

NIKOS LITINAS : **The Maculate Muse. A source of sexual arousal in fourth-century AD Alexandria (Palladas, AP 9.395)**

Since Homer was the main source for readers in primary education, the epigrammatist Palladas, who lived in Alexandria in the fourth century AD, exploited words or verses of the Homeric epics in his epigrams in order to refer to situations or examples which were familiar to all his readers. The Homeric heroes are revived in Palladas' epigrams as caricatures through which he presents contemporaneous figures of his city. Therefore, issues of the Homeric epics become part of the reality of Palladas, but, since the figures are hidden behind the Homeric expressions, they are not immediately recognizable. In particular, the epigrammatist chose certain well-known female figures of the Homeric world and added a humorous element to the characteristics of these women. AP 9.395 is an example of such an epigram. "Odysseus said: "nothing is sweeter than a man's fatherland", for in Circe's isle he never ate cheese-cake. If he had seen even the smoke curling up from that, he would have sent ten Penelopes to the deuce" (transl. Guichard). Palladas referred to two well-known verses of the Odyssey, 9.34 and 1.58 and used the figure of the Homeric Odysseus to remind the reader that this clever and strong hero never tasted Circe's cakes, but just tasted the concoction that she offered him, and because of the antidote he had taken on Hermes' advice, this drink had no effect on him. However, if he had tasted the concoction of Palladas' Circe, he would never have returned to his own Penelope or other "Penelopes". The aim of the poet by using this quip on Circe and his pun on the *ἔκχυτον* was to refer neither to Circes' magic nor to Penelope's patience, nor to Odysseus' adventures during his wanderings. We could infer that *ἔκχυτον* in Palladas' epigram was not the Homeric Circe's potion in a cup from where Odysseus drank, but the juices poured out from the Palladian Circe's vagina, when this latter Circe had sexual desires and excitement. The Homeric quotations may work as a springboard to describe a Circe of his city, probably a warm and seductive woman, or a prostitute. It is quite certain that not only whoever experienced the taste, but also all who could see the smoke (because of her hot excitement) rising up in the chimney of the house, were captivated so much that they would cheat on the most faithful wife many times to become her erotic slaves. The Homeric Odysseus is a man who would never return to his Penelope, if he had tasted the concoction prepared by Palladas' Alexandrian Circe.

Mots-clés :

Palladas – Circe – Odysseus – cunnilingus – female ejaculation – squirting – Alexandria