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ALL ABOUT GEORGE

There is a long stretch of epigrams in the middle of the ninth book of the Palatine Anthology (*AP IX*, 449–480) that immediately catch the eye because of their striking similarity. They all are *ethopoiiai* and they all bear the formulaic title of this kind of rhetorical exercises: τί ἂν εἴποι or τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους “what would so-and-so say?” – usually followed by a participle construction (either dependent on the subject or a genitive absolute) indicating the circumstances under which so-and-so supposedly uttered his/her words¹. Most of the *ethopoiiai* are in hexameter, a few in the iambic trimeter. According to Wifstrand, who studied these *ethopoiiai* from a metrical point of view, they date from the second half of the fifth century at the earliest – although he himself acknowledges that their versification is not particularly ‘Nonnian’ as one would perhaps expect from epigrams written at such a late date². But not all late antique poetry, especially not poems of average quality such as these school exercises³, is indebted to Nonnos, however influential he may have been in the late fifth and the sixth centuries.

One of these *ethopoiiai* (*AP IX*, 454) is rather strange for three reasons: (1) it deals with an otherwise unknown George instead of the myth-

¹ See L. ROSSI, Composition and Reception in *AP* 9.1-583: *Aphēgeseis*, *Epideixeis* and *Progymnasmata*, in: M.A. HARDER, R.F. REGTUIT & G.C. WAKKER (eds.), *Hellenistic Epigrams*. Leuven–Paris 2002, 151–174, at pp. 170–171. She asserts that *AP IX*, 23, 96, 117, 126 and 163, also belong to this collection; but as nos. 23, 96, 117 and 163 begin with a sentence introducing the speech act, they are not authentic *ethopoiiai*. But she is right that *AP IX*, 126 probably derives from the same source as the series of *ethopoiiai* at *IX*, 449–480; so too *AP IX*, 495 and *AP I* 4, and probably *Sylloge Parisina* nos. 3 and 4 (see A. CAMERON, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes*. Oxford 1993, 222–223).

² A. WIFSTRAND, *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos. Metrisch-stilistische Untersuchungen zur späteren griechischen Epik und zu verwandten Gedichtgattungen*. Lund 1933, 170.

³ P. WALTZ, Epigrammes ‘épideictiques’ et manuscrits illustrés, *Annuaire de l’Inst. de Phil. et Hist. Orientales et Slaves* (Mélanges Boisacq), 6 (1938) 347–356, thinks that these *ethopoiiai* served as captions to illustrations in late antique illuminated manuscripts. This theory lacks any proof.

ological characters that are speaking to us in the other epigrams, (2) it consists of just a pentameter (the truncated second half of an elegiac distich) and (3) instead of the usual participle construction in the title, it makes use of a prepositional clause (εἰς ...). It goes as follows: (τίνας ἂν εἶποι λόγους Καλλιόπη εἰς Γεώργιον) Οὗτος ἐμὸς γενέτης γνήσιος, οὐ Κρονίδης “(what Calliope would say to George) This man, not Zeus, is my true father”. There is obviously something terribly wrong with this epigram and thanks to the Planudean Anthology we know exactly what. For there we find the very same epigram, but this time in the form of an elegiac distich and without the lemma. It bears a separate number in modern editions because the nineteenth-century editors of the Greek Anthology did not notice the link between the distich and the isolated pentameter: *APL* 312. There the epigram goes as follows: Καλλιόπη βασίλεια Γεώργιον εἶπεν ἰδοῦσα· οὗτος ἐμὸς γενέτης γνήσιος, οὐ Κρονίδης, “Queen Calliope, when she saw George, said: This, not Zeus, is my true father”.

The Planudean version looks much more reliable and presumably goes back to Cephalas, but it raises the question why the Palatine manuscript presents a garbled version of the original text. As far as I know, this would be the only instance in the Greek Anthology where a piece of verse has been turned into a heading in prose. This requires an explanation. There is also a second question desperately in need of an answer: if the Planudean version is the original one, what is its relation to the ethopoiiai among which it is found? For in the Planudean version the epigram is no longer an ethopoiia. It is simply a laudatory epigram on an individual called George, probably a poet for otherwise the reference to Calliope would make little sense. This raises a third question: who is George?

As for the first question regarding the curious fate of *AP IX, 454/APL 312*, it is worth noticing that in the series of ethopoiiai at *IX, 449–480* it is not the only instance of lemmata being tampered with. *AP IX, 450* is a laudatory epigram by Philemon on Euripides, which is also found in the *Life of Euripides*⁴. Although it is not an ethopoiia, it bears the following lemmata in the Palatine (P) and Planudean (Pl) manuscripts respectively: σίχοι οὗς εἶπεν Φιλίμων εἰς Εὐριπίδην (P), τίνας ἂν εἶποι λόγους Φιλίμων δι’ Εὐριπίδην (Pl). Pl provides the formulaic heading of an ethopoiia, but P’s title is puzzling as well, because the ordinary lemma would have been something like: Φιλίμωνος· εἰς Εὐριπίδην. Whichever of the two readings one favours, it is very interesting to see that Cephalas presents Philemon’s

⁴ See H. STADTMÜLLER (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca epigrammatum Palatina cum Planudea*, vol. III, pars prior. Leipzig 1906, 451–452.

epigram in the disguise of an ethopoiia. The lemma attached to *AP IX*, 453 is also rather peculiar: *τίνας ἄν εἴποι λόγους Μελέαγρος μέλλοντος βοῶς θύεσθαι τῷ Διὶ καὶ μυκωμένου* (P, Pl). This epigram is not an ethopoiia either. It is a Hellenistic epigram, probably by Meleager, written in elegiac distichs (whereas the authentic ethopoiiai make use of the hexameter or the iamb)⁵. Cephalas placed it among the ethopoiiai in order to establish a thematic link between this epigram, which deals with Zeus presenting himself to Europa in the form of a bull, and the ethopoiia *AP IX*, 456, which deals with Pasiphae in love with the Cretan bull. There can be little doubt that it was Cephalas himself who invented the lemma of *AP IX*, 453, thus turning an ordinary epigram into an ethopoiia (allegedly uttered by the mythological hero Meleager).

In the light of the evidence presented above – Cephalas caught red-handed in the act of turning two epigrams into ethopoiiai – it is reasonable to assume that he is also responsible for altering the text of *IX*, 454. If this is the case, the question remains to be answered how Planudes could possibly retrieve the original text (including the first verse). The epigram can be found in the Planudean section of epigrams on works of art (*AP I* IV), which contains many epigrams not found in the Palatine Anthology because of a lacuna in the branch of the manuscript tradition to which the Palatine Anthology belongs⁶. This lacuna (between *AP IX*, 583 and 584) is the most likely place where the epigram was to be found in the anthology of Cephalas. If so, it would indicate that Cephalas copied the epigram twice: first in the garbled version we find at *AP IX*, 454 and then once again, in its original form, somewhere among the epigrams on works of art.

Then the second question: what is the connection between this epigram and the series of ethopoiiai among which it is found? As stated above, the reference to Calliope appears to indicate that George is a poet. Yet, although Calliope and poetry make a perfect match, it is quite striking that the epigram, with no lack of exaggeration, claims that George was no less than the father of Calliope. Against this bold assertion, compare *AP I* 296

⁵ A.S.F. GOW & D.L. PAGE (eds.), *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*. Cambridge 1965, vol. II, p. 593, write: “Meleager is the mythological hero, not the Gadarene poet”. But despite the sheer mass of mythological lore found in ancient and Byzantine sources, there is not a single piece of evidence that would corroborate this apodictic statement. Cf. J. GEFFCKEN, *RE* 15, 484 n. and STADTMÜLLER, *Anthologia Graeca*, 454, who both attribute the epigram to Meleager.

⁶ See M.D. LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts (WBS 24/1)*, Vienna 2003, 85–86.

where Antipater of Sidon says that Calliope was the mother of Homer, and *APL* 217 which states more daringly that Calliope was the mother who breastfed not only Homer and Orpheus, but also Cyrus. This last epigram is anonymous, but it looks like the self-advertisement of a poet called Cyrus: probably Cyrus of Panopolis⁷. I think we should postulate the same thing for George: he is not just the subject of the laudatory epigram, he is also its self-congratulating author. But even if he is not the author of the epigram (that is, an author well pleased with his own accomplishments), we see that the epigram constitutes a break with tradition. It no longer presents Calliope as the mother of Homer and others, even contemporary poets such as Cyrus, but it turns her into a child of the formidable George. George is portrayed as an Olympian figure, the very source of poetry – not just a poet suckling on the milk-giving breast of Calliope, but a poet giving new life to Calliope and the tradition she stands for.

It is very interesting to see that the next epigram, a very ancient one quoted by Synesius, deals with Homer (*AP* IX, 455). Most of the ethopoiiai deal with Homeric heroes (IX, 457–464, 467, 470–471, [472 deals with Odysseus, but is not an ethopoiia], 473–478)⁸; a few others with mythological characters⁹ and one with a divinity¹⁰. Given the ‘Homeric’ resonances in the series of ethopoiiai, *AP* IX, 455 would seem to be an apt introduction to the collection as a whole; it would be the ideal motto for such a collection. Not only does it stress the importance of Homer as the source of inspiration, but it also is a genuine ethopoiia: “(what Apollo would say about Homer) The song is mine, but divine Homer wrote it down”. If we read this epigram as an intertextual reference, it means something quite different: “(what the poet of the ethopoiiai would say about Homer) The song is mine, but divine Homer (was the first to) write it down”.

In short, the case I am trying to make is that *AP* IX, 454/*APL* 312 is a laudatory epigram presenting the author of the ethopoiiai as a new Hom-

⁷ See the excellent portrait of this poet as sketched by A. CAMERON, *The Empress and the Poet: Paganism at the Court of Theodosius II*, in: *Later Greek Literature*, ed. J. WINKLER & G. WILLIAMS. Cambridge 1982, 217–289 (repr. in idem: *Literature and Society in the Early Byzantine World*. London 1985, no. III).

⁸ *APL* 4 (an ethopoiia dealing with Hector) also belongs to this Homeric group: see A.S.F. Gow, *The Greek Anthology: Sources and Ascriptions*. London 1958, 56. If *AP* IX, 126 (Clytaimnestra) and 495 (Agamemnon) indeed belong to the original collection of ethopoiiai (see footnote 1), then we have two more epigrams that deal with ‘Homeric’ characters (although the literary source itself is Aeschylus).

⁹ Philomela and Procne (451–452), Pasiphae (456), Meleager (465), Alcestis (466), Heracles (468–69), Perseus (479) and Hippodameia (480).

¹⁰ Eros in love (449).

er (either written by George himself or by his editor) and that the next epigram, *AP IX*, 455, is a ‘Homeric’ motto indicating what the collection is all about. The fact that the laudatory epigram and the motto are not to be found at the very beginning of the series of ethopoiiai, does not pose a serious problem. As always, Cephalas thought he knew best and rearranged his source: he started with a number of epigrams on love and its pernicious effects (*IX*, 449, 451–452, 453, 456)¹¹, and then copied the collection as he found it (454–455: laudatory epigram and motto; 457–480: collection).

Then we have the third question: who is this George? In the *editio princeps* of the Palatine Anthology, Jacobs identifies him with George of Pisidia¹². In all subsequent editions of the Greek Anthology, even in the excellent edition by Beckby, this hypothesis (because that is what it is) is repeated without questioning¹³. It has even found its way to the secondary literature on Pisides¹⁴. Even if one does not accept my theory that George is the author of the series of late antique ethopoiiai we find at *AP IX*, 449–480 (which would immediately exclude the possibility that he is the same person as Pisides), there is the problem that it is hardly likely that George of Pisidia would be praised in the form of a flattering elegiac distich in the very same period that witnessed the death of the classical tradition. In the time of Pisides there are hardly any elegiacs – and hence it comes as little surprise that the only epigram written in honour of this great poet is composed in iambs¹⁵.

If one accepts my supposition that George is the author of the series of ethopoiiai, then we are looking for a poet living in the late fifth or the early sixth century (see Wifstrand mentioned in the first paragraph). There are not that many Georges in this period. The popularity of this Christian name starts much later. There is in fact only one George credited with the composition of literary works in the period from which the ethopoiiai date: George the Grammarian. He is mentioned in the index to the *Anthologia Barberina* (c. 920)¹⁶ as the author of a (nowadays lost) anacreontic entitled

¹¹ The series of ethopoiiai starts with Eros suffering himself from love (*IX*, 449), and then presents examples of illicit love: Philomela raped by Tereus (451–452), the rape of Europa (453), and Pasiphae in love with the bull (456).

¹² F. JACOBS (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca sive poetarum graecorum lusus*, vols. I–XIII. Leipzig 1794–1814, ad locum.

¹³ H. BECKBY (ed.), *Anthologia Graeca*, 4 vols. Munich 1957–58, vol. 3, p. 800 and vol. 4, p. 572.

¹⁴ F. GONNELLI, *Le parole di cosmo: osservazioni sull’ Esamerone di Giorgio Pisida*. *BZ* 83 (1990) 411–422, at p. 411, n. 1.

¹⁵ See LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry*, 131 and 199.

¹⁶ See LAUXTERMANN, *Byzantine Poetry*, 123–128.

Dispute between Helios and Aphrodite (no. 47). This poem is followed by an anonymous group of seven ethopoiiai (nos. 48–54; no. 48 and the beginning of no. 49 are lost in the manuscript), two epithalamia (nos. 55–56) and one encomium written at the occasion of the Broumalia of Kolouthos (no. 57). These anacreontics have recently been edited by Ciccolella¹⁷. She rightly points out that it is not certain whether all these poems should be attributed to George the Grammarian – despite the indisputable fact that they are all very much alike. One thing is certain, though: these poems, whether by George the Grammarian or someone else, were composed in the scholarly environment of the school of Gaza, just as the preceding anacreontics by John of Gaza¹⁸. This scholarly milieu with its interest in progymnasmata, especially the ethopoiia, would most certainly seem to be the right place to have given birth to the ethopoiiai of the Greek Anthology – and if we could prove that George the Grammarian composed not only the *Dispute*, but also the group of anacreontics that immediately follow afterwards, it would be a very tempting idea to identify him with the homonymous poet of the epigrams at *AP IX*, 449–480. Date, milieu, literary genre, and, to top it all, the same name: it all seems to fit splendidly. But nothing is certain in philology – not even what seems as obvious as this identification.

¹⁷ F. CICCOLELLA (ed.), *Cinque poeti bizantini. anacreontee dal Barberiniano greco* 310. Alessandria 2000, 175–263.

¹⁸ See CICCOLELLA, 176–178. For the poems of John of Gaza, see eadem, 117–173.