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'DEATH', DOXOGRAPHY, AND THE 'TERMERIAN EVIL' (PHILODEMUS, EPIGR. 27 PAGE = A.P. 11.30)*

The text of this poem, already corrupt in the Palatine, has had a turbulent history over the last two centuries. Here is Page's version, the translation in Gow–Page,¹ and my own somewhat expanded apparatus:

I who in time past was good for five or nine times, now, Aphrodite, hardly manage once from early night to sunrise. The thing itself, — already often only at half-strength, — is gradually dying. That's the last straw. Old age, old age, what will you do later when you come to me, if even now I am as languid as this.

In 1982 D. Sider responded to Gow–Page.² First, whereas the latter had said of τοῦ Τερμερίουν [κακόν] in line 4 ‘proverbially = “a great disaster”, “the last straw”’,³ Sider attempted to specify the exact sense, for which the ground had already been laid:⁴ ‘as Kaibel and others have recognized, Philodemus’ reference is to the Termeros who used to kill people by butting them with his head until he had his head broken by Theseus [in fact it is Heracles] (Plut. Thes. 11) … a Termerion kakon is the punishment that fits the crime, as is certainly the case in Philodemus where that which has done the butting [the phallus] has had its κεφαλή “die”.⁵’ We shall return to this explanation later. Sider’s second line of approach came from his belief (correct, I think) that Page’s ἡμιθαλές ‘cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged’.⁶ Gow–Page were chiefly troubled by the repetition: ‘ἡμιθανεῖς repeats both the wording and the sense of κατὰ βραχὺ θνησκεῖ much too closely; substitute the quite different ἡμιθαλές, “at half-strength”’ (cf. Heraclitus 7.465.2 = 1936, ἡμιθαλεῖς P: -θανεῖς P1), and the lines run well’.⁷ Sider did not agree, keeping ἡμιθανεῖς, but repunctuating the couplet:

οἴμοι καὶ τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ κατὰ βραχὺ, πολλάκις δ’ ἥδη ἡμιθανεῖς θνησκεῖ τοῦτο τὸ Τερμέριον.

* I thank my colleagues, Professors Albert Henrichs, Ian Rutherford, Calvert Watkins, and Mr Alex Sens, and my former colleague, Professor Hayden Pelliccia, for comments on earlier drafts. They are responsible neither for remaining errors nor for adherence to any specific interpretation here espoused.

⁴ E.g. by Kaibel, quoted by Gow–Page: ‘iam ego uere patior Termerium illud malum’. They did not quote him further, but should have: ‘Nam non quoduis malum est Termerium sed quod quis ea corporis parte patitur qua antea peccauerat’, Philodemi Gadarensis Epigrammata, Index Scholarum in Universitate Litteraria Gryphiswaldensi per semestre aestiuom anni 1885 a die 15 mens. April. habendarum (Greifswald, 1885), p. 22.
⁵ Sider, op. cit. (n. 2), 212–13, and 213 n. 15 for parallels for a play on κεφαλῆ/φαλλός.
⁶ Sider, op. cit. (n. 2), 212.
⁷ Gow–Page, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 399. At A.P. 7.465.2 there is a clear vegetative metaphor at work, which is not the case here.
Now his paraphrase of the first four lines: ‘What he used to do up to nine times before he now does only once, with difficulty (μόλις); and the thing itself, the act from start to finish, lasts but a short time (κατὰ βραχύ); and already half-dead his member often dies altogether.’

This seems to me to complicate things even further for at least two reasons: (1) in normal usage κατὰ βραχύ means ‘gradually’, ‘little by little’, even ‘slowly’ – virtually the opposite of ‘a short time’; and this sense ‘gradually’ would in any case already be represented by the words μόλις ἐκ πρώτης νυκτὸς ἐξ ἡδῶν in line 2, which strongly suggests that ‘the act from start to finish’ now takes all night; (2) πολλάκις does not easily qualify θυγίσκει from which it is separated by both ἔδη and ήμιθανές. Put another way, πολλάκις δ’ ἔδη surely goes together most naturally as an adverbial cluster. So far, then, we have two possibilities, neither entirely satisfactory, for the second couplet: a stop after θυγίσκει with πολλάκις ... ήμιθανές parenthetical, or stops after βραχύ and θυγίσκει.

There is a further problem: what is a Τερμέριον κακὸν? Is it, as Sider takes it, the same as a Τερμέριος τίς? ‘Termerian trouble’ seems in fact to refer primarily to trouble not for Termerus, but for the people Termerus butted. Plutarch, Thes. 11 needs to be quoted in its full context. The subject is Theseus:

ἐν δὲ Ἑλευσίνι Κερκύνα τὸν ἔξ Ἀρκαδίας καταπαλαίσας, ἀνείλε καὶ μικρὸν προελθὼν Δαμαστὴν ἐν Ἑρνεοῦ τὸν Προκρούσην, ἀναγκάσας αὐτὸν ἀποσοῦν τοῖς κλυτήρισι ὁπερ τοὺς ἔξους ἐκείνους ἐπραττέ δὲ ταῦτα μιμούμενος τὸν Ἡρακλέα, καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνου ὡς ἐπιβουλευόμενο τρόπος ἀμιμούμενος τοὺς προκριχειρώντας, ἐθναί τοὺς Βουκίας καὶ κατεπάλασε τὸν Ἀντίοχο καὶ τὸν Κάκινον κατεμομοῦσας καὶ τὸν Τέρμερον συρρῆθα τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀπέκτεινεν. ἄφ’ ὑπ’ ὅλα καὶ τὸ Τερμέριον [sic] κακὸν ὁμοιαθῆσαι λέγουσι παίαι γὰρ, ἃς ἔμεθε, τὴν κεφαλὴν τοὺς εὐνυχανόντας οἱ Τέρμερος ἀπάλυκν. οὕτω δὴ καὶ θηρεῖς κολάζων τοῖς πονηροῖς ἐπεχζάθη, ὡς μὲν ἠβαίνοντο τοῖς ἄλλοις, ὅπ’ ἐκείνου καταβιαζόμενοι, ἐν δὲ τοῖς τρόποις τῆς ἀντίων ἀδίκων τὰ δίκαια πάσχοντα.

The entire paragraph draws a parallel between Theseus and Heracles, specifically in their common mode of punishing wrongdoers with the same fate those wrongdoers had inflicted on others – a system of punishment elsewhere known as Νεοπτολέμεοι τίσις.

The expression, which does not appear in Plutarch, is explained and defined aetiologycally by Pausanias at 4.17.4: it was the fate of Neoptolemus, after killing Priam on the altar of Zeus Herkeios at Troy, to be slain himself by the altar of Apollo in Delphi. He concludes: καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦτον τὸ παθεῖν ὁποῖον τις καὶ ἔδρασε Νεοπτολέμεως τίσιν ὀνομάζουσιν. It is hard to say whether ἀπὸ τοῦτον is temporal (‘thenceforward’ – so the Loeb), temporal/causal (‘from this occurrence’), or even refers to Neoptolemus himself (‘they name it after him’). In fact, there may be more than one nuance to the words. I am evading the very difficult issue concerning competing versions and details of this myth, within the Pindaric corpus and elsewhere, since it

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8 Sider, op. cit. (n. 2), 212.
9 Cf. Thuc. 1.64.2; 4.96.4; 7.79.5; Anaxagoras fr. 33 Diels-Kranz; Aristot. H.A. 692b15; at Prot. 329b4, Gorg. 449b8, and elsewhere. Plato uses it to describe the gradual progress of Platonic dialectic. The Ibycus (which produced the above examples) reveals that the phrase, when the cluster occurs (forming a single unit) with a post-positive particle, that particle always comes between the two adverbs (as here), and is never postponed to follow ἔδη; so πολλάκις μὲν ἔδη at Plato, Gorg. 508d5; Thuc. 3.37.1; Men. Perik. 267; Galen, De salute tuenda 6.190; πολλάκις δὲ ἔδη at Theophr. Hist. Plant. 8.10.3; Arrian, Cyn. 16.3.1; Oppian, Halieut. 3.510; πολλάκις γὰρ ἔδη at Gorgias 7.22 (Diels-Kranz); Plato, Gorg. 456b1; Dio Chrys. Orat. 15.12; Galen, de usu partium 3.157, 359, 900 (in each of these categories I have omitted further examples from later Greek).

10 The Ibycus supports this, showing πολλάκις ἔδη frequently in Theognis, Euripides, Thucydides, Plato, Theophrastus, Menander, in the orators, and constantly in later Greek. When the cluster occurs (forming a single unit) with a post-positive particle, that particle always comes between the two adverbs (as here), and is never postponed to follow ἔδη; so πολλάκις μὲν ἔδη at Plato, Gorg. 508d5; Thuc. 3.37.1; Men. Perik. 267; Galen, De salute tuenda 6.190; πολλάκις δὲ ἔδη at Theophr. Hist. Plant. 8.10.3; Arrian, Cyn. 16.3.1; Oppian, Halieut. 3.510; πολλάκις γὰρ ἔδη at Gorgias 7.22 (Diels-Kranz); Plato, Gorg. 456b1; Dio Chrys. Orat. 15.12; Galen, de usu partium 3.157, 359, 900 (in each of these categories I have omitted further examples from later Greek).

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Is a ‘Termereian evil, or trouble’ the same as a ‘Neoptolemeian punishment’; for that is more or less what it has been taken by critics of Philodemus (who may well have had this latter proverb in mind as they dealt with τούτο τὸ Τερμέρον?). I think it is not, and although the inference may proceed from Plut. Thes. 11, it is not the easier one. Let us look at the temporal and logical sequence in Plutarch: Theseus defeated Cercyon and Damastes (Procrustes), in which actions he imitated Heracles, for Heracles had used the methods of wrongdoers against the wrongdoers themselves, sacrificing Busiris, wrestling with Antaeus, fighting Cycnus in single combat, and breaking Termerus’ head. Plutarch proceeds with the aetiology of Termereian trouble, in which Heracles has no part: it is from Termerus (ἀδ’ αὐτοῦ) that Termereian trouble is named; for (γάρ) it seems he killed those he met by butting them with his head. Like Heracles, then (οὖτο δὴ καί), Theseus went about punishing wrongdoers with the same fate they meted out to others. The aition on Termerus attaches most easily to the account of how Termerus killed people, while the final sentence relating the actions of Heracles to those of Theseus brings the focus back to the latter and concludes the entire chapter. But in Philodemus’ epigram, from the words τὸν τὸ Τερμέρον, Kaibel and Sider first extract παζχω τὸ ‘Τερμέρεινον κακὸν’ (whose natural meaning would be ‘I suffer a great evil [such as being butted to death]’), and must then supply the sense παζχω τὴν ‘Τερμέρεινον τίνων’ (= ‘punishment for the “butter”’).

If you look up Τερμέρον in LSJ you will find first a sense ostensibly derived from Plutarch, Thes. 11 (‘Τερμέρειον or Τερμέρον κακόν, τό, prov., a misfortune one brings on oneself’), and second the following: ‘τὸ τ. = membrum uirile, dub. in A.P. 11.30 (Phld.).’ This second gloss is incomprehensible to a reader of any edition, apparatus, translation or discussion of the epigram from this century – that is from Sider (1982), Page (1975), Aubreton (1972), Gow-Page (1968), Becky (1958), or Paton (1918). But here is the second distich in the 1872 edition of F. Dübner:

οἶμοι καὶ τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ καταβραχύν̣ πολλάκις δ’ ἡδη
ημιθανές θυσίακει τοῦτο τὸ τερμέρον.

A third possibility, then: a stop after κατὰ βραχύ’ but none after θυσίακει: ‘hei mihi! et hunc [sc. coitum] breuem: saepius uero jam | semimortuum prorsus – moritur hoc malum’. In this Dübner was accepting Pauw’s Τερμέρον ([sc.] κακόν) and following Jacobs’ supplement τοῦτον (a)ῦτο: 

And stops are likewise present after κατὰ βραχύ


Most other references to Termerus or ‘Termarian trouble’ (Philippus of Theangela FGrHist 741 F 3 ap. Schol. Eur. Rhes. 509; Jul. Or. 7.210d; Lucian, Lex. 11; Suidas s.v. Τερμέρα κακά: Paroem. Graec. i.162, ii.215) give no explanation, but in those instances which deal with the actual κακά, we are dealing with huge (though generally unspecified) problems or troubles, not punishments. For some other late references, not very relevant to the present discussion, see G. Türk, ‘Termeros’, RE 5A (1934), 731.

but absent after ἰθῆγακεί in the other earlier editions, of Tauchnitz (1829), and Brunck (1772–6). What is astonishing is that this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century consensus is not preserved in the notes or apparatus critici of any subsequent edition or commentary, only in LSJ9, where it is fossilized in the form of a gloss which is incomprehensible without a research library.

In 1885 there appeared Georg Kaibel’s edition and commentary of the epigrams of Philodemus; he printed a second distich which is in essence that inherited by Page:

οἷμοι καὶ ποτε τοῦτο κατὰ βραχύ (πολλάκι ποτὲ ἡδή ἰθῆγακεί: τοῦτο τὸ τερμέριον.

‘Alas and this one (often already half-dead) is gradually dying. I am suffering the Termerian ill.’ The τοῦτο of line 3 now refers to the penis, rather than the act, while that in line 4 (together with τὸ τερμέριον) is part of a separate exclamation (sc. νῦν πῶχω), and refers to the poet’s actual condition.

Why the change, and what new problems does it create? Kaibel came up with three structural or contextual objections to Jacobs’ and Dübner’s punctuation and restoration: (1) the τοῦτο of 2 is already qualified by μόλις and further qualification (κατὰ βραχύ) is impossible; (2) κατὰ βραχύ means ‘gradually’ (paullatim), not ‘soon’ or ‘quickly’; (3) the first distich constitutes a separate thought to which nothing further can be added. Each of these points is well-taken, and two have already been shown to work against Sider’s repunctuation, as well as that of Jacobs and Dübner.

In dealing with the end of the couplet, Kaibel proceeded to compare Ovid, Amores 3.7, an amusing expansion of Philodemus’ epigram, which dwells at great length on the poet’s inability to perform. Much of the humour of Ovid’s poem derives from the fact that it takes him 84 lines to tell us that nothing happened, and he does so fairly explicitly, referring more than once to the offender: 13 ‘mea membra’; 65 ‘nostra membra’; 69 ‘quin istic pudibunda iaces, pars pessima nostri’. But Kaibel was concerned to keep such explicitness to a minimum. In rejecting Brunck’s τοῦτο τὸ τερμόνιον and Dübner’s tentative suggestion τοῦθ’ ἃτι περ μὸριον he notes: ‘non solum brevior [sc. quam Ovidius], ut par est, sed uerecundior etiam longe Philodemus, ut u. 1. 2 doceb erubum omissum. Cauebimus igitur ne spurca uocabula inferamus secundo disticho corrupto et impedito’; and a little later: ‘procul habendi ei sunt qui proprium membr nomen restituebant’. He then distinguishes between Strato, τοῦτο κατὰ βραχύ. And in his edition of 1794 (Anthologia Graeca sive Poetarum Graecorum Lusus ex recensione Brunckii, i [Leipzig, 1794], p. 73), as the title suggests, he had printed the text of Brunck, who accepted Reiske’s φθίνει μοι καὶ τοῦτο. 19

Brunck, however (Analec ta Veterum Poetarum Graecorum, ii [Strasbourg, 1773], p. 86), printed φθίνει μοι καὶ τοῦτο κατὰ βραχύ. My colleague, Ian Rutherford, without awareness of these editions, had also thought τοῦτο τὸ τερμέριον might be the subject of θηγάκει.

It was introduced in the sixth edition of 1869; Kaibel’s edition, or more likely Paton’s Loeb of 1918, led to the addition of ‘dub.’ after ‘membrum uirile’ in LSJ9 (1940).


19 Ovid’s source is unmistakeable: 17–18 (‘qua mihi uentura est, siquidem uentura, senectus, cum desit numeris ipa iuuenta suis?’) is virtually a translation of Philodemus’ third distich, which the first and second are represented respectively by 23–6 (‘at nuper bis flaua Chloide, ter candida Pitho, I ter Libas officio continuata meo est; I exigere a nobis angusta nocte Corinnam, I me memini numeros sustinuisse nouem’) and 65–6 (‘nostra tamen iacuere uelut praemortua membra I turpiter hesterna languidiora rosa’). Cf. also Gow–Page ii, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 398–9.


Martial, and the Priapic poets on the one hand (who do name the penis) and on the other 'omnes elegantioris judicii poetae' such as Philodemus, who must not be charged with actually doing so. He then enlists Pauw: 'has igitur sordes prudenter euitauit, qui prouerbii memor scripsit τοῦτο τὸ τερμέριον'. What Pauw meant, as is clear from the translation of Dübner, and from Kaibel’s discussion, is that the Termerian evil (i.e. the ‘penis’) is ‘dying’, but as Kaibel noted ‘potuit fortasse poeta suam calamitatem Τερμέριον κακὸν appellare, non potuit membrum ipsum’. Hence his punctuation after θηνισσει, which removes any reference to the penis other than the vague τοῦτο in line 3. And his treatment has so convinced other scholars that the earlier punctuation and meaning was expunged from the record.

There are, I think, at least two immediate problems with this reconstruction: (1) The τοῦτο in line 3 and that in line 4 have different referents – as they do in all the other interpretations. This is not an overwhelming obstacle, but it seems rather wanting in an epigrammatist of Philodemus’ elegance. (2) More telling, other usage in the Anthology strongly militates against taking τοῦτο τὸ τερμέριον as syntactically independent from what precedes. In poets both before and after Philodemus, when we find τοῦτο τὸ + noun or adjective, beginning at the medial caesura of the pentameter, the phrase always functions as either subject or object of an expressed preceding verb:

In five of these cases we see not only this general syntactical parallelism, but also rhythmical or prosodic parallelism, as the pattern of choriambic clausulae suggests what is a virtually ‘formulaic’ system: μαρμάρινον / παιδάριον / λειπόμενον / δαιμόνιον / δωδέκατον. Any critic who approaches τοῦτο τὸ + noun or adjective, beginning at the medial caesura of the hexameter, as the subject of a following EXEt.

22 For support he refers to various epigrams where there is no actual word for ‘penis’: A.P. 12.216 (Strato) where it is called ὁμήρου (with πόσθυ or σαθυ understood); 12.232 (Scythinus) ὁδήγησε τῆς ἱδρύμαστας, ἰδρύμαστα (with εὐσέβεια for ἵπποι, and βάπτωσι for τοῦτο). It looks as if we could be dealing even with two genuine but slightly different epigrams, and should not choose between the two.

23 No editor or commentator tells where Pauw published his emendation, and I have simply been unable to find the reference.

24 The instances were provided by the Ibycus. In two cases (A.P. 9.618.2, 680.4) we find τοῦτο τὸ λουτρών, also beginning at the medical caesura of the hexameter, as the subject of a following ἔχει.

25 For support he refers to various epigrams where there is no actual word for ‘penis’: A.P. 12.216 (Strato) where it is called ὁμήρου (with πόσθυ or σαθυ understood); 12.232 (Scythinus) ὁδήγησε τῆς ἱδρύμαστας, ἰδρύμαστα (with εὐσέβεια for ἵπποι, and βάπτωσι for τοῦτο). It looks as if we could be dealing even with two genuine but slightly different epigrams, and should not choose between the two.

26 The poem is assigned to Plato by Diogenes Laertius (3.33), while the Palatine has the lemma Μουσικῶν, the Planudean Μουσικῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος. Its relationship to Philodemus is uncertain: cf. R. Reitzenstein, Epigram und Skolion (Giessen, 1893), p. 182 ‘seinem Charakter nach könnte es sehr wohl erst um Beginn der Kaiserzeit oder kurz vorher entstanden sein’; id., ‘Platos Epigramme’, NGG (Berlin, 1921), p. 54.

27 This is parallel in the rhythm it sets up, if not exactly in syntax, since δωδέκατον is in fact a predicate adjective.
Why must we assume, as all editors who print *Τερμέριον* do, that *κακόν* is to be understood with it? Philodemus' use of the adjective is the first attested, and although the proverb presumably predates Plutarch, it need not follow that every use of the adjective specifically presupposes the actual proverb. Why should we not take *τοῦτο τὸ Τερμέριον* as meaning (as it does most naturally) 'this Termerian one', 'this thing that exhibits the qualities of Termerus'. What is distinctive about Termerus, at least in the most extensive surviving treatment of the myth in Plut. *Thes*. 11, is his method of killing, by butting. A 'Termerian thing', then, will be a 'butter', a penis, which can now be allowed to serve as the subject of *θυμίσκει*. This is in line with the formulaic parallels quoted above, and also removes the problem regarding the repetition of *τοῦτο*. Here is a new version, with Beckby's *μοι* (Gow–Page: 'deserves consideration') supplementing line 3:

{oιμοὶ μοι} καὶ τοῦτο κατὰ βραχύ (πολλακὶ δ' ἡδῆς

*θυμίσκει* τοῦτο τὸ Τερμέριον.

'Ah me, and this thing gradually (often already

half-dead) is dying on me – this Termerian thing.

The couplet now consists (for the first time in its editorial history) of a single sentence, as do the one preceding and the one following, and (also for the first time) the second *τοῦτο* merely resumes the first, specifying its meaning as an almost embarrassed postscript. We find a more or less parallel phenomenon at Theoc. *A.P.* 6.338.1–2:

*Ὑμῖν τοῦτο, θεία, κεχαριμένον ἄνθετο πάσαις | τῶγαλμά Ξενοκλῆς, τοῦτο τὸ μαρμάρινον, | μουσικός. Although the first *τοῦτο* here modifies *τῶγαλμα*, it is similarly resumed (as object) by the *τοῦτο* τό phrase.

We are not quite done with *τὸ Τερμέριον*. It is, I think, possible to view it not just as a nominal adjective, but rather as an actual diminutive noun – 'little butter'.

Such a diminutive of a proper name would in origin be of the hypocoristic type suggesting endearment and would be parallel with terms of address such as *Γλυκέρα* from *Γλυκέρα*, which are formed on an *ad libitum* basis where the context calls for them.

There are six other instances just in Philodemus' epigrams (8.1 *Φιλαίνει*, 9.3 *Καλλιστίων*, 14.6 *Σανθάριον* [from *Σανθώ*], 16.1 *Θέρμιον*, 16.5 *Δημάριον* [from *Δημιό*, 16.1], 26.2 *Τρυγοίνον*). Indeed, Philodemus may even have gained some notoriety for his use of these diminutives.

We could also see in *τὸ Τερμέριον* an appropriate diminutive of the deteriorative type whose real diminutive force

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30 So Aristoph. *Ach.* 404–5 *Εὐριστής, Εὐριστίδιος, ἤπακουον*. Philostratus (*Epist. Erot.* 38) refers to the well-known *Γλυκέρα* of Menander as *Γλυκέρα*, and at *Misog.* fr. 280 KÖ. Bentley suggested *χαῖρ᾽ ὃ Γλυκέρα* where Priscian (18.251) has unmetrical *χαῖρ᾽ γλύκερα*. Meineke and Körte, however, accept Porson's *ὁ χαῖρε, Γλύκερα*. On this type of diminutive, cf. Petersen, op. cit. (n. 29), p. 175. There is clearly flexibility in the formation of these diminutives which, given their intensely colloquial nature, must have been far more numerous than our surviving texts can indicate. Philodemus may even have formed it (without strict linguistic accuracy) after, e.g., *Τιμάριον* (Meleager, *Epierr* 59–62 Page), or *παιδάριον*, which occurs at [Plato] *A.P.* 9.39.4 in the same position, and with *τοῦτο τὸ* (for the chronological issue, see above, p. 134).

31 That is, if we accept, as many do, the suggestion of G. Friedrich concerning the 'Socration' addressed in Cat. 47 (Catulli *Veronensis Liber* [Leipzig and Berlin, 1908], p. 228): 'Wir haben nach dem Wortlaut unseres Gedichtes keinen Grund, uns den Socratation anders vorzustellen als den Philodemus von Gadara, der auch bei Piso in Macedonien war, *Gracius facilis et valde venustus* (Cic. in Pis. 70). If this is so, then the name will have perhaps been for Catullus and his group a fine coterie nickname: 'Little Socrates who was fond of nouns in -tov'.
(reflecting the ultimate fate of the mythical Termerus) aptly describes the present condition of the poet. Now with the possible exception of ῥηγώνιον, the identity of Philodemus’ -τον characters is female, but that is no obstacle: first, that is often the gender of such words (cf. A. P. 12.216.1 ὀρή [sc. ἡνιστή, ἡγαθή]; Lat. mentula, etc.), and second, such a transformation suits the reduced condition of the ‘butter’: what once was a Termerus is now a Termerion. Here we may invoke a precise parallel from TSchol. II. 2.235, which characterizes Thersites’ taunting of the Greeks (‘᾿Αχιάδες, οὐκέτ’ ᾿Αχιαῖοι’: ‘ᾲχιάδες: παρομοιασία, οία “οὕ Φίλιππος, ἀλλὰ Φιλίππων κεκράτηκεν δις Ἂδηλαδος.”’

To return to the text of Epigr. 27, what are we to say of the repetition in ῥήμαθας θνησκεῖ to which Page (and others before him) objected? It will become unobjectionable if it does not constitute a real repetition, that is if the type of ‘death’ in ῥήμαθας is distinct from that in θνησκεῖ.36 There are two possibilities: (1) the ‘frequent half-death’ refers to the flaccidity which occurs in the course of the one all-night event. This is then succeeded by the actual death of impotence; but better, I think, (2) ῥήμαθας belongs to the vigorous stage, for this is the post-coital ‘half-death’ that already used to occur often – five to nine times a night, to be followed by four to eight resurrections. Hence πολλάκις δ’ ἡμῆν which far from being mere filler now strengthens the contrast between the first and second couplets: the poet’s temporary ‘half-death’ is a very different one from the progressive death of impotence which the poem laments.37

32 Given the nature of Greek society, we will not often find diminutives for ‘penis’; exceptions are found at Aristoph. Thesm. 254, 515 πόσθιον (where the actual diminutive force is also felt), and Clouds 197 πραγμάτων (where the diminutive is perhaps more affectionate, ‘my little thing’); on these see J. J. Henderson, The Maculate Muse (New Haven and London, 1975), pp. 109, 116. Those who so wish will add to these two ληκίθων, for the controversy on which see most recently and conveniently (with further bibliography) J. J. Henderson, ‘Κοδάριον: a Reply’, Mnemosyne 27 (1974), 293–5, and R. J. Penella, ‘Κοδάριον: a Comment’, Mnemosyne 27 (1974), 295–7. We could add πορτήνov (in Latin perhaps = ‘particula’, for which see Adams, op. cit. (n. 20), p. 45), which is properly if not effectively a diminutive, and Latin ‘mentula’ is also worth mentioning.

33 Trygonion is an interesting name, perhaps related to our subject. It means ‘little dove’ and has erotic associations: Epigr. 26 Page is a difficult poem, but Gow–Page accept Paton’s view (rendered sensible by his emendation of ἁφή γυναικῶν to ἡμιγυναικῶν [another ἡμι- compound] in line 5) that is an epitaph for his Trygonion, an emasculated priest of Cybele (Gallus) who, when he was ‘alive’, ‘alone among the effeminates adored the Cyprian’s rites and took to the seductions of a Lais’ (trans. Gow–Page). Are we dealing with a ‘dove’ that has become reduced in the same way as Termerion in Epigr. 27? For columba = ‘penis’, cf. G. Giangrande ap. P. Howell, A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial (London, 1980), pp. 122–3; Y. Nadeau, ‘Catullus’ Sparrow, Martial, Juvenal and Ovid’, Latomus 43 (1984), p. 862; R. F. Thomas, ‘Sparrows, Hares and Doves: “Source Criticism” and the limits of plurality’ (forthcoming issue of Helios on Catullian criticism).

34 In the name Mentula in Catullus 94, 105, 114 and 115, we perhaps have an inverted parallel for Termerion.

35 Virgil’s reworking of the Homeric lines is tantalizing: Numanus Remulus’ taunt of the Trojans at Aen. 9.617 (‘ο uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges’) is set in the context of reminiscence of Cat. 63 and its treatment of the emasculation of Attis; cf. 617–18 ‘ίτε per alta | Dindyma’ etc.

36 On the artistic desirability of such distinct repetition, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey on Horace’s ‘rura...rura’ (Odes 4.5.17–18) in Profile of Horace (London, 1982), pp. 137–8.

37 In other poems treating impotence as the death of the penis, the death has actually occurred: Scythinus, A. P. 12.232 (νεκρῶν ἄπεκρεμάσθο); Automated, A. P. 11.29.3–4 (τι πρίν ακαμήτης | ζώσα, νεκρὰ μηρῶν πάσα δεδεκέν ἐσο;); here cf. the proximity of the language to that of Philodemus (ὁ πρίν / ἴτι πρίν) – and the two epigrams are juxtaposed in the Anthology (11.29–30). For these, and for Latin parallels, including Ovid, Am. 3.7.65 ‘praemortua membra’ (above, n. 19), see G. Giangrande, ‘Catullus’ Lyrics on the Passing’, Mus. Phil. Lond. 1 (1975),
There is no surviving instance of ἡμιθαναῖς with this precise force, but that is not very surprising given the subject. We have already cited Ov. Am. 3.7.65, from a poem acknowledged as influenced by Philodemus 27: ‘nostra tamen iacuere uelut praemortua membra’ (see above, p. 133). This clearly responds to lines 3–4 of the Greek (and ‘praemortua’ refers to premature impotence), but it also looks to a prior Latin tradition, which is conflated with the ultimate Hellenistic model. I have in mind Catullus 50.14–16, where the poet uses erotic language (but not the language of impotence) to describe the effect on him of Calvus’ poetry: ‘at defessa labore membra postquam | semimortua lectulo iacebant, | hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci’. ‘Semimortuus’ is first found here and is surprisingly rare.37 Did Catullus coin or use it after Philodemus’ use of ἡμιθαναῖς? If so, both could refer to post-coital exhaustion, real for Philodemus, figurative for Catullus.38 Although it cannot be known beyond doubt whether Catullus had access to Philodemus’ poetry, it is assumed by many that Poem 32.7–8 (‘sed domi maneas paresque nobis | nouem continuas fututiones’) may refer to this same Epigram 27 of Philodemus (cf. 1 εἰνέα).39

I conclude by representing the temporal scope of the epigram with reference to past, present and future in the following version, which reflects the epigram’s careful play with time, and its juxtaposing of past vigour (1–2) and present dysfunction (3–4), with the latter anticipating the permanent impotence of old age (5–6):

I who in time past was good for five or nine times, now, Aphrodite, hardly manage once from early night to sunrise. Ah me, and this thing gradually (often already half-dead) is dying on me – this little ‘Termerus’. Old age, old age, what will be left for you to do later if you arrive, when already now we are as languid as this?

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37 OLD s.v. otherwise has only Sen. Con. 1.7.9; Apul. Met. 6.26, and the Ibycus adds only a second instance from Apuleius, Met. 1.14.6.

38 For Catullus’ clear use of erotic language in Poem 50 (whether metaphorical or otherwise matters not for the present purposes), see most recently D. L. Burgess, ‘Catullus c. 50: the Exchange of Poetry’, AJP 107 (1986), 576–86.

39 Cf. W. Kroll, C. Valerius Catullus (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 60, where the connection to Ovid, Am. 3.7 is also made. I will perhaps be forgiven a sortée into the realm of the biographical fallacy if I note that Epigr. 27 is likely to have a lower terminus of c. 60 b.c. (since Philodemus, born c. 110, presents himself as not yet old; cf. 5–6), while Catullus’ poetic production (even if Lesbia is Clodia Metelli and Poem 83 therefore predates the death of Metellus in 59) is confined to the decade of the 50s. From In Pis. 68–72 it is clear that Philodemus had produced a considerable corpus of epigrams by the year 55.