

EUPHILETOS' HOUSE: LYSIAS I

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Lysias I, *On the killing of Eratosthenes*, is often cited in discussions of Greek domestic architecture for the details incidentally given about the house of the defendant, Euphiletos. This paper attempts to define rather more closely than before what we know about Euphiletos' house, and to relate it to archaeological evidence on Athenian private dwellings.¹

We may examine the relevant passages in the order they are presented by Euphiletos:

(1) Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν, ὦ ἄνδρες, . . . οἰκίδιον ἔστι μοι διπλοῦν,
ἴσα ἔχον τὰ ἄνω τοῖς κάτω κατὰ τὴν γυναικωνίτιν καὶ κατὰ
τὴν ἀνδρωνίτιν. (9)

I have a little two-storey house, the upper storey the same size as the lower, as far as women's apartments and men's apartments are concerned.

Lysias is seeking to present Euphiletos as a common man, honest, not too clever, trusting. He is not poverty-stricken, for he has some land of his own, that lies far enough out of Athens to make it convenient to stay overnight or longer when he goes to work it: and he is in a position to invite a friend in for an impromptu meal. Neither is he well-off, for his household servants number only two—a maid (*θεράπαινα*) and a girl-maid (*παιδίσκη*).² He does not hire a nurse when his wife has a baby. He has no male servants. If he had, he would have used their help as well as that of his friends in apprehending the adulterer Eratosthenes: as it is, he suggests that if he had had prior notice he would have hired some man-servants (*θεράποντες*). It would be perfectly in key for Lysias to use the diminutive *οἰκίδιον* to reinforce this impression of unostentatious subsistence, but in fact the

¹ A partial elementary analysis of Euphiletos' house is given in H. Frohberger, *Reden des Lysias* II (Leipzig 1868) 113 f., 172, where earlier comments are mentioned. Becker's *Charicles* (Excursus I to Scene III) is still the most valuable collection of the literary evidence.

² Aeschines (*Epist.* 12.11) thinks it a sign of poverty that his family (wife, mother, and three children) should have only seven slaves.

picture of a “little house,” as we shall see, seems to be consistent with the facts of the story. At the relevant times, the household consisted of Euphiletos himself, his wife, a baby, a grown maid, and a girl-maid. Euphiletos’ mother had died early in the story, perhaps before the birth of her grandchild.

The context clearly indicates the meaning of διπλοῦς—“two-storeyed”: it seems to be the only recorded use in this sense. Later words are δίστεγος and διώροφος.

Euphiletos’ chief motive in describing his house is to let his hearers know that the men’s apartments and the women’s apartments are of equal size, and so justify his later exchange of living-quarters with his wife, which might seem to his contemporaries undignified. The phrase κατὰ . . . τὴν ἀνδρωνίτιν is not to be taken as a simple explanation of “upper storey and lower storey.” If this were the case, the use of κατὰ would be unexpected, and a more likely construction would be accusative/dative in parallel with τὰ ἄνω τοῖς κάτω. What Euphiletos is emphasizing is that the parts which were used as living quarters—husband’s below and wife’s above—were equal, quite apart from any other rooms the house might contain.³

The word “equal” has a secondary implication, that the floor-plan of the upper level is likely to have been identical with that of the lower level under it.⁴ The walls of common Greek houses were normally of adobe brick. The stone foundations on which they were built are .45 to .50 metres thick, and the walls themselves were probably between .25 and .45 metres. The weight of such a wall would be so great that it could not serve as an upstairs partition between rooms, unless supported by a corresponding wall beneath. The upper floor-plan would have to be the same as the lower, unless an upper partition were omitted (which would have the unlikely result that the more private rooms were larger than the more public ones). There is a further theoretical possibility, that a wooden partition-wall might be used to subdivide an upper room: the only contemporary example I find of such a light partition (διάφραγμα) is in a comparatively flimsy one-storey structure (καλύβη—Thuc. 1.133).

(2) ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ παιδίον ἐγένετο ἡμῖν, ἡ μήτηρ αὐτὸ ἐθήλαξεν·
ἵνα δὲ μὴ, ὅποτε λοῦσθαι δέοι, κινδυνεύῃ κατὰ τῆς κλίμακος
καταβαίνουσα, ἐγὼ μὲν ἄνω διητώμην, αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες κάτω.

³ LSJ say that ἀνδρωνίτις is an alternative for ἀνδρων, the men’s dining-room. But the parallelism with γυναικωνίτις, which clearly implies the plural “apartments,” is enough to make this very unlikely, even without Vitruvius’ later statement (6.7.2)

⁴ D. M. Robinson & J. W. Graham, *Excavations at Olynthus VIII: the Hellenic House* (Baltimore 1938) (afterwards referred to as *Olynthus*) 217 ff., 223 ff.: R. S. Young, “An industrial district of Ancient Athens,” *Hesperia* 20 (1951) 135–288 (referred to as *Athens ID*) 207, etc.

καὶ οὕτως ἦδη συνειθισμένον ἦν, ὥστε πολλάκις ἡ γυνὴ ἀπῆει
κάτω καθευδήσουσα ὡς τὸ παιδίον, ἵνα τὸν τιτθὸν αὐτῷ διδῶ
καὶ μὴ βοᾷ. (9–10)

When the baby was born, my wife breast-fed it. So that she shouldn't run any risks going down the stairs when the baby needed washing, I started to live upstairs and my wife down. That was what we'd got used to—that my wife would often go downstairs to sleep by the baby, to feed it for it not to cry.

The baby would normally be by its mother and tended by her—though this may not have been the case if Euphiletos had been able to hire a wet-nurse as a richer man might have done. If the wife had been living upstairs this would have meant that all day she would have to climb up and down to wash (and change) the baby. It is assumed that for this purpose it would not have been enough for water to have been carried upstairs by a servant. For some reason, it would be necessary to come down, to a cistern, well, or pipe; and perhaps to a drain or rudimentary toilet (possibly emptying through the wall) of the sort found at Olynthus.⁵

Placements for wooden stairs have been found in Greek houses. At Olynthus the stairs descend into the courtyard or portico; at Delos they were internal, in short flights going back and forth in a form of shaft.⁶ In Athenian houses stair placements have not been identified. The presumption, therefore, is that they were of the external type, and that the characteristic rectangular stones that acted as their base were removed later for building-material, in the same way as the other shaped stones of Athenian houses—thresholds and hearths—disappeared.

At night, the wife joined Euphiletos in his apartments, now upstairs; but would go down to sleep with the child when her husband allowed it, or even (in this sad case) demanded it . . .

(3) . . . μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ παιδίον ἐβόα καὶ ἐδυσκόλαιεν
ὑπὸ τῆς θεραπαίνης ἐπίτηδες λυπούμενον, ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇ. ὁ
γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἔνδον ἦν· ὕστερον γὰρ ἅπαντα ἐπυθόμην. καὶ
ἐγὼ τὴν γυναῖκα ἀπιέναι ἐκέλευον καὶ δοῦναι τῷ παιδίῳ τὸν
τιτθόν, ἵνα παύσῃται κλαῖον. (11–12)

. . . after dinner, the baby began to wail and grizzle, deliberately pestered by the maid, so that it would do this—for Eratosthenes was in the house, I found it all out later. And I told my wife to go down and feed the baby, so that it would stop crying.

⁵ *Olynthus* 205 f., plate 55.

⁶ *Olynthus* 267 ff.: J. Chamonard, *Exploration archéologique de Délos VIII* (Paris 1922–1924).

The wife joins the husband for dinner in the *andronitis*, now upstairs, while the adulterer is able to get in the house. He may even have been there already when Euphiletos came home, for the arrival of the master was unexpected. The presumption of an external staircase is strengthened.

(4) . . . ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐγὼ ὠργιζόμενην καὶ ἐκέλευον αὐτὴν ἀπιέναι, “ἴνα σύ γε” ἔφη “πειρᾶς ἐνταῦθα τὴν παιδίσκην. καὶ πρότερον δὲ μεθύων εἴλκες αὐτήν.” καγὼ μὲν ἐγέλων, ἐκείνη δὲ ἀναστᾶσα καὶ ἀπιούσα προστίθῃσι τὴν θύραν, προσποιουμένη παίζειν, καὶ τὴν κλεῖν ἐφέλκεται. καγὼ τούτων οὐδὲν ἐνθυμούμενος οὐδ’ ὑπονοῶν ἐκάθευδον . . . (12–13)

. . . when I got cross and kept on telling her to go away, she said: “You just want to try it on here with the girl, don’t you? You were pawing at her before, when you were drunk.” I laughed, but she got up, and on the way out she shuts the door, pretending it’s a joke, and pulls the bolt across.⁷ So I didn’t say anything or suspect anything, but just went to sleep . . .

There are at least two rooms upstairs—an inner one, which can be locked from outside, and an outer one, giving access to the stair. The outer one might well have been the normal sleeping-place for the girl-maid.⁸

When Euphiletos mentions the events of this night a second time, he uses the word *δωμάτιον* for the inner room.

(5) . . . ἀναμνησκόμενος δὲ ὅτι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ νυκτὶ ἐψόφει ἡ μέταυλος θύρα καὶ ἡ αὐλειος . . . (17)

. . . remembering how that night the door from the house into the yard was creaking, and the door from the yard into the street . . .

(6) . . . καὶ ἐλθόντες οἴκαδε ὡς ἐμέ, ἀναβάντες εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶον ἐδειπνοῦμεν . . . (22)

. . . coming back to my house, we went up to the upper-room and had dinner.

The word *ὑπερῶον* has a long history in Greek, with memorable uses both in Homer and in the *Acts of the Apostles*. It is interpreted both as “upper storey” and “upper room.” Here it could well refer to the

⁷ *κλείς* in its early sense of “bar, bolt,” not the later meaning “key.” The word *ἐφέλκεται* tempts one to think of the action of pulling through a latchstring (see *Olynthus* 261) but this is a doubtful meaning for *κλείς*. A referee suggests that the verb would also be applicable to the action of a “Laconian” key. See *Olynthus* 202 f., Pl. 70, no. 2.

⁸ For the maid outside the bride’s door, compare Actoris in *Od.* 23.228. A less elevated example at *Anth. Gr.* 5.5.

principal upstairs room, what would normally be the living-cum-reception room of the women's quarters.

(7) ὁ δ' Ἐρατοσθένης, ὦ ἄνδρες, εἰσέρχεται, καὶ ἡ θεράπεινα ἐπεγείρασά με εὐθύς φράζει ὅτι ἔνδον ἐστί. κἀγὼ εἰπὼν ἐκείνη ἐπιμελέσθαι τῆς θύρας, καταβὰς σιωπῇ ἐξέρχομαι . . . (23)

Eratosthenes comes in, gentlemen of the jury, and the maid wakes me up straightaway and tells me that he's in the house. So I tell her to look after the door, and I go down silently and go out . . .

Again strong evidence for an external staircase. The maid is able to come upstairs, and Euphiletos is able to come down and out through the yard into the street, without disturbing wife and lover in the downstairs inner-room.

(8) καὶ δᾶδας λαβόντες ἐκ τοῦ ἐγγύτατα καπηλείου εἰσερχόμεθα, ἀνεωγμένης τῆς θύρας καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀνθρώπου παρεσκευασμένης. ὥσαντες δὲ τὴν θύραν τοῦ δωματίου οἱ μὲν πρῶτοι εἰσιόντες ἔτι εἶδομεν αὐτὸν κατακείμενον παρὰ τῇ γυναικί . . . (24)

We get some torches from the nearest tavern and go into the house—the door was opened and tended by the maid. We shoved open the door of the inner room, and the first of us who got in saw him still lying by my wife . . .

The maid has been stationed to open the door to her master and his hastily collected posse. It is not clear whether this is the street door or the one from the yard into the house. The ground-floor inner-room is called *δωμάτιον*, just like its counterpart upstairs.

(9) οὕτως, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἐκεῖνος τούτων ἔτυχεν ὥνπερ οἱ νόμοι κελεύουσι τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράττοντας, οὐκ εἰσαρπασθεῖς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ, οὐδ' ἐπὶ τὴν ἐστίαν καταφυγών, ὥσπερ αὐτοὶ λέγουσι. πῶς γὰρ ἂν, ὅστις ἐν τῷ δωματίῳ πληγείς κατέπεσεν εὐθύς, περιέστρεψα δ' αὐτοῦ τῷ χεῖρει, ἔνδον δὲ ἦσαν ἄνθρωποι τοσοῦτοι, οὓς διαφυγεῖν οὐκ ἐδύνατο. (27)

That's how he met the fate the laws ordain for people who do such things, gentlemen of the jury, not dragged in out of the street, nor after he'd taken sanctuary at the hearth, as these men say. How could he have? He was struck down in the inner room, and fell at once, and I twisted his arms behind his back, and there were so many people that he couldn't escape through them.

Eratosthenes' kin, who are prosecuting Euphiletos for the killing, have alleged that it was not a case of justifiable homicide *in flagrante delicto*.

They say that Eratosthenes managed to get away from the inner room, perhaps got into the street and was dragged back (though this may be yet another version of the way he was brought into the house originally): and even managed to get into religious contact with the hearth.

Hearths at this time were made of four dressed blocks of stone set in a rectangle.⁹ In Athenian excavations no such blocks have been found. They have presumably been reused later in the same way as thresholds and stair-footings. At Olynthus, such hearths are found in rooms characterized as kitchens by their hard-earth floor and unplastered walls.

We are now in a position to attempt some correlation of this evidence with discoveries in Athens. The minimum requirements for Euphiletos' house are seen to be a principal room and an inner-room on both the upper level and the lower; an external staircase in the yard; a washing-facility; and a kitchen. There is the likelihood that this minimum is the actuality or close to it, as suggested by the use of the word *οἰκίδιον*.

Archaeological evidence on fifth- and early fourth-century houses remained scant for many years. Dörpfeld's excavations southwest of the Acropolis in the 1890s found some private houses, but the remains were too fragmentary and sporadic to permit close interpretation.¹⁰ The investigations at Olynthus in the 1930s provided rich new material in a much more complete and understandable form, but there had to be strong reservations about how applicable this would be to our knowledge of housing in Athens. The residential quarter of Olynthus was laid out in regular blocks in an orthogonal street-plan, with the houses nearly all of uniform size; whereas classical Athens was notorious for its irregularity of plan, inconvenient streets, and small houses.¹¹

Matters have now improved. The excavation of an "Industrial District," lying between the Areopagus to the East, and the Hill of the Nymphs and the Pnyx to the West, revealed (between 1939 and 1949) a number of irregularly shaped houses in what was known to be the thickest-populated area of the city. One of the best-understood houses from this area, the so-called "House D," corresponds almost exactly with what we know about Euphiletos' house.¹²

House D was built in the first half of the fifth century. The yard was refloored about 475 B.C. In the early years of the fourth century the street lying to the East was converted into the central "Great Drain" that served the whole area, and there was some realignment of the eastern wall of the house to accommodate this, but the general conformation of the

⁹ *Olynthus* 186 ff.

¹⁰ W. Dörpfeld, *Antike Denkmäler* II (1899–1901) fig. 38, gives a clearer picture than the earlier report in *Athen. Mitt.* 19 (1884) 508 ff.

¹¹ I. N. Travlos, *Πολυοδομική εξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν* (Athens 1960) 70 f.

¹² *Athens ID*, 217 f.

house was unchanged through the period (say, 410 to 385 B.C.) in which Lysias' speech may be placed.

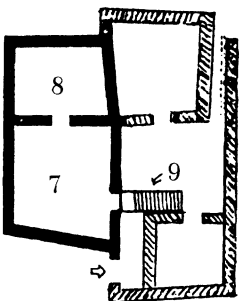
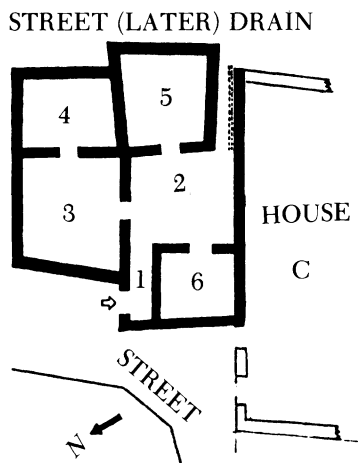
The area of the house, including the yard, is about 80 square metres. The layout of the groundfloor is clear from the accompanying Plan I. The yard is entered from the Northwest through a corridor 1.20m. wide. The apparent entrance from the East is much narrower, and restricted still further by a tiled drain out into the roadway. It seems likely therefore that this was not a real entrance, and was blocked above the drain-level. Room 6, here designated as "washroom," had a well going back to the time before the house was built.

Nothing survives of the adobe walls: the stone socles which show on the ground-plan are about .45m. high. Plan II shows a hypothetical upper floor that would meet all the requirements of Euphiletos' house. There is some difficulty in deciding where the staircase would be. The suggested position would give a horizontal run of about 2.90m. Allowing a height of 2.50m., and a landing of .90m., both for safety and to provide ample headroom at the entrance to the yard, we find that the stair would have a pitch of 48°. The normal pitch at Olynthus was about 37°, but both there and at Delos some stairs were steeper, even approaching what we might call a ladder rather than a stair. And we must remember Euphiletos' remark about the risk that his wife would run coming down the stair.

It would be well that no one should fantasize the ultimate coincidence: that Euphiletos lived in House D. All the same, it is gratifying to see how well in this case the literary and the archaeological evidence inform and enrich each other.

PLAN I—HOUSE D (GROUND)

PLAN II—UPPER STOREY
(HYPOTHETICAL)



1 ENTRANCE

2 YARD

3 'ANDRON'

4 'DOMATION'

5 KITCHEN

6 WASHROOM

7 'HYPEROON'

8 'DOMATION'

9 STAIR—'KLIMAX'

Plans after 'JT' in *Athens ID*

VIEW FROM THE SSW (ignoring the adjacent house)

