

61 — Menecrates of Aenos | 42 G-P

Αἶνιε, καὶ σὺ γὰρ ὦδε, Μενέκρατες, οὐκ ἔτι πολὺς
ἦσθα; τί σε, ξείνων λῶστε, κατειργάσατο;
ἦ ῥα τὸ καὶ Κένταυρον; “ὅ μοι πεπρωμένος ὕπνος
ἦλθεν, ὁ δὲ τλήμων οἶνος ἔχει πρόφασιν.”

Source: AP 7.725 [J] εἰς Μενεκράτην οἰνωθέντα καὶ τελευτήσαντα [C] Καλλιμάχου. Not in Planudes.

1 οὐκ ἔτι πολὺς divisit Barber Gronewald οὐκέτι πολὺς P οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ Zedel εἰσέτι πολὺς coni.
Ruhnken 2 λῶστε Zedel ὥστε P 3 ἦ ῥα τὸ divisit Zedel ἦρατο P (accentum erasit C)

Menecrates of Aenus—so you too are here—were you not still
in the prime of life? But what, best of friends, destroyed you?
Was it what finished off the Centaur too? “The sleep destined for me
came, but sorry wine was the actual cause.”

This dialogue between the living speaker and the dead man is a familiar type found on inscribed epitaphs. Like epigram 15, the opening suggests that the speaker is a passerby who has noticed the tomb of someone he knew. Initially he asks how Menecrates had come to die, but then voices an immediate suspicion that the man had died of excessive drinking, which presupposes that he had on more than one occasion observed his friend in convivial settings. The mention of the Centaur coupled with Menecrates’ chagrined response in lines 3–4 that he died while intoxicated has a firm mythological parallel and moves the epigram away from a true inscription into the realm of literary fiction (Hutchinson 1988: 73). In *Odyssey* 11.57–65 Odysseus encounters the ghost of Elpenor, a comrade who fell asleep on the roof of Circe’s house while drunk with wine. The next morning, not realizing that he was on the roof, he fell off and broke his neck. Elpenor’s explanation at 11.61: ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἶσα κακὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἶνος (“an evil destiny from some god infatuated me and a vast amount of wine”) closely resembles Menecrates’ own coupling of fate and wine. The intertext reinforces that Menecrates will have died young or at least while he was still vigorous (ἔτι πολὺς) and not the result of a constitution weakened by illness or old age, “no longer in your prime” (reading οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ). The opening καὶ σύ (“you too”) suggests an environment of more than one tomb; Barber (1954: 230) and Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004: 321) following him assume a cemetery and an element of surprise. The conjunction also looks forward to the Homeric intertext as Odysseus expects to see the ghosts of comrades in the underworld but is surprised by Elpenor.

Menecrates’ response counters the speaker’s assumption that drink caused his demise by asserting that fate was the real culprit, wine only the πρόφασις. But the

potential meanings of *πρόφασις*—according to LSJ, “falsely alleged motive” or “actual motive”—muddy the waters. The final phrase could mean that “wine is falsely given as the reason for my death” or “wine is the actual reason for my death”. *τλήμων* fits either scenario: either the wine is “hapless” and falsely accused or “reckless” and the reason for Menecrates’ death. Lines 2–4 are closely imitated in Vergil’s *Catalepton* 11.1–4 where the poet’s *quid immeriti crimen habent cyathi?* would seem to acquit the wine:

Quis deus, Octavi, te nobis abstulit? an quae
dicunt, a, nimio pocula duro mero?
“vobiscum, si est culpa, bibi. sua quemque sequuntur
fata: quid immeriti crimen habent cyathi?”

What god, Octavius, snatched you away from us? Or was it,
as they say, cups of too strong wine?
“I drank with you, if it is a fault. Our individual destiny follows
each of us. What crime did the guiltless cups commit?”

A Menecrates occurs in epigram 45 as the reluctant *eromenos*. If it is the same person (as Cairns 2016: 252–254 argues), this marks the final stage of his epigrammatic life. But this interpretation depends, in part, on the restoration of the first line. If Menecrates did not die in the prime of his life, but past it, he would have been too old to have been an *eromenos* (see below n.2).

1. Αἴνιε: most likely the Thracian city at the mouth of the Hebrus river. Although there are other cities so named, Thrace was proverbial for drinking to excess and would fit well with the reference to the Centaur and wine. Aenus in Thrace is also the setting for *Iambus* 7 (fr. 197.1–3 Pf.), which opens like a dedicatory epigram: Ἑρμᾶς ὁ Περφεραῖος, Αἰνίων θεός, | ἔμμι τῷ φυγαῖχμα | ...] πάρεργον ἱποτέκτον[ος. (“I am Hermes the Perpheraean, god of the Aeneans, the incidental work of the cowardly builder of the horse [i.e., Epeius]”).

καὶ σύ: Callimachus uses the phrase καὶ σύ also in epigram 30.5 on Cleonicus, which shares a number of features with this epigram: the speaker’s initial surprise to find Cleonicus, the leading question about the man’s condition, introduced by ἦ ῥα, and the use of καὶ σύ to include the addressee within a group with features common to all (death in this epigram; erotic desire in the earlier and καὶ σύ again at epigram 52.4 of erotic desire).

ᾧδε: editors and commentators are divided between understanding this as a statement (“So you are here then.”) or as a question (“Are you here then?”) and debate whether the adverb “here” refers to being in this life, in this country, or in this tomb. The last is surely correct: compare Posidippus 53.1 A-B: Καλλιόπη, σὺ μὲν ᾧδε·

σὲ δὲ κλαίουσιν ἑταῖραι (“Calliope, you are here. Your companions weep for you”), where the young woman in the tomb has fallen from a roof after an all-night party, experiencing a fate not unlike Elpenor’s (and see Calderón Dorda 2024: 287). See also epigram 12.4 where ὦδ(ε) specifies the location of the dead man in his tomb (see discussion for this and οὐκ ἔτι πούλῳς below in Gronewald 1994).

οὐκ ἔτι πούλῳς: the reading of P is οὐκέτι πούλῳς. There have been several lines of approach in interpreting the text. (1) Pfeiffer obelized the phrase, and in his notes suggested that οὐκ must be corrupt, citing *Aetia*, fr. 24.5 Harder: ὠμογέρων ἔτι πούλῳς ἀνὴρ (“a man in vigorous old age”) as the parallel for reading ἔτι πούλῳς; in order to account for the offending οὐκ, he leaned toward Ruhnken’s conjecture, εἰσέτι πούλῳς (“still young”). (2) G-P and Mair follow Zedel’s emendation to οὐκ ἐπὶ πούλῳ, as a statement meaning “not here for long”; ἐπὶ πούλῳ is attested in Thucydides and other prose writers with this meaning. (3) Barber (1954: 230) suggested punctuating as Αἴνιε—καὶ σὺ γὰρ ὦδε—Μενέκρατες, οὐκ ἔτι πούλῳς ἦσθα: “Menecrates of Aenos—for you too lie here—you were not <after all> still vigorous.” Finally, (4) Gronewald 1994 accepts Barber’s articulation, but suggests that οὐκ ἔτι πούλῳς is a question, “were you not still in good health?” All these readings are viable: (1), (2), and (4) imply that the man died young or at least in his prime; (3) that he had reached old age, perhaps the more easily succumbing to drink. If this is the same Menecrates as in epigram 45, (3) cannot be correct, since he was a very young man in that epigram. We have printed (4) persuaded by the *Aetia* passage, the Homeric intertext, and Gronewald’s discussion.

2. **λῶστέ:** P has ὦστέ, which Zedel emended; the expression is used in dialogues, sometimes with an ironic tone and often with questions; see, e.g., Plato, *Laws* 638a1, *Iambus* 1.33 (fr. 191.33 Pf.) and 13.24 (fr. 203.24 Pf.), Theocritus, *idd.* 14.3 and 16.21. But the vocative is not usual with a genitive; here it may be an inversion of Homer’s δειλὲ ξείνων (21.288), addressed to Odysseus, in the passage that is alluded in line 3 (see note).

3. **ἦ ῥα:** Epic and lyric for ἄρα; also, at 30.3 and 41.3.

τὸ καὶ Κένταυρον: this recalls Homer’s phrase at *Odyssey* 21.295–296: οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον...ἄασε. It is an allusion to the fate of the Centaur, Eurytion, who at the wedding feast of the Lapiths consumed too much wine and tried to abduct the bride. In the ensuing battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs, he was mutilated and driven away from the company (*Odyssey* 21.299–302). Homer’s phrase is imitated later by Alcaeus of Messene (*AP* 11.12.1–2 = 3.1–2 G-P) as οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον... | ὤλεσεν and Nicarchus (*AP* 11.1.3) as οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον | ἀπώλεσεν). Athenaeus (14.613a) quotes the Homeric lines as οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον... | ὤλεσε.

4. **τλήμων οἶνος**: the wine is τλήμων because it caused Menecrates' demise, not because of its inherent quality (see discussion above).

Barber (1954) 227–230.

Cairns (2016) 247–252.

Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004) 321–322.

Giangrande (1963) 154–157 = (1984) 66–69.

Gronewald (1994) 22–24.

Haupt (1876) 146–147.

Hutchinson (1988) 73–74.

Zedel (1780) 112–113.