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## PETRONIANA

Tuomo Pekkanen

### 52,9 *madeia perimadeia*

In his commentary on Petronius, C. Pellegrino (1975, 311) points out that "non si hanno, almeno a tutt'oggi, elementi tali da farci rendere conto di questa espressione in modo soddisfacente". Like most modern editors (e.g. Friedländer 1906, Maiuri 1945, Perrochat 1952, Marmorale 1955, Smith 1975), he refers to the old suggestion of Ribbeck that the text originally contained the names Medea and Perimede, which appear together in Theocr. 2,14ff.

Χαῖρ', Ἐκάτα δασπλῆτι, καὶ ἐς τέλος ἄμμιν ὀπάδει  
φάρμακα ταῦτ' ἔρδοισα χειρίονα μήτε τι Κίρκας  
μήτε τι Μηδείας μήτε ξανθᾶς Περιμήδας,

"Hail, grim Hecate, and to the end attend me,  
and make these drugs of mine as potent as those of Circe  
or Medea or golden-haired Perimede."<sup>1</sup>

It seems that Ribbeck's hypothesis of the meaning of the enigmatic words is only repeated because there is no other solution that might even be taken into consideration. Friedländer already marked it as incredible (ad locum: "dass aber solche kaum erhörte Singularitäten in dem Libretto eines damaligen Pantomimus vorkommen konnten, erscheint nach allem, was

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<sup>1</sup> The translation is that of A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus I*, 1950, 17. Medea and Perimede are also joined as enchantresses at Prop. 2,4,7 *non hic nocturna Cytæis, / non Perimedææ gramina cocta manus*. As the scholia of Theocritus identify Perimede with the sorceress Agamede (Il. 11,740), Gow (II 39, ad locum) thinks that Agamede might be the Homeric name for Medea and holds it possible that "Theocritus and Propertius have inadvertently mentioned Medea twice".

wir von diesen wissen, unglaublich")<sup>2</sup> and Perrochat calls the various attempts of interpreting the words as "hypothèses fragiles" (ad locum), and with full reason. In the following, I shall offer a fresh solution to the problem.

The context is: 52,8ff. *ceterum laudatus Trimalchio hilarius bibit et iam ebrio proximus 'nemo' inquit 'vestrum rogat Fortunatam meam, ut saltet? credite mihi: cordacem nemo melius ducit.' atque ipse erectis supra frontem manibus Syrum histrionem exhibebat concinente tota familia 'madeia perimadeia'. et prodisset in medium, nisi Fortunata ad aurem accessisset, et, credo, dixerit non decere gravitatem eius tam humiles ineptias.* "Trimalchio warmed to his drinking under our flattery, and was almost drunk when he said: 'None of you asks my Fortunata to dance? Believe me, no one can dance the cordax better.' He then lifted his hands above his forehead and imitated the actor Syrus, while all the slaves sang in chorus: 'madeia perimadeia'. And Trimalchio would have come out into the middle of the room if Fortunata had not whispered in his ear. I suppose she told him that such low fooling was beneath his dignity."

Syrus must have been a pantomime,<sup>3</sup> who was very popular in the time of Petronius. So much seems to be clear that the words *madeia perimadeia* originate from a Greek song, sung during the performance of Syrus and so known to the contemporary readers of Petronius that they could recognize it from a couple of words, even when quoted in a slightly corrupted form. That Trimalchio's knowledge of Greek was rather modest, is evident from 64,5 (*nescio quid taetrum exsibilavit, quod postea Graecum esse affirmabat*), and the slaves which formed the chorus accompanying the performance of their master, could not know it much better.

Maiuri thinks that it is not possible to find out the sense and argument of the pantomime in question (ad locum: "il ritornello, sc. *madeia perimadeia*, era il ritornello che accompagnava in coro una delle più note pantomime di quell'attore, e vano è tentare di indovinarne il senso e

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Gow (l.c.): "Whether the chorus *madeia perimadeia* in Petron. 52 has any relevance is doubtful."

<sup>3</sup> Since the first century A.D., *histrion* was used as a synonym of *pantomimus* (TLL s.v. *histrion* 2844,45ff.). For the difference between the mime and the pantomime, see E. Wüst in RE XVIII:2,863,58ff.

l'argomento").<sup>4</sup> It seems to me, however, that the well-known Homeric episode of the first meeting of Odysseus and Nausikaa (Od. 6,110ff.) gives new elements for the correct understanding of the Petronian passage.

When Nausikaa and her maids played ball, a cry from one of them woke Odysseus, who had spent the night of his landing in Scheria beneath bushes. He sat up and pondered: "...Can it be that I am somewhere near men of human speech? I will myself make trial and see." Then he sets about to come forth to the maidens:

6,127 Ὠς εἰπὼν θάμνων ὑπεδύσετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,  
ἐκ πυκινῆς δ' ὕλης πτόρθον κλάσε χειρὶ παχείῃ  
φύλλων, ὧς ῥύσαιτο περὶ χροῖ μ' ἡδεα φωτός.

"So saying the goodly Odysseus came forth from beneath the bushes, and with his stout hand he broke from the thick wood a leafy branch, that he might hold it about him and hide therewith his genitals."

When Trimalchio lifted his hands above his forehead (*erectis supra frontem manibus*) he imitated Odysseus, who looked around himself or stared in the direction of Nausikaa and the maids and finally decided to step forward to see better (126 ἐγὼν αὐτὸς πειρήσομαι ἠδὲ ἴδωμαι).<sup>5</sup> This gesture was enough for the family of slaves, who, having repeatedly performed the same pantomime together with their master, began to sing

<sup>4</sup> For the songs, accompanying the pantomimes, see Wüst 855f. Sidonius says that the pantomimic choruses made bad compositions acceptable by means of good singing: epist. 8,9,5 *chori pantomimorum ... bono cantu male dictata commendant*.

<sup>5</sup> The movements of the hands played the most important part in the pantomimes (Wüst 853,24ff.). Cf. the word *chironomos*, *chironomon* (Iuv. 6,63; 5,121; Sidon. epist. 4,7) 'one who moves his hands according to the rules of the art, a pantomime'. Sen. epist. 121,6 *mirari solemus saltandi peritos, quod in omnem significationem rerum et affectuum parata illorum est manus et verborum velocitatem gestus adsequitur*. Cassiod. var. 1,20 (*disciplina*), *quae ore clauso manibus loquitur et quisbusdam gesticulationibus facit intellegi, quod vix narrante lingua aut scripturae textu possit agnosci*. The lifting of the hands may express astonishment, as is evident from Catull. 53,4 *Admirans ait haec manusque tollens*; Cic. Luc. 63 *Hortensius autem vehementer admirans, quod quidem perpetuo Lucullo loquente fecerat, ut etiam manus saepe tolleret*.

in Greek a song paraphrasing the corresponding Homeric passage.<sup>6</sup> We may conjecture that Trimalchio was about to step forward naked,<sup>7</sup> like Odysseus (*prodisset in medium*), had not his wife prevented him from doing so by saying that such a performance — which Fortunata knew well enough from her experience in the house of Trimalchio — was beneath the dignity of such a man as her husband (*non decere gravitatem eius tam humiles ineptias*).

The enigmatic words *madeia perimadeia* thus appear to be a distortion of Od. 6,129 περὶ χροῖ μήδεα φωτός. It should be noticed that the Homeric narrative continues with the description of Odysseus, coming forth (130ff.) "like a mountain-nurtured lion trusting in his might, who goes forth, beaten with rain and wind", etc.

The Homeric episode about Odysseus and Nausikaa was not seldom treated in later poetry.<sup>8</sup> It probably appeared in the mythological parody Ὀδυσσεὺς ναυαγός of Epicharmos (Athen. 14,619 B) and in the mime of the same name written by Oionas, a parodist of southern Italy (fourth century B.C.), whom Athenaeus (1,20 A) tells to have introduced the stranded Odysseus talking bad Greek (ναυαγὸν Ὀδυσσέα σολοικίζοντα). Sophokles treated the subject in his *Ναυσικάα ἢ Πλύντριαι* and acted the part of Nausikaa, playing ball with great skill, when he produced it (Athen. 1,20 F). The meeting of Odysseus and Nausikaa must also have

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<sup>6</sup> In the list of pantomime titles, given by Lucianus, the whole wandering of Odysseus, including Circe etc., to the punishment of the suitors, is enumerated among the themes that the dancer had to learn (*De saltatione* 46). The pantomimic dance was an imitation of acts, which could be interpreted by words (Athen. I 15 d). The dancer undertook to present by means of movements all that was being sung (Lucian. *De salt.* 62). To write libretti for pantomimes (*fabulae salticae*) was a degrading but lucrative occupation. Cf. Sen.suas. 2,19 *qui (Stilo) pantomimis fabulas scripsit et ingenium grande non tantum deseruit sed polluit*; Iuv. 7,87ff.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Cic. Pis. 22 *cumque ipse nudus in convivio saltaret* (sc. L. Piso); Cic. Verr. 2,3,23 *saltare nudus in convivio coeperat* (sc. Verres); Vell. 2,83,2 *nudus ... saltavit in convivio* (sc. L. Munatius Plancus). Apul. met. 10,29 *adest luculentus puer nudus, nisi quod ephebica clamida sinistrum tegebat humerum*, etc. (description of a pantomime performance).

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed references to the following, see RE XV s.v. Nausikaa 2017, 20ff. and XVII s.v. Odysseus 1983, 59ff.

appeared in Sophokles' Phaiakes and possibly in his Niptra. A comedy called Nausikaa is also known from Philyllios and Eubulos. Some fragments of Alkman (15, 16, 82) reveal that even he had used the subject in some way or another. Pacuvius treated the story in his tragedy Niptra, and the epic poet Tuticanus, a friend of Ovid (Pont. 4,12,25ff. and 4,16,27), in the Phaeacis. The comedy Niptra of Polyzelos and the Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀπονιζόμενος of Alexis may also have presented the Nausikaa episode, which offered suitable material for comic purposes. Finally, the relation between Nausikaa and Odysseus is presented in an obscene manner in Priapeia 68,19ff., which may be quoted here, as it probably gives an idea of how the episode might have been treated for pantomimic purposes:<sup>9</sup>

*altera materia est error fallentis Ulixei,  
 si verum quaeras, hanc quoque movit amor.  
 hic legitur radix, de qua flos aureus exit,  
 quam cum μῶλυ vocat, mentula μῶλυ fuit.  
 hic legimus Circei Atlantidemque Calypson  
 grandia Dulichii vasa petisse viri.  
 huius et Alcinoi mirata est filia membrum  
 frondenti ramo vix potuisse tegi.  
 ad vetulam tamen ille suam properabat, et omnis  
 mens erat in cunno, Penelopea, tuo.*

As to the form of the words *madeia perimadeia*, they might be explained without further comments as distortions of the Homeric περὶ ... μήδεα, for it cannot be expected that the slaves of Trimalchio would have been made repeat them correctly. Furthermore, the quotation is not from Od.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Aug. in psalm. 136,9 *hominibus cantaturis et saltaturis ad turpia cantica*; Lat. inst. 6,20,29 *bistrionum impudicissimi motus*. Cypr. epist. 103 *vir ultra muliebre[m] mollitiem dissolutus, cui ars sit verba manibus expedire, ut desaltentur fabulosae antiquitatis libidines*. Prud. perist. 10,21 *cygnus stuprator peccat inter pulpita, / saltat Tonantem tauricornem ludius*. As adultery was a popular theme of the pantomimes, it was natural that the mythological characters represented were also chosen from this point of view. For Leda and the swan, cf. also Iuv. 6,63 *Ledam molli saltante Bathyllo*; Arnob. nat. 7,33 *si Leda ... fuerit saltatus*. Iuvenalis 6,63ff. tells that the dance of the pantomime Bathyllus was so obscene that even Thymele, a mime-actress and mistress of obscene representations herself, could learn from him (See E. Courtney, A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal 1980, 270).

6,129 directly but from a popular song, based on the Homeric episode. The etymology of μήδεα is somewhat unclear (cf. Frisk, Gr. etym. Wb. 222 s.v.), but the connection with μήδομαι is suggested by Old High German *gimabt* f. 'facultas, genitalia' (Schwyzer, Gr. Gramm. I 208 β). The Petronian *mād-* for *mēd-* may be considered as a hyper-Dorism,<sup>10</sup> perhaps used to give a parodic tint of Doric choral lyric to the vulgar song of Trimalchio's slave chorus.<sup>11</sup> *-eia* for *-ea* perhaps is an intentionally used hypercorrect element. In the Greek personal names of Rome, the variation *-ea*, *-ia*, *-eia* is very common. From the numerous examples, found in H. Solin's *Namenbuch* (1982), I shall only quote the following: p. 877 *Hedea* (1st cent. A.D.), *Hedia* (Augustus—Nero), *Hedeia* (1st cent. A.D.), 363 Παναχέα (2nd/3rd cent. A.D.), *Panacia* (1st/3rd cent. A.D.), Παναχεία (2nd/3rd cent. A.D.), 414f. *Panthea* (Augustus), *Panthia* (1st/

<sup>10</sup> O. Lagercrantz (*Symbolae Osloenses* 7 [1928] 41f.), who interpreted *madeia perimadeia* as μάδε' ἤϊα, πέρι μάδε' ἤϊα 'genitalia meabilia, genitalia valde meabilia' or perhaps 'mentula mobilis, mentula valde mobilis', explained μάδεα as the Doric equivalent of μήδεα and referred for ἤϊα to Hesych. ἤϊος· πορεύσιμος. "Den Inhalt des Textes stellte Trimalchio durch seine Bewegungen dar. Was er dabei meinte, war allem nach zu urteilen der Coitus" (Lagercrantz, *ib.*). Ribbeck and de Lorenzì (*Rivista indo-greco-italica di filologia* 13 [1929] fasc. 3—4, 10f.), who wanted to see the names Medea and Perimede in the text, suggested that *madeia* was a hyper-Dorism for Μήδεια used with the intention to create a word-play with Latin *madeo* 'to be wet, drunk'. According to H. Thesleff (*An Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings of the Hellenistic Period* 1961, 89), "Hyper-Doric  $\bar{a}$ 's are found in almost all Pythagorean Doric fragments of 10 lines or more in length. Mostly, however, they occur in intellectual terms of non-Doric origin... Even a Dorian did not necessarily have the proper feeling for the quality of the vowel in such words." Cf. also C. D. Buck *The Greek Dialects* 1955, 179f. "hyper-Doric or hyper-Aeolic forms are occasionally met with in late inscriptions, though less often than in our literary texts. Thus the Attic term ἔφηβος... when adopted in other dialects, was sometimes given the pseudo-dialectal form ἔφαβος, e.g., in some late Doric and Lesbian inscriptions, in imitation of the frequent equivalence of dialectal  $\bar{a}$  to Attic  $\eta$ ".

<sup>11</sup> For a learned audience, the Doric dialect as such could be something of a conscious rusticity. Probus on Verg. ecl. p. 326 Thilo: *Graecis sermo sic videtur divisus, ut Doris dialectos qua ille (sc. Theocritus) scripsit rustica habeatur. opportunum fuit ergo ei, qui pastores inferebat, ea lingua disputasse.* Cf. A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* I p. lxxiii.



3rd cent. A.D.), Πάνθεια, (2nd cent. A.D.), 393f. *Thalea* (Augustus), *Thalia* (1st cent. A.D.), Θάλεια (2nd/3rd cent. A.D.). -εῖα for -έα in the nominative of the feminine singular is known since Homer: Il. 2,786 ὠκέα Ἴρις, Theocr. 3,20 ἀδέα τέροψις.<sup>12</sup> After the variation -εῖα: -έα in the feminine, -εῖα for -έα could also be used in the neuter plural, e.g. ὄξεια, θήλεια.<sup>13</sup> In the Hellenistic period, -εῖα became popular in the names of towns (Ἀλεξάνδρεια, Ἀντιγόνεια) and was sometimes substituted for -εα, e.g. Μαντίνεια for older Μαντίνεα.<sup>14</sup>

The repetition of *madeia* is probably intended to emphasize that the slaves of Trimalchio were so ignorant that the only thing they knew from the Greek song of the pantomime in question was one and the same obscene expression, which they therefore kept on repeating.

#### 58,9 *longe venio, late venio*

In the many attempts to solve the riddles presented by Hermeros to Ascylos, nobody has so far discussed the exact meaning of the verb *venio*, from which the correct interpretation of the whole passage decisively depends.

In his discussion of the origin of the Romance passive of the type *viene fatto* (It.), E. Löfstedt (*Studia neophil.* 11 [1938/39] 182) writes: "Obwohl die Sache wenig Beachtung gefunden hat ... begegnen z.T. schon in klassischer Zeit gewisse Beispiele, in denen *venire* einem *fieri* oder *esse* sehr nahe kommt, wenn auch die eigentliche Bedeutung 'kommen', 'erscheinen', 'sich zeigen' oft genug durchschimmert. Dabei ist u.a. bemerkenswert, dass derartige *venire* sowohl bei prädikativisch gebrauchtem Adj. und Subst. als beim Part. Perf. vorkommt...". From his examples to illustrate the phenomenon the following may be quoted:

Prop. 2,34,81            *non tamen haec ulli venient ingrata legenti,  
   sive in amore rudis sive peritus erit.*

<sup>12</sup> For more examples, see Schwyzer, *Gr. Gramm.* I 474 n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Schwyzer I 581 n. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Schwyzer I 475. Cf. also the variants Ἀκαδήμεια-Ἀκαδημία and the vulgar Latin confusion of *-ia/-ea* in words as *aenia* = *a(b)enea*, *alia* = *alea*, *peria* = *pereat*, etc. (further examples in V. Väänänen, *Introd. al Lat. volg.* 76 and 185).

- 1,18,14 *quamvis multa tibi dolor hic meus aspera debet,  
non ita saeva tamen venerit ira mea,  
ut tibi sim merito semper furor ...*
- Iuv. 7,29 *qui facis in parva sublimia carmina cella,  
ut dignus venias hederis et imagine sacra.*
- Manil. 4,382 *nec Leo venator veniet nec Virgo magistra.*
- Sidon. epist. 5,21 *nunc vos parenti venitis heredes ...*
- Prop. 1,10,25 *irritata venit quando contemnitur illa.*
- 1,5,32 *... non impune illa rogata venit.*
- Mulomed. Chir. 157 *si equus de via coactus venerit.*

In his Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal (1980), E. Courtney says that in Iuv. 7,29ff., quoted above, *venias* "differs very little from *fias*". For further examples of the corresponding usage, he refers i.a. to Verg. Aen. 7,470 *se satis ambobus Teucrisque venire Latinisque*. For our purpose, the Vergilian construction *se satis ... venire* is so far illuminating as *venire* in the sense of *fieri* appears in it together with a predicative adverb (*satis*). C. J. Fordyce (1977 ad locum) translates *satis* as 'a match for both parties', i.e. he interpretes it — quite correctly — in the sense of a semantically corresponding noun or adjective, *satis ... venire* becomes very near *parem ... fieri* or *fore*, which might be substituted for it without much changing the meaning.

The use of adverbs or prepositional expressions as predicatives of the verbs *esse* and *facere/fieri* is predominantly a characteristic of the colloquial speech (See LHS II pp. 171, 414, E. Löfstedt, Per. Aeth. 2,3): Petr. 46,2 *belle erit*; 61,2 *Trimalchio ad Nicerotem respexit et 'solebas' inquit 'suavius esse in convivio'* (the same phrase is repeated by Trimalchio in 64,2 as *solebas suavis esse*); 75,8 *vos rogo, amici, ut vobis suaviter sit. nam ego quoque tam fui quam vos estis* (here, too, Trimalchio is speaking). The Petronian examples with *facere/fieri*, presented by G. Bendz (Eranos 39 [1941] 38—39), are all from the vulgar passages: 58,7 *qui te primus deurode fecit*; 63,9 *quod sursum est, deorsum faciunt*; 38,12 *liberti scelerati, qui omnia ad se fecerunt*; 47,10 *quem ... ex eis vultis in cenam statim fieri*; 50,5 *factae sunt in unum aera miscellanea*. The construction is also known, although more seldom, with the verbs *efficere* (TLL V 2, 177, 44—) and *reddere* (Frontin. strat. 1,5,4, cf. LHS l.c.).

When *venio* is understood as *fio* and *longe* and *late* as predicative adverbs used instead of the corresponding adjectives, the riddle *longe venio, late venio* is easily solved as *longus fio, latus fio*, 'I become long, I become broad'. For the meaning of *late, latus*, cf. Tac. ann. 2,21 *latos barbarorum artus* 'the barbarians' great limbs'. The solution of the riddle is the same as that of the two following, i.e. *penis*.

When *qui de nobis* is interpreted 'what part of us', the answer to each of the riddles must be a masculine word meaning some part of the body, and a masculine word for phallus is the natural solution of not only the first riddle but also of *currit et loco non movetur* and *crescit et minor fit*. It is of course possible that each of the riddles has two solutions, an obscene and a respectable one (cf. M. E. Smith's edition, 1975, 162). Even the latter, however, must be an answer to the question 'what part of us'. The solutions *pes, oculus, capillus*, proposed by Bücheler (see Perrochat's commentary p. 100), fulfil this condition, but even so it is doubtful whether they hit the mark. If *venio* is understood in its original sense (cf. its etymological connection with Gr. βαίνω), *longe venio, late venio*, 'I come far and wide' may well be said of the foot. But *currit et loco non movetur* can also refer to the foot as well as to the eye (cf. Ov. rem. 218 *invitos currere coge pedes*, etc., Potam. tract.-1 p. 1415<sup>A</sup> *oculi suis in orbibus currunt*), and there is no reason why the respectable answer of the first two riddles could not be the same (i.e. *pes*). As to *crescit et minor fit*, Büchelers suggestion *capillus* is not very convincing, and *unguis* or *venter* would fit as well if not better.