TWO TEXTUAL PROBLEMS IN LUCIAN'S PISCATOR

Pisc. 14. ... ἀλλὰ τούναντιον ὅπερ ἐν ἦ καλόν, ὡσπερ τὸ χρυσίον ἀποσμόμενον, τοῖς κόμμασι λαμπρότερον ἀποστίλβει καὶ φανερώτερον γίνεται1).

ἀποσμόμενον β': ἀποσπόμενον γ (Γ4 inter -σ- et -ω- μ supra ras. exaravit; ang. sup. ext. Ω, ἀποσμάμενος τ. κομ ... man. quaedam scrisit) τοῖς κόμμασι Λ recc. plerique, bcd vulg.: τοῖς κόμμασιν Γ olim (nunc τοίς σκόμμασιν, sed στ et pars sinistra litt. ω serius inferta; marg. τοῖς κομ, ut vid. man. rec. (?)) Σ α: τοῖς σκόμμασι Φ, sine dubio olim Ω (nam nunc /κό/μμασι (= ras.) praebet), β γίνεται Γ Φ: γίνεται δαβ

In this passage, Philosophy is chiding her followers for being angry with Parrhesiades (i.e. Lucian), who had been making fun of them. She compares their situation with the treatment accorded her by Comedy at the Dionysia, noting that she still considers Comedy her friend, in spite of the ridicule. She then goes on to make a thoughtful remark about the effect of αξιώματα on things in general. In her view, nothing is the worse off for a joke, but just the opposite is the case: whatever is fine shines all the more brightly.

We may, first of all, dispense with the variant ἀποσπόμενον. The word supposedly refers in the context to mining (i.e. =

1) Adapted from my dissertation, A Critical Edition of Lucian’s Vitarum Auctio and Piscator, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1974). For most dialogues, including Piscator, the manuscript tradition can be conveniently divided into two classes, β and γ, the former best represented, for our dialogue, by B (Vind. 123, tenth century), and U (Vat. 1324, eleventh century), the latter by Γ (Vat. 90, tenth century), Φ (Laurentianus C.S. 77, tenth century), and Ω (Marc. 434 (840), tenth or eleventh century). The other testes quoted in the apparatus: ΙΓ, a late corrector of Γ, L (Laur. Plut. 57. 51, eleventh century), the editions (Edd.) a (Editio Princeps, Florence, Alpina, 1406), b (Ed. Aldina prior, Venice, 1503), c (Ed. Aldina altera, Venice, 1522), d (Ed. Juntina, Venice, 1535), the vulgate (vulg., Ed. Reitziana, Amsterdam: Wetsten, 1743), Σ (Vat. 224, fourteenth century), P (Vat. 76, fourteenth century), σ (Urb. 121, fifteenth century), ε (Vat. 87, fourteenth century), Ψ (Marc. 436 (314), fourteenth century), N (Par. 2957, fifteenth century), R (Laur. Plut. 57. 28, fifteenth century).

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ἀνορύττόμενον\(^2\), but to apply such a usage to it would surely strain the Greek. It is, in fact, the result of a simple scribal error. The real problem lies in the words τοῖς κόμμασι(ν)/σκόμμασι. The former has been generally accepted, since it is the vulgate reading and was the original reading of the prestigious \(\Gamma\). It is also found in the old manuscript L (Laurentianus Plut. 57. 51, eleventh century) and in many recentiores, as the apparatus shows. Now, much energy has been expended to explain the meaning of κόμμασι in the context. Some of these interpretations are found in scholars’ notes included in Reitz’s edition. According to Gronovius, who read the false ἀποστάμενον, a certain type of gold used to be beaten on being dug up\(^3\). Even if we were to accept ἀποστάμενον, Gronovius’ interpretation would be open to criticism, since the Greek tells us that the κόμματα are used *while* the gold is being dug up. Graevius claimed that κόμμα σα refers here to the *act* of striking, an interpretation which the Greek will not tolerate, and that the gold, when struck in the mint, became shinier\(^4\). Jacobs, some years later, opined that κόμμασι refers to the blows by which metals were cleansed of slag\(^5\). ἀποστάμενον really means ‘being wiped off’, and only by a far-fetched interpretation of the Greek could one think that there is a reference to some smelting process here.

Few have defended the variant σκόμμασι. Eduard Schwartz thought that it could indeed be retained if a semi-colon (\(\cdot\)) is placed after ἀποστάμενον, producing a half-completed simile\(^6\). The text proposed by Schwartz is feasible, but quite awkward, especially since σκόμματος had just occurred in the preceding clause.

The problem can be solved rather easily. I submit that κόμμασι became σκόμμασι via dittography and the orthographical error \(\omega/\omega\), but that κόμμασι is itself a corruption due to dit-

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\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid. Professor T.V.Buttrey has informed me that in Mexico low-grade (10%) silver coin-blanks are dipped in silver, making them a dull white (they had been of a greenish tint). Upon striking, they become shiny. He knows of no parallel in the ancient world.


ography in an uncial manuscript. The exemplar of this manuscript would have read TOICOMMACI (with lunate sigma) and was in copying corrupted to TOICOMMACI (IC became ICIC). The combination IC closely resembles uncial kappa, hence the corruption τοίς κόμμασι. ὄμμα is generally a poetic word, but is found in Plato and Thucydides, two authors Lucian had studied, as well as in Lucian’s own works 7). In our sentence, τοίς ὄμμασι can be taken as a dative of reference. The solution offered here provides for an eminently readable text, and avoids the pitfalls of the bizarre κόμμα and the awkward σκόμμα. We may translate: ‘... but, on the contrary, whatever is good, like gold being wiped off, shines more brightly in our eyes and becomes more conspicuous’.

The passage involved is part of the speech for the defense delivered by Parrhesiades, in which the theme of the hypocrisy of latter-day philosophers is constantly played upon, and compared to the actor’s performance on stage. It is important to note that the author is vividly describing a present (at least in the literary sense) and continuing custom. The clause of which ὁργίζονται is the verb continues the vivid tone of the passage: ‘... and doubtless they [the audience] do not get angry with them…’ The problem is twofold. In the first place, both variants for the main verb of the clause beginning ἀλλὰ καὶ ἦδωτ’ ἀν ὀλμαί β’ ἀλλα καὶ ἦδωντ’ ἀν μᾶλλον Γ’ ἀλλα καὶ ἦδοτ’ ἀν μᾶλλον Φ (inter γ- ct -δ- foramen membraniae; -ν- suprascr. man. sec.) ἀλλὰ καὶ ἦδωντ’ ἀν ὀλμαί Ps? ζ Ψ ἀλλα καὶ ἦδωντο ἀν, ὀλμαί, ΝΣΕedd.vulg. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἦδωται, ὀλμαί, K. Schwartz ἀλλὰ καὶ ἦδοντ’ ἀν, ὀλμαί, μᾶλλον Lehmann (monente Jacobs) μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἦδωντ’ ἀν ὀλμαί Fritzsche in app. μαστιγον-μένον Bekker LR: μαστιγονμένων β’

current practice. In addition, the variants οἷμαι and μᾶλλον are suspect: the former is perhaps superfluous, since the presumption of the spectators’ attitude had already been succinctly expressed with δὴ ποιν, while the latter is cumbersome after ἀλλὰ καὶ. Since the conjectures listed in the apparatus include one or both of these words, they suffer from the same blemishes. Let us note, however, that K. Schwartz, in postulating ἐδονταί, recognized the parallelism of this verb and ἔγιζονται. A sharp eye could perhaps discern the doubtful elision -αι (i.e. ἐδονταί) hiding behind ἄν in β (ἐδοντ’ ἄν). In this case, ἄν would have to refer to μαστιγομένῳ. Here again, however, the particle injects a note of potentiality which is unwarranted in the context.

The sharply contrasting variants οἷμαι and μᾶλλον, both of which are suspect, probably have a common origin. I would suggest that both are derived from a note written above the line. I see the stages of corruption this way: ἐδονταί was changed to ἐδοντ’ ἄν (cf. β). Next, a redactor wrote οἱ μᾶλλον above the line, using, perhaps, a diagonal stroke for -οι or even an extreme form of suspension, μα. The note was intended as an emendation for ἐδοντ’: ‘οἱ (i.e. ἐδοντ’) preferred’. In the γ-recension, -οι- in fact replaced -ο- in ἐδοντ’ but μᾶλλον was added to the text. In β, οἱμᾶλλον or οἱμα was corrupted or misunderstood as οἷμαι, and subsequently made part of the text. Hence the divergent texts of β and γ. The use of the present imperfective ἐδονταί without qualifiers such as οἷμαι and superfluous adverbials as μᾶλλον provides a sentence which is consistent with the lively and sharply defined tone of the passage. We may translate: ‘Since the umpires customarily beat any actor who, in the role of Athena, Poseidon or Zeus performs poorly and in a manner unworthy of the gods, and doubtless they [the audience] do not get angry with them, because they turn the actor who put on their masks and played their parts over to the whippers to be beaten, but they are even glad that he is being beaten’.

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