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Jests of Plautus, Cicero, and Trimalchio

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Had Lucan written *aque Indo* in place of the slight chiasmic variety *Indoque a*, there would have been no need to quote the line as a 'rare hyperbaton'; and much the same defence might be raised for Manilius l. 429, *discordes-vultu* (A) *permixtaque* (B) *corpora* (B) *partus* (A).

But to return to Horace—the importance of bearing in mind these types is seen clearly when we face such a 'derangement of epitaphs' as is provided by the commentators on *Epod.* 5. 19:

*iubet (Canidia) cupressos funebres
et uncta turpis ova ranae sanguine 19
plumamque nocturnae strigis . . .
flammis aduri Colchicis.*

Here the editors offer a bewildering variety of interpretations. The most favoured dogma appears to be that *ova* and *plumam* belong to *strigis*, and that we should translate by 'an owl's eggs and feathers smeared with blood of hideous toad.' Gow and Page have their doubts, and well they may; for if the conventional interpretation be cor-

rect, Latin order is a Chinese puzzle, and school-boys should not be permitted to spend valuable time on this exhilarating game. But if we follow the principles of Latin poetic order as demonstrated above, we shall arrive at conclusions less complimentary both to Horace and to Latin poetry.

The grouping *uncta turpis ova ranae* is simply that of type β^1 . I submit that these words *must* be read by a Roman as 'eggs anointed of foul toad,' and that *ranae* goes with both *ova* and *sanguine*, for it lies between them. We may, if we like, in the Horatian manner, supply *unctam sanguine* (*strigis*) with *plumam*.

Dr. A. S. Way, in his translation (Macmillan, 1898), says rightly:

'And the spawn a loathly toad had voided,
smeared with blood,
And the feather of a screech-owl, bird of
gloom.'

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JESTS OF PLAUTUS, CICERO, AND TRIMALCHIO.

Plaut. *rud.* 766-8.

L. ibo hercle aliquo quaeritatum ignem.
D. quid quom inueneris?

L. ignem magnum hic faciam. D. quin inhumanum exuras tibi?

L. immo hasce ambas hic in ara ut uiuas comburam, id uolo.

On *inhumanum*, which he marks as corrupt, Leo observes 'quid fuerit apud medicos quaerendum'; Professor Lindsay refers his readers to C.R. XVIII p. 402, where he cites the verse as evidence for the pronunciation of *gn* in Latin and says 'Clearly this strange reply is due to the resemblance of *ignem magnum* in pronunciation to *inhumanum*.'¹ That hardly diminishes any strangeness it may have; and I believe that the problem can be solved without

researches in the abyss of ancient medicine or hypotheses about the pronunciation of *gn*.

When one speaker announces his intention of going about to make a great fire, and the other thereupon enquires 'What for? to burn the churlishness (or something of that sort) out of you?' this insult at first sight appears to have two incongruous faults: it is both clumsy and mild. It does not seem to arise naturally, as a good insult should, from the previous conversation, and it is not nearly so offensive as a bad insult, unconfined by any requirements of neatness, might easily be. Why should the proceedings of Labrax suggest the notion of burning any element out of anybody? and why should the particular element be *inhumanum*?

¹ In the same note he cites for the same purpose Cic. *de rep.* IV 6 (Non. p. 24) 'censoris iudicium nihil fere damnato obfert nisi ruborem. itaque, ut omnis ea iudicatio uersatur tantummodo in nontne, animaduersio illa ignominia dicta est, and comments 'So Cicero pronounced *ignominia* more or less as "innominia." Non

sequitur: the only inference which can be drawn from Cicero's words is that he derived *ignominia*, quite rightly, from *nomen*: there is no indication that he made the mistake of deriving it from *in nomine*.

Because men once went about to make a great and famous fire which had for its purpose to burn out of a certain person the element of *humanity*; and that person's name was casually and inadvertently mentioned by Labrax when he made use of the interjection *hercle*. Minuc. *Oct.* 22 7 'Hercules, ut hominem exuat, Oetaeis ignibus concrematur', Ouid. *met.* IX 250-3 (Jove is the speaker) 'omnia qui uicit, uincet, quos cernitis, ignes | nec nisi materna Vulcanum parte potentem | sentiet: aeternum est, a me quod traxit, et expers | atque immune necis nullaque domabile flamma', 262-5 'interea, quodcumque fuit populabile flammae, | Mulciber abstulerat, nec cognoscenda remansit | Herculis effigies, nec quicquam ab imagine ductum | matris habet tantumque Iouis uestigia seruat', Sen. *H.O.* 1966-8 (Hercules to Alcmena) 'quidquid in nobis tui | mortale fuerat, ignis euictus tulit: | paterna caelo, pars data est flammis tua.' Fire was used with the same intent though not with the same effect by Thetis on Achilles, Apollod. *bibl.* III 171 ὥς δὲ ἐγέννησε Θέτις ἐκ Πηλέως βρέφος, ἀθάνατον θέλουσα ποιῆσαι τοῦτο, κρύφα Πηλέως εἰς τὸ πῦρ ἐγκρύβουσα τῆς νυκτὸς ἔφθειρεν ὃ ἦν αὐτῷ θνητὸν πατρῶον, Apoll. *Rhod.* IV 869 sq. ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτέας αἰεὶ περὶ σάρκας ἔδαιεν | νύκτα διὰ μέσσην φλογμῷ πυρός, and by Demeter on Demophoon or Triptolemus, Apollod. *bibl.* I 31 βουλομένη δὲ αὐτὸ ἀθάνατον ποιῆσαι τὰς νύκτας εἰς πῦρ κατετίθει τὸ βρέφος καὶ περιῆρει τὰς θνητὰς σάρκας αὐτοῦ, Ouid. *fast.* IV 553 sq. 'inque foco corpus pueri uiuente fauilla | obruit, humanum purget ut ignis onus'. Labrax therefore may be making a bonfire with a view to such self-improvement as the nature of his case allows. Burning him alive will not indeed turn him into a god, but it may perhaps turn him into a human being.

Both interlocutors are at home in mythology: Daemones at 604 recalls that swallows are the descendants of Philomela; Labrax at 509 is expected to know who Tereus and Thyestes were, and with the life of Hercules he seems to have been thoroughly familiar, for we owe to him our knowledge of a

detail recorded by no other authority, 489 sq.:

edepol, Libertas, lepida es, quae numquam
pedem
uoluisti in nauem cum Hercule una imponere.

Macrob. *Saturn.* II 3 16 Cicero . . . cum Piso gener mollius incederet, filia autem concitatus, ait filiae 'ambula tamquam uir', <at genero 'ambula tamquam femina'>. et cum M. Lepidus in senatu dixisset patribus conscriptis <'ego non tanti fecissem simile factum'>, Tullius ait 'ego non tanti fecissem ὁμοίόπτωτον'.

These supplements of the defective text are those of early editions, and they are approved by the latest editor Eyssenhardt. The second, though manifestly quite uncertain, is not manifestly false; for *fecissem . . . factum* would seem to come within Quintilian's definition of ὁμοίόπτωτον *inst.* IX 3 78, though *ib.* 80 he refers 'non minus *cederet* quam *cessit*' to a distinct and different figure 'qua nomina mutatis casibus repetuntur'. But it is so inconspicuous and inoffensive a specimen of its class that it can hardly have elicited Cicero's raillery; and from the emphasis of 'patribus conscriptis' following upon 'in senatu' I should infer that Lepidus had slipped into some expression unfit for the ears of his audience, like that cited in *ad fam.* IX 22 2 'memini in senatu disertum consulare ita eloqui, "hanc culpam maiorem an illam dicam?" potuit opusculum?' This however is likewise uncertain: about the first of the two witticisms there should be no similar doubt. The supplement above given is wrong, and Cicero's own words can be recovered.

Piso had a mincing gait and Tullia a rapid stride: Cicero, displeased with these peculiarities, is supposed to say to his daughter 'walk like a man' and to his son-in-law 'walk like a woman'. That is what they did already and what he wished to break them of doing; and the form of *εἰπωvελα* which consists in saying the opposite of what one means is much too common and simple to constitute a pleasantry or to win a place among the *dicta Ciceronis*. The contrast between the pair suggested to

their sprightly relative a whimsical way of conveying his reproof. When he said to his daughter 'ambula tamquam uir', what he meant was 'walk like *your husband*'. And what he said to his son-in-law was 'ambula tamquam *uxor*'.

Petron. 41 6-8 dum haec loquimur, puer speciosus, uitibus hederisque redimitus, modo Bromium, interdum Lyaeum Euhiumque confessus, calathisco uuas circumtulit et poemata domini sui acutissima uoce traduxit. ad quem sonum conuersus Trimalchio 'Dionyse' inquit 'LIBER esto'. puer detraxit pilleum apro capitique suo imposuit. tum Trimalchio rursus adiecit: 'non negabitis me' inquit 'habere LIBERVM patrem'. laudauimus dictum Trimalchionis et circumeuntem puerum sane perbasiamus.

I print this passage as Trimalchio would have wished it to be read. Our current texts, with their 'liber esto' and 'Liberum patrem', would show him that half his labour had been lost and half his wit wasted; and if he could consult the translators and commentators he would be grievously disappointed with most of them and thoroughly satisfied with none.

It is likely that many readers have understood the pun in 'me habere LIBERVM patrem', and it is not impossible that many translators have done so; but only two or three of them give proof that they understand it, and a larger number give proof that they do not. Trimalchio is happier dead than if he had lived to see such interpretations as 'dass Bacchus mein Sohn sey', 'the god of liberation is my father', 'I have freed him who frees us from care', 'on ne peut pas nier qu'à présent Bacchus ne dépende

de moi (iocus inter Liberum Patrem et seruum liberum)'. But as to 'LIBER esto', few even suspect that it contains a pun; few of those who suspect it can explain what the pun is; and nobody, not even W. K. Kelly, explains it in terms which would assure Trimalchio that he had not been casting pearls before swine.

There comes in a boy, Dionysus by name, as the sequel tells us, wearing a wreath of vine and ivy, handing round grapes, and declaring himself now Bromius, now Lyaeus, now Euhius. 'Dionysus', says Trimalchio, 'LIBER esto': that is, assume the character of the indigenous wine-god; be, not Bromius nor Lyaeus nor Euhius, but our Italian Liber. The boy, instructed beforehand, feigns to take the proper name for an adjective and to recognise the formula of manumission; he snatches the cap of liberty from the head of the lately enfranchised boar and claps it on his own. By this pun in action he has performed his master's bidding to the letter: LIBER est, and by logical consequence also *pater*: Seru. *georg.* II 4 '*pater* licet generale sit omnium deorum, tamen proprie Libero semper cohaeret, nam Liber pater uocatur'. Trimalchio's way is now clear to his next pun, 'non negabitis me habere LIBERVM patrem': in the words' first sense as they fall on the ear, 'father Liber is of my household',—and there stands Dionysus with his cap on to prove it; in their after-meaning, as they reach the mind, 'I am a freeman's son',—false within the knowledge of the whole company, and yet not deniable.

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TWO NOTES ON VIRGIL AND HORACE.

Aen. I. 462:

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

The key to the exact meaning of this famous verse, in the current interpretations of which *rerum* seems to mean anything or nothing, is to be

found in the observation that the genitive of *mortalia* is *mortalium rerum*. The two clauses are arrows shot at the same mark, in the manner familiar to us in the Psalter; not common in Latin poetry, yet not to be disallowed in any literature. They are: (1) *sunt lacrimae*