

AETNA 49

Pelion Ossa creat summus premit Ossan Olympus

'A few months ago nothing was farther from my thoughts than this poem: towards the end of last October I had the pleasure of collating for Professor Ribbeck a manuscript of the *Culex* in our public library; and on finishing it I looked through the *Aetna* which came after . . .' So wrote H. A. J. Munro in 1867 by way of introducing his edition of the poem (p. 25); and it was by a happy coincidence that the conjecture I here advance came to me while 'I looked through the *Aetna*' in that same Cambridge manuscript, University Library Kk.V.34 of the tenth century.

I give the text above as it is given by all known manuscripts of the poem (apart of course from the capitalization), and no context is needed: the theme is the piling of Olympus on Ossa on Pelion. The first verb *creat* is manifestly wrong, and conjectures abound: see the second major contribution by a Cambridge scholar to the emendation of the *Aetna*, the edition by F. R. D. Goodyear (Cambridge, 1965) with his note ad loc. Munro favoured Jacob's conjecture *grauat*, Goodyear (both in the *ed. maior* and in the *OCT* of the *Appendix Vergiliana* [Oxford, 1966]) *premit*, arrived at independently by Clausen and Kenney. Most of the other conjectures propounded follow the same line, of substituting for *creat* another verb. In the two which take a different line, Brakman's *arte* and Goodyear's own *supra et*, I 'find nothing to commend' (Goodyear's phrase, p. 112²).

Were *grauat* or *premit* given by any or all of the manuscripts, I should not feel any inclination to intervene, for neither conjecture is in any way objectionable in itself; about stylistic appropriateness nothing can be said, since the poem is anonymous and very corrupt. But *grauat* and *premit* remain conjectures, when all is said and done, and neither explains how on earth *creat* got into the text. *grauat* was no doubt created by playing with letters (*G* looking like *C* and so forth); *premit* assumes a jump by a scribe. I too assume a jump by a scribe, and propose for consideration

Pelion Ossa imum, summus premit Ossan Olympus.

What I imagine to have happened is that *imum* was passed over by a copyist eager to reach *summus* = *s-iimmu-s*. For the loss of a word within a line, cf. 4, where the correct *dexter uenias mihi carminis auctor* has become in some manuscripts *dexter mihi carminis auctor Apollo* via the unaccountable omission of *uenias*. More complex interpolation to mend an initial loss is in evidence at 161 where *G*'s correct *certo tibi lumine res est* is corrupted to *tibi lumine certaue retro* by all the rest.

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A CONTENTIOUS MATTER: PETRONIUS 11.2–4

risu itaque plausuque cellulam implevit, opertum me amiculo evolvit et 'quid agebas' inquit 'frater sanctissime? quid? †verti† contubernium facis?' nec se solum intra verba continuit, sed lorum de pera solvit et me coepit non perfunctorie verberare, adiectis etiam petulantibus dictis: 'sic dividere cum fratre nolito.'

This passage describes Ascylos' reaction on discovering Encolpius and the boy Giton joined in a passionate embrace. The text here is that of Müller (Teubner, 1995). In addressing the difficulty of the well-attested *verticontubernium* most editors adopt the unparalleled *vesticontubernium*, written in a later hand in the margin of the codex