TWO NOTES ON APULEIUS

met. 1,9,1–2

amatorem suum, quod in aliam temerasset, unico verbo mutavit in feram castorem, quod ea bestia captivitatis metuens ab insequentibus se praecisione genitalium liberat.

Socrates describes the metamorphoses with which Meroe punishes wayward lovers. The combination feram castorem is puzzling, both because it offers an unusual adjectival use of fera,1 and because the addition of feram gives no extra information about the beaver, since even without it we would expect the beaver to be a wild animal; it is telling that many translators omit feram. Heinsius deleted feram as a gloss,2 a suggestion that modern editions might mention; it could indeed be a comment on castorem, although there is, in the context, small chance of confusion with the divine Castor. Perhaps, instead, we should see castorem as the gloss, intruding on an original feram Ponticam. Compare Nux 166 Pontice castor; Tert. adv. Marc. 1,1 p. 291,23 (Marcion as a Pontic theologian is compared to the beaver); Isid. orig. 12,2,21 castores a castrando dicti sunt. . . ipsi sunt et fibri, qui etiam Pontici canes vocantur.

met. 1,12,2

infimum deiectus obliquo aspectu quid rei sit . . . opprior.

Aristomenes has been tipped on the floor at the entry of the witches, with the overturned bed on top of him. Even if infimum, ‘lowermost’, were attested as an adverb,3 it would still be a bizarre way of saying ‘thrown to the floor’; the same objection applies to (in) infimum. The inn, though evidently not of the highest quality, is not described in a manner to justify Helm’s in fimum. A better suggestion is Shackleton Bailey’s in humum.4 Alternatively, try in pronum, as at Sen. Thy. 728 cervice caesa corpus in pronum ruit; this fits nicely with the description (obliquo aspectu and, in 1,12,1, de Aristomene testudo factus) and is not too far from the transmitted reading, especially if the sign for pro were mistaken for an fi ligature.5

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1) For what it is worth, the passage is the only instance in the TLL article fera under the subheading ‘additur ad certum nomen animalis’ (VI 1, p. 607,52–3). It is not reasonable to suppose that feram is an adjective, feminine as appropriate to a castrated animal (cf. for instance Catullus 63,8 with Fordyce ad loc.); this unattractively anticipates both the sequence of events and the point of the sentence. Ou-dendorp’s conjecture, ferum, is subject to the second objection given above.
2) At Ov. am. 1,8,19 ‘vide, ne tō feram ex Glossa irepserit’.
3) TLL VII 1, p. 1397,6 gives only this passage as a possible example.
4) D. R. Shackleton Bailey, On Apuleius’ Metamorphoses, RhM 131, 1988, 167; Drs. W. Keulen points out to me that the spelling infumum could provide an easy stepping stone for the corruption.
5) W. M. Lindsay, An Introduction to Latin Textual Emendation, London 1896, 86, notes that early miniscule ligatures give ‘si and fi the look of p’.