That Victorian ethics have been the source of many problems is a notion inculcated into us for many, many years. But lack of αἰδός does not always preserve us from difficulties, as one realizes reading the commentaries on this epigram. Here Dioscorides...
treats his subject without much reserve, one would say, yet scholars have not succeeded in giving a coherent explanation of his words. The latest editors, Gow-Page, write about lines 1-2: "This couplet presents difficulties. The second and third, if they do not conclusively prove, strongly suggest that in this σόμπλογμα Doris is καλοπίζουσα, and if so διατείνας is difficult to understand of physical position. In the middle and passive the verb is common in the sense of exerting oneself . . . Perhaps the act. may mean putting her to the stretch, calling on her to exert her full powers. 'Ὑπέρ λέχεων, though the use of the preposition is hard to parallel precisely, must surely mean on the bed, and ἐν ἀνθεσι cannot be (as it is in Theocr. 5. 87) literal. “Ἀνθος is common of physical charm, though more usually in the sing. (cf. however Solon fr. 25 ἔσθη ξηθής ἐρατότιον ἐπ’ ἄνθεσι παιδοφιλήσῃ); perhaps therefore the phrase goes with what follows and means amid her blooming charms". And Dübner prints the following comments on line 3: “Describitur schema quod κελητα appellat . . . Cui quum contraria sit in primo versu facta descriptio: υπέρ λέχεων διατείνας, tenendum est primum distichum circa praeludia quaedam ac velitationem amatoriam versari”.

As one sees, in the first distichon at least υπέρ λέχεων, διατείνας, and ἀνθεσιν ἐν χλετεροὶς have to be discussed. Let us begin with the participle. In my view διατείνας is nothing but the causative of διαβάσσα (3). Doris is sitting there over her lover, but the idea for this apparently perfectly satisfying (2) position was his (1). Therefore we meet Doris in the opening of our poem as an object of some action: Δωρίδα τὴν ροδότυγον. Δια- in διατείνας has the same meaning as in διαβάσσα, i.e. διατείνω does not mean here extendo, but distendo, as was seen by Paton and Waltz-Guillon. Compare Galen, De atra ship, commanding deep respect. Where I have no comment, I subscribe to their views.

Archaic lyric poetry will be cited from:
D. L. Page, Poetae Melici Graeci (Oxford 1962),
M. L. West, Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati, 2 vols. (Oxford 1971 resp. 1972), and

The new Archilochus Epode is cited from the editio princeps: