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Water colder than boreal snow: an analysis of the motif of drinking cold water in the epigrams of Leonidas of Tarentum

In this paper I analyse the motif of drinking cold water in the poems of Leonidas of Tarentum, showing the relation of his epigrams to the works of Anyte and of other Hellenistic poets, focusing on metaphorical and programmatic meaning. Epigrams 16 and 18 GP of Anyte are interpreted as opening poems of a collection. The famous metaphor of drinking from the sacred fountain, instead of a polluted river, comes from Callimachus Hymn 2, 108–112, which is similar to the opposition in Leonidas' 86 GP. The ecphrasis of a cup represents poetic work in Theocritus Idyll 1. By comparing these texts, I argue that epigrams of Leonidas are related not only with Anyte's poems, but also with the works of other Hellenistic authors and the drinking motif should be read metaphorically, as referring to poetic activity, not as a simple bucolic scene.

Keywords: Leonidas of Tarentum, cold water, cup, poetic program, Anyte, Callimachus, Theocritus

'Stranger, rest thy weary legs under the elm...'¹ – so begins the poem of Anyte, inviting a wanderer to stop, rest and enjoy the shade and a cold stream. This epigram became a model for many later poets, including epigrammatists writing on bucolic subjects, such as Nikias 5 GP = AP 9, 315. Streams and springs are an important part of the pastoral landscape represented in Theocritus' *Idylls*, some of which appear to be influenced by the poems of Anyte. The motif is also developed in the epigrams of another Hellenistic poet, Leonidas of Tarentum. He is known for poems describing simple folk,

¹ Anyte HE 18 = AP 16, 228. The translations of all the epigrams are from the *Greek Anthology*: W.R. PATON (1916–1918).

artisans and scenes of a pastoral or rural nature, such as in epigram 86 GP = AP 16, 230, which includes the motif of drinking cold water. In this paper, I analyse those epigrams of his which concern drinking from streams and the gifts offered at springs, and juxtapose the epigrams of Leonidas with the works of other Hellenistic poets, showing how the Tarentine reworks the subject and how it is related to the other poetic programs of the time.

Leonidas 86 GP = AP 16, 230²

μη σὺ γ' ἐπ' οἰονόμοιο περίπλεον ἰλύος ᾧδε
 τοῦτο χαραδραΐης θερμόν, ὀδίτα, πίης·
 ἀλλὰ μολῶν μάλα τυτθὸν ὑπὲρ δαμαλήβοτον ἄκραν
 ταύταν, παρ κείνα ποιμενία πίτυϊ
 εὐρήσεις κελαρύζον ἐϋκρήνου διὰ πέτρης
 νᾶμα, Βορειαίης ψυχρότερον νιφάδος.

Traveller, drink not here in the solitude this warm water so full of mud from the torrent, but go a little farther over this hill whereon the heifers are grazing, and by the shepherds' pine there you will find a fountain bubbling up through the generous rock, colder than the snow from the north.

For this poem, epigrams 16 and 18 GP of Anyte seem to serve as a model. However, Leonidas is not simply imitating the poetess, as he also reverses some elements to create a new meaning for his work:

Anyte 16 GP = AP 9, 313

ἴζευ ἅπας ὑπὸ καλὰ δάφνας εὐθαλέα φύλλα,
 ὠραίου τ' ἄρυσαι νάματος ἀδὺ πόμα,
 ὄφρα τοι ἀσθμαίνοντα πόνοις θέρεος φίλα γυῖα
 ἀμπαύσης, πνοιῇ τυπτόμενα Ζεφύρου.

² The edition of all the epigrams is the *Greek Anthology*: H. BECKBY, ed. (1965–1968).

Sit here, quite shaded by the beautiful luxuriant foliage of the laurel, and draw sweet drink from the lovely spring, that thy limbs, panting with the labours of summer, may take rest beaten by the western breeze.

Anyte 18 GP = AP 16, 228

Ξεῖν', ὑπὸ τὰν πετέλεαν τετρομένα γυῖ' ἀνάπασσον·
 ἄδύ τοι ἐν χλωροῖς πνεῦμα θροεῖ πετάλοις·
 πίδακὰ τ' ἐκ παγαῶς ψυχρὸν πίε: δὴ γὰρ ὀδίταις
 ἄμπαυμ' ἐν θερμῷ καύματι τοῦτο φίλον.

Stranger, rest thy weary legs under the elm; hark how sweetly the breeze murmurs in the green leaves; and drink a cold draught from the fountain; for this is indeed a resting-place dear to travellers in the burning heat.

The first difference is at the beginning of the poem with the advice given to the wanderer. Anyte invites a traveller to stop or sit; Leonidas instead exhorts him to go on until he reaches a better place to rest. Likewise, the Tarentine in the opening lines tells the passer-by not to drink (μὴ σὺν ... πίης), while the poetess invites him to do so. Smaller analogues can also be found in the poem of Leonidas, but with slightly changes, such as a naming of the wind – in AP 9, 313 it is Zephyrus, whereas in AP 16, 230 it is Boreas. Leonidas names this wind to underline the coldness of the water: it is even colder than the snow in the north, making the contrast between cold and warm even more striking than in Anyte's poems. The word οἰονόμοιο, meaning either 'solitary' or 'feeding the sheep', also occurs in the other poem of the poetess, 3 GP = AP 19, 291.³ This term is used to describe the stream, warm and muddy, unlike the fountain of Anyte and the further spring with cold water situated next to the pine, which in poetry is considered a typical pastoral tree,⁴ and appears here with an epithet, ποιμενία ('of shepherds').

³ GOW-PAGE (1965: 386).

⁴ SENS (2006: 152).

Cool water also plays an important part in epigrams 3 and 5 GP of Leonidas. Both poems belong to the votive type and describe the gifts offered at springs:

Leonidas 3 GP = AP 6, 334

αὐλία καὶ Νυμφέων ἱερός πάγος, αἶ θ' ὑπὸ πέτρῃ
 πίδακες, ἧ θ' ὕδασιν γειτονέουσα πίτυς,
 καὶ σὺ τετραγλώχιν, μηλοσσόε, Μαιάδος Ἴερμᾶ,
 ὅς τε τὸν αἰγιβότην, Πάν, κατέχεις σκόπελον,
 ἴλαοι τὰ ψαιστὰ τό τε σκύφος ἔμπλεον οἴνης
 δέξασθ', Αἰακίδεω δῶρα Νεοπτολέμου.

Caves and holy hill of the Nymphs, and springs at the rock's foot, and thou pine that stands by the water; thou square Hermes, son of Maia, guardian of the sheep, and thou, Pan, lord of the peak where the goats pasture, graciously receive these cakes and the cup full of wine, the gifts of Neoptolemus of the race of Aeacus.

Leonidas 5 GP = AP 9, 326

πέτρης ἐκ δισσῆς ψυχρὸν κατεπάλμενον ὕδωρ,
 χαίροις, καὶ Νυμφέων ποιμενικὰ ξόανα,
 πίστραι τε κρηνέων, καὶ ἐν ὕδασι κόσμια ταῦτα
 ὑμέων, ὧ κοῦραι, μυρία τεγγόμενα,
 χαίρετ': Ἀριστοκλέης δ' ὄδ' ὁδοιπόρος, ᾧ περ ἀπῶσα
 δίψαν βαψάμενος τοῦτο δίδωμι γέρας.

Hail, thou cold stream that leapest down from the cloven rock, and ye images of the Nymphs carved by a shepherd's hand! Hail, ye drinking troughs and your thousand little dolls, ye Maidens of the spring, that lie drenched in its waters! All hail! And I, Aristocles the wayfarer, give you this cup which I dipped in your stream to quench my thirst.

Epigram 3 GP accumulates elements related to the pastoral world and common in Anyte's epigrams and the bucolic *Idylls* of Theocritus:⁵ the cave, the springs, the pine, the rural gods with a description underlining their function (μηλοσσόε – 'guarding the sheep', αἰγιβότην, Πάν, κατέχεις σκόπελον – 'Pan, who watches over a hill where the goats pasture'). Also the gifts offered are simple and proper for a herdsman. In this context, the dedicator revealed in the last line is somewhat surprising – Neoptolemos, a sovereign. I will not discuss here the historical context of the poem, as it is quite uncertain,⁶ but more important for the purpose of this paper are the motifs of the stream and of the gifts: a cup and its contents – the wine. However, in this case, the water serves more as a part of a landscape rather than a means for satisfying thirst.

Epigram 5 GP presents an offering by a grateful wanderer who has already satisfied his thirst, as the passer-by was exhorted to do in Leonidas' 86 GP or 16 and 18 GP of Anyte. The entire poem is concerned with water, and various expressions related to water are repeated throughout the epigram (ὔδωρ – 'water'; πίστραι τε κρηνέων – 'a drinking-trough of springs'; ὕδασι (...) τεγγόμενα – 'drenched in waters'; ἀπῶσα δίψαν – 'having satisfied the thirst'). The donator calls himself wayfarer, but as Kathryn Gutzwiller notes, his name suggests that he is from the upper echelons of society,⁷ as in 3 GP. In this poem too, the water is cold, a detail that is underlined by the epithet ψυχρὸν placed in the very first line. Although the gift is not named, the most probable votum for such an occasion would be a cup, as in a similar epigram of Anyte 3 GP = AP 16, 291, which may have served as an inspiration for the Tarentine:

Anyte 3 GP = AP 16, 291

Φοιξοκόμα τόδε Πανὶ καὶ αὐλιάσιν θέτο Νύμφαις
δῶρον ὑπὸ σκοπιᾶς Θεύδοτος οἰονόμος·

⁵ Cf. D'ACCINI (1958: 308–309; 311–313).

⁶ GOW (1958: 113); KLOOSTER (2019: 311).

⁷ GUTZWILLER (1998: 98).

οὔνεχ' ὑπ' ἀζαλέου θέρεος μέγα κεκμηῶτα
παῦσαν, ὀρέξασαι χερσὶ μελιχρὸν ὕδωρ.

To shock-headed Pan and the Nymphs of the sheepfold did the shepherd Theodotus set this his gift here under the hill, because, when he was sore tired by the parching summer heat, they refreshed him, holding out to him sweet water in their hands.

Anyte of Tegea is considered the first to introduce descriptive, pastoral epigrams,⁸ and it is usually assumed that her poems were imitated by many poets of the time, such as Theocritus and Nicias. However, as a result of the difficulty in establishing the dates of individual poems, we cannot be sure of the direction of borrowings between the poems or whether the common source is not in fact in the no longer preserved works of, for example, Philittas.⁹ Gutzwiller interpreted epigrams 16 GP = AP 9, 313 and 18 GP = AP 16, 228 as programmatic and suggested that they may have served as an opening to Anyte's epigram book, arranged by the poetess herself, and that the poems were inviting the traveller-reader to sit, rest and enjoy the new type of poetry, as refreshing as cold water.¹⁰ As I have mentioned previously, there are some common elements between epigram 86 GP of Leonidas and 16 and 18 GP of Anyte, but the Tarentine's retention of some elements and addition of new ones may serve to propose his own meaning and message for the reader. Unlike Anyte, Leonidas tells the traveller-reader not to stop and not to drink from the stream, which in his poem is muddy, but to go further, where the water is cold and clean. If the epigrams of the poetess are to be read programmatically, so epigram 86 GP of Leonidas may be read in a similar context, but with a quite different message. The voice from the poem exhorts the reader to enjoy poetry which is as fresh as cold water and not poems which are like a muddy stream. The motif of cold water in epigram 1

⁸ GUTZWILLER (1993: 71; 88).

⁹ SENS (2006: 158–159); GUTZWILLER (1993: 88).

¹⁰ GUTZWILLER (1993: 86–88).

GP of Asclepiades can similarly be read as a direct response to Anyte, as the poet denounces the humble subjects explored by the poetess of Tegea and others, and instead takes up erotic themes.¹¹

Asclepiades 1 GP = AP 5, 169

Ἡδὺ θέρουσ διψῶντι χιῶν ποτόν, ἡδὺ δὲ ναύταις
 ἐκ χειμῶνος ἰδεῖν εἰαρινὸν Στέφανον·
 ἦδιον δ', ὀπότεν κρύψη μία τοὺς φιλέοντας
 χλαῖνα καὶ αἰνῆται Κύπρις ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων.

Sweet in summer a draught of snow to him who thirsts, and sweet for sailors after winter's storms to feel the Zephyr of the spring. But sweeter still when one cloak doth cover two lovers and Cypris hath honour from both.

Perhaps the Tarentine's epigram had a similar function. It appears to be a response to Anyte's poem, and a comparison with Asclepiades' use of the motif taken from the poetess of Tegea to underline his interest in an entirely different subject suggests that we can read the Leonidas' poem in a similar way. Although Leonidas writes on pastoral themes and describes scenes from rural life in his poetry, and may have been inspired by the poetess of Tegea, his works do not represent the bucolic world in an idealized way as Anyte or Theocritus do. Leonidas' poetry is more realistic and shows the harshness of life in the country. His herdsmen are forced to defend their flock from predators and they then offer at a temple a bloody weapon, just like warriors (49 GP = AP 6, 236). Other professions, such as fishermen and artisans, have to struggle with everyday work to make a living. Therefore, unlike in Anyte's epigram 16 and 18 GP, Leonidas advises not to stop at the closest stream, which is muddy and warm, but instead to take the effort to go further to drink from the spring by the pastoral pine (ποιμενία πίτυϊ) with its truly cold water. Perhaps Leonidas is advising his audience to dare to go further in a metapoetic sense and

¹¹ GUTZWILLER (1993: 87).

not stop at the idealized bucolic world of Anyte or Theocritus, but to come to a more realistic world represented by the purer flow of water at its very spring. By reversing the motif Tarentine may be showing that he chooses a slightly different way to presenting the same topics.

Some interesting parallels for the motif of drinking the water from the stream in Leonidas' epigrams may be found in Theocritus *Idylls*. In the Tarentine's epigram 3 and 5 GP, the gift offered at the springs is a cup. In the poems of Theocritus, various types of drinking vessels appear, especially those used by rustic folk. In epigram 3 GP of Leonidas, the word denoting the cup is σκύφος. Although in this poem it is dedicated by a sovereign, according to the LSJ Dictionary the term means 'cup, can, esp. used by peasants, of wooden milk-vessels'.¹² The word choice therefore makes the contrast between the high social status of the dedicator and the pastoral setting of the poem more prominent. The same word is also employed by Theocritus in *Idyll* 1, 143, denoting a bowl for milking goats. Also in *Idyll* 1, the craved cup is the price for a song, but also represents the poetry itself.¹³ In this context it is interesting to look closer in epigram 5 GP of Leonidas and 3 GP by Anyte at the dedications of the cups. Évelyne Prioux also sees a metapoetic meaning in the multiple, humble statues of nymphs in epigram 5, which represent the numerous poems of Leonidas, which are small, because of their epigrammatic form, and concerned about simple folk and their offerings.¹⁴ In the work of the poetess, the person offering a gift is a herdsman, whereas in the Tarentine's poem it is a traveller, which provides a parallel with the advice given in his epigram 86 GP to a passer-by. Given that epigrams 16 and 18 GP of Anyte and 86 GP of Leonidas may be read programmatically and appear suitable for the opening of a poetry book or section, these two poems seem quite apt for the ending of the book. Here the herdsman or wayfarer, having satisfied his thirst and been refreshed by the cold water representing poetry, shows his gratitude by making an offering by the spring, giving to

¹² LSJ (1940: 1618).

¹³ SENS (2005: 206).

¹⁴ PRIOUX (2017: 13).

the gods a vessel, which itself serves as a symbol of a poem. It is possible that the source of this metaphor of a cup and the motif of drawing the water from the stream may be traced even further as various types of drinking vessels also appear in the fragments of Philitas.

Philitas constituted an important source of inspiration for the Hellenistic poets, but because of the preservation state of his texts it is difficult to establish the (possibly numerous) borrowings from his poetry. In the preserved fragments of Philitas one can find different terms denoting a cup, mainly rustic or coming from various regions of Greece.¹⁵ Scholia to Theocritus' *Idyll* 7 indicate that the spring of Bourina in this poem is taken from the poems of Philitas,¹⁶ which indicates that the links between these two authors also relate to the water motif. Furthermore, there are other examples of borrowings of this motif, such as in Propertius 3, 3, 51–52,¹⁷ where water becomes a metonymic term for the poetry of Philitas, which is supposed to have inspired the Roman poet: *talia Calliope, lymphisque a fonte petitis / ora Philitea nostra rigavit aqua*. In the light of the literary references mentioned above, it is quite probable that the motif of water in Leonidas' epigram is supposed to be a reference to the poetry of Philitas. Perhaps the search for better water in epigram 86 of Leonidas could also be read as a metaphor of seeking the better poetic inspiration, especially as it is presented in the form of advice – to take the water from the cold spring which is situated further away, not from here, where the stream is warm and muddy.

This opposition in epigram 86 GP of Leonidas is strikingly similar to the famous programmatic statement of Callimachus¹⁸ in *Hymn* 2, 108–112:¹⁹

Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλά
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει

¹⁵ Fr. 31–37. The accumulation of these words may be due to the source of the quotation, the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus, concerned mostly with convivial topics. Nevertheless, the number of such terms is quite notable.

¹⁶ Σ Theoc. VII 5–9 k: WENDEL ed. (1914: 79–80).

¹⁷ GUTZWILLER (1993: 88).

¹⁸ GUTZWILLER (1998: 113).

¹⁹ Edition and translation: CAPPS–PAGE–ROUSE (1921: 58–59).

Δηροῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
 ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
 πίδακος ἐξ ἰερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον.

Great is the stream of the Assyrian river, but much filth of earth and much refuse it carries on its waters. And not of every water do the Melissae carry to Deo, but of the trickling stream that springs from a holy fountain, pure and undefiled, the very crown of waters.

This represents the poetic program of the poet – he prefers small but refined poetry instead of long poems of debatable value. It may also mean the choice of topic – not a popular one, but a new and refreshing one. This is also expressed in epigram 28, where the poet declares that he does not drink from public fountains as he avoids everything that is public:²⁰

Ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, οὐδὲ κελεύθῳ
 χαίρω τίς πολλοὺς ὦδε καὶ ὦδε φέρει,
 μισῶ καὶ περίφοιτον ἐρώμενον, οὐδ' ἀπὸ κρήνης
 πίνω· σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια.
 Λυσανίη, σὺ δὲ ναιχὶ καλὸς καλός – ἀλλὰ πρὶν εἰπεῖν
 τοῦτο σαφῶς Ἦχώ, φησί τις 'ἄλλος ἔχει'.

I hate the cyclic poem, nor do I take pleasure in the road which carries many to and fro. I abhor, too, the roaming lover, and I drink not from every well; I loathe all common things. Lysanias, thou art, yea, fair, fair: but ere Echo has quite said the word, says someone, 'He is another's'.

A very similar message is included in Leonidas' epigram 86 GP, as it contains both a polluted stream and a hard to reach spring.²¹ This epigram of Leonidas contains further conceits related to the poetic program of Callim-

²⁰ Edition and translation: CAPPs-PAGE-ROUSE (1921: 156–157).

²¹ GUTZWILLER (1998: 113).

achus such as levity or purity.²² Water is also used in other programmatic metaphors in the poems of Callimachus. In *Aitia* fr. 1, 30–34, the poet declares that he wants to be like a cicada feeding on the dew, which represents sophisticated poetry. Both cicada and dew occur in Leonidas' epigram 91 GP = AP 6, 120, which also contains a probable programmatic statement, as has been analysed by Nicola Piacenza.²³ In fragment 178, 11–12 of the *Aitia*, the drinking of wine can be read metaphorically as it should be done moderately, in a small cup and mixed with water.²⁴ In this context it is also interesting to compare the offering made by Neoptolemos in epigram 3 GP as he gives a rustic cup filled with wine.

As we have seen, the water motif was used by many early Hellenistic poets in metapoetic and programmatic poems. A later poet, Antipater of Thessalonica, even used the term 'water-drinkers' to designate the authors of that time with their new type of poetry, which he criticized:

Antipater of Thessalonica 20 GP = AP 11, 20

Φεύγεθ', ὅσοι λόκκας ἢ λοφνίδας ἢ καμασηνας
 ἄδετε, ποιητῶν φύλον ἀκανθολόγων,
 οἳ τ' ἐπέων κόσμον λελυγισμένον ἀσκήσαντες
 κρήνης ἐξ ἱερῆς πίνετε λιτὸν ὕδωρ.
 σήμερον Ἀρχιλόχοιο καὶ ἄρσενος ἤμαρ Ὀμήρου
 σπένδομεν· ὁ κρητῆρ οὐ δέχεθ' ὕδροπότας.

Away with you who sing of loccae (cloaks) or lophnides (torches) or camasenes (fish), race of thorn-gathering poets; and you who practising effeminately decorative verse drink only simple water from the holy fount. To-day we pour the wine in honour of the birthday of Archilochus and virile Homer. Our bowl receives no water-drinkers.

²² PRIoux (2017: 14).

²³ PIACENZA (2010).

²⁴ KNOX (1985: 111).

The ‘water-drinkers’, as opposed to the ‘wine-drinkers’, can be understood as Callimachus and the followers of his new type of poetry:²⁵ refined, complicated and designed for a small circle of educated literates. Nevertheless, Piacenza has noted that the beginning of epigram 20 GP of Antipater shares the first word of the incipit to epigram 37 GP = AP 6, 302 of Leonidas and seems to allude to it (Φεύγεθ’ ὑπέκ καλύβης).²⁶ Furthermore, the water is described as λιτὸν, ‘simple’, which constitutes an important concept in Leonidas’ poetry. That may suggest that the term ‘water-drinkers’ could be understood more widely, as denoting also other poets, such as Leonidas.

Leonidas in his epigram 86 GP does not simply use the motif of Anyte’s poems, but also reverses it to add his own views on poetic and programmatic matters. He then adds allusions to other Hellenistic authors and their poetic programs, as suggested by the opposition of clean and polluted streams, in common with the statement of Callimachus’ *Hymn* 2. In Leonidas’ other poems which develop the water motif, such as the offering of gifts at springs, we can find elements common not only to other contemporary poets such as Theocritus, but also to the shared sources which can be traced even further back, for example to the lost poems of Philitas. I have not tried to establish the precise bounds between the poems of various Hellenistic poets and Leonidas, but rather to show that he took part in the poetic discussion of the time and prove that the Tarentine’s poems should not be read as simple scenes from rural life, as they also have metapoetic and programmatic meaning.

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