

†*fericulusta mel*† *habuit praxim* (Petr. 39.4)

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Despite Müller and Smith (who print *fer[i]culus*), Trimalchio's *ferculus* may well be correct; note *fericulum* (beside *ferculum*), securely attested in the MS traditions of Seneca, Columella, and Valerius Maximus, as well as the *praefericulum* recorded by Festus (P.F. 293.11 L). The sequence *-ta mel* requires emendation, but previous solutions account satisfactorily neither for the transmitted text nor for the context of Trimalchio's utterance. Worth considering is the possibility that the text is sound as it reads, but with a short lacuna (as often in H), which necessarily follows *mel*; this in turn implies a segmentation *tam el<...>*, which is best restored as *tam el<egantem>*: note the extraordinary frequency of non-correlative *tam* in Petronius (as observed by Petersmann), and the fact that the only other attestation of *elegans* in the *Satyricon* involves the same construction (*tam elegantes strophas*, 60.1).

The sequence †*fericulusta mel*† *habuit praxim* (H)¹⁾ raises three separate problems: (1) the form *ferculus* (H), vs. *fericulum* (e.g. 69.7, H) and the ordinary *ferculum* (e.g. 35.1, HL);²⁾ (2) the precise interpretation of the transmitted sequence *-ta mel*; and (3) the meaning of the phrase *habuit praxim*, although the last two points are clearly interdependent: *-ta mel habuit praxim* should make good sense within the immediate context of the rest of Trimalchio's sentence (*nam mihi nihil novi potest affferri, sicut ille †fericulusta mel† habuit praxim*), and within the discourse setting as a whole.

1. *ferculus*. According to Smith, "The unsyncopated form *ferculus* found in H should not be retained. Even in narrative H has *fericulum* at 69.7, but HL have *ferculum* at 35.1."³⁾ But this account, which appears to place great weight on the agreement of H and L at 35.1, oversimplifies the complex pattern of attestations: the testimony of L, of course, is simply absent for most of the *Cena* after 37.5, and Smith omits mention of an additional instance of *fericulum* in narrative (60.7), as well as an additional "unsyncopated" *fericulo*

¹⁾ Marmorale: "una delle più penose *cruces* petroniane", an evaluation cited with approval by Giovanni Alessio, *Hapax legomena ed altre cruces in Petronio* (Naples 1960–61) 120.

²⁾ I assume, with all editors, the correctness of Gronovius' separation of *-ta* from the *fericulusta* of H.

³⁾ Martin S. Smith, *Petronii Arbitri Cena Trimalchionis* (Oxford 1975) 89, ad 39.4. Similarly e.g. Müller², who prints *fer[i]culus* at 39.4.

in the speech of Trimalchio (68.2), to say nothing of four other instances of *ferc-* in narrative. The attestations are as follows:

| <i>Encolpius</i> | <i>Trimalchio</i> | <i>Habinnas</i> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| ferculis 21.7 ⁴) (L) | fericulus 39.4 (H) | ferculum 66.3 (H) |
| ferculum 35.1 (HL) | fericulo 68.2 (H) | |
| [ferculo 36.2 ⁵) (HL)] | | |
| ferculum 39.1 (H) | | |
| ferculo 41.9 (H) | | |
| fericulum 60.7 ⁶) (H) | | |
| fericulum 69.7 ⁷) (H) | | |

The evidence suggests, then, that *fericulum* should indeed be eliminated from Encolpius' narrative. Nor is it surprising that Habinnas is given the normal form *ferculum*: although he does use some "colorful" vocabulary and locutions that distinguish his speech from that of the cultured main characters, his language - despite his inebriated state - is on the whole grammatically correct and much less highly marked by the solecisms that typify the speech of Trimalchio and the other freedmen.

We cannot, however, so casually dispose of Trimalchio's *fericulus*. It is a fact of some interest, generally ignored by commentators, that a form *fericulum* is securely attested in the manuscript traditions of Seneca, Columella, and Valerius Maximus, with a possible attestation in the elder Pliny.⁸) Note further the form *praefericulum* attested in Festus (P.F. 293.11 L), as well as comparative evidence (e.g. Greek *φαρέτρα* "quiver", and Sanskrit *seṭ* formations with *bharī-/bhari-*) supporting a laryngeal-final root-variant **bherh_x-* (beside the more frequent **bher-*), which may be directly preserved in (-)*fericulum* (see Ernout-Meillet, *Dict.* s.v. *ferculum*). Thus Petro-

⁴) This is the only example outside the *Cena* portion of the work.

⁵) The phrase *scilicet in altero ferculo* (36.2), which does not appear in Pithoeus' second edition of 1587, is now generally believed to be an interpolation.

⁶) *periculum* H, *fericulum* Reinesius.

⁷) *ferculum* patav., similarly *ferculo* patav. for Trimalchio's *fericulo* at 68.2.

⁸) Seneca, *Dial.* 7.25.4 (*fericulum*), 9.7.2 (*fericula*), *Ep.* 90.15 (*fericula* B, beside *fercula* in later manuscripts and corrected in B), 95.19 (*fericula*, transmitted as in 90.15), 122.3 (*fericula* Turnebus, for the *pericula* of all MSS); Columella 1. pr.5 (*fericula* S, *fercula* A and *codices recentiores*); Val. Max. 9.1.1 (*fericulorum* Kempf, cf. *fericulorum* Pighius, but MSS *periculorum* and *pisciculorum*); Pliny *Nat.* 35.49 (MSS *pericula*, cf. *fercula* Detlefsen, although Mayhoff's *vehicula* remains a possibility).

nius may well have given Trimalchio an archaic/popular variant *fericulus* (note the characteristic “popular” masculine gender, which itself is guaranteed by the immediately preceding *ille*; cf. the immediately following *caelus hic*, 39.5). The doubly-marked form *fericulus*, then, might originally have been contrasted systematically with the *ferculum* given to Encolpius and Habinnas; consequently, Trimalchio’s *fericulus* (39.4) and *fericulo* (68.2) may reflect something original, although the H tradition is naturally confused in the matter of Encolpius’ speech, given the intrusion of the competing *fericulum* – much as in Seneca, where *ferculum* is also well-attested.

2. *-ta mel*. Emendation is clearly required. From the point of view of sense, Bücheler’s *iam* is relatively safe, but its formal simplicity fails to account for the reading of H. *tamen* (Gronovius, Siewert, Maiuri) makes little sense, no matter what *habuit praxim* means, and *talem* (Studer, E. Thomas, Schmeck) is not much better, although the simple transposition is perhaps attractive. *Iam semel* (Heraeus, Ernout) makes sense only if *habuit praxim* means “has shown/proved” or the like, which is uncertain (see below). More recently, Alessio has suggested (op. cit. 121) that at some point there was a marginal gloss *camella*, designed to explain the unusual form *fericulus*, and also to disambiguate its meaning, since *ferculum* can mean both “dish, platter” and “litter, barrow”; this gloss was later incorporated into the text in the form *tamel* (and then reanalyzed as in H), at some later stage when the final syllable of *camella* was no longer legible. This line of speculation, although ingenious, is highly unsatisfactory: it is sufficient to mention that *camella* “goblet” (used in this meaning at 135.4) is a singularly inept and unconvincing gloss for *fericulus/fer(i)culum*, which never, in its ten Petronian appearances, means anything but “platter, dish, course”. What is, however, attractive about Alessio’s hypothesis is the assumption that the passage has been seriously disfigured in a way that will account for the reanalysis and resegmentation of an uninterpretable sequence into *-ta mel*. This point has not been sufficiently recognized, although insertion of a marginal gloss is not the only expedient.

An alternative solution begins with the assumption that the text of H as we have it is actually sound, but (necessarily, therefore) *incomplete*; that is, a lacuna (perhaps resulting from erasure or other damage) left an uninterpretable sequence, which a copyist in the H tradition adjusted in a natural way, i. e. by factoring out what appeared to be the recognizable word *mel* “honey”, and by attaching the *ta* to

the preceding word, producing *fericulusta* (which would then bear a certain resemblance to adjectives ending in *-stus*, or to nouns like *locusta*, cf. *locustam* 35.4). According to this conception, then, the lacuna (or damaged portion) of the text must fall precisely between *-ta mel* and *habuit*, and therefore the original sequence must have read *tam el<...>*, for which the most plausible restoration is *tam el<egans>* (agreeing with *fericulus*), or *tam el<egantem>* (agreeing with *praxim*).⁹⁾ Before offering further arguments in support of this analysis, we must consider the interpretation of *habuit praxim*.

3. *habuit praxim*. Since the *fericulus* to which Trimalchio refers is the elaborate zodiac dish introduced in 35.1, and since Trimalchio begins by boasting *nam mihi nihil novi potest afferri*, it is logical to suppose, as many have done, that *habuit praxim* must mean something like “has shown” or “has proved”: “Nobody can bring me anything new, as that last dish [already?/once and for all?] proved”. But it is difficult to extract such a meaning from *habuit praxim*. Even if *habuit* really reflects *praebuit* (i. e. *p̄buit*; J. H. Simon apud Smith, ad loc.), *praxim* can provide no such meaning, at least if it is to be interpreted according to its putative source Greek *πρᾶξις*.¹⁰⁾

Given *πρᾶξις* “result”, especially “good result, success”, others have understood *habuit praxim* to mean “had a (good) result”, i. e. “was successful”.¹¹⁾ This is indeed a plausible interpretation of what *habuit praxim* might mean in isolation, but it is unsatisfactory, in the context of Trimalchio’s actual discourse, in two ways. First, “just as that dish was successful” does not follow well after Trimalchio’s opening boast; in seeking to justify his claim that no one can show him anything new, Trimalchio might well refer to the zodiac dish, but the remark that it “was successful” is particularly lame (even for Trimalchio). Secondly, it is important to note that Trimalchio immediately launches into an extended astrological harangue (beginning

⁹⁾ It is suggestive and perhaps significant, although certainly not decisive, that the only other attestation of *elegans* in the *Satyricon* also appears with non-correlative *tam*: 60.1 *nec diu mirari licuit tam elegantes strophas*, referring to the entertainment provided by Trimalchio’s Homeristae.

¹⁰⁾ One must always, to be sure, reckon with the possibility of a neologistic usage on the part of Trimalchio. Jacobs’ wholesale substitution of *apodixin* “proof” (found at 132.10) seems to me to be an improbable solution, nor is simple *dixin* (which, like *praxim*, is otherwise unattested in Latin) paleographically attractive. The word *operationem* scrawled in the margin of H appears to be an attempt to gloss *praxim*, but elucidates nothing.

¹¹⁾ Thus e. g. Alessio (above, n. 1) 120.

caelus hic, etc.), and Smith is no doubt correct in thinking that “Trimalchio has the astrological dish in front of him as he gives this exposition”. Ideally, then – and this point has never, so far as I am aware, been explicitly stated – whatever Trimalchio says directly before *caelus hic* etc. should produce a natural transition to his speech on the astrological interpretation of the dish’s contents (to the extent that we may expect natural transitions from Trimalchio). In this sense again, Trimalchio’s merely saying that the dish “was successful” makes a *possible* transition (insofar as it is a statement about the dish), but not a very good one: it gives no hint of Trimalchio’s intention to launch into *caelus hic* etc., which then follows rather abruptly. It would be preferable if *habuit praxim* referred to the zodiac dish in a way that more naturally allowed Trimalchio to proceed with his item-by-item discussion of its contents.

The above considerations not only support the suggestion of *el<egans>* or *el<egantem>*, but they also raise the possibility that *praxim* itself – the very word that should solidify the transition – may not be sound. As for a form of *elegans*: whether it agrees with *fericulus* or with *praxim* (or whatever word *praxim* may conceal), such an additional characterization would more aptly support Trimalchio’s initial boast than the vague statement that “the dish was successful”. Non-correlative *tam* plus adjective, moreover, is a phraseological pattern that is highly characteristic not only of the informal speech of Trimalchio and his friends, but of Petronius in general (*tam* plus adjective 40×, *tam* plus adverb 8×).¹² The choice between *el<egans>* and *el<egantem>*, finally, hinges on what is done with *praxim*. In view of the above observations, I would tentatively suggest that *taxim* (or *taxin*, cf. *τάξις* “arrangement, order, disposition”) be read for *praxim*, in which case *el<egantem>* is the more natural choice.¹³ Thus *sicut ille fericulus tam el<egantem> habuit taxim* “just as that dish had such a fancy set-up” provides an excellent transition to Trimalchio’s

¹² In addition to the *tam elegantes strophas* already cited (above, n.9), note 60.7 *fericulum tam religioso apparatu perfusum*; see in general the excellent discussion of this stylistic feature by H. Petersmann, *Petrone urbane Prosa: Untersuchungen zu Sprache und Text* (Syntax) (Vienna 1977) 114–15.

¹³ For the word order pattern of the phrase *ille fericulus tam el<egantem> habuit taxim*, cf. 31.4 *ne in hoc quidem tam molesto tacebant officio*, 35.7 *ad tam viles accessimus cibos*, 114.3 *tam spissae repente tenebrae*, and further, without *tam*, Trimalchio’s strikingly parallel *porcus ille silvaticus lotam comederit glandem* (40.7), in which *lotam* and *el<egantem>* are virtual synonyms.

subsequent explication of what we might well call the platter's "elegant *τάξις*".¹⁴⁾

The radical appearance of the restoration *tam el<egantem>* is somewhat deceptive. In general, although the *Cena* is relatively free of the larger lacunae more typical of the outer portions of the text, it is clear that its sources were damaged in many parts, and that H itself (which dates from 1423) is an extremely sloppy production. H is in fact rife with demonstrable cases of missing words or parts of words. Although many such cases involve medial abbreviation or haplogical omission of a quite ordinary kind,¹⁵⁾ many other cases involve more complex omissions, including missing beginnings or endings of words: e.g. *lecticarius* 34.3 (HL) for <supel>*lecticarius*; *labrore* 52.4 for *labro* <ora>*re* <coepit>; *numquid* 68.6 for *num<quam' in>quit*; *peruapatur* 73.5 for <tem>*perabatur*; etc. Still, in most such cases, there is some phonetic or graphic similarity between at least some of the

¹⁴⁾ For *τάξις*, note also the meaning "list, register" well-attested in second-century A.D. papyri (see *LSJ* s.v.), which is perhaps appropriate to Trimalchio's itemized treatment here; cf. Smith's suggestion that Trimalchio "is perhaps imagined as turning it [the dish] round as he proceeds, as if it were a celestial sphere". Trimalchio's *taxim* (or *taxin*?), according to this proposal, would have nothing to do with the relatively rare Latin adverb *taxim* "lightly touching", which might well have been foreign to Trimalchio's speech-register in any case.

The presumed development of *t* > *p(r)*- in *taxim* (or *taxin*) > *praxim* is relatively easy, especially if the archetype used Greek letters for this word, given common confusion between Greek Π and T. As for the *-r* of *praxim*: a scribe with even a little knowledge of Greek, faced with a nonsensical *paxim*, might readily have corrected such a form to *praxim*. Alternatively, one or both features (i.e. *t* > *p*, intrusive *r*) may ultimately reflect characteristics of the archetype, or of the more immediate ancestors of H, about which little is known: for *t* > *p* cf. the well-known case of *Parentini* (59.4, H; *Tarentini* Scheffer and most modern editors), which has exercised much ingenuity (see e.g. Alessio, op. cit. 217–18, with further references); the intrusive *-r* (as in *praxim*, according to the analysis suggested here) is in fact a recurring feature of the *Cena*'s transmission, and one that has not yet, to my mind, been satisfactorily accounted for, although many explanations have been proposed for individual forms (*credrae* (38.1 H; *citrea* Jacobs); *culcitrās* (38.5 H) and *culcitra* (98.5 L); *frustrum* (35.3 H), *frustra* (59.7 H) and *frustrum* (66.5 H) vs. *frusta* (66.7 H), and L's *frustum* at 35.3; and possibly *scruta* [*scita*] (62.1 H, see Smith ad loc., as well as his general discussion, p. 221)). It is noteworthy that all cases involve *cr* or *tr*; conceivably, an original *taxim* might first have been read as *traxim*, and later corrected to (or misread as) *praxim*. The restriction of this feature to *t* and *c* supports Smith's contention that in such cases scribal errors (as opposed to late Latin phonology) are to blame.

¹⁵⁾ E.g. *cornices* 53.12 and 78.6, cf. *cornicines* 78.5; *atellam* 53.13 for *Atell<an>am*; *Publium* 55.5 (HL) for *Publium*; etc.

missing material and the part that is preserved (thus <supel>*lecticarius*, etc.); in the present case, the same may apply to *tam el<egantem>*, and indeed the similarity of *tam* and *-tem* may help to account for the omission, if this part of the word was not simply damaged at a relatively early stage.¹⁶⁾

¹⁶⁾ I am very grateful to my colleague George Goold for a number of helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.