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The Social Diffusions in the Amatory Epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos¹

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Abstract: Asclepiades of Samos *Ἀσκληπιάδης ὁ Σάμιος* (also known as Sicelidas) (fl. 270 BC) is a particularly distinguished epigrammatist in the Hellenistic period.² But for the anthology of Meleager of Gadara (c. 140 BC - c. 70 BC), *The Garland*, which later became the basis for the *Greek Anthology*, Asclepiades' works (around 47 epigrams *in toto*, around 14 of which are spurious) could have totally vanished leaving us with only a name.³

¹ It is to be noted that this paper is an adapted part of a Master's thesis submitted to the Alexandria Centre for Hellenistic Studies (Alexandria University) in 2021, under the title of "Social and Religious Reflections on the Amatory Epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos", under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Magda El-Nowieemy. The thesis is divided into two chapters: the first chapter is entitled "The Social Diffusions in the Amatory Epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos"; while the second chapter is entitled "The Religious Echoes in the Amatory Epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos". This paper will include the first chapter only with some adaptations.

² Since the information about Asclepiades of Samos is scanty, the information about his date of birth and death remain questionable. However, researchers conjecture that his date of birth is in the period between 340 BC and 320 BC. See Clack (1999, 1-2).

³ Meleager of Gadara is both an epigrammatist and an anthologist. He was most famous for his elegiac epigrams. In his *Garland*, Meleager included the epigrams between the seventh and the third centuries BC comprising the

As far as the social theme is concerned in the epigrams of Asclepiades, his works mirrored the mindset and general mood of his society. Thus, he was one of the precursors of love epigrams who injected the love trend, as a focal point and primary motif, into his epigrams. Being influenced by the elegiac nature of epigrams and the political mood of his time; that is of alienation (from the *polis*), his topics were quite affected and reflected in his love theme, which included despair, suffering in love and disloyalty. In addition, as a result of the central political system (monarchy), Asclepiades' writings took a greatly individualistic and subjective turn. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the sensual hedonistic propensity had played its role in turning Asclepiades' love '*eros*' into erotic '*eros*'. All these elements will be previewed through a social angle in this paper.

Key Words: *symposion*, *hetaerai*, empowerment of women, racism.

Asclepiades of Samos is a name mostly overshadowed and underrated in the history of epigram-writing in particular, and literature at large. There is no doubt that he has made a significant contribution in the history of epigram-writing. He is distinctly known for the "Asclepiad metre", which is named after him.⁴ In addition, most of his works are in elegiac couplets.⁵ The usual dialect used in his epigrams is the Ionic dialect; however, there are a few written in the Doric dialect. The lack of information about Asclepiades of Samos makes it difficult to discover the reason for the variation in dialects. Moreover, in his epigrams, Asclepiades usually draws a link between the speaker and the spoken words and between the form and content; hence, the study of his epigrams is to be carried out carefully because of the absence of most of his background information.⁶

Asclepiades was a friend of Hedylus (third century BC Greek poet), who was from Samos as well. Also, he was an older contemporary of Theocritus (mid-third century BC Greek poet) and the famous Greek poet, Callimachus of Cyrene (c. 305 - 240 BC, fl. 260 BC).⁷ He set

epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. Meleager identified the epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos with anemones. As for the epigrams of Meleager's time, the only epigrams that were recorded in his *Garland* then were his own. See Paton (1920, v); Clack (1999, 3); Ibrahim (2013, 50-51); Sens (2019, 337-339).

⁴ DLTLT, s.v. "Asclepiad meter" = An Aeolic metre ascribed to Asclepiades of Samos. It was employed in lyric and tragic verse. The Roman poet Horace (65 BC - 8 BC) was one of those who implemented the Asclepiad metre in his works.

See also Etman (1998, 467).

⁵ CODLT, s.v. "elegiac couplet" = A pair of lines written in verse with full meaning. The couplet includes a dactylic hexameter followed by a pentameter.

⁶ Sens (2019, 339-345).

⁷ Clack (1999, 3).

an example in epigram-writing for many of his contemporaries, such as Posidippus of Pella (mid-third century BC Greek poet) and Theocritus, who expressed his admiration of Asclepiades of Samos and the Greek poet, Philitas of Cos (c. 340 BC - c. 270 BC), the tutor of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (282 BC - 246 BC), in *Idyll 7*.⁸ On Asclepiades' part, he also admired *Lyde* by Antimachus of Colophon (early third century Greek poet) for its literary value as it was an elegiac narrative poem implementing the epic language.⁹ Furthermore, in recognition of Asclepiades' literary talent, he was given the privilege of *προξενία* (*proxeny/citizenship rights*) from Delphi and Histiaea.¹⁰ Also, there is strong suggestion that he visited Alexandria because of the literary interactions between him and the poets of Alexandria, such as Theocritus and Callimachus of Cyrene.¹¹ Notwithstanding the previous facts, the data about Asclepiades of Samos were still insufficient to form a full or clear picture of his life.

Asclepiades of Samos is considered one of the first epigrammatists to lay down the foundations of amatory epigram-writing for later generations to follow.¹² The love *topos* was not rendered through lengthy epics, philosophical frameworks or metaphysical notions but short everyday life anecdotes. Further, the psychology and the mood of his audience were still interwoven with their religious sense, which they had inherited from their ancestors. However, the individualistic propensity that took over the spirit of the Hellenistic period had made a slant swerve from the ancient traditional way of thinking and writing. It had all taken place with swirling around the collective polis-oriented, homosexual, usually, long-winded literature and turning it into individualistic, heterosexual, concise literature. It is noteworthy that only through Asclepiades' skill of self-expression and persuasion had he managed to convey his deep feeling of dismay and despair in love to his beloved and his audience at large. The development and progress of this trend of writing was extensively propagated through the Hellenistic writers of the time, especially those in Alexandria. This type of literature was considered in large part an

⁸ According to Theocritus' *Idyll 7* (39-41), Simichidas, probably referring to Theocritus himself, is a goatherd who meets another goatherd called Lycidas, on his way to a harvest festival on the island of Cos. The former invites the latter to a poetry challenge to showcase their poetic talents, but Simichidas makes a significant statement before setting out the poetic duel. Such statement entails that although Simichidas is universally known as the best, his skill is nothing to be compared with Sicelidas of Samos and Philitas of Cos. Thus, in this context, the name Sicelidas was used by Theocritus instead of Asclepiades. It is suggested that the naming of Sicelidas originates from Asclepiades' refuge on the island of Sicily at the time when Samos was attacked by Athens. See Fantuzzi (2004a, 134-135); Argentieri (2007, 148); Klooster (2011, 167); Anagnostou-Laoutides (2015, 559); Sens (2019, 337).

⁹ Sistakou (2007, 397).

¹⁰ LSJ, s.v. "*προξενία*" = "treaty or impact of friendship between a state and a foreigner" or "status and privileges". See Cameron (1995, 67).

¹¹ It is a matter of controversy whether Asclepiades of Samos visited Alexandria or not. See Cameron (1991, 291-292); Anagnostou-Laoutides (2015, 559).

However, Sens is positively in favour of the view supporting Asclepiades' visit to Alexandria. For more details about the evidences of Asclepiades' visit to Alexandria, see Sens (2011, xxvi-xxxii); Sens (2019, 338-339).

¹² Riad and Saber (2007, 198); Sens (2007, 384).

adequate representative of this highly sophisticated, erudite, innovative generation of literary scholars such as Hedylus, Posidippus of Pella, Theocritus, Leonidas of Tarentum (third century BC poet, fl. 270 BC), Callimachus, and my subject figure, Asclepiades of Samos.¹³

The amatory epigrams of Asclepiades give the reader the impression that he lived a lascivious life full of lustful relations with courtesans. The *topoi* of lust and desire in Asclepiades' epigrams strongly suggest such view. Furthermore, there are two reasons to eliminate the possibility of the involvement of any emotional love whatsoever in Asclepiades' epigrams and the replacement of it with pure lust. First, the relationships with courtesans were mainly business relations between a courtesan and a client. Second, courtesans were probably lower class members, whereas clients were mainly aristocrats which created a social barrier between both parties too difficult, yet not impossible, to break. Such reasons drive us towards an almost sure assumption of the inclusion of physical desire rather than the emotional one. Asclepiades projects himself as a lover and his epigrams give different accounts of his erotic adventures. Each epigram addresses and films one erotic adventure at a time. Each erotic adventure is portrayed by catching a moment in time and describing all the emotional involvement and activity in it, especially the sexually heated interaction often amidst a sympotic atmosphere.¹⁴ Setting the stage for the whole scene of the epigram to take place within a few set of words exerted a great dramatic skill of minimilisation by Asclepiades and would not have been attained but for a well chosen set of symbols.¹⁵

The epigram *ἐπίγραμμα* is a writing genre that many Hellenistic writers, including Asclepiades of Samos, found suitable as a medium to communicate their ideas through to their readers. The epigram originates from the word *ἐπιγράφω* which means "to inscribe, to graze or to mark the surface" since the genre started in this form.¹⁶ The traces of epigram-writing go back in time to the archaic period; nevertheless, it became popular, full-blown and well-developed during the Hellenistic period.¹⁷ There were two aims of epigram-writing: temporary and permanent epigrams. The temporary epigrams were not meant to last for long, so they were inscribed on cups or vases on social occasions. The permanent epigrams were meant to last for eternity, so they were inscribed on stone e.g. graves. The latter way of writing has helped epigrams survive through anthologies and papyri to our very day. Epigram-writing is the art of

¹³ Etman (1998, 474-475); Riad and Saber (2007, 202).

¹⁴ Gutzwiller (2007a, 315-324); Ibrahim (2013, 51).

¹⁵ Fantuzzi (2007, 478-479).

¹⁶ LSJ, s.v. "*ἐπίγραμμα-α*" = "inscription, especially of the name of the maker on a work of art, or of the dedicator on an offering", "sepulchral or commemorative inscription", "short poem, usually in elegiac verse", or "title of a work or a picture".

LSJ, s.v. "*ἐπιγράφω*" = "mark the surface/graze" or "write upon/inscribe".

¹⁷ Argentieri (2007, 148); Garulli (2019, 267).

conveying a certain message in brief elaborate words in a witty and clear manner. The epigram is often anecdotal in style about a personal experience and has an unexpected ending either with a twist or a revelation. Irony and humour usually characterised this genre of writing. Erudition in writing is another characteristic that reflected the cultural and scientific advancement of the Hellenistic period. Thus, the epigram spread in the Hellenistic period because it fitted the spirit and mood of the time. Asclepiades and the Hellenistic writers found expression in this genre of writing which they were able to fit into their own messages in a short and eloquent manner.¹⁸

Etymologically speaking, the word amatory comes from the Latin verb "*amare*", which means "to love", and the adjective "*amatorius*", which means "of love".¹⁹ The love theme was infused in epigrams in ancient Greece which included expressing love towards the other, male or female, or even talking about love in essence "amatory epigrams".²⁰ Nevertheless, the love theme was not the first theme to be tackled in epigrams. Initially, the epigram was written to dedicate gifts to the deities in temples, usually with the names of the pious donors and the revered god on the votive offerings "dedicatory epigrams". Also, the epigram was written to commemorate the dead for their outstanding and heroic acts or to mourn the loss of their loved ones "funerary/sepulchral epigrams".²¹ Thus, the epigram at first dealt with themes related to piety and death. They were called "dedicatory epigrams" and "funerary/sepulchral epigrams" respectively.²² Such epigrams were written in the form of inscriptions on tombs or dedicated objects. Another subgenre that developed in ancient Greece was the "symptotic poetry".²³ It was called so because the setting of the epigram was "the *symposion*". The communal and festive spirits decided the character of this subgenre of writing. The epigrammatist Meleager organised his *Garland* according to these subgenres of writing.²⁴ He divided his book into four parts: sepulchral, dedicatory, amatory/sympotic and epideictic/display epigrams.²⁵ Sometimes, it is difficult to categorise epigrams because some poets mix *topoi* together and thus, the epigram is rendered vague and controversial with no clear-cut category to fall under.

¹⁸ Fantuzzi (2004b, 283-291); Gutzwiller (2007b, 106-107).

¹⁹ LL, s.v. "*amare*" = "love".

²⁰ Most of the extant Hellenistic epigrams are amatory epigrams and the bulk of the works of Asclepiades of Samos belong to this subgenre. See Barber (1923, 56).

²¹ Ibrahim (2013, 51).

²² Asclepiades of Samos wrote some famous funerary/sepulchral epigrams such as (*AP* 7.11=G-P 28) about Erinna, (*AP* 7.145=G-P 29) about Ajax and (*AP* 13.23=G-P 33) about Botrys.

²³ The symptotic poetry is a kind of poetry centring around the *symposion* and all the themes and motifs related to it. Telling jokes and short comic anecdotes are common features of this genre. See McClure (2003, 1-2); Cazzato and Prodi (2016, 1-2).

²⁴ See note 3 above.

²⁵ Epideictic/display epigrams are the ones that have an unusual metre and do not fall under any of the main categories of epigrams according to the division of Meleager in his *Garland*. See Fantuzzi (2004b, 291-297); Gutzwiller (2007b, 108-117).

Concerning the social aspects at Asclepiades' time, the Hellenistic society of Asclepiades of Samos descended from a well-founded Greek heritage that had already enjoyed its own established institutions, traditions, rites and beliefs. However, along with the progress of time towards the Hellenistic time of Asclepiades came a new set of social changes, such as social mobility and gender equality, which needed to be mirrored through literature. One of the fundamental social institutions in the Hellenistic society was the *symposion* with all its accompanying features including the consumption of wine, poetry recitals, male and female courtship, etc... In addition, the status of women was one of the critical issues at the time of Asclepiades. Moreover, the view of the Greeks towards other races was another issue to be dealt with by Asclepiades since he had a deeply-rooted conceptual foundation of Greek racial superiority. Taking all the previous social aspects into consideration, Asclepiades of Samos embarked on his literary journey to feature such social aspects in his epigrams from his own perspective through a rationally calculated and meticulously weighed set of words.

Multiple social aspects can be inferred, deduced and detected from reading the lines - and between the lines - of the epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. These aspects just unravel themselves if one keeps the epigrams on close inspection. It is noteworthy to mention that the authentic epigrams only are to be subject to analysis in this paper.

The paper is analytic and comparative in nature. A review is to be made of the ancient Greek works of love poetry that had been partially the basis of Asclepiades' epigrams to further comprehend Asclepiades' thoughts. The paper will examine and cross-examine, through analysis, Asclepiades' works to reach his most distinctive features, his considerable influence and inspiring contributions to his age. Therefore my approach will entail interdisciplinary and comparative analysis.

This paper is dedicated to studying the social features in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos from which one could develop a better vision and understanding of the culture and values of the Hellenistic life. The scheme of the paper will move in the following pattern: it will be divided into two parts. The first part will be an introduction to the social aspects of the Hellenistic society; whereas the second part will be an analysis of these social aspects in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. The first part will entail an introduction to cardinal social aspects of the Hellenistic society: the *symposion*, the *hetaera*, the empowerment of women "*hetaerai*" and the racial discourse. The second part, which includes the analysis of the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades, will be ordered as follows: first, it will tackle the *symposion* in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades. Second, it will tackle the *hetaera* in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades. Third, it will tackle the empowerment of women,

particularly the "*hetaerai*", in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades. Fourth, it will tackle the racial discourse in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades. All of the previous points will be subject to thorough analysis in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades.

In the first part of the paper, the social features of the Hellenistic period will be discussed. The first feature is the *symposion* in the Hellenistic period.²⁶ The *symposion* had its immense effect on the Hellenistic period. The *symposion* is a drinking party mainly held for social gatherings and philosophical discussions. It had been attended primarily by men with the company of women who were hired for entertainment.²⁷ The main purpose for organising such event was for the pleasure and welfare of the Greek citizen. Ever since the rise of the *symposion*, it had been connected with poetry.²⁸ In ancient Greece, the *symposion* had been established as small, private and aristocratic;²⁹ however, in the Hellenistic period, it changed into large public meals funded by the wealthy citizens, but attended by everyone: elite citizens, non-citizens and slaves were also included. In the Hellenistic period, the *symposion* was considered a source of solace, relief, psychological refuge to the Hellenistic citizens just the same way as it had been for their ancestors.

The *symposion* is one of the most pivotal and vital social institutions in the ancient Greek life. The features of the *symposion* in the Hellenistic period were almost the same as they had been in ancient Greece, yet with some changes. One of the features of the traditional Greek *symposion* is that it was held for homosexual courtship:³⁰ male *symposiasts* had the liberty to show male solidarity, sexual hegemony and pederasty.³¹ Nevertheless, the Hellenistic period placed more emphasis on heterosexuality.³² In both ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period, there were poets, flute girls and cup-bearing boys in the *symposion*.³³ Noblewomen too could participate in the event.³⁴ The *symposion* also included other activities such as participation in drinking competitions and conversing with others "table talks" while reclining on *κλίvai* (*klinai/couches*),³⁵ musical activities and sexual affairs, sometimes extramarital affairs.³⁶ The

²⁶ LSJ, s.v. "συμπόσι-α" = "drinking together".

LSJ, s.v. "συμπόσι-ον" = "drinking-party", "the guests" or "the rooms in which such parties were given".

²⁷ Rotroff (1996, 4).

²⁸ Cazzato and Prodi (2016, 1-2).

²⁹ In ancient Greece, the *symposion* was normally aristocratic with the exception of the democracy of Athens in the Classical period which included the common public as well. See Rotroff (1996, 25); Papakonstantinou (2012, 4-5).

³⁰ Murray (1988, 266); Arthur-Katz (1989, 161).

³¹ Howatson and Sheffield (2008, vii-ix).

³² Burton (1993, 236).

³³ Murray (1988, 266); Mantas (2012, 83).

³⁴ Burton (1993, 233-235).

³⁵ LSJ, s.v. "κλίβη-η" = "that on which one lies/couch" or "banquet".

³⁶ Cazzato and Prodi (2016, 9).

symposion was usually followed by drunken *κῶμος* (*komos*/revelling or merrymaking).³⁷ *Komos* was a social tradition reflected in the Hellenistic epigrams. It was a main ritual in ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period that was performed as part of the rites of the Greek festivals e.g. Dionysia.³⁸ In those nights, aristocrats enjoyed being drunk, and thus, social inhibitions melted as they went to the streets and intermingled with the common people in different activities including physical violence, noisy behaviour and sexual affairs.³⁹ Thus, the main features of the *symposion* remained almost the same through ancient Greece up to the Hellenistic period with some differences; such as a propensity towards heterosexuality and the inclusion of more classes into the *symposion*.

The *symposion* had its noticeable effect on literature itself. Tracing back the developmental changes to the epigram, starting as sepulchral and dedicatory epigrams and leading up to amatory and sympotic epigrams, just reflect the rising importance of the *symposion* as a literary setting.⁴⁰ Hence, this development cannot be ignored because the *symposion* had an extensive influence on the Greek life up through the Hellenistic period, resulting in the production of such distinct subgenre.⁴¹

The second feature (to be discussed) is the *hetaera* in the Hellenistic society.⁴² In many events, especially in the Hellenistic period, the *hetaera* was the love object in the epigrams since she was part and parcel of the *symposion*. The presence of the *hetaera* had been one of the defining elements of the *symposion* as well. As for the definition of the *hetaera*, she is the companion - a courtesan or a mistress - whom higher-class men could have a relatively long-term relationship with for the purpose of entertainment, sex and public ostentation. The relationship may be based on gift-exchange. The *hetaera* was both sophisticated and infamous at the same time.⁴³ Therefore, there are three functions of *hetaerai* in the *symposion*: an economic role, providing an erotic atmosphere and minimising tension in class distinctions.⁴⁴ Thus, it was completely logical to find vigorous business of the *hetaera* taking place in the *symposion*.⁴⁵ The potential financial gains for the *hetaera* from the free wealthy aristocratic

³⁷ LSJ, s.v. "*κῶμος*" = "revel/carousal/merry-making" or "band of revellers".

Komos is described as a night-time after party, which usually took place after the *symposion* or the festival of *Διόνυσος* Dionysus. It includes *komasts*, with wine in their hands, walking the streets with songs and music. See Adrados (1975, 37); Johnson (2004, 12); Kérenyi (2005, 149).

³⁸ Sourvinou-Inwood (2003, 70).

³⁹ Weçowski (2014, 83).

⁴⁰ Fantuzzi (2004b, 283-285).

⁴¹ Ludwig (1963, 61-62).

⁴² LSJ, s.v. "*ἑταίρα*" = "courtesan" or "companion".

The "*hetaera*" is an invention of the *symposion*. See Kurke (1999, 181).

⁴³ Pomeroy (1975, 139).

⁴⁴ Kurke (1999, 185-186).

⁴⁵ Cameron (1981, 276).

citizens are fundamental motivators to partake in the *symposion*.⁴⁶

The third feature is the empowerment of women "*hetaerai*" in the Hellenistic society. Ancient Greece was a closed society in nature, especially Athens.⁴⁷ Free male citizens enjoyed freedom of movement and action, being given their full civil rights; whereas, relatively speaking, Greek women and non-citizens were given minimum attention in terms of rights and roles.⁴⁸ Generally speaking, women had not been invited into the social milieu in ancient Greece. In addition, the word *φράτρα* (*phratry*/brotherhood)⁴⁹ itself is a clear evidence of the unfair treatment of women in the Greek society, since belonging to one *phratry* was inherited from the father not the mother in order to gain an official acknowledgement of the full rights of citizenship in ancient Greece.⁵⁰ However, during the third century BC, the status of Greek women was taking a turn towards improvement outside of Athens.⁵¹

Later on, during the Hellenistic period, women earned more rights and opportunities in education.⁵² However, women's participation in the literary life did not meet much interest or concern. In addition, women were claimed to be incapable of discussing public matters, such as politics with an assurance on confining women topics to private matters only.⁵³ Thus, even women's poetic abilities were put to the question, and consequently, their works were relatively neglected and prone to loss.

As for the courtesans and prostitutes of the Hellenistic period, they were the main subjects of amatory epigrams since respectable female citizens were not active participants in the social life,⁵⁴ and they were not regularly invited into the *symposion*, as mentioned above. Furthermore, if the Hellenistic woman was not royalty, she would not get the chance of being a public figure.⁵⁵ Only then did the *hetaera* jump into the public front to fill the void of female representation in the Hellenistic life.⁵⁶

In the Hellenistic period, a demarcation in the Hellenistic society and a comparison force themselves increasingly between ordinary women and the rising class of *hetaerai*.⁵⁷ Unlike ancient Greece, Hellenistic women gained greater importance and power through *hetaerai* and

⁴⁶ In the Hellenistic period, the *symposion* and the royal courts were prominent targets of the *hetaerai*. See Kapparis (2018, 371).

⁴⁷ Cameron (1981, 277).

⁴⁸ Pomeroy (2002, 1-5).

⁴⁹ LSJ, s.v. "*φράτρα*" = "brotherhood", "tribe/clan" or "league".

⁵⁰ Pomeroy (1995, 116-117).

⁵¹ Cameron (1981, 277).

⁵² Cribiore (2001, 83-86).

⁵³ Barnard (1978, 20); Pomeroy (1990, xvii).

⁵⁴ Ordinary respectable women were not made for representation of Greek women. See Pomeroy (1975, 140).

⁵⁵ Carney (1991, 162).

⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning that after the fourth century BC, *hetaerai* who were known by name were mainly the mistresses of the Hellenistic kings. See Cameron (1981, 276).

⁵⁷ Arthur-Katz (1995, 23).

queens.⁵⁸ During the Hellenistic period, there became a new, clear-cut classification of the position of women. This classification affected the nature of the Hellenistic writings. Women working in prostitution were divided into *πόρνη* (*porne*/buyable woman)⁵⁹ and *ἑταίρα* (*hetaera*/courtesan), and there was the rest of a different variety of women from diverse uncertain social positions, such as the flute-girl, the acrobat, and the dancer that formed the background of the *symposion*.⁶⁰ To further highlight the difference between both categories of women (*porne* and *hetaera*), *porne* may be simply defined as a woman who gets paid for sex only, or the one whom men pay money to per session for an affair as a form of trading or a business deal.⁶¹ As for the *hetaera*, as mentioned above, she occupied quite a higher status in the social hierarchy despite being part of the prostitution business. In the Hellenistic period, the *hetaera* played an important role as a companion of prominent men in society. Such role brought extra privileges to the Greek women in the Hellenistic society such as the expanding of the rights of *proxeny*, educational rights, business conduct and taking legal action.⁶² One of those famous *hetaerai* who gained power from the prostitution business is Lamia;⁶³ she had been probably hailed as an idol and role model for other *hetaerai* of the Hellenistic period to follow in her footsteps. Another famous *hetaera* who rose to power to almost being an uncrowned queen is Bilistiche.⁶⁴

The fourth feature is the racial discourse in the Hellenistic society. The Hellenistic society adopted the same racial spirit of ancient Greece. Ancient Greece was well known for its racism, so it developed the word *βάρβαρος* (*barbaros*/barbarian) to distinguish itself from other inferior races.⁶⁵ Such term was given to all races that did not speak its language, have the same skin colour or follow the Greek style of living, particularly its democracy. This racism was

⁵⁸ McNiven (2012, 515); Caneva (2014, 27).

⁵⁹ LSJ, s.v. "*πόρνη*" = "harlot/prostitute".

⁶⁰ Pomeroy (1975, 178-179).

⁶¹ Kurke (1999, 178).

⁶² Arthur-Katz (1995, 23); Pomeroy, Burstein, Donlan and Roberts (2008, 487).

⁶³ The *hetaera* Lamia fell in love with the king of Macedonia Demetrius Poliorcetes (c. 306 - c. 283 BC), son of Alexander the Great's general, Antigonos Monophthalmus (306 BC - 301 BC), who won her great power as a *hetaera*. Lamia received divine honours by Athenians and Thebans. Also, a temple was built in honour of Aphrodite Lamia. See Ogden (1999, 177).

⁶⁴ Bilistiche was a Macedonian *hetaera* of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and the winner of two Olympic chariot races, which was unusual until the fourth century BC. Her importance rose in accordance with her powerful relation with the king. Such importance went as far as joining her name with Aphrodite in one of her temples "Bilistiche Aphrodite". See Cameron (1991, 289-300); Pomeroy (2002, 5); Kosmetatou (2004, 19); Ogden (2008, 365-37).

⁶⁵ LSJ, s.v. "*βάρβαρος*" = "non-Greek/foreign" or "brutal".

OCD, s.v. "*βάρβαρος*" = The barbarian is a term used in ancient Greece, particularly Classical Greece, in reference to non-Greeks in order to emphasise the superiority of the Greek character in terms of political rights, cultural outlook and social conduct.

The racial tone and the differentiation between Greeks and non-Greeks rose in ancient Greece probably after the Persian Wars (490 BC - 479 BC). See Vlassopoulos (2013, 7-8).

For more details about the distinction between Greeks and barbarians, see Browning (2002, 261); Boletsi (2010, 63-114); McCoskey (2012, 32).

reflected in its laws that deprived other races of most rights and handed them over lowly occupations. However, because of Alexander's conquests, his religious syncretism and the Hellenistic expansion all over the world, the Hellenistic society came in contact with other races resulting in increased interaction between cultures and the lowering of the racial tone.⁶⁶ One of these forms of interaction was the intermingling between the Greek society "the West" and the Egyptian society "the East".⁶⁷ Despite such intermingling, one of the major racial differences was the skin colour and this difference played a major role in the Hellenistic society in terms of viewing the other and judging them. Egyptians and Ethiopians were examples of dark-skinned people whom the Greeks colonised and thus came in contact with.⁶⁸

In the second part of the paper, the social features of the Hellenistic period will be analysed in detail through the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos.

First, this is an analysis of the *symposion* in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. The *symposion* lied at the heart of the Greek social life, so it was the setting of a plethora of epigrams in ancient Greek literature. In the Hellenistic period, the situation was the same, and so, Asclepiades of Samos featured the *symposion* in multiple events too.

(AP 5.167=G-P 14)⁶⁹ features a gloomy mood in an amatory epigram with a ritual that took place after the *symposion* called *komos*.⁷⁰ The epigram depicts a wretched lover wandering around trying to reach his beloved and eventually comparing himself to *Ζεύς* Zeus as the ideal lover who pursued his loved one as well. The epigram reads as follows:⁷¹

**Υετὸς ἦν καὶ νόξ, καὶ τὸ τρίτον ἄλγος ἔρωτι,
 οἶνος· καὶ Βορέης ψυχρός, ἐγὼ δὲ μόνος.
 ἀλλ' ὁ καλὸς Μόσχος πλέον ἴσχυεν. "Αἰ σὺ γὰρ
 οὕτως
 ἦλυσ, οὐδὲ θύρην πρὸς μίαν ἠσυχάσας."
 τῆδε τοσαῦτ' ἐβόησα βεβρεγμένος· Ἄχρι τίνος,
 Ζεῦ;**

⁶⁶ Boletsi (2010, 80-99); Vlassopoulos (2013, 7-8).

⁶⁷ According to Kelly, races are divided into three main types: the Caucasoid, the Mongoloid and the Negroid. The Negroid are divided into two subtypes: the black and the brown. See Kelly (1991, 78).

⁶⁸ Samuels (2013, 39-40); Vlassopoulos (2013, 35-36).

⁶⁹ In reference to the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos, the numbers of epigrams used first with the abbreviation AP in the paper are the ones found in *Anthologia Palatina* by Constantine Cephalas; while the numbers used second are the ones found in the *Greek Anthology* by Gow and Page.

⁷⁰ See note 37 above.

⁷¹ All the Greek and English-translated texts of the epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos are from volumes one, two and four of *The Greek Anthology with an English Translation* by Paton, W. R. (1920), (1919), (1918). Loeb Classical Library. In addition, the arrangement of the epigrams in the present paper will be according to the order of epigrams in the previously mentioned volumes.

Ζεῦ φίλε, σίγησον· καὐτὸς ἐρᾶν ἔμαθες.”

(AP 5.167=G-P 14)

**It was night, it was raining, and, love's third
burden, I was in wine; the north wind blew cold
and I was alone. But lovely Moschus overpowered
all. "Would thou didst wander so, and didst not
rest at one door. "So much I exclaimed there,
drenched through. "How long Zeus? Peace, dear
Zeus! Thou too didst learn to love."**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.167=G-P 14), Asclepiades opens his epigram by describing the stormy night,⁷² which is the traditional atmosphere of *komos* following the *symposion*,⁷³ to build up intensity. He starts with "It was night": his favourite time of grieving; "...it was raining": a projection of his inner feelings on nature"; and "...love's third burden": a primary theme of erotic epigrams, "...the north wind blew cold and I was alone": Asclepiades is alone, which is a worse situation than (AP 12.135=G-P 18),⁷⁴ where there is company to complain to. In addition to all of that, he is under the influence of wine. The epigram portrays the Hellenistic society's ritualistic act of *komos* in which the revellers take to the streets at night after the *symposion* under the effect of wine. The revellers go merry-making to their friends or lovers' doors.⁷⁵ Such epigram is a typical scene of the *symposion* followed by *komos* in which Asclepiades applies the rules of causality to the epigram,⁷⁶ which is one point causing or leading to another. Feeling lonely and defeated by the turbulent weather stirred a wave of tumultuous emotions inside the lover, which made him challenge the rough weather, defy the elements of nature, and eventually arrive at his beloved's door *παρακλαυσίθυρον* (*paraclausithyron*/beside the closed door).⁷⁷ Such series of

⁷² The same opening phrase is also found in (AP 5.189=G-P 42).

⁷³ Tarán (1979, 57).

⁷⁴ In (AP 12.135=G-P 18), Nicagoras was surrounded by his friends (probably in the *symposion*) and his friends were trying to console him. On the other hand, in (AP 5.167=G-P 14), the poet is alone with no one to console or soothe.

⁷⁵ After banquets at night, revellers used to take to the streets holding their cups and go to their friends' houses. See Tarán (1979, 58).

⁷⁶ The laws of causality (cause and effect) were basic scientific approaches in Hellenistic medicine (e.g. Erasistratus of Ceos [304 BC - 250 BC]) and philosophy (e.g. Stoic philosophy). Also, Hellenistic poets, such as Asclepiades of Samos, employed the laws of causality in literature. See Long (1986, 103); Green (1990, 485); Cambiano (1999, 611).

⁷⁷ LSJ, s.v. "*παρακλαυσίθυρον*" = "lover's complaint sung at his mistress's door/serenade".

It is a recurrent motif used by Asclepiades of Samos reflecting the spirit of *komos*. The motif is when the *komasts* go to the house of their beloved ones at night and wait at their doors (possibly with songs, serenades, music and garlands). For more details about "*paraclausithyron*", see Canter (1920, 355-368).

actions happened as a result of being under the influence of the primordial god of love, Eros.⁷⁸

Before the end of the epigram, Asclepiades depicts himself in an act of prayer and supplication to Zeus when he exclaims - while drenched and in painful grief - that Zeus too had fallen in love, in an attempt to seek advice or epiphany from the king of gods who had been through the same experience before. Such pious tone strongly suggests that the acts of *komos* and *paraclausithyron* are not only social acts to be practised mildly, but also ritualistic acts to be performed favourably.

(AP 12.50=G-P 16) features the setting of the *symposion* as it plays a major role in the Hellenistic life. This epigram is a scarcity where Asclepiades includes his name as the persona. It may imply that the situation actually happened to Asclepiades himself, as a form of autobiographical writing, or that he may have just felt strongly about the situation without actually living it. At any rate, the following epigram is distinctively special as Asclepiades draws a shocking link between living a life of enjoyment in the *symposion* and death in an amatory epigram. (AP 12.50=G-P 16) portrays the terrible condition of Asclepiades who is in tears. He has company in the *symposion* to soothe him and cheer him up. His friend advises him to consume more wine and enjoy his life to the zenith since life is too short. Wine, in this particular context, plays a predominant role as an indispensable feature of the *symposion* highlighted in the gesture of handing the cup of wine to Asclepiades.⁷⁹ The epigram reads as follows:

Πῖν', Ἀσκληπιάδη· τί τὰ δάκρυα ταῦτα; τί πάσχεις;

οὐ σέ μόνον χαλεπή Κύπρις ἐλήϊσατο,

οὐδ' ἐπὶ σοὶ μόνῳ κατεθήζατο τόξα καὶ ἰοῦς

πικρὸς Ἔρωσ· τί ζῶν ἐν σποδιῇ τίθεσαι;

πίνωμεν Βάκχου ζῶρον πόμα· δάκτυλος ἀώσ·

ἢ πάλι κοιμιστὰν λύχνον ἰδεῖν μένομεν;

πίνωμεν, δύσερωσ· μετὰ τοι χρόνον οὐκέτι πουλύν,

⁷⁸ The poet, astonishingly, puts himself on an equal standing with Zeus while he is in a posture of worship. Such paradox creates an air of confusion and lack of reason. This state of delirium, especially loss of common sense and self-control, is a distinguishing and defining aspect of Asclepiades' lovers who are consumed by love.

⁷⁹ Rotroff (1996, 7); Cazzato and Prodi (2016, 9).

σχέτλιε, τὴν μακρὰν νύκτ' ἀναπασόμεθα.

(AP 12.50=G-P 16)

Drink, Asclepiades. Why these tears? What aileth thee? Not thee alone hath cruel Cypris⁸⁰ taken captive; not for thee alone hath bitter Love sharpened his arrows. Why whilst yet alive dost thou lie in the dust? Let us quaff the unmixed drink of Bacchus.⁸¹ The day is but a finger's breadth. Shall we wait to see again the lamp that bids us to bed? Let us drink, woeful lover. It is not far away now, poor wretch, the time when we shall rest through the long night.

(Trans. Paton, 1918)

(AP 12.50=G-P 16) opens with a wine-drinking scene by a *symposiast* - a typical Dionysian ritualistic act.⁸² Ancient Greeks believed that wine had a purging effect as it led to giving freedom and liberating their inner selves; and that is why they gave Dionysus the title, "the liberator".⁸³ Also, in the opening lines of this epigram, there is an authorial *σφραγίς* (*sphragis*/seal or signet)⁸⁴ and an internal monologue of Asclepiades soothing himself, or it could be a dialogue showing Asclepiades' imaginary friend soothing him. The epigram starts with "Drink Asclepiades. Why these tears? What aileth thee?" picturing himself getting drunk with a friend consoling him. Through the opening words of a heavily burdened heart, Asclepiades conveys sincerity of feeling in order to achieve realism of situation.⁸⁵ Realism was a characteristic aspect of Hellenistic writing.⁸⁶ Such realistic situation depicts a typical sympotic mood along with the iconic invitation to drink.⁸⁷ The male lover, Asclepiades, is in resounding defeat drinking his pains away. On the other side, the friend represents, supposedly, the sound of calm reason. This assumed friend says, "Why whilst yet alive dost thou lie in the dust?" and "The day is but a finger's breadth", which gives way to a recurrent common Hellenistic motif

⁸⁰ Cypris is another name for Aphrodite.

⁸¹ Bacchus is another name for the Greek god of wine, Dionysus. Thus, drinking the unmixed wine in (AP 12.50=G-P 16) is a sign of hard drinking in a ritualistic act. See Luschnig and Mitchell (2007, 61).

⁸² The first rounds of wine-drinking were hailed as libations to Dionysus. See Bruss (2010, 127).

⁸³ Peters (2009, 44).

⁸⁴ LSJ, s.v. "σφραγίς" = "seal/signet", "gem/ stone for a ring" or "impression of a signet ring".

Sphragis is a poetic claim to authorship. See Stehle (2009, 67).

⁸⁵ It is the ability to imitate a real-life situation in literature. For more details about realism, see Villanueva (1997, 5-7).

⁸⁶ Richter (1943, 118); Bailkey (1987, 255-258).

⁸⁷ The invitation to the drink is the springboard for social interaction in the *symposion* by which it grows into round-table discussions, philosophical debates and poetic recitals. For more details about wine circulation - to the right - in the *symposion*, see Wećowski (2014, 86-97); Cazzato and Prodi (2016, 6).

in the *symposion*: *carpe diem*.⁸⁸

In the context of (AP 12.50=G-P 16), the interlocutor tries to soothe the tortured lover, Asclepiades, by telling him that he is not the only person stricken by Aphrodite. The lover is moonstruck by Aphrodite and is held captive by her - he is helpless, but he is trying to put on a solid appearance by hiding his feelings. Nevertheless, his attempt to hide his feelings ends up in vain since his friend notices his misery. Consequently, the friend finds that the best way to get rid of temptation is to yield to drinking. The drink is not mixed "diluted" as mentioned in (AP 12.50=G-P 16); a detail that goes against the traditional mixed wine of the *symposion* in order to stay sober.⁸⁹ Whether the friend's advice sounds wise or not, it seems that the spirit of the *symposion* gives way to overflowing emotions and that it is the solace and refuge of its attendants to open up their hearts and let go of their suppressed innermost feelings. Another considerable note is that Asclepiades finds no way to resist desire but to yield to it or drink his pains away. Here, he gives a general image of the "obsessed lover" surrounded by a kind of sombre atmosphere that submerges him further into a sea of tumultuous and storming emotions.⁹⁰ In (AP 5.150=G-P 10), the same situation takes place accompanied by implied or stated rejection by the beloved, which is at least counted as closure.⁹¹ However, (AP 12.50=G-P 16) closes with a gloomy open ending suggesting the hopelessness of the situation. This state of "tortured lingering" is most acutely, accurately and craftily expressed by Asclepiades reflecting, partially or totally, the social mood of the age. Thus, the epigram in hand shows that even though the *symposion* had that festive mood celebrated at its heart, there was some hidden desperate side reflected in failed social relations.

(AP 12.135=G-P 18) presents one of the icons of the *symposion* known as the elemental revealer of ἀλήθεια (*aletheia/truth*): οἶνος (*oinos/wine*).⁹² Wine is a tell-tale method that unravels the hidden truth of love. Asclepiades' amatory epigrams had their special and distinct atmosphere that had wine, *komos* and lovers: *symposiasts* and *hetaerai* - all featured in one scene.⁹³ The following epigram is a very good example featuring all these elements. The

⁸⁸ *Carpe diem* is a Latin expression that means "seize the day". It is a concept fundamentally introduced by Horace in his *Ode* 1.11. The concept is a call to live for the moment and enjoy life as much as possible. Added to that, it is a common motif that preoccupied Asclepiades of Samos in his writings. See Grimm (1963, 316-317).

⁸⁹ Part of the Greek cultural tradition entailed the consumption of diluted wine at the *symposion* and identified it as civilised action, whereas the consumption of undiluted wine was identified as a barbarian action. See Rotroff (1996, 4); Weçowski (2014, 100).

⁹⁰ Gutzwiller believes that Asclepiades' epigrams draw a comparison between the idealistic image of mutual love and the bitter reality of unrequited love. See Gutzwiller (1998, 150).

⁹¹ (AP 5.150=G-P 10) had an ending (closure) where the aristocrat eventually orders his servants to put out the light, whereas (AP 12.50=G-P 16) is left with an open ending (no closure) where the reader does not know what will happen next to the lover, Asclepiades.

⁹² LSJ, s.v. "ἀλήθ-εια" = "truth" or "sincerity/truthfulness".

LSJ, s.v. "οἶνος" = "wine" or "fermented juice of other kinds".

⁹³ Gutzwiller (2007b, 179); Bruss (2010, 125).

epigram reads as follows:

Οἶνος ἔρωτος ἔλεγχος· ἐρᾶν ἀρνεύμενον ἡμῖν
ἦτασαν αἱ πολλαὶ Νικαγόρην προπόσεις.
καὶ γὰρ ἐδάκρυσεν καὶ ἐνόστασε, καὶ τι κατηφῆς
ἔβλεπε, χὼ σφιγχθεὶς οὐκ ἔμενε στέφανος.

(AP 12.135=G-P 18)

Wine is the proof of love. Nicagoras⁹⁴ denied to us that he was in love, but those many toasts convicted him. Yes! he shed tears and bent his head, and had a certain downcast look, and the wreath bound tight round his head kept not its place.

(Trans. Paton, 1918)

In (AP 12.135=G-P 18), the motif of the suffering lover stands out with drunken, discreet Nicagoras. Nicagoras is sitting, probably in the *symposion*, in deep pain, yet he refuses to open his heart to anyone; but once he starts drinking wine, his secret is out and he starts letting go of his feelings. The wreath on his head shows him maintaining a proper, respected, classy appearance, and, probably, he had an aristocratic status because of the wreath on his head. The fall of the wreath is symbolic for losing the upper hand and superiority in his relationship. In this epigram, Asclepiades draws closely the symptoms of a suffering lover about to emotionally break down: "he shed tears, and bent his head, and had a straight downcast look" and then his tight wreath fell off his head during his outburst of emotions. The importance of the *symposion* to Greek life very much shines in this epigram as it is that place where the male lovers can open up and display their feelings in front of fellow *symposiasts*. Wine grants truthfulness and that is what it did to Asclepiades' smitten lover, Nicagoras, when he became drunk. The picture of a broken lover amidst the festive mood of the *symposion* draws an inescapable contrast; where everyone is busy singing, dancing, intellectually conversing, flirting, seducing, mocking and reciting poetry; while, on the other side, there is that broken-hearted guy crying over his misfortune in love. Notwithstanding that heart-breaking scene, such celebratory atmosphere could be absolutely uplifting and soothing for the dejected lover. The reason for Nicagoras' hidden emotions is not particularly clear: is it because it is a private matter, or because it is a secret, or maybe it is a matter of masculinity where no one should notice his misery and tears? At any rate, despite all this agony, the uplifting spirits of the *symposion* and the atmosphere of *komos* could sweep all pains away; or, at least, alleviate them. Thus, the lover

⁹⁴ Nicagoras is a friend of Asclepiades, probably an imaginary one.

probably sought the *symposion* in the hope for some positive energy, consolation, or even relaxation.⁹⁵ It is observed that Asclepiades' exceptional ability to depict the symptoms of a soul in pain in a few lines admirably stands out in this context.

Second, this is an analysis of the *hetaera* in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. Asclepiades of Samos had an inspective eye through which he portrayed the *hetaera* - how she acted, thought, reacted, etc... Through his eye and his portrayal, the reader can perceive a clearer picture of the *hetaera*: one of the women's social classes of the Hellenistic society. Along with such portrayal, other social conventions, attitudes and conceptions begin to unravel themselves.

(AP 5.158=G-P 4) is an anecdote of the lover of Hermione presented in a scene of emotional defeat or turndown. The epigram shows the *hetaera*, Hermione, explicitly warning her lovers against getting emotionally attached with her through an embroidered message on her ζώνη (*zone*/girdle).⁹⁶ The epigram reads as follows:

*Ἑρμιόνη πιθανῆ ποτ' ἐγὼ συνέπαιζον, ἐχούση
ζωνίον ἐξ ἀνθέων ποικίλον, ὃ Παφίη,
χρύσεια γράμματ' ἔχον· δίολον" δ' ἐέγραπτο,
"Φίλει με·*

καὶ μὴ λυπηθῆς, ἣν τις ἔχη μ' ἕτερος."

(AP 5.158=G-P 4)

**I played once with captivating Hermione, and she
wore, O Paphian Queen,⁹⁷ a zone of many colours
bearing letters of gold; all round it was written,**

"Love me and be not sore at heart if I am another's."

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.158=G-P 4), Asclepiades portrays another heartbreak; however, this time, it introduces a new means of communication, which is writing messages. Asclepiades depicts the colourful girdle of the admired one with the gold letters reading, "Love me and be not sore at heart if I am another's." The beloved's blatant words "aphorism" strongly,⁹⁸ or rather, definitely suggest the beloved to be a *hetaera*, for, it goes without saying that Hermione enjoys all free

⁹⁵ Fantuzzi (2004b, 339-340).

⁹⁶ LSJ, s.v. "ζών-η" = "belt" or "the lower girdle worn by women just above the hips".

Respecting the girdle, it was a belt worn by women in ancient Greece. In this context, the girdle symbolises desire; and by having the seductive sentence "the magic spell" embroidered on it, the admirer cannot take her off his mind. See Cameron (1981, 282).

⁹⁷ The Paphian Queen is Aphrodite.

⁹⁸ CODLT, s.v. "aphorism" = It is defined as the usage of a few words of wisdom to express a general principle or axiom.

will to choose her lover. Also, the statement assures her to be a far-fetched woman and an unattainable catch. From the first meeting with Hermione, the lover, Asclepiades, sounds so submissive and obsessed, for he remembers each word of the girdle sentence when he gets intimate with her.⁹⁹ For Asclepiades, Hermione is so enchanting by sending the right messages. The right message here is embroidered on the girdle she is wearing, and this is an implicit seductive message and allusion to Aphrodite's *κεστός ἱμάς* (*kestos himas*/charmed girdle):¹⁰⁰ the girdle that Aphrodite, the goddess of seduction, lent to *Ἥρα* Hera in order to help her beguile her consort, Zeus.¹⁰¹ In Greek religion, girdles were typical votive offerings to Aphrodite.¹⁰² Women of different backgrounds, marital statuses and social castes: free, slaves, married, unmarried, *hetaera*i and prostitutes, etc... were all represented by Hera,¹⁰³ and they visited Aphrodite's temples in pursuit of succour in matters of beauty, attractiveness and sexuality. In the same fashion, Hermione wears the girdle to adorn herself and attract her men. Added to that, as a *hetaera*, Hermione actually cares about business and makes sure, at best, not to earn the enmity of her lovers when she breaks up with them by adopting an apologetic tone. Ironically, the girdle of Aphrodite was used to renew love and stabilise troubled relationships; whereas Hermione used it to end her relations with her lovers in peace.¹⁰⁴

At this point, the art of seduction has taken up a whole new level. The *hetaera* uses all possible means to tempt her admirers probably to heat up the challenge over herself, and thus, boosting her financial gains to her own advantage. Writing such sentence makes her more desirable as she places herself as the dream woman of every man.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the girdle sentence indicates very important aspects in her character: obliging, pliant, suggestible and

⁹⁹ Asclepiades vividly recollects his affair with Hermione which contrasts with the present situation where Hermione is gone and probably flirting with another lover. See Bing (2000, 246).

¹⁰⁰ LSJ, s.v. "*κεστός ἱμάς*" = "Aphrodite's charmed girdle".

The girdle of Aphrodite is suggested to be an amulet or a clothing item which could be either a saltire/a brassiere worn around the breast or a girdle worn around the waist. At any rate, the girdle is a powerful tool of sexual attraction used by Hermione, since it is an undergarment worn right above the hip, and thus, every lover who catches sight of the message is already sexually enticed. The usage of the girdle, along with the mention of Aphrodite, leads the reader to visualising Aphrodite's divine girdle and its unmatched divine beauty and grace. Taking all the previous images into consideration, Asclepiades succeeded in creating a highly sexually charged scene coloured with graceful divine beauty. See Faraone (1990, 221-222); Bing (2000, 247).

¹⁰¹ According to Homer's *Iliad* (14.190-217), in the course of action of the Trojan War, Hera had a plan to distract Zeus from following the war events, so she resorted to Aphrodite in order to provide her with a charm, claiming her need to revive her sexual life with Zeus. Thus, Aphrodite provided Hera with a girdle in order to lure Zeus. Using the help of the god of sleep, *Ἵπνος* Hypnos, Hera put Zeus to sleep while seducing him. Subsequently, Hera misused Aphrodite's girdle to deceive Zeus and gain extra advantage for the Greeks over the Trojans. See Faraone (1990, 228); Cyrino (1993, 221); Brown (1997, 32-33); Fraser (2011, 19).

¹⁰² It was believed that the girdle was one of Aphrodite's gifts. Aphrodite's gifts were used to trigger sexual excitement and they were, more often than not, used deceptively. Those gifts were called aphrodisiacs and were believed to have brought one's romantic and sexual life into effect. Thus, girdles became votive offerings in Aphrodite's temples. That is how Aphrodite exerted her influence in the Greek life. See Faraone (1990, 220).

¹⁰³ Rouse (1902, 247).

¹⁰⁴ Rouse (1902, 72); Brandon (2014, 19).

¹⁰⁵ Hermione sets an example of a typical promiscuous avaricious *hetaera*. See Cameron (1981, 293).

accommodating. Further, it rather sums up the *hetaera's* job in the Greek social life, unlike a prostitute or a respectable woman, I am a woman to love, yet I am unattainable. The sentence holds a sweet-sour "bittersweet" paradox to her disappointed lovers. In other words, Hermione warns her lover against jealousy, for she would not be loyal to him later on. Such act of disloyalty is a reflection of Aphrodite's character that had not been faithful to her consort *Ἥφαιστος* Hephaestus, the god of fire and metalwork.¹⁰⁶ The sentence sounds so realistic and believable that it could be easily imagined coming out of the mouth of a silver-tongued *hetaera*.¹⁰⁷ The art of manipulation is a main theme of Asclepiades and sounds so real in his aristocrat-*hetaera* encounters.¹⁰⁸ The epigrams of Asclepiades are full of the Hellenistic spirit and reflect Hellenistic people's lives. The *hetaera* was a no-man's land despite her trained skill to keep good company with any man she attends to. However, business and social norms dictate that the *hetaera* should maintain good social relations with everyone, but stay with no one, which makes her girdle-sentence a brilliant diplomatic answer to every broken-hearted lover wishing to own Hermione.¹⁰⁹ One should also keep in mind that a *hetaera's* lost or potential clients might be powerful upper-class citizens, so the *hetaera* has to be particularly eloquent so as not to meet dejection or dissatisfaction that might cause her significant financial losses, or even dangers.

The aphorism shows such self-confidence that adds more and more craving on the lovers' part by giving the *hetaera* an image of a wild, untamed, entertaining company.¹¹⁰ Asclepiades, again, pictures a *hetaera* at a superior position to her male lover because she is unattainable. The image of the *hetaera* presented in (AP 5.158=G-P 4) stands in stark opposition to the wealthy citizen woman who is best to be least talked about. One can easily imagine the difference between both classes' attitudes and behaviours: a woman seeking fortune, amusement, and, if lucky enough, fame in contrast with a free citizen woman whose ultimate

¹⁰⁶ According to Homer's *Odyssey* (8.250-366), Hephaestus was married to Aphrodite; however, Aphrodite was not faithful to Hephaestus since he was not attractive and with a limp in his leg. In consequence, Hephaestus received word of his wife's infidelity with the god of war, Ares, so he caught and trapped the cheating couple naked under a net for all the other gods to witness the couple's shame of adultery. See Braswell (1982, 129); Allan and Maitland (2012, 88).

¹⁰⁷ In (AP 5.158=G-P 4), the ambiguous adjective *πιθανή* could mean "silver-tongued", "obedient" or "easily-led". The meaning of the word is revealed when the lover reads out the stitched words on the girdle, and so, the word *πιθανή* turns out to mean "easily-led". That is to say, Hermione gave way easily to men's flirtation. This literary technique is called "ambiguous anticipation", and it is used by Asclepiades as a means of literary suspense to keep his audience engaged and attentive until the end of the epigram. See Arnott (1969, 7).

¹⁰⁸ In Greek mythology, Aphrodite's gift to Hera and how Hera later employed the girdle in the deception of Zeus during the Trojan War (*Iliad* 13.351-14.153) further solidify the point of sexual manipulation. See Cyrino (1993, 221); Brown (1997, 32-33); Fraser (2011, 19).

¹⁰⁹ It was known that the *hetaera* had one lover, yet she was everybody's friend. See McKay (1983, 139).

¹¹⁰ In Hellenistic Greece, the *hetaera* had been expected to entertain her clients through her sweet talk, dancing and fornication. If the client was completely satisfied, he could pay more money or provide the *hetaera* with more advantages of a free citizen. Thus, once the *hetaera* plays her cards right and sends the right messages, the obsessed lovers would be twisted round her little finger.

job is to manage the household duties and educate the children. The financial element is a key factor in this comparison, although it is not always the case.

(AP 7.217=G-P 41) is an amatory epigram with a dedicatory spirit, since Asclepiades extols Archeanassa who exerted her charming youth to hold a quite entertaining company with her lovers. Generally speaking, the *hetaera* had multiple skills, more than just seduction, such as philosophical discussions, poetry recitals, verbal games, singing and dancing;¹¹¹ however, Asclepiades focused on the sensual side in his epigrams. The epigram reads as follows:

*Ἀρχεάνασσαν ἔχω, τὰν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ἑταίραν,
ἃς καὶ ἐπὶ ῥυτίδων ὁ γλυκὺς ἔζειτ' Ἔρως.
ἃ νέον ἤβης ἄνθος ἀποδρέψαντες ἐρασταὶ
πρωτοβόλου, δι' ὄσης ἤλθετε πυρκαϊῆς.*

(AP 7.217=G-P 41)

**I hold Archeanassa the courtesan from Colophon
even on whose wrinkles sweet Love sat. Ah, ye
lovers, who plucked the fresh flowers of her youth
in its first piercing brilliance, through what a fiery
furnace did you pass!**

(Trans. Paton, 1919)

Asclepiades' usual style is to write about despair in love; thus, this epigram does not go along the same track of his usual trend. Asclepiades' epigrams, normally written in the first person, usually show the lover courting, lonesome, unhappy or deserted.¹¹² In (AP 7.217=G-P 41), Asclepiades praises and admires his courtesan Archeanassa, even in her old age and,¹¹³ in this context, it is directly stated that the beloved is a *hetaera*. Asclepiades also expresses his jealousy of those who enjoyed her company in her youth. The sexual connotations continue to be referred to with the usage of the heat motif "through what a fiery furnace did you pass." Archeanassa is praised for her expertise in the art of seduction. The idea of reciprocal love does not fit the usual theme of Asclepiades - despair in love - and, thus, he puzzles his readers. However, the discourse of admiring a courtesan and glorifying her still keeps the epigram within the Asclepiadean sphere. The role of the *hetaera* was to entertain her lovers and clear their minds of the burdens of the commercial and the political life.¹¹⁴ In (AP 7.217=G-P 41),

¹¹¹ McClure (2003, 80).

¹¹² Ludwig (1963, 64).

¹¹³ Archeanassa is too old that Eros is able to sit on her wrinkles. The picture of Eros, the immortal god, sitting on Archeanassa's wrinkles, the mortal courtesan, is an act of abject mockery of the fading youth of a mortal. The contrasting portrayal between an aging mortal and an ageless immortal brings to mind mankind's adamant pursuit of immortality of the gods.

¹¹⁴ McClure (2003, 80).

Archeanassa's role was applauded as an entertainer, subsequently, her status in society, as a *hetaera*, was elevated by Asclepiades' epigram, since her efforts were appreciated and valued. Asclepiades' portrayal of the *hetaera* in terms of position and status mirrors Asclepiades' view and exceeding acceptance of the category of the *hetaera*.

By writing this epigram, Asclepiades sets off on an endeavour to immortalise Archeanassa through his words, taking into consideration that there is a possibility these words would be later engraved on a tombstone, and thus, giving her eternal recognition.¹¹⁵ Hence, Asclepiades has given the courtesan a name, positive merits, and above all, immortality through his words, which has helped her name survive up to our very day. This ability of immortalising a human being with the help of the Muses is in itself an act of divine ability that Asclepiades employs in favour of a courtesan instead of glorifying the gods. Immortalising a courtesan through literature almost puts courtesans, who are ordinary people, on an equal footing with heroes, demi-gods and gods.

(AP 12.161=G-P 20) is another epigram that reveals more about the *hetaera* and the social aspects of the Hellenistic society. Firstly, it portrays a *hetaera's* skill in using pederasty in seduction.¹¹⁶ Secondly, it introduces different types of clothing in the Hellenistic period. The epigram reads as follows:

*Δόρκιον ἢ φιλέφηβος ἐπίσταται, ὡς ἀπαλὸς παῖς,
ἔσθαι πανδήμιον Κύπριδος ὠκὸν βέλος,
ἤμερον ἀστράπτουσα κατ' ὄμματος, ἠδ' ὑπὲρ ὤμων
σὸν πετάσῳ γυμνὸν μηρὸν ἔφαινε χλαμύς.*

(AP 12.161=G-P 20)

**Dorciōn, who loves to sport with the young men,
knows how to cast, like a tender boy, the swift dart
of Cypris the Popular, flashing desire from her eye,
and over her shoulders . . . with her boy's hat, her
chlamys showed her naked thigh.**

(Trans. Paton, 1918)

In (AP 12.161=G-P 20), Asclepiades is describing Dorcion's skill to attract her men with her looks and attractive clothing. The word Dorcion is a diminutive of *δορκίας*

¹¹⁵ Another interpretation is that the speaker is Archeanassa's tombstone turning the epigram into a dedicatory epigram instead of an amatory one. See Sens (2002, 251).

¹¹⁶ Pederasty is the sexual relation of adult males with adolescent boys. See Kuefler (2006, 14); Reeser (2015, 102-103).

(*dorkas*/gazelle),¹¹⁷ picturing a little animal of large, bright eyes, proverbially one of the slenderest of creatures.¹¹⁸ Dorcion uses the art of seduction by dressing like a boy, as she wears a *πέτασος* (*petasus*/boy's hat) and *χλαμύς* (*chlamys*/mantle),¹¹⁹ showing her thighs. Asclepiades states that Dorcion "knows how to cast", for this is her job, and he is praising her for knowing it very well. In (*AP* 12.161=G-P 20), Asclepiades leaves the reader with an open end, which is an indicator of the success of Dorcion in achieving her goal.¹²⁰ From the previous notes, it could be deduced that the social role of the *hetaera* was mainly seduction and entertainment.

During the Hellenistic period, it was normal that men were attracted to children of both sexes and this attraction was transformed into the writings of several Hellenistic epigrammatists like Asclepiades of Samos: pederastic epigrams.¹²¹ As for the type of clothing that Dorcion wore, both the boy's hat and the *chlamys* were generally worn by young *ἔφηβοι* (*epheboi*/adolescents),¹²² whereas the *hetaera* used this kind of attire as a form of sexual attraction.¹²³ From the previous epigram (*AP* 12.161=G-P 20), it is evident that the *hetaera* of the Hellenistic period used the adolescent transvestite technique as a means of seduction.¹²⁴

Third, this is an analysis of the empowerment of women "*hetaerai*" in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. Asclepiades gave women the upper hand in most of his writings particularly through his *femme fatale* figures, although the usual mouthpiece in his epigrams was a male one. In addition, Asclepiades was known to have written from a male's point of view, so writing from the female's point of view was a rarity according to Asclepiades' corpus.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Asclepiades was considered one of the Hellenistic epigrammatists who empowered women in most of his works.

(*AP* 5.7=G-P 9) features a case of perjury "oath-breaking" as well as female emotional

¹¹⁷ LSJ, s.v. "*δορκάς*" = "an animal of the deer kind (so called because of its large bright eyes) in Greece" or "gazelle in Syria and Africa".

¹¹⁸ Cameron (1981, 291).

¹¹⁹ LSJ, s.v. "*πέτασος*" = "broad-brimmed felt hat, worn by adolescents".

The *petasus* was a broad-brimmed hat that was worn by warriors and travellers for protection from the sun. See Clack (1999, 48).

LSJ, s.v. "*χλαμύς*" = "short mantle, worn by horsemen borrowed with the *petasus* from Thessaly" or "mantle worn by young boys from Macedonia".

The *chlamys* was a cloak that was wrapped around one shoulder by a clasp while the other shoulder enjoyed free movement. See Clack (1999, 48).

¹²⁰ Even though Cameron praises Dorcion's success in seduction, he insists that there is no proof of her being a *hetaera*. See Cameron (1981, 291).

¹²¹ Richlin (1997, 30).

¹²² OCD, s.v. "*ἔφηβοι*" = It is defined as young boys who have reached the age of puberty and are prepared to be involved in wars and thus they received military training. The *epheboi* participated in different physical activities in the gymnasium.

¹²³ Clack (1999, 48).

¹²⁴ The adolescent transvestite technique or cross dressing is wearing clothes of the opposite sex to trigger sexual attraction.

¹²⁵ (*AP* 5.145=G-P 12) and (*AP* 7.11=G-P 28) are examples of Asclepiades' epigrams that are told by women in the first person narration.

superiority, where Heraclea swears three times by the lamp and yet still breaks her promise.¹²⁶ Asclepiades makes sure to highlight the perjury of Heraclea and vindictively curses her when she gets together with another guy.¹²⁷ The epigram reads as follows:

*Λύχνε, σὲ γὰρ παρεοῦσα τρὶς ὄμοσεν Ἡράκλεια
ἤξειν κούχ ἤκει· λύχνε, σὺ δ' εἰ θεὸς εἶ
τὴν δολίην ἀπάμμονον· ὅταν φίλον ἔνδον ἔχουσα
παίξῃ, ἀποσβεσθεὶς μηκέτι φῶς πάρεχε.
(AP 5.7=G-P 9)*

**Dear lamp, thrice Heraclea here present swore
by thee to come and cometh not. Lamp, if thou art
a god, take vengeance on the deceitful girl. When
she has a friend at home and is sporting with him,
go out, and give them no more light.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.7=G-P 9), Asclepiades continues a whole series of rejected-love relations. The object of love in all of the amatory epigrams is probably the *hetaera*. The desperate mood continues with a cold rejecting woman: she is cold, unfaithful, and seductive. On one side, Heraclea is an unfaithful temptress who swears by the lamp three times to come to the lover's abode, yet she does not show up.¹²⁸ Thus, she is charged with perjury, which she does not seem to care about, since she swears three times, and still does not show up. Not only that, Heraclea is expected to be with another lover in her own house instead. On the other side, the forlorn lover, Asclepiades, is absolutely passive and emasculated by the uncaring beloved, Heraclea. The former finds comfort in complaining to the lamp (apostrophe).¹²⁹ In (AP 5.7=G-P 9), the lover is waiting for his beloved and is consumed with jealousy, so he resorts to the deity-lamp or the witness-lamp to curse his beloved,¹³⁰ if she is sporting with another man, by putting out the lights.¹³¹ Heraclea is clearly given the upper hand, as the faithful male lover is the one

¹²⁶ Asclepiades provides the lamp with divine powers and various roles as it is part and parcel of the image of any Hellenistic temple. In fact, the lamp is hailed as a deity to be sworn upon thrice. The lamp was a significant votive offering, and that is how it got its godly image drawn in the mind of Asclepiades of Samos. Asclepiades pictures the lamp as a vengeful god, witness and messenger. See Kanellou (2013, 277-79).

¹²⁷ The reaction of the lover in (AP 5.7=G-P 9) is quite vengeful unlike the reaction of the lingering, patient lover in (AP 5.150=G-P 10).

¹²⁸ The case of Heraclea's perjury in (AP 5.7=G-P 9) is similar to Nico's perjury in (AP 5.150=G-P 10).

¹²⁹ CODLT, s.v. "apostrophe" = It is defined as a literary technique in which the poet talks to an abstract or an inanimate addressee for dramatic effect.

¹³⁰ The lamp motif bears a metaphorical symbol for the lovers' burning desire for Heraclea. It signifies that the *hetaera's* job entails ensuring that her lovers' flaming desire is always set ablaze so as to keep business with clients or prospective clients. See Marcovich (1988, 5-6); Winiarska (2017, 228-229).

¹³¹ This is an example of psychological projection where the lover takes the lamp as a confidant. This could be both ironic and symbolic since the poet is complaining to a short-lived object, the lamp, which may fade away

waiting for her, whereas Heraclea is the unfaithful female figure with promiscuous affairs. When it comes to the lover, the obsessed lover's psychology is very well drawn when put in contrast with the insolent, heart-breaking beloved. Such contrast puts the *hetaera* at a superior position to her male lover.

From (AP 5.7=G-P 9), several deductions can be made. The *hetaera* occupies a proper social status because she has the privilege and ability to own her abode where she can receive any clients she wishes to have. The *hetaera* may have an assignation or a meeting place where she can meet her clients; a right that makes the status of the *hetaera* legal in her society. In addition to that, Asclepiades pictures the *hetaera* of low ethical status because of her constant acts of oath-breaking or perjury. Therefore, through this epigram, the *hetaera* is pictured with valid and solid legal power, yet of low ethical values.

(AP 5.150=G-P 10) is a complaint about Nico's breaking of ὄρκος (*horkos*/oath) despite swearing by Δημήτηρ Demeter.¹³² However, the lover, Asclepiades, does not curse her immediately because he still has a sliver of hope that she may come anytime soon, but this hope is shattered by the end of the epigram as she does not seem to show up. The scene eventually ends with a lonely, abandoned lover, and the curtains are drawn with the lover's final resolution to put out the lights. The epigram reads as follows:

Ὁμολόγης ἤξειν εἰς νύκτα μοι ἢ πιβόητος
Νικό, καὶ σεμνήν ὄμοσε Θεσμοφόρον·
κούχ ἤκει, φυλακὴ δὲ παροίχεται. ἄρ' ἐπιорκεῖν
ἤθελε; τὸν λύχνον, παῖδες, ἀποσβέσατε.

(AP 5.150=G-P 10)

**The celebrated Nico promised to come to me
for to-night and swore by solemn Demeter. She
comes not and the first watch of night is past. Did
she mean then to forswear herself? Servants, put
out the light.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.150=G-P 10), the lover, Asclepiades, most probably an aristocrat,¹³³ is passed

soon. The psychological projection comes from the inner thoughts of the poet as he seems to have had the intention for a one-night stand, since he is meditating upon a lamp (short-lived relationship) instead of the long-lasting stars (long-lived relationship). This point supports those who are of the opinion that Heraclea is a *hetaera*.

¹³² LSJ, s.v. "ὄρκος" = "oath" or "the object by which one swears, as the Styx among the gods". *Horkos* was one of the issues that the Greeks took seriously for fear that the gods may punish them for breaking the oath. *Horkos* was one of the cards played by Asclepiades of Samos, especially when the *hetaera* stood him up for a romantic date, in order to win his arguments.

¹³³ The lover is probably an aristocrat because he has his own servants.

over for a date with his beloved, Nico, who is most probably a *hetaera*. The contrast between the lovelorn forsaken lover and the uncaring beloved shows so clearly in a way that presents the male lover totally helpless and hopeless as well. The lover, Asclepiades, has the whole scene set in anticipation of Nico who does not show up at his house eventually.¹³⁴ Here, victorious Nico shows apathy and negligence to her lover, for, at least, she should not have promised him a date if she had not planned to meet him in the first place.¹³⁵ Eventually, Nico does not show up and breaks her oath and her lover's heart. Thus, the adjective *ἐπιβόητος* given to the *hetaera* eventually meant "ill-spoken of".¹³⁶ However, by the end of the epigram, the *hetaera*, Nico, ends up rejecting the aristocrat emotionally. By doing so, Nico is given the upper hand emotionally.

(AP 5.162=G-P 8) is a metaphor: the love-struck poet compares his beloved's act of infidelity to the bite of *echidna* "viper".¹³⁷ Some types of female snakes are notorious for killing their male partners after mating in order to keep their eggs in them: such action is known as sexual cannibalism. Therefore, the mythological allusion to the *hetaera* as an *echidna* leaves an ugly image of the *hetaera* as a sneaky, untrustworthy snake.¹³⁸ The epigram reads as follows:

*Ἡ λαμυρή μ' ἔτρωσε Φιλαίνιον· εἰ δὲ τὸ τραῦμα
μὴ σαφές, ἀλλ' ὁ πόνος δύεται εἰς ὄνυχα.
οἴχομ', Ἔρωτες, ὄλωλα, διοίχομαι· εἰς γὰρ ἐταίραν
νυστάζων ἐπέβην, οἶδ', ἔθιγον τ' Αἴδα.*

(AP 5.162=G-P 8)

**Cruel Philaenion has bitten me; though the bite
does not show, the pain reaches to my finger-tips.**

¹³⁴ One of the significant points in (AP 5.150=G-P 10) is that the meeting place is in the lover's home, which means that Nico is probably a *hetaera*. However, even though the *hetaera* goes to her client at his place, the *hetaera* still has the choice to abandon her lover. In addition, there is no mention of any tying financial issues that may bind the *hetaera* to visit a man unwillingly. Thus, the *hetaera* had the privilege of choice and free will to select her lovers.

¹³⁵ Traditionally speaking, the value of the oath absorbed its importance from the value or the social standard of the oath-taker. See Fletcher (2012, 243).

¹³⁶ LSJ, s.v. "*ἐπιβόητος*" = "ill spoken of" or "famous".

Asclepiades uses the ambiguous adjective *ἐπιβόητος* meaning either 'celebrated' or 'ill-spoken of'. At first, the reader does not know which meaning to follow: 'celebrated' or 'ill-spoken of', but then, as the reader continues reading, he discovers the meaning when the lover asks himself, "Did she mean then to forswear herself?" Only then does the reader understand the intention of the speaker, and subsequently, the meaning of the ambiguous adjective *ἐπιβόητος* turns out to be 'ill-spoken of'. See Arnott (1969, 7); McKay (1983, 135).

¹³⁷ A viper is a poisonous snake. The poisonous pointed fangs of the viper, in reference to the *hetaera*, can be compared to the pointed arrows of Eros with which he strikes his victims causing them severe pain. See Borthwick (1967, 250); Clack (1999, 232); Cairns (2016, 236).

¹³⁸ In this epigram, Asclepiades writes about the disloyalty of the *hetaera* and her failure in having committed relations. An ironic point since this is the nature of prostitution, and if the *hetaera* sticks to one client, it would be bad for her business.

**Dear Loves,¹³⁹ I am gone, 'tis over with me, I am past
hope; for half-asleep I trod upon a whore, I know
it, and her touch was death.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.162=G-P 8), Asclepiades laments the painful stings of love in the opening of the epigram, which is definitely a usual theme of Asclepiades: pain and agony in love; and as usual the addressee is a *hetaera*.¹⁴⁰ Then, the poet highlights his inner emotional pain "internal pain" that harms him physically "external pain" represented by the snake-biting image. Transforming the emotional suffering into an extreme fatal case of physical death is completed by, "... the pain reaches to my finger-tips". The previous deteriorating analogy can be compared to the bite of an asp, a poisonous snake, which does not have an apparent external effect, yet the victim dies in slumberous lethargy. Such analogy turns the romantic affair into a serious medical case study that is carefully scrutinised to be able to fully understand its symptoms, and hence, find a cure.¹⁴¹ The epigram closes with a melodramatic image of a lover in sound defeat by a *hetaera* ending in his emotional and physical death.

(AP 5.164=G-P 13) is another epigram that displays emotional rejection of the *hetaera*. This time Asclepiades invokes the goddess of night to witness how Pythias rejected an invited ξένος (*xenos*/guest-friend),¹⁴² which is pretty shameful, since it is against the norms of the Hellenistic society to reject guests. According to standard Greek ἦθος (*ethos*/moral),¹⁴³ concerning receiving a guest-friend, it was inappropriate and shameful not to be welcoming and hospitable with the guests, especially if the guest is invited, according to the words of Asclepiades in (AP 5.164=G-P 13). Thus, Asclepiades condemns his beloved for not being hospitable and prays to the goddess of night to take revenge on her by reversing roles and making her the one crying to the goddess of night at Asclepiades' door. The epigram reads as follows:

¹³⁹ Loves/Eros is another name for Eros. See Spencer (1932, 121-123).

¹⁴⁰ Asclepiades is too gullible and self-involved to take notice that Philaenion is a faithless *hetaera*. The moment of calling Philaenion directly a *hetaera* is the moment of realisation and the climax of the epigram. See Cameron (1981, 293).

¹⁴¹ Such interest in medicine and symptoms of illnesses and disorders is a typical feature that distinguishes Hellenistic scholarship. The tracing of emotional influence on physicality "psychosomatic disorders" is considered an innovation of Alexandrian literature because of the application and depiction of science in literature. A typical example of the Hellenistic erudite literature can be found in the physical symptoms of love that appear on Medea, when she was madly in love with Jason, in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* (Book 3). See Gutzwiller (2007b, 79-80).

¹⁴² LSJ, s.v. "ξένος" = "guest-friend, applied to persons and states bound by a treaty or tie of hospitality", "stranger/wanderer/refugee" or "foreigner". For more details about the definition of *xenos*, see Konstan (1997, 33-36).

For details about the reception of guests *xenos* in a Homeric context, see Robb (1994, 28-31).

¹⁴³ LSJ, s.v. "ἦθος" = "customs/manners" or "character/disposition".

*Νύξ· σὲ γὰρ οὐκ ἄλλην μαρτύρομαι, οἷά μ' ὕβριζει
 Πυθιάς ἢ Νικοῦς, οὔσα φιλεξαπάτις·
 κληθείς, οὐκ ἄκλητος, ἐλήλυθα. ταῦτά παθοῦσα
 σοὶ μέμψαιτ' ἔτ' ἐμοῖς σταῖσα παρὰ προθύροις.
 (AP 5.164=G-P 13)*

**Night, for I call thee alone to witness, look how
 shamefully Nico's Pythias, ever loving to deceive,
 treats me. I came at her call and not uninvited.
 May she one day stand at my door and complain
 to thee that she suffered the like at my hands.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.164=G-P 13), Asclepiades calls upon Night, or rather, the goddess of night, as a witness to his agony and a usual preferable time to describe his pains of love. The poet relates his beloved with deception and maltreatment. The art of manipulation here is worth pointing out as Asclepiades is putting his beloved on the spot: he is announcing it loud and clear that Pythias had already invited him, but now she is rejecting him. In revenge, the poet stands powerless as he does nothing but wish her to face the same humiliation.

From (AP 5.164=G-P 13), it is inferred that *xenos* is one of the basic axioms in Hellenistic social norms. On the other hand, it goes as a matter of appropriateness and convenience in the Hellenistic society that a person usually gives prior notice or is invited before paying a visit to any host. It is also noted that the *hetaera* still maintains the upper hand over her male lovers despite her inferiority in the Hellenistic society. This highlights how Asclepiades empowers women, particularly the *hetaera* in his epigrams.

(AP 5.207=G-P 7) is an example of the elevation and empowerment of women. In this epigram, Asclepiades complains to Aphrodite about Bitto and Nannion as they, seemingly, neglected his initiations. This epigram portrays a scene of two women in no need for a male figure in anyway, whether the need was sexual, emotional or financial. The scene shows them as independent women. The epigram reads as follows:

*Αἱ Σάμαι Βιττὼ καὶ Νάννιον εἰς Ἀφροδίτης
 φοιτᾶν τοῖς αὐτῆς οὐκ ἐθέλουσι νόμοις,
 εἰς δ' ἕτερ' αὐτομολοῦσιν, ἃ μὴ καλά. Δεσπότι Κύπρι,
 μίσει τὰς κοίτης τῆς παρὰ σοὶ φρυγάδας.
 (AP 5.207=G-P 7)*

Bitto and Nannion of Samus will not go to the

**house of Cypris by the road the goddess ordains,
but desert to other things which are not seemly. O
Lady Cypris, look with hate on the truants from thy
bed.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.207=G-P 7), Asclepiades criticises the two Samian women, Bitto and Nannion, who choose to skip their visit to him. The Samian women are most likely *hetaerai* according to the Asclepiadean code of writing. This epigram is another display of the free will that the *hetaera* enjoyed in the Hellenistic period.¹⁴⁴ The lover, Asclepiades, is frustrated and embittered because Bitto and Nannion of Samos are not taking "the road the goddess ordains", which is, supposedly, the road to his house. Instead, the two Samian women are using another road while deserting the lover's. This epigram is another indicative of the fact that the *hetaera* went to the house of the male lover, and she had full authority whether to go or not. There is another point to consider in this epigram: Asclepiades is actually addressing two women, which strongly propounds that they are *hetaerai* and the relationship between Asclepiades and the two Samian women is purely lustful. Also, there is an insinuation by Asclepiades that the two women are lesbians when he describes their actions as "not seemly". For ancient Greeks, men were normally attracted to young people of both genders; thus, it indicates that lesbianism was considered a deviation or an abnormality.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the word "seemly" signifies that it is a matter of propriety, not a matter of religious or moral obligation, to pay him a visit instead of having other affairs. Added to that, there is no mention of any financial commitment - not even a payment in advance. Thus, there are no strings attached in the relationship between the lover and the *hetaerai*. The freedom of will that women enjoyed in the Hellenistic period is a salient feature of the time. The mild and evasive reference to lesbianism gives the implication that men were unable to prevent such phenomenon from spreading, since it was most probably frowned upon, yet not illegal or forbidden.

Another interpretation given to the "house of Cypris" is by referring to it as the school of Aphrodite "double entendre".¹⁴⁶ This interpretation suggests that the two Samian women

¹⁴⁴ Dover gives examples of other women of the Hellenistic period who are also named Bitto and Nannion in inscriptions and dedications - some were typical references to *hetaerai*. See Dover (2002, 222-228).

¹⁴⁵ Richlin (1997, 30).

¹⁴⁶ CODLT, s.v. "double entendre" = It is defined as a literary technique that refers to an expression that has two meanings.

Since Aphrodite was the patroness of prostitutes, she was in charge of teaching her subjects about sex and seduction in ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period. It was mythically believed that Aphrodite taught *hetaerai* prostitution in her sanctuaries and temples. In return, the *hetaerai* offered Aphrodite dedicatory gifts, such as mirrors and ornaments, and wore special dresses to her. This cult was found at different places, such as Palaepaphos in Cyprus,

have skipped the classes of Aphrodite. The teacher, in this interpretation, is Aphrodite or the priestesses at the temple of Aphrodite, since Aphrodite was responsible for teaching sexual skills just like the Muses taught poetry to poets.¹⁴⁷ Thus, deserting Aphrodite's classes at her temple sounds like a sacrilege. According to Asclepiades, despite the Samian women's ability and duty to follow the orders of Aphrodite, they disobeyed her orders, and thus, he invokes Aphrodite to curse them for such profanity.¹⁴⁸ The *hetaera* was not often genuinely interested in scholastic education, but it was known that the more talented or skilled the *hetaera* was, the more she got paid.¹⁴⁹ That is why Asclepiades reproaches the two Samian *hetaerai* for not attending the classes in the school of Aphrodite, which may have a detrimental effect on the Samian women's business for their indiscipline.¹⁵⁰

The image of women receiving education existed in ancient Greece yet in small portions.¹⁵¹ Female education is one of the main and most important characteristics and privileges that had been given to women, non-citizen females in particular, in the Hellenistic period, even though royalty and upper classes enjoyed this privilege more than the lower classes.¹⁵²

Fourth, this is an analysis of the racial discourse in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. It is an undeniable fact that the Greeks and the Macedonians considered themselves superior races, and since Asclepiades had written about a foreign *hetaera* complementing her body complexion, his epigram had a significant, distinct discourse that forced itself upon its study: a racial discourse.¹⁵³

(AP 5.210=G-P 5) is about one of the royal *hetaerai* admiring her physical beauty in particular and her company in general. In this epigram, Asclepiades adds a new dimension to his writing, which is the racial dimension. The epigram reads as follows:

*Τῷ θαλλῷ Διδύμῃ με συνήρπασεν ὃ μοι. ἐγὼ δὲ
τήκομαι, ὡς κηρὸς παρ πυρί, κάλλος ὀρῶν.
εἰ δὲ μέλαινα, τί τοῦτο; καὶ ἄνθρακες· ἀλλ' ὄτ'*

Corinth and Athens. See Rouse (1902, 72); McClure (2003, 144); Karageorghis (2005, 50-52); Cyrino (2010, 42-43); Cairns (2016, 120-122).

¹⁴⁷ Dover (2002, 223).

¹⁴⁸ Johnson and Ryan (2005, 131-132).

¹⁴⁹ Kapparis (2018, 47-62).

¹⁵⁰ The epigram is artistically manipulative as it could be understood in both ways. However, the ingenuity of the epigram lies in the way Asclepiades unifies the will of Aphrodite and his own will together in order to serve one end: going to bed with the Samian women with Aphrodite's blessing. Further, Asclepiades makes sure to convey his message loud and clear, which is, serving the will of Aphrodite is an ultimate end that each one has to fulfill in order to avoid her displeasure.

¹⁵¹ Brunschwig and Sedley (2003, 155).

¹⁵² Marrou (1956, 103); Pomeroy (1990, 59-72); Mantas (2012, 77-79).

¹⁵³ Pomeroy et al. (2008, 496).

ἐκείνους

θάλωμεν, λάμπουσ' ὡς ῥόδεται κάλυκες.

(AP 5.210=G-P 5)

**Didyme¹⁵⁴ by the branch she waved at me has
carried me clean away, alas! and looking on her
beauty, I melt like wax before the fire. And if
she is dusky, what is that to me? So are the coals,
but when we light them, they shine as bright as
roses.**

(Trans. Paton, 1920)

In (AP 5.210=G-P 5), Asclepiades writes about Didyme,¹⁵⁵ most likely an Egyptian or a Nubian,¹⁵⁶ and his passion for this dark-skinned woman. Didyme could have been brown-skinned or black.¹⁵⁷ For the Greeks, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians were both dark-skinned despite the difference in skin tone.¹⁵⁸ The usage of the rhetorical question, "And if she is dusky, what is that to me?" shows the social barrier caused by skin colour. For more emphasis on the social barrier motif, the poet ensues, "So are the coals, but when we light them, they shine as bright as roses."¹⁵⁹ A clear metaphor assuring and, to some effect, defending the beauty of dark-skinned women is introduced by the poet as he compares his dear enchantress to coal,¹⁶⁰ a rare commercial commodity, that glows like glamorous roses when coal is burnt.¹⁶¹

In Asclepiades' (AP 5.210=G-P 5), there is no actual admiration of the charm of Didyme

¹⁵⁴ LSJ, s.v. "διδύμ-άων" = "twins/double".

¹⁵⁵ Snowden puts forward the idea that Asclepiades is describing a personal experience "autobiographical style". See Snowden (1992, 240).

Lefkowitz discusses the assumption of Didyme's being the royal *hetaera* of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus. See Lefkowitz (2008, 44-45).

Ogden argues against the idea of considering Didyme a royal *hetaera* because of the difficulty of placing her among the royal *hetaerai* of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus historically. Ogden adds that it was impossible to place Asclepiades of Samos among the Alexandrian court poets historically. See Ogden (2008, 358).

¹⁵⁶ Didyme was probably extremely beautiful. See Lefkowitz (2008, 44-45).

¹⁵⁷ Cameron believes that the skin colour did not necessarily mean that Didyme was black in colour; it could just be darker than the poet's. See Cameron (1991, 287-289).

Lignite coal was familiar to the Hellenistic people. It is a brown kind of coal, so Didyme might have been brown-skinned. See Keyser and Irby-Massie (2007, 258).

¹⁵⁸ Ogden (2008, 358); Samuels (2013, 39).

¹⁵⁹ Snowden sees the metaphor here as an accurate description of a dark-skinned woman by Asclepiades of Samos. He argues strongly that Didyme was an Ethiopian/a Nubian who dwelled as a native Egyptian in the south of the Nile valley. Moreover, Ethiopians were characterised by their dark or black skin, their tight, woolly, curly hair and their flat noses. Thus, in Snowden's eye, Asclepiades succeeded in drawing the image in the metaphor. See Snowden (1992, 240-243).

¹⁶⁰ The unusual usage of 'coal' in praising the beauty of a woman is completely astonishing and outstanding. Hutchinson comments that the usage of coal to defend Didyme's beauty "makes a fresh surprise" and "enhances our astonishment". See Hutchinson (1988, 269).

¹⁶¹ Coal was a rare commercial commodity in the Hellenistic period. See Davison and Harper (1972, 155). It is suggested that the comparison of Ethiopians to coal was a Greek tradition. See Snowden (1992, 240).

except through the eyes of Asclepiades; and except by going through a transformation process "I melt like wax before the fire".¹⁶² In this metaphor, the beauty of Didyme lies in her ability to produce heat "seduction" referring to her physical attractiveness rather than her facial beauty. Then, Asclepiades throws light on the fact that she is dark-skinned. The focus on Didyme's complexion indicates Asclepiades' persistence in assuring that the skin colour is never a barrier to exuding beauty.¹⁶³ However, Asclepiades contradicts himself because the beauty here rather depends on the beholder. The beauty of Didyme only shines when the poet "lights" it. Only then does it shine as bright as roses. Asclepiades shows smart manipulation techniques of women by laying Didyme's beauty in the eyes of her beholder and putting it in relation to the desire it exudes. The nature of amatory epigrams is that of seduction and it is absolutely expected to view a woman's beauty in terms of desire, by projecting the desire she stirs in her admirers. Asclepiades continues his defensive epigram with the following rhetorical question "What is that to me?", which brings the racial tone down and the poet is trying to find reason for Didyme's normality and natural beauty, but then, the defensive tone continues, "So are the coals, but when we light them, they shine as bright as roses", in an attempt to stress on her physical beauty that adds up to her charm and attractiveness. Nevertheless, ironically, Asclepiades uses a racial tone himself in the last simile when he likens a dark object "coal" to a light object "rose" just to show how beautiful Didyme is. Hence, Asclepiades, being a Greek, could not escape showing a racial tone himself.

Didyme is clearly not the Asclepiades type of female figure who is unfaithful and treacherous. Asclepiades sounds thrilled by her mere waving at him, which makes it sound more of a royal action just like a queen waving at her subjects.¹⁶⁴ Another point worth considering is that the poet met his demise in this epigram once he looked at Didyme, investing her with godly powers, just like a god whose appearance causes the death of the mortals, e.g the appearance of Zeus and the death of Semele.¹⁶⁵ The poet's horrendous demise by melting in (*AP* 5.210=G-P

¹⁶² There may be an offensive insinuation that Didyme's ugliness has melted and has turned into a beautiful picture in the eyes of the enchanted lover. See Hutchinson (1988, 269).

¹⁶³ Snowden propounds that Asclepiades presented an idea that was, to a great degree, against public opinion even though he knew his idea would not appeal to the Greek standard of beauty. See Snowden (1992, 240).

¹⁶⁴ There are other two interpretations for the opening image. The first interpretation of the image of Didyme waiting by the branch is that it is one of seduction in the midst of nature. The second interpretation is conveyed by McKay stating that the branch is a bait to attract the preys. See McKay (1968, 172).

¹⁶⁵ The total destruction of Semele was caused by the mighty and fatal appearance of Zeus to her in his true form. It all started with Zeus having an affair with Semele. That relation stirred in Hera - the wife and sister of Zeus and the queen of the Olympian gods - flames of rage as she was consumed with jealousy and revenge. As a result, Hera took on the form of Semele's nurse and triggered her curiosity to see Zeus in his real form. At first, Zeus refused to appear to Semele, because she is a mortal and once he appears to her, she will be destroyed. However, after constant pleas on Semele's part, Zeus eventually appeared in his true form to Semele. No sooner had Zeus appeared to Semele than she was destroyed. Zeus could not save Semele, but he was able to save Dionysus, the illegitimate child of Zeus and Semele, by pulling him out of her womb and bearing him in his own thigh. See Hadjicosti (2006, 121-127); Caballero (2011, 127-128); Bouzek (2018, 241).

5) sounds like a warning or a threat to anyone who would dare fault the mistress or the king's affair. Thus, on the assumption that the epigram was about Didyme, the Egyptian mistress of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, she is considered off-limits to everyone, including the poet himself, and the issue is non-negotiable concerning the royal affair, especially that queens and royal courtesans were known to have been gifted by the charm of Aphrodite herself.¹⁶⁶ It is quite noticeable all the power bestowed upon the mistress because of her affair with the king. That is an archetypal example of how powerful the *hetaera* could have become in the Hellenistic period. Asclepiades sounds rather cautious in his epigram this time keeping his direct and open eroticism to the minimum; probably so as not to be frowned upon by King Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Thus, although Didyme was a dark-skinned *hetaera*, she earned more power and status due to her involvement in royal liaisons.

The *hetaera* social crust was on the rise; she was of a higher social standing than a prostitute and more educated than a native Greek woman. Subsequently, any Greek male of high status was expected to have a *hetaera* to retain a glamorous social façade, but, what if the king himself chose a dark-skinned barbarian to be his *hetaera*? Such situation probably led to a lot of murmuring and mumbling among the crowds since intermarriage between the Greeks and the Egyptians had not yet been accepted by the social milieu.¹⁶⁷ Needless to say, Ptolemy II Philadelphus was a key supporter of the scholars and literati,¹⁶⁸ and having an epigrammatist like Asclepiades at his back was probably a telling display of mutual solidarity and support between King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Asclepiades of Samos.¹⁶⁹ By writing Didyme's epigram, Asclepiades was most probably deviating pointed fingers at Ptolemy II Philadelphus.¹⁷⁰ The pointed fingers were probably in disapproval of this inferior and demeaning relation between King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and a black inferior *hetaera*, Didyme.¹⁷¹ Sotades (third century satire poet and critic) who criticised the sibling-marriage between King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his sister Arsinoe II and also insulted Ptolemy II Philadelphus' mistress Bilistiche was later executed by him.¹⁷² Hence, Asclepiades certainly did not plan to risk irritating Ptolemy II Philadelphus so as not to meet Sotades' horrific fate. Such

¹⁶⁶ Caneva (2014, 41).

¹⁶⁷ Cameron (1991, 290).

¹⁶⁸ Schenker (2016, 315).

¹⁶⁹ Asclepiades wrote this epigram as a gift to Didyme's beauty and in support of her attractive skin colour. See Cameron (1991, 291).

¹⁷⁰ Snowden emphasises that whether Didyme was the mistress of Asclepiades of Samos or Ptolemy II Philadelphus, it should not affect our judgement of the racial discourse. See Snowden (1992, 240).

¹⁷¹ McCoskey (2002, 13-39); Samuels (2013, 41).

¹⁷² Sotades criticised Bilistiche in some verses referring to her as a lowly barbarian which triggered royal vexation. In the end, such royal vexation led to his doom in 266 BC. See Weber (1998, 162-163); Kosmetatou (2004, 20-36).

touchy political situation probably forced Asclepiades to take such averting standpoint to lift some social pressure off the king's back. Social norms and traditions appear at their extreme in this epigram in an attempt to change a fundamental social racial perception of beauty; which is the inferior view of the other, or in other words, racism.

Thus, (AP 5.210=G-P 5) highlights the social barriers in the Hellenistic society. The racial influence on Asclepiades' writing is obvious and overwhelming in his inferior depiction of his Didyme trying to find reasons for her beauty. Furthermore, the usage of colours in the coal-burning metaphor and the "coals as roses" simile emphasises the point about racial discourse in the epigram: the relevance of beauty to skin colour, which is a limpid indication of the racism of the Hellenistic society at that time.

As studied above in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos, heterosexual love (AP 12.135=G-P 18) was starting to deluge the domination of homosexual and pederastic writings. It can be observed that even erotic heterosexual epigram had pigments of homosexuality or pederasty (AP 12.161=G-P 20). It is also observable that despite the familiarity with the female homosexual works of Sappho, lesbianism had not been welcomed into the Hellenistic society (AP 5.207=G-P 7).

Also, in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos, the Hellenistic spirit of the *symposion* (AP 12.50=G-P 16), (AP 12.135=G-P 18) with its *komos* and *paraclausithyron* (AP 5.158=G-P 4), (AP 5.164=G-P 13), (AP 5.167=G-P 14) had still been inherited traditions from the ancient Greeks with an assurance on the necessity of *carpe diem* (AP 12.50=G-P 16). However, this time the *symposion* with all of its related rituals were mainly employed for heterosexual courtship.

In addition, in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos, the *hetaera* had been known for her notoriety and rapacity, especially her lack of commitment and faithfulness (AP 5.7=G-P 9), (AP 5.150=G-P 10), (AP 5.162=G-P 8), (AP 5.164=G-P 13). The *hetaera* had also been known for her seductive skills and pleasurable company (AP 12.161=G-P 20) which earned her materialistic gains and more privileges and rights depending on the wealth and power of her lover. The *hetaera* of the Hellenistic period enjoyed such status that made her addressed, at times, on equal footing with her lovers. The *hetaera* enjoyed the freedom of choosing her lovers (AP 5.7=G-P 9), (AP 5.150=G-P 10), paying her clients visits (AP 5.150=G-P 10) and having multiple lovers (AP 5.158=G-P 4). Moreover, the *hetaera* enjoyed her legal right of owning her own meeting place (AP 5.164=G-P 13). All of the previous reasons drive the reader to the conclusion that the *hetaera* enjoyed a rising status in the Hellenistic period. The rise of the *hetaera* along with the rising power of the Hellenistic queens led to a generic change in the

view of women in the eye of the Hellenistic society ever since - women were duly empowered.

Further, in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos, women in general were relatively empowered in the Hellenistic period. The reference to the school of Aphrodite hinted at the right of women education at that time (AP 5.207=G-P 7). The recurrent *femme fatale* motif is an example of female superiority, especially on the emotional level (AP 5.150=G-P 10), (AP 5.162=G-P 8), (AP 5.164=G-P 13). Through his epigrams, Asclepiades fueled the idea of women's independence and their liberty of choosing or avoiding their lovers. At times, not only did women break their promises to avoid, ignore or neglect their lovers, they were also the ones with promiscuous affairs, not the men (AP 5.7=G-P 9).

Furthermore, it seems that the racial superiority of the Greeks during their Classical age extended through the Hellenistic period despite the Hellenistic expansion and coming in contact with other cultures; a creed that could be felt through Asclepiades' admiration of Didyme (AP 5.210=G-P 5).

In conclusion, the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos conclude the experience of an obsessed lover falling desperately in love with a usually indifferent female beloved. Asclepiades' women were most probably viewed as *hetaerai*, as a result of certain social considerations of actions and morality that most typically fit the portrait of a *hetaera*. Asclepiades' presentation of the lover-*hetaera* affair, along with the different elements of wine, *komos*, *paraclausithyron* - all set the scene of the social institution of the *symposion* with all the social rites and protocols underlying Asclepiades' society, especially the spirit of *carpe diem*. From Asclepiades' point of view, his loved ones could not be attained without the blessings of Aphrodite and Eros. Despite the pangs of love caused by the arrows of Eros, the end of this pain still remains in the potent hands of the love-gods, Aphrodite and Eros; for they are the fundamental and actual causes for Asclepiades' ability to attain his beloved, take revenge on his unfaithful beloved or vanquish Asclepiades himself and put him out of his misery.

In general, the social aspects are diffused throughout the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos in a way that gives them room for self-expression and thorough analysis. To begin with, the *symposion* stands as a momentous social institution that gives definition to the spirit of Asclepiades' time. The *symposion* is a social occasion of interacting, opening up and sharing ideas and feelings; however, the spirit of *carpe diem* remains optimistically the engulfing ambience. Generally speaking, Asclepiades often features mixed feelings of festivity and despair, whether in the *symposion* or even outside of it, to reflect the underlying fear of failure, rejection, or even death behind a celebratory façade, usually presented in the *symposion*.

In the *symposion*, as mentioned above, there were different variations of women with

different duties among which the *hetaera* rose as a new addition to the whole picture. Thus, the *hetaera* is considered as an innovation in the Hellenistic period and in the amatory epigrams of Asclepiades of Samos. Through Asclepiades' epigrams, the *hetaera*'s character and moral attitude reveal themselves distinctly because of their constant appearances in his epigrams, even if not directly stated. Asclepiades depicts the *hetaera* as independent, seductive, manipulative, sometimes hard-to-get; sometimes pliant, disloyal and definitely uncommitted. Despite the negative character traits that stick to the notorious title of a *hetaera*, she is still given credit through her role in society to bring the lower classes of the *hetaerai* together with the higher classes of lovers bringing about more homogeneity among the members of the Asclepiadean society. In Asclepiades' epigrams, this aspect is mostly crystallised in the love affairs that are usually neck and neck between both classes. That is to say, Asclepiades' epigrams put the *hetaerai* on the same standing as their lovers in the relationship. This balance is shown through several scenes of emotional superiority of the *hetaera* by portraying her as a disinterested beloved abandoning her lover while the latter is waiting for her at his own place or even by the door of her own place "*paraclausithyron*" - the *hetaera* is indifferent in both cases to her lover's suffering. Sometimes, the lover is portrayed complaining to his friends about his beloved's aloofness; while, at other times, the lover laments his inaccessibility to the *hetaera* because of her old age or death. Such depictions accumulate to build up a more sophisticated picture of the *hetaera* than before, giving her more importance and status among the society of Asclepiades of Samos.

The society of Asclepiades of Samos had a heritage of racism inherited from ancient Greece, but this tone relatively decreased along with the expansion of the Hellenistic world and the rise of the necessity of interaction and intermingling with other societies. The issue of Asclepiades' Didyme is an exemplar of the changes that took place in Asclepiades' society because of its different Asclepiadean approach that tackles the racial discourse. Whether Asclepiades' Didyme was the *hetaera* of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus or not, there is no doubt that Asclepiades' treatment of Didyme is positively different from his other *hetaerai*. That is because of the inclusion of the racial element in the epigram. Added to that, Asclepiades does not portray Didyme as an unfaithful, untrustworthy or manipulative *hetaera*. On the contrary, Didyme is given positive merits that make her increasingly desirable. Subsequently, Asclepiades is found defending Didyme's dark complexion and promoting her beauty and physical attractiveness to his readers. Such defence bears a plethora of indications within. It helps extrapolate that at the time of Asclepiades of Samos, there still lingered a culture of racism in his society. An issue that made Asclepiades take on the moral responsibility of defending

Didyme's beauty and normalising her charm by comparing it to common elements of nature. Such normalisation boosts the possibility of considering Didyme the royal *hetaera* of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, since Asclepiades does not directly picture her in a sexual or seductive light, as well as ascribing to her the royal action of waving her hand at him as if she were a queen waving at her subjects in a royal procession.

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