

Myrtia, n° 15, 2000, pp. 255-258

ASCLEPIADES AND PROSTITUTION

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Professor F. Cairns wastes almost thirty pages ("Asclepiades and the Hetairai", *Eikasmós* 9, 1998, pp. 165-193) in order to *enfoncer une porte ouverte*, i.e. in order to show what classical scholars have always known, namely that the girls with whom Asclepiades consorted were prostitutes who sold their sexual services (*cf.*, for example, H. Licht, *Sittenges. Griechenlands*, II, Leipzig, 1926, p. 52, with excellent treatment of the matter, based on RE and Daremberg-Saglio). Cameron's baseless contention to the contrary, which Cairns contradicts with immense verbosity, has already been dismissed by H. White, with her customary succinctness, in her by now renowned review of Cameron's book (*Habis* 29, 1998, p. 391). Cameron, of course, does not retain the monopoly of the "méconnaissance totale du texte" and the "méconnaissance du thème" (to quote Professor van Looy's severe judgement, in *Hommages Voordeckers*, Turnhout, 1997, p. 333 ff.), whenever he tries to deal with ancient poetry¹: Cairns is known to be similiary afflicted², and such affliction of his shows in the paper he has published in *Eikasmós*. I shall quote only three examples, which are indicative of his inability to understand the texts he faces and to assess ancient evidence.

On p. 184 Cairns discusses *A.P.* V 210, without even knowing that the mss. reading τῶ θαλλῶ in line 1, which he believes to be corrupt, is correct,

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¹ When attempting to understand the epigram in Cougny VII, 31, Cameron was unable to explain how five sailors could man ten ships, until H. White pointed out that δέκα, in line 1, means "ten times" (*GIF* 50, 1998, p. 68 f.; for the motif of the τρικυμῖαι, *cf.* e.g. Rattenbury-Lumb-Mallon, *Héliodore*, Paris, 1960, vol. II, p. 73, n. 1). The shipwreck was completed by the *decumanus fluctus*, *cf. Thes.*, s.v. τρικυμῖα.

² Instructive examples will be found in K. Alexander's review of *Atti Conv. SISAC*, Naples 1984, published in *CL* 1983, p. 134 f. According to Cairns (*cf. Myrtia* 12, 1997, p. 21 f.) the Argonauts made not for Colchis, but for the Caspian Sea.

indeed constitutes the witty *pointe* of the epigram, as H. White brilliantly demonstrated several years ago (*Further Studies in Greek Poetry*, Athens, 1992, p. 12): Didyme has succeeded in bewitching Asclepiades, although she is dark-skinned. This is not all: Cameron, without one shred of evidence, alleged that the Didyme who seduced Asclepiades was a mistress of Ptolemy Philadelphus: this is, of course, "pure fiction", as H. White has underlined (*Habis* 29, 1998, p. 392). Cameron's allegation is not only devoid of any proof, but becomes, at the hands of Cairns who swallows it, farcical: Cameron invents that Asclepiades sojourned in Alexandria, where he associated with Ptolemy, and at the same time publicly declared, in his epigram, that he was daring enough to bed, by paying her, one of Ptolemy's mistresses, i.e. Didyme: it is as if the Poet Laureate of the day wrote an ode in order to boast that he copulated with Mrs. Langtry. Who, in his senses, would dare to touch a "hetaira of Ptolemy Philadelphus", to quote Cairns himself (art. cit., p. 184)? Powerful persons like Ptolemy, of course, "wollen ihre Dirne nicht mit anderen teilen", as everybody knows (cf. *RE* VIII, col. 1340).

The second error made by Cairns consists in his hopelessly misunderstanding *A.P.* V 7. For the sake of brevity, I refer the reader to my *Scr.Min.Alex.* II, p. 365, where I have, I hope with laudable clarity and conciseness, posed the problem and solved it. First of all, Cairns (art. cit., p. 189) has totally failed to understand the document accurately explained by Sudhoff as quoted in *RE* VIII, col. 1342, 63 ff. The document is not (as Cairns comprehends) a normal "rental agreement" for residence, insofar as it does not allow Thinabdella to reside on the premises she rents; however, the document cannot be a "prostitution permit", as Cairns strangely contends, because prostitution permits did not exist in antiquity: prostitutes did not need any such permits to ply their trade, and were only required to pay "die Hetärensteuer" (Sudhoff); the document studied by Sudhoff is an "eigentümlich" (so Sudhoff) contract, insofar as it allows Thinabdella to rent and use the premises not as her dwelling, but for the explicit purpose of copulating there with any client she wishes (ἐπιχωροῦμέν σοι μεθ' οὗ ἐὰν θέλῃς ἐνθάδε κοιμᾶσθαι), i.e. she is one of those girls who used rented premises not as their permanent residence, but "zur Ausübung ihres Gewerbes" (*RE*, loc. cit.). That the accommodation mentioned in the document studied by Sudhoff may have belonged "to Thinadbella", as Cairns surmises, is impossible, because, as Sudhoff (whose conclusions are accepted in *RE*, art. cit.) underlines, she "offenbar" needed the permission of the owners of the "Wohnung" to use it for the purposes of prostitution: prostitutes who used "eigene Häuser" (*RE*, art. cit.: e.g. οἰκία in Alciphr. IV 7, 1 and IV 9, 1) "zur Ausübung ihres Gewerbes" needed nobody's permission to do so.

Sudhoff, followed by *RE*, *loc. cit.*, correctly concludes that the "zwei assoziierte τελώναι" are the owners of the "Gebäude" in question, and that it is in this latter capacity of theirs that they give Thindabella the "eigentümliche Erlaubnis". Sudhoff underlines that τελώναι were "Steuerpächter", "tax-collectors", whose job was to collect taxes: they were not empowered to permit or forbid the exercising of prostitution as a profession; accordingly, Thindabella is given not a permit to exercise the profession of prostitute, but only the "eigentümliche Erlaubnis" to use the premises in question in order to receive her clients. The two "assoziierte τελώναι" are obviously τελώναι ἐταιρικοῦ (*cf. Ostr.* 83, in Sudhoff, *loc. cit.*): evidently, as a sideline they acted like πορνοβοσκοί (*cf. Thes.*, *s.v.* τελώνης, with material), in that they offered accommodation addresses to be rented by free "Dirnen" like Thindabella.

Philodemos mentions an accommodation address at *A.P.* V 46. In line 7 of this epigram (= Gow-Page, *Garl. Phil.* 3186) the question which the poet asks the girl (ποῦ γίνῃ;) cannot mean "*ubi habitas?*" (Jacobs), "where do you live?" (Gow-Page): it can only signify "where do you arrive?" and alludes to the accommodation address at which the girl is wont to arrive³ in order to receive her clients (= ἤξειν, κοῦχ ἤκει⁴, *A.P.* V 7, 2), the poet will send a servant to fetch her from her accommodation address (πέμψω), because he prefers to go to bed with her at his house, after she has received her clients at her accommodation address.

The third error committed by Cairns is represented by his failure to understand the nature of accommodation addresses. Such addresses are the very opposite of "public (*sic!*) houses of assignation", "a dwelling publicly (*sic!*) accessible for sexual purposes", as he preposterously writes (*art. cit.*, p. 189 f.): they constituted (as they do to-day) a strictly private arrangement⁵

³ *Cf.* Moulton-Milligan, *Vocab. Gr. Test.*, *s.v.* γίνομαι (γενοῦ πρὸς Ἄταιν, etc.).

⁴ On the equivalence of γίνομαι and ἤκω, *cf.* Moulton-Milligan, *ibid.*

⁵ Upon being asked by Philodemos her accommodation address (*A.P.* V 46, 7), the girl refuses to mention it aloud, because she does not want to be overheard by passers-by, tells Philodemos "καταμάθανε", i.e. "look here", and presents her calling-card (*cf.* Gow-Page, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*). For καταμαθάνω "look", "observe", *cf.* Moulton-Milligan, *op. cit.*, *s.v.* The verb used by the girl is, therefore, not "odd", as Gow-Page write, but contextually apposite. It will be noted that Philodemos, meeting the girl in the street, realizes (respectable girls were never unaccompanied, when out of doors) correctly that she is an "ambulante Dirne", as such not confined in a brothel, but likely to have an accommodation address (*cf. Scr. Min. Alex.*, *loc. cit.*). Sider (*The Epigrams of Philodemos*, Oxford, 1997, p. 134) realizes that the question ποῦ γίνῃ; denotes

made in order to protect the privacy of a prostitute's clients who wanted to avoid the stigma of being seen to use a public πορνεῖον. The verb θέλης, in the document studied by Sudhoff, is significant: whereas women who worked in public brothels or in houses publicly known to be used for prostitution received any comers, who had to queue up (*cf.* Vorberg, *Gloss. Erot.*, p. 318, on the sign "*occupata*"; Aristaen. II 16, § 1: τὴν ἡμετέραν οἰκίαν... " ἔνδον ἕτερος"...), girls who, like Thinabdella, operated at private accommodation addresses could afford to be choosy, and arranged to meet only those clients whom they judged desirable.

Conclusion: I trust I have made the incurable nature of Cairns' errors patent to my readers.

the fact that the girl is expected by Philodemos to come "to a favourite location away from home", but he does not understand that such location to which the girl will come (= ἤξειν, κοῦχ ἦκει, *A.P.* V 7, 2) is her accommodation address. Free-lance "Dirmen" worked either in their "eigene Häuser", or elsewhere than at home, in which case they rented either a *cella* in the μαρτυλεῖα or premises as an accommodation address (*RE, loc. cit.*; Vorberg, *Gloss. Erot.*, p. 319).