

peccasse. Paratus miles arma non habui." The context leaves no doubt that this is a letter in which Encolpius apologizes to Circe for having failed her as a lover. The implication of the first two sentences is, accordingly, clear: "I confess that I have often sinned, for I am both human and still young. Never, however, before today have I erred grievously (by comparison with insulting you)." At this point, on the assumption that Encolpius goes on to list actual crimes from his past, his train of thought becomes convoluted: "You have the accused (Encolpius accused by Circe of insulting her) confessing (to having indeed insulted her). Whatever you might command (as punishment for the insult), I deserve (anyway, that is, apart from the insult on the grounds of my past crimes). I have committed treason, murder, sacrilege. Devise punishment for these crimes. I will co-operate. Remember this one thing (to mitigate the punishments you devise for my past crimes): it was not I but my instruments that sinned (in insulting you today)."

The assumption that Encolpius uses these crimes as metaphors or euphemisms for his real crime yields a more straightforward argument. "Whatever you command, I deserve (because of the gravity of my insult to you). I have (in a figurative sense, in terms of

the gravity of the deed) committed treason, murder, sacrilege. Remember this one thing: it was not I but my instruments that sinned (in figuratively committing treason, etc.). A ready soldier (in a figurative sense), I lacked weapons." This interpretation does not necessarily imply that Encolpius has not committed any of the crimes that he mentions. Consequently, that in 133 he apparently admits stealing from a temple of Priapus does not exclude a figurative interpretation of *violavi templum* in 130.

Finally, it is noteworthy that in the passage just mentioned (133. 3) Encolpius prefaces a prayer to Priapus for forgiveness with the words, *non sanguine tristi | perfusus venio*. This is positive, if not conclusive, evidence that Encolpius had not committed murder at that point in the narrative.

In summary, there is no certain indication that the missing portions of the *Satyricon* portrayed Encolpius committing murder. There is one positive indication to the contrary. Accordingly, one does not seem to be justified in including homicide on the part of Encolpius in reconstructing the missing episodes of the *Satyricon*.

DAVID D. MULROY

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

#### FOSSA IN CATULLUS' SIMILE OF THE CUT TREE (17. 18–19)

Insulsissimus est homo, nec sapit pueri instar  
bimuli tremula patris dormientis in ulna.  
cui cum sit uiridissimo nupta flore puella  
et puella tenellulo delicatior haedo,  
adseruanda nigerrimis diligentius uuis,  
ludere hanc sinit ut lubet, nec pili facit uni,  
nec se subleuat ex sua parte, sed *uelut alnus*  
*in fossa Liguri iacet supernata securi,*  
tantundem omnia sentiens quam si nulla sit usquam  
[Cat. 17. 12–20].

In a recent article on Catullus 17,<sup>1</sup> H. Akbar Khan advances a convincing explication of this striking simile. The key to its interpretation and function, he points out (pp. 91–92), is its dominant sexual imagery. It is clear that Catul-

lus is describing a completely indifferent, sexually inert husband (*nec se subleuat* [18]). The poet's choice of imagery—a cut tree lying in a *fossa*—is suited perfectly to his task. Khan's basic interpretation of the simile is undoubtedly correct: the (cut) tree represents the husband's (useless) phallus.<sup>2</sup> His remarks on the symbolic meaning of *fossa* (pp. 91–92), however, are unduly vague:

Furthermore, the word *fossa* has distinct sexual overtones. It is connected with *fodere*, and when it occurs in an erotic context would be based on the widespread conception of the woman as a field to be ploughed by the man. Also, it seems to have

1. H. Akbar Khan, "Image and Symbol in Catullus 17," *CP*, LXIV (1969), 88–97.

2. As Khan points out (*op. cit.*, p. 91), this symbolism is

well attested in Latin literature: cf. *Ov. Am.* 3. 7. 15, *Plaut. Truc.* 674, and *Cic. Pis.* 9. 19.

been a standard formula in the Greek marriage for the bride's father to hand over his daughter to the bridegroom *ep' arotōi gnēsion paidōn*, "to be ploughed and made to produce true offspring."

I should admit that *fossa* may be connected ultimately with the idea of plowing and its very common sexual connotations.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there is little need to go so far afield when the word *fossa* itself appears elsewhere as a synonym for *cunus*: "nunc misella landicae / uix posse iurat ambulare prae fossis" (*Priap.* 78. 5–6) and "tibi haec paratur, ut tuum ter aut quater / uoret profunda fossa lubricum caput" (*Priap.* 83. 31–32).

Probably this sort of symbolism (in Latin, *fossa* = *cunus*) is deeply rooted in human consciousness; it is paralleled by certain

primitive fertility rituals in which a pit is dug in the earth in order to be fertilized symbolically with a spear as though it were the female genitalia.<sup>4</sup> In any event, we have seen that the metaphorical use of tree (= phallus) and *fossa* (= *cunus*) is well attested in ancient poetry. The presence of these images in Catullus 17. 18–19 clearly suggests that the function of the simile is to reinforce vividly the sexual inertia of the indifferent husband whom the poet ridicules. To Catullus the hopeless situation of so languid a man being married to a desirable woman is summed up in the striking image "alnus / in fossa Liguri iacet supernata securi."

JUSTIN GLENN

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

3. For examples of this metaphorical use of plowing Khan (*op. cit.*, p. 92, n. 13) cites P. J. Enk, *Truculentus*, II (Leyden, 1953), note to line 148 on p. 46. A fuller list of examples may be found in A. Dieterich, *Mutter Erde*<sup>3</sup> (Berlin,

1925), pp. 47–48, nn. 1–2. To Enk's and Dieterich's passages add Lucr. 4. 1272–73.

4. See C. G. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*<sup>2</sup> (Princeton, 1969), pp. 42–43.

#### ARISTOPHANES *VESPAE* 68–69: AN UNNOTICED OBSCENITY

\*Ἔστιν γὰρ ἡμῖν δεσπότης, ἑκείνοσι  
ἄνω καθεύδων, ὁ μέγας, οὐπὶ τοῦ τέγους.

Thus reads the text of Coulon (*Aristophane*, II [Paris, 1948], 20). The problem is ὁ μέγας. Translators and commentators innocently assume that Bdelycleon is a tall man. Several examples suffice: "Nous avons un maître, celui-là qui dort là-haut, le grand qui est sur le toit" (van Daele). "This is our master yonder, asleep upstairs—the tall man—the man on the roof" (Starkie *ad Vesp.* 67). "So look—that's our master there—asleep / top-side—the big fellow—the one up on the roof" (Parker).

The difficulty is clear. Xanthias on stage points up to Bdelycleon, who is asleep on the episcenium. One does not identify a man reclining above one's head by drawing atten-

tion to his *height*; and Bdelycleon is explicitly not standing (*καθεύδων*). Such a couplet furthermore lacks its joke. The reference rather is to the large phallus of the comic actor, easily visible to the audience, silhouetted against the sky. For the exaggerated comic phallus see Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup>, revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968), pp. 220–23. ὁ μέγας, therefore, means *vir bene mutoniatus*. For μέγας in this sense compare *Nubes* 549, *Aves* 1733, and Sappho, Frag. 111. 6 L.-P. with the exegesis of G. Kirk, *CQ*, NS XIII (1963), 51–52, and H. Lloyd-Jones, *CQ*, NS XVII (1967), 168.

WILLIAM M. CALDER III

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY