THE BOYS AND THE BARBARIANS
Some Remarks on Callimachus H. 4, 177 1)

BY
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In Callimachus' Hymn to Delos lines 162 ff., the reader is confronted with a highly unusual scene: while Leto is at a loss where to give birth to Apollo, since Hera has made all places literally fly away at her arrival, the unborn child in her womb pronounces a long prophesy on the future birth of Ptolemy Philadelphus on Cos, and on the battles the two of them, Apollo and Ptolemy, will have to fight against the Gauls, the god at Delphi, the king on the banks of the Nile 2).

Unfortunately in the description of the Gaulish attack on Delphi the MSS present a corrupt and lacunal text (l. 177), which was not much elucidated by the publication of P. Oxy. 2225; the papyrus made evident only that the lacuna did not cover one, but two lines (177a+b). For convenience's sake I here print Pfeiffer's text 3) of lines 171 ff.

καὶ νῦ ποτὲ ἔννοις τις ἐλεύσεται ἄμμιν ἄθλος
οὐσερον, ὁππόλαν οἱ μὲν ἐφ᾽ Ἑλλήνεσσι μάχαιραν
βαρβαρικὴν καὶ Κελτῶν ἀναστήσαντες "Ἀρήα
ὁλεθρον Τιτήνες ἄφ᾽ ἐσπέρου ἐσχάτωντος

175 βρᾶσονται νυφάδεσσον ἐνευκότης ἡ ἱσάριθμοι
tείρεσιν, ἠνίκη πλείστα κατ᾽ ἱέρα βουκολέονται,

177a παιδ[     ],...σα[     ],.[     ]
177b ἀφρι.[   ].[   ] ὁσφ[       ]ς
καὶ πεδία Κρυσακία καὶ Ἡρα[στο]ν φάρ[ἀγγ]γες
ἀμφιπεριστείωνται, ἵδωσι δὲ πίσον καπνὸ

180 γείτονος αἰθομένοιο, καὶ ὀὐκέτι μοῦνιν ἄκουῃ,

1) I am indebted to Mr. F. Lettinga for correcting my English.
2) For a more extensive survey of the fourth hymn see P. M. Fraser, Ptolemaic Alexandria, I (Oxford 1972), 637 ff.; on the 'Prophet in the Belly' motif: K. J. McKay, Erysichthon (Leiden 1962), 149 ff.
3) R. Pfeiffer, Callimachus, II (Oxford 1951).
In his apparatus, Pfeiffer notes that he supposes the vaticinium in the lacuna may have run as follows (I translate): ‘(When the Gauls come rushing on) and the children, returning from Tempe’s mountains, wonder how the Crisaean plains and the ravines of Hephaestus 4) be crowded on all sides and see ...’. In Pfeiffer’s view, παδ[ and Δωρ[ refer to the children called Δωροτεσσαρίων, who performed the Delphian δασφορία described again by Callimachus in the fourth book of the Aetia, frs. 86 (?)–89, and referred to in the fourth Iambus, fr. 194.33 ff. 5). The main aim of this paper is to point out that it is unlikely that this should be the content of the lacuna.

As to the hyperbaton of παδ[ες] and Δωρ[ες], there seems to be no problem, though I do not know of another instance in Callimachus in which the corresponding terms occur just at the beginning of two subsequent lines 6); but H. 4, 298 f. παδ[ες] ... ἄρσανες seems close enough as a parallel.

It seems more doubtful, however, whether the fact that in Pfeiffer’s view the Gaulish attack should be described as seen by the eyes of the Delphian youths, just returning from their holy mission, really suits the style of the poet. A representation like that, contrasting the noble boys of Delphi with the brutish barbarians from the North, at first sight strikes me as slightly too ‘romantic’; and did not Pfeiffer himself once criticize pseudo-romantic interpretations of Callimachus’ poetry 7)?

But apart from this stylistic point, to which I will return below, there is the point of chronology. Could the return of the laurel-bearing youths from Tempe in fact have been contemporaneous with the presence of the Gauls at Delphi?

4) For my view on the papyrus-reading Ἡρα[σταρό] see the Appendix below.


6) F. Lapp, De Callimachi Cyri. tropis et figuris (Bonn 1965), 36, only notes that τραίετιον with more than three words between the corresponding members occurs some 19 times in Call., unfortunately without citing the instances.

7) JHS 75 (1955), 70 f. = Ausgewählte Schriften (München 1960), 152 f.