

## ROASTED CICADAS AND HOMERIC ALLUSIONS IN POSIDIPPUS\*

Τῶν Μουσῶν τέττιγα Πόθος δήσας ἐπ' ἀκάνθαις  
κοιμίζειν ἐθέλει πῦρ ὑπὸ πλευρὰ βαλὼν·  
ἦ δὲ πρὶν ἐν βύβλοις πεπονημένη ἄλλ' ἄθερίζει  
ψυχὴ ἀνηρῶ δαίμονι μεμφομένη.

(Posidippus A. P. 12.98 = 3074–77 Gow-Page)

I reproduce the text of Gow and Page,<sup>1</sup> who summarize the epigram as follows: “The literary man or poet is proof against the torments of Love. [...] The meaning seems to be that a man whose soul has been formed by education takes the accidents of life lightly, imputing them to the malignity of fortune”.<sup>2</sup> A similar view is taken by E. Fernández-Galliano: “El alma cultivada, curtida por el estudio, resiste a los tormentos quejándose de su mala fortuna”.<sup>3</sup> However, as Gow and Page admit, such a reading sits oddly with the transmitted text: “[the moral of the epigram] is neither very plain nor very happily phrased”.<sup>4</sup>

The interpretation in question is largely based on the reading ἄλλ' ἄθερίζει, and on the rather forced exegesis of ἄλλα as meaning ‘everything unconnected with culture’.<sup>5</sup> There are, however, two considerable shortcomings in this interpretation:

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1) A. S. F. Gow & D. L. Page (eds.), *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, vol. I (Cambridge 1965) 168.

2) Quotation from A. S. F. Gow & D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, vol. II (Cambridge 1965) 486–87.

3) E. Fernández-Galliano, *Posidippo de Pela* (Madrid 1987) 78. M. Brioso Sánchez, *Faventia* 12–13 (1990–1991) 37–40, comparing Callimachus’ *Epigr.* 46 Pfeiffer = 1047–56 G.-P. (A. P. 12.150) and Theocritus’ *Idyll* 11, thinks that the poem celebrates the power of poetry (not of education in general) as a defense against the power of Pothos.

4) Gow & Page (above, n. 2) 486.

5) Gow & Page (above, n. 2) 487. Fernández-Galliano (n. 3) 80 is in complete agreement: “ἄλλα indicaría lo que no está conectado con la cultura”.

(a) It disregards the antithesis, suggested by πρίν (3), between the poet's past devotion to study and his present succumbing to the power of Pothos. One may compare a similar antithesis in Meleager, A. P. 12.117.4–6 = 4095–97 Gow-Page:

– Ποῦ δ' ἢ πρόσθεν λόγων μελέτη;  
 – Ἐρρίφθω σοφίας ὁ πολὺς πόνος· ἔν μόνον οἶδα  
 τοῦθ', ὅτι καὶ Ζηνὸς λῆμα καθεῖλεν Ἔρωτος.

(b) It is incompatible with ἀνηρῶ δαίμονι μεμφομένη: the soul cannot be simultaneously taking lightly its misfortunes and complaining about its ἀνηρὸς δαίμων. Contrary to Gow and Page's misleading paraphrase (cf. above), the poet does not coolly 'impute' his pain to the malignity of fortune, but in a clearly emotional fashion finds fault with it (μέμφεται).<sup>6</sup> Trypanis' ἄμμ' ἀθερίζει, 'looks down upon the bond',<sup>7</sup> must be rejected on the same grounds: one cannot ignore (ἀθερίζει) a torture which he finds cruel (ἀνηρῶ) and complains about (μεμφομένη).

R. Peppmüller<sup>8</sup> and Wilamowitz<sup>9</sup> saw that the final spondee must have been occupied by τρίζει; for the penultimate dactyl Peppmüller suggested ἤλεά (or ἄλεά), while Wilamowitz proposed ἄθλια. These solutions have been unduly undervalued both by Gow-Page and by Fernández-Galliano, but seem to offer a more satisfactory alternative. First and foremost, they afford room for a typically Alexandrian plurality of meanings and connotations, which nicely balances the analogous plurality latent in the use of κοιμίζειν (in l. 2). For κοιμίζειν ('put to rest', 'calm') may be taken, in this context, to mean specifically 'reduce to silence', an interpretation especially reinforced by the 'subtext' of the proverb

6) In this respect, the paraphrase of Fernández-Galliano (above, n. 3) 78 "quejándose de su mala fortuna" is closer to the mark.

7) C. A. Trypanis, *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 9 (1953) 297. His conjecture won the approval of H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 83 (1963) 97 n. 32.

8) In: *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 12 (1892) 1605–6. Peppmüller's conjecture is cited with approval by R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der alexandrinischen Dichtung* (Gießen 1893; repr. Hildesheim 1970) 163 n. 1.

9) Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, ap. P. Schott, *Posidippi epigrammata collecta et illustrata* (Inaug.-Diss., Berlin 1905) no. 15 (teste Trypanis [above, n. 7] 296).

ἀκάνθιος τέττιξ (cf. l. 1 ἐπ' ἀκάνθαις) which is used ἐπὶ τῶν ἀφώνων καὶ ἀμούσων ..., παρόσον οἱ ἀκάνθοι τέττιγες οὐκ ἄδουσιν.<sup>10</sup> Pothos inflicts cruel tortures upon the Μουσῶν τέττιξ,<sup>11</sup> perhaps as a child would cruelly toy with a captured insect by holding it over a fire.<sup>12</sup> The expected outcome would be for the cicada-poet to be silenced and (as we are to understand from the proverb) to be rendered ἄμουσος; but the soul of the cicada-poet keeps τρίζειν, emitting shrill noises, although probably unintelligible, like the voice of a number of animals (see LSJ s. v., 1) or like Herodotus' Troglodytai (5.183) who γλώσσαν ... σὺδεμιῇ ἄλλῃ παρομοίῳιεν νενομίκασι, ἀλλὰ τετριγασί κατά περ αἰ νυκτερίδες. At the same time, of course, τρίζειν is the vox propria for the hissing or crackling sound made by someone burnt in a fire (cf. e.g. Eupolis 132.2 K.-A. κάεσθαι τετριγότα).

On the other hand, ἄθλια or ἠλεὰ τρίζει, in conjunction with the sense 'put to death' of κοιμίζω (for which see LSJ s. v., I.2), introduces a subtle allusion to two Homeric passages where τρίζειν is the sound emitted by a person's ghost at the moment of death, namely Il. 23.100–101 ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἠύτε καπνὸς / ὄχετο τετριγυῖα, and Od. 24.5–9 ταὶ δὲ [sc. ψυχὰ ἰ μνηστήρων] τρίζουσαι ἔποντο / ὣς δ' ὅτε νυκτερίδες μυχῶ ἄντρου θεσπεσίῳι / τρίζουσαι ποτέονται ... ὣς αἶ τετριγυῖαι ἄμ' ἦισαν. These Homeric allusions will thus appositely pave the way for l. 4 (ψυχὴ

10) Zenobius Paroem. I 51 (CPG I 20.5–6 Leutsch-Schneidewin). Cf. also Steph. Byz. s. v. Ἄκανθος (i 57 Meineke) τὸ ἐθνικὸν τῆς Ἀκάνθου Ἀκάνθιος, ἐξ οὗ καὶ παρομοία: Ἀκάνθιος τέττιξ, ἐπὶ τῶν ἀφώνων· τοιοῦτοι γὰρ οἱ τῆς χώρας τέττιγες, ὡς Σιμωνίδης (PMG 610 Page); Diogenianus I 49 (CPG I 188.8–11 Leutsch-Schneidewin); Suda s. v. ἄκανθα (α 796, I.1 75.33–34 Adler); cf. also Aelian, NA 10.44; Suda s. v. τέφρα (τ 437, I.4 535.5–6 Adler); Hsch. s. v. ἀκανθίας (α 2265 Latte); EM s. v. ἀκάνθιος (45.11 Gaisford = 199.11 Lasserre-Livadaras). The bearing of the proverb on the interpretation of this epigram was first demonstrated by Trypanis (above, n. 7). In reality, of course, the name ἀκάνθιος / ἀκανθίας ('the prickly one') must refer to the cicada's regular habitat (thorns), as is pointed out by M. Davies & J. Kathirithamby, *Greek Insects* (London 1986) 130.

11) For the cicadas' association with the Muses in ancient sources see Davies & Kathirithamby (above, n. 10) 118, 122.

12) For cicadas as toys (παίγνια) see A. P. 7.190.4 (Anyte) = 742–45 Gow-Page, with Gow & Page (above, n. 2) ad loc. For epitaphs for cicadas killed by boys, presumably as a game, see A. P. 7.201 (Pamphilus) = 2839–42 Gow-Page, and A. P. 7.200 (Nikias) = 2767–70 Gow-Page, with Gow & Page (above, n. 2) ad loc. (in the latter epigram, the insect is in all probability a cicada, although it is not explicitly identified as such). Cf. Davies & Kathirithamby (above, n. 10) 128–29 with n. 101.

άνηρῶ δαίμονι μεφομένη), which is probably a creative re-working of another Homeric passage, namely Il. 16.856–7: ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων παταμένη Ἄϊδόσδε βεβήκει, / ὄν πότμον γοόωσα. The evocation of epic deaths (Patroclus' in Il. 23.100 and 16.856, the suitors' in Od. 24.5) would enhance the ironical effect: the poet's imminent death (κοιμίζειν) is, unlike that of the epic heroes, the result of his inability to marshal his educated rationality against the assaults of Pothos.

It would appear that ἄθλια / ἠλεὰ τρίζει is essentially the emendation required. There is, however, room for a minor improvement: read ἄλλιτα τρίζει, 'shrieks unanswered implorations'. The image suits well the mock-epic tone of the epigram: the moribund cicada-poet implores for his life to be spared, but his supplication (we must assume) is rejected, as happens with many a Homeric hero. In addition, ἄλλιτα would also add a mock-funeral dimension, as it seems to have been peculiar (perhaps as an exquisite stylistic rarity?) to funerary discourse. In an anonymous epigram transmitted in Hippolytus, Refut. omn. haeres. IV 32.3 (p. 120.17–27 Marcovich) = App. Nov. Epigr. IV 54.7 Cougny,<sup>13</sup> ἄλλιτα κωκύνοντες is used of the unanswered dirges of the dead<sup>14</sup> in the Underworld (it is rightly translated as 'inexorabiliter plangentēs' by Cougny). For ἄλλιτος in association with death cf. also 'Epica Adespota' 6.5 Powell:<sup>15</sup> θανῶτοιο κατέλαβεν ἄλλιτος αἶσα. The cognate ἄλλιστος also occurs as an epithet of Hades: A. P. 7.643 (Crinagoras) = 1875 Gow-Page<sup>16</sup> ἥρπασας, ὃ ἄλλιστ' Αἶδη; Euphorion fr. 98.4 Powell ἀλλίστοιο (Meineke : ἀλήστοιο codd.) πύλας ἔβαν Ἀιδονῆος;<sup>17</sup> I. G. xiv 1909.3 ἀλλίστου ταχέως ἀντιάσαντ' Αἶδεω. So also with ἀλ(λ)ιτάνευτος: A. P. 7.483 (anon.) = 3854 Gow-Page Ἀΐδη ἀλλιτάνευτε καὶ ἄτροπε (however, in P. Graec. Mag.<sup>2</sup> IV.1776–77 ἀλιτάνευτε is an epithet of Eros).

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13) E. Cougny (ed.), Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis et appendice nova epigrammatum veterum ex libris et marmoribus ductorum ..., vol. III: Anthologia Epigrammatum Graecorum: Appendix Nova (Paris 1890) 405.

14) The dead are described modo Homeric in l. 3 of the same epigram as νεκῶν ἀμενηνῶν μυρία φύλα.

15) See J. U. Powell (ed.), Collectanea Alexandrina (Oxford 1925) 80.

16) A. S. F. Gow & D. L. Page (eds.), The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams, vol. I (Cambridge 1964) 208.

17) See Powell (above, n. 15) 47.