

## ASCLEPIADES, AP V 210

The much suspected opening words of this poem, τῷ θαλλῷ, may in fact be correct. They could, in spite of Gow-Page, stand for the flower of youth. A second possibility is that the noun means 'wand', comporting a phallic *double-entendre*. Or else it may mean 'gift', a rare and neglected, but papyrologically attested meaning of the word. If emendation is still preferred, τῷ θάλπει seems the best bet, given the frequency of heat metaphors for erotic feeling in classical poetry.

τῷ θαλλῷ Διδύμη με συνήρπασεν. ὦμοι, ἐγὼ δέ  
 τήκομαι ὡς κηρὸς πὰρ πυρί, κάλλος ὄρων.  
 εἰ δὲ μέλαινα, τί τοῦτο; καὶ ἄνθρακες· ἄλλ' ὅτε κείνους  
 θάλψωμεν, λάμπουσ' ὡς ῥόδευι κάλυκες.

Although printed and translated without qualms by Paton ('by the branch') and Beckby ('mit ihrer Schönheit'), the opening of this poem has been much suspected<sup>1</sup> and emended. Of the various conjectures<sup>2</sup>, τῷ θαλλῷ (or one of the variants thereon) commands the most powerful support<sup>3</sup>; Dübner accepted Boissonade's τῷ θαλερῷ, with Waltz distinctly the odd man out in printing Lumb's<sup>4</sup> τωθασμῷ ('par ses taquineries'). There are, however, various grounds for supposing that the manuscript reading<sup>5</sup> may in fact be correct.

<sup>1</sup> Most recently by D. H. Garrison, *Mild Frenzy: a Reading of the Hellenistic Love Epigram*, Wiesbaden 1978, p. 52, who, notwithstanding his tentative rendering 'by her youthfulness', obelises the text.

<sup>2</sup> Repertories of which are furnished by Dübner, Stadtmüller, and Gow-Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams*, Cambridge 1965, II, p. 120. One would never know from Paton and Beckby that there was any dispute at all!

<sup>3</sup> Originated by Jacobs, the eyes have it in Wilamowitz (? see later, n. 28), Ruhnken, Gow-Page, and, most recently, W. Ludwig, «Die Kunst der Variation im hellenistischen Liebesepigramm», *L'Epigramme Grecque*, Geneva 1968, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> T. W. Lumb, *Notes on the Greek Anthology*, London 1920, p. 16 («by her taunts»); Gow-Page do not discuss this suggestion.

<sup>5</sup> Doubts about which ultimately derive from the corrector's marginal ζητει τὴν ἔννοιαν in P.

1. In spite of Gow-Page's contemptuous dismissal,  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\hat{\omega}$  could denote the flower of youth or beauty, given similar use of the cognates  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu$  and  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ , not to mention the ubiquity of  $\xi\nu\theta\omicron\varsigma$  in this sense<sup>6</sup>. And indeed, the reading has been so defended<sup>7</sup>. Additional support for this line of defence is provided by the frequency with which the images of flower and fire are coupled in epigram and elsewhere<sup>8</sup>.

2. Gow-Page's ridicule of Toup<sup>9</sup> for adducing Plato, *Phaedo* 230 D ( $\tau\acute{\alpha}$  πεινῶντα θρέμματα θαλλὸν ἢ τινα καρπὸν προσείοντες ἄγουσι) in support of the reading rather clouds the issue. The point about this passage is that it permits the idea that Didyme attracted the poet by waving a wand at him. Girls often take this sort of initiative in pastoral and elsewhere, usually with sexual or magical intentions. An obvious case in point is Vergil, *Ecl.* III 64: *malo me Galatea petit, lasciuia puella*. There is also *Ciris* 376-7 where, in a very rare example of the Latin *thallus*, a branch is one of the items used in Thessalian magic to enchant a man's mind<sup>10</sup>. Less familiar is a passage in Athenaeus (XIII 587 A) in which, with the support of a quotation from Sophocles, it is established that *thalloi* are the favourite food of goats, especially she-goats. The lechery and greed of this animal were proverbial<sup>11</sup>. In the light of this, the goatish Didyme could be luring her equally hircine prey

<sup>6</sup> In addition to those provided by *LSJ*, many more examples could be furnished from *AP* V and XII. See, e. g., V 144 (Meleager), V 231 (Macedonius Consul), and best (which is to say worst) of all XII 256, where in 12 lines of endless repetition Meleager does this entire stock of images to death. Notice also  $\iota\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$   $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  (V 194, Asclepiades or Posidippus) of female beauty, for which Gow-Page could adduce no exact parallel. In fact, the same phrase is used by Gregory Nazianzen in one of his tedious exercises (*AP* VIII 32).

<sup>7</sup> By L. Broccia, « $\Theta\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$  in Asclepiade», *Parola del Passato* 16, 1951, pp. 54-61, of which Gow-Page seem unaware, though in view of their avowed policy of not mentioning modern literature it is hard to be sure. Cf. O. Knauer, *Die Epigramme des Asklepiades von Samos*, Würzburg 1935, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> Discussed with copious examples by E. K. Borthwick, «Fire Imagery in Two Poems in the Anthology», *CP* 64, 1969, pp. 114-5.

<sup>9</sup> This line of defence is credited by Dübner not to Toup but to N. Piccolos, *Supplément à l'Anthologie grecque contenant des épigrammes et autres poésies légères inédites, précédé d'observations sur l'Anthologie*, Paris 1853, a relatively neglected work (apparently unknown to Beckby and, although sometimes mentioned in their notes, not in Gow-Page's register of editions and anthologies) and currently inaccessible to me. Broccia, *art. cit.*, p. 61, also appeals to the Plato passage.

<sup>10</sup> See the long note on this in the edition of R. O. A. M. Lyne, Cambridge 1978; cf. Nonnus, *Dionys.* XI 510, where one of the Seasons wears a *thallus* in magical ritual.

<sup>11</sup> *AP* IX 317 (Anon.); Theocritus I 87-8, V 39-42; Lucian, *Ep. Sat.* 28. Elsewhere (XIII 582 F), Athenaeus adduces Machon for the proper names or nicknames Aix and Thallus (cf. Thallousa, XIII 587 F).



by brandishing a piece of their favourite food, a standard combination of vegetable and sexual imagery in Hellenistic epigram<sup>12</sup>.

3. Hunting for phallic symbols is a dangerous critical pastime. Nevertheless, wands and suchlike frequently *do* stand for the penis: κορύνη and ῥωπαλόν for instance in Greek<sup>13</sup>, *ramus* and *thyrsus* in Latin<sup>14</sup>. Asclepiades, no stranger to obscenity<sup>15</sup>, might intend a vulgar double meaning here, a notion supportable by the comparable use of συναρπάζειν in sexual action<sup>16</sup> and by the frequency of snatching away flowers in the language of rape<sup>17</sup>. One might add that the heroine's very name comports a touch of sexiness appropriate to the forward behaviour suggested here. Didyme, not a common appellation<sup>18</sup>, is singled out by Athenaeus (XIII 576 F) as the most extraordinarily beautiful member of the harem of Ptolemy Philadelphus<sup>19</sup>. Perhaps even more to the point, her name is suggestive of διδυμοί, a slang term for testicles<sup>20</sup>.

4. Finally, for those who prefer a *double-entendre* without a phallic symbol, the tertiary meaning of θαλλός, neglected by Gow-Page and commentators in general, might be considered. In papyri<sup>21</sup> from the

<sup>12</sup> The best example is AP IX 563 (Leonidas), elucidated as «a jewel of Hellenistic obscenity» by G. Giangrande, «Fifteen Hellenistic epigrams», *JHS* 95, 1975, pp. 31-4. Alternatively, Didyme might be seen as a coy heroine in that some authors represent a *thallus* of olive as Athene's symbol of chastity: AP IX 586 (Cometas Chartularius); Nonnus, XII 112, XVI 30.

<sup>13</sup> AP V 129 (Automedon), XVI 261 (Leonidas); for tools as phallic symbols in comedy, cf. J. J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, New Haven 1975, pp. 120-4. In vulgar English, the words «tool» and «rod» are used to denote the male organ.

<sup>14</sup> Novius, in Non. 116, 26; Apuleius, Ἀνεχόμενος 16. Cf. P. Pierrugues, *Glossarium Eroticum Linguae Latinae*, Paris 1826, pp. 432, 488.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Giangrande, «Hellenistische Epigramme», *Eranos* 65, 1967, pp. 39-40, on AP XII 161; Garrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-61.

<sup>16</sup> Aristophanes, *Lys.* 437.

<sup>17</sup> And of epitaph; for the image of the flower of life, and the untimely death of a young girl as a kind of rape, see R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, Urbana 1962, p. 195, to which it might be added (for present purposes) that in Nonnus, *Dionys.* XXVII 239, XXVIII 21, the *thallus* is a lethal weapon in battle. Such conscious transfer of figures from theme to theme would, of course, be in the best traditions of Hellenistic epigram.

<sup>18</sup> Not apparently a creature of myth, Didyme earns very few references from real life in Pape-Benseler, *Griechische Eigennamen*, and none at all in D. C. Swanson, *The Names in Roman Verse*, Madison 1967. Elsewhere in AP, there is only the marginal character in VII 521 (Callimachus).

<sup>19</sup> Who was more or less coeval with Asclepiades —not, of course, that I intend any precise equation.

<sup>20</sup> AP V 126 (Philodemus).

<sup>21</sup> *LSJ* furnish several examples; cf. pseudo-Callisthenes I 32.

second century B. C. (not too far from Asclepiades' own time) on, θαλλός stands for a gift of any sort. As Giangrande<sup>22</sup> has shown, it is typical of Hellenistic epigrammatists to employ a word in a rare sense. Asclepiades is conceivably saying that Didyme seduced him with a gift (i. e. of her sexual favours); for the language, compare Libanius, *Ep.* I 212: ἐλκετο τῷ θαλλῷ.

In spite of these various proposals, emendation may still be thought preferable. As Gow-Page concede, the fashionable remedy, albeit palaeographically simple, is unwelcome in the singular<sup>23</sup>, unless (a possibility they do not consider) we take it to mean that Didyme winked at the poet<sup>24</sup>. More elaborate versions<sup>25</sup> contrived to fit the plural run the risk of being mere rewriting. Still more so, despite Gow-Page's cautious compliment that he was «perhaps on the right lines», does Scaliger's ἡ Θαλλὼ Διδύμης, importing a third character<sup>26</sup>. It is, I suppose, an open question whether τῷ φθαλμῷ... κάλλος ὄρων is effective antithesis or inept repetition. The latter view would rule out Meineke's τῷ κάλλει. Lumb's τωθασμῷ (printed, as we saw, in Waltz' Budé) makes no sense unless Asclepiades is presumed to have been a masochist: few men, certainly not poets of the Greek Anthology, are captivated by insults<sup>27</sup>.

One possibility might be τῷ θάλπει<sup>28</sup>, referring to the heat (physical, emotional, or a combination of both) of Didyme's passion. Since Asclepiades seems happy in his love<sup>29</sup>, the notion of passion on the girl's

<sup>22</sup> In his *JHS* article, cited above.

<sup>23</sup> Both Propertius I 1, 1 and his model Meleager (*AP* XII 101), usually cited in discussions of the present problem, have the plural, as does *AP* XII 72 (Meleager), where the image of burning is also exploited. Ludwig, reviewing Gow-Page (*Gnomon* 38, 1966, p. 23), defends it as a «repräsentativen Singular» with various parallels (e. g. *AP* V 162, where Asclepiades says «nail» for «nails» under no metrical exigency).

<sup>24</sup> It is worth recalling that the twitching of the right eye was regarded as an omen, something found in an amatory context in Theocritus III 37.

<sup>25</sup> Such as Ruhnken's τῷ φθαλμῷ Διδύμης με συνήρπασσεν.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Broccia, *art. cit.*, p. 54, n. 1, for objections to the placement of the article here, adducing *AP* V 164 (Asclepiades).

<sup>27</sup> *LSJ* lend no support to Waltz' interpretation of τωθασμός as gentle teasing; cf. Broccia, *art. cit.*, p. 59, n. 2, for other objections to this notion.

<sup>28</sup> Which I at first thought was unique to myself. I then found it attributed to Wilamowitz in Stadtmüller's *apparatus*, and ran it to earth in his «Parerga», *Hermes* 14, 1879, p. 166. Gow-Page make no mention of this conjecture, attributing to Wilamowitz only support for the idea of eyes, something I have not been able to verify (it is, for instance, not in the detailed discussions of his *Hellenistische Dichtung*).

<sup>29</sup> Though Garrison, *op. cit.*, p. 53, regards the poet's feelings towards Didyme as ambivalent.



part is tenable. Both this noun and its cognate verb are used in erotic contexts<sup>30</sup>, and there would be the possible advantage<sup>31</sup> of introductory consonance with the images of fire and heat that prevail throughout the epigram.

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<sup>30</sup> Above all, the present poem apart, *AP* XII 17 (of uncertain authorship, but possibly by Asclepiades; cf. Gow-Page, *HE*, II, p. 142), an erotic epigram containing the image of burning.

<sup>31</sup> This suggestion would be subject to the aforementioned considerations of balance and iteration, in view of *θάλψωμεν* in the last line.