

TWO NOTES ON HELLENISTIC POETRY

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Los versos 105 s. del *Himno* II de Calímaco representan una alusión crítica a las *Argonáuticas* de Apolonio de Rodas. Y un examen de los indicios pertinentes muestra que el poeta Lícidas, en el *Idilio* VII de Teócrito, es Calímaco.

Lines 105f. of Callimachus' *Hymn* II are a criticism of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. And an analysis of the relevant evidence shows that the poet Lycidas, in Theocritus' *Idyll* VII, is Callimachus.

1. CALLIMACHUS AND ENVY

At lines 105ff. of Callimachus' *Hymn* II, Envy addresses the god Apollo:

ὁ Φθόνος Ἄπολλωνος ἔπ' οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν·
οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰοῖδον ὅς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἶειδει.

In a recent discussion of this passage, G. Giangrande has shown that we are faced in line 106 with an example of verbal syllepsis¹. Thus the sense is "I do not admire the poet who does not even sing as much as πόντος sings". The critics

¹ Cf. *CL* 2 (1982) 57ff.

have, however, been puzzled by the precise relevance of the word *πόντος*. I would like to suggest that the noun *πόντος* has been personified by the poet². Hence line 106 means “I do not admire the poet who does not even sing as much as Pontus sings”.

There is an obvious allusion to the fact that Apollonius Rhodius wrote an epic poem concerning the Argonauts and Pontus³: cf. *Arg.* 1.1ff. In other words, Pontus is said to sing the epic poem concerning Jason and the Argonauts⁴. Callimachus means that Envy tries to attack those poets who did not write long epic poems like Apollonius' *Argonautica*⁵.

The fact that this passage refers to Callimachus' failure to write long epic poems is mentioned by the scholia: cf. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Oxford 1951), II, 53. For Callimachus' famous literary quarrel with Apollonius Rhodius cf. Mair, *Callimachus*, Loeb edition (London 1960, reprint) 3ff. and *Habis* 1998, 390. Herter, followed by Williams (cf. his commentary on Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, lines 106), and Giangrande (*CL*, *art. cit.*) take *πόντος* in line 106 to be a reference to Homer. Giangrande (*loc. cit.*) has shown that Köhnken's objections to Herter are ungrounded. As usual, Callimachus is being oblique “per ambiguitatem vocis” (cf. Lapp, *op. cit.*, 99), in this case the “ambiguitas” of the word *πόντος*. If we read *πόντος* “sea”, and take the word to denote Homer, Callimachus is generally attacking all those poets who wrote long epic poems in the Homeric tradition, such as e. g. Rhianus or Apollonius; if, on the other hand, we read *πόντος*, *Pontus Euxinus*, Callimachus is attacking specifically his rival Apollonius. It would be out of

² For the personification of rivers, towns, islands, etc., in Callimachus cf. Lapp, *De Callimachi Cyrenaei tropis et figuris* (Diss. Bonn 1965) 85.

³ This point has already been correctly understood by E. Spanheim, *In Callimachi Hymnos observationes* (Utrecht 1697) 111.

⁴ Cf. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s. v. *Ponticus*: *serpens*, the dragon that watched the golden fleece, Juv. 14.114.

⁵ Callimachus personifies geographical entities, including the sea (*Πόντος*), cf. Lapp 86, quoting *Hymn* 2.18. He has used *Πόντος* at *Hymn* 2.106 as a “persona allegorica” (on such personifications cf. Jacobs, *Philostratorum Imagines et Callistrati Statuae* [Lipsiae 1825] 754) to allude, by means of his allegory, to his rival Apollonius (on such “versteckte Kritik” cf. Mair's edition of Callim., Loeb, 23, quoting passages from Knaack, *RE*, “Apoll. Rhod.”, 128). But why should Pontus “sing” (*ἀείδει*)? Callimachus alludes to the *topos* whereby the sea was *ἀσίγητος* (Nonn. 42.405), *ἡχήεις* (Ap. Rhod. 2.741). In *Hymn* 2.17ff. Callimachus uses this *topos* to underline that the personified sea must remain silent and not speak (*εὐφῆμει*), when good poets like him sing (*ἀοιδῆ... κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί*). Normally, it is the Muse who sings what the poet repeats (cf. *Il.* 1.1, *Μῆνιν ἀείδει θεά*, *Hom. Hymn.* 19.1 *ἀείσο Μοῦσα λίγεια*, *Od.* 8.73 *Μοῦσ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸν ἀνῆκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν*). Apollonius wishes to sing *παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν* in the passage where he mentions the Pontus (*Arg.* 1.1ff.), and hopes that the Muses will supply his song to him (1.22 *Μοῦσαι δ' ὑποφήτορες εἶεν ἀοιδῆς*), but Callimachus, by saying *Πόντος ἀείδει*, malevolently implies that the voluminous epic written by Apollonius was sung to him not by the Muses, but by the personified Pontus, who was the theatre of the Argonauts' expedition. In other words, Apollonius was not inspired by the Muses, but by an inferior source of inspiration. The present *ἀείδει* (cf. Giangrande, *art. cit.*, 58, n. 1 for the reference to Homer) denotes, if referred to *Πόντος*, the *Pontus Euxinus*, the fact that the *Pontus Euxinus* is always ready to sing for those poets who, like Apollonius Rhodius, want to write poems on the Argonauts' expedition (cf. Mooney's edition of Ap. Rhod., 16f.).

character if Callimachus, in *Hymn* 2.105f., limited himself to generally attacking epic poets instead of criticizing his rival Apollonius Rhodius: Callimachus, as a rule, aims his oblique asides at Apollonius (cf. E. Eichgrün, *Kallimachos und Apollonios Rhodios*, Diss. Berlin 1961). That lines 105f. are an overt allusion to *Arg.* 1.1f. is shown, as Spanheim has underlined, by the Wortstellung ' Ἀπόλλωνος/πρόν-τος = Φοῖβε/Πόντοιο.

2. A MEETING WITH LYCIDAS

In Idyll VII Theocritus describes a meeting between Simichidas and a character called Lycidas. They discuss poets and poetry and then both sing a short song. The ancient *scholia* explained that Simichidas is intended to represent the poet Theocritus: cf. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge 1965, reprint) II, 128. Similarly the poet Asclepiades is given the name Sicelidas (cf. line 40). Scholars have, however, been puzzled by the correct identification of Lycidas. I shall now argue that it is obvious from the context that Lycidas represents the poet Callimachus.

Simichidas (i. e. Theocritus) meets Lycidas in the Coan countryside: cf. lines 10ff. Lycidas is described as a goatherd: cf. lines 13ff. At lines 45ff. Lycidas attacks those poets who tried to rival Homer. As Gow has already explained, Theocritus is alluding here to the literary argument concerning whether or not a Hellenistic poet should write long epic poems: cf. *Habis* 29 (1998) 389. Gow has, however, unable to explain why a goatherd should be said to discuss such matters of literary criticism. The answer to this problem is simple. Theocritus is alluding to Callimachus' *Aetia*. In that poem, Callimachus compared himself to Hesiod and described how he dreamt that like Hesiod he had met the Muses while he was acting as a shepherd⁶: cf. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Oxford 1949) 9 and 11. Thus the reader is meant to understand that Lycidas "the goatherd" is, in reality, Callimachus, the imitator of Hesiod. It is therefore not surprising that at lines 45ff. Lycidas (i. e. Callimachus) attacks those poets who tried to rival Homer, i. e. those poets who wrote long epic poems like Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.

The critics have also been puzzled by the fact that Lycidas is called a Cydonian (i. e. a Cretan) in line 12. Theocritus is alluding here to Callimachus, *Hymn* 1.8, where it is stated that Cretans are always liars. At *Hymn* 1.64 Callimachus states that when he tells lies he hopes that his lies will persuade the listener, i. e. he hopes that he will tell convincing lies. In other words, Callimachus hopes that his fictions will be convincing. There is an allusion here to Hesiod, *Th.* 27, where the Muses state that they know how to say many false things as though they were true.

⁶ Quintus Smyrnaeus (*Posthom.* 12.309) also claimed to have been a shepherd and to have met the Muses, who inspired him, as they had inspired both Hesiod and Callimachus before him.

In sum: Lycidas is said by Theocritus to be a Cretan because he, like the Muses, knows how to lie (i. e. he knows how to be a good poet).

The ancient reader would have been expected to have read the *Aetia* and thus to know that Callimachus claimed to have met the Muses while he was acting as a shepherd like Hesiod. Accordingly, Theocritus jokingly introduces Lycidas (i. e. Callimachus) to the reader dressed as a goatherd and discussing matters of literary criticism⁷.

⁷ For attempts to identify Lycidas in recent years cf. M. Puelma, *Theokrit und die griech. Bukolik* (Wege der Forschung 580, Darmstadt 1986) 269. Schwinge thought that Lycidas was "Hesiodus redivivus", which is an untenable hypothesis, given the fact that Lycidas attacks authors of voluminous epic poetry, i. e. those who wanted to imitate Homer: Lycidas, that is, holds the position held by Callimachus. Gercke (*apud* Gow, *Theocritus* II, 130) wanted to identify Lycidas with Callimachus; cf. also Schlatter, *Theokrit und Kallimachos* (Diss. Zürich 1941) 69. My argument, as the reader will understand, is based on the papyrus fragments of Callimachus' *Aetia*, which I combine with the statement made by Lycidas at lines 45ff. To sum up: Callimachus is the ideal candidate to hide under Lycidas' disguise: he is the only poet who can both state the Callimachean principle uttered at lines 45ff. and claim to be an ἀπὸλος (on the basis of the *Aetia* fragments). Moreover, since the investiture of Simichidas is ironic (cf. lastly my observations in *SicGymn* 42 [1989] 322ff.), Callimachus, the ironic poet *par excellence* (cf. Lapp, *De Callimachi Cyrenaei tropis et figuris* [Diss. Bonn 1965] 106f.) is uniquely suited to carry it out. If Simichidas is meant to be, as I think, following the scholia, Theocritus, we are faced with a typically Hellenistic example of *Selbstironie* (cf. G. Giangrande, *Scr. Min. Alex.* II and IV, Select Index, s. v. *Selbstironie*). The *Selbstironie* resides in the fact that neither Callimachus nor Theocritus can claim to be a real rustic: the Idyll is, as Legrand has correctly written, a "mascarade Bucolique" (cf. Gow, *Theocritus* II, 129f). Williams' suggestion (*Theokrit und die griech. Bukolik*, cit., 273ff.) to the effect that Lycidas is Apollo is untenable because Williams (*op. cit.*, 273) has not understood Giangrande: the latter has shown that there is no "Divine Encounter" in the Idyll, the protagonists being poets.