ΑΕΛΙΑΝ, VARIA HISTORIA 13.15

Φασί παχύτατον γενέσθαι τῇ διάνοιαν οἱ τῆς κωμωδιάς ποιηταί τὸ δέρμα ἔχοντα ἀδιακόντιστον Πολύδωρόν τινα καὶ ἄλλον Κοικυλίωνα ὄνομα, ὡσπερ τὰ κύματα ἥριθμει ύπὸ τῆς ἄγαν μανίας. λόγος δὲ τις καὶ Σαννυρίωνα τοιοῦτον γενέσθαι, δὲ ἐν τῇ λυχνίῳ τῇ κλίμακα ἐξήτει καὶ Κόροιβον δὲ καὶ Μελιτίδην καὶ ἑκεῖνους ἀνοήτους φασίν.


(1) Rudolf Hercher deleted the phrase τὸ δέρμα ἔχοντα ἀδιακόντιστον while remarking, „ex sequentibus enim patet, de Polydoro, si quo epitheto exornandus erat, non cutis duritiem, sed stultitiae aliquod specimen praedicandum fuisse“ (Paris, 1858, p. LXII). Ger­trud Herzog-Hauser accepted the deletion (in RE XXI, 1952, 1789). I think Mervin R. Dilts (Teubner, 1974) is right in retaining the phrase. For, (a) it does not look like a gloss, and a concrete explanation for Polydorus’ being παχύτατος τῆν διάνοιαν is expected, as we have such explanations in the cases of Koikylion (ὡςπερ) and Sannyriot (δὲ). And (b), the word παχύτατος seems to hint at a pun with παχύδερμος, meaning both thick-skinned and thick-witted. Polydorus thinks he is παχύς τὸ δέρμα. As a matter of fact, he is only thick-headed, παχύς τῆν διάνοιαν. For παχύδερμος implying dull, stupid compare Menander Epitrepontes 1114 Sandbach (παχύδερμος ἢσθα καὶ σῶν, νοῦν ἐγείν δοκεΐν); Lucian Timon 23 ἀπειρόκαλος καὶ παχύδερμος; Plautus Miles 235 f. (Erus meus elephanti corio circumventust, non suo,/-neque habet plus sapientia quam lapis).

Nevertheless, I think Dilts’ recent Teubner text is not quite in order. First, the phrase τὸ δέρμα ἔχοντα ἀδιακόντιστον seems to be misplaced. Second, the word ἔχοντα is out of order. For Polydorus does not have a skin no dart can pierce (no man has): he only thinks he has. Accordingly, read the passage as follows. Φασί παχύτατον γενέσθαι τῇ διάνοιαν οἱ τῆς κωμωδιάς ποιηταί Πολύδωρόν τινα, τὸ δέρμα ἔχειν λέγοντα ἀδιακόντιστον, καὶ ἄλλον, Κοικυλίωνα ὄνομα, ὡσπερ τὰ κύματα ἥριθμει ύπὸ τῆς ἄγαν μανίας.
Jacobs and Hercher changed the transmitted μανίας into ἀνοίας. Dilts did not, and I think he is right. For μανία sometimes can come close to the meaning of folly, silliness (ἀνοία, μωρφα, ἡλιθιότης), as our word craziness can. Cf. Plato Timaeus 86 b 3 δυὸ δ᾿ ἀνοίας γένη, τὸ μὲν μανίαν, τὸ δὲ ἁμαθίαν; Isocrates On the Peace 17 πολλὴν ἄνοιαν καὶ μανίαν τῶν... νομιζόντων...

(3) The name of the lunatic Polydorus reads in Eustathius three times Polyorous, Πολύωρος (Odyssey 10.552 p. 1669.55; De simulat. 9 and Adv. implacabilit. accus. 26=Opuscula, pp. 89.90 and 103.48 Tafel). Now the name Πολύωρος occurs in Attic inscriptions too (J. Kirchner, Prosopogr. Attica Nos. 12110 and 12111). Probably it is linked with πολυωρία, care, attention, consideration, as opposed to ολιγωρία, ὀλίγωρος. Thus, it is more likely than not that Aelian’s Πολύδωρον is a lectio facilior for the correct Πολύωρον, as E. L. Leutsch had suggested long ago (ad Apostolius 5.27), followed by Herzog-Hauser (in RE, s. v. Polyoros). No change in the textus receptus, however, is advisable, since Polyoros may have been corrupted into Polydoros already in Aelian’s source.

(4) It is interesting to note that neither Aelian nor Eustathius mention Koroibos as the lunatic who used to count the waves: in Aelian it is Koikylion, in Eustathius it is Polyoros. That may mean that they both had used some ‘unorthodox’ source, since Koroibos as the classical ‘counter of the waves’ is well established. For the Phrygian Koroibos, son of Mygdon and fiancé of Kassandra, came to Troy too late, a few days before the fall of the city, only to be killed by Diomedes (Ilias Parva of Lesches ap. Pausanias 10.27.1=fr. 16 Allen; Quintus Smyrnaeus 13.168—78; Pap. Ryland 22.4=, F Gr Hist 18.1), or by Neoptolemos (Pausanias), or else by Peneleus (Vergil Aeneid 2.424—26). Hence his epithet stupid (stultus), which can be traced back to Euphorion (Servius ad Aeneid 2.341; Eustathius ad Odyssey p. 1669.46). Hence also his proverbial folly to count the waves: Κοροίβου ἡλιθιώτερος: εὐήθης καὶ μωρός... οὕτος γάρ τὰ κύματα τῆς θαλάσσης ἠρίθμει (Zenobius 4,58; Diogenian 5.56)).

(5) We now come to the main point of this paper. What is the lunatic Sannyrion actually doing? Perizonius thought of an interpolation: „Dubitem... de integritate huius loci.” More recently, William M. Calder III advanced an original interpretation (in Philologus 117, 1973, 141 f.). He took both λήκυθος and κλιμαξ in a metaphorical, rhetorical sense: λήκυθος = ampullae, „rhetorical embellishments or even bombast“, and κλιμαξ = gradatio, climax. „A sane man could specify a bombastic climax. Poor SannyRon took both terms concretely and 'used to seek the ladder in the lekythos'. “

1 In addition to the fourth lunatic Koroibos, the fifth one, Melitides, is well known too. Compare Aristophanes Frogs 991 and Schol.; Diogenian 5.12 (and the gloss in cod. C); Apostolius 5.27 and Leutsch ad loc.
Calder’s interpretation is fresh, but not likely enough to me. For if both Polyoros (who believed his skin no dart could pierce) and Koikylion (who used to count the waves) are lunatics for showing a concrete behavior or action of theirs, why the third of them, Sannyrion, should be different while seeking his ladder in a lekythos?

Now Koikylion’s counting the waves is a well known adynaton: ‘counting the countless’. Compare Theocritus 16.60 κύματα μετρεῖν (and A.S.F. Gow ad loc.); Phrynichus trag. ap. Plutarch Quaest. conv. 8, 732 F; Apollonius Rhodius 4.214—17; Anacreontea 13,3 f.; Lucian Amores 2; Hermotim. 84, etc. I think Sannyrion is engaged in another adynaton: ‘seeking a huge object in a smallest one’. He is looking for his lost household-ladder in a small oil-flask — an impossible and absurd task. The closest parallel for this motif which I could find would be Stith Thompson, Motif-Index H1023.11, ‘Putting a large squash whole into a narrow-necked jar’.

Thus I would suggest to take Sannyrion’s action in its literal sense. Concrete is also the action of the lunatic described by Eustathius (ad Odyssey, p. 1669.56): he takes to bed an empty pitcher to serve him as pillow, then he stuffs it with chaff to make it softer (καὶ τὸν ἐν τῷ καθεύδειν θέμενον ὄβριαν κενὴν ύγροῦ πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ, καὶ θλιβόμενον τῇ σιλήροτῃ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἄχυρα παραβύσαντα καὶ τὸ σκεῦος πλήσαντα, ἢν οἱ δὴθεν μαλακὸν εἶπ̄ προσκεφάλαιον).

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THE GENUINE TEXT OF THEOPHRASTUS’ THIRTY-FIRST CHARACTER. PAPYRUS LYCHNOPOLITANA: EDITIO PRINCEPS

...ὁ δὲ φιλόλογος ώς τύπῳ περιλαβεῖν τοιούτους τις οίς τῶν δὴ κάρῃ κομοωντων Ἀχαϊῶν τρόπω καὶ τὸν Μομμσήνιον μιμούμενος αὐτὸς μὲν τὴν κεφαλὴν κομψοτέρως κομάν, τοὺς δὲ μαθητάς αὐτοῦ ὀμίλως κομάν πειρωμένους ἐκ τοῦ διδασκαλείου ἐξάλλειν καὶ σκορακίζειν ὡς ἄν ἀσεβοῦντας καὶ νεωτερίζοντας καὶ τῇ πατρίῳ πολιτείᾳ ἐπιβουλευόντας. Καὶ περὶ τοῦ ΤΕ συνδέσμου υπόμνημα τι πέντε βιβλίων συγγράψας βοῦν Δί θύσαι καὶ θριαμβεύσας κεκραγέναι "Ὡς οὐδὲτοτε ὁ Οὐλιμάμιτος, "Αμέλει δείνος δὲ καὶ τὴν γαμετὴν ἀποτέμψαται διὰ τὸ αὐτὴν τὰ Κατούλλου ποιήματα κρύβηθαν ἀναγνώσκουσιν ἐφευρηκέναι, καὶ ταῦτα μὴ κατὰ τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Φώρδους τεθειωμένην καὶ ἑκλειπτὴν ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Μύνωρς ἀκάθαρτον ἔκθεσιν. Δυνατὸς δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ κατʼ ἐναυτὸν συνόδῳ τῶν συμφιλολογοῦντων καὶ παιδαγωγῶν ἀναστάς τὰ Νόννου ὑπὸ ἐκφωβοῦν διατελεῖν, ὅστε πάντας τούς παρόντας χρόνων καταλυπόντας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι. Καὶ τὸ Ὁμήρου ὄνομα συνεχῶς "Ομήρος" γράφειν, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν διδάσκειν τὰ Ὁμήρου ἐπὶ ὑπὸ τῶν τεσσαράκοντα Ὁμηριδῶν συνερραμμένα ὑπάρχειν, ποτὲ δὲ δηλοῦν αὐτὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τοῖς Ἡλλωρίουσ

2 Compare E. Dutoit, Le thème de l'adynaton dans la poésie antique (Paris, 1936) pp. 30; 34; 46.