

GIANFRANCO AGOSTI – ATHANASSIOS VERGADOS

Introduction

In recent years etymology and etymological wordplay in Greek and Latin literature has experienced a renewed interest. Several important books and articles have been published on this topic, exploring the presence of etymology in different literary genres and analyzing the engagement with the ‘true’ meaning of words and names by ancient authors. The organizers have been working for many years on etymology in archaic Greek literature, especially in Hesiod, and on etymological wordplays in late antique literature and epigraphy. Following this shared interest, they decided to organize a workshop on etymology and literary culture from the archaic age to late antiquity. The papers now gathered in this volume address a wide range of authors and genres, from early Greece to the Roman empire and the late antique/early Byzantine world. While a collection of essays such as this cannot exhaust the topic, we hope to have shown how vital it is to pay attention to the etymological practices inherent to Greco-Roman literature and to stimulate further research on this topic.

The collection opens with an article on Hesiod’s *Theogony*. **Athanassios Vergados** revisits the section on monsters, creatures that depart from the usual anthropomorphic presentation of the gods and pose a double challenge: a political because they seek to undermine Zeus’s organisation of the cosmos and a cognitive because language, as it turns out, is unable to grasp and express monstrosity adequately. While the first monstrous characters to appear in the *Theogony*, the Cyclopes, are given an etymologically ‘correct’ collective name that reflects the most prominent characteristic, the Hundred-Handers are ‘not to be named’. In the section of monsters proper (270-336) etymological correctness decreases, with some names only partially capturing what is essential about these creatures, and some characters receiving generic names or no name at all. Finally, the narrative on Typhoeus misses an obvious opportunity for etymology, while it confounds terms for different types of voice, thus mirroring the monster’s appearance. After Zeus’s dispatching Typhoeus, however, etymological explanation returns. In her contribution **Ilaria Andolfi** explores etymology in the context of philosophical views on language, especially those of the Stoics and the Epicureans as well as the theory of the πάθη, before zooming in on early Greek mythography and genealogy where etymology was used to validate a particular account against several competing ones, a practice that is attested also in later mythographic sources (e.g., Palaephatus, Heraclitus, Cornutus). It is particularly interesting that these authors reveal

an awareness of language change over time and its effect on the form of words. This approach is detected in two fragments of Andron of Teos (*FGrHist* 802F3) and Andron of Halicarnassus (fr. 8 *EGM*), both of which Andolfi argues should be attributed to Andron of Teos, where etymologies κατὰ φθοράν are proposed. Names, it turns out, can convey covert knowledge about a place or personality, which when uncovered enables us to unravel a compelling narrative about them. **Michael Paschalis** examines the etymology of the proper name Orestes in the *Cratylus* and in Greek tragedy and demonstrates how attention to semantic clusters is essential for detecting the implicit, context-specific etymologies (e.g., at *Pi. N. X* 60-70). In the *Cratylus*, where Orestes means ‘Mountain-Man’ (< ὄρος), the name is embedded in the genealogy of the Pelopids. Paschalis detects two groups of etymologies in tragedy. The matricide plays link the name with ὄρα̃ν (‘to see’) and words that belong to the semantic field of vision and light, especially in the climax of the recognition scene. In Euripides’ *Orestes*, however, Ὀρέστης is associated with terms pointing to ‘mountain’ or ‘wildness’ (ὄρος, ἄγριος, τὸ θηριῶδες), which thus can be seen to function as a poetic antecedent of the etymology presented in the *Cratylus*.

Greek epigram is a genre particularly fond of etymology, as the following articles demonstrate. **Lucia Floridi** investigates (par-)etymological wordplay on proper names in epigram and what they can reveal about the poets’ re-working their epigrams. By exploring poems which appear in different form, with proper names varied, within the *Greek Anthology* (or in the *Greek Anthology* and on papyrus) Floridi demonstrates that these epigrams may have been reused by their poets in a new context and that proper names were substituted not due to palaeographic error but in order to increase the efficacy of the poetic message. **Arianna Gullo**, on the other hand, explores etymological phenomena in a selection of funerary epigrams from Book VII of the *Greek Anthology*. These epigrams exhibit a profound interest in etymological puns and wordplays, which are frequently made to fit the context and lend an erudite tone to the epigram, often operating in clusters or networks of assonance, repetition, and/or engaging creatively with the image that may accompany the funerary epigram. Several cases illustrate engagement with Homeric philology, especially debates on the meaning of a rare Homeric word, with the epigrammatist making choices that reflect his position in the matter.

The following two contributions address topics in Latin literature. **Ioannis Ziogas** focuses on the interplay between etymology and law: both linguists and jurists share the concept of *ratio* (‘reasoning’) that indicates the rationale or the principles that determine juristic or linguistic realities, and the legal expert’s *doctrina* parallels that of the poet. Etymology and legal reasoning are based on language, an idea that can be traced back to Plato’s labelling the name-giver as νομοθέτης in the *Cratylus*.

Roman juristic writing shows a profound interest in etymology, and it is the merit of Ziogas' paper that it shifts attention to etymology in Roman jurisprudence, bridging institutional divides and paying attention to the social and cultural realities in which Roman law, along with literature and scholarship, thrived. Examples include Antistius Labeo who just like Nigidius Figulus was interested in the origins of words as a way to reveal the origins (*i.e.* the true nature) of law: positing a natural link between names and things enhances the authority of the law. This interplay between law and etymology is not present in legal sources alone but is reflected in literature as well. **Robert Maltby** demonstrates how attention to etymology can illuminate questions of authorship and structure of a poetry book. In particular, the author of the *Appendix Tibulliana* (*AT*) uses etymology of proper names and common nouns in a way that is reminiscent of the use of etymology in the great elegists of the past, especially Tibullus, and other poets of the golden era. The poet's etymological wordplays in the *AT* that have parallels in Tibullus, and what is more, they are found throughout the *AT*, which supports the thesis of a unified composition. Personal names (Lygdamus, Neaera, Cerinthus) recall etymologically charged names used in earlier elegists, as well as pointing, through literary associations, to earlier poets and thus lend depth to this unified composition.

The next two papers focus on Neoplatonism. **Robbert van den Berg** examines the term γλίσχρος ('sticky') that Platonists applied to the etymologies proposed by Stoics. This adjective derives from the *Cratylus* and helps establish a distinction between correct (Platonist) vs incorrect (Stoic) etymologising; it is later used by Neoplatonists with a critical attitude towards Stoic etymologising of divine names and early myth. While Neoplatonists continue etymologising divine names, as the Stoics had done, they show a different conception of the relation of these names to the context in which they occur. This is especially the case in their application of etymology to the proems of the Platonic dialogues that introduce ideas that contribute to the overall argument of the dialogue. In addition, names are etymologised without ignoring the context in which they occur and the σκοπός of the Platonic dialogue so as to fit with the allegorical reading of the myth as a whole and to propose a metaphysical (rather than physical) interpretation: the hidden truth must relate to the intelligible rather than the physical world. **Nicola Zito's** paper focuses on the poem Περὶ καταρχῶν by the Neoplatonic Philosopher Maximus of Ephesus (mid-4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) that offers its audience advice on when to undertake particular tasks on the basis of the observation of astral movements. From Zito's analysis Maximus' poem emerges as a work imbued with Alexandrian erudition, which includes the use of etymological wordplays in his presentation of the advice, where not only the names of constellations matter but also the etymologically derived knowledge from the epithets accompanying these names. Maximus, in true Alex-

andrian spirit, alludes both to Hellenistic predecessors and to philological debates on the meanings of the words he is discussing, which presupposes a knowledgeable reader who is capable of detecting and appreciating these literary and scholarly references.

The thematic section concludes with three articles on late antique literature. **Anna Lefteratou** examines etymology and related phenomena in the Homeric centos. Particularly interesting are speaking (Homeric) names that are recast as theologically charged adjectives (Theoclymenos, for instance, is a case in point). Vocabulary derived from archaic hexameter poetry is reused (and is understood etymologically) to recast terms drawn from the New Testament, while the audience are often confronted with polysemous Homeric vocabulary which they need to interpret using their knowledge of Homeric criticism or Christian poetry. Centos are the product of a bookish culture, and their audience are expected to be familiar with scholarly and theological exegesis, whilst the poems themselves are read as exegetical works ancillary to the Christian canon. **Martina Venuti** turns her attention to etymology in late Latin authors. Using the name of Saturnus as her example, she illustrates how etymological knowledge and practice, including bilingual Latin-Greek etymologies, was transmitted from Varro, Cicero, and the Augustan poets to Fulgentius' *Mythologiae* via Tertullian, Lactantius, Servius, Augustine, and Macrobius, before finding its place in Isidor's encyclopaedic work. Finally, **Gianfranco Agosti** explores several cases of etymological phenomena involving proper names that reveal the 'true meaning' of the name in late antique and Byzantine inscriptions. While some of the wordplays may be easily detectable, a good number of them are more elaborate and subtle, sometimes displaying interlingual (Greek and Latin) puns. Their aim seems to be, accordingly, to challenge the audience's interpretive skills. No matter how complex, etymological wordplays draw the reader's or listener's attention to the qualities of the individuals praised. The degree to which these were recognised and appreciated by the audience varies, and there are several unknown factors that prevent us from forming a definitive view on this matter.

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