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The First Word of Callimachus' Aitia


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THE FIRST WORD OF CALLIMACHUS’ AITIA

Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato

In his first speech before the Ithacan assembly, Telemachus describes as follows the second (and greater) of the two evils that have fallen upon him and his house (Od. β 50):

μητέρι μοι μνηστήρες ἐπέχρονον οὐκ ἔθελοσθη.

In the manuscript Marc. gr. 613, one of the most important (and perhaps less carefully studied) testimonia of the Odyssean scholia1, the interlinear note to the first part of this line, written by the hand classified by Ludwich as M², reads (f. 20r = p. 80, 2 Dindorf):

μητέρι μὲν ὡς πολλάκις Τελχίνες.

Neither Dindorf – who simply suggested the obvious emendation μοι for μέν2, so as to make a lemma out of the first two words – nor, as far as I know, any of the subsequent critics has dedicated any comment to this scholium. One might be struck by the lack of any evident analogy between the Telchines and Penelope’s suitors: nothing of what is known about the former (neither the Rhodian and Cretan legends about their life, nor their nature of magical daemons credited with the discovery and use of metals, nor, finally, their antonomastic role as the genii of envy)3 can be safely connected with the Homeric picture of the suitors.

The only common feature may be detected in the fact that both the Telchines and the suitors are malevolent subjects operating collectively in a multitude with the aim to disturb or attack somebody (but here again, no cases are known of Telchines importuning a woman, let alone asking her hand for marriage against her will): in my opinion, too slight a parallel to be remarked in a scholium. And anyway: a) πολλάκις would point to a habitual action of the Telchines, and I wonder to which episodes the reference could be; b) this interpretation would force us to change the lemma from μητέρι μοι (the Telchines never did any harm to mothers or widows) to ἐπέχρονον (the word expressing the idea of “disturbing”, “annoying”, “attacking”), although one must observe that this verb is never used of the Telchines, so that the parallel could in no way imply a verbal reminiscence4.

If this explanation appears to be unsatisfactory, I dare suggest a different one. The first two words of β 50 (namely the lemma of our scholium) represent one of the many Homeric instances of the so-called “double dative” created by the overlap of a dative (μοι, whether ethical, possessive or of disadvantage5) with another dative governed by the verb (μητέρι)⁶. Aristonicus’ (and therefore Aristarchus’) typical explanation for this type of construction, as well as for the similar one called “σχήμα καθ’ ὁλον καί

1 Having started a new recensio of the text of the scholia to the Odyssey, I can certify that Dindorf’s account of M’s readings, based exclusively on Cobet’s collations of books α–δ, is often unreliable. The opposite is true for Ludwich’s partial edition of the schola to α (Scholia in Homeri Odysseae A 1–309 auctoria et emendatoria, ed. A. L., Köningsberg 1888–1890 [repr. Hildesheim 1966]) and for the same author’s Programm devoted to this manuscript (A. Ludwich, Scholia ad Odysseae l. XIII ex codicibus mss. Veneto et Monacensi edita, Regimonti 1871 [«Acad. Alb. Regim. 1871. I». 1–4]: both these works proceed from good, independent collations and contribute to drawing a distinction between the annotating hands.

2 It may be enough to quote one more error of this sort: in Σ ad β 319 (p. 109, 1 Dindorf) the ms. E (Ambr. E 89 sup., b. 19v) has a wrong μὲν instead of μου after κατηγοροῦντες.

3 The most complete survey on the Telchines is still the article by H. Herter in RE V A (1934), 197–224.

4 M. van der Valk, Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad, I, Leiden 1963, 264 n. 311, argues that Apollonius Rhodius, when using the word ἐπέχρονον for the ἐτήσιον οὔτοι in Arg. II, 498, wishes to represent the winds «as living and malicious beings». In fact, the Telchines fit in well with this description, but I find it hard to believe that such a subtle analogy might have been remarked by an ancient scholiast.

5 S. West ad loc, comments (in A. Heubeck – S. West – J. B. Hainsworth, A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey I, Oxford 1988, 133): “It is hard to say whether the dative μοι should be classified as possessive, ethical or of disadvantage”.

6 For similar cases see e. g. E. Schwyzzer (– A. Debrunner), Griechische Grammatik II, München 1950, 149.
méros”7, is: δότηκ' ὁντὶ γεννητής, i. e. “the dative instead of the genitive”8. As a matter of fact, the personal pronoun in the dative can almost always be given possessive force, and thus be rendered by means of a possessive (in our case, “my mother”): this is the solution most frequently adopted in modern translations9.

Now, our scholium may be interpreted as dealing with precisely this grammatical issue, the “double dative” in the lemma, and as referring to another famous passage containing a “double dative”, i. e. the opening line of Callimachus’ Aitia:

πολλάκις μοι Τελχίνες ἐπί τρύζουσιν ὀδόθη.

Admittedly, three objections can be raised against this reconstruction.

a) One should assume that the text of the scholium is badly mutilated, and restore it to the following:

μητρή μοι ὧς “πολλάκις ζε <μοι> Τελχίνες <ἐπι τρύζουσιν ὀδόθη>”.

This, however, will immediately appear as no major difficulty to anyone who is acquainted with the tradition of Homeric scholia (and particularly of the Odyssean ones), in which often even essential words (in this case, particularly the μοι of Callimachus’ line, which perhaps at some stage may have turned into the final sigma of πολλάκις) have been swallowed up by textual corruption.

b) The “double dative” in Callimachus’ line is not certain (in so far as some editors read ὀδόθης for ὀδόθη) and is anyway of different nature from the one in β 50.

This objection can be easily rejected: ὀδόθη at the end of Aitia I, 1 is the reading one can gather from the only witness of the last word of this line (in lacuna in POxy 2079), i. e. the Scholia Florentina (PSI XI, 1219), which carry ΑΟΙΔΗ and normally omit the iota mutum10. Furthermore, the syntax of Aitia I, 2 (νήθες οἱ Μοῦσῆς οὐκ ἐγένοντο φίλοι), whether brachylogical (Μοῦσης depending ἀπό κοινοῦ on νήθες and φίλοι) or not (νήθες meaning “ignorant, stupid”)11, does stand on its own and thus allows the reading ὀδόθη in the foregoing line. As for the syntactical nature of μοι ... ὀδόθη, I doubt that it can be described as a σχήμα καθ’ ὅλον καὶ μέρος stricto sensu12, since this σχήμα only occurs with parts of the body, with the “mind”, thoughts or the like13: I would rather see here the overlap of two datives, with μοι (whether ethical, possessive or of disadvantage) implying the same deep involvement that was remarked by Nitzsch in the μοι of β 5014. Anyway, the scholiast may hardly

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8 See Σ. Ariston. ad A 24a with Erbse’s apparatus testimoniorum and L. Friedlaender in Aristonici περί σημείων Βιβλίδος religiae emendatores, ed. L. F., Göttingen 1853 (repr. Amsterdam 1965), 22. The same applies, as far as the σχήμα καθ’ ὅλον καὶ μέρος is concerned, to the accusative case: see Friedländer, ibid. 20.
9 The ancients felt the same, as is shown by the (mis)quotation of the beginning of β 50 in Σ ex. ad I 225a μητρή τ’ ἐμῆς μητρήτης (ms. T).
10 The reading ὀδόθη in the papyrus was first suggested in the editio princeps (M. Norsa – G. Vitelli, Da papiri della Società Italiana, in Bulletin de la Société Royale d’Archéologie d’Alexandrie 28, 1933, 123–142: 126 and 129), and immediately taken to refer to Callimachus’ poetry. It might be worth noting that after ΑΟΙΔΗ the papyrus has a double dash, with the only purpose of finishing the line for justification on the right-hand margin.
11 The former interpretation is favoured by Pfeiffer, though with some doubts; see L. Torraca, Il prologo dei Telchini e l’inizio degli Aitia di Callimaco, Napoli 19732, 26–27; Massimilla (= Callimaco, Aitia. Libri primo e secondo, ed. G. M., Pisa 1996), 201–202. The latter is now supported with convincing arguments by E. Magnelli, Quelle bestie dei Telchini, in Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 127, 1999, pp. 52–58. The last vigorous supporter of ὀδόθης in l. 1 is A. Cameron, Callimachus and his Critics, Princeton (N. J.) 1995, 340.
12 As believe M. Pohlenz, Callimachos’ Aitia, in Hermes 68, 1933, 313–327: 317 (= Id., Kleine Schriften II, Hildesheim 1965, 44–58: 48); F. Lapp, De Callimachi Cyrenaei tropis et figuris, diss. Bonnæ 1965, 92; Torraca (as in note 11), 23; Massimilla (as in note 11), 201.
13 See Schwzyer (as in note 6), 81 (who admits this figure only with a «Körperteil, auch als Sitz einer geistigen Funktion»). Consequently, I do not think that O 162 εὶ δὲ μοι ὑπὲρ ἐπέκεκρο ἐπιπεσίστη, quoted by Pfeiffer in his apparatus, can be considered as an example of this σχήμα.
14 Quoted in Kühner (as in note 7), 429.
have gone beyond the observation of the \textit{prima facie} analogy between the structure of the two lines, an analogy that also partially extends to their metrical and rhythmical pattern (dactylic word + μοι + trisyllabic word + feminine caesura + word beginning by ἐπ-).

c) The quotation of a parallel from a \textit{νεώτερος} poet is far from frequent in Homeric scholia dealing with syntactical matters\textsuperscript{15}; it also sounds rather strange that the parallel is introduced so briskly with a mere ὧς, without any explanation regarding the reason of the quotation and without the name of the poet quoted.

As a counter-argument I may adduce Σ ex. ad Δ 100c:

\begin{quote}
όσιμευσον Μενελάου ὧς ἔξερρήζεν ὀδοῖο (Ψ 421) καὶ “κατεύθη τῆς κεφαλῆς” (Ar. Vesp. 1428).
\end{quote}

Here the only link is represented by ὧς, and the issue is by all means a syntactical one. If in this context a good reason for quoting Aristophanes was that the use of the genitive instead of the accusative was regarded by Aristarchus as specifically Attic, and numbered among the proofs of Homer’s Attic origin\textsuperscript{16}, in other “syntactical” exegetical scholia no such motives for quoting a \textit{νεώτερος} can be detected: see e. g. Σ ex. ad E 878b:

\begin{quote}
σοὶ τ’ ἐπιπεθοντα καὶ δεδημεθεσα ἕκκοστος περὶ πρόσωπον τὸ σχῆμα, ὧς παρὰ Εὐριπίδη (Or. 1483) “

dιαπερείχες ἐγένοτον Φρύγες”,

and Σ ex. ad I 77b\textsuperscript{1}:

\begin{quote}
τίς τάδε γυθήσεαν οὐ λείπει τὸ ὀρών, ἄλλ’ ἐστι παλαιὰ συνήθεια: “ἄλλ’ ἔτερον ἱσθην”

(Ar. Ach. 13) …
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

The instances of quotations from younger poets in connection with syntactical issues are admittedly sporadic\textsuperscript{17}, and most of the numerous quotations from Callimachus in the exegetical scholia concern grammatical peculiarities, mythological issues or the occurrence of rare words, so that our scholium would not be of the commonest form (unless, of course, a wider corruption of its text is assumed). Yet, the presence of Hellenistic poetry in the Homeric scholia of Aristarchean origin has been the object of recent reappraisals, which show its width and its depth\textsuperscript{18}; on the ground of this and of the afore-mentioned examples, I believe that the reconstruction of the scholium given above is intrinsically possible and that it accounts best for the sibylline \textit{iunctura} \textit{πολλά} \textit{νκι”} Τελείως.

If this is true, Lobel’s integration of \textit{πολλάκι} at the beginning of \textit{Aitia} I, 1 in POxy 2079\textsuperscript{19}, per se very likely and favoured or adopted by most editors and critics\textsuperscript{20}, attains the degree of certainty.

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\textsuperscript{15} My argument will focus on the Iliadic scholia, where a reliable edition and good indexes are at hand.

\textsuperscript{16} See e. g. Friedlaender (as in note 8), 21; Carnuth in Aristonici \textit{περί σημείων Οὐδουσείας reliquiae emendationes}, ed. O. C., Lipsiae 1869, 19–20; Σ Ariston. ad Γ 5 with Erbse’s apparatus; T. Hedberg, \textit{Eusthatios als Attizist}, diss. Uppsala 1935, 191–193.

\textsuperscript{17} See also Pindar in Σ ex. ad B 367a\textsuperscript{1}, Theocritus in Σ ex. ad Γ 323b etc.

\textsuperscript{18} See F. Montanari, Aristarco ad Odisea II 136–137, Appunti di filologia omerica antica, in \textit{Materiali e discussioni} 3, 1979, 157–170 = Id., \textit{Studi di filologia omerica antica} II, Pisa 1995, 27–40 (esp. 27–33, where the author argues that a rather obscure quotation from Callimachus in an Aristarchean scholium actually concerns a syntactical issue); Id., Filologi alessandrini e poeti alessandrini. La filologia sui “contemporanei”, in \textit{Aevum antiquum} 8, 1995, 47–63, esp. 53–60.

\textsuperscript{19} E. Lobel, Callimachea, in \textit{Hermes} 70, 1935, 31–45: 32.

\textsuperscript{20} See especially Torraca (as in note 11), 22 and Cameron (as in note 11), 339 (to his list of poetic parallels for such an \textit{incipit} one might add two modern poets who most certainly did not have Callimachus in mind: Politian’s 53rd Greek epigram – inc. \textit{Πολλάκι τοξευθηκε διερχετει} θ’ ὑπὸ Πέκκος Ἐράτον – and Eugenio Montale’s line quoted as \textit{exergo} of this paper). Pfeiffer’s tentative suggestion \textit{πάντωθι} is favoured by d’Alessio (Callimaco, \textit{Aitia. Giambi} etc., ed. G. B. d’A., Milano 1996), but convincingly refuted by Massimilla (as in note 11) 201.