WORKS AND NIGHTS (MARCUS ARGENTARIUS, AP 9.161)

In a long and colourful passage from Book 3 of his elegiac poem *Leontion*, a veritable manifesto of Hellenistic erotics, Hermesianax of Colophon (early third century BC) presents us with an amusing list of poets and their loves (fr. 7 Powell = Athen. XIII 597B). This catalogue features, *inter alia*, an enamoured Hesiod inspired by a woman.[1] The notion of surly old Hesiod in love with a girl may come as a bit of a surprise to most students of classical philology. After all, one might suppose that the harsh, archaic misogyny of the didactic poet does not bode well for amorous relationships with members of the opposite sex.[2] That makes the statement of Hermesianax (7.21–26) all the more remarkable:

> Φημὶ δὲ καὶ Βοιωτὸν ἀποπρολιπόντα μέλαθρον
> Ἡσίοδον πάσης ἤρανον ἱστορίης
> Ἀσκραίων ἐσικέσθαι ἐρῶνθ'[3] Ἑλικωνίδα κώμην·
> ἔνθεν ὅ γ' Ἠοίην μνώμενος Ἀσκραϊκὴν
> πόλλ' ἔπαθεν, πάσας δὲ λόγων ἀνεγράψατο βίβλους
> ὑμνῶν, ἐκ πρώτης παιδὸς ἀνερχόμενος.

> I claim that even Boeotian Hesiod, keeper of all legends, left his home and came out of love to the Heliconian village of the Ascraians. There, wooing Ascraian Ehoie, he suffered many a thing and wrote down in books all his *Catalogues*, as he hymned her, starting up again and again from the first girl.

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[1] On this passage cf. Bing (1993) 629-31 and Caspers (2006) 22-3.

[2] The myth of Pandora (*Th.* 570-602, *Op.* 59-105), which includes Hesiod's famous observation ἄνδρεσσι κακὸν θνητοῖσι γυναῖκας / Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης θῆκε (*Th.* 600 f.), stands out in this regard; see e.g. Arthur (1973), Loraux (1978), Arighetti (1981), Arthur (1983), Rudhardt (1986), Lévêque (1988) and Vernant (2006). On Hesiod's 'anti-eroticism', see duBois (1992) and Dagradi (1999).

[3] Thus Riegler's emendation for εχων (A). Noteworthy, too, is Daléchamp's suggestion to read ἔκονθ': could Hermesianax be responding to Hesiod's claim that his father moved to Ascra out of dire necessity (φεύγων … κακὴν πενίην, *Op.* 637-8) by insinuating that the poet in fact came there *willingly* all by himself? Cf. Caspers (2006) 22.

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The Hellenistic poet wittily mistakes the oft-repeated opening formula of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, ἢ οἵη, for a proper name, and envisions the *Ehoiai* as a poem, indeed a hymn, written in praise of the girl.[4] Hermesianax thus transforms every female of the *Catalogue* into the first 'woman', Ehoia, while arranging his own catalogue of poets on the model of the Hesiodic text and presenting his collection of elegiac narratives as inspired by a woman, Leontion.[5] By refashioning the Hesiodic œuvre in the image of his own work, Hermesianax has ingeniously turned the archaic poet into his literary forefather.

A similarly humorous engagement with moralising Hesiod and the erotic potential of the *Catalogue of Women* is found in a fascinating short poem by Marcus Argentarius (*AP* 9.161), a witty composer of amatory verse and probable contemporary of Ovid in Rome, whose texts were once included in the *Garland of Philip*.[6] Argentarius' epigram offers a unique glimpse into a neglected aspect of Hesiodic reception. It also plays, we believe, a more subtle game with the text of the archaic poet than has hitherto been seen. In what follows, we would like to offer a close reading of this epigram and unpack its playful miniature poetics.

Ἡσιόδου ποτὲ βύβλον ἐμαῖς ὑπὸ χερσὶν ἑλίσσων
Πύρρην ἐξαπίνης εἶδον ἐπερχομένην·
βύβλον δὲ ῥίψας ἐπὶ γῆν χερί, τοῦτ' ἐβόησα·
"Ἔργα τί μοι παρέχεις, ὦ γέρον Ἡσίοδε;"

One day, while unrolling a book of Hesiod under my hands, I suddenly saw Pyrrha come upon me. Throwing the book on the ground with my hand, I shouted this: 'Why are you bothering me, old Hesiod?'

[4] In a similar vein, Philitas' beloved Bittis/Battis (fr. 7.75-8) may not be an actual woman, but the embodiment of Philitas' scholarly passion, a personified gloss; cf. Bing (2003) 339-41, following a suggestion first made by Kuchenmüller (1928) 27, *contra* Knox (1993) 79 n. 25.

[5] Cf. 1: οἵην; 57: οἷα; 71: οἷα; 85: οἵη; 89: οἷωι. For similar Hellenistic and imperial adaptations of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, cf. Phanocles' Ἔρωτες ἢ Καλοί, whose opening formula (ἢ ὡς) recalls Hesiod's ἢ οἵη; the Ἑοῖοι of Sosicrates of Phanagoreia (SH 732), or the Τῶν Γυναικῶν Κατάλογος of Nicaenetus of Samos or Abdera (fr. 2 Powell = Athen. XIII 590B); cf. Cairns (1979) 214-24; for further literature see n. 25.

[6] The *Palatine Anthology* preserves 37 poems under his name. If the identification of Marcus Argentarius with the orator Argentarius, a disciple of Cestius mentioned by Seneca the Elder (*Contr.* 9.3.12-13), is correct, then we can date him to some time between 20 BC and AD 16. He seems to have been a popular rhetor in his day, as Seneca quotes him no less than forty-two times; for the poet's identity cf. Small (1951) 67-78. On Argentarius' erotic epigrams cf. Höschele and Konstan (in preparation).

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The epigram as a whole is framed by the presence of Hesiod and his books, starting, as it does, with the word Ἡσιόδου and ending with the vocative Ἡσίοδε. The first two lines of the text set the scene: once, as the speaker was unfolding a papyrus roll of Hesiodic poetry, he suddenly saw Pyrrha come to him. Scholars have long noted that Pyrrha is a common personal name of the period, one that befits lovers and *hetaerae*.[7] Pyrrha, in fact, reappears as an object of desire in another epigram of Marcus Argentarius (*AP* 9.286), and the *RE* lists her as 'Pyrrha. 8': 'Name von Hetären. Anth. Pal. IX 161. 286'.[8] F. E. Wright has even gone so far as to argue that she might be the same woman as Horace's beloved in *Ode* 1.5.[9] Whatever her 'true' identity and the actual relation of our epigram's Pyrrha to any 'historical' woman, or to the literary loves of other poets, her sudden erotic intrusion in the text leads the poet to stop his reading and throw his book on the ground. He then shouts something like: 'Hesiod, you old fart, why are you bothering me with your *Works and Days*?', a sentence that playfully conflates the expression ἔργα (= πράγματα) παρέχειν ('give trouble') with the title of Hesiod's didactic poem (Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι). In short, the scholar-poet is engaged in reading hallowed didactic verse from the archaic master when a girl called Pyrrha intrudes on him and disrupts his study. On a surface level, the text is clear and straightforward, the pun—a typical element of Argentarius' epigrammatic humour[10]—somewhat flatly jocose at best.

A closer look at the epigram, however, brings us beyond the simple academic joke of an opposition between sex and scholarship. For Argentarius' Pyrrha is not (only) 'Pyrrha. 8' of the *RE*, a neatly classified *hetaera*. She is properly not Pyrrha, in fact, but Ionic Pyrrhè.[11] The one named character of this poem framed by Hesiod is, very appropriately, a character of Hesiod's poetic universe—more precisely, the very first figure to appear in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. Pyrrhè is featured at the beginning

[7] See Small (1951) 132; Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 74-5; cf. *IC* 3, p. 56 no. 8.4, *SEG* XXIII 577, *Milet* I (3) 38 z, 2, *PP* 5259, *IG* II² 12561; 2357.9, imp. *NScav* 1897, 200, *IG* II² 9268, Hor. *O.* 1.5.

[8] Cf. v. Geisau (1963).

[9] Wright (1932) 168.

[10] Small (1951) 87 observes: 'Argentarius was the first epigrammatist to introduce puns into his poems in relatively large numbers, and in this minor matter, at least, he may claim to be regarded as an innovator and as a forerunner of Martial.' For puns in other epigrams by Argentarius cf. Hendry (1991a), (1991b) and (1997). Of note also is the repeated alternation of the sounds χϱ and ϱχ at lines 1-2 and 3-4, and a possible sound play between ἔργα and γέϱον in the last verse.

[11] For the common usage of (Epic-)Ionic forms in Hellenistic epigrams, see Palumbo-Stracca (1993-1994). Argentarius wrote mostly in (Epic-)Ionic, 'the prevailing dialect of later epigram' (Small 1951, 82), but he also experimented with Doric forms in at least three epigrams (*AP* 5.105, 9.87, 9.221), which suggests that his usage of dialect variants was more than mere surface convention. Pyrrha appears in at least one other place as Pyrrha in the *AP* (9.485).

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of that work as the daughter of Pandora and Epimetheus, wife of Deucalion, and the mother of Hellen and other primeval ancestors. She is the first human mother of the poem, the prototypical *ehoia*, and original woman.[12] There is no indication in our meager fragments that the story of the flood was included in the *Catalogue*, and some reason to believe that it wasn't.[13] The birth of Pyrrhè's children through rock-throwing, however, probably played a part in the poem.[14] Contrary to the other women of the *Catalogue*, whose reproductive sexuality is explicitly mentioned in the text, it is plausible to suppose that Hesiod's Pyrrhè, as Pindar's Pyrrha (*Ol.* 9.43), conceived ἄτερ εὐνᾶς.[15] Even Ovid still portrays Pyrrha and Deucalion as *innocuos ambo, cultores numinis ambo* (*Met.*1.327).

This marked chastity of the first Hesiodic woman was not to last unscathed, as its transgressive charge attracted much predictable attention in the various strands of erotic literature. Following the pattern of Sappho's biographical reception, Pyrrha became a prototypical literary lover, and her primordial femininity an icon of erotic desire.[16] A play by Epicharmus, already, an author known for his staging of mythological burlesque, was entitled Πύρρα καὶ Προμαθεύς, or Πύρρα ἢ Λευκαρίων. Most of the extant fragments are concerned with the food destined for the boat, but it is not implausible to imagine that the comedy exploited the various dimensions of Pyrrha's story and reproductive prowess elsewhere. One longer fragment (*POxy* 2427 = *CGFP* 85 = fr. 113 K–A) shows Pyrrha on stage with Deucalion and Prometheus, who is trying to teach the two future survivors how to build a *larnax* to prepare for the flood. Pyrrha suspects the Titan of trickery and accuses him of deception. His answer, while it does not imply that 'she has a nasty mind', as Lobel writes, mentions the words 'bad' (fr. 113.15 K–A: κακ[...) and 'woman' (fr. 113.17 K–A: γυναικὸς) in the same breath.[17] In another fragment of the same play (116 K–A), someone says that 'Deucalion seeks after/covets Pyrrha' (Πύρραν γαμῶται Λευκαρίων). Not much, then, but enough to establish that, by the early fifth century

[12] See Casanova (1979), West (1985) 50-1 and 56, Fowler (1998) 11, Hirschberger (2004) 172–4, Bremmer (2008) 32-3 and 108.

[13] See West (1985) 55–6, Bremmer (2008) 107–9, *contra* Merkelbach (1968) 144, Caduff (1986) 92–102 and 114, D'Alessio (2005) 220. The first attestation of the flood story is Epicharmus fr. 113 K–A; cf. Pind. *Ol.* 9.40–79.

[14] Fr. 234 M–W; see West (1985) 52, D'Alessio (2005) 225, Bremmer (2008) 114–15.

[15] On the language of reproduction and sexuality in the *Catalogue of Women*, see Aguirre Castro (2005). As fragments 75 and 76 M–W attest, the *Catalogue* explicitly engaged with erotic themes and language; cf. Hunter (2005b) 253.

[16] For the reception of Sappho in antiquity cf. Yatromanolakis (2007) and n. 18.

[17] Lobel (1959) 4. For comic Pyrrha's possible influence on the 'Mrs. Noah' of medieval mystery plays, see Bremmer (2008) 110, n. 52.

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BC, Pyrrha had become a character of comedy, in which sexuality might have played some role. We should note that Diphilus, Epicharmus' successor on the comic stage in the early third century BC, also wrote a *Pyrrha* (fr. 69 K–A). The only fragment surviving from that play is of little value. It is, however, a fair guess that the playwright who had made Sappho a lover of Archilochus and Hipponax (fr. 70 K–A) did not leave much innocence to his own comic Pyrrha.[18]

Perhaps Diphilus' contemporary Hermesianax inadvertently tapped into the same tradition when he made Hesiod fall in love with Boeotian Ehoie, 'starting up again and again from the first girl' (fr. 7.26 Powell)—just as Hermesianax humorously mistakes ἠ οἴη for the name of Hesiod's beloved, a reader of this passage might willfully misunderstand the expression πρώτης παιδὸς as referring to the first heroine of the *Catalogue*, that is Pyrrha. Could Argentarius have re-interpreted Hermesianax' words in this fashion, equating the 'initial girl' with the prototypical woman? If so, this would ironically make the two poets rivals in love and give our speaker's exclamation 'why are you troubling me, old man Hesiod?' a further amusing twist.

Be that as it may, Pyrrha's erotic potential, which was possibly exploited in Greek comedy (though, considering the meager remnants, this assumption has to remain speculative), becomes fully evident in Latin poetry. Horace is channeling either that tradition or that potential when he names the first love of his *Odes* after the primordial woman (*C.* 1.5), instead of calling her Lycoris, Delia, Nemesis, Cynthia, or Corinna. After evoking mythical Pyrrha and the terrors of the great flood in *C.* 1.2.6 (*saeculum Pyrrhae nova monstra questae*), Horace portrays himself as a survivor of passion's shipwreck and implicitly equates Pyrrha's fickleness with the sea.[19] In the Ovidian *Epistula Sapphus*, in turn, the Greek poetess is inspired to hurl herself off the Leucadian cliff by a naiad, who encourages her to follow the example of Deucalion (*Her.* 15.167–170):[20]

[18] Eubulus, Antiphanes, Ophelion, and Dinolochus too wrote plays entitled *Deucalion* or *Leucarion*; see Kassel and Austin (2001) 73. On Sappho as a character of comedy, see Pastorino (1955), Magno (1979–1980), Parker (1993) 309, Most (1995) 17, Lidov (2002). Yatromanolakis (2007) 292–312 downplays the sexual character of the comic Sappho, even, at 298, for the Diphilus play.

[19] For the 'liquid association of the name Pyrrha' in *Odes* 1.5 cf. Fredricksmeyer (1965) 180. For the sea imagery cf. ibid. 182 and Quinn (1963) 71–5.

[20] Sappho's love for Phaon (a figure perhaps mentioned in her work: fr. 211a L–P) is first attested in Menander (fr. 258). It might have appeared in some of the many other comic plays centered on the life and works of the poetess, and it was regularly referred to in later centuries (e.g. Ael. *VH* 2.18; Serv. ad *Aen.* 3.279; Palaeph. 49; Plin. *Nat.* 22.20). We are not taking any side on the disputed authenticity of the Sappho letter here. On the question, see Baca (1971), Tarrant (1981), Murgia (1985), Knox (1995) 12–14, Rosati (1996) and Rimell (1999).

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Hinc se Deucalion Pyrrhae succensus amore
misit et illaeso corpore pressit aquas.
nec mora, versus amor fugit lentissima mersi
pectora; Deucalion igne levatus erat.

Deucalion, burning with love for Pyrrha, threw himself down from here, and struck the waters with his body unscathed. Love immediately turned around and fled the swimmer's breast, leaving it utterly devoid of feelings; thus Deucalion was freed from his fiery passion.

The story of Deucalion's leap is not attested elsewhere, but Birt's suggestion that it might go back to an Alexandrian wordplay that pseudo-etymologically associated Δευκαλίων with Λευκαδίων seems very attractive.[21] Whatever the case, the letter's author has wittily turned the survivor of the primeval flood into the πρῶτος εὑρετής of a *remedium amoris* which requires the lover to cast himself into water:[22] instead of throwing rocks on the ground, Deucalion throws himself off a rock, trying to extinguish his burning passion with the waves of the sea![23] And the cause for his despair is none other than Pyrrha, whose very name, when derived from πῦρ (fire), may account for Deucalion's flaming desire. In Juvenal still, Pyrrha, the original mother, the icon of primordial times (cf. Juv. 15.30; Mart. 10.67), is also she who first *maribus nudas ostendit . . . puellas* for the torrent of future vices to come, that is the prototypical *lena* (Juv. 1.84). Significantly, the reference to Deucalion and Pyrrha in Juvenal appears in a context that evokes catalogic poetry *à la* Hesiod, embedded as it is between two long lists of sinners (22–80 and 87–146).[24]

Clearly, Pyrrha has been around. The long tradition of amatory poetry centered on the prototypical woman has only come down to us in fragments, but enough survive to give us an idea of its vitality over the centuries and its appeal as a channel of erotic intertextuality. The figure of erotic Pyrrha seems to have been especially popular in the first centuries BC and AD, and this brings us back to our epigram. Throughout the Hellenistic period, the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* was particularly appreciated as a

[21] Birt (1877) 432.

[22] Dörrie (1975) 156 observes: '. . . hinter dem Vordergrund solch gewaltsamer Wort-Ableitung steht gewiß etwas mehr: nämlich erstens das Postulat, daß gegen unglückliche Liebe nichts anderes hilft als dieser Sprung (in den Tod!) – und daß diese Erfahrung so alt ist wie die Menschheit – also: Deukalion.'

[23] Compare *et iussos lapides sua post vestigia* mittunt (Ov. *Met.* 1.399) with *hinc se Deucalion Pyrrhae succensus amore / misit* (Ov. *Her.* 15.167–8).

[24] On Juvenal's use of the Deucalion and Pyrrha story and its intertextual relation to Ovid's version in the *Metamorphoses* cf. Lorenz (2004).

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model, an example of short episodes stitched together in a long composition, the ultimate catalogue, a primary source of aetiology and regional genealogy, and an inexhaustible fount of obscure love stories.[25] Not only was the *Catalogue* a favoured poem of a favoured author in the literary culture of Marcus Argentarius, but it came laden with the immense baggage of its long reception. When Pyrrhè suddenly appears in the epigram, she is both the Pyrrhè of Hesiod and a character shaped by centuries of Hesiodic reception.

Pyrrhè intrudes on the speaker as he unfolds a papyrus roll containing a poem by Hesiod (we may infer from the last line that he is perusing the *Works and Days*). While Pyrrhè's image is pictured 'flying away' (εἴδωλον...ὤχετ' ἀποπτάμενον) in *AP* 9.286.2, where the speaker wakes up from a dream, our epigram portrays her surprising him with her arrival. The abruptness of Pyrrhè's appearance is expressed both by the verb ἐπέρχομαι, which means 'to intrude', 'to come upon suddenly', and by the temporal adverb ἐξαπίνης.[26] Her intrusion on Argentarius' reading of Hesiod's didactic poem (*Erga* followed by woman) plays a witty game with the canonical order of Hesiodic poetry, which places the *Catalogue*, including Pyrrhè, right before the *Works and Days*.[27] As the speaker reads the *Erga* and unrolls the papyrus, Pyrrhè comes, in a way, *back* to sight from the preceding Hesiodic poem. Whether he sees her before his eyes or not, whether this vision conveys something more tangible than the dream of *AP* 9.286 or not is left entirely open. The Pyrrhè of this epigram is, on at least one level, a character created by Hesiod. Her presence leads the narrator to throw his roll of the *Works and Days* on the ground and deride the archaic master. How can we make sense of his reaction in this short and lively scene?

The poem's marked focus on the narrator's hands seems to convey an aggressive attitude towards Hesiod. As far as we can see, the puzzling construction ἐμαῖς ὑπὸ χερσὶν ἑλίσσων of line 1 is unparalleled. While the verb ἑλίσσω is obviously in its place in the sense of unrolling a papyrus—it denotes the very act of reading, for example, in Callimachus (fr. 468 Pf.) and Posidippus (SH 705.16)—this is the only instance where it appears with ὑπὸ χερσίν. The meaning of that expression may be, simply, something like 'under my hands', but that would be a unique example of such a usage. The phrase ἐμαῖς ὑπὸ χερσὶν, however, is rather common and regularly used to convey aggression, domination, violence. It is frequently found in such constructions

[25] For the Hellenistic and imperial reception of the *Catalogue of Women*, see Reinsch-Werner (1976), Clauss (1990), Rutherford (2000), Hunter (2005b), Asquith (2005), Hardie (2005), and Fletcher (2005); see also n. 5.

[26] See Small (1951) 136–7.

[27] See West (1985) 1–3.

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as ὑπὸ χερσὶ δαμάζειν/δαμάζεσθαι.[28] Whatever its precise connotation in the epigram, it seems plausible to read something more into it than 'under my hands'. The speaker is not delicate with his papyrus at the beginning of the poem, he is unrolling it with gestures of antagonism. This is confirmed two lines later, as we see him throw down the book on the ground with his hand (χερί), and then derisively *shout* at Hesiod. The poem portrays a clash between the epigrammatist and the old master of didactic poetry.

While Hesiod is ancient, the girl is obviously not. The key to making sense of this opposition is the character of Pyrrhè. Her sudden arrival prompts the speaker's rejection of the book-roll. In this poem framed by the presence of Hesiod, the narrator turns away from the verses of the *Works and Days* to embrace Pyrrhè and the *Catalogue of Women*, the poem of girls 'who unfastened their maiden girdles' (fr. 1 M–W).[29] The epigrammatist's progression from one poem to the other, from the feminine world of the *Ehoiai* to the hard world of the *Erga* is interrupted by his vision of the girl. He discards the hostile book for the joys of love, substituting, so to speak, *eros* for *eris*. This choice is embodied by a gesture probably taken from the *Catalogue* itself: the speaker casts his book to the ground as Pyrrhè and Deucalion threw down their rocks. The original act of procreation thus becomes a symbol of erotic pleasure. It may be seen as a further humorous touch that the work thrown to the ground is none other than Hesiod's *Erga*, which is all about how to make things spring from the earth.[30] The vision of Pyrrhè thus replaces the tactile world of the *Works and Days*.

Pyrrhè and her tradition stand for the catalogue of women that Argentarius chooses over the scholarly life—a powerful scene of *recusatio*.[31] Yet that choice, interestingly enough, is made within the world of Hesiodic poetry. Hesiod is the source of both the rejected life and the chosen alternative laid out by the narrator in the epigram. When, as Pyrrhè returns, he asks Hesiod '῎Εργα τί μοι παρέχεις, ὦ γέρον ῾Ησίοδε;', Argentarius is not only making a pun conflating ἔργα and ῎Εργα, but he is also implicitly saying: 'why are you now giving me *this* work, old man?'. The erotic encounter with Pyrrhè is presented as an event taking place within the world of Hesiodic poetry, a result of Hesiodic Pyrrhè's grasp on the mind of the speaker. *Erga* acquires a new sense through this operation, as the

[28] Cf. Hom. *Il.* 2.860, 874, 3.352, 6.368, 8.344, 10.452, 15.2, 16.438, 20.94, 20.143, 23.675. Similarly, Hom. *Il.* 19.61–2 (Ἀχαιοὶ ὀδὰξ ἕλον ἄσπετον οὖδας / δυσμενέων ὑπὸ χερσὶν), 24.638 (σῆς ὑπὸ χερσὶν ἐμὸς πάϊς ὤλεσε θυμόν), Opp. *H.* 2.31 (περθομένης δηΐων ὑπὸ χερσὶ πόληος), Q.S. 2.355–6 (πολλοὶ δ' ἐν κονίῃσι καὶ αἵματι θυμὸν ἔλειπον / Αἰθιόπων ὑπὸ χερσί), 9.160–1 (τοῦ δ' ὑπὸ χερσὶ / μυρίοι ἐκτείνοντο), 11.159 (τῶν ὑπὸ χερσὶ κατηρείποντο φάλαγγες).

[29] On the theme of sexuality in the *Ehoiai*, see Aguirre Castro (2005) and Hunter (2005) 253.

[30] We owe this observation to Peter Bing.

[31] For the opposition between scholarship and love in Hellenistic epigrams (e.g. Posidippus *AP* 12.98, Callimachus *AP* 12.150), see Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) 342–5 and Gutzwiller (1998) 160–1.

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labours of love replace the works and days, and the speaker can now put his hands to better use as he gives Pyrrha the works. The poem thus marvelously illustrates the triumph of ἔργα Ἀφροδίτης over Ἔργα Ἡσιόδου.[32] In a way, this progression from didactic *Works* to erotic deeds gives the Hesiodic ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι (*Op.* 382) a whole new meaning and unexpected twist. By playing two Hesiodic poems off against each other, Argentarius implicitly envisions two different Hesiods—a dichotomy which might be reflected in the doubling of Hesiod's name at the beginning and end of our epigram.[33]

Significantly, Hesiodic Pyrrhè is but the first in a series of women—the poem may thus invite us to picture Argentarius as launching his erotic career with the primordial woman, who is to be followed by a long sequence of other epigrammatic loves. The multiplicity of desires, both male and female, is indeed characteristic of amatory epigram.[34] Conceivably, *AP* 9.161 might even have functioned as the introduction to a whole sequence of erotic epigrams within Argentarius' original *libellus*. His texts only came down to us via Philip's *Garland*,[35] but it is very likely that they first appeared in a single-authored, artfully designed book,[36] which would have very appropriately—with tongue firmly in cheek—presented the Hesiodic *Ehoiai* and its series of sexy heroines as a model in opposition to the *Erga*.[37]

[32] For the erotic connotation of ἔργα, cf. in particular Strato *AP* 12.209.3–4, where sexual foreplay is characterised as τὰ πρὸ ἔργων / παίγνια.

[33] We owe this thought to Jonas Grethlein.

[34] Cf. e.g. Gutzwiller (2007) 315 on Asclepiades: 'Like erotic epigrammatists to follow, he presents an ever-changing array of love objects – both women, who include virgins and hetairas, and young males.'

[35] On that topic, David Petrain brings our attention to the fact that the two anonymous epigrams framing *AP* 9.161 likewise begin with the letter η (the surrounding poems, by way of contrast, don't). This mini-series does not appear in one of the larger blocks that have been shown to go back directly to the *Garland of Philip* (such as *AP* 9.215–312), but considering the identical first letters of all three poems it is not unreasonable to assume that it was taken from Philip's alphabetically arranged anthology; on the structure of which cf. Cameron (1993) 33–40. Significantly, both *AP* 9.160 and *AP* 9.162 are concerned with books and/or writing (the first deals with Herodotus and the Muses, while the latter features a speaking writing implement). Note in particular the contrast between Herodotus, who receives one book from each of the Muses in *AP* 9.160, and our poet, who casts away a book-roll of Hesiod.

[36] For Hellenistic epigram books, whose remnants are still to be found in the *Palatine Anthology*, cf. Gutzwiller (1998); on the erotic *libellus* of Rufinus, an epigrammatist of the first century AD, cf. Höschele (2006). On the Posidippus papyrus as a poetry book, see the contributions in Acosta-Hughes, Kosmetatou, Baumbach (2004) and Gutzwiller (2005).

[37] The speaker's preference for amorous adventures over didactic poetry can, no doubt, be read as a programmatic *recusatio* of *epos*. Since the discovery of the Milan Posidippus papyrus, however, which contains whole series of epigrams on stones and bird signs, the *Lithika* and the *Oionoskopika* (Smith 2004, Baumbach and Trampedach 2004, 151–6), we now know that there was also something like didactic epigram (the *Oionoskopika* may very well have been inspired by the lost Hesiodic *Ornithomanteia*); cf. Sider (2005). Could, as Peter Bing suggests to us, Argentarius be opposing two epigrammatic sub-genres here, privileging the erotic over the didactic tradition?

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We could go on, but it would hardly befit the size of our text. Suffice it to note that the aesthetics of erotic intertextuality underlying this Greek epigram, and so many others like it, the poetic culture they represent, played a prominent role in the literary landscape that also produced Latin love elegy. Greek Augustan verse is a treasure-trove of unread gems. The old evaluation of this poetry as mere boudoir fancy continues to hold general currency. Many classical philologists, if they show any interest for those texts, would probably not contradict this 1951 condemnation of Greek Augustan epigrammatists: 'Pleasant and amusing though these *vers de société* may be, the men who wrote them are merely the most skillful practitioners in a literary genre which had become at its best largely frivolous, and at its worst, conventionalized, stereotyped, and academic. For profound poetic interpretation of the life of this age we must turn not to them but to Virgil and Horace and the lesser Latin masters who were their confrères.'[38] Against this view, we believe that Greek Augustan epigram is interesting both in and of itself, and as a window into an all but forgotten space of first-century Rome's multifaceted poetics. In four lines of original dialogue with the archaic and Hellenistic tradition, Argentarius has captured an amusing little scene that vividly conjures an entire poetic program before our eyes. This level of virtuosity may be seen as an invitation to further explore the dynamics of a literary culture where poet and audience could conceive and enjoy such a titillating vision of Pyrrhè.

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[38] Small (1951) 98. It is interesting to remind ourselves that Ovid could be considered as one of the 'lesser Latin masters' some fifty years ago.

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