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RIDDLES AND HALLUCINATIONS

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Riddles and Hallucinations

I

In *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* Charlotte Roueche¹ publishes a graffito from the Odeon:

Ζήτημα
] ἄψυχον υπο . . ου
 . . .] βατάζετε κλαυ
 . . .] ψυχας βατάζει
 εὐτ(υχῶς)

and comments "The text is extremely obscure. It may well have a religious sense" and speculates on other possibilities, ending "It is probably only the discovery of parallels which will elucidate this passage."

In a sense a parallel graffito was already published from Cyrene in 1962:²

Ζήτημα· τῶν Πριάμου παιδῶν τίς πάτηρ;

on which R. Kaster (*Mnemosyne* 37 [1984] 457f.) commented that it was probably a parody of a school exercise. Possibly so. That the Aphrodisias graffito is exactly what it says, viz. a zetema, there should be no doubt. Riddles about "life-less" things that display life are particularly common in Greek. On a herm was found the riddle: "when alive, they saw not the sun; when dead, they fought": answer: astragaloi.³ The lyre—or other instrument—that is dead but speaks was one of the oldest.⁴

¹ Society for the promotion of Roman Studies: JRS Monographs 5 [London 1989] no. 218.vi.

² Oliviero G., et al., ASAA 33-34 (1961-2) p. 324 no. 192.

³ Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca* 1120:

εἰcίν μοι δὺ' ἀδελφοὶ ὁμών[υμοι], οἱ δὺ' ὅμοιοι,
 οἱ μέχρι μὲν ζώουσι, τὸν ἴηλιον οὐκ ἐκορῶcιν,
 αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν ἰθαν[έωσι,] ἰτότ' ἀλλήλοισι μάχονται .

The reconstruction is based on a variant version: Tryphon, περὶ τρόπων in Spengel, *Rhet. gr.* III 195.

⁴ For further references see "Aristophanes of Byzantium and Problem Solving", *CQ* 32 (1982) 336-349. I add a few additional observations by L. Koenen: "The plaster to the left of the extant graffito is damaged, hence it is not known how many letters are lost. It is, however, clear that at least in lines 3 and 4 the text began to the left of what is extant of lines 1 and 2. Line 1 ζήτημα may have been indented, and line 2 ἄψυχον is either preceded by a space or is the actual beginning of that line (see Roueché's pl. XLV). Although the uncertainty of the physical arrangement of the graffito precludes a serious reconstruction, we may expect something like the following:

] Ζήτημα·
] ἄψυχον· ὑπ' αὐτοῦ
 δὲ πᾶν] βατάζετε κλαυ-
 μα ὅτε ψ]υχας βατάζει
] εὐτ(υχῶς).

² ὑπ' αὐτοῦ Koenen

³ read βατάζεται (as considered by Roueché)

For the effect of music described here see Hes. *Theog.* 55 ἄμπαυμα τε μερμηράων and the parallels collected by M. West in his commentary."

II

Cratinus fr. 325 K-A runs:

ἄρχων < > εἶμι νῦν Ἀθηναίοις ἐγώ.

The statement reminds one at first of the chorus of Cratinus' *Ploutoi* (fr. 171,49f.) who call themselves fish.⁵ But in their commentary to fr. 325 the editors note among other solutions: "οἶνω ἐπαρθέντα loqui coni. Crusius Phil. 47 (1889) 40, coll. Bacchyl. 20 B 12 Sn., Ar. Eq. 92sqq." I had unwittingly collected the same references (from Athenaeus 782D) to the hallucination of power created by wine.⁶ One can add to strengthen Crusius' case: Plato, *Leg.* 671 B (cf. 649A): (As a result of wine everyone) ἄρχων ἰκανὸς ἀξιοῖ ἐαυτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων γεγόνεσθαι, which was probably in Plutarch's mind at *Moralia* 715A. The general thought must have been common, as Diphilus (fr. 86 K-A) and Horace (*Od.* 3.21.3) suggest. But Theodore Birt (*Elpides* [Marburg 1881] 59ff.) had shown how widespread was the idea that Hope by itself could generate illusions of kingship among the poor, and Crusius⁷ was able ingeniously to add an early example, probably Epicharmus' *Chytrai* (fr. 136-7 Kaibel), to his list: this dealt with the folk-tale of the potter, who fancies he will make a fortune from his wares, only to break them at the height of his hopes. It is tempting to think that the line would be the climax of one of these speeches of fantastic hope, since the thought was so common in folklore and early comedy. Then Herwerden's attribution of fr. 325 to the *Pot* of Cratinus, recorded in the apparatus of *PGC*, would be even more likely.

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⁵ ἐγὼ γὰρ εἶμι θυννὶς ἢ μέλατινά σοι
καὶ θύννος, ὀρφός, γλαῦκος, ἔγγελλος, κύων.

⁶ "Symposium at Sea", *HSCP* 80 (1976) 161-170 at the end.

⁷ *Zur handschriftlichen Überlieferung ... der Paroemiographen*: = *Philologus* Supp. 6, Nachtrag, p. 321, citing also his article in *Philol.* 48 (1890) 228.