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TWO SUBMERGED ITEMS OF GREEK SEXUAL VOCABULARY FROM APHRO-
DISIAS

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 117 (1997) 81–84

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TWO SUBMERGED ITEMS OF GREEK SEXUAL VOCABULARY FROM APHRODISIAS

I draw attention here to two recently surfaced items of Greek sexual vocabulary which appear in the inscriptions collected by C. Roueché in *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias in the Roman and Late Roman Periods* (Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. Journal of Roman Studies Monographs no. 6), London, 1993. In each instance confirmation is provided of the existence of a word whose previous attestation in Greek was sparse and somewhat dubious.

παθικός

The word *pathicus*, used interchangeably with *cinaedus*,¹ is fairly common in Latin denoting a passive homosexual. Παθικός, however, has yet to feature in the lexica of the Greek language² although it must be reflected in παθικεύεται (Nicarchus, *AP* 11.73.7). At last we now have firm evidence of its existence in the living language: a graffito on plaster in “the easternmost recess” of a backstage corridor of the Odeum is set out as follows in Roueché:³

Καρ[.]ιδιανός ΚΑΙΩΝ⁴
παθηκός vac. ΚΥΔΙΑC[.]
Καρμιδακιος
Panel A i

Here παθηκός, with η for ι,⁵ must represent παθικός. The Latin word *pathicus* is found to have a true Greek equivalent and the generally held view that it was a popular borrowing into Latin⁶ is confirmed. Παθικός merits, but has not so far received admission into the section of the *Bulletin épigraphique* entitled “Mots nouveaux et mots rares”. I had assumed that παθικός was used here solely as a term of abuse, but Charlotte Roueché to whom I am grateful for a photograph of this inscription, suggests tentatively that, given the provenance of this graffito, παθικός might possibly carry some technical theatrical meaning. Its synonym κίναιδος is certainly found used of performers⁷ and we may note the

¹ See Kroll on Catullus, 16.2 and 57.1. Note the presence of *pathicus* in a Pompeian graffito (*pathicus qui praeterit* (CIL IV. 2360.2 = CE 45.2 = E. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria. A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, no. 79.2), an indication of the register of the word.

² The bracketed appearance of παθικός in the *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* with passages adduced solely from Latin literature does not really invalidate this statement. TLL x. 1. v. 703 records the appearance of παθικός in a Latin glossary; Gloss. ^L Philox. no. 54: *morbosus παθικός*.

³ This graffito was previously published in C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity. The Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions including Texts from the Excavations of Aphrodisias* (Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. Journal of Roman Studies Monographs no. 5), London, 1989, p. 245.

⁴ Read καὶ ὄν?

⁵ See F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. I *Phonology*, Milan, 1977, 235, 237f. In Roueché’s earlier publication (see note 3) the word is correctly indexed as παθικός.

⁶ See V. Väänänen, *Le latin vulgaire des inscriptions pompéiennes*³, Berlin, 1966, 111 and J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, London, 1982, 190.

⁷ The most up-to-date discussions of κίναδος are E. Bernard, *Les inscriptions de Philae* II, Paris, 1959, no. 154 and F. Perpillou-Thomas, *Artistes et athlètes dans les papyrus grecs d’Égypte*, *ZPE* 108 (1995), 225–251, 228f. Kroll’s treatment (*RE* XI.1. 459–462) remains fundamental.

reference in P. Hibeh 1.54.10 to Ζηνόβιος ὁ μαλακός who is clearly some sort of dancer.⁸ If, however, we read καὶ ὦν in the line that precedes, a purely abusive function of the adjective appears more likely.

πυγιστής

Hitherto the existence of this agent noun has likewise been somewhat shadowy. LSJ in its supplement gives as the single example of its occurrence SB 6872.⁹ This text is a graffito of the Roman period¹⁰ incised on a stone from Silsileh (the ancient Lochias¹¹), the promontory in the east harbour of Alexandria. It is now most conveniently to be found in A. Bernand's *De Thèbes à Syène*¹² where it is set out as follows:

ἔξω
Πετεχνοῦμις
Ἐρταήσις¹³ πυγ

It was Bruno Keil who suggested that πυγ should be interpreted as a noun, πυγιστής.¹⁴ Why he picked on πυγιστής, a word not attested in his time,¹⁵ rather than πυγαῖος which is found in the Souda glossed as ἀκόλαστος¹⁶ (π 3108 [~ Zonaras 1594]) is difficult to say. From his translation, in which he uses *paedicator*, it is clear that he knew full well, as one would have expected, that πυγιστής would be an agent noun. Keil, like Bernand, takes the inscription to be a kind of malediction: “off you go!” or “away with . . . !”¹⁷ For ἔξω used imperatively we may compare Luc. *Alex.* 38 ἔξω Χριστιανούς.¹⁸ But it is not

⁸ ἀπόστειλον δὲ ἡ[μ]ῖν / καὶ Ζηνόβιον τὸν μαλακὸν ἔχοντα τύμπανα καὶ / κύμβαλα καὶ κρόταλα· χρεῖ/α γάρ ἐστι ταῖς γυναιξίν πρὸς / τὴν θυσίαν· ἐχέτω δὲ / καὶ ἰματισμὸν ὡς ἀσ/τειότατον. Zenobius is 1019 in I. E. Stephanis, *Διονυσιακοὶ Τεχνῖται*, Iraklion, 1988. The connection between μαλακός and κίναιδος was made by C. C. Edgar, *Records of a Village Club, Raccolta di scritti in onore di Giacomo Lumbroso (1844-1925)*, Milan, 1925, 369–376, 371. See also Perpillou-Thomas (previous note), 229.

⁹ = CIG iii. 4854 = F. Preisigke – W. Spiegelberg, *Ägyptische und griechische Inschriften und Graffiti a. d. Steinbrücken des Gebel Silsile (Oberägypten)*, Straßburg, 1915, no. 115.

¹⁰ “Sans doute 1er siècle apres J.-C.”, Bernand (see note 12), 89.

¹¹ See Strabo, 17. 791C and 794C and *RE* 13.1. 946.

¹² A. Bernand, *De Thèbes à Syène*, Paris, 1989, pp. 88–89. fig. 110. Plate 51.1 contains a photograph of the stone and plate 51.2 the transcription made by Legrain.

¹³ H.-J. Thissen, *ZPE* 90 (1993), 294 reads Ἐρμαήσις.

¹⁴ ap. Preisigke – Spiegelberg (note 9): Perdrizet – Lefèbvre (see note 20) misquote their text, incorrectly accenting πυγιστής. Keil and Bernand are agreed in taking Ἐρταήσις as an undeclined genitive indicating Petechnoumis' paternity.

¹⁵ Curiously there is an entry for πυγιστής in the *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, but no examples are cited. C. D. Buck and W. Peterson, *A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives*, Chicago, 1944, 566 accept Keil's interpretation of the Silsileh graffito.

¹⁶ LSJ's entry s. v. πυγαῖος “= κατάπυγος, Suid.” is taken directly from the *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*. Κατάπυγος itself is a very rare word whose existence has sometimes been denied (M. Lombardo, *PP* 40 (1985), 300–301 discussing an archaic graffito,]ς καταπυγ[, on a pithos from Pisticii). We now have two epigraphical examples from the Greek West. See A. Johnston, *PP* 46 (1990), 45 and G. Manganaro, *ZPE* 111 (1996), 135f. who would now read κατάπυγος in the early graffito from Akrai where formerly (*Helikon* 2 (1962), 474) he had read καταπύγων. Fraenkel made the point, perfectly valid in principle, that one could not infer the existence of κατάπυγος from the occurrence of the comparative form, καταπυγοτέρων in Sophron fr. 63 (E. Fraenkel, *Glotta* 34 (1955), 43 n. 2 = *Kleine Beiträge* I 148 n. 2), but now that we have two western non-literary examples of κατάπυγος, it seems legitimate to assume that this comparative and the superlative καταπυγοτάτου (found on the base of a lamp from Gela: Kaibel, *Epigrammata*, 1131 = D. M. Bailey, *Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum* 1, London, 1975, pp. 310f., no. Q 666 = L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales de Sicile*, Rome, 1989, no. 151) do indeed reflect κατάπυγος (cf. Manganaro, 135) and also perhaps that the adjective in the graffito discussed by Lombardo should be restored as κατάπυγ[ος rather than καταπύγ[ων.

¹⁷ It is perhaps hair-splitting to try to determine the case of the noun in a collocation like this. Both Keil and Bernard assume that Πετεχνοῦμις is a vocative, but a nominative would be just as in place and perhaps better here. If D. M. Lewis

all that easy to believe in a Greek¹⁹ malediction of the *active* partner in a homosexual act: see the next paragraph. Another graffito from Egypt must be taken into account here since its editors' citation of Keil's suggestion about the Silsileh inscription presumably indicates that they considered that it may have provided a further instance of πυγιστής. This is a graffito on the right leg of a statue of Horus in the room of Osiris in the Memnonium at Abydos. It too contains the letter sequence πυγ with nothing following it:

Μενεκράτ[ης]
Νικαγόρας
Βότρυς πυγ²⁰

Again one might consider interpreting πυγ as πυγαῖος or, if we believe that all of the men who figure in this list of names are being insulted, πυγαῖοι. Another possibility would be that πυγ should be taken as an abbreviation of a verb form, πυγίζεται or πυγίζονται.²¹ πυγιστής, however, cannot be excluded as a possible interpretation of πυγ since it is just conceivable that Botrys might have written his own name and boastfully added a word (but do writers of graffiti expect passers-by to recognise their handwriting? And, in any case, the writer surely would not have expressed himself so ambiguously by writing only three letters of the word he intended?). It is even possible, on this assumption, that πυγίζει or πυγίζει was the writer's intention.

Now, however, an indubitable instance of the word πυγιστής has emerged. A graffito on one of the seats in the theatre at Aphrodisias reads as follows:

ἐγὼ πυγιστής²²
εἶμε²³
46 k row 9

has rightly interpreted the Kerameikos ostrakon 3469 (D. M. Lewis, Megakles and Eretria, *ZPE* 96 (1993), 51–52) we would have an exact parallel for the Silsileh graffito as interpreted by Keil, [Μεγ]ακλῆς / [ηιπ]οκράτος / [πάλι(ν) ἔχσο· / [μὲ] εἰσέλθης . . . His restoration seems more plausible than that of A. E. Raubitschek, *ib.* 100 (1994), 381–382. But this text remains very puzzling: see O. Masson, *Bull. épigr.* 1993. 220 and 1994. 269.

¹⁸ καὶ ὁ μὲν (Alexander) ἠγεῖτο λέγων, „ἔξω Χριστιανούς“, τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἅπαν ἐπεφθέγγετο, „ἔξω Ἐπικουρείους“. On this use of ἔξω, imitated or paralleled in Latin (*Petr. Sat. 52.7 aquam foras uinum intro*), see G. P. Shipp, *WSI.* 66 (1953), 108f., *Glotta* 39 (1961), 153 and *Modern Greek Evidence for the Ancient Greek Vocabulary*, Sydney, 1979, 242–243. It so happens that the ancient examples he cites both involve accusative nouns, but the nominative or vocative is not disturbing if one compares the allegedly proverbial Athenian expression θύραζε Κάρες (or Κῆρες)· οὐκέτ' Ἀνθεστήρια (for a recent discussion of this controversial verse see N. Robertson, *NSCPH* 95 (1993), 203ff.) and recalls the notice in Moeris (Pierson–Koch, p. 171) proclaiming that θύραζε is Attic and ἔξω Hellenic (for a possible contradiction of this rule see the previous note). Similar sorts of utterance, combining directional word and a nominative or vocative, are found in Aristoph. *Birds* 507, ψωλοὶ πεδίονδε, and in the ritual cry that gave its name to the second day of the Eleusinian mysteries, ἄλαδε μύσται (Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 F80, Polyaeus. 3.11.2).

¹⁹ Whether the fact that the man has an Egyptian name should be taken into account is questionable. This tells us nothing about the nationality of the writer. In any event Bernard's "inverti" is not a happy translation of πυγιστής.

²⁰ P. Perdrizet – G. Lefèvre, *Les graffites grecs du Memnonion d'Abydos*, Nancy, 1919, no. 127.3.

²¹ See D. Bain, Six Greek Verbs of Sexual Congress (βινῶ, κινῶ, πυγίζω, ληκῶ, οἴφω, λαικάζω), *CQ* n. s. 41 (1991), 51–77, 70. I withdraw my suggestion that the Silsileh inscription's πυγ might contain an abbreviation of a verb form. I had not seen Bernard's work when I submitted that article for publication. It is uncertain what is intended at M. Lang, *Graffiti and Dipinti [The Athenian Agora xxi]* (Princeton, 1976) C12 [ε]ς πυγ[although it certainly looks as if a man's name ending in -ης is followed by a word from the πυγ-family. Lang restores with πυγ[αῖος.

²² The accent in Roueché is incorrect.

²³ i. e. εἶμαι, the MG form. See F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. II *Morphology*, Milan, 1981, 400.

Roueché translates “I am a bugger”. As Bowersock in his review of Roueché²⁴ rightly observes, ἐγὼ πυγιστής εἰμι should not be taken as a mere avowal of the writer’s sexual preference. The nature of this graffito is obviously boastful and aggressive and it must be distinguished from the type of inscription where a person is insulted by being named and having a sexually insulting word like καταπύγων or εὐρύπρωκτος appended to his name.²⁵ This particular graffito, by the very nature of its location, on a seat,²⁶ is bound to be threatening in intent.

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²⁴ G. W. Bowersock, *Gn* 69 (1997), 46–50, 50: he draws attention to two likely occurrences of the cognate verb πυγίζω in these inscriptions, A 2 and A 6. I am not so sure that he is right to see aggression in the imperatives πέρδε (apparently found in an acclamation from Aphrodisias: Daniel’s interpretation – see below – is accepted, however, neither by Roueché in *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, p. 133 nor by D. Feissel, *Bull. épigr.* 1987. 466) and πέρδου (found on a temple wall in Syria) which I would prefer to explain as having an apotropaic function. See R. W. Daniel *ZPE* 61 (1985), 130 and D. Bain, *ZPE* 63 (1986), 104. But the inscription from Caesarea in Mauretania Caesarensis that reads *lege et crepa* (*CIL* VIII 2. 9421: cited in *ZPE* 75 (1988), 72 without the number of the inscription) might be thought to lend support to Bowersock’s suggestion.

²⁵ For this type of inscription see Bain (note 21), 67, 67 n. 120 and *ZPE* 104 (1994), 33, 33 nn. 8 and 9.

²⁶ It would represent the verbal equivalent of the sketch of the phallus found in row 4 (Roueché, p. 111). Roueché notes that the sketch on one of the seats in row 16 might be of a phallus.