

ΤΙΘΑΙΒΩΣΣΟΥΣΙ ΜΕΛΙΣΣΑΙ (HOMER, *ODYSSEY* 13.106)*

ABSTRACT

This article examines the verb τιθαβώσσω, a Homeric hapax legomenon of unknown meaning and etymology: it reviews its use in Hellenistic poetry and strives to provide a contextually plausible meaning for the verb ('to sting'), as well as for the related adjective θιβρός ('stinging, mordant, piquant'). It argues that τιθαβώσσω is etymologically related to Latin *figere* 'insert, pierce', *fibula* 'pin', Lithuanian *diegti* 'to poke, sting', and Tocharian B *tsāk*^ā 'to bite'.

Keywords: Homer; Antimachus; Nicander; Lycophron; etymology; Indo-European reconstruction

Greek τιθαβώσσω is a rare verb, the exact meaning and etymology of which are unknown.¹ It has a typical profile of a 'homerisches Wort':² used once in the *Odyssey*, it is not attested in Greek literature again until Hellenistic times. This paper proposes a novel linguistic analysis of the word, starting neither with its meaning (which is uncertain) nor with alleged Indo-European cognates (which are even more uncertain) but rather with familiar morphological and phonological rules of Ancient Greek.

I

The verb is used in the *Odyssey* in the description of the cave of the Nymphs near which Odysseus awakes upon his arrival to Ithaca and in which he later hides the treasures he had received from the Phaeacians (13.103–6):

ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἠεροειδές,
ἱρὸν Νυμφῶων αἰ νηϊάδες καλέονται.

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¹ H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* (Leipzig, 1885), 2.330: 'dubiae originis et significationis vocabulum'; A. Debrunner, 'Zu den konsonantischen *io*-Präsentien im Griechischen', *IF* 21 (1907), 201–76, at 252: 'ganz unerklärt'; H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960–72), 896: 'schon wegen der schwer bestimmbareren Bed. etymologisch dunkel'; F. Skoda, *Le redoublement expressif: un universal linguistique* (Paris, 1982), 214: 'obscur'; A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford, 1989), 2.171: 'exact sense and etym. unknown'; A. Rengakos, 'Lycophron als Homererklärer', *ZPE* 102 (1994), 111–30, at 120: 'das immer noch unerklärte Hapax'; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 2009²), 1077: 'expressif et obscur'; R.S.P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden, 2010), 1482: 'origin?'; A.M. Bowie, *Homer Odyssey Books XIII and XIV* (Cambridge, 2013), 116: 'a very rare word, of unknown meaning and etymology'.

² The reference is to M. Leumann, *Homeric Wörter* (Basel, 1950), whose approach is discussed below.

ἐν δὲ κρητῆρες τε καὶ ἀμφιφορῆες ἕασιν
λάτινοι· ἐνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι.

And near it a pleasant dusky cave,
sacred to the nymphs who are called Naiads.
In it are mixing bowls and amphoras
of stone, and bees τιθαιβώσσουσι there.

The context gives no clear indication of what the precise activity of the bees thus described might have been, while the ancient commentary offers the translation ‘to store up (honey)’: Schol. Q (Dindorf) τὴν βόσιν, τὴν τροφήν, ἀποτιθέασιν, ὃ ἔστι τὰ κηρία ‘they put away food, provisions, that is, honey’; Schol. V ἀποτιθενται τὴν βόσιν, ὃ ἔστι τὸ μέλι, οἷον θησαυρίζουσι τὰ κηρία καὶ νεοττοτροφοῦσιν ‘they put away for themselves food, that is, honey, as they preserve the honeycombs and feed young bees’.³ According to an entry in Cyril’s lexicon (fifth century C.E.) interpolated into Hesychius’ dictionary (fifth or sixth century C.E.), the implied object of the verb is μελίκηρον ‘honeycomb’.⁴

The ancient translation ‘to store up (honey)’ is not implausible contextually and has been widely adopted for τιθαιβώσσω in modern translations and scholarship.⁵ But how reliable is it? It is beyond doubt that to the ear of a Greek grammarian active in the third- or second-century Alexandria or Pergamum the first two syllables of τιθαιβώσσω would sound like a form of τίθημι, especially after the diphthong αι [ai] was monophthongized to [e],⁶ while the second part (-βώσσω) would just as easily be associated with βώτωρ ‘shepherd’, βόσκω ‘lead to pasture’. The paraphrase of τιθαιβώσσω as τιθέναι ‘put’ + βόσιν ‘food’ found in the scholia is in all likelihood a folk etymology. There is therefore no reliance on the ancient tradition as far as the meaning of our verb at *Od.* 13.106 is concerned.

Outside of the *Odyssey* passage, the verb is entirely absent from Archaic and Classical Greek literature and resurfaces again in Hellenistic poetry. The passages containing τιθαιβώσσω are reviewed in the following section, even though none sheds light on the original meaning of the verb; τιθαιβώσσω makes an impression of being a learned intrusion, unlikely to have been part of anyone’s active vocabulary at the time.

II

While one might expect a Hellenistic poet to use an obsolete Homeric expression to make an allusion to the *Odyssey* passage discussed above, not all attestations of τιθαιβώσσω seem specifically modelled on the Homeric phrase. The Homeric passage must have directly inspired the anonymous author of Pindar’s metrical vita⁷ that contains

³ Similar translations have been preserved in other grammatical literature, e.g. the Homeric lexicon by Apollonius Sophista (152.33 Bekker: τὴν τροφήν ἀποθησαυρίζουσι ‘they lay food aside’) or the *Etymologicum Magnum* (758.16 Gaisford).

⁴ Hsch. τ 862 Hansen–Cunningham: τιθαιβώσσουσιν· ἐν ἀποτιθενται, ἀποθησαυρίζουσι τὴν τροφήν αἱ μέλιτται, τὸν λεγόμενον μελίκηρον (‘the bees put away inside, preserve the provisions—namely, the honeycomb’).

⁵ For the sake of space, I am not citing all modern works of reference in which τιθαιβώσσω has been thus translated. One voice of dissent is by T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin and New York, 1995), 519, who render the verb as ‘they nest’, arguing that the stone vessels metaphorically represent beehives; in fact, clefts in rock form the natural abode of bees.

⁶ For the Koine the beginning of this sound change can be dated to the third century B.C.E.

⁷ This poem (Πινδάρου γένος δι’ ἐπῶν) is transmitted in several Pindaric manuscripts such as Laurentianus 32.37, Laurentianus 32.35 and Parisinus 2403.

the famous image of a honeycomb in the poet's mouth:⁸ μέλισσά τις ὡς ἐπὶ σίμβλω | χεῖλεσι νηπιάχοισι τιθαιβώσσουσα ποτῶτο (vv. 7–8, ed. Drachmann) 'a bee came flying τιθαιβώσσουσα into his childish lips as if it was a beehive'. Here the verb is clearly used in the sense 'put up honey',⁹ and the author of the *vita* may have used the rare Homeric word to create a complex intertextual reference emphasizing the parallel between the deep sleep from which Odysseus awoke next to the cave of the Nymphs and the deep sleep during which Pindar's poetic initiation took place.

In a fragment usually attributed to the poem *Artemis*, Antimachus of Colophon apparently used the verb in a more general meaning 'to put away': ἔνδοθ[ι] γ[ω]ρυτοῖο τιθα[ι]βώσσοισα κά[λυ]ψε (fr. 108 Matthews) 'she hid (or: covered) τιθαιβώσσοισα into the quiver';¹⁰ the ancient commentator paraphrases the verb with τιθεῖσα καὶ ἀποθησαυρίζουσα.¹¹ The object of τιθαιβώσσω is missing: the most straightforward solution would be arrows (as Cazzaniga argued),¹² but Matthews points out that quiver would not be thought a hiding-place (κάλυψε) for arrows and suggests that '[t]he reference may be to the goddess taking the offerings (λόγια) made to her (fr. 107) and storing them in her quiver'.¹³ Especially under the latter analysis, Antimachus' use of the verb would be essentially Homeric, under the assumption that the poet understood τιθαιβώσσω in the *Odyssey* passage to mean something similar to τίθημι. It is not coincidental that the verb applied by Homer to bees was chosen by Antimachus to refer to Artemis, since the goddess's association with the insect is well known.¹⁴ the scholar-poet's penchant for recondite Homeric vocabulary prompted him to employ a verb that would invoke the image of bees for his learned readership.

The next passage to be examined comes from the Diomedes episode in Pseudo-Lycophron's *Alexandra*:¹⁵ when Diomedes flees to Italy, the king of the Daunians recruits his services in a war against the Messapians in exchange for a share of the land but, when the king reneges on his promise, the hero curses the Apulian soil to be infertile until such time as an Aetolian (like himself) sows the land (621–2):

Δηοῦς ἀνεῖναι μήποτε ὄμπνιον στάχυν
γῶας τιθαιβώσσοντος ἀρδηθῶ Διός

It [*sc.* the land] should never produce Deo's bountiful grain,
although Zeus should irrigate the fields with showers¹⁶

⁸ For further discussion of the metaphor of a honeycomb in the mouth, see M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore, 2012²), 62, 176 n. 5; and for general association between bees and poets, see M. Davies and J. Kathirithamby, *Greek Insects* (Oxford, 1986), 70–2.

⁹ The same meaning must have been the one known to Porphyry, who explains τιθαιβώσσειν as τὸ τιθέναι τὴν βόσιν 'putting away food' (*De antr. nymph.* 18).

¹⁰ It is unclear what inferences can be drawn from Antimachus' choice of an Aeolic form of the participle.

¹¹ V.J. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon* (Leiden, 1996), 442.

¹² I. Cazzaniga, 'Osservazioni critiche intorno allo hypomnema antimacheo di Pap. Mil. Vogl. I 17, 33–6 (= fr. 182 Antimachi W.)', *PP* 22 (1967), 63–74, at 72 n. 15.

¹³ Matthews (n. 11), 283.

¹⁴ G.W. Elderkin, 'The bees of Artemis', *AJPh* 60 (1939), 203–13 remains magisterial; see also R.D. Carlson, 'The honey bee and apian imagery in classical literature' (Diss., University of Washington, 2015).

¹⁵ For the sake of simplicity, Pseudo-Lycophron is referred to as Lycophron below.

¹⁶ See S. Hornblower, *Lycophron: Alexandra* (Oxford, 2015), 266.

The intended sense of *τιθαιβώσσω* here is clearly ‘irrigate’, ‘fertilize’, which is rather different from the use of the verb in the *Odyssey* and in Antimachus. One may theorize that Lycophron understood the obscure Homeric verb to mean something like ‘to put (food) in’, hence ‘to feed’ and, by extension, ‘to water’ (the scholia to Lycophron use the same paraphrase *τὴν βόσιν τίθεσθαι* that we have already seen above). But much more significant is the mention of Deo, viz. Demeter,¹⁷ earlier in the sentence, since this goddess also has known associations with bees: her priestesses and initiates were called *μέλισσαι*,¹⁸ her daughter Persephone is called *Μελιτώδης* (Theoc. *Id.* 15.94), and Callimachus says *Δηοῖ ... ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι* (*Hymn* 2.110).¹⁹ In this instance Lycophron’s choice of the verb describing Zeus bringing water to the soil may have been specifically influenced by the Callimachean image of bees carrying water to Demeter.

Finally, in Nicander’s *Theriaca* the verb *τιθαιβώσσω* is used of domestic fowl fostering their chicks (195–9):

μορφή δ’ ἰχνευτῶ κινωπέτου οἶον ἀμιυδρῆς
 ἴκτιδος, ἥ τ’ ὄρνισι κατοικιδίησιν ὄλεθρον
 μαίεται ἐξ ὕπνοιο συναρπάζουσα πετεῦρων
 ἔνθα λέχος τεύχονται ἐπικριοι, ἦ καὶ ἀφαυρά
 τέκνα τιθαιβώσσουσιν ὑπὸ πλευρῆσι θέρουσαι.

The form of this snake-tracking creature [*sc.* *Ichneumon*] is that of the puny marten that seeks the destruction of domestic fowls, snatching them from their perches as they sleep, where they roost upon a beam or *τιθαιβώσσουσιν* their feeble chicks, keeping them warm beneath their breast.²⁰

The verb appears to mean something like ‘nourish’ here.²¹ It is extremely unlikely that this sense is original; in fact, there are several ways of explaining the usage of *τιθαιβώσσω* in this passage. Most likely, Nicander adopted the verb in this sense directly from Lycoph. *Alex.* 622 (where the verb is used to refer to nourishment of the fields): at *Ther.* 401 the poet uses another word from the same passage in the *Alexandra*—namely, *ἀρδηθμός* (perhaps Lycophron’s own coinage). Nicander’s use of *τιθαιβώσσω* may also be due to his own interpretation of the Homeric verb as ‘they put in (honey = food)’, hence ‘they feed’. Finally, folk etymology may have played

¹⁷ See N.J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), 167.

¹⁸ Cf. Pind. fr. 158 S.–M. *ταῖς ἱεραῖσ<ι> μέλισσαις τέρπεται* (‘Demeter) delights in her priestesses’ (this fragment, cited in schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.106a, is followed by a clarification that *μέλισσαις δὲ τὰς ἱερείας, κυρίως μὲν τὰς τῆς Δήμητρος*). The Hellenistic poet of a hymn to Demeter addresses her priestesses (or initiates?) as *μέλισσαι* (*SH* 990.2). Apollodorus of Athens reports that the women participating in the Thesmophoria were called *μέλισσαι* (*FGrHist* 244 F 89). The scholiast on Theoc. *Id.* 15.94 explains Persephone’s epithet *Μελιτώδης* by saying *τὰς ἱερείας αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς Δήμητρος μελίσσαις λέγεσθαι*; similarly, Porphyry states *τὰς Δήμητρος ἱερείας ὡς τῆς χθονίας θεᾶς μύστιδας Μελίσσαις οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐκόλουον* (*De antr. nymph.* 18). Finally, note Hsch. μ 719 (Latte–Cunningham) *μέλισσαι· αἱ τῆς Δήμητρος μύστιδες* (‘bees the initiates of Demeter’).

¹⁹ See G. Crane, ‘Bees without honey, and Callimachean taste’, *AJPh* 108 (1987), 399–403, who plausibly argues that *μέλισσαι* here should be understood as actual bees, not as priestesses of Demeter.

²⁰ J.-M. Jacques (ed.), *Nicandre: Œuvres. Tome 2: Les Thériques* (Paris, 2002); transl. A.S.F. Gow and A.F. Schofield, *Nicander* (Cambridge, 1953).

²¹ It is possible that *νεοττοροφουσιν* ‘rear young birds’ listed in Schol. V as a paraphrase of *τιθαιβώσσουσι* at *Od.* 13.106 refers to the passage in Nicander.

a role: the Schol. Nic. *Ther.* 199 offer a derivation from τυτθᾶ βόσκειν ('nourish youth'), and it is not unreasonable to speculate that Nicander himself may have had this etymology in mind; another possibility is that the poet was thinking about an etymological connection with τιθηνέω ('tend, foster, raise lovingly').²²

This concludes our examination of the passages in which τιθαιβώσσω is attested. While the meaning of the verb in *Od.* 13.106 is uncertain, passages in later poetry are either directly dependent on the Homeric passage (Pindaric *vita*) or make an indirect reference to it: the reason both Antimachus and Lycophron use the rare verb τιθαιβώσσω is arguably its association with bees in Homer; Lycophron's usage, in turn, appears to have influenced Nicander. As is often the case in Hellenistic poetry, the choice of a rare lexical item is determined by considerations of intertextuality (with support from folk etymology) and not by its proper lexical meaning which remains unknown.

While it is probable that τιθαιβώσσω had become obsolete by Hellenistic times, it is also possible that the original meaning of the verb had been forgotten much earlier—namely, before *Odyssey* Book 13 was composed: no longer transparent to the singer, the verse-final phrase τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι could have been extracted from its original context (no longer available to us) and used in the description of the Cave of the Nymphs simply because the latter featured bees.²³ The poet of the *Odyssey* may indeed have thought that the verb meant something like 'to store (honey)', just as later commentators believed, even though this was not the etymological meaning of the verb. Such a misunderstanding would not be unprecedented: for instance, the basic meaning of the verb κορύσσω, -ομαι is 'to put the helmet (κόρυς) on' and, broadened, 'to equip with weapons, arm oneself', but at *Il.* 4.424 the verb is metaphorically used of a wave (κύμα θαλάσσης) as it raises its head on the open water (πόντω μὲν τε πρῶτα κορύσsetai). As Leumann (n. 2), 210 showed, the verb κορύσsetai in this verse was reinterpreted as meaning 'swells up' which gave rise to such unexpected usages as in *Il.* 21.306 κόρυσε δὲ κύμα ρόοιο (Skamandros) was lifting up the wave of his waters' and *Il.* 2.273 πόλεμόν τε κορύσσων 'arousing, stirring up the battle'.²⁴ To take another example from Leumann, the noun ἀλαλητός belongs to the same root as ἀλάομαι 'to wander', and the etymological meaning can still be discerned in *Il.* 16.78–9: οἱ δ' ἀλαλητῶ | πᾶν πεδίον κατέχουσι ('roaming [around the plain], they [*sc.* the Trojans] take hold of the entire plain'); since the connection between ἀλαλητός and ἀλάομαι was no longer transparent to the singers and since the immediately preceding lines mention the voice (ὄψ) of Hector, bursting out all round, ἀλαλητός was reinterpreted as meaning 'war cry'.²⁵ In *Il.* 14.426 and 23.679 we find the verb δουπέω in an unexpected meaning 'to die' (vs the usual meaning 'make a noise', δοῦπος); Leumann (n. 2), 215–17 plausibly argues that we are dealing here with an epic adaptation of the phrase δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, misunderstood as 'he fell and died'. Another example is the adjective ἀάατος 'sunless', used at *Il.* 14.271 as

²² From τιθήνη ('nurse'), ultimately from the root of θῆσθαι.

²³ The question why there should be bees in the Cave of the Nymphs lies outside the scope of this paper. It is possible that an analogy was sought with the bees who helped feed the infant Zeus in the Dictaeon cave (Epimenides, fr. 4.70 *EGM*=*BNJ* 457 F 17), but the insects' general association with purity, chastity and holiness is more likely to have played a role.

²⁴ See G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume 1: Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), 378 and C. Brügger, M. Stoevesandt and E. Visser, *Homers Ilias: Gesamtkommentar*, vol. 2, fasc. 2 (Berlin, 2010²), 86.

²⁵ Leumann (n. 2), 211.

an epithet of the rivers of the Styx, and mechanically transferred to *Od.* 21.91 and 22.5 to qualify the bow-stringing contest simply by virtue of being a sinister epithet related to the Underworld.²⁶ If a ‘Leumannsches Missverständnis’²⁷ of a similar kind is responsible for the appearance of τθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι at *Od.* 13.106, we must conclude that we know nothing about the meaning of τθαιβώσσω except that the verb is used of honeybees; it could refer to any of the insects’ prototypical activities, including buzzing, dancing, collecting pollen and stinging.

III

Having reviewed the avatars of τθαιβώσσω in Greek literature, we can now turn to the question of its origin. The ancient derivations from τὴν βόσιν τίθεσθαι or τυτθὰ βόσκειν can be safely discarded, and modern scholarship has mostly been agnostic as to the etymology of τθαιβώσσω.²⁸ But even though the verb appears to be entirely isolated in Greek, the rules of word formation in Ancient Greek are known to us rather well, which makes it possible to ‘undo’ the morphological derivation step by step and identify the root of the verb.

Verbs in -ώσσω in Ancient Greek form a minuscule group which becomes even smaller once we set aside those verbs in which -ω- may belong to the root, such as πτώσσω ‘cower, hide for fear’.²⁹ The remaining verbs are denominative,³⁰ so we might start by entertaining that idea in the case of τθαιβώσσω. One derivationally clear case among the verbs in -ώσσω is the Homeric ἀγρώσσω ‘catch by hunting’

²⁶ See A. Nikolaev, ‘Homeric ἀάατος: etymology and poetics’, *Sprache* 50 (2012–13), 182–239, at 197–8.

²⁷ ‘Leumannian misunderstanding’; so dubbed by W. Burkert, ‘ΘΕΩΝ ΟΠΙΩΝ ΟΥΚ ΑΛΕΦΟΝΤΕΣ’, *MH* 38 (1981), 195–204 = *Kleine Schriften* (Göttingen, 2001), 1.95–104. While ‘Leumannsches Missverständnis’ is most frequently used to refer to the process that S. Reece, *Homer’s Winged Words* (Leiden, 2009) has termed ‘junctural metanalysis’ (e.g. pre-Homeric [πολέμου] ἐπιδημίου κρυόεντος resegmented as [πολέμου] ἐπιδημίο· ὀκρυόεντος, hence *Il.* 9.64 ἐπιδημίου ὀκρυόεντος), Leumann’s magisterial book contains discussions of many other processes that contributed to the creation of ‘Homeric words’.

²⁸ See the references in n. 1 above. Few daring solutions that have been advanced do not stand scrutiny from the position of modern historical linguistics. For instance, C.A. Lobeck, *Ῥημιακόν, sive verborum graecorum et nominum uerbalium technologia* (Königsberg, 1846), 248 assumed that ‘nourish’ was the original meaning and analysed τθαιβώσσω as a ‘uerbum intensiuum’ made from the same root as τθῆνη ‘wet nurse’; this is impossible, since Latin *fēmina* ‘woman’ and other cognates of the Proto-Indo-European root ‘to suck’ make it clear that the -η- in the root of τθῆνη, θῆσθαι goes back to Proto-Greek *ē (and not *ā) and is therefore incompatible with the -αι- of τθαιβώσσω. L. von Döderlein, *Homeric glossarium* (Erlangen, 1850–8), 3.359 thought that the description of the cave in the *Odyssey* referred specifically to domesticated honey bees and proposed that τθαιβώσσω with the alleged meaning ‘settle’ was etymologically related to τθασός ‘cultivated’, which is improbable semantically, morphologically and phonetically (for Döderlein, the -β- in τθαιβώσσω was a ‘hardened digamma’ used as a hiatus-filler). As to τθασός, it is probably a foreign word; see Beekes (n. 1), 1482.

²⁹ G. Klingenschmitt, *Das altarmenische Verbum* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 70 derives πτώσσω from a primary stem *ptoh₂k-je/o- and compared Armenian *t’ak’č’i-* ‘to hide’, but the Armenian verb may also go back to the root of Latin *tacēre*, while πτώσσω can be analysed as a denominative verb derived from πτώξ ‘timid, hare’ (O. Hackstein, ‘Eine weitere griechisch-tocharische Gleichung: Griechisch πτήξαι und tocharisch B *pyākti*’, *Glotta* 70 [1992], 136–65, at 137).

³⁰ Homeric κνώσσω ‘to be asleep’ and Hsch. θ 812 Latte–Cunningham θρώσσει· γεννῶ, φοβεῖται both have uncertain etymologies and are excluded from the present consideration.

derived from ἀγρώτης ‘hunter; hunting’:³¹ the sequence -σσ- in ἀγρώσσω is the Ionic outcome of the sequence *-tj-. On the strength of this parallel we may posit an agent noun *τιθαιβώτης from which the verb τιθαιβώσσω was derived.³²

The next step in our linguistic exercise is to determine the possible starting point for the agent noun *τιθαιβώτης. Here the -ω- before the suffix points to a derivation from a contract verb; compare Homeric ἐ(ε)δνωτής ‘matchmaker’ from ἐδνώω ‘betroth’, which leads us to a hypothetical verb *τιθαιβόω.³³ The verb ὑπνώσσω ‘be sleepy’ next to ὑπνώω ‘sleep’ suggests that we are on the right track, even though the putative intermediate stage *ὑπνώτης happens not to be attested.

Nearly all -όω verbs in Greek are denominative; when they are derived from *o*-stem adjectives, they have factitive semantics (‘to make X’), for instance ἀλαόω ‘make blind’ from ἀλαός ‘blind’ or ὀρθόω ‘make straight’ from ὀρθός ‘straight’. But there is another type, usually dubbed ‘instrumental’ (‘to make provided with X’, ‘to provide with X’) and derived from *o*-stem or *ā*-stem nouns; compare βροτώ ‘make bloody, stain with blood’ from βρότος ‘blood’, πυργόω ‘equip with fortifications’ from πύργος ‘tower’, or χολόω ‘affect with anger’ from χόλος ‘anger’.³⁴ If the nominal stem from which reconstructed *τιθαιβόω was derived was an adjective, we have to operate with the factitive type (‘to make *τιθαιβός’); if the derivational basis was a noun *τιθαιβός,³⁵ the verb would belong to the ‘instrumental’ type (‘to provide with a *τιθαιβός’). Since we know neither the meaning of Greek τιθαιβώσσω nor the underlying Proto-Indo-European root, the choice between these two options has to be postponed until the next section.

To summarize the argument thus far, the stem formation of τιθαιβώσσω can be plausibly accounted for by positing the following derivational chain: *τιθαιβός (*nomen actionis* potentially concretized as a *nomen rei actae*)³⁶ → *τιθαιβόω (denominative

³¹ See E. Risch, *Wortbildung der homerischen Sprache* (Berlin and New York, 1974²), 284. For an exhaustive discussion of secondary verbs in -ώσσω, see Debrunner (n. 1), 248–53.

³² For the agent noun suffix -της, see P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien* (Paris, 1933), 316 and the monographic treatment by A. Leukart, *Die frühgriechischen Nomina auf -tās und -ās* (Vienna, 1994).

³³ While -της/-τῆς had become the most productive of the agent noun forming suffixes very early in Attic-Ionic and by the fifth century in all other dialects, in Homeric Greek we still find what may have been the original distribution of the suffixes: -της is used with compounds, while -τήρ and -τωρ are used with simplex nouns (ἡγήτωρ ‘leader’ vs κυνηγέτης ‘hunter’, βοτήρ ‘herdsman’ vs συβώτης ‘swineherd’; Risch [n. 31], 28–9). However, the -της suffix does not necessarily indicate that *τιθαιβώτης should be analysed as a compound: the reason such a form would be acceptable even in the oldest Greek is simply that it looked like a compound because of its length; it is also possible for an original *τιθαιβότηρ to have been remade as *τιθαιβώτης on the analogy to compounds with -βώτης. In sum, the agent noun *τιθαιβώτης does not violate morphological rules of Homeric Greek.

³⁴ See E.F. Tucker, *The Creation of Morphological Regularity: Early Greek Verbs in -έω, -άω, -όω, -ύω, and -ῖω* (Göttingen, 1990), 283–92. The formal difference between the two types would not have been perspicuous to a Greek, since factitives in general may have exactly the same meaning as instrumentals, e.g. αἰσχύνω ‘to furnish with αἰσχρός’ (instr.) is equivalent to ‘to make αἰσχρόν’ (fact.), as noted by W.S. Barrett, *Greek Lyric, Tragedy, and Textual Criticism: Collected Papers* (Oxford, 2007), 344 n. 67.

³⁵ The position of the accent in this hypothetical form cannot be ascertained. Another formation from which the verb *τιθαιβόω ‘to deposit’ is just as likely to have been derived would be *ā*-stem *τιθαίβη, cf. κορυφόμαι ‘rise up’, ‘be provided with a crest’ from κορυφή ‘top, peak, crest’. No decision can be made between *τιθαιβός and *τιθαίβη as putative derivational bases of *τιθαιβόω, and the choice is ultimately immaterial for the solution pursued in this paper. The presentation in the main text implicitly assumes *τιθαίβη as a viable alternative to *τιθαιβός.

³⁶ In many languages verbal abstract nouns (*nomina actionis*) in addition to denoting an actual action may also be used to denote either concrete objects or results of said action (*nomina rei*

verb) → *τιθαιβότης (*nomen agentis*) → τιθαιβώσσω. Even though the postulated intermediate stages are not attested and we still do not know the meaning of the root, this derivation fully conforms to the laws of Greek word formation.³⁷

Given that neither *-βο- nor *-αιβο- are known suffixes in Greek, the only sensible segmentation of our hypothetical nominal stem is *τιθαιβ-ο-. This aligns nicely with the fact that the most common way of making deverbal nouns and adjectives in Greek and Proto-Indo-European was by adding a plain thematic suffix (*-ο-) to the verbal root: cf. *leub^h-ó- ‘dear, beloved’ (English *lief* ‘beloved’, Old Russian *l’ubъ* ‘id.’, Italic *leufo- ‘desired’ → Oscan *loufi[r]* ‘or’) from the root *leub^h- ‘to love, desire’ (Latin *lubēre* ‘to be desirable’), *b^heid^h-ó- ‘trusted’ (Latin *fidus* ‘trusty’) from the root *b^heid^h- ‘to trust’ (Greek πείθω ‘I persuade’, Latin *fidere* ‘to have confidence in’), *sróμ-ο- ‘flowing; a flow’ (Greek ρόος ‘stream’, Vedic *srāvaḥ* ‘id.’) from the root *sreu- ‘to flow’ (Greek ρέω) or *uóik-ο- ‘settling; a settlement’ (Greek οἶκος ‘house’, Vedic *vésaḥ* ‘house, brothel’, Latin *uīcus* ‘village, block of houses’) from the root *ueik- ‘go inside’ (Vedic *visáti*).³⁸

This leaves us with *τιθαιβ-, which is clearly too long to be a verbal root. However, verbal nouns can also be derived from characterized stems, including those with reduplication: cf. Greek διδάχη ‘instruction’ (from διδάσκω), ιστός ‘mast; beam’ (from ἵστημι),³⁹ κερραγμός ‘cry’ (from perfect κέκραγα), ὄπωπῆ ‘vision’ (from perfect ὄπωπα), or συνοχμός ‘joining, joint’ (<*-hehok^hmó- to the root of συνέχω).⁴⁰ Phonologically, an analysis as a reduplicated stem comes for *τιθαιβ- virtually unbidden, compare τίθημι from *θίθημι (the root θη-/θε-), aorist ἐτύθη from *ἐθύθη (from θύω ‘offer up’), or τιθήνη ‘wet nurse’ from *θιθηνᾶ (from θῆσθαι ‘to suckle’), showing a dissimilation of two aspirated stops (θ ... θ > τ ... θ).⁴¹ The stem *τιθαιβ- can thus go back to *θι-θαιβ-, a reduplicated stem made from the root *θαιβ-.

IV

We are now in a position to tackle the question of a possible Indo-European etymology for the root *θαιβ-. The initial *^h in the root is unproblematic: in this position it can only go

actae): cf. English *construction* ‘the process of building something’ but also ‘a building’, *forgery* ‘the process of faking something’ but also ‘a fake’, Italian *discendenza* ‘the process of descending’ but also ‘offspring’, Greek ἀοιδή ‘the act of singing’ but also ‘a song’.

³⁷ Across languages, chains of morphological derivation often become opaque to speakers and are abbreviated thanks to the workings of analogy. The verb ὑπνώσσω ‘be sleepy’ mentioned above may in fact have been derived directly from ὑπνος ‘sleep’ on the model of ἀγρώσσω ‘catch by hunting’ next to ἄγρᾶ ‘hunt’, ‘skipping’ the putative intermediate stage *ὑπνώτης (the absence of which therefore does not have to be viewed as an attestation gap after all); in other words, the speakers may have reanalysed the *synchronic* morphological relationship between ἀγρώσσω and ἄγρᾶ as direct derivation whereby the nominative singular ending was replaced by -ώσσω and left ἀγρώτης out of the derivation, even though *historically* the double -σσ- of ἀγρώσσω certainly goes back to the τ of ἀγρώτης followed by the suffix *-ie/o-. Similarly, τιθαιβώσσω may in theory have been formed directly from *τιθαιβος on the model of ὑπνώσσω : ὑπνος, etc.

³⁸ See Risch (n. 31), 8–14 and for details A.J. Nussbaum, ‘Agentive and other derivatives of “τόμος-type” nouns’, in C. Le Feuvere et al. (edd.), *Verbal Adjectives and Participles in Indo-European Languages* (Bremen, 2017), 233–66.

³⁹ See Chantraine (n. 32), 13.

⁴⁰ See for the last example F. Solmsen, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen Laut- und Verslehre* (Strassburg, 1901), 256 and for additional examples E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich, 1939), 1.423.

⁴¹ Grassmann’s Law: A. Sihler, *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Oxford, 1995), 142–4.

back to Proto-Indo-European (henceforth, PIE) $*d^h$. Things are somewhat more complicated with the final consonant: while Proto-Greek $*b$ may in theory continue PIE $*b$,⁴² this sound was extraordinarily rare in the proto-language,⁴³ while the usual source of Greek β is PIE $*g^w$.⁴⁴ Finally, the vowel $*a$, too, can only be reconstructed with some amount of certainty in very few cases,⁴⁵ while most instances of Greek α continue a PIE ‘laryngeal’ sound reflected in Hittite as h and usually denoted by the symbol $*h_2$. Greek $-α-$ therefore in all likelihood goes back to PIE $*-eh_2i-$ > $*-ah_2i-$ which by the rules of ablaut would be expected to alternate with $*-h_2i-$ > $*-ih_2-$ (laryngeal metathesis in preconsonantal position)⁴⁶ > $*ī$.⁴⁷

It remains to put the pieces of the puzzle together and find a PIE root with a meaning compatible with activities of honeybees and the following formal characteristics: initial $*d^h$, final $*g^w$ and $*ai$ or long $*ī$ in-between. Precisely such root underlies Latin *figere* ‘to insert, fix, pierce’ (*infigere* ‘to drive [sharp objects] in’, *configere* ‘to fasten together’, etc.); the inscriptional form *FIGIER* (inf. pass.) in the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* (186 B.C.E., *CIL* I² 581.27) indicates that the long $-ī$ in the forms of the Latin verb cannot continue an old diphthong,⁴⁸ while Old Latin *fiuere* ‘to insert’ (Cat. via Paul. Fest. p. 92 M.)⁴⁹ and the noun *fibula* ‘pin’ (< **fiuibula* < **fiued^hla*) show that the final consonant of the root goes back to PIE $*-g^w$.⁵⁰ The Latin root therefore continues $*d^hīg^w$.

The same proto-form $*d^hīg^w$ < $*d^hih_2g^w$.⁵¹ is reflected by Lithuanian *diegti* / *diēgti* ‘to poke, sting, hurt, prick’ (= Latvian *diēgt* ‘to stab’), *īdiegti* ‘to sting’,⁵² *dygūs*

⁴² Cf. βέλτερος ‘better, stronger’ < $*bel-$, Vedic *balin-* ‘strong’, Latin *dē-bilis* ‘weak’, Russian *bol’soi* ‘big’.

⁴³ See J. Clackson, *Indo-European Linguistics* (Cambridge, 2007), 46; M. Weiss, *Outline of the Historical and Comparative Grammar of Latin* (Ann Arbor, 2020²), 37.

⁴⁴ Cf. βαινόν ‘come’ < $*g^wη-je/o-$, Latin *ueniō* or βοῦς ‘cow’ < $*g^wóus$, Vedic *gáu-*, Latin *bōs*, Old English *cū*. See Sihler (n. 41), 161–2.

⁴⁵ See Sihler (n. 41), 45; Clackson (n. 43), 36; Weiss (n. 43), 45.

⁴⁶ For laryngeal metathesis, see M. Mayrhofer, *Indogermanische Grammatik*, vol. 1/2: *Lautlehre* (Heidelberg, 1986), 175. For instance, Greek πρῶϋς ‘mild, gentle’ < $*prāu-$ goes back to the root $*preh_2i-$ the zero-grade of which appears as $*prī-$ < $*prih_2-$ (instead of $*prh_2i-$) in preconsonantal position (cf. Vedic *prīñāti* ‘gratifies’).

⁴⁷ Laryngeal consonants disappeared from most branches of Indo-European, but left important traces in the vowel system; in particular, any laryngeal lengthened the immediately preceding vowel before it was lost: cf. Greek δαίωμα ‘distribute’, Cretan δαίσις ‘apportioning’ < $*deh_2i-$ vs Vedic *dī-* ‘divide, share’ < $*dih_2-$ (< $*dh_2i-$ with metathesis). Another example of alternation between $-ai-$ (< $*-eh_2i-$) and $-ī-$ (< $*-ih_2-$ < $*-h_2i-$) may be provided by Greek λιλαιόμαι ‘desire’ compared by F. Solmsen, ‘Zur Geschichte des Dativs in den indogermanischen Sprachen’, *ZVS* 44 (1911), 161–223, at 171 to λαιδρός ‘bold, impudent’, to which we may add adj. λαίμος ‘wanton’ (Men. fr. 102 K.–A.) and reconstruct the root as $*leh_2i-$, the zero grade of which would be found in λῆρός ‘shameless’ < $*lih_2-ro-$ (one wonders if Hittite *lahlahh^hiya-* ‘to be in [emotional] turmoil’ may belong to this PIE root). A similar alternation may be found in Greek αἰμύλος ‘seductive, binding’ (of words) vs ἱμάς ‘leather strap’, ἵμονιά ‘rope’ going back to an *n*-stem $*sīmon-$ < $*sih_2mon-$ (Vedic *sīmān-* ‘boundary’, Old English *sīma* ‘rope’) and further to PIE root $*seh_2i-$ ‘to bind’ (see M. Weiss, ‘On the prehistory of Greek desire’, *HSPH* 98 [1998], 51–6; M. Janda, *Elysiön: Entstehung und Entwicklung der griechischen Religion* [Innsbruck, 2005], 46–7).

⁴⁸ Contrast *EXDEICATIS* in the same inscription, line 22, from *dicere* < PIE $*deik̥$.

⁴⁹ Note also the gloss *offuēbant*: *claudēbant seris* ‘shut with bars’ (*Abolita Glossary* 132.1).

⁵⁰ Word-medial $-g-$ in Classical Latin present *figere* was introduced by analogy to the perfect. The most recent discussions of the Latin verb are B. Bock, *Die einfach thematischen Präsensentien in der dritten Konjugation des Lateinischen* (Graz, 2008), 239–40; R. Garnier, *Sur le vocalisme du verbe latin: étude synchronique et diachronique* (Innsbruck, 2010), 398.

⁵¹ In theory, $*d^hīg^w$ - attested in Latin, Germanic and Baltic may go back to $*d^hih_1g^w$ -, $*d^hih_2g^w$ - or $*d^hih_3g^w$ -, but Tocharian B *tsāk^h*- to be mentioned momentarily rules out $*h_1$.

⁵² The Academic Dictionary of Lithuanian (*Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*) illustrates this meaning with a

‘prickly’, *dýgti* ‘sprout, erupt (of teeth)’, *dyglyš* ‘thorn’,⁵³ Old English *dic* ‘ditch, pit’ (and perhaps Modern English *dig*), and Old High German *dih* ‘moles, gorges’.⁵⁴ All these cognates have in common the idea of sticking a sharp object in by making a hole (hence such meanings as ‘to pierce’, ‘to plant’, ‘to dig’, etc.).

The crucial *comparandum* is provided by Tocharian AB *tsāk^ā*, which means both ‘to bite’ and ‘to pierce’.⁵⁵ Linguistic archaisms preserved in Tocharian as well as common innovations shared by the rest of the Indo-European languages have led scholars to believe that Tocharian languages were the second branch to have separated from the other Indo-European languages after Anatolian (Hittite, Luwian, etc.).⁵⁶ It is therefore quite likely that Tocharian *tsāk^ā* preserved the original meaning of the root (‘to bite’), while in other Indo-European languages the meaning of the root was broadened to include piercing, poking, planting and digging.⁵⁷ If Greek *τθαιβόσω* goes back to a PIE root with the meaning ‘to bite’, the connection with bees at *Od.* 13.106 becomes clear under the theory that the Greek verb originally meant ‘to sting’.⁵⁸

Formally, **d^hih₂g^w-* (< **d^hh₂ig^w-*) is best seen as a zero grade of PIE **d^heh₂ig^w-*⁵⁹ of the same complex structure as, for example, **g^weh₂id-* > Greek *φαιδρός* ‘bright’, Lithuanian *gaidrūs* ‘bright, clear’.⁶⁰ A reduplicated stem **d^hi-d^heh₂ig^w-* ‘to

proverb that amusingly leads us back to Greek: *bék nuo grieko kaip nuo žalčio, nes, jei tu prisiartinsi, diegs tave* ‘run away from a Greek as if from a snake: if they get closer, they will sting you’.

⁵³ See W. Smoczyński, *Słownik etymologiczny języka litewskiego* (Vilnius, 2007), 109.

⁵⁴ See A.L. Lloyd, O. Springer and R. Lühr, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Althochdeutschen*. Vol. 2: *bi – ezso* (Göttingen, 1998), 630–4.

⁵⁵ See D. Ringe, ‘Evidence for the position of Tocharian in the Indo-European family?’, *Die Sprache* 34 (1988–90), 59–123, at 71; D.Q. Adams, *A Dictionary of Tocharian B: Revised and Greatly Enlarged* (Amsterdam, 2013), 800.

⁵⁶ See J.H. Jasanoff, ‘The impact of Hittite and Tocharian: rethinking Indo-European in the 20th century and beyond’, in J. Klein et al. (edd.), *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics* (Berlin, 2017), 1.220–38.

⁵⁷ It is possible that the meaning ‘to sting’ attested in Lithuanian is an archaism. Note also Latvian *daīga₂* ‘kind of fly’ (K. Mühlénbach and J. Endzelin, *Lettisch-deutsches Wörterbuch* [Riga, 1923–36], 2.430).

⁵⁸ Or ‘to bite’: even though Aristotle knew that female bees have a sting (e.g. *Hist. an.* 626a18), it is entirely possible that at the much earlier time when the *Odyssey* was composed Greeks still thought that bees and wasps bite and not sting. This hypothesis is borne out by the use of *δάκνω* of insects at *Il.* 17.572.

⁵⁹ The disyllabic structure of **d^heh₂ig^w-* is awkward, but such an extended root would not be unparalleled: beside **g^weh₂id-* mentioned in the main text above cf. **seh₁id^h-* (> Greek *εἶθαρ* ‘immediately, right on’) next to **sh₁id^h-* > **sih₁d^h-* (> Greek *ἴθυς* ‘straight’: M. Peters, *Untersuchungen zur Vertretung der indogermanischen Laryngale im Griechischen* [Vienna, 1980], 86) or **ureh₂ig^w-* (> Greek *ραῖβός* ‘bent inward’, Gothic *wraigs* ‘crooked’: Frisk [n. 1], 639). In theory, **d^heh₂ig^w-* may be viewed as a secondary root, viz. **d^heh₂(i)-* with a *Wurzelerweiterung* **g^w*, cf. **leh₁id-* ‘let’ for which G. Klingenschmitt, *Das altarmenische Verbum* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 213 n. 69 proposed a connection with **leh₁(i)-* (cf. Alb. *la* ‘s/he let’); another example may be found in Latin *saepēs* ‘hedge’ and Greek *αἰπύς* ‘steep’ (< **mit einer Befestigung versehen*), on the basis of which M. Janda, ‘Etymologie von altgriechisch *αἰπύς*’, *SPFB(klas)* 6–7 (2001–2), 123–34 reconstructed **seh₂ip-* ‘bind’, clearly relatable to **seh₂i-* ‘bind’ discussed above, n. 47. (It is quite possible that root extensions like **-d^h*, **-g^h*, or **-g^w* represent fossilized second members of compounds: I. Balles, ‘Lang, rund und krumm: zu einigen indogermanischen Zusammenbildungen’, *Die Sprache* 48 [2009], 20–6.) The putative non-extended root **d^heh₂(i)-* cannot be identified with certainty at present.

⁶⁰ In H. Rix and M. Kümmel, *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben* (Wiesbaden, 2001²), 142 the root is reconstructed as **d^heiHg^w-* ‘to stick in’, but this is done solely on the evidence of Lithuanian *diegti*, Latvian *diēgt* and other forms in Baltic languages that point to Proto-Baltic **deig-/daig-* (similar reconstructions have been adopted in all standard etymological dictionaries of Baltic). If the reconstruction **d^heiHg^w-* is correct, Proto-Greek **t^(h)it^haiḡ^wo-* with its *-ai-* cannot be related to this root. But this

bite'⁶¹ made from this root would make a plausible point of origin for Proto-Greek **t^haiǵ^w-o-* 'act of biting; a bite, a sting', hence denominative verb **τιθαιβόω* 'to provide with a bite' → 'to sting'⁶² from which first an agent noun **τιθαιβότης* 'stinger, stinging insect' and then a verb *τιθαιβόσσω* 'to sting' can be derived by familiar sound laws and rules of word formation.

V

The zero grade **d^hig^w-* (< **d^hih₂g^w-*) 'pierce, bite' attested in Latin, Germanic, Baltic and Tocharian may also be reflected in Greek: **d^hig^w-* is expected to give **t^hib-* and this is exactly what we find in the adjective *θιβρός*⁶³ attested only in Hellenistic poets and in personal names.⁶⁴ The etymology of this word is unknown and its meaning is unclear.⁶⁵

reconstruction is phonotactically suspect. More importantly, as is acknowledged in the first footnote to the *LIV* lemma, the Proto-Baltic full grade **deig-* may be *secondary*; there are many examples of such secondary full grades in Baltic languages. For instance, Lithuanian *seilas* 'noose, rope' (< **sei-*) can only be explained as a derivative of the root **seh₂i-* 'bind' discussed above in n. 47 under the assumption that a new full grade **sei-* was created in Proto-Baltic to match the zero grade **sī-* < **sih₂-* < **sh₂i-* ~ **seh₂i-*. Similarly, the only way to align Lithuanian *rieti* 'to scold', Latvian *riēt* 'to bark' (< **rei-*) with Russian *rajat* 'to make a noise' and Latvian *rāt* 'to rebuke, scold' (< PIE **reh₂i-*) is to posit a secondary full grade **rei-*. Klingenschmitt (n. 59), 213 n. 69 plausibly analysed Lithuanian *siekti* 'reach out' (quasi **seiHk-*) and *lėisti* 'let down, let go' (quasi **leiHd-*) as new full grades back-formed to zero-grade allomorphs **sih₁k-* and **lih₁d-* made from **seh₁i-k-* and **leh₁i-d-*, extended versions of **seh₁i-* and **leh₁i-*. Examples could be multiplied; the point is that Baltic evidence for **deiHg-* (to which one should add some Slavic forms overlooked in etymological dictionaries—namely, Slovenian and Croatian *deǵati se* 'to argue' < Proto-Slavic **dēǵati*, on which see O.N. Trubachev, 'Ėtimologičeskij slovar' G.A. Il'inskogo', *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 1957/6, 91–6, at 95) is not incompatible with the reconstruction **d^heh₂ig^w-* marshalled in the main text above.

⁶¹ In PIE, one would expect a present stem with *i*-reduplication to show a zero grade root; however, in the absence of direct comparanda for the reduplicated stem, it is entirely possible that **d^hi-d^heh₂ig^w-* (> Proto-Greek **t^haiǵ-*) is a product of remodelling of some sort: either athematic **d^he-d^heh₂ig^w-* was remade as an *i*-reduplicated stem **d^hi-d^heh₂ig^w-* (compare **d^he-d^heh₁-* >> **d^hi-d^heh₁-* > *τιθημι*) or thematic *i*-reduplicated **d^hi-d^hih₂g^w-e/o-* was remade as an athematic stem **d^hi-d^heh₂ig^w-* (compare **s(t)i-sth₂-e/o-* >> **s(t)i-steh₂-* > *ιστημι*). I thank M. Weiss for pointing this out to me.

⁶² As A. Nussbaum reminds me, there is more than one way of arriving at **τιθαιβόω*, and while it is possible that the hypothetical nominal stem **τιθαιβος*/**τιθαιβη* 'biting' was concretized to 'a bite/sting' and served as a derivational basis for a factitive verb **τιθαιβόω* 'to make a bite/sting', a different approach is just as possible: one could posit a nominal stem **τιθαιβός* with a passive meaning 'bitten, stung' that would make an -*óω* present stem meaning 'to render bitten/stung', hence 'to bite, to sting'. Compare e.g. *θοός* 'sharp, sharpened, whetted' vs *θοόω* 'to make sharp', on which see A. Nikolaev, 'Greek *θοός* "sharp"', Hittite *tuh₃-* 'to cut', in D. Gunkel et al. (edd.), *Vina diem celebrant: Studies in Linguistics and Philology in Honor of Brent Vine* (Ann Arbor, 2018), 267–75.

⁶³ The natural quantity of the vowel -*i*- in *θιβρός* cannot be determined.

⁶⁴ On *Θίβρος*, *Θίβρων*, *Θίβραχος*, see F. Bechtel, *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit* (Halle, 1917), 508 and R. Arena, 'Considerazioni intorno agli aggettivi *θιβρός* e *θεμερός*', *RIL* 104 (1970), 307–14, at 309 n. 10. The earliest onomastic attestation is *Σέβρον*, viz. *Θέβρον*, in Alc. fr. 1.3 *PMGF*.

⁶⁵ Frisk (n. 1), 674: 'wegen der unsicheren Bedeutung etymologisch mehrdeutig'; Chantraine (n. 1), 420 is similarly agnostic. Arena (n. 64), 314 derived *θιβρός* from PIE **d^heg^{wh}-* 'to be hot', but this is linguistically impossible since Grassmann's Law (n. 41 above) affects the *first* of two aspirated stops: compare the regular development in **d^heg^{wh}-reh₂* > Proto-Greek **t^hek^{wh}rā* > **tek^{wh}rā* > *τέφρα* 'ashes'. An etymological connection with Hsch. *θ* 233 Latte-Cunningham *θεμερόν*: *σεμνόν* and *θεμερόπις* proposed by K. Tsantsanoglou, *Of Golden Manes and Silvery Faces* (Berlin, 2012), 11 likewise lacks conviction: there is no 'normal syncope + assimilation process' in Greek that would convert *θεμερός* to *θιβρός* and then to *θιβρός*.

It will be appropriate to start with the two passages from Nicander where we have sufficient context (*Theo.* 35, *Alex.* 554–6):

θιβρὴν δ' ἐξελάσεις ὀφίων ἐπιλωβέα κῆρα

You may expel the θιβρὴν and harmful doom that snakes bring⁶⁶

ναὶ μὴν ῥητίνη τε καὶ ἱερὰ ἔργα μελίσσης
ρίζα ε χαλβανόεσσα καὶ ὄεα θιβρὰ χελύνης
ἀλθαίνει τότε νέρθε πυρὸς ζαφελοῖο κεραΐης

Again, pine-resin and the sacred produce of the bee
and the root of all-heal and the θιβρὰ eggs of the tortoise
are curative when you mix them on a hot fire

A scholium on Nic. *Theo.* 35a (Crugnola) translates θιβρός as ‘hot’ and presumably for this reason Gow and Schofield (n. 20 above) translate θιβρὴν κῆρα as ‘hot doom’.⁶⁷ But just as in the case of τῆλαιώσσω, there is no reliance on the ancient tradition: the paraphrase ‘hot’ may simply be due to the similarity of θιβρός to both θερμός and τέφρα. For ὄεα θιβρὰ χελύνης in the *Alexipharmaca* Gow and Schofield choose ‘delicate eggs of the tortoise’,⁶⁸ possibly based on Hsch. θ 580 (Latte–Cunningham) θιβρόν· τρυφερόν and perhaps on the fact that turtle eggs tend to be very pliable.⁶⁹

It is a priori not very likely that the poet used the same word in two such divergent senses as ‘hot’ and ‘delicate’. Now that the possibility of deriving θιβρός from the same root as τῆλαιώσσω ‘sting’ has been recognized, an alternative interpretation comes virtually unbidden: the meaning of θιβρός may have been ‘stinging, biting, mordant’, something equally well-suited for sharp pain caused by snake’s venom and for slightly sharp, piquant taste of turtle eggs.⁷⁰

If the word θιβρός belonged to the same semantic field as ὄζυς, δριμύς, or πικρός and referred to various unpleasant sensory experiences, the use of the word in two more Hellenistic fragments becomes clear. The same scholium on Nic. *Theo.* 35a cites Callim. fr. 654 Pfeiffer θιβρῆς Κύπριδος ἀρμονίης⁷¹ and Euphorion, fr. 115 Lightfoot θιβρὴν τε Σεμίραμιν.⁷² Arena (n. 64 above) aptly compared the

⁶⁶ Transl. Gow and Schofield (n. 20), except that I hold back their translation of the word under discussion.

⁶⁷ θιβρὴν δὲ τὴν θερμὴν καὶ ὀξεῖαν διὰ τὰς ἐξ αὐτῆς γινομένης φλεγμονῆς (‘θιβρὴν means hot and sharp, on account of the inflammation that results from it’).

⁶⁸ Followed by J.-M. Jacques, *Nicandre: Œuvres. Tome 3: Les Alexipharmques* (Paris, 2007), 51 ‘œufs délicats’.

⁶⁹ A different way of understanding this passage is reflected in the scholium θιβρὰ· θερμά. Indeed, νέρθε πυρὸς (questioned by Gow and Schofield [n. 20], 199) may refer to baking under the coals; cf. Schol. *Alex.* 555 Ábel and V’ari: ἐψηθέντα ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων. But this does not make the translation ‘hot eggs’ particularly plausible for the *Alexipharmaka* passage in which not just the eggs but all of the ingredients are said to be mixed on a fire.

⁷⁰ An excellent parallel in English, suggested to me by B. Maslov, may be seen in the word *tart*, whose meanings, at least through its history, have ranged from ‘sharp, severe, painful’ to ‘sharp to the sense of taste, pungent’ to ‘acrimonious’ (of a person).

⁷¹ Or Ἀρμονίης; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 769A τὴν Ἀφροδίτην Ἄρμα καλοῦσιν.

⁷² Following the scholia, students of these fragments have translated θιβρῆ with ‘hot’, ‘burning’, or ‘sultry’, e.g. G. D’Alessio, *Callimaco* (Milan, 1996), 2.761: ‘della bruciante Cipride’; J.L. Lightfoot, *Hellenistic Collection* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 357: ‘sultry Semiramis’; B. Acosta-Hughes and C. Cusset, *Euphorion. Œuvre poétique et autres fragments* (Paris, 2012), 170: ‘l’ardente Sémiramis’.

Callimachean fragment with Empedocles' fr. 122.2 DK Ἀρμονίη θεμερώπις and marshalled other arguments in favour of the view that for Hellenistic poets the word θιβρός was confused with and influenced by another rare word θεμερός 'solemn, august, venerable'. This is in principle possible, but a more economical solution would be to accept that in these two fragments Aphrodite and Semiramis are described as 'stinging', 'biting', or 'bitter'. Both the goddess and the queen are emblematic of Eros,⁷³ and it requires no detailed substantiation that for Greeks Eros could be stinging or bitter: one only needs to think of Sappho's "Ἔρος ... γλυκύπικρον (fr. 130 Voigt)⁷⁴ or Aeschylus' δηξιθυμον ἔρωτος ἄνθος 'heart-stinging flower of love' (*Ag.* 743).⁷⁵ It may even be possible to go a bit further and surmise that the word θιβρός carried the specific connotation of bee sting: for Eros imagined as a honey-bee flitting about the flowers, cf. ποτ' εὐρον | ἐν τοῖς ῥόδοις Ἔρωτα 'once I found Eros among the roses' (*Anac.* 6.1–2 West),⁷⁶ and a specific association between sting of love and sting of a bee is a common topos in post-Classical Greek poetry.⁷⁷

Hesychius' lexicon offers a long series of *interpretamenta* for θιβρός, of which the one that does not seem to come from ancient exegesis on Callimachus, Euphorion, or Nicander offers additional support for the hypothesis put forth in this paragraph: θιβρήν ... τινὲς δὲ χαλεπὴν 'according to some: painful' (θ 579 Latte–Cunningham).

From a linguistic viewpoint, θιβρός 'stinging' (< *tʰiǵ^wro- < *dʰih₂ǵ^wro-) forms a perfect counterpart to τιθαιβώσω 'sting' (< *tʰi^witʰaiǵ^w- < *dʰi-dʰeh₂ǵ^w-); the ablaut relationship between zero-grade allomorph *dʰih₂ǵ^w- and full-grade allomorph *dʰeh₂ǵ^w- is the same as between λιλάιωμα 'desire' (*quasi* *li-leh₂i-) and λιρός 'shameless' (< *lih₂-ro- 'desirous') discussed in n. 47 above.

VI

So what is the meaning of τιθαιβώσσοισι μέλισσαι at *Od.* 13.106? As I suggested at the end of section III, it is entirely possible that this phrase was adopted from a hexametrical verse in which it was used in its original sense 'honeybees sting', but this meaning was no longer known to the poet of the *Odyssey*, who may have thought instead that the phrase meant 'honeybees deposit (honey)', assuming that τιθαιβώσσοισι was somehow a form of the same root as τίθημι. This is the 'Leumannsches

⁷³ For Semiramis' excessive lust, see e.g. Diod. Sic. 2.13.4.

⁷⁴ On this epithet, see F. Horn, "Bitter-sweet love": a cognitive linguistic view of Sappho's "Ἔρος γλυκύπικρος (frg. 130 Voigt)", *Poetica* 48 (2016), 1–21, who critically reviews C. Calame's suggestion (*The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece* [Princeton, 1992], 16) that γλυκύπικρος should be understood as 'sweet-stinging'.

⁷⁵ δάκνω 'bite' is used both of insects (e.g. *Il.* 17.572) and of love, as in Aeschylus' δηξιθυμον or in Soph. fr. 841 Radt τῷ δ' ἔρωτος δῆγμα παιδικὸν προσῆ 'but for him who has been stung by love for a boy'; I thank both B. Maslov and the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this.

⁷⁶ But the interpretation of Alcman fr. 58 *PMGF* ("Ἔρος ... ἄκρ' ἐπ' ἄνθη καρβίνων 'Eros coming down over the flower-tips') is debated; see C. Calame, *Alcman* (Rome, 1983), 555–6.

⁷⁷ E.g. Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 5.163 (= 4248–51 Gow–Page, *HE*) Ἀνθοδιατε μέλισσα ... | ἦ σὺ γε μινύεις ὅτι καὶ γλυκὺ καὶ δυσύποιστον, | πικρὸν ἀεὶ κραδίᾳ, κέντρον Ἔρωτος ἔχει 'O flower-nurtured honeybee ... Is your message that she has Love's sting, both sweet and hard to bear, ever bitter to the heart?'; Strato, *Anth. Pal.* 12.249.1, 6 Βουποιήτε μέλισσα ... | κήγῳ κέντρον ἔρωτος ἔχω 'Ox-born bee ... I, too, have a sting, even love's'; *Anacreontea* 35.15–16 πόσον δοκεῖς πονούσιν, | Ἔρωτος, ὅσους σὺ βάλλεις; 'If the bee-sting is painful, what pain, Love, do you suppose all your victims suffer?' Euripides' comparison of Aphrodite/love to a bee flitting around (*Hipp.* 563–4) probably does not allude to stinging; W.S. Barrett, *Euripides Hippolytos* (Oxford, 1964), 266.

Missverständnis' theory. But there is another option which, to me, appears more intriguing: the sense of *πιθαιβώσσω* intended by the poet of the *Odyssey* may have been precisely 'to sting'. The description of the Cave of the Nymphs cited in the beginning of this paper continues by saying that οὐδέ τι κείνη | ἄνδρες ἐσέρχονται, ἀλλ' ἄθανάτων ὁδός ἐστιν 'and men never enter by it, since it is a path of the immortals' (*Od.* 13.111–12). The bees sting mortals but not the gods.

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