

A COUPLET OF ARCHILOCHUS

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In his copious discourse on wine Athenaeus (i. 30 f) says that Archilochus compares Naxian wine to nectar, and then proceeds to quote a couplet by him:

έν δορῑ μέν μοι μάζα μεμαγμένη, έν δορῑ δ' οἶνος
Ἴσμαρικός, πίνω δ' έν δορῑ κεκλιμένος.

(fr. 2 Diehl)

There is no difficulty about the text, and the words are simple enough; but the lines have suffered from an interpretation canonized by a succession of editors and passed from one to another without any hint of its inadequacy. It has become common form to illustrate these lines by the famous Song of Hybrias:

ἔστι μοι πλοῦτος μέγας δόρυ καὶ ξίφος
καὶ τὸ καλὸν λαισήιον, πρόβλημα χρωτῶς·
τούτῳ γὰρ ἀρῶ, τούτῳ θερίζω,
τούτῳ πατέω τὸν ἀδὺν οἶνον ἀπ' ἀμπέλῳ,
τούτῳ δεσπότης μνοΐας κέκλημαι

and to claim that just as Hybrias lives by his sword, spear and shield, so Archilochus lives by his spear, which gets him his bread and his wine and on which he reclines as he drinks. Such an interpretation is certainly in keeping with what we know of Archilochus' life and habits, but it suffers none the less from grave defects.

First, there is a stylistic difficulty. When *έν δορῑ* appears three times in a couplet, we may reasonably expect it to

have the same meaning on each appearance, especially in so careful a writer as Archilochus. But that is not what the usual interpretation demands. J. M. Edmonds gives a fair expression of the common view when he translates: "In the spear is my kneaded bread, in the spear my Ismarian wine, I recline when I drink on the spear"¹. With the Greek in front of us we cannot but feel that such a verse ruins the elegance of the triple *ἐν δορί* by suggesting that it is no more than a verbal device, which is seen to have no real function when we look for its meaning. This alone might make us suspicious of the usual interpretation and suggest that we ought to find another².

Secondly, there is a serious objection from linguistic usage. *ἐν δορί κεκλιμένος* is taken to mean "reclining on my spear", but we may well doubt if this is possible. We should expect simply *δορί κεκλιμένος* without velying on the analogy of such Homeric phrases as *ἀσπίσι κεκλιμένοι* (*Il.* iii. 135), *πόντῳ κεκλιμένοι* (*xv.* 740), *στήλῃ κεκλιμένος* (*xi.* 371) and *φηγῶ κεκλιμένος* (*xxi.* 549). When Hudson-Williams comments on the passage: "In our passage *ἐν δορί* is added to make the repetition more emphatic", he recognizes the difficulty but does not explain it, since the repetition could hardly be made more emphatic by making the Greek ungrammatical, if not unintelligible. *ἐν δορί κεκλιμένος* is not the same as *δορί κεκλιμένος* and is unlikely to have been put in its place just to secure a purely perfunctory reappearance of *ἐν δορί* for the third time.

Thirdly, the alleged parallel from Hybrias is delusive. His fourfold *τούτῳ* does indeed emphasize how he lives by his weapons and get his livelihood from them, but he uses *τούτῳ* simply by itself without *ἐν* and gives it precisely the same function on each appearance. Moreover

¹ *Elegy and Iambus*, II, p. 99.

² *Early Greek Elegy*.

in this connection he speaks not about his spear and sword but about his shield, and we can hardly doubt that the song was meant to be accompanied by some play with the shield, which the repeated *τούτω* helped to stress. Archilochus could hardly have done the same kind of thing with his repeated *ἐν δορί* since its last appearance would create a serious anticlimax and destroy the elegance of his couplet. For these reasons the accepted explanation is unsatisfactory, and we ought to be able to find another which meets our needs.

The second difficulty was felt by U. Bahntje, who saw that Hybrias provides no real parallel and that the common explanation is clumsy and inadequate. He himself suggested that Archilochus "imagines proposuit militis excubantis cui quibus opus est ab hasta pendent"³; in other words, that he literally carries his food and drink on his spear, as he lies down to enjoy them. Though the picture is not absolutely clear or convincing, it has perhaps a certain truth to campaigning conditions when a soldier might use his spear to carry his rations. It has at least the merit that it gives a possible sense to *ἐν δορί* in all three cases, but it suffers from giving the third case a different meaning from the other two, and this is a serious obstacle to accepting it.

In introducing the couplet Athenaeus is more confusing than helpful. He seems to have in mind some other passage than this, since the couplet says nothing about nectar, and Ismarian wine does not come from Naxos. Fortunately the lines are also quoted by Synesius (*Ep.* 130, p. 717 H.; cf. Suid. s. v. *ὕπνομαχῶ*, who says of himself: *ἀλλ' ἱπποκρατεῖται μὲν ἅπαντα καὶ τὴν χώραν ἔχουσιν οἱ πολέμιοι, ἐγὼ δὲ ὑπὸ μεσσυργίῳ τεταγμένος ὕπνομαχῶ. «ἐν . . . κεκλιμένος» οὐκ οἶδ' εἰ μᾶλλον Ἀρχιλόχῳ προσήκοντα ἦν ταῦτα εἰπεῖν.*

Synesius applies Archilochus' lines to himself at a time

³ *Quaestiones Archilocheae*, p. 11.

of war when he is at his post on some fortification. The precise point of comparison must be that, like Archilocus, Synesius spends his life under arms, and takes all his meals at "action stations". This is clearly at variance with the traditional interpretation, since it assumes that ἐν δορί refers not to the means by which Archilochus wins his bread and wine, nor to his manner of carrying them, but to the place where he puts them to their proper use. If we follow Synesius, we may perhaps find a more satisfying explanation of the couplet.

We have seen that ἐν δορί should have the same meaning each time that it occurs. If it could mean something like "under arms" or "at my post", we could understand why Synesius quotes it as he does. Nor in fact is it very far from having such a meaning. There is nothing to prevent it meaning "at my spear". This use of ἐν is well documented, notably in Homer:

οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ ρ' ἱκανὸν ὄθει σφισιν εἶκε λαχῆσαι
ἐν ποταμῶ. . .

(*Il.* xviii. 520-1)

where it means not "in" but "at";

κατεκλάσθη δ' ἐνὶ καυλῶ
ἔγχος

(*Il.* xiii. 608-9)

where the sword is broken "at" the hilt:

ἐν δ' ἄρα τόξῳ,
ἀντικρὺ διὰ χειρός ἐλήλατο χάλκεον ἔγχος.

(*Il.* xiii. 594-5)

where Menelaus delivers a wound in the hand "by" the bow. Something of the same kind can be seen in such Attic usages as μετὰ τὴν ἐν Κερκύρα ναυμαχίαν (*Thuc.* i. 57) and τῆς ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχίας (*Isocr.* v. 147), and in the Ionic of Herodotus in οἰκησάντων ἐν Ἑλλησπόντῳ

(i. 57) and πόλιν τὴν ἐν Εὐξείνῳ πόντῳ (i. 76). In all these cases ἐν means not "in" but "at" or something very close to it. If we apply this to the couplet of Archilochus, it makes excellent sense. At this spear are his food and his drink, and at his spear he drinks. This gives the same meaning to ἐν δορί on each appearance and agrees with Synesius' quotation of the passage to illustrate his own situation.

If the couplet speaks of Archilochus' life under arms at his post some of its other implications still need to be unravelled. In what temper does he speak of his food and drink? What precise import should be attached to the rations which he mentions? First, there is the μάζα μεμαγμένη. This was barley meal, kneaded but not baked, as we see from Herodotus' words on the Babylonians: καὶ ὅς μὲν ἄν βούληται αὐτῶν εἶτε μάζαν μαξάμενος εἶδει, ὁ δὲ ἄρτου τρόπον ὀπτήσας (i. 200).

A μάζα was commonly contrasted with a wheaten-loaf, as by Hippocrates (*Vet. Med.* 8) and was thought inferior to it, as the proverb ἀγαθὴ καὶ μάζα μετ' ἄρτον (*Zenob.* i. 12) shows, though it had a certain dignity as the right food for old-fashioned occasions, as we see from Solon's insistence that it should be eaten, instead of ἄρτος, in the Prytaneum (*Ath.* iv. 137 e). It was, by normal views, a humble food, the fare of slaves and soldiers. But that does not necessarily mean that Archilochus despises it; for in another place it is the allegedly superior ἄρτος which he says reeks of servitude — δοῦλιον ἄρτον εἶδων (*fr.* 79. 6. Diehl). If a μάζα smacked of humble life and simple circumstances, that was in certain lights to its credit. Xenophon knew that to the hungry it makes little difference whether bread is made of barley or wheat: ἀναμνησθήτω πῶς μὲν ἦδὲ μάζα καὶ ἄρτος πεινῶντι φαγεῖν (*Cyr.* i. 2. 11), and that a μάζα μεμαγμένη might be quite palatable can be seen from Aristophanes' use of it to describe the way in which Cleon has appropriated the glory due to Demosthenes for the victory of Pylos:

καὶ πρώην γ' ἔμοῦ
 μᾶζαν μεμαχότος ἐν Πύλῳ Λακωνικὴν,
 πανουργότατά πως περιδραμῶν ὑφαρπάσας
 αὐτὸς παρέθηκε τὴν ὑπ' ἔμοῦ μεμαγμένην.

(*Eg.* 54-7)

There would be no point in this if a μᾶζα was universally despised and regarded as a very poor food. The point is that it is simple and nourishing. When Archilochus adds to the noun the participle μεμαγμένη, he suggests that such as it is, it is perfectly well prepared and ready to be eaten. He does not complain of it, but hints that in war it is good to have rations at all and that this kind of food will suffice.

The μᾶζα μεμαγμένη may be nothing out of the way, but there can be no doubt about the Ismarian wine; for this was a wine with a history. It is what Odysseus gave to the Cyclops, ἡδὺν ἀκηράσιον, θεῖον ποτόν (*Od.* ix. 205) and which had an ὄδμη θεσπεσίη (*ib.* 210. 3). Homer's authority was recognized by Virgil (*G.* ii. 37), Propertius (ii. 33. 32) and Ovid (*Met* ix. 642). Since it came from Thrace, and Archilochus knew the country from his own experience, this may have been one of the consolations which he found for the hardships of war. The food is nothing out of the ordinary, but the wine is excellent, and that is why Archilochus does not mention it till the last, when he develops the theme with the word πίνω. It is the wine which makes the occasions worthy of notice.

This takes us to the last word, κεκλιμένος. Κλίνεσθαι is used regularly for reclining to eat or to drink. If the actual business of getting down is expressed in the aorist, as in Eur. *Cyc.* 543 κλίθητί νῦν μοι πλευρὰ θεῖς ἐπὶ χθονός and Hdt. i. 211 κλιθέντες ἐδαίνυντο, the perfect is used when the eaters and drinkers have taken their places. So Theocritus describes a rustic repast;

Τὸν Πτελεατικὸν οἶνον ἀπὸ κρατήρος ἀφυξῶ
 Πᾶρ πυρὶ κεκλιμένος

(vii. 65-6)

The word κεκλιμένος suggests lying down as the Greeks lay down for a feast, and Archilochus' point is that in his own special conditions he does something of the kind. His only furniture is his spear, and this provides the setting. His food is of a humble enough kind, but the wine is first-class, and that is his main interest. Even in these conditions he can enjoy it as if he were at some convivial occasion. He was a man who knew how to make the best of the most unpromising circumstances and just as when he is on watch in a ship at sea, he looks forward to a good evening:

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡμεῖς
 νήφειν ἐν φυλακῇ τῆδε δυνησόμεθα,

(fr. 5 A. 8-9)

so on land, when war is close to him and he has military duties to perform, he is not discouraged, but enjoys the situation because he has something good to drink.