the Adonis join borrowings from other poems by Bion in the surrounding episode. As Nisus aims his spear at Euryalus’ assailants he prays to Diana (9.404-9):

\[
\text{Tu, dea, tu praeens nostro succurre labori,}
\text{astrorum decus et nemorum Latonia custos…}
\text{hunc sine me turbare globum et rege tela per auras.}
\]
The prayer corresponds to Iliad 10.277-95 (in the Dolon episode that furnished a model for the whole escapade), and is the first in a series, complemented by the pair in Book 11: Metabus’ prayer to Diana as he aims the spear that will carry his infant daughter Camilla to safety (11.557-60), and Arruns’ prayer to Apollo as he aims his spear at Camilla and kills her (11.785-93). Why does Nisus pray to Diana? She is the protectress of woods, such as the one in which he finds himself; he alludes to this in the second of the two titles by which he calls her in 405, nemorum custos. She is the patron of hunters, and he is a kind of hunter as he aims. But the first phrase by which Nisus addresses her, astrorum decus (that is, Diana as the moon), hints at a more immediate reason: he is requesting light to aim by—ironically, when we remember that the very moonbeams he prays for were the undoing of Euryalus (374; cf. 457), and even more so against his warning to Euryalus about the approach of light at 355. Schlunk 68-74 shows that this motif gathers and reworks, with hints from the ancient commentators, a complex of motifs from Iliad 10.

Nisus’ general status as desperate lover here activates the topos of a prayer to the moon for light by the comast, or lover on his way to importune his beloved; moreover, the comastic undertones of his prayer have a specific model in Bion fr. 11.1-3, where a rustic comast performs a variation on this topos by praying to the Evening Star for light (since, as he will explain, the moon has set too early):

"Εσπερε, τὰς ἐρατᾶς χρύσουν φάσος Άφρογένειας. "Εσπερε, κυνηγείας ἵψας, φύλι, νυκτός ἁγάλμα τόσον ἀφαιρέτερος μήνης ὅσον ἔξοχος ἄστρον...

In κυανέας νυκτός ἁγάλμα, «adornment of the dark night,» we find the model for Virgil’s use of decus at 405. The basic sense there, «(glittering) adornment (for the body),» will occur at 10.134-5 qualis gemma micat…aut collo decus aut capiti; Turnus had already used the word in a celestial metaphor earlier in Book 9 (18 Iri, decus caeli…). Nisus’ apostrophe astrorum decus conflates the ends of Bion’s lines 2 and 3 and reinstates the moon (whose light the bucolic comast must do without) as addressee. Bion’s νυκτός is possessive or objective (night holds the ornament or is adorned); in Virgil’s phrase the genitive becomes partitive, with the moon understood as one of the astra (compare [Seneca] Octavia 425 Astraea virgo, siderum magnum decus). In the person of Nisus,
Bion’s comast brings out the amatory background of the doomed initiative with tragic irony. Although other circumstances of Bion’s poem that might have resonated here are lost to us, we can see Virgil using a kind of allusive shorthand (I think of Pasquari’s «arte allusiva»), introducing themes with great economy by recalling to the knowledgable reader what the new work preserves and what it changes in its model.

Like Bion’s Adonis, Bion’s Evening Star helps connect the figures in the group reviewed above. At 8.589-91 a simile compares Pallas to the Morning Star:

...qualis ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda,
quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignis,
exitit os sacrum caelo tenebrasque resolvit.

Evander’s son departs for war as if suffused in the light of morning, a bright symbol of promise soon to be quenched by death.\(^\text{23}\) Senfter notes that the superlative characterization of the star (\textit{quem Venus ante alios…}) connects Pallas with two other figures marked by beauty and early death, Lausus on the Italian side (7.649-50 \textit{quo pulchrior alter non fuit, excepto Laurentis corpore Turni}) and Euryalus on the Trojan side (9.179-80 \textit{quo pulchrior alter non fuit}). This characterization has been carried over to Lucifer from Hesperus, which is often described as supernally beautiful, first at \textit{Iliad} 22.318 ‘\textit{Εσπερός, δες κάλλιστος \v{e}ν οὐρανῷ ἱστάτη ώ αστήρ}’.\(^\text{24}\) Bion registers this commonplace in fr. 11.3 \textit{ἔκχει αστῶν}, a phrase that Virgil, replacing the Homeric ‘beauty’ of the star with a more personalized superlativity, conflates with fr. 11.1 \textit{φιτων \‘Αρφογενείας: quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignis} (one recalls the conflation of fr. 11.2-3 in 9.406 \textit{astrorum decus}).\(^\text{25}\) And it is here that, by Virgil’s allusive economy, Bion’s epithet ‘holy’ appears (591 \textit{os sacrum}). The use for the Morning Star of a precursor’s words on the Evening Star incidentally advertises awareness that they are the same star (a more overt topos in Callimachus fr. 291, Meleager \textit{Anthologia Palatina} 12.114, Cinna fr. 6, Catullus 62.34, and Horace \textit{Carmina} 2.9.10-12).

The apostrophe to Euryalus and Nisus at 9.446-9 (\textit{fortunati ambo!} etc.), in anticipating the one to Lausus at 10.791-3, is another link between Virgil’s Adonis-figures. As a macarism pronounced over a heroic pair, it has a precedent in Bion fr. 12, where the thesis ‘blessed are those who love when they are loved equally in return’ (line 1 \textit{ἀδίκως \v{e}ν \v{e}λλόντες \v{e}πὴν Ἰον \v{e}νεργάωντα}) is exemplified by Theseus and Pirithous, Orestes and Pylades, and finally Achilles and Patroclus. Lyne has recorded a suggestion by Jasper Griffin that the Virgilian passage derives from the Bionean.\(^\text{26}\) Bion may be the first to transfer this kind of macarism from a blessed afterlife to the blessedness of reciprocated love and to

\begin{itemize}
\item Senfter 172.
\item See also Sappho fr. 104B Voigt, Catul. 62.26.
\item Bion’s comparative parallel between the brightness of one star over others and that of the moon over the stars is picked up by Hor. \textit{Carm.} 1.12.46-8 (\textit{Iulium sidus}), \textit{Ov. Met.} 2.722-3 (\textit{Lucifer}).
\item Lyne 1987: 235 n. 49.
\end{itemize}
the tradition that makes paiderastic couples of heroic pairs (another Hellenistic eroticization of an epic motif); Virgil is drawing these themes into his vision of Roman history. Bion’s last-named pair is especially close to the situation in the Aeneid: ἰὲν ἄνηγσακος ὁτι οἰ μόρον αἵνον ἄμυνεν (line 7 «blessed was [Achilles] in death, since he avenged [Patroclus’] cruel death»)—the very substance of Virgil’s phrase on Nisus’ death (445 placidaque...morte quievit) and the macarism.27 Against this background Nisus’ last words perform a special function (9.427-30):

me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum,
o Rutul! mea fraus omnis, nihil iste nec ausus
nec potuit; caelum hoc et conscia sidera testor;
tantum infelicem nimium dilexit amicum.

The last line provisionally reverses Bion’s opening thesis: Nisus declares that for being loved by his beloved, he is the opposite of felix (a Latin equivalent, in macarisms, to λακκός and μάκαρ, as at Georgics 2.490 felix qui potuit...), since Euryalus is dead. The structure of his last sentence, on the other hand, follows that of the last sentence of Bion’s comast (fr. 11.6-8):

...οὐκ ἐπὶ φορέαν
ἐξομμα οὐδ’ ἵνα νεκτός ὅδοιος κεφάλαια, ἀλλ’ ἔρωτα, καλὸν δὲ τ’ ἐφωγώνιν συνέφωσάν. 

In each text a pair of closely coordinated, almost semantically equivalent, negative clauses is capped by an explanatory adversative clause (οὐκ...οὐδὲ... ἀλλά... ~ nec...nec...tantum...). The contents are also related: Nisus did in fact go on a thieving expedition by night, and he changes the denial of Bion’s comast into a confession (mea fraus omnis).

There is a possibility that Bion’s fragments 11 and 12 come from the same poem: the listing of erotic paradeigmata in comastic (or simply lovelorn) speeches has bucolic parallels in Theocritus 3.40-51 and [Theocritus] 20.34-43, and the two passages are stylistically related, having exceptional concentrations of artistic noun-modifier patterns.28 In that case, a rustic lover who invited a heavenly body to share and support his love (Bion fr. 11.8 συνέρασι...τας...καιλέω, ἀλλ’ ἐραω, καλ’ δὲ τ’ ἐφωγώνιν) declares that «those who love are blessed when they are loved equally in return» is pointedly replaced by a bewildered warrior inviting a heavenly body to share (Aeneid 9.409 succurre) in a desperate rescue attempt, and ending up blessed (like Bion’s Achilles) only after joining in death the beloved he avenged. In a revisionary inversion of Bion’s analogy, the final example in the comast’s


28. See Reed 14, 51-2, 176.
catalogue (the position itself suggests an ambiguity and gloom in the Greek poem) switches places with the speaker: Bion’s amatory pair becomes the heroic pair. Nisus and Euryalus are *fortunati* not just because they live on in Virgil’s epic, indissolubly part of the Roman history they helped to initiate, but because their mutual love kept them together in death: bonded to a Hellenistic love-motif, the epic theme of eternal glory for which Achilles died is remade. If this reconstruction is accurate, Virgil frames the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, from Nisus’ prayer to the macarism over their corpses, as a reworking of the prayer of Bion’s rustic comast, with the insertion of material from the *Adonis* in the middle helping to transform the unrequited love suffered by the comast into the loss of the beloved by violence—again, death is the fruit of love.

III

The combination of at least two Bionean poems behind the Euryalus episode encourages us to look for the influence of others, and Bion’s lost mythological poems on Orpheus and Hyacinthus offer fields for at least heuristic speculation, and possible reinforcement of the general theme of tragic love. The former poem is unattested. From the fact that the *Epitaph on Bion* ([Moschus] 3) alludes to the myth of Orpheus exactly as it alludes to known mythological poems of Bion—indeed, even more insistently, since it has sections on Orpheus both at the beginning and at the end (14-18, 117-26)—Skutsch and Knaack reached the natural conclusion that Bion’s anonymous epitaphist knew a poem on Orpheus by the master.29 It is interesting that Virgil’s Orpheus story (*Georgics* 4), particularly its tragic turning point, echoes in his story of Nisus—indeed, even more insistently, since it has sections on Orpheus both at the beginning and at the end (14-18, 117-26)—Skutsch and Knaack reached the natural conclusion that Bion’s anonymous epitaphist knew a poem on Orpheus by the master.29 It is interesting that Virgil’s Orpheus story (*Georgics* 4), particularly its tragic turning point, echoes in his story of Nisus; compare, for example, *Georgics* 4.485-91 *casus evaserat omnis...restitit...victusque animi respetit* with *Aeneid* 9.386-89 *evaserat hostis...ut stetit et frustra absentem respetit amicum...* From this perspective Nisus is cast as Orpheus, pausing and turning in fear of losing his beloved; Euryalus as Eurydice, the lost beloved. Though the potential influence from Bion is clear, specific comparisons are impossible. Hardie’s observation on 9.386 that the name Euryalus sounds like Eurydice, and is its metrical equivalent, opens the way to speculation on verbal imitations that unfortunately may never be confirmed.

Certain motifs in Virgil’s Orpheus narrative hint at a Bionean source. Eurydice’s reproach at *Georgics* 4.494-5 *«quis et me» inquit «miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu, / quis tantus furor?»* is like that of Aphrodite at *Adonis* 61 τοῦσοουτον ἐμήνο ὅθη παλαίειν;31 If Virgil derived the phrase from Bion, did it come from his Aphrodite or his Eurydice—that is, did Virgil combine two of Bion’s poems here, or did Bion himself use the same motif in two separate

29. See Skutsch 59-60, Knaack, Reed 27. Bion fr. 6 and 17 have connections with Orpheus and so may come from the lost poem; see Valpuesta Bermúdez 286-7; Reed 152, 192 n. 59.
30. Bleisch 187-8 collects verbal parallels between the two texts (and a third, the death of Creusa in *Aen.* 2). See also Gale.
31. Cf. [Tib.] 3.9.7-8 *quis furor est...* in a comparison with *Adonis* (see Wilhelm 96).
poems? *Georgics* 4.469 *Manisque adiit regemque tremendum* (of Orpheus’ journey to the Underworld) seems to adapt *Adonis* 51-2 ἔρχειν εἰς Ἀχέρωντα·πάρο στυγνὸν βαιλῆα καὶ ἕγιον (of Adonis)—or had Bion also used such a phrase of his Orpheus? The exclamation for Eurydice at the end of the *Georgics* narrative *Eurydicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua, / a miseram Eurydicen! anima fugiente vocabat* (4.525-6) contains a grammatical construction that also occurs at *Aeneid* 2.769-70 *Cresuam / nequiquam ingeminans iterumque iterumque vocavi*: the name is both quoted exclamation and direct object of the verb. Compare *Adonis* 39 Κύπριδς αἰνέν ἔρωτα τίς / ὑκέκλαυσεν ἂν αἰαῖ, where the verb governs both an exclamation and a direct object. Was there a construction of this kind also in Bion’s *Orpheus*? Ovid has one (on Linus) at *Amores* 3.9.23-4, an elegy deeply influenced by Bion. The phrase *anima fugiente* at 4.526 recalls the use of *fugio* discussed above. These parallels, however, do not bring us closer to the Euryalus episode.

Hardly less elusive is any influence from the lost poem excerpted in Bion fr. 1, four lines on Apollo’s grief at the death of Hyacinthus that sound like part of a longer treatment of the myth; references at *Epitaph on Bion* 6 and 26 suggest that Bion described the growth of the hyacinth flower and Apollo’s lamentation.32 The analogy with Euryalus extends to both boys’ deaths, caused unintentionally by their lovers. Perhaps because the description «crimson flower» was conventionally applied to the hyacinth,33 Servius sees the metamorphosis of Hyacinthus behind the first of Euryalus’ flower similes (on 9.435 purpureus...flos), and Ovid’s studied use of *Aeneid* 9.433-7 for the death of Hyacinthus (*Metamorphoses* 10.185, 190-95, alongside echoes of Bion fr. 1) could be considered to extract a mythological subtext; Wigodsky 141 wonders if a Hellenistic treatment of the Hyacinthus myth is behind Euryalus’ double simile. Pallas is overtly likened to a hyacinth (along with a violet) at 11.69, in the simile that in Bionian fashion describes his lingering beauty. Needless to say, the specific repetitions that would allow us to see how Bion works meaningfully in the new context are hard to find. One close verbal parallel is 9.424 *aet tavan potuit perferre dolorem ~ Bion fr. 1.1 τοῦς ἀλώνες ἐξόντα, on the suffering experienced by the lover at the death of his beloved. There is a pointed reversal here, since whereas Bion’s line describes Apollo’s ἄμφισία, this is where Nisus cries out (this contrast inverts the one between the vocal wilderness through which Bion’s Aphrodite wanders and the dumí silentes at 9.393).

Virgil’s passage on the healing of Aeneas shows striking, if not uniformly interpretable, parallels with Bion’s Hyacinthus fragment. *Aeneid* 12.402-4 *Phoebique potentibus herbis / nequiquam trepidat, nequiquam spicula dextra / sollicitat* recalls Apollo’s futile application of all his φάσματα (including

32. Skutsch 58, Reed 28-9.
33. Cf. Sappho (?) fr. 105B Voigt τῶν ὑάκινθων … πορφυρῶν ἄνθος. Euph. fr. 40.1 Powell = 44.1 van Groningen = 70.1 Claie πορφυρή ὑάκινθων, Mel. A.P. 5.147.3-4 ὑάκινθων…πορφυρήν, Ov. Met. 13.395 purpureum…flore (cf. 10.212-13), Manil. 5.257 purpureos hyacinthos. See Brenk 225 = 92 n. 16.
ambrosia and nectar) to Hyacinthus at Bion fr. 1.2-4; 405 nulla viam Fortuna regit recalls Bion’s (apparent, though corrupt) reference to fate in line 4. At 419 Venus sprinkles ambrosia into Iapyx’ potion—along with dittany, which at 413-14 is *puberibus caulem foliis et flore comantem purpureo*, with the phrase that can be a periphrasis for hyacinth. Iapyx is the beloved of Apollo, like Hyacinthus. Here too contamination between several models is thinkable: Iapyx’ history parallels the obscure contents—a gift granted the speaker by Apollo in exchange for something—of Bion fr. 6, which might come from the lost *Orpheus*. Like that of Adonis, Aeneas’ wound is apparently on his thigh; and the same goddess presides over both scenes.34

IV

I wish to conclude by pressing the question of contamination as more than a source-critical problem. Virgil is not the only poet who juxtaposes borrowings from different poems of Bion. Three myths treated by him —Orpheus, Hyacinthus, and Adonis— articulate Book 10 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, where shared motifs and language point up the likenesses between them. Ovid’s Hyacinthus story and Nonnus’ lament over Ampelus contain reminders of both the *Adonis* and Bion fr. 1.35 The tragic amatory theme common to the myths would alone have suggested such combinations, but one begins to suspect that the Smyrnean poet reused more specific themes and motifs from poem to poem, not necessarily mechanically, but in a way that positively invited conflations and palimpsestic appropriations of his various myths. Later poets, in other words, may have used his recurrent motifs (the lament, for example, or floral imagery) as hinges to combine his several mythological poems and make new sense of them as subtexts of their own narratives. Among the effects of the *Aeneid*’s interpretive reordering of Bion’s poetry we have especially noticed a transposition of the Greek poet’s amatory themes to a martial context: the Euryalus episode brings the *Adonis* back to its warrior-models and raises the martial subjects of Bion fr. 12.7 to the forefront of the macarism, decisively bonding martial epic with Hellenistic eroticism. The mixture of love and death thus enters the Latin epic tradition, transfigured into an erotics of Roman origins.

Works cited


34. Imperial-era sarcophagi take advantage of this analogy: Koortbojian 49-62.

35. Reed 28.
