

CALLIMACHEAN Ο ΣΙΓΑΡΝΗΣ

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La autora propone su propia lectura οὔτος ὁ σιγαρνής ('este retoño silencioso') para el discutido texto †οὔτος οσειγαρνης† de AP 12.139 (= Call. *Epigr.* 44 Pf.). El *hapax* σιγαρνής (<ὀ σιγα-ερνής) es una palabra griega adecuada para referirse a una persona que parece dócil y buena y después resulta ser tan peligrosa como un "agua mansa" o un "río tranquilo" (cf. AP 12.139.4: ἡσύχιος ποταμός). Una lectura propuesta por Heather White y Giuseppe Giangrande (οὔτος ὃς εἶ γ' ἀρνής) en *Habis* 27 (1996) 41-43 y 28 (1997) 27-28 es innecesaria e injustificada.

The author offers her own reading of οὔτος ὁ σιγαρνής ('this silent sprout') for the so discussed text †οὔτος οσειγαρνης† (AP 12.139 = Call. *Epigr.* 44 Pf.). The *hapax* σιγαρνής (<ὀ σιγα-ερνής) is a quite good Greek appellative for a person, who seems gentle and friendly, but appears to be dangerous like "still water" or "tranquil stream, quiet river" (cf. AP 12.139.4: ἡσύχιος ποταμός). The proposal οὔτος ὃς εἶ γ' ἀρνής, given by Heather White and Giuseppe Giangrande in *Habis* 27 (1996) 41-43 and 28 (1997) 27-28, is unnecessary and not motivated.

The text of Callimachus' epigram 44 Pf. runs as follows:

Ἔστι τι ναὶ τὸν Πάνα κεκρυσμένον, ἔστι τι ταύτη
ναὶ μὰ Διώνυσον πῦρ ὑπὸ τῇ σποδιῇ.
οὐ θαρσέω· μὴ δὴ με περίπλεκε· πολλάκι λήθει
τοῖχον ὑποτρώγων ἡσύχιος ποταμός.
Τῶ καὶ νῦν δείδοικα, Μενέξενε, μὴ με παρεισδύς
οὔτος †οσειγαρνης† εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα βάλῃ.

ὁ ουτοσοσειγαρνησ codex Palatinus : οὔτος ο σ' εἶ γ' ἀρνής Saumaise, Anna Fabri : οὔτος ὁ σιγέρπης Bentley : οὔτος ὁ σιγάρνης (=ὀ σῖγα ἐργαζόμενος)

Reiske : οὔτος ὁ σιγάρνης (=ὄς σίγα ἄρνυται) Schwyzer : οὔτος ὁ σεῦ γ' Ἐρμῆς Giangrande, οὔτος ὁ σεῦ γ' ἀσ<ι>νῆς Marcovich : οὔτος ὄς εἶ γ' ἀρνῆς White, Giangrande : οὔτος ὁ σιγαρνῆς (i.e. σιγα-ερνῆς) Kaczyńska / βάλλη codex Palatinus : βάλλη correxit Heinsius : βάλλη<ς> coniecit Schneider.

In an earlier issue of *Habis* Heather White and Giuseppe Giangrande suggest the following restoration of the original text (lines 5-6)!:

Τῶ καὶ νῦν δείδοικα, Μενέξενε, μή με παρεισδύς
οὔτος ὄς εἶ γ' -ἀρνῆς;- εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα βάλλη.

("So now I fear, Menexenus, lest this person that indeed (γε) is you –do you deny it?– might slip in and make me fall in love").

The suggested verbal form ἀρνῆς is an intrusive element, which is explained by the same authors in a separate paper, published also in *Habis* 28, as a dubitative subjunctive ("Do you perhaps deny it?"). This interpretation explains nothing and the traditional conjecture οὔτος ὁ σιγέρπης, proposed many decades ago by Richard Bentley, still appears to be ingenious. It refers to the Hesychian gloss σιγέρπης· λαθροδάκτης (liter. "biting secretly") and it fits in well enough with the sense². This is why Bentley's emendation has been accepted by many editors, commentators and translators of the poetry by Callimachus.

W. R. Paton gives the following English translation of the Callimachean epigram in question³:

"There is, I swear it by Pan, yea, by Dionysus, there is some fire hidden here under the embers. I mistrust me. Embrace me not, I entreat thee. Often a tranquil stream secretly eats away a wall at its base. Therefore now too I fear, Menexenus, lest this silent crawler find his way into me and cast me into love".

According to Miroslav Marcovich, the Callimachean epigram illustrates the following situation⁴. Menexenus, a friend, comes to introduce a quiet, innocent

¹ H. White and G. Giangrande, "Callimachus and Menexenus", *Habis* 27 (1996) 41-43. See also H. White-G. Giangrande, "The Verbal Form APNHIS in Callimachus", *Habis* 28 (1997) 27-28.

² J. Ferguson, "The Epigrams of Callimachus", *G&R* 17 (1970) 64-80, translates "this Alsatian" and adds the following explanation (p. 72): "σιγέρπης is Bentley's suggestion: it means a hound which cannot be trusted. Here we have three principal images: the fire beneath the ashes, the river eating at the wall, the treacherous hound". Also F. Bredau, *De Callimaco verborum inventore* (Vratislaviae 1892) 37, follows Bentley: "Hesychius vocem σιγέρπης commemorat, quam explicat verbo λαθροδάκτης et de iis canibus adhibet, qui clam subrepentes mordent (ληθαργός κύων, ὁ προσσαίωνων μέν, λάθρα δὲ δάκνω)".

³ *The Greek Anthology*, with an English translation by W. R. Paton, vol. 4 (London-New York 1918) 353. The editor gives the traditional reading οὔτος ὁ ἴσειαρνης, but he adds a short comment in footnote 2: "σιγέρπης Bentley, and I render so".

⁴ M. Marcovich, "A Callimachean Crux (Ep. 44 Pfeiffer, 1081-86 Gow-Page, A.P. XII, 139)", *RhMus.* 119 (1976) 149-151. The author follows observations, suggested by Dübner: cf. *Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis et appendice nova*, instruxit F. Dübner, vol. 2 (Parisiis 1882) 414. See also *The Greek Anthology. Hellenistic Epigrams*, edited by A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1965) 163-164.

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”. Then he explains his behaviour to the present friend Menexenus, by adducing the example of the proverbial and therefore dangerous river⁵, and by applying it to the present situation (τῷ καὶ νῦν). The Alexandrian poet concludes: “So now too I fear, Menexenus, lest this dangerous person (Gk. οὗτος ὁ ἴσειγαρνης) slip in and whelm me into love”. Thus it is obvious that the Greek term ἴσειγαρνης denotes such a dangerous person, who is called *agua mansa* in Spanish (cf. the well known proverbs *del agua mansa me libre Dios* and *guárdate del agua mansa*) and *cicha woda* (lit. ‘silent water’) in Polish.

In my opinion, no emendation is necessary and the reading of the *codex Palatinus* οὐτοσοσειγαρνησ (or better οὗτος ὁ σιγαρνήσ) should be preserved. The word σιγαρνήσ is, in fact, a *hapax legomenon* which derives probably from the adverb σίγα “silently, quietly, secretly”⁶ and the well known noun ἔρνος (n.) “young sprout, shoot”, thus it refers to “a plant which grows silently”, cf. εὐ-ερνήσ adj. “sprouting well, flourishing”, δυσ-ερνήσ “sprouting badly”. Callimachus used the term σιγαρνήσ evidently in reference to the person, who appears to be as dangerous as ἡσύχιος ποταμός (= Sp. *agua mansa*, It. *l’acqua cheta*). In my earlier paper (written in Polish) I discussed⁷ the origin of the Polish proverb *Cicha woda brzegi rwie* (= E. *Still waters run deep*, G. *Stille Wasser sind tief*, Sp. *más hondo el río, hace menos ruido*) and its numerous European variants (e.g. Italian *l’acqua cheta rovina i ponti*, Serbo-Croatian *tihā vòda brjieg rònī*, French *il n’est pire eau que l’eau qui dort*, Modern Greek από σιγανό ποτάμι να φοβάσαι and so on), pointing not only to the Mediaeval Latin proverb *Qui tacite currit fluvius sua litora solvit*, but also to an Ancient Greek proverbial sentence πολλάκι λήθει τοῖχον ὑποτρῶγων ἡσύχιος ποταμός (‘oft-times a quiet river undermines the wall unmarked’) introduced by Callimachus to the amatory epigram in question. It may be easily demonstrated that the Ancient Greek phrase ἡσύχιος ποταμός (lit. ‘a quiet river’) requires personal reference⁸, exactly like Spanish *agua mansa*, Italian *l’acqua cheta*, German *stilles Wasser*, SC. *tihā vòda*, Polish *cicha woda*, Modern Greek τό σιγανό ποτάμι, etc., and it refers to a living object of love.

⁵ The Greek sentence πολλάκι λήθει τοῖχον ὑποτρῶγων ἡσύχιος ποταμός, repeated by Callimachus of Cyrene, is an ancient source for the Spanish proverb *agua que corre silenciosa, agua peligrosa* and its numerous European variants, see E. Kaczyńska, “*Cicha woda brzegi rwie*. Epigramat Kallimacha (44 Pfeiffer = 9 Gow-Page) w swietle nowej interpretacji”, in *Miscellanea Graeca et Neohellenica*, edenda curavit Krzysztof Tomasz Witczak (Łódź 1999) 7-21. Compare also two different Spanish proverbs: *de agua mansa me libre Dios* and *más hondo el río, hace menos ruido*.

⁶ See *A Greek-English Lexicon* compiled by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (Oxford 1996) 1596.

⁷ E. Kaczyńska, *op. cit.* 7-21.

⁸ Note that the English proverb may refer also to a person, cf. A. P. Cowie, R. Mackin and I. R. McCaig, *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms* (Oxford 1993) 521: *still water run deep* - a quiet person can have much knowledge, cunning, strong emotions, etc. E.g.: “She’s never shown any sign of having a mind of her own before”. “Perhaps she’s never needed to. Still waters run deep”.

The suggested semantics of ὁ σιγαρήνης (< ὁ σιγα-ερής ‘he who sprouts silently’) is confirmed by the exact derivational equivalent, which appears in the Polish language: the word *ścichapek* ‘a quiet person who can have much knowledge, cunning, strong emotions; a seemingly quiet person who may be able to do an unexpected action or excess’ (liter. ‘he/she who sprouts silently’) derives from the adverb *z cicha pęk* (literally ‘sprouting silently’)⁹. It is worth emphasizing that Pol. *z cicha* ‘silently, quietly’ corresponds securely with Gk. σῖγα ‘id.’ and Pol. *pęk / pęk* ‘bud; bunch (of flowers), bundle’ is related somehow or other to Gk. ἔρνος (n.) ‘young sprout, shoot’. In Polish two appellatives *cicha woda* (= Sp. *agua mansa*, Gk. ἡσύχιος ποταμός) and *ścichapek* (= Gk. σιγαρήνης), if they refer to a person, are frequently treated as two full synonyms. We cannot be sure, if the same or an analogous situation appears in Ancient Greek, but it seems highly probable on the basis of the Callimachean evidence, where both expressions ἡσύχιος ποταμός (l. 4) and οὗτος ὁ σιγαρήνης (l. 6) correlate each other. Both agents, “a quiet river” (l. 4: ἡσύχιος ποταμός) and “this silent sprout” (l. 6: οὗτος ὁ σιγαρήνης), have a similar metaphorical meaning and both produce the same result: a disastrous destruction (l. 4: τοῖχον ὑποτρῶγων = l. 6: εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα βάλῃ).

The difficulties, which editors and commentators find in line 6 of the Callimachean epigram in question, disappear as soon as one realizes that the word σιγαρήνης is a Greek compound containing two elements: the adverb σῖγα ‘silently, quietly, secretly’ and the noun ἔρνος (n.) ‘young sprout, shoot’ and that it is semantically reflected by the Polish appellative *ścichapek* (< *z cicha + pęk / pęk*) ‘a seemingly quiet person who may be able to do an unexpected action or excess’ (literally ‘he who sprouts silently’).

It may be concluded that the reading οὗτος ὃς εἶ γ’ ἀρνῆς, proposed by H. White and G. Giangrande in *Habis* 28, is hardly acceptable¹⁰. What is more, the verbal form ἀρνῆς, explained by the same authors (*ibid.*), represents a modern invention which –in my opinion– is highly doubtful.

⁹ E. Kaczyńska, “L’acqua cheta. Per l’esegesi di un epigramma di Callimaco (*Ep.* 44 Pfeiffer = 9 Gow-Page = *A.P.* XII 139)”, *Maia* 53.1 (2001) 37-42. Note that also G. B. D’Alessio translates the sequence οὗτος ὁ σιγέρπης by the idiom “l’acqua cheta!”: see Callimaco, *Inni. Epigrammi. Ecclae*, introduzione, traduzione e note di G. B. D’Alessio, I (Milano 1996) 255. A different Italian translator, G. Zanetto, omits the *crux*, but he gives the title “L’acqua cheta” to the epigram in question: cf. Callimaco, *Epigrammi*. Traduzione di G. Zanetto. Introduzione e commento di P. Ferrari (Milano 1992) 69.

¹⁰ Also a different reading οὗτος ὁ σεῦ γ’ Ἐρμῆς, proposed by G. Giangrande, “Lese Früchte”, *RhMus.* 101 (1958) 50-58, is not convincing.