Marcus Argentarius the Iambic Epigrammatist: Homer's Irus Episode and Philostratus' "Sweet Cure"

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MARCUS ARGENTARIUS, an epigrammatist collected in the *Garland of Philip*,[1] has long been recognized for his puns and double-entendres, though recent decades have brought renewed appreciation for his frequently obscene wordplay and wit.[2] Recent scholarship has also focused on

[1] He may be identical with the rhetorician Argentarius who was a student of L. Cestius Pius (floruit ca. 20 BCE–ca. 16 CE) and mentioned frequently by Seneca the Elder (e.g. *Controv*. 9.3.12–13). This Argentarius was a Greek by ethnicity but, as Seneca tells us, declaimed only in Latin. As A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip* II (Cambridge 1968) 166, note in support of the identification, "The *cognomen* 'Argentarius' is rare, and the ironical spirit of the poet has much in common with what we hear of the rhetorician—a fluent, witty, and often malicious speaker." If he is not this Argentarius, then we know nothing about him other than that he was included in the *Garland of Philip* and so wrote sometime in the first century BCE or the first part of the first century CE. For discussion of the epigrammatist's date and identity see S. G. P. Small, "Marcus Argentarius: A Poet of the *Greek Anthology*," *YCS* 12 (1951) 65–145, at 67–78; R. Del Re, "Marco Argentario," *Maia* 7 (1955) 184–215, at 184–187; Gow and Page, *Garland* II 166–167; R. G. M. Nisbet, "*Felicitas* at Surrentum (Statius, *Silvae* II.2)," *JRS* 68 (1978) 1–11, at 5–7, who suggests he may be not just Seneca's rhetorician but possibly the grandfather of Lucan's wife Polla Argentaria; É. Prioux, "Argentarius, Marcus," in C. Urlacher-Becht (ed.), *Dictionnaire de l'épigramme littéraire dans l'Antiquité grecque et romaine* II (Turnhout 2022) 143–145.

[2] See especially M. Hendry, "*Frigidus lusus:* Marcus Argentarius XXXIV Gow-Page (*Anth. Pal.* 11.320)," *GRBS* 32 (1991) 197–201, "A Hermetic Pun

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Argentarius' complex literary allusions and the ways in which he uses such allusions to comment metapoetically on his own literary aims and methods.[3] In this article, I hope to further our understanding of both Argentarius' witty obscenities and his literary self-positioning by providing a new reading of *Anth.Pal.* 11.320. My reading builds on that of Michael Hendry, who first recognized that the poem has an obscene twist and is making a masturbation joke.[4] I argue that the joke is even more obscene and involves not masturbation *per se*, but autofellatio. I also show how Argentarius' allusions to the Irus episode in the *Odyssey*—Homer at his most iambic—as well as to Hipponax and Archilochus, make a programmatic statement and help define Argentarius' poetic persona as that of an iambic epigrammatist.

Michael Hendry's insightful interpretation of *Anth.Pal.* 11.320 rescues it from its "reputation among editors as one of the stupidest in the entire *Anthology*" (198):

Ἀντιγόνην ἔστεργε Φιλόστρατος· ἦν δὲ παλαισταῖς
ὁ τλήμων Ἴρου πέντε πενιχρότερος.

in Marcus Argentarius XII GP (*A.P.* 5.127)," *Hermes* 119 (1991) 497, and "An Abysmal Pun: Marcus Argentarius VI GP (*A.P.* 5,104)," *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997) 325–328; L. Kronenberg, forthcoming in *AJP* and *Mnemosyne*. On Argentarius' penchant for obscene puns and wordplay see also Small, *YCS* 12 (1951) 86–87, whose negative evaluation of that penchant is typical of earlier scholarship: "Sometimes he handles the figure [paronomasia or punning] with much wit and skill, but in the σκωπτικά or satiric pieces, it must be confessed, our poet more often than not turns his cleverness to the base uses of a humor so explicitly anatomical as to be revolting" (86).

[3] E.g. Argentarius' epigram (*Anth.Pal.* 9.161) in which he reflects upon a time when he was reading Hesiod's *Works and Days*, only to be interrupted by Pyrrha, has received two interesting interpretations, which explore how the poem unites erotic and literary concerns to make a programmatic statement: R. Gagné and R. Höschele, "Works and Nights (Marcus Argentarius, *AP* 9.161)," *CCJ* 55 (2009) 57–70, and A. Vergados, "What Was He Reading Exactly? Marcus Argentarius, *AP* 9.161 (=1369–72 GP), and Hesiod's *Works and Days*," *ICS* 38 (2013) 65–80.

[4] Hendry, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 197–201.

εὗρε δ' ὑπὸ κρυμοῦ γλυκὺ φάρμακον· ἀντία γὰρ σχὼν
γούνατ' ἐκοιμήθη, ξεῖνε, μετ' Ἀντιγόνης.

Philostratus loved Antigone. But the wretch was poorer than Irus by five palms. Thanks to the cold, however, he discovered a sweet cure: for, hugging his knees, he slept, stranger, with Antigone.[5]

Hendry proposes that instead of simply creating a pedestrian pun on the name Antigone and the body position indicated by ἀντία … γούνατ'—a pun rightly found wanting by previous critics—Argentarius is doing something "both wittier and smuttier than previously suspected."[6] He argues that the position of Philostratus' knees is suggestive of masturbation based on the bent position of the knees of masturbating satyrs and humans on vases. He concludes that "Philostratus' γλυκὺ φάρμακον is masturbation," that Philostratus " 'went to sleep (alone) with the help of Antigone', i.e. with the help of explicit fantasies of Antigone," and (quoting a reader) that " 'his onanism is literally ἀντὶ γονῆς, and Antigone becomes a speaking name'."[7]

I agree with Hendry that Argentarius depicts Philostratus as having an erotic dream of Antigone—similar to the speaker's dream of Pyrrha in Argentarius *Anth.Pal.* 9.286—and as having an autoerotic experience that is subtly suggested by the bent knee posture. I also agree that there is a pun on the lack of procreative purpose of this sexual activity in the name Antigone, suggestive of ἀντὶ γονῆς ("instead of procreation"). However, I would slightly amend Hendry's interpretation of the bent knee pose, which is explicated in the scholion as a fully hunched-over pose with the head opposite the knees (ἐναντίον τῶν γονάτων θεὶς τὴν κεφαλήν). I suggest that Philostratus' novel discovery was not simply masturbation—which does not seem to rise to the level of

[5] Text of Gow and Page; translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[6] Hendry, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 198–199, provides an amusing collection of previous editors' disparagements of the pun.

[7] Hendry, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 199 and 200. Hendry also notes that "in another epigram (X = 5.116), Argentarius uses φάρμακον of another second-best (in his opinion) sexual practice, heterosexual sodomy" (199).

a novel discovery and does not require the posture depicted in the epigram—but autofellatio.

While references to masturbation are certainly more numerous than autofellatio in Greek literature, I have argued that Hesiod's riddling depiction the "boneless one gnawing his foot" (*Op.* 524–526) in his "winter scene" (493–563) could suggest autofellatio.[8] This double entendre is reinforced by the opening depiction of a poor and idle man in winter squeezing his swollen foot with his thin hand (493–497), an image which others have connected to masturbation.[9] In addition, commentators have long recognized connections between the opening of Hesiod's winter scene, with its warning to avoid the temptation of the bronze smith and λέσχη ("public hangout," *Op.* 493), and Melantho's rebuke of Odysseus for hanging around the suitors of Penelope instead of going to the bronze smith and λέσχη to sleep after he has beaten Irus in a boxing match (*Od.* 18.327–329).[10] Indeed, Hesiod's winter scene, full of riddles, kennings, and double entendres, is arguably his most 'iambic' passage.[11] Perhaps Argentarius interpreted Hesiod's depiction of the poor and idle man in winter as evoking the beggar's world of *Odyssey* 18 and created an homage to Hesiod's sexual double entendres with

[8] L. Kronenberg, "Idle Hands: The Poetics of Masturbation in the Winter Scenes of Hesiod (*Op.* 493–563) and Vergil (*G.* 1.291–310)," in T. H. M. Gellar-Goad et al. (eds.), *Didactic Literature in the Roman World* (Abingdon 2024) 71–105, at 78–79: others have interpreted the "boneless one gnawing his foot" in a sexual manner, but usually as masturbation and not autofellatio (see 93 n.44 for references). There are also jokes about autofellatio in Old Comedy, which associate it with eating (93–94 n.53 for references). Cf. also Catull. 88, with culminates with an image of Gellius' autofellatio (88.8 *non si demisso se ipse voret capite,* "not if he should devour himself with lowered head").

[9] See Kronenberg, in *Didactic Literature* 72 and 88 n.8, for references.

[10] See e.g. A. Ercolani, *Hesiodo: Opere e giorni* (Rome 2010) 324.

[11] On reading the *Works and Days* as an iambic or satirical work see G. Nisbet, "Hesiod, *Works and Days:* A Didaxis of Deconstruction?" *G&R* 51 (2004) 147–163.

Philostratus' own "winter activity," introduced by allusions to Irus in *Odyssey* 18.[12]

I would also suggest that the opening couplet of *Anth.Pal.* 11.320, in which Philostratus' poverty is compared to Irus', contributes to the obscene punchline by creating a punning joke about large penis size. Hendry begins his article by acknowledging that "the point of the comparison to Irus in the first couplet is very obscure and has not yet been satisfactorily explained," and he also acknowledges that his own possible explanations are not "entirely satisfactory."[13] He connects these lines to the punchline by arguing that the odd phrase παλαισταῖς … πέντε πενιχρότερος ("poorer by five palms") picks up on the connection of palms/hands to masturbation, though he admits that this explanation leaves the number of palms (five) unexplained.[14] On that point, he considers the possibility that Argentarius is punning on πυγών, another name for the measurement of "five palms," which is equivalent to the distance from the elbow to the first joint of the fingers, and πυγή ("buttocks"). Thus, perhaps Philostratus is poorer than Irus because "Philostratus, rejected by Antigone, has no πυγή to call his own, as it were." Ultimately, Hendry finds problems with this argument too, since "Irus is not known to have had a girlfriend" (198). I agree that παλαισταῖς ("palms") could connote "hands" and their use in autoerotic activity, but I would argue that the particular importance of "*five* palms" lies in their use as the measurement of a comically large penis.

[12] For the winter setting cf. Hesiod's κρύος in 493 and Argentarius' κρυμοῦ in 11.320.3.

[13] Hendry, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 197.

[14] Hendry, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 200 n.13. Gow and Page, *Garland* II 184–185, comment on the oddity of the phrase: "a phrase of the same type as Ar. *Ran.* 91 πλεῖν ἢ σταδίωι λαλίστερα, *Nub.* 430 ἑκαστὸν σταδίοισιν ἄριστον, but it seems unnatural here to choose so short a measure; five palms (not cubits, as Paton renders) might be fifteen inches."

Jokes about large penises go back at least to Sappho: as G. S. Kirk first noted, Sappho in fr.111 displays the ribaldry that is at home in the genre of wedding-songs when she states that the carpenters need to raise the roof because the bridegroom is "much bigger than a big man" (ἄνδρος μεγάλω πόλυ μέσδων, 6)—or, as Kirk puts it, "his *membrum virile* is envisaged as extending far higher than his head."[15] Jeffrey Henderson adds the further detail that "μέγας … is often found as an adjective describing erect phalli" in comedy.[16] Alexander Dale also connects Sappho fr.110, with its description of a doorkeeper's feet, which are seven fathoms long (θυρώρῳ πόδες ἑπτορόγυιοι), to the same sort of ribald wedding humor, given the use in Greek of "foot" for "penis."[17]

While seven fathoms is an extreme exaggeration, closer to the "five παλασταί" of Argentarius is Strato's use of πῆχυς ("forearm"), a unit of measure equal to six παλασταί, to describe Agathon's penis size (*Anth.Pal.* 11.21). The specification of *five* παλασταί would have the same effect of conveying an exaggerated penis size while having the added bonus of creating a bilingual pun[18] on Latin *penis* with πέντε, reinforced by πενιχρό-

[15] G. S. Kirk, "A Fragment of Sappho Reinterpreted," *CQ* 13 (1963) 51–52. Kirk's interpretation is supported by H. Lloyd-Jones, "Sappho Fr. 111," *CQ* 17 (1967) 168; G. Wills, "Phoenix of Colophon's ΚΟΡΩΝΙΣΜΑ," *CQ* 20 (1970) 112–118, at 112; J. F. Killeen, "Sappho Fr. 111," *CQ* 23 (1973) 198; A. Dale, "Sapphica," *HSCP* 106 (2011) 47–74, at 51–52. M. Marcovich, "On Sappho fr. 111 LP," *Humanidades* (1963/4) 223–227, is not convinced by the obscene interpretation.

[16] J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*[2] (New York 1991) 115–116, with citations from comedy.

[17] Dale, *HSCP* 106 (2011) 52. On the use of "foot" for "penis" see also Kronenberg, in *Didactic Literature* 72, 88 n.8.

[18] R. Keydell, "Bemerkungen zu griechischen Epigrammen," *Hermes* 80 (1952) 497–500, at 497–498, argues that Argentarius makes a bilingual pun in *Anth.Pal.* 5.63.1, another Antigone poem, on Σικελή ("Sicilian") and *sic* ("yes"). In a paper delivered at the Society for Classical Studies Annual

τερος, which could punningly suggest not "poorer" but "more well-endowed."[19]

Another parallel may be found in the fourth-century BCE parodic poem, the *Hedypatheia* of Archestratus, which seems to make a punning reference to a penis which is bigger than a πυγών or five παλασταί (fr.30 Olsen and Sens = Ath. 320F–321A):

> ἐν δὲ Θάσῳ τὸν σκορπίον ὠνοῦ, ἐὰν ᾖ
> μὴ μείζων πυγόνος· μεγάλου δ' ἀπὸ χεῖρας ἴαλλε.
>
> Buy the scorpion fish in Thasos, unless it is bigger than a bare cubit (= five palms). Keep your hands off the big one.

Carl Shaw was the first to explicate the underlying sexual humor:

> Archestratus employs wordplay to exploit the dictional similarities between various offensive and inoffensive words. He introduces the joke with a reference to the scorpion fish, ὁ σκορπίος, which must have sounded to the Greek ear very much like the combination of two primary Greek obscenities σκῶρ and πέος … [T]he scorpion fish was also a 'shitcock', a vulgar turn of phrase that alludes to a penis used for anal intercourse.[20]

Meeting in 2022 ("The Garland of Philip as Roman Poetry"), Stephen Hinds detects bilingual puns in other *Garland of Philip* authors, namely Antipater of Thessalonica (*Anth.Pal.* 9.93), Philodemus (*Anth.Pal.* 11.64), and Crinagoras (*Anth.Plan.* 40). Unlike these three authors, it is possible that Argentarius was a Roman writing in Greek, though as Small, *YCS* 12 (1951) 74, states, "There is thus unfortunately no real evidence at our disposal to determine whether Marcus Argentarius was a Romanized Greek or a Hellenizing Roman." If Argentarius is Seneca the Elder's *rhetor*, as noted above, he was Greek by ethnicity but declaimed only in Latin.

[19] As an anonymous referee suggests, πενιχρός could also pick up on the use of χροΐζω for "touch" in sexual situations (see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* [Baltimore 1982] 185, 224).

[20] C. Shaw, "σκορπίος or σκῶρ πέος? A Sexual Joke in Archestratus' *Hedypatheia*," *CQ* 59 (2009) 634–639, at 636. B. Mulligan, "Bad Scorpion: Cacemphaton and Poetics in Martial's Ligurinus-Cycle," *CW* 106 (2013) 365–395, at 367–370, and J. McInerney, "Food, Sex, and Greek Identity in the *Hedypatheia* of Archestratos," *CP* 117 (2022) 63–78, at 63–64, both support

Shaw goes on to argue that πυγών puns on πυγή, and that the ultimate joke is that the customer should "[pay] for anal sex but only if the paid-for penis is not too large for the customer's anus." In the case of Argentarius, who avoids the term πυγών, I do not think a pun on "anus"/πυγή is intended so much as the pun on *penis* discussed above and the use of five παλασταί as a measure of penis length—a detail that ultimately helps to support the autofellatio joke in the punchline.

There are also parallels in Latin epigram for the use of specific measurements in large-penis jokes: Martial makes comical reference to a large penis (7.14.10) using the Latin unit of measurement that is roughly equivalent to the πῆχυς or πυγών, namely *sesquipedalis* ("a foot and a half in length"). Similarly, in the *Priapea* there are references to the *conto … pedali* ("foot-long pole") of Priapus (11.3) and his *fascino pedali* ("foot-long phallus") (28.3). Even closer to the use of πῆχυς or πυγών for measurement, the word *bracchia* ("arms") is used of Priapus' phallus in *Priap.* 72.4.[21]

Finally, Argentarius' unit of measure (παλαιστή), with its similarity to παλαιστής ("wrestler"), may have the added benefit of reminding us of Irus' boxing matching with Odysseus at the beginning of *Odyssey* 18, and I would now like to return to the question of why Argentarius invokes Irus in his epigram.[22] While Argentarius appears to be using "Irus" simply as shorthand for "beggar," there are in fact several connections between his Philostratus epigram and the Irus episode which suggest that Argentarius wants his reader to ponder the importance of this literary framework for his poetics. For example, one of the first things the reader learns about Irus is that, in addition to being notable for his "greedy belly" (γαστέρι μάργῃ), he was "very big" (μάλα

Shaw's reading, with Mulligan (367) suggesting that Martial uses a bilingual cacemphaton in 3.44.8, in which *scorpios* alludes to the "σκῶρ-πέος: the 'shit-dick' of the *pedicator*."

[21] On this interpretation see C. Goldberg, *Carmina Priapea* (Heidelberg 1992) 358, and *TLL* II 2159.35.

[22] I owe this point to one of my anonymous referees.

μέγας) in appearance but had no force or strength (οὐδέ οἱ ἦν ἴς οὐδὲ βίη: *Od.* 18.2–4). Given the use of μέγας for "well-endowed," as discussed above, even if Homer did not intend the word to be used in that sense, Argentarius could have interpreted it as a reference not just to his overall size but to the size of his genitals —an interpretation that gives added point to Philostratus' comparison to him.

Odysseus' surprise revelation of his own strength beneath his rags also focuses on the region of the genitals and thighs (18.66–68):

> αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ζώσατο μὲν ῥάκεσιν περὶ μήδεα, φαῖνε δὲ μηροὺς
> καλούς τε μεγάλους τε
>
> But Odysseus girded his rags around his genitals, and he revealed beautiful and large thighs

This revelation leads the suitors to make a joke about Irus that reads almost like the punchline to one of Argentarius' epigrams (18.73–74):

> "ἦ τάχα Ἶρος Ἄϊρος ἐπίσπαστον κακὸν ἕξει,
> οἵην ἐκ ῥακέων ὁ γέρων ἐπιγουνίδα φαίνει."
>
> "In truth soon Irus, Un-Irused, will draw evil onto himself, such an area above the knee the old man reveals beneath the rags."

This quip reminds us of Argentarius' play on the name Antigone, and, indeed, name play is a hallmark of Argentarius' punning style.[23] Considering the focus in the Antigone pun on the "knees," it may also not be a coincidence that the suitors' joke includes a reference to the knee (ἐπιγουνίδα). While usually translated as "thigh," the "area above the knee" could certainly include the μήδεα and continue to suggest a contrast not just between Irus' and Odysseus' strength and appearance but between their genitals. In addition, the pun on Irus' name could contribute to the notion that Irus might be "large" in appearance but has no real virility. As Gregory Nagy explains:

[23] In addition to *Anth.Pal.* 11.320, name puns feature in Argentarius 5.16, 5.32, 5.63, 5.104, 5.116, 9.161, 9.554.

> The action of the narrative will reveal that Iros indeed has no *ī̃s* or *bíē* … Accordingly, those who witness the combat call him *Á-īros* (*Odyssey* xviii 73), which may be reconstructed as **n̥-u̯īros* and glossed etymologically as "he who as no force = **u̯īs*." This form serves as a comic correction for what now emerges as the ironically misapplied meaning of *Îros* as **u̯īros* "he who has force = **u̯īs*." Thus the form *Îros* seems to be a play on an unattested Greek word **u̯īros*, cognate with Latin uir 'man', etc.[24]

Genitals also figure in the punishment with which Antinous threatens Irus, who, if he loses to Odysseus, will be sent to King Echetus, who will cut off his nose, ears, and genitals (μήδεα, 18.87). Even Irus' association with insatiable hunger and thirst (18.2–3) could find an obscene reflex in Philostratus' autofellatio, or "self-eating." Finally, Argentarius' somewhat odd address to a "stranger" (ξεῖνε, 11.320.4) in the final line of his epigram could allude to the addresses to Odysseus as "stranger" (ξεῖνε) at the conclusion of the Irus episode (18.112, 122). Thus, Argentarius' comparison of Philostratus to Irus directs our attention to the many similarities between Argentarius' epigram and this most iambic episode in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Indeed, the Irus episode has frequently been read as representing the intrusion of an iambic ethos into the world of epos. Thus Nagy has argued that "the story of Iros in effect ridicules the stereotype of an unrighteous blame poet."[25] Ralph Rosen slightly amends Nagy's theory to suggest that "it is Odysseus here who has righteousness on his side, and as such, from the perspective of the narrative, himself plays a role analogous to that of a blame poet against an unrighteous target, Irus, who is

[24] G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 229–230 n.4. J. A. Russo, M. Fernández-Galiano, and A. Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* III (Oxford 1992) 47, connect Irus "to the form **ἶρος that underlies Homeric ἱερός, 'strong' or 'quick'." See also D. Steiner, "Diverting Demons: Ritual, Poetic Mockery and the Odysseus-Iros Encounter," *ClAnt* 28 (2009) 71–100, at 82–83, and *Homer: Odyssey Books XVII and XVIII* (Cambridge 2010) 157, 167.

[25] Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* 230.

presented as richly deserving of Odysseus's mockery."[26] Donald Lavigne, with a further amendment, has argued that "if Irus represents the reliance on words that characterizes iambic speech, then Odysseus, in adding deeds to words, represents the epic appropriation of the iambic mode."[27] But whichever version is preferred, as Lavigne notes, "recent commentators agree that the two scenes [Thersites (*Il.* 2.188–277) and Irus (*Od.* 18.1–123)] are in one way or another related to archaic *iambos*."[28]

In particular, commentators agree that the Irus scene is important for later iambic poets and their own construction of their personae. Deborah Steiner argues that the "Odysseus-Iros encounter … maps out the trajectory that the enmities so integral to the Ionian poets' constructions of their iambic personas would follow."[29] Lavigne similarly focuses on how Odysseus and Irus "employ devices which feature prominently in archaic Iambic performance, as exemplified in the poetry of Archilochus,"[30] while other scholars have focused more broadly on how Odysseus and other characters and themes in the *Odyssey* find parallels in the personae of both Archilochus and Hipponax.[31] In his

[26] R. Rosen, *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire* (Oxford 2007) 137.

[27] D. Lavigne, "ΙΡΟΣ ΙΑΜΒΙΚΟΣ: Archilochean Iambos and the Homeric Poetics of Conflict," in P. Bassino et al. (eds.), *Conflict and Consensus in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry* (Cambridge 2017) 132–153, at 150. Lavigne further suggests that "outside of the perspective of epic, the iambic poet is more like a composite of Irus (or Thersites) and Odysseus" (152).

[28] Lavigne, in *Conflict and Consensus* 137 (further bibliography in 137 n.24).

[29] Steiner, *ClAnt* 28 (2009) 90.

[30] Lavigne, in *Conflict and Consensus* 133.

[31] On similarities between Archilochus and the ethos of the *Odyssey*, particularly as an epic in which outward appearances can be deceiving, see J. Russo, "The Inner Man in Archilochus and the *Odyssey*," *GRBS* 15 (1974) 139–152. On the similarities between the Odysseus and Archilochus see also B. Seidensticker, "Archilochus and Odysseus," *GRBS* 19 (1978) 5–22. On Hipponax and Odysseus, R. Rosen, "Hipponax and the Homeric Odysseus," *Eikasmos* 1 (1990) 11–25. Rosen particularly argues that Hipponax fr.121,

examination of "Hipponax and the Homeric Odysseus," Rosen adds the observation that "Hipponax seems to have incorporated different aspects of Odysseus' character from those adopted by Archilochus" and that Odysseus may have "figured prominently in an early iambic tradition."[32]

There are indications throughout Argentarius' epigrams that, like Archilochus and Hipponax, he at times models his persona on the wandering beggar figure of Irus or the disguised Odysseus, or perhaps on Archilochus' and Hipponax's own adoptions of aspects of those personae. He presents himself as an insatiable wine-drinker in *Anth.Pal.* 6.248, 9.229, 9.246, and 11.26. In 9.229.3 he mentions his poverty, also a common complaint of Hipponax (e.g. frr.32, 34, 36) and an aspect of Archilochus' persona as well (fr.295).[33] In *Anth.Pal.* 6.248.8 Argentarius calls his wine flagon his "old fellow-wanderer" (ἀρχαίην σύμπλανον)—just as Odysseus addresses Irus as a fellow "wanderer" (ἀλήτης, *Od.* 18.18). In the same epigram he calls himself Marcus (Μάρκου, 7), perhaps even a play on the defining characteristic of Irus' belly (*Od.* 18.2), μάργος ("greedy, gluttonous"). He plays on the other aspect of his name—Argentarius—in *Anth.Pal.* 5.16.6 with a reference to "silver" (ἀργυρέους), precisely what Hipponax is lacking in his poem in which Wealth addresses him by name (fr. 36). And, of course, Argentarius' penchant for obscenity, which is unmatched by other *Garland of Philip* authors, and for repre-

122, and 132 allude to the Irus episode and that "Hipponax adopted as one of his roles the superficially unassuming, but physically powerful Odysseus" (17). See also Rosen, *Making Mockery* 117–171, for a fuller exploration of Odysseus as a "figure of satire." On Odysseus as a model for Archilochus and Hipponax particularly as relates to their "self-narration of personal experience," as well as the "fictionalization of the self in first-person narrative," see G. Hedreen, *The Image of the Artist in Archaic and Classical Greece: Art, Poetry, and Subjectivity* (Cambridge 2015), esp. 59–134 (quotation from 9).

[32] Rosen, *Eikasmos* 1 (1990) 11 n.1.

[33] For Archilochus and Hipponax, I am using the text of M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* I–II (Oxford 1989–1992).

senting debased forms of sexuality finds a spiritual home in the iambic genre.

Considering this iambic persona of Argentarius, both in 11.320 and in other epigrams, I would also suggest that Philostratus' "sweet cure taught to him by the cold" (ὑπὸ κρυμοῦ γλυκὺ φάρμακον) could be an allusion to Hipponax fr.34.2, in which Hipponax complains that he does not have a thick cloak as a "cure for the cold" (φάρμακον ῥίγεος). Hipponax also uses φάρμακον in fr.39, when he refers to a potion (κυκεῶνα) that will serve as a φάρμακον πονηρίης ("cure for my bad state," 4). Rosen traces the Eleusinian connections of the κυκεών, as well as the connections between the iambic genre and Eleusinian myth and ritual, and concludes that "ultimately it is the iambos itself, as evoked by the mention of the ritual *kykeon,* that becomes the φάρμακον against, as Masson puts it, 'la méchanceté', i.e., objective, moral πονηρία."[34]

That φάρμακον might be a symbol of iambos in Hipponax, or at least associated with iambic poets,[35] could lend its appearances in Argentarius further importance and iambic coloring.[36] Argentarius also uses φάρμακον in a figurative sense in *Anth.Pal.* 5.113, when he explains how hunger can be a "remedy for love" for Sosicrates, who has undergone a reversal of fortune from rich to poor and now can no longer attract the attention of women (ἀλλὰ πένης ὢν / οὐκέτ' ἐρᾷς· λιμὸς φάρμακον οἷον ἔχει, "but being poor, no longer do you love; hunger is such a strong drug," 1–2). Sosicrates, then, is a Philostratus-type, and the punchline of

[34] R. Rosen, "Hipponax Fr. 48 Dg. and the Eleusinian Kykeon," *AJP* 108 (1987) 416–426, at 421–422.

[35] Archilochus also uses φάρμακον in a figurative sense in a fragment of an elegy (fr.13) in which he says that the gods have made strong endurance (κρατερὴν τλημοσύνην, 6) the cure (φάρμακον, 7) for incurable evils (ἀνηκέστοισι κακοῖσιν, 5).

[36] Steiner, *ClAnt* 28 (2009) 71–100, has explored the many connections between the Irus episode and *pharmakos* (scapegoat) ritual—perhaps the use of the related word φάρμακον in Argentarius also alludes to this aspect of *Odyssey* 18?

the poem even involves a quotation from the *Odyssey*: instead of calling him pet names, Menophila now treats him like a stranger and asks "who are you and from where? Where is your city?" (τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πόθι τοι πτόλις; 5). While this line is not from the Irus episode, it is certainly a leitmotif of the *Odyssey*.[37] Finally, φάρμακον appears in another Menophila epigram as a "cure" (*Anth.Pal.* 5.116.4) for ἀρσενικὸν … πόθον ("desire for males," 3), namely heterosexual anal sex (5–6).

Of course, iambic poetry is not the only genre that Argentarius invokes in his poetry or uses to define his poetic persona, but I hope to have shown that it is an important strand of his poetics. That said, a major difference between Argentarius and the iambic poets, as well as *Odyssey* 18, is that Argentarius' persona in his epigrams is not driven by enmities, and his satiric poems are obscene but not full of venom or hatred. Perhaps Philostratus' "*sweet* remedy," then, is a programmatic symbol for Argentarius' brand of the iambic ethos: he has adopted the debased persona and obscenity of the iambic poets, but his overall goal is to produce laughter and not drive an enemy to suicide or exile. Like the iambic poets, he invokes the world of Homer and epic in complex ways: on the surface, he creates a contrast between the lowly genre of epigram with its debased characters—including his own persona—and the sublime world of godlike heroes. But his allusions to the *Odyssey*, and particularly to the Irus episode, make clear that the seeds of his unheroic universe, with its celebration of baseness, laughter, and wordplay, were first planted by Homer.[38]

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[37] Cf. *Od.* 1.170, 10.325, 14.187, 15.264, 19.105, 24.298.

[38] I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer and editorial board for their helpful suggestions, and also to Stephen Scully, who read an earlier version of this article.