

## SOTADES AND THE FLUTE-PLAYER

*Heather White*

*Classics Research Center, London*

Un examen del texto de Ateneo muestra que el frag. 2 Powell de Sótades es un ataque contra Filino (no contra Teodoro, como defendió Susemihl, seguido por Powell).

An analysis of Athenaeus' text shows that Sotades, frag. 2 Powell is an attack on Philinus (and not on Theodorus, as contended by Susemihl, whom Powell follows).

At 14.621a Athenaeus quotes the following verses as an example of the sort of poetry that was written by Sotades: τοιαύτη δ' ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ ἡ ποίησις· Θεοδώρου τοῦ αὐλητοῦ Φιλίνου ἦν πατήρ, εἰς ὃν ταῦτ' ἔγραψεν·

ὁ δ' ἀποστεγάσας τὸ τρήμα τῆς ὀπισθε λαύρης,  
διὰ δειδροφόρου φάραγγος ἐξέωσε βροντὴν  
ἠλέματον, ὀκοῖην ἀροτῆρ γέρων χαλᾶ βούς.

Translation by C. B. Gulick, *Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists*, Loeb edition (London 1937) VI, 345f.: "Here is a specimen of the kind of thing he wrote; Philinus, to whom he addressed these verses, was the father of Theodorus the flute-player: 'And he, uncovering the hole of the back-privy, sent forth through the wooded chasm a clap of thunder impotent, such as an old ox lets loose when ploughing'".

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of Sotades' fragment. They believe (cf. Powell *ad loc.*; LSJ, s.v. δειδροφόρος, etc.) that these lines are an attack on Theodorus the flute player, which Sotades addressed to Philinus ("Philinus, to whom he addressed these verses", Gulick). This interpretation has caused difficulties: if the lines were an attack on Theodorus, why should Sotades have

addressed them to the flutist's father and not to the flutist himself? Moreover, it was not clear how the malodorous βροντή ("flatus ventris"), if produced by Theodorus, could be humorously connected with the melodious air emitted by Theodorus' flute.

Recently, if I understand A. Lorenzoni<sup>1</sup> correctly, Magnelli has surmised that the lines should be interpreted as an "attacco al flautista Teodoro in quanto *pathicus*". This suggestion is untenable, because it does not solve the two already mentioned difficulties, so much so that Lorenzoni must wonder what relationship might possibly exist between the βροντήν ἠλέματον and the "forse stentate e non gradevoli arie di flauto prodotte dall' artista, forse ormai vecchio" (italics mine).

The solution to the problem is simple. Sotades' lines are aimed at Theodorus' father, i.e. Philinus. The meaning of the phrase εἰς ὃν ταῦτ' ἔγραψεν is "against whom he wrote these verses"<sup>2</sup>. Sotades states that Philinus uncovered his anus (evidently in order to defecate) and that, instead of being able to defecate, he merely farted loudly<sup>3</sup>. In other words, Philinus tried to defecate<sup>4</sup> but his efforts were vain: instead of defecating he merely managed to emit a vain πορδή (βροντήν ἠλέματον). This explanation accounts for the epithet ἠλέματον, which until now had remained inexplicable.

Sotades, in sum, wanted to ridicule Philinus<sup>5</sup> by comparing the respective sounds produced by the two: whilst Theodorus emitted musical sounds from his flute, Philinus could only emit a πορδή from his anus. Sotades' poetry was notoriously obscene. Thus at frag. 16 (Powell) Sotades alludes to the fact that Zeus and Hera were said to have indulged in *fellatio*: cf. *Orpheus* 21 (2000) 187f. The marriage of Ptolemy to his sister was mentioned by Sotades at frag. 1, where the noun κέντρον was used by Sotades to describe the *membrum virile*. The epithet δειδροφόρου, as everybody agrees, is metaphorical like φάραγγος and denotes the hairs of Philinus' anus: cf. my *New Studies in Greek Poetry* (Amsterdam 1989) 77 for the hairs of the anus. The beauty of the *pathicus* is spoilt by the hairs which grow with adolescence: cf. *A.P.* 12.31. The word φάραγγος may serve to indicate that Philinus was an old (therefore hairy) *pathicus*, i.e. εὐρύπρωκτος. On the other hand, Sotades is ridiculing Philinus because this latter emitted a πορδή instead of the melodious sounds produced by a flutist, and not because of his sexual inclinations: it is therefore probable that φάραγγος simply

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Lorenzoni, "Eust. 1068,60-1069,23 (su un comico e qualche alessandrino)", *Eikasmos* 12 (2001) 205-227: 221 (note 48).

<sup>2</sup> The preposition εἰς governs the accusative of a person against whom (or in praise of whom, as the case may be) a poem is written (innumerable examples of this usage are offered by the lemmatists in the *Anthologia Palatina*). Cf. *Thes.* s. v. εἰς 294B.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 394, where βροντή ("thunder") is compared to πορδή ("fart"). For a similar joke about farting cf. Machon 11.156ff. (Gow).

<sup>4</sup> For another reference to defecation cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.* 10 (1996) 39.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase εἰς ὃν ("against whom") cannot possibly refer to Theodorus, because, if this were so, Athenaeus would not have needed to mention Theodorus' father.

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alludes to the well known fact that the σφιγκτήρ becomes *laxus* in old persons (causing incontinence): in other words, Philinus' anus was a φάραγξ because he was old, not a *pathicus*. Cf. γέρων, line 3. Note that Theodorus cannot have been known to be a *pathicus*, because Lamia invited him to visit her (Ael., *N. H.* 12.17).