

A Fragment of an Early Sympotic Elegy?

τῶν ἔφαγόν τ' ἔπιόν τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα.

Considered out of context, the verse would naturally be understood to mean “of those things (or of what things) I ate and drank and indulged my genitals”. Eating, drinking, sex: a familiar triad. Recall Sardanapalus’ epitaph at Nineveh, said to have been inscribed on a stone stele in Chaldaean letters, proclaiming the message, in the words of Amyntas (*FGrHist* 122 F 2), ἐγὼ δὲ ἐβασίλευσα, καὶ ἄχρι ἐώρων τοῦ ἡλίου <τὸ> φῶς ἔπιον ἔφαγον ἠφροδισίασα, εἰδὼς τὸν τε χρόνον ὄντα βραχὺν ὃν ζῶσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ... καὶ ὢν ἂν καταλίπω ἀγαθῶν ἄλλοι ἔξουσι τὰς ἀπολαύσεις. A metrical version was ascribed to Choerilus of Iasos, *SH* 335:

εὔ εἰδὼς ὅτι θνητὸς ἔφυς σὸν θυμὸν ἄεξε
 τερόμενος θαλίησι· θανόντί τοι οὔ τις ὄνησις.
 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σποδός εἰμι, Νίνου μεγάλης βασιλεύσας.
 ταῦτ' ἔχω, ὅσσ' ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα καὶ μετ' ἔρωτος
 τέρπν' ἔπαθον, τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ ὄλβια κεῖνα λέλειπται. 5

Hence Phoen. fr. 1,1 Pow. ἀνὴρ Νίνος τις ἐγένετ', ὡς ἐγὼκούω, / Ἀσσύριος, 9f. ἀλλ' ἦν ἄριστος ἐσθίειν τε καὶ πίνειν / κῆρᾶν, 18f. ἔχω δ' ὀκόσον ἔπαισα χῶκόσ' ἦεἰσα / χῶκόσ' ἐράσθην. Eating or drinking is also coupled with love-making in *Carm. conv. PMG* 902 σύν μοι πῖνε συνήβα συνέρα συστεφανηφόρει, *Carm. conv. PMG* 913 οὐ χρεὶ πόλλ' ἔχειν θνητὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἐρᾶν καὶ κατεσθίειν.

The expression ‘give to one’s αἰδοῖα’ may be illustrated by other passages where διδόναι or another verb meaning ‘give’ is used with an appropriate dative in the sense of indulging an appetite, as in Theogn. 695 οὐ δύναμαί σοι, θυμέ, παρασχεῖν ἄρμενα πάντα, 915f. κοῦποτε γαστρί / σῖτον ἐλευθέριον ... ἐδίδου, cf. 920, 1000; Simon. fr. eleg. 20,12 W.² ψυχῇ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τλῆθι χαριζόμενος. Similarly in Latin, Hor. *Carm.* IV 7,19f. *amico quae dederis animo*. For αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα we find an exact parallel in Liban. *Or.* 3,6 τὰ μὲν εἰς πότους ἔτρεψε, τὰ δὲ εἰς κύβους, τὰ δὲ αἰδοίοις ἔδωκε θρασυτέροις ἔστιν οὗ τοῦ νόμου.

The verse under discussion in fact stands in *Od.* XV 373, in the mouth of the sober and celibate swineherd Eumaios. He is telling the disguised Odysseus

how kindly he was cared for by his master, who has been missing for many years. Now he has to fend for himself. But the gods have let his holding prosper; τῶν ἔφαγόν τ' ἔπιόν τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα, “therefrom I have eaten and drunk and...”.

The last phrase was interpreted in antiquity, and is regularly interpreted by modern commentators, as “I have given to those worthy of respect”, that is, presumably, to any deserving needy individuals who have applied to him for help, as Odysseus has. It did not escape ancient exegetes, however, that the verse might be read in another sense:

schol. H ad l. καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα] οὕτω τοὺς ἰκέτας ἔλεγον. τινὲς δὲ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης. This last phrase seems to have suffered some truncation¹, but its purport is unmistakable.

Eust. *Od.* 1784,47 τὸ δὲ “αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα” ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀνδράσιν αἰδοῦς ἀξίοις, ξένοις δηλαδὴ καὶ ἰκέταις. παραιτητέον γὰρ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀναξίως Ὀμήρου νοοῦντας ἐνταῦθα τὸ “αἰδοίοις” καὶ κίναιδον διομολογουμένοις τὸν Εὐμαίον. κωμικευομένῳ μέντοι ἀνδρὶ χρήσιμος ἔσται ποτὲ ὁ λόγος κατὰ παράχρησιν, ὡς δυναμένου τοῦ “ἔφαγόν τε καὶ ἔπιόν τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα” καὶ λάγνῳ προσαρμόσαι ἀνδρὶ, ὅποια καὶ ἕτερα τῶν Ὀμήρῳ σεμνῶς λεχθέντων ἄλλως ἐκληφθέντα ὡς ἐπὶ θυμέλης ἐπαίχθησάν τε καὶ εἰσέτι δὲ παίζονται. There may be a suggestion here that some comic poet or parodist had indeed availed himself of the verse. Libanius’ αἰδοίοις ἔδωκε in the passage quoted above is probably a Homeric echo².

In modern times only Cobet, so far as I know, took the verse in this way, which seemed to him obvious. He supposed that the conventional interpretation was devised by grammarians to spare feminine sensibilities: «ne mulierculae offenderentur commenti sunt grammatici aliquid, quod difficile est sine risu audire. Nempe αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα esse ἰκέταις καὶ αἰδοῦς ἀξίοις ἔδωκα»³. He objected that αἰδοῖοι by itself could not mean *supplices*. J. van Leeuwen was also troubled by this. He noted the alternative interpretation but rejected it: «alii olim versum sic sunt interpretati: *hinc edi, bibi, amavi*. Sed eiusmodi dictum etiamsi in illa tempora satis quadraret, minime tamen conveniret dignitati decorae dictionis epicae, fescenninae potius impudentiae comicorum aptum, si homines revera τοῖς αἰδοίοις δοῦναι umquam dixerint id quod est *libidini indulgere*. Quapropter adiectivum corrigendum potius videtur quam utcunque interpretandum (cf. nota crit.)»⁴.

The traditional interpretation must be correct. The *Odyssey* poet had no thought of portraying Eumaios as a voluptuary in the Sardanapalus mould. The adjective

¹ F. Bossi attractively suggests <τὰ> τῆς Ἀφροδίτης.

² Cf. J. Martin, *Libanios. Discours*, II, Paris 1988, 277.

³ C.G. C., *Miscellanea critica*, Leiden 1876, 231.

⁴ J. v. L., *Homeri Carmina. Odyssea*, Leiden 1917, 427. In the *nota critica* he cites Naber’s conjectures αἰτίζουσιν and ἄλλοδαποῖσιν.

αἰδοίοισιν with no noun is certainly awkward, and Arie Hoekstra even thought it necessary to suppose that a following line had fallen out⁵. But it is typical of this poet to create elliptical versions of phrases, as in V 476 ἐν περιφαινομένῳ (~ *H. Hom. Ven.* 100 περιφαινομένῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ), VI 141 ἄντα σχομένη (~ I 334 ἄντα παρειάων σχομένη λιπαρὰ κρήδεμνα), VIII 47 σκηπτοῦχοι (~ 41 σκηπτοῦχοι βασιλῆες), VIII 302 σκοπιὴν ἔχεν (~ 285 οὐδ' ἀλαοσκοπιὴν ἔχεν), VIII 542 σχεθέτω (~ 537 σχεθέτω φόρμιγγα λίγειαν), XIII 427 ἀλλὰ τὰ γ' οὐκ οἶω (*scil.* τελέεσθαι), XV 22 κουριδίῳ (*scil.* πόσιος), XV 140 Βοηθοΐδης (~ 95 Βοηθοΐδης Ἐτεωνεύς), XV 152 εἶπεῖν (*scil.* χαίρειν), XV 177 τεῖσεται (*scil.* μνηστῆρας), XVI 348 ἐρύσσομεν (~ VIII 34 ἐρύσσομεν εἰς ἄλα δῖαν), XVI 351 οὐ πῶ πᾶν εἶρητο (~ 11 οὐ πῶ πᾶν εἶρητο ἔπος). The form αἰδοίοισιν for ξείνοισιν ... αἰδοίοισιν (IX 271) or ἰκέτησιν ... αἰδοίοισιν (VII 165, 181) is entirely in line with these examples.

Nevertheless, the verse reads oddly in the context. The poet might have been content with it as an adequate expression of the thought that he had in mind, but it is hard to fend off the suspicion that he has borrowed it from some poem in which it bore the more obvious sense – some early antecedent of the Sardanapalus epitaph. One of his most salient characteristics is his propensity to take verses from the *Iliad* and use them for his own purposes even when they do not fit perfectly. He was no doubt liable to take them also from other poems that he knew.

In the present case the source poem would not have been an epic, but it might very well have been a sympotic elegy. Elegy was a well established genre before the time of the *Odyssey*. Many passages in the *Iliad* seem to show the influence of martial protreptic elegy of the kind represented by Callinus and Tyrtaeus⁶. Elegy celebrating cheerful living will have been no less familiar to the Homeric poets, even if it less often provided them with verbal inspiration. It is not difficult to imagine a short poem on these lines:

οὐκ ἔραμαι πλουτεῖν, οὐ χρήματ' ἔχειν ὅσα Γύγης
 ἢ Κινύρης· ἀρκεῖ κτῆσις ἐμοί γ' ὀλίγη.
 ὅσσ' ἔφαγόν τ' ἐπιόν τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα,
 ταῦτ' ἄφενος τίθεμαι· τᾶλλ' ἀνέμοισιν ἐῶ.

I take οὐκ ἔραμαι πλουτεῖν from Theogn. 1155, Gyges from Archil. fr. 19 W.², Cinyras from Tyrt. fr. 12,6 W.², ταῦτ' ἄφενος from Solon fr. 24,7 W.² The Solon poem as a whole provides a parallel for the sentiment:

⁵ A. Heubeck-A. H., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, II, Oxford 1989, 256: «probably suppliants are meant [...] and after the word a line beginning with e.g. *ξείνοισι ἢδ' ἰκέτησι [...] has been omitted. Or 345 (see n.) may originally have belonged here in the form *ἀνδράσιν ὄντιν' κτλ.». He adds, «to paraphrase the line with *hinc edi bibi amavi* is a desperate expedient».

⁶ See my *Hellenica*, I, Oxford 2011, 209-213, 226-232.

ἴσόν τοι πλουτέουσιν, ὅτῳ πολὺς ἄργυρός ἐστιν
 καὶ χρυσὸς καὶ γῆς πυροφόρου πεδία
 ἵπποι θ' ἡμίονοί τε, καὶ ᾧ μόνῃ ταῦτα πάρεστιν,
 γαστρί τε καὶ πλευραῖς καὶ ποσὶν ἄβρᾶ παθεῖν
 παιδός τ' ἠδὲ γυναικός, ἐπὴν καὶ ταῦτ' ἀφίκηται, 5
 ὥρη, σὺν δ' ἤβη γίνεται ἀρμολίη.
 ταῦτ' ἄφενος θνητοῖσι· τὰ γὰρ περιώσια πάντα
 χρήματ' ἔχων οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται εἰς Αἴδεω,
 οὐδ' ἂν ἄποινα διδοὺς θάνατον φύγοι, οὐδὲ βαρείας
 νούσους, οὐδὲ κακὸν γῆρας ἐπερχόμενον. 10

The use of αἰδοῖα for *pudenda*, incidentally, is found in both epic and elegy (*Il.* XIII 568, *Hes. Op.* 733, *Tyrt. fr.* 10,25 W.²).

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Abstract

Od. XV 373 τῶν ἔφαγόν τ' ἔπιόν τε καὶ αἰδοίοισιν ἔδωκα is probably adapted from a sympotic elegy in which the last phrase had its more natural meaning of “I have indulged my genitals”. The *Odyssey* poet has made it mean “I have given to men deserving respect”.