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Cato De Agricultura I

J. C. Howe

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The use of $\cup - \cup$ (in *Apú-*) to represent an anapaest presents no difficulty in Plautus. It is curious that a few lines further on we have the word *Apulus* ($-\cup\cup$), which reminds one of the passage in Horace which has been emended by reading with the best MSS. *Pulliae* for *Apuliae* (*Od.* III. 4. 10)—a reading which, well supported as it is, is aesthetically unattractive to me, even if we read *Nutricis* for *Altricis*; the jingle of *Apulo* and *Pulliae* is displeasing.

E. A. SONNENSCHNEIN.

OBSUTUM MAENAE CAPUT.

Ovid, *Fasti* 2. 571-582, describes the spells which are worked on the day of Feralia by an old hag to counteract the spirits of the dead, 'one of a thousand savage spells,' as is the view of Fowler, *Roman Fest.* 310. Amongst other things she takes the fish, *maena*, covers its head with pitch, sews its mouth up with a needle of brass and roasts it on the fire, pouring wine over it: the rest of the wine she herself or her companions drink off.¹

The cathartic character of the black pitch, the ritual and sepulchral character of the bronze are well known, but to the sewing up of the mouth we have an excellent parallel in the customs of the Givari in South America: they prepare the heads of fallen enemies, drying them and reducing them in size; then, after a very impressive ceremony, they sew up the mouth, 'that they may not return the insults offered upon them by the victors'; then they use them as trophies or even (in spite of the closed mouths) as oracles, see Colini, *Osservazioni etnogr. sui Givari (Atti d. acc. dei Lincei XI. 1883, 26)*. The Romans of imperial times really did know this barbarous method of punishing dead enemies to render their wrath harmless, cp. Sen. *ep.* 47, 4 (*servi*) *quorum os non consuebatur*, i.e. 'slaves who are allowed to speak freely with their husbands.' This is, so far as I know, the only testimony for such a usage among Romans; and if the colloquial phrase does not refer to customs of barbarian peoples, known to the Romans of the time of Nero (cp. the means of punishment of the Germans after the victory of Arminius, Flor. IV. 12=II. 30: *aliis oculos, aliis manus amputabant, uni os obsutum, rescisa prius lingua, quam in manu tenens barbarus 'tandem, ait, vipera sibilare destisti'*), it certainly may refer to the ritual of the Feralia, mentioned by Ovid. Neither Gell. VII. (VI.) 4, where the Carthaginians sew up the eyebrows of Regulus (*sursum ac deorsum diductas insuebant*), nor Verg. *georg.* IV. 301 (where modern editors read *obstruitur*, not *obsuitur*), is relevant in this connexion.

In Ovid the sacrifice of the *maena* is a holocaust, and the deity, to whom the whole ritual applies, is the late abstraction *Dea Tacita* or *Muta*, i.e. the $\Sigma\eta\eta$ (Pap. Par. mag. 557 and Stob. *Ecl.* p. 393, 15, where Phobos, *Sige*, Hypnos and Mneme are the daughters of

Selene) of Hellenistic times, cp. the hero Hesychos. As to the silence of the ghosts, see Headlam, *Class. Rev.* 1902, 55; and as to the tying up of the mouth to prevent the ghost from escaping, see J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*³, *Taboo* 31 and 33, *Spirits of the Corn* II. 267. We know a similar practice from Old Norse mythology: the mouth of Loki was pierced by the dwarfs. Perhaps this explanation may hold good for the tying up of the jaws of the corpses with the Greeks (Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict.* 3. 3332) and for the coin of Charon placed on the tongue of the dead.

S. EITREM.

CATO DE AGRICULTURA I.

Est interdum praestare mercaturis rem quae-rere, nisi tam periculosum sit, et item fenerari si tam honestum sit.

So Keil. As it stands, the first clause can only be construed, 'It is possible that seeking a living by trade may sometimes be preferable, if it were not so risky, etc.,' a hispid awkwardness which one hesitates to attribute even to this author. In the sections which follow, the thoughts worked out are—(i) the profession of usurer is to be ruled out in any case, because our ancestors regarded usurers as twice as wicked as thieves; (ii) we are left with commerce and husbandry from which to choose our ideal: both are praiseworthy, but the former is to some extent discounted by the element of hazard from which it is inseparable, though both evoke energy and demand respect. The clumsiness of style in the first clause is due to the two juxtaposed infinitives, and those who are content to heap on to the shoulders of our author those solecisms at which they themselves can feel no pang, will adopt the sound principles of conservative criticism, and do nothing here. Smooth sense is given, however, by the alteration of *praestare* to *praestans*: merchants can claim a glamour for their calling, and usurers even (were theirs not illegal) might do the same; but (§ 4: *at ex agricolis et viri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur, maximeque pius quaestus stabilissimusque consequitur minimeque invidiosus, minimeque male cogitantes sunt qui in eo studio occupati sunt.*) husbandry is a calling both honourable and safe.

J. C. HOWE.

¹ The whole practice aims at this effect, v. 581: *hostiles linguas inimicaque vinximus ora.*