

THE PIG AND THE SEA-HARE

[OV.] Hal. 132 *lolligo durique sues sinuosaque caris*

Surrounded as it stands by a mollusc (*lolligo*) and a crustacean (*caris*), there seems to be no point in trying to find for *sues* a suitable fish in the

scientific sense of the word. Hence one is bound to take issue with every approach so far¹⁾ and explore new avenues in quest of a more cogent identification.

It strikes me that *sues* here may well be identical with the animal always, as far as my scholarship extends, referred to by Latin authorities as *lepus (marinus)*. With regard to the linguistic possibility of the name „pig“ being given to this mollusc, surely I shall not be accused of chauvinism if I bring forward Galician *porco*²⁾: as a matter of fact it is the only instance known to me. This of course is not strong enough evidence to show that the ancients themselves took advantage of such a possibility as well. Nevertheless, a hint in favour might be sought in Pliny's description³⁾ of the item as *offa informis*, presumably because of its fatness, an external trait which provides a point of resemblance with the pig⁴⁾, rather than in a remark by Apuleius involving details of internal anatomy⁵⁾.

If *sus* = *lepus* is right, the twofold conclusion offers itself that: (i) *durique* should in all probability be emended to *dirique*⁶⁾, in view of the reputation of being extremely poisonous that the sea-hare had in antiquity⁷⁾; and (ii), whatever the origin of the unanimous reading in the MSS, *lepores* at v. 126 proves untenable, for in addition to the ichthyological implausibility as set out by De Saint-Denis⁸⁾ no reason appears for the repetition of one and the same thing under two names.

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1) Cf. A. C. Andrews, "Greek and Latin Mouse-fishes and Pig-fishes", *TAPhA* 79, 1948, 238 and 253; F. Capponi, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Halieuticon II*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1972, 571-574.

2) One of many names for a kind of sea-hare in our language-more accurately, and pedantically, *Aplysia punctata* Cuv. (cf. M. C. Ríos Panisse, *Nomenclatura de la flora y fauna maritimas de Galicia. I Invertebrados y peces* [Verba. Anuario Gallego de Filología, Anejo 7], Universidad de Santiago de Compostela 1977, 91).

3) *Nat.* 9. 155 „Nec uenena cessant dira, ut in lepore marino... in nostro (*sc.* mari) offa informis, colore tantum lepori similis”.

4) Cf. R. Strömberg, *Studien zur Etymologie und Bildung der griechischen Fischnamen* (Acta Universitatis Gotoburgensis, 49:2), Göteborg 1943, 101.

5) *Apol.* 40 "...pisciculum, quem uos leporem marinum nominatis... solus ille... cum sit cetera exossis, duodecim numero ossa ad similitudinem talorum suillorum in uentre eius conexa et catenata sunt”.

6) As early as C. Gesner's edition (Tiguri 1556), but for reasons other than mine.

7) Cf. D'A. W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Fishes*, London 1947, 142-143.

8) See *Commentaire* in his edition *Ovide, Halieutiques*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1975, *ad loc.*