

SOME PETRONIAN PASSAGES AND MODERN GREEK*

Petronius' *Satiricon* is considered to be one of the best sources of information on vulgar and colloquial Latin. There are passages in *Satiricon* that are most similar to modern Greek expressions. The most probable interpretations for this similarity are:

I) It is natural for peoples of the same origin, living under the same climatic conditions, to use similar expressions⁽¹⁾. In this case the modern Greek expression preserves an ancient Greek one (even if there exists no parallel ancient Greek example of this same expression), and the similarity between Latin and modern Greek doesn't prove that the modern Greek expression is of Latin origin.

II) «Cena Trimalchionis» takes place in a Greek town («graeca urbs») of Southern Italy. Perhaps Petronius translates into Latin colloquial and vulgar Greek expressions he likes and considers them to be particularly (more adequately) expressive.

III) There is a third probability; there may have been a Latin expression (preserved by Petronius) that was translated into Greek in the Roman era and has been preserved by byzantine Greek to the present. But this last probability becomes untenable, if there existed ancient Greek texts much earlier than Petronius work (e.g. passages in Aristophanes' comedies), where these expressions are met.

The most characteristic passages in *Satiricon*, similar to modern Greek phrases or expressions are:

1) 43,8: «Noveram hominem olim oliorum». ⁽²⁾ There is a conscious barbarism in this passage, because the person speaking here wants to give a comical emphasis to the meaning. We have here: a) a barbarism (oliorum), (b) emphasis given by the repetition (iteratio)⁽³⁾ of the word olim, (c) humor.⁽⁴⁾ Hebrew,⁽⁵⁾ Greek,⁽⁶⁾ and Latin⁽⁷⁾ passages have been suggested as the source (or explanation) of the Petronian phrase (cf. A. Salenius, *Die Griechen und das Griechische in Petrons Cena Trimalchionis*, Helsingfors 1927, p. 26). But in none of the passages mentioned above are all three elements found together; we find only the second one; in Plautus' passage there is even the third one. I think that the only similar expression is the modern Greek «ποτέ τῶν ποτῶν». But there is a difference, between the two expressions: in Petronius' phrase there is an indefinite adverb («once upon a time»); in the Greek one there is a negative meaning («never in the world»).

2) 38, 1: «Lacte gallinaceum...»

Aristophanes is the first to use this phraseology «ὄρνιθων γάλα» (Vesp. 508). It is exactly the same expression with the modern Greek ^(7a): «καὶ τοῦ πουλιοῦ τὸ γάλα». Plinius (HN, Praef. 24) and others too use this expression, and, according to A. Maiuri,⁽⁸⁾ «<lacte gallinaceum> è locuzione ancora popolarmente viva» (i.e. in Italy).

3) 44,14: «Sed si nos coleos haberemus...»⁽⁹⁾ This comparison of the sexual organs

* This article was first published (in Greek) in *Παρνασσός*, 1982, pp. 49-53.

of the man with manliness (in the widest sense of the word) must be of very ancient origin. It isn't necessary to relate this expression with eunuchism. Persius first of all writes about it: «Haec fierent, si testiculi vena ulla paterni/viveret in nobis?»⁽¹⁰⁾ In modern Greek this phraseology is often met: 'Ιστορικὸν Λεξικὸν τῆς Νέας Ἑλληνικῆς, ἹΑκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν, vol. III, p. 133 «αὐτὸς ἔχει ἄ... = εἶναι ἰσχυρὸς, θαρραλέος πολλαχ.»: E. Κριαρᾶς, Λεξικὸ Μεσαιωνικῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Δημῶδους Γραμματείας, sub. v. «ἀρχιδᾶτος = ποὺ ἔχει προσόντα, ἀξιόλογος, ἰσχυρὸς». Even today in modern Greek phraseology, in military jargon, we use the phrase «μὲ ἄ... (e.g. «εἶναι λοχαγὸς μὲ ἄ...») when speaking about a man highly efficient in his work.

4) 42,2: «Frigori laecasin dico».

Rightly Heraeus, Rh. Mus. 70, p. 38, thinks this «laecasin» to be the Latin transcription of the Greek «λαϊκάζειν»⁽¹¹⁾. Here Seleucus means that he defies cold weather (cf. Maiuri, o.c. p. 174). We meet this phraseology in the modern Greek «τοῦ λέω ἃ σικτίρ»^(11a); also in «τοῦ εἶπα νὰ πάει νὰ γ...» «τοῦ λέω ἄ(η) γ...» This phraseology («dicere alicui laecasin») must undoubtedly be of Greek origin and obviously belongs to the vernacular⁽¹²⁾. It is most improbable that Petronius imitates Strato here (Strato Phoenicides 1,36: «οὐχὶ λαϊκάσει;») or anyone else. Seleucus expresses himself in that way in order to show the contempt he feels for a condition, not for a person. It's the same as in the modern Greek expression: «ὄταν πιάσω τὴν καλή, θὰ πῶ στὴ φτώχεια ἃ σικτίρ» (= When I get rich, I'll say "to hell" with poverty) Certainly the phraseology meets in the dialect of the lower classes, but not necessarily in the «linguaggio meretricio», as Maiuri claims (o.c., p. 174).

5) 51,5: «Hoc facto putabat se coleum Jovis tenere»⁽¹³⁾ I can't see why we should change the reading of the Codex H, which has a very clear meaning. The phraseology is certainly «grossolana, ma piena di forza» (Marmorale, o.c. ad loc.) «plebea, ma efficace» (Maiuri, o.c. ad loc). There exists a most similar expression in modern Greek: «νόμιζε πὼς κρατοῦσε τὸ Δία (ἢ τὸν Πάπα ἢ τὸ Θεὸ) ἀπ' τ' ἄ...» i.e. he thought that he was the Emperor of the World. Aristophanes first spoke in his comedies about the physical pain of the man whose genitals are held and drawn by another (Equit. 772, Neb. 713, Aves 442). It is not necessary to accept the explanation given by A. Ermout⁽¹⁴⁾ and W. Truszkowski⁽¹⁵⁾, so that the above mentioned Petronian passage may become intelligible.

6) 53,12: «Reliqua, animalia, acroamata, tricas meras esse»⁽¹⁶⁾

Even today in modern Greek, when we want to vilify something (e.g. an act or a belief) we say: «αὐτὰ ἔναι τρίχες», or... «...σκέτες τρίχες», or «...τρίχες κατσαρές»⁽¹⁷⁾ From time immemorial, hair was thought of as a meaningless thing of no value: there was a proverbial phrase in Arist. Ran. 613: «ἄξιον τριχὸς» = without any value.⁽¹⁸⁾ In Forcellini, Lexicon Totius Latinitatis, Prati 1860, IV. p. 795, sub. v. tricae B, we read: «Tricae dicuntur etiam res futiles, frivolae, nullius pretii»; and then the word is interpreted by the Italian «triche, cose da nulla...» But I don't agree with the explanation given by him, that the word tricae-arum should be associated with the mythical city Trica mentioned by Plinius 3 HN 11,16 (104); on the contrary the myth about Diomedes' deeds may have been invented on the base of the meaning of the word θριξ (trica) = «a thing without any value whatsoever». The same Forcellini compares the

word «tricae» with the greek one θρίξ, and speaks about Plautus' passage, Persa 4.6.21: «Nugipiliquides» «You, who speaks about things of no value» (if the reading «Nugipililoquides» is the correct one).⁽¹⁹⁾ In Catullus also we read (17,17): «Nec facit pili uni cohortem»⁽²⁰⁾ That proves that the Latin word «pilus» had also the metaphorical meaning of the Greek one θρίξ (τρίχες).

We knew six Petronian phrases or expressions that are very similar to modern Greek ones. Two of them (42,2 and 53,12) must be of Greek origin. But one thing is undoubtable: they are vulgar or colloquial expressions; although they are rough, they are very efficacious.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΙΣ

Είς τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρον, τὸ ὁποῖον ἐδημοσιεύθη τὸ πρῶτον ἐλληνιστὶ εἰς τὸν τ. ΚΔ' (1982) τοῦ «Παρνασσού», σσ. 49-53, ἀνιχνεύονται αἱ ὁμοιότητες μεταξὺ ἐκφράσεων τινῶν τοῦ «Σατυρικοῦ» τοῦ Πετρωνίου καὶ νεοελληνικῶν φράσεων· πρὸς τοῦτοις ἐπιχειρεῖται (ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ ἄρθρου) αἰτιολόγησις τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων τούτων. Αἱ ἐξεταζόμεναι λατινικαὶ καὶ ἐλληνικαὶ ἐκφράσεις ἀνήκουν εἰς τὸν καθημερινὸν προφορικὸν λόγον τῶν λαϊκῶν τάξεων.

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙΣ

(1) «Συγγενικό... με τὴ λαϊκὴ εὐτράπελη διήγηση καὶ τὴ λαϊκὴ βωμολοχία τὸ (i.e. Satiricon) κάνει καὶ ἓνα ἄλλο γεγονός». Πετρωνίου Σατυρικόν, transt. Κ. Μιχαήλ, Athens (ed. Κείμενα) 1970, p. 9.

(2) In the most Petronian passages I'm examining, K. Mueller's text is usually accepted (K. Mueller, Petronii Satyricon, Munich 1961).

(3) A. Maiuri, La Cena di Trimalchione di Petronio, Naples 1945, p. 168, says about «nummorum nummos» (Sat. 37,8) that it is: a «frase amplificatrice di schietto carattere popolare».

(4) Thesaurus linguae Latinae (ThL) says about «olim oliorum»: «usu singulari -m oliorum (sc. per gen. part. jocosae fictum...)» Oxford Latin Dictionary (OLD) says to this regard «humouresly».

(5) Cf. Jez. 26,7 «King of Kings». Maiuri, o.c, p. 168 doesn't accept the Semitic origin of the phrase «nummorum nummos».

(6) Cf. Homer H39: «οἰόθεν οἶος», H 97: «αἰνόθεν αἰνώος».

(7) Plaut. Capt. 825: «Regum rex regalior».

(7a) Cf. Liddell. Scott sub v.v. ὄρνις, VI καὶ γάλα 12

(8) Cf. Maiuri, o.c.p. 169. The vulgar origin of this expression is accepted also by L. Friedlaender, Petronii Cena Trimalchionis Leipsig⁽²⁾ 1906, ad loc., and E. Marmorale, Petronii Arb. Cena Trimalchionis, Florence (2) 1961, ad loc.

(9) ThL translates this passage as follows: «si viri essemus».

(10) Cf. Maiuri, o.c, pp. 176-7.

(11) Cf. Liddell-Scott, sub. v. λαϊκάζω. It was Burman who corrected the reading of the Codex H into «laecasin». D. Altamura also, Quibus ex Graeca lingua... Latinitas III (1965), p. 200, translates the passage as follows: «aliquem neglegere, deambulatum mittere».

(11a) «Ἡ Α σικτίρ» «The first world (δ!) is the modern Greek equivalent to the ancient Greek «ἄγε», a hortative word. The second one is a Turkish verb of the active voice, although in the Greek phrase it is used as a verb of the passive voice.

(12) Liddell-Scott, sub v. *λαικάζω*, says about Strato's passage: «a vulgar form of execration». Cf. also E. Marmorale, o.c., ad loc.

(13) «Coleum» is the reading of Codex H.

(14) A. Ernout, *Pétrone Le Satiricon*, Paris² 1931, ad loc, writes concerning this passage: «L' expression vulgaire désigne une sorte de porte bonheur».

(15) W. Truszkowski, *Język potoczny i retoryka w. Satyrykonie Petroniusza, Sprawozdania Oddziału Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie 1970*, p. 37 «The proverbial «putabat se coleum Jouis tenere» has been proven to be a parody of an ancient supplicative gesticulation, a substitution of a normal phrase by a vulgar one» (in a first-hand translation of Truszkowski's passage).

(16) According to Scheffers's correction.

(17) The meaning of Petronius' phrase is just the same; cf. Ernout, o.c., ad loc.

(18) See Liddell-Scott, sub v. *θριξ*, II2. Henricus Stephanus (th.L.G. - éd. 1829), says also, sub v. *θριξ*: «ἄξιόν τι τριχός, i.e. *minimi pretii*».

(19) The most probable reading of this Plautian passage is «Nugiepiloquides» «/Qui/ nugas insuper addit» (Leo), «Slushjabberotikin» (Nixon). *Nugiepiloquides* /nugae + ἐπι + loguor + ἴδης (a patronymic suffix).

(20) Cf. Petronius, 44,17: «Nemo Jovem pili facit» = «κανείς δὲν δίνει δεκάρα γιὰ τὸ Δία» = *personne ne fait cas pour un sou de Jupiter*» (Ernout, o.c., ad loc), where *pilus* = *θριξ* = «good for nothing».

ΟΡΑΤΙΟΥ ΑΠΟΦΘΕΓΜΑΤΑ

Nec desinat umquam tecum Graia loqui tecum Romana vetustas.

(Δὲν παύει νὰ ὀμιλῇ μὲ τὰ λόγια σου ἡ ἀρχαία Ἑλλάς καὶ ἡ παλαιὰ Ρώμη).

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Stuttgart