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τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον (SOPATER FR. 13, 1): ODYSSEUS THE HEDONIST

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A considerable time span of nearly four hundred years separates the Homeric *Odyssey*[1] (featuring Odysseus' archetypical katabasis[2] in Book 11) from the dramatic production of the Cypriot (Paphian) playwright Sopater[3], who composes phlyakes[4] in the late fourth – early third century BC[5]. One of Sopater's plays bears the intriguing title *Nekyia*, while the play's single surviving fragment (fr. 13) mentions – and satirizes – Odysseus by name[6].

[1] The composition date of the Homeric poems is estimated to have been the late 8th – early 7th century BC. On the 'Homeric Question' cf. TURNER 1997 and FOWLER 2004 (both with further bibliography).

[2] On this vast thematic topos cf., *exempli gratia*, the recent collected volumes by BONNECHÈRE/CURSARU 2015 and EKROTH/NILSSON 2018.

[3] Kassel–Austin 1, 275-287.

[4] Phlyakes seem to have been a special category of comic dramas featuring abundant mythological burlesque and paratragedy. Recently, FAVI (2017, 21-53) shed ample light upon the controversial (in antiquity and modern times) literary genre of phlyacography, challenging the core notion of phlyacography as a distinct literary genre and making instead the case of it being a geographical appellation. FAVI's reevaluation of phlyacography is not irrelevant to the radical approach to Sopater and his phlyaces by NESSELRATH 2016.

[5] We can date Sopater's floruit during the last quarter of the fourth and the first half of the third century BC; cf. Ath. 2, 71b: Σώπατρος ὁ Πάφιος γεγονὼς τοῖς χρόνοις κατ' Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου ἐπιβιοὺς δὲ καὶ ἕως τοῦ δευτέρου τῆς Αἰγύπτου βασιλέως ("Sopater of Paphos was born during the reign of Alexander son of Philip and lived into the reign of Egypt's second king"); Alexander the Great reigned during the years 336-323 BC and Ptolemy II's reign began in 285 BC. For further discussion about Sopater (his floruit, origin, themes and motifs of his work, etc.), cf. FAVI 2017, 264-285. Cf. also *RE* III A.1 s.v. Sopatros nr. 9, SOMMERBRODT 1875, 31-43, OLIVIERI ²1946, 27-42, KAIBEL ²1958, 192-197, VOSKOS ²2008, 180-189, 310-331, 502-542, SOFIA 2009, NESSELRATH 2016.

[6] The technique of ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν, popular during Old Comedy (cf. *e.g.* HALLIWELL 1984, RECKFORD 1987, 461-482), is noticeably modified during the fourth century BC and beyond, largely (though not exclusively) focusing

Already during the fifth century BC the descent to Hades crystallizes into a stereotypical motif[7] within the contemporary comic production and, as such, it features in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405 BC)[8] and *Gerytades* (*ca*. 408 BC)[9], in Eupolis' *Demoi* (between 417 and 411 BC)[10], in Pherecrates' *Crapataloi* and *Metalleis*[11], as well as in Nicopho's Ἐξ Ἅιδου ἀνιών (*The one ascending from Hades*)[12]. In parallel, Odysseus' figure becomes highly popular among the comic playwrights; he already features in Sicilian Comedy, in plays by Epicharmus (Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος and Ὀδυσσεὺς ναυαγός; K-A 1,60-70) and Dinolochus (Κίρκα ἢ Ὀ[δυσσ- ; K-A 1,178). Within Old Attic Comedy Odysseus is the title-figure of plays by Cratinus (Ὀδυσσῆς; K-A 4,192-200) and Theopompus (Ὀδυσσεύς vel Ὀδυσσῆς; K-A 7,724-726), while in Middle Comedy Odysseus' name appears repeatedly, in play-titles by Amphis (Ὀδυσσεύς; K-A 2,213-235)[13], Anaxandrides (Ὀδυσσεύς; K-A 2,253-255)[14], Eubulus (Ὀδυσσεὺς ἢ Πανόπται; K-A 5,231)[15], and Alexis (Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀπονιπτόμενος vel ἀπονιζόμενος, and Ὀδυσσεὺς ὑφαίνων; K-A 2,110-112)[16]. In addition, other comic plays (from across the comic genre) bear titles that are germane to Odysseus' adventures, *e.g*. Ἀλκίνους by Phormis, Σειρῆνες and Πηνελόπη by Theopompus, Πλύντριαι ἢ Ναυσικάα by Philyllius, Ναυσικάα by Eubulus, Καλυψώ by Anaxilas, Κίρκη by Ephippus, etc.[17]

Likewise, Sopater's play-title, *Nekyia*, automatically evokes the Homeric 'Nekyia' (*Odyssey* Book 11) and directly establishes a firm mythical background for the play's plot. Myth burlesque must have been a prominent feature of the play[18]; a reasonable assumption is that Sopater staged a comic katabasis of Odysseus to the Underworld, which was a parody /

on prosopographic aspects of the targeted individuals; cf. PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2009, HENDERSON 2014 (with further bibliography).

[7] Cf. MIKELLIDOU 2014 (with further bibliography).

[8] Cf. DOVER 1993, 40 and SANTAMARÍA 2015 (with further bibliography).

[9] Cf. OLSON 2020 (with further bibliography).

[10] Cf. OLSON 2017, 286-471.

[11] Cf. FRANCHINI 2020, 11-71 and 94-125 respectively.

[12] Yet, the person ascending is not necessarily Odysseus; there are multiple candidates instead. Cf. PELLEGRINO 2013, 55.

[13] Cf. PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2016, 170-176.

[14] Cf. MILLIS 2015, 155-176.

[15] Cf. HUNTER 1983, 161.

[16] Cf. ARNOTT 1996, 463-474.

[17] For an analysis of all comic plays relating to Odysseus cf. BERGK 1838, 413 and SCHMIDT 1887-1888.

[18] Myth burlesque is a particularly popular trend during, especially, the era of Middle Comedy. The comic playwrights prove remarkably resourceful in furnishing the traditionally established myths with ingenious comic twists; equally conspicuous are the cases of blatant anachronism, where myth and reality are inextricably interwoven to produce a grand comic effect; cf. WEBSTER ²1970, 16-19, 82-85, NESSELRATH 1990, 188-241, and 1995, PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2017. Regarding Old Comedy's extensive (intertextual, satirical, etc.) engagement with the mythical tradition, cf. BAKOLA 2010, 180-208, BOWIE 2010, RUFFELL 2011, 314-360. Aristotle preserves a representative example of such a grotesque treatment of myth by Comedy (*Po*. 1453a 37-39): οἳ ἂν ἔχθιστοι ὦσιν ἐν τῷ μύθῳ, οἷον Ὀρέστης καὶ Αἴγισθος, φίλοι γενόμενοι ἐπὶ τελευτῆς ἐξέρχονται, καὶ ἀποθνήσκει οὐδεὶς ὑπ' οὐδενός ("those who are the worst enemies in myth, like Orestes and Aegisthus, leave the stage at the end having become friends and no one is killed by anyone").

burlesque of the Homeric, archetypical one. Sopater's *Nekyia* would thus continue a long-running literary tradition of mythological burlesque. Accordingly, the reference to Odysseus in the play's single surviving fragment is neither peculiar nor unexpected *per se*. What *is* intriguing and, hence, worth discussing and further elucidating is the precise meaning of the satirical reference, which remains obscure (due to the fragment's minuscule size and the sheer lack of context). Accordingly, the present paper offers a fresh look and an alternative interpretation of the current use of the puzzling proverbial expression τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον (*the perfume in the lentil-soup*), which is used to derisively characterize Odysseus. The fragment in question (Sopat. fr. 13) is preserved by Athenaeus, in Book 4 of his *Deipnosophistae*, paragraph 160c[19]:

> Ἴθακος Ὀδυσσεύς, τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον,
> πάρεστι· θάρσει, θυμέ.
>
> Odysseus from Ithaca, the perfume in the lentil-soup,
> is here; fear not, my heart![20]

On the level of syntax, the proverbial expression τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον serves as explanatory apposition to Ὀδυσσεύς[21]; *i.e*. Odysseus is laconically described as / identified with "perfume in the lentil-soup"[22]. According to the common line of interpretation, the proverbial expression is presently believed to introduce an element of incongruity, *i.e*. that Odysseus is somehow *out of place*. Favi notes that the fragment straightforwardly establishes that Odysseus "è chiaramente indesiderato o quantomeno non benvoluto"[23]; he further argues that the proverb is possibly related with Odysseus' linguistic / rhetorical skills. *LSJ*[9] (s.v. φακῆ suppl.) claim that in general the proverb applies to any "incongruous juxtaposition of the precious and the common", while Olson[24] explains the proverb as being "roughly equivalent to *don't throw good money after bad*". Furthermore, according to Lilja[25] and Pütz[26], the proverb's meaning is that perfume is to be used for seasoning only refined/elegant/sympotic dishes, but it is inappropriate for lentil-soup. However, strictly speaking, the notion of incongruity does not directly

[19] On Athenaeus' value as a reservoir of fragmentary material, his sources, his methods of quotation, his modus scribendi, etc., cf. the collected volume *Athenaeus and His World*, edited by BRAUND/WILKINS in 2000 (featuring numerous contributions that offer thorough analyses of several issues), as well as RUDOLPH 1891, DÜRING 1936, LUKINOVICH 1990, NESSELRATH 1990, 65-79, JACOB 2013, and MURRAY 2015. For a detailed discussion of the difficulties / controversy of using Athenaeus as a source, cf. DALBY 1996, 176-179. On Athenaeus' manuscript tradition cf. ARNOTT 2000b.

[20] Eng. trans. mine.

[21] SMYTH 1956, §988.

[22] On all aspects of perfumes in antiquity, cf. the three monographs by SQUILLACE, 2010, 2014, and 2015.

[23] FAVI 2017, 392-393, 395-397. He also suggests that the speaker should be identified with Ajax.

[24] OLSON 2007b, 267 (comm. on Ath. 4, 160b).

[25] LILJA 1972, 109.

[26] PÜTZ 2003, 277.

result from this tiny fragment. Instead, all that the fragment reveals is a mere satirical tone; the essence/point of this satire is left entirely unexplained. The scholarly tendency to detect nuances of incongruity in this fragment has been apparently triggered by the usage of the proverb with this meaning (of incongruity) in a couple of Latin texts (by Cicero and Aulus Gellius, quoted below). Yet, as it will be shown next, incongruity is not the only possible way of interpreting Sopater's furtive jibe towards Odysseus. The notion of hedonism is an alternative candidate; and although the notion of hedonism does not directly result from the fragment either, it will be argued that this is a stronger and more plausible line of interpretation.

Before we proceed, it is important that we look closely into the citation context of Sopater's fragment within Athenaeus' text. Although the proverb τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον is the very reason why Larensius[27] quotes Sopater's fragment (Ath. 4, 160c), the proverb's meaning is left unexplained. Despite the wide learning that Larensius claims to possess and attempts to evince by quoting further occurrences of this proverb, the actual meaning of it is never spelled out; all quotations are too laconic and are limited to simply testifying the proverb's mere occurrence, whilst neither the meaning nor the context is ever made clear.

Before Sopater fr. 13, Larensius (*ap*. Ath. 4, 160b) first quotes Strattis fr. 47 (from the play *Phoenissae*)[28]: παραινέσαι δὲ σφῷν τι βούλομαι σοφόν· / ὅταν φακῆν ἕψητε, μὴ 'πιχεῖν μύρον ("I wish to give the two of you some wise advice: when you cook lentil soup, don't pour perfume into it")[29]. Following the quotation of Sopater's fragment, Larensius acknowledges that (Ath. 4, 160c) Κλέαρχος δὲ ὁ ἀπὸ τοῦ περιπάτου ἐν τοῖς Περὶ Παροιμιῶν ὡς παροιμίαν ἀναγράφει τὸ "ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον" ("Clearchus of the Peripatetic school in his *On Proverbs* records 'the perfume's in the lentil soup' as a proverb"[30]). Larensius rounds off the subject by scoffing at the ignorance of contemporary Latin scholars, who – as he maintains – cite Varro[31] as the origin of this expression, being unaware of the Greek antecedents. Nonetheless, Larensius' eloquent citations only demonstrate that he knows where to find the proverb, not that he grasps its meaning. On the contrary, in cases where Athenaeus comprehends entirely the

[27] Larensius is the symposiarch within Athenaeus' narrative.

[28] Strattis enjoyed a relatively long career; his floruit expanded from the last decade of the fifth century BC until well into the third decade of the fourth century (at least); cf. ORTH 2009, 18-28. Strattis' *Phoenissae* allude to Euripides' homonymous play (produced in 410 or 409 BC) and was probably produced when Euripides was still alive (ORTH 2009, 208). For analytical commentary on fr. 47 cf. ORTH 2009, 212-215.

[29] Paratragedy is at work here; the first line of Strattis' fr. is identical to Eur. *Ph*. 460 (in both passages Jocasta is the speaker). As Alexander Aphrodisiensis reports (comm. on Arist. *Sens*. 443b 16, quoted below), Strattis meant to satirise Euripides for his bad taste / ineptitude in writing (σκώπτων Εὐριπίδην ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ἀκαιρίᾳ); it should be noted though that Alexander's claim refers to the manifestation of paratragedy and is not an explanation of Strattis' use of the proverb. Paratragedy is inherent to the comic genre and omnipresent in the surviving comic material. For paratragedy in the earliest surviving sample of an entire comic play, *i.e*. Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, cf. OLSON 2002, liv-lxiii.

[30] This is Clearchus fr. 83; WEHRLI 1948, 74 interprets the proverb as "zu viel des Guten".

[31] τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον is the title of a satire by Varro, of which three fragments survive (frr. 549-551; ASTBURY ²2002, 91). It is interesting that fr. 549 mentions two large fishes (*i.e*. the luxury food *par excellence* throughout most antiquity), which can "stimulate the palate" (*palatum suscitare*)

meaning of a phrase or term, he explicitly states this, along with the fragments/passages quoted as an example[32]. Instead, in the case of the present proverb no explanation whatsoever is offered or even implied. Still, the precise meaning of this proverb is crucial for interpreting Sopater's fragment; *i.e.* for understanding how sharp the satire is against Odysseus.

Strattis fragment 47 (quoted above) is our earliest testimony for this proverbial expression; yet, the comic line is formulated *not* as a proverb, but rather as an instruction (by some guru-sounding speaker). Hence, upon evaluating previous scholarship, Orth correctly concludes that we cannot say with certainty whether Strattis used an already established proverbial expression or he is the one who should be credited with its formation during the last decade of the fifth century BC[33].

Apart from the (inconclusive) instances mentioned by Athenaeus (Strattis, Clearchus, and Varro), the proverb is also used by Cicero, *Ad Att*. 1, 19, 2 (with a word-play on Lentulus' name): *legati sunt Q. Metellus Creticus et L. Flaccus et, τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον, Lentulus, Clodiani filius* ("the ambassadors are Q. Metellus Creticus, L. Flaccus, and – 'the perfume on lentils' – Lentulus son of Clodianus"); in his commentary *ad loc*. Shackleton Bailey suggests that "perfume on lentils is something of value wasted on something worthless and incongruous"[34]. The proverb also occurs in Aulus Gellius (*NA* 13, 29, 5): *'Videte tamen,' inquit, 'ne existimetis, semper atque in omni loco 'mortales multos' pro 'multis hominibus' dicendum, ne plane fiat Graecum illud de Varronis Satura proverbium τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον* ("take care, however, not to think that 'mortales multi' is to be used always and everywhere in place of 'multi homines', lest that Greek proverb, τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον, which is found in one of Varro's *Satires*, be applied to you")[35]. Complementarily to Shackleton Bailey, Pearson argues that the expression needs to be interpreted as a proverbial example of incongruity[36]. Yet, in neither Cicero's nor Aulus Gellius' text

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[32] *e.g.* (i) explaining the origin of a proverb, Ath. 6, 266e-f: τοὺς Χίους φασὶν ἐξανδραποδισθέντας ὑπὸ Μιθριδάτου τοῦ Καππάδοκος παραδοθῆναι τοῖς ἰδίοις δούλοις δεδεμένους ... μήποτ᾽ οὖν διὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἡ παροιμία 'Χῖος δεσπότην ὠνήσατο', ᾗ κέχρηται Εὔπολις ἐν Φίλοις ("the Chians were deprived of their freedom by Mithridates of Cappadocia and were turned over in chains to their own slaves … This is perhaps the origin of the proverb 'a Chian purchased his master', which Eupolis uses in *Friends*" [fr. 296]);

(ii) interpreting the verb ἀναπίπτειν ("fall back"), Ath. 1, 23: ὅτι τὸ ἀναπίπτειν κυρίως ἐπὶ ψυχῆς ἐστιν, οἷον ἀθυμεῖν, ὀλιγοδρανεῖν. Θουκυδίδης πρώτῃ· 'νικώμενοι ἐπ᾽ ἐλάχιστον ἀναπίπτουσι'. Κρατῖνος δ᾽ ἐπὶ ἐρετῶν χρᾶται τῇ λέξει· 'ῥοθίαζε κἀνάπιπτε' ("the verb ἀναπίπτειν is properly used of a person's spirit, in the sense 'be discouraged, fainthearted.' Thucydides in Book I [70, 5]: 'they are minimally discouraged when defeated'. But Cratinus [fr. 332] uses the word to refer to rowers: 'raise a splash and fall back'");

(iii) interpreting the verb δάψαι ("to devour"), Ath. 8, 363a: ἐπὶ τῶν ἁπλήστως καὶ θηριωδῶς ἐσθιόντων τὸ δάψαι καὶ δαρδάψαι. Ὅμηρος· 'τόν δ' ἄρα ἀλλὰ κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατέδαψαν' ("the verbs δάπτω and δαρδάπτω are applied to people who eat gluttonously, like wild animals. Homer [*Od*. 3, 259]: 'but dogs and birds devoured him'").

[33] ORTH 2009, 213. Cf. also n. 28 (in the present paper).

[34] SHACKLETON BAILEY 1965, 335, where he also advances the "presumption that Lentulus is the μύρον and the other ambassadors the φακῇ … and that Lentulus was too good for the mission and the company".

[35] Eng. trans. by ROLFE 1927, 509.

[36] PEARSON 1963, 176.

is the proverb's meaning clearly spelled out. It is only much later, in the 15th century AD, that eventually an actual glossing of this proverb is offered (in fact, this is the only existing elucidation of the proverb); the paroemiographer Apostolius (*CPG* II, 233; 13, 12) reports that this was said ἐπὶ τῶν φιληδόνων ("with reference to hedonists / individuals fond of pleasure"). Since this is a straightforward interpretation of the proverb, I consider it methodologically correct to explore how such an approach can be applied to Sopater's enigmatic fragment as a satirical remark against Odysseus.

But before proceeding with exploring how much of a φιλήδονος Odysseus was (or, better say, pictured to have been), let us first look closely into this proverbial expression. In Aristotle we read about a fashionable, albeit bizarre, habit consisting of blending flavours from inedible, yet odoriferous, substances with foodstuff[37]:

> αἱ δὲ καθ᾽ αὑτὰς ἡδεῖαι τῶν ὀσμῶν εἰσίν, οἷον αἱ τῶν ἀνθῶν· οὐδὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον οὐδ᾽ ἧττον πρὸς τὴν τροφὴν παρακαλοῦσιν, οὐδὲ συμβάλλεται πρὸς ἐπιθυμίαν οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ τοὐναντίον μᾶλλον· ἀληθὲς γὰρ ὅπερ Εὐριπίδην σκώπτων εἶπε Στράττις, "ὅταν φακῆν ἕψητε, μὴ ᾽πιχεῖν μύρον." οἱ δὲ νῦν μιγνύντες εἰς τὰ πόματα τὰς τοιαύτας δυνάμεις βιάζονται τῇ συνηθείᾳ τὴν ἡδονήν, ἕως ἂν ἐκ δύ᾽ αἰσθήσεων γένηται τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς ἓν καὶ ἀπὸ μιᾶς.[38]
>
> But the other class of smells are *per se* pleasant, for example the scents of flowers; for they have no influence, either great or small, in attracting us to our food, nor do they contribute anything to the longing for it. The effect is rather the opposite; for there is a truth contained in Strattis' jibe at Euripides: "when you cook lentil-soup don't pour perfume in it." Those who do as a fact mix such elixirs with their drink get a forced pleasure by accustoming themselves to it, so that the pleasantness arising from the two sensations apparently becomes the result of one.[39]

Alexander Aphrodisiensis attempts to elucidate further this practice in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Sensu*:

> τοῦ δὲ <προσβιβάζειν> μηδὲν τὰς τοιαύτας εἰς τροφὴν συμβάλλεσθαι τῶν ὀσμῶν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀβρώτους τοὺς χυμοὺς ποιεῖν, ἐμνημόνευσε Στράτιδος τοῦ κωμικοῦ, ὃς σκώπτων Εὐριπίδην ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ἀκαιρίᾳ εἶπεν· ὅταν φακῆ ἕψηται, μὴ ἐπιχεῖν μύρον, ὡς οὐδαμῶς τῶν μύρων εἰς τὸν τρόφιμον χυμόν τι συντελούντων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὐναντίον ἄτροφον αὐτὸν ποιούντων. ὅ τινάς φησιν ὑπὸ φιληδονίας καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ μύρα σπουδῆς βιάζεσθαι καὶ τοῖς πόμασι παραμίγνυσθαι, μύρον † τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν † χυμῶν ἐκ συνηθείας πότιμον ποιοῦντας αὑτοῖς καὶ τὰς ἐκ δύο αἰσθήσεων ἡδονάς, την

[37] On smell in Aristotle in general cf. CAPPELLETTI 1977 and JOHANSEN 1996.

[38] *Sens*. 443b-444a.

[39] Eng. trans. by ROSS 1906, 75 (adapted).

> τε ἀπὸ τῆς γεύσεως μίαν καὶ τὴν μίαν ἀπὸ τῆς ὀσφρήσεως γινομένην, ἐκδέχεσθαι βιαζομένους αὐτούς.[40]
>
> The fact that such smells do not contribute whatsoever to the food, but they rather make juices uneatable is also mentioned by the comic poet Strattis, who – whilst scoffing at the ineptitude of Euripides' words – said: "when you cook lentil soup, don't pour perfume into it", since perfumes contribute nothing towards making a juice nourishing/edible, but rather the opposite, they make it not nutritious/inedible. This is what certain people say *i.e*. that, due to the fondness for pleasure and the zeal for perfumes, they force nature and intermingle the drinks with perfume, thus producing for themselves – in the habit of juices – drinkable perfume, and they make every effort to receive pleasures from two senses, one from the taste and one from the smell.[41]

What the above passages present us with is the preposterous phenomenon of adding perfumes to edible stuff[42]. Strattis, who provides us with the earliest testimony of the relevant proverb (fr. 47, quoted above), was a couple of generations older than Aristotle; in fact, by the time of Aristotle's birth Strattis was probably in his heyday[43]. Hence, it is presumable that Strattis witnessed the early manifestations of this absurd practice and ridiculed it on stage (whether in passing or in an extended scene, there are no means for us to know). Accordingly, it is probable that what Aristotle and Alexander Aphrodisiensis describe is the same to what Strattis ridicules, *i.e*. an experimental trend adhered to by contemporary gourmands during the late fifth and the largest part of the fourth century BC. In addition, it must not be immaterial that Clearchus (who also cites the proverb; see above) was Aristotle's pupil, *i.e*. a somewhat younger contemporary (4th-3rd cent. BC[44]). We have no means to know for how long this eccentric habit was practised. The testimony of Alexander Aphrodisiensis (3rd century AD) may or may not suggest intermittent re-emergence of this practice in (or until) his time (*i.e*. Alexander may refer to contemporary reality or may simply analyse Aristotle's text using the historical present tense in his narrative). For what it is worth, this weird practice is also recorded in Plutarch, *Caes*. 17, 5-6, where we are told that Caesar was once served (and ate) asparagus doused in

[40] Alex. Aphrod. comm. on Arist. *Sens*. 443b 16 (WENDLAND 1901, 96-97).

[41] Eng. trans. mine.

[42] It should be noted though that wine was the only comestible substance that could be (and was) mixed with certain aromatic essences/perfumes (e.g. myrrh, cassia, etc.), which enhanced, rather than ruined, its texture, taste, and aroma. Theophrastus refers to this practice, in *Od*. 10: μύρον καὶ τἆλλα εὔοσμα τοὺς μὲν οἴνους ἡδύνει τῶν δὲ βρωμάτων οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ πάντα λυμαίνεται καὶ ἀπύρωτα καὶ πεπυρωμένα ("perfume and other fragrant things, while they give a pleasant taste to wine, yet have not this effect on any other article of food, but in all cases spoil food, whether it be cooked or not"; Eng. trans. by HORT 1916, 337); cf. also Thphr. *Od*. 67: δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ μύρον ἡδύνειν τοὺς οἴνους, διὸ καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐν τῇ οἰνοποιΐᾳ μιγνύουσιν οἱ δὲ οὕτως ἐπιχεόμενον πίνουσιν ("it appears also that perfume sweetens wines, wherefore some add it in the manufacture, some put it in at the time of drinking"; Eng. trans. by HORT 1916, 387); cf. Plaut. *Curc*. 101-104. Cf. further SQUILLACE 2015, 125-126, 177.

[43] Cf. n. 28.

[44] Cf. WEHRLI 1948, 45.

perfume instead of oil (παραθέντος ἀσπάραγον καὶ μύρον ἀντ᾽ ἐλαίου καταχέαντος). Whatever the case and regardless of the duration of its trendiness, this habit was ludicrous and conspicuous enough to give rise to a corresponding proverb.

Judging from what both Aristotle and Alexander Aphrodisiensis emphatically state in the passages presented above, it becomes clear that adding non-edible aromatic essence to edible stuff was an extraordinarily hedonistic practice; indeed, Ross (commenting on the aforementioned Aristotelean passage) notes that "the idea here seems to be that gourmands get a pleasure from odour which appears to arise from taste"[45]. This conclusion coincides with and confirms the interpretation provided by Apostolius, *i.e*. that the proverb is said ἐπὶ τῶν φιληδόνων, *i.e*. to target the hedonists. Understandably, this practice was regarded as an extravagant and superfluous manifestation of a luxurious lifestyle, in the sense that one spends their money on unnecessary and nonsensical purposes, simply because something is considered "trendy". Besides, it is useful to remember that post-classical Athens was particularly hostile to both conspicuous money-spending and flamboyant demonstration of wealth[46].

Taking into consideration (i) Apostolius' straightforward elucidation of the proverb, (ii) Aristotle's and Alexander Aphrodisiensis' testimonies, (iii) that all the tiny fragment does is convey a vague satirical tone (without specifically suggesting incongruity – or anything else), there is a good case to be made for an alternative interpretation. It is conceivable that in Sopater's *Nekyia* Odysseus – via this proverb – was described as a hedonist (perhaps a *nouveau riche* too), who unrestrainedly exhibits his wealth. As a matter of fact, there is a traceable path of the mythological tradition (outside Comedy), which substantiates the visualization of Odysseus as a hedonist and supports the fragment's analogous interpretation. This characterization of Odysseus as a *bon-viveur* and a hedonist relies on the misinterpretation of certain Homeric passages, where the praise of peaceful times (from a warrior who has experienced the horror of war) is mistaken for a hedonistic approach to life. Such a passage is the beginning of *Odyssey* Book 9, where Odysseus, addressing the Phaeacians (lines 5-11), maintains that there is no "greater fulfilment of delight" (τέλος χαριέστερον, line 5), "than when joy possesses a whole people" (ἢ ὅτ᾽ ἐυφροσύνη μὲν ἔχῃ κάτα δῆμον ἅπαντα, line 6) within a sympotic context featuring abundant food and wine (lines 8-10). Odysseus concludes that such a setting seems to his mind "surpassingly lovely" (κάλλιστον, line 11). The ancient scholiast *ad loc*. notes that, because of these lines, Odysseus is charged (ἐγκαλοῦσι – the subject of the verb remains unidentified) with φιληδονίαν ("fondness for pleasure, hedonism"), since he considers ἀπόλαυσιν ("pleasure") to be "the ultimate goal of life" (τέλος τοῦ βίου): ἐγκαλοῦσι δὲ τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ φιληδονίαν, λέγοντες τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν τέλος ἡγούμενον τοῦ βίου διὰ τούτων. The scholiast, though, immediately proceeds to clarify that these words by Odysseus is a case of *captatio benevolentiae*, an attempt to flatter his hosts, the Phaeacians, picking up on Alcinous' earlier words (*Od*. 8, 248 αἰεὶ δ᾽ ἡμῖν δαίς τε φίλη κίθαρίς τε χοροί τε: "and always to us is the banquet dear, and the lyre, and the dance"). Still, Athenaeus (12, 513a) quotes lines 5-11

[45] ROSS 1906, 186.

[46] Cf. PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2020, 634-635.

from *Odyssey* Book 9 claiming that ὁ δὲ παρὰ τῷ Ὁμήρῳ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἡγεμὼν δοκεῖ γεγενῆσθαι Ἐπικούρῳ τῆς πολυθρυλήτου ἡδονῆς ("Homer's Odysseus appears to have guided Epicurus to his notorious concept of pleasure").

Athenaeus attests once again to Odysseus' rumored φιληδονία ("hedonism") in 10, 412b: τὸν Ὀδυσσέα δὲ Ὅμηρος πολυφάγον καὶ λαίμαργον παραδίδωσιν ("Homer presents Odysseus as a greedy gourmand"); to substantiate this claim, Athenaeus quotes lines 215-218 from *Odyssey* Book 7 (where Odysseus addresses the Phaeacians):

> ἀλλ᾽ ἐμὲ μὲν δορπῆσαι ἐάσατε κηδόμενόν περ·
> οὐ γάρ τι στυγερῇ ἐπὶ γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο
> ἔπλετο, ἥ τ᾽ ἐκέλευσεν ἕο μνήσασθαι ἀνάγκῃ
> καὶ μάλα τειρόμενον καὶ ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἀνώγει[47]
>
> But let me eat my dinner, unhappy as I am.
> For nothing is more shameless than the miserable belly,
> which orders us to pay attention to it and gives us no choice,
> even when we are worn out, and demands to be filled.[48]

Next (10, 412c) Athenaeus claims that Homer establishes Odysseus' "extreme greed and gluttony" (τὴν τελειοτάτην αὐτοῦ παρίστησι λαιμαργίαν καὶ γαστριμαργίαν), when he says:

> ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ πένθος μὲν ἔχω φρεσίν, ἡ δὲ μάλ᾽ αἰεὶ
> ἐσθέμεναι κέλεται καὶ πινέμεν, ἐκ δέ με πάντων
> ληθάνει ὅσσ᾽ ἔπαθον, καὶ ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἀνώγει[49]
>
> Since I feel pain in my heart; but my belly
> relentlessly insists that I eat and drink, and makes me
> forget all my sufferings and demands to be filled.[50]

It should be noted though that within the Homeric text this anti-heroic and entirely human attitude on Odysseus' behalf constitutes the latter's reply to Alcinous, who has just put forward a series of conjectures regarding Odysseus' origin. Alcinous even entertains the thought that this is some god who appeared amongst them in human form; refuting these preposterous assumptions Odysseus confirms that he is but a tormented mortal, of the most wretched ones to have ever lived, and entreats them – using the words quoted above – to let him enjoy his dinner in peace. Of course, the disassociation of these lines from their original context and

[47] It should be noted though that the Homeric manuscripts preserve a different reading here: καὶ μάλα τειρόμενον καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα (*Od*. 7, 218).

[48] Eng. trans. by OLSON 2008b, 429.

[49] *Od*. 7, 219-221.

[50] Eng. trans. by OLSON 2008b, 431.

their isolated quotation can indeed trigger a misleading interpretation, *i.e*. that Odysseus is portrayed as a pleasure-seeking glutton who readily succumbs to gastronomic indulgences.

Accordingly, it is reasonable – and methodologically sound – to presume that this is how the comic hero in Sopat. fr. 13 presents Odysseus, through the association he attempts with the proverbial expression τοὐπὶ τῇ φακῇ μύρον. If indeed this was the case, the comic portrait of Odysseus as a glutton could have been either a core thematic motif that ran through the entire play or simply a passing reference to the comic hero. Whatever the case, it is useful for us to remember that Sopater was not the only playwright who spotted and made good use of the comic potential of several Homeric passages. Besides, Homer was considered *the* poet for ancient Greeks and, according to Aristotle's testimony (*Po*. 1448b 34 – 1449a 2), "he was the first to delineate the forms of comedy" (καὶ τὰ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχήματα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν), "by dramatizing the laughable" (δραματοποιήσας τὸ γελοῖον) in his *Margites*.

Along with the cases (mentioned at the beginning of the paper) where Odysseus' name features in the title of a comic play (where myth burlesque is a given), there are three intriguing comic fragments that tackle aspects of Odysseus' alleged hedonism. The earliest occurs in Old Comedy and belongs to Cratinus; the first speaker[51] asks about Odysseus' whereabouts; and the second speaker replies that he saw him on the island of Paros nonchalantly buying an oversize melon.

> (A.) ποῦ ποτ᾽ εἶδές μοι τὸν ἄνδρα, παῖδα Λαέρτα φίλον;
> (B.) ἐν Πάρῳ, σικυὸν μέγιστον σπερματίαν ὠνούμενον[52]
>
> (A.) Where did you see the man, the beloved son of Laertes?
> (B.) On Paros, where he was buying a huge melon.[53]

The second such instance occurs in Middle Comedy; this is Amphis fr. 27[54], where Odysseus oversees the preparations for a forthcoming luxurious banquet ahead of the arrival of some eminent guest; most conspicuous is the order Odysseus gives to decorate the room using exceptionally luxurious items (rugs made of high quality Milesian wool and expensive unguent), and then to scent the air by burning some kind of special and rare incense (*mindax*):

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[51] Perhaps Cyclops or Penelope – the identity of the speaker is controversial. Translation of line 1 is crucial for the identification of the speaker. It is true that the dative of advantage (μοι) can often be translated as if the possessive genitive was used, but the meaning is different (cf. SMYTH 1956 §1481). Presently, μοι is better to be interpreted as an affectionate expression (in the lines of "did you see the man *for me*"), rather than assuming that the speaker is Penelope (referring to "her husband"). OLSON (2007a, 387) believes the speaker is Penelope looking for her husband, whereas STOREY (2011, 337) thinks otherwise.

[52] Cratin. fr. 147, from the play Ὀδυσσῆς (*Odysseuses*).

[53] Literally, "a seed-filled cucumber"; cf. Athenaeus' testimony in introducing the fragment (2, 68c): ὅτι τοὺς πέπονας Κρατῖνος μὲν σικυοὺς σπερματίας κέκληκεν ἐν Ὀδυσσεῦσι ("Cratinus in *Odysseuses* refers to melons as seed-filled cucumbers").

[54] From Amphis' play Ὀδυσσεύς (*Odysseus*); cf. PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2016, 170-176.

ἐρίοισι τοὺς τοίχους κύκλῳ Μιλησίοις,
ἔπειτ' ἀλείφειν τῷ Μεγαλλείῳ μύρῳ,
καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν θυμιᾶτε μίνδακα.
(B.) ἀκήκοας σύ, δέσποτ', ἤδη πώποτε
τὸ θυμίαμα τοῦτο;

(A.) … the walls all around with Milesian wool,
then anoint (them) with Megalleian unguent,
and burn the choice mindax incense.
(B.) Master, have you ever heard of
this kind of incense before?[55]

The third instance occurs a few years later, in Alexis' corpus[56]. Within a context of chronotopic transfer,[57] Odysseus is visualized fervently discussing fish matters in the Athenian agora[58]:

(A.) καὶ τοὺς ἁλιέας δ᾽ εἰς τὸ βάραθρον ἐμβαλῶ.
ἀπελευθέρων ὀψάρια θηρεύουσί μοι,
τριχίδια καὶ σηπίδια καὶ φρυκτούς τινας.
(B.) οὗτος πρότερον † κεφαλὴν εἰ λάβοι θύννου †
ἐνόμιζεν ἐγχέλεια καὶ θύννας ἔχειν[59]

(A.) And I'm going to throw the fishermen into the pit!
They catch me tiny fish that are only fit for freed men —
Sardines and cuttlefish and some fry-fish.
(B.) This guy previously † if he got a tuna-head †
thought he had eels and female tunnies.[60]

To conclude, given (i) that Aristotle describes a contemporary phenomenon (*i.e*. mixing perfumes with edible stuff) that is captured and crystallized into a proverbial expression, (ii) that the only straightforward explanation of the proverb that we possess (Apostolius') directly establishes a connection with hedonism and pleasure, (iii) that the non-comic literary tradition (ancient scholia on *Odyssey* and Athenaeus) explicitly record a tangible image of the Homeric hero as being fond of pleasure (out of misinterpreting the Homeric text), (iv) that numerous

[55] Eng. trans. by PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2016, 171.

[56] On Alexis' floruit cf. ARNOTT 1996, 3-18.

[57] For this dramaturgic technique cf. PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2017.

[58] As known, fish in Comedy (especially during the periods of Middle and New) becomes *the* luxury food *par excellence*; its ostentatious consumption was often considered an arrogant display of wealth and (political) power, and could even bear tyrannical overtones (cf. Ar. *Vesp*. 495). Cf. DAVIDSON 1993, FISHER 2000, WILKINS 2000, 293-304, PAPACHRYSOSTOMOU 2020.

[59] Alex. fr. 159 (from the play Ὀδυσσεὺς ὑφαίνων, *Odysseus weaving*). Cf. ARNOTT 1996, 465-470.

[60] Eng. trans. by OLSON 2008a, 409 (adapted).

play-titles throughout the comic genre reveal Comedy's constant engagement with Odysseus (in ways unknown in their details but unquestionably entailing mythological burlesque), and (v) that individual comic fragments substantiate an ebullient / nonchalant portrait of Odysseus, it is safe (and methodologically sound) to assume that this is how Sopater meant to portray Odysseus through the use of this proverb in fr. 13, *i.e*. as a "hedonist" (φιλήδονος), a *bon viveur*, a pleasure-seeker. This interpretation occurs naturally as the simplest one ('Occam's razor' principle), via the mere combination of available testimonies and the subsequent application of the resulting outcome upon Sopater's case[61].

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[61] The notion of incongruity, prominent in the aforementioned texts of Cicero and Aulus Gellius, is not irreconcilable with the application of the proverb to the hedonists, but rather captures the original quintessence of the practice *per sé*; *i.e*. the mixing of incongruous stuff, which was adopted by those seeking to intensify pleasure, hence the proverb's application to the hedonists.

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