

HARPALUS AS PALLIDES

According to Athenaeus 13 p. 596 B, in his satyr play *Agen* Python ridiculed Harpalus, the fallen minister of Alexander, under the nickname Pallides. My intention here is not to discuss this play, represented by two fragments quoted by Athenaeus, but rather to inquire what Python intended by the use of this nickname.

Meineke was apparently the first to suggest that the point of the joke was a pun on *φαλλός*¹), and the meaning of this would be clear enough, as Harpalus' notorious dalliance with courtesans would leave him wide open to sexual humor. But would such a pun be linguistically plausible? The mss. have Pallides, and Meineke's emendation Phallides is no more than a *petitio principii*. Since this play was written for performance in Alexander's camp, if the pun involved Macedonian pronunciation the name would be Pallides (cf. Schwyzer, *Gr. Gr.* 1, 69 ff.). Bruno Snell, who accepts the idea of a pun *φαλλός*-Pallides, appeals to the principle (Schwyzer 1, 204) that in the *koine* of Asia Minor and Egypt π and φ, τ and θ, and κ and χ were often confused²). But is his observation relevant? The fragments of *Agen* do not seem to present notable *koine* features, but rather, as Snell himself demonstrates, diction intended to recall that of fifth century drama including two quotations from Sophocles. Indeed, the formation Pallides itself recalls a feature of Old Comedy diction, the mock patronymic (cf. *Ar. Ach.* 596-598, Pherecydes fr. 219 K., Cercidas fr. 4 P.). Thus the considerations favoring a pun *φαλλός*-Pallides do not inspire great confidence.

Far likelier the pun is with *Παλλάς*: Harpalus is the "child of Pallas", a gibe at his dealing with the Athenians. It is most probable that *Agen* was written after Harpalus' removal from office, when he had fled from Babylon and was encouraging revolt from Alexander³). In fr. 1 Snell of this play we are told how he had purchased Athenian citizenship by donating to the city thousands of bushels of corn. Hence a pun alluding to his relations with Athens would be quite intelligible to the audience and is also acceptable from a linguistic point of view. Of course, puns can exist on more than one level, and it is not impossible that some in the audience would discover secondary puns on *φαλλός* and possibly also *παλλακίς*. This cannot be proved or disproved. But the primary pun surely involved *Παλλάς*.

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1) August Meineke, *Analecta Critica ad Athenaei Deipnosophistas* (Leipzig, 1867) 280f.

2) *Szenen aus griechischen Dramen* (Berlin, 1971) 109 n. 10.

3) For the probable date of the play, cf. H. Lloyd-Jones, *Gnomon* 38 (1966) 16f.; for the prevailing situation cf. E. Badian, "Harpalus", *JHS* 81 (1961) 16-43.