

OVID, *METAMORPHOSES* 9. 466

Byblis, still unaware of the true nature of her feelings, can no longer bring herself to call Caunus 'brother':

iam dominum appellat, iam nomina sanguinis odit,
Byblida iam mauult quam se uocet ille sororem.
spes tamen obscenas animo demittere non est
ausa suo uigilans.

(*Met.* 9. 466–9)

Bömer, following Haupt-Ehwald, on *dominum*: 'ἐρωτικῶς, "Geliebter", "Ehegatte"'. So too the dictionaries, which include this passage as an example of *dominus* as the equivalent of elegiac *domina* (cf. *TLL* 5. 1915. 39, *OLD* s.v. 4b).¹ But Byblis has not yet recognized what she really hopes for from her brother (468–9) and therefore cannot address him with a term of endearment. In fact, *dominus* is a common and colourless form of address,² which might properly be used in polite speech with members of one's family,³ even a brother (cf. *Sen. Epist.* 104. 1). Byblis unconsciously prefers it to his name, which is how she herself prefers to be called, because of its potential amorous suggestions; but that is not its primary meaning here. The word-play is an as yet unnoticed part of Ovid's subtle characterization of Byblis' struggle with her emotions.

Columbia University

PETER E. KNOX

¹ Among his examples Bömer includes *Met.* 7. 725, where in fact *dominus* refers to the *paterfamilias*.

² *Sen. Epist.* 3. 1 'si proprio illo uerbo quasi publico usus es et sic illum amicum uocasti... quomodo obuio, si nomen non succurrit, "dominos" salutamus'. Cf. *TLL* 5. 1925. 3 ff.

³ *TLL* 5. 1926. 36–82.

ANTHOLOGIA PALATINA, 9. 686

Ἦνορέης δλετῆρα ὑπερφιάλου Βαβυλῶνος
καὶ σέλας ἀκτεάνοιο Δίκης Βασίλειον ὕπαρχον,
ξεῖνε, νόῳ σκίρτησον ἰδὼν ἐφύπερθε πυλάων.
Εὐνομίης ποτὶ χώρον ἀριστογένεθλον ὁδεύεις,
βάρβαρον οὐ τρομέεις, οὐκ ἄρρενας ἄρρενοκοίτας.
Ὅπλα Λάκων, σὺ δὲ τεῖχος ἔχεις βασιλείον ἄγαλμα.

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Lemma B, in textu: εἰς τὴν πύλιν τὴν ἀνατολικὴν τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης.

'Rejoice in your heart, O stranger, as you behold above the gates the Prefect Basil, him who destroyed the might of arrogant Babylon and who shines with the splendour of incorruptible Justice. You are proceeding to a place that bears a rich harvest of law and order, where you need fear neither barbarian nor men that share the bed of other males, The Laconian had his arms for protection; you have this statue of Basil.'

There is a long history of muddle in the interpretation of this epigram. The older editors up to and including those of the Budé edition (vol. viii [1974], 264) connected it with the emperor Basil I (867–86), who did defeat the Arabs but at no time bore the title of prefect. This difficulty was noticed by S. Kyriakides, who in 1936 argued that the personage in question was the patrician and parakoimomenos Basil, the natural son of Romanus I Lecapenus, who defeated the Arabs at Samosata in 958, thus relegating the epigram to the second half of the 10th century.¹ For this he was rightly castigated by F. Dölger, who dated the text to the period between the 4th and the 6th century,² while L. Robert placed it in the context of other Late Antique

¹ *Studi biz. e neoellenici*, 5 (1939), 504–5; id. 'Επιστ. ἐπετ. Φιλ. Σχολῆς Πανεπ. Θεσσαλονίκης, 3 (1937–9), 267–79.

² *Byz. Zeitschr.*, 40 (1940), 180–3.

epigrams honouring governors for upholding justice (*δίκη* and *ἐννομία*) and assigned to it a 5th century date.³ In 1966 Mrs H. Ahrweiler moved it back to the 9th century with the suggestion that a *hyparchos* could have been the governor of a maritime city, namely Thessalonica.⁴ C. Edson opted for the 7th or 8th century,⁵ J.-M. Spieser for the 4th or 5th (with a question mark)⁶ and, finally, D. Feissel for the 4th to the 6th.⁷

First, a point that has gone unnoticed because of the prevailing ignorance of Byzantine antiquities. It is inconceivable that the statue of a prefect (or anyone else) should have been erected after the 7th century, when the manufacture of statues ceased to all intents and purposes in the Eastern Empire. It may be further noted that the few recorded statues of the 7th century were of emperors or members of the imperial family.⁸ Hence it is virtually certain that the epigram is not later than the 6th century.

While the content of the poem is highly formulaic, as already pointed out by Robert, the reference to unnatural vice is unusual and, indeed, surprising. The traditional explanation is that it has something to do with the Persians or the Arabs, whom Basil had defeated or otherwise humbled. The Arabs may be left out of consideration in view of the date we have postulated; so we are left with the Persians. But why should there have been Persians in Thessalonica? The Budé editors lamely explain, 'Quant aux moeurs contre nature prêtées aux Perses, les Chrétiens les reprochaient souvent aux barbares en général'. I am not aware that such barbarians as might have been threatening Thessalonica, i.e. the Goths, Huns, Slavs or Bulgars (depending on the date), were ever regarded as effeminate, but let that pass. Surely, the epigram implies that because of some measure taken by Basil or by the imperial government he represented a stranger could enter Thessalonica without having to fear the moral danger posed by homosexuals. Unnatural vice had been a capital crime since the 4th century,⁹ but I can recall only one occasion when a systematic campaign was mounted to stamp it out. This was done by Justinian (Procopius, *H.A.* xi. 34–6) at the very beginning of his reign, presumably in 528.¹⁰

By a remarkable coincidence the Prefect of Illyricum in 529 was called Basilides, if not exactly Basileios. This Basilides was one of Justinian's most trusted ministers. He had previously served as Praetorian Prefect of the East, possibly under Justin I. He was Master of Offices in 531–2, succeeded Tribonian as Quaestor in 532–4 and was once again Master of Offices in 535–9.¹¹ I suggest that the epigram refers to him and ought, consequently, to be dated 529.

There are two possible objections to my hypothesis. As PPO Or. Basilides was not a military commander and could not have inflicted a defeat on the Persians; neither, for that matter, could any other prefect have done so between the reign of Constantine and the end of the 6th century. But then it is not certain that line 1 refers to a military

³ *Hellenica*, 4 (1948), 24.

⁴ *Byzance et la mer* (Paris, 1966), 126.

⁵ *IG* x, 2, 1, no. 47.

⁶ Centre de Recherche d'Hist. et Civil. de Byzance, *Travaux et mémoires*, 5 (1973), 150–1; *ibid.* 7 (1979), 333.

⁷ *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine* (Paris, 1983), n. 87.

⁸ To my knowledge, the latest seriously attested statue is that of Nicetas, cousin of the emperor Heraclius: Nicophorus, *Opuscula historica*, de Boor, 9. Those of Justinian II, Constantine VI and Irene are mentioned only in the fabulous *Patria* of Constantinople and should be regarded with considerable scepticism.

⁹ See J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, II (1912), 412.

¹⁰ Malalas, Bonn ed., 436. The relevant entry follows that on the completion of the baths of Dagistheus and the paving of the court of the Basilica, for which *Chron. Paschale*, Bonn ed., i. 618–19 gives the date 528.

¹¹ For his career see E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, ii. 433.

action: as PPO Or. Basilides could have made some diplomatic move that put the Persians at a grave disadvantage. Confining ourselves to the reign of Justin I, we can point to two diplomatic incidents that were prejudicial to Persian interests: the defection to the Romans of the king of the Lazi and Justin's refusal to adopt Kawad's son Chosroes. Basilides could have played a part in either of these events.

The second objection concerns the prefect's name. Here it should be noted that the later poets of the Anthology do take liberties with personal names that happen not to fit the metre: Anatolius is turned into Antolios, Theodosius into Theudosios, etc. It is true that with a little ingenuity the author of our epigram could have accommodated the spelling *Βασιλείδης* to hexameter (but not the alternative form *Βασιλίδης*). If he chose the more familiar Basileios, it was probably for the sake of the pun in line 6 (*βασίλειον ἄγαλμα*), which would otherwise have had to be sacrificed.

Exeter College, Oxford

CYRIL MANGO

LIDDELL & SCOTT, GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON

The editor of the projected new Supplement to Liddell & Scott is grateful to the many scholars who have sent in notes in response to his request and is encouraged to make a further appeal. In doing so he would like to draw attention in particular to the Roman and early Byzantine periods down to the Lexicon's terminal date of *c.* A.D. 600.

Contributors are invited to send additional material or corrections to the editor, Mr P. G. W. Glare, Clarendon Building, Bodleian Library, Broad Street, Oxford OX1 3BG. They are asked to check that the material is not to be found in either the ninth edition of the Lexicon or the 1968 Supplement. Additional references to words already treated should not be sent, unless they add substantially to our understanding of these words. It would be helpful if contributions were to be written on slips measuring approximately 6 × 4 inches (15 × 10 cm). The lemma should be written in the top left-hand corner, and contributors are asked to specify the edition or other source that they have used.