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## CALLIMACHUS *EPIGRAM* 28: A FASTIDIOUS PRIAMEL

ALBERT HENRICHs

ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, οὐδὲ κελεύθω  
χαίρω τὶς πολλοὺς ᾧδε καὶ ᾧδε φέρει·  
μισέω καὶ περίφοιτον ἐρώμενον, οὐδ' ἀπὸ κρήνης  
πίνω· σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια.  
Λυσανίη, σὺ δὲ ναίχι καλὸς καλός· ἀλλὰ πρὶν εἰπεῖν  
τοῦτο σαφῶς ἤχῳ φησί τις “ἄλλος ἔχει.”

**T**IME and again these clever and poignant lines have suffered because their critics failed to consider the formal models which inspired them. The alleged structural difficulties disappear, and the poem's artistic form and thematic unity emerge, once we realize that Callimachus adopted the literary device of the so-called priamel for the overall structure of his emphatic declaration of dislike.

A priamel (“introduction”) is “the figure in which a series of three (occasionally more) paratactic statements of similar form serves to emphasize the last.”<sup>1</sup> In the case of love poetry, which alone interests us here, a statement describing other people's preferences in catalogue form (A) introduces the poet's own preference, love (B). It is not uncommon for an erotic priamel to proceed from the particular (“Some like honey”) to the general (“Others like anything sweet”), or vice versa (from “Love is sweetest” to “I speak from experience”).

An early example will illustrate this convention. In one of the finest priamels ever written, Sappho (fr. 16 L–P) asks the question, “What is best (κάλλιστον)?” In her answer, other men's specific preferences (A: some like the cavalry, others the infantry, still others the navy) are followed by a general description of her own preference (B: ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὄττω τις ἔραται). After two stanzas which dwell on the mythical exemplum of Helen's love, Sappho restates her personal desire in more specific terms, and with explicit mention of the name of her beloved:

<sup>1</sup> M. L. West on Hesiod *Erga* 435–436. There are two useful collections of priamel texts: W. Kröhling, *Die Priamel (Beispielreihe) als Stilmittel in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*, Greifswalder Beiträge 10 (1935); U. Schmid, *Die Priamel der Werte im Griechischen von Homer bis Paulus* (Wiesbaden 1964).

(B) I miss Anaktoria, who is lovable and pretty, and prefer her to (A) the splendor of the whole Lydian army. The ring has closed.

Between the archaic period and the Hellenistic era, the priamel lost much of its original vigor. More often than not, formal elaboration conceals poverty of content. But some Hellenistic examples are more attractive than others. Asclepiades' priamel (*A.P.* 5.169), for instance, is a pleasant variation of a traditional gnomic riddle, *τί τὸ ἥδιστον*;<sup>2</sup>

ἡδὺ θέρους διψῶντι χιῶν ποτόν, ἡδὺ δὲ ναύταις  
ἐκ χειμῶνος ἰδεῖν εἰαρινὸν Στέφανον·  
ἡδιον δ' ὁπόταν κρύψη μία τοὺς φιλέοντας  
χλαῖνα, καὶ αἰνῆται Κύπρις ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων.

Again, two specific preferences which the poet does not share (A) are put in contrast with what he considers the ultimate pleasure (B).<sup>3</sup> Finally, Propertius managed to turn a thematically plain but carefully wrought priamel into a literary manifesto (2.1.43–6):

navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,  
enumerat miles vulnera, pastor ovis;  
nos contra angusto versantes proelia lecto:  
qua pote quisque, in ea conerat arcto diem.

Comparison with Asclepiades (one of Callimachus' targets, and inspirations) and Propertius (the Roman Callimachus), both perfectly good poets, shows how accomplished is the balance of traditional form and thematic innovation in *Epigram* 28. In fact Callimachus' use of the priamel is so subtle that he has outwitted his modern critics, who apparently have not recognized it.<sup>4</sup> What then makes Callimachus' priamel so different?

In point of phrasing, his question was not: what do I like best? Rather, with an ironic twist typical of him, he frustrates our expectations by asking: which thing is worst? As long as we keep this fundamental difference in mind, the pattern of the priamel is unmistakable, and driven

<sup>2</sup> See M. L. West's references on *Theogn.* 255–256 (so-called *Epigramma Deliacum*); M. Gronewald, *ZPE* 19 (1975) 178 f.

<sup>3</sup> On *A.P.* 5.169 see Ed. Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* II 407 f (on *Ag.* 899–902); Gow and Page *ad loc.* Nossis *A.P.* 5.170, the epigram which follows in the Palatine Anthology, is similar (*Ein gleiches*, in Beckby's edition).

<sup>4</sup> No treatment of *Epigr.* 28 that I am familiar with recognizes it as a priamel (see most recently P. Krafft, *Rhein. Mus.* 120 [1977] 1–29). On the other hand, W. Kröhling (above, n.1) 18 catalogs its first couplet as an incomplete priamel but does not consider the rest of the poem.

home in a climactic series of verbs which underscore the poet's dislike, culminating in the painfully unpoetic and vulgar *σικχαίνω*.<sup>5</sup>

- |             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| A, specific | { | I dislike (ἐχθαίρω) "cyclic" (bad) epic poetry                  |
|             |   | I dislike (οὐδὲ . . . χαίρω) the trodden path                   |
|             |   | I dislike (μισέω) the male prostitute <sup>6</sup>              |
|             |   | I dislike (οὐδὲ . . . πίνω) the public well                     |
| A, general  |   | I dislike (σικχαίνω) "pleasures shared by the mob" <sup>7</sup> |
| B, specific |   | But I do like Lysanias, <sup>8</sup> however . . .              |

Callimachus did not invent the negative priamel.<sup>9</sup> It had plenty of precedent, for example in the *Odyssey* (14.222 ff), in Tyrtaeus (12 West), and especially in Archilochus fr. 114 West (cf. fr. 19),

οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγὸν οὐδὲ διαπεπλιγμένον  
οὐδὲ βοστρύχοις γαῦρον οὐδ' ὑπεξυρημένον,  
ἀλλὰ μοι μικρὸς τις εἴη . . .

But the exact model which inspired Callimachus' diction in *Epigram* 28. 3–4 has fortunately survived in the corpus of extant Theognidea, and the two couplets in question (579–582 West) are clearly an excerpt from

<sup>5</sup> *Σικχαίνειν* (or usually the middle) is one's reaction to something that makes him sick. The expression was a favorite of Hellenistic prose writers (Phrynichus *Ecl.* 198 Fischer condemns it, advising instead ἀλλ' ἐρείς βδελύττομαι ὡς Ἀθηναῖος) and enjoyed a very long life in Egypt as is illustrated by its occurrence in the Cologne Mani Codex and its survival as a Greek loanword in Coptic texts (A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, *ZPE* 32 [1978] 142 n.200).

<sup>6</sup> "Gassenhure," as Wilamowitz put it (below, n.19). In deviation from the accepted interpretation, R. Thomas suggests taking περίφοιτον ἐρώμενον as the "peripatetic lover" of New Comedy, with the stereotype character substituting for the genre (this volume). But both the γυναῖκα περιδρομον of *Theogn.* 581 (see below) and common usage tell against his suggestion. In a homosexual context, ὁ ἐρώμενος is certain to equal ὁ παῖς, as it is in the only other occurrence of that participle in the notorious Book XII of the Palatine Anthology (Straton *A.P.* 12.10.3 οὐδ' οὕτω φεύγω τὸν ἐρώμενον). Compare the striking coinage ἐρωμένιον, "darling" (Antiphanes *A.P.* 11.168.4). Ἐρώμενος is clearly a technical and prosaic term, and Hellenistic poets elsewhere preferred the less explicit ἡίθεος (e.g., Callim. *Hymn.* 2.49, fr. 23.4, fr. 500; Theocr. 12.21; and numerous instances in Book XII of the Anthology), or occasionally Spartan vocabulary (Callim. fr. 68; Theocr. 12.13 f). By contrast, a lesser poet could invoke Dionysus as τὸν ἐρώμενον Κυθήρης, "Aphrodite's favorite" (*Anacreontea* 38.6 Preisendanz).

<sup>7</sup> So Gow and Page.

<sup>8</sup> For σὺ εἰ καλὸς καλὸς being tantamount to ἐρῶ σου see G. Giangrande, *Eranos* 67 (1969) 35 n.10; Krafft (above, n.4) 13 f nn.42–43.

<sup>9</sup> "Negationsanapher" is Schmid's term (above, n.1).

a fuller priamel:<sup>10</sup>

ἐχθαίρω κακὸν ἄνδρα, καλυψαμένη δὲ πάρειμι,  
 σμικρῆς ὄρνιθος κοῦφον ἔχοντα νόον·  
 ἐχθαίρω δὲ γυναῖκα περιδρομον, ἄνδρά τε μάργον,  
 ὅς τῃν ἄλλοτρίην βούλετ' ἄρουραν ἀροῦν.

The speaker, a virtuous matron,<sup>11</sup> rejects men and women who have sexual preferences different from her own. In adapting this piece of gnomic writing to a homosexual situation, Callimachus had to substitute a promiscuous boy for the promiscuous female of his model.<sup>12</sup> The poet will have been encouraged by two other couplets in the same collection, which reject a fickle παῖς who went his own way (Theogn. 599–602 West):<sup>13</sup>

οὐ μ' ἔλαβες φοιτῶν κατ' ἀμαξιτόν, ἦν ἄρα καὶ πρὶν  
 ἡλᾶστρεις, κλέπτων ἡμετέρεην φιλίην.  
 ἔρρε θεοῖσιν <τ'> ἐχθρὲ καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἄπιστε,  
 ψυχρὸν ὃς ἐν κόλπῳ ποικίλον εἶχες ὄφιν.

Not only does the trodden path which Callimachus dislikes come straight from “Theognis,” but so does the sullied well, which has often been compared to Theognis 959–962:

ἔστε μὲν αὐτὸς ἔπινον ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου,  
 ἡδὺ τί μοι ἐδόκει καὶ καλὸν ἦμεν ὕδωρ·  
 νῦν δ' ἤδη τεθόλωται, ὕδωρ δ' ἀναμίσγεται ὕδει·  
 ἄλλης δὴ κρήνης πόσιμαί ἢ ποταμοῦ.

Diction, theme, and even the metaphors of *Epigram* 28.1–4 are all traditional. But their combined effect is unique. In most priamels, the values which the poet rejects are unrelated to his own preference which they serve to emphasize: neither their nature nor the order in which

<sup>10</sup> On Callimachus' use of Theognidea see R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion* (1893) 69 f, who saw the connection of *Epigram* 28 with Theogn. 579 ff and 959 ff but not 599 ff.

<sup>11</sup> More specific identifications, such as a goddess or poetess, have been suggested; see M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974) 156.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Theocr. *Id.* 7.120–121. The same words with which Archilochus berates the faded beauty of Neoboule (S 478a 26 ff in Page, *Suppl. Lyr. Gr.*) are put by Theocritus into the mouth of women who taunt an ἐρώμενος for being past his prime.

<sup>13</sup> Commentators on Callim. *Epigr.* 28 seem to be unaware of *Theogn.* 599 ff, or 1311–18. The anonymous couplet *A.P.* 12.104 (οὐμός ἐρωσ παρ' ἐμοὶ μενέτω μόνω· ἦν δὲ πρὸς ἄλλους / φοιτήσῃ, μισῶ κοινὸν ἐρωτα, Κύπρι) appears to be inspired by Callim. *Epigr.* 28 and illustrates the meaning of περίφοιτος ἐρώμενος (see above, n.6); cf. O. Weinreich, *Die Distichen des Catull* (Tübingen 1926) 62.

they occur seem to matter much.<sup>14</sup> Take the plain erotic priamel in Theocritus, *Idyll* 8.53–56:

μή μοι γὰρ Πέλοπος, μή μοι Κροίσεια τάλαντα  
εἶη ἔχειν, μηδὲ πρόσθε θεῖν ἀνέμων·  
ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τᾷ πέτρᾳ τᾷδ' ἄσομαι ἀγκὰς ἔχων τυ,  
σύννομα μῆλ' ἔσορῶν Σικελικὰν τ' ἐς ἄλλα.

The land of Pelops, the wealth of Croesus, and the swiftness of the winds are all proverbial, but they are of a completely different nature than the cherished presence of fair Milon. Hellenistic poets in general show little concern for such thematic inconsistencies. Not so Sappho, or for that matter Callimachus in *Epigram* 28. Metrically and stylistically, the second couplet repeats the pattern of the first.<sup>15</sup> The symmetry is apparent both to the eye and to the ear. If this is a valid index, it follows that Callimachus arranged the four pursuits from which he dissociates himself in a much more deliberate order than other poets. But it would be wrong to force a close thematic relationship upon the *ποίημα κυκλικόν* and the *περίφοιτος ἐρώμενος* on the one hand or the trodden path and public well on the other hand. Scholars who complained that the *περίφοιτος ἐρώμενος* should be mentioned “at the end of the list, not sandwiched between the highway and the common drinking place” would hardly have expected such rigorous logic from Callimachus if they had read the whole epigram as a full-fledged priamel.<sup>16</sup> The poet proceeded by association. Thematically, all four items in his catalogue participate in the same defect, to wit lack of exclusiveness. Poetry in the tradition of the epic cycle touches on too many subjects, just as a busy road, a promiscuous lover, and the parish pump serve too many needs.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Rightly emphasized by Schmid (above, n.1) 49, who compares Theocr. *Id.* 8.53 ff with Callim. fr. 75.44 ff (another erotic priamel of high sophistication).

<sup>15</sup> Repetition and parallelism, which characterize *Epigr.* 28.1–4, are also the hallmark of the priamel.

<sup>16</sup> The quotation is from Gow and Page *ad loc.*, who refer for their complaint to Fraenkel, *Agamemnon* II 407 n.3, a brief description of the serial style typical of the priamel (see above, n.3). But they obscure the connection with *Theogn.* 579 ff by quoting 581 *γυναικα περιδρομον* without *ἐχθαίρω* (579, 581). A similar complaint, and equally mistaken, is that of L. P. Wilkinson, *Class. Rev.* 81 (1967) 6: “We should logically expect Lysanias to be praised (prematurely) for not being *περίφοιτος* rather than for his beauty.”

<sup>17</sup> The *κυκλικοί* (according to Aristotle, early but inferior imitators of Homer as the poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) were held in utter disdain by Hellenistic literary theory as well as by Aristarchus and his school; their style and subject matter were considered repetitious, trite, and lacking in focus. See R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* I (1968) 73 f, 137, and 230; C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The “Ars Poetica”* (1971) 210 ff on *A.P.* 132 and 136 (where Horace adopts the critical terminology and metaphors of Callimachus; cf. R. Thomas, this volume).

There is no doubt in my mind that in writing this epigram Callimachus wrote his personal credo, which is that of an extremely self-conscious man who cultivated his privacy and exclusive taste.

"We cannot fail to see that the final couplet is irrelevant to the previous statements made by Callimachus."<sup>18</sup> So a recent critic. Several other scholars have gone so far as to excise the concluding couplet for similar reasons. But to remove lines 5–6 is to undo Callimachus' craftsmanship, and to turn a deaf ear to his wit. In his extremely sensitive analysis of this epigram, Wilamowitz pointed out that the unexpected turn of events in the last couplet is the quintessential property of a Callimachean epigram.<sup>19</sup> But we can now go further than he could. If the first two couplets are a priamel which lists things liked by the mob but hated by Callimachus, the third couplet, separated by the antithetical  $\delta\epsilon$  which introduces the poet's own preference, is the natural sequel. But Callimachus would not be Callimachus, and the epigram not an epigram, if the poem ended here. He never intended to write a conventional declaration of love along the lines of Sappho. As it turns out, and as the poet has known all along, Lysanias is already taken. This circumstance not only puts him definitely out of Callimachus' reach, but also takes him off the poet's mind for good. True to his own declaration, Callimachus will not share anything. Lysanias is rejected. Almost unnoticeably, the traditional priamel, together with its inherited function, has been turned on its head. In the end, the negative priamel does not culminate, as it should, in a statement of what Callimachus likes best but — and this is his triumph both over Lysanias and over his readers — of what he hates most. A perfect synthesis of expectations raised by the priamel and of the same hopes destroyed in the final epigrammatic blow.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Giangrande (above, n.8) 34, who did not remove the last couplet but chose to rewrite it.

<sup>19</sup> *Homerische Untersuchungen*. Philologische Untersuchungen 7 (Berlin 1884) 354 n.36. Cf. *Hellenistische Dichtung* I 178, II 129.

<sup>20</sup> In deference to earlier interpreters, it must be said that their combined wisdom adds up to a reading of the epigram which is not essentially different from mine. But if some of them understood the poem's literary form, they did so instinctively, not consciously. In particular Krafft (above, n.4) 20–22 gives an admirable analysis of the stylistic features which identify lines 1–4 as the introduction of a priamel, but he clearly did not realize that the epigram, including lines 5–6, is a priamel.

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