

The Inviolable Garden of Girls in Ibycus 286 *PMG*

ἦρι μὲν αἴ τε Κυδώνια
μηλίδες ἀρδόμεναι ῥοᾶν
ἐκ ποταμῶν, ἵνα παρθένων
κῆπος ἀκήρατος, αἴ τ' οἴνανθίδες
αὐξόμεναι σκιεροῖσιν ὑφ' ἔρνεσιν⁵
οἴναρέοις θαλέθοισιν· ἐμοὶ δ' ἔρος
οὐδεμίαν κατάκοιτος ὦραν·
†τε† ὑπὸ στεροπαῖς φλέγων
Θρηίκιος Βορέας
αἴσσω παρὰ Κύπριδος ἀζαλέ-10
αἰς μανίαισιν ἐρεμνὸς ἀθαμβῆς
ἐγκρατέως πεδόθεν †φυλάσσει†
ἡμετέρας φρένας. (ed. Budelmann 2018)

In spring both the Kydonian quince-trees, watered from the streams of rivers in the inviolable garden of girls, and the blossoms of the vine, growing beneath the shady shoots of the vine-leaves, thrive—but as for me, *erōs* is at rest in no season; and Thracian Boreas, burning with lighting flashes, darting from beside the Kyprian with parching madresses, dark, undaunted, forcibly guards my heart from the ground up (my own translation).

Ibycus 286 *PMG* is preserved for us in Athenaeus (13.601b) as an example of Ibycus' love poetry, and scholars have struggled to reconcile the contrasting representations of *erōs* in the two halves of the 13-line poem. Indeed, the lush imagery of the garden in its first half strongly suggests eroticism, yet even in the first few lines, complications already appear: the girls within the garden are labelled *parthenoi*, “maidens,” and the landscape itself is defined as *akēratos*, “untouched.” In this paper I will argue that the garden, although full of erotic imagery, is distinctly lacking in *erōs* and thus the contrast between the two halves of the fragment is not of differing types of *erōs*, but of its anticipation and subsequent arrival.

Most commentators argue that the garden is itself a site of erotic activity, based on the erotic symbolism of its plant life. William Tortorelli sees the contrast as between two types of *erōs*, one the “gentle ideal of love” and the other “the speaker’s own negative experiences” (Tortorelli 2004: 375). Vanessa Cazzato, too, argues that the two halves are linked by their shared erotic nature, and thus the contrast must be between a particular kind of *erōs* in the world of the garden and a different *erōs* in world of the speaker (Cazzato 2013: 272–73). I will show in this paper, however, that there is no *erōs* present for the *parthenoi* in the garden, but that they are being nurtured for the purposes of future sexual availability, much as the plants are being cultivated for future harvesting.

I will first establish that the *kēpos* is distinct from other *loci amoeni* due to its cultivated nature (LSJ s.v. κῆπος). I will then argue that not only the quince-trees and grapevines of the garden, which have as yet to put on fruit, but the *parthenoi* as well are purposefully cultivated towards “ripeness.” The cultivation of the *kēpos* keeps the plants and the *parthenoi* unviolated (*akēratos*) by outside and harmful forces, such as those seen in the latter half of the fragment: harsh winds, violent lightning, and above all *erōs*. As Anne Carson states, “female beauty grows *until* the moment of plucking”; after a woman has taken part in sexual relations, she loses her previously untouched desirability (Carson 1990: 148 n. 29). I will therefore argue that the immature *parthenoi* of the garden must be cultivated to preserve their inviolacy up until the moment when they are ripe and ready to be picked—their *opōra*. Thus the first half of the poem serves as a “prelude that leads on to the consummation of desire,” rather than as a space for erotic activity itself (*contra* Calame 2013: 169).

My main contribution to the scholarship on Ibycus 286 *PMG* is therefore that the contrast of the fragment is first and foremost one of growth and maturity: the protected time

of *partheneia* in the first half is contrasted sharply with the violent moment of *opōra* in the second. The apparent disjunction between the two halves of Ibycus 286 *PMG* is thus not of differing types of *erōs*, but of its anticipation as built up by the cultivation of the *parthenoi* in the first half and its presence as lamented by the speaker in the latter half.

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