

Alphabetic Images in Ancient Greece: The Hellenistic *Technopaegnia*

1. The *Wings of Simias* (AP 15.24)

Λευσέ με τὸν Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου ἄνακτ' Ἀκμονίδαν τ' ἄλλυδις ἐδράσαντα,
μηδὲ τρέσης, εἰ τόσος ὢν δάσκια βέβριθα λάχνα γένεια·
τᾶμος ἐγὼ γὰρ γενόμεαν, ἀνίκ' ἔκραιν' Ἀνάγκη,
πάντα δὲ τᾶς εἴκε φραδαῖσι λυγραῖς
έρπετά, πάνθ', ὅσ' ἔρπει 5
δι' αἴθρας,
Χάους τε,
οὔτι γε Κύπριδος παῖς,
ὠκυπέτας ἦδ' Ἄρεος καλεῦμαι·
οὔτι γὰρ ἔκρανα βία, πραῦνόνω δὲ πειθοῖ· 10
εἴκε δέ μοι γαῖα θαλάσσας τε μυχοὶ χάλκεος οὐρανός τε·
τῶν δ' ἐγὼ ἐκνοσφισάμαν ὠγύγιον σκάπτρον, ἔκρινον δὲ θεοῖς θέμιστας.

Gaze upon me, the ruler of deep-bosomed Earth, and the one who set the son of Acmon apart,
do not run in fear if, being such a size as I am, my bushy cheeks are laden with down.
For I was born then, when Necessity governed
and all things gave way to her baneful warnings
those that creep all things, as many as creep 5
through the air.
But the child of Chaos,
and not at all of Cypris
nor the swift-flying child of Ares am I called;
for in no way did I govern by force, but by gentle-minded persuasion, 10
and to me yielded the earth and the folds of the sea and the bronze sky;
and from them, I took a primeval scepter and determined divine laws for the gods.

2. The *Axe of Simias* (AP 15.22)

Ἄνδροθέα δῶρον ὁ Φωκεὺς κρατερᾶς μηδοσύνας ἦρα τίνων Ἀθάνη 1
τᾶμος, ἐπεὶ τὰν ἱεράν κηρὶ πυρίπνω πόλιν ἠθάλωσεν 3
οὐκ ἐνάριθμος γεγάως ἐν προμάχοις Ἀχαιῶν, 5
νῦν δ' ἐς Ὀμήρειον ἔβη κέλευθον 7
τρὶς μάκαρ, ὃν σὺ θυμῷ 9
ὄδ' ὄλβος 11
ἀεὶ πνεῖ. 12
ἵλαος ἀμφιδερχθῆς 10
σὰν χάριν, ἀγνὰ πολύβουλε Παλλάς. 8
ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κρανᾶν ἰθαράν νᾶμα κόμιζε δυσκλής· 6
Δαρδανιδᾶν χρυσοβαφεῖς τ' ἐστυφέλιξ' ἐκ θεμέθλων ἄνακτας, 4
ὥπασ' Ἐπειὸς πέλεκυν, τῷ ποτε πύργων θεοτεύκτων κατέρειψεν αἶπος, 2

Phocian Epeius gave a gift to the man-goddess Athena, honoring her strong counsel, an axe, the one with which he once destroyed the height of the god-built towers, then, at that time when he burned the holy city of the Dardanians with fire-breathing destruction and thrust out the golden-clothed rulers from their foundations; he had not been counted among the champions of the Achaeans, but rather as a lowly man who carried water from the pure springs, but now he embarks upon a Homeric path, thanks to you, holy Pallas of many counsels. Thrice blessed is the man whom you, gracious in your heart, behold. Such blessedness breathes forever.

3. The Egg of Simias (AP 15.27)

Κωτίλας 1
τῆ τόδ' ἄτριον νέον 3
πρόφρων δὲ θυμῷ δέξο, δὴ γὰρ ἀγνώσ 5
τὸ μὲν θεῶν ἐριβόας Ἑρμᾶς ἔκιξε κάρυξ 7
ἄνωγε δ' ἐκ μέτρου μονοβάμονος με τὸν πάροιθ' ἀέξειν 9
θοῶς δ' ὑπερθεν ὠκὺ λέχριον φέρων νεῦμα ποδῶν σποράδην πίφασκεν 11
θοαίς ἴσ' αἰόλαις νεβροῖς κῶλ' ἀλλάσσω, ὀρσιπόδων ἐλάφων τέκεσσι, 13
πᾶσαι κραιπνοῖς ὑπὲρ ἄκρων ἰέμεναι ποσὶ λόφων κατ' ἀρθμίας ἴχνος τιθήνας· 15
καί τις ὠμόθυμος ἀμφίπαλτον αἶψ' αὐδὰν θῆρ ἐν κόλποις δεξάμενος θαλαμᾶν μυχοιτάτοις 17
κᾶτ' ὠκα βοᾶς ἀκοᾶν μεθέπων ὄγ' ἄφαρ λάσιον νιφοβόλων ἀν' ὀρέων ἔσσυται ἄγκος. 19
ταῖς δὴ δαίμων κλυτὸς ἴσα θοοῖσι <ν ὄδον> δονέων ποσὶ πολὺπλοκα μεθίει μέτρα μολπᾶς. 20
ρίμφα πετρόκοιτον ἐκλιπὼν ὄρουσ' εὐνὰν ματρὸς πλαγκτὸν μαιόμενος βαλιάς ἐλεῖν τέκος· 18
βλαχᾶ δ' οἰῶν πολυβότων ἀν' ὀρέων νομὸν ἔβαν τανισφύρων τ' <ἀν> ἄντρα Νυμφᾶν· 16
ταί τ' ἀμβρότῳ πόθῳ φίλας ματρὸς ῥῶοντ' αἶψα μεθ' ἡμερόεντα μαζόν, 14
ἴχνει θένων γᾶν <θεὸς> παναίολον Πιερίδων νομόδουπον αὐδὰν, 12
ἀριθμὸν εἰς ἄκραν δεκάδ' ἰχνίων κόσμον νέμων ῥυθμῶν, 10
φῦλ' ἐς βροτῶν ὑπὸ φίλας ἐλὼν πτεροῖσι ματρὸς, 8
λίγεια νιν κάμ' ἀμφὶ ματρὸς ὠδὶς. 6
Δωρίας ἀηδόνο· 4
ματέρος 2

Lo there!
This is the new
warp of a twittering mother,
a Dorian nightingale. Receive it in
good spirit, for the shrill labor of a pure
mother bore it. Hermes, loud-shouting herald
of the gods, taking it from under the wings of its
dear mother carried it to the tribes of mortals and ordered
me increase the number from a meter of one foot onward to
ten feet at the outermost, keeping the order of the rhythms and
bearing them quickly from up above, he made manifest the swift,
slanting direction of <scattered> feet, striking, he traced out that ever-
rapid, variegated, lawful-sounding cry of the Pierians, exchanging limbs
equally for swift, rapid fawns, offspring of light-footed deer and they, from

immortal desire of their beloved mother rushed forward speedily after the desired teat, all go with rushing feet over the highest peaks along the path of their communal nurse. And with a bleat they traverse the mountain-pastures of the much-nourishing sheep and the caves of the slender-ankled Nymphs. And some savage-hearted beast hearing their re-echoing cry in the innermost hollows of his lairs, swiftly leaving his bedrock bed rushed violently forward, seeking to snatch a wandering offspring of the dappled mother and then swiftly following hard upon the sound of the cry, this beast straightaway hastened along the shaggy hollow of the snow-beaten mountains. Indeed the famed god urging them on the path to stir with swift feet equally, set loose intricate measures of song.

4. The *Syrinx* of Ps.-Theocritus (AP 15.21)

Οὐδενὸς εὐνάτειρα, Μακροπτολέμοιο δὲ μάτηρ
μαίας ἀντιπέτροιο θοὸν τέκεν ἰθυντήρα,
οὐχὶ Κεράσταν, ὃν ποτε θρέψατο ταυροπάτωρ,
ἀλλ' οὐ πειλιπὲς αἶθε πάρος φρένα τέρμα σάκουσ,
οὐνομ' Ὀλον, δίζων, ὃς τᾶς μέροπος πόθον 5
κούρας γηρυγόνας ἔχε τᾶς ἀνεμώδεος,
ὃς Μοῖσα λιγὺ πᾶξεν ἰοστεφάνω
ἔλκος, ἄγαλμα πόθοιο πυρισφαράγου,
ὃς σβέσεν ἀνορέαν ἰσαυδέα
παπποφόνου Τυρίας τ' ἐ<ξήλασεν>. 10
ᾧ τόδε τυφλοφόρων ἐρατόν
πᾶμα Πάρις θέτο Σιμιχίδας·
ψυχὰν ἄ, βροτοβάμων,
στήτας οἴστρε Σαέττας,
κλωποπάτωρ, ἀπάτωρ, 15
λαρνακόγυιε, χαρεῖς
ἄδῦ μελίσδοις
ἔλλοπι κούρα,
Καλλιόπα
νηλεύστῳ. 20

The bed-fellow of no one and mother of the far-fighter
bore the swift guide of the nurse of the one replaced by a stone,
not Cerastas, whom the one sprung from the bull once reared,
but him whose heart was formerly burnt by the *pi*-lacking rim of a shield,
whole in name, a double animal, who had desire for the voice-dividing 5
maiden, born of sound, like the wind,
he who constructed a shrill wound for the violet-crowned Muse,
a monument of fire-roaring desire,
he who quenched the courage by the same name
of the grandfather-slayer and [led out] the Tyrian woman. 10

The one to whom Paris Simichidas offered this beloved
possession of those who carry the blind;
delighting your soul with it, you who trample on men,
goad of the Saettian woman,
son of a thief, without a father, 15
box-footed one,
may you play sweetly
to the mute maiden,
beautifully-voiced,
invisible. 20

5. The Altar of Dosiadas (AP 15.26)

Εἰμάρσενός με στήτας
πόσις, μέρωψ δῖσαβος
τεῦξ', οὐ σποδεύνας ἴνις Ἐμπούσας, μόρος
Τεύκροιο βούτα καὶ κυνὸς τεκνώματος,
Χρύσας <δ'> αἴτας, ἄμος ἐψάνδρα 5
τὸν γυιόχαλκον οὔρον ἔρραισεν,
ὄν ἀπάτωρ δίσευνος
μόγησε ματρόριπτος.
ἐμὸν δὲ τεῦγμ' ἀθήσας
Θεοκρίτιο κτάντας, 10
τριεσπέροιο καύστας
θώυξεν †ἀνιύξας·
χάλεψε γάρ νιν ἰῶ
σύργαστρος ἐκδυγήρας.
τὸν δ' †ἐλλινεῦντ' † ἐν ἀμφικλύστῳ 15
Πανός τε ματρὸς εὐνέτας, φῶρ
δίζωος, ἴνις τ' ἀνδροβρώτος Ἰλοραιστᾶν
ἦρ' ἀρδίων ἐς Τευκρίδ' ἄγαγον τρίπορθον.

The husband of a woman in man's
clothing, an articulate, twice-young man,
built me, not the one lying on ashes, son of the shape-shifter,
whose death was caused by a Teucrian herdsman, offspring of a dog,
but the beloved of Chryse, when the cook-of-men 5
crushed the bronze-limbed guardian
whom the fatherless, two-wived man,
thrown by his mother, toiled over.
Looking upon my monument,
the slayer of Theocritus, 10
the burner of three-night-man,
shouted out †squealing,
for it wounded him with poison,
the belly-trailing defier of old age.
And him †catching with nets † in the place surrounded by waves 15
both the bed-fellow of the mother of Pan, a thief,
twice-living, and the son of the man-eater, for the sake of
the Ilion-destroying arrows, led to the thrice-destroyed Teucrian city.

6. The *Altar of Besantinus* (AP 15.25)

Ὀλὸς οὐ με λιβρὸς ἱρῶν
Λιβάδεσσιν οἶα κάλχης
Ὑποφοινίησι τέγγει,
Μαύλιες δ' ὑπερθε πέτρῃ Ναξίῃ θοοόμεναι
Παμάτων φείδοντο Πανός, οὐ στροβίλῳ λιγνύι 5
Ἴξὸς εὐώδης μελαίνει τρεχνέων με Νυσίων·
Ἐς γὰρ βωμὸν ὄρης με μήτε γλούρου
Πλίνθοις μήτ' Ἀλύβης παγέντα βώλοις,
Οὐδ' ὄν Κυνθογενῆς ἔτευξε φύτλη
Λαβόντε μηκάδων κέρα, 10
Λισσαῖσιν ἀμφὶ δειράσιν
Ὅσσαι νέμονται Κυνθίαις,
Ἴσόρροπος πέλοιτό μοι·
Σὺν οὐρανοῦ γὰρ ἐκγόνοις
Εἰνάς μ' ἔτευξε γηγενῆς, 15
Τάων δ' ἀείζων τέχνην
Ἔνευσε πάλμυς ἀφθίτων.
Σὺ δ', ὦ πίων κρήνηθεν, ἦν
Ἴνις κόλαψε Γοργόνος,
Θύοις τ' ἐπισπένδοις τ' ἐμοί 20
Ὑμηττιάδων πολὺ λαροτέρην
Σπονδὴν ἄδην. ἴθι δὴ θαρσέων
Ἐς ἐμὴν τεύξιιν, καθαρὸς γὰρ ἐγώ
Ἴὸν ἰέντων τεράων, οἶα κέκευθ' ἐκείνος,
Ἄμφι Νεαῖς Θρηικίαις ὄν σχεδόθεν Μυρίνης 25
Σοί, Τριπάτωρ, πορφυρέου φῶρ ἀνέθηκε κριοῦ.

The dripping mud of sacrificial victims
does not, like purple, moisten me
with bloody-red streams,
and the knives sharpened on the Naxian stone
spare the property of Pan. The sweet-smelling berry 5
of Nyssian twigs does not darken me with whirling smoky flame.
Indeed, you look at me as an altar not wrought with bricks of
gold nor with lumps of Alybe,
nor should you let the one which the Cynthus-born generation built,
taking horns of bleaters 10
such as pasture around the
smooth ridges of Cynthus,
be matched equally to me.
For with the offspring of Sky
the earth-born Nine built me, 15
whose immortal *techne* the
ruler of the immortals granted.
And you, drinking from the spring
which the son of the Gorgon struck, may

you sacrifice and pour a libation on me, 20
an offering much more sweet than the satiety of
Hymettian bees. Indeed come with courageous heart
to my attainment, for I am pure of
the poison of threatening monsters, like that altar near Thracian
Neae concealed, the one nearby Myrina which the thief of the 25
purple ram dedicated to you, thrice-fathered Athena.

**Greek texts adapted from J. Kwapisz, *The Greek Figure Poems* (forthcoming, Groningen), and A. S. F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (1966 reprint); translations are my own.

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