

Susan Stephens has drawn attention to the way that the search for poetic allusions in the poetry of Callimachus ignores earlier and contemporary prose traditions. In a recent article Philippa Lang (2009) argues that Callimachus fr. 75.12-14 in *Acontius and Cydippe* contain a direct reference to Hippocrates' *On the Sacred Disease*. But I argue that Callimachus' allusions to science and other contemporary cultural practices in *Acontius and Cydippe*, fr. 67-75 Pfeiffer, are competing and over-determined.

I suggest that the story of Acontius and Cydippe embodies love magic as a type of cultural discourse: a young man puts an injunction upon the object of his love; she suffers physically as a result; the spell is broken when the goddess who caused the spell is appeased. The text offers verbal parallels to love magic discourse. The metaphor of burning, an important part of the magical rite, is present throughout the story. In fr. 67.2 Acontius burns for Cydippe, in fr. 75.15 Cydippe melts from her disease, in fr. 75.30-31 Cyex is advised to meld his family with Acontius', as if smelting the metals electrum and gold. Second, the magical objects of the gods are mentioned in Aristaenetus' retelling (1.10), where Cydippe's beauty is praised to the point that "Aphrodite adorned her with all her own honors, sparing her *kestos* alone." Callimachus' version likely mentioned this, since the *kestos* is the object Aphrodite gives Hera to seduce Zeus in *Iliad* 14, the story alluded to in fr. 75.4 before the *Abbruchsformel*.

I also argue that *Acontius and Cydippe* invokes the discourse of medicine. In the central scene fr. 75.12-19 Cydippe becomes ill with multiple diseases: epilepsy, a quartan fever, and a chill. Lang takes Cydippe's illnesses to refer to Hippocrates' *On the Sacred Disease* and points to fr. 75.13-14, which describe the apotropism of the disease onto wild goats and the false naming of the disease as *sacred*. Yet the context of *Acontius and Cydippe* proves just the opposite: Cydippe's disease is sacred, caused by Artemis. It is to the subversion of Hippocratic medicine and to the credit of its healing competitor, magic, that we read the Hippocratic text against this passage. Commentators have struggled to identify a passage in *On the Sacred Disease* that is a parallel to Cydippe's second and third diseases. I suggest reading the progression of illnesses within the discourse of Hippocratic medicine: first, an acute, sudden disease (epilepsy); second, a long chronic fever; third, an acute chill. We see here not an allusion to a text – as if Hippocrates' *On the Sacred Disease* or any other Hippocratic text contained these diseases or this sequence of illnesses – but to a kind of cultural knowledge.

My argument is that *Acontius and Cydippe* is overdetermined with meaning, able to be read either as medical discourse or magical discourse. Thus I would not argue so much for one particular version but instead the interaction of the various themes: magic, medicine, revealed and acquired knowledge and the various resonances they form. Reading contemporary cultural practices as cultural discourse in Cydippe's illness enriches the *aitia*. It is not simply that there might be an allusion to *On the Sacred Disease*, but rather that this possibility is embedded inside a complex of competing aetiological explanations.