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The Women Most Mentioned

The names of Athenian courtesans held a particular fascination for the Second Sophistic writer Athenaeus and the Hellenistic courtesan treatises and *komoidoumenoi* that inform Book 13 of his *Deipnosophistae*. And yet surprisingly little scholarly attention (apart from Schneider's list in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie* in 1913) has been given to the subject. Indeed, several recent discussions of hetaeras have almost completely neglected the importance of their names (Henry 1985; Davidson 1997: 118-119; 115 and 133; Kurke 2000: 198, 202, 205-207). This paper examines the names associated with hetaeras in Book 13 of the *Deipnosophistae*, their meanings for Athenians of the fourth and third centuries BCE, and their function at Athenaeus' table.

According to Athenaeus, most Athenian hetaeras had more than one name, a "real" name and a professional name or nickname (*epiklêstheisa*). In some cases, a woman might have as many as four names: witness Leme (Rheum), also known as Didrachmon (For Two Drachmas) and Parorama (Oversight), and by her "real" name, Phylakion (13. 596f). Similarly, the hetaera Callistion is identified by her nicknames Hyios (Sow, 13. 583a) and Ptochylene (Begging Helen, 13. 585b). The attribution of nicknames to notorious individuals appears to have been a sympotic past time, a type of "derisive jest" (*epichleuei paidzontes*) that called attention to their low social status at table as well as advertised their sexual availability. Leana, Leontion, and Lais all have as their root *leôn*, and play on the lion *schema* (cf. Ar. Lys. 231), while Hippe (Mare), Hippaphesis (Starting Post of a Race Course), and Synoris (Pair of Horses) draw on equestrian metaphors for sex.

By embedding over 150 names of hetaeras in the speech of the grammarian Myrtilus (13. 571a-610b), Athenaeus shows the important role played by this form of intellectual "trivial pursuit" in sophistic gamesmanship. Indeed, Myrtilus' command of Athenian onomastic obscurities, from his exegesis of the name of Ocimon (Basil) in Eubulus' *Cercopes* (13. 567b-c) to his quotation of Machon's account of how the courtesan Melissa acquired her nickname Mania (Madness; 13. 578c), forms the heart of his relentless display of sophistic *paideia*. Such a profound preoccupation with naming reflects the Second Sophistic fascination with monumental ruins and literary detritus, a fetishization of the idealized classical past realized only in its fragmentary parts (Porter 2000). For these practitioners of linguistic Atticism, the process of fetishizing the hetaera, whether at the symposium or onstage, began with the name.

Select Bibliography: M. Henry, *Menander's Courtesans and the Greek Comic Tradition* (Frankfurt, 1985); J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes* (New York, 1997); L. Kurke *Coins, Bodies, Games and Gold* (Princeton, 2000); J. Porter, "Ideals and Ruins," in S. Alcock, J. Cherry, and J. Elsner (eds.) *Pausanias*, 63-92 (Oxford, 2000).