

## 4. The Fountains of Argos

The masculine personae of the previous poem yield to a cast of feminine characters: the daughters of Danaos, immortalized as fountain nymphs in the vicinity of Argos.

According to tradition, when Poseidon had afflicted the country with drought, Danaos sent his fifty daughters to search for water. At least four of the girls (Physadeia, Amymona, Hippe, and Automate) succeeded in finding it. Amymona, the most famous of them, gave herself to Poseidon in love and was rewarded by him with the spring named for her, located at Lerna about three miles (5 km.) from Argos. Her role in the cult of Hera at Argos may have supplied Callimachus with the principal *aitia* of this poem. At any rate, we learn that the girls who weave the robe for Hera's cult statue in her temple at Argos must not do so before bathing in Amymona's spring.

The opening of the poem is missing. We can perhaps add a phrase to it with the help of an ancient commentary on Antimachus, quoted in Pfeiffer's notes: 'Callimachus says that women recently delivered do not bathe in water from the Physadeia, but from the Automate . . .' To illustrate his point, the commentator went on to quote (and so to preserve for us) a couplet from Callimachus' poem (our first three lines). Just before the fragment begins, then, Callimachus, addressing Automate, may have said 'not from Physadeia',

O fair stream named for Automate,  
but from you
they draw water when they'd wash  
a slave tainted in childbirth . . .

Between these lines and the papyrus fragment preserving the rest of the poem, there is a gap of unknown length. The papyrus fragment itself opens with the conclusion of a sentence it does not preserve, calling the four fountain nymphs

heroines . . . descended from Io.

From here the poet goes on to address Amymona in particular, and to conclude with a resonant farewell to her and her sisters:

5 Nor is it right, O bride of Poseidon,  
nymph of the waters, for those  
who must weave the robe of Hera

to stand by the weaver's rods until  
they've poured your water  
10 over their heads, seated  
upon your sacred rock, your stream  
cascading all around it:

Hail, Lady Amymona  
and dear Physadeia, Hippe and Automate,  
hail, primeval haunts of nymphs,  
15 and go on flowing, radiant daughters of Pelasgos!



## 5. Akontios and Kydippe

We come now to the best preserved of all Callimachus' fragmentary poems. About two-thirds of it survives, just over 100 of the approximately 150 lines that it must have had in its full form.

Section A contains the opening of the poem, section H the conclusion. The *Diegesis* is fragmentary, lacking the usual quotation of the opening line but preserving sufficient traces in the summary portion to enable us to assure the poem its position at this point in the book. As to the sequence and context of the fragments presented in sections B–G, we can only guess, assisted by other sources dependent, presumably, on Callimachus himself. The most important of these occurs in Aristaenetus 1. 10. It describes how the youth Akontios, hopelessly in love with the girl Kydippe, tricked her into uttering an oath she could not retract:

Selecting a Kydonian apple to deceive her with, he inscribed words around it and rolled it stealthily before the feet of her attendant . . . and the girl, taking it and running over the writing with her eyes, read out as follows: 'By Artemis, I will marry Akontios.' Even as she was going through it, and though it was both an unwilling and a supposititious expression of love, she felt ashamed and cast it away from her.

The trick itself is not actually described in any of the extant portions of the poem. We learn from lines 63–72 (of the translation) that Artemis heard Kydippe's oath and held her to it, unwitting though it was. The fragmentary *Diegesis* also quotes the oath (exactly as we find it in Aristaenetus), another indication that it must have occurred in a part of the poem now lost. The whole story unfolds as if for its own sake, though various *aitia* occur in the telling, all of them dealing with

matters that relate to the history and culture of Keos and Naxos, island homes of the two lovers.

Poseidon's love for Amymona in the preceding poem prepares the way somewhat for the introduction of a love poem at this point. The Keian connection, touched on in the Simonides poem, now comes to the fore.

The poem opens with a reference to the inspired trick:

## A

Eros himself instructed young Akontios,  
burning for the girl Kydippe,  
in the art of love (at least,  
he wasn't a schemer before), helped him . . .  
5 earn the name of husband  
till his dying day.

To your rites on Delos  
he came, Apollo, and she as well—  
he from Ioulis, she from Naxos;  
the blood of Euxantios in his veins,  
10 of Prometheus in hers—the two of them  
beautiful stars of the islands.

Even when  
Kydippe was little, many a mother  
prayed that her son would marry her  
and followed up those prayers  
15 with oxen sacrificed.

No other girl  
approached the dripping stone  
of shaggy old Silenos with a face  
more like the dawn, no other  
danced for Ariadne's slumber on feet  
20 as delicate

The two following fragments deal with Akontios before he falls in love with Kydippe. The first describes his attractiveness:

## B

21 When the boy went to school  
or to bathe, the hearts of lovers  
beat faster

The second gives us a glimpse of his inaccessibility to his admirers, depicted, like the revellers in *Iambus* 15, playing the Sicilian game called *kottabos*. Those who played for a kiss from Akontios met with disappointment:

## C

And many a party-goer, hooked on Akontios,  
25 shook the drops from his cup  
to the ground

At some point in the narrative, the tables turn. Akontios falls in love:

## D

27 but now  
the shooter is the shot, he has  
another's barb in him

Falling in love seems to make him nervous. According to Aristaeetus, he dreads being seen by his father:

## E

30 which is why, on any  
pretext whatever, off he went to the country

We next find him, probably in the country, cutting the name of his beloved into the trunks of trees:

## F

32 But have in your bark enough letters carved  
to say, 'I love Kydippe.'

The last of these glimpses before the denouement may come from a soliloquy spoken by the distraught lover:

## G

Madman that I am, why  
35 have I frightened you so?

By the opening of the next section, which brings the poem to conclusion, Akontios has played his trick and it has taken effect. Kydippe's father has betrothed her to someone else, but marriage with anyone other than the unknown Akontios is now impossible, thanks to Artemis, who keeps causing the bride to become ill just before her marriage.

The long section opens with the sort of topic that is grist for the mill in a collection of poems called *Aitia*. Kydippe's people practise a peculiar marriage custom:

H

And the girl had already spent the night  
with a boy at her side—

  a girl *has* to, on Naxos,  
before she marries, and the boy  
she sleeps with must have both parents living,  
40 all because Hera, once upon a time,  
as legend has it...

  That's far enough!

You dog, you cur: you'll make  
songs even of forbidden themes.

  It's a good thing  
you haven't seen dread Demeter's rites:  
45 you'd belch them out too.

  Knowing a lot  
is dangerous, when a man can't curb his tongue—  
a knife, truly, in a child's hands.

  And now,  
the evening before  
the oxen would tear their hearts  
50 to see, at dawn, the sharp blade  
mirrored in the waters, the girl turned  
deathly pale, the sickness  
we bid go plague the mountain goats  
and falsely label 'sacred' came on  
55 and nearly finished her.

  A second time  
the nuptial couch was strewn, a second time  
the girl fell sick, a quartan fever

lasting seven months.

  For the third time  
they thought to marry her: that third time  
60 a deadly chill pierced Kydippe.

  Her father  
didn't wait for the fourth time . . . [he went]  
to Apollo at Delphi, and the god  
spoke to him, in a dream:

  'A heavy oath  
in the name of Artemis bars  
65 your daughter's marriage.  
  At the time  
my sister wasn't off dealing with Lygdamis,  
or plaiting rushes in her temple at Amyklai,  
or washing the stains of the hunt  
in the stream Parthenios: no,  
70 she was on the scene in Delos, when your daughter  
swore that she would marry Akontios,  
and no other.

  O Keyx, if it's me  
you come to for advice . . .  
fulfil her oath.

  You won't be mingling  
75 lead with silver, but electrum  
with gleaming gold—

  yours the strain  
of ancient Kodros, while he,  
your Keian son-in-law, is scion  
of that race of priests, who worship  
80 Aristaian Zeus the Ikmian, climbing  
the mountain tops  
when baleful Maira rises, to blunt  
her onset and beseech the god  
for the breeze that brings  
85 quail fluttering by the thousands  
into linen nets.'

  So spoke the god,  
and Keyx, returning to Naxos, asked

the girl herself, who told him everything  
exactly as it happened,  
and was healed . . .

90 And you, Akontios, all you had to do  
was go to Dionysos' island . . .  
for your [bride]:  
the goddess had her oath  
abided by, and the girl's friends  
were singing wedding songs already.

I doubt,

95 Akontios, that you would trade the night  
you touched her virgin belt  
for ankles swift as Iphikles', skimming  
ears of grain, or all  
the treasure Midas Kelainites  
100 heaped himself:  
and anyone who's had  
a taste of that harsh god's power  
will second what I say.

And from that union  
a mighty name was destined to arise:  
the Akontiadaï, your descendants, abounding

105 to this day in numbers and in glory  
in Ioulis,  
and the tale  
of your passion came to my ears  
from old Xenomedes, who once set down  
the whole island

110 in a mythological memoir, beginning  
from the moment Korykian  
nymphs settled there, driven  
from Parnassos by a huge lion (it was from them  
the island got the name Hydroussa),  
and how Kirodes . . . came to live

115 in Karyai; and after him  
came Carians and Leleges, whose trumpets  
ever welcome Zeus of the Battle Cry  
to the sacrifice, and how the son

120 of Phoibos and Melië, Keos,  
changed the island's name;  
then crime,  
and death by lightning strike,  
and the sorcerers, Telchines,  
and Demonax, that fool

125 who left the gods out of account—  
all these the old man set down  
in his tablets, along  
with aged Makeło and her daughter,  
Dexitheia, the only ones

130 the gods spared when they destroyed  
the island for its wickedness;  
and of its four cities  
he told how Megakles  
built Karthaia, and Eupylos the son  
of Chryso the demi-goddess

135 raised Ioulis of the fountains,  
and Akaios founded Poiessa where  
the long-haired Graces are,  
and Aphrastos Koresia town,  
and he told the story,  
Akontios, of your sharp love

140 and the pain it gave you, that old man  
tending the truth, from whom  
the girl's tale ran to my Calliope.

## 6. The Marriage Rites at Elis

The marriage theme is taken up again, fresh from its treatment in the previous poem, but with a very different emphasis. We have to do not with a private love affair but with war and politics. The poem is set in Elis, where Olympia, site of the Olympic Games, was located. The background is available from a scholion to *Iliad* 11. 700. We see from it that Heracles must have figured large in the sixth poem of *Aitia* 3, as he had in the first:

Heracles at Eurystheus' behest had cleansed the dung of Augeas but when he asked him for his pay, Augeas kept refusing, arguing that