

K. Nashef, Beih. Tüb. Atlas B 7/5, 1982, 272, der die Lage von Opis als „noch immer unbekannt“ bezeichnet; inzwischen scheint auch er eine Identifizierung mit Tulul al Mujaili⁶ zu erwägen – vgl. Zetemata 82, 1985, 149 A. 27). Zu den antiken Quellen vgl. oben Abschnitt 12: Das Opis-Problem.

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THE ALDER AND THE POET

Philetas 10 (p. 92 Powell)

Οὐ μέ τις ἐξ ὄρέων ἀποφώλιος ἀγοριώτης
αἰρήσει κλήθρην, αἰρόμενος μακέλην·
ἄλλ' ἐπέων εἰδὼς κόσμον καὶ πολλὰ μογήσας
μύθων παντοίων οἶμον ἐπιστάμενος.

The speaker in this intriguing poem identifies herself as a κλήθρη, an alder tree, and asserts that no uneducated (ἀποφώλιος¹), mattock-wielding²) mountain rustic will take her, but ra-

1) ἀποφώλια . . . ἀπαιδευτα Schol. Od. 5.182, cf. LfrgrE s.v. In our passage ἀποφώλιος (and by extension the entire raignment) may recall Od. 8.167–177. There, the word appears without a negative for the only time in early epic and, as in Philetas, a contrast is drawn between physical ability and skill with words:

οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν
ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φνὴν οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτ' ἀγορητύν.
ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνήρ,
ἄλλα θεὸς μορφήν ἔπεισι στέφει, οἱ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
τεροπόμενοι λεύσσοσιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλῆως ἀγορεύει
αἰδοῖ μελιχίην, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγορομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνά ἄστν θεὸν ὡς εἰσορόωσιν.
ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ἄλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσιν
ὡς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπές, οὐδέ κεν ἄλλως
οὐδὲ θεὸς τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι.

2) αἰρόμενος μακέλην must be taken as a generalizing epithet (parallel to and contrasting with πολλὰ μογήσας for the poet), as was seen by E. Maass,

ther he who, through his own hard work (πολλὰ μογήσας v. 3), is knowledgeable in the way of song, i. e. the typical Hellenistic poet. Alder-wood is, of course, fit for a variety of furniture or wood-work. But what would a poet want with the tree; or the tree with a poet? The answer will likely involve us in some sort of 'play' inasmuch as Stobaeus (II 4,5) locates the poem among Philetas' *παίγνια*.

Two general categories emerge from the many solutions proposed: first, there are those that maintain that the alder is merely a comparison³); we may reject this approach since the text provides not the slightest hint that such was intended: the speaker is simply a κλήθη. Then there are those who deal seriously with the apparent fact that the 'P' of this poem is, in one way or another, an alder. Here we distinguish two sub-groups, one which sees

Hermes 31 (1896) 405 n. 3, followed by G. Kuchenmüller, *Philetas Coi Reliquiae* (Berlin 1928) p. 61 and 63; cf. Theocritus 16.31-33 (cited below). Because he tried to imagine the rustic chopping down the tree with a mattock, Wilamowitz thought that the text needed emendation (cf. *Hellenistische Dichtung I*, Berlin 1924, p. 116).

3) Thus C. Ph. Kayser, *Philetas Coi fragmenta quae reperiuntur* (Göttingen 1793) 47, felt that the poet, comparing himself to an alder, says that song would move him more than brute rustic force. N. Bach, *Philetas Coi, Hermesianactis atque Phanoclis reliquiae* (Halle 1829) 41, also sees the poet as comparing himself to an alder, but with the sense: "summo cum studio poesi litterisque incumbens immortalitatis gloriam consequar". Similarly C. Cessi, *Eranos* 8 (1908) 142: "de fama sua agat poeta"; and A. Couat, *La Poésie Alexandrine* (Paris 1882) 74; R. Herzog, *Philologus* 79 (1924) 418: "ein dichterisches Selbstbekenntnis in bukolischer Umgebung mit polemischem Sinn".

Others took this thought in another direction, proposing that a *woman* is compared to a tree: Thus R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion* (Gießen 1893) 179, followed by Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung I* p. 117. K. F. W. Schmidt, *Symb. Osl.* 7 (1928) 30-32, suggested that the woman was herself called Κλήθη (though such a name is unattested). T. B. L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (London 1964) 42, simply accepted Reitzenstein's original comparison. Emendation was another means of turning κλήθη into a woman: thus already J. A. Hartung, *Die Griechischen Elegiker II* (Leipzig 1859) 33, made her 'tall', βλώθη; and for G. Morelli, *Maia* 2 (1949) 12, she was 'tender', βληθη.

Others yet would see a *book* compared to a tree. I. Cazzaniga, *Riv. di Fil.* 90 (1962) 238-9, for instance, believes that the alder stands for Philetas' 'Demeter'. For Q. Cataudella, *Helikon* 7 (1967) 402-404, it is the title poem for a book of Παίγνια which compares itself to an alder: "il suo libro non sarebbe andato a finire, come un tronco di ontano, nelle mani di un rozzo contadino". K. J. McKay, *Antichthon* 12 (1978) 36-44, follows Cataudella's lead but, supplying δῶν - in the general sense 'tree' - at the beginning of v. 10 of the *Aitia Prologue* (allegedly a reference to a work of Philetas), would make Κλήθη the (unattested) title of the book.

κλήθρη as the alder itself⁴); and one which takes it as the material from which an object – the actual subject of the poem – is made.

The former group breaks down as it fails to explain satisfactorily why an alder tree would want a poet rather than a rustic, and to what end the poet would take (αἰρήσει) her; nor does it do justice – far more, like many interpretations, it falls victim – to the riddling structure of the paignion, which, as Kuchenmüller (op. cit., n. 2 above, p. 62) and others observed, makes us constantly reassess our understanding of the poem in the process of reading.

For at least through the first word of v. 2, αἰρήσει, we might indeed assume that the speaker is no tree at all but, for example, a woman (cf. n. 3 above), since the subject of μέ in v. 1 is deliberately vague. With κλήθρη, however, we must alter that view: the speaker within the first couplet is now clearly a tree; there is no need to take her as anything but a tree, and the fact that ἔξ ὀρέων can go with αἰρήσει rather than ἀγροιώτης reinforces that reading. Perhaps the last words of the couplet, αἰρόμενος μακέλην, hint at the further shift to come, since the ‘mattock-wielding’ rustic – for Theocritus at least – is the archetype of one who has no part in song: μηδ’ ἀκλειῆς μύρηαι ἐπὶ ψυχροῦ Ἀχέροντος / ὡσεὶ τις μακέλα τετυλωμένος ἐνδοθι χεῖρας / ἀχὴν ἐκ πατέρων πενήην ἀπτήμονα κλαίων (16.31–33). In any case, with the second distich we must reassess anew, for we are faced with that puzzle – stated above – of what possible benefit an alder might derive from a poet or vice versa.

We therewith turn to that second sub-group for which the understanding of κλήθρη is the key to grasping the paignion’s game⁵). Κλήθρη, on this view, is an object made of alder-wood. Two such objects have been considered: the first, a poet’s staff of alder-wood which – it is argued – would have been intended as a

4) F. Jacobs, *Animadversiones in epigrammata Anthologiae Graecae I 1* (Leipzig 1798) 388, thought it an incised tree that hoped it wouldn’t be cut down by a rustic, but would be put to some use by a poet. Similarly W. E. Weber, *Die elegischen Dichter der Hellenen* (Frankfurt a. M. 1826) 662, thought that the verses were incised in or hung in a votive tablet around an alder which the poet had planted. Cf. also F. G. Schneidewin, *Delectus poetarum elegiacorum Graecorum* (Göttingen 1838) 145, and R. Holland, *PhW* 45 (1925) 141, who emends κλήθρη to κλήθρον, i. e. as a door-bar, and suggests that the wood is the laurel.

5) Thus (with McKay op. cit. n. 3 above, p. 38–39) we may probably see in αἰρήσει κλήθρη the additional, pointed sense of ‘grasping intellectually’, i. e. no uneducated rustic will ‘understand’ the κλήθρη, but only he who is versed in the way of song, in other words the poet or (as we here first comprehend) the educated reader.

gift, an ἀποφόρητον like that in Theocr. 7.43 (τάν τοι . . . κορύναν δωρούτομαι), and which the poem would have accompanied and impersonated⁶). The second, and to my mind correct, solution is a writing tablet made of alder-wood⁷).

In choosing between these two, it seems to me decisive that tablets have a long history of speech⁸), the staff has none. The concept of a speaking text, moreover, is immediately understandable; a speaking staff is not. Finally a tablet would allow a true identity between the poem and object, the staff would not. Κλήθρη as 'tablet' must then be metonymy (as Kuchenmüller saw, op. cit., n. 2 above, p. 61) – an unproblematical solution: for Euripides had used πεύκη metonymously for writing tablets at I. A. 39 and Hipp. 1253 f.

But before we can embrace this explanation one crucial obstacle must be removed, namely Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's doubt, or better flat denial (Hellenistische Dichtung I p. 116 n. 1), that tablets could be made of alder-wood. While Kuchenmüller could point to the variety of objects for which the alder was used, and ask "why not for tablets?" (op. cit. p. 62), he could not produce an example. We, however, are now in a position to do just that – and so provide striking corroboration for our theory that the speaker is a tablet. For alder-wood tablets (early 2nd cent. A.D.) were found in great quantity during the mid 1970s at Vindolanda in England⁹).

6) Thus E. Maass, De tribus Philetæ carminibus, Ind. Lect. Marp., 1895, p. 96, who thought the poem was used as a lot which one of Philetas' circle would have chosen, so receiving the staff as his apophoreton. The idea of the apophoreton was followed by A. Nowacki, Philetæ Coi fragmenta poetica, Diss. Münster 1927, p. 56–7. Cf. also E. L. Bowie, CQ 35 (1985) 75.

7) Thus first C. Wachsmuth in his apparatus criticus to the passage in Stobæus, followed by Kuchenmüller, op. cit., n. 2 above, p. 61.

8) See e.g. already Euripides' *Erechtheus* fr. 369.6–7 Nauck²: δέλτων τ' ἀναπτύσοιμι γῆρυν / ἄν σοφοὶ κλέονται, or *Hippolytus* 877–881.

9) Cf. A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, *Historia* 24 (1975) 471–2; A. K. Bowman, *ZPE* 18 (1975) 244–8, and R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford 1982) 296.

With this objection set aside, then, we can interpret the poem as a 'talking tablet'¹⁰). But more, to the extent that it is a riddle the poem marks the ties that had come to exist between writing and song in a particularly dramatic and involving way. It does not merely state the fact of those ties; rather it relies for its affect on their active recognition and acceptance by the educated reader who wishes to solve the puzzle. With a form particularly suited to contemporary tastes, the riddle¹¹), Philetas, the first great Hellenistic poet, thus provides us with an early sign of the nascent awareness of writing and books that would characterize the Age¹²).

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10) A late instance of a talking tablet, likewise riddling, is in AP XIV 60 (cited by Kuchenmüller, op. cit. p. 62):

Ἦλη μὲν με τέκεν, καινούργησεν δὲ σίδηρος·
 εἶμι δὲ Μουσᾶων μυστικὸν ἐκδοχίον·
 κλειομένη σιγῶ· λαλέω δ' ὅταν ἐκπετάσῃς με,
 κοινωνὸν τὸν Ἄρη μόνον ἔχουσα λόγων.

And even the wax on the tablet takes voice, though again at a late date, in AP XIV 45:

Εἶμι μέλας, λευκός, ξανθὸς ξηρός τε καὶ ὑγρός·
 εὔτε δὲ δουρατέων πεδίων ὑπερ ἔντανύσῃς με,
 Ἄρει καὶ παλάμη φθέγγομαι οὐ λαλέων.

11) Cf. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* II p. 151–152, and P. Bing, *Callimachus' Cows: A Riddling Recusatio*, *ZPE* 54 (1984) 1–8.

12) On the poet's new self-consciousness with regard to writing cf. 'Poetic Inspiration and the Poet's Self Image in Hellenistic Greece', the first chapter of my forthcoming book, *The Well Read Muse. On Hellenistic Literature*.