On Heracles and Hebe

The following fragment was attributed to Simias by Powell:

χαίρε ἀναξ Ἐκατε, ζαθέας μάκαρ Ἡβας

The reader will note that Powell printed the alteration "Ἐκατε instead of the mss. reading Ἕταρε. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. This fragment evidently comes from a hymn to Heracles, who is addressed as the "companion of Hebe" (Ετάρε ... Ἡβας). Heracles was deified after death and married Hebe: cf. Theocritus, Idyll 17, line 32. The fragment should therefore be printed as follows:

χαίρε ἀναξ, Ἕταρε ζαθέας μάκαρ Ἡβας


Youthful Dionysus

Simias also referred to Dionysus: cf. Powell, op. cit., p. 114, fr. 15:
Σέ ποτε δρί' ὃς ἀνὰ δρυμά τε, νεαρὲ κόρε νεβροχίτων

Powell printed the alteration δρί' ὃς ἀνὰ δρυμά τε instead of the mss. reading Διός ἀνὰ πύματα. Textual alteration is again not necessary. The text should be printed as follows:

Σέ ποτε Διός ἀνὰ πύματα νεαρὲ κόρε νεβροχίτων
“you at length (ποτε) lord (ἀνα) for the last time (πύματα), youthful son of Zeus, dressed in a fawnskin”.

It should be noted that πύματα is an adverb and means “for the last time”: cf. Odyssey 4.685. Dionysus, like Apollo, was said to be always youthful: cf. Ovid, Met. 4.17 – tu puer aeternus. Cf. also LSJ, s.v. ἀνα: “voc. of ἀναξ, only in the phrases ὤ ἀνα, contr. ὲνα, and Ζεὺς ἀνα, and always as address to gods”. Cf. moreover, Odyssey 19.523 κούρον Ζήθωςο ἄνακτος.

The exordium of a hymn often consisted in a verb of singing accompanied by the accusative σέ, a vocative and adverbs expressing time: cf. e.g. Callimachus, Hymn 4, line 1 – Τὴν ἱερὴν, ὦ θυμέ, τίνα χρόνον ἢ ποτ' ἀείσεις / Δῆλον κτλ. Cf. moreover, A.P. 8.67, 2 εὐχόμενη πύματα (“praying for the last time”).

The Avenging Furies

At fr. 16 (Powell) Simias mentions the murder of Melanippus:

Τὸν στυγνὸν Μελανίππου φόνον αἰ πατροφόνων ἔριθοι.

Scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of ἔριθοι. I would like to suggest that Simias is referring to the fact that the Furies were said to punish murderers. Simias has employed a metaphor. Thus ἔριθοι means here “mowers, or reapers”: cf. LSJ, s.v. ἔριθος (Iliad 18.550 ἔριθοι / ἦμων). The Furies are said to be the “reapers” (i.e. destroyers) of parricides. Cf. LSJ, s.v. ἁμαώ (3): “mow down in battle, A.R. 3.1187”. Cf. also LSJ, s.v. θερίζω (2): “metaph.,' Ἀρη τὸν ... θερίζουντα βροτούς Α., Supp. 637 (lyr.)”. Cf. moreover, Odyssey 2.135 στυγερὰς ... Ερινύς (“the hateful Furies”).

Doris and the sea

At fr. 13 (Powell) Simias addresses Doris:
Māter ὁ ποτνία κλὔθι Νυμφᾶν ἀβρᾶν
Δώρι, κυμοκτύπων (τ') ἱραν' ἀλίων μυχῶν.

In line 2 τ' ins. Fraenkel, ut Nereus vel Neptunus appelletur ἱραν' codd.: corr. Salmas.

In line 2 Powell printed Salmasius' correction ἱραν'. I would like to suggest that better sense can be made of the fragment if we print line 2 as follows:

Δώρι, κυμοκτύπων ἱρα ναλίων μυχῶν.
"Doris, for the sake of [ŋ] the wave-beaten nooks of the sea"

Cf. LSJ, s.v. ἱρα II: "later c. gen., = χάριν, for the sake of, on account of ... ἤ. φιλοξενίης Call., fr. 41". For the prodelision, cf. D.L. Page, Sappho and Alcaeus, Oxford, 1970, p. 276 ("πι πόντον"). Cf. also LSJ, s.v. ἐναλίως: "of the sea". Note, moreover, the employment of Adjektivhäftung (κυμοκτύπων ... ναλίων): cf. my commentary on Theocritus' Idyll 24 (Amsterdam 1979), p. 37.

Of mice and giants

Athenaeus (XIV 616d) states that the king of Egypt made a joke at the expense of Agesilaus, the king of Sparta, who was short. The joke was this:

ἀδινεον ὁ ὄρος, Ἰεύς δ' ἐφοβεῖτο, τὸ δ' ἑτεκεν μῦν.
"The mountain was in travail-pains and Zeus was frightened, but it brought forth a mouse".

Scholars have been puzzled by the point of the joke. The point lies in the fact that mice and giants were both said to be "earth-born" (γηγενείς): cf. Mair's note on Lycophron 1306 (Loeb edition, London 1960). When the earth was in labour, Zeus feared the birth of a giant, but instead a mouse was born. Thus the Egyptian king means that Agesilaus was not a giant of a man (i.e. strong and powerful), but only a mouse.6

5 Cf. I.U. Powell, op. cit., p. 244, fr. 22.
6 Cf. LSJ, s.v. Γίγας II: "as Adj., mighty (γίγαντος, μεγάλου, ἵσχυροϋ, ὑπερφυοῦς, Hsch.)".
7 On the mouse as a contemptible being, cf. RE, s.v. Maus, 2405. Maybe the Egyptian king wanted to tell Agesilaus not to "überschätzen" his own strength.
Demetrius Poliorcetes and the Athenians

Athenaeus (VI 252ff.) states that the Athenians flattered Demetrius Poliorcetes and received him as a god with singing and dancing. In a hymn of praise, Demetrius is called the son of Poseidon and Aphrodite:

ο τού κρατίστου παί Ποσειδώνος θεοί, χαίρε, καφροδίτης.

It should be noted that Ptolemy Soter was deified at this time: cf. A.S.F. Gow, Theocritus, Cambridge, 1965, vol. 2, p. 345. Gow noted that the Rhodians were advised by Ammon to worship Ptolemy I as a god in return for his assistance against Demetrius Poliorcetes in 304 B.C.

In line 12 Demetrius is compared to Helios: δυοι δυοι φίλοι μὲν αστέρες, ἥλιος δ' ἐκεῖνος Demetrius is said to be like Helios because the island of Rhodes was considered to belong to Helios. Demetrius Poliorcetes besieged Rhodes in 304 B.C. Accordingly, the Athenians addressed Demetrius as Helios in order to imply that the island of Rhodes belonged to him. At line 23ff. there is a reference to Thebes:

τὴν δ' οὐχὶ Θηβῶν, ἀλλ' ὅλης τῆς Ἐλλάδος
Σφίγγα περικρατούσαν,
Αἴτωλος δ' ὕποπται πέτρας καθήμενος,
ὡσπερ ἠ παλαιά,
τὰ σώμαθ' ἡμῶν πάντ' ἀναπάσας φέρει,
κοῦκ ἔχω μάχεσθαι.
Αἴτωλικόν γὰρ ἀρπάσαι τά τῶν πέλας,
νῦν δὲ καὶ τά πόρρω.


"That Sphinx which crushes, not Thebes but all Hellas - the Aetolian who sits upon the cliff, even as the Sphinx of old, and snatches up and carries off all our men - against it I cannot fight. For it is the Aetolian way to carry off the things of their neighbours, and now even the things more distant".

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In this passage, the Aetolians are described as rapacious. According to ancient sources, Αἰτωλός is derived from αἴτεω cf. Thes.Gr.Ling, s.v. Αἰτωλός. Cf. also A.P. 5.63. It should, moreover, be noted that the word Σφίγξ was used to describe greedy people: cf. LSJ, s.v. Σφίγξ 2. In line 25 the Aetolians are said to be "seated on the cliff": Αἰτωλός ὄστις ἐπὶ πέτρας καθήμενος. There is an allusion here to the fact that the Aetolians had occupied Delphi. As a result, Demetrius Poliorcetes celebrated the Pythian games at Athens: cf. Plutarch, Demetrius XL 4.

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10 Cf. Sophocles, O.T. 464 Δελφίς ... πέτρα ("the rock of Delphi"). The reader will note that the singular has been employed instead of the plural. Thus the words Αἰτωλός ὄστις ἐπὶ πέτρας καθήμενος mean "the Aetolians who sit upon the cliff", i.e. the Aetolians who occupy Delphi. For the use of the singular instead of the plural, cf. Gow, Theocritus, vol. 2, p. 87. Cf. also my Studies in Late Greek Epic Poetry, Amsterdam, 1987, p. 88.