Literary Loves

Interpretations of Dioscorides 1-5 and 7 G–P

by

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ABSTRACT


This is a study of six Hellenistic erotic epigrams attributed to the third century BC epigrammatist Dioscorides. The introduction provides a critical discussion of interpretive aims and strategies of scholarly readings of Hellenistic epigrams in general, with a focus on concepts such as intertextuality, historicity, ideology and theory. The individual chapters address a wide range of philological and literary particularities, but the interpretive focus is placed on the interrelatedness and interchangeability of the epigrams’ erotic and poetic aspects and actors, and the epigrams’ literary self-awareness and self-reflexivity.

In the first chapter, Dioscorides 5 G–P is shown to blur the categories of poet and lover, and poem and beloved, and to use sexual intercourse as a metaphor for poetic production. The second chapter proposes a new understanding of the relationship between Dioscorides 3 and 4 G–P as an epigram pair dramatizing the poetic principles of imitation and variation. In the third chapter, Dioscorides 2 G–P is discussed as a mediation of eros and poiesis, presenting erotic desire as both cause and effect of poetic production and performance respectively. Chapter four highlights contradictory elements in the literary construct of the object of desire in Dioscorides 1 G–P. In the last chapter, neglected literary motivations for and editorial applications of the sexual content of Dioscorides 7 G-P are explored. The conclusion stresses the open-endedness of literary interpretation, and the polysemic qualities of these epigrams.

Key-words: Dioscorides, Greek Anthology, Hellenistic epigram, erotic poetry

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\textit{Uppsala, 29}^{th} \text{ of August 2003}

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Introduction – How I’m comin'

Male voice (distant): *I’m comin’*...
Female voice (inviting): *How you comin’* babe...?
Male voice (distant): *I’m comin’*
(aggressive): *This is how I’m comin’*!!!

I have taken the quotation from the chorus of a classic rap song – How I’m Comin’ – a single release from LL Cool J’s 1993 album (Def Jam/Columbia) entitled ‘14 Shots to the Dome’. The song forms, at least partly, an example of one of the most common *topoi* in rap lyrics: rapping about your style, about how you perform. ‘This is how I’m comin”, that is to say, refers specifically to the song itself, to the album which it foreshadows, and, in general terms, to the way in which LL Cool J performs his poetry (or, to be more true to the genre, to how he delivers his rhymes). His poetic activity is presented in a way that is evocative of sexual activity. It suggests that the two are analogous, that LL Cool J the poet and LL Cool J the lover come together in what they do and in how they do it; the characteristics and activity of each may be used to elucidate that of the other.

Needless to say, the ways in which different periods, cultures and individuals conceive and experience the erotic and the literary vary immensely. Still, no matter how decidedly different the erotic and the poetic have been construed, the interrelatedness and interchangeability of the two has been a recurrent phenomenon throughout Western literary history.¹ Ancient Greek poetry, with its sexualisations of literary procedures and products, is no exception. Indeed, antiquity’s most well-known love song, Sappho’s *fr. 31*, has been read as a drama of writing and reading, with poet, poem and reader as its main characters.² Jesper Svenbro has argued that writing and reading as such, regardless of literary pretensions, was reflected upon by the ancient Greeks through models which may be labelled as erotic: so, for instance, the ‘pederastic model’, in which the relationship between writer and reader is thought about in terms of the dominant and the submissive partner in a pederastic relationship.³ In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, an instrumental text for Svenbro’s exploration and assessment of the pederastic model, we find the themes of *logos* and *eros* to be inseparably

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intertwined; *eros* and *poiesis* are closely related in the *Symposium*. Similarly erotic in character is the model which governs Svenbro’s reading of Sappho’s poem, in which ‘the reader is seen as the suitor of the writing, which is the daughter of the writer’. Whereas patronized poets might draw on various aspects of the cultural and sexual practices of prostitution to describe their own activity and social position, Roman elegists like Ovid used this and related eroto-poetic *topoi* as one among many devices to gain literary success. Latin poetry provides us with many examples, which are less controversial, perhaps, than that of Sappho. These examples range from fairly isolated instances, such as Juvenal’s calling Statius’ *Thebaid* his *amicus*, that is, his girlfriend or whore, to complete works which explore and elaborate on the relationships between the erotic and the poetic, such as Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*.

The present thesis is devoted to a handful of Hellenistic erotic epigrams. The Hellenistic epigram stands between archaic Greek poetry, by which it has been considered as heavily influenced, and Roman love elegy, which it is held to have inspired. Even though the last decades have witnessed an increased scholarly interest in Hellenistic literature in general, leading critics are in no doubt that interpretive work remains to be done on the Hellenistic epigram. While the Hellenistic era has been said to display an artistic preoccupation with *eros*, Hellenistic poetry has been said to be characterized by ‘an extreme self-consciousness, an overt sense of itself as poetry, and a constant willingness to comment upon itself and its function’. These two factors make the Hellenistic epigram an interesting location for further discussion on how the erotic and the poetic may be seen as interrelated in literature; critics

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4 Svenbro, 1993, 199.
5 Svenbro, 1993, 198. Cf. also the *parabasis* of the *Clouds*, where Aristophanes speaks of himself and his *Banqueters* in terms of a young, unmarried woman who exposed her child, and Callistratus, the *choregos*, as the girl who reared and educated it (Ar. *Nubes* 530-532): καγώ, παρθένος γὰρ ἐτ᾽ ἴν κακῷ ἐξῆν πῶ μου τεκεῖν, ἐξέβητο παῖς δ᾽ ἐπέρα τις ῥαβδοῦ ἀνείλετο, ὑμεῖς δ᾽ ἐξηθέσατε γενναίως καπαδεάσατε.
6 Fear, 2000, 218.
8 Cf. Sharrock, 1994, vii: ‘The *Ars Amatoria* is a poem about poetry, and sex, and poetry as sex’.
11 See now the Hellenistic bibliography, reachable from http://www.gltc.leidenuni.nl.
14 Hunter, 1993, xiii; cf., also, Goldhill, 1991, 225: ‘Exclusivity, scholarship, self-reflexiveness, acute awareness of the poetic past […] it is both the particular combination and the particular intensity of such characteristics that distinguish the poetry of the Hellenistic period’.
have already focused on this aspect of Callimachus’ epigrams. This will be a recurrent topic of my thesis, in which, to put it in the simplest of terms, I propose to interpret six Hellenistic erotic epigrams.

The epigrams I will set out to interpret are all attributed to Dioscorides, some of whose work was included in the famous Garland, a vast anthology of epigrammatic poetry compiled by the Gadarene poet Meleager around 90 BC. The most prominent epigrammatists that Meleager included in his collection were listed in an introductory poem, where each was represented by a flower or a plant. It seems ironically consistent with the state of affairs regarding Dioscorides’ biography that what was once given to represent him is now obscured by a manuscript corruption. Virtually nothing can be said with confidence about the poet himself—even the name Dioscorides is probably mistaken—but his life will not be my concern here. Scholars seeking roughly to place him in space and time have made the following inferences from the epigrams themselves, in Gow–Page’s enumeration, epigrams 14 (AP 6.290), 24 (AP 7.708), 33 (AP 7.76), 34 (AP 9.568), 37 (AP 11.363), and 39 (AP 7.166), all seem to connect Dioscorides with Egypt, in one way or the other. The singularly

15 For instance, AP 12.43 (Callimachus 2 G–P): ἔχθαιρω τὸ στούμα τὸ κυκλικόν οὐδὲ κελεύθῳ | χαίρω τὶς πολλαῖς ὅδε καὶ ὅδε φέρειν | μεσέω καὶ περισσοῦν ἐρώμενον οὐδὲ ἀπὸ κρήνης | πῖνων σκειάξω πάντα τὰ δημόσια. Ἀσωμίην, οὐ δὲ ναίχι καλὸς καλὸς: ἄλλα πρὶν ἠπείν | τοῦτο σαφῶς, ἐχὼ φορὰ τὶς "Ἄλλος ἔχει." – ‘I hate the cyclic poem, nor do I like the road that carries many here and there. I also hate the wandering lover, nor do I drink from the public fountain. I loathe all things common. Lysanias, your are beautiful, beautiful. But before I say this, an echo clearly says, ‘He’s another’s.’” I adopt the text and translation of Gutzwiller, 1998, 218. Incidentally, the point made above about the coming together of LL Cool J’s two personae, has been made also with regard to Callimachus; cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 214: ‘the speaker’s reflection about his erotic experience works to associate Callimachus the lover with Callimachus the scholar-poet’, and Gutzwiller, 1998, 218: ‘[t]he reserve that defines Callimachus as lover is also characteristic of Callimachean poetics, and it is this unity of Callimachus’ artistic and erotic selves that helps to integrate the amatory section with the other portions of the Epigrammata’.

16 AP 4.23-24 (Meleager 1. 23-24 G–P): λυχνίδα τ’ Ἐιδορίσων, ἔδ’ ἔδεν Μωσίην ἀμείνοντ’ | ὡς Διὸς ἐκ κοίρων ἐσχόν ἐπωνυμίην. For many scholars, Meleager’s circumlocation ὡς Διὸς ἐκ κοίρων ἐσχόν ἐπωνυμίην has suggested the name Διοκομίδης rather than Διοκομίδης, as the name is given in almost every lemma in the manuscripts. Even if this be case, the explanation of Di Castri, 1995, 173, n. 1: ‘[l]a scrittura Διοκομίδης dei lemmatisti si spiega con la pronuncia isocronica dei bizantini, che non avvertono la quantità del dittongo’ cannot be right. Either way, in the secondary literature the poet is referred to as Dioscorides, primarily if not exclusively, and I stick to this form for practical reasons.

17 As Gow–Page, 2, 235, point out, there are too many Nicopolis for the Corrector’s (C) ascription of AP 7.178 (Dioscorides 38 G–P) to Διοκομίδου Νικοπολίτου to be conclusive. All the more inconclusive are the ‘several reasons’ that led Thurlington, 1949, 3, to gather that Amphipolis was Dioscorides’ place of origin, among which we may note that: ‘[a] person from Amphipolis is mentioned in 36 (=Dioscorides 10 G–P=AP 12.37). A
most important of these epigrams is AP 7.708 (Dioscorides 24 G–P), an epitaph for the comic poet Machon, who was active in Alexandria around the middle of the third century. Although one may remain sceptic about Athenaeus’ information that the epigram was actually inscribed on Machon’s tomb, it still serves as a terminus post quem for the dating of Dioscorides, placing him in the second half of the third century BC. Dioscorides’ alleged influence on epigrammatists such as Antipater of Sidon, Rhianus and Damagetus usually serve as termini ante quem. Antipater of Sidon, born no later than 170 BC, was active throughout the second century. Both Rhianus and Damagetus were active in the second half of the third century. Scholars have found Dioscoridean traces in a group of epigrams by Damagetus that have been placed in the so called Social War of 220-217 BC. Hence, M.B. Di Castri has recently reiterated the suggestion to set an approximate terminus ante quem for Dioscorides towards the end of the war. The historically minded, then, would perhaps not be completely misled if I, like most other scholars, would place Dioscorides in or around Alexandria towards the end of the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes (246-221), or at the beginning of that of Ptolemy Philopator (221-203).

We know Dioscorides as an epigrammatist only. No other works of poetry or prose are attributed to him, not even indirectly by mention in other ancient texts. The 41 epigrams ascribed to him, which have reached us through a tenth century manuscript known as the Codex Palatinus, cover a wide thematic range. All main types of epigram are represented, funerary, dedicatory, descriptive, satiric, and, of course, erotic. Thematic variety is indeed a trademark of the genre, but the first authoritatively influential account of Dioscorides in the 20th century, R. Reitzenstein’s RE article of 1903, dubbed him nonetheless as ‘[d]er letzte und vielseitigste der grossen alexandrinischen Epigrammatiker’. In 1949, B. Thurlington spoke of him as ‘a master of the hellenistic epigram, one of its foremost composers’, and in...
1972, he was referred to by P.M. Fraser, as ‘the other main epigrammatist of the third century’, next to none other than Callimachus.

Against this background, the extent to which Dioscorides’ work in general, and his erotic epigrams in particular, have been neglected as objects of literary study in their own right, is somewhat surprising. Recently, however, a new edition with a translation into Spanish and an exhaustive commentary by G. Galán Vioque has been published. Also, a new translation into English (with brief comments) has recently appeared; one can only hope that these works will receive more attention than O. Moll’s and Thurlington’s dissertations, from 1920 and 1949 respectively. Before the appearance of Galán Vioque’s edition, the 1965 commented edition of Hellenistic Epigrams by Gow–Page was the standard work on Dioscorides’ epigrams.

Gow–Page’s ground-breaking publication certainly sparked a renewed interest in the genre as such, already reflected in the 14th Fondation Hardt Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique of 1968, devoted to the Greek epigram, but I would still hold that Fraser’s magisterial Ptolemaic Alexandria, published in 1972, meant a significant change, one creating a dividing line in the scanty history of Dioscoridean scholarship. In the following I shall attempt briefly to characterize some recurrent attitudes and important trends in that scholarship. For the most part, I disregard scholarly contributions aimed at elucidating one or two epigrams, or a specific problem within an epigram, for the simple reason that they do not easily lend

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28 Fraser, 1, 595. According to Fraser, 1, 568, ‘Posidippus and Hedylus […] are of less importance than Callimachus, and less interesting and curious than Dioscorides’.

29 Galán Vioque, 2001. Much to my regret, I procured this book only when the final draft for this thesis was nearly completed. Equally regrettable is the fact that I have not been able to procure J. Clack, Dioscorides and Antipater of Sidon: The Poems, Wauconda, IL 2001. For the latter, cf. Maxwell–Stuart, 2003, 252: ‘Occasionally one would like C. to have added a fresh thought of his own to introduce a leaven touch to his reportage of other scholar’s attempts to elucidate a word or a phrase.’ As for the neglect of Dioscorides’ epigrams, pointed out by Fraser, 2, 843, n. 320, we may note that they are still passed over with few or no remarks in many recent works devoted to Hellenistic poetry; see for instance FH 14, Gutzwiller, 1998, Hell. Gron. 3, 1998, Hopkinson, 1998, Hutchinsohn, 1998, Hell. Gron. 6, 2002. In the autumn of 2000, I was told that Dioscorides 1 and 5 G–P (AP 5.56 and 5.55 respectively) will appear in a forthcoming volume of Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, edited by Peter Bing, devoted to the Hellenistic epigram.

30 With regard to Moll’s dissertation, it should be noted that only selected chapters were published.

31 Gow–Page, 1-2; FH 14; Pfhol, 1969.

32 Fraser, 1, 595-607, gives an account of Dioscorides. There is far more to be read in those few pages about the poet than there is, for instance, in Wilamowitz, 1-2, devoted to Hellenistic poetry in the time of Callimachus. Exceptionally, AP 5.55 (Dioscorides 5 G–P), came into the focus of interest in the early seventies when scholars tried to restore parts of the Cologne Epode of Archilochus; cf. Danielewicz, 1989, 233.
themselves to consideration in more general terms. Nor do I treat the occasional references to one Dioscoridean epigram or the other by scholars on the lookout for a parallel.

Though Fraser may be taken as a prime example of the renewed interest in the poet’s production, he was a decidedly hostile critic, particularly when it came to the erotic epigrams. He describes, for instance, AP 12.14 (Dioscorides 9 G–P) as ‘elegant and frivolous, but nothing more’; AP 12.171 (Dioscorides 11 G–P) ‘seems to commemorate a genuinely felt parting […]’, but the language lacks force, and the final sentiment is flat and otiose’; AP 12.42 (Dioscorides 13 G–P) ‘has no particular merit’; finally, AP 5.138 (Dioscorides 2 G–P) is ‘a frigid conceit, and inferior to Dioscorides’ other pieces’. 35

If I will myself appear to describe the erotic epigram as ‘a transcendent linguistic artifact that has no relation to its historical moment of conception’, the main trend in Dioscoridean scholarship, up to and including Fraser, has been the opposite: to treat Dioscorides’ epigrams as windows into the reality and the minds of the Alexandrians. The first authoritative scholarly contribution of the previous century, held by Fraser to be ‘the best analysis’, leaves little room for doubt on this point: ‘wie Ovid giebt er [sc. Dioskorides] mehr als einer seiner Vorgänger Einblick in das tägliche Leben und die Vergnügen der Grossstadt’. Reitzenstein is far from the only scholar to find Dioscorides’ poems interesting mainly as providers of historical information. T.B.L. Webster makes it clear why he turned to Dioscorides in the first place: ‘The most interesting [sc. of Dioscorides’ poems] are those which reveal contemporary Alexandrian taste in literature and music’. Even Gutzwiller, in her monograph devoted to the literary meaning of the poems of the epigrammatists, gives

33 So, for instance, the brief articles of de Vries, 1972, that deals with one phrase in AP 7.31 (Dioscorides 19 G–P), and Blomqvist, 1983, that offers an emendation to AP 7.411 (Dioscorides 21 G–P).
34 This renewed interest we may locate to the seventies; see, for instance, Buffière, 1977; Cresci, 1977 and 1979; Harvey, 1974; Schrier, 1979; Sutton, 1973; de Vries, 1972. Previously, the dissertations of Moll, 1920, and Thurlington, 1949, and the works of Weinreich, 1941 and 1948, and Webster, 1964, are significant exceptions to the general neglect. However, both Weinreich and Webster come to Dioscorides mainly from an interest in (dramatic) art in Hellenistic times.
35 The quotations are taken from Fraser, 1, 596-597. Cf. also Fraser, 1, 606: ‘His [sc. Dioscorides’] pieces on literary themes […] are interesting […] but also without any poetic feeling […]. We may contrast in this connection the excellent […] pieces on literary subjects by Asclepiades […] and Callimachus’. However, Fraser, 1, 606, was also struck ‘by the variety of his [sc. Dioscorides’] work, and by the novelty of much of it’.
36 I quote Fear, 2000, 154, who makes a similar distinction in the scholarly handling of Roman elegiac texts.
37 See also the largely biographic approach adopted (if only briefly) by Thurlington, 1949, who focuses on the poet’s opinions on religion, love, nature, and death and life, and his artistic, literary and dramatic tastes. Cf. also the characterisation of Dioscorides ‘als Kunst- und Musikkenner’ offered by Weinreich, 1941, 66-67.
38 Fraser, 2, 843, n. 320.
39 Reitzenstein, 1903, col. 1126.
40 Webster, 1964, 141.
voice to a position similar to Webster’s on one of the (very few) occasions that she speaks of Dioscorides: ‘This last poet [sc. Dioscorides] is particularly worthy of attention. […] We have from Dioscorides […] a series of five connected epigrams, reflecting a contemporary appreciation of preclassical drama and its archaizing revival in the third century’. The list could be made longer, but I turn instead to a connected tendency, already apparent in the last two quotations, namely the preference for Dioscorides’ ‘literary’ epigrams that continues to dominate Dioscoridean scholarship.

The philological vacuuming of the Dioscoridean corpus for historical information has been directed mainly towards his ‘literary’ epigrams. The term ‘literary’ has been used as a group label for Dioscorides’ epigrams on dramatic and lyric poets—and, one might add, any other epigram that has seemed to deal with literary or theatrical topics in a more obvious or direct way than others. Setting aside these more arbitrary additions to the ‘literary’ group (I will be returning to the classification as such below), it is the epigrams on poets, in particular, that have been considered as Dioscorides’ best and most interesting poems: they are the poet’s ‘Glanzstücke’ according to U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. Di Castri holds them to be the most interesting part of Dioscorides’ production, and Fraser even suggested that Dioscorides was the originator of this type of epigram.

The most recent scholarship on Dioscorides’ poems, however, has taken a more literary-critical turn. This might be seen as a reflection of the steadily increasing scholarly interest in the literary contextualization of the ancient epigram, culminating in Gutzwiller’s 1998 call for a ‘specifically literary study of Hellenistic epigrams’. Contributions aimed at characterising Dioscorides’ style or poetic technique, and studies of the literary sources for his epigrams had appeared before that, it is true. An implicit aim (or necessary pre-requisite) no doubt was to restore the poet’s battered honour. So, L.R. Cresci explicitly contended: ‘Dioscoride può essere stravagante, artificioso, bizzaro, ma non cade mai nella banalità, nel sospiro languido, nel complimento manierato e zuccheroso’. However, the superiority of the ‘literary’ epigrams was still reiterated. In Di Castri’s attempt to draw a literary profile of the

42 Mainly, not solely; cf. for instance, Fraser, 1, 606: ‘His funerary pieces […] reflect the chances of life in Egypt […] and present a series of lively and informative vignettes.’
43 Wilamowitz, 1, 223.
44 Di Castri, 1995, 175.
45 Fraser, 1, 599.
46 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, ix. It is true, of course, that the epigram had been described as the literary pursuit of poëti docti already by Giangrande, see, for instance, FH 14, 345-346.
47 Cresci, 1979, 256.
poet in a series of three articles, dealing with all of Dioscorides’ epigrams, the ‘literary’
epigrams were deemed as particularly apt for the task; in her own words, this group is ‘un
campionario significativo, atto a fornire indicazioni precise sulle coordinate artistiche del
poeta alessandrino’.48 This strongly recalls the introduction to an earlier study by Cresci on
more or less the same epigrams: ‘sono quelli in cui l’originalità di Dioscoride si delinea più
nitidamente e in cui si possono rinvenire le ragioni di certe scelte stilistiche e compositive del
poeta’.49 Cresci’s Dioscorides is a ‘letterato’, just as Di Castri’s is a poet and a scholar.
Whereas the value of Dioscorides as a source for the literary history of tragic poetry was
emphasized by Cresci in her conclusion,50 Di Castri suggested that these epigrams may have
functioned as polemical pleas in contemporary scholarly or literary debates.51 Like
Reitzenstein and Fraser, both Cresci and Di Castri commented on the variety of Dioscorides’
work: Cresci underlined the poet’s taste for variatio, and Di Castri even spoke of ‘[l’]estrema
varietas del testo dioscorideo’.52 In the light of the constantly noted and seemingly
appreciated variety of the poet’s production, it is surprising that scholars seem to have had
some difficulties coming to terms with Dioscorides’ erotic epigrams. It is to these that I now
turn.

In the latest edition of Dioscorides’ epigrams, the editor G. Galán Vioque counts 13
epigrams, in which both male and female objects of desire surface, as erotic.53 The selection
of Dioscoridean erotic epigrams treated in this thesis, I have to admit, is more due to
circumstance than premeditation. What began as a commentary on all Dioscoridean epigrams
has been narrowed down to a study of the erotic epigrams in which the object of desire is
female. This choice must not be taken to imply that I subgroup the erotic epigrams according
to gender. Instead, I have chosen such epigrams in which the interpretive problems I faced
seemed more thrilling and exciting than those presented to me by the group of erotic epigrams
that I have passed over. In one of the epigrams treated in this study (AP 5.54), the very issue
of gender is problematized as a pregnant wife is turned around to be enjoyed as a boy lover. In
yet another one (AP 5.56), what looks like a woman begins upon closer scrutiny to dissolve
into a patchwork of the stuff that goddesses, whores and Cyclopes are made of. In this

48 Di Castri, 1995, 175, n. 9. Similarly, Schrier, 1979, 322, hopes to have laid bare some stimuli which induced
Dioscorides to using certain words.
49 Cresci, 1979, 247.
50 Cf. Cresci, 1979, 257, who speaks of a ‘preziosità della testimonianza sulla storia della tragedia arcaica’.
52 Cresci, 1979, 256 and Di Castri, 1995, 175 respectively.
epigram, a darker, more destructive aspect of erotic desire lurks behind the eulogizing surface. In AP 5.138 desire takes an outright destructive turn when the first person speaker likens the erotic fire kindled in him with that which ravaged Troy. Here, too, the woman who inspires desire undergoes a transformation, but this time around she turns into a Muse rather than a boy. In AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 the women who inspire the first person speaker turn into one another. Here, the first person speaker is willing to die if only he could satisfy his desire for one of them. When a first person speaker finally describes consummate intercourse, as is the case in AP 5.55, he becomes immortalized. In each of these cases, I will point at interpretive possibilities that have not been seized upon by previous scholars. In the end, I hope that I will be judged by what I do (or fail to do) with these epigrams, rather than by the fact that there are more Dioscoridean erotic epigrams to interpret.

We find among the erotic epigrams I have chosen to study the earliest examples of explicit and obscene language in the genre. When D.H. Garrison published a study of the Hellenistic love epigram in 1978, he gave a rather bleak picture of the moralist tendencies of previous scholarship. Past scholarly criticism, he contended, even that of Page, consisted in dislike of the aesthetics and moral of the erotic epigram rather than curiosity in it. While it may be true that ‘lack of αἰδωσία does not always preserve us from difficulties’, as O.J. Schrier pointed out in doing Doris (or ‘Love with Doris’ as he entitled his article), too much (misguided) αἰδωσία may be problematic for studies in Dioscorides’ erotic production. To begin with, the authenticity of certain epigrams, particularly AP 5.56, 5.55, and 5.54 (Dioscorides 1, 5, and 7 G–P respectively), has often been questioned precisely because of their indecency. So, for instance, J. Hubaux and R. Henry:

‘En tout cas, l’épigramme 54 […] n’est pas, selon toute apparence, de Dioscoride : elle porte la marque du pornographe Argentarius. Ainsi, le charmant élégiaque que paraît avoir été Dioscoride se voit dépouillé du mérite contestable d’avoir écrit les pièces 54 à 56. Il lui reste […] le privilège encore plus enviable d’avoir inspiré à Virgile’.

57 Hubaux–Henry, 1937, 224.
However extreme, this is not a unique example: Fraser, too, had his misgivings about
the epigrams in question, and Cresci spoke of them as ‘un aspetto problematico della
personalità artistica di Dioscoride’. In her 1977 article on the erotic epigrams of
Dioscorides, Cresci nonetheless concludes that their authenticity is beyond doubt, and that
they may serve to bring out ‘la fisionomia poetica di Dioscoride’ more clearly. Even so,
Cresci still regards them as problematic because of the purported stylistic differences between
the erotic epigrams in relation to Dioscorides’ other poems. By contrast, Di Castri speaks of
the ‘disomogeneità linguistica’ of the Dioscoridean epigrams as typical of Alexandrian
epigrammatists. Perhaps Di Castri is suggesting a unifying approach to the sprawling variety
of Dioscorides’ work; like most others, she seems to hold Dioscorides’ ‘literary’ epigrams in
higher regard, but she deals with the rest as well. And, rather than coming to the erotic
epigrams with a troubled amazement at their disparity, Di Castri attempts to show how
aspects of other literary types are incorporated into the erotic typology of Dioscorides’
epigrams.

The focus on style, literary sources and poetic technique in scholarship on Dioscorides’
epigrams has undermined the attempts to distinguish a (superior) ‘literary’ group among them.
The fluidity of any category of Dioscoridean epigrams labelled ‘literary’ is apparent already
in a comparison of Fraser’s first definition, according to which ‘[t]he strictly literary pieces
number ten, all directly concerned with a literary topic’, with his subsequent addition of
another two epigrams to the ‘literary’ group; the latter two are included because they ‘derive
from literary sources, and have literary subjects.’ Add now the three epigrams that recount
Spartan episodes, AP 7.484, AP 7.430, and 7.434 (Dioscorides 30-32 G–P), which for Fraser
‘no doubt have a literary origin’. These three, significantly, are treated also by Di Castri as
‘literary’.

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58 Cf. Fraser, 1, 598, for whom ‘the tone as a whole bears a close resemblance to the poems of Meleager and the
line of sensuous epigrammatists inspired more or less directly by him. There therefore seems a strong case for
denying these pieces to Dioscorides’. Cf. also, Boas, 1914, 9-11.
59 Cresci, 1979, 255.
60 The problem as spelt out by Cresci, 1977, 268, resides in ‘la difficoltà posta dall’esigenza di raccordare e
spiegare due impostazioni stilistiche tanto divergenti’.
61 Di Castri, 1997, 68.
63 Fraser, 1, 599.
64 Fraser, 1, 602.
65 Fraser, 1, 603.
430, 434’. 
If Fraser’s ‘deriving from literary sources’ or ‘have a literary origin’ are to serve as guiding lights in the denomination of a Dioscoridean epigram as ‘literary’, a great deal (if not all) of Dioscorides’ epigrams which are conventionally labelled otherwise (like the erotic), would qualify as well. In present-day terminology, the division is particularly confusing, and it should be pointed out that when applied to Dioscorides’ epigrams by these scholars, ‘literary’ does not stand in contrast to ‘inscribed’. The latter distinction has served as one of the key concepts in defining the epigram as a literary genre.

Numerous scholars have contributed to the construction of a historical process that sees the epigram beginning as a humble inscription on an object ‘to say whose it is, or who made it, or who has dedicated it to which god, or who is buried underneath it’, to become the most favored literary form ‘of those on the cutting edge of literary development’, a form that would even ‘rival New Comedy in circulation’. Anyte of Tegea (fl. early third century BC.), has been singled out as one of the pioneers in literalizing the epigram, and indeed, as the first one to have issued a poetry book of epigrams. The epigrams of the earliest literary epigrammatists are compositions mainly on funerary and dedicatory themes. These poems retain so many of the conventions of ‘functional’ or ‘inscribed’ epigrams (as opposed to the ‘literary’ or ‘quasi-inscriptional’ kind, not made for stone), that one might be inclined to speak, with P. Bing, of a deliberate dislocation. With epigram’s now famous move from stone to scroll, a corresponding shift in points of reference began to take place, not only from concrete statues and monuments to imaginary ones, but soon also to texts of any and every kind. Thus, the thematic repertoire of the epigram seems to have expanded, rapidly and profusely. The conquest of erotic and sympotic themes has been considered as the most

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67 So, Tarán, 1979, 4, in a relatively early monograph study of the Hellenistic epigram, devoted to its art of literary and thematic variation, gave more space to the erotic epigrams than she did to funerary, dedicatory and epideictic, because it is in the erotic epigrams that ‘the Hellenistic poets were at their best and the art of variation is most significant.’

68 For the history of the epigram, see, for instance, Reitzenstein, 1893, 87-192; Wilamowitz, 1, 119-134; FH; Beckby 12-67; Fraser, 1, 553-67; West, 1974, 1-2 and 19-21; Hutchinson, 1988, 20-22; Cameron 1993, 1-18; Bing, 1995; Cameron, 1995, 70-95; Gutzwiller, 1998, 1-53 and passim; Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 381-481.

69 A classic definition by West, 1974, 2, quoted by Cameron, 1993, 1, and by the OCD.


71 FH 48, 129.

72 Cameron, 1993, 2.


74 Bing, 1995, 116, and, in particular, 131, where it is argued that readers of Hellenistic epigrams are expected to recognize and understand not only ‘literary allusions […], but […] those to history, geography, medicine, religion etc.’; cf. also Slater, 1999, 514: ‘Hellenistic epigrams reach into Alexandrinian glossography and sophisticated grammar on one side, but on the other into technical terminology and slang’.
notable, but even though non-inscriptional themes were incorporated into the genre, inscriptional features were often retained.\footnote{Cf. Rossi, 2001, 3: ‘[i]n many respects, epigram inherited and reworked the themes and characteristics of literary genres that were already in decline, but it preferred to appear as the literary alter ego on a structural and formal level of a real ‘genre’, namely the epigraphs.’}

In the light of the vast thematic variety we encounter in the genre as a whole, even in the production of so early an epigrammatist as Posidippus (born no later than 305 and may have lived into the 250s or 240s),\footnote{Gutzwiller, 1998, 151.} it is hardly surprising that the unifying features of the literary epigram have been sought in its formal aspects. Those that can be projected back to the inscriptive stage from which it was to be emancipated are highlighted in particular, that is, the metrical form of the elegiac couplet, and qualities such as brevity, particularity, and completeness.\footnote{Cf. Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 389; Gutzwiller, 1998, 3-4, and 117-118; Cameron, 1993, 3.} It remains difficult to assess, however, how early these features, and features such as allusiveness, wit and pointed endings, became genre expectations. Indeed, the aesthetic ambition and allusiveness that many scholars have commented upon with regard to the literary epigram are not alien to inscriptions, even to graffiti.\footnote{Cf. Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 391.} There are, furthermore, epigrams written in metres other than the elegiac couplet, and epigrams of some length, that suggest that the epigrams known to us may present a somewhat misleading picture of the genre, at least before the time of Meleager.\footnote{Cf. Cameron, 1995, 77; Sider, 1997, 26-27; FH 48, 126-128.}

Epigram’s road to fame seems an unlikely one in many ways.\footnote{Gutzwiller, 2002, 85: ‘[o]ne of the more difficult problems confronting scholars of Hellenistic epigrams is understanding the process by which poems written for inscription were transformed into purely literary pieces that were, in many cases, clearly not written to be inscribed.’ Cf., also, Cameron, 1995, 78.} One may construe the attitude towards inscriptions in the fifth and first half of the fourth century in terms of indifference: inscriptions, epigrams, were anonymous and read only rarely, if at all.\footnote{For attitudes towards inscriptions, see, with further references, Bing 2002, 42-60.} As a literary genre, emerging only half a century later, it is, by contrast, the conscious assigning or claiming of \textit{authorship} of epigrams that serves as an important dividing line.\footnote{Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 395: ‘[a] livello di epigramma letterario – l’epigrama che più ci aspetteremmo essere ‘d’autore’ – è dunque impossibile stabilire se si possa parlare, prima dell’epoca ellenistica, di una deliberazione dell’autore nel collegare il proprio nome a un testo che aveva magari avuto anche una destinazione e fissazione epigrafica, e quindi anche di una trasmissione non epigrafica che rendesse conto di tale collegamento.’ Cf. also Gutzwiller, 1998, 48: ‘[t]he conceptualization of epigram as a literary kind, documentable for the first half of the third century, had its roots in a growing interest in the authorship of epigrammatic compositions traceable throughout the fourth century.’} The efforts of Hellenistic scholars to issue entire book collections (or papyrus-scrolls) of inscribed epigrams...
(for instance, attributed to such illustrious poets as Simonides), and the appearance of epigrams as quotations in other literary texts, have been seen as highly important, almost pre-requital factors before the new, literary epigram could make its way into the poetic tradition and literary canon.83

However, if the editorial work of Hellenistic scholars paved the way for literary epigrammatists, it has recently been suggested by Bing (albeit cautiously) that the very change of attitude towards inscribed epigram, which extant sources suggest took place in the early Hellenistic era, was rather due to poets, above all, who clearly stopped to read what stood on monuments, absorbed the conventions of the genre, and sensed its untapped potential as literature, but also scholars who began making collections of inscribed epigrams. Through them the genre acquired a parallel life in a new medium, the papyrus.

As we have already seen, the reciprocal action of the poetic and scholarly spheres, a cliché in accounts of Hellenistic literature in general, remains important also with regard to the individual epigrammatists, the erudite and scholarly aspects of whose works are often highlighted.

If the third and second century papyri that have reached us are unlikely to settle the precise relation between book collections of epigrams ascribed to past poets, or epigrams from a specific geographic region, and poetry books issued by contemporary poets, they do suggest that epigram books were circulated as early as the third century. The Hellenistic literary epigram was indeed described as ‘pure Buchpoesie’, even before the findings of the Milan and Vienna papyri, with their 110 elegiac epigrams and 240 epigram incipits respectively.86 Scholars may well have acknowledged a variety of conceivable means of informal circulation imaginable for an epigram, before it found its way into a papyrus book.87

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83 Cf. Rossi, 2001, 3-4; FH 48, 110-111, where P. Parsons points out that we still lack any papyrical evidence for the singularly most discussed of these collections, the so called *Sylloge Simonidea*, for which see Gutzwiller, 1998, 50-53.
85 FH 14, 94, n. 2.
86 The papyrological evidence for epigram-books is briefly overviewed by P. Parsons in FH 48, 115-122, and discussed at more length by Gutzwiller, 1998, 15-46.
87 So, for instance, Gutzwiller, 1998, 53: ‘we may assume that these more “bookish” epigrams circulated in a variety of ways, including small, private compilations as well as more formal collections consisting either solely
However, with the arrival of the edition of, the New Posidippus (and the very recent studies on the Milan papyrus), and with that of the Vienna papyrus on the way, bookishness is likely to remain a key concept when it comes to describing the defining features of the epigram as a literary genre. As Gutzwiller states it, in no uncertain terms: ‘[s]tudy of the literary art of the Hellenistic epigram is inescapably concerned […] with epigram as book poetry.’

Intimately connected with the notion of the epigram as book poetry, is that of literary epigrams as ‘writerly’ (or ‘writeable’) rather than ‘readerly’ (or ‘readable’) texts, as distinguished by Roland Barthes. If inscribed epigrams had few readers, the literary epigram not only enjoyed a wide popularity, but is thought by Bing and other scholars to have had, and indeed required, active readers. Bing describes the aforementioned deliberate dislocation of the epigram as a ‘self-conscious manipulation of, and (above all) play with, supplementation which is crucial both to creation and reception of many epigrams in the Hellenistic period’, what he labels an Ergänzungsspiel. In an ancient reader’s encounter with an epigram that has shifted physical context from stone to scroll, as Bing argues, ‘its formal resemblance to the inscribed variety prompts readers to experience the poem’s context as at least partly a lack of context. The lack elicits a response, which is to use imagination to fill out the picture’. When physical (if imaginary) objects or places were supplanted as

of epigrams or of epigrams in combination with other types of poetry.’ Cf. also, Bing, 1998, 32, n. 37 (partly reproduced in Bing, 2000, 147) who considers ‘it likely that letters (or short scrolls? […] in addition to presumably far rarer epigram-books – served as a critical medium by which much quasi-inscriptional epigram was disseminated’.


89 Gutzwiller, 1998, 6. Argentieri, 1998, distinguishes between: (i) syllogies, that is, (scholarly) collections or compilations of epigrams not authored by the compiler, as referred to above; (ii) libelli, collections of epigrams issued by their author, who takes on an additional creative role as editor, since the arrangement of the epigrams within the collection, it is argued, was premeditated; (iii) anthologies, in which the editor makes a compilation of epigrams including his or her own compositions, like the Garland of Meleager. This division, which Argentieri holds to reflect a chronological development, matches Gutzwiller’s study of the epigram from stone to book, and from book to anthology.

90 The distinction is explained by Culler, 1983, 10, in a way reminiscent of how the emerging literary epigram has been described as a new, cutting-edge genre: ‘[a]gainst the ‘readable’ – works that conform to traditional codes and models of intelligibility – he [sc. Barthes] set the ‘writeable’ – experimental works that we don’t yet know how to read but can only write and must in effect write as we read them’.

91 Cf. Meyer, 1993, 175: ‘Die Einbeziehung des Lesers meint als nicht nur die ersatzweise Hineinnahme eines nicht mehr gegebenen Kommunikationsrahmens, sondern auch die Ausbildung eines Autor-Leserdiskurses in der alexandrinischen Dichtung sowie die positive Bewertung der Freiheit des Lesers.’ Cf., again, Bing 1998, 38: ‘[t]hus in concert with the genre’s [sc. epigram’s] traditional concision, the extent of the reader’s role in constructing meaning exceeds what is found in other genres.’

92 Bing, 1995, 116, n. 3.

93 Bing, 1998, 35.
primary points of reference by other works of poetry and prose, the Ergänzungsspiel as envisaged by Bing was extended, but it did not fundamentally change.\textsuperscript{94}

However, there have also been counter-reactions against the conceptualization of epigram as book poetry intended as a literary game, and against what has been perceived as a tendency to pursue literary contextualization too far, at the expense of more traditional philological concerns, and of contexts other than the literary, such as the inscripational ancestry of the epigram, and its Realien.\textsuperscript{95}

To begin with the former, the notion of the Hellenistic literary epigram as book poetry was radically contested by Alan Cameron. Instead, Cameron argued that the epigram was performance poetry, and that the symposium was its principal forum.\textsuperscript{96} Cameron went so far as to say that ‘there is no ancient literary form of which it can be said with less plausibility that it was written for the book.’\textsuperscript{97} But if Cameron was sceptic against the concept of epigram books issued and arranged by a poet/editor, he had previously argued that the epigram was destined by its very nature to be anthologized.\textsuperscript{98} We may note, in this connection, that many scholars regard an artistically arranged anthology of epigrams, such as the Garland of Meleager, as unthinkable without a continuous production of authorially issued epigram books.\textsuperscript{99}

One could argue, of course, that the existence of epigrams written on papyri does not prove that they were written for (and intended to be read off) the book, or that such a book was issued by the author. At the same time, these are not mutually exclusive conceptualizations, and the many interesting, sometimes wholly reviving, interpretations that the book poetry presupposition has spawned, remain to me the strongest argument in favour of retaining it. This seems to be brought home implicitly by Bing, who, against Cameron, argues that ‘it is scarcely sufficient to explain the range and quality of the epigrammatic corpus as we have it, or the pointed responses of one epigram to another’.\textsuperscript{100} The epigram, conceived as book poetry, has more than survived Cameron’s attack, but his focus on the sympotic context is not unparalleled, as we shall see when we now turn again specifically to the erotic epigram.

The erotic epigram has often been seen as of an invention of Asclepiades,\textsuperscript{101} sprung out of his combination of the formal features of inscription with motifs and elements drawn from elegy, lyric and drama.\textsuperscript{102} Though it may be tempting to explain the emergence of epigrams

\textsuperscript{94} It must be said that Bing, 1995, 119, stresses that he does not propose a general strategy for interpreting Hellenistic epigrams: ‘[t]hough Ergänzungsspiel is common, Hellenistic poets have many arrows in their quiver’. However, Rossi, 2001, 6, treats it as little short of just that, and so shall I.
with erotic (and sympotic) themes just as a thematic expansion, Hunter regards the erotic epigram as ‘a curiously provoking fact of literary history’.103

[t]here seem so many obvious explanations in terms of the formal and thematic trends of the time (move towards ‘short poems’, predominance of hexameters and elegiacs over lyrics, prominence of eros as a theme in many different branches of literature etc.) that the genuinely surprising nature of the phenomenon is often overlooked.

In keeping with a recent trend in scholarly criticism, Marco Fantuzzi has drawn attention to the role that the epigraphic tradition and sympotic context might have played for the emergence of the erotic epigram. Fantuzzi takes us back to the second half of the sixth century, and to more occasional types of inscriptions, set on cups and vases, all evolving around the central interests and activities of the symposium: music, song, drinking and, above all, erotic desire.104 The vast majority of such inscriptions are confined to prose statements as short and crude as ‘cheers’, or ‘X is beautiful’; the latter type is particularly common.105 These are in fact the only quantitatively comparable parallels to the vast amount of third century epigrams that dramatize statements of love, and express appreciation for boys and

95 Cf. Hopkinson 1999, 257. See also Rossi, 2001, vii: ‘[p]oetic and literary stylisation naturally played a role, but there must also have been some element that was derived directly from “reality” [...]’. Rossi holds that the originality of her contribution should partly be sought ‘in the exploitation of the epigraphic material and the Realien of every kind’.
96 Cameron, 1995, 79.
97 Cameron, 1995, 76-77.
98 Cameron, 1993, 4.
100 Bing, 2000, 146; partly the same argument as given in Bing, 1998, 32, n. 37.
101 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 149, So, for instance, Magini, 2000, 17-18; Gutzwiller, 1998, 120; Garrison, 1978, 5 and 14; Fraser, 1, 561-562; Wilamowitz, 1, 120.
102 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 149-150; Garrison, 1978, 48. The relationship between erotic epigram and love elegy seems futile to address, since the general view is that the distinction between epigram and elegy becomes increasingly difficult to uphold with the emergence of the literary epigram; Gutzwiller, 1998, 5. However, cf. Hutchinson, 2002, 8: ‘We should, then, be encouraged to think of epigram as from its early stages onward a distinctive type of elegy, at least: distinctive for its particular interest in concision and for its relation, in many cases, to material objects’. For further references on Hellenistic elegy, see Hutchison, 2002, 7, n. 15.
103 Hunter, 1998; cf. also Cameron, 1993, 2: ‘[m]ore surprising is the sudden emergence […] of the sympotic and erotic epigram, already perfected by its first identifiable practitioners, Asclepiades and Callimachus’.
105 Cf. Sutton, 1992, 14 (and, for further references, 34, n. 4).
girls. To find qualitative parallels to the erotic epigram’s poetic form, ambition and quality, Fantuzzi turns to the activities of the symposium.

In contrast to the more formal inscriptions of the funerary and dedicatory kind, the vase and cup inscriptions are not only less elaborate, but can scarcely be seen as completed speech-acts in themselves. Fantuzzi describes them instead as stimuli and foci of speech and performance in the symposium. It is here that Fantuzzi finds a cultural space with a long tradition where the making and reading of brief inscriptions of erotic content interacts with the exhibition of poetic skill, displayed by recitation, improvisation or discussion of poetic verse. Thus, he presents the hypothesis that the erotic epigram emerged as a kind of crossbreeding between such inscriptions with their background and function in the symposium, and the more elaborate literary forms that were normally discussed and recited during a symposium. For Asclepiades, Posidippus, and Hedylus, the first composers of erotic epigrams, the symposium was indeed an important poetic setting. Most of their erotic epigrams are situated in or thematically centred around it. Since Fantuzzi does not attempt to downplay the bookishness of the erotic epigram, his explanation of its emergence may be said to occupy a middle-ground between Cameron’s view, that erotic epigrams were intended first and foremost for performance in the symposium, and that of Gutzwiller, in whose overall view of the epigram as book poetry the sympotic setting is completely fictional or metaphorical, from the very first of epigrams with erotic themes.

The erotic epigram soon developed conventions of its own. Already Asclepiades’ younger contemporaries seem to have begun to look beyond their inscriptional inheritance. If Asclepiades may retain inscriptional conventions, even in his erotic poems, Callimachus and Dioscorides have been singled out as those who transcend the inscriptional typology more than any other epigrammatists. With Callimachus, the erotic epigram is thought to have

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107 Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 391: ‘almeno gli autori di epigrammi erotici della prima metà del III secolo a.C., alle cui spalle era non già un genere con i suoi topoi e le sue convenzioni ma ancora semplicemente la più ampia eredità culturale e letteraria del passato, pensassero ai loro testi come punto di incrocio tra il gesto simposiale del fare o del leggere graffiti vascolari e le raffinate forme letterarie elaborate dai generi simposiali della poesia arcaica.’
108 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 121-122, and 150, where Asclepiades’ erotic and sympotic epigrams are described as ‘pseudo-performances composed as book poetry and only fictionalized as song’.
109 Most notably, in AP 5.203 (=6 G–P), a dedicatory epigram, of sorts, that sees the hetaira Lysidice dedicate her riding spur to Aphrodite, presumably, because she is so gifted as not to need it. See further, Gutzwiller, 1998, 126-127.
taken an increasingly literary and aestheticized turn with regard to its starting-points and concerns.\textsuperscript{112} Thematically, the poetic traditions of Theognidean elegy and archaic sympotic song remain important for Callimachus. He, too, has been seen as writing himself into and against them, by variation, modification and specialization,\textsuperscript{113} but he has also been seen as responding directly to Asclepiades’ epigrams; by now, if not before, there was a specific literary tradition of erotic epigrams to proceed from and react against.\textsuperscript{114}

Considered as a genre in its own right, the Hellenistic erotic epigram does not only consist of seemingly blatant and straight-forward expressions of desire and appreciation of desire’s objects. The suppression of erotic desire and the manifestation of its symptoms also count among its darling themes.\textsuperscript{115} In the (few) extant erotic epigrams by Callimachus, knowledge of, and reflection on, the erotic condition has been singled out as a particularly prominent concern.\textsuperscript{116} In this connection, several critics have turned to philosophical traditions as a further contextualizing frame for the erotic epigram. Garrison, for instance, while crediting Asclepiades with the formal invention of the erotic epigram, holds the values that lay behind the invention to be clearly spelled out by Hellenistic philosophical schools.\textsuperscript{117} Fantuzzi, too, frames the erotic epigram within the philosophical debates whether the wise man should fall in love and succumb to erotic desire.\textsuperscript{118} He describes Callimachean and Posidippean problematizations of erotic desire as means of resolving a conflict, or of furnishing the erotic epigrammatist with what is called an alibi ‘per essere intellettuali \textit{ma} innamorati, così come per essere intellettuali \textit{ma} autori di poesia d’amore.’\textsuperscript{119}

Progressing further in the formation of the erotic epigram, Fantuzzi refers both to a literary precedent that authorizes the very urge to seek an alibi for speaking of erotic desire in more concrete terms, and to a cultural background in which open celebration of erotic desire is allowed. The literary model is found in the narrative strategy of Plato’s \textit{Symposium}. At this party—marked, uncharacteristically, by its moderate drinking—the idealization of erotic

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 189: ‘[a]ll of Callimachus’ literary works are informed by a reliance on art […], which is not to be understood simply as technical skill, but as an acute awareness of the cultural and literary sources that contribute to the composition at hand. For epigram this means, in part, attention to the history of the genre, transference from its functional existence on stone or in the symposium to a more purely aesthetic form within the confines of the book’.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 451.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Gutzwiller, 1998, 214-218.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Garrison, 1978, 10 and 14-15.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 452-454.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 455.
\end{itemize}
desire, and the complaining about the impossibility to obtain the object of one’s desire (both stock themes of the erotic epigram) begin only with the late arrival of the drunk Alcibiades. It is only now that the Symposium actually begins to look like the symposium we construe, one in which the freedom to speak frankly about erotic desire is institutionalized, especially with drinking as an excuse. This is, so to say, the literary justification, added to the cultural substrate of the historical symposium, for being in love and making erotic poetry.\textsuperscript{120}

Among the various strategies that would arguably constitute a means of self-justification, or at least imply the conflict that was the motivating force, Fantuzzi mentions also what I have stated to be my interpretive focus, the connection established between poetry and erotic desire.\textsuperscript{121} In Dioscorides’ epigrams, however, it seems difficult to range the various expressions of this particular \textit{topos} under such an overarching interpretive frame. Indeed, Fantuzzi himself cautions against underestimating \textsuperscript{122}

\begin{quote}
la novità della complessa ideologia che sintetizzò l’idea di colpevollessa dell’amore e il suo alcolico alibi. La sua elaborazione fu infatti una scelta precisa e più o meno consapevole che caratterizza l’enfatica coscienza di questi epigrammisti come poeti dotti, non meno di quanto la qualifichino [...] l’intelletualismo della loro estetica e le loro tante affermazioni di superiorità da spiriti «allevati dalle Muse» rispetto a chi tale non era.
\end{quote}

This cautioning should be heeded. The extent to which erotic epigrammatists may be seen asserting \textit{sofia}, intellectual excellence, can certainly be contextualized somewhat differently. The epigrams of the present study show few signs of any ‘colpevollessa dell’amore’.\textsuperscript{123} Nor do Dioscorides’ epigrams reserve a prominent place for wine or drinking, or even the symposium as such.\textsuperscript{124} The Symposium, however, and other Platonic dialogues

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 461: ‘[l]a strategia narrativa di Platone e il codice simposiastico arcaico e classico più in generale rappresentano, rispettivamente, un precedente individuale e il sostrato ‘culturale’ che permettono di considerare radicata nella storia la ‘giustificazione’ che gli epigrammisti dell’inizio dell’ III secolo a.C. sottendono al loro essere innamorati e al loro fare poesia erotica’.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 455. For examples in the Callimachean epigrams of each of these motifs, see Gutzwiller, 1998, 219-226.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Fantuzzi–Hunter, 2002, 461-462.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Indeed, it has been suggested (if implausibly) that Dioscorides introduced the outright obscene to the genre; cf. Galán Vioque, 2001, 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} The verbs \textit{oijnovw} and \textit{pivnw} occur in the two funerary epigrams AP 7.31 (Dioscorides 19 G–P) and AP 7.456 (Dioscorides 29 G–P) respectively.
\end{itemize}
will surface in my interpretations, and I will return to Platonic interpretive frames in a number of the individual chapters, rather than pursue the matter further here.

Conceivably, the above account more or less covers what Dioscorides inherited as a composer of erotic epigrams. My intention has been to give a brief overview of the construction site of the epigrams that I come to as a critic, rather than my own views on the matter. At the same time, since my interpretations of the epigrams are delivered as the main bulk of a doctoral thesis, they will meet certain institutional expectations: they should demonstrate the independent application of scholarly methods to the literary texts that form the object of my study. Regrettably, the conciseness in wording of these expectations, or rather, conditions in the curriculum, is matched only by an eerily dead silence—equally institutional—with regard to what precisely delimits ‘scholarly’ interpretation from … what, really?

In terms of actual practice, it is my assumption that philologists, be they liberal humanist or post-modern, invariably sit reading, nose deep in LSJ and the TLG, their texts, and those of their peers, more or less closely. But if an average day at the office, as it were, might look essentially the same, there are seemingly insuperable differences with regard to what, in the present case, interpreters of Hellenistic erotic epigrams set out to do, what they look for in the poems, and how they look upon what they have done. I shall now turn to ‘how I’m coming’, by revisiting these questions and some of the constructions presented above, focusing on the presuppositions upon which they seem to rest, and making my own presuppositions explicit.

The past decades have seen a relative decrease in attempts to extract biographical information and emotional authenticity from Hellenistic erotic epigrams. Against Garrison’s views on the Hellenistic erotic epigram as ‘a systematic and fundamentally serious means of providing Hellenistic man with a kind of happiness and emotional security’,126 we may contrast that of Calame, for whom the erotic epigram is ‘a purely literary game, designed to entertain intellectuals groups on the lookout for sophisticated poetic amusement’.127 However, the emphasis on the self-consciously artificial and playful nature of the erotic

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125 In the case of Dioscorides, cf. Thurlington, 1949, 14: ‘[t]he poet’s taste in love is catholic and leads him from sentiments of great beauty to even unnatural ideas which one cannot help feeling were better left unwritten’. Interestingly enough, Thurlington, 1949, 15, concludes the paragraph by stating that ‘Dioscorides was conventional in attitude toward love’. Cf., also, Webster, 1964, 143: ‘Dioskorides stands out as a vivid and uninhibited personality, who felt strongly both in scholarship and in private life.’


epigram has not quite killed the author. With regard to biographical information, for instance, we may note that John Madden has recently accused scholarly critics of the Cycle of Agathias for making ‘no serious attempt to read anything autobiographical into the love poems’. Unsurprisingly, Madden sees his own attempts thwarted as he observes that the poems in question ‘contain a fusion of the real with the fanciful – elements which (given the function of topoi in the literary aesthetics […] cannot now be separated with any confidence’. 128

Nonetheless, even more outspokenly literarily oriented scholars, such as Gutzwiller, are lead to speak of an epigrammatist’s ‘emotional core’. 129 In her reading of the literary epigrammatists up to and including Callimachus, the notion of an author’s conscious projection of a poetic persona serves as an important analytical tool for Gutzwiller. 130 The projection of a poetic persona is described as a direct result of the epigram book, but also as a means for the first literary epigrammatists of giving meaning and coherence to their choice of subject. Not only, as Gutzwiller seems to argue, can the poetic persona of a literary epigrammatist be revealed ‘amid the multiplicity of voices, through thematic repetition, formal cohesiveness, and uniformity of subject and tone’, 131 but it is also that with which ‘the reader tends to associate the artistic integrity of the epigram book’. 132 Now, the notion of a stable, unifying persona is highly problematic, not least in the light of Gutzwiller’s own emphasis on how meanings will vary and change according to contextual changes. Another problem with Gutzwiller’s attempt to construe a poetic persona out of the remaining epigrams of each of these poets is that the distinction between a poetic persona and the author is not sharply maintained. Admittedly, the distinction seems to be hazy even in critiques levelled against Gutzwiller’s notion of a poetic persona, 133 but it is explicitly blurred by Gutzwiller. 134

When the voice speaking within individual poems can be closely identified with the poet, as in sympotic-erotic epigram, the collection

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128 Madden, 1995, 32 and 37 respectively.
130 On the poetic persona of literary epigrammatists in general, see Gutzwiller, 1998, 10-12 and 52-53. For the specific personae of individual epigrammatists, see Gutzwiller, 1998, 55-56 (Anyte); 87-88 (Nossis); 102-103 (Leonidas of Tarent); 139-143 (Asclepiades); 162-169 (Posidippus); 181-182 (Hedylus); 214, 219 (Callimachus).
133 See now Argentieri, 2001, 680: ‘[l]a formula «un solo libro su un tema di una personalità poetica», che sembra di poter ricavare dalle conclusioni della G. [sc. Gutzwiller], mi pare insomma davvero troppo restrittiva per queste complesse personalità di poeti di cui peraltro sappiamo troppo poco – e quel che sappiamo di Posidippo […] certo non conforta questa formula.’
may present itself as autobiographical narrative or as a series of personal statements revealing the poet’s beliefs and values.

The present thesis deals with too few of Dioscorides’ epigrams for any characterisation of a poetic persona to seem meaningful. Yet, even if one were to accept the postulation of a poetic persona along the lines suggested by Gutzwiller, it should not be allowed to serve as a detour into the mind of any epigrammatist. Unmediated or not, the retrieval of personal information about Dioscorides from the erotic epigrams attributed to him remains a hopeless task, and certainly one that I will not take on in this thesis.

Gutzwiller does not abandon the notion of poetic personae in her reading of subsequent epigrammatists. In the alleged epigram collection of Antipater of Sidon, she speaks of the presence of ‘a unifying focus in its projection of the author as an interpreter of earlier Greek texts and culture’. However, in dealing with the epigrams of Antipater (and Meleager), Gutzwiller interestingly shifts her interpretive focus from the poetic persona to the intertextuality of the epigrams. Since Dioscorides enters the epigrammatic stage after Callimachus, but before Antipater of Sidon, the ‘intertextuality’ of his erotic epigrams seems a reasonable focus for any interpreter, not least in the light of the bookishness of epigrammatic poetry. To be sure, intertextuality will be a chief concern of mine.

For Gutzwiller, the intertextuality of epigrams has a ‘double sense:’ she takes it to refer to ‘their relationship to other literary texts’ and to ‘their relationship to the textual codes of the social system within which the poets worked’.

I must admit to some confusion about this double definition, but it reads like an attempt to expand the notion of ‘text’, so as to include also non-literary texts, and ‘texts’ that are not written productions. Yet, unless the implication is that epigrams in general, and those of Meleager in particular, are somehow closer related to other literary texts and to textual codes of social systems than say Aratus’ *Phaenomena*, ‘intertextuality’, even as employed by Gutzwiller, seems much more than an optional interpretive focus to be switched on or off at a critic’s convenience. Gutzwiller seems to suggest that anthologized epigrams are particularly intertextual, but her suggestion that ‘the poet-editors of epigram anthologies fashioned a literary context for historical intertextuality’

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suffers from her unclear distinction between intertextuality (historical or not) and context, to which I will return below.\textsuperscript{138}

Although the concept of intertextuality has become increasingly problematized within our discipline, many philologists remain reluctant to accept a definition that would turn it into ‘a general phenomenon of semiotic systems rather than an additional extra which is most important’.\textsuperscript{139} To exemplify a more traditional understanding of the term, one that still prevails in my national scholarly context, I turn to a recent paper by M.A. Harder on intertextuality in Callimachus’ \textit{Aetia}. Disqualifying the notion that ‘all texts are in fact a mosaic of earlier texts’ as unhelpful for her purposes, Harder limits her study of intertextuality to one particular aspect that she calls allusion: ‘the creative use of earlier texts which may help the reader to attribute meaning to the new text’.\textsuperscript{140} However, Harder may be seen further to limit her initial definition. In establishing the criteria by which to discover allusions, she singles out materials that belonged to the literary and scholarly traditions,\textsuperscript{141} and in the discussion following the paper (also published), Harder suggests that Hellenistic poetic texts themselves direct us more towards poetic than prose models.\textsuperscript{142}

This predilection for allusions, in combination with the narrowing down of the intertextual field, has been labelled as typical of the traditional philological conceptualization of intertextuality; typical, too, is the preoccupation with whether or not an allusion was intended and controlled by the author.\textsuperscript{143} We may note that if Harder warns us that subjectivity cannot be excluded in allusion-spotting, and cautions us against ‘speculation or over-interpretation’,\textsuperscript{144} she is quite willing to plunge into the abyss precisely when it comes to the matter of authorial control and intention.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{138} Gutzwiller, 1998, 14. See also Gutzwiller, 1998, 236: ‘[t]aking Antipater’s achievement in variation one step further, Meleager employed the dual roles of editor and composer to create a textual context for the intertextuality of epigram.’ See, again, Gutzwiller, 1998, 301: ‘[t]he anthologist thus enters into direct dialogue with his own models—weaving the intertextuality of epigram variation into the fabric of a single context.’

\textsuperscript{139} Cf. Fowler, 2000, 121. For a comprehensive account of the term, see Allen, 2000.

\textsuperscript{140} FH 48, 190.

\textsuperscript{141} Harder’s checklist is the following; FH 48, 191: ‘(1) explicit references to another author; (2) quotations; (3) the use of the same (rare or unusual) words or hapaxes; (4) the use of literary devices which may be considered as typical of a certain author or genre; (5) references to material which was part of the literary or scholarly tradition.’

\textsuperscript{142} FH 48, 225-226.

\textsuperscript{143} Cf. Fowler, 2000, 122.

\textsuperscript{144} FH 48, 191.

\textsuperscript{145} FH 48, 224.
Even though it is true that one can never answer questions of authorial intent, I think one could at least explore what answers to such questions could be suggested by the evidence and thus form a hypothesis about Callimachus’ use of allusion that may be useful for shaping the way we look at important issues in Hellenistic poetry.

It can thus be said that the ideal aim of reaching back to the authorial intention not only seems to die harder than Bruce Willis (even when the interpretive aim, allegedly, is intertextual), but also that the fear of speculation and over-interpretation seems to diminish, or to be more easily acknowledged as part of the process, as long as interpretation is directed towards and aimed at formulating hypotheses concerning the author.\textsuperscript{146} While Harder must be said to show clear signs of the above-mentioned tendency to speak of intertextuality as an extra, even so narrow a definition of intertextuality as hers would seem to allow a critic to make conclusions that reach beyond the author.\textsuperscript{147}

The reader who is aware of the allusions and has the relevant texts in his mind or on his bookshelves is able to acquire a great deal of extra information, on the one hand concerning the actual stories, on the other hand at a meta-poetic and programmatic level, so that he is able to situate the text he is reading in its literary and socio-cultural context.

This recalls how Gutzwiller takes intertextuality to refer to epigrams’ ‘relationship to the textual codes of the social system within which the poets worked’. In Harder, the implication seems to be that we may situate a literary text in its socio-cultural context by focusing on that aspect of intertextuality that is labelled allusion. In somewhat of a contrast to Harder, or rather, more explicitly than Harder, Gutzwiller takes context to refer both to ‘the specific physical context in which an epigram is read’ \textit{and} to ‘the social and historical matrix in which the author composed’.\textsuperscript{148} This double definition is reminiscent of the way in which Gutzwiller chooses to understand intertextuality doubly. Just as I have few difficulties with

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\item Consider, for instance, FH 48, 226: ‘I agree that there is no way in which we can be certain that these allusions were ‘intended’ by the author and that they were picked up by readers at any given time’. This may be seen as a moderation of Harder’s earlier exhortation to explore questions of authorial intent. Yet, in spite of the explicitly stated impossibility of reaching anything but speculative results, the tolerance towards speculation seems to increase when its aims are stated in precisely those terms.
\item FH 48, 223.
\item Gutzwiller, 1998, ix and x respectively.
\end{enumerate}
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the first part of Gutzwiller’s definition of intertextuality, so the first part of her definition of context seems to me to pass, although, the specific physical context in which I have read these epigrams is that of modern editions. I find it considerably more difficult to come to terms with the second part of Gutzwiller’s definition of context, particularly with regard to the difference to the second part of her definition of intertextuality: how do we separate epigrams’ ‘relationship to the textual codes of the social system within which the poets worked’ from ‘the social and historical matrix in which the author composed’? Again I can only guess that Gutzwiller takes context, in its second sense (the social and historical matrix), to precede intertextuality, understood, if only partly, as the textual codes that context gives rise to.

When I suggest that the notion of ‘textual codes’ could be seen as expansion of the concept of intertextuality, so as to include non-literary texts and to accept other cultural phenomena than written production as intertexts, I do so with a view to approaching my own understanding of the term ‘intertextuality’: we create meaning in texts by relating them to other texts. The number of relations to be made is inexhaustible, not least because I hold such a broader definition of intertexts to include also modern constructions of ancient texts in the broader sense.\(^\text{149}\) I aspire to heeding, that is to say, Latinist Don Fowler’s call for cultural critics:\(^\text{150}\)

> to abandon the pretence that what they are juxtaposing with literature is raw ‘history’, events and facts, rather than stories they themselves want to tell.

\(^\text{149}\) Cf. Fowler, 2000, 117: ‘We do not read texts in isolation, but within a matrix of possibilities constituted by earlier texts, which functions as langue to the parole of individual textual production: without this background, the text would be literally unreadable, as there would be no way in which it could have meaning’, and 129: ‘the source-text to which the target-text is related are not ancient texts at all, but modern narratives about religion or myth or social construction’.

\(^\text{150}\) Fowler, 2000, 129.
Against this background, it is obvious that I cannot bring myself to formulate the aim of my interpretations (or indeed to look upon my results) in historicist terms. Unfortunately, historical objectivist and positivist rhetoric still seems to be the favoured strategy when it comes to endowing interpretation within Classical philology with a scholarly or a scientific alibi. So, for instance, Gutzwiller writes in the preface to her *Poetic Garlands* how she has thought that

If we could uncover to any degree at all the original settings in which these epigrams were read, we would have a basis for understanding the literary meaning the poems held for ancient readers.

In her recent study of the epigrams attributed to Theocritus, Laura Rossi adopts a similar, though less carefully worded position:

[... ] in order to gain a correct understanding of ancient texts and their true significance it is necessary to ‘read’ the documentation in our possession through the ‘eyes’ of the ancient Greeks and not through our own. Only after having reconstructed the context that determined their creation can one hope to understand ancient production, with its true intention and function, and above all in the same manner in which the Greeks ‘read’ it and expected it to be composed.

Though it hardly bears saying, one simply must object that we are unlikely ever to read any Greek text through the eyes of the ancient Greeks, and that it is equally unlikely that all Greeks of any given period read or understood the functions of their texts in the same way. Yet, it has seemed to me that any interpretation that does not profess (at least ideally) to offer an understanding of how our study objects were intended by their prime movers and how they

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151 Gutzwiller, 1998, ix. Cf. also Slater, 1999, 514, who concludes an article on one of Dioscorides’ erotic epigrams, AP 12.42 (Dioscorides 13 G–P), by implying that interpretive success lies in historically valid reconstruction of reader response: ‘[t]he explanation of epigrams is a difficult task, and the more allusive and verbally sophisticated they are, the less likely we are to meet with success. […] It is probably impossible to recreate the pleasure that this glossographic and irrational mixture awakened in the minds of the Hellenistic sophisticate; but it is an intriguing puzzle to make the attempt’.


153 If one were so inclined, one could always find support for this contestation in Pl., Prot. 347e5-7: ‘some say a poet means one thing, others say something different, all of them discussing a matter that they are unable to resolve’.
were read and received by their original audiences, is bound to be questioned with regard to its legitimacy. What is more, the presupposition that there are such things as true intentions and functions, and that our interpretations may reach them, is seldom defended. Instead, there is a tendency to by-pass arguing for the tenability of such claims by resorting to a near blind worship of linguistic competence, where one’s displayed prowess in Greek and Latin becomes the guarantee (and a measure for others) of the correctness and the truth of interpretive results. Contrary to what one would have thought, however, such a view does not, for philologists, seem to imply that we were all expert critics, at least of literature composed in our native tongue. Such a contestation does not to scan, and the combination of positivism and linguistic fetishism takes the opposite turn at this point. Even if the following example, taken from Bruce Thornton’s critical bibliography on ancient sexuality, may be rare in terms of explicitness, it certainly expresses a widely held view within our discipline:154

[...] unlike what happens in academic criticism in English literature departments, where semiliterate subjectivity is unrestrained—since it’s relatively easy to acquire the knack of interpreting literature written in one’s own native tongue—as a discipline Classics has a firmer empirical foundation: the actual texts and fragments that scholars must learn to read in the original language and that cannot with impunity be capriciously translated or tortured. This prerequisite skill imposes an absolute limit on fanciful speculation, though of course there are plenty of Greek- and Latin-reading dunces. In addition, classicists are trained to ground any argument directly on those texts and to locate it in the tradition of previous scholarship. These professional limits account for a lot of soporific pedantry, but they also mean that even the most ideologically or theoretically loaded argument will occasionally yield some nuggets of valuable information, if one has the patience to pan out the mud of jargon and ideology.

To the implied belief that we may reach pure, disinterested knowledge only by applying our linguistic competence to our study objects as they are in themselves—and that we do so more faithfully than scholars of English literature—we must object that interpreters of literary texts within many other disciplines have a somewhat higher success-rate than classicists in

reaching agreements on such fundamental points as the identity of their objects of study. In Classical literary studies, as any critical apparatus stands ready to testify, the difficulties in determining what our study objects are, that is what our texts actually read, outnumber, by far, the ‘actual texts’ in which, according to Thornton, our arguments are so firmly grounded.

The construction of a literary text that forms the object of philological study lies not only in the work of the author, but also in that of the textual and the literary critic, inseparable as they are. Even in the very construction of our study objects, let alone their meaning, most classicists could easily (and would eagerly, I hope) problematize any postulation of ‘constant and universally recognisable textual features such as titles, phonetic elements, syntactic and narrative units (stanzas, chapters, parts of a novel) or semantic structures’. And even if we take our study objects as straightforwardly given, as Thornton seems to do, we must acknowledge that the presuppositions with which we arrive to authoritatively established texts are strongly shaped by the textual features and structures that other scholars have seized upon in their interpretive activity. If we simply accept contextual (re)constructions that have emerged from prior interpretive efforts (and consider, with Rossi, such reconstruction as determining with regard to the intention and the function of the literary texts we set out to study ourselves), we run the risk of ceasing interpretation, replacing it with trying to conform our subject matter to the (uncontested) presuppositions of others.

In this respect, I differ diametrically from Thornton’s implied assertion that some constructions are less ideological and theoretical in nature (and therefore somehow better) than others. In sharp contrast, numerous philosophers and literary critics, like Peter Zima, professor of Comparative Literature, have argued that the construction of our study objects is the result of human discourses that may be labelled as ideological. This view, often labelled post-modern, is traditional by now, rather than controversial. The number of Classical

155 Thornton’s usage of English as a negative contrast to Classics is not without parallels; cf. T. Eagleton’s brief description of the attitudes surrounding the rise of English as an academic discipline in England during the 19th and 20th centuries (Eagleton, 1996, 25): ‘English was an upstart, amateurish affair as academic subjects went, hardly able to compare on equal terms with rigours of Greats or philology; since every English gentleman read his own literature in his spare time anyway, what was the point of submitting it to systematic study? [...] The only way in which English seemed likely to justify its existence in the ancient Universities was by systematically mistaking itself for the Classics; but the classicists were hardly keen to have this pathetic parody of themselves around.’

156 Zima, 1999, 189. See now the amazement expressed by Fowler, 2000, 13, that ‘classical scholars of all people should be determined to situate their stories so firmly “out there” when even the most apparently objective features of their texts are up for grabs.’
philologists that would lend an ear to this (and other oppositional discourses) before routinely dismissing them is steadily increasing.\textsuperscript{157}

In his attempt to assess the role of ideology in the construction of literary meaning, Zima defines ideology, as a linguistic structure,\textsuperscript{158} in the following way:\textsuperscript{159}

\textit{Originating in a particular group language or sociolect, ideology is a discourse governed by the semantic dichotomy and the corresponding narrative techniques (hero/antagonist). Its Subject is either not prepared or not able to reflect on its semantic and syntactic procedures and present them as an object of open discussions. Instead it considers its discourse as the only possible (true, natural) one and identifies it monologically with its actual and potential referents.}

According to such a characterisation, Thornton’s contestation is highly ideological, as it appears to be a dualistic monologue of right and wrong that does not offer space for dissent, but that identifies its discourse with the object as such.

While Thornton’s supposition that linguistic competence in Greek and Latin would impose ‘an absolute limit on fanciful speculation’ remains unclear, it is particularly difficult to reconcile with regard to the role of speculation in interpreting Hellenistic epigrams, strongly emphasized by Bing and by Hunter:\textsuperscript{160}

Much of what I have to say will be speculative, but [...] these poems are very clearly written as a provocation to speculation. Perhaps no literary genre makes such a direct appeal to the reader’s powers of intellectual reconstruction, to the need to interpret, as does that of epigram; the demand for concision makes <narrative silences> an almost constitutive part of the genre. In these circumstances, the refusal to speculate amounts to no less than a refusal to read.

Hunter’s declaration aptly describes my own reaction to the epigrams that I interpret in this thesis; so does Bing’s description of how a reader of an epigram, struck by its lack of context, responds by an imaginative filling out of the picture. But why does Hunter make the

\textsuperscript{157}See, with further references, de Jong–Sullivan, 1994; McManus, 1997; Fowler, 2000; Schmitz, 2002.
\textsuperscript{158}Cf. Zima, 1999, 198-204.
\textsuperscript{159}Zima, 1999, 204.
initial claim that the poems were very clearly written as a provocation to speculation? And why does Bing stop short of labelling the interpretive efforts of Classical scholarship on the epigram as *Ergänzungsspiele*? The need to be interpreted, the need for intellectual reconstruction can hardly be considered as more immediately felt with regard to Hellenistic epigrams than say Platonic dialogues. Though it cannot be labelled as a dualistic monologue, one cannot help but sensing traces of identification in a way that suggests that the claim of historical validity does not only accompany particular interpretations (the poem X was read in this way in Antiquity), but even interpretive approaches; it is almost as if less suspicion would be thrown on the speculative element of literary interpretation, if that too could be projected back to Antiquity itself as a historically valid approach. Of course, one could make a case, based on the concision of epigrammatic poetry, for accepting only very straightforward, face-value readings, by arguing that an epigram ‘cannot elicit what is not already there’, and that an ‘audience that does not already recognize and identify with the poem’s presuppositions will probably find its overt gesture nonsensical, counterintuitive, foolish, wrong, or even offensive’. 161 I wouldn’t agree, of course, nor will I dwell further upon it, seeing how I greatly sympathize with the views of Hunter and Bing.

Unlike Thornton, I would argue that while we are all invariably ideological, we can choose to be ‘theoretically loaded’ (and I believe it is imperative for classicists to be just that). Following Zima, I have certainly tried to be a theoretical writing Subject, one that reflects upon its social and linguistic situation (its origin or genesis) as well as upon its semantic and syntactic mechanisms in an attempt to avoid dualism (dichotomy). It reveals its own contingency and particularity, thus opening its discourse to a dialogue with heterogeneous theories (languages). Simultaneously, it presents its objects as contingent constructs which do not exclude alternative constructions within competing discourses and sociolects.

Interestingly, though Zima holds literary objects and their meanings to be constructed in ideological and theoretical discourse, he opposes that his views imply any kind of relativism. It is not eternal truth or objectivity that he strives to defend, but universality. In the present case, the notion of such universality could be defended by arguing that the text established by different editors remains virtually the same, and that even a cursory glance at differing

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161 Walker, 2000, 255. I should add that Walker does not appear to make such an argument, however.

162 Zima, 1999, 206.
interpretations will yield a number of textual features and structures that virtually no critic, from Hecker to the present student, has passed over, however differently they might have been interpreted.

For Zima, this universality is rooted, not in the inter-subjectivity within a specific interpretive community, but rather in the on-going inter-discursivity between incompatible ideologies, on a theoretical level; it is, for Zima, ‘obtained by a permanent dialogue between particular and heterogeneous positions’.\textsuperscript{163} While Zima stresses the fact that interpretations within different interpretive communities often deal with the same elements or structures, he is careful to note that all features and structures may not be brought forth by any single theoretical perspective.\textsuperscript{164}

It may reasonably be questioned if such an attempt to defend universality in literary interpretation really makes away with the relativism that Zima, like most Classical philologists, seems eager to avoid, though not as desperately. Within our discipline, scholars like Fowler, for instance, have received much criticism for taking the seemingly radical stance that ‘we do what we want with texts’, and that ‘[i]f there are no foundations, there are no foundations’.\textsuperscript{165} Not only has it been considered unscientific or unscholarly to deliver interpretations without accompanying claims to historical veracity at a given point, but interpretation itself has been labelled a waste of time if its subjects openly profess to be ‘making it all up’.\textsuperscript{166} However, just as Fowler argues that ‘criticism has to be justified as an activity, not for the goals it reaches’,\textsuperscript{167} so, rather than feeling pointless, I defend the fact that I have not striven to produce truths about antiquity, by quoting a short passage from a lecture given in 1926 by Oxford philosopher and archaeologist R.G. Collingwood.\textsuperscript{168}

\begin{quote}
The past and the present are not two objects: the past is an element in the present, and in studying the past we are actually coming to know the present, not coming to know something else [...]. This principle, the ideality of the past, explains both why we cannot and why we need
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{163} Cf. Zima, 1999, 213.
\textsuperscript{164} Cf. Zima, 1999, 212-213: ‘Although this might be taken to mean that constant elements or structures do exist in literary texts, it does not imply that these structures can be immediately perceived within a particular theoretical perspective. Only a theoretical dialogue in the interdiscursive sense can confirm their existence. Moreover, it can lead to the discovery of aspects and elements we might never become aware of if we limited ourselves monologically to one perspective.’
\textsuperscript{165} Fowler, 2000, vii and 31.
\textsuperscript{166} Cf. Fowler, 2000, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{167} Fowler, 2000, 4.
\textsuperscript{168} Collingwood, 1993, 406.
\end{footnotes}
not know the past as it actually happened. We cannot, because there is nothing to know; nothing exists to be studied: there are no past facts except so far as we reconstruct them in historical thought. And we need not, because the purpose of history is to grasp the present [...] 

About a year and a half ago, I submitted a shorter version of thesis for the degree of licentiate of philosophy. During that viva, I was criticized for not living up to the views outlined above in terms of my critical practice (that particular failure just might have been a blessing in disguise). Admittedly, interpretive consequences of the above positions are more far-reaching than my following interpretations may suggest. I bring literature ante-dating the epigrams into interpretive play more often than I do literature dated as subsequent. Although it would be perfectly in accordance with my position, I have not given much space to comparative material such as rap lyrics, for instance. In fact, I will make use of (and disregard) much of the same material (in much the same way) as the scholars with whose general outlook I strongly disagree, including making use of their own work, from which, needless to say, I have benefited greatly. So what’s the big fuss?

I can only emphatically stress that my quarrels are not so much with the pragmatics of actual critical practice. I do not consider it outdated for a philologist to try to muster linguistically orientated arguments for his or her interpretations. Nor do I advocate a complete dogmatic shift, envisaged as a change of monologue to one that sounds more fashionable to one interpretive community (or the other). What I do advertise, however, and what I have tried to initiate by means of this introduction, is an inter-discursive debate along the lines suggested by Zima. Our self-definition as a scholarly discipline should be an on-going concern. Much is to be gained, as I believe, by a more inclusive attitude with regard to such debates. The need for both debate and openness I have felt particularly strongly in the scholarly context from which I have come, which is why this is how I’m coming.169

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169 With regard to Dioscorides’ epigrams, I proceed from the edition of Gow–Page, but have felt free to adopt differing readings in some cases. Editions used for other authors are not specified, but the reader will have no trouble locating the texts.
Dioscorides’ erotic epigrams may have been relatively neglected as a group, but AP 5.55 or Doris, as I will be referring to the epigram, has attracted more attention than any single other Dioscoridean poem.\(^{170}\) Of course, many have confined themselves to a briefly pronounced judgement in passing. A lemmatist of AP, for instance, labelled her ‘πόρνη’ as a woman, and ‘πορνικώστατον’ as a poem;\(^{171}\) in more recent times, she has been described as ‘distasteful’,\(^{172}\) or ‘purely comic’,\(^{173}\) but also as ‘a wonderfully sensuous piece of erotic writing’.\(^{174}\)

More substantial considerations of the epigram have presented it as part of a poetic tradition going back to Homer. Within this tradition, it has been seen as most intimately connected with the works of previous epigrammatists, such as Posidippus and, especially, Asclepiades, but also as closely affiliated with the archaic lyric of Archilochus;\(^{175}\) furthermore, infusions of prosaic elements, such as scientific vocabulary, have been traced throughout the epigram.\(^{176}\) It is this multi-leveled mixture, mainly of past poetic languages and themes, that has led some scholars to describe Doris in terms of innovation and originality,\(^{177}\) but one

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\(^{170}\) Though the ascription of the epigram to Dioscorides has been questioned, for instance by Boas, 1914, 9-12, Hubaux-Henry, 1937, 223-224; and Fraser, 1, 598, I agree with Thurlington, 1949, 46, Cresci, 1977, 268, and the vast scholarly majority, for whom authenticity is not an issue, that there are no reasons for reassigning it to another epigrammatist.

\(^{171}\) The lemmatist known as ‘J’, on whom see Cameron, 1993, 50 and 116.

\(^{172}\) Fraser, 1, 597.

\(^{173}\) Zanker, 1987, 163.

\(^{174}\) Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 81.

\(^{175}\) Cf. Fraser, 1, 597, who reads the epigram as a *reductio ad obscoenissimum* of hetairic epigrams of Asclepiades and Posidippus, and also Cresci, 1977, 263-266, and Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 81, both of whom consider the epigram as an imitation of Asclepiades 6 GP (=AP 5.203). Schrier, 1979, 324-325, gives a broader picture by taking into consideration the connections to the Homeric epics and archaic lyric, whereas Di Castri, 1997, 55-56, primarily focuses on the relation to the Cologne Epode of Archilochus.


\(^{177}\) Cf., for instance, Schrier, 1979, 325, who, as the commentary will show, seems wrong to state: ‘Dioscorides made use of traditional elements, but gave them a new, drastically erotic sense’, and (equally unqualified) Zanker, 1987, 163: ‘the transfer of the motifs [sc. from dedicatory poems for hetaerae] into an epigram on a
might equally well speak of this feature as typical of the literary genre and the era to which she belongs.\footnote{Di Castri, 1997, 57, speaks of the literary and stylistic elements of the epigram as ‘un’armonica fusione, di raffinato gusto alessandrino’; see, in more general terms, Goldhill, 1991, 223-225.}

The most extensive treatments given to Doris readily acknowledge that further studies are still legitimate, and that they may even prove fruitful.\footnote{Schrier, 1979, 325: ‘It is not my opinion that by calling attention to the materials collected in this paper I have traced all the sources attainable for us from which Dioscorides and similar poets drew their inspiration. Much work is yet to be done in this field for those who are willing to look upon these epigrams as small literary monuments’. Galán Vioque, 2001, 157-170, certainly adds much new material to that discussed by Schrier, and we converge to no small degree in the choice of texts to bring into interpretive play.}

In my attempt to account for and engage with certain parts of the literary repertoire relevant for the interpretation of this epigram, and with the scholarship that has made this epigram the object of its detailed scrutiny, I have found the form of a commentary to be the most suitable. First, then, I will conduct a philological dissection of the epigram, reopening wounds inflicted by previous scholarship, while making a few incisions of my own. Proceeding from the commentary, and moving beyond the issues treated within its scope, I hope, in a final, comprehensive analysis, to show how Doris may be done differently, and how she all but demands to be done like never before:

\begin{quote}
Δωρίδα τὴν ἱδόσπυγον ὑπὲρ λεχέων διατείνας
ἀνθεζὶν ἐν χλοερῖς ἀβάνατος γέγονα.
ἡ γὰρ ὑπερφυέσσι μέσον διαβάσα μὲ ποσαῖν
ἥψασιν ἀκλινέως τὸν Κύπριδος δόλιχον,
δὲμησι νοθρὰ βλέπουσα· τὰ δ᾽ ἡμέτερα πνεύματι φύλλα,
ἀμφίσαλαμομένης ἔτρεμε πορφύρεα,
μέχρις ἀπεσπείσθη λευκὸν μένος ἀμφοτέρους,
καὶ Δωρίς παρέτου ἐξεχύθη μέλεα.
\end{quote}

Having stretched out Doris the rose-arsed on top of a bed,
I became immortal in verdant flowers.
Straddling me in the middle with her extraordinary legs,
she completed the long-distance course of Cypris without bending,
hers eyes looking torpidly; her..., like leaves in the wind,
as she was vibrating all around, trembled crimson,
until white force was poured forth as an offering, from and to both of us, 
and Doris was poured out with relaxed limbs.

1-2 Δωρίδα ... διατείνας ἀνθεσιν ἐν χλοερῶς ἀθάνατος γέγονα: the first two lines, in 
particular, are closely connected to Archil. fr. 196a, for which see Gerber, 1991, 80-93 (along 
with further references), Burnett, 1983, 83-97, and Bremer, 1987, 24-61. The affinity between 
the two texts is stressed by Galan Vioque, 2001, 157 and by Di Castri, 1997, 55, who states 
that ‘l’epigramma raccolg lie in particolare la scena conclusiva’. The similarities in wording 
with vv. 42-44 of the Cologne Epode (παρθένον δ’ ἐν ἀνθεσιν ἡ τηλεσσα λαβῶν ἐκλίνα 
[...]) have been duly noted. A contrast, of course, is that Doris is hardly represented as a 
παρθένος, at least not consistently. There are further verbal similarities, which may entail more 
significant contrasts between the two scenarios.

Di Castri, 1997, 56, is on the right track in stating that ‘Dioscoride trasferisce 
l’immagine floreale, che in Archiloco conserva una valenza realistica, evocando il sito 
dell’amplesso, in campo metaforico al v. 2’; this ‘campo metaforico’ deserves a closer look. 
Though an expression for verdant flowers is retained in this epigram, the event has been 
relocated from nature’s blossoming flowers to a more urban bed. This suggests, for all its 
purported ‘realism’, the possibility of another Archilochean counterpart for Dioscorides’ 
ἀνθεσιν ἐν χλοερῶς; an obvious candidate, of course, is ἐς ποη[φώρους | κῆπους of lines 23-24 
of the Epode. The conclusion of line 2, ἀθάνατος γέγονα, is an important marker in this 
respect. It seems to stand in opposition to lines 13-15 in Archilochus, where the male speaker 
stresses that there are many satisfactory pleasures apart from the divine thing (τερψιές ἐστιν 
θεῆς | πολλαί νέοισιν ἄνδράσιν | παρέξ τὸ θείων χρήμα). The promise in lines 23-24 to stop 
within the (virgin) girl’s grassy garden (σχήμα χάρ ἐς ποη[φώρους | κῆπους), should allow us 
to count among those pleasures that of ejaculating outside the vagina; contrast Henderson, 
1976, 170-171. Thus, in complete contrast to Archilochus’ promise, the speaker of this 
epigram, far from settling for anything παρέξ τὸ θείων χρήμα, becomes immortal himself— 
ἀνθεσιν ἐν χλοερῶς—which, if rightly taken to mirror ἐς ποη[φώρους | κῆπους in Archilochus, 
suggests Doris’ genitals even more strongly; cf. below.

We may note in this connection, the agnosticism of Bremer, 1987, 51: ‘It is bad 
psychology as well as bad method to infer [...] that full coitus is indeed avoided [...], and it is 
equally useless to claim the opposite. We do not know and we are not meant to know’. 
Seriously, who can settle for that? Besides, we find a further ‘reading’ of Archilochus in AP 
7.351 (Dioscorides 17 G–P), where the Lycambids defend themselves against Archilochus’
slander; cf. Irwin 1998, 180, for whom the Dioscoridean epigram and AP 7.352 (Meleager 132 G–P), also on the daughters of Lycambes, are ‘invaluable windows into the poetry we are missing’.

1 ῥοδόπυγον: Schrier, 1979, 311, suggests that Dioscorides formed this hapax after ῥοδόπυγχος, but that he was inspired by καλλίπυγος, found in Cerc. fr. 14. However, chronology is as much a problem here as everywhere else in Hellenistic poetry. Whereas the dates for Dioscorides are uncertain, the OCD gives 225 as the floruit of Cercidas. Furthermore, the coinage of the word is not strikingly original, as we see from adjectives such as δωσίπυγος (Suda s.v.), λευκόπυγος (Alexis fr. 322), μελάμπυγος (Archil. fr. 178; A. Lys. 802), and also ἀπυγος (Sem. fr. 7.76) and εὐπυγος (cf. LSJ s.v.); Di Castri, 1997, 56 (with n. 36) has already drawn attention to some of these, but it should be noted that they are not all ‘meno nobili’.

The first part of the compound, ῥόδο-, could certainly have come with associations of divine beauty; cf. Irwin, 1984, 161-168. As for the second part, -πυγον, Schrier, 1979, 312, quotes Hor. Sat. II 7.47-51 to corroborate that a πυγῆ may have had a special attraction in certain sexual positions. This is clearly an understatement. While Schrier briefly refers to ῥοδοκείετε τέρπεω πυγῆ of Dioscorides 6 GP, many parallels to the appreciation of female pygal beauty could be added; cf. Hes. Op. 373, Sem. fr. 7.76 (with Lloyd-Jones 1975, 83), A. Pax 868 (with Olson, 1998, 237), Alexis, fr. 103.11-12 (with Arnott, 1996, 277), Philodem. Ep. 12.2 S (Sider, 1997, 106), and also, Pomeroy, 1975, 48-49 and 144.

Baldwin, 1980, 357, suggests that we add the sexual meaning found in rose words, that is, female genitals (cf. Henderson, 1991, 135), as a reason for its appearance in this particular context. Though Schrier 1982, 146, disagrees, I find the suggestion very plausible. With ῥόδο- suggesting the female genitals, we should consider the possibility of this compound, ‘cunt-arsed’ in effect, as a crude ἀπροσδόκητον, if not an ambiguity as to the nature of the sexual act, that is whether vaginal or anal.

ὑπέρ λεχέων: taking ὑπέρ in its normal sense of ‘above’ leads Schrier, 1979, 309 to the unnecessarily strained explanation that ‘Doris’ lover, who is lying on his back, has caused her to sit on him, and from his point of view she is ὑπέρ λεχέων’. Schrier, 1982, 146, even goes so far as to exclude any position in which Doris is lying on the bed; contrast Gow–Page, 2, 239, Baldwin, 1980, 358, and also the translations of Waltz, Beckby, Richlin, 1983, 50, and Galán Vioque, 2001, 49: ‘Sobre mi cama he tensado...’.

Disagreeing with Schrier 1979, 326, in ruling out τολμήσας δ’ ἐπέβην λεχέων ὑπέρ of AP 5.275.3 as an acceptable parallel to the present usage of ὑπέρ, I am inclined to take ὑπέρ to
mean ‘on top of’. First of all, the idea that Paulus Silentiarius’ mimesis of the epigram induced him to use the expression in a forced way is not an acceptable argument: forced does not equal impossible. More importantly, however, an additional parallel to this usage is found in (orac. ap.) Luc. Alex. 42.50: Καλλιγένειαν ὑπὲρ λεχέων σαλαγεὶ κατὰ δόμα.

**διατείνας:** Cresci, 1977, 263, and Schrier, 1979, 308-309, read διατείνας in close connection with διαβασα in line 3, which both take as describing Doris bestriding the speaker as if riding. It is however far from certain how διαβασα should be understood (see below), and it seems harsh to take the words as virtual synonyms, as Cresci, 1977, 263, seems to do, by principally referring to their sharing of δια-. In contrast, Gow–Page, 2, 239, find διατείνας hard to understand of physical position if Doris is κελητίζουσα. While Richlin, 1983, 235, n. 29, rejects the idea of κέλης altogether, Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 82, and Zanker, 1987, 216, n. 22, suggest that the couple changed positions.

In itself, διατείνας gives few hints with regards to any specific position. It could perhaps go with διαβασα in line 3, but, there are many others ways in which the stretching out of a human body could be conceived. The vagueness in this respect might well serve as a call to the reader to fill the gap.

2 ἄνθεσιν ἐν χλοεροῖς: the emendation ἄψεσιν in the place of ἄνθεσιν, proposed by Hecker, 1852, 205, is adopted by Dübner and Paton, but not reported by Waltz, Gow–Page, and Beckby. Then again, there is no reason to alter the text. The argument provided by Hecker for bringing ἄνθεσιν into question in the first place, ‘parum congruit cum verbis versus primi: ὑπὲρ λεχέων. Lectum enim foliorum rosarum Sybariticum hoc loco non intelligitur’, neglects far too summarily, as we shall see below, many other possible meanings of ἄνθεσιν ἐν χλοεροῖς; the parallel adduced by Dübner, 1, 126, namely χλοερόσιν ἱαινόμενου μελέσσαν of Ps.-Theoc. Id. 27.67, is not convincing enough in itself.

In fact, already Jacobs, 1817, 65, took the expression to mirror ῥοδόπυγον, and Richlin 1983, 235, n. 29, similarly sees the idea of ῥοδόπυγον amplified by the floral imagery in lines 2 and 5. Schrier 1979, 309, who rejects this interpretation, oddly claims that the internal cohesion between lines 1-2, in such a case, would be stronger in relation to the cohesion in the following lines. Yet, not only the floral imagery employed in this epigram (lines 1, 2 and 5), but also the theme of divinity (lines 1, 2, 6 and 7-(8)), the ring composition (lines 1, 8), the sports metaphors (lines 3 and 4), and the libation terminology (lines 7-8), make this epigram appear as a tightly cohesive composition throughout. In other words, the connection between
...ροδόπυγον and ἄνθεσιν ἐν χλοερόις certainly allow for reading the latter as referring to Doris’ body.

Slings, 1983, 418, takes ἄνθεσιν in the literal sense of the word and suggests a reference to the ‘custom’ of spreading flowers over the bed; cf. Luc. Asinus 7, and (with some good faith) Apul. Met. II 16.2 and Pl. Symp. 196a7-b3. I remain unconvinced.

Referring to passages such as Il. 14.346-351, h.Cer. 5-16, and Archil. fr. 196a.28-29, Schrier, 1979, 310, argues that ‘the use of just this metaphor heightens the impression of beatitude felt by Doris’ lover’. Somewhat casually, Schrier labels the metaphor in play here ‘the Meadow of Love’, a shorthand term for a great number of passages in Greek poetry where meadows and gardens serve as places of fulfillment of erotic desire, and of the transition of maidens to women; cf. Calame, 1999, 153-174. In this connection, we may note that both ἄνθος and χλοερός may have suggested youthfulness and even virginity, as in Mimn. fr. 2.3-4 and Ps.–Theocr. Id. 27.67; perhaps a pointed contrast to the fact that Doris will easily lend herself to be interpreted as a far more experienced woman, or even a hetaira or a porne. In the light of Hesychius giving νέον as a synonym to χλοερόν s. v., the expression may even be considered as a variation for ἠβηγής ἄνθος or νέον ἠβηγής, recurring with sexual implications, albeit less specific, in for instance Hes. Th. 988-990, Tyrt. fr. 10.28, Archil. fr. 196a49-50, h.Cer. 108, Sol. fr. 25.1, and Theoc. Id. 30.30.

Though it is difficult clearly to separate (and my agenda is not to limit the choice between these possibilities, at least not too excessively), I hold the expression primarily to refer to Doris’ genitals; cf. also, Sandin, 2000, 345.

ἀθάνατος γέγονα: as noted by Schrier, 1979, 312 and 323, the expression picks up on the associations to divinity inherent in the first element of the compound ροδόπυγον; see also the comment on ἄπεσπεισθῆ below. Di Castri, 1997, 56, may be right, if too quick (I remain unconvinced), to spot an allusion to Sappho fr. 31.1 ἵσος θεοῖν, and too hesitant to fully explore the connection to θείων χρήμα in Archil. fr. 196a.8, for which see the comment on lines 1-2 above. There are moreover further, more explicit parallels to the notion of becoming immortal in sexual congress, such as Theoc. Id. 29.7-8, AP 5.94 (Rufinus 35.4 P), AP 12.177.8, and Prop. II 14.10 (with Enk, 2, 205, for further Roman parallels).

3 ὑπερφούεσσι: Gow–Page, 2, 240, consider the meaning ‘long’ as a possibility, but hold it more probable that it is used as an expression of general admiration rather than size. Again, the two alternatives are not mutually exclusive, and taking the word to mean ‘long’, is certainly more picturesque. However, ‘extraordinary’ seems to do more justice to the Greek,
and goes well with the long-distance running metaphor. The epic dative plural -εσσι, and the epicizing doubling of σ in the following ποσόν may perhaps be seen as hinting, formally at any rate, towards size. If ύπερφυέσσι does indeed refer to size, I hesitatingly refer to Ov. AA 3.777-778 as a (far from compelling) argument against the wide-spread notion that the position involved here is the κέλης: parva uehatur equo: quod erat longissima, numquam | Thebais Hectoreo nupta resedit equo.

μέσον διαβασά με: word order, I think, requires μέσον to be taken as a masculine predicative to με, thus effecting an iconic structure, for which see below, though, in theory, μέσον could go as a neuter adverb together with διαβασά. Either way, the wording recalls wrestling metaphors, such as (γάρ) σε μέσον ἔχω λαβών of A. Nu. 1047, which were very common in erotic literature (cf. Henderson, 1991, 156, and Thornton 1997, 43-44), so as momentarily to suggest quite an active if not aggressive participation on Doris’ behalf.

διαβασά με: the predominantly held view is that the participle describes the position often referred to as κέλης, that is, the woman bestriding the man (lying on his back) as if riding; cf. Dübner, 1864, 126, Gow–Page, 2, 239, Cresci, 1977, 263-264, Schrier 1979, 308 and 311, Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 82, and Di Castri, 1997, 56; for the position κέλης, see Henderson 1991, 164-165. Some support for this assumption is undoubtedly given by the usage of the verb διαβαίνειν in A. Lys. 60 (for which see Henderson, 1987, 74) referred to by both Cresci and Schrier. But διαβαίνειν is hardly a technical term, pace Galán Vioque, 2001, 163. In Arist. Vesp. 688, for instance, διαβας seems to mean ‘standing with legs apart’; cf. MacDowell, 1971, 226. Hence, alternative modes of straddling must also be considered. The possibilities, of course, are quite a few: Baldwin 1980, 357-358 suggests that ‘Doris could be lying on the bed with her legs raised and feet crossed around the loins of her standing lover’. As Baldwin points out, this suggestion has the advantage of making ῥόδόπυγον more than ornamental. The latter is a feature shared by another alternative, offered by Richlin 1983, 235, n. 29: ‘the scene describes anal intercourse (or vaginal intercourse from the rear) with the woman prone, her legs hooked over her lover’s, her head turned to one side (so that her eyes are visible)’.

Considering the implications of divine beauty inherent in ῥόδόπυγον, together with the notions of pygal beauty attested elsewhere in Greek erotic literature (we now may hesitatingly add Ov. AA 3.774, spectentur tergo, quis sua terga placent), an a tergo position of some kind or other seems the most likely; for the commonness of representations of a tergo positions on vases, cf. Kilmer, 1993, 33, and Keuls, 1985, 176. However, in the light of the interpretation offered above of ἀνθησιν ἐν χλοεροῖς, anal intercourse seems highly unlikely. The speaker
should be pictured as being in between the woman’s parted legs, whether she be prone, sitting or kneeling; cf. Kilmer, 1993, 41 on R434.

ποσιν: rendered as ‘feet’ in the translation of Richlin, 1983, 50, but, as noted by Thurlington, 1949, 46, and Gow–Page, 2, 240, the word refers to the legs from thigh down; cf. Sider, 1997, 105.

ὑπερφυέεσσι μέσον διαβάσα με ποσιν: note the iconic structure of these words, viz., ABABBA, which constitutes a formal parallel, as it were, to the straddling action described. Though less striking, at least Δωρίδα ... διατείναι of line 1, and perhaps even παρέτους ἑξεχύθη μέλεσι of line 8 may be seen as similarly iconic.

4-6 ἀκλινέως ... Κύπριδος ... βλέπουσα ... πνεύματι ... ἔτρεμε: according to Thurlington, 1949, 45, the metre of this poem reflects ‘the culmination and subsidence of passion’. While difficult to interpret, the irregularity with which vowels preceding mutes and liquids are affected or not affected in these lines is worth noting. For Dioscorides’ metre, cf. Galán Vioque, 2001, 30-34, Thurlington, 1949, 33-39, and Moll, 1920, 45-69.

4 ἦρπησεν: commonly used in the sense to complete a journey, the verb is primarily qualified by τὸν Κύπριδος δόλιχον, for which see below. Cresci, 1977, 265, and Schrier, 1979, 313, n. 18, compare with AP 5.275.4 (ἀὸς δὲ κελεύθου ἢ ἦρπησεν κυπριδῆς ἦρπην ἀσπασίως), which is easy to read as modeled on the present epigram. Nevertheless, the verb occurs also in other, similarly erotic contexts. Baldwin rightly refers to AP 5.75.5 (Rufinus 29.5 P), ἦρπησα πολλὰ καμὼν, which lacks any additional implications of a race or journey, and, I would add parallels in which the verb refers to achieving ‘marriage’, as in Hes. fr. 37.6 (ἦρπεν θ᾽ ἐμερόεντα γάμῳ), or simply to ‘scoring’ as in Luc. Asinus 39.50 (καὶ διαλέγεται πρὸς τὸν ἐπιστάτην τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ μοθὸν αὐτῷ ἀδρόν ὑπέσχετο, εἰ συγχωρήσεις αὐτῇ σὺν ἐμοί τὴν νίκτα ἀναπαύσεσθαι· κάκείνος οὐδὲν φροντίσας, εἰτε ἄνυσει τὶ ἐκεῖνη ἐξ ἐμοὶ εἰτε καὶ μή, λαμβάνει τὸν μισθὸν), and Nonn. D. 48.871-872 (ἀρτι πάλιν Ἁ_timezone ἐπίκλοσον ἦρπησαν εὐνήν, | παρθενικὴς δ᾽ ἐτέρης γάμον ἦρπασεν).

ἀκλινέως: an ambiguous word. Even if the adverb is to be taken closely to δόλιχον, the point of which is duration, metaphorical usages of ἀκλινής, such as ‘persistent’ or ‘steadfast’, are probably more to the point than ‘without swerving (sc. from the course)’. On the other hand, the more technical meanings of the word, ‘without inclination’, and ‘fixed’ should also be considered; cf. Richlin, 1983, 235, n. 29: ‘The normal position for women taken from behind was standing, holding on to a low grip […]’; hence the point of ἀκλινέως”; see Hesych. s.v. ἁρρεπῶς, which is referred to also by Dübner, 1864, 126.
δόλιχον: a second sports-metaphor, recalling the evocation of wrestling in line 3. Schrier 1979, 313, and Baldwin, 1980, 358, are absolutely right in questioning the suggestion by Gow–Page, 2, 240, that δόλιχον refers to a horse-race. After all, δόλιχον was the technical term for the long distance foot-race, for which see Decker, 1995, 70-72. Regardless of position(s) involved here, the word suggests duration; Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 81, notes that στάδιον, the sprint race, would have fitted the metre as well. Therefore, parallels such as Lucr. 4.1195-1196 (nam facit ex animo saepe et communia quaerens | gaudia sollicitat spatium decurrere amoris), may be somewhat misleading with regard to the present passage, despite the fact that we do find the expression ‘to complete the course of love’, because, in Lucretius, it refers to achieving an orgasm (cf. Adams 1982, 144); here, the orgasm is yet to come. This holds true also of Ov. AA 2.725-728 (sed neque tu dominam uelis maioribus usus | defice, nec cursus anteeat illa tuos; | ad metam properate simul: tum plena uoluptas, | cum pariter uicti femina uirique iacent), which Janka, 1997, 498, rightly compares with lines 7-8, rather than line 4, of the present epigram.

I would stress that the difference in this respect is felt also in the comparison with τελεοδρόμος in AP 5.203.5 (Asclepiades 6.5 G–P), which refers to Lysidice’s proficiency in giving satisfaction, again that is, in providing her customers with an orgasm.

5-6 τά δ’ ... πορφύρεα: undoubtedly the most problematic passage of this epigram. It seems certain that τά refers to some part or other of Doris’ body, and that it should go together with πορφύρεα, as I try to bring out by translating ‘her… […] trembled crimson’. Grammatically, τά should be read as a neuter demonstrative, capable of referring to masculine or feminine substantives as well (K–G 1, 61, n. 1, and Schwyzer, 2, 602), which allows for the gap to be filled by a number of different nouns. One cannot help but wondering, therefore, if the text is deliberately vague. In the following, I will briefly state the suggestions that have been offered so far, and then move on to examine them closer.

Jacobs, 1817, 65, took τά to refer to ὀμμασιν, a view adopted and greatly elaborated by Schrier, 1979, 314-322, who is followed by Di Castri, 1997, 56-57. Gow–Page, 2, 240, suggest that τά ... πορφύρεα refers to Doris’ breasts; Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 81, seems certain that this is the case, and wonders whether hetairas used to rouge their nipples! Similarly though seemingly less certain, Zanker, 1987, 163, translates ‘her red breasts [?]’. Fraser, 1, 597, seems to supply μέλεα (or an equivalent), as he translates ‘limbs (?)’. Baldwin, 1980, 358, takes τά ... πορφύρεα to refer to Doris’ buttocks and thighs. Richlin, 1983, 235, n. 29,
refers it to the buttocks only. Finally, White, 1998, 92, suggests that ‘φύλλα ... πορφύρεα [...] refer to the petals of real roses and to the metaphorical petals of Doris’ “pudenda muliebria”.

Holding τά to refer to Doris’ eyes, Schrier 1979, 315, draws attention to Od. 7. 104-106, αἱ μὲν ἀλετρείοισι μύλης ἔπι μῆλοπτα καρπόν, | αἱ δ’ ἰστοὺς ύψοσι καὶ ἥλακατα στραφῶσιν | ἦμεναι, οἷα τὲ φύλλα μακεδνῆς αἰγείρῳ (and also S. fr. 23: ὀσπερ γάρ ἐν φύλλουσιν αἰγείρῳ μακράς, | κάν ἄλλο μηθέν, ἀλλὰ τούκείνης κάρα | κυνεῖ τις αὐρα κάνακοψιζεω σπερόν), and follows the interpretation offered by Stanford, 1947, 324, namely, that the quivering, flickering leaves suggest a play, supposedly loved by the Greeks, of light on bright moving surfaces. Accordingly, Schrier, 1979, 315, states that: ‘The same effect of light is meant by Dioscorides in our epigram. It is the sparkling [my italics] of Doris’ eyes which is compared with the flickering of leaves moved by the wind. [...] So there is no contrast with νοθρὰ βλέπουσα’. Schrier 1979, 321, holds the meaning of lines 5-6 to be exactly rendered by Waltz’ translation: ‘Elle me regardait avec des yeux langoureux, dont l’éclat scintillait’. Similarly, Di Castri, 1997, 56-57 states: ‘l’aggettivo [...] si presta perciò a connotare il vibrare degli occhi di Doride nel godimento dell’ amplesso, in stretta connessione col verbo ἀμφισαλειώ’. It is difficult, however, to agree with such an interpretation, seeing that the focus in the parallels quoted by Schrier does not seem to be on light but on movement. In the case of Od. 7.104-106, we are dealing with constant movement; cf. the first alternative offered by Hesychius, s.v. ἢμεναι, and also Garvie, 1994, 184. In S. fr. 23, the focus is on one part in movement of a relatively calm whole (κὰν ἄλλο μηθέν). Whereas there seems to be little to suggest a play of light in the parallels quoted, at least so as to override that of movement, it would seem odd, first, to have Doris νοθρὰ βλέπουσα, and then, in immediate connection, to describe her eyes as constantly moving, or, as the most conspicuous part of Doris’ body in terms of movement. This focus on movement not only suggests a referent other than the eyes, but may also be taken to foreshadow the relaxation to follow Doris’ orgasm; as a parallel, with similar sexual implications, we may refer to Sappho fr. 2.7-8: [...] αἰθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων | κόμα κατέρρει, on which see Winkler, 1990:1, 186. It seems necessary, then, to abandon the idea that τά refers to the eyes, and I turn to the suggestion that τά refers to Doris’ buttocks (and thighs). AP 5.35 (Rufinus 11 P), which is referred to also by Baldwin, 1980, 358, provides us with many parallels: συγάς αὐτὸς ἐκρίνα τριών, εἰλοντο γάρ αὐταὶ | δείξασαι γνωμῆν ἀστεροπτὴν μελέων. | καὶ ρ’ ἦ μὲν τροχαλοῖσ σφραγιζομένη γελασίνου | λευκῆ ἀπὸ γλυπτῶν
I myself judged the buttocks of three; for they chose me themselves, showing me the naked lightening of their limbs. The first was marked with round dimples, she blossomed from the rump with white softness to the touch. The snow skin of the second blushed as she was spread, more red even than a crimson rose. The third was calm as the sea, furrowed by a silent wave, spontaneously vibrating in her luxurious flesh. If he who judged the goddesses had seen these buttocks, he would not have wanted to look again on the former’;

Baldwin rightly compares διαιρομένης with διατείνας in our epigram, and notes the change of colour in the skin of the girl who spreads her legs in lines 5-6 in Rufinus’ epigram. Thus, σορφύρεα in line 6 of our epigram, may well be set against φουνίσσετο χιονή σάρξ | σορφυρέοι ρόδου μάλλων ἐρυθρώτερη. In Rufinus’ epigram, the movement of the skin of the third contestant, though likened to that of a calm sea creased by silent waves, very much recalls the motion which is described in Dioscorides by means of the ἦμτε πνεύματι φύλλα simile, the verb ἐτρεμε, and the participle ἀμφισαλευμένης. In addition to the use of σαλευμένη in Rufinus 11.8, quoted above, Baldwin, 1980, 358, finds a parallel in πυγαί ... σαλευόμεναι of AP 5.60 (Rufinus 22.3-4 P); cf. also Schol. in Arat. 1009, noted by Schrier, 1979, 324.

Schrier, 1982, 147, raises two objections against such an interpretation. First and foremost, he seems unwilling to accept what he considers a very harsh hyperbaton, namely τὰ δ’ ... σορφύρεα. Against this we may quite simply counter argue that hyperbata are rather common in the epigrams attributed to Dioscorides; cf. AP 5.52.1-2 (Dioscorides 6 G–P):

"Ορκον κοινὸν Ἐρωτ’ ἀνεθήκαμεν· ὅρκος ὁ πιστὴν | Ἀρσινόης θέμενος Σωσιστάτῳ φιλέων;
AP 7.31.7-8 (Dioscorides 19 G–P): άυτόματον δὲ φέρων ίον, τὸ φιλέσπερον ἄνθος, | κύποι και μαλακῇ μύρτα τρέφοντο δρόσῳ; and AP 12.37.1-2 (Dioscorides 10 G–P) Πυγήν Σωσάρχιοι διέπλασεν Ἀμφισπολίτεω | μελήπων παιζόν ὁ βροτολογοῦ Ἐρως.

The second objection involves the difficulties of the readers in knowing what to connect with τὰ δ’ ... σορφύρεα – why not the wings of Doris’ nose? As for the latter, Richlin, 1983, 235, n. 29, argues the floral imagery inherent in ἐν δούπιγον of line 1, in ἦμτεν ἐν χλοερῶς of line 2, and in ἦμτε πνεύματι φύλλα of line 5, serve to connect and amplify the idea of Doris’ πυγή. This, of course, seriously undermines the idea of taking τὰ δ’ ... σορφύρεα as referring to Doris’ breasts, and makes Baldwin’s addition of the thighs quite
unnecessary. To my mind, we are left with Doris’ buttocks as the most attractive alternative in regards to the referent of τά.

Two final notes on πορφύρες in the translation of which I opted for ‘crimson’. Seeing, however, that the word may be used to denote the rosiness of human complexion, perhaps ‘rosy’ should also be considered. This would be in accordance with LSJ s.v. πορφύρες II 2, and it would neatly reconnect, of course, to ῥοδόπυγον in line 1 above. Baldwin, 1980, 358, suggests that the change of colour during sexual intercourse was an established literary motif, so, ‘crimson’ is still tenable, even if Doris was described as ῥοδόπυγον earlier in the epigram.

Following Rufinus 11P, perhaps one should also consider a play on the meaning ‘surging’, cf. LSJ s.v. πορφύρες I 1. To this end, one could possibly argue that maritime associations had already been evoked by the proximity of ἀμφίσαλευμένης, so as to accomplish the shift from floral to maritime imagery in this word.

Furthermore, it should be noted that both Schrier, 1979, 322, and Di Castri, 1997, 56, draw attention to passages such as Anacr. fr. 357, Sim. fr. 80, Bion 1.3, and Phryn. fr. 13, where we find πορφύρες employed in connection to the sphere of influence of Aphrodite, so as to continue the theme of the divine.

5 δομασι νοθρά βλέπουσα: this comment on Doris’ gaze may suggest at least some point of eye-contact between her and the speaker; perhaps Doris looked back over her shoulder; cf. Kilmer 1993, 35 on R361. ‘Emotionally effective’, similar motifs were increasingly employed by the red-figure painters of the Hellenistic age; cf. Sutton, 1992, 11.

But what does νοθρά βλέπουσα imply? Gow–Page, 2, 240, refer to Apul. M. 3.14, where the moist and trembling eyes of Photis, languid with ready passion and willing desire, are already half-closed in anticipation. Yet, the languorousness of Doris’ gaze is not due to willing desire as such, but rather to the physical exhaustion in completing the long distance course; for dullness of vision due to sexual excess, or simply as the result of indulging in sexual intercourse, cf. Arist. Pr. 876b24-26 and 880b8-9 (Διὰ τί, ἐὰν ἀφροδισιάζῃ ὁ ἀνθρώπος, οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἀσθενοῦσα μάλιστα.;) cf. also Suda., s.vv. Νοθρεία καὶ νοθρός, ὁ ἀσθενής.

In this connection, though difficult to assess in terms of relevance for the present passage, we may also compare Suda., s.vv. Ἐρημὸν ἐμβλέπειν: ᾠκίνητον καὶ νοθρόν· ὅλον ὅταν εἰς ἑρμῆιν ἣ πέλαγος μέγα καὶ ἄχανες βλέπουμεν. Ἀριστοφάνης Πολυδώ (= A. fr. 456).

6 ἀμφισαλευμένης: another harax, as noted by Schrier, 1979, 323, which the latest revised supplement to the LSJ somewhat narrowly translates ‘rock up and down astride’. Judging,
however, by the rather loose usage of ἐκ- in Dioscorides 1.6 GP (AP 5.56), and ὑπέρ- in line 3 above, it seems uncertain if ἀμφὶ-, here, should even be translated as narrowly as in its radical sense, ‘(tossing about) on both sides’, rather than more generally, ‘(vibrating) all around’.

7 ἀπεσπείρωθη: this verb is mostly used as a technical term for the ritual act of performing a drink-offering to gods (cf. Schrier, 1979, 323, and Danielewicz, 1989, 234); a few parallels will suffice, Od. 3.394, Eur. Io. 1190, Antiph. 1.20, Pl. Phd. 117b, and, Theocr. Id. 2.43. The verb of course picks up the implications of divinity inherent in ἁρδόπυγον and ἄδανατος γέγονα, in lines 1 and 2 respectively. Noting that red wine is usually what is poured out, Schrier suggests the possibility of a pun on λευκόν; the proximity of πορφύρα might perhaps be seen as implicitly bringing out this contrast, but, in addition to ἀποστενδῶν δάκρυσιν ἐκ βλεφάρων of AP 6.30.4, we may note a further exception in Hld. Ai. 7.14.6: ἀποστενδῶ τῶν ἐμαυτῆς δακρύων καὶ ἐπιφέρω χώς ἐκ τῶν ἐμαυτῆς πλοκάμων.

λευκόν μένος: Gow–Page, 2, 240, rightly defended μένος with reference to μέλαν μένος, used of blood in S. Aj. 1412-1413. It is tempting to consider this expression as an echo of Archil. fr. 196a.52; Bremer, 1987, 49-50, at any rate, seems to defend the supplement λευκόν in Archilochus with reference to this passage.

ἀμφοτέρωσαν: Danielewicz, 1989, 233-235, notes the ambiguity of the dative, that is whether it is a dative proper, or a dative of interest/agent. In this context, it denotes the persons from which the λευκόν μένος was poured and, at the same time, the persons to whom it was offered as a libation; in addition to the references given by Danielewicz, 1989, 233-235, for the ancient medical views on ejaculation on part of both male and female, cf. Dean-Jones, 1994, 155-159. It is only now that the theme of ἀποθεώσεως is brought to a climatic closure, as the mutual orgasm (cf. Theocr. Id. 2.143: ἐπράξθη τὰ μέγιστα, καὶ ἐς πόθον ἣρθομεῖ ἀμφω) of the two ‘divinities’ is described in terms of a libation offering from and to themselves.

8 παρέτοις: for Doris’ lassitude after her orgasm, we may compare with Ov. Amores 1.5.25: cetera quis nescit? lassi requievimus ambo, and, more prosaic, Arist. Pr. 876a36-38: Διὰ τι τῶν πλείων ἄφροδισίων χρωμένοι ἐπιδηλότατα συνίδοσα τά ὀμματα καὶ τά ιαχῖα, τὰ μὲν ἐγγύς ὀντα, τὰ δὲ πόρρω; here, too, there is a focus on (and transition from), eyes and buttocks as in lines 4-6 above. The adjective is commonly found in medical contexts; cf. Gal. In Hippocratis librum de officina medici commentarii 18b, 638: τὸ γὰρ ὁπτὸν κεῖσθαι καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἐχειν καὶ τὰ σκέλη παραπληρίως κείμενα τοῖς παρέτοις, οὐ κατὰ διάθεσιν μοχθηρῶν, ἀλλὰ διὰ μαλακίαν ἐγγύηται τοῦ κάμμοντος ἢ τρυφήν ὑπερβάλλουσαν, and Aret. SA 2, 3.8
and 5.3, where it occurs in close connection with νοθρός. Perhaps, then, an example of employment of scientific medical knowledge in Hellenistic poetry, for which see Zanker, 1987, 124-127.

εἴσεσθεθη: cf., again, Danielewicz, 1989, 236, who detects in this verb a continuation of the libation metaphor in line 7, but also, in its connection with παρέτους μέλεσαι, takes it to refer to the Hippocratic opinion that women’s semen is drawn from all parts of the body.

A question already raised (and indicatively answered) in the brief introduction is what to read into the name Doris: a woman, obviously, but one that is presented to us, voyeuristically, as an object. Whether we determine her to be historical or fictional, or think of her as stereotypical or unique, as an amateur or a professional, are questions with which I am not primarily concerned, though, in the commentary, I have indicated how she is presented in a way which suggests both parthenos and porne, and both human and divine. The commentary illustrates that even in a relatively explicit erotic narrative such as the present, verging, as many will undoubtedly see it, on the pornographic, a fair number of uncertainties and gaps remain. They remain, as we have seen, despite the philological parallels adduced by others and myself to settle them once and for all; we may recall, for instance, the difficulty of pinpointing the position(s) involved, and the question of the referent of τὰ δ’ ... πορφύρεα. What is needed, of course, is for every reader to fill these gaps with his or her own fantasies, expectations and experiences, and scholarly readers have undoubtedly done so.

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181 Somewhat differently, Schrier, 1979, 323-324 states: ‘In the second part of the poem the attention focusses on the woman’s activities and her reactions, but there is no doubt possible: everything is described from the male point of view’.
182 One could say of Doris, and, even more so, of the unnamed woman of AP 5.56 (=Dioscorides 1 G–P) what Greene, 1998, 77, says about Ovid’s Corinna: ‘she is all parts–dismembered and fragmented by the amator’s controlling gaze’; and also 80-81: ‘Thus, picturing Corinna as both chaste bride and wanton woman [...] is perhaps the ultimate sexual turn-on for the male lover in the poem’.
183 The difficulties in distinguishing between erotica and pornography, and the question of applicability of any such distinction to ancient texts still prevail; cf. Zweig, 1992, 73.
184 Cf. Kellman, 1985, 36: ‘no literary text, indeed no work of art, can be fully determinate. The reader himself must always traverse a formidable canyon between signifiant and signifié, even in as garrulous and imperious a book as Les 120 Journées de Sodome’.
185 Consider how Fowler, 1989, 146-147, betrays her (non-tenable) distinction between the erotic and something else (the pornographic?), on the criterion of explicitness: ‘Still more erotic [sc. than AP 5.56=Dioscorides 1GP]
Doris is objectified in more than one way; one particular aspect of ‘objectification’, albeit of a different sort, seems to have been neglected by previous critics, namely the extent to which Doris may be a ‘written woman’, one that serves as the poet’s means to display poetic sophia in the attempt to achieve immortality, a take which is familiar from a strand of criticism on Roman love elegy. This, then, is the starting point for the redoing of Doris to which I now turn.

In line 7, we reach the climatic conclusion of the pervasive theme of divinity and immortality, and, of the main action of the epigram, the sexual act itself. What, then, are we to make of line 8: καὶ Δωρίς παρέτοσ ἐξεχύθη μέλεσι; a scene of fading out, as it were, without which the sexual act would have seemed incomplete somehow and less realistic? Possibly, but why, one feels inclined to ask, are not both poured out in relaxed limbs, like the lovers in Ov. Amores 1.5.25 (lassi requievimus ambo), after their orgastic experience, the mutuality of which is made explicit in the preceeding line 7: μέχρις ἀπεσεῖθη λευκών μένος ἀμφοτέρους? On closer inspection, the wording of the concluding line is remarkably ambiguous, and we may allow it to redirect our attention to something beyond the erotic activity described.

Let us begin with the verb χέω, which is used, in its simple form and in various compounds, including ἐκχέω, to describe the poet’s voice or poetic compositions as being poured. We find the image in Pindar, for instance, when he lets the Muses pour out a dirge for Achilleus, and, again, when he hopes that with the pouring forth of his voice, his songs are the first two lines of epigram V (AP 5.55) [...]. Here again is the evocation of female flesh. The rest of the poem, which is a fairly explicit description of their love-making, is, because it is less suggestive, less erotic; cf., also Cameron, 1995, 516, n. 82, arguing that the couple changed positions: ‘who would pay good money to a courtesan so gauche as to stay in one position all the time?’ Interesting, too, is a suggestion reported (not made) by Maxwell–Stuart, 2003, 252, that Doris is described as having red buttocks ‘because Dioscorides has been smacking them prior to entering her’.

186 Cf. Wyke, 2002; cf. also Greene, 1998, 37, also on Propertius’ Cynthia: ‘Cynthia is depicted primarily as a “woman in text”–a text that inscribes male desire and also reflects the self-conscious literary concerns of the poet’, and Greene, 1998, 38: ‘Propertius nonetheless portrays her as little more than a vehicle for his artistic fame and a function of his literary discourse’.

187 For Ovid, see Raval, 2001, Sharrock, 1994, and Weiden Boyd, 1997; for Propertius (and Ovid), see Wyke, 2002; for Tibullus, see Lee-Stecum 1998.

188 The image of ‘pouring’ is akin to that of ‘flowing’ familiar from passages such as Il. 1.249, Hes. Theog. 39, id. 97, and h.Ap. 5, all of which share the wording ἐρέει αἰδή.

189 1. 856a-58: τὸν μὲν οὐδὲ θανώτ’ ἀουδαὶ ἐπέλειπον, ὥσπερ αἱ παρὰ τε πυ- | μᾶν τάφον θ’ Ἐλλήκωνας | παρθένοι | στάν, ἐπὶ θρήνον τε πολύβαμον ἤχεαν.
will make Hippocleas more attractive in the eyes of unmarried girls, among others. The most notable example, perhaps, is that in which Pindar even pours himself over Delos.

The particular compound ἐκχέω is used in a similar way in Eur. Suppl. 773: 'Αἰδών τε μολτᾶς ἐκχέω διακρυφόονς, and, even more strikingly, in Aristophanes’ Frogs, where Dionysus advises Euripides to back off from Aeschylus, for fear that the latter might get so angry as to hit Euripides in the head with a massive word and make him pour out his Telephus (vv. 854-855): ἵνα μὴ κεφαλαίω τῶν κρόταφόν σου ῥήματι | θενών ὅπ’ ὀργήσ ἐκχέῃ τὸν Τῆλεφον. This parallel bridges the gap between the passages just referred to and the epigram at hand, in which a similar reference to poetic activity should be considered. For, against this background, it seems fair to ask whether the pouring forth of Doris, Δωρίς ἐξεχύθη, just like ἐκχέῃ τὸν Τῆλεφον, on one level of interpretation, may be read as referring to the realization of this particular piece of poetry. ‘Doris’ (or, strictly speaking, Δωρίδα) is not only the first word of the poem, but also the only named character of the epigram, and may thus be seen as analogous to protagonists in tragedy and the novel, and to ‘first words’ of books, which came to ‘stand for’ the works themselves, like Euripides’ Telephus, as we saw above, or Chariton’s Callirhoe, or Propertius’ Cynthia.

On this reading, then, the epigram ends with the blurring of the categories beloved and poem, and, thereby, with a shift in attention from the erotic action of sexual intercourse towards the artistic activity of poetic composition. As sudden as this shift may seem, it has been hinted at from the very outset of the epigram, though, agreeably, it is mainly with the fading distinction between beloved and epigram that those between sexual and poetic activity, and lover and poem begin to crack. Let us briefly return to lines 1 and 2, the reconnection to which is prompted anyhow, one could argue, by the ring composition Δωρίδα ... διατείνας and Δωρίς ... ἐξεχύθη.

The two introductory lines, on which the rest of the epigrams expand, turn out to be somewhat less enigmatic, if more complex, than previous commentators have realised. As we reread the lines from this new perspective, it becomes clear that Δωρίδα ... διατείνας of line 1, and that ἀνθεσὶν ἐν χλοεροῖς ἄθανατος γέγονα of line 2, similarly take a double...

\[190\] P. 10.55-60: ἔλπομαι δ’ Ἐφορώιοι | ὅπ’ ἀμφὶ Πηνείων γυναικῶν προχέοντων ἐμὸν | τὸν Ἰπποκλέαν ἐτὶ καὶ μᾶλλον σὺν ἀμώδεις | ἐκατ’ στεφάνων θαυμόν ἐν ἄλλι | ἕπεθεμεν ἐν καὶ παλατέροις, | νέασιν τε παρθένασι μέλημα. καὶ γάρ | ἔτεροις ἔτερον ἔρωτες ἐκκενάν ὃρφενας.


\[193\] For instance, Schrier, 1979, 309.
reference, both to sexual and poetic activity, and to lover and poet. In line 1, the lover’s stretching out of Doris corresponds to the poet’s speaking explicitly and expressively about or even in her, as is suggested by lexicographical works in which the verb διατείνειν is glossed by διαρρήθην λέγειν, as in Hesychius, Pseudo-Zonaras and Photius’ Lexicon. It is the lover’s self-acclaimed immortality (ἀδάνατος γέγονα) which follows his amatory success that the poet craves, and that he hopes to attain by a literary one. The verdant flowers in which the lover becomes immortal, ἀνθεσιν ἐν χλοεροῖς, neatly fit the picture: we find flowers used metaphorically about poetry by both Sappho and Pindar, and by the epigrammatists Nossis and (indirectly) Rhianus. Here, we reach a point of resounding metaphoric feedbacks, as it were, in which Doris/epigram/flowers/Doris become inseparable.

As poet and poem assume the roles of lover and beloved, the representation of the sexual intercourse which follows turns into a metaphor for poetic production. We may compare with yet another passage from Pindar, where the social context of the symposium serves as the key metaphor for poetic production, and where the more general imagery of poetry as flowing can be traced in the sympotic mixing of bowls and pouring of libations. To some extent, this is mirrored in the present epigram, the erotic context of which is represented with its own libational mixing of bodily fluids and flowing of bodily parts.

194 Cf. Hesychius, sv. διατείνειν (=Δ 1369); Pseudo-Zonaras s.v. διέτεων· διαρρήθην εἶπε, and, Photius, Lexicon, s.v. Διετεινα· διαρρήθην εἶπεν (=Δ 557).
195 Cf. Weiden Boyd, 1997, 156, on Ovid Amores 1.5: ‘[…] the poem embodies a mutual relationship between amatory and literary success and failure (the two coexist). As the lover describes his experience, he uses the language and the voice of the poet, for whom love is a literary phenomenon’.
197 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 78-79, on AP 5.170 (Nossis 1 G–P): ‘Roses […] are here symbols of Nossis’ own poetry or, what is much the same thing, symbols of the sensual, flowerlike women who form the subject matter of that poetry (for a similar analogy of a beloved to flowers, cf. Rhianus 2 G–P = AP 12.58)’.
198 Cf. Catullus 50, where the activity of two poets is represented in the language of erotic passion and sexual intercourse: hesterno, Licini, die otiosi | mutum lusimus in meis tabellis | ut comunerat esse delicatos: | scribens uersicolos uterque nostrum | ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc, | reddens mutua per iocum atque uiumum. | atque ilinc abii tuo lepore | incensus, Licini, facettiisque, | ut nec me miserum cibus iuuaret | nec somnus tegeret quiete ocellos, | sed toto indomitus furore lecto | uersarer, cupiens uiderc lucem, | ut tecum loquerer, simulque ut essem. | at defessa labore membra postquam | semimortuus lectulo iacens, | hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci, | ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem. | nunc audax caue sis, precesque nostras, | oramus, caue despusas, ocelle, | ne poenas Nemesis reposcat a te. | est uhemens dea: laedere hanc caueto.
The bodily parts, or limbs referred to in the poem, \( \mu\varepsilon\ell\varepsilon\sigma\iota \), may be accepted as neatly fitting this picture of double referentiality without further ado – after all, \( \mu\varepsilon\ell\varepsilon\sigma\iota \) does mean ‘songs’. \( \Pi\alpha\rho\varepsilon\tau\omicron\sigma\iota \), however, poses somewhat of a problem. The adjective is sparsely attested, and there are few signs of metaphorical usages. In what sense, if any, can Doris be seen as a ‘relaxed’ composition? Possibly, we are dealing with a reference to the metre of the poem, which may perhaps be said to have been ‘poured out in relaxed songs’ on account of both the irregularity with which mute plus liquid affect preceeding vowels, and the break from the tendency to avoid word-end after an initial long of the fourth and fifth foot as in lines 1, 3 and 7.

I leave the possibility open for now; a rigorous argument would require a study of the metre of all Dioscoridean epigrams. It may be stated, though, that these are not extraordinary examples without parallels in other poems. Having said that, I am more inclined to speculate further about the metapoetical significance of \( \pi\alpha\rho\varepsilon\tau\omicron\omega\varsigma \) as a reference to the content of the epigram: First, we may note that other adjectives which have the meaning ‘relaxed’, for instance \( \varepsilon\kappa\lambda\upsilon\nu\sigma\varsigma \) and \( \acute{\alpha}v\varepsilon\theta\sigma\varsigma \), include in their semantic range transferred senses such as ‘unbridled’ and ‘lascivious’, and ‘uncontrolled’ and ‘licentious’ respectively. Of the two, \( \acute{\alpha}v\varepsilon\theta\sigma\varsigma \) is perhaps the more interesting, since it is a verbal adjective derived from \( \acute{\alpha}v\varepsilon\gamma\varepsilon\mu\iota \) just as \( \pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\varepsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma \) stems from \( \pi\varepsilon\gamma\varepsilon\mu\iota \). We may note, in this connection, a usage of \( \pi\varepsilon\gamma\varepsilon\mu\iota \) in the phrase \( \tau\omicron\circ\mu\varepsilon\tau\omicron\circ\nu \pi\alpha\rho\varepsilon\varsigma \) in S. OC 1212, translated ‘letting go one’s hold of moderation’ in the LSJ. By reference to this semantic parallel, as it were, I cautiously suggest that we take \( \pi\alpha\rho\varepsilon\tau\omicron\omega\varsigma \) in the sense of ‘immoderate’ or something worse: The pouring out of Doris in relaxed limbs equals the composition of the epigram in uninhibited verses. In this reading, the explicitness of the narrative, once deemed unnecessary, emerges as an all but explicitly stated poetic strategy aimed at soliciting readers, who, of course, are the key to everlasting remembrance; it is by fully disclosing how the lover became immortal, and by letting his readers all but become \( \acute{\iota}\sigma\omicron\circ\circ \theta\varepsilon\omega\varsigma\alpha\nu \) themselves, that the poet seeks to achieve his immortality as a \( \theta\varepsilon\omicron\circ\circ \acute{\alpha}v\varepsilon\omicron\circ\omicron \) on account of his poetic virtue. As we shall see in the following chapter, the connection between personification of poetic pieces and poetic immortality may be shown to be a recurrent phenomenon in Dioscoridean epigrams.

\[ \text{200 Cf. Thurlington, 1949, 37.} \]
\[ \text{201 LSJ, svv.} \]
\[ \text{202 Cf. Thurlington, 1949, 15.} \]
\[ \text{203 Cf. Fear 2000, 221: ‘If a poem is a sexualized object [...] then to effect the widest possible literary audience the author must accept that he cannot regulate the sexuality of his text, but must cut it loose so that other readers might experience its sensual delights. Hence, to achieve literary fame, the poet has to renounce exclusive ownership rights and indulge the promiscuous desires of his work’}. \]
2. Aristonoe or Cleo?
AP 5.53 (Dioscorides 3 G–P) or 5.193 (Dioscorides 4 G–P)?

I'm so sick of recycled metaphors
but I'd fuck Laura Ingalls only when she's done with her chores

In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, writing is said by Socrates to be like painting; its offspring seems alive, and you might think that it spoke, but written words point to the one same thing, always. Every written piece gets tossed from mouth to mouth, everywhere, and reaches those who know about the subject and those who do not in the same way. Incapable of helping itself, it will always depend on its father for defence. Written speech is first a bastard child, then a phantom of living speech, Socrates and Phaedrus agree, after which Socrates asks Phaedrus: Would a sensible farmer, in possession of seeds that he cared about and wanted to bear fruit, seriously sow them in a garden of Adonis, and take joy in watching them turn beautiful in eight days, or, would he do that for the sake of play and for the feast, if he did it at all? They agree that a serious farmer would sow his seeds in a more appropriate soil, and that he would be content, if what he sowed reached maturity in eight months.

In this chapter, I offer an interpretation of two seeds planted in the literary soil of the Adonia, AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 (Dioscorides 3 and 4 G–P). Both have long been orphaned, both seem to point to the same thing, but it is only one of them that even scholars have tried to bastardize:

> Ἡ πιθανὴ μ’ ἐτρωσεν Ἀριστονόη, φίλ’ Ἀδωνι,
> κοψαμένη τῇ σῇ στίβεα πάρ καλύβη,
> εἰ δώσει ταύτην καὶ ἐμοὶ χάριν, ἐὰν ἀποπνεύσω,
> μὴ πρόφασις, σύμπλουν σὺ με λαβὼν ἄμαγον.

AP 5.53 (Dioscorides 3 G–P)

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204 Pl. *Phdr*. 275 d4-e5; paraphrases of the *Phaedrus* in this chapter are adaptations from the translation of Rowe, 1986. This passage aptly describes epigrammatic communication; cf. Fantuzzi-Hunter, 2002, 431.


206 For ἄμαγον in AP 5.53, cf. Giangrande, 1967, 41, n. 6, who compares it with εἴπων of Theocr. *Id.* 14.11. Moreover, I follow B. Thurlington, 1949, 60, (and Galán Vioque, 2001, 46) in reading σῷμα for σῶν in AP 5.193, which, as Gow–Page, 2, 238, point out, is likely to be a scribal variation.
Persuasive Aristonoe wounded me, dear Adonis,
beating her breasts by your hut.
If she will give this favour to me too, if I die,
let there be no excuse—depart with me as your companion.

"Ἡ τροφερὴ μ’ ἡγευσε Κλεώ τὰ γαλακτίνι, Ἄδωνι,
tῇ σῇ κοφαμένη στήθεα παννυχίδι.
eἶ δῶσει κάμοι ταύτην χάριν, ἢν ἀποπνεύσω,
mὴ προφάσεις, σύμπλουν σύμ με λαβὼν ἀγέτω.

AP 5.193 (Dioscorides 4 G–P)

Voluptuous Cleo caught me, Adonis,
beating her milk-white breasts at your night-festival.
If she will give this favour to me too, if I die,
let there be no excuses—let her depart with me as her companion.

The close similarity of the epigrams—they are almost identical—has puzzled scholars in
their attempts to define the nature of the relationship between them. Some scholars have
sought to explain the textual differences in terms of interpolations in the course of
transmission, or in terms of a remodelling by a later author.²⁰⁷ Others, again, have assumed an
altogether different author, with the result that one of the two, especially AP 5.193, has been
attributed to Asclepiades, to Marcus Argentarius, to an anonymous imitator, and, more often,
to a likewise anonymous parodist.²⁰⁸ I begin by examining the suggestion that AP 5.193
should be read as a parody in relation to AP 5.53.

²⁰⁷ Reitzenstein, 1903, col. 1128 suggests the possibility that Meleager remodelled Dioscorides AP 5.53 into AP
5.193 when including it in his Garland; cf. also Hecker, 1852, 220-221, (quoted approvingly by Dübner, 1864,
141): ‘qua diversa leguntur, tantum correctorum praepostera cura temere interpolata sunt, quam pristina species
non diversa fuerit’. See now FH 48, 106, n. 45, where Parsons holds that scribal carelessness ‘will not wash’ as
an explanation for the differences between the two epigrams. Parsons mentions authorial adaption and oral
corruption as two other possibilities.

²⁰⁸ Stadtmueller, 1894, 161, comments ‘eiusdem Dioscoridis non videntur hoc ep. et V 52 [= AP 5.53],
alterutrum aut imitatoris est aut Asclepiadæ’. Waltz, 1960, 88, n. 1, holds AP 5.193 to be a parody of AP 5.53,
and cannot therefore assign it to Dioscorides. Hubaux–Henry, 1937, 224, hold it unlikely that an author would
parody himself, and suggest that AP 5.193 is the work of Marcus Argentarius. Giangrande, 1967, 41-43, gives
further arguments in support of the view that AP 5.193 is a parody of AP 5.53; for which see below. More
For all the similarities, there are still differences between the two epigrams. The opening descriptions and the names of the female characters, and the concluding imperative forms, are perhaps the most striking. In AP 5.193, the wish to be carried off as a companion or σύμπλως of Cleo has been interpreted as a sexual metaphor, and it is this sexual metaphor that has, in its turn, been the main argument for those who consider AP 5.193 as parody of AP 5.53.

It seems fair to ask what exactly this wish for a sexual encounter might parody in the corresponding epigram. The dramatic setting of the epigrams, the Adonia, suggests that it cannot be very much, since sexual fantasies and encounters are recurrent features in literary representations of the festival. While we can only speculate about the contents of comedies entitled Adonis and Adoniazousai, Moschion’s monologue in Menander’s Samia, at least, is highly relevant for our purposes:

... ἔξις ἀγροῦ δή καταδραμῶν
ὁς ἔτυκη[έ] γ’ εἶς Ἀδώνι αὐτῶς κατέλαβον
συνημμένας ἐνθάδε πρὸς ἡμᾶς μετά τιναν
アルバム γυναικῶν τῆς δ’ ἔφοτής παιδιάν
πολλή[ν] ἔχωνσις οἶνον εἰκός, συμπαρῶν

substantially, but inconclusively, Thurlington, 1949, 61, rejects AP 5.193 on metrical grounds, stating that line 3 of AP 5.193 would be the only hexameter in Dioscorides beginning with three spondaic feet.

209 Cf. Waltz, 1960, 88, n. 1. I agree with Waltz in regarding Cleo as the subject of the imperative; in Waltz’ translation ‘qu’elle me prenne comme compagnon de traversée et m’emménne’. Gow–Page, 2, 239, acknowledge the fact that ‘amatory exercises are elsewhere described in nautical metaphors’, but still hold it to be highly improbable here. AP 5.54 (Dioscorides 7 G–P) provides us with an additional Dioscoridean example of sexual activity described with nautical imagery; for further examples, cf. Thornton, 1997, 35-37, and Henderson, 1991, 161-166. Now, the problem one must face in retaining ἄγριω with Cleo as subject is the masculine form λαβῶν, which both Waltz and Gow–Page (and Galán Vioque who prints the conjecture ἄντης without comment) fail to address. Giangrande, 1967, 42, neatly avoids the problem by using λαβῶν in his interpretation of Cleo as a pathicus and a ‘Pseudo-mädchen’ in parodic contrast to Aristonoe. The arguments in favour of such an interpretation, including λαβῶν, are inconclusive, however, and I share the scepticism of Sider, 1997, 179-180. As for the seemingly incongruous λαβῶν, I refer to the general discussion of Langholf, 1977, 290-307, who notes some Hellenistic examples on p. 293. On pp. 297-300, Langholf has collected a large number of parallels to unexpected masculine participles in conjunction with imperatives and imperative infinitives from Hippocratic prescriptions, in which a female patient is the agent. I cannot help wondering whether the prescription context may somehow be at play here, but leave the matter open.

Coming back in a hurry from our farm I found them, as it happened, gathered at our house for the Adonis-festival along with some other women. The festivities, as one might expect, were providing a good deal of fun and since I was there along with them, I became, I suppose, erotically possessed. You see, the noise they were making was giving me a sleepless night – they were carrying their gardens on to the roof, dancing, celebrating the night away, scattered all over the roof. I hesitate to say what happened next – perhaps I’m ashamed when there is no good being ashamed; even so, I’m ashamed. The girl became pregnant. By telling you this, I am also saying what happened before. I did not deny that I was to blame.

Moschion’s erotic possession, and his subsequent congress with Plangon during the festival night can be paralleled in the fragmentary remains of Lollianus’ Phoinicica, where, in all probability, the Adonia sets the scene for another sexual encounter.213 If, indeed, voyeurism, erotic possession and sexual encounters are to be held as prominent themes in literary representations of the festival, it seems safe to assume that the conclusion of AP 5.193 need not be viewed as parodic. On the contrary, one could argue that sexual fantasies are inherent to the situation, a festival celebrated by women seen through a male gaze, and therefore likely to be present also in AP 5.53.

Even though AP 5.53 is less outright erotic than AP 5.193, as we soon shall see, the wish for a sexual encounter in AP 5.53 does go beyond the point of mere inference from the dramatic context: being a σύμπλος of Adonis does not simply imply irrevocable death, but

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also resurrection, as is suggested by Theocr. *Id.* 15.136-137 and 143-144. A different appreciation of what the speaker of AP 5.53 hopes for as he seemingly wishes to die, may be gleaned from AP 5.162 (Asclepiades 8 G–P), which many scholars hold as one of the models for the epigram in question:

> Ἡ λαμπρὴ μ’ ἔτρωσε Φιλαῖνιον, εἰ δὲ τὸ τραύμα 
> μὴ σαφές, ἀλλ’ ὁ πόνος δύναται εἰς ὄνυχα.
> οἶχοι, Ἡρωτες, ὅλωλα, διοίχομαι, εἰς γὰρ ἐταίραν 
> νυστάξων ἐπέβην τήρδ’, ἐθηγόν τ’ αἴδα.

AP 5.162 (Asclepiades 8 G–P)

Wanton Philaenion has wounded me, and even if the wound
is not obvious, the pain sinks to the core.

I’m lost, Erotes, I’m done for, I’m gone, for I carelessly
trud upon this whore, and I’ve touched death.

The sexual imagery with which this epigram is brimming has been duly observed and accounted for; there can be little doubt that the death to which the speaker of Asclepiades’ epigram repeatedly refers, involves sexual congress with Philaenion. The speaker of the Dioscoridean epigrams is longing, I suggest, for this kind of ‘death’. Already the verb ἀποσπέω in AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 reads like a wish for a kiss (if not a death-wish), but it may not be entirely insignificant that ‘the last kiss’ counts as a well-known motif in the Adonis

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214 Of course, in AP 5.53, σύμπλος, refers also to the custom of the Ptolemaic Adonia of committing an effigy of Adonis to the sea, mentioned in Theocr. *Id.* 15.133, cf. also Reed, 1997, 19-20. Both AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 seem to be firmly rooted, as it were, in Theocr. *Id.* 15, not only in terms of dealing with the Adonia. Note the variation of φιλ’ Ἀδωνι and Ἀδωνι in AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 respectively, which parallels Theocr. *Id.* 15.143-144. Possibly, even the names Ἀριστονοῦ and Κλεώ could be seen as echoes of two female protagonists in Theocritus’ idyll – Πραξινώα and Γοργώ.


myth. In Dioscorides’ epigrams, however, the wish to depart with Adonis, that is, to die and to rise again, completes the shift to a metaphorical death that is sexual intercourse. One could consider it as a positive equivalent of the negative expression ἠθυγών τ’ Ἄιδα in AP 5.162. Both epigrams deal with sex, and we may note the complete reversal from a negative experience with a ‘professional’ to a positive desire for an ‘ordinary’ woman as a pointed difference between AP 5.53 and AP 5.162.

The case against the authenticity of AP 5.193, based on the notion that it is a parody of AP 5.53, I find rather weak. The purported difference between the epigrams does not seem to be one of sexual motif or theme, but rather of tone. The difference in tone begins already in the variation between πιθανή and τρυφερή in AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 respectively. Even though πιθανή would have carried sexual implications to readers familiar with epigrams such as AP 5.158, there can be little doubt that the adjective τρυφερή came with more implications still. This holds true also of the difference between the unqualified στίβεα in AP 5.53 and the more picturesque τὰ γαλάκτινα στίβεα in AP 5.193. Though it may reasonably be assumed that the breasts in particular, and not just the upper chest in general, were implied in AP 5.53, it must nevertheless be remembered that, in female ritual lament, the distinction between beating one’s chest and beating one’s breasts is generally thought to have been

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217 Cf. Bion, EA vv. 46-47: τοσοσιον με φίλαιον ὅσον ζώη τὸ φίλαμα, | ἄχρις ἀποφέξης ἐς ἕμων στόμα, with the parallels given by Reed, 1997, on Bion EA vv. 44-50; for a more general association between breath and kiss, cf. Ach. Tat. 2, 37.9-10: τὸ δὲ ἀσθέν σὺν πνεύματι ἑρωτικῷ μέχρι τῶν τοῦ στόματος χειλέων ἀναθηρών συντετχάνει πλανομένον τὸ φιλήματι καὶ ζητοῦντι καταβήναι κάτω, ἀναστρέφον τὸ σὺν τῷ ἀσθένει τὸ φιλήμα καὶ μιχθέν ἔπεται καὶ βάλλει τὴν καρδίαν.

218 For a male lover being called Adonis by his mistress, cf. AP 5.113.1-4 (Argentarius 9 G–P): Ἡράθης πλουτῶν, Σωκύκρατις, ἀλλὰ πέντε ἄν | οὐκέτ’ ἔρρη: λιμῶ σφίδμασαν ὅσον ἔχει. | ἦ δὲ πάροι σε καλέσα μύρον καὶ τερπνῶν Ἄδωνιν | Μυροάρα, νῦν σοι τοῦτο μοι αὐξάνεται. This remote parallel may gain weight when we consider, for instance, Argentarius’ variation of AP 5.54 (Dioscorides 7 G–P) in AP 5.116 (Argentarius 10 G–P); for further parallels between the two, cf. Moll, 1920, 32.

219 Contrast the interpretation of AP 5.53 offered by Hubaux–Henry, 1937, 222: ‘Nous ne croyons pas que le poète [...] souhaita les faveurs d’Aristonoc [...]. L’inspiration de l’épigramme est plus purement sentimentale’.

220 For the distinction, cf. Tarán 1979, 5: ‘I call motif the constituent feature or dominant idea around which the poem is built and which can be applied to various situations. The situations themselves, that is, the anecdotal part or the “plot” of the epigram is what I call its theme’.

221 The two ‘extreme’ views on πιθανή in this context, would be those of Giangrande, 1967, 42, ‘Dioskorides hatte πιθανή von Aristonoe in dem Sinne „schön” gebraucht’, and Cairns, 1998, 169, who reads πιθανή as a hetairic technical term. With regards to AP 5.53, it has often been suggested that πιθανή could be a borrowing from AP 5.158 (Asclepiades 4 G–P). The interpretation offered above on the relation between AP 5.53 and AP 5.162 may perhaps serve as an argument against Cairns, 1998, 169, who holds it impossible that Dioscorides would have borrowed πιθανή from Asclepiades unless he wanted Aristonoe to come off as a hetaira; see now Winkler, 1990:1, 199-202, on the Adonis festival as an event not only, or even mainly for hetairai.
upheld; most notably so, in the similar case of Bion’s *Adonis*.222 Thus, in AP 5.193, τὰ γαλάκτερα provide us with a significant contrast to AP 5.53, in so far as it leaves us with no doubt that the focus has become more directly placed on the breasts in particular. A similar tension may be felt in the variation between καλύβη of AP 5.53 and παννυχίδει of AP 5.193, between the hut and the all-nighter. Again, I take παννυχίδει in AP 5.193 to be erotically more suggestive than καλύβη. Indeed, the noun παννυχίς is used to refer to a night of love-making in AP 5.200 and AP 5.201.223 Add to this the pointed difference in the concluding imperative, with ἀπαγόν in AP 5.53 referring to Adonis, and ἀφέσω in AP 5.193 referring to Cleo, and I hope to have amassed sufficient support for claiming that it is a general feature of AP 5.193 to be more suggestive and more boldly explicit than AP 5.53 in terms of erotic language, and that this is the main difference between the two epigrams.

Scholars who accept both epigrams as the work of Dioscorides have found a convenient recourse in simply deeming one as a variant of the other; perhaps an authorial revision for a later publication.224 Admittedly, this is not wholly inconceivable.225 But the commonness of self-variation among the literary epigrammatists, which would be an obvious (and strong) argument for regarding both epigrams as genuine, makes it possible too to regard them as written for the same publication.226 It is generally considered a common phenomenon for literary epigrams to be written in pairs of two, or even in longer sequences, which were intended to be read together. It has been convincingly argued that AP 7.37 (Dioscorides 22 G–P) and 7.707 (Dioscorides 23 G–P) form such a pair.227 The study of epigram pairs has been directed primarily to the epigrams of Lucilius and Martial, where scholars have categorised a

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223 Cf. Gutzwiller, 1998, 176-177, with n. 124. We may also compare with the usage of the verb παννυχίζειν in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* v. 1069.

224 So, Fraser, 2, 846, n. 331. Gow–Page, 2, 238, consider the two epigrams as alternative versions by the same poet. Cf. also Reitzenstein, 1903, col. 1128, who suggests that AP 5.53 may have been the primary version, and that AP 5.193 was an improvement published in a later edition. In contrast, Weinreich, 1941, 86, holds AP 5.193 to be an inferior version on stylistic grounds. For instance, he considers ἀφετηρίζειν of AP 5.53 to be ‘ganz volksreligiös echte’, and so more apt than the simple ἀφετηρίζειν in AP 5.193. However, the variation of ἀφετηρίζειν of AP 5.53 and ἀφετηρίζειν of AP 5.193 is argued to be a matter of style, and not a matter of content. For instance, Dickey, 1996, 134-135: ‘in Homer and Sophocles ἀφετηρίζειν seems to express genuine affection, but this usage is weakened in Euripides and comedy, and in late Greek ἀφετηρίζειν often carries very little meaning of any sort’.

225 Cf., for instance, the suggestion made by P. Parsons (cf. *P. Oxy.*, 1999, 39 and 52) to explain the textual differences in AP 11.328 as preserved in the Palatine manuscript and *P. Oxy.* 4502 respectively.

number of different types of pairs. One particular category of epigram pairs, the so-called ‘Variantenpaare’, where one of the two constituent epigrams often forms an ‘Übertreibung’, or an ‘exaggeration’ in relation to the first, is obviously relevant here. AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 could well be considered in similar terms: as we have seen, AP 5.193 may be read as a kind of ‘exaggerated’ version of AP 5.53.

In Classical philology it is usually demanded that intertextual relations made between texts take specific and verifiable correspondences, such as shared linguistic features, as their starting-point. Accordingly, the ‘intertextuality’ between these two epigrams will never be in doubt. While it is perfectly possible to stop at this interpretive turn, further possibilities are opened up by the move to read the epigrams as one unit. So, for instance, the endings of the two epigrams may be set against two lines of a Callimachean epigram, quoted below, in a way which certainly meets the above criterion of marked linguistic correspondences:

(AP 5.53.4): μὴ πρόφασις, σύμπλουν σύμ με λαβὼν ἄπαγον.

AP 5.193.4: μὴ προφάσεις, σύμπλουν σύμ με λαβὼν ἄνέτω.

AP 7.89.5-6 (Call. 1 Pf.; 54 G–P): εἰ δ’ ἀγε, σύμ μου ἄλεγεν, ποτέρην εἰς ὑμέναυον ἄγω.

We may note, to begin with, the tmesis – while that of συμβουλεύω is unparalleled in the Greek Anthology, tmesis of συλλαμβάνω occurs only three times: in the two Dioscoridean epigrams, and in AP 9.559, which is attributed to Crinagoras (= G–P), who is generally thought of as strongly influenced by Dioscorides. Whereas C. Aet. fr. 112.6 seems to be the only other instance of σύν in tmesis in Callimachus, AP 6.220.13 (Dioscorides 16 G–P) provides the only additional example of tmesis whatsoever in Dioscorides’ epigrams;

229 Cf. the axiom proposed by Hinds, 1998, 26 (which ought to be equally, if not even more, applicable to Hellenistic poetry): ‘There is no discursive element in a Roman poem, no matter how unremarkable in itself, and no matter how frequently repeated in the tradition, that cannot in some imaginable circumstance mobilize a specific allusion’.
230 Cf. Index AG, s.vv. συμβουλεύω and συλλαμβάνω.
this certainly highlights the expression. Moreover, in the assimilation of the pre-verb, which is followed here by an enclitic form of the personal pronoun in the first person, these lines of Dioscorides and Callimachus have another formal feature in common. This common feature is conspicuous, because it goes against an early trend to avoid such assimilation in writing. Furthermore, we may note that AP 5.53 and 5.193, taken together, parallel the close repetition of άγω in AP 7.89. One might further argue that the jingle σύμ μοι ... άγω is strong enough a marker to enable the rhetoric of ‘leading’: read as a pair, the Dioscoridesan epigrams lead us right to the lines in Callimachus’ epigram where the stranger asks Pittacus: ‘Please advise me which woman I should wed’.

It is generally required that the correspondences also have interpretive consequences for the text(s) from which one proceeds. As Fowler puts it: ‘We ask: show me that this is not uncommon, and tell me something interesting.’ I will thus have to make an attempt at the latter, but only after having reiterated that Callimachus’ vast influence on contemporary and later poetry is undisputed. Moreover, it has been argued that AP 7.89 was so prominent among Callimachus’ epigrams as to occupy the initial position in his collection. In other words, it would be an eligible candidate for any contemporary or later epigrammatist to allude to.

The Callimachus epigram recounts an anecdote of a stranger asking the advice of Pittacus on the matter of which of two brides to marry, one equal to his rank and wealth, the other superior. Pittacus draws the stranger’s attention to some young boys who repeat the phrase τήν κατά σαυτών ἔλα, that is, follow your own course or drive your own line, as they play with their whipping-tops. This is a hint, of course, one which is taken by the stranger, who leads the poorer of the two women to his home.

233 Cf. BD 1990, §19. In the LSJ s. v. σύν 2. II., we find two examples of ήφι in tmesis. In Gignac, 1976, 167, we are given two examples of σύν assimilated to σύμ before labial stops. It should be noted too that even though assimilation of -ν in word-junction is more frequent in Ptolemaic papyri, Mayser, 1970, §53, does not give a single example of σύν assimilated to σύμ.
234 Fowler, 2000, 123.
237 A discussion of this phrase is provided by Livrea, 1995.
Let us now return to Dioscorides’ two epigrams. If we hold the dramatic context of the epigrams to be one and the same festival, and the speaker of both to be one and the same person (and there is nothing which would suggest otherwise), how should we interpret the voyeuristic gaze which moves from Aristonoe to Cleo, and the differences between its two observations, as outlined above? The latter implies that some sort of comparison is being made. An obvious possibility, therefore, would be to apply the stranger’s question to our Dioscoridean context: *please tell me which girl I should wed.* In other words, Aristonoe and Cleo assume the places of the two brides between which the speaker has a choice to make. Of course, our speaker’s interest would probably fall somewhat short of actual marriage—a humoristic point, perhaps, in relation to Callimachus’ stranger—but the variation in AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 between πιθανή and τρυφερή, and καλόβη and πανυχίδει respectively, could be viewed as echoes of the poorer and the superior bride in Callimachus’ epigram.238

Dioscorides’ two epigrams can now be seen to range within a wider epigrammatic motif, namely that of comparing (and choosing between) two kinds of lovers. The motif is familiar from a number of later epigrams: in AP 5.18 (Rufinus 5 P), a slave girl is preferred to a luxurious lady. In AP 11.34 (Philodemus 6 S) the life with a ‘stay-at-home girl’ is compared with and preferred to that which involves revels and a ‘drunken whore’. Again, in AP 12.173 (Philodemus 11 S), the comparison and subsequent choice involves a girl who is hard to get and one who is easily available.239 In this respect, the innovation or originality of Dioscorides’ approach may have been that the lovers are being treated in one epigram each, rather than being swiftly dealt with in one and the same. The process of comparison and choice stretches over two separate poems. In the examples quoted above, however, the differences between the types of lovers that are being compared are more prominent than those between Dioscorides’ two women. This requires an explanation, and, once again, the Callimachus epigram helps us to suggest a solution.

The two brides in Callimachus’ epigram, it has been argued, have meta-poetical implications, with the poorer bride representing what is elsewhere referred to as the thin Muse.240 Similarly, the phrase τήν κατά σαυτόν ἠλα has also been given a meta-poetical significance by some scholars. Livrea even argues that ‘we might speak of the poetics of τήν

239 Cf. AP 12.86 (Meleager 18 G–P) and AP 5.89 (Argentarius 4 G–P), and Martial 9.32 with Henriksén, 1998, 168-171, for further Roman parallels.
κατὰ σαυτὸν ἔλα, to indicate the same complex of ideas and images which are expressed so magisterially in the Prologue to the Aitia and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{241} The epigram ends with an exhortation to its addressee, that he too should follow his own course. However, the identity of this addressee, and the implication of this exhortation are still debated. These questions need to be briefly addressed before we can return to Dioscorides’ epigrams.

The question of the addressee seemingly depends on the textual variant adopted in AP 7.89.16: that is, whether we read οὖτω καὶ σὺ, Δίων, τὴν κατὰ σαυτὸν ἔλα, or οὖτω καὶ σὺ γ’ ἱων τὴν κατὰ σαυτὸν ἔλα.\textsuperscript{242} Regardless, however, of which variant we would prefer, and whom we would hold as the primary recipient of the message that Callimachus wants to convey, one simply cannot ignore a wider range of readers as potential addressees.\textsuperscript{243} Even if the phrase τὴν κατὰ σαυτὸν ἔλα is an exhortation to Dion to ‘be true to his own natural inclination towards ἀπεπτόμενο’, as Livrea would have it,\textsuperscript{244} this wider range of readers, whether real or hypothetical, cannot be excluded as recipients. All the more so, if, as Gutzwiller suggests, the phrase forms a programmatic statement with reference to Callimachus’ own collection of epigrams, and general philosophy of life and poetics.\textsuperscript{245} From a readerly point of view, then, it is necessary to relate and respond to the exhortation to follow our own course.

The views expressed by Callimachus on the cyclic poem, the Assyrian river and the common track make it unlikely that he ever exhorts us to follow our own course freely.\textsuperscript{246} The readers find themselves in a position similar to that of the stranger, whose social position dictated the only course that would have been acceptable for him to follow. Thus, the metapoetical implication to be understood by the reader in the exhortation to ‘follow your own course’, becomes the very opposite: a dogmatic, if not polemical, ascertainment in relation to

\textsuperscript{241} Livrea, 1995, 480; contrast Asper, 1997, 226.
\textsuperscript{242} So, for instance, Gutzwiller, 1998, 224 and 225, with n. 84, reads σύ γ’ ἱων. Contrast Livrea, 1995, 480, who holds this reading to be unacceptable and reads σύ, Δίων, in its place. The latter is preferred also by Pagonari 1997.
\textsuperscript{243} Cf. Bleisch, 1996, 462: ‘The wit of the poem, which we seem to be missing, must lie in the application of the proverb to the addressee, whose situation must be slightly different from the stranger’s’. I fully agree, but I am not convinced by the solution proposed by Bleisch, who reads ‘houtο καὶ su Dion’ as an anagram for ‘Dionusiako’, and who takes this dual vocative to refer to Ptolemy II and Arsinoe.
\textsuperscript{244} Again, Livrea, 1995, 480; contrast, Pagonari, 1997, 84, who takes this as an exhortation to Dion the philosopher to stick to what he knows, and not to occupy himself with poetry: ‘Ἐστι, το ἐπίγραμμα πλαισίωσεται απὸ τὴ βασικὴ ἕννα της ἀποφαγῆς της πολυπαγμοσύνης και γίνεται τελεία ἕνα κείμενο πολεμικῆς, αλλὰ καὶ ποιητικῆς, εναντίων τῶν εραιστικῶν που δεν εννοοῦν ὅτι ἡ λογοτεχνία δεν εἶναι καθ’ ἔσωνις, δεν τους ταιρίαζε’.\textsuperscript{245} Gutzwiller, 1998, 226.
\textsuperscript{246} Cf. Cameron, 1995, for a critical view, along with further references, on the passages in question here, that is AP 12.43 (Call. 28 Pf.; 2 G–P), id. Ap. 105-112, and id. fr. 1 Pf., for which see also Hopkinson, 1988, 86-100.
all other poetics – in reality, there is only one course to follow, that which Callimachus sets forth.247

It is quite possible to follow up the meta-poetical implications of Callimachus’ two brides with regard to the Dioscoridean epigrams, which certainly give room for reading their two brides, Aristonoe and Cleo, as representing the epigram in which they play the principal part. By way of introduction to my argument, I turn to an obvious example of Dioscoridean personification of poetic pieces, to AP 7.407 (Dioscorides 18 G–P), where Sappho’s songs are referred to as her immortal daughters:248

"Ἡδιστὸν φιλέουσι νέοις προσανάκλημ᾽ ἐρώτων,
Σαπφοῦ, σὺν Μούσαις, ἦ ὡς σε Πιερή
η ᾿Ελικὼν εὐκίσσος ἵσα πνεύσουσαν ἐκεῖναις
κοσμεῖ τὴν ῾Ερέασφ Μούσαν ἐν Αἰολίδι,
η καὶ ὦ Μήρον ῾Ιμέναιοις ἕχων εὑφεγγέα πεῦκην
σὺν σοὶ νυμφιδίων ἵσταθ’ ὑπέρ θαλάμων,
η Κενίρεω νέον ἔρνος ὀδυρομένη ᾿Αφροδίτη
σύνθρησιος μακάρων ἵερον ἄλος ὀρής,
πάντη, πότνια, χαῖρε θεοῖς ἵσα· σάς γὰρ ἀοἰδᾶς
ἀθανάτας ἔχομεν νῦν ἐτὶ θυγατέρας.

O Sappho, sweetest support for passions for young lovers,
you must surely be keeping company with the Muses,
honoured by ivied Helicon and by Pieria,
for the songs of the Muse from Eresus equals theirs;
or else it’s the god of weddings, Hymen,
who stands by you over the bridal bed, torch in hand;
or else you share Aphrodite’s weeping for young Adonis,
and so come to see the holy grove of the blessed.
Greetings wherever you are, lady, greetings as to a god:
for your songs, your immortal daughters, are with us still.

It is tempting to see the immortality set up for Sappho as a strategic reassurance of that of the composer of the laudatory epigram. A number of Disocoridean compositions feature

247 Following Schmitz, 1999, 151-178, perhaps the question could be left open, whether the poetological function of this dogmatic, probably polemical stance, in fact works reader-inclusively.
the same divinities that are mentioned in this epigram as associated with Sappho.\textsuperscript{249} While Dioscorides lets Hymen stand by Sappho in her composition of epithalamia, in AP 5.52.5-6 (Dioscorides 6 G–P), his speaker prays that Hymen will hear lamentations rather than wedding songs on the wedding night of the woman who broke her vow of fidelity to him: \textit{θρήνους, ὅ ὶὙμήναι, παρὰ κλησίν ἄκούσας | Ἀρσινόης παστῷ μεμψαμένους προδότη.}\textsuperscript{250} The parallels between the Sapphic poems praised and Dioscorides’ own epigrams continue, but again with a twist. Whereas Sappho is represented as a fellow mourner of Aphrodite, a \textit{σύνθρηνος}, Dioscorides, it has been argued, jumps into Adonis’ shoes.\textsuperscript{251} Sappho is keeping the Muses company; her songs equal theirs. In AP 5.138 (Dioscorides 2 G–P), we shall see how a female singer turns into an erotic Muse, in so far as she becomes the impetus for further poetic production. Finally, in a poem in which Sappho is so obviously represented as the mother of her poems,\textsuperscript{252} it seems reasonable, in the light of the above, to delve into the possibilities of a correspondence with regard to its author, Dioscorides. There is little to suggest that we should consider Dioscorides as the father of any his epigrams. On the contrary and as we saw in the preceding chapter, if anything they read more like his all too humanly divine mistresses.

Let me return to Callimachus’ epigram after this detour. The situation of the stranger, with his choice of brides, corresponds to that of the reader and his or her choice of which poetical programme to remain faithful to. In Dioscorides’ epigrams, the speaker’s position, with his more or less simultaneous confrontation with two objects of his desire, is parallel to that of the readers in their meeting with these two poetic pieces. In other words, on a metapoetical level of interpretation, it is between AP 5.53 and AP 5.193, the two epigrams themselves, that the readers should make their comparison and choice.

We have now been confronted with and compared the two objects of our desire – Dioscorides’ two poems. How to proceed with our choice? I am inclined to answer this question in anti-climactically straightforward and simple way, by allowing the epigram against which we have set our two epigrams to dictate it. Much like the stranger, and the

\textsuperscript{249} I thus go somewhat further than Williamson, 1995, 14: ‘The whole poem thus becomes a monument not only to Sappho but also to its author’s learning and wit’.

\textsuperscript{250} For textual problems in the last of these two lines, cf. Gow–Page, 2, 241.

\textsuperscript{251} Cf. Papanghelis, 1987, 65: ‘That Dioscorides/Adonis and Aristonoe/Venus may have been a prod on the way to Propertius/Adonis and Cynthia/Venus is not an irreverent guess, for [sc. Propertius] 2.13 too abuses the same mythological/ritual posture, albeit in a more serious vein than that in which the roguish epigrammatist jumps into Adonis’ shoes’.

readers of Callimachus’ epigram, we too are left with the phrase τὴν κατὰ σαυτῶν ἔλα as the key to the answer we seek.

In relation to Callimachus, we may consider the application of the catch phrase to involve a shift in focus, from poetics to poem on the one hand, and from authorial control to readerly independence on the other. This time around, ‘follow your own course’, seems to be an exhortation to do just that, that is, to choose between the two epigrams as one sees fit. These contrasts may be significant, though they could hardly serve as support for the notion that Dioscorides was an opponent of Callimachus or his programme, as some seem to suggest.253 It could also be argued, however, that the independence in terms of choosing, between women and epigrams alike, exists only at first glance, if at all, as we have seen to be the case in Callimachus. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the introductory parts of the two epigrams are metrically identical, and thus fully interchangeable: ‘Ἡ πιθανή ἡ’ ἐπροσεν, could easily take the place of ‘Ἡ τρυφερή ἡ’ ἔγρηνεσε, and vice versa. Though such a swap would completely alter the poems in one respect, very little would in fact have changed. This is not entirely without consequences. On one level of reading, it corroborates our earlier view that the erotic desire expressed by the speaker in his meeting with the women is, essentially, one and the same. Aristonoe or Kleo? As long as the desire is satisfied, who cares? Turn now to the corresponding question, on the parallel, meta-poetical level of reading. AP 5.53 or AP 5.193? When each of the two epigrams can so easily turn into the other, how do we determine which, in the end, is which? This goes beyond the mere recycling of metaphors, or the tradition of replacing proper names of the same metrical value in otherwise identical epigrams.254 We seem to have reached a point where the two poems may be read as an indulgent enactment of the principle of poetic variation and the phenomenon of poetic revision. Applying oneself to an epigram in this way, that is, actively dismembering it into parts and allowing them to take each others place can be remotely paralleled in the Phaedrus, where Socrates uses an epigram to criticize the structure of Lysias’ speech: the epigram, AP 7.153, is ridiculed because ‘it makes no difference whether any part of it is put first or last’.255

Let us return now to where we left Socrates in the Phaedrus at the very outset of this chapter. Socrates continues the seed simile by arguing that the sensible man would hardly be in earnest in planting his seeds in black water, ‘sowing them with a pen through words that are incapable of speaking in their own support, and incapable of adequately teaching what is

true’.256 Such a garden of letters, as Socrates labels it, is characterised as one of amusement, as a storage of reminders, for the writer as well as for others who follow in the same tracks. The attitude adopted by Socrates towards this garden is not entirely negative, for, as he says, ‘when others resort to other sorts of amusements, watering themselves with drinking-parties and other things which go along with them, then he, it seems, will spend his time amusing himself with the things I say, instead of those’.257

As we saw in the introduction, the erotic epigram is construed both as bookish in nature and as intimately connected to the sympotic tradition. In addition, Fantuzzi has recently highlighted the importance of the narrative strategy of the Symposium as a literary precedent for the alleged conflict of writing of eros while still claiming status as intellectuals that Fantuzzi finds expressed in various epigrammatists. Of particular interest to Dioscorides’ epigrams, as I believe, is Fantuzzi’s observation that such strategies could involve ‘complessi risvolti metapoetici’.258 No doubt they did; only, the Symposium is a notoriously multifaceted and complex text, not least in terms of its narrative strategies.259 One might be tempted to read its statement that the poets have yet to eulogize the god Eros (177a-d) as being seized upon by the erotic epigrammatists as a call for poems; Hunter has even suggested that ‘a collection of erotic epigrams may be seen as a poetic analogy’ to the Symposium.260 Yet, the treatment of the two poets in the Symposium is far from flattering, and the end of the dialogue has been read as representing ‘the ascendancy of the life of philosophy over that of poetry’.261

Set against the Phaedrus, it is difficult to group these two epigrams with the pastime writing of Socrates’ approval. They seem to be disqualified both on account of being things that go together with symposia (ironically, with the Platonic Symposium), and on account of being planted in a garden of Adonis. However, the alleged urge of epigrammatists to seek self-justification, if applicable at all in this case, might just be read as ironically sought in terms which are explicitly condemned by the hostile authority upon which we expect them to call. In this connection (and by means of conclusion), I want to return also to the portrayal of Sappho’s poems as her immortal daughters and to the suggestion that these two epigrams, like AP 5.55, may be construed as the mistresses of their author. We might find reason to speak of

256 Pl. Phdr. 276 c7-9; translation Rowe, 1986, 127.
further ‘risvolti metapoetici’ in relation to Diotima’s exposition in the *Symposium* on the fertility of human beings. 262 As characterised by Diotima, we are fertile in both body and soul, 263 and seek immortality, renown, and a state of bliss through either the procreation of children, or, in the case of those with a fertile soul, through the generation of ‘prudence and virtue in general’; poets and inventors are to be found among the latter group. 264 If they had a choice, Diotima states, every human being would choose the kind of offspring that these people have: they look upon Homer and Hesiod and all the other good poets, and envy the fine offspring they have left behind to procure for them a glory immortally renewed in the memory of men. 265 I argued above that the immortality granted to Sappho’s daughters was extended to Dioscorides himself by virtue of his own treatments of the themes that he extolled Sappho for writing on. While the success of the poet’s strategy, however we construe it, is beyond question, I hope to have shown that (and further indicated how) Platonic metaphors relating to poetics and erotics may be used as more than rhetorical frames within which to interpret these and other Dioscoridean epigrams. As far as immortality goes, the case-studies of Doris and Aristonoe and Cleo suggest that there is a middle way, that this middle way may be incestuously perverted, and that the fertility of this poet soul is essentially carnal.

262 For a closer, more problematizing reading of this passage, see Halperin, 1990.
264 Pl. *Symp.* 208e1-209a3.
3. Athenion – AP 5.138 (Dioscorides 2 G–P)

Now your mind is open
2 poetry seldom heard
Ur heart has never been broken
Until U’ve heard these words


Only one of the epigrams treated in this dissertation may reasonably be thought to have been included in Meleager’s Garland. We find Dioscorides 2 G–P (AP 5.138) in the second segment of what was arguably the opening sequence of the Garland. It introduces the short sequence of epigrams AP 5.138-141. Significantly, song and love is the general theme of these epigrams, and this epigram itself enacts the fluxing and refluxing cycle of poetry and erotic desire, a theme to which I will be returning below:

"Ιππον Ἄθηνιον θ'νεν ἔμοι κακών ἐν πορί πᾶσα
Τλος ἃν, κάγῳ κείνῃ ἤμι ἐφλεγόμαν,
οὐ δεῖσαν Δαναῶν δεκέτῃ πόνον ἐν δ’ ἐνι φέγγει
τῷ τότε καὶ Τρῶες κάγῳ ἀπωλόμεθα.

Athenion sang of the Wooden Horse, an evil thing for me:
All Ilium was in flames, and I too, together with her, was set on fire,
without fear of ten years’ struggle of the Danaans.
In that one light (of blaze/day) both Trojans and I perished.

P.M. Fraser saw the move to set the two fires on pair as ‘a frigid conceit, inferior to Dioscorides’ other poems’. While consistent with that of other Greek epigrammatists, for whom Eros is violently consuming and rarely fulfilled, one might agree that the characterisation of erotic desire in this epigram, which sees the speaker’s passionate condition equal, in quality and in numbers, to the carnage which took place within the walls of Troy as

267 Fraser 1, 1972, 597
somewhat of an overkill. Yet, it is important to point out that the artifice goes beyond a mere comparison of fires. Rather, we see ‘the fire of Troy’ literalized in the ‘erotic fire’ of the speaker in a way remotely similar to that of ‘the burning of love’ in Theocritus 11.52-53, where the Cyclops would even endure the burning of that dear one eye of his.\footnote{269}

There is no tragic irony comparable to that of Theocritus’ idyll in the present epigram. Its mechanics of literalization are different, and, as the theme of Athenion’s song is transferred and realized on the speaker of the epigram; it destabilises any sharp division between the content of Athenion’s song on the one hand, and the dramatic action recounted in the epigram on the other. The device by which the theme of Athenion’s song is transferred unto the speaker rests to some degree on verbal ambiguities that are similarly transferable. This is how I would interpret the referential ambiguity of κακών in the first verse. The adjective can be read both as a neuter in apposition to the preceding phrase, and as masculine with ἱππον. It is both the Wooden Horse,\footnote{270} and Athenion’s performance that proved disastrous for our speaker,\footnote{271} and the ambiguity of κακών renders them difficult to distinguish from each other. In the second line of the poem, κεῖνη is similarly ambiguous. To be sure, the word formally refers to the preceding Ἰλίως, but even without pushing the argument so far as to read ἀμφίτειον γιασάντας ἡμᾶς καὶ κύμαθ᾽ ἐλοιτά, \textit{at the same time, I was set on fire by her/began to burn with passion for her)} Athenion will never be far from our thoughts as the referent of κεῖνη. The speaker is set on fire not together with Troy, but also with erotic passion for Athenion. Finally, in line 3, we see the same ambiguity in φέγγει, which sees the two fires come together as one. The noun φέγγος covers and is used of the light of day and the blaze of fire. Scholars have noted as much before, but apparently felt compelled to decide in an exclusive manner between the two possibilities. Whereas Weinreich, for instance, argues that the word must be understood as the light of the fire in which the city burns,\footnote{272} Gow–Page consider such a view improbable, and read φέγγος as meaning ‘day’.\footnote{273} Of course, ἐν δὲ ἐνὶ φέγγει, with φέγγος interpreted as day, provides a neat contrast to the preceding δεκέτη πόνναν.

The Trojans and the speaker, both poetic creatures, share the day of doom in the timeless

\footnote{268} Cf. Calame, 1999, 52-56.\footnote{269} Theoc. \textit{Id}. 11.49-54: τὸς καὶ τῶν ἐνίκησεν ἠκούν καὶ κῦμαθ᾽ ἐλοιτά; \textit{at the same time, I was set on fire by her/began to burn with passion for her)} Athenion will never be far from our thoughts as the referent of κεῖνη. The speaker is set on fire not together with Troy, but also with erotic passion for Athenion. Finally, in line 3, we see the same ambiguity in φέγγει, which sees the two fires come together as one. The noun φέγγος covers and is used of the light of day and the blaze of fire. Scholars have noted as much before, but apparently felt compelled to decide in an exclusive manner between the two possibilities. Whereas Weinreich, for instance, argues that the word must be understood as the light of the fire in which the city burns,\footnote{272} Gow–Page consider such a view improbable, and read φέγγος as meaning ‘day’.\footnote{273} Of course, ἐν δὲ ἐνὶ φέγγει, with φέγγος interpreted as day, provides a neat contrast to the preceding δεκέτη πόνναν.

The Trojans and the speaker, both poetic creatures, share the day of doom in the timeless

\footnote{270} For ἱππον used specifically of ‘the Wooden Horse’, Gow–Page, 2, 237, refer to AP 16.7 (Alcaeus 10 G–P).


\footnote{272} Weinreich, 1941, 69-70.
realm they inhabit. At the same time, ἐν πυρὶ πᾶσα and ἐφλεγόμαι of lines 1 and 2, have certainly paved the way for understanding φέγγει in the sense of the light in which the Trojans and the speaker perish. The ‘fire of Troy’ and the ‘erotic fire’ of the speaker become inseparable. It is said explicitly to be one and the same (ἐνί); of course, the ‘fire of Troy’ was itself ultimately kindled by erotic passion. So, unlike Weinreich, I think we have every reason to consider the possibility of a conscious play on the ambiguity of the word φέγγος.

Setting authorial consciousness aside, the ambiguities are there, throughout the epigram. Their function may be described as underpinning the device of transferral. The realisation of the theme of a dramatized song within an epigram on its (equally dramatized) first person speaker is paralleled in Crinagoras 2 G–P (AP 9.429):

To;n skopo;n Εὐβοίης ἀλικίμωνος ἔσεν Ἀριστῶ
Ναῦπλιον· ἐκ μολπῆς δ’ ὃ θρασύς ἐφλεγόμην.
ὁ ψευστής δ’ ὑπὸ νύκτα Καφρείης ἀπὸ πέτρης
πυρὸς ἔμην μετέβη δυσμόρον ἐς καρδίην.

Of the watchman of sea-beaten Euboia sang Aristo,
Nauplius. From the song, I, an audacious man, was set on fire.
The liar flame in the night from the rock of Caphereus
passed over to my ill-fated heart.

Just like the Trojans and Dioscorides’ speaker with them, and just like the Greeks who fell victims to the false beacon lit by Palamedes’ father, Nauplius, vengeful over the death of his son, so the speaker of Crinagoras’ epigram eventually perishes in erotic desire. Clearly, the emphasis in Crinagoras’ epigram lies on the deceitful nature of the workings of erotic desire through song, but the element of deceit is present also in the theme of the Wooden Horse so as to linger over the pathema of Dioscorides’ speaker as well. Interestingly, the speaker of Crinagoras’ epigram presents himself as audacious (ὁ θρασύς). The adjective could be said to pick up on the participial expression οὐ δείσας in the third line of the Dioscoridean epigram. However, and as I will argue below, whereas οὐ δείσας reads as a comment of surprise, ὁ θρασύς suggests for Crinagoras’ speaker an awareness of the risk of misfortune in attending a performance. In other words, what we lack in Dioscorides’ epigram in terms of explicitness, is provided by Crinagoras, not only in this respect, but also (and more clearly),

273 Gow–Page, 2, 237.
with the verb \( \mu \varepsilon \alpha \beta \alpha \lambda \nu \omega \), which is used, not only of the passing over from one place to another, but also of the changing of themes.

Among scholars who have noticed the thematic affinities between the two epigrams we find Gow–Page, but whereas most tend to speak of Crinagoras’ literary indebtedness to the Dioscoridean epigram,274 Gow–Page reach a different conclusion: ‘[t]he theme and treatment are very like Dioscorides 5.138=II, but we suppose that the picture is drawn from life.’275 Then again, most scholars have read the Dioscoridean epigram as drawn from real life as well. Yet, the historicizing tendencies of past interpreters’ outlook on performer, performance and piece performed cannot be said to have been very productive, as a brief outline of their suggestions will illustrate.

The name Ἀθηνίων, to begin with, sounds very much like that of a hetaira, as Gow–Page point out, but is not strictly a hetaira name.276 The name occurs in papyri, and Fraser drew attention to BGU 1169 (24 BC), where it refers to an Alexandrian woman.277 In addition, in P. Erasm. II 39 (152 BC) we find an Athenion as the lessee of a ship.278 Weinreich wonders about the fictitiousness of the name as such–is it a pseudonym, and if so, one taken by the singer herself, or conferred on her by the author–but even though he opens up for the possibility that the personal emotion of the author could be a literary game, the historicity of the singer seems as unquestionable for him as for most other scholars, for whom this is not even an issue.279 Whereas Weinreich, as noted in a previous chapter, would identify Athenion with the unnamed woman in Dioscorides 1 G–P,280 the beauty of a bronze statuette of a veiled dancer makes ‘Dioscorides’s devastation’ plain to understand for Webster.281 Even though the papyri may serve to reassure us of the possibility, at least, of a historical Athenion, the positing of one adds nothing to the interpretation of the poem. The situation is no different with regard to the performance.

A considerable amount of ink has been spent in the attempts to determine the precise nature of Athenion’s performance. Again, Weinreich’s insistence on understanding the verb

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276 Gow–Page, 2, 237.
277 Fraser, 2, 848, n. 342.
279 Weinreich, 1941, 63 and 66.
280 Weinreich, 1941, 73.
281 Webster, 1964, 171.


\( \gamma\varphi\varepsilon\nu \) ‘in voller technischer Bedeutung’ will serve well to illustrate the futility of any attempt even tentatively to determine the specific nature of Athenion’s performance. One suggestion sees Athenion playing the part of Cassandra in a tragedy entitled ‘\( \Pi\pi\sigma\sigma \), supposedly the Hellenistic model for Livius Andronicus’ \( \text{Equus Troianus} \). Other suggestions are that she sang a monody or a messenger speech from a tragedy at a symposium, or spoke or sang a solo recitative with or without an accompanying kithara. Even if scholars have been unwilling to rule out a more public occasion for Athenion’s supposed performance, most have imagined the occasion to be private, most often a symposium. Yet, scholarly guesswork on this point seems only to cover a small part of the wide variety of more or less institutional frameworks for poetic performance conceivable in the Hellenistic age. As Thurlington states, ‘[…] no conclusion can be reached regarding Athenion’s professional classification, the place of her singing or the nature of the composition’. For what is worth, we may note that the verb \( \varepsilon\phi\lambda\varepsilon\gamma\omicron\upsilon\mu\nu \) in line two would imply ‘an intense access of emotion’, but one does not need to be ‘outwardly expressed’, to quote from a comment made by A. Sommerstein on the verb as it appears in Ar. \( \text{Nu} \). 992. For all the commonness of the verb in similar contexts, we may compare with the usage of \( \varepsilon\phi\lambda\varepsilon\gamma\omicron\upsilon\mu\nu \) in the \textit{Charmides}, where Socrates cannot outwardly express the emotions triggered within him as he gets a peek into Charmides’ \textit{himation}. Against this background, the occasion may possibly be said to have been public enough to prevent the speaker from expressing his emotions openly. Yet, it remains a futile question with regard to the interpretation of the epigram.

Furthermore, any attempt to determine the exact theme of Athenion’s song seems to me to be misguided. Needless to say, such attempts have been made. Giangrande, for instance, argues that the ‘\textit{Angst der Belagerten}’ was a \textit{Leitmotif} of the composition which Athenion sung. Similarly, Gow-Page label the motive of Athenion’s song ‘the Sack of Troy’. As in the above cases, one should be careful not to press the issue too hard. To any exceedingly

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282 Weinreich, 1941, 63(-67).
283 Cf. Rostagni, 2.2, 7-12, and Gentili, 1979, 40-41.
284 Webster, 1964, 143.
285 Cf. Gow–Page, 2, 237, and Fraser 1, 1972, 598.
286 So, for instance, Di Castri, 1997, 1.
288 Thurlington, 1949, 54.
290 \textit{Pl. Charm}, 155c5-e3.
specific suggestion made, such as Giangrande’s, one may easily object that Athenion quite simply sings ‘Ippon—the Wooden Horse—which, like all narratives, could be sung from different perspectives. In the Odyssey, for instance, the emphasis differs significantly as the story is told or referred to in Od. 4.271-289, with its focus on Helen’s attempt to trick the Greeks into revealing themselves, in comparison with Od. 8.499-553, where the divided council of the Trojans and the sack of Troy are in the foreground, or again with Od. 11.523-532, where the fear of the Greeks and the eagerness of Neoptolemos are more prominent.293

The pursuit of historical circumstances behind the poetic performance within the epigram may not be perverse as such, even if the performance should be labelled as fictitious together with the rest of the epigram. However, rather than assuming its historicity and making additional guesses regarding its circumstances, an approach to Athenion and her show that focuses more on related literary fictions, is no doubt apt to be more productive.

A beginning towards a more focused intertextual approach was made recently by Di Castri, who suggests that the two opening lines of the present epigram were inspired by AP 5.210 (Asclepiades 5.1-2 G–P): Τῷ θαλῶ Διδύμη με συνήμπασαν· ὁμοι, ἐγὼ δὲ | τήκομαι ὡς κηρὸς πάρ πυρί, κάλλος ὀρῶν.294 However, τήκομαι ὡς κηρὸς πάρ πυρί and ἐν πυρί πᾶσα | Ἰλιος ἴν, κάγω κείνῃ ἀμ’ ἐφλεγόμαν operate from fields of imagery too distinct for any notion of direct inspiration to seem convincing to me. Instead, I turn to Di Castri’s description of the epigram in general and the two first lines in particular as a ‘divertito intarsio di spezzoni del frasario omerico’.295 Di Castri compares the phrasing of lines 1-2 of the epigram, ἐν πυρὶ πᾶσα […] ἐφλεγόμαν, with Il. 20.314-317: […] ἐγὼ καὶ Παλλάς Ἄθηνη | μῆ ποτ’ ἐπὶ Τρόισσαι ἀλεξήσειν κακὸν ἴμαρ, | µηδ’ ὀπότ’ ἀν Τρόιης μαλερῷ πυρὶ πᾶσα δάιημα καλομένη (cf. also Il. 21.372-376). She also compares the usage of ἐν πυρὶ in the second line of the epigram with Il. 18.346 and Od. 8.435 (αἱ δὲ λοετροχῶν τρίποδ’ ἔστασαν ἐν πυρὶ κηρέῳ) and Il. 7.429 (ἐν δὲ πυρὶ πρήσαντες ἐβαν προτὶ Ἰλιον ἵνην). In addition, Di Castri speaks of a ‘prolessi dell’oggetto’ in this epigram, which she connects to Od. 8.521 (ταῦτ’ ἄρ’ ἀοιδῶς ἀεὶ δε περικλυτός). Yet, I must admit to some scepticism with regard to the relevance of the above parallels for the interpretation of this epigram. Di Castri further mentions the fact that the position of κακὸν in this epigram may be paralleled in a number of Homeric verses, like Il. 2.195, 14.81, 16.329 and 24.370, and she even draws attention to the placement of κακὸν next

292 Gow–Page, 2, 237.
293 Garvie, 1994, 334.
294 The suggestion, which was made already by Moll, 1920, 3, is repeated by Galán Vioque, 2001, 142.
to a dative, which she connects to ll. 15.109 (δύμε κακόν) and 134 (τοῖς ἀλλοισι κακόν). To the latter observation we may add ll. 21.92, which at least parallels the wording of this epigram, ἐμοὶ κακόν, but we are left once again with verbal and positional similarities, the interpretive consequences of which still elude me.

If nothing else, the above parallels at least serve to underline the strong presence in this epigram of epic poetry, to which we are lead from its very beginning. In terms of vocabulary, and seen from the perspective of the epigram as a whole, the closest parallel which survives would be F1 of the Ilias Parva: Ἄλιον ἄείδω καὶ Δαρδανίῃν ἐνταλών, ἴς πέρι πόλλα ἐπαθον Δαναοῖ, θεράποντες Ἀρης. More importantly, however, the very first words of the epigram, Ἰππῶν Ἀθήνιον ἱσεῦν, which are so unmistakably evocative of epic introits, provide more than an epic flavor of tone. Externally, it suggests that Athenion is to be viewed as an inspired performer of song, rather than an actor of the stage, but in keeping with my outlook on the epigram as a literary artifice, I am more interested in the internal implications. In comparison with similar wordings of epic introits, the words Ἰππῶν Ἀθήνιον ἱσεῦν make Athenion occupy the structural place of inspiring Muse(s). Not only does this implicitly raise the question of poetic inspiration, but also (and still, nota bene within the literary and dramatic framework of the epigram), it suggests that Athenion, more than merely poetically inspired, is also a creature inspiring to poetic activity.

Hellenistic poetry has been variously construed as markedly shifting in relation to earlier (bardic) notions of poetic inspiration. An often cited example is Apollonius Rhodius’ invocation of Apollo and his belated mention of the Muses in book 1 of the Argonautica (v. 22), but particularly significant in this context is the invocation of only one Muse, Erato, in book 3. Indeed, a number of epigrammatists antedating Dioscorides seem to have found a substitute for the Muses in Aphrodite and even Eros. The connection between erotic desire and poetic creation did not emerge as a new literary topos in the Hellenistic age. Commenting on Apollonius’ invocation of Erato in book three, Hunter draws attention to a number of earlier parallels.

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296 Noted also by Di Castri, 1997, 2; for the Ilias Parva, cf. Davies, 1989, 63.
297 For epic introits, see Wheeler, 2002.
298 Cf., for instance, ll. 1.1; Od. 1.1; Sappho, fr. 127 (δεῖρο δηράτε Μώσαι χρόσαι λήποσαι); Alcman, fr. 27.1.1-3 (Μοῖρ’ ἄγα Καλλιόπα θύγατερ Δαός | ἄρχ’ ἐρατόν ἐπέων, ἐπὶ δ’ ἵμερον | ὠμοι καὶ χαράεντα τίθη χαρῶν.).
Stheneboia fragment, which announces that the instruction of Love turns a man into a poet even if he did not know the Muses before (fr. 663 Nauck): ποιητήν δ’ ἄρα ᾗ Ἑρως διδάσκει, κἂν ἀμοῦσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν. It is tempting to apply a similar ‘model’ of poetic inspiration, however loosely construed, to the present epigram, and to consider the possibility of the speaker and Athenion as reflections of an ‘(amousos) aner’ and an ‘erotic muse’ respectively.

Athenion is not explicitly invoked, nor explicitly set up as the inspirational force of the epigram at hand. Yet, she may indeed have been received and read as such, already by the time of Meleager. In Meleager’s Garland, as stated above, the present epigram introduces a series of epigrams, thematically linked by their sharing of the general theme ‘song and love’. The epigram immediately following our own in this arrangement, AP 5.139 (Meleager 29 G–P), may be seen as more specifically linked to the preceding epigram, to our AP 5.138, by its casting of a similarly inspired and inspiring counterpart to Athenion in the singer Zenophila.303

303 Translation adapted from Paton, 1, 195.

Similarly to my suggestion, in Gutzwiller’s interpretation of the Meleagrian epigram, Zenophila ‘plays the role of inspiring Muse, as she holds the poet captive […], casting upon him with her beauty, song, and grace a form of desire […] that is both erotic passion and poetic impulse.’304

Let us return now to the questions raised above, and to the Homeric poetry from which we set out. As a verbal parallel to the beginning of line three of the epigram, οὕτως Δαναών δεκέτη πάνων, which I will be returning to, Di Castri refers to Od. 1.350: τοῦτό δ’ οὐ νέμεσις Δαναών κακὸν οἶτον ἀείδειν. The line which Di Castri draws attention to comes from a passage in which poetic performance is not only described as having a disturbing emotional effect on a member of its audience, but also as being justified, in the end, even though it may be potentially harmful, namely Phemius’ performance in the first book of the Odyssey. This song is overheard by Penelope, and it seemingly draws her down from her chamber to the doorway of the hall in which Phemius sings. As Penelope is brought to tears by the song, she speaks to the singer in reproach, bidding him to sing another song. Above all, Penelope wishes Phemius to cease with the song he is currently singing, for it is bitter to her (Od. 1.337-344): Phemius, many other things you know to charm mortals, deeds of men and gods which minstrels make famous. Sing them one of these, as you sit here, and let them drink their wine in silence. But cease from this woeful song which always harrows the heart in my breast, for upon me above all women has come a sorrow not be forgotten. So dear a face do I always remember with longing, my husband’s, whose fame is wide through Hellas and mid-Argos.

Penelope’s strong reaction here and that of her husband to the songs of Demodocus in Od. 8, are two early examples of a common literary topos, recurrent throughout extant Greek

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literature, in which song, or (performed) poetry, is presented as having an immense emotive power over its audience. Indeed, in the Platonic dialogue deriving its name from the rhapsode Ion, success as a performer is construed as largely depending on the ability to have an emotional impact on the audience. For all the grief felt and displayed by Penelope and Odysseus, in extant (and central) fifth and fourth century writings the emotions of pity and fear seem to have been even more closely associated with poetry. In Plato’s Ion, the rhapsode describes how even his own hair stands on end with terror, and how his heart leaps when he relates a tale of fear or awe, and fear and pity are singled out also in Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen, where poetry (or ‘metrical speech’) is said to generate in its hearers ‘fearful shuddering and tearful pity and grievous longing’. Unlike the worried concern expressed in Platonic dialogues like the Ion, the Republic, and the Laws, regarding poetry’s inability to give but pleasure, and its destructive consequences, psychological and ethical, for both masses and individuals, both Gorgias before, and Aristotle after Plato, seem to have taken less pessimistic views. Debated though it remains, the Aristotelean notion of katharsis may at least be said to involve a positive experience, a relief from fear through that what was instilled in the audience; and this was by no means a feature of tragic poetry only.

Oversimplified as it may seem, the poetological aspects dwelled upon in these central texts may be labelled as topicalities against which the present epigram may be read. The topoi of fear and katharsis, I believe, open a way into interpreting the third line of the epigram, where the speaker explicitly states that he did not fear (οὐ δείσασι Δαναῶν δεκέτη πόνον), though, as I suggest, he should have.

The beginning of line 3 has troubled many commentators and editors; Gow-Page even print ἀνυδέισασι. Though there is in fact hardly need for conjecture, as I hope to show, a number of alternative readings have been suggested, and even among scholars who find no

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310 Cf. Gorgias, Helen, 9: τὰν ποίησιν ἰκανοῦ καὶ νομίζω καὶ ἰδομεῖ τὸν λόγον ἄξοντα μέτρων ἢ τοὺς ἁκώδοντας εἰσήγαγε καὶ φράσαν περιφέροντας καὶ οὕς πολύορθος καὶ πόθος ψυχοπνεύσθη, ἐπὶ ἀλλατρίων τε πραγμάτων καὶ οἰκίας τε καὶ δισπραγμίας ἑδύω τι πάθημα διά τῶν λόγων ἐπαθεῖν ἡ ψυχή.  
312 For epic katharsis, see Haliwell, 1986, 200, n. 43.  
313 For the aorist δείσασι, Giangrande 1967, 45, rightly refers to KG I, 199, β.  
314 Meineke, for instance, proposed ὡδὲ ἰκανοῦ, Stadtmeieller ὡδ’ ἐισῆδος or ὡδ’ μείνας, Waltz ὡδ’ δυνάσας, Mähly ὡδ’ πλήρας, Jacobs ὡδ’ δείσασις, and even ὡδ’ διδείσασι, ὡ Δαναῖς. Gow–Page, 2, 237, oddly suggest συσχεδείας, whereas Di Castri, 1997, 3, n. 6, at least finds some support for ἐκπλήρασις in E. Troad. 433-434: […] δέκα γὰρ ἐκπλήρασις ἐτη | πρὸς τοῖσον ἐνθάδ’ | ἐξεταὶ μόνος πάτραν, and E. Or. 656-657: μιὰν ποιῆσα ἡμέραν, ἡμῶν ὑπὲρ | σωτήρος στάς, μὴ δέκ’ ἐκπλήρασις ἐτη.
fault with the text, the interpretation of the participial phrase has proven problematic. We may note, for instance, the explanation offered by Hecker, ‘[s]imul cum Troia incendio abstumtus sum, licet non per decem annos Graecorum expugnationem extimussem, i.e. licet Troianus non essem’,\(^\text{315}\) which has been quoted approvingly by scholars such as Dübner, Weinreich, Giangrande, and Galán Vioque.\(^\text{316}\) Yet, the main point of the expression cannot be the speaker realising that there is in fact something, which sets him apart from the Trojans with whom he burns.

Proceeding from Hecker, Weinreich paraphrases so as to bring out the concessive twist he believes to be in play here: ‘Obwohl ich (als Grieche) keine zehnjährige Belagerung durch Danaer zu fürchten hatte. […] Vielmehr gingen in einem Flammenglanz damals […] sowohl die (10 Jahre belagerten) Troer wie ich (sofort sturmreif gemachter Grieche) zu Grunde.’\(^\text{317}\) Yet, the ‘Gegensätzlichkeit’ between Greek and Trojan, and the ‘Gegenüberstellung’ between the two fires have already been made so explicit in line 2 as to need little clarification of the sort that Weinreich tries to bring out of the expression in line 3. In surprising contrast, Giangrande would rather have the speaker look upon the siege with Trojan eyes, arguing that the ‘Angst der Belagerten’ was as a \textit{Leitmotif} of compositions on the Sack of Troy. Galán Vioque, too, speaks of fear as a \textit{Leitmotif} in this context. He suggests that the speaker experienced love at first sight, ‘sin que el enamorado haya experimentado el miedo de los diez años de asedio.’\(^\text{318}\) None of these explanations seem entirely satisfactory. The suggestion that the speaker is placed on the side of the besieged by the statement that he did not fear the ten-year struggle of the Danaans would imply that \textit{Danawèn dekevth povnon} should be taken to mean ‘the suffering of the Trojans caused by the ten-year efforts of the Danaans’.\(^\text{319}\) If so, the expression is indeed remarkably condensed.

Rather than trying to team the speaker up with Greeks or Trojans, I would try to capitalize on the fact that the speaker did not fear, \textit{ouj deivsa}. For, in the light of the \textit{topoi} related to poetic performances and their emotional impact on their audiences, it is not entirely impossible to read the brief participial phrase as an aside, where the speaker (with some

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\(^{315}\) Hecker, 1843, 54.

\(^{316}\) Dübner, 1864, 134; Weinreich, 1941, 68; Giangrande 1967, 44; Galán Vioque, 2001, 146.

\(^{317}\) Weinreich, 1941, 68.

\(^{318}\) Galán Vioque, 2001, 146.

\(^{319}\) Variants of the wording \textit{Danawèn dekevth povnon} recur among other epigrammatists, such as \textit{Danawòs dekètη πόνων} should be taken to mean ‘the suffering of the Trojans caused by the ten-year efforts of the Danaans’. In addition, Di Castri, 1997, 3, refers to S. Phil. 715: \textit{ως μηρ’ οίνοχότον πώματος ήσθη δεκέτει χρόνος}. 
surprise?) acknowledges that he was moved, not to fear by the contents of Athenion’s performance, but to passion by Athenion herself. In attending a poetic performance, the speaker may reasonably have expected not only to fear, but also to experience a *katharsis* from the fear produced in him through the performance. In this case, the very opposite occurred—not only were the emotions triggered by the performance were neither fear nor pity, but they even left our speaker all in flames. Herein lies a strong element of contrast and surprise, and I suggest that the entire phrase be read as a reaction by the speaker to his own story in a way similar to what G.B. Walsh has described as ‘audible thought’. It is almost as if the speaker momentarily wanders in mind from the main or most obvious argument of his story, briefly reflects over the circumstances surrounding it, and then returns to deliver the final point (and pun), that he perished in an erotic fire together with the Trojans (who perished themselves, ultimately, because of passion).

We may thus be induced to reflect and react together with the speaker. I have chosen to react within the framework of the select *topoi* regarding poetic performance and emotional impact as briefly outlined above. Accordingly, we (together with the speaker) should have expected Athenion’s performance to have an emotional impact, and even though our expectations were met, the effects of the performance were not what we would have assumed them to be, at least for this particular member of its audience. Athenion herself surpassed our reasonable expectations, and emerged through her performance as a prime mover of poetic composition and not only a performer of such. If songs, through their performers, may cause both erotic desire and poetic impulses, what of the intermediate stage, that of the emotional torment caused by this desire, of which the speaker of the present epigram leaves us in no doubt? Could a performer/performance be seen as *aἰτίας* of poetry, not only in the neutral sense of causing it, but also as being ‘guilty of’ the distress it may render and thus blameable?

I will turn tentatively to answering these questions, but should first try to anticipate being accused of over-interpreting the epigram by introducing questions that are not necessary or even relevant for understanding it; as we saw in the introduction, scholars often warn against speculation and over-interpretation. A temporary refuge may perhaps be sought in W. Booth’s distinction between *understanding* and *overstanding* a text, two terms aimed at supplanting the opposition between (sound) interpretation and (contrived) over-interpretation. According to the distinction between under- and over-standing, it may be

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said that the questions posed by prior critics of the present epigram have been aimed at understanding the poem. They have concerned themselves with the ‘reconstruction of the intention of the text’,323 so have I, to a certain extent, but I have also tried to overstand the epigram, by asking and offering suggestions.324

about what the text does and how: how it relates to other texts and to other practices; what it conceals or represses; what it advances or is complicitous with. Many of the most interesting forms of modern criticism ask not what the work has in mind but what it forgets, not what it says but what it takes for granted.

Before addressing the questions posed above regarding blame and poetic impulses, I would turn to an aspect repressed, mainly by previous critics of the epigram, rather than by the text itself, namely that of double entendres. As a rare exception to the rule, A. Richlin casually compares Ιλιος to the Latin ilia, that is pubes.325 The suggestion is interesting, not least because it further underlines the eroticized epic Ilios, but the absence of equally striking Greek parallels remain a problem for this suggestion.326 On the one hand, it would not be difficult further to sexualize the epigram. The ‘conquest of the city’, to begin with, may well be seen as evocative of ‘the conquest of a woman’; the simile recurs in Propertius, for instance.327 This would undoubtedly place the horse of which Athenion sung, and with which the Greeks penetrated the walls of Troy in a different light, particularly, if it was her pubes which were burning with passion, rather than Troy in flames.328 The conquest of this alternative Ilium would of course not take as long as ten years to complete, and so the struggle of the Danaans need not be feared. Incidentally, line 3 has seen other attempts to bring out a double entendre, such as that of Piccolos: ‘Par les mots οὐ δείσας Δαναῶν πόνον le poëte veut donner à entendre ὅτι δέκα ἐφήληρε et compare sa bravoure à celle des héraux grecs.’329

Seeing, moreover, how words for fighting, attacking and killing also are used to indicate sexual activity, the last word of the epigram, ἀπωλομέθα, could be seen as turning the

324 Culler, 1992, 115.
326 It is true that we find the following gloss in Hesychius, s.v. Ιλιος: τό τῆς γυναικὸς ἐφῆβων δηλοί. καὶ κόμοι γυναίκειοι, but it cannot be said to bridge the gap entirely.
327 Cf. Propert. 3.13.9: haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas | quaeque gerunt fastus. Icrioti, tuos.
328 For ἰπνος in this sense, and for words for burning indicating sexual intercourse, cf. Henderson, 1991, 126-127 and 177-178 respectively.
speaker’s metaphorical death into consummate intercourse (or even to a mutual orgasm?), even though the Trojans with whom he perishes would complicate the picture to some extent.

Turning now, by means of conclusion, to the questions of blame and poetic impulses, they are passed over in silence (by both text and critics of it), but they are certainly pertinent to the literary contexts surrounding the epigram, that of the emotional impact of poetic performances, and that of the *raison d’être* for poetry as such, or for this poem, at the very least. Let us return one last time to Penelope’s reproach of Phemius, and focus instead on Telemachus’ reply to Penelope, which is where we find the verbal parallel that Di Castri drew our attention to (*Od*. 1. 346-353):

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\begin{align*}
\mu\dot{h}t\dot{e}r \ \dot{e}m\dot{h}, \ t\dot{i} \ t^{' } \ \dot{a}r\dot{a} \ \phi\theta\nu\nu\dot{e}eiz \ \dot{e}r\dot{i}r\eta\rho\nu \ \dot{a}o\dot{i}d\dot{o}n \\
t\dot{e}r\dot{p}\dot{e}i\nu \ \dot{o}p\dot{p}h \ o\i \ \n\dot{o}s \ \dot{r}\dot{o}r\nu\dot{t}a\i; \ o\i \ \nu \ t^{' } \ \dot{a}o\dot{i}d\dot{o}i \\
\dot{a}i\dot{t}o\i; \ \dot{a}l\dot{l}l\dot{a} \ \pi\dot{a}thi \ \dot{Z}e\nu\dot{s} \ \dot{a}i\dot{t}i\dot{o}i; \ \dot{a}s \ \tau\epsilon \ \dot{d}\dot{i}d\dot{i}\dot{a}w\dot{a}n \\
\dot{a}n\dot{dri}\dot{a}\dot{s}a\i; \ \dot{a}l\dot{f}\dot{h}r\dot{a}t\dot{h}eiz \ \dot{o}n\dot{p}o\i \ \dot{e}\dot{h}\dot{\ell}e\dot{r}h\dot{a}n \ \dot{e}k\dot{a}\dot{as}t\dot{o}. \\
to\dot{u}\dot{t}h\dot{t} \ \dot{o}\i; \ \nu\dot{e}\dot{m}\dot{a}w\dot{s} \ \dot{D}a\dot{n}\dot{a}\dot{a}w\dot{n} \ \kappa\kappa\dot{a}\dot{n} \ \dot{o}\i\dot{t}o\i; \ \dot{a}e\dot{i}\dot{d}e\dot{e}i\nu- \\
t\dot{h}n \ \gamma\dot{a}r \ \dot{a}o\dot{i}d\dot{i}\dot{h}n \ \dot{m}\dot{a}l\dot{l}l\dot{o}n \ \dot{e}\dot{p}\dot{k}\dot{i}\dot{e}l\dot{i}o\dot{n}a' \ \dot{a}n\dot{h}\dot{r}\dot{r}\dot{a}w\dot{o}u, \\
\dot{h} \ \tau\epsilon\dot{i} \ \dot{a}k\dot{ou}\dot{n}\dot{t}e\dot{s}a\i; \ \nu\dot{e}\dot{n}\omega\dot{t}\dot{a}t\dot{h} \ \dot{a}m\dot{f}\dot{i}\dot{p}\dot{e}\dot{l}\dot{e}\dot{t}a\i; \\
soi \ \dot{d} \ \dot{e} \ \dot{e}\dot{p}\dot{t}\dot{o}\dot{t}\dot{o}\dot{l}\dot{m}\dot{a}t\dot{h} \ \kappa\rho\dot{a}d\dot{i}\dot{h} \ \kappa\i; \ \theta\nu\dot{m}\dot{o}\i \ \dot{a}k\dot{ou}\dot{e}i\nu.
\end{align*}
\]

My mother, why do you begrudge the good minstrel to give pleasure in whatever way his heart is moved? It is not minstrels that are to blame, but Zeus, I suppose, is to blame, who gives to bread-eating men, to each one as he will. With this man no one can be angry if he sings the evil doom of the Danaans; for men praise that song the most that comes the newest to their ears. For yourself, let your heart and soul endure to listen.

While not a key for unlocking all the secrets surrounding our epigram, the passage against which we have set the epigram firmly denounces any notion of blame on the performer’s behalf, an issue explicitly raised by Telemachus. In becoming herself an inspiring muse, Athenion has played out her role, but the speaker, his relation to the epigram, and indeed, the epigram itself, may still be further elucidated. Just as Penelope is to let her heart

329 Quoted by Dübner, 1864, 134.
and soul endure to listen, so the speaker must undoubtedly have had to endure his metaphorical death, since he did survive to tell the tale.

In contrast (or even in opposition) to passages in Plato’s *Republic*, in which it is suggested, for instance, that hearing poetry will impair those lacking an antidote, a *pharmakon*, against it,331 stand central Hellenistic poetic texts, which positively acknowledge that poetry is a *pharmakon* in its own right: a soother for unfulfilled erotic desire as in Theocr. *Id.* 11, or even a universal remedy against everything, as in the hyperbolic exclamation of AP 12.150 (Call. 3 G–P).332 And even though Doris, that is Dioscorides 5 G–P (AP 5.55), reassures us that temporary fulfilment of erotic desire may be seized upon as an equally strong source for poetic impulse, it is tempting to read this epigram, in which poetry returns to poetry through eros, precisely as a *pharmakon*, as a therapy (of sorts) of desire, and as an attempted mediation in itself between erotic desire and poetic production.

332 For poetry as a *pharmakon*, see, along with further references, Hunter 1999, 220-224.
4. Mad About Whom? AP 5.56 (Dioscorides 1 G–P)

Lazy eyeball, small piece, six shoe
Caramel complexion, breath smellin’ like cinnamon
Excuse me hon, the Don mean no harm, turn around again
God damn, backyard’s bangin’ like a Benzi
[…]
Let’s go ahead and walk these dogs and represent Wu
Raekwon the Chef et al., ‘Ice Cream’, Built 4 Cuban Linx, (RCA 1995).

When the painter Zeuxis, as we are told by Pliny, was commissioned to produce a painting for the Agrigentines, he had the city’s maidens pose nude for him for inspection. Of these he singled out five to be used as models. The idea was to be able to reproduce in his painting, one of Helen, the most outstanding feature of each.333 But whereas Zeuxis, we must assume, produced in the end an integrated whole out of these individual building blocks, the object of desire in the present epigram never arises as a complete body from its fragmented parts.

Even though AP 5.56 has attracted some scholarly attention, and indeed met with approval and even praise for its sensuous language,334 readings of the epigram have often been remarkably prosaic. A misdirected attempt has been made to identify the body parts described here with the woman Athenion of AP 5.138 (Dioscorides 2 G–P),335 but few seem to have regarded the poem as more than a description of an unnamed woman,336 who may, at some point, have been the poet’s mistress.337 The opening description of this desired female object has been characterized as conventional both in theme and style,338 and the abrupt ending in a gnome-like expression and a mythological exemplum has been seen as both ‘wunderschön motiviert’ and as ‘cryptic’.339 Before turning to the more comprehensive interpretive issues, let us begin with the epigram itself, and a commentary of its particularities:

333 Pliny, Nat. Hist. 35, 64.
334 Waltz, 1960, 17; Richlin, 1983, 50; Fowler, 1989, 146
335 Weinreich, 1941, 72-77.
336 Thurlington, 1949, 47 and also 51: ‘Dioscorides was captivated by the beauty of a woman, and […] emphasised the elements of her beauty’.
337 Gow–Page, 2, 236.
338 Giangrande 1, 193-217.
339 Reitzenstein, 1893, 187 and Gow–Page, 2, 236 respectively.
'Εκμαίνει χείλη με ροδόχροα, ποικιλόμωθα,
ψυχωτακή, στόματος νεκταρέου πρόθυρα,
καὶ γλήναι λασίαισιν ὑπ’ ὀφρώσιν ἀστράπτουσαι,
σπλάγχνων ἔμετέρων δίκτυα καὶ παγίδες,
καὶ μαζὶ γλαγόντες, ἐνίζυγες, ἱμερόεντες,
ἐκφυέες, πάσης τερπνότεροι κάλυκος.

5 ἄλλα τί μηνόω κυνὶν ὀστέα; μάρτυρές εἰσι
tῆς ἀθυροστομίης οἱ Μίδεω κάλαμοι.

Mad with desire they drive me, lips, rosy, tale-telling,
soul-melting, doorway of a nectareous mouth,
and eyes flashing beneath dark(?) brows,
ets and snares of my heart,
and breasts, milky-white, well-matched, exciting desire,
outstanding, more delightful than any rosebud.
Yet, why am I showing bones to dogs? Witnesses
to my babbling are Midas’ reeds.

1 ἐκμαίνει...με: the verb is commonly, though not exclusively, used to denote madness caused by love, passion and desire. To parallel the active construction, we may refer to Κύστρη τί μ’ ἐκμαίνεις ἐπὶ ταύτη of Ar. Ecc. 966, and to κῆμε γάρ ὁ Κρατίδας τὸν ποιμένα λείος ὑπαντῶν | ἐκμαῖνει of Theoc. 5.90-91. Needless to say, as the first word of the epigram, the verb is given additional emphasis.

ροδόχροα: the adjective certainly indicates a beauty of divine nature; in Theoc. 18.31, we find ροδόχρως referring to Helen; similarly, in AP 9.525.18, ροδόχρως refers to Apollo. Compare also Anacreont. 55.20-23: ροδοδάκτυλος μὲν Ἡός, ἰ ῥοδοπήρες δὲ Νύμφαι, ἰ ῥοδόχρως κάφροδίτα | παρὰ τῶν σοφῶν καλείται. For the possibility of a double entendre, see further on line 2 below.

ποικιλόμωθα: though compounds with ποικίλος as the first element are common in Greek poetry, this particular combination occurs here for the first time in extant Greek literature. Possibly, as Di Castri, 1997, 58, n. 43, suggests, the coinage may owe something to the epic πολύμωθος (cf. Il. 3.214). Di Castri is right, however, to stress that the compound retains the full force of the wide range of associations of its first part, covering beauty, subtlety and, not least, unreliability and deception. For the latter, Di Castri refers to δόλωσιν ποικίλος | ρήμασιν
θ’ αἰμύλοις of Ar. Eq. 686-687; cf. also ϕεῦδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μθοι of Pi. O. 1.29; ἀπλοὺς ὁ μθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἐφι, | κοι ποικίλων δεὶ τάνδει’ ἐρεμωνεμάτων of E. Ph. 469-470; and ῥήγηθι πιστεύεις πυκνούντων σῆ τε μενοικ | ποικίλων αὐθήσα μθον ἐπισταμένη of AP 11.350.3-4. Cf. also Galán Vioque, 2001, 112, who suggests an allusion to the ‘gusto que los antiguos sentían por la estimulación verbal durante la realización del acto sexual’.

Πρόξυροι ποικλάμοια: following the feminine caesura, the line is brought to a striking close by the two rather uncommon compound adjectives with a clear assonance of the vowel o. Though difficult to assess, we may quote D.H. Comp. 14.67: τῶν δὲ βραχέων αὐθέτερον μὲν εὖμορφον, ἔτος δὲ δυσείδες τοῦ ε ὃ ὀ· διάστησι γάρ τὸ στόμα κρείπτον θατέρου […] The formal fullness of the adjectives, in combination with the sound-pattern, which causes the mouth to open up, does seem to add an element to the overall description of the lips. See further lines 3 and 5 below for striking sound-patterns.

2 ϕυχοτάκη: the adjective occurs here for the first time in extant Greek literature. A number of closely related topoi are echoed in this word: Eros was known as a limb-loosener already to Penelope’s suitors (cf. Od. 18.212). In Alcman fr. 3.61-62, Astymeloisa looks at the first person speaker more meltingly than sleep or death with limb-loosening desire (λυσιμελεί τε πόσω, τακερώτερα | δ’ ύπνω καὶ σανάτω ποτιδέρκεται). Melting gazes recur, for instance, in Ibycus fr. 6.1-2 (Ερως αὐτῷ με κυνάεωσιν ὑπὸ | βλεφάροις τακέρ’ ὄμμασι δερκόμενο), a fragment to which I will return later.

Desire was moreover seen to rob its victims of all sense and senses (for deprivation of νοῦς, cf. Il. 14.214-217; of ϕρένες, cf. Il. 3.442-446 and ἐφηνας ἐμαυ φρένα καλομέναν πόθω of Sappho, fr. 48.2), and to render them life- or soulless; cf. διάστησιν ἐγκείμαι πόθω, | ἀψυχος of Archil. fr. 193.1-2. The interpretation of Garrison, 1978, 76, in which this adjective is seen an a ‘implication of conflict’ is clearly, then, an understatement; the melting of one’s soul is far from an enjoyable affair, as two further parallels, albeit from non-erotic contexts, indicate: cf. πάλαι γάρ ὀδύνουσα τῶν ἀφιγμένων | ψυχήν ἐτήκου νόστος εἰ γενήσεται and αὐτά δ’ ἐν χερνῆι δόμοις | ναὶ ψυχιν τακομένα | δωμάτων φυγάς πατρίων | οὐρείας ἀν’ ἐρίπνας of Eur. Heraclid. 644-645 and E. 207-210 respectively.

We may note also the only other instance of the word in extant Greek literature, AP 16.198.2, where Maecius has Eros crying soul-melting tears, his hands bound: κλαίε μάλα, στάξων ϕυχοτάκη δάκρυα.

Στόματος νεκταρέων πρόϑυρα: needless to say, the lips form the doorway of a nectareous mouth in a figurative sense, but the associative range of these three words is worth a
Surely, νεκταρέω hints at the divine (cf., for instance, AP 12.68). Di Castri, 1997, 58 (with n. 44), refers also to parallels such as Medea’s nectarous smile in A.R. 3.1008-1009, and to Pi. P. 9.63-64 (νέκταρ ἐν χείλεσι καὶ ἀμβροσίαν | στάξωσι, θήριον τέ νυν ἄθανατον).

There might also be more outright erotic connotations in play here. Attention should be paid to the door metaphor of this line, that is, to πρόθυρα. In Old Comedy, tongue-kissing is often described in door vocabulary (cf. Griffith, 1994), and the subject χείλη, lips, certainly paves the way for an immediate association to kissing, but the phrasing might take us even further.

In listing words used to indicate female genitals, Henderson, 1991, 137, n. 1, draws attention to πρόθυρα in this line (unfortunately without further comment). Following Henderson’s implication, that is, if πρόθυρα is to be understood in such a way, the rosy lips of line 1 would no doubt indicate the labia (and νεκταρέω, it seems reasonable to suppose, would refer to humidity or fragrance, rather than figuratively meaning divine). The highly erotic tone and the ambiguity of the words make a more genital association seem less than far-fetched. In the reading of Sandin, 2000, AP 5.210 (Asclepiades 5 G–P) starts with a reference to a captivating vagina, and one could perhaps read these two introductory lines as somewhat of a ‘shock start’, looking back to Asclepiades’ epigram. But even so, there are good reasons against reading a double entendre into these lines. A transition from genitals to eyes and, finally, to breasts does not only seem awkward, but would certainly defeat the purpose of a ‘shock start’, and ποικιλόμυθα, at least, does not easily lend itself to a more genital interpretation.

3 γλήναι (λαοίσασιν ὑπ’ ὀφρῖσιν) ἀστράπτουσαι: eyes often occur as the seat of love and erotic desire, and as its informants. Eros’ gaze outdoes even his arrows as the chief weapon, and parallels abound; cf., for instance, Calame, 1999, 20-22. It should be noted, however, that γλήνη is a select noun, as Cresci, 1977, 258 remarks. Even though LSJ states that it is used poetically meaning ‘eye’, it is used specifically of the eyeball. Perhaps, it could be argued that it fits the object of desire with large, protruding eyes, but I will focus more on intertextual rather than lexical interpretive implications of the noun in this context.

Cresci (followed by Vezzali, 1989, 92) traces the noun back to descriptions of the Cyclops, as in Od. 9.390 (to be quoted below), and to Cyclops at work in Call., H. 3.52-54 (πᾶσι δ’ ὑπ’ ὀφρῶν | φάεα μοινόγληνα σάκει ἵσα τετραβοεῖω | δεινὸν ὑπογλαίασαντα). The interpretive consequences of such a turn in the description, which sees the object of desire
presented as little short of goddess in line 1, only to be given attributes traditionally given to monstrous creatures, is dodged by Cresci with a remark on the author’s playful and boldly ironical stance. Vezzali, 1989, 92, more convincingly speaks of the object of desire as essentially literary, as drawn entirely from literary topos, but argues that we are dealing with an ironic reinterpretation of the aesthetic parameters of the beastly and inhuman in earlier poetry. I will be returning to Vezzali’s arguments below, but I would also add another possible explanation to the employment of the noun in this context.

Both Cresci and Vezzali are right in drawing attention to the eerie ring of the noun, but we might well look to other passages for its explanation. Particularly illuminating, I believe, are the following, all of which relate to the mutilation of eyeballs and/or eyes by means of something being thrust into them: Il. 14.493-494 (τῶν τόθ’ ὑπ’ ὠφρύας οὐτὰ κατ’ ὀφθαλμὸν θέμεθα, | ἐκ δ’ ὁσε γλήνην), Od. 9.389-390 (πάντα δὲ οἱ βλέφαραν ἀμφι καὶ ὠφρύας εὖσεν αἰτιμή | γλήνης καιομένης: σφαγαγεύντο δὲ οἱ πυρὶ, μίξαι), S. OT. 1276-1277 (φοίνιας δ’ ὁμοὶ | γλήναι γένει ἐπεγγιν), and A. R. 4.1093-1094 (ἴβριστὴς Ἐχετος γλήφαι ἐνι χάλκεα κέντρα | πῆξε θυσιατρὸς ἐν).

I suggest this line be read as a transferal of the ‘topos’ of death by eye mutilation (war terminology, of course, is commonly applied to erotic contexts), one that sees an inversion of the topical action: it is the eyes themselves that cause destruction; they do so by hurling out lightning (see further the comment on ἀστράπτωσατ below). In this connection, we may note that female beauty was described, at times, as a projectile or a thrusting weapon (cf. Jax, 1933, 61), and that γλήφη appears to appear in contexts tainted by a sense of gloom and destruction, even in passages not as outright horrific as those referred to above; cf. A.R. 2.254-255, Lyc. 362 and 988, and Q.S. 12.399-404 (Τῷ δ’ ἄφαρ ἔμπισε δείμα, τρόμους δ’ ἄμφεκλασε γυῖα | ἀνθρός ὑπερθύμμω τελεία δὲ οἱ περὶ κρατὶ | νῦς ἐχθῆς στυγερῶν δὲ κατὰ βλεφάρων πέσεν ἁλγος, | σὺν δ’ ἔχεν λασίασιν ὑπ’ ὠφρύαν ἀμαμα φωτός: | γληφὴν δ’ ἀργαλέησι πεπαρμέναι ἀμφὶ δοτὶς | μίξῃ ἐκλογέντο).

λασίασιν ὑπ’ ‘ὀφρύαν: we find the combination in Q.S. 12.402, quoted above, but that passage provides us with few clues as to how λασίασιν should be interpreted here. The adjective has previously been tampered with, though mainly due to aesthetical concerns; some of the emendations which have been proposed (and which Gow-Page, 2, 236, rightly find improbable) are noted in Dübner, 1, 126: γαλεράσιν (Jacobs); λαράσι (Hecker); λιπαράσι or λαμπράσι (Piccolos); ῥαδινασι (Geel).
While rightly objecting to any alteration of the text based on notions of womanly beauty, Gow–Page, 2, 236, still cannot free themselves from aesthetically motivated arguments: for instance, they adduce parallels (such as Theocr. 8.72; Anacreont. 15.15; Ov. AA 3.201, Petron. 126; we may add Juvenal 2.93 and Mart. 9.37 from Thurlington, 1949, 48-49) which would indicate that long eyebrows meeting over the nose were admired in women (Frida Kahlo springs to mind as the liberal humanistic parallel par excellence). But the word λάσιος generally means ‘thick’ or ‘overgrown’, not ‘long’, and it does not follow that the brows actually met over the eyes in this particular case; even if further parallels could be added in pleading the case, such as Artemidorus’ assertion that thick eyebrows are auspicious for women (cf. Artem. 1.25: Ὑφρώες δασεῖα καὶ εὐανθεῖς πᾶσιν ἁγαθαὶ, μάλιστα γυναιξίν· αὕτη γὰρ ὑπὲρ εἰμορφίας καὶ μέλαιν χρίονται τὰς ὑφρώας), they do little to change this.

Furthermore, Gow–Page, 2, 236, suggest the possibility that ὑφρώσιν means not ‘brows’ but ‘eyelids’. The motivation for this suggestion seems to be that long lashes (sic!) have been more universally admired in women, but there are further possibilities as well.

The notion that γλάφνη should be referred back to earlier literary descriptions of the Cyclops, suggested by Cresci, 1977, 258, and furthered by both Vezzali, 1998, 92-93, and Di Castri 1997, 58 (with n. 45), is followed up by all three in their explanation of λασίοφρων ὑπ’ ὑφρώσιν. To be sure, the Cyclops in Theoc. Id. 11.30-31 believes that Galatea flees him because of his single thick brow, which stretches over all his forehead, but it leaves us again with the question why the object of desire in this epigram would go from the beauty of a divine being to the horrific appearance of a Cyclops from one verse to the other, and then be described, two verses below, as having breasts more delightful than rosebuds. Of course, the irony argument could be pushed this far (and even further), but how productive is it really?

Instead, I would opt for another, admittedly somewhat less spectacular, possibility. It should be noted that Hesychius, s. v. μελάνοφρως, which means ‘with dark brows’, gives λασίοφρως as a synonym. Following Hesychius then, λασίαισιν ὑπ’ ὑφρώσιν could possibly be interpreted as a variation for ‘with dark brows’. Though frequently recurring in Greek poetry, it may be objected that dark brows were generally associated with (and a feature of) men: Zeus has them in Iliad 1.528, Theseus rolls his eyes darkly beneath his brows in Bacchyl. Dithyr. 3.17, an ox-herd had them in Theocr. 20.24, and Eros, of course, has them in Ibycus fr. 6: Ἐρος αὕτε με κινείοις ὑπὸ | βλεφάροις τακέρ’ ὡμασὶ δερκόμενος | κρήμασι παντοδαστοῖς ἐς ἄπει- | μα δίκτυα Κύπριος ἑσβάλλει: | ἦ μοι τρομέω νῦν ἑπερχόμενον, | ὡστε φερέξυγος ἕππος ἀεθλοφόρος ποτὶ γύραι | ἀέκον σὺν ὁχεσφῇ θοσίς ἐς ἀμιλλαν ἐβα.
The Ibycus passage suggests that dark brows are not only a token of masculinity (clearly not among the child’s more obvious qualities) but also of destructive power; cf. Gentili, 1988, 103, who holds that the darkness of the brows ‘symbolizes the obscure power that Eros exercises over the soul of the person who has been the object of his glance […]—the sharp, uniquely penetrating gaze […] that radiates from the eyes of the god and acts […] with devastating force’. I suggest that the brows of the object of desire in this epigram are to be construed similarly. An interpretation along these lines not only retains the object of desire as godly, but also integrates well with the eeriness of the word γλήνη, and the destructive force of the erotic gaze, which is to become vividly explicit with ἀστράπτουσαι, to which we now may turn.

ἀστράπτουσαι: both Cresci, 1977, 258 and Vezzali, 1989, 92-93, note that Zeus’ eyes are commonly described as hurling lightning in earlier Greek poetry, such as II. 2. 353, 9.237 and 10.5. Di Castri further notes an interesting parallel in Pl. Phdr. 254b.4-5 (καὶ πρὸς αὐτῷ τ’ ἐγένοντο καὶ εἶδον τὴν ὄδην τὴν τῶν παιδικῶν ἀστράπτουσαν). In later poetry, the verb seems to have become common in contexts of beauty and desire, the noun ἀστραπτή appearing already in Sophocles fr. 474 (τοιαν Πέλοι ινγα θηρατημίαν ἐρωτεσ, ἀστραπή τιν’ ὀμμάτων, ἔχει); see, for instance, A. R. 3.1017-1020 (τοῖος ἀπὸ ξανθόο καργάτος Αἰσιώνιδα | στράτευεν ἐρως ἱδεῖαν ἀπὸ φλόγα, τῆς δ’ ἀμαρνας | ὀφθαλμῶν ορπαξεν, ιαίνετο δὲ φρένας εἰσω | τηκομένη […])), and Mosch. 2.86 (ἄσσε δ’ ὑπογλαίσεσε καὶ ζηρον ἀστράπτεσκεν).

In their note on AP 12.84.3 (Meleager 114 G–P), Gow-Page, 2, 667, list further parallels in the Anthology ranging from Asclepiades to Strato. Against this background, one might consider a contrast between dark brows on the one hand, and shining eyes on the other.

However, I choose to read the take the word in a stronger sense than ‘shining’, and, in combination with the above interpretation of γλήνη, it heightens the sense of doom, which started with ψυχοτακῇ. Indeed, the word ἀστράπτονσαι is given additional weight by the metrical pattern, seeing that this is the only instance of a σπονδείαζων hexameter in Dioscorides. Galán Vioque, 2001, 115, points out that the verb does not occupy the same place in the verse in Homer and Hesiod, but that it does so frequently in later epic.

4 σπλάγχνον: having been a seat for emotions such as anger and sorrow in earlier extant Greek literature, we find it, according to Cunningham, 1971, 73, as the seat of love first in Herod. 1.57, but also in Theocr. 7.99.

dίκτυα καὶ παγίδες: we encounter hunting metaphors in general, and ‘the net of love’ in particular, in earlier Greek poetry (cf. the Ibycus fragment quoted above; S. fr. 932; Ar. fr.
666, all of which will be discussed below), but both seem to have become much more common than before with the Hellenistic epigram; cf. Kenney, 1970, 387 (followed by Brown, 1987, 132-134) for a large number of parallels, among which we may note AP 12.87.5-8 (Anon.), AP 12.146.2 (Rhianus 5 G–P), and AP 5.96 (Meleager 59 G–P).

Gow-Page, 2, 236, state that παγίδες, if it is to be distinguished from δίκτυα, should be read more specifically as stake-nets. While there is nothing to prevent us from reading the two nouns as complementing each other as a means of adding emphasis, we would do well to follow Cresci, 1977, 259, and Vezzali, 1989, 93, who focus on the different (earlier) literary contexts in which the two nouns appear in similar metaphorical usages. Whereas Cresci, 1977, 259, finds the combination of the nouns ironically strident (cf. also Vezzali, 1989, 93: ‘[a]vvicinare in maniera spreguidicata una metafora lirico-tragica ed una comica rientra perfettamente nel tono parodico che Dioscoride use per il suo effetto’).

To begin with δίκτυον, there is certainly something to Vezzali’s labelling of it as ‘una metafora lirico-tragica’. An obvious parallel to the usage of δίκτυα is provided by the concluding lines of the Ibycus fragment quoted above (ἐς ἀπειρα δίκτυα Κύπριδος ἐσβάλλει). Similarly, we find δίκτυα as a net of desire, this time ensnaring women, in S. fr. 932 (ἀρκοια γάρ τοι καὶ γυνὴ φεύγει πικράν ὀδίναι παίδων· ἄλλ᾽ ἐπεί λήξῃ κακοῦ, ἐν τοῖσιν αὐτοῖς δίκτυοις ἀλίσκεται πρὸς τοῦ παρόντος ἵμερου νικωμένη). The δίκτυον ἀτης of A. PV 1078, though not referring to Eros, still points in a similar direction, that is, to a net of universal force. In addition, though the passage is difficult to grasp and highly debated, we may note that in A. Ag. 1115-1116 (Ἡ δίκτυον τί γ᾽ Ἄιδου. ΄ ἄλλ᾽ ἄρκους ἦ ξύνευνος […]), the noun used for the net of Hades is δίκτυον, whereas ἄρκος is used for the snare that is a bedfellow. Perhaps, then, δίκτυα not only suggests and points towards the high in terms of style, but also to the universal in terms of connotation.

By contrast, metaphorical usage of παγίς, which we find predominately in Comedy as both Cresci, Vezzali and Di Castri, 1997, 58, n. 46, point out, seems to be closely associated with women in general, and prostitutes on the hunt for wealth in particular; see, for instance, Ar. fr. 666 and Amphis fr. 23.4.

It seems possible, then, to read the words δίκτυα καὶ παγίδες as complementary terms to describe the speaker’s situation: inexorably bound, on the one hand, by the universal nets of love, and ignominiously caught, on the other, in the lowly snares of a woman. Such a combination of universal and particular in matter, and of high and low in style, is marked by Hutchinson, 1988, 11-14, as a distinguishing feature of Hellenistic poetry.
5 μαζι: the word need not necessarily come with maternal rather than erotic connotations, as suggested by Gow, 1950, 74, commenting on Theoc. 3.48. Gow rightly refers to E. Andr. 629 (ἀλλ’, ὡς ἑστιδες μαςτόν, ἐκβαλὼν ξίφος | φιλήμ’ ἐδέξω, προδότιν αἰκάλλων κύνα, | ἡμέραν πεφυκός Κύπριδος, ὦ κάκιστε σύ), where the erotic play with maternal connotations is manifest. We may moreover add a number of parallels in the Greek Anthology, such as AP 5.128 (Marcus Argentarius), 5.258 (Paulus Silentiarius), 5.132 (Philodemus 12 G–P and S) and 9.544 (Addaeus).

γλαγούντες: rightly interpreted by Cresci, 1977, 259 as ‘milky-white’ rather than ‘having (or full of) milk’; contrast both the LSJ, s.v., and Gow–Page, 2, 236. The suffix -(ο)ent- would be the only support for the latter interpretation, but, as Palmer, 1980, 258, points out, following Mycenaean times the suffix ‘was productive only as means of self-conscious poetic stylizing’. Although it occurs here for the first time in extant Greek literature, γλαγόετς does mean milky with reference to color in Nicander and Oppian; see LSJ, s.v.

It should also be noted, as Sider, 1997, 96, states in his remark on AP 10.21.3 (Philodemus 15 G–P; 8 S), that breasts are praised for their whiteness, for the rosiness of their nipples or for both qualities together; a rosy nipple is indeed implied in line 6 below.

εύζοης: occurs only here in extant Greek literature, perhaps formed by analogy with ancient root nouns such as σύζωξ, for which see Sihler, 1995, 281-283. Cresci, 1977, 259, suggests the possibility that the word is derived from εὐζογος, used of ships in Od. 13.116 and 17.288, and A.R. 1.4.

5-6 γλαγούντες, εύζοης, ἰμερόετες | ἐκφυές: noteworthy not only due to the jingle of the homoioteleuta, but also for the concentration of epithets. For hexameter lines occupied mostly by adjectives, see Bühler, 1960, 212-215; cf. also Galán Vioque, 2001, 110, who sees in the high concentration of epithets in this epigram a reflection of hymnic poetry.

6 ἐκφυές: unlike major editors such as Waltz, Gow–Page, Beckby, and Galán Vioque, all of whom print εὐφυές, I prefer the so called Corrector’s ἐκφυές; the Corrector (C) arguably received the manuscript after it had already been added to by other scribes, and made corrections (with access to an independent text), often by obliteration of the earlier manuscript reading; cf. Sider, 1997, 48-49. The Corrector’s reading is preferred also by Giangrande, 1, 197, (and White, 1985, 42). In addition to Giangrande’s quotation of Gow–Page, 1, XXXVII, who warn against underestimating the importance of the Corrector, and who hold his corrections to be usually true, one should note the impression of Cameron, 1993, 104, n. 18,
that ‘the more substantial corrections C offers are more likely to be transmitted readings than personal conjectures’.

In terms of interpretation ἐυφυέες, presumably meaning ‘well-grown’, ‘shapely’ or even ‘graceful’ seems somewhat flat with regards to its very prominent position, syntactically and metrically. One would expect the last epithet in such a bombastic row to bring the description to a stronger conclusion than merely stating that the breasts are suitably formed, an aspect partially covered by ἐυζυγες. To this end ἐκφυέες, perhaps not only meaning ‘abnormally developed’ or ‘over-grown’ in the literal sense, as LSJ and Gow–Page, 2, 236, respectively, would have it, but ‘forth-grown’ used figuratively to mean ‘large’, ‘projecting’ (to be compared with Giangrande’s ‘aggettanti’) or even ‘extraordinary’ (‘oustanding’ would reflect the different possibilities) does a much better job. For breasts described as outstanding in the literal sense, cf. the use of κωνία in AP 5.13.3 (Philodemus 2 G–P; 9 S), and also Suda, s. v. ἀρθοτιτθιος.

Additional emphasis is brought to the adjective, regardless of choice of variant, by means of the quasi-enjambment of lines 5 and 6. In this respect too, ἐκφυέες seems to me to fit more neatly than ἐυφυέες, as it allows for a closer interrelation of form and content in the description of the breasts, that I accordingly interpret as so outstanding or pointed as to spill over into the following verse.

Against ἐκφυέες, as interpreted above, it could be argued that outstanding or large breasts are seldom praised in Greek erotic literature; cf. Gerber, 1978, 208. Yet, as he himself points out (with reference to this particular passage) praise of breasts was not always made according to the most common categories. Contrast, Galán Vioque, 2001, 120, according to whom ἐκφυέες is ‘claramente inferior’.

(τερπνότεροι) κάλυκος: a rosebud, specifically, as Gow-Page, 2, 236 remark. Roses often occur as tokens of love, as in Theocr. 3.23, 10.34, and 11.10, but may also refer to the female genitals, as AP 5.210.4 (Asclepiades 5 G–P), and AP 5.55 (Dioscorides 5 G–P). In drawing the period to a conclusion, the noun recalls the rosy lips of line 1. Moreover, as a rosebud in itself may leave us to associate (freely) to a rosy nipple (rather than a vagina), it hints at an erotic climax in the description of the sources for the speaker’s madness.

As noted by Cresci, 1977, 260, the expression τερπνότεροι κάλυκος is echoed in AP 5.48.2 (Rufinus 19 P), where it refers to the mouth, just as χείλεις σῷ ῥοδέων ἀβροτέρῳ καλύκων AP 5.236.4 (Paulus Silentiarius) refers to the lips.
attention has been brought to the close parallel in AP 7.100 (Plato 6 P): Ἕνων, ὅτε μηδὲν Ἀλεξίς ὅσον μόνον εἶπ᾽ ὅτι καλός, ὅπτε καὶ πάντη πᾶσιν περιβλέπεται. | θυμέ, τί μηνίεις καυσῆς ὁστέων, εἴτε ἀνυήσεις | ὠς τοῦ Φαῖδρον ἀπωλέσαμεν.

There has been some speculation regarding the relative chronology of the two epigrams. Most other commentators hold our epigram to imitate AP 7.100; so, for instance, Thurlington, 1949, 50-51, Cresci, 1977, 261, Gow-Page, 2, 236-237, but the objection raised by Reitzenstein, 1893, 186-187, who argues that the Plato epigram in fact reeks of allusions to Hellenistic epigrams and is more likely to be written by a later author, finds support in Di Castri, 1997, 58, n. 47. The issue is unlikely to be resolved. It is equally likely that both epigrams draw (independently) from a common source, a proverb that has not survived in the course of transmission.

In AP 7.100, the proverbial character (and sense) of the dogs and bones is quite clear. By indicating Alexis’ beauty to others, that is, by showing the bone to dogs, the speaker unwittingly attracts competition for Alexis’ love, proving too talkative once more; he has already lost an earlier love, Phaedrus, in the same way. If you show a bone (Alexis or Phaedrus) to dogs (the public/competitors), as the moral goes, the dogs will (try to) take it away from you; the element of bringing disaster over oneself is obvious. It seems possible to read the present epigram along similar lines, as I will argue below. For the moment, suffice it to note as a remote parallel to the expression of bringing disaster on oneself the proverb κύων ἐπὶ στῦνον, for which see Strömberg, 1954, 49.

An additional possibility is to regard the expression as an ending-device in broader terms: as a variation for that common move in ancient erotic poetry where a halt is made in descriptions given or in actions recounted. Cresci, 1977, 260, refers to AP 5.252 (Paulus Silentiarius), the last two verses of which seem heavily indebted to the present epigram: Ἡρῴωμεν, χαρίεσσα, τὰ φάρεα, γυμνὰ δὲ γυμνὸς | ἐμπελάση γυνίως γυνὰ περιπλοκάδην | μηδὲν ἐοὶ τὸ μεταξύ. Σεμιράμιδος γὰρ ἔκειν | τείχος ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ λεπτὸν ὄψαμα σέθεν | στῆθα δ’ ἐξεύχθω τὰ τε χείλεα. Τάλλα δὲ σηγῇ | κρυπτέον· ἐχθαίρω τὴν ἀθυροστομίην. In this reading, τάλλα δὲ σηγῇ κρυπτέον may be argued to form a counterpart to the present epigram’s ἀλλὰ τί μηνίοι καυσῆς ὁστέα. In other words, the meaning would be something like ‘why am I showing to dogs (what) bones (are)’; if anyone, dogs ought to know them well.

Admittedly, the trope is more common in interruptions of erotic narratives, but there are parallels to descriptive contexts as well: so, for instance, the catalogue of pleasurable activities in Anacreont. 15 and the specified description of the painting ordered in 16; cf.
Anacreont. 15.35-37 (ἐχεῖς ἀπαντῇ: ἀπελθὲ: | λαλοιστέραν μ’ ἐθηκας, | ἀνθρωπε, καὶ κορώνης) and 16.33-34 (ἀπεχεὶ: βλέπω γάρ αὐτήν: | τάχα κηρέ καὶ λαλήσεις) respectively. We do meet the topos, moreover, already in v. 56 of the Louvre partheneion of Alcman, where the description of Hagesichora is interrupted by διαφάδαιν τί τοι λέω, ‘why do I tell you openly’. Of course, the Alcman poem goes on to state that ‘Hagesichora is here’ (Ἀγγειχώρα μὲν αὕτα).

We may note that Reitzenstein, 1893, 186-187, reads this expression as the speaker’s way of making halt in a description which has now gone so far that it necessarily would become all to apparent or even reveal the name of the woman described, were it to be continued. I shall return to these alternatives in my general discussion below.

8 ἄθυροστομίτης: we encounter the noun, meaning something like ‘doorless mouthedness’, here for the first time in extant Greek literature, but the coinage, if indeed Dioscoridean, can hardly be termed as extremely innovative. Whereas both Vezzali, 1989, 94 and Di Castri, 1997, 59, refer it back to Theogn. 421-422 (Πολλοί’ ἀνθρώπων γλώσση θύραι οὐκ ἐπίκεινται | ἀμοίδαι, καὶ σφυν πόλλ’ ἀμέλητα μέλει), it should be noted that we find κακαγορεῖ τις ἄθερον [α]τόμα | περιβέβρων in Simon. fr. 36.1-2. The context of the Simonides fragment and the Theognidean elegiac suggest ‘doorless mouthedness’ to be morally base.

Vezzali, 1989, 94, suggests that Dioscorides’ usage of the noun ‘sfrenata loquacità’ was taken up by Christian Greek authors (she refers to Nic. 2 in Act. 4.42; Nil. Epist. 2.47; Cyr. Am. 2; Leont. H. Nest 4.22), who would arguably use the words in the sense of ‘blasphemy’. It should also be noted that several scholars have pointed out the move towards a Ringkomposition, in which ἄθυροστομίτης echoes πρόθυρα of line 1, but it cannot be said to be very striking.

οἱ Μίδηω κάλαμοι: this epigram ranks among the earliest extant sources for this part of the story of Midas, told also in Ovid’s Metamorphoses 11.180-192. Having been the only one in a panel of judges in a poetry contest to rule against Apollo, Midas received ass’s ears as a punishment from the god. Midas kept the secret of his ears from all but his barber. Proving unable to withstand the burden, the barber dug a hole in the ground and whispered the secret into it, but a group of reeds grew on the spot, and the secret was spread as they whispered in the wind ‘King Midas has ass’s ears’.

As pointed out by Galán Vioque, 2001, 124, the epigram does not elaborate on the myth as such, but introduces it as an exemplum; its relevance, however, is not entirely obvious to me. Reitzenstein, 1893, 186-187, seems to focus on the aspect of ‘betrayal’ as he interestingly
(but so far without much support from subsequent scholarship) relates the reeds of Midas to the pen (κάλαμος) of the poet: ‘verräterisch waren die κάλαμοι des Midas, verräterisch ist immer auch des Dichters Rohr’. Gow-Page, 2, 237, argue that the relevance, in this context, is that ‘a secret, once disclosed however privately, is sure to come out’. Cresci, Vezzali and Di Castri are all surprisingly quiet about this reference to Midas’ reeds, to which I will return below.

Regardless of relative chronology, AP 7.100 may certainly be used as an interpretative template for a surface reading of the epigram at hand. The speaker of this epigram, accordingly, possesses knowledge of an attractive object (if not the object itself), and is lead by the emotion inspired in him to spill, if not his thymos or guts, which the speaker of AP 7.100 explicitly addresses, some information at any rate that this object is beautiful: ‘χ καλη’. Once this statement has been made public, to follow AP 7.100 further, we may conclude that the object will soon be possessed by another. Yet, unlike AP 7.100, which makes this fact the finale of the composition, this epigram ends with an exemplum stating that any lack of reticence, however cautious, eventually leads to the secret coming out.

I remain unsatisfied by such an interpretation, however, since it seems to stop short of taking into account the further literary and topical aspects of the epigram. It does not address the highly problematic nature of the object of desire, the emotion and effects it has on the speaker (other than fear of rivals), and the relation, not only between the first six and the concluding two lines of the epigram, but also between the two last lines themselves. I will turn briefly to address these issues.

Despite Reitzenstein’s attempt to relate Midas’ reeds with the pen of the poet, which could have been the first inception for a more literary orientation in interpreting the epigram, it was not until Maria Luisa Vezzali’s 1989 article that its literary nature was explicitly stressed: 340

Dioscoride ha in animo di compiere una parodia del genere erotico-descrittivo, tranformandolo in un sorridente ed abilissimo saggio di

stile e di memorie letterarie, con l’intento evidente di creare nel lettore un effetto di straniamento.

In the commentary, I have already shown myself to be in complete agreement with Vezzali as far as the literariness of this composition goes. I readily admit, in addition, to the Verfremdung which the epigram continues to produce in me as a reader. To begin with, it has seemed unclear to me whether we should think of the epigram along the lines suggested by Vezzali, as a parody of a (presumably well-established) literary eroto-descriptive genre, or if we should rather construe it as the Classical beginning towards the blason anatomique. The latter seems to be suggested by Galán Vioque, who contends that: 341

[1]a alabanza de la belleza de la amada es un motivo muy frecuente en el epigrama erótico, pero la descripción detallada de los encantos femeninos es una innovación de Dioscórides que tiene un gran éxito en los epigramatistas posteriores.

If the Iliad’s description of Thersites is the earliest example of a catalogue of bodily features in extant ancient poetry, 342 the most famous would either be that of the nude Corinna in Ovid’s Amores 1.5.19-21, or that of Flora in the epigram by Philodemus, AP 5.132 (12 G–P and S), which the passage in Ovid possibly echoes. 343 Further examples to be added, of course, are the two Anacreontic poems referred to in the commentary above, a number of epigrams by Rufinus, such as AP 5.58 (Rufinus 19 P), a significant amount of parallels in Latin poetry, 344 and also Achilleus Tatius’ description of the painting of Europa. 345 It is noteworthy that many of these examples appear as brief, framed passages, and that parallels to

342 Il. 2.216-219.
343 AP 5.132 (Philodemus 12 S): Ω ποδός, ὃ κυήμης, ὃ τῶν (ἀπόλολα δικαίωκ) | μηρῶν, ὃ γλυττῶν, ὃ κτενός, ὃ λαγόνων, | ἀμοίν, ὃ μαστῶν, ὃ τοῦ ραδιοῦ τραχήλου, | ὃ χειρῶν, ὃ τῶν (μαίνομαι) ὀρματίων, | ὃ κατατεχνησάτο κυήματος, ὃ περιάλου | γλυττησάμων, ὃ τῶν (θὸ ἐμὲ) φωναρίων. | εἰ δ’ Ὄπικη καὶ Φίλωρα καὶ οὐκ ἄδουσα τα Σαπφοῦς, | καὶ Περσεὺς Ἰνδῆς ἱράσατ’ Ἀνδρομέδης.
344 Cf. Hor. Ode 2.4.21: Hor. Serm. 1.2.92; Ov. Met. 1.497-502; Petron. 126.15-17.
345 Ach. Tat. 1.1.11: θάνθης ὀμφαλὸς γαστρὸς τετεμένη λασέρα στενή τὸ στενὸν εἰς ἵδων καταβαίνων θηρίνετο. μαζὶ τῶν στερῶν ήμέρα προκύπτοιτος’ ἢ συνάγουσα ζώνη τῶν χειτῶν καὶ τοῦς μαζίς έκλειε, καὶ ἐγένετο τοῦ σώματος κάτωπτον ὁ χιτῶν.
such ‘catalogues of charms’ are not to be found in extant poetry (or rhetorical handbooks) prior to our Dioscoridean epigram.\footnote{Even so, Cohen, 1981, 44, is clearly mistaken in stating: ‘[…] the conclusion seems firm. In pre-Philodeman love poetry we do not find elaborate and detailed descriptions of the beloved. Philodemos was the one of the first, if not the first, to incorporate this literary device in the love poetry of the West’.}

While I would not venture to suggest that we are in fact dealing with a Dioscoridean invention, the lack of earlier poetic contexts within which to assess it, makes any attempt to label it as a parody of an eroto-descriptive genre look premature, and forces us to seek out other contexts for this catalogue of charms. On the look-out for precursors to the literary eroto-descriptive mode, we would do well to consider contemporary painting and sculpture as having provided a strong impetus for the poetic craft. The development of art had rendered the (nude) female one of the most common statuary forms in the Hellenistic age; ‘[e]xploration of the sensuous experience, particularly through representations of the female form’ had been an important factor already in the fourth century BC.\footnote{Pollit, 1972, 159; cf. also Fowler, 1989, 137: ‘Female flesh in all its beauty was a major achievement of the Hellenistic sculptors’.} In an era of poetic ekphrasis this may possibly have spawned poetic adaptations and analogies (were they not present before).

Indeed, returning to the literary parallels, art and artifice emerge as key frames. The descriptive catalogues in the two Anacreontic poems mentioned above are framed as advice for painters.\footnote{Anacreont 16.1-5: Ἄγε, γαρούφων ἀμοιστε, γράφε, γαρούφων ἀμοιστε, ὡς ἄν εἶπο, γράφε τὴν ἐμὴν ἐταίρην; Anacreont. 17.1-2: Πράξει μου Βάθθολον αὐτοῖ | τὸν ἐταίρον, ὡς διδάσκω.} There is not only, as critics have pointed out, a statue-like air over Ovid’s Corinna as she stands naked before the male gaze, but she also ‘displays a perfection realizable only in a work of art such as a marble statue, an ivory carving, or a finely crafted book of poetry’.\footnote{Keith, 1994, 31, quoted, and discussed, by Greene, 1998, 81-82.} To a certain degree, Corinna and the object of desire in the present epigram are two of a kind, poetically crafted mistresses of different lovers.

Fragmented though they may be, it could be argued that Ovid’s Corinna, Philodemus’ Flora, and Zeuxis’ Helen each makes up some kind of whole. But how far in the creation of a woman will the lips and mouth, and eyes and breasts delineated in the present epigram carry? Indeed, Peter Bing once suggested to me that the object of desire of this poem was in fact male. Of course, choosing to read ἐκφυεῖς rather than ἐυφυεῖς, as I have done, renders such an interpretation difficult to uphold; similarly, γλαγόεντες would present somewhat of a problem. It could be argued, however, in defence of the suggestion that the attributes of male
and female objects of desire overlap extensively in the Greek Anthology. Moreover, as the
parallels collected in the commentary show, ‘rosy’ is as much an attribute of Apollo and Eos
as of the nymphs and Aphrodite, the dark brows a feature of masculinity, and the hurling of
lightening, needless to say, reminiscent of Zeus. Or let us return to Vezzali. For even though
her main argument for a parodical reading can easily be checked (the Cyclops reading is, after
all, not very convincing), it shows that the question with which I began this chapter clearly
remains; mad about whom? This question seems to me to be particularly relevant as we try to
relate the description to the mythical exemplum with which the epigram is concluded.

Of course, it is not difficult to let a woman emerge from the descriptions of lips, mouth,
eyes and breasts in the first six lines of the epigram, but much like Doris of AP 5.55
(Dioscorides 5 G–P) the object of desire in this epigram must be seen as a generic rather than
specific. As I have already stated in the commentary, she is given qualities and powers most
commonly associated with divinities; her lips are rosy, her mouth is nectareous and her eyes
hurl lightening. At the same time, it could be argued that the highly sensual tone of the first
lines, especially the erotic ambiguity of the phrasing in lines 1 to 2, and 6, hints at a physical
intimacy, whether experienced or dreamed of, that suggests a mortal woman, a hetaira even,
rather than a divine being. Sexual encounters with goddesses did, after all, entail horrific
consequences for mortal men, as Anchises, Teiresias, and Tithonos would surely testify.

However, although the physical features of this Goddess/Whore figure take up most of
the epigram, it may reasonably be questioned whether she is the main concern of the
composition. The description of physical features is framed, after all, by what looks to me as
the first person speaker’s self-concern: ἐκμαίνει...με [...] ἀλλά τι μηνύω. The opening word of
this epigram, ἐκμαίνει, could in fact be argued to be as programmatic as it is forceful, a strong
and immediate signal that erotic madness is a main theme of the epigram. The idea that strong
passion or desire could lead to madness is a commonplace in extant Greek literary and
philosophical texts. We even owe the preservation of Sappho’s fr. 31, to some degree, at
least, to the fact that the author of De sublimitate considered it such a masterpiece when it
came to describing the signs of erotic madness. I will be concerned, here, with the archaic
poetic tradition of the violence of Eros, and the Sapphic tradition of erotic fragmentation, both
of which are highly relevant frames within which the present epigram may be set firmly. As I

351 E.g. Thgn. 1231; Pl. N. 11.48; Prodicus fr. 7 DK; S. Ant. 790; E. Hipp. 240-241; Pl. Phdr. 249c-251a.
stated in the commentary above, I suggest that we go much further Garrison, who sees in ψυχοτακῆς ‘an implication of conflict, if only vestigially’. Many of the features touched upon by the speaker pull in opposite directions, and there is a destructive side to enough of the features that carry our speaker away for us not to ignore them: not only are the lips that drive our speaker mad mendacious (ποικιλόμῳθα), but also, they take away the soul. More prominent still, is the potential capacity of destruction in the eyes. It may reasonably be said that the description is more than just ambiguous; erotic violence seems to lurk behind the corner.

These destructive features recall the brutality associated in archaic poetry with Eros. This is not to say that the object of desire in this epigram is presented as Eros himself. Already in archaic poetry, the topically violent relationship between Eros and victim is reproduced also in erotic relations between human lovers and beloved ones. However, one could object that whereas such recast characterizations of Eros and victim into the roles of lover and beloved, in archaic poetry, at least, see the lover being no less violent and oppressive than Eros himself towards the beloved, the speaker of our epigram remains passive throughout the first six lines of the poem; when this passivity is broken in line seven, it is done in a way which suggests an attempt to restore a loss of power and control: why I am showing bones to dogs? Witnesses to my babbling are Midas’ reeds.

We have reached now the last two lines of this epigram over which I remain puzzled and pessimistic as far as pin-pointing immediate references and transferred significances is concerned. In the commentary, my aim was mainly to suggest how the two lines can be understood in isolation. Attempting a more incorporative approach, an obvious possibility (and one easily connected with the theme of erotic madness) would be to read into this, the end-note of the epigram, an erotic fragmentation of the lover, commonly associated with Sapphic poetry, which sees the lover’s disintegration upon visual exposure to the object of desire. It is suggestive, also, of the divided self of the lover, present too in Sapphic poetry, but most notably exploited and clearly seen perhaps, in Catullus’ poems 8, 72 and

352 Cf. De Sublimitate 10.1.8-10.1.11: οὖν ἡ Σαπφώ τὰ συμβαίνοντα ταῖς ἔρωσικαῖς μανίαις παθήματα ἐκ τῶν παρεπομένων καί ἐκ τῆς ἁλθείας αὐτῆς ἔκκαθοτε λαμβάνει. πῶς δὲ τῆν ἅρετὴν ἀποδείκνυται ὅτι τὰ ἄκαμπτα τοῦτο καί ὑπερτεταμένα δεικνύει καὶ ἐκλέξει καί εἰς ἄλλα συνήθη.
76. Just as Catullus advises himself in 8.1 to stop his folly (*Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire*) and admonishes himself to endure in 8.19 (*at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura*), so the phrase ἀλλὰ τί μηρίω κυσίν ὀστέα may be read, not only as an ending-device typical of erotic descriptions or narratives as I suggested in the commentary, but also as the reaction of an increasingly divided self, and more specifically as an explicit quasi-rationalizing attempt to check one’s emotional state or behavior so as to regain control. However, if we do read the preceding sentence as a verbal response to an imminent danger of disintegration, the subsequent warning against ἄθροστομία, (excessive) verbosity proves difficult to integrate. One would rather have expected ‘bladder away’, but it could perhaps be argued that the Midas’ exemplum is one that suggests the futility of any such attempt.

We now begin to approach the interpretation of Gow-Page as quoted above in the commentary, namely that the relevance of the reference to Midas’ reeds in this context is that ‘a secret, once disclosed however privately, is sure to come out’. However, in my version towards the same end, I have presented the reference to Midas’ reeds in terms of an opposition to the gnome-like expression of dogs and bones. There is in fact little that suggests such an opposition. Midas’ reeds are introduced without a particle, but follow instead after the introductory particle of the gnome in line 6, ἄλλα. The latter suggests a clear definitive break with the foregoing description, so that it may indeed be preferable to consider the beginning of line six as an end-device, typical of erotic narratives.

Most commentators see little trouble with explaining the reason for this abrupt ending in terms of a fear of rivals, along the lines of AP 7.100. So, for instance, H. White argues:

> The meaning in Dioscorides’ epigram is: «you, readers, expect me to continue the enumeration of my girl’s *appas* by proceeding further from her breasts downwards, but (ἄλλα) I shall not do so: why should I encourage my rivals?»

Similarly, Galán Vioque gives this brief and clear characterization of the epigram:

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358 Cf. Rosenmayer, 1992, 158-159, with reference to Sappho’s (fr. 31): ‘Erotic tension or disillusionment seems to attract images of disaggregation, as each segment of the body and its senses comes into contact with the disturbing power of Eros. The individual voice tries to counteract the physical collapse by a verbal response or, a last attempt at control of the self’.
359 White, 1985, 42-43
el poeta teme que la descripción de los encantos de la amada a través
de la poesía pueda atraer la atención de otros sobre ella, por lo que se
recomienda recato y lo hace mediante el *locus classicus* de
imprudencia, el rey Midas.

However, even if fear of rivals may be paralleled, especially in Latin poetry, I remain
reluctant to accept any notion of fear of rivals in this epigram. As it seems to me, the object
of is so generic that the description, if continued along the same lines, could have gone on for
an entire epic without any risk of revealing a specific identity. We are nowhere near anyone as
tangible as an Alexis or a Phaedrus for the speaker of this epigram to lose. To be sure,
Reitzenstein’s attractive suggestion to read into Midas’ reeds a reference to the poet’s pen
does add a further dimension to the epigram. As a concluding pun, it is not far-fetched at all.
Just as the *kálamos* of Midas made his secret public knowledge through their excessive
verbosity, so the *kálamos* of the poet—through its ἀθυροστομία (that can be taken to refer back
to the verbosity of the epigram itself as an apt description of its bombastic row of
adjectives)—has now published that he is mad, to be sure, but we will never know about
whom.

361 Contrast Galán Vioque, 2001, 108, ‘Es, sin embargo, [...] el miedo al rival en el amor, un motivo
especialmente recurrente en la poesía latina (cf., *u.gr.*, Verg. *B*. 10.46; Hor. *epod*. 15, *C*. 1.33.3; Prop 1.8.2, 1.16,
2.9, 2.21, 3.8; *Ou. am*. 1.8.23, 3.8.9; Tib. 1.5, 2.3.3-34.’
362 Thus approaching the sense in which the word is applied to Echo in *S. Ph*. 188-190: ‘babbling and therefore
useless’; cf. Webster, 1970, 83.
5. For Better or For Worse? – AP 5.54 (Dioscorides AP 7 G–P)

Huge non-recoupable advance, majors be vigilant
I excel in both content and deliverance
So let’s put on our classics and we’ll have a little dance, shall we?

In a debate in the pseudo-Lucianic *Erotes* between a lover of women, Charicles, and one of boys, Callicratidas, the former adduces a quantitative point to the end that women are superior to men as vehicles for sexual pleasure: a woman, he states, may be used more like a boy than even a boy; a woman, and a woman alone, one can enjoy by opening up two paths of pleasure.363 The last epigram with which I will concern myself heads down these two paths, and in doing so, paves the way for countless more literary pleasures. Like some Charicles or Callicratidas, each of whom has been characterised as ‘something of an extremist, a zealot whose fanatical attachment to his own erotic object-choice – and whose correspondingly violent revulsion against the sexual objects favored by his opponent – mark him out as peculiar […]’,364 I will begin by questioning briefly those interpretive models that seek to relate this epigram to (or extract from it) information about the social conditions or sexual mores of the era in which it was composed. In spite of their fanaticism, even Charicles and Callicratidas manage at one point to agree about the erotic attractiveness of an object: Praxiteles’ and subsequently Cnidus’ Aphrodite. In D. Halperin’s brief analysis of the dialogue, their consensus in this respect suggests that ‘the quarrel […] comes down to […] a differential liking for particular human body parts, independent of the sex of the person who posses them’.365 Similarly, I will strive to propose differential understandings of parts commented on by others, such as genre fusion and gender inversion, and attempt to highlight aspects rarely discussed, such as editorial applications and Platonic backgrounds. In the end, I hope to be able to emulate the epigram itself in terms of open-mindedness and open-

363 Cf. ps.Luc. *Erotes* 27: εἶ δὲ δὲι τὶ καὶ περιεργοτερὸν εἰπεῖν·δὲι δὲ ἐν Ἄφροδιτης τεμένει·γυναικὶ μέν, ὁ Ὀλυμπιάς, καὶ σαλβότερον χρώμενον ἔξεστιν εὐφρανθήναι διελασίας ἀπολαύσεως ὁδοῦ ἀνίσαντα, τὸ δὲ ἄριστον ὅσδειν τρόπον χαρίζεται θήρειαν ἀπόλαυσιν, on which see further Halperin, 1994, 24-34.


endedness, rather than becoming myself a Charicles or a Callicratides in my exploration of its literary charms:366

Never lay her heavy with child on your bed face to face,  

taking pleasure in procreative Kypris.  

For in the middle, there will be a huge wave, and it will be no small labour  
as she is rowed and you ride at anchor.  

No, turn her round and take pleasure in her rosy arse,  
thinking of your wife as male-boy Kypris.

To be sure, Weinreich’s comparison (even if made in passing) of the cultural operation that takes place in the epigram to that of ‘moderne Sexualhygieniker’ makes little sense, even though it is repeated in more recent scholarship.367 Are we dealing with a male counterpart to Dr. Ruth or should we think more along the lines of S.J. Parker in the Sex and the City?

For S. Goldhill, this epigram serves as a springboard into the much broader, largely Imperial debate regarding such issues as sexual difference and marriage.368 Thus, Goldhill draws attention to ‘the specific link between gender difference and the normative world of

366 Some textual notes must be addressed, if only briefly. For instance, πρὸς σῶν in line 1, which is rightly defended by Gow–Page, 2, 241, and kept by Waltz, Beckby and Galán Vioque against Jacobs’ προσιών; cf. Dübner, 1864, 126, for further equally unnecessary suggestions to alter the text. Despite the regular use of πρὸς with the accusative, such as πρὸς λέγει κλίνων of Il. 23.171, clearly meaning ‘by’, or ‘against’, Gow–Page, 2, 241, rightly take πρὸς σῶν λέγει to mean ‘on to’, or ‘on the bed’, by comparing with Theocr. Id. 6.30 and Polyb. 15.29.9. If this is to be labelled a ‘laxity’ in Dioscoridean usage of prepositions, it is not unparalleled; cf. Dioscorides 1.6, 5.1 and 5.3. In addition, I agree with Gow–Page, 2, 241, in preferring Brunck’s πάλιν στρέψας to Toup’s περιστρέψας; contrast, Galán Vioque, 2001, 175-176.


368 It is unfortunate that the recent commented edition of Dioscorides’ epigrams (Galán Vioque 2001) does not discuss Goldhill’s brief but thought-provoking treatment of the epigram.
juxtaposition of the pregnant wife in the marriage-bed […] and the bluntly comic erotic advice that gives the epigram its sharpness (as family values are turned upside down). That the version of “male love” offered here depends on a particular representation of the female and the wilful use of her body is clear enough; but there is more. […] one thing you are asked to imagine, is ‘How like?’ ‘How like a man is a woman?’.

A question that this brief characterisation of the epigram provokes in me is ‘Funny how?’ ‘Like a clown?’ To what extent does this epigram transgress the normative world of marriage and procreation? If we proceed from the view that conjugal sex was associated primarily with procreation, one might object that there is little in our epigram to suggest a disruptive breach from the prime role of the marriage-bed as the factory of legitimate children.³⁷¹ The woman is pregnant, and thus, on a literary level, there is little in the epigram that immediately provokes (or implicitly calls for) a ‘righteous outrage’ comparable to that of Megacles, when he found out that Pisistratus was not having intercourse with his new wife (who was Megacles’ daughter) with a view to procreate:³⁷²

\[\text{Oi\ de\ paîdion ton te oì υπαρχόντων νεφελεῶν kai λεγομένων\ enagéōn einai ton 'Alkmeonidēωn, ou boulōmenos oì genvēthai ek tēs neogáμou γυναίκος τέκνα ἐμίσγετό oì ou kата nómoν. Tā mēn nyn prōta ēkrupte taúta ħ gnvē, metā de, eîte iostoreóuṣe eîte kai ou, φραζει τή ἐωτῆς μητρί, ħ de tō anērī. Tōn de deiōn tī ēsche ἀτιμαζεσθαι}\]

³⁷¹ The locus classicus in support for this view is ps.D. 59.122: τὰς μὲν γὰρ ἑταίρας ἥδων ἐνεκἄ ἐγχει, οὔ δέ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ’ ἡμέραν ὑπατείας τῶν σώματος, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τῶν παιδοποιοῦσα γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἐνδον φίλοιο πιστῶν ἔχειν; cf. also Men. Dysc. 842-844: ἀλλ’ ἐγχει ψαλίδων ἐπ’ ἀρότων γνησίων | τὴν θυγατέρ’ ἤνη μειράκιον σοι προϊκά τε | διδομι’ ἐπ’ αὐτῆ τρία τάλαντα. Sihvola, 2002, 214, calls Aristotle’s views on marriage ‘somewhat exceptional’, not least because ‘his description of marriage sees the prospect of the husband-wife relationship as much broader than just producing legitimate children.’
³⁷² Hdt. 1.61; translation Godley, 1946 (adapted).
But as he had already young sons, and the Alcmeonid family were said to be under a curse, he had no wish that his newly wed wife should bear him children, and therefore had sex with her in an unconventional way. At first the woman hid the matter: presently she told her mother (whether being asked or not, I do not know) and the mother told her husband. Megacles was very angry that Pisistratus should do him dishonour: and in his wrath he made up his quarrel with the other faction.

Compared to this, the normative world of marriage and procreation seems far from transgressed in our epigram, at least in this respect, and the bed, if one needs to be reminded, is also a commonly utilized place and symbol for recreational sex. Yet, as Goldhill has argued,

\[ \text{the 'move towards symmetry', that has featured so markedly in current accounts of the history of sexuality, not only mobilizes particular and often difficult and shifting representations of the female, but also repeatedly is layered with more traditional, hierarchical images of the relations between the genders.} \]

Fair enough. But how convincing is Goldhill’s own view of this epigram—as one transgressing marital norms, upsetting and overturning family values, and wilfully using the female body—without a tacit appeal to traditional and hierarchical images of precisely those issues? This complicates the matter of answering the question ‘Funny how?’. Of course, many commentators (including Goldhill) have drawn attention to the pun involved in the double sense that the word κύμα may be taken: as ‘wave’ and as ‘foetus’.

The choice of this word seems particularly apt in the light of nautical metaphors in line 4, ἐρεσσομένης and σαλευμένων. In fact, Goldhill’s translation, ‘swell’, is probably to be preferred seeing how it better indicates the double sense of the word. But then what? Are we dealing with a humorously desperate man in this epigram? One remotely similar to the first person speaker

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373 Zeitlin, 1996, 27-29. For λέχος, εὔνη and λέκτρων in erotic contexts, see further Calame, 1999, 30-33 and passim.

in Martial 2.49, described by Halperin as ‘so fond of insertive anal sex with boys that he is willing to enter into a disgraceful and corrupt marriage merely in order to expand his possibilities for enjoying it’?376 Hardly; the literary landscape of Hellenistic erotic epigrams, Dioscorides’ epigrams included, presented a variety of venues for such. Perhaps we should rather think of this epigram in the light of (and as corroborating) authoritative (and particular) statements about the relatively restricted situation of Greek husbands in Hellenistic Egypt in relation to their counterparts in Classical Athens with regard to the sexual menu,377 as if it involves a joke about a man forced to anal intercourse with his wife for lack of other partners. Or should we instead draw on a combination of select marriage contracts, medico-magical proscriptions for contraceptives (add now Hdt. 1.61, quoted above, as an example of anal intercourse as birth-control), and fragmentary scraps of eroto-magical charms from Graeco-Roman Egypt that suggest that recreational sex within marriages was not only common, but that it was so varied as to include anal sex?378 What compels us, by the way, to think that the wife of the speaker in this epigram has anything to object to anal sex? I leave these matters open.

Faulting Foucault for neglecting the narratives of Greek novels (and texts such as Plutarch’s Amatorius), Goldhill goes on to state that ‘[t]he engagement required by these allusive, ironic and highly self-reflexive texts produces not only problematic history, but also a problematizing frame for the homiletic texts with which Foucault is most concerned’. 379 This can certainly be said for this and other Hellenistic erotic epigrams. Still, it is not uncommon to find references to Hellenistic erotic epigrams in accounts that historically attempt to outline or comment on the social and sexual practices of the Hellenistic world. Admittedly, the present epigram is not quoted or referred to quite as often as one might have thought, but a recent (if extreme) example holds this and other Hellenistic erotic epigrams as

378 Cf. Montserrat, 1996, 84-86. A recurrent wish in erotic charms is that the female object be bound so that she not ‘be fucked, be buggered, fellate, not do anything for pleasure of another man’ except, of course, for the male casting the spell; cf. Suppl. Mag. 46.10-12 (and, with a slight variation in wording, also nos. 38, 47, 48, 49: δοσος μή βελενηθ, μή πυκοσθη, μή λεκάσθη, μηδεν προς ήδην πυσήνη άλλω άνδρι ει μή έμοι μόνο. Montserrat argues that the women enchanted for sexual purposes are not wives, or at least not the wives of the enchanters. Though this may well be so, one could argue that it does suggest that women might be expected to have had erotic experiences including anal sex. For a discussion of heterosexual anal intercourse on vase paintings, cf. Kilmer, 1992, 83-86.
indicative of reality, and as expressing opinions true to those held by their authors. As we saw in the introduction, many scholars have held Dioscorides’ epigram to form, in one way or the other, a window into the society in which they were created. However, the difficulties in judging whether or not this epigram forms a transgression or is subversive in terms of social and sexual norms are tremendous—when staring at a window, one often sees little more than a blurred reflection of oneself.

The difficulties in this respect are no less daunting when it comes to assessing the place of this epigram in the history of discourse on these topics. For Goldhill, the novels, dialogues, diatribes and poems that he considers, ‘[…] form a network, a system of texts which refer to, draw on, appropriate one another […]’. In this respect, Goldhill’s attempt ‘to show […] how the more explicitly didactic texts on the subject of sexuality need to be seen in relation to the less explicitly – or ironically self-professedly – didactic works (and vice versa)’ generally succeeds, although some doubts remain at least with regard to the present epigram. In the following, I will attempt to situate our epigram within a wider textual network, but with a focus on literary rather than sexual transgressions and inversions.

On a generic level, the epigram may be described as a fusion, a congress of various, and to some degree opposing, literary forms. The introductory negative alone, Μήποτε, has been enough for one scholar to see the epigram as having ‘un alone epico-gnomico’. To be sure, the structure Μήποτε … γάρ … ἀλλά is strongly reminiscent of pre-Hellenistic gnomo-didactic poetry, where parallels to this tri-partite structure is not uncommon. Already by this structural resemblance, the epigram may be seen as setting itself up as a miniature gnomo-didactic poem, thereby implying to offer practical knowledge and normative values. I will however focus on this poem within the framework of didactic poetry, rather than relating it to the Θεογνίδεα.

It is not only the Μήποτε … γάρ … ἀλλά structure that may be said to be reminiscent of didactic poetry. As Galán Vioque has noted, the adverb μεσσόθι in the beginning of line 3 of

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380 Cf. Cabrera, 1995, 157: ‘[a] modo de conclusión diremos, pues, que la polémica presente en los epigramas […] entre los amores masculino y femenino se debe a razones testimoniales que inciden en la realidad del momento. […] nos inclinamos por atribuir a los poetas actitudes fieles a sus propios presupuestos ideológicos que, en cada caso, revelarían su permeabilidad o su adhesión a consignas filosóficas, actitudes individuales o estados de opinión favorables o contrarias a la marginación de las mujeres.’


383 Di Castri, 1997, 59 (with n. 49).

384 E.g., Hes. Op. 399-404, and Theog. 113-114 and 155-158.
this epigram, is first attested in Hesiod, but conspicuously absent in subsequent extant Greek literature, until it reappears in the Hellenistic age, twice in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius, but also (and notably) six times in Aratus’ didactic epic Phaenomena. Furthermore, γὰρ μέγα in line 3, and in particular the two cola of line 4, τῆς μὲν ἐρεσσομένης, σοῦ δὲ σαλευμένου, might be taken as an echo of Hesiodic verses that see Earth and Heaven crash together in the Theogony (702-705):

| ὁς ὅτε γαῖα καὶ οὐρανός ἑυρός ὑπέρθη | πλήνατο τοῖς γάρ κε μέγας ὑπὸ δούπος ὄρφει, | τῆς μὲν ἐρεσσομένης, τοῦ δ’ ύψοθεν ἐξερπύντος. | τόσος δοῦπος ἐγεντὸ θεῶν ἔρωτι ξυνιότων. It has been suggested that the verbal similarity between this epigram and the Hesiodic passage should be seen in the light of a comic fragment which contains a rowing metaphor for sex, namely Plato Comicus fr. 3 K: ὁ Κινύρα, βασιλεῦ Ὑπηρίων ἀνδρῶν δασυπρόκτων, | παῖς σοι κάλλιστος μὲν ἐφιθαυμαστότατός τε | πάντων ἀνδρώπων, δύο δ’ αὐτῶν δαίμον’ ὀλείτων, | ἣ μὲν ἐλαυνομένη λαθρίως ἐρετμοίς, δ’ ἐλαύνων. On one level (and without taking the detour through Plato Comicus), it is certainly possible to consider the Hesiodic parallel as a hyperbolic indication of just how difficult intercourse with a pregnant woman really would be. Read in this way, it may be seen further to underline the litotes in line 3 of the epigram: To be sure, it will be no small labour (οὐκ ὀλίγος ἄκων ἐσται), but rather apocalypse now.

So, perhaps, it can be said that the epigram inscribes itself into the tradition of didactic poetry by its use of the authorizing model, and indeed, the paradigmatic didactic poet, Hesiod. It seems reasonable, therefore, to consider the consequences thereof, on the content plane. In this respect, our epigram must be said violently to clash. The Hesiodic poems are decidedly less outspoken and encouraging with regard to sex, conjugal and otherwise. In the Works and Days, as Froma I. Zeitlin has put it, ‘woman’s sexual and reproductive roles remain […] discreetly obscured’. Zeitlin notices further how we are nowhere told of carnal activity between Pandora and Epimetheus in what she labels as a ‘proto-version of marriage’, and draws attention to how the view of sexuality as dangerous, even lethal, permeates the Hesiodic poem. The subject matter may thus be described as ill-suited for the didactic

385 Hes. Op. 369: μεσοῦθι φείδεσθαι· δειλῇ δ’ ἐν πυθέμεν φειδώ. Incidentally, four lines later, we are warned not to be deceived by an ‘ass-rigged woman’, for ‘he who believes a woman, believes a cheater’ (Hes. Op. 373-375): μηδὲ γυνὴ σε νόμων πυγοστόλως ἐξαπατάτω | αἱμίλα κωτόλουσα, τεῦχ διφόσα καλῆν· | ὃς δὲ γυναικὶ πέποιθε, πέποιθ’ ὁ γε φελῆρην.


388 Zeitlin, 1996, 58.

poetic tradition of which this epigram is so reminiscent. So much so, in fact, that we could apply the reference to the clash of the Titans to the epigram itself: the predicament of conjugal sex in the form of Hesiodic didactic poetry is a disaster of apocalyptic proportions.

It could be argued that the worse suited the subject matter for a poem that seemingly inscribes itself into a didactic tradition, the better the effect, at least as long as it can be read as an ironic or outright parodic joke. It is not only the conflation of the Hesiodic passage with that of the comic poet Plato that would point to such an irony. The word πόνος (labour/effort/toil/work), as A. Carson has argued, is a common metaphor, throughout Greek literature, for ‘the act of sexual intercourse that engenders or aims at engendering offspring’.390

By means of the πόνος of sex, the Greek husband domesticates his wild bride and, just as he does for his land and the beasts on it, brings to fruition what would otherwise remain savage and unproductive. [...] Distinct from the πόνος of sex in Greek diction we find the παιδία [sic!] (“play”) of erotic dalliance. Erotic “play” may include premarital, extramarital, homosexual or even marital relations, provided these do not take the form of coitus for procreative purposes.

Against this background, the choice of the word πόνος in line 3 of the epigram seems odd, even paradoxical. Since we are dealing with an already pregnant wife, one could argue, sexual intercourse in which she takes part should not be referred to as a πόνος (no matter how big or small), but rather as play (however difficult due to her state). Perhaps this oddity suggests that the word πόνος is evocative of more than just a labour of love. An obvious possibility would be to read the word as taking on a double reference, one that would include also the labour of poetic production. Admittedly, in Hellenistic poetry, it is rather the verb ἐκπονεῖν that ‘suggests an ideal of highly polished work in which every word counts’,391 related to the Callimachean ideal of λεπτότης, but πόνος used of poetic production would not be unparalleled; we find it in both Callimachus and Asclepiades.392 I emphatically stress that I

392 Cf. AP 16.63 (Callimachus 55 G–P; 6 Pf.): Τοῦ Σαμίου πόνος εἶμι δόμω ποτὲ θεῖον οὐκ ὤν | δεξαμένου, κλείω δ’ Εὐρυτον ὁπ’ ἐπαθέν, καὶ ξαφθήν Ἰδείαν, Ὀρμήκειον δὲ καλεῖμαι | γράμμα τε Κροκόθλου, Ζεῷ φέλε, τὸῦτο μέγα. Cf. also AP 7.11 (Asclepiades 28 G–P): Ὅ γλυκός Ἡράννης οὕτος πόνος, οὐχὶ πολύς μὲν, ὦς ἄν παρθενικὰς ἐννεακικαδεκέτεις, ἃ άλλ’ ἐτέρων πολλῶν δυνατῶτερος: εἰ δ’ Ἀἴδας μοι | μὴ ταχὺς ἔλθε, τίς ἂν ταλάκου ἐσχ’ ὄνομα:
do not propose to equate πόνος with ἐκποιεῖν (nor will I, though I was tempted, attempt to bring μέγα κῶμα into interpretive play, and argue in terms of a polemical stance against Callimachean poetics). However, I will suggest the possibility of reading a poem about sexual play (παιδία) after successful sexual labour (πόνος) as a literary game, as a παίγνιον, which, as part of its play, readily submits itself to commenting, at the same time, on the dramatic action on which it is elaborating: that is to say, to write a didactic poem about sexual intercourse, ὅπερ δλόγος πόνος ἔσται, will be no small labour. Let’s push things forward.

The Hellenistic age, as P. Toohey has argued, saw the second phase or level of didactic writing. This second phase is marked not only by literacy, but by the flourishing of prose handbooks and technical compendiums written over a vast area of different topics. Given that ‘how to enjoy sexual intercourse’ was not a standard topic of didactic poetry, we might well look to other literary forms in an attempt further to broaden the textual network within which to interpret the present epigram. Indeed, by the third century BC, if not before, a prose genre of sex manuals had been established, ‘handbooks whose primary stock in trade was a careful listing, enumerating, and limiting of the positions for heterosexual intercourse’. Unfortunately, a meagre papyrus fragment and some twenty odd testimonies are all that seem to remain of this genre. Instrumental in H. N. Parker’s reconstruction of the sex manual is a poem described as ‘a brilliant and witty parody of the conventions of elegiac poetry, of didactic poetry, and of the sex manuals’, that is Ovid’s Ars Amatoria, particularly its catalogue of sexual positions in book 3 (769-788). Unlike Ovid’s famous poem, the sex manuals were almost invariably ascribed to women portrayed as writing from experience, as Parker notes in exploring the remaining testimonies. However, there are two notable exceptions to this rule of female ascription. Interestingly, one of the two exceptions appears in an epigram ascribed to Dioscorides, AP 7.450 (=Dioscorides 26 G–P), in which Philaenis, the most famous (alleged) author of sex manuals, is ‘exonorated’.

Τής Σαμίης τὸ μνήμα Φιλαινίδος· ἄλλα προσεπεῖν
τλῆθε με καὶ στήλης πλησίον, ὁψερ, ἰθι.

394 Cf. Toohey, 1996, 8-10.
395 Parker, 1992, 91 (with n. 2).
396 The testimonies are listed in Parker, 1992, 108.
397 Parker, 1992, 95.
398 Ov. AA 3.769-788.
399 Parker, 1992, 92.
The tomb of the Samian Philainis, but be not ashamed to speak with me, Sir; come close to the stele. I am not she who wrote those works unsuitable to women and who did not acknowledge Shame as a goddess. No, I was of chaste disposition, by my grave, and if anyone to shame me composed a wanton treatise, let time reveal his name, and may my bones rejoice that I am rid of the abominable report.

The second exception is referred to in another epigram, AP 7.345, which is attributed to Aeschrion (=1 G–P). This epigram, too, features an epitaph of Philaenis’, but it names Polycrates of Athens as the author of the sex manuals: 401

"Εγώ Φιλαενίς ἕ *πίβωτος άνθρώποις
ἐνταύθα γήρα τῷ μακρῷ κεκοίμημαι.
μή μ’, ὥ μάταιε ναῦτα, τίν communion κάμπτων
χλειών τε ποιεῖ καὶ γέλωτα καὶ λάσθην.
οὐ γὰρ, μά τὼν Ζήν’, οὐ μά τός κάτω κοίρους,
oὐκ ἢν ἐς ἄνδρας μάχλος οὐδὲ δημώδης.
Πολυκράτης δὲ τίν γενήν Ἁθηναῖος,
λόγων τι παιπάλημα καὶ κακὴ γλώσσα,
ἐγραφεῖν, οὐ’ ἐγραφί’ ἐγώ γὰρ οὐκ οἶδα.

I Philaenis, celebrated among men, have been laid to rest here, by extreme old age. Thou silly sailor, as thou roundest the cape, make no sport and mockery of me; insult me not.

400 Translation Paton, 2, 245-247.
401 Translation Paton, 2, 187.
For by Zeus I swear and the Infernal Lords
I was not lascivious with men or a public woman;
but Polycrates the Athenian,
a cozenor in speech and an evil tongue,
rote whatever he wrote; for I know not what it was.

In the light of this epigram, we may at least suggest the possibility that Dioscorides’ handling of the Philaenis matter involved the attribution of sex manuals to a male author, as line 7 (τοῦ μὲν ἀναπτύξαι χρόνος οὖνομα) would indicate. Gow–Page, who hold the epigram attributed to Aeschrion to have inspired Dioscorides’ epigram, comment on the omission of Polycrates’ name in Dioscorides epigram: perhaps it was a misunderstanding, or ‘due to the fact that it would have meant little to his contemporaries’. Obviously, one could equally well explain the omission as a gap waiting to be filled, and thus enjoyed, by an ‘educated’ reader, so as to give the latter a moment of pleasure at his or her own erudition. I am not particularly concerned here with AP 7.345 or AP 7.450 as comments on the genre of the sex manuals, but their ascription of such works to male authors such as Polycrates provides us, I believe, with an additional indication that our epigram is a parody that mockingly transfers the prose genre of sex manual to the poetic genre of ‘didactic epic’.

Polycrates was an (in)famous practitioner of ‘paradoxical encomia’, that is prose writings of literary praise of such unlikely individuals as Clytaimnemstra. Dionysus of Halicarnassus criticized him for being (among other things) ‘vulgar in his epideictic speeches’, but Demetrius is somewhat more conciliatory in his brief comment on the author: Polycrates, Demetrius states, was being ’playful, not in earnest; the very inflation of his writing is part of the play’. We do not need, it is true, to take a detour through Polycrates to try to establish that we may read our epigram as a parodying play, from the point of view of the literary forms it employs. In general, Hellenistic didactic poetry has been described both as formal, that is ‘interested more in the trappings of the genre than in

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402 The relative chronology of the two epigrams is discussed by Gow–Page, 2, 3-4.
403 Gow–Page, 2, 4.
406 Cf. Demetr. Eloc. 120: ἕγω δὲ Πολυκράτει μὲν τὸν ῥήτορα συγχωρῶ ἐγκαμμαζομεντο ..., ὡς Ἀγαμέμνονα ἐν ἀντιθέτοις καὶ μεταφοράς καὶ πάν τοίς ἐγκαμμαζομενοῖς τρόποις ἐπαιζέων γάρ, οὐκ ἐσποιδάζει, καὶ αὐτός τῆς γραφῆς ὁ ὑγιὸς παιγνίων ἦστι. παιζέων μὲν δὴ ἐξέστω, ὡς φημί, τὸ δὲ πρέπον ἐν παντὶ πράγματι φιλοκτένω, τοῦτο ἐστι προσφόροις ἐμπεωτεύειν, τὰ μὲν μικρὰ μικρῶς, τὰ μεγάλα δὲ μεγάλως.
instruction’, and as ‘undercut by puns, word play, and persistent, ludic irony’. Yet, we might well consider Polycrates as a literary precursor, if not an authorizing model, not only of the ‘perverse’ sex manuals themselves, but, more importantly, of perverting a literary form by applying it to wholly unsuitable matter. Let’s push things forward.

Conjugal erotic passion (and our epigram must undoubtedly be said to involve just that), is not only discreetly obscured in Hesiod, but remains a rare sight in Greek literature at large. Though the exceptional ending of Xenophon’s Symposium (where the enactment of the passion of Ariadne and Dionysus leaves the attending bachelors so fired up that they swear to get married, and spurs the married men to head home in haste to enjoy sexual intercourse with their wives) may suggest that conjugal sex was not completely alien even to a sympotic context, conjugal sex in eroto-sympotic epigrams ascribed to epigrammatists antedating Dioscorides is non-existent. Interestingly, AP 5.52 (Dioscorides 6 G–P) also revolves around conjugal love, or rather would-be (conjugal?) love, with a focus on betrayal. Though it could be objected that the theme of breaking fidelity vows had been treated also by Callimachus, Asclepiades and Meleager, the Dioscoridean epigram, AP 5.52, is the only one which implicitly refers to epithalamic song, and explicitly mentions the bridal bed. It remains a possibility, then, that our epigram counts among those that signalled the advent of conjugal eroticism in the erotic epigram as a genre. For what it is worth, we may

409 The word ἀλοχός not only refers primarily (if not exclusively) to a lawfully wedded wife, but it is also distinguished from ἀκοιτής by Calame 1999, 128, in the following way: ‘The akotitēs spouse, she who shared the bed, that is to say the loving and legitimate wife, was also alochos, she who was attached to the bed, a fecund woman who produced legitimate descendants.’
411 Xen. Symp. 9.7: τέλος δὲ οἱ συμπόται ἴδοντες περιβεβληκότας τε ἄλληλοις καὶ ὡς εἰς εὐνήμ ἄπώντας, οἱ μὲν ἁγιαμίαν γαμεῖν ἐπόμισαν, οἱ δὲ γεγαμερκότες ἀναβάντες ἐπὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἀπήλαιν πρὸς τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας, ὁπσὶς τούτων τύχουν.
412 Even though, as Gutzwiller, 1992, 367, argues, ‘the Ptolemaic queens associated themselves with Aphrodite as a deity who promotes mutual desire between husband and wife’, and indeed finds some support in Callimachus’ Lock of Berenice, and Theoc. Id. 17.128-130. However, the highlighting and comparison of sexual relationship within the Royal marriages with Hera and Zeus, or Helen and Menelaus, must be said to operate on a completely different, divine level, than our present epigram.
413 AP 5.52 (Dioscorides 6 G–P); ‘Όρκων κοινῶν Ἐρωτ’ ἀνεθήκαμεν· ὥρκος ὁ πιστὴν | Ἀρσινόης θέμενος Σωσάτταροι θελήσεως. | ἄλλα ὡς μὲν φυεθῆς, κενε δ’ ἀρκει· τῷ δ’ ἐφοιλέθη, ἢ Εμερος· ἢ δὲ θεὼν οὐ θανερή δύναμις. | θρίπνως, ὥε· ὡρμήσαι, παρά κληξάν ἀκοῦσαι· | Ἀρσινόης, πιστῶ μεμφάμενος προδότῃ.'
say that we see nothing of it before our epigram, and decidedly more, though still admittedly little, after it.\textsuperscript{415} Rather than pursuing the matter further, I return instead to the Imperial setting of Goldhill’s discussion of the epigram.

Like Goldhill, L. Cresci saw in the epigram affinities with the pseudo-Lucianic \textit{Erotes}, mentioned at the outset of the chapter, and with the second book of Achilles Tatius’ \textit{Leucippe and Cleitophon}—that is, with texts that engage in the debate regarding the relative merits of heterosexual and pederastic love.\textsuperscript{416} Perhaps it could be said that our epigram advocates a pederastic model of sex, but it is important to notice that it does not overtly associate its ‘pederastic model’ with any philosophical concern. Usually, the explicit connection with philosophy and education stands is an important element of pederastic discourse, not only in Imperial texts, but also in what remains from the classical period.\textsuperscript{417} This lack of ostensible philosophical connections or concerns in our epigram should perhaps caution us against one-sidedly exploring its gender inversion and any argued pederastic aspect within the framework of these Imperial texts, or within the philosophical debates of pederasty as a way to and marker of cultivation in the Hellenistic age.\textsuperscript{418} The gender inversion, it seems, must be thematized differently.

I reach the same conclusion when I set this epigram against other Hellenistic epigrams in which we find a more or less explicit tension in the choice between male and female sex partners.\textsuperscript{419} For instance, in AP 12.17 (Asclepiades 37 G–P, though the ascription is uncertain), the speaker professes to prefer male over female love.\textsuperscript{420} By contrast, the speaker of AP 5.208 seems to prefer a woman.\textsuperscript{421} In AP. 12.86 (Meleager 18 G–P),\textsuperscript{422} the speaker would prefer a boy to the boy’s mother, and in AP 12.41 (Meleager 94 G–P), it is, once more, 

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{414} AP 5.6-8 (Callimachus 11 G–P [25 Pf.]; Asclepiades 9 G–P; Meleager 69 G–P).
  \item \textsuperscript{415} Cf. AP 5.208 (Meleager 8 G–P). Following Sider, 1997, 33-38, ‘marriage/wife’ is the theme of what Sider calls Philodemus’ cycle of erotic epigrams on Xanthippe.
  \item \textsuperscript{416} Cresci, 1977, 266.
  \item \textsuperscript{418} Some material is collected by Gerhard, 1909, 140-146 and Lomiento, 1993, 268-293.
  \item \textsuperscript{419} Cresci, 1977, Cf. also AP 5.116 (Argentarius 10 G–P), AP 5.19 (Rufinus 6 P), and AP 10.68 (Agathias).
  \item \textsuperscript{420} AP 12.17: \textit{O\`ı} μοι θηλυς ἐρως ἐγκάρδιος, ἀλλὰ με πισταὶ \textit{̣| ἀρσενος ἀσβέστων θήκας ἐπ᾽ ἀνθρακι. | πλειότερων τὸδε βάλλον: ὅσω δυνατότερος ἄρας \textit{̣|} θηρατέρης, τόσος χίω πόθος ὄξύτερος.}
  \item \textsuperscript{421} AP 5.208 (Meleager 9 G–P), the text of which may be uncertain, but, as Gutzwiller, 1998, 297, n. 134, argues, the general sense is not in doubt: \textit{O\`ı} μοι παιδομανὴ κραδίας τί δὲ τερπνόν, Ἐρωτες. | ἀνδροματεῖν, εἰ μὴ δοῖς \textit{̣|} λαβεῖν ἐθέλοι; \textit{̣|} ἀ χείρ γὰρ τὰν χεῖρα· καλὰ μὲ μένει παράκοιτος. | ἔρως τὰς ἀραχήν ἀρσενικῆς λαβίσαι.}
  \item \textsuperscript{422} AP 12.86 (Meleager 18 G–P): \textit{Α’ Κύπρεις θήλεια γυναικομανὴ φλόγη βάλλει, | ἀραγά δ’ αὐτὸς Ἔρως ἵπερον ἀνισχεῖ. | πα ῥέψως ποτὶ παίδ η’ ματέρα· φοιμὰ δὲ καῦταν | Κύπραν ἔρειν· Ἡμιξα τὶ βρασό παιδάριον.}
women that the speaker professes to love. It is a shared feature of all of the above epigrams to comment in a discriminatory way and to choose actively between male and female, to favour one of the two types of love. In this respect, the epigram of our concern, AP 5.54, must be said to differ significantly. In sharp contrast, our epigram does not make a choice or state a preference in such terms. If this epigram may be said to turn a woman into a boy, it could be argued to do so, seemingly, out of the pragmatics of her specific condition. It thus may be said to differ, both with regard to the treatment of the topic of pederasty in philosophical writings, or even in the ancient Greek novel, and with regard to the epigrams referred to above. I shall therefore move on to explore the gender inversion of this epigram as an attempt of mastering the genre of erotic epigram, and from the point of view of editorial poetics.

Entering my first alternative venue, I will proceed from the fact that literary motifs employed in pederastic and heterosexual epigrams overlap extensively. For, if Goldhill is right in suggesting that our epigram raises the question of ‘how like a man is a woman’, it may be asked whether that question is already raised (implicitly) by the very tendency towards overlapping motifs in the erotic epigram as a genre. The refusal of our epigram to be either heterosexual or pederastic, or rather, the manner in which it may be seen as having it both ways, may perhaps be considered as a literary representation of this convention of the erotic epigram, similar to the way in which Aristonoe and Cleo, as I have argued, may be read as a literary dramatization of the poetic principle of variation. Parallels abound in the many ways in which sepulchral epigrams have been read as actively engaging with the history and literary conventions of its own particular genre.

Indeed, by setting itself up as both heterosexual and pederastic, our epigram may be seen to encompass every other conceivable erotic epigram, and one is inclined to wonder whether it thus inscribes itself at the very top of the genre, as the epigram from which all other

423 AP 12.41 (Meleager 94 G–P): Οὐκέτι μοι Θήρων γράφεται καλὸς οἶδ᾽ ὦ πυραυγῆς | πρὶν ποτὲ, νῦν δ᾽ ἦδη δαλὸς Ἀπολλόδωτος. | στέργων θῆλν ἔρωτα· διαστράγγλον δὲ πίεσμα | λασταφῶν μελέτων ποιμέναι αἰγοβάταις.


426 One among many Callimachean examples will have to suffice, AP 7.277 (50 G–P; 58 Pf.): Τίς, ἔξως ὁ νασαγε; Λεόντιχος ἑνδίδα νεκρῶν ἕπρεν ἐπ᾽ αἰγιαλῶν χώσε δὲ τάδε ταῷ | δακρύσας ἐπίκηρον ἐὼν βλών· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτὸς | ἐναντίων, αἰθήσει δ᾽ ἵσα θαλασσαπορεῖ. Gutzwiller, 1998, 209-210, rightly reads the epigram as a dramatization of the act of composing an inscription. In Gutzwiller’s reading ‘the opening query about the identity of the deceased represents Lenoticus’ own dialogue with himself as he muses on the identity of the shipwrecked corpse he has just buried. Having finished the task of covering the body, he now contemplates how he can mark the grave of one whose name he does not know. His only knowledge concerns his own actions and feelings, which therefore become the substance of the epigram.’
erotic epigrams may be seen to emanate, as were it the idea of the erotic epigram, the master of its literary world, reducing all others to the role of servants.

Let’s push things further. The current division of pederastic and heterosexual epigrams into two different books of the Greek Anthology (AP 5.134-215 and AP 12.37-168)—and we enter now into my second alternative venue—was the result of late editorial work, possibly by Cephalas. The earliest anthologists, like Meleager, seem to have included both types in amatory sections. Could our epigram have provided a transition between such sections? As the epigram was transferred from stone to book, it has been argued, ‘some poetry, most likely that found at points of opening, closing, or transition, developed a secondary reference to its own literary frame’. Indeed, warning us against reading Meleager’s epigrams as ‘isolated entities’, Gutzwiller would allow us to choose to grant referential status to the literary context itself—that is, the particular short sequence of epigrams in which a poem is set and, more broadly, the entire collection, given cohesiveness through intricate arrangement and overarching metaphors.

The Dioscoridean epigrams on which I have written do not easily lend themselves to any reconstructive work of the kind done by Gutzwiller. However, starting from the hypothesis that they were published in a book of epigrams, and from Bing’s analysis of AP 7.37 and 7.707 (=Dioscorides 22 and 23 G–P), which suggests that those two epigrams refer to each other as ‘neighboring texts on the page’, an exploration of the gender inversion in our epigram, from the point of view of editorial poetics, seems not only irresistible, but even wholly admissible.

In Gutzwiller’s reconstruction, the amatory book of Meleager’s Garland has a large section of male-female epigrams (AP 5.150-91, 12.98-160, 12.45-48) as the core section of the collection. This section is framed by sections devoted to either boys or women (AP 12.54-97 and 12.37-44, and 5.192-208 and 12.61 respectively). Following the same model of editorial poetics, we should consider how AP 5.54 may have been related to the content of the poems surrounding it. For instance, our epigram could easily be conceived as a transitional

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piece, placed between two sections of epigrams, one devoted exclusively to women, the other to boys. As a transitional piece, we could argue that the posited section of ‘heterosexual’ poems spills over into the first lines of our epigram, which then, by its gender inversion, and by ending with the words ἀρσενόπαιδα Κύπρεων, announces and launches into a ‘pederastic’ section.

As we saw above, the terminology employed in the epigram suggests a tension between procreative and recreational sex, between function and fun (not that fun is useless, but still). On a surface reading, the polarization between procreative and recreational sex is most obvious, of course, in the two adjectives that are used to qualify the sex (that is, Κύπρεων, which I read as metonymic in both lines 2 and 6), παιδογόνος and ἀρσενόπαιδας respectively. The latter might have been a new coinage; it remains unusual after its appearance here, recurring mainly in Nonnus. Similarly, the adjective παιδογόνος is a rare sight in extant Greek literature antedating our epigram. Our candidates for poetic precedents are only three: AP 9.437 (Theocritus 20 G–P; 4 Rossi), where it is used to qualify the noun phallus, and Euripides’ Supplices (v. 625) and Call. fr. 260a.10. More interestingly, however, there are five instances of the noun παιδογονία, all to be found in one and the same author, also antedating our epigram, namely Plato.

We have already touched upon one of these five passages in a previous chapter. It is found in the Symposium, where it denotes the means with which some attempt to achieve immortality, that is, through the procreation of children. Of course, this carnal procreation is then disfavourably contrasted with the ‘child-bearing’ soul of, among others, poets. As I have stressed earlier, this passage explicitly both relates and polarizes sexual and poetic activity. The second of the five we find in the Republic, where the noun is used in passing when Socrates refers to ‘the distasteful topic of possession of women and procreation of children’. The remaining three instances are all to be found in the Laws. Of these, the first derives from a passage in the sixth book, where the Stranger leaves the issue of marriage to embark on the topic of how a bride and bridegroom should pass the one full year posited

432 Gutzwiller, 1997, 190, and Gutzwiller, 1998, TABLE II.
434 Cf. Rossi, 2001, 160, and, for the issue of authenticity of the epigram, which remains debated, 166-167.
435 AP 9.437.3-4: φάληρτι | παιδογόνῳ δυνατὸν Κύπριδος ἐργα τελεῖν.
436 Pl. Symp. 208e1-a5.
before childbirth. Although the Stranger has uttered hard sentiments before, he admits, people will find his views on this topic even more difficult to accept. In the next and last two instances, the noun appears in passages regarding same-sex relations, and the severe regulations of sex relations within marriages. The first of these involves a law devised ‘for making a natural use of procreative intercourse,—on the one hand, by abstaining from the male and by not slaying of set purpose the human stock, nor sowing seed on rocks and stones where it can never take root and have fruitful increase; and, on the other hand, by abstaining from every female field in which you would not desire the seed to spring up.’ Shortly after, the noun reappears, and we now reach the final example, in a passage which sets up as an example to emulate fowls (and many other animals), saying that they ‘live chaste and celibate lives without sexual intercourse until they arrive at the age of breeding; and when they reach this age they pair off, as instinct moves them, male with female and female with male; and thereafter they live a way that is holy and just, remaining constant to their first contracts of love.’

I am not about to suggest that παιδογόνω in line 2 of our epigram is alluding to any specific one of these Platonic passages. But I wish to end this chapter by suggesting that the rarity of the adjective and the cognate noun in antedating texts, and the relative concentration of occurrences in the Platonic corpus, mark these passages as relevant frames within which an interpretation of the epigram can be furthered. While the passages from the *Laws* referred to above evolve around sexual aspects that are touched upon by our epigram, the parallels from the *Symposium* and the *Republic* firmly place poetics on the agenda. Indeed, the *Laws*, too, sees its fair share of poetic censorship. The views expressed in the Platonic corpus on these two issues, poetry and sex, are notoriously unsystematic and seemingly contradictory at times. We may note, however, that critics often pair them together. The *Laws*, with its wish to return to the socio-sexual *mores* before Laius’ invention of pederasty, has been characterized, by J.J. Winkler as ‘a thought-experiment on the same order as censoring traditional poetry in the *Republic*, one that went utterly against the grain of values, practices and debates of Plato’s society.’ The Platonic writings may remain unrepresentative as far as the history of sexual and social *mores* are concerned, but their importance with regard to the discursive history of sexuality and poetics seems difficult to overestimate.

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439 Pl. *Leg.* 838e4-839a3; translation Bury, 1926, 159.
440 Pl. *Leg.* 840d3-e1; translation Bury, 1926, 165.
In the *Laws*, as Goldhill point out, the Stranger may be ‘alluding to the commonly recognized difficulty of discussing erotic matters without blurring the distinction between the serious and the comic’, but *eros* is introduced in the *Laws* as a topic of ‘strong worry about the corruption [...] of the pleasures of sex [...]’.

Furthermore, in its dealing with the topic of *eros* (and that of poetry), A. Nightingale has argued that the *Laws*, as a literary text, ‘does not invite its readers to practice philosophy; on the contrary, it consistently indicates that the investigation of the issues at hand has already been completed’. In other words, to construe ‘a Plato’ from the dialogues as an (if not the) archetypical philosopher, hostile not only towards poetry and sex, but also to the exploration of their interrelationship, would thus hold valid, however oversimplified and casual.

Let me return to Goldhill, who points out that ‘[t]he interaction of philosophy and other elements of intellectual discourse with the narratives of the novels or the poetry of the symposium [my italics] constitutes a fundamental dynamic of the discourse of ancient sexuality’. It is central to the sense of engagement in this discursive space, Goldhill goes on to argue, that one finds the place of humour and irony. If we were to reject the suggested connection to ‘Plato’ by arguing that our epigram does not form a philosophically informed or even interested response to a particular and verifiable Platonic passage or doctrine, we may just risk rendering one of its many places of humour and irony inaccessible. Where Goldhill saw family values and the female body as what was turned upside down and wilfully used in this epigram, I am inclined to propose that one of our epigram’s admittedly sharp edges derives from its turning ‘Plato’ upside down. The ways in which this and other Dioscoridean epigrams may be seen to accomplish that, to form metapoetical revolts against ‘Plato’, would provide a good starting-point for further thematization and more penetrating analysis. For now, I will be content if I have been able to show that ‘Plato’ and Dioscorides may be intimately connected, for better or for worse.

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442 Winkler, 1990:2, 173.
443 Goldhill, 1995, 54 and 55.
444 Nightingale, 1993, 300.
445 So, for instance, Lucas, 1990, 230: ‘He [sc. Plato] knew the power of erotic love [...] But he draws back. It is the same as with poetry’.
Outro – Next Time

You’ve got no wins here, so better luck next time
[...]
You thought you brought your best lines, but they couldn’t touch mine
I rocked you in your knot, hope you have better luck next time
[...]
(not this time but next time)

Though the (ant-)agonistic mode of the rap song quoted above hardly needs to be pointed out, the sample with which the song concludes—taken from the remixed version of LL Cool J’s *I Shot Ya*—certainly casts some doubt over what will happen ‘next time’. 447 How sincere is the wish for ‘better luck next time’, when, in the target text, LL Cool J openly professes ‘word, I’m here to crush all my peers’? Indeed, in the LL Cool J song that Gangstarr alludes to, the line ‘not this time but next time’ is followed by (and ends with) ‘I’ma name names. I shot ya’—no such thing as a ‘next time’, it would seem. Better not wait then; rewind.

I set out to interpret six Hellenistic epigrams in this thesis. To those readers who might have seen me as annoyingly reluctant (or, quite simply, unable) to deliver confident statements about *the* meaning of this or that poem, or this phrase or the other, I can only reply that such an approach would have been contrary to my conviction that the process of interpretation never ends, and that all works of art are polysemic so as to admit many different and indeed contradictory interpretations, simultaneously.

The aspects focussed on by an interpreter, and the juncture at which interpretation will be drawn to a close will depend on the (arbitrary, however well-argued) choice of the interpreter, rather than any pre-determined (and dictating) actual meaning or intention of the interpreted texts. Indeed, and as we saw in the introduction, the Hellenistic epigram has been described by some of its foremost scholarly critics not only in similar terms of open-endedness, but also in terms of play. Against this background, too zealous an attempt to narrow down and argue confidently for one sole possible interpretation of any of them, or any line or word, would to my mind mean doing both these texts and my readers an injustice.

447 Cf. LL Cool J (feat. Fat Joe, Foxy Brown, Keith Murray and Prodigy), ‘I Shot Ya (remix)’, *Mr. Smith*, (Def Jam 1995).
In interpreting AP 5.53 and AP 5.193 (Dioscorides 3 and 4 G–P), for instance, it would have been possible to draw interpretation to a close: (i) after stating that one of them exists only as a mistaken scribal perversion the other; or (ii) after arguing that both poems should be looked upon as two consciously authored compositions; or (iii) after arguing that they form a pair, having showed how they relate to each other when read as such (one suggestion, as some readers will recall, was to consider one of them as an exaggerated version of the other in a way corresponding to how scholars have construed the phenomenon of epigram pairs); or (iv) after locating this pair of epigrams within a broader textual network, namely the epigrammatic motif of choosing between two kinds of lovers; or (v) after further broadening the scope of the textual network within which to interpret the epigrams, considering such interpretive possibilities as reading the poems as a literary representation of certain features of the epigrammatic genre, such as poetic variation, and against the background of metaphors of intellectual and physical conception; it was here that I stopped (at long last).

Furthermore, although it must be said of both the object of desire in AP 5.56 (Dioscorides 1 G–P), and the sexual act in AP 5.55 (Dioscorides 5 G–P), that each is described in some detail, I hope to have shown how differently they can be (and contradictorily they have been) construed. The assumption that it is possible univocally to reduce an interpretation of any of these epigrams, even in segments, to any single one of the interpretive possibilities drawn attention to by myself and others remains as alien to me as the belief that scholarly interpretation is characterized by its ability to do just that. While I am looking forward to see how these epigrams will be interpreted next time, this time seemed as good as any to attempt to illustrate their polysemic quality. This much, I hope to have achieved.

The very attempt may be thought of as something of a structural handicap, at least in so far as it has drawn attention away from the theme around which I stated that my interpretations would revolve. By means of conclusion, I briefly return therefore to my interpretive focus, the interrelatedness of eros and poiesis, and the interchangeability of erotic and poetic actors.

This time, let me begin with Athenion rather than Doris. AP 5.138 (Dioscorides 2 G–P) not only dramatizes the kindling of erotic passion during a poetic performance by a poetic performer, but also explicitly links the effects of erotic passion to the dramatic action of the poetic piece performed. Indeed, this epigram connects poetry and erotic desire so firmly as to beg (and all but force us to put) the question of how the two are interrelated; I suggested that AP 5.138 enacts a cycle in which poetry leads to erotic desire that leads to poetry. Admittedly,
none of the other epigrams treated in this thesis seems to interrelate poetry and erotic desire as obviously and immediately as AP 5.138. However, it could be argued that AP 5.138 forms an authorizing model for the very move to consider and to try to educe poetological implications the representations of erotic desire in Dioscoridean epigrams by and large; if ever we needed one, AP 5.138 provides us with an alibi.

Returning to Doris, to AP 5.55 (Dioscorides 5 G–P), it is true that nothing compels us to adopt a reading beyond the sexual act described. Yet, as I hope to have shown, the pouring out of ‘Doris’ is so strongly reminiscent of other outpourings of poetry, that it redirects our attention precisely to poetological concerns. The metapoetic reading of Doris is based on the two introductory and the concluding lines. Not all segments, let alone every single word, of this or any other of the epigrams treated here, can be used to argue that eroticism in these epigrams may carry metapoetic undertones. I would never propose that the epigrams should be read as systematically written allegories of poetic production. It would be mistaken, too, to expect systematic coherency in the ways in which poetological aspects may be said to be expressed in and by erotic metaphors.

If, in AP 5.55, Doris and the first person speaker seem simultaneously to fill the roles of both beloved and poem, and lover and poet, the first person speaker and the pregnant wife of AP 5.54 (Dioscorides 7 G–P) do not easily lend themselves to be interpreted in a similar way. Among the various possibilities discussed with regard to this epigram, perhaps the ‘functional reading’, according to which a gender inversion that sees woman turn to boy may be seen as motivated in terms of the editorial poetics of a collection of epigrams, remains the least controversial. Yet, as much as this example differs from the ways in which Athenion and Doris were analyzed, it suggests an additional way in which the erotic contents of these epigrams may be explained in poetological terms, and this before considering how the two categories may be seen to merge when considering the poem in contexts other than that of the literary epigram.

In this respect, I wish to draw particular attention to passages from the Platonic dialogues dealing with eros and poiesis, even though they remain among the least pursued in this thesis. In the one passage in the Platonic corpus where the themes of inspiration and imitation are combined, Laws 719c, the inspired poet is likened to a spring that lets whatever is at hand flow forth, and the skill of imitation that poets are said to possess results only in self-contradiction; ‘the poet’s art of imitation is just as irrational as the inspiration which comes from the Muses: in both cases the poet does not know what he is doing, and is
therefore incapable of judging his production’.\footnote{Translation Murray, 1996, 12.} What better target for a poet, in displaying and defending his *sophia*, than a corpus where poets are granted neither wisdom nor skill?\footnote{Cf. Pl. Ap. 22b-c and Rep. 601d1-2 respectively.} What better way than by bringing in the backbiter, both as a model (as in the idea of poetic offspring, and, possibly, even for personifying poetic pieces as mistresses),\footnote{For the latter, cf. Pl. Rep. 603a10-b2.} and as an antagonist on whose knot to rock. Well, perhaps there are better targets and ways, but none as ironic. At any rate, much work remains to be done on these erotic epigrams in relation to the Platonic dialogues; perhaps next time.

I turn, finally, to the epigram where I had most difficulties, or rather where I failed, even by my own account, to produce an interpretation in which erotic and poetic aspects emerged as interconnected or interchangeable, AP 5.56 (Dioscorides 1 G–P). I stubbornly refused to accept any notion of fear of rivals as a reason for the seemingly sudden interruption of the description of the object of desire. Indeed, I refused to see the ...thing... described in the epigram as much more than a nameless heap of contradictory parts. What kind of dog would even recognize this as a bone, let alone be satisfied with it? If Midas’ reeds whispered to everybody that the king had ass’s ears, what is the pen of the poet saying to us? These questions I raised in objection to earlier interpretations, only to prove unable to answer them satisfactorily. Perhaps my scepticism was unfounded, or rather, prematurely stated. If parallelisms are to be sought, why not look for one between the object of desire and the epigram itself, and why not look for another between the rivals on the one hand and ourselves as readers on the other? Perhaps, the frustrated desire of the rivals to see the object in full naked splendour is paralleled by our own, equally frustrated, desire to grasp this epigram; as if first person speaker and poet were saying, *you’ve got no wins here, so better luck next time.*
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