

HOMER AND HERODAS – A SUGGESTION

Herodas, *Mimiambos* 6 is the enactment of a visit paid by Metro to Koritto. It begins with the words κάθησο, Μητροῖ. The natural translation is the seemingly abrupt, but no doubt politely spoken, “Sit down, Metro”. That view has recently been challenged on the grounds that κάθησο (contrast καθίζευ, in the similar opening, Theoc. 15.3) should mean “stay seated”, “don’t get up”¹). The implication of the challenge seems implausible, namely, that Metro, who has sat down uninvited, is rising at the advent of her hostess. The abuse of the slave is otherwise (says Grossi) inexplicable: in his view (p. 261) it occurs because the visitor was given an *ordinary* chair and not a δέφροζ.

2) Philologus 108 (1964) 48.

1) M. Grossi, Sull esordio del Mimo VI di Eronda, RhM 127 (1984), pp. 259–262. Cf. (not mentioned by Grossi) G. Mastromarco, Nota al mimo sesto di Eronda, *AFLB* 19–20 (1976–1977), pp. 101–103, id. *The Public of Herondas* (Amsterdam, 1984), p. 51, n. 50. Mastromarco suggests (as an answer to his problem, see n. 4) the substitution for κάθησο of either (a) a formula of greeting or (b) an invitation to Metro from Koritto to come in.

To these propositions one may answer:

(1) δίφρος is an ordinary (backless, four-legged) chair (Ar. *Eq.* 1164): it requires to be cushioned for the comfort of the aged (Pl. *R.* 328c) and for visitors (*Od.* 19.97, Theoc. 15.3). The quality and status of the chair are marked by either (a) an adjective (*Od.* 20.259, ἀεικέλιος, Plb. 6.53.9, ἐλεφάντινος) or (b) the context in which the word appears (Plut. *Caes.* 66.3, of Caesar's *sella* in the Senate House, Aristid. 49[25].19 Keil, of a latrine²).

(2) Apollod. *Com. fr.* 14 K (which Grossi cites) thus shows the slave's behaviour to be normal:

εἰς οἰκίαν ὅταν τις εἰσῆι φίλου
 ... ὑπαντήσας δέ τις
 δίφρον εὐθέως ἔθηκε, κἂν μηδεὶς λέγει
 μηδέν.

(3) abuse of slaves is a common-place in mime (cf. Herod. 4.41 ff., 8.1 ff., Theoc. 15.27 ff.³). It is motivated here by Koritto's having bid her friend "sit down" before noticing the absence of a chair⁴.

(4) κάθησο *can* mean "sit down", "take a seat": (a) Ar. *Ec.* 144, σὺ μὲν βάδιζε καὶ κάθησ', 169, ἄπερρε ... καὶ κάθησ' ἐντευθενί. The women have risen previously to speak⁵. (b) E. *IA* 627, ἔξῃς κάθησο δευρῶ μου ποδός, τέκνον.

(5) the "visiting-scene" is a typical set-passage in the mime (cf. Herod. 1 and Theoc. 15) with antecedents in the epic. Noteworthy (*mutatis mutandis*) for explaining it are:

- (a) *Il.* 6.354 (where Helen is visited by Hector)
 ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν εἴσελθε καὶ ἔξεο τῷδ' ἐπὶ δίφρῳ
- (b) Hom. *b. Cer.* 191 (where Metaneira is visited by Demeter)
 εἴξε δέ οἱ κλισμοῖο καὶ ἐδριάσθαι ἄνωγεν⁶.

The first words of (b) may have their inexplicit parallel – although no invitation to "take a seat" is offered there – in *Mimiambos* 1.6⁷), the last two (with [a]) explicate our passage.

2) Its distinction from the θρόνος and κλισμός as εὐτελέστερος (Ath. 5.192 f.) is based on the Odyssean passage. For other reference and illustrations of Greek δίφροι see G. M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London, 1966), pp. 38 ff., pls. 200–269. They do not support the interpretation placed on them by Grossi (p. 261, n. 6).

3) A precedent is Penelope's castigation of Melanthe (*Od.* 19.91 ff.).

4) This seems the easiest way round Mastromarco's problem (art. cit. p. 102) that Koritto is inviting Metro to sit down *before* ordering the slave to bring a chair.

5) The passages were (rightly) adduced by N. Terzaghi, *Eroda. I Mimiambi* (Torino, 1925), p. 177. Grossi in denying their obvious sense (p. 259) would seem to have misunderstood the action. Mastromarco's interpretation, "rimettiti a sedere" (cf. *Ach.* 59), is inapplicable to E. *IA* 627.

6) N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974) pp. 205, 207, 211 (following W. Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer*, Problematika, Heft 7, Berlin, 1933).

7) If *Metriche* is seen as being seated at the opening ("in einem einfachen Gemache mit Threissa bei der Wollarbeit", O. Crusius, *Die Mimiamben des Herondas*, 2. Aufl. von R. Herzog, Leipzig, 1926, p. 63). Cf. Mastromarco, *The Public of Herondas*, p. 24.

This note merely indicates a literature pedigree: it does not imply any reference by Herodas to the Mother and the Maiden⁸).

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