A CALLIMACHEAN CRUX

(Ep. 44 Pfeiffer, 1081–86 Gow-Page, A.P. XII, 139)

"Εστι τι, ναι των Πάνα, κεχρυμένον, ἔστι τι ταύτη, ναὶ μὰ Διώνυσον, πῦρ ὑπὸ τῆς σποδῆς. οὐ θαρσῶν μὴ δῆ με περιτλεκέ πολλάκι λῆθει τοῖχον ὑποτρώγων ἤσύχιος ποταμός. τῶν καὶ νῦν δείδουκα, Μενέξενε, μὴ με παρεισόδος οὔτος ἡ σειγαφρος ἡ εἰς τὸν ἑρωτα βάλημ."

2 διώνυσον P 5 τῶ P 6 οὐντοσειγαφρος P βάλημ P, corr.

(1) Richard Bentley had suggested ὁ σιγέοτης for the transmitted σειγαφρος with reference to Hesychius σιγέοτης λαθροδάκτης. This has been widely approved. E.g., by Otto Schneider (Leipzig, 1870); A.W. Mair (Loeb, 1921); Hermann Beckby (A.G., Tusculum-Bücherei, 1958); Robert Renehan (HSCP 68, 1964, 376–78); Georg Luck (GG A 219, 1967, 54).

(2) Nevertheless, I think those who hesitated to accept Bentley's σιγέοτης were right. So, e.g., Wilamowitz (Callimachus, Berlin, 1882 = 19254; Hellenistische Dichtung, Berlin, 1924, I, 173); Émile Cahen (Callimaque, Budé, 1922 = 19615); Rudolf Pfeiffer (Callimachus, Oxford, II, 1953); A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Hellenistic Epigrams, Cambridge, 1965).

For, (a): Palaeographically the corruption of σιγέοτης into σειγαφρος is not "readily understandable". (b) By no means is it certain that Hesychius' λαθροδάκτης was intended to be an echo of λῆθει and ὑποτρώγων in our lines 3–4, as Renehan wants us to believe (also in his book Greek Textual Criticism: A Reader, Harvard U. P., 1969, 123–26). Finally, (c): ἔστις, meaning 'creeper', need not carry on the figure of a river 'creeping past'.

(3) Emendations introducing new Greek words must be discarded on methodological grounds. Such are: J. J. Reiske's
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(4) Giuseppe Giangrande (Rh. Mus. 101, 1958, 50–52) suggested this reading of line 6: οὐτὸς ὁ σεῦ γ' Ἑρμῆς εἰς τὸν Ἑρωτα βάλῃ. I think his emendation of σεῦγ into σεῦ γ' is sound. For, (a): Y was misread by some scribe as I. And (b): This σεῦ γ' happily links 6 οὐτός with Menexenus in line 5.

However, Giangrande’s emendation of ἀρνῆς into Ἑρμῆς is not convincing to me. For, first, the epiphany (cf. the οὐτός) of the god Hermes as a personal helper and λειτον of Menexenus is unwelcome and unwarranted. And second, ἀρνῆς does not seem to me to be an easy corruption of Ἑρμῆς (contra Giangrande 51: “Die Verderbnis ist sehr leicht zu erklären: das tachygraphische Zeichen für εν über dem γ wurde falsch gelesen und so entstand ein ungewünschtes γαδ’”).

(5) I would like to suggest the following reading for the corruption οἰγαγάρνης:

οὐτὸς ὁ σεῦ γ' ἂσινής εἰς τὸν Ἑρωτα βάλῃ.

“This harmless or innocent (fellow) of yours”. A long, walking-stick-shaped papyrological C was misread as P. Compare, for instance, the sigma in θωτός with the rho in ὑπερβολον of Bacchylides Dithyr. 18, 19 Snell in P. Lond. 733, col. 37, 3 (end of II C. A.D.). Ἀσινής with a living object was used already by Sappho, Fr. 148 L.-P. (ἀσινής πάροικος).

The situation in epigram 44 seems to be as follows. Menexenus, a friend, comes to introduce a quiet, innocent young boy to Callimachus. The boy embraces the poet while greeting him. But, Callimachus, apparently overwhelmed by the beauty of the boy, reacts in a strange way: “Embrace me not, since I have no confidence in myself (and you may well become my ἐφόμενος in no time)”. Then he explains his behavior to the present friend Menexenus, by adducing the example of the proverbial quiet and therefore dangerous river (πολλάκι), and by applying it to the present situation (τὸν καὶ νῦν) 1). The word 6 ἀσινής (‘harmless, innocent’) resumes the idea of 4 ἴσιχος (‘quiet’) from the

1) This was then imitated by Ovid, Ars amat. I, 619–20:

Blanditiis animum furtim deprendere nunc sit,
ut pendens liquida ripa sube(s)ytur aqua,
as E. J. Kenney had suggested (apud B. Axelson, Hermes 86, 1958, 128).
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river-simile, in the same way in which the word ἀρειωδός ('by insinuating himself into my affections’, Gow-Page) resumes the idea of ἀλήθεια ('unmarkedly, secretly') from the same simile. Both agents, 'a quiet river' (ἡσύχιος ποταμός) and 'this harmless man' (οὖτος ὁ ἰαμής), produce the same result: a disastrous destruction (τοῖχον ὑποτρόφγων = εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα βάληι).

"By Pan, there is something hidden (in me). By Dionysus, yes: there is some fire beneath these ashes. I have no confidence (in myself): embrace me not. For oft-times a quiet river undermines the wall unmarked. So now too I fear, Menexenus, lest this harmless man of yours find his way into my heart and whelm me into love."

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