

JAMES HORDERN

MACHON AND PHILOXENUS

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## MACHON AND PHILOXENUS

In *ZPE* 130, 2000, 9–11, Francis Cairns argues that Machon fr. 9.14–17 Gow and Hermesianax fr. 7.69–74 Powell, both of which refer to the dithyrambic poet Philoxenus of Cythera, are based on a passage in which the poet ‘claimed to have been a nursling of the Muses (Machon and Hermesianax), and probably also to have received training from them (Hermesianax), and in which he described his poems as his ‘children’ (Machon)’. While the relationship between these authors is worth considering, the passage from Machon will not bear the sense Cairns desires:

τοὺς διθυράμβους σὺν θεοῖς καταλιμπάνω  
 78 ἠνδρωμένους καὶ πάντας ἐστεφανωμένους,  
 οὓς ἀνατίθημι ταῖς ἐμαυτοῦ συντρόφοις  
 Μούσαις. Ἀφροδίτην καὶ Διόνυσον ἐπιτρόπους –  
 ταῦθ’ αἰ διαθήκαι διασαφοῦσιν, ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ  
 82 ὁ Τιμοθέου Χάρων σχολάζειν οὐκ ἔδει κτλ.

Machon 77–82 (fr. 9.14–19 Gow)<sup>1</sup>

Cairns takes σύντροφος at line 79 to mean ‘<joint> nurse’, comparing Hermesianax fr. 7.69ff. ἄνδρα δὲ τὸν Κυθήρηθεν ὃν ἐθρέψαντο τιθῆναι | Βάκχου καὶ λωτοῦ πιστότατον ταμίην | Μοῦσαι παιδευθέντα Φιλόξενον κτλ., and adducing the active sense of σύντροφος at Pl. *Pol.* 267e, *Lg.* 8.845d. But the logic of the passage really requires that σύντροφος should mean ‘fellow nurslings’, as the commentators take it. The language throughout clearly imitates the legal formulae used for wills: the usual verb for bequeath is καταλείπω (e.g. P. Oxy. 3103.9f., 3609.8f.; P. Petrie I.xi.9 etc.), of which καταλιμπάνω is an attested variant (P. Petrie I.xiv.9); ἐπιτρόπους at line 80 means not ‘guardians’ but ‘executors’ (cf. P. Petrie I.xiv.18, xix.27, xx(1).2 etc.; Egyptian Greek wills usually name the reigning Ptolemaic couple); and ταῦθ’ . . . διασαφοῦσιν recalls the formula ἡ διαθήκη κυρία at the end of extant Greek wills (e.g. P. Oxy. 489–91, 493). Philoxenus therefore leaves his poems, now grown to manhood to the care of the Muses, and with Dionysus and Aphrodite as executors. For this literary fiction to succeed the Muses are most likely to be his close relatives, those with whom he was brought up, rather than his no doubt superannuated nurses. The imagery used by Hermesianax is quite conventional, as Cairns himself illustrates, and any apparent connection between him and Machon here is therefore most probably coincidental.

University College, Dublin

James Hordern

<sup>1</sup> The text is that of A. S. F. Gow, *Machon* (Cambridge, 1965). Cairns places a comma after Μούσαις, and a stop after ἐπιτρόπους. Meineke marked a lacuna after Μούσαις, objecting (‘rather hypercritically’, remarks Gow) that the dithyrambs, having grown to manhood, would not require guardians. Cairns’ punctuation attracts, though it requires either that καταλιμπάνω should have two different senses (‘I bequeath my dithyrambs’ but ‘I leave behind executors’), or that a verb be understood with ἐπιτρόπους. In the Petrie papyri the usual legal verb with ἐπιτρόπους is αἰροῦμαι, but ἐπί[τροπον] δὲ καταλείπω is conjectured by Mahaffy at I.xi.11. In either case a stop is desirable after διασαφοῦσιν in the following line.