CHAPTER 2

Colluthus and His Models

The *Abduction of Helen* is a jigsaw of models interacting on a linguistic, content-based and stylistic level. Most of these models have been identified by Livrea in his 1968 edition, but no work has been done to interpret how these models have been employed. Colluthus’ version of the story is based on the *Cypria*,\(^1\) with a few alternatives, but he also engages with Homer, Apollonius and Nonnus as his main models.

In three selected scenes, the poet draws on specific genres: the proem and the description of Paris (epic and bucolic poetry), Eris (epic poetry), and the beauty contest with Aphrodite’s speeches (rhetoric and invective). His objective was not to fit in with his predecessors, but to create expectations in his readers in order to then surprise them with a twist. This can be approached through a methodology which considers traditional epic models but also identifies allusions\(^2\) to more contemporary poets, and in some instances offers a new reading through the key to Colluthus’ poetry, irony.

This approach owes much to the theories of Fowler and Hinds in particular.\(^3\) The debate around the author’s intentionality with regard to textual connections to other texts remains open.\(^4\) The focus here is therefore on the effects that the poet hopes to achieve in his readers, and, consequently, on how an educated reader would have received such references,\(^5\) independently from the author’s intentions. On some occasions, however, a classification of Colluthus’ echoes to other texts can be suggested as either citations or revisions are possible; this differentiation is in some instances possible based on a traditional analysis of the models used to either support a point (thus by quoting a predecessor as a warrant) or to disagree strongly from them, with the intention of presenting a new version of the story or to correct the model’s version.\(^6\)

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1 See n. 9 p. 37.
2 For the theory behind intertext and allusion see Fowler 1997.
5 Martindale 2006, 3; Zajko 2006, 82–3.
6 Hinds 1998, Chapter 4; Riffaterre 1990, 73–5.
This choice derives from the fact that the two main criteria to distinguish intentional from accidental references as defined by the intentionalist school of thought, i.e. the author’s familiarity with his model (markedness), and the significance of the reference,\(^7\) can only partially be applied to the *Abduction*. Firstly, no matter how close Colluthus’ text may seem to, for instance, a line of Nonnus, it can hardly be proven that he knew these texts himself. This statement may seem as an exaggeration, given that what Conte and Barchiesi define as the *modello-codice*\(^8\) is represented, in this context, by the whole epic tradition of models ranging from Homer to Triphiodorus. However, given that we do not have any information about Colluthus’ biography, we can only assume that his education would have involved first-hand reading of his models. He could have read some of the texts in the original language, some in translation, or in school, or in translinear translation. Secondly, the issue of significance of the reference to another text leads to obvious questions regarding the perspective of such significance: is the intertextual reference significant in the eyes of the author, or in those of the reader? Once again, the matter remains open.

1. **A Bucolic Opening**

The opening of Colluthus’ *Abduction of Helen* (lines 1–16) and the section about Paris (102–26) instantly instil a bucolic feeling in readers. Literary models, content, and scenario are borrowed from both the epic and the pastoral tradition, and the impression that we perceive from the sounds and images in this section is unmistakably bucolic; but did Colluthus just want to write another epic proem and paint another bucolic picture?

The proem\(^9\) occupies the first sixteen verses of the *Abduction*, and is followed by the scene of Peleus and Thetis’ wedding, including a parade of the gods and goddesses attending the ceremony (lines 20–39), and Strife’s plan to

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\(^8\) Conte 1986, 141–51; Barchiesi 1984, 91–121.
\(^9\) In 1928, De Lorenzi suggested that the *Abduction’s* proem was the work of a scholar who added it to the poem after Colluthus’ death. His theory was based on alleged contradictions between the proem and the rest of the poem, which led him to consider the *Abduction* a fragment of an unfinished poem; this explained why it is not quoted among the works of Colluthus in the *Suda*. In De Lorenzi’s view, this poem was an *Antehomerica*, a work that was meant to cover the events prior to the Trojan War and stand beside Quintus of Smyrna’s *Posthomerica* and Triphiodorus’ *Sack of Ilium*, which bridged the gap between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. De Lorenzi also based his theory on two different traditions that would have been followed within the poem: the author of the proem follows Callimachus’ *Aetia*, whose