

On the Nature of Strato’s Humour: Another Look at *Anth.Pal.* 12.6

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IN *ANTH.PAL.* 12.6, one of Strato’s epigrams included in the book known as the *Musa Puerilis* of Strato of Sardis,¹ the narrator refers to a discovery he has made. One day, as he was making some calculations, he found that the words *πρωκτός* (“anus”) and *χρυσός* (“gold”) both consist of letters indicating figures that add up to the same number (1570):²

πρωκτός καὶ χρυσός τὴν αὐτὴν ψῆφον ἔχουσιν·
ψηφίζων δ’ ἀφελῶς τοῦτό ποθ’ εὗρον ἐγώ.

The numbers indicated by the letters of “anus” and “gold” are the same. One day, while I was calculating, I made that discovery by chance.

The obvious humour of this distich is generated by the contrast between the pompous tone of the announcement (*τοῦτό ποθ’*

¹ This is due to the title *Σπράτωνος τοῦ Σαρδιανοῦ Παιδικὴ Μοῦσα* given to Book 12 in the Palatine codex. Despite the title, the book includes not only the pederastic poems of Strato, which most probably date to the end of the first and beginning of the second century A.D., but also poems on pederastic themes by earlier authors such as Callimachus and Meleager. These were added to the collection of Strato’s poems by later anthologists so as to form the collection found in the Book 12. See A. Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford 1993) 39–42, 121–159; K. J. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context* (Berkeley 1998) 281–301, esp. 282 with n.111; A. Fountoulakis, “Male Bodies, Male Gazes: Exploring *Erôs* in the Twelfth Book of the *Greek Anthology*,” in E. Sanders et al. (eds.), *Erôs in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 2013) 293–311, at 293 with nn.1 and 2 for further bibliography.

² The text of the *Anth.Pal.* used is H. Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca*² I–IV (Munich 1965).

εὔρον ἐγῶ) and the obscene and ostensibly insignificant topic of the discovery. Humour is also generated by the unexpected metaphorical equation of a metal considered precious and beautiful with a part of human anatomy denoted by a vulgar term with shameful connotations.³

Although these lines lack explicit homosexual references, in the context of the thematic orientation of Strato's poems and the twelfth book's pederastic epigrams they may be taken to allude to the pleasures of anal intercourse in pederastic sexual relationships. Seen from such a perspective, it is reasonable that the poem is placed before *Anth.Pal.* 12.7, which is also ascribed to Strato and refers to the sphincter of boys, the differences between boys and girls in terms of penetrative love-making, and a preference for the former over the latter. The epigram may thus be taken to suggest, as a variation on the same theme, a similar preference for the intercourse that can be offered by a boy.⁴ It has also been observed by commentators that the epigram refers to a socially inspired link between money and sexual favours, a theme found quite often in the *Greek Anthology*,⁵ while the isopsephic pun is based on a tech-

³ Cf. Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 303. For humour in Strato's epigrams generated by metaphor, polysemy, comparison, sexually nuanced vocabulary, allusion, and antithesis see M. González Rincón, *Estratón de Sardes: Epigramas* (Seville 1996) 39–55, esp. 42 (on *Anth.Pal.* 12.241 and humour generated by lexical ambiguity) and 46 (on *Anth.Pal.* 12.204 and humour based on antitheses). As for the obscenity of the word πρῶκτός, it is for this reason that it is often absent from Greek lexica like that of Pollux, where it is not included in the section on anatomical terms (2.168–170). See H. D. Jocelyn, "A Greek Indecency and its Students: λαικάζειν," *PCPS* 26 (1980) 12–66, at 22. For the obscenity and the uses of this word see D. Bain, "Ἰσοψηφία καὶ ὁ πρῶκτός: An Abusive Graffito from Thorikos," *ΖΠΕ* 104 (1994) 33–35, at 33.

⁴ See A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*² (New York/Oxford 1992) 36; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 303–304.

⁵ E.g. *Anth.Pal.* 5.16, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 44, 101, 109, 113, 114, 125, 126, 217, 240, 9.411, 420, 10.50, 12.42, 44, 148, 204, 212, 214, 219, 237, 239, 14.107. Cf. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, "Strato and the Musa Puerilis," *Hermes*

nique thought to have been developed by the poet and astrologer Leonidas of Alexandria.⁶

These observations draw attention to some aspects of the epigram's potential meaning which are associated with socially produced ideas and highlight the meticulous process of composition of the *Anthology's* poems in a literary culture. Yet they fail to show other aspects of the epigram that have much deeper roots in its social and cultural ambience. Although the aspects of the poem's meaning that have been noted so far may have been obvious to some of its readers, others, and especially those acquainted with the domain of pederastic experience and the vocabulary developed therein, likely would have been ready to discern in these lines a far more nuanced semantic load. Drawing mainly upon epigraphic evidence, this paper aspires to show that the poem's references to *πρωκτός* and *χρυσός* stem from a vocabulary semantically formulated in social ambiances of male homosexuality. This will lead to a reappraisal of the poem's potentially double meaning and a further understanding of its close associations with its social and cultural context.

To begin with the word *πρωκτός*, it is highly unlikely that in this epigram it is used in its literal sense. Throughout the twelfth book, whenever reference is made to a boy's buttocks and related anatomical parts, this is either by means of a more

100 (1972) 215–240, at 230; N. Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period: An Anthology* (Cambridge 1994) 92; González Rincón, *Estratón* 148–149; W. Steinbichler, *Die Epigramme des Dichters Straton von Sardes* (Frankfurt am Main 1998) 93–95; L. Floridi, *Stratone di Sardi: Epigrammi* (Alessandria 2007) 138–139.

⁶ Some of Leonidas' epigrams have found their way into the *Anthology*: *Anth.Pal.* 6.321–322, 324–329, 11.9, 70, 187, 199, 200, 213. Cf. Anon. *Anth. Pal.* 11.334; D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge 1981) 503–514; Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry* 84, 92; González Rincón, *Estratón* 149; Steinbichler, *Die Epigramme* 94; Floridi, *Stratone* 138–139; M. E. Giannuzzi, *Stratone di Sardi: Epigrammi* (Lecce 2007) 109; N. Livingstone and G. Nisbet, *Epigram (Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics* 38 [Cambridge 2010]) 119–121. For the humorous aspect of isopsephy see Floridi, *Stratone* 18.

elevated vocabulary using medical terminology or words such as *πυγή* (“buttocks”) and its cognates, or even through metaphors and innuendoes.⁷ Thus Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.7 refers to the anus with the medical term *σφιγκτήρ* (“sphincter”), while the buttocks and then anal intercourse are alluded to with the poetic type *ὄπιθεν* (“at the back”). In Dioscorides *Anth.Pal.* 12.37 and Rhianus *Anth.Pal.* 12.38 *πυγή* is used in references to the buttocks of boys. In a similar way the piece of wood on which Graphicus sits is described as *πυγαῖα σανίς* in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.15. In Meleager *Anth.Pal.* 12.41 the sense of “hairy-holed” in a reference to anal intercourse with passive homosexual men is conveyed by *δασύτρωγλος*,⁸ which is used instead of *δασύπρωκτος*; even in the obscene context of this poem the word *τρώγλη* (“hole”) is preferred to the vulgar *πρωκτός*. Metaphorical language is employed in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.225 in a reference to anal intercourse, which according to the poet should be avoided early in the morning; here the meaning of “anus” is conveyed by *κύων*, while that of “the large intestine” by the *καρπολόχος Δημήτηρ*. Strato resorts to the art of innuendo in *Anth.Pal.* 12.208, where the move of a papyrus roll around the parts of a boy’s body may allude to sexual intercourse: *τρυφεροῖς σφίγξει περὶ χεῖλεσιν* (“he will press against his tender lips,” 3), referring to that roll, may well allude to the act of a boy’s penetration by an *erastês*, and the *χεῖλεσιν* to the boy’s anus. This anatomical part is evoked by using the verb *σφίγξει*, etymologically related to *σφιγκτήρ*.⁹

The rarity of *πρωκτός* in its literal sense in other books of the

⁷ Cf. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus* 37, 129–130. Similar non-literal references to the penises of boys occur in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.3; cf. W. M. Clarke, “Phallic Vocabulary in Straton,” *Mnemosyne* 47 (1994) 466–472.

⁸ Cf. G. L. Fain, *Ancient Greek Epigrams: Major Poets in Verse Translation* (Berkeley 2010) 179–180.

⁹ For this allusion see Maxwell-Stuart, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 222–223 (also 230–234, 238–239, for the often allusive manner in which Strato refers to sexual acts); González Rincón, *Estratón* 213–215; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 304.

Greek Anthology has been observed by Steinbichler and Floridi, who note its occurrence in a scoptic epigram from the eleventh book (*Anth.Pal.* 11.241, attributed to Nicarchus), which evokes the obscene semantic nuances attached to *πρωκτός* in iambic poetry and earlier comedy.¹⁰ In this epigram, which appears along with others referring to *ὄζόστομοι*, the mouth of a certain Theodorus is thought to give off a bad smell similar to that of his anus (1–3):

τὸ στόμα χά πρωκτὸς ταύτόν, Θεόδωρε, σοῦ ὄζει,
 ὥστε διαγνῶναι τοῖς φυσικοῖς καλὸν ἦν.
 ἦ γράψαι σε ἔδει, ποῖον στόμα, ποῖον ὁ πρωκτός.

Your mouth and anus, Theodorus, give off the same smell, so that it would be a great job for the scientists to tell the difference between them. You should indeed write down which one is the mouth and which one the anus.

The epigram appears as an extreme satire on people with bad breath. At the same time, a man's anus might also be taken as a shameful part of male anatomy which is probably related to the anal penetration of a passive homosexual who also practices fellatio. The filth associated with the male anus stems not only from the excrement that comes from it, but also from its potential penetration by the penis of another man. In the latter case the filth of the anus would be metaphorically suggestive of shamelessness, debauchery, and humiliation.¹¹ It is perhaps for this reason that Theodorus' anus is thought to be filthy and is equated with his mouth which might have been used in a similar manner.¹² But given the use of *εὐρύπρωκτος* for barristers

¹⁰ Steinbichler, *Die Epigramme* 94–95; Floridi, *Stratone* 139. The epigram may also be seen as deriving from popular jokes on *ὄζόστομοι*: see L. Floridi, "Greek Skoptic Epigram and 'Popular' Literature: *Anth.Gr.* XI and the *Philogelos*," *GRBS* 52 (2012) 632–660, at 648–649.

¹¹ See J. J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York/London 1990) 36–37, 55–64; Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus* 128–130, 201–202.

¹² For fellatio as a particularly indecent act see Artemid. *Oneir.* 1.79; Jocelyn, *PCPS* 26 (1980) 12–66; Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* 38, 43.

and politicians who develop an empty and often disgusting rhetoric, it is also likely that Nicarchus' epigram refers to a man whose speech is regarded as nonsensical or annoying.¹³

The use of *πρωκτός* as a vulgar term is attested in Hipponax (fr.104.32 W.), but is particularly common in Aristophanes, where it stands out as an obscene and abusive term usually denoting the male anus.¹⁴ Unlike the more decent word *πυγή*, *πρωκτός* is often used by the comic poet when a man is being ridiculed, as it is associated with buggery. These semantic overtones become even clearer in the use, often attested in comedy, of its compounds *εὐρύπρωκτος* ("with a wide anus"),¹⁵ *λακκόπρωκτος/χαυνόπρωκτος* ("with a gaping anus")¹⁶ or *λευκόπρωκτος* ("with a white [sc. feminine] anus"),¹⁷ which are employed sometimes as empty derogatory terms emerging even in political contexts and sometimes with reference to passive homosexual men who are regularly being penetrated, as with the different usages of *καταπύγων*.¹⁸

¹³ For this use of *εὐρύπρωκτος* see J. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (London 2007) 53–54.

¹⁴ E.g. Ar. *Nub.* 164, *Vesp.* 431, 604, 1035, 1173, *Eq.* 381, 640, 721; cf. J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*² (New York/Oxford 1991) 201.

¹⁵ E.g. *Nub.* 1084–1100, *Ach.* 716.

¹⁶ E.g. *Nub.* 1330, *Ach.* 104.

¹⁷ E.g. Callias *Pedētai* fr.14 K.-A.

¹⁸ E.g. Ar. *Thesm.* 200, *Eq.* 639, *Nub.* 529, 909; Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* 150, 201–202, 209–211; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love* 53–54, 60–63, 113. According to T. K. Hubbard, "Popular Perceptions of Elite Homosexuality in Classical Athens," *Arion* III 6.1 (1998) 48–78, at 55–59, *καταπύγων* may refer to men who play either an active or a passive role in anal sex. Its use, however, along with the feminine *καταπύγαινα*, which can only refer to a woman who is regularly being penetrated anally, suggests that it was initially meant to refer to passive homosexual men even though it was eventually used as an abusive term with a non-specific denotation. Cf. M. J. Milne and D. von Bothmer, "ΚΑΤΑΠΥΓΩΝ, ΚΑΤΑΠΥΓΑΙΝΑ," *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 215–224; K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978) 113, 142–144.

Much like these compound epithets, *πρωκτός* was sometimes used not to denote a specific anatomical part, the anus, but as a metaphorical term of abuse deriving its meaning from that anatomical part, its potential sexual use, and its consequent degrading connotations. This is attested in a rupestral graffito from Thorikos of ca. 400 B.C., where reference is made to [- -] Βω.τιάδης ὁ πρωκτός.¹⁹ David Bain has convincingly argued that the noun *πρωκτός*, used here instead of an adjective similar to the compounds mentioned above, is “an empty term of abuse,” whose semantic overtones have as a point of reference the potential homosexual use of a man’s anus. The characterization of a man as a *πρωκτός* might then draw attention to his passive homosexuality, but is also extended to his bad character as a more general insult.²⁰ It would not be unreasonable to suppose that such general terms of abuse were at an early stage semantically formulated in homoerotic social contexts or contexts acquainted with homosexual practices, where words associated with a culture of homosexual experience were used with a related, albeit more general, meaning.

Epigraphic evidence from the Athenian Agora is suggestive of a similar use of such words. In a graffito on the internal part of a rim fragment from a lekane, dated to the second quarter of the fifth century, a certain Sydromachus is described as *λακκόπρ[ο]κτος*.²¹ The epithet may point to his passive homosexuality. Yet its use in a graffito on a pot in the social ambience of the Agora suggests that it must have been a more general term of abuse related to the man’s personality and character, as often happens in comedy. The graffito is published among similar graffiti from the Agora dated between the late sixth and the fourth century. In these graffiti words such as *καταπύγων*, *καταπύγαινα*, *πυγάιως*, and *λαϊκάστρια* are used

¹⁹ J. Bingen, *Thorikos IX* (Ghent 1990) 151, no. 88.

²⁰ Bain, *ZPE* 104 (1994) 34.

²¹ M. Lang, *The Athenian Agora XXI: Graffiti and Dipinti* (Princeton 1976) 14, no. C 23.

as abusive epithets of a non-specific nature, not much different from the words 'bastard' or 'arse-hole' in English, even though the sexual character of their semantic nuances is obvious.²² This sort of abuse is directed against men and women alike. It is worth noting that in the same body of evidence we find the far more common epithet *καλός*, which very often appears inscribed in pederastic scenes in vase-paintings as well as in graffiti found on walls, pieces of stone, or fragments of pottery. The epithet suggests the beauty of a youth. At the same time, it appears as a more general term pointing towards a kind of schematic physical beauty, which is not specified more precisely, as well as towards complementary moral qualities such as decency, honesty, and modesty, which fit with ideals associated with handsome elite young males often entangled in pederastic affairs.

In these graffiti the terms *καλός* and *καταπύγων* or *λακκόπρωκτος* appear as polar opposites referring not only to physical characteristics, but also to moral features of young men in social and perhaps sexually charged homosocial contexts.²³ It is worth noting that in the fragments from the

²² *καταπύγων*: Lang, *Athenian Agora* nos. C 5, C 18, C 22, C 24 (*καταπύγων*), C 25, C 26, C 27 (*καταπύγ(αινα)*); *πυγ[αίος]*: C 12; *λαϊκάστρια*: C 33, C 34; cf. Jocelyn, *PCPS* 26 (1980) 12–16.

²³ In most cases the *καλός* inscriptions do not refer to the youths portrayed in the vase-paintings, but to idealized *erōmenoi*, who could later become hoplites and citizens, and should not belong to the social category of *κίναϊδοι*, who were thought of as effeminate, shameless, and constantly bugged. These inscriptions form parts of confessions or acclamations that might have been further developed and directed, either poetically or not, towards a boy in appropriate real-life contexts. The *erōmenoi* portrayed in scenes of pederastic courtship exhibit accordingly a modesty which is normally expected of brides or virgin girls and comes as a concomitant of their being *καλοί*. Cf. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 9, 111–124; Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* 53–54, 62, 195; H. A. Shapiro, "Eros in Love: Pederasty and Pornography in Greece," in A. Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (New York/Oxford 1992) 53–72, at 62–63; F. Lissarague, "Publicity and Performance: *Kalos* Inscriptions in Attic Vase-painting," in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*

Agora a youth called Alcaeus is described as *καλός* in one graffito, while in another the same youth is *καταπύγων*.²⁴ The application of these two opposites to the same person may imply that the same handsome youth might have been appreciated differently by different persons, perhaps according to his response to their advances. It may also imply that the youth might behave sometimes in a decent and honest manner and sometimes in an ill-tempered way characterized by shamelessness, arrogance, aggressiveness, and dishonesty so that he is rendered unattractive despite his beauty.²⁵

It should be borne in mind that, in addition to *καλός*, other words with related meanings were used in contexts of this kind. In rupestral graffiti from Thasos, which date to the second quarter or the middle of the fourth century, we find the names of boys accompanied usually by words denoting their beauty or grace in what seems to be pederastic admiration.²⁶ Most frequent is the *καλός*, occurring twelve times. Other terms are *ἀγρέος*, *ἀργυρούς*, *ἀστεοπρόσωπος*, *ἀστέος*, *ἐμός*, *εὐπρόσωπος*, *εὐρυθμος*, *εὐσχήμων*, *εὐχαρις*, *ἡδύς*, *καλλιπρόσωπος*, *φιλόκωμος*, *φίλος*, *χρυσός*, and *ώραῖος*. The meanings of most of these words may range from “with a beautiful face” (*εὐπρόσωπος*, *καλλιπρόσωπος*) to “graceful” (*εὐχαρις*, *εὐρυθμος*), “polite” or “charming” (*ἀστέος*) and “looking polite” or “look-

(Cambridge 1999) 359–373; C. Calame, *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece* (Princeton 1999) 85–88, 136–137; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love* 61, 427–428; A. Lear, “*Kalos*-inscriptions,” in A. Lear and E. Cantarella, *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty: Boys were their Gods* (London/New York 2008) 164–173.

²⁴ Lang, *Athenian Agora* C 19 and C 22; see Milne and von Bothmer, *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 218, 220.

²⁵ Cf. A. Steiner, “Private and Public: Links between Symposion and Syssition in Fifth-Century Athens,” *ClAnt* 21 (2002) 347–379, at 371–373; Lear, in *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty* 170–171, who rightly argues against the generalization of the antithesis between *καλός* and *καταπύγων* and the attribution to the latter of the cultural importance possessed by the former.

²⁶ Y. Garlan and O. Masson, “Les acclamations pédérastiques de Kalami (Thasos),” *BCH* 106 (1982) 3–22.

ing charming” (ἀστεοπρόσωπος).²⁷ Considering, however, their occurrence along with καλός in the context of such pederastic graffiti, it is reasonable to assume that they fall within a semantic field found in the pederastic καλός inscriptions and probably developed in social contexts and common conversation. They thus denote in a more general sense the beauty and moral qualities of a desirable youth, as does καλός.

Among the words used in these graffiti as parallels to καλός, the word χρυσός occurs with the names of three boys: Σωσίων [χ]ρυσός, Ἡροφῶ[ν] χρυσός, Μυίσκος χρυσός.²⁸ The metaphorical use of the word χρυσός and its derivatives, which refer to a metal considered precious and beautiful, and used as a material indication of wealth as well as in the creation of beautiful artifacts,²⁹ is often found in Greek literature to denote the beauty and moral superiority of the gods.³⁰ Aphrodite, in particular, is often presented as “golden” in references that underline her sensual beauty as well as her divine grace and beauty. As is suggested by Diodorus (4.26.2–3), it is perhaps this latter feature that emerges more pointedly: τινὲς δὲ λέγουσι ... χρυσᾶ δὲ μήλα ἀπὸ τοῦ κάλλους ὠνομάσθαι ποιητικῶς, ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην χρυσὴν καλεῖσθαι διὰ τὴν εὐπρέπειαν (“some say ... that the apples (of the Hesperides) were poetically named golden because of their beauty, just as Aphrodite is called golden because of her comeliness”).

Yet the beauty of gold is evoked not only for divine or feminine beauty. In Chariton 1.1.5 the beautiful and erotically attractive blushing on the face of Chaereas, the young male protagonist, as he is coming home from the gymnasium, is com-

²⁷ For the meanings see Garlan and Masson, *BCH* 106 (1982) 17–18. For ἀστεῖος as both “polite” and “charming” see LSJ s.v.

²⁸ Garlan and Masson, *BCH* 106 (1982) nos. A 3, A 22, A 54.

²⁹ Cf. Garlan and Masson, *BCH* 106 (1982) 17 with n.33.

³⁰ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 3.64, *Od.* 8.337; Hes. *Op.* 65, *Theog.* 822, 962, 975; Mimn. fr.1.1–2 W.; Pind. *Isthm.* 2.39, 8.11, *Nem.* 5.15, *Ol.* 13.10; Bacchyl. *Dith.* 15.2–4 S.-M., *Epin.* 5.174–175; Soph. *OT* 157; Ar. *Ran.* 483; Lucian *Imag.* 8, *Pro Imag.* 24, *Dial.Mort.* 9.3.

pared to gold: τότε δὲ Χαιρέας ἀπὸ τῶν γυμνασίων ἐβάδιζεν οἴκαδε στίλβων ὥσπερ ἀστήρ· ἐπήνθει γὰρ αὐτοῦ τῷ λαμπρῷ τοῦ προσώπου τὸ ἐρύθημα τῆς παλαίστρας ὥσπερ ἀργύρῳ χρυσός (“and then Chaereas was strolling home from the gymnasium shining like a star; the blush of the palaestra was blossoming on the shine of his face as gold on silver”). This visible sign of beauty, however, which is compared to gold, is also related to nobility. As is specified after a few lines (1.1.6), the generating of desire in the hearts of Chaereas and Callirhoe soon after they see each other is due not only to their beauty but also to their visually perceived moral qualities: ταχέως οὖν πάθος ἐρωτικὸν ἀντέδωκαν ἀλλήλοις τοῦ κάλλους τῆ εὐγενείᾳ συνελθόντος (“they soon fell passionately in love with each other, because of the beauty that came together with nobility”).

When “golden” is attributed to a male or a female, human or divine, this normally is with χρύσεος or compounds such as χρυσοκόμης, χρυσόκομος, χρυσοπλόκαμος, χρυσωπός, χρυσόθρονος, or χρυσοφαής.³¹ In the graffiti from Thasos it is not an adjective of this kind, but the noun χρυσός which is used to characterize the three boys, like the noun πρωκτός in the graffiti from Thorikos. This is not surprising especially if it is borne in mind that χρυσός often appeared in poetry to denote something “dear” or “precious.”³² Drawing upon the metaphorical use of words pertinent to gold, the graffiti from Thasos use χρυσός to suggest the boys’ beauty and moral qualities, thus within the semantic field of καλός as used in pederastic inscriptions. Similarly, in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.204 χρύσεος appears as the equivalent of καλός applied to the beauty of a boy named Sosiadas. The Homeric phrase χρύσεια χαλκείων, which was taken up by later authors, acquiring a proverbial

³¹ E.g. Hes. *Theog.* 947, Ar. *Av.* 217, Eur. *IA* 548, *IT* 1236, *Supp.* 975–977 (χρυσοκόμης); *Anth.Pal.* 6.264 (χρυσόκομος); *Hymn.Hom.* 3.205 (χρυσοπλόκαμος); Ar. *Thesm.* 321 (χρυσωπός); Hom. *Il.* 1.611, *Od.* 5.123, *Hymn.Hom.* 3.305, 12.1, Aristoph. *Av.* 950, *Anth.Pal.* 9.165 (χρυσόθρονος); Eur. *Hipp.* 1275 (χρυσοφαής).

³² Aesch. *Cho.* 372; Eur. *Tro.* 432; Ar. *Plut.* 268, *Nub.* 912; Pind. *Ol.* 7.50.

character,³³ is used in this epigram to underline the antithesis between the handsome (καλός) Sosiadas and the hairy (δασύς) Diocles, who is thus presented as ugly—throughout the *Musa Puerilis* body hair is thought to be undesirable and to mark the loss of youthful boyish beauty:³⁴ “χρύσεια χαλκείων” νῦν εἶπατε· “δὸς λάβε” παίζειι / Σωσιάδας ὁ καλός καὶ Διοκλῆς ὁ δασύς (“‘Golden gifts for bronze’ you now say. The handsome Sosiadas and the hairy Diocles are playing ‘give and take’”).³⁵ In Asclepiades *Anth.Pal.* 12.163 χρυσός and μάραγδος (“emerald”) are used also as analogous to καλός. These words refer to two desirable boys in love with each other. To return to the use of the χρυσός in pederastic inscriptions, it was not so widespread as καλός. Yet its presence in the graffiti from Thasos suggests that it was part of a related vocabulary used by social groups engaged in pederastic activities.³⁶

³³ Hom. *Il.* 6.236; Pl. *Symp.* 219A1; Arist. *Eth.Nic.* 1136b; Cic. *Att.* 6.1.22.

³⁴ See Maxwell-Stuart, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 226; S. L. Tarán, “ΕΙΣΙ ΤΡΙΧΕΣ: An Erotic Motif in the *Greek Anthology*,” *JHS* 105 (1985) 90–107.

³⁵ The proverbial expression δὸς λάβε may point towards the exchange of the same sexual favours between the man and the youth, even though Diocles is hairy and Sosiadas handsome. Cf. Meleager *Anth.Pal.* 5.208; Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.214. δὸς λάβε may also hint at the venality of the relationship between Sosiadas and Diocles, and determine accordingly the meaning of the χρύσεια χαλκείων. The antithesis, however, between the beautiful ἐρώμενος and the hairy ἐραστὴς, which is expanded in the poem in a series of further analogous antitheses between χρύσεια and χαλκείων, κάλυκας and βᾶτω, σῦκα and μύκησιν, and ἄρνα γαλακτοπαγῆ and βοί, must determine the type of the first antithesis that derives from the Homeric χρύσεια χαλκείων. In this context, even if χαλκείων is taken as a reference to the money offered by Diocles, χρύσεια must refer to the youthful beauty of Sosiadas. As has been noted by Maxwell-Stuart on the basis of these antitheses, “the subtlety of the play on the theme of money lies in the idea that the ‘golden’ gift of Sosiades is his beauty and his youth, whereas the bronze of Diocles is almost certainly coinage”: *Hermes* 100 (1972) 228–229. Cf. González Rincón, *Estratón* 204, 206; Steinbichler, *Die Epigramme* 102–105; Floridi, *Stratone* 258–262.

³⁶ Although in the graffiti from Thasos the pederastic references are confined to expressing admiration for the desired boys, in other graffiti of a similar kind such expressions of admiration are accompanied by more

Strato's awareness of the activities of such groups and so of a relevant vocabulary is implied by the closing epigram of the *Musa Puerilis* (*Anth.Pal.* 12.258). The narrator identifies himself as the poet and states that the divine gift of poetic inspiration and composition is used so that his work does not echo his own erotic affairs only, but encapsulates also the pederastic experience of groups engaged in such activities, identified in line 3 as pederasts (φιλόπαισι).³⁷ The interests of such groups may coincide with the interests of some of Strato's potential readers and their consequent ability to recognize in his poems patterns of speech, thought, and action familiar to them from their experience. The use of χαράσσω (3), to "write" as well as to "engrave," with respect to the composition of these poems may point towards their culture of writing and reading as well as towards a culture of homoerotic practice which included the relevant inscriptions:

ἦ τάχα τις μετόπισθε κλύων ἐμὰ παίγνια ταῦτα
 πάντας ἐμοὺς δόξει τοὺς ἐν ἔρωτι πόνους·
 ἄλλα δ' ἐγὼν ἄλλοισιν ἀεὶ φιλόπαισι χαράσσω
 γράμματ', ἐπεὶ τις ἐμοὶ τοῦτ' ἐνέδωκε θεός.

When someone in the future will be hearing my poetic games, he will think that the pains of love described in them are all mine. But I've always been writing this or that poem on behalf of many other lovers of boys, because this was an ability offered to me by some god.

Marco Fantuzzi has made the attractive suggestion that the origins of Hellenistic erotic epigram may be traced back to the καλός inscriptions in vase-paintings, which functioned as a starting point for the expression of more developed poetic

explicit references to sexual acts in pederastic affairs. Some of the latter graffiti have an abusive character. See e.g. *IG* XII.3 536, 537a, 538b; Lang, *Athenian Agora* nos. C 2 and C 8; *CIL* IV 1825, 1825a, 2048, 2210, 2319b, 3932, 5408, 8512, 8805. Cf. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus* 82–83.

³⁷ Cf. P. L. Furiani, "Omofilia e androcrazia nella società maschile di Stratone di Sardi," *Euphrosyne* 15 (1987) 217–226; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 309–310.

forms of pederastic admiration in the context of the symposia.³⁸ Such developed forms of poetic expression are attested in inscriptions even from the classical period and are echoed in pre-Hellenistic poetry.³⁹ The familiarity of the poets of the *Musa Puerilis* with such inscriptions, not only from vase-paintings but also from social contexts, is eloquently suggested by Anon. *Anth.Pal.* 12.130. This epigram uses the epithet καλός, stereotypical in those inscriptions, here with respect to the beauty of a boy named Dositheus, as well as the related specification of his beauty, χαρίεις ὄμμασι. Moreover, reference is made to the act of inscribing such words on trees or walls as part of a manifestation of an older man's desire for a youth:⁴⁰

εἶπα καὶ αὖ πάλιν εἶπα· “καλός, καλός,” ἀλλ’ ἔτι φήσω,
ὡς καλός, ὡς χαρίεις ὄμμασι Δωσίθεος.

³⁸ These forms of admiration must have followed conventions and concerns of earlier sympotic and erotic elegy as these were formulated in terms of the epigrams' formal and stylistic demands. See M. Fantuzzi, “The Epigram,” in M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2004) 283–349, at 284–285. Cf. A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995) 71–103; N. Slater, “The Vase as Ventriloquist: *Kalos*-Inscriptions and the Culture of Fame,” in E. A. Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and its Influence in the Greek and Roman World* (Boston 1998) 143–162; P. Bing and J. S. Bruss, “Introduction,” in *Brill's Companion to Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden/Boston 2007) 1–26, at 11–16; E. L. Bowie, “From Archaic Elegy to Hellenistic Sympotic Epigram?” in *Brill's Companion* 95–112; K. Gutzwiller, “The Paradox of Amatory Epigram,” in *Brill's Companion* 313–332, at 314; Livingstone and Nisbet, *Epigram* 14–15, 68–70; R. Hunter, “Language and Interpretation in Greek Epigram,” in M. Baumbach et al. (eds.), *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram* (Cambridge 2010) 265–288, at 284–288. Cf. M. A. Tueller, *Look Who's Talking: Innovations in Voice and Identity in Hellenistic Epigram* (Leuven 2008) 124–125, who refers to *Anth. Pal.* 5.158 and 215, and the technique of “embedding an ‘inscription’ in erotic epigram” as a form of reference to the past of the genre.

³⁹ See e.g. *IG* I³ 1403, XII.2 268; *Ar. Ach.* 142–144, *Vesp.* 97–102; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 111–113, where further instances in Hellenistic epigrams are noted.

⁴⁰ At 4 Paton's emendation καῦσεν is preferred to the ἴσχετ' of the manuscript tradition.

οὐ δρυός οὐδ' ἐλάτης ἐχαράξαμεν, οὐδ' ἐπὶ τοίχου
 τοῦτ' ἔπος· ἀλλ' ἐν ἐμῇ καύσεν Ἔρως κραδίᾳ.
 εἰ δέ τις οὐ φήσει, μὴ πείθεο. ναὶ μὰ σέ, δαίμον,
 ψεύδεται· ἐγὼ δ' ὁ λέγων ἀτρεκὲς οἶδα μόνος.

I've said it again and again: "he is beautiful, he is beautiful."
 And I'll say again that Dositheus is beautiful and has lovely eyes.
 We didn't inscribe those words upon an oak or a pine, nor upon
 a wall. But Eros burned them on my heart. If anyone denies
 that, do not believe him. I swear in the name of god that he lies.
 I alone, the man who says that, know the truth.

The reference to the typical vocabulary of pederastic admiration as well as to the habit of creating inscriptions using that vocabulary in the context of pederasty points towards a domain of pederastic social and cultural experience which is echoed in the epigrams of the *Musa Puerilis*.⁴¹ The habit, in particular, of inscribing words or short phrases pertaining to the beauty of boys in social contexts⁴² is poetically exploited in a self-conscious manner that evokes the ancestry of those poems and the process of their composition out of the inscribed phrase,⁴³ and is turned into part of a process taking place in a

⁴¹ Cf. Meleager *Anth.Pal.* 12.41; Aratus *Anth.Pal.* 12.129. In Callimachus *Anth.Pal.* 12.51, for instance, καλός is used of a beautiful boy in a phrase that reproduces the typical phrasing of the inscriptions (καλὸς ὁ παῖς), so as to allude to the common theme of a boy's chastity as opposed to a boy's promiscuity. As Kathryn Gutzwiller aptly observes, the boy may belong to the category of the καλὰ not only because of his beauty, but also because he is not appealing to anyone other than the speaker: Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands* 223. As in the inscriptions, καλός refers not only to physical, but also to moral qualities. For Strato's parody of conventions found in inscriptions see Floridi, *Stratone* 18–19.

⁴² For the 'habit' of inscribing texts for public use see R. MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *AJP* 103 (1982) 233–246.

⁴³ Cf. P. Bing, "Ergänzungsspiel in the Epigrams of Callimachus," *A&A* 41 (1995) 115–131; M. Puelma, "Ἐπίγραμμα – epigramma: Aspekte einer Wortgeschichte," *MusHelv* 53 (1996) 123–139; Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands* 47–53; Fantuzzi, in *Tradition and Innovation* 283–291; D. Meyer, *Inszeniertes Lesevergnügen. Das inschriftliche Epigramm und seine Rezeption bei Kallimachos* (Stuttgart 2005) 96–101; Bing and Bruss, in *Brill's Companion* 4–11; A.

man's heart. This process is associated with the motif of erotic suffering which is amply attested in the *Musa Puerilis*. The words *καλός* and *χαρίεις ὄμμασι*, in particular, are no longer inscribed on trees or walls, but are transformed and appear as the traces inscribed on the heart of the man in love by the burning fire of Eros. The metaphorical conception of fire as a form of erotic suffering, which occurs in the twelfth book of the *Anthology* with many variations,⁴⁴ is thus being formulated with the skilful use of material coming from actual social practice, the wider cultural phenomenon of Greek pederasty.

Considering the use of *πρωκτός* and *χρυσός* in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.6 in the light of the associations between the *Musa Puerilis* epigrams and the experience they echo, it is likely that these words are used metaphorically as elements of a vocabulary developed within the boundaries of that experience. They recur in patterns of thought and action which pervade the *Musa Puerilis* and determine the book's themes and motifs in a way much like that of *Anth.Pal.* 12.130 discussed above. The semantic load of these words, deriving from homoerotic contexts, is developed further through the fundamental technique of the variation of language, style, theme, motif, imagery, and ideology that is characteristic of these epigrams.⁴⁵ Metaphor is

Bettenworth, "The Mutual Influence of Inscribed and Literary Epigram," in *Brill's Companion* 69–93; Hunter, in *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram* 278–284; Livingstone and Nisbet, *Epigram* 45–47.

⁴⁴ For the metaphorical presentation of erotic suffering as fire burning the man in love see e.g. *Anth.Pal.* 12.63, 72, 81, 82, 83, 87, 91, 92, 93, 126, 127. The metaphor is amply exemplified in the *Greek Anthology*, but constitutes in fact a common perception of the suffering of love found in many ancient authors. See Fountoulakis, in *Erós in Ancient Greece* 295–298 with n.18.

⁴⁵ For the significance of variation in Hellenistic epigram see S. L. Tarán, *The Art of Variation in the Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden 1979); Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands* 227–236. For variation in earlier inscribed epigram see M. Fantuzzi, "Typologies of Variation on a Theme in Archaic and Classical Metrical Inscriptions," in *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram* 289–310. For variations on the theme of suffering in erotic epigrams see W. Ludwig, "Die Kunst der Variation im hellenistischen Liebesepigramm," in *L'épigramme*

often a way of creating more variants—so, for instance, not only in *Anth.Pal.* 12.6, but also in Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.225, 238, and 242.

That an *erômenos* possessing all the physical and moral qualities that justify the characterization χρυσός can nevertheless exhibit a bad character so that he may be characterized as προκτός, given the numerical equation of the two terms in *Anth.Pal.* 12.6 and their use in non-literary contexts of homoerotic experience, evokes the major theme of erotic suffering, which stands as the polar opposite of erotic pleasure and pervades the *Musa Puerilis*.⁴⁶ A desirable *erômenos* capable of bringing pleasure may at times be so arrogant, unresponsive, and hostile to an older man's feelings and advances that he causes pain. In Diocles *Anth.Pal.* 12.35 a boy named Dames, περισσὸς κάλλει ("eminent in beauty"), may be desirable, but is so arrogant and unresponsive that he refuses to say even χαῖρε to the men who greet him in the street. A boy's arrogance may be regarded as the dark side of his beauty so that the desire for him appears futile. Hence a boy's beauty is described as κενανχῆς κάλλος ("vainglorious beauty") in Anon. *Anth.Pal.* 12.145.5–6.⁴⁷ A beautiful boy may be so deceptive that desire for him causes suffering worse than that caused by a hetaera or a virgin girl (Anon. *Anth.Pal.* 12.90); the beautiful youth of this poem offers the older man, whose voice emerges as that of the narrator, only glances and empty promises.

The perception and characterization of a beautiful boy as good and desirable may sometimes depend on his response to the older man who is in love with him. Thus in Anon. *Anth.Pal.* 12.107, a boy described as καλός is desirable only so long as he

grecque (Vandoeuvres/Geneva 1967) 297–348, at 307–320.

⁴⁶ See *Anth.Pal.* 12.71, 72, 73, 74, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 90, 91, 92, 93, 99, 101, 124, 125, 126, 134, 135, 143, 144, 145, 158, 166, 167, 169, 172, 174, 180, 181, 201, 218, 226, 241, 252, 253. Cf. Maxwell-Stuart, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 222; Calame, *The Poetics of Eros* 57–59; Giannuzzi, *Stratone* 251–255; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 296–299.

⁴⁷ For the arrogance of boys see also *Anth.Pal.* 12.185, 186.

responds to the older man's feelings. In Dionysius *Anth.Pal.* 12.108, if the boy turns to another man he is regarded as detestable. Promiscuity is often a feature of those boys' behaviour, which implies their bad character and makes them unwanted despite their beauty.⁴⁸ The sorrow caused by a boy who is prone to ἀδικεῖν may be turned into hatred and this can be reversed only when the boy responds in a like manner to the older man's love, as in Anon. *Anth.Pal.* 12.103.⁴⁹ In *Anth.Pal.* 12.124⁵⁰ the boy whom an older man sees in his dreams appears at times as smiling and at times as hostile. This betrays the older man's perception of the boy's potential double nature, which might result either in kind and decent behaviour or in arrogance, aggressiveness, and deceit.

The sense of *erôs* as a bittersweet feeling, which is common in Greek poetry, is applied in Meleager *Anth.Pal.* 12.154 to a boy who may at times be ἡδύς, γλυκύς, χαρίεις, and καλός, and at times ἀνηρός (“troublesome”).⁵¹ That in a pederastic affair a beautiful *erômenos* might possess the physical but not the moral qualities expected of a καλός must have been quite common in the world of homoerotic experience, as depicted not only in the *Musa Puerilis*, but also in earlier poetry. In ‘Theognis’, for instance, a boy considered καλός on the grounds of his physical beauty may stand in sharp contrast to his bad and shameful

⁴⁸ Promiscuity can appear as a feature of the behaviour of boys who offer their sexual favours for gifts or money: e.g. *Anth.Pal.* 12.42, 44, 204, 212, 214, 237, 239, 250. Cf. Maxwell-Stuart, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 226–230; F. Buffière, *Eros adolescent. La pédérastie dans la Grèce antique* (Paris 1980) 629–635; Floridi, *Stratone* 258–259; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 305. In this light, Strato 12.6 may well refer to the venality of pederastic *erôs* not because of the reference to χρυσός, but because a boy characterized as προικτός might exhibit such behaviour.

⁴⁹ Cf. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 176–177; Fountoulakis, in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* 308.

⁵⁰ Described as anonymous or as belonging to Artemon.

⁵¹ For a similarly easy reversal of the beloved's attitude and feelings cf. Meleager *Anth.Pal.* 12.159 and Asclepiades *Anth.Pal.* 12.153, which however refers to a heterosexual relationship.

character.⁵² As has been noted, it is perhaps for similar reasons that in the graffiti from the Agora a boy is described once as *καλός* and once as *καταπ[ύγων*. In accordance with this poetic and probably socially determined pattern of thought and action, an *erómenos*, who may at first sight be characterized as *χρυσός*, may turn out to possess only the beauty and not the moral qualities of *χρυσός*. If he behaves badly, he may be considered *πρωκτός*.

The venality of *erós* is an important theme in the erotic epigrams of the *Anthology's* fifth book. This is because in the heterosexual epigrams of that book many of the women portrayed as objects of desire may be understood as hetaerae or common prostitutes, offering sex for money.⁵³ But the boys who are objects of desire in the twelfth book appear to conform to the norms of Greek pederasty attested in social contexts. They mostly emerge as elite young males exhibiting an arrogance reflecting their social position, above financial concerns,⁵⁴ although cases of avarice, buying sex-slaves, or even male prostitution were not alien to pederastic affairs.⁵⁵

⁵² 'Theog.' 1259–1262, 1377–1380, cf. 1287–1294, 1305–1310; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 57–58; Lear, in *Images of Ancient Greek Pederasty* 171, 247.

⁵³ See *Anth.Pal.* 5.2, 18, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 44, 45, 46, 101, 109, 113, 114, 121, 125, 126, 159, 162, 175. Note, however, that the eagerness of these women to engage in erotic or even sexual relationships does not necessarily mean that they are hetaerae or prostitutes. As Cameron has shown, many of the women depicted in Asclepiades' epigrams do not conform to the stereotypical attitudes and features of prostitutes, but represent a variety of female types one might come across in social settings. See Cameron, *Callimachus* 494–519.

⁵⁴ See e.g. Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.214. It is perhaps for similar reasons that in pederastic scenes in vase-paintings the *erómenoi* are never offered money, although they are often depicted accepting gifts: Shapiro, in *Pornography and Representation* 56.

⁵⁵ The fourth-century case of Timarchus, who as a boy, according to Aeschines' *Against Timarchus*, prostituted himself to other males, and later was engaged in politics, provides the best-known evidence concerning male prostitution in ancient Greece. For other evidence see Ar. *Plut.* 149–159; Hyp. *Ath.* 2; Theopompus *FGrHist* 115 F 225b; Timaeus 566 F 124b; Curt.

While the venality of *erôs* may have appeared as the thematic core of Strato *Anth.Pal.* 12.6 to some of its readers, it is likely that those acquainted with the main themes of the *Musa Puerilis* and the pederastic experience those themes echo would have also been able to discern in it a semantic breadth deriving from that experience. As the first epigrams of the twelfth book hint at the principal themes of the book's poems,⁵⁶ it comes as no surprise that *Anth.Pal.* 12.6 may refer to the pervasive theme of the ambivalent view of boys who appear as beautiful and desirable, but also can cause sorrow and pain through their arrogance, indifference, aggressiveness, and promiscuity. Drawing upon a relevant thematic strand, which is attested with variations in many epigrams of the *Musa Puerilis* and goes back to the Theognidea,⁵⁷ Strato employs the device of isopsephy as well as a socially nuanced metaphorical vocabulary in order to hint at that theme. The unexpected association between *πρωκτός* and *χρυσός* not only generates humour, but also brings to the foreground the theme of erotic sorrow. The bitter irony that this generates emphasizes that theme in the poem and marks the character of Strato's satire. As *χρυσός* may suggest the venality of pederastic *erôs* as well as the beauty and moral qualities of boys in pederastic affairs, the poem acquires a potential double meaning which is largely contradictory and invests Strato's satire with further irony, created by ambivalence and ambiguity.⁵⁸ While the isopsephic technique and the use of metaphorical language show the literary sophistication of the author and his audience, the origins of his lexical material

6.7–11. See Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 19–42; Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire* 56–64; N. R. E. Fisher, *Aeschines: Against Timarchos* (Oxford 2001) 1–8, 20–24; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love* 64–66, 370–371, 447–463, 490–491. For the depiction of such relationships in the *Musa Puerilis* see n.48 above.

⁵⁶ See Floridi, *Stratone* 52–53.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands* 213–214.

⁵⁸ Cf. Floridi, *Stratone* 17–18 (for a typology of Strato's humour) and 22–24.

and its semantic nuances in the social field of Greek pederasty show a kind of humour that stems not only from a literary pun, but also from a conscious play with perceptions, assumptions, and preconceptions arising in a wider social ambience. This humorous variation on the theme of erotic sorrow due to an ill-behaving *erômenos* points in a self-reflexive manner to the process that led to the creation of erotic epigrams out of erotic inscriptions and suggests a profound relation of these poems to their social and cultural context.⁵⁹

September, 2013

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⁵⁹ Cf. Cameron, *Callimachus* 71–103, 494–498, 517–519; Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands* 227–236; Fantuzzi, in *Tradition and Innovation* 284–285. Thanks are due to the editor and the anonymous referee of *GRBS* for their valuable suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this article.