

Two Mistresses of Ptolemy Philadelphus

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I. Didyme and Asclepiades

τῶφθαλμῶ¹ Διδύμη με συνήρπασεν· ὦμοι, ἐγὼ δὲ
τήκομαι ὡς κηρὸς πὰρ πυρί, κάλλος ὄρων.
εἰ δὲ μέλαινα, τί τοῦτο; καὶ ἄνθρακες· ἄλλ' ὅτε κείνους
θάλψωμεν, λάμπουσ' ὡς ῥόδεαι κάλυκες.²

Didyme is not just a run-of-the-mill charmer who has led Asclepiades on and let him down. Unlike most of his erotic poems, there is no situation, just description. And the essence of the description is that she is black.

In the ordinary way skin black as coal might be thought to suggest a negro: a Nubian, say, or Ethiopian. But (as our own use of the word illustrates) when applied to skin colouring, black is a very relative term, normally implying no more than skin significantly darker than the speaker's. Can the name help?

Didyme is not an uncommon name, but it is above all an *Egyptian* name.³ Preisigke's *Namenbuch* (1922) cites well over one hundred undifferentiated examples of Didymos/Didyme;⁴

¹ Despite a recent defence by B. Baldwin (*Emerita* 50 [1982] 145–49), P's τῶφθαλμῶ is surely incredible. Wilamowitz's τῶφθαλμῶ must be what the poet wrote. For the singular, found "unwelcome" by Gow and Page (*HE* II 120; cf. W. Ludwig, *Gnomon* [1966] 23), there are two other examples in Asclepiades: *Anth.Pal.* 5.162.2 (εἰς ὄνυχᾶ) and 12.161.3 (κατ' ὄμματος); cf. too Agathias, *Anth.Pal.* 5.282.3: ὄμμα δὲ θέλγειν οὐ λάθε.

² *Anth.Pal.* 5.210=v Gow-Page:

"Didyme has swept me off my feet with her eye. Alas!

When I gaze upon her beauty I melt away like wax before the fire.

If she is black, so what? So are the coals.

But when we burn them, they glow like rosebuds."

³ "characteristique de l'Égypte": L. Robert, *Hellenica* II (Paris 1946) 8.

⁴ No exact count possible, since he simply cites one hundred separate volumes in which the names are to be found (65 for Δίδυμος, 35 for Διδύμη).

Foraboschi's supplement at least another two hundred.⁵ The Ptolemaic Prosopography lists 32 examples as far as it goes,⁶ and of the thirteen learned Didymi listed in Pauly-Wissowa six at least are Alexandrian. One reason given for the frequency of the name (together with its Egyptian equivalent Hatre) is the frequency of twins in Egypt.⁷

The Egyptians carefully distinguished themselves from their darker Nubian and Ethiopian neighbors in their art.⁸ But to the Greeks the Egyptians had always seemed dark-skinned.⁹ A number of texts spell out the difference fairly precisely. For example, Achilles Tatius describes Nilotic pirates as "dark-skinned, though not absolutely black like an Indian, but more like a half-caste Ethiopian" (μέλανες ... τὴν χροίαν, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἄκρατον, ἀλλ' οἷος ἂν γένοιτο νόθος Αἰθίοψ).¹⁰ Particularly explicit is the description in the probably second-century *Acts of Peter* of a demonic female as "a pure Ethiopian, not Egyptian but completely black."¹¹ Inside Egypt skin colour was naturally an important identifying characteristic, and personal descriptions in official documents regularly specify whether an individual is dark- or light-skinned.¹² But most Greek texts

⁵ D. Foraboschi, *Onomasticum alterum papyrologicum* II.2 (Milan 1971) 93f.

⁶ L. de Meulemeester-Swinnen and H. Hauben, edd., *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* VII (Louvain 1975) 96f.

⁷ P. Perdrizet, *Les terre cuites grecques d'Égypte* (Nancy 1921) xix, 100; terra cotta representations of twins are common. On Hatre, K. R. W. Schmidt, *GGA* (1918) 108 no.2.

⁸ J. Vercoutter, *L'image du Noir dans l'art occidental* (Fribourg 1976) 33–88; F. M. Snowden, Jr, *Before Color Prejudice* (Harvard 1983) 11ff, 37–40, 73ff.

⁹ There is a very full collection of texts relating to ancient perceptions of difference in skin colour, intelligently interpreted, in Lloyd A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (London 1989). Curiously enough (if I am not mistaken), he missed Asclepiades on Didyme.

¹⁰ *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.9.2; the Nile pirates in Heliodorus 1.3.1 are simply μέλανες.

¹¹ *in aspectu Ethiopissimam, neque Aegyptiam sed totam nigram: Actus Petri cum Simone* 22, in R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* I (Leipzig 1891) 70. On the blackness of demons and the like see J. J. Winkler, *JHS* 100 (1980) 160ff; Thompson (*supra* n.9) 110–13.

¹² J. Hasebroek, *Das Signalement in den Papyrusurkunden* (=Papyrusinstitut Heidelberg, Schr. 3 [Berlin 1921]) 30, for a list of the items found: μελίχρωος, μελάγχρωος, λευκόχρωος, επίπυρρος, υπόπυρρος, πυρρακῆς, ἐρυθρίας. According to Hasebroek, the first, "honey-skinned," is the commonest, "die typische Hauptfarbe der Ägypter."

simply call Egyptians “black” or “dark.” Herodotus, for example, uses μελάγχροες (2.104). To the Greek Ammianus (22.16.23) *Aegyptii plurique subfuscili sunt et atrati*. The Ps.-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica* classifies the Egyptians together with the Ethiopians as ἀγὰν μέλανες, a sign (the writer alleges) of cowardice.¹³ In Aeschylus, the Danaïds refer to themselves as μελανθές ἡλιόκτυπον γένος.¹⁴ In the anonymous fragment χροῖαν δὲ τὴν σὴν ἥλιος λάμπων φλογὶ αἰγυπτιώσει (*Trag. Adesp.* fr.161=*TrGF* II 60), “make Egyptian” means “make dark.” To judge by the titles of numerous lost plays, Athenian audiences were fascinated by stories of Egypt, and it is likely that Egyptians were distinguished from Greeks on stage by appropriately painted masks, just as black and white complexions are clearly differentiated in Greek vase painting.¹⁵

When we encounter a dark-skinned Didyme in a Hellenistic epigram, we have every right to expect an Egyptian. An Egyptian Didyme written of by Asclepiades would have flourished in the early decades of the third century, during the reign of the first two Ptolemies. Can we identify such a woman? It seems not to have been noticed that Ptolemy Philadelphus had a mistress called Didyme, “one of the native women” (μίαν τῶν ἐπιχωρίων γυναικῶν). The source is the *Memoirs* of the king’s great-great-grandson, Ptolemy Euergetes II.¹⁶ In the mouth of a Ptolemaic king, very conscious of his Macedonian blood, “native” clearly means Egyptian.

¹³ §67=R. Foerster, ed., *Scriptores physiognomonici* I (Leipzig 1893) 72; the claim is repeated by Polemo, *ib.*, p.244 §36, and by anon., II p.107. Ps.-Aristotle weakens his case somewhat by adding that “excessively pale” people were also cowardly!

¹⁴ *Suppl.* 154f; cf. 719f, 745ff; J. Diggle, *Euripides, Phaethon* (Cambridge 1970) 79f.

¹⁵ According to Helen Bacon (*Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* [New Haven 1961] 26) Aeschylus drew a distinction between the “merely dark” Egyptians and the “truly black” Ethiopians; but see now the more comprehensive discussion in É. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* (Oxford 1989) 139–43.

¹⁶ Ath. 576E–F (=FGrHist 234F4). On Ptolemy’s mistresses see too Polyb. 14.11.2 and (for Glauce the Citharode) D. B. Thompson, in L. F. Sandler, ed., *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann* (New York 1964) 314–22; P. M. FRASER, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972: hereafter ‘Fraser’) II 818 n.165. Lady friends of the Ptolemies are collected in a section discreetly entitled “Dames de la Cour” in *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* IV (1968) nos. 14713–37; see too S. B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt* (New York 1984) 53f.

Philadelphus' native mistress Didyme is bound to have appeared dark-skinned to Greek observers. Some may have been critical of such a liaison. Intermarriage between Greeks and Egyptians was still frowned upon (Fraser [*supra* n.16] II 71), and though a mistress is not a wife, Euergetes clearly thought the point worth mentioning. A graceful defence such as Asclepiades' poem might have been appreciated by the royal lover.

There is no reason to doubt that Asclepiades lived into the early part of Philadelphus' reign. If so, then so celebrated a poet, spoken of with awe by Theocritus and paid the compliment of imitation by Callimachus, is sure to have received an invitation to court. Didyme is the first on Euergetes' list,¹⁷ which (since it is not alphabetical) may mean that she was the earliest. And where but at a Ptolemaic court is a Greek poet of the age likely to have come across a young black woman who was his social equal? The only other detail supplied by Euergetes is that Didyme was μάλ' εὐπρεπεστάτην τὴν ὄψιν. Now this would most naturally be taken to mean, quite simply, that she was very beautiful in appearance. But the phrase *could* also mean that she had very beautiful eyes, no doubt more conspicuous in a dark-skinned woman.¹⁸ We might compare Damascius' description of the fifth-century Egyptian poet Pamprepius of Panopolis as μέλας τὴν χροίαν, εἰδεχθῆς τὰς ὄψεις, where the plural perhaps suggests "with hideous eyes" rather than just "with a hideous face."¹⁹ If so, the coincidence with Asclepiades' description (τῷ φθαλμῷ Διδύμη με συνήρπασεν) would be complete. Indeed, if Asclepiades' poem really does refer to the royal mistress, then it may well have been known to Euergetes, in part at least the source of his own description.

¹⁷ The complete list (in alphabetical order) is: Agathocleia (*Pros. Ptol.* VI no. 14713), Bilistiche (14717), Glauce (14718), Didyme (14719, not citing Asclepiades), Cleino (14726), Mnesis (14728), Myrtion (14729), Stratonice (14733).

¹⁸ The physical descriptions in Egyptian documents have a surprisingly rich vocabulary to characterize eyes: γλαυκός, χαροπός, ἐπιχάροπος, εὐόφθαλμος, κάκοψις, κοιλόφθαλμος, ὑπόσκνιφος, ὑπόστραβος, ὑποστραβαινίζων, not to mention several more mundane terms: Hasebroek (*supra* n.12) 33ff.

¹⁹ *Suda s.v.* Παμπρέπιος (IV.14.37 Adler, misinterpreted by C. Zintzen, *Damascii Vitae Isidori Reliquiae* [Hildesheim 1967] 151). But Heliodorus' Nile bandits are μέλανας ... τὴν χροίαν καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἀρχμήρους, where τὴν ὄψιν presumably refers to facial appearance in general, as e.g. with εὐπρεπῆς τὴν ὄψιν in Dem. 40.27 and elsewhere.

It should be observed that the poem need not be read as implying that Didyme is Asclepiades' own mistress or even the object of his active attentions. Nothing marks her out as the flirt, the reluctant virgin, the betrayer, or any other of the female types so memorably depicted in the rest of his erotic verse.²⁰ He simply states that she has bewitched him with her gaze. The poem is a tribute to her beauty—and a defence of her dark skin. It would be a perfectly acceptable compliment to the mistress of another man—even a king. Furthermore, the poem could have been written either before or after Didyme's period as royal mistress.

If the identification is accepted, two gains for the biography of Asclepiades result. First, although it is clear that Asclepiades exerted a determining influence on the course of the first generation of Alexandrian epigrammatists and had a personal as well as literary relationship with Posidippus and Hedyllus, who undoubtedly worked in Alexandria, there is in fact no solid evidence to locate Asclepiades himself there.²¹ The best Fraser could produce was two epigrams in which Asclepiades allegedly writes of Samos (his birthplace) as "somebody outside the island." Even this evidence (not pointing of course directly to Alexandria) must unfortunately be eliminated. One of the poems is by the much later Rufinus,²² and in the other the reference to the women as Samian is only there because Samian women were proverbially lecherous.²³

The circumstantial evidence for treating Asclepiades as the founder of the Alexandrian epigram is probably good enough by itself. But if the Didyme poem really does celebrate a mistress of Philadelphus, we would at last have proof.

Second, Asclepiades' dates. According to Fraser, he was born not later than *ca* 340. That is to say, he would have been *ca* 60 at

²⁰ For this interpretation of "female types" in Asclepiades see my "Asclepiades's Girlfriends," in Helene P. Foley, ed., *Reflexions of Women in Antiquity* (London 1981) 275–302.

²¹ See the discussion in Fraser I 557f, and my *Greek Anthology*, forthcoming, Appendix V.

²² *Anth.Pal.* 5.43, with Fraser II 799 n.22, alleging that the "style is unmistakably of the early third century." There is not the slightest reason to take the poem away from Rufinus: see Denys Page, *The Epigrams of Rufinus* (Cambridge 1978) 88f, with my review in *Latomus* 40 (1981) 394f.

²³ *Anth.Pal.* 5.206; see Gow and Page, *HE* II 122, with my remarks (*supra* n.20) 281.

the accession of Philadelphus (283/2)—and perhaps a septuagenarian by the time he met Didyme. This early chronology rests entirely on the more than questionable assumption that he wrote *Anth.Pal.* 9.752.

εἰμι Μέθη, τὸ γλύμμα σοφῆς χερός, ἐν δ' ἀμεθύστῳ
 γέγλυμμαι· τέχνης δ' ἡ λίθος ἀλλοτρίη.
 ἀλλὰ Κλεοπάτρης ἱερὸν κρέαρ· ἐν γὰρ ἀνάσσης
 χειρὶ θεὸν νήφειν καὶ μεθύουσαν ἔδει.²⁴

The amethyst (ἀ-μέθυστος) was supposed to protect against inebriation.²⁵ The poem is ascribed to Asclepiades by Planudes; to Asclepiades or Antipater of Thessalonica in the Palatine Manuscript. In recent times no one but Cichorius seems to have paid any attention to the ascription to Antipater. By way of preface it should be observed that such alternative ascriptions normally arise when a copyist collates two exemplars and notices that their ascriptions differ. Thus the second is not necessarily less probable than the first.

According to Fraser (I 557, II 795), the Cleopatra “cannot plausibly be identified with anybody except the daughter of Philip of Macedon, who was murdered in Sardis in 309 B.C.” What he means, of course, is that *if* Asclepiades is the author, this Cleopatra is the only plausible candidate. Gow unaccountably remarks that “the second couplet raises some doubts, but the style is otherwise like Asclepiades’ and unlike Antipater’s, and, if it is by either, Asclepiades has much the stronger claim.”²⁶ The poem is in fact a rather silly, rhetorical ecphrasis on a gem. In both subject matter and style it is utterly unlike Asclepiades—or indeed any of his contemporaries. On the

²⁴ I am Drunkenness, the work of a skilled hand, but I am carved in amethyst. The stone is foreign to the work.
 But I am the sacred possession of Cleopatra. On a queen’s hand even the goddess of drunkenness should be sober.

²⁵ In fact, this poem and its fellow *Anth.Pal.* 9.748 (cited below) constitute most of the evidence there is for this improbable belief, which Pliny dismisses as *Magorum vanitas* (*HN* 37.124): see too H. Lewy, *Die semitischen Fremdwörter im Griechischen* (Berlin 1895) 58f; D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge 1981) 82.

²⁶ Gow and Page, *HE* II 148f. The detailed recent discussion of Ginevra Galli Calderini, *AttiAccPont* n.s. 31 (1983) 266ff, reaches the same unacceptable conclusion.

other hand it is entirely in the style and spirit of early imperial epigram. The closest parallel is 9.748, ascribed to Plato *iunior*, a poet certainly no earlier than the first century A.D.:²⁷

ἄ λίθος ἔστ' ἀμέθυστος, ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πότας Διόνυσος·
ἢ νήφειν πείσει μ' ἢ μαθέτω μεθύειν.²⁸

Gow remarks that many queens were called Cleopatra and "there may have been others of whom we know nothing." Yet only one queen so called is celebrated by any Greek epigrammist known to us, and that is Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Antony and Cleopatra. Her marriage to Juba II of Mauretania *ca* 20 B.C. and her death perhaps as late as *ca* A.D. 20 were alike commemorated by Crinagoras of Mytilene.²⁹ Now the dateable poems of Antipater of Thessalonica range from 11 B.C. to some time between 12 and 19 A.D., squarely between these dates. Crinagoras is not known to have visited either Mauretania or Alexandria, and it is a fair guess that it was in Rome, where he moved in the highest society, that he made Cleopatra's acquaintance. Antipater too moved in the best circles at Rome, and he might easily have met her there.

Note too the metrical irregularity ἀλλὰ Κλεοπάτρης in line 3. Various easy corrections are possible (Κλεω-, Κλευ-, Κλειο-); yet as Gow and Page observe, there is one exact parallel in the *Anthology*: ξεῖνε Κλεῶνίκης (where again Κλεω-, Κλευ-, Κλεονν- have been suggested)—precisely in a poem by Antipater of Thessalonica (*Anth.Pal.* 9.215.2). Antipater's metrical practice is distinctly laxer than most other authors in either Meleager's or Philip's *Garland*.³⁰

It is surely more than a coincidence that Antipater should turn out, on metrical as well as historical grounds, to be such an appropriate alternative to Asclepiades. Gow and Page repeated their ascription to Asclepiades when discussing Antipater in their *Garland of Philip* (II 21), but Page wisely (though without giving reasons) dropped the poem from his re-edition of Asclepiades in his *Epigrammata Graeca*. We should do well to

²⁷ "about the middle of the first c. A.D.," is the reasonable guess of Page (*supra* n.25) 82.

²⁸ The stone is amethyst, but I am the boozier Dionysus;

Either let it teach me to be sober—or learn how to get drunk.

²⁹ *Anth. Pal.* 9.235, 7.633 (Gow and Page, *GP* II 233f, 225f); cf. C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (Leipzig 1922) 331f.

³⁰ Gow and Page, *GP* I xxxix, xl, xlii, xliv.

eliminate it from future discussions of the biography of Asclepiades.

Fraser oddly failed to discuss one further poem (XXXIX Gow-Page=*Anth.Plan.* 68):

Κύπριδος ἄδ' εἰκῶν· φέρ' ἰδόμεθα μὴ Βερενίκας·
διστάζω ποτέρῃ φῆ τις ὁμοιόταραν.³¹

The problem here is a double ascription to "Asclepiades or Posidippus." It must be said at once that, whichever the poet, the subject must be Berenice I, wife of Ptolemy I Soter, rather than Berenice II, wife of Euergetes. Gow eventually decided for Berenice I, but implied that the question is more open than it is by misdating Berenice II's marriage with Ptolemy III Euergetes to 258 instead of 246.³² Neither poet is likely to have been alive that late.

It is particularly hard to decide between Asclepiades and Posidippus, because the latter so frequently imitates the former. Gow thought the style and Ptolemaic subject in favor of Posidippus, the Doric dialect in favor of Asclepiades. A more substantial consideration is perhaps that Posidippus never employs the distich (indeed his contemporary epigrams are often very long), whereas a closely similar distich is securely attributed to Asclepiades (XXI Gow-Page=*Anth.Pal.* 12.75):

εἰ περὰ σοι προσέκειτο καὶ ἐν χερὶ τόξα καὶ ἰοί,
οὐκ ἂν Ἔρωσ ἐγράφη Κύπριδος ἀλλὰ σὺ παῖς.³³

A comparison (apparently a painting rather than a statue) to the god, as XXXIX is to the goddess of love. Compare XXXVIII (= *Anth.Pal.* 12.77), ascribed once more to Asclepiades or Posidippus:

³¹ This is a statue of Cypris. But look, is it not perhaps Berenice? I am at a loss. Whom does it resemble most?

³² So too does Galli Calderini in her useful but inconclusive discussion (*supra* n.26: 273–77): "probabilmente nel 258." A possible betrothal this early was broken off by Berenice's mother Apama on Magas' death in 250 (E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* I² [Nancy 1979] 243–46), and the marriage did not finally take place till after the death of Philadelphus in 246. As we know from Callimachus fr.110 (the *Coma Berenices*), Berenice was still a recent bride when Euergetes left on his Syrian expedition later the same year 246.

³³ If you had wings on your back and a bow and arrows in your hand, It is you, boy, not Eros who would be reckoned the son of Cypris.

εἰ καθύπερθε λάβοις χρύσεια πτερὰ καὶ σευ ἄπ' ὤμων
 τείνοιτ' ἀργυρέων ἰοδόκος φαρέτρη
 καὶ σταίης παρ' Ἔρωτα φιλάγλαον οὐ μὰ τὸν Ἑρμῆν
 οὐδ' αὐτὴ Κύπρις γνώσεται ὄν τέτοκε.³⁴

This time there can be little doubt. This labored and over-ornate variation on Asclepiades' elegant and concise poem must be the work of Posidippus.³⁵ By the same token it is surely preferable to conclude that the Berenice poem too is by Asclepiades.

The next question is, was Berenice alive when the poem was written? It is obviously relevant that Berenice was the first of a long line of Ptolemaic royal ladies to be identified with and worshipped as Aphrodite. Theocritus 17.34–50 seems to imply that this did not happen till after Berenice's death, by *ca* 280. Now Asclepiades *may* have coincidentally compared a statue of the living Berenice to Aphrodite without any reference to her subsequent divinization as Aphrodite. But the probability is surely against this. If so, then we would have further evidence for his presence in Alexandria in the 270s.

Asclepiades may (like Callimachus) have lived to a ripe and active old age. But on balance we should probably consider the possibility that he was born a decade or so later than *ca* 340 and did not live much beyond *ca* 260.

II. Bilistiche and Posidippus

Philadelphus' "inclination to amours" (as his great-great-grandson put it) was common knowledge. Theocritus (14.61) included ἐρωτικός in a list of his virtues. Bearing this in mind, let us take a fresh look at *Anth.Pal.* 5.202, another of those epigrams so irritatingly ascribed to "Asclepiades or Posidippus":

³⁴ If you were to grow golden wings above and if on your silvery shoulders were hung a quiver full of arrows, and if you were to stand beside Eros in all his splendor, never (by Hermes) would even Cypris know which was her son.

³⁵ So Gow and Page, *HE* II 142; Galli Calderini (*supra* n.26) 271ff.

Πορφυρέην μάλιστα καὶ ἠνία σιγαλόεντα
 Πλαγγῶν εὐίπων θῆκεν ἐπὶ προθύρων,
 νικήσασα κέλητι Φιλαινίδα τὴν πολύχαρμον
 ἔσπερινῶν πῶλων ἄρτι φρυασσομένων.
 Κύπρι φίλη, σὺ δὲ τῆδε πόροις νημερτέα νίκης
 δόξαν, ἀείμνηστον τήνδε τιθεῖσα χάριν.³⁶

This is said to be no more than a variation on *Anth.Pal.* 5.203 by Asclepiades, a more subtle double entendre likewise turning on what Gow primly described as “the equation between amatory and equestrian exercises”:

Λυσιδίκη σοί, Κύπρι, τὸν ἵπαστῆρα μύωπα,
 χρύσειον εὐκνήμου κέντρον ἔθηκε ποδός,
 ᾧ πολὺν ἕπτιον ἵππον ἐγύμνασεν· οὐδέ ποτ’ αὐτῆς
 μηρὸς ἐφοινίχθη κοῦφα τινασσομένης·
 ἦν γὰρ ἀκέντητος τελεοδρόμος· οὐνεκεν ὄπλον
 σοὶ κατὰ μεσσοπύλης χρύσειον ἐκρέμασεν.³⁷

Fraser (I 570; II 812) described 5.202 as a “tasteless” and “immensely crudified” adaption of Asclepiades’ poem. Yet it is not really a question of taste that is involved. The curious thing about 202 is that, despite being more crudely sexual, it is at the erotic rather than the aesthetic level that the metaphor fails.

In Asclepiades, Lysidice dedicates her spur to Aphrodite, a parody of the usual dedication of domestic or professional tools no longer of use. But Lysidice is disposing of her spur because she is such a good “horsewoman” that she does not need it; she

³⁶

On the portico of the god who delights in horses [lit. “well-horsed porticos”],

Plango has dedicated her purple whip and glittering reins,
 having defeated with her courser the seasoned campaigner Philaenis,
 when the colts of the evening have just begun to neigh.

Dear Cypris, grant her the true glory of her victory,
 establishing for her this favor never to be forgotten.

³⁷

It is to you, Cypris, that Lysidice has dedicated the golden spur of her
 shapely foot,

with which she has exercised many a stallion on his back while her
 own thigh was never reddened, so lightly did she bounce;
 for she would finish the course without applying the spur.

So she hung this her weapon of gold on your central gate.

can reach the “end of the course” without applying the spur. The metaphor is skilfully maintained throughout. An innocent reader could take it for a poem about a real horsewoman.

Let us now look at *Anth.Pal.* 5.202. First, the whip and reins Plango dedicates do not work so well at the sexual level as Lysidice’s spur in Asclepiades. They suggest some leather-clad Mistress rather than a skilful hetaera astride her lover. Worse still, her proficiency is illustrated, not (as we might have expected) by reference to some eager or satisfied man, but by her “unforgettable victory” over another woman, strangely described as a “seasoned campaigner.” This woman she “defeated *with* her horse” (νικήσασα κέλητι). If this is the man, there is no suggestion that she is servicing him; on the contrary, he is merely the means whereby she defeats her female rival. And what part do the “colts of the evening” play in this race? Obviously one woman may be better in bed than another, but the image of a victorious contest cannot help but suggest a race in which fastest is best. At the erotic level this is hardly satisfactory, since most men would surely prefer the slower woman, the one able to defer rather than hasten the moment of climax. We may contrast here Dioscorides’ description of the accomplished Doris, riding her lover all the way to the finish of the “marathon” of love (τὸν Κύπριδος δόλιχον: *Anth.Pal.* 5.55.4).³⁸

The last four words of line 1 are a Homeric formula:³⁹ as Gow remarks, “the reader is led to expect a heroic theme, or at least one connected with athletic meetings.” But the ensuing parody is hard to make erotic sense of. ἡνία in Homer are always the reins of horses yoked to chariots.⁴⁰ When we add in the borrowing of line 4 (of which more below) from Callimachus’ *Fifth Hymn*, where again reference is to horses that draw a chariot, the alert reader will have in mind the picture, not of a skilful horsewoman, but of a victorious charioteer.

This incongruous note entirely destroys the image of a woman astride a man that has so far been assumed to be the

³⁸ Amazingly heavy weather has been made of this original (and still misunderstood) masterpiece of erotic writing: see Gow and Page, *HE* II 239f; O. J. Schrier, “Love with Doris,” *Mnemosyne* SER. 4 32 (1979) 307–26; B. Baldwin, *ibid.* 33 (1980) 357ff; Cameron (*supra* n.20) 301 n.68; Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus* (New Haven 1983) 50, 235.

³⁹ *Il.* 5.226, 328; 8.116, 137; 11.128; 17.479.

⁴⁰ *habenae equorum iunctorum*: H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* I (Leipzig 1885) 544.

raison d'être of the poem. It is difficult to believe that even the less subtle Posidippus would have so badly botched the task of writing a coherent variation on this simple theme—much less Asclepiades. Is it possible that this was not even the poet's purpose? Was there in fact ever an occasion at the court of Philadelphus when a real hetaera won a real chariot race?

There was. None other than his celebrated Macedonian mistress Bilistiche won two chariot victories at the Olympic games, no less: in the quadriga in 268, and in the pair in 264.⁴¹

Of our two candidates for author, Asclepiades may not have survived this long, but Posidippus was certainly alive in 263/2 (Fraser I 557). That the poem not only might but must in any case have been written as late as Bilistiche's triumphs can be established with something approaching certainty.

It has long been noticed that line 4 is a clever adaptation of line 2 of Callimachus' *Hymn* 5, to Athena:

ὄσσαι λωτροχόοι τᾶς Παλλάδος ἔξιτε πᾶσαι
 ἔξιτε· τᾶν ἵππων ἄρτι φρυασσομενᾶν
 τᾶν ἱερᾶν ἐσάκουσα⁴²

The borrower must be the author of 5.202. In Callimachus the ἄρτι serves a precise and important function; it is because he has just that moment heard the snorting of the horses drawing Athena's chariot that the poet bids the λωτροχόοι come forth and be about their business. But the ἄρτι in 5.202.4 is entirely otiose; the line refers in the most general terms to the "colts" of both Plango and Philaenis, not even to the moment of Plango's victory, since the poem is supposed to be commemorating her subsequent dedication to Aphrodite. The effect of the line

⁴¹ *P. Oxy.* XVII 2082; Paus. 5.8.11; L. Moretti, *Olympionikai: i vincitori negli antichi agoni olimpici* (= *MemLinc* VIII.8.2 [Rome 1957]) 136f; Jacoby, *FGrHist* 257aF6, with *Komm.* p.852. Fraser (I 210 n.206) writes "264 and 260," presumably by oversight. Bilistiche will not (of course) have driven the chariot herself. In later times women are often listed as victor in chariot events, "femmes fortunées qui entretenaient une écurie de course et non viragos qui s'exhibaient dans l'arène (L. Robert, *BCH* 58 [1934] 520f with examples; cf. my *Circus Factions* [Oxford 1976] 204). For sources on Bilistiche, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* VI no. 14717.

⁴² You bathpourers of Pallas, come out everyone,
 come out. The mares just now began to neigh,
 I heard the sacred mares ...
 Tr. A. W. Bulloch, *Callimachus: the Fifth Hymn* (Cambridge 1985) 93.

derives entirely from its transference *as a whole* from a solemn, hymnic context to a crude, erotic context.

In fact, since the poet so obviously expected his impudent borrowing to be recognized, we might wonder why he bothered to change Callimachus' ἵππων to πώλων. Its connotations of youth—"prancing young colts of the night"—suit the sexual metaphor nicely enough, but are not essential. All the examples of the "horsewoman" motif collected by Jeffrey Henderson⁴³ happen to use ἵππος (as did Asclepiades) or words formed from it, not πῶλος. Could it be relevant that it was precisely in the category of πῶλοι that Bilistiche won both her Olympic victories?⁴⁴

Three final details. Commentators have a tendency to classify any pretty female name found in an erotic context as "suitable for a hetaera." Many of these names are common among respectable women.⁴⁵ But both the names in this poem were borne by notorious hetaeras, Plango of Miletus and Philaenis of Samos.⁴⁶ That is to say, the poet is making sure that we think of his competitors as professional hetairas rather than just talented amateurs.

Secondly, Plango's purple whip: πορφυρέην is the only non-Homeric word in an otherwise formulaic line, and while the adjective is common enough, it is nonetheless tempting to wonder whether the first word of the poem has some special significance. From the age of Alexander purple became (as it had been with the Persians) the color and prerogative par excellence of royalty. In particular, Hellenistic kings regularly presented their ministers and favorites with purple robes, to symbolize their status. Livy regularly refers to courtiers of Hellenistic monarchs as *purpurati*, evidently reflecting wide-

⁴³ *The Maculate Muse* (New Haven 1975) 174; for πῶλος in a different context see Eubulus fr.84.2 (Koch, *CAF* II 193), with R. L. Hunter, *Eubulus: The Fragments* (Cambridge 1983) 176 (note the quaint index entry [259] "of ladies").

⁴⁴ In 268 with the πωλικ[ὸ]ν [τέθριππον] (*P.Oxy.* XVII 2082); in 264 with the newly introduced πωλική συνωρίς (*Paus.* 5.8.11).

⁴⁵ As L. Robert has often warned, e.g. *L'Epigramme grecque (=Entretiens Hardt* 14 [*Vandoeuvres-Geneva* 1968]) 340f.

⁴⁶ On whom see Gow and Page, *HE* II 140f; D. W. Vessey, *RBPhil* 54 (1976) 78–83.

spread Hellenistic practice.⁴⁷ Thus to a contemporary familiar with the practice, to style a hetaera who “rode” the king as possessing a purple *whip* would be a particularly delicate touch, a nice blend of compliment and insult.

Third, for all the world as though 5.202 were a genuine dedication, Hecker and Waltz identified the temple of Cypris with “well-horsed porticoes” in which Plango is said to have hung her whip and reins as the new temple of Arsinoë-Aphrodite at Canopus. Posidippus did in fact write two epigrams on this foundation (XII–XIII Gow-Page). Nevertheless, Gow and Page rightly rejected so literal-minded an approach to what is so clearly a fictitious dedication. Furthermore, Arsinoë’s temple was built on a headland at Zephyrium looking out to sea, and (as Posidippus’ epigrams and another by Callimachus [XIV Gow-Page] make clear) Arsinoë-Aphrodite was conceived as a marine deity (Fraser I 239ff). It is thus improbable that her temple would have been conspicuously adorned with representations of horses. Indeed, why should any temple of Aphrodite have been decorated in this way? No known cult of Aphrodite associates her with horses. But that still leaves the question, why should the poet specify so unusual a feature for even an imaginary temple of Aphrodite? One possible explanation is that εὐίπων is simply a heavy-handed “foreshadowing” of the equestrian imagery to come. But there is another possibility. Philadelphus dedicated another temple to Aphrodite a year or two later—to none other than *Bilistiche-Aphrodite* (Plut. *Mor.* 753E–F). No information survives about the appearance of this temple, but given Bilistiche’s interests and achievements, some equestrian emphasis is at least a possibility. However this may be, Bilistiche was certainly an Aphrodite εὐίπος, in the literal if in no other sense.

Such outspokenness at the court of Philadelphus would not be without parallel. Everyone knows the immortal line penned by Sotades of Maroneia on the marriage between Philadelphus and his sister Arsinoë in 275: “it’s an unholy hole you’re shoving your prick in” (εἰς οὐχ ὀσίην τρυμαλιὴν τὸ κέντρον ὠθεῖς: Ath. 621A=Sotades fr.1 Powell). Sotades made a point of insulting kings: Lysimachus as well as Philadelphus, and (according to his son) “other kings in other cities too.” In due

⁴⁷ M. Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (=Coll. *Latomus* 116 [Brussels 1970]) 29–36.

course he paid for his temerity, but not straightaway.⁴⁸ From a tantalizingly colorless reference in his *Suda* biography we learn that he wrote a poem “On Bilistiche.”⁴⁹ To judge from his record, the poem is not likely to have been flattering.

What more tempting occasion to write a poem on Bilistiche than one or other of her Olympic chariot victories?

αἰεὶ τοῦτο Διὸς κούραις μέλει, αἰὲν ἀοιδοῖς,
ὑμνεῖν ἀθανάτους, ὑμνεῖν ἀγαθῶν κλέα ἀνδρῶν.⁵⁰

So Theocritus a few years earlier (probably *ca* 275), the opening of his curious poem 17 offering to panegyryze Hiero the new king of Syracuse.⁵¹ Both the king’s name and Theocritus’ frequent allusions to Pindar and Simonides recall the great age of the victory ode. And what victory more deserving an epinician than an Olympic chariot win? As Theocritus goes on to say, not only did the “man of Ceos” bring renown to men,

τιμᾶς δὲ καὶ ὠκέες ἔλλαχον ἵπποι
οἳ σφισιν ἐξ ἱερῶν στεφανηφόροι ἦλθον ἀγώνων (46f).

Callimachus was to write at least two epinicians for chariot victories: for Queen Berenice II at the Nemean games and for Sosibius at the Isthmian and Nemean.

It is perfectly possible that a serious epinician was written for one or both of Bilistiche’s victories. Her relationship with the king was not kept discreetly in the background. The anonymous Oxyrhynchus chronicle that records the quadriga victory of 268 styles her bluntly “Bilistiche the Macedonian ...

⁴⁸ M. Launey’s careful paper, “L’execution de Sotadès et l’expédition de Patroklos dan la mer Égée (266 av. J.C.),” *REA* 47 (1945) 33–45, has shown that the execution of Sotades fell probably in 266, some eleven years after the insult to Ptolemy and Arsinoë. There is no good reason to believe that he spent all that time in prison or that it was for that insult alone that he was executed. It might have been an insult to Bilistiche that was the final straw.

⁴⁹ *Suda s.v.* There is nothing to suggest that the affair with Bilistiche began before the death of Arsinoë in 268.

⁵⁰ It is ever the task of Zeus’ daughters, ever that of bards,
to hymn the immortals and the glorious deeds of heroes.

⁵¹ See Gow’s commentary and F. T. Griffiths, *Theocritus at Court* (= *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 55 [Leiden 1979]) Ch. 2.

hetaera of Ptolemy Philadelphus.”⁵² This is the more striking in that (as we now know) Philadelphus’ wife Arsinoë had been dead for only two months at that time, not two years as used to be thought.⁵³ And what could be more conspicuous than a temple of Bilistiche-Aphrodite?

From a curious passage of Athenaeus we learn that her ancestry was discussed by “historians of Argos” (Ath. 596E=FGrHist 311F1 with *Komm.* p.54). For although her Macedonian origin seems well documented (Bilistiche, like Berenice, is a Macedonian name), she is said to have claimed descent from the Atreidae. Jacoby was worried by the ethnic “Argive” in this passage, and doubted the identification with Philadelphus’ undoubtedly Macedonian mistress.⁵⁴ But she is styled ἑταίρα, and the Ἀργεῖα may be no more than an inference from the claim to descent from the Atreidae. This claim may be less startling than it seems, in view of the well-known pretensions to Argive descent by the Macedonian royal house.⁵⁵ Though certainly attested as early as the fifth century, this theme seems to have been comprehensively promoted by King Archelaus of Macedon (ca 413–399). It was at Archelaus’ court that Euripides wrote his *Archelaus*, in which he may actually have invented a mythical character Archelaus, son of the Heraclid Temenus, who was exiled from Argos and founded the original Macedonian capital city of Aegae.⁵⁶ Archelaus’ coinage also advertised this supposed Argive connection.⁵⁷ It is later a common motif in the Alexandrian poets.

⁵² *P.Oxy.* XVII 2082=FGrHist 257aF6. The traces of ἑταίρα are faint, but no plausible alternative suggests itself.

⁵³ Arsinoë died on 1 or 2 July 268 (as recently established by E. Grzybek, *Du calendrier macédonien au calendrier ptolémaïque* [Basel 1990] 107–12), and the Olympic Games were scheduled so that the third day of the festival coincided with the second or third full moon after the summer solstice.

⁵⁴ ἐκ Μακεδονίας τῆς ἐπὶ θαλάσσης; Paus. 5.8.11; [Μ]ακετίς; *P.Oxy.* XVII 2082 fr.6.6f.

⁵⁵ Hdt. 5.22.2, 8.137.1; Thuc. 2.99.3, 5.80.2; Isoc. *Philip* 32; cf. N. G. L. Hammond and G. T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia II* (Oxford 1979) 3f; Harder (*infra* n.56) 133–37.

⁵⁶ A. Harder, *Euripides’ Kresphontes and Archelaos (=Mnemosyne, Suppl. 87* [Leiden 1985]) 129–37. Archelaus also appears in Euripides’ *Temenos* or *Temenidae* (Harder 289).

⁵⁷ E. N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon* (Princeton 1990) 172f.

Theocritus 17 emphasizes the descent of Philadelphus and Alexander from Heracles, and his *Heracliscus* (24) is a veiled panegyric of Philadelphus.⁵⁸ This may also explain the enigmatic and fragmentary words καὶ πάρος Ἀργεῖ[. in Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices*.⁵⁹ In a poem on a victory in the Nemean games, it would be natural and appropriate to allude to the Argive ancestry Berenice had acquired through her recent marriage to Euergetes.

We need only assume that Bilistiche claimed a connection with Macedonian royalty (naturally with no more justification than the Ptolemies), and the rest follows automatically. It may be worth noting in this connection that only two women before Bilistiche had won in chariot events at the Olympic games, both royalty.⁶⁰ And the next after her was also a queen, Berenice II. Her double Olympic victory and her own royal connection had elevated Bilistiche to a station in life where a court poet might deem it prudent to suggest a more flattering origin. It would not be hard to point to other such fictions in Ptolemaic court poetry. For example, in the same *Victoria Berenices* Berenice II is described as the daughter of Philadelphus and Arsinoe II, the "sibling gods."⁶¹ She was in fact the daughter of Magas and Apama, as everyone knew (including the copyist of the Lille papyrus).

The art of polemical poetry has seldom flourished as it did in Ptolemaic Alexandria. A poet who disliked the pretensions of the royal mistress might well have been sorely tempted to write an anti-epinician for the occasion.

268/4 may be a little late for Asclepiades, though the argument that he would not be likely to write so tasteless a variation on his own treatment of the theme (5.203) would now have less

⁵⁸ Griffiths (*supra* n.51) 91–98; Bulloch (*supra* n.42) 12f.

⁵⁹ No satisfactory explanation has so far been proposed. According to Parsons, "Callimachus may intend a simple parallel: formerly an Egyptian king (Danaus) ruled in Argos; now an Egyptian queen triumphs in the Argive games" (*ZPE* 25 [1977] 10). For a different suggestion, R. F. Thomas, *CQ* n.s. 33 (1983) 106ff.

⁶⁰ Cynisca, daughter of Archidamus II and sister of Agis II and Agesilaus, who won (probably) in 396 and 392 (Moretti [*supra* n.41] nos. 373, 381); and Euryleonis (another Spartan), in (probably) 368 (Moretti no. 418); cf. Pomeroy (*supra* n.16) 54.

⁶¹ *SH* 254.2, with Parsons (*supra* n.59) 6–9. The difference here (of course) is that this fiction also appears on official inscriptions: Fraser II 384 n.356.

weight. If the poet did have Bilistiche's Olympic victories in mind, then the introduction of the motif of the racing hetaera would not have been a lapse of taste, but rather the *raison d'être* of the poem. Whereas 5.203 is an obscene double entendre disguised as a dedication by a horsewoman, 5.202 would be a lampoon on the king's mistress disguised as an obscene double entendre. The horsewoman motif would be literal and primary rather than a metaphorical subtext. But the execution is undeniably crude, and on balance Bilistiche's fellow Macedonian, the less subtle Posidippus, is the more likely author. He might even have known her in the days before chance brought them together at the court of Philadelphus.

III. Callimachus and Apollonius

Hitherto the chronological implications of the link between Callimachus and the epigram have seemed minimal. Fraser, for example (after many others), took it for granted that Callimachus' *Fifth Hymn* "is to be dated fairly early in the career of the poet, for a line of it was filched by his elder contemporary Posidippus" (Fraser I 256). We now know that it cannot have been a very early work.

Another link long recognized is that between *Hymn* 5.103f:

δῖα γυναῖ, τὸ μὲν οὐ παλινάγρετον αὐθι γένοιτο
ἔργον ...

and Apollonius 2.444f:

Αἰσονίδη, τὸ μὲν οὐ παλινάγρετον οὐδέ τι μῆχος
ἔστ' ὀπίσω ...

Not only the same rare adjective in the same phrase and metrical position, and identical articulation throughout. The decisive point, as A. W. Bulloch has pointed out, is that "both have the most unusual feature of the normally proclitic οὐ separated from its adjective by the main caesura."⁶² There is no other example of this in Callimachus, notoriously the most fastidious and innovative of metricians, whereas it was apparently a refinement that did not trouble Apollonius. It

⁶² *AJP* 98 (1977) 121ff.

follows that it must be Callimachus who is the borrower, adapting Apollonius' line to his own context—with good effect, as Bulloch has shown.

The chronological implications now become serious. For since Pfeiffer and Eichgrün it has been generally accepted that the *Argonautica* draws heavily on Callimachus' *Aetia*.⁶³ This brings us back to the Plango/Philaenis epigram. If the relative sequence suggested above stands firm, then *Aetia* I–II, *Argonautica*, and Callimachus *Hymn* 5 were all written *before* an epigram ascribed to Asclepiades or Posidippus and (as suggested here) datable to either 268 or 264. Does a *terminus ante quem* of 268/4 entail an implausibly early date for any of these works?

Some scholars have been prepared to date the *Argonautica* as late as 250/240.⁶⁴ First, it has often been suspected that the *Aetia* prologue and the *Hymn to Apollo* allude to the *Argonautica*, and, on the traditional assumption that both date to *ca* 245, that has been held to support a similar date for the *Argonautica*. But the only serious reason for dating the *Hymn to Apollo* to 245 is its thematic similarity to the prologue.⁶⁵ But I hope to show in a forthcoming book that the *Aetia* prologue is not (as usually assumed) a separate poem prefixed to a hypothetical collected edition of Callimachus' works. It is what it appears to be, the prologue to the *Aetia* itself, an integral part of *Aetia* I–II as originally published *ca* 270. And if the prologue dates from *ca* 270, so too (it might be argued) does the *Hymn to Apollo*. There is certainly no other reason to assign it so late a date.

Second, it is generally agreed that Apollonius drew on Nymphis of Heraclea for his own account of that region in Book II.⁶⁶ The Apollonius scholia cite Nymphis often,⁶⁷ and on 2.729 directly claim that Apollonius took a detail from Book I of his *On Heraclea*.⁶⁸ According to Vian, this work “went down

⁶³ A convenient summary in Fraser I 627–32.

⁶⁴ Notably F. Vian, *Apollonios de Rhodes, Argonautiques* I (Paris 1974) xiii.

⁶⁵ Fraser I 652; cf. F. Williams, *Hymn to Apollo* (Oxford 1978) 2.

⁶⁶ See the full analysis of this section in Vian (*supra* n.64) 156–63.

⁶⁷ C. Wendell, *Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium Vetera* (Berlin 1935) 337 (index); the passages are all collected in *FGrHist* 432.

⁶⁸ Νύμφις ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ἡρακλείας ἀ΄ φησί· παρ' οὗ Ἀπολλώνιος ἔοικε ταῦτα μεταφέρειν: p.184.13 Wendel.

to 346.”⁶⁹ If this were so, the case would be proved. But it is not so. Nymphis wrote two books, a local history of Heraclea, and a multi-book history of the Successors of Alexander. It is the latter, not the former, that “goes down to Ptolemy III” (246–221).⁷⁰ Nymphis was an older contemporary of Apollonius, born not later than 310. His book on Heraclea might easily have been written as early as the 270s. Jacoby explicitly remarks that it could have been in Apollonius’ hands even if he wrote as early as *ca* 270.

Third, some scholars have been prepared to make Apollonius librarian of Alexandria in succession to Eratosthenes, early in the second century, preferring a demonstrably error-ridden *Suda* entry to the Oxyrhynchus librarian list.⁷¹ Most recent discussions devote much ingenuity to harmonizing our few reasonably hard data with the two “ancient” *Lives*, in particular with their story of the failure of the *Argonautica* when Apollonius recited it as a young man, his retreat to Rhodes and eventual triumphant return. Did the first recital take place before or after he became librarian? Did the Rhodian retreat happen before or after he became librarian?

There is no need to go into all the details, much less all the modern hypotheses, since major discrepancies and omissions in both *Lives* cast serious doubt on the entire story. *Vita I* in consecutive sentences claims both that Apollonius turned to poetry late in life and that he first recited the *Argonautica* “as an ephebe.” Both *Vitae* imply that, having gone to Rhodes, he stayed there. Depending on which of these versions we choose to accept, the *Lives* can be reconciled with both early and late chronologies.

But over and above these contradictions loom two other no less disturbing factors. First, the credit of both *Lives* is gravely undermined by a confusion between the author of the *Argonautica* and a later Apollonius of Rhodes, a colorful sophist from Alabanda who set up a highly successful school of

⁶⁹ Vian (*supra* n.64) 156 n.3; *cf.* xiii.

⁷⁰ All the details in Jacoby, *Komm. ad FGrHist* 432, pp.259ff; Fraser II 887 n.83.

⁷¹ “après la mort d’Ératosthène (195)”: Vian (*supra* n.64) x.

rhetoric at Rhodes *ca* 120 B.C.⁷² It is this that explains the claim in *Vita II*, absurd for the poet, that Apollonius “engaged in public affairs and taught rhetoric” in Rhodes.⁷³ Strabo uses the identical terminology of the later Apollonius.⁷⁴ Almost certainly the same confusion underlies the statement in *Vita I* that the poet “taught with great distinction (λαμπρῶς) there, and was found worthy of Rhodian citizenship and honour among them.”⁷⁵ The adverb suggests the display oratory of the sophist rather than the classroom of the grammarian. Since the sophist was a witty fellow with a taste for polemic, we cannot help but wonder how much else of his biography has helped to shape the *Lives* of the poet.

Second, there are three serious omissions in both *Lives*. First, neither of them so much as mentions the librarianship, which was after all the high point of Apollonius’ professional career. Meineke, Wendel, and others were mistaken to interpret the claim in *Vita II*, ὡς καὶ τῶν βιβλιοθηκῶν τοῦ Μουσείου ἀξιωθῆναι (p.2.13 W), as meaning “he was deemed worthy of the librarianship.” As Pfeiffer showed from a number of other passages in later writers,⁷⁶ βιβλιοθήκης ἀξιωθῆναι means “be deemed worthy of *inclusion in the library*”—referring (of course) to his poem. Not only would this be an entirely trivial point (works did not have to reach a certain standard to merit inclusion in the library). It would further underline the unhistorical identification of Apollonius with his *Argonautica* to the exclusion of any other aspect of his life and works. Contrary to what is often inferred from this passage, the *Lives*

⁷² W. Schmid, *RE* 2 (1895) 140.64f; G. D. Kellog, *AJP* 28 (1907) 301–10; Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 143 n.5, 266. He was also known as “Apollonius the Pansy” (ὁ μαλακός).

⁷³ παρέγενετο ἐν τῇ Ῥόδῳ κάκει ἐπολιτεύσατο καὶ σοφιστεύει ῥητορικοὺς λόγους; p.2.7f. That these words derive from a confusion with the sophist was spotted long ago (Schmid [*supra* n.72]; E. Maas, *Aratea* [Berlin 1892] 335), but has seldom been remarked in connection with the poet.

⁷⁴ Ποσειδώνιος δ’ ἐπολιτεύσατο μὲν ἐν Ῥόδῳ καὶ ἐσοφίστευεν, ἦ δ’ Ἀπαμῆνυς ἐκ τῆς Συρίας, καθάπερ καὶ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Μαλακὸς καὶ Μόλων· ἦσαν γὰρ Ἀλαβανδεῖς (Strab. 14.655). The two verbs are clearly meant to apply to Apollonius and Molon as well as Posidonius.

⁷⁵ p.2.1f; the latter phrase is repeated in *Vita II*, p.2.10f.

⁷⁶ Pfeiffer (*supra* n.72) 284f, citing three passages of Eusebius (*Hist.Eccl.* 3.9.2, 21.8.8; *Praep.Evang.* 8.1.8) and Aristeas *Epist* 9. Fraser rightly accepted this interpretation in his notes (II 478 n.131) but unfortunately followed Wendel in his text (I 331).

do *not* bring Apollonius back to Alexandria (though *Vita II* does have him buried beside Callimachus): he leaves Alexandria as a youth and spends the rest of his life in Rhodes. As far as the *Lives* are concerned, the question of his librarianship simply does not arise, and it is a fundamental error of method to try to fit it into their accounts.

Second, neither mentions that Apollonius wrote numerous other poems, doubtless spread out over a period of years. The *Lives* clearly imply that his entire career revolved round the early failure and ultimate success of the *Argonautica*. The truth is that fragments from works on the origins (κτίσεις) of Alexandria and Naucratis and an aetiological poem entitled *Canobus*⁷⁷ show that he wrote a number of poems in Egypt, just as fragments from similar works on Caunus and Cnidus⁷⁸ as well as Rhodes illustrate a similarly varied poetic career during the Rhodian period. In his own day, Apollonius' fame did *not* rest on his *Argonautica* alone, and the series of Egyptian poems lends no support to the claim of an early departure from Alexandria. These were mistakes only possible in a later age that knew only the *Argonautica*.

Third, the absence of any fixed points, whether names or dates, in either *Life*: there is no date of birth or death, no list of works; no Ptolemy is identified, whether as patron or pupil. *Vita I* mentions no kings at all, *Vita II* says only that "he lived in the days of the Ptolemies." Wendel emended ἐπὶ τῶν Πτολεμαίων to ἐπὶ τοῦ (τρίτου) Πτολεμαίου, "under the third Ptolemy." This would make good historical sense, and it is true, as Hunter remarks, that the reading of the manuscripts "is too obvious to need saying" (Hunter [*supra* n.78] 1 n.3). Nonetheless this vagueness is of a piece with the rest of the *Life*. By contrast, even the *Suda* biography, however inaccurately, names Euergetes, synchronizes Apollonius with three writers other than Callimachus, and specifies (wrongly, in the event)

⁷⁷ Fr.1ff Powell; cf. Maas (*supra* n.73) 359–69; D. A. van Krevelen, *RhM* 104 (1961) 128–31.

⁷⁸ Caunus and Cnidus are cities on the coast of Caria later incorporated into the Rhodian Peraea. Büchner's articles on Caunus and Cnidus in *RE* 11.1 (1921) 85–88, 914–21, give a good idea of the rich mythological traditions available for such poems; for Caunus see too F. Cassola, *PP* 12 [1957] 192–209; R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica* III (Cambridge 1989) 9–12; and above all now L. Robert, *Documents d'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1987) 487–531. For the extant fragments, Powell, *Coll. Alex.* pp.5ff.

that he succeeded Eratosthenes as librarian. As its format shows, the *Suda* entry recognizably derives, like most of its entries for men of letters, from the sixth-century biographical dictionary (*Onomatologos*) of Hesychius of Miletus.⁷⁹ The so-called "ancient" *Lives* do not. Unlike the *Suda* they lack even the standard classification of his works (ἐπῶν ποιητής). Their main purpose is to embellish a single anecdote unknown to the genuine biographical tradition (there is no hint in the *Suda* entry of the failure-exile-success story).

The *Lives* were put together, presumably in late antiquity, by someone without access to a work like Hesychius.⁸⁰ Unconcerned or unable to give a comprehensive account of Apollonius' multi-faceted life and works, his modest purpose was to explain two things that puzzled him: why, though born in Alexandria, Apollonius was known as the Rhodian;⁸¹ and why there were (as he thought) two editions of the *Argonautica*. This latter detail he had (of course) inferred from the so-called "proecdosis" several times quoted in those very scholia to which his *Life* served as an introduction. The failure-exile-success story provided a neat and colorful explanation of both puzzles.

Since the story was invented without reference to Apollonius' real career, it is not surprising that it cannot easily be fitted into it. The evidence of the minor poems suggests a longish spell in

⁷⁹ On which see Christ-Schmid-Stählin II.2⁶ (1924) 1039f; W. Spoerri, *Kl. Pauly* II (1967) 1122.

⁸⁰ Precisely because of their lack of serious content, I am reluctant to attribute the *Lives* to either of Apollonius' early imperial commentators, Theon and Lucillus Tarrhaeus (so C. Wendel, *Die Überlieferung der Scholien zu Apollonios von Rhodios* [AbhGöttingen (1932)] 113).

⁸¹ M. R. Lefkowitz (*Lives of the Greek Poets* [Baltimore 1981] 130) was wrong to conclude that Apollonius "came from Rhodes to begin with." That he was born an Alexandrian is documented by earlier and better sources than the *Lives* and the *Suda*; for example, the Oxyrhynchus list of librarians (*P.Oxy.* X 1241 II.1: Ἀλεξανδρεὺς ὁ καλούμενος Ῥόδιος) and Strabo (14.13.2 [655]: Διονύσιος δὲ ὁ Θράξ καὶ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ τοὺς Ἀργοναύτας ποιήσας, Ἀλεξανδρεῖς μὲν, ἐκαλοῦντο δὲ Ῥόδιοι). The statement that he was born in the Ptolemaic tribe of Alexandria (p.1.6) is perhaps the only persuasive circumstantial detail in *Vita I*. Ptolemais is one of the only three tribe names known for Ptolemaic Alexandria, otherwise attested by none other than Callimachus (*Anth.Pal.* 7.520; Fraser I 40, II 113 n.8). The tradition that he was from Naucratis is only mentioned in connection with his poem on the origins of that city (Powell fr.7=Ath. 283E; see H. Herter, in Bursian, *Jahresb.* 285 [1944–55] 222).

both Alexandria and Rhodes, with no indication which came first. But since he was born in Alexandria and supposedly a disciple of Callimachus, we might most naturally place the Alexandrian period first. The Oxyrhynchus list has now established that Apollonius was librarian before Eratosthenes, and his *Suda* entry suggests that Eratosthenes was appointed by Euergetes *ca* 245. The natural inference is (a) that Apollonius was librarian before then, presumably in the 260s and 250s; and (b) that this was his Alexandrian period. Whatever truth may lurk beneath the failure-exile-success story, it has surely been greatly exaggerated and should not be used to date the poem.⁸² For example, E.-R. Schwinge dismissed the possibility of an early date for the poem on the grounds that Apollonius could not have been appointed librarian after such a literary failure.⁸³ But the late date would have a consequence no less surprising: that so important a figure in the Alexandrian literary world as its librarian was driven out of town by one unsuccessful poem.

The "proecdosis" which is surely the basis for the entire story cannot possibly have been the text of that unsuccessful first recitation.⁸⁴ Apollonius would never have *published* a first draft that had met with the disastrous reception described in the *Lives*. Yet the "proecdosis" from which the scholia cite a number of passages was evidently still available for scholars to collate several centuries later.⁸⁵ Furthermore, on the evidence of these quotations, the "proecdosis" offered a text that differed only in minor details from the vulgate, as H. Fränkel has

⁸² It is unfortunate that we have no precise information on the dates of Apollonius' Rhodian period, since at some time between *ca* 262 and 246 Rhodes was at war with Philadelphus. For all that is known of this mysterious episode, R. M. Berthold, *Rhodes in the Hellenistic Age* (Ithaca 1984) 89–92.

⁸³ "Vor allem aber wäre Übertragung and Ausübung von Bibliothekariat und Erzieheramt nach öffentlichem Durchfall mit den Argonautika nicht denkbar": E. R. Schwinge, *Künstlichkeit von Kunst* (Munich 1986) 84.

⁸⁴ As rightly emphasized by Herter, *RE* Suppl. 13 (1973) 22.

⁸⁵ It was presumably the Augustan Theon or the late first-century Lucillus of Tarrha to whom this stratum of the extant scholia is to be attributed: Wendel (*supra* n.80) 105f; Vian (*supra* n.64) xlif.

emphasized.⁸⁶ It certainly lends no support to the hypothesis of a youthful work drastically rewritten.

The *Lives* are agreed that it was in Alexandria that Apollonius wrote the *Argonautica*, and there is really no good reason to doubt that the only edition we know of was published as early as the 260s. It should follow, then, that Apollonius drew on *Aetia* I–II (published *ca* 270) but not III–IV (not published till *ca* 246). For what it is worth, my own feeling is that the parallels cited from *Aetia* III–IV are less persuasive than those from I–II.⁸⁷

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⁸⁶ *Einleitung zur kritischen Ausgabe der Argonautica des Apollonios* (Göttingen 1964) 8f; cf. H. Erbse, *Gnomon* 88 (1966) 160; M. Haslam, *ICS* 3 (1978) 63f.

⁸⁷ I am grateful to Diana Delia and the editors for valuable comments on an earlier draft, and more recently to Debra Nails.