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Two epigrams by Asclepiades (XXV, XVI G.-P.)

By Eric W. Handley, Cambridge

Epigrammatists speak with many voices. Perhaps this was always so, ever since verses were first fashioned to be written on objects – a personal possession, a dedication to a god, a tomb, or whatever else was to be given a special identity. The hellenistic poets who developed the epigram as a literary entertainment had a variety of patterns to follow, and, in their characteristic way, to blend. Among their sources of inspiration outside that of the epigram and of its relations in the symposion, there is one which developed to the height of its achievement in the later fourth and the early third century, and continued to be widely popular throughout Antiquity in places where plays were performed and Greek was spoken or studied – namely, the New Comedy of Menander and his contemporaries and successors. For later generations, New Comedy became a classic of popular fiction, with its images of love-affairs and family quarrels, and its reflections of the language of an admired Athens of the past. Commenting on what might be a hellenistic epigram on Menander in his *Further Greek Epigrams* (1981), anon. XLII, Denys Page remarked: “he is remembered in all periods from the *Garland* of Philip onwards”. I hope that Thomas Gelzer will look with pleasure, as he certainly will with a deep knowledge, on this case-study of two epigrams by a much admired early hellenistic poet, in which the names of Aristophanes and others will in fact join that of Menander.

If there were to be a reason, other than simply personal ones, for the nature of this offering, it can be pinned on to the year 1995. 1995 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, which, with the parallel volumes that followed, has been the foundation of so much later work, including (with profound acknowledgment) the present offering. There is some encouragement to try to go a little further with relationships between comedy and epigram when we recall that in those thirty years there have been highly interesting accessions, both of texts from papyri, and of images of plays and their actors in works of art of all kinds from paintings to terracottas¹. The gain, from our

1 In this context, the recovery of large parts of Menander, *Misoumenos* is especially interesting, including the opening scene of a lover at a door in the rain and the dark: new text in the Loeb Menander, vol. 2 (forthcoming 1996/97), edited by W. Geoffrey Arnott. The numerous papyri and quotations of unknown or uncertain authorship are collected very helpfully in vol. VIII (1995) of Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci*; works of art relating to New Comedy are catalogued in the third edition (1995), by J. R. Green and Axel Seeberg, of T. B. L. Webster's *Monuments illustrating New Comedy*, with much new material, prefatory discussion and analysis.

present viewpoint, is twofold: firstly in somewhat better documentation of plays lost or largely lost which were popular classics for centuries; and secondly, in a clearer reflection of that popularity, when we think of the readers of the books and the patrons of the artists and craftsmen at different times, in different places and on different levels in the social scale.

Asclepiades XXV (920ff.) G.-P. = *AP* 5.181

- 920 τῶν †καρίων† ἡμῖν λαβὲ †κώλακας†· ἀλλὰ ποῦ' ἤξει;
καὶ πέντε στεφάνους τῶν ῥοδίνων. τί τὸ πάξ;
οὐ φῆς κέρματ' ἔχειν; διολώλαμεν· οὐ τροχιεῖ τις
τὸν Λαπίθην; ληστήν, οὐ θεράποντ', ἔχομεν.
οὐκ ἀδικεῖς οὐδέν; φέρε τὸν λόγον· ἐλθὲ λαβοῦσα,
925 Φρύνη, τὰς ψήφους. ὦ μεγάλου κινάδους·
πέντ' οἶνος δραχμῶν, ἀλλᾶς δύο, ...
ὦτα, λέγεις, σκόμβροι, †θέσμουκες† σχαδόνες.
αὔριον αὐτὰ καλῶς λογιούμεθα, νῦν δὲ πρὸς Αἴσκραν
τὴν μυρόπωλιν ἰὼν πέντε λάβ' †ἀργυρέας·
930 εἰπέ δὲ σημεῖον Βάκχων ὅτι πέντ' ἐφίλησεν
ἐξῆς, ὧν κλίνη μάρτυς ἐπεγράφετο.

This sketch of a man preparing for a party is one of a small group of epigrams with related themes which includes, among its neighbours in *AP*, the shorter and simpler Asclepiades XXVI, εἰς ἀγορὰν βαδίσας, Δημήτριε ... There the opening words give an instant lead-in to the situation, that of sending someone shopping. Likewise, in Menander's *Misoumenos* (270) when we hear ξένος ἐστὶν εἷς, μάγειρε, κἀγὼ καὶ τρίτη | ἐμή τις ..., "There's one guest, cook, and myself, and the third, a lady ...", the short monologue, without the intervention of another voice, both gives a lead-in and invites expectation for what is to come. In a play, we have the aid of what we can see on stage (in this instance the speaker is accompanied by an eminently recognizable cook); and there is more or less help from our expectations in the context; the epigram, without those aids, challenges us as it goes to reconstruct and evaluate the situation and the person or persons involved; but in both cases the image of a 'real-life' event is all the more readily formed because it is an image familiar from popular fiction as well as from personal experience. Feasts, parties and all the business that goes with preparing for them are a traditional and well-loved element of Greek Comedy for which (thanks in part to Athenaeus' interests in his *Deipnosophistae*) we happen to have very rich documentation². When we can add

2 For essentials, see G.-P. ad loc. and G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry* (1987) 163 and n. 33; for more on feasts, parties, cooks and cooking in Comedy, see T. B. L. Webster, "Menander: production and imagination", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 45 (1962) 235–271 at p. 268; Handley on M. *Dysk.* 946–953 (p. 300) and 393 (p. 199f.), with "A particle of Greek Comedy", in *Studies ... Webster* ii (Bristol 1988) 51–55, and the new text, PDuke inv. F 1984, 1, published and discussed by W. H. Willis in *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies* 32 (1991) 331–353, now *PCG* VIII. 1146; Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table* (1993) 78ff.

detailed correspondences of vocabulary and idiom, there is good reason to allow, with Gow-Page, that epigrams like Asclepiades XXV and XXVI “seem modelled on scenes from Comedy or Mime”, provided that our general expectation is for the modelling to be typological rather than specifically allusive.

Asclepiades XXV, to be properly appreciated, needs to be read as a monologue, like XXVI, and not, as G.-P. put it, “dismembered into a dialogue between the master and the slave”. All the same, the effect of dialogue is given in an interesting way when the speaker is presented not simply as addressing another person (or people), but as echoing words notionally spoken to him, as at 921f., τί τὸ πάξ, κτλ.: “What do you mean, ‘enough’? Are you saying you’ve no change?”³.

The familiar case of this in Comedy is when a character enters from a door on stage while talking over his shoulder, as it were, to someone notionally inside, as at Menander, *Dyskolos* 456, τὸ λεβήτιον, φής, ἐπιλέλη[σϋ]ε; “You lot have forgotten the stewpot, you say?”. More elaborate examples of dialogue within monologue will concern us later in regard to Asclepiades XVI; but as part of their background, and especially that of the epigram being discussed, it is material to refer here to two passages of Aristophanes.

At *Thesmophoriazusae* 279–294, Euripides’ kinsman is at last dressed as a woman, and prepares for the festival by taking on, or as we might say miming, the role of a mother of two children accompanied by her slave girl, who is surely imaginary: “Now come along with me, Thratta. Oh, Thratta, look ...” (279f.); “The basket, Thratta, and the cake, for the sacrifice” (284f.); “Off you go, Thratta” (293). The repeated name, far from being an indication of the presence of another person, is more like a device to lend reality to the miming. The names in the epigram at 925, 928 and 930 may likewise contribute to its realism⁴.

The opening scene of *Clouds* is interesting to us not only for some of its formal characteristics, but for one of its prominent motifs. What might have been presented simply as a monologue by Strepsiades is diversified into dia-

3 For πάξ, see Headlam on Herodas 7.114, who refers *inter alia* to Menander, *Epitr.* 657/987 and Diphilus, *inc. fab.* 96KA (B) πάξ. (A) τί πάξ; The words κέρμα and κερμάτιον (as at M. *Heros* 7) are well documented in LSJ as terms for ‘money’.

4 One name is conspicuously absent, unless it is hidden in the †κώλακας† of 920. τῶν καρῶν ἡμῖν λαβέ is easy Greek for “Get us some walnuts”, like Ar. *Ach.* 805 ἐνεγκάτω τις ἔνδοθεν τῶν ισχάδων, “Someone bring out some figs”; for the nut stalls (τὰ κάρυα) as a familiar market feature, see Theophrastus, *Char.* 11.4. Then one could think of a parenthesis like ὁ Κώκαλος ἄρά ποῦ ἤξει; with some prompting from the way the slaves are summoned at Ar. *Frogs* 608f. ὁ Διτύλας χά Σκεβλύας χά Παρδόκας | χωρεῖτε δευρί ...; but the elided λαβέ is an objection, if not a strong one, as Dr Neil Hopkinson remarks to me, referring to Gow-Page, *Garland of Philip*, I, xlii n. 3. The more correct reaction may be despair: G.-P. here discuss other ideas, and from among them suggest (following Hermann) that τῶν καρῶν ... κλώνακας, “walnut-tree leaves” deserves consideration; τρεῖς καρῶν ... χοίνικας (Waltz) has support “but this seems far too much for five diners”.

logue mode in various ways. The sleepless old man calls on Zeus (2), curses War (6), and summons a slave to bring a light and his tablet of accounts. From these, he reads aloud, as at 31, τρεῖς μναῖ διφρίσκου καὶ τροχοῖν Ἀμυνία; he makes comments, interrupted by cries from his son talking in his sleep; on this sleep-talk he also comments, achieving a fascinating kind of quasi-dialogue, until the son at last wakes for a moment of genuine verbal exchange, and then goes to sleep again. Monologue mode resumes; dialogue breaks in with one more interruption by the slave who says the oil has run out (56–59).

What leads to the scrutiny of the accounts in Asclepiades' epigram is the extravagance (as his master sees it), not to say the dishonesty, of the slave's earlier marketing, which has caused the money to run out. We are left to ask ourselves if master and slave do not rather deserve each other. Again, the detail will have been familiar: the threat of punishment, the angry man's resort to a trivial reference from myth, the accusation of robbery, the common abuse-word κίναδος and so on⁵.

Apart from *Clouds*, lines 926–927 bring to mind a number of passages in Comedy where by-play is made with reckoning or sums of money⁶. Alexis, *Apeglaukomenos* 15KA is particularly in point, as can be seen at a glance:

- 3 (B) δίκαιος ὁ λόγος. (A) ἀβάκιον, ψῆφον. λέγε.
 (B) ἔστ' ὠμόταριχος πέντε χαλκῶν. (A) λέγ' ἕτερον.
 5 (B) μῦς ἑπτὰ χαλκῶν. (A) οὐδὲν ἀσεβεῖς οὐδέπω.
 λέγε. (B) τῶν ἐχίνων ὀβελός. (A) ἀγνεύεις ἔτι.

In our text, the “wine: five drachmas” and the “sausage: two” are precisely analogous to the marine items (whatever they are) that rate five and seven coppers in Alexis. Our seafood is still to come, but at least one item seems to have escaped. Various suggestions have been made for something at the end of 926 to make a parallel to the wine and sausage. One can add the thought, with no more certainty than the other ideas, that the speaker may have skipped to a total before he comes to the string of items that follow: perhaps then <δῶδεκα πάντα>, “twelve in all”; and if anyone remembered the axes in *Odyssey* 19.578 and 21.76, no harm is done, any more than if the bed in the last line recalled

5 For torture by the wheel, apart from LSJ s.v. τροχίζω, τροχός, note ἐπὶ τὸν τροχόν ποῦ' οὗτος ἀνέβη, “he's a villain” in Com. Anon. (Menander?), *PCG* VIII. 1152; angry men and myth, M. *Dysk.* 153 (Perseus), frg. 718 (Prometheus); Straton, *Phoenikides* 1KA, 1 Σφίγγ' ἄρρεν', οὐ μάγειρον, a type of expression which also formally parallels ληστήν, οὐ θεράποντ' ἔχομεν (Fraenkel, *Elementi plautini* 47ff. gives more), and for the theft motif, note M. *Aspis* 228ff. (Max Treu, *Philologus* 102, 1958, 215–239 gives more). The οὐκ ἀδικεῖς οὐδὲν, in a context of reckoning, is like the οὐδὲν ἀσεβεῖς in Alexis (quoted next in the text), but note it also at M. *Dysk.* 143, 348; *Sam.* 328.

6 Two recent acquisitions are Com. Anon. (Menander?), POxy LXII (1996) no. 4302 and other fragments = *PCG* VIII. 1152, as referred to above; and PHerc 78, Caecilius, *Obolostates siue Faenerator*, as presented by K. Kleve at the 21. Internationaler Papyrologenkongress, Berlin 13.–19. August 1995.

the celebrated one built by Odysseus. We should look for another escapee. Not in λέγεις, for which λαγώς (Jacobs) has been favoured, for it “diversifies a long catalogue and adds to the vivacity of the speech” (G.-P.), but in †θέσμουκες†, which (they say) “seems hopeless”. But if we recognize θές “put it down” as a word wholly apt to the context of accounting, μουκες will yield μύ<α>κες, “sea-mussels”, a word equally apt; and the admired vivacity will be further enhanced⁷. The scrutiny is not to last: the impatient host has his mind on another project, and turns to that with the remark that “We’ll work it out properly tomorrow”.

The last project is the twist in the poem’s tail. It is a pity to miss it through doubts about what ἀργυρέας can be. The slave is to hurry to Aischra’s and get myrrh for the guests: the idea is that she will provide it on credit to Bacchon’s slave, once he is identified as the man who once made love to her five times over, and the bed is called as witness to the love-pact. The bed is witness in the same spirit that Praxagora calls her lamp λορδουμένων ... σωμάτων ἐπιστάτην in Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae* (10: one could name more lamps of this kind); the ἀργύρεαι can hardly represent money (for Bacchon has run out of it); silver flasks, λήκυθοι from the pantry, they may well be, one for each of the diners: that would make a good impression at the shop, if nothing else; and there seems no reason why ἰών ... λαβέ in 929 should not mean “go and take” (like ἀργύριον λαβὼν τρέχω in the similar scene in *M. Samia* at 195) – even if in 924, ἐλθὲ λαβοῦσα, we make that hard-working word into English “come and bring”, and think of ἡμῖν λαβέ in 920 as “(go and) get”. In that case, a useful parallel would be Aristophanes, *Heroes* 310 KA, τρέχ’ ἐς τὸν οἶνον ἀμφορέα κενὸν λαβὼν | τῶν ἔνδοθεν ... “Run to the wine shop and take an empty jar from the storeroom.”

It may be that one day Asclepiades will come to the daylight in a substantial copy on papyrus, and so enjoy the good fortune of Menander and of his fellow epigrammatist Posidippus. What can (with luck) happen to textual problems was neatly and happily illustrated in 1987 by POxy LIV. 3724, edited by Peter Parsons, in which ends of lines survive from Asclepiades XII (*AP* 5.145): they reinforce the reading ἐρώντων in its third line (862) and establish the neglected conjecture ἐκείνου for ἄμεινον in its fifth (864). At present, as we have seen above, the miraculous dexterity of a whole comic scene in twelve lines is seen by a light that sometimes, inevitably, flickers and fails. The comic poets themselves can perhaps help us to come nearer to the perception of the epigrammatist and his ancient admirers.

7 For θές, see LSJ s.v. τίθημι, A II 9b, with Eupolis, *Kolakes* 165KA δεῖπνον (? -ου) θές ἑκατὸν δραχμάς and *M. Epitr.* 522/749, Θεσμοφόρια δις τίθει, Σκίρα δις. The set of seafood, for such it seems to be, is spoilt by σχαδόνας, which LSJ quotes from Comedy as “honeycomb”; but also in other senses, including wasp or bee larvae; so that it is not unthinkable, although apparently unattested, as the name of something in a fishmarket. Punctuate ... σκόμβροι· θές ... σχαδόνας· ...

Asclepiades XVI (880ff.) G.-P. = *AP* 12.50

880 Πῖν', Ἀσκληπιάδη· τί τὰ δάκρυα ταῦτα; τί πάσχεις;
 οὐ σὲ μόνον χαλεπὴ Κύπρις ἐλήϊσατο,
 οὐδ' ἐπὶ σοὶ μούνῳ κατεθῆξατο τόξα καὶ ἰούς
 πικρὸς Ἔρωσ· τί ζῶν ἐν σποδιῇ τίθεισαι;
 πίνωμεν Βάκχου ζωρὸν πόμα· δάκτυλος ἄως·
 885 ἢ πάλι κοιμιστὰν λύχνον ἰδεῖν μένομεν;
 †πίνωμεν, οὐ γὰρ ἔρωσ† μετὰ τοι χρόνον οὐκέτι πουλύν,
 σχέτλιε, τὴν μακρὰν νύκτ' ἀναπαυσόμεθα.

Our second epigram has much less to do with Comedy, certainly in any main-line sense, since it is firmly set in the context of a symposion. The opening πῖνε strikes that note at once, and it continues to sound, interwoven with thoughts of love and death, as the symposiast is revealed as heartbroken and unconsoled, while dawn is a mere hand's breadth away (if that will do as an equivalent for δάκτυλος ἄως in 884: whatever else it does, the echo of Alcaeus in 884–885 seems to authenticate the nature of the scene to be imagined)⁸.

Again, though the text is much better preserved, the detail has been much debated⁹. For us, the interesting question, after what we have seen in XXV, is who is supposed to be speaking? It is even a question whether we should ask that; or if we do, whether our initial expectation will not somehow be changed.

“It is not quite plain,” observe G.-P., “whether A. is addressing himself or is addressed by comrades at a symposium”. Beckby (ed. *AP*) speaks crisply in support of the latter view: “Die Szene spielt beim Symposion; die Kameraden sprechen”; and so (to take a further opinion in this sense) Daniel H. Garrison, in *Mild Frenzy*, p. 23, says that the poem “dramatizes the comforting of a lovesick symposiast who is unable to conceal his sadness”; ... “the effect in this epigram is of not one but many friends chiming in with a word of comfort”¹⁰. In *Hellenistic Poetry* (1988), G. O. Hutchinson follows a more elaborate line in holding that “It only becomes clear as the poem proceeds that Asclepiades is not addressing himself; and the device is meant to seem strange” (275f.); in a note (n. 106), among other pertinent remarks, we find: “The last couplet, in particular, it would be very unnatural to give to Asclepiades”.

The lovelorn lover is a figure in common between New Comedy and the epigram, and not only in his classic appearances, with their apparently endless variations, in scenes at the street-door like the one in *Misoumenos* already mentioned (note 1). Asclepiades XVIII, οἶνος ἔρωτος ἔλεγχος ... (*AP* 12.135) describes a companion at a party who by turns weeps and nods off to sleep, his

8 Alcaeus 161/346 πίνωμεν· τί τὰ λύχν' ὀμμένομεν; δάκτυλος ἄμερα.

9 Giuseppe Giangrande, “Symptotic Literature and Epigram”, in *Entretiens Hardt* XIV (1968) 91–177, has an extensive discussion of the poem at pp. 128–135.

10 *Mild Frenzy: a reading of the Hellenistic Love Epigram* (Hermes Einzelschriften 41, 1978).

head downcast (καί τι κατηφῆς ἔβλεπε), his garland displaced. The same tell-tale signs, with an element of anger added, are seen in the young man in Menander's *Dis Exapaton*, when he thinks his girl has been unfaithful (104f.: τί κατηφῆς καὶ σκυθρωπός, εἶπέ μοι, | καὶ βλέμμα τοῦθ' ὑπόδακρυ;). What was also within the experience of Asclepiades and his readers, and is increasingly within ours, is the way in which Menander's lovers (true, not only lovers) absent themselves from reality for a while to reflect introspectively on the state they are in, briefly or at length, and to conduct quasi-dialogues with themselves or others as they voice their thoughts aloud¹¹.

So (to be economical with examples) young Sostratos in the *Dyskolos*, having cried οἶμοι κακοδαίμων as the girl he loves disappears from view, at once pulls himself together with the words παῦε ὑρηνῶν, Σώστρατε· | ἔσται κατὰ τρόπον "It'll be all right" (213f.)¹². The Sostratos in *Dis Exapaton*, whose downcast and tearful appearance has just been noted, had made a similar effort in the depths of his disillusionment: ἐ[π]άγ[αγε, Σ]ώστρατε (23). That elderly lover, Demeas in the *Samia*, checks an emotional outcry with ὦ – τί, Δημέα, βοᾶς; | τί βοᾶς, ἀνόητε; κάτεχε σαυτόν, καρτέρει (326f.). More interestingly to us, as he works out his situation, fighting between anger and self-control, he verges into dialogue mode by rehearsing the argument to himself: "She's a damned whore. Well, she'll have to go. Δημέα, νῦν ἄνδρα χρῆ | εἶναί σε· ἐπιλαθοῦ τοῦ πόθου, πέπαυσ' ἐρῶν" (348–350). We have lost, perhaps for ever, the *meditationes* in Menander's *Psophodees*, *Nomothetes* and *Hypobolimaios* which Quintilian thought of as textbook examples of set speeches (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.70); a new discovery, a remarkable speech of self-debate by Thrasonides in Act IV of *Misoumenos* can be recognized, in spite of severe problems of reading and articulation, in the fragment published and discussed by Margaret Maehler in 1992 as POxy LIX. 3967¹³. Should we then not think after all of Asclepiades consoling himself?

There is a sting in the tail, but I should like to think of it in a different way from the interpretations I have so far met. It turns on how we read 886 †πίνωμεν, οὐ γὰρ ἔρωσ†. A literal attempt on the phrase by Wilamowitz has had some support (but not from G.-P., who quote it from *Hellenistische Dichtung* ii. 113): "Wir trinken, denn Eros ist nicht', an den wird heute nicht gedacht." It seems so abrupt and so out of key with the context as to make one sympathize with those who prefer to obelize or emend. πίνωμεν can be written, to

11 The topic of "Dialogue in the Menandrian monologue" was given an airing long ago by George F. Osmun, *TAPhA* 83 (1952) 156–163; but see for preference the more up-to-date survey by John Blundell in Chapter 3, pp. 65–82, of his *Menander and the Monologue* (*Hypomnemata* 59, Göttingen 1980).

12 Not at first recognized by some people, including myself in *ed. Dysk.*; but see Handley/Hurst, *Relire Ménandre* (Genève 1990) at pp. 137f.

13 There is an overlap with POxy XXXIII. 2656, which partly simplifies matters, partly complicates them further: see Arnott, quoted n. 1, for a hard try for a sound, readable version.

echo the *πίνωμεν* of 884, but that requires further emendation, as in *πίνωμεν, δύσερωσ* (Kaibel) and *πίνωμεν γεραρῶσ* (Page). Giangrande (quoted n. 9) is emphatic in favour of his suggestion *πιομένου γὰρ Ἔρωσ* which he translates as “*Ἔρωσ se livre à qui boira’, i.e. if you will drink like us, you will triumph over your love-pangs*” (p. 130), but leaves a worry, in spite of the purposeful aim to stay close to the transmitted text, over the use of the future participle, and prompts one to ask if it is not possible to make more sense without altering anything at all.

In 885, the question *ἦ ... μένομεν;* “Are we waiting to see the torch again that takes us home to bed?” is in effect a deliberative, as such questions can be in English and other languages (“Are we going ...?” and so on). A useful example in Greek is Rufinus, *AP* 5.75 *ὄσπε τί ποιοῦμεν; φεύγομεν ἢ μένομεν;* The *πίνωμεν* gives the answer: “Drinking, aren’t we, Love?”, *πίνωμεν, οὐ γάρ; Ἔρωσ* – and, Eros, of course, not Asclepiades, is the *σχέτλιε* in the remark that follows. The vocative is placed in that as it is in Meleager XIV (*AP* 5.57):

*τὴν περινηχομένην ψυχὴν ἦν πολλάκι καίης
φεύξετ’, Ἔρωσ· καυτή, σχέτλι’, ἔχει πτέρυγας.*

One might claim the colloquial Attic of Comedy as the model for the *οὐ γάρ;* (as at *M. Dysk.* 782, *ἔνδον περιμενεῖς, οὐ γάρ;*), except that it can be found also at the stylistic level of Demosthenes, in *Aristocratem* (23.161 *καλά γ’, οὐ γάρ; ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τὰ γεγραμμένα*).

But how is it that Asclepiades turns to address Love? And what do we make of the plurals in 884–888, which are surely addressed to, or refer to, the company at large? Perhaps we are expected to realize that at this hour just before dawn, Asclepiades is the only man present and awake; some of the friends with whom he began the party may have crept off home; those that are still there are asleep; so far from consoling him, they are too far gone to respond. Anyone who recalls the end of Plato’s *Symposium*, as Asclepiades perhaps did, will have an idea of the scene¹⁴.

¹⁴ I am grateful to colleagues who have tolerated my explorations of these ideas, and especially to Professor Herwig Maehler for the opportunity to incorporate them in a paper read to a symposium on ‘Research topics in Hellenistic Egypt’, held at University College London, 8–10 July 1991.