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DARKNESS ON THE MOUNTAINS: A FRAGMENT OF CALLIMACHUS’ HECALE?

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 123 (1998) 72

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DARKNESS ON THE MOUNTAINS: A FRAGMENT OF CALLIMACHUS’ HECALE?

Hesychius η 392 Latte ἡλυχίων ὄρεων : ἐν σκότωι κατεχομένων.1 This anonymous citation very much breathes the atmosphere of learned Hellenistic poetry (‘poetae Alexandrini’, Latte). The epithet ἡλύχιος is found nowhere else, and does not even appear in the lexicon of LSJ (or its revised Supplement), which recognizes only ἡλυχαῖος from Suid.2 Compare Hes. η 390 ἡλύχη· σκίω, a noun occurring in Aristophanes, Acharnians 684; the verb ἐπιλυχάζω = ‘overshadow’ is in common use.

One naturally thinks first of Callimachus who, among all the Hellenistic poets, is much the most often cited by grammarians and lexicographers. Although these words might fit any description of the coming of night, perhaps it is worth pointing to a context in the Hecale where a mention of mountains would be particularly appropriate. On the day when Theseus set out from Athens for Marathon, the noonday sky had been more brilliant than glass (fr. 18,1–2 H. ὁφρὰ μὲν οὖν ἔνδιος ἐν ἑττὶ, θέρμετο δὲ χθόν., / τόφρα δὲ ἔν τὸ ὑάλιον φανέρων οὐρανὸς ἤτοι), with not even the suspicion of a cloud (3–4 οὐδὲ ποθὶ κνηκὴς ὑπερφαίνετο, πέπτατο δὲ αἰθήρ / ἀννέφελος). But at supper time (5–6) clouds began to gather over the Attic mountains;3 in the space of four lines (8–11) we find mention of Parnes, Aegaleos and Hymettus. Two of these (Parnes and Hymettus) were, in the terminology of [Theophrastus],4 De Signis Tempestatum 51 ὅπις σημαντικός, of especial significance for predicting the weather; the presence or absence of clouds round about them is often noted by [Theophrastus]. If (as I suspect) fr. 19 καὶ ἢρός ἀχλάσαντος5 belongs in the second half of fr. 18,11, the air has grown murky, and in line 12 lightning flashes (ἀστεροποιεῖ σελάγιζων). There follows a simile occupying lines 13–14 and probably at least as far as 16, where the papyrus begins to fail; this too includes a mountain (Thrachian Merisus, 15). Hesychius’ fragment ἡλυχίων ὄρεων might find a place soon after the end of fr. 18 H., referring back to the Attic mountains of lines 8–11, which by now are covered in darkness.

There is another entry in Hesychius, ω 172 Schmidt ἡλυχίων, of which the first explanation is σκοτεινών.6 Use of the genitive plural case makes me wonder whether there was an ancient variant ἡλυχίων ὄρεων for ἡλυχίων in our fragment. For attested variants in the Hecale, cf. the choice between πολύκρημνον and πολύκρημνον in fr. 96,3 H.7

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1 I have detached this item from the accompanying article, Some Neglected Verse Citations in Hesychius, in order to give it more prominence, and to mark it as a sequel to Three Possible Fragments of Callimachus’ Hecale in Hesychius (ZPE 117, 1997, 47–49).

2 The omission is not wholly explained by the fact that the manuscript of Hesychius has ἡλυχίων, which J. G. Schneider corrected to ἡλυχαῖον. Stephanus’ Thesaurus does recognize ἡλύχης.

3 This seems to be a general description of Attic weather conditions (cf. my note on fr. 18,8 ff.), since Parnes and Aegaleos (lines 8 and 9) are not especially relevant to Theseus’ journey.

4 This work, as it stands, can hardly be by Theophrastus, but may incorporate material from a genuine work of Theophrastus which was used by Aratus for the weather signs in his Phaenomena, and perhaps by Callimachus here and elsewhere in the Hecale (cf. fr. 25 H.). See Douglas Kidd, Aratus, Phaenomena (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 21–23.

5 glossed σκοτεινόν by Suid.

6 followed by κακόν, μακρόν, ἀξίον, μεγάλον, which may be influenced by explanations of διαλύπτων (cf. Pfeiffer on Call. fr. 713 and Et. Mag. p. 280,55 διαλύπτων μακρόν, μέγα, διείνον, χαλαπτόν).

7 One might also regard χατάνοντος for κατάνοντος in fr. 47,6 H. as an established variant (χατήρες is by no means a commonplace word).