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CERCIDAS, CAELIUS, AND UNSAFE SEX: ΤΥΝΔΑΡΕΟΙΟ ΓΑΜΒΡΟΣ
(CERC. FR. 2.28 LIVREA)

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CERCIDAS, CAELIUS, AND UNSAFE SEX: ΤΥΝΔΑΡΕΟΙΟ ΓΑΜΒΡΟC
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Cercidas fr. 2 Livrea (= 4 Powell) is concerned with attitudes towards sexual gratification. It opens with a contrast, expressed in terms explicitly borrowed from Euripides, between the two ways in which Eros can blow from his cheeks: "if on any mortal his right cheek breathes gently and graciously, that man enjoys calm weather as he steers his ship of love with Persuasion's moderate rudder. But for those against whom he looses his left cheek, stirring up whirlwinds and voracious gales of desire, their passage is rough and choppy throughout" (lines 4-10). The former kind is then commended: "Is it not better to select the wind that is favourable to us, and, with Moderation's aid, using the helm of Persuasion, sail a straight course, while our voyage is in Cyprian waters?" (lines 11-14). At this point the papyrus is badly damaged; one can only speculate on the possible significance of what may be a reference to the voyage of Icarus (line 24). When coherent sense is resumed, there is a dire pronouncement: "for all such criminal violence and bestial obsession with women bring disastrous ruin as their fulfilment, and the certain promise of pain and remorse" (lines 24-26). There follows the notorious passage:

ἀ δ' ἐξ ἀγορᾶς Ἀφροδίτα
καὶ τὸ μη[δε]νὸς μέλειν, ὀπ[αν]ίκα λῆις, ὄκα χρήζηις,
οὐ φόβος, οὐ ταραχά.

But Aphrodite of the market-place, 'feeling anxiety for nothing', whenever you like, when you need it, no fear, no bother: lay her for an obol and imagine you're Tyndareus' son-in-law. (lines 26-9)

The conventional interpretation of these lines has been that they exemplify the calm and sensible approach to sex applauded at the beginning of the poem, and that the poet is advocating *in propria persona* resort to prostitutes as an acceptable alternative to adultery. This was the view of A.S.Hunt, the first editor of the poem; he wrote, with barely concealed distaste, of "... verses which advocate the simplest and cheapest satisfaction of animal instincts. Cercidas adopts the attitude expected in a follower of Diogenes, who decried marriage (D.L. 6.54, 72) and described love as the occupation of the idle (51) and a painful pursuit of pleasure."¹ This view has been enormously influential, and is now found in standard works on Cynism² and ancient philosophy in general,³ on Greek⁴ and on Latin

¹ *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* VIII (1911) 22.

² E.g. D.R.Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London, 1937) 81. I have suggested that users of the English language should conform to the usage of the rest of the world by reviving the impeccably formed noun "Cynism" (instead of the more dubious form "cynicism" with all its misleading associations) to denote the

literature,⁵ since Cercidas' words have been assimilated to the attitude so memorably enunciated at Horace *serm.* 1.2.119, 125-6:

...parabilem amo uenerem facilemque.

...

haec ubi supposuit dextro corpus mihi laeuum

Ilia et Egeria est: do nomen quodlibet illi.

Indeed, some have seen this passage of Cercidas as an actual source for Horace.⁶

Enrico Livrea, with whom I am preparing a new text of Cercidas with full commentary, and I have argued that the speaker of these words must be an imaginary interlocutor, into whose mouth C. puts this apparent praise of *Venus parabilis*.⁷ Our interpretation depends on recognition of the ironical element in the lines, as well as their inconsistency with the overall message of the poem as a whole. I wish here to examine in detail the last clause of the passage we attribute to the interlocutor (τα[ύ]ταν ὀβολῶ κατακλίνας / T[υ]νδαρέοιο δόκει γαμβρός τ[ό]τ' ἡμεν), since I see it as containing layer upon layer of irony, in comparison with which Horace's words seem plain and straightforward.

Firstly, there is linguistic incongruity: on the evidence of Plato, *Symp.* 203b and Aristophanes, *Lys.* 904 it seems that *κατακλίνας* is, appropriately in this context and especially after the crudity of ὀβολῶ, a vulgarism (hence my translation "lay"). This gives particular piquancy to its juxtaposition with the resonant name of the ancient hero Tyndareus, above all in the archaic genitive form Τυνδαρέοιο, which appears at first sight to belong to Homeric epic. But in fact Homer uses only the genitive form Τυνδαρέου,⁸ so that Cercidas is being more epic than Homer. This pseudo-Homeric form Τυνδαρέοιο,

philosophical outlook of Diogenes and his followers: see my note "Giving dogs a bad name", *LCM* 14 (1989) 155-56.

³ E.g. H.North, *Sophrosyne. Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca, NY, 1966) 245, H.D.Rankin, *Sophists, Socratics and Cynics* (London, 1983) 245.

⁴ E.g. D.H.Garrison, *Mild Frenzy: a Reading of the Hellenistic Love Epigram*, *Hermes Einzelschrift* 41 (Wiesbaden, 1978) 20-21.

⁵ E.g. N.Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge, 1966, repr. Bristol 1982) 25.

⁶ E.g. G.Fracaroli, *RFIC* 40 (1912) 127ff., (*contra* M.Lenchantin de Gubernatis, *Boll.Fil.Cl.* 19 [1912] 52-6, esp. 53; cf. G.Pasquali, *Orazio Lirico* [2nd ed., Florence 1966] 226-36); Wilamowitz, *Sitzb.Pr.Ak.Wiss.* (1918) 1146 (= *Kleine Schriften* ii 136): "Da ist es hübsch, dass Horaz in seiner ältesten Satire den Kerkidas vor Augen hat." Q.Cataudella, *PP* 5 (1950) 18-31 argued for Philodemus as an intermediary between Cercidas and Horace; cf. M.Gigante, *Ricerche filodemee* (2nd ed., Naples 1983) 241-3.

⁷ E.Livrea, *Studi cercidei* (Bonn, 1986) 65-7. I have expounded this view in papers read to the Leeds International Latin Seminar, the Hibernian Hellenists at Maynooth, and the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, and thank my audiences for their stimulating reactions.

⁸ *Od.* 11.298, 24.199; this is also the only form of the genitive actually attested in the Hesiodic corpus (cf. fr. 196.7, 199.8, 204.61 M-W), though Lobel proposed a supplement with the -οιο form at Hes. fr. 23(a) 14 M-W. The -οιο form does occur at A.R. 1.148, 3.517, Moschus, *Ep.Bi.* 78, where as a correctly formed epic genitive it is of course entirely appropriate.

coming so soon after a normal Doric genitive ὀβολῶ, attracts attention to itself, especially as there is no other example of an -οιο genitive in the extant remains of Cercidas.⁹

Secondly, the expression ("Tyndareus' son-in-law") is utterly preposterous in this context: a short-term relationship with a prostitute, necessarily limited to the sexual act, is being referred to in the social (and non-sexual) vocabulary appropriate to the permanent state of legitimate matrimony.¹⁰ Moreover, we must, I think, concede that however ecstatic the pleasures experienced by the devotee of ἅ ἐξ ἀγορᾶς Ἀφροδίτη may have been, they are unlikely to have included contemplating the social status of a supposed, and very temporary, "father-in-law".

Thirdly, the reader must ask the question how desirable is the status of son-in-law of Tyndareus, even (perhaps especially) in sexual terms. Commentators have too readily assumed that Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός is simply a periphrasis for Menelaus, the husband of Helen. But notoriously Tyndareus had more than one daughter.¹¹ One of them, Phylonee, need not concern us, since she suffered apotheosis as a virgin.¹² The other three were Timandra, Clytaemestra, and Helen, none of whom is an obvious paradigm of conventional marital bliss. Both Hesiod (fr. 176 M-W)¹³ and Stesichorus (fr. 223 Page) recount the story that Tyndareus when sacrificing to the gods neglected Aphrodite, who avenged herself by causing his daughters to be διγάμους καὶ τριγάμους καὶ λειψάνδρους: hence Timandra left her husband Echemus for Phyleus, and her sisters Clytaemestra and Helen embarked on their own better-publicized careers of spectacular adultery. No wonder that for Ovid too being Tyndareus' son-in-law was far from being an unmixed blessing: one of the curses in his *Ibis* is

tam quoque di faciant possis gaudere fideli
coniuge quam Talai Tyndareique gener. (353-4)¹⁴

The phrase Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός could therefore convey a reference to a union with any of Tyndareus' adulterous daughters, not just with Helen. In such a sexual context, one might still feel, even after granting the irony in the use of γαμβρός, that Helen was the most appropriate of the three women. However it is precisely in a sexual context that we encounter a phrase which offers a striking parallel to Cercidas' words, *quadrantaria Clytemnestra*, the expression applied by Caelius Rufus to Clodia:¹⁵ *quadrantaria*

⁹ Livrea ad loc. rightly compares the ironical effect of Horace's mock-epic phrase *fortissima Tyndaridarum* in the colloquial context of *serm.* 1.1.100.

¹⁰ In English terms, the Commercial Union is being advertized as if it were the Legal & General.

¹¹ Cf. Eur. *Orestes* 249-50, 540-41, 750.

¹² Apollodorus 3.10.6; cf. Hesiod fr. 23(a) 10-12 M-W.

¹³ On the placing of this fragment, see M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985) 96.

¹⁴ Talaus' son-in-law was of course Amphiarus, whose death was brought about by the treachery of his wife Eriphyle.

¹⁵ Quintilian 8.6.53 = ORF p. 486. In his commentary on Cicero, *pro Caelio* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1960) p. 124, R.G. Austin appositely cites Antiphon 1.17, from a (possibly fictional) speech in which the prosecutor accused his stepmother of engineering his father's death by poisoning: ἔδοξεν αὐτῆι βουλευομένην βέλτιον

reproduces the unflattering ὀβολῶ κατακλίνας, while *Clytemnestra* echoes the mock-heroic allusion of Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός.¹⁶ Caelius' insult had a double point, Clodia's promiscuity, which led one of her lovers to hint that she was no better than a common prostitute,¹⁷ and the widespread belief that she had poisoned her husband.

The same kind of double reference is surely present here in Cercidas' pointed expression. While the advocate of "Aphrodite of the market-place" may appear to be commending the purchase of sexual enjoyment supposedly without complications, his phrase Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός, which seems at first sight to represent the climax of his case, has, because of its ambiguity, a sinister connotation which undermines his message, and clearly points to the baleful consequences of the course of action he is advocating. Indeed, it exemplifies the gnomic reflection which preceded his intervention:

πᾶν γὰ[ρ] τὸ βιαι[ο]πό[ν]ηρον
καὶ προκοθηλυμαν[ἐς] φέρει ταναβλαψιτέλειαν
καὶ μεταμελλοδύναν.

("All such criminal violence and bestial obsession with women bring disastrous ruin as their fulfilment, and the certain promise of pain and remorse.")

Moreover, the formation of the neologism μεταμελλοδύναν parallels the forceful ambiguity of Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός. Its middle element μελλο-, as Livrea observes, "ricorda scherzosamente la terminologia matrimoniale e sessuale, cf. μελλέποσις, μελλόποσις, μελλόγαμβρος, μελλόγαμος, μελλόνυμφος etc." Such terms belong, like γαμβρός, to the sphere of settled and legitimate family life.

Even the interpretation of the phrase Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός as referring (whether partially or primarily) to Menelaus contains yet a further irony, so far unnoticed by commentators. The speaker (whatever his identity) is commending extra-marital means of achieving sexual satisfaction. Yet, as no less a person than Aristotle observed, Homer represents Menelaus alone of all the Greek heroes as abstaining from sexual activity throughout the Trojan War:

θαυμάσαι δ' ἄν τις ὅτι οὐδαμοῦ τῆς Ἰλιάδος Ὅμηρος ἐποίησε Μενελάωι συγκοιμημένην παλλακίδα, πᾶσι δὲ γυναικάς. κοιμῶνται γοῦν παρ' αὐτῶι καὶ οἱ γέροντες μετὰ γυναικῶν, Νέκτωρ καὶ Φοῖνιξ... ἔοικεν οὖν ὁ Σπαρτιάτης αἰδεῖσθαι

εἶναι μετὰ δεῖπνον δοῦναι, τῆς Κλυταιμῆστρας (ταύτης add. Gernet) τῆς τούτου μητρὸς ταῖς ὑποθήκαις ἅμα διακονοῦσαν. The text has been much discussed, and I print here an eclectic version; in particular some editors have proposed to excise the words τῆς τούτου μητρὸς, but they seem acceptable as explicating the jibe τῆς Κλυταιμῆστρας ταύτης: "this Clytaemestra, that is, the defendant's mother". For Clytaemestra as synonymous with husband-killing, cf. Juvenal 6.656 Clytaemestram nullus non vicus haebit.

¹⁶ I am not of course suggesting that Caelius was quoting Cercidas, rather that Cercidas' allusion, if not its precise form, is recognizably appropriate as a forceful jibe in an actual context of sexual immorality compounded with violence.

¹⁷ Cf. Plutarch, *Cicero* 29.4 (quoted by Austin): Κλωδίαν ... Κουαδραντίαν ἐκάλουν, ὅτι τῶν ἐραστῶν τις αὐτῆι χαλκοῦς ἐμβαλὼν εἰς βαλάντιον ὡς ἀργύριον εἰσέπεμψε· τὸ δὲ λεπτότατον τοῦ χαλκοῦ νομίματος κουαδραντήν ἐκάλουν.

γαμετήν οὔσαν τὴν Ἑλένην, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ τὴν στρατείαν ἤθροισεν· διόπερ φυλάττεται τὴν πρὸς ἄλλην κοινωνίαν.¹⁸

In conclusion: the phrase Τυνδαρέοιο γαμβρός is pointedly ambiguous and ironical, and serves not to support but to subvert the apparent recommendation of ἅ δ' ἐξ ἀγορῶν Ἀφροδίτα.

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¹⁸ Fr. 144 Rose = Athen. 13.556d (where Gulick chides Aristotle for nodding in the case of Phoenix and forgetting *Iliad* 9.658-68).