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TWO SUBMERGED ITEMS OF GREEK SEXUAL VOCABULARY FROM APHRODISIAS

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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, is fairly common in Latin denoting a passive homosexual. Παθικός, however, has yet to feature in the lexica of the Greek language although it must be reflected in παθικεύται (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:

Καρδιάνω ΚΑΙΩΝ
παθηκός vac. ΚΥΔΙΑΚ[ . ]
Καρμιθοκίος

Panel A

Here παθηκός, with η for i, 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 Latin 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 κίναιθος is certainly found used of performers and we may note the

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1 See Kroll on Catullus, 16.2 and 57.1. Note the presence of pathicus in a Pompeian graffito (paticus 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. 1 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 ἄν?


reference in P. Hibe 1.54.10 to Ζηνόβιος ὁ μαλακός who is clearly some sort of dancer. If, however, we read κοι ὀν 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. This text is a graffito of the Roman period incised on a stone from Silsileh (the ancient Lochias), the promontory in the east harbour of Alexandria. It is now most conveniently to be found in A. Bernard’s *De Thèbes à Syène* where it is set out as follows:

εξο
Πετεχνούμις
Ἐρταṗησις πυγ

It was Bruno Keil who suggested that πυγ should be interpreted as a noun, πυγιστής. Why he picked on πυγιστής, a word not attested in his time, rather than πυγιστης which is found in the Souda glossed as ἀκόλουθος 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 . . .!” For εξο used imperatively we may compare Luc. Alex. 38 εξω Χριστιανοῦ. But it is not

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


12 A. Bernard, *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.


14 ap. Preisigke – Spiegelberg (note 9): Perdrizet – Lefèbvre (see note 20) misquote their text, incorrectly accenting πυγιστής. Keil and Bernard are agreed in taking Ἐρταṗησις 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. πυγιστής “= 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, ἐκ καταπύγος, on a pithos from Pisticci). 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 καταπύγος. Fraenkel made the point, perfectly valid in principle, that one could not infer the existence of κατάπυγος from the occurrence of the comparative form, κατάπυγητόν in Sophron fr. 63 (E. Fraenkel, *Glotta* 34 (1955), 43 n. 2 = Kleine Beiträge 1148 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 καταπύγητότατον (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. 310ff., 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 καταπύγος rather than καταπύγον.

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 Πετεχνούμις 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 Greek\textsuperscript{19} malegration of the \textit{active} partner in a homosexual act: see the next paragraph. Another graffiti 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 \textit{pugistēs}. This is a graffiti 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 \textit{πυγ} with nothing following it:

\begin{center}
\text{Μενεκράτης}
\text{Νικηφόρας}
\text{Βότρυς \textit{πυγ}^20}
\end{center}

Again one might consider interpreting \textit{πυγ} as \textit{πυγαῖος} or, if we believe that all of the men who figure in this list of names are being insulted, \textit{πυγαῖοι}. Another possibility would be that \textit{πυγ} should be taken as an abbreviation of a verb form, \textit{πυγιζέται} or \textit{πυγιζόνται}.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{pugistēs}, however, cannot be excluded as a possible interpretation of \textit{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 \textit{πυγίζει} or \textit{πυγίζει} was the writer’s intention.

Now, however, an indubitable instance of the word \textit{pugistēs} has emerged. A graffiti on one of the seats in the theatre at Aphrodisias reads as follows:

\begin{center}
\text{ἐγὼ \textit{πυγιζέται}^22}
\text{ἐμμε}^23
\text{46 k row 9}
\end{center}


\textsuperscript{18} καὶ ὁ ἀνδρὶ (Alexander) ἤγετο λέγων, „ἐξω Χρυσταυνοῦς“, τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἃπαν ἐπεφθέγγετο, „ἐξω Ἐπικουρείους“. On this use of \textit{ἐξω}, imitated or paralleled in Latin (Petr. Sat. 52.7 aquam foras uinum intro, see G. P. Shipp, \textit{WSt.} 66 (1953), 108f., \textit{Glotta} 39 (1961), 153 and \textit{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 \textit{θύραξε} Κάρες (or Κάρες)’ συκέτ’ Ἀνθηστήρια (for a recent discussion of this controversial verse see N. Robertson, \textit{NSCPH} 95 (1993), 203ff.) and recalls the notice in Moeris (Pierson–Koch, p. 171) proclaiming that \textit{θύραξε} is Attic and \textit{ἐξω} 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. \textit{Birds} 507, ψαλοὶ πεδιόνε, and in the ritual cry that gave its name to the second day of the Eleusinian mysteries, ἅλαδε μύσται (Ephorus, \textit{FGH} 70 F80, Polyæn. 3.11.2).

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{pugistēs}.


\textsuperscript{21} See D. Bain, Six Greek Verbs of Sexual Congress (βινῷ, κινό, πυγίζω, ληθαύ, οὐρά, λαικάζω), \textit{CQ} n. s. 41 (1991), 51–77, 70. I withdraw my suggestion that the Silsileh inscription’s \textit{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, \textit{Graffiti and Dipinti [The Athenian Agora xx]} (Princeton, 1976) C12 [εἰς \textit{πυγ}] although it certainly looks as if a man’s name ending in -ης is followed by a word from the \textit{πυγ}-family. Lang restores with \textit{πυγαῖος}.

\textsuperscript{22} The accent in Roueché is incorrect.

Roueché translates “I am a bugger”. As Bowersock in his review of Roueché\textsuperscript{24} rightly observes, ἐγὼ πυγιστὴς 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 καταπύγαν or εὐρύπροκτος appended to his name.\textsuperscript{25} This particular graffito, by the very nature of its location, on a seat,\textsuperscript{26} is bound to be threatening in intent.

\textsuperscript{24} G. W. Bowersock, \textit{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 πορδε (apparently found in an acclamation from Aphrodisias: Daniel’s interpretation – see below – is accepted, however, neither by Roueché in \textit{Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity}, p. 133 nor by D. Feissel, \textit{Bull. épigr.} 1987. 466) and πορδου (found on a temple wall in Syria) which I would prefer to explain as having an apotropaic function. See R. W. Daniel \textit{ZPE} 61 (1985), 130 and D. Bain, \textit{ZPE} 63 (1986), 104. But the inscription from Caesarea in Mauretania Caesarensis that reads \textit{lege et crepa} (\textit{CIL} VIII 2. 9421: cited in \textit{ZPE} 75 (1988), 72 without the number of the inscription) might be thought to lend support to Bowersock’s suggestion.

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

\textsuperscript{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.