

JAN MAARTEN BREMER – MARC HUYS

SOME REMARKS ON THE NEW EDITION OF THE “TATTOO POEM”
(= P. BRUX. INV. E.8934 + P. SORB. INV. 2254)

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SOME REMARKS ON THE NEW EDITION¹ OF THE "TATTOO POEM"
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This paper serves the sole purpose of suggesting new supplements for two lacunae in the first column of P.Brux. inv. E.8934. More specifically our suggestions concern the passage which evokes in Homeric phrasing the fight between Heracles and the Centaur Eurytion. For the sake of clarity the relevant distichs (col. I, 14-24) are reproduced below as they have been printed in the editio princeps.

14]...ε [τ]ρίποδα μέγαν
15] .φο..[.]ις κρατὸς ὑπε[ρ] λαοῖου
16	- ☞ - ☞] .ει μέσσου δ' εἰς στῆθ[ο]ς ἔρεισεν
17	- ☞ - ☞	-]ν ἀνέρος οὐδεμῖαν
18	- ☞ - ☞]εθηκε βέλος Τριτωνῆς Ἀθήνη
19	- ☞ - ☞]του φειδομένη μεγάλως
20	- ☞ - ☞	ἐτ[έ]ρηι μὲν ὑπ' ἀσφάραγον λάβε χειρί,
21		τῆι δ' ἑτέρηι ῥ[ό]παλου σκληρὸν ἀνασχόμενος
22	- ☞ - ☞] κρόταφον σὺν [τ' ὀ]στέα πάντα ἄραξεν
23	- ☞ - ☞]ων ἔκπεσεν [έγ]κέφαλος
24	- ☞ - ☞] πληγὴν ψυχῆ [δ' ἄ]νὰ ἥερα δῶνε

14.]...ε [τ]ρίποδα (an]τε[τ]ράποδα?) 16. Ἡρακ]λεῖ Parsons 17. (καί κεν ἴδοις φυλακῆ]ν Parsons) 18. ἀλλ' ἐν χερσὶν] ἔθηκε e.g., εἰ τότε μὴ παρ]έθηκε Parsons 19. ἀύ]τοῦ vel βιό]του e.g. 20. init. Ἡρακ]λής Parsons 22. Κεντ]αύρου] Parsons 23. ρί]νων Parsons; ἔκπεσεν corr., εκπεσεν P

In line 17 Parsons' suggestion is less than probable, for two reasons. In the first place: his supplement (17 letters) is much too long² in view of the very probable supplements suggested for lines 7 (10 letters) and 21 (11 letters).³ In the second place: in this poem, as far as we can read it, the poet is occupying himself with the vengeful tattooing of an enemy; and he addresses his enemy at least three times (col. II 4,12,14)⁴ by means of the second person singular in an aggressive way. Now it would be awkward if in col. I, 17 the poet

¹ M.Huys, Le poème élégiaque hellénistique P.Brux. inv. E.8934 et P.Sorb. inv. 2254: édition, commentaire et analyse stylistique, Papyri Bruxellenses Graecae II 22, Bruxelles 1991.

² This was already observed in Huys, op.cit. p.50.

³ For a discussion of these supplements see Huys, op.cit. p.42.

⁴ Probably also in col. I,5 πρῶτά σ' ἐπὶ ν]ωνόν στιξω.

would aim the second person singular at another addressee, a kind of ideal, detached reader who is turned temporarily into an eyewitness.⁵

Therefore we would prefer ἐλπίζων ἀλκή]ν ἀνέρος οὐδεμίαν. The length of this supplement (11 letters) fits the lacuna perfectly, and the prosaic ἐλπίζων is in itself not incompatible with the diction of our poet.⁶ Besides, there are other examples of forms of the prosaic active⁷ ἐλπίζω occupying the first metron of the hexameter or pentameter in elegiac distichs: A.P. 5.101,3 and 7.638,4 (Crinagoras), 11.216,5 (Lucillius), 11.350,5 (Agathias). The sense of ἐλπίζων suits the context: the Centaur is convinced that by means of the tripod he can keep Heracles at a safe distance; he "does not expect/fear any help of a man".⁸ Then, instead of human defence, the goddess Athena intervenes. The combination of ἀλκή with ἀνέρος as a genitive of the subject is found also in A.P. 7.426,5-6 (Antip.Sid.), Oppian Halieut. 3.541, Q.Sm. 2.152 and 11.445.

For line 22 we would suggest πλήξεν τε] κρόταφον σύν [τ' ὀ]στέα πάντα ἄραξεν. The supplement is certainly not too long (8 letters). Our suggestion is based on the comparison with Homeric fighting scenes. Many of them follow a typical four-stages pattern:

1. The enemy hits his opponent with a weapon (βάλε, ἤλασε, πλήξε ξίφει, δουρί, χερμαδίῳ).

2. The effect of the wounding is described realistically.

3. The victim falls (πέσεν, κάππεσεν, ἔκπεσεν, πεσών; less frequently ἤριπε); in some cases it is a part of the body which falls to the ground (in E 82 the hand, in Π 741 the eyes).

4. The victim expires (θυμὸν ἀποπνείων, λύθη ψυχή, λίπε δ' ὀστέα θυμός).

The Iliad contains a wealth of such passages, all variations on the same pattern, e.g. Δ 519-526, E 65-68, 80-83, 290-296, 305-310, Π 308-311, 322-325, 411-414 = 577-580, 737-743 etc. The Odyssey contains one relevant passage, viz. μ 412-414: not a combat scene but evidently modelled on the same type.

⁵ From I.J.F. de Jong, *Narrators and focalizers, the presentation of the story in the Iliad*, Amsterdam 1987, pp.54-60, it appears that this technique (the use of the addressee as an imaginary spectator) is frequently used by the poet of the Iliad. What we want to point out is that in this particular elegy, with its highly individual (imagined) situation, this technique would be less appropriate.

⁶ For the occasional use of a prosaic expression in this poem see Huys, *op.cit.* pp.88-89.

⁷ We have considered ἐλπόμενος ἀλκή]ν, in view of ἔλπει in col. II, 12. This verb occurs regularly in epic poetry from Homer onwards, and would occupy here its traditional sedes (see Σ 260, Hesiod Scutum 66 etc.); but it seems bad method to introduce an uncommon metrical license, viz. the lengthening of a short syllable in princeps position: one finds this very rarely in the pentameter, and then at the diaeresis. See Gow & Page, *Hellenistic epigrams*, Cambridge 1965, vol.II, p.49 ad Antip.Sid. 19,4 (to the examples taken from Theognis add 1136). If the emendation in col. I, 7 δαιζόμενον is accepted, the same metrical license would occur; but in this case there are three 'attenuating circumstances': (a) the phenomenon looks less odd in a hexameter, as it is not uncommon in Homer (see West, *Greek Metre*, Oxford 1982, p.38; and cp. also Theognis 329 and 461), (b) sense and context enforce this emendation, and (c) a syllable ending on ν seems more fit for lengthening.

⁸ For this sense of ἐλπίζω see LSJ s.v., 2. Cp. Hdt. 1.77 and 8.53: in both passages the verb is used for persons who, wrongly, do not fear any immediate danger from the enemy.

With our supplement the four phases are represented:

1. Heracles hits the Centaur's temple with his club (21, 22a).
2. He smashes all the bones of his skull (22b).
3. The Centaur's brain falls (through his nose?) to the ground (23).
4. The victim's soul vanishes into the air (24).

The coordination of (1) and (2) by means of τε .. τε finds a perfect parallel in Ψ 673: ἀντικρὺ χροῖα τε ῥήξω σὺν τ' ὅστέ' ἀράξω. For πλήξεν in combination with κρόταφος we refer to Theocr. 22.124: πλήξεν ὑπὸ σκαιὸν κρόταφον καὶ ἐπέμπεσεν ὄμω, and to Q.Sm. 6.563: πλήξε κατὰ κροτάφοιο... For col. I, 22 as a whole the closest parallel is μ 412-413: πλήξε κυβερνήτεω κεφαλὴν, σὺν δ' ὅστέ' ἄραξε / πάντ' ἄμυδις κεφαλῆς.

The imitation of this Homeric type of scene may also explain the specific use of ἔκπεσεν in line 23. This expression had been the object of some amazement in the editio princeps as it is not attested elsewhere to indicate the pouring out of the brain, a recurrent feature in Homeric scenes.⁹ But given the fact that the use of (ἐκ)πέσεν is very common in the third stage of the killing scene as analysed above, the verb can be expected here. As in so many other instances this poet - whether he is to be identified with Hermesianax or not - shows his skill and originality in using the verbal form, traditional in this context, in an unexpected and new way.¹⁰

Universiteit van Amsterdam
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Jan Maarten Bremer
Marc Huys

⁹ Cp. Huys op.cit. p.56.

¹⁰ Cp. Huys op.cit. pp.84-86.