LYSIANASSA'S SKILLS: PHILODEMUS, *Anth. Pal.* 5.126 (= Sider 22)

'Good value for your money': such is the moral that lies behind *Anth. Pal.* 5.126 (= Sider 22), a comparison of the performance and price of two prostitutes and, consequently, of the shrewdness of the two customers to whom the women grant their favours.

Here is the text according to its most recent editor:[1]

πέντε δίδωσιν ἑνὸς τῇ δείνᾳ ὁ δεῖνα τάλαντα
καὶ βινεῖ φρίσσων καί, μὰ τόν, οὐδὲ καλήν·
πέντε δ' ἐγὼ δραχμὰς τῶν δώδεκα Λυσιανάσσῃ,
καὶ βινῶ πρὸς τῷ κρείσσονα καὶ φανερῶς.
πάντως ἤτοι ἐγὼ φρένας οὐκ ἔχω, ἢ τό γε λοιπὸν
τοὺς κείνου πελέκει δεῖ διδύμους ἀφελεῖν.

The first elegiac couplet deals with a prostitute and her male client, called ἡ δείνα and ὁ δεῖνα. She is terribly expensive, since one single sexual intercourse costs the large sum of 5 talents; therefore, he is blamed for his stupidity, not only because he pays a lot of money for what little he gets, but also because she is not even good looking.

The customer of the second couplet is the poet himself:[2] he pays quite a fair price for his companion's services, because Lysianassa is satisfied with just 5 drachmas and because she is a real beauty—but, above all, because she gives him 'the twelve favours'. This euphemistic expression is how Sider translates the Greek τῶν δώδεκα.[3] In his commentary, however, the vagueness of such a rendition (fully consistent with the generic Greek text) is clarified: the 'twelve favours' are 'the twelve times the narrator is known for being capable of (or for boasting of)'.

The last couplet contains Philodemus' amused reflections: 'Assuredly, either I'm crazy or, after all this, he should have his balls cut off with a knife' (Sider's translation again).

The meaning of this epigram is clear. What is less clear is why Philodemus has chosen the number twelve for indicating Lysianassa's generosity towards him. So far, nobody appears to have been concerned with this number. From translations of the epigram, one would infer that twelve simply represents a 'big' number, something like the four copulations that Martial claims to have had with Telesilla, or the nine boasted of by the same Philodemus, but also Catullus, and Ovid.[4]

But twelve is not an ordinary number. On the contrary, it seems to be highly significant in amatory matters. An Aristophanic passage, for example, hints at the twelve positions of Cyrene, a notorious prostitute: in the agon of the *Frogs*, Aeschylus blames Euripides for having composed his lyric songs according to the 'twelve tricks'

[1] D. Sider, *The Epigrams of Philodemos* (New York–Oxford, 1997), 138.

[2] For the sake of convenience I consider Philodemus' poems autobiographical, together with Sider and M. Gigante, *Philodemus in Italy: The Books from Herculaneum* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 49ff., although I am aware that the most recent epigram studies run counter to such a position.

[3] Sider himself has borrowed this phraseology from one of the translations given by A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1968), 367: 'Now I give Lysianassa five drachmas for twelve favours.'

[4] Mart. 11.97; Phld. *Anth. Pal.* 11.30 (= Sider 19); Catull. 32.8; Ov. *Am.* 3.7.25–6.

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of Cyrene (lines 1327–8: *ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον / Κυρήνης μελοποιῶν*)—that is, for having debased tragic art to a level fit for harlots.[5] In his commentary, Dover remarks that 'Kyrene's "twelve-trickery" … will be her sexual versatility, what Dem. xviii 130 calls *πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν*' and confines himself to saying that '*δώδεκα* is used in comic exaggerations of number'—in other words, he considers 'twelve' a mere synonym of 'many'.[6]

The scholia seem to pay more attention to that number, though. In the *scholia vetera*, Cyrene is said to be 'a very famous courtesan called "Twelvetricks" because she was able to practice that very number of sexual positions' (*Κυρήνη τις ἑταίρα ἐπίσημος, δωδεκαμήχανος ἐπικαλουμένη διὰ τὸ τοσαῦτα σχήματα ἐν τῇ συνουσίᾳ ποιεῖν*);[7] in the *scholia recentiora*, Cyrene's 'twelve tricks' are explained as the twelve erotic positions used by the woman while performing her profession (*ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον τῆς Κυρήνης, ἤγουν ἀνὰ τὰς δώδεκα αὐτῆς αἰσχρὰς μηχανάς*).[8] A similar statement is found in Hesychius, in a gloss that clearly refers to this passage (δ 2706 *δωδεκαμήχανος· πόρνη τις ἐλέγετο, διὰ τὸ τοσαῦτα σχήματα ποιεῖν συνουσίας*), but the most intriguing mention of this number is surely in the *Suda*. According to the Byzantine encyclopaedia, a late Hellenistic writer, the otherwise unknown Paxamus,[9] composed a book on sexual technique called the *Δωδεκάτεχνον* (π 253: … *Δωδεκάτεχνον, ἔστι δὲ περὶ αἰσχρῶν σχημάτων*), a title that might be translated as 'The Twelve Ways to Make Love'. Here, 'twelve' probably functions as a round number indicating the full completion of a cycle, as it does in only the most famous example of that numeral: the labours of Heracles, which probably became fixed at twelve at the beginning of the Hellenistic era.[10]

Erotic handbooks seem to have been very popular in those years. Cataloguing all the *figurae Veneris* was the scope of two much appreciated Hellenistic treatises: the *Περὶ ἀφροδισίων* written by Philaenis and the illustrated book attributed to a woman named either Elephantine or Elephantis,[11] both of whom followed in the footsteps of Astyanassa, the servant of Helen of Troy who first dedicated herself to the discovery of new sexual positions and who is credited with writing a booklet on

[5] The same accusation had been made by Aeschylus a few verses earlier (lines 1301ff.).

[6] K. Dover (ed., with intro. and comm.), *Aristophanes*, *Frogs* (Oxford, 1993), 357.

[7] Cf. *Scholia in Thesmophoriazusas; Ranas; Ecclesiazusas et Plutum*, pars III, fasc. Ia, ed. M. Chantry (Groningen, 1999), 149.

[8] Cf. *Scholia in Thesmophoriazusas; Ranas; Ecclesiazusas et Plutum*, pars III, fasc. Ib, ed. M. Chantry (Groningen, 2001), 223. According to both 'old' and 'recent' scholia, the use of the expression *ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον* is an allusion to a passage of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* (fr. 755: *ἀνὰ τὸ δωδεκαμήχανον ἄστρον*). The adjective *δωδεκαμήχανος* is used by the comic poet Plato for criticizing the excessive love for theatrical devices (*μηχαναί*) shown by the tragic poet Xenokles (Ar. *Pax* 792 and scholia).

[9] In his *RE* entry (vol. 18.2, coll. 2436–7), W. Morel dates him to the first century B.C.

[10] Cf. G. W. Bond (ed.), *Euripides*, *Heracles* (Oxford, 1981), 153–5.

[11] Philaenis' treatise is mentioned by the unknown author of the *Carmina Priapeia* (63.17) and by Lucian (*Amores* 28, *Pseudologistes* 24). P. Maas' entry in the *RE* (vol. 19.2, col. 2122) has been superseded by the scholarly debate provoked by the publication of some papyrus scraps of Philaenis' book (E. Lobel, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, XXXIX, Egypt Exploration Society Graeco-Roman Memoir [London, 1972], 2891); for a more exhaustive treatment of the subject, see D. W. T. Vessey, 'Philaenis', *RBPh* 54 (1976), 78–83, J. E. G. Whitehorne, 'Filthy Philaenis (P. Oxy. xxxix, 2981): a real lady?', in M. Capasso, G. Messeri Savorelli and R. Pintaudi (edd.) *Miscellanea Papyrologica in occasione del bicentenario dell'edizione della Charta Borgiana* (Florence, 1990), 2.529–42, M. C. Ferrero Ingelmo and E. Montero Cartelle, 'Filénide en la literatura grecolatina', *Euphrosyne* 18 (1990), 265–74. Elephantis' work is mentioned in Suet. *Tib.* 43, Mart. 12.43 and *Carmina Priapea* 4.1; cf. *RE* (O. Crusius, vol. 5.2, coll. 2324–5).

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that specific subject (*Suda* 4261: *Ἀστυάνασσα· Ἑλένης τῆς Μενελάου θεράπαινα· ἥτις πρώτη τὰς ἐν τῇ συνουσίᾳ καστακλίσεις εὗρεν καὶ ἔγραψε περὶ σχημάτων συνουσιαστικῶν*).[12]

Seen in this light, then, the epigram appears to have a more precise meaning, and Philodemus' mention of the number twelve is anything but fortuitous: the poet's pride in his choice of companion is completely justified, because, thanks to Lysianassa's abilities, he does not need to be content with just a single embrace, but can enjoy the 'full monty' of canonical sexual experiences: the twelve positions that had been surveyed and arranged by his contemporary Paxamus.

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[12] Since, as Sider remarks, 'names with the ending -*ανασσα* are rare', I wonder whether the notorious reputation of Astyanassa has led Philodemus to give his generous lover the name of Lysianassa.

FRAIL OR MONOLITHIC? A NOTE ON ASCLEPIADES' CORPUSCLES*

In memory of Hans B. Gottschalk

The doctrine of the physician Asclepiades of Bithynia (*fl.* second century B.C.?) which has attracted most attention in modern scholarship has arguably been that of his elemental bodies, the so-called *ἀνάρμοι ὄγκοι*. Were they atoms with a different name? Or were they a substantially different kind of particles, and, if so, what kind of particles? The controversy is so deep as to involve the very meaning of the expression by which Asclepiades is reported to have called them, in particular the adjective *ἀνάρμοι*. This is a very rare adjective, formed of privative *an-* and *armos* ('joint', 'fastening'). The basic idea is, thus, that of a lack of articulations ('jointless'), whatever that means when applied to elemental bodies. Since Asclepiades' corpuscles shatter into fragments on occasion, the mainstream interpretation is that the reference is to their lack of internal cohesion (transl. 'weak' or 'frail').[1] Gottschalk, by contrast, understands the adjective as indicating that nothing interrupts the corpuscles' cohesion, and proposes the very opposite meaning ('seamless' → 'rigid', 'monolithic').[2] It is not my intention to provide either a detailed *status quaestionis* or a comprehensive reappraisal of the body of testimonia.[3] My intention is, rather, to draw attention to a testimony which has not been considered so far, and which provides evidence to the contrary of the mainstream interpretation, and in favour of Gottschalk's own.

* This note has benefited from comments by David Sedley and Philip van der Eijk. I should like to thank the anonymous referee of *CQ* for suggestions for improvement.

[1] E.g., most recently, J. T. Vallance, *The Lost Theory of Asclepiades of Bithynia* (Oxford, 1990), 21–2.

[2] H. B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus* (Oxford, 1980), 38–42, provides a close examination of usages of the adjective.

[3] Both can be found in Vallance (n. 1), 7–43. To my best knowledge, no later discussion of the topic has appeared.

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