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Etymology and Exegesis
in Book 7 of the *Greek Anthology*

This paper deals with cases of etymological puns in the seventh book of the Greek Anthology, from those commonly used by Greek poets of any age, attested in epigram as well, to others originating from toponyms and proper names. In the last part it also explores the relationship between etymology and philological exegesis, with a special focus on Homeric exegesis.

Il contributo riguarda casi di giochi etimologici nel settimo libro dell'Antologia greca, da quelli impiegati comunemente dai poeti greci di ogni epoca, attestati anche nell'epigramma, ad altri derivati da toponimi e nomi propri. Nell'ultima parte il lavoro prende inoltre in esame il rapporto tra etimologia ed esegesi filologica, con particolare attenzione all'esegesi omerica.

1. Introduction

This paper, which stems from my forthcoming commentary on Book 7 of the *Greek Anthology*¹, deals with cases of etymological puns in that thematic book. Epigram is a broad form of ancient Greek poetry, characterized by remarkable versatility and variety in content, tone, and diction. That is why, as a formal construction and a genre dependent on sophisticated word design and taste for puns, letter and wordplay, it offers large scope for etymological investigation. More than the other thematic books, Book 7 in particular spans almost a dozen centuries, from the archaic and classical period until the rise of the Byzantine empire, giving a great overview of the genre's history and development across the centuries. Moreover, funerary epigrams represent a privileged thematic area if considered from the perspective of their idiosyncratic style, and hence this subgenre emerges as paradigmatic.

In the first section of my paper I will focus on common etymological puns used by Greek poets of any period, attested in epigram as well. The second section analyses cases of etymological puns originating from toponyms, whereas the third concerns etymology and proper names². The last part, finally, is centered on etymology and philological exegesis, with a special focus on Homeric exegesis³.

¹ See Gullo (forthcoming).

² On this topic, particularly productive in funerary epigrams, where the name of the dead may be exploited for praise, see also Lucia Floridi's contribution in this volume, with further bibliography.

³ The texts of the Greek epigrams are those of Beckby 1967-1968, II. All translations are mine.

2. Popular etymological puns

In this section I am going to analyse etymological puns which are well-known in Greek literature and attested in several, different literary genres⁴. The epigrammatists exploit them by adapting the wordplays to the context. The main purpose of this usage is to give the poem a learned, erudite tone.

Let us start with Anon. *AP* VII 12 = *FGE* XXXIX 1222-1227 = Erinn. T 5 Neri, an epitaph for Erinna, and concentrate on l. 1 Ἄρτι λοχευομένην σε μελισσοτόκων ἔαρ ὕμων, where the word ἔαρ stands out: a paronymological relationship is established between ἔαρ / ἦρ and Ἡριννα, evidence for which is attested in Byzantine glossaries (cf., e.g., *EM* 437,21-22 = Erinn. T 2c Neri), as well as presumably between Erinna's name and ἔαρ ὕμων. The association between Erinna and spring, determined by the 'myth' of the poetess's premature death at a young age, is justified by the fact that spring is a common image for youth⁵.

D.L. *AP* VII 105,3-4 = Lacyd. T 1a Mette is an epitaph for Lacydes of Cyrene, Arcesilus' successor in the leadership of the Platonic Academy in Athens:

(...) Διόνυσος ὅταν πολὺς ἐς δέμας ἔλθῃ,
λύσε μέλη· διὸ δὴ μήτι Λυαῖος ἔφου;

(...) When entering a body in great quantity,
Dionysus loosens the limbs: is not that the reason
[why he is Lyaeus?

At line 4 the expression λύσε μέλη routinely etymologizes Dionysus' epithet Λυαῖος⁶, in the same line: a similar etymological pun occurs in Hedyll. *AP* XI 414,1 = *HE* XII 1891 = 12,1 Floridi, where Dionysus is styled λυσιμελής⁷.

Let us pass on to [Simon.] *AP* VII 508 = 'Emp.' *FGE* I 550-553 = 31 B 156 D.-K. = *GVI* 44:

Παυσανίαν ἱητρὸν ἐπώνυμον, Ἀγχίτεω υἱόν,
τόνδ' Ἀσκληπιάδην πατρὶς ἔθαψε Γέλα,
ὃς πλείστους κρνεραῖσι μαραιομένους ὑπὸ νοῦσοις
φῶτας ἀπέστρεψεν Φερσεφόνης θαλάμων.

⁴ See Kwapisz - Petrain - Szymański 2013.

⁵ See Neri 2003 *ad l.*, 190; Gullo (forthcoming) on Jul. Aegypt. *AP* VII 601, with further bibliography.

⁶ The earliest occurrence of Λυαῖος as Dionysus' religious epithet is Leon. *AP* VI 154,1 = *HE* XCVII 2555 (see Gow - Page 1965, *HE*, II, *ad l.*, 394).

⁷ See Floridi 2020 *ad l.*, 169f.

The physician Pausanias, who bears in his name the treatment
 [against pain,
 son of Anchites, pupil of Asclepius', was buried here by his
 [fatherland, Gela,
 he who kept away from Persephone's chambers many
 men consumed by terrible illnesses.

The epigram etymologizes the name of the physician Pausanias («the one who puts an end to pain», cf. l. 1 ἐπώνυμον), who is the dedicatee of Empedocles' Περὶ φύσεως, as well as the philosopher's ἐρώμενος: cf. D.L. VIII 61 = Emp. 31 A 1 D.-K., who depends on ps.-Aristipp. fr. 8 Dorandi and Satyr. fr. 14 Schorn. One may compare the speaking name of the physician Ablabius in Theoseb. *AP* VII 559,3 καὶ νῦν Ἀβλαβίου γοερῶ περι σήματι κείται. Etymologizing the doctor's name recalls the 'names of art' taken by doctors for professional purposes⁸. At this point it is perhaps important to distinguish between the practice of etymologizing the name of the dead and, vice versa, that of etymologizing gods' and deities' names (see above the case of D.L. *AP* VII 105 with Dionysus' epithet Λυαῖος), which is certainly easier.

Let us see now Antip. Sid. *AP* VII 748 = *HE* XXXIII 410-417 = Merkelbach-Stauber, *SGO* II 09/11/01, an epigram probably praising a building in one of the towns named Heracleia, which has been misleadingly understood as a sepulchral poem for a woman bearing this name and, thus, included in Book 7, where it is clearly misplaced. At line 3 we read the expression χθονὸς υἷες (...) Γίγαντες, a hyperbolic, rhetorical ploy to stress how great the architectural construction to which the epigram is dedicated, appears, as though it was the amazing work of mythological creatures like the Giants. By using the *iunctura* χθονὸς υἷες Antipater resumes the ancient (and groundlessly made up) etymology which puts in relationship the word Γίγας with γῆ and the root of γίγνομαι = «born from Gaia/Gaea (the personification of the Earth)», according to the legend that the Giants were indeed Gaia/Gaea's children: cf., e.g., Hes. *Th.* 185 (with West 1966 *ad l.*, 220); Eur. *Ph.* 128; Vian 1952, 283 (with detailed discussion of this ancient etymology).

Arch. Byz.? *AP* VII 68 = Arch. *GPh* XIV 3666-3673 = Diog. Sinop. *SSR* V B 115 Giannantoni, one of the fictitious funerary epigrams dedicated to Diogenes the Cynic, starts with an address to Charon:

Ἄϊδος ὦ νεκυηγέ, κεχαρμένε δάκρυσι πάντων

O ferryman of Hades conducting the dead, delighting in the tears of all

⁸ See Samama 2003, 16ff.: there is plenty of evidence for Pausanias used as a professional name for 'real' doctors.

Diogenes speaks in the first person and begs Charon to welcome him in his boat, so that the philosopher could travel to Hades. Let us consider the vocatives νεκρηγέ, κεχαρμένε at line 1: the word νεκρηγός is rare – it is attested elsewhere only in *GVI* 2046,8 = Merkelbach-Stauber, *SGO* I 07/01/01 (Antandros, Troas, probably Hellenistic), where it is applied to Hermes. In Archias' epigram the compound is combined with a likely pareymological and paradoxical pun between Charon, the ferryman of the dead, and the perfect participle κεχαρμένε from χαίρειν, which indicates enjoyment, in addition to the standard greeting formula χαίρε: this pun is rather ancient and widespread in popular culture (clearly made with an apotropaic purpose). It will be sufficient to mention *Ar. Ra.* 184 (with Dover 1993 *ad l.*, 214), in which the etymological perception is also confirmed by the famous, threefold paronomastic greeting (χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων) by which Charon is welcomed (whole quotation from *Achae. TrGF* I 20 F 11,1)⁹.

3. *Etymology and names of the cities*

In this section I am going to look at two cases in which the name of a city gives the epigrammatist the chance to embed in his poem an etymological explanation for the toponym.

Antip. *Thess. AP* VII 705 = *GPh* L 343-348 is a lament for Amphipolis, once wealthy and powerful city now reduced to ashes and ruin:

Στρυμόνι καὶ μεγάλῳ πεπολισμένον Ἐλλησπόντῳ
 ἠρίον Ἡδωνῆς Φυλλίδος, Ἀμφίπολι,
 λοιπά τοι Αἰθιοπίης Βραυρωνίδος Ἴχνια νηοῦ
 μῖμνει καὶ ποταμοῦ τὰμφιμάχητον ὕδωρ

⁹The same etymological feeling can be found in the *incipit* in the epitaph celebrating a doctor (?) named Charon (*GVI* 1384 = *GG* 41 = *CEG* 127 = 52 Samama, Tithronion, Phocis, ca. 500 BCE?: detailed study in Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 362ff.), who accidentally shares with the underworld character his name and is said to have 'freed' many men from labours. However, according to others, just by the power of onomastic mutuality, one may catch in the text a maliciously ironic allusion to the physician's ability to soothe the pain of the patients by sending them quickly to Hades (see the discussion in Samama 2003, 153 n. 13; on the satire against physicians and doctors, which is a widely attested theme in Greek and Latin literatures and particularly in epigram, see Floridi 2014 on *Lucill.* 35 = *AP* XI 112, 218f.; see also the case of the physician Agis in *Hedyl. AP* XI 123 = *HE* XI 1887 = 11 Floridi): thus, in this peculiar context, the paronomastic pun χαίρε, Χάρων should «esorcizzare ogni possibile e persistente influenza malsana» (Albani 1991, 188) of the dead.

τὴν δὲ ποτ' Αἰγείδαις μεγάλην ἔριν ὡς ἀλιανθῆς
 τρῦχος ἐπ' ἀμφοτέραις δερκόμεθ' ἠϊόσιν.

Amphipolis, tomb of the Thracian Phyllis,
 placed on the Strymon and the great Hellespont,
 all is left to you are the remains of the temple of Brauronian
 Ethiopian Artemis and the much-contested water of the river;
 we see now the city which was once a reason for fighting to Aegeus'
 descendants as though it was a blood-red rag on the two banks.

Amphipolis stood on the eastern bank of the Strymon, upon a hill stretched on a cove in the flow of the river: hence its name, which hinted at the fact that the city was touched by the Strymon on both sides (cf. Th. IV 102,4); the etymological explanation is recalled at lines 5-6 through the image of the blood-red rag¹⁰ – Amphipolis itself – between the two shores, and perhaps at line 4 as well through the epithet ἀμφιμάχητος (applied to the water of the river). The adjective ἀμφιμάχητος ('worthy of being fought for')¹¹ is a *hapax*: in Chaerem. AP VII 720,2 = HE II 1366 Thyrae or Thyraei, land for which Spartans and Argives competed, is similarly said ἀμφίλογος¹²; moreover, one may compare περιμάχητος = 'contended', 'longed for'. One may assume that here Antipater's etymological ploy displays his clever learning, but also his skills in weaving a thick plot of powerfully dramatic images providing a mental view of the tragic setting.

Christod. AP VII 697 = 1 Tissoni = GVI 1908 celebrates the consul and praetorian prefect in Illyricum John, probably a native of Lychnidos. Let us examine lines 5-8:

εἶχε δ' ἀπ' εὐσεβέων προγόνων ἔρικυδέα πάτρη
 Λυχνιδόν, ἦν Φοῖνιξ Κάδμος ἔδειμε πόλιν
 ἔνθεν λύχνος ἔην Ἑλικώνιος, οὐνεκα Κάδμος
 στοιχείων Δαναοῖς πρῶτος ἔδειξε τύπον.

From his pious ancestors he got a glorious fatherland,
 Lychnidos, a city which was built by Phoenician Cadmus;
 hence the Heliconian light came, since Cadmus first
 taught the Greeks the signs of the letters.

¹⁰ The adjective ἀλιανθῆς ('blood-red', 'tinged with red'), restored at line 5 by Boivin de Villeneuve 1736, 315 (on this figure see Hutton 1946, 518ff.), is found in Paul the Silentiary (AP V 228,3 = 48 Viansino; S.Soph. 771; amb. 215) and is Toup's emendation in Orph. A. 586.

¹¹ See LSJ, s.v.; DGE, s.v.

¹² See LSJ, s.v.; DGE, s.v., I.1.

Let us consider Λυχνιδόν (...) / (...) λύχνος at lines 6-7: in particular, at line 6 the name of the Illyrian city of Lychnidos¹³, John's alleged hometown, is used for a paronymological pun with λύχνος, which allows Christodorus to praise John directly through his homeland¹⁴. Lychnidos is the place from where the 'Heliconian', that is, 'learned', light comes, – according to a metonymic employment of the adjective Ἑλικώνιος, which was rather common at the time¹⁵ –, because (l. 7 οὐνεκα) it is there that its founder Cadmus invented writing¹⁶, which made the word of the Muses, i.e. poetry, immortal and eternal. More generally, one may observe that the wordplay is inscribed in a network of terms related to light and shining, thus it cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon.

4. Etymology and proper names

Pisand. AP VII 304 = FGE I 293-296 = GVI 865 = Merkelbach-Stauber, SGO I 02/01/07 is an epitaph for Hipphaemon, 'Thessalian from Crete, of Magnesian ancestry' (Strab. XIV 1,11 reports about people from Magnesia settled and dwelling in Crete and Thessaly, who founded the colony of Magnesia on the Meander):

Ἄνδρὶ μὲν Ἴππαίμων ὄνομ' ἦν, ἵππῳ δὲ Πόδαργος
καὶ κυνὶ Λήθαργος καὶ θεράποντι Βάβης·
Θεσσαλός, ἐκ Κρήτης, Μάγνης γένος, Αἴμιονος υἱός·
ᾤλετο δ' ἐν προμάχοις ὄξυν ἄρη συνάγων.

The man's name was Hipphaemon, the horse's Podargos,
the dog was named Lethargos, whereas the servant Babes;
Thessalian from Crete, of Magnesian ancestry, son of Haemon:
he died while fighting in the first rows.

It is likely that the epigram alludes to a funerary monument which portrayed, along with the dead Hipphaemon, the horse, the dog, and the servant¹⁷. Πόδαργος

¹³ For which see *RE*, XIII/2, s.v. *Lychnidus* [1], 2111ff.

¹⁴ Here the expression λύχνος [...] Ἑλικώνιος does not seem to refer to John as 'light of the Muses', *pace* Robert 1940-1965, IV, 17; 85 n. 3, and 93, or to the city of Lychnidos, *pace* Agosti 2005, 9.

¹⁵ See Agosti 2005, 8.

¹⁶ This detail is invented from scratch by Christodorus himself: Cadmus as founder of Lychnidos is not attested elsewhere.

¹⁷ For dogs represented on funerary monuments see Gullo (forthcoming) on Anon. AP VII 64; in general, for animals sculpted or painted on tombs see *ibid.*, intr. on Anon. AP VII 62.

(l. 1) is the name of one of the four horses addressed by Hector in Hom. *Il.* VIII 185 (Aristarchus athetised the line, given the fact that in Homer the chariot dragged by four horses does not seem to be in use in battle, and Hector carries on his speech by using the dual; however, our epigrammatist may perhaps know the line)¹⁸. The name Πόδαργος probably means ‘with white feet’ or ‘with swift feet’: cf. Hsch. π 2662 Hansen ποδάργης· λευκόπους, ταχύς, with app. *ad l.*, 132; *LfggrE*, III, s.v. Ποδάργη and Πόδαργος, 1305 (and, naturally, *ibid.*, I, s.v. ἀργός, 1205f.); the first sense is presumably the most ancient one, already attested in Mycenaean (*po-da-ko*) as the name of an ox in KN Ch 899, 1029+¹⁹, but in this context it would be better to adopt the second meaning, although, in any case, both meanings could suit our passage if applied to horses: compare the name Λάμπρος²⁰ in Hom. *Il.* VIII 185 (Hector’s horse: see above) and *Od.* XXIII 246 (the horse of the Dawn) – or *Lampron* in Hyg. *Fab.* XXX 9 (Diomedes’ horse) –, where there might be a reference to both the concept of brightness and shininess along with that of swiftness²¹. The name Π]όδαργος (attributed to a horse) occurs perhaps on one of the Attic olpai of the first half of the sixth century BCE from Louthraki and Caere²². From a morpho-lexical point of view πόδαργος can be compared in particular with ἀργίπος, ποδώκης, ποδήνεμος (for example it is applied to a horse in Mnasalc. *AP* VII 212,1 = 13 Seelbach = *HE* XI 2643) or ἀελλόπος and ὠκύπους²³. More in general, in our epigram Πόδαργος could just be a typical (yet etymologically appropriate) name for a horse.

Passing on to line 2, the name Λήθαργος (‘lazy’, ‘slow’?) is an emendation of the *corrector* C, accepted by modern editors, to θηραργος (the transmitted reading in

¹⁸ See Lehrs 1882, 193f.; West 2001, 202. It is also attested as the name of a horse belonging to Menelaus (Hom. *Il.* XXIII 295*) and of one belonging to the Thracian Diomedes (Hyg. *Fab.* 30, 9). Ποδάργη (Hom. *Il.* XVI 150*; XIX 400*; cf. also Stesich. *PMG* 178 = *PMGF* = fr. 2a Finglass Ποδάργας; Q.S. III 750*) is the name of the Harpy mother to Xanthos and Balius, Achilles’ divine horses, Zephyrus’ offspring, as well as that of a mare, daughter of Boreas and a Harpy called Σιθονίη, yoked by Erechtheus (Nonn. *D.* XXXVII 154-159*): for the association of Harpies and winds (West 1966 on Hes. *Th.* 266 ὠκεῖαν τέκεν Ἴριον and 267 ἄελλώ, 242), which were connected in their turn with horses, see the evidence and documentation in Davies - Finglass 2014 on Stesich. fr. 2a Finglass Ἄρπαγον, 225.

¹⁹ See Davies - Finglass 2014 on Stesich. fr. 2a Finglass ὠκέα τέκνα Ποδάργας, 226.

²⁰ See Baecker 1884, 74.

²¹ In Hom. *Il.* XIX 404 πόδας αἰόλος ἵππος Edwards 1991 *ad l.*, 283, suggests the same implications, recognising «a connotation of shining hoofs as well as speed».

²² See Wachter 2001, 93; 95; 322. For Πόδαργος as a dog’s name see Baecker 1884, 56, and one may compare the Homeric κύνες πόδας ἀργοί (*Il.* XVIII 578; *Od.* II 11, where, nonetheless, the variant reading is also transmitted δῦ κύνες ἀργοί, as in XVII 62).

²³ See Risch 1974, 213 and n. 27.

the *Palatine Anthology*, the *Planudean Anthology* and the indirect tradition, which looks like a corruption influenced by the fact that it is a hunting dog and, perhaps, induced by the following *θεράποντι*). A dog is usually praised for his zeal, therefore *Λήθαργος*, which suggests laziness and negligence, would seem an antiphrastic name²⁴: this technique is rather common for names of human beings²⁵. Page 1981, *FGE*, 81, prints the form *Λαίθαργος* ('perfidious', 'insidious', evidently associated with the root *λαθ-/ληθ-*, carrying the idea of a hidden action)²⁶, proposed by Masson 1962, 139 n. 4, which is the epithet of a dog in Hippon. fr. 66 W.² = 32 Degani ('who feels envy'); the word is also found in Soph. *TrGF* IV F 885, where it is applied to a woman, compared to a *λαίθαργος* dog welcoming his owner warmly while biting, and in Ar. *Eq.* 1068, where the term is associated with the *κυναλώπηξ* (explicitly, the pimp Philostratus), a particular race of dogs, used for hunting, which was believed to be the product of the crossbreed between a dog and a fox and which then bore the mark of an unreliable kinship in its genetic inheritance²⁷. Whatever relationship exists between *Λήθαργος* and *Λαίθαργος* (particularly in our epigram *Λαίθαργος*, altered by corruption into *Λήθαργος*, could perhaps be the correct reading), both words seem to be related to *Ἄργος* or *ἀργός*²⁸.

In Pisander's epigram some of the words, whether they are proper or common nouns, are linked with each other in a dense net of assonance and consonance as well as repetitions of word-parts (cf. l. 1 *Ἴππαίμων* ~ *ἵππῳ*; l. 1 *Ἴππαίμων* ~ l. 3 *Αἴμωνος*; l. 1 *Πόδ-αργος* ~ l. 2 *Λήθ-αργος*), which is rather striking, if we consider that the poem possibly concerns an image portraying all of the characters.

5. *Etymology and philological exegesis*

The debate on Homeric language had been vital since the archaic age and essentially consisted in recovering Homeric words that were (and are) particularly interesting from a lexical point of view, as well as rare terms (the so-called *hapax* and *dis legomena*) and/or difficult ones, better known as *glossai*, interpreted in the light of the scholiographic tradition. In some cases, nonetheless, this reflection was not limited to the banal and passive re-use of these Homerisms, which were

²⁴ For the dog's name *Λαίθαργος/Λήθαργος* it is worth mentioning the lexicographic tradition: cf., e.g., *Suid.* λ 410 and *EGen.* λ 14 (see also Marzullo 1975-1977, 331f.).

²⁵ See Floridi 2014, 27ff.

²⁶ For *Λαίθαργος* as the name of a dog see Baecker 1884, 72. Yet the connection with *Λήθαργος* remains unclear, even though it appears at least plausible.

²⁷ See Franco 2003, 271f. and n. 46-48.

²⁸ See above the discussion on *Πόδαργος* (l. 1).

often exhumed merely to show off one's erudition, which inscribed the poet in a precise exegetic tradition though. Attempts to explain the controversial or uncertain meaning of a Homeric *glossa* or *hapax* might also be embedded in the lines themselves; in such cases, these poets employed the *glossa* or *hapax* (especially an adjective) together with another word whose meaning was clearer. By putting the two terms next to each other, in a synonymic pair, they reproduced one of the interpretations debated by the Alexandrian philologists. The poet could also deviate from his contemporary and earlier fellow-epigrammatists by recovering the Homeric word as a rarity and employing it in its most uncommon meaning. Alternatively, they might take their own personal stand without directly using the Homeric rarity. In these cases, instead of the Homeric word, they used *one* of the lexical alternatives offered by the scholiographic tradition to explain the ambiguous meaning of that word itself. Moreover, if a poet wished to imitate or quote a Homeric passage that displayed textual differences, the Homeric *interpretatio* could result in a conscious choice between two or more versions (readings or variants) of the Homeric text. The Homeric reading or variant preferred by the late antique poet was then embedded in the texture of the verse²⁹.

Primarily epigrams in which a debated Homerism is used will be discussed here. Our first example comes from Asclep. *AP* VII 284 = *HE* XXX 950-953 = 30 Guichard = Sens, which is an epitaph for a shipwrecked man, buried on the shore: Eumares orders the sea, his murderer, to stay away from his tomb; as happens often in funerary epigrams for shipwrecked men, sea, winds and storms, like those places and settings which are particularly dangerous for ships and sailors, are personified; in this case specifically the sea is treated and addressed as though it was the passer-by:

Ὀκτώ μεν πήχεις ἄπεχε, τρηχεῖα θάλασσα,
καὶ κύμαινε βόα θ', ἠλίκα σοι δύναμις
ἦν δὲ τὸν Εὐμάρεω καθέλης τάφον, ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν
κρήγυον, εὐρήσεις δ' ὄστέα καὶ σποδιήν.

Stay away from me and keep a distance of eight cubits, wild sea,
and swell up and shout with all your force;
if you kick down Eumares' tomb, you will find
nothing good, but only bones and ashes.

²⁹ See mainly Sistakou 2007 with regard to the re-use, on the part of the Hellenistic epigrammatists, of precious Homerisms, especially if featuring debated meanings, and, for a special focus on late antique epigram, Gullo 2021, with further bibliography (on the general topic of Homeric exegesis as well).

The term κρήγγος (l. 4) is a Homeric *hapax* found in *Il.* I 106 μάντι κακῶν, οὐ πῶ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγγον εἶπες, where the meaning assigned by the lexicographers is ‘good’ (schol. A *ad Il.* I 106c)³⁰, although some sources interpret it as ‘true’ (Hsch. τ 1089; *EM* 537,23). The semantic value of the word was probably debated in the Hellenistic age³¹: in Asclepiades’ epigram it is used with the sense ‘good’³², but κρήγγος can also occur in the meaning ‘true’³³. Its sense remains uncertain in Leon. *AP* VII 648,9 = *HE* X 2012 ἦδει Ἀριστοκράτης τὸ κρήγγον (an epigram on regretting the choice of avoiding marriage and procreation): according to Gow – Page 1965, *HE*, II, *ad l.*, 321, here τὸ κρήγγον is employed as a noun (‘what is true’, ‘the truth’)³⁴. Although in *AP* IX 335,2 = *HE* XXVI 2124 Leonidas himself uses κρήγγος as an adjective with the sense ‘good’, in my opinion in Leon. *AP* VII 648,9 = *HE* X 2012 both meanings are possible, especially because they tend to overlap (the truth known by Aristocrates, the protagonist of the epigram, concerns what is good for the mankind, so the two meanings almost coincide). Whatever its etymology, its uncertainty allows the poet to make a false attempt of providing it through a wordplay: he actually leaves it ambiguously answered in a context where both the attested, possible meanings of the word κρήγγος are suitable.

Leon. *AP* VII 657 = *HE* XIX 2062-2073 is an epitaph for Cleitagoras, adorned with bucolic motifs and opening with an address to his fellow-shepherds:

Ποιμένες, οἱ ταύτην ὄρεος ράχιν οἰοπολεῖτε
αἴγας κευείρους ἐμβοτέοντες ὄις.

Shepherds, you who wander on your own (?) on the top
of this mountain bringing to grazing goats and fleecy sheep.

Let us examine οἰοπολεῖτε at line 1: the verb is very rare and is also attested in Eur. *Cyc.* 74 (applied to Dionysus, not necessarily with the meaning ‘alone’, but

³⁰ See *LfggrE*, II, s.v., 1534: «gut, richtig, angemessen, erfreulich».

³¹ See Sistakou 2007, 396.

³² It is employed with the same meaning in, e.g., Phoen. *CA* VI 4, 235 Powell; Cerc. *CA* VII 14, 209 Powell = III 10 Livrea = Lomiento; Herod. IV 46; VI 39; Leon. *AP* IX 335,2 = *HE* XXVI 2124; Theoc.? *AP* XIII 3,3 = 19 Gow = *HE* XIII 3432 = Hippon. test. 18 Degani = 7 Gerber; Damag. *AP* VII 355,4 = *HE* VIII 1414*; Nic. *Th.* 935. See also Sens 2011 *ad l.*, 205, with detailed analysis of parallel passages.

³³ It occurs in this meaning in, e.g., [Theoc.] XX 19; Arch. *AP* V 58,1 = *GPh* I 3588; Paul. Sil. *S.Soph.* 933.

³⁴ So also Dübner in Dübner - Cougny 1864-1890, I, 398; Waltz 1960; Pontani 1978-1981, II, 323; Marzi in Conca - Marzi - Zanetto 2005-2011, I, 921.

perhaps ‘separated from the θίασος’), but the passage is controversial³⁵. The verb derives from οιοπόλος, whose meaning is a disputed Homeric *quaestio*: the compound could mean ‘lonely’ (Hom. *Il.* XIII 473 = XVII 54; 24, 614; Id. *Od.* XI 574) or ‘watching / grazing the sheep’, ‘pastoral’ (Pi. *P.* IV 28; Colluth. 15 and, very likely, *h. Merc.* 314, but see Vergados 2013 *ad l.*, 449), but the sense is ambiguous in Hom. *Il.* XIX 377, as well as in A.R. IV 1322 and 1413, where perhaps the meaning is ‘lonely’³⁶. One should not be surprised to find exegetical attestations of such an equivocation: this double meaning is actually codified in schol. D on Hom. *Il.* XIII 473/Z² van Thiel and exploited by several poets for variation purposes (cf., e.g., *h. Ven.* [*h. Hom.* 5] 79-80). In our case as well, given the suitable context, Leonidas may be using the verb ambiguously³⁷ or, at any rate, as a play on signifiers: in fact, in οιοπολεῖτε / οἷς (l. 2) there might be a likely attempt at etymology, by connecting the verb with the noun οἷς (‘sheep’); this would then allow the poet to ‘choose’ and use the word in the latter meaning (‘watching / grazing the sheep’, ‘pastoral’).

The final section of this paper discusses cases in which the epigrammatists challenge themselves to explain a linguistic rarity. In so doing, they state their own view and at the same time, take part in the ancient scholarly debate by either adopting one of the interpretations already recorded in the scholiographic tradition or proposing a new, original one.

In the following two cases, which come both from epitaphs for animals (Simm. *AP* VII 203 = *CA* 20, p. 115 Powell = *HE* I 3268-3271 and Mnasalc. *AP* VII 192 = 10 Seelbach = *HE* XII 2647-2650), the words discussed are etymologically debated; both terms can have different meanings according to the context in which they are used. However, their debated origin allows the poet to play with ambiguity, so that it is not always possible to determine the exact meaning case by case.

Let us start with Simm. *AP* VII 203 = *CA* 20, p. 115 Powell = *HE* I 3268-3271, a funerary epigram for a hunter partridge:

Οὐκέτ’ ἀν’ ὕλην δρίος εὔσκιον, ἀγρότα πέρδιξ,
 ἠχήεσαν ἰεῖς γῆρυν ἀπὸ στομάτων,
 θηρέων βαλιούς συνομήλικας ἐν νομῷ ὕλης
 ὄψεο γὰρ πυματὰν εἰς Ἀχέροντος ὁδόν.

³⁵ See Seaford 1984 *ad l.*, 116; Hunter - Laemmle 2020 *ad l.*, 111.

³⁶ See Livrea 1972, 238ff. = Id. 1991, I, 60f. (see also Id. 1968 on Colluth. 15 οιοπόλοισιν, 68f.; Id. 1973 on A.R. IV 1322 οιοπόλοι, 373f.); Rengakos 1994, 119 and 177 (see also *ibid.*, 154 and 166).

³⁷ At l. 2 ἐμφοτέοντες could rule out the latter meaning in favour of ‘lonely’ in order to avoid repetition, but, at the same time, the same participle could specifically suggest the sense ‘watching / grazing the sheep’ to the uncertain reader.

No longer, hunter partridge, in the shade-giving woods
 you will emit your resounding voice from your throat,
 chasing dappled fellows in the clearings;
 you went on your last journey to the Acheron.

Let us focus on βαλιός (l. 3): the adjective βαλιός (cf. also the paroxytone form βαλίος), first attested in Eur. *Alc.* 579 – yet the form Βαλίος is already found as the name of one of Achilles' horses in *Il.* XVI 149*; XIX 400*; in addition, the paroxytone form is conjectured as the name of one of Actaeon's dogs in Epic. Adesp. CA I 4, 71* Powell Βαλιός πόδας αίνετός³⁸. In some instances it means 'dappled'³⁹, whereas at other times it is understood as 'swift'⁴⁰. The sense is uncertain in Leon. Alex. AP VI 326,4 = FGE V 1883; Nonn. *D.* XX 71; 258; XXXII 133⁴¹ and, actually, in Eur. *Hipp.* 218 as well the meaning 'swift' would be perfectly suitable and consistent, just as in Call. *Aet.* III fr. 149,10 Massimilla. The fluctuation of the sense of βαλιός between the two semantic fields of color and velocity appears to be as ancient as that of ἀργός (Chantraine, *DELG*, s.v., βαλιός, 160, who believes that the sense 'swift' is applied «de façon artificielle»; Frisk, *GEW*, I, s.v., 214), and does not need to have arisen with Callimachus (*pace* Schmitt 1970, 53 n. 6)⁴².

³⁸ See Baecker 1884, 33ff.

³⁹ See *LSJ*, s.v., 1.; *DGE*, s.v., 1.: cf. Eur. *Alc.* 579; Id. *Hipp.* 218, with Barrett 1964 *ad l.*, 202; Id. *Hec.* 90; Id. *IA* 222; Id.? *ibid.*, 1081; Call. *Aet.* III fr. 149,10 Massimilla, if Maas's conjecture is correct; Opp. *H.* II 434*; IV 88; [Opp.] *C.* II 21; 314.

⁴⁰ See *LSJ*, s.v., II.; *DGE*, s.v., 2.: cf. [Eur.], *Rh.* 356; Call. *Aet.* IV fr. 110,53 Pf. = 213 Massimilla = 110 Harder, with Harder 2012, II, *ad l.*, 825; Tryph. 84*; Syn. *h.* I 77; Nonn. *D.* IX 156*; X 386; XIX 277; XXII 51; XXVIII 319; XXXVII 90; 372; 642; XLII 36*; XLIII 346*; Id. *P.* X 70*; it is likely that the adjective takes the same meaning in the Delphic oracle *ap.* Porph. fr. 309F,9 Smith = Eus. *PE* V 7,5. See Massimilla 2010 on Call. *Aet.* III fr. 149,10 βαλ|ιής (...) ἐλάφου, 268; *ibid.*, on Call. *Aet.* IV fr. 213,53 = 110 Pf. βαλιὰ πτερά, 483 (cf. also Hsch. β 143; *Suid.* β 82).

⁴¹ In these passages the adjective is applied to common names of animals (ἔλαφοι and λαγωοί) which can equally be either fast or dappled: unfortunately, the context does not help. However, in Nonn. *D.* XX 71, the meaning 'swift' is perhaps more suitable, given the fact that βαλιός is here attached to the hare, and so is as well at l. 258, where the adjective qualifies deer, physically marked with κεραός, too: this last epithet may suggest that βαλιός does not recall here another feature of these animals (like the dappled skin) from a strictly physical point of view – otherwise, there might be an effect of wordiness –, but it may point out to their agility or some related aspect.

⁴² Through the fourth century BCE βαλιός is a word used only by Homer and Euripides and, in all of the Homeric and Euripidean passages in which the term occurs, interpreters usually apply the meaning 'dappled' but the sense of the adjective is not always unequivocally 'dappled' in all of these passages. The scholia on some of these Homeric and Eurip-

That in our epigram the adjective means ‘dappled’ seems to be confirmed by Mart. III 58,15 *picta perdix*⁴³, in addition to the fact that highlighting such a feature in a bird that is not generally famous at all for its swiftness seems more sensible: Si(m)mias seems to employ the term with the same semantic value (‘dappled’) also in AP XV 27,18 = CA XXVI, 119 Powell⁴⁴.

Let us continue with Mnasalc. AP VII 192 = 10 Seelbach = HE XII 2647-2650, which is an epitaph for a cricket:

Οὐκέτι δὴ πτερύγεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισιν αἰεῖσεις,
 ἀκρί, κατ’ εὐκάρπους αὐλακάς ἐζομένα,
 οὐδέ με κεκλιμένον σκιερὰν ὑπὸ φυλλάδα τέρψεις,
 ξουθᾶν ἐκ πτερύγων ἀδὺ κρέκουσα μέλος.

No longer will you sing with your clear-voiced wings,
 cricket, standing in the fertile furrows,
 nor will you amuse me lying under the shady leaves,
 by singing a pleasing tone through your shrill wings.

I understand ξουθᾶν (l. 4) as ‘melodious’, ‘singing’ (more precisely ‘buzzing’ or ‘whirring’); the adjective ξουθός, first attested in 5th-century BCE poetry, may also be interpreted as ‘swift’, ‘moving rapidly, quickly’⁴⁵ or ‘reddish brown’⁴⁶ (cf. Hsch. ξ 90; Phot. ξ 309; *Suid.* ξ 81)⁴⁷. However, the connotation of sound (*LSJ*, s.v., particularly 2. and 4.; see also *ibid.*, 3.), which covers a wide range of noises from buzz-

idean passages, as well as schol. Opp. *H.* II 434 and [Opp.] *C.* II 314 frequently explain βαλιός with ‘swift’ or suggest both meanings. In particular, schol. Eur. *Hec.* 90, I, 21 Schwartz, distinguishes between βαλιός = ‘swift’ and βαλιός = ‘dappled’. Moreover, schol. Eur. *Rh.* 356, II, 336, points out the contradiction with the whiteness of Rhesus’ horses expressed at ll. 304 and 618, thus providing the following hypothesis: δύναται δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ ταχέαιας. Before Callimachus, the author of *Rhesus* may have made his own erudite choice between two meaning alternatives within which βαλιός already fluctuated.

⁴³ See Fusi 2006 *ad l.*, 383. Moreover, the presence of close synonyms in the turn of very few lines definitely points to that interpretive direction, ruling out any doubts: cf. *Numidicaeque guttatae* (l. 15); cf. also *gemmeique pavones* (l. 13).

⁴⁴ See Kwapisz 2013 *ad l.*, 135, who understands the word as «spotted».

⁴⁵ See *LSJ*, s.v., particularly 3. and 5.: *LSJ* warns that the shade of sound and that of velocity are close, so that in some cases they are put together under the same lemma.

⁴⁶ See *LSJ*, s.v., II.

⁴⁷ The etymology is unknown: see Chantraine, *DELG*, s.v., 766f.; Frisk, *GEW*, II, s.v., 337f. On the matter see Fraenkel 1950, II, on Aesch. *Ag.* 1142 ξουθά, 520f. (*contra* Medda 2017, III, *ad l.*, 189f.); Gow 1952, II, on Theoc. VII 142 ξουθαί, 166.

ing to chirping, from whistling to rustling, and which seems to be secured here by the *iunctura* πτερύγεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισιν (l. 1), which on its turn paraphrases ξουθᾶν ἐκ πτερύγων, seems preferable, for example, in Mnasalc. *AP IX 333,4 = 8* Seelbach = *HE XV 2662**, as well as in Ar. *Av. 676*⁴⁸; [Theoc.] *AP IX 437,11 = 4* Gow = *HE XX 3484 (incipit)*⁴⁹; Nic. *AP IX 564,2 = HE VI 2776*^{*50}; Anon. *AP IX 373,4 = Tib. Ill. FGE V 2071*; Lyr. *Adesp. CA VII 1, 185 Powell*, as well as in the compound ξουθόπτερος in Eur. *HF 487*⁵¹; Id. *TrGF V.1 F 467,4*; Lyr. *Adesp. CA VII 13, 185 Powell*⁵².

Particularly in the ambiguous cases in which both βαλιός and ξουθός occur, what is most striking is the prevalence of the possible alternative between ‘fast’, ‘swift’, and another meaning: one may wonder whether this has to do with the intention of ‘opposing’ the steadiness of the ideal writing support – and of the dead – with images of swiftness and movement?

One may observe that in similar cases uncertain etymology is exploited on purpose in order to play with the reader’s imagination, who can then decide case by case which meaning is more suitable to a given context. However, in some cases the ambiguity remains.

Finally, Antip. Sid. *AP VII 75 = Antip. Thess. GPh LXXIV 483-486 = Stesich. test. 24 Campbell = PMGF TB6 = Tb39 Ercoles* is an epitaph for Stesichorus:

Στασίχορον, ζαπληθὲς ἀμέτρητον στόμα Μούσης,
ἐκτέρισεν Κατάνας αἰθαλόεν δάπεδον,
οὔ, κατὰ Πυθαγόρῳ φυσικὰν φάτιν, ἅ πρὶν Ὀμήρου
ψυχὰ ἐνὶ στέρνοις δεύτερον ᾤκίσατο.

The burning land of Catania bestowed funeral honors
to Stesichorus, rich and immeasurable mouth of the Muse,
in whose chest, according to Pythagoras’ theory, the soul which belonged
previously to Homer settled down once again.

The adjective ζαπληθές (l. 1, ‘rich’, ‘very full’) is attested elsewhere only in Aesch. *Pers. 316* (referred to a thick beard)⁵³ and, on the basis of the lexicographic sources, its etymology recalls the concept of immeasurable size, but it is not entirely

⁴⁸ See Dunbar 1995 on l. 214 ξουθῆς, 153 for further parallels.

⁴⁹ See Gow - Page 1965, *HE*, II, *ad l.*, 536.

⁵⁰ See Gow - Page 1965, *HE*, II, *ad l.*, 432.

⁵¹ See Bond 1981 *ad l.*, 191.

⁵² See also Douglas 1928, 110ff.

⁵³ See Garvie 2009 *ad l.*, 167.

clear. In *Suid.* ζ 20, where the first distich of our epigram is quoted, the adjective is glossed just with ἄμετρος, ἄπειρος; it seems as though Antipater, putting ζαπληθής and ἀμέτρητος (l. 1) next to each other in the first line as adjectives applied to the same noun (στόμα), meant to clarify the etymology and explain the meaning of the first adjective (ζαπληθής) through the following, commoner synonym, according to a standard practice among the early Alexandrian poets.

6. Conclusions

This paper can only give a sampling of the ways in which sepulchral epigram exploits etymology. Yet the few cases examined above provide a very good grasp of the great contribution research on etymology in epigram can make. First of all, the use of famous and well-attested etymological puns allows to inscribe epigram in a long-lasting literary tradition by establishing intertextual connections with other genres, from lyric and epic poetry to comedy, with which epigram is in continuous dialogue, adapting with flexibility to very different registers and degrees of formality. Embedding learned etymological explanations of names into epigrams concerning real events and characters offers their authors the opportunity to shed new light on historical, prosopographical and antiquarian details: Antipater of Thessalonica exploits erudite etymology to compose a highly imaginative and dramatic poem, which communicates very powerfully the horrifying scenery of war and death, according to the idea that the vivid, lively and highly emotional narration is preferred to the detached objectivity of the historical facts; on the other hand, Christodorus takes the opportunity to explain the origin of the name Lychnidos as a cue to reframe his poem completely with new narrative, escaping the bounds of truth and reality, history and time; in addition, etymology acts as a new, original tool to enhance and enrich late antique eulogy. Pisander gives each character an etymologically appropriate name that matches their status and identity, so that the dense network of lexical and phonetic affinities structuring the poem actually mirrors the tight bond which ties the master with his servant and his animals, no matter whether or not the epigram refers to an actual funerary monument and was originally inscriptional. Finally the use of etymology in connection with philological exegesis, which is a particularly fortunate combination in epigram, makes this genre into a privileged vantage point for investigating this still underexplored and problematic topic: epigram can make a valuable contribution to the study of philological exegesis by revealing effective methodologies for approaching very debated matters, especially in Homeric exegesis.

I hope to have shown that this research field is clearly rich and productive:

given the long life of epigram and its unique tendency to continuous and unpredictable experimentation, the same kind of investigation can be extended to all the subgenres of literary and inscriptional epigram more broadly, as well as to Byzantine epigram. In doing so, new responses to etymological features and patterns will be revealed by observing how philological exegesis is treated in epigram throughout the centuries.

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