

SAPPHO FR. 111

ἴψοι δὴ τὸ μελάθρον·
 ὑμήναον.
 ἀέρρετε τέκτονες ἄνδρες·
 ὑμήναον.
 γάμβρος †εἰσέρχεται ἴσος† Ἄρενι
 ἄνδρος μεγάλω πόλυ μέζων.

Dr. G. S. Kirk suggested (*C.Q.* xiii [1963], 51–2) that the last line here referred to ‘a fantastically ithyphallic bridegroom’. Professor Lloyd-Jones (*C.Q.* xvii [1967], 168), while professing uncertainty as to the rightness of this suggestion, thought it ‘quite likely’, and adduced in support of it a story from Tzetzes on Lycophron 1378 (ed. Scheer, ii. 381 f.), a story told also, but in different words, in the *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. ἀσελγαίνειν (ed. Gaisford, 153, 1 f.), and containing in this second version the words μέγας ἀνήρ ‘used in just the sense which Dr. Kirk ascribed to it in Sappho’.

G. Wills added (*C.Q.* [1970], 112) that ‘another pertinent line, also from an epithalamion, is at Aristoph. *Pax* 1351 . . .’, and (*G.R.B.S.* viii [1967], 180 n. 26) that ‘this confirms Kirk’s suggestion’. The relevance of this quotation from Aristophanes was questioned by Marcovich (*C.Q.* xxii [1972], 31). But the citation of evidence from an epithalamium that it was part of ‘the obscene banter of marriage’ to refer to the bridegroom as one *bene mutuniat* (cf. the remark of Professor Dover ap. Kirk) is relevant to a claim that in the wedding-song we are dealing with the bridegroom is jestingly alleged to be *mirifice mutuniat*. This is a matter in which the popular fancy relishes the humour of fantastic hyperbole (as at Petronius, *Sat.* c. 92 ‘ut ipsum hominem laciniam fascini crederes’; cf. Kirk, *J.H.S.* xcii [1972], 81, on Trickster; Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes*, p. 50, on Fergus).

There seems to be further support for the suggestion in the phallic song (Page, *P.M.G.* no. 851 a), in which the Rabelaisian humour of calling for plenty of room for an approaching phallic figure is much in the manner of the Sappho fragment as interpreted by Professor Kirk:

ἀνάγετ', εὐρυχωρίαν
 τῶι θεῶι ποιείτε·
 θέλει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ὀρθὸς ἐσφυδωμένος
 διὰ μέσου βαδίζειν.

Here, in view of the objection of McKay (ap. Wills, loc. cit.) that ‘ἀνὴρ μέγας must refer to over-all stature, not to a specific member’s size’ (cf. Marcovich (op. cit. p. 31, § 4), it may be pointed out that it is of θεός that ὀρθός and ἐσφυδωμένος are predicated, the relevant accusative (or dative) of respect being left to the understanding. If, in deference to tradition, Sappho was being improper, it was done with humour and propriety of language.