

# VEGETABLES AND BALD HEADS (PETR. SAT. 109.10.3-4)\*

At *Satyrica* 109.9-10 Eumolpus recites some verses poking fun at the plight of his two friends, Encolpius and Giton, whose heads have been completely shaved in the futile attempt to pass them off as fugitive slaves having been so punished, thus enabling them to escape recognition by Lichas and Tryphaena. Three elegiac couplets are followed by seven hendecasyllables. Here I mean to concentrate on a single problem, posed by an expression in the hendecasyllables. Addressing presumably Giton in the second person singular, Eumolpus tells him: "poor head, you gleamed with hair, / than sun and moon more fair; / bronze-bald, as tuber round / rain-born in garden ground, / now mocking girls you dread"<sup>1</sup>. I purposely adopted this translation by Branham and Kinney<sup>2</sup>, though I do not agree with the reference to rain, because it preserves the exact equivalent of the Latin word around which our problem revolves, namely *tuber*. Giton's bald head is called smoother than polished bronze or than a vegetable, referred to as *tuber*, which is round, grows in a vegetable garden, and is generated by water: *levior aere vel rotundo / horti tubere, quod creavit unda* (vv. 3-4).

Opinions as to the nature of this vegetable have varied and may fall into three categories. By far the greatest number of interpreters take this *tuber* to be some sort of mushroom growing on the surface of the earth. This interpretation also seems to be the oldest: it was first proposed by Weitz, who – if we can trust Burman – took the word to indicate a "genus fungorum"<sup>3</sup>. A survey of some interpreters of Petronius spanning the whole of the twentieth century reveals its wide popularity. I have found it in all languages: six times in Italian<sup>4</sup>, three times in German<sup>5</sup>, twice in English<sup>6</sup>, and once in French<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Petr. sat. 109.10.1-5 *infelix, modo crinibus nitebas / Phoebus pulchrior et sorore Phoebi. / at nunc levior aere vel rotundo / horti tubere, quod creavit unda, / ridentes fugis et times puellas.*

<sup>2</sup> Branham-Kinney 1996, 106

<sup>3</sup> Burman I, 1743, 653.

<sup>4</sup> Cesareo-Terzaghi 1950, 101; Ciaffi 1967<sup>2</sup>, 275; Canali 1990, 189; Aragosti 1995, 415; Reverdito 1995, 191; Scarsi 1996, 167.

<sup>5</sup> Busche 1911, 456; Stubbe 1933, 174; Ehlers, in Müller-Ehlers 1983<sup>3</sup>, 239.

<sup>6</sup> Heseltine 1913, 227; Walsh 1996, 100.

<sup>7</sup> Ernout 1922, 119.

Though widespread, however, this interpretation lacks reliable linguistic support. As far as I know, *tuber* is never used in Latin to mean a surface mushroom, and, though mushrooms do sometimes grow in gardens, they can hardly be referred to by the simple expression *horti tuber*, which seems more appropriate for a plant typically found in vegetable gardens. Only in the fantastic world of a billionaire like Trimalchio can one fancy to order boletus seeds from India and start growing them in one's garden<sup>8</sup>. But of course Trimalchio is also credited with growing a tropical crop like pepper in his land in Italy, and even with having hen's milk at home<sup>9</sup>. The only reason I can think of for the popularity of this interpretation is that one expects the smooth, shining bald head to be compared with something clearly visible, whereas the only viable alternative seemed to be taking *tuber* to mean something hidden underground.

In fact, this latter interpretation was proposed by Burman<sup>10</sup>, who referred to a well-known passage which Pliny the Elder devotes to a detailed description of truffles<sup>11</sup>, saying, among other things, that they are completely buried in the earth<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps for the reason just stated, Burman's suggestion did not enjoy particular success. Only recently it was taken up by Courtney<sup>13</sup> and Connors<sup>14</sup>. Probably also Branham and Kinney refer to a truffle in their translation previously quoted, when they use the English term "tuber" to render Petronius' identical word. There would indeed be a strong argument in favor of this interpretation, though none of its advocates, as far as I know, has had recourse to it. We may remember that in the *Cena Trimalchionis* Hermeros disparagingly calls Giton a *cepa cirrata*, a "curly onion"<sup>15</sup>. The onion has, in fact, stringy roots which resemble hair. Having now lost his hair, Giton could indeed be aptly compared to a truffle, which, as Pliny says, has no fibers or filaments – but he uses a word, *capillamenta*, which can easily remind of hair<sup>16</sup>.

However, the contrary arguments are more obvious and weightier: truffles cannot of course be grown in vegetable gardens, as Pliny remarks in the

<sup>8</sup> That's what Hermeros tells Encolpius: Petr. 38.4 *ecce intra hos dies scripsit, ut illi ex India semen boletorum mitteretur*.

<sup>9</sup> Petr. 38.1 *omnia domi nascuntur: lana, citrea, piper; lacte gallinaceum si quaesieris, invenies*.

<sup>10</sup> Burman I, 1743, 653.

<sup>11</sup> Plin. *NH* 19.33-37.

<sup>12</sup> Plin. 19.33 *tubera haec vocantur undique terra circumdata*.

<sup>13</sup> Courtney 1991, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Connors 1998, 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> Petr. 58.2.

<sup>16</sup> Plin. *NH* 19.33 *nullisque fibris nixa aut saltem capillamentis*.

same context<sup>17</sup>, and are anything but as smooth as a bald head or the other object the latter is compared to, namely polished metal<sup>18</sup>. Burman saw in the mention of *unda*, water, a support to his interpretation, as Pliny says that truffles grow in the season of thunderstorms and also refers to a belief according to which their spores are disseminated by floods<sup>19</sup>; and Courtney, as well as Branham and Kinney, take Petronius' *unda* to refer to rain, as do many of the scholars who take the *tuber* to be a surface mushroom. However, *unda* can hardly be the equivalent of *imber*, rain, as even Courtney cannot help admitting<sup>20</sup>. This is so true that the correction of *unda* to *umor* (or *umbra*) has been proposed<sup>21</sup>. As a matter of fact, in the few cases when *unda* is referred to rain it is used in the plural and is accompanied by some unequivocal determination<sup>22</sup>; not to mention that Pliny states that truffles prefer dry and sandy soil<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, in my opinion, the interpretation of the *rotundum horti tuber* as a truffle does not stand a close examination either.

Before going on, I would like to attach a brief catch to the file of this Pliny-based interpretation of the *tuber*. It is somewhat surprising that no one, as far as I know, has recalled another passage in which Pliny uses exactly the same *iunctura* found in our Petronian passage. True, when he writes about truffles he uses the verb *globare*<sup>24</sup>, to suggest a round shape, but it is only when treating another plant, namely the birthwort, or *aristolochia*, that he mentions *tubera rotunda* attached to the roots<sup>25</sup>.

The *tubera* of the birthwort, of course, are also subterranean, like the truffle, and can hardly help us identify Petronius' *horti tuber*. But does the noun always refer to something growing underground? True, sometimes just the simple word *tuber* is used to indicate an underground vegetable, but often, when this is the case, it is accompanied by the genitive *terrae*. *Terrae tu-*

<sup>17</sup> Plin. NH 19.35 *quod certum est, ex his erunt, quae nascantur et seri non possint*.

<sup>18</sup> These arguments are effectively exploited by Scarcia 1964, 116 n. 64; cp. also Sommariva 1985, 47.

<sup>19</sup> Plin. NH 19.37 *cum fuerint imbres autumnales ac tonitrua crebra, tunc nasci... Mytilenis negant nasci nisi exundatione fluminum invecto semine*; cf. Juven. 5.116-118 *tradentur tubera, si ver / tunc erit et facient optata tonitrua cenas / maiores*.

<sup>20</sup> Courtney 1991, 29: "this *unda* on its own could only mean ground-water".

<sup>21</sup> By Busche 1911, 456.

<sup>22</sup> Ov. met. 1.82 *pluvialibus undis*; 11.519 *caelestibus undis*; Colum. 10.420 *caeli pendentibus undis*. Cp. Sommariva 1985, 47 n. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Plin. NH 19.34 *siccis haec fere et sabulosis locis frutectosisque nascuntur*.

<sup>24</sup> Plin. NH 19.34 *ea protinus globetur magnitudine*; 35 *in se globari*.

<sup>25</sup> Plin. NH 25.95 *nostri malum terrae vocant et quattuor genera eius (aristolochiae) servant: unum tuberibus radicis rotundis, foliis inter malvam et hederam, nigrioribus mollioribusque eqs.*

*ber* or *tuber terrae* is almost invariably the truffle, though Pliny uses the expression to refer to the cyclamen bulb<sup>26</sup>: it is the truffle, for instance, in Juvenal<sup>27</sup>, Martial<sup>28</sup>, and in Petronius himself<sup>29</sup>. And the Italian word for truffle, "tartufo", descends from a Latin rustic form, \**territufer*, equivalent to the classic *terrae tuber*<sup>30</sup>.

Can Petronius' mention of the *terrae tuber* help us determine the nature of the *horti tuber* of our passage? In both cases the character addressed is Giton. In the *Cena* Hermeros abuses him with these words: *videbo te in publicum, mus, immo terrae tuber*: "I'll wait for you outside, you rat, or rather truffle". As the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* notes, this refers contemptuously to someone who avoids the light of day: a mouse or a rat has its nest underground, as stressed by Horace, when he says that from the labor of the mountains a paltry mouse will be born<sup>31</sup>; *immo* marks a further abusive progression: Giton is worse than a mouse; he is rather comparable to a *terrae tuber*, which never comes out of the ground: there is no doubt that Hermeros is referring to a truffle, though Smith in his commentary on the *Cena* takes these words to refer to "a toadstool or mushroom"<sup>32</sup>, that is to something growing above the surface of the earth. It should also be noted that, shortly after, Hermeros threatens to do away with Giton's "two-penny-hair", as he calls it<sup>33</sup>. But does this unequivocally link bald heads and truffles?

Interestingly enough, *tubera* and bald heads had already been placed side by side earlier in the *Satyrica*. When our heroes are trying to sell a cloak they have stolen, one of the brokers that volunteer as guarantors is described as *calvus tuberosissimae frontis*: "a bald-headed man with a forehead full of warts or boils"<sup>34</sup>. This reminds us that *tuber* can refer to anything bulging or swelling, such as bumps protruding from a surface – in this case a man's forehead. The word is probably related to the root of *tumeo*, as generally recognized by modern linguists<sup>35</sup>, and as the ancients already realized, if we

<sup>26</sup> Plin. *NH* 25.115 *a nostris tuber terrae vocatur (radix cyclamini)*; cf. *malum terrae* at the previous note.

<sup>27</sup> Juven. 14.7 *tubera terrae*. *Tuber* alone is found at 5.116 and 119.

<sup>28</sup> Mart. 13.50 (title) *terrae tubera*.

<sup>29</sup> Petr. 58.4 *terrae tuber*.

<sup>30</sup> Devoto 1968<sup>2</sup>, 424.

<sup>31</sup> Hor. *ars poet.* 139 *parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*.

<sup>32</sup> Smith 1975, 161.

<sup>33</sup> Petr. 58.5 *curabo, longe tibi sit comula ista besalis*.

<sup>34</sup> Petr. 15.4.

<sup>35</sup> Walde-Hofmann II, 712-713; Ernout-Meillet II 705: "on pense au radical de *tumeo*; mais la formation n'est pas claire".

can trust the testimony of Isidore of Seville<sup>36</sup>.

No doubt the *rotundum horti tuber* of our poem must be some sort of vegetable. In the vegetable realm we have already found that the word *tuber* can refer to self-standing underground "bulges" or "swellings": the truffle, but also the roots of the birthwort and the cyclamen. In Pliny it is also found, however, in reference to "bulges" or "swellings" attached to a larger surface, namely burls protruding from the trunk of trees growing above the ground, such as the alder, the citrus, and the maple<sup>37</sup>. But can *tuber* mean a self-standing vegetable – like the truffles and the underground bulbs just mentioned –, but growing on the surface and therefore visible, like the burls of a tree? The answer to this question is pivotal for the evaluation of the third interpretation proposed for the *horti tuber* of our poem – an interpretation that has been defended by two Italian scholars, Scarcia<sup>38</sup> and Grazia Sommariva<sup>39</sup>, and, if at all linguistically possible, would solve many of the difficulties posed by this passage, as even Courtney is ready to admit<sup>40</sup>.

Scarcia and Sommariva take the *rotundum horti tuber* to be the gourd. They had been preceded, at the end of the nineteenth century, by Collignon, who, in one of the appendixes of his epoch-making book on Petronius<sup>41</sup>, had paired our Petronian passage with an expression used by one of Psyche's sisters complaining about her husband, in the well-known story told in the *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius: *cucurbita calviorem*, "balder than a gourd"<sup>42</sup>. This is taken to be a proverbial expression by Otto<sup>43</sup>: "kahler als ein Kürbis". This passage is quoted in a modified form by Fulgentius in his *Expositio sermonum antiquorum*<sup>44</sup>, and his text has found its way into some lesser Apuleian manuscripts too<sup>45</sup>. Based on his different readings (one of

<sup>36</sup> Isid. orig. 17.10.19 *tuberum tumor terrae prodit; eaque causa nomen illi dedit*.

<sup>37</sup> Plin. NH 16.231 *dat et alnus, ut dictum est, tuber sectile, sicut citrum acerque. nec aliarum tuber iam in pretio*. Cp. also 16.68-69.

<sup>38</sup> Scarcia 1964, 116-117 n. 64.

<sup>39</sup> Sommariva 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Courtney 1991, 29.

<sup>41</sup> Collignon 1892, 390 (in the third *Appendice: Rapprochements entre Pétrone et Apulée*, pp. 388-390).

<sup>42</sup> Apul. met. 5.9 *at ego misera primum patre meo seniore[m] maritum sortita sum, dein cucurbita calviorem et quovis puero pusillio[re]m, cunctam domum seris et catenis obditam custodientem*.

<sup>43</sup> Otto 1890, 100, s. v. *cucurbita* (2).

<sup>44</sup> Fulg. serm. ant. 17, pp. 116, 21 - 117, 4 Helm *quid sit pumilior, quid sit glabrior*. Apuleius in asino aureo inducit sorores Psicae maritis detrahentis; dicit: 'quovis puero pumilios et cucurbita glabriorem'; *pumilios enim dicunt molles atque enerves, glabrum vero lenem et imberbem*. See Pizzani 1968, 32; 113-115.

<sup>45</sup> Cp. Scarcia 1964, 113 n. 60; Pizzani 1968, 114.

which is *cucurbita glabriorem*, instead of *calviorem*), Fulgentius interprets the passage as an allusion to sexual impotence, and is followed by Scarcia<sup>46</sup>, who, throughout his whole essay, which deals primarily with the interpretation of the title of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, suggests an obscene meaning behind almost every mention of the gourd – *cucurbita* – in Roman writers. Here he takes *cucurbita* to be the equivalent of a eunuch, a *cinaedus*, or an impotent person and understands *cucurbita glabriorem* as “feebler than a eunuch”. As can be seen, he attributes to Apuleius a meaning based on the text of Fulgentius. However, Fulgentius' readings are universally held to be unreliable<sup>47</sup>, and the obvious meaning of Apuleius' expression is indeed “baldier than a gourd”<sup>48</sup>.

Scarcia understands *cucurbita* in the same sense of *cinaedus* in an earlier Petronian passage, which can throw a great deal of light on the expression used in our poem. When Trimalchio gives the horoscopes appropriate to each of the constellations of his Zodiac dish, he says that under Aquarius innkeepers and gourds are born: *in Aquario copones et cucurbitae*<sup>49</sup>. Like in his interpretation of the Apuleian passage, Scarcia takes Trimalchio's *cucurbitae* to be the equivalent of *cinaedi*<sup>50</sup>. But, just like in the interpretation of the Apuleian passage he attributes to Apuleius a meaning based on Fulgentius, so here too he moves from a false starting point, namely that each of Trimalchio's horoscopes must unconditionally refer to human beings<sup>51</sup>, whereas a look at the text shows that two-horse-chariots, oxen, and testicles are mentioned by him under Gemini<sup>52</sup>. Some scholars have thought that Trimalchio's *cucurbitae* may stand for another category of human beings, namely blockheads or idiots<sup>53</sup>. This appears to be supported by another passage in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, where a character says: *nos cucurbitae caput non habemus*, “we do not have the head of a gourd”, or a gourd in-

<sup>46</sup> Scarcia 1964, 112-117.

<sup>47</sup> Cp. e.g. Purser 1910, 33; Fernhout 1949, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Todd 1943, 101-103, argues that *cucurbita* is referred to a bald head not just here, but also in another Apuleian passage (*met.* 1.15) and in Petr. 39.12, for which see below; but he is far from convincing as far as the latter two texts are concerned. Cf. also Scobie 1975, 112. For the possibility that baldness, as well as stupidity, be implied at Apul. *met.* 1.15 see below, and note 58.

<sup>49</sup> Petr. 39.12. For the whole chapter see de Vreese 1927.

<sup>50</sup> Scarcia 1964, 98-109.

<sup>51</sup> Scarcia 1964, 98: “*Cucurbita* deve indubbiamente alludere a uomini; lo esige... l'andamento intero dell'oroscopo, che esclude riferimenti a cose naturali (piante o animali che siano...)”.

<sup>52</sup> Petr. 39.7 *in geminis autem nascuntur bigae et boves et colei*.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Smith 1975, 71; Keulen 2003, 270 (“nincompoop”).

stead of a head<sup>54</sup>. This again is taken to be a proverb by Otto<sup>55</sup>, though Scarcia denies that any such proverb exists in Latin<sup>56</sup>. However, it surely exists in Italian, where a blockhead is often familiarly referred to as a “zuccone”, literally a big gourd or pumpkin, and sometimes simply as a “zucca”, a gourd<sup>57</sup>. On the other hand, baldness (as well as stupidity) may be implied by the reference to a gourd in the present Apuleian passage too, if the character who speaks these words, a *ianitor*, is to be associated with the mimic type of the ‘bald-headed fool’ (μωρὸς φαλακρός), as suggested by Keulen<sup>58</sup>.

Another possible interpretation of Trimalchio’s *cucurbitae* could be “cupping-glasses”, for bleeding, a meaning often attested in medical writers and elsewhere<sup>59</sup>. Bleeding is indeed associated with Aquarius in an astrological text<sup>60</sup>, but along with other Zodiacal signs.

It is however the most obvious meaning of the word, “gourds” or “pumpkins”, that suits the context best. Under Aquarius Trimalchio places innkeepers, who proverbially mix water with their wine, as testified by an inscription, Martial, and other texts<sup>61</sup>. This is obviously a joke, but it is in line with the astrologers’ tendency to associate with each constellation objects somehow reminiscent of it: in the case of Aquarius things somehow related to water. Now, Gargilius Martialis (III century A.D.), in his book on medicines made from vegetables and fruits, tells us that, according to physicians, the gourd is nothing but curdled water: *aquam coagulatam*<sup>62</sup>. He quotes Galen, who does exhibit a text which agrees with what Gargilius attributes to him<sup>63</sup>, and the watery nature of the gourd is confirmed by other ancient writers<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Apul. 1.15.

<sup>55</sup> Otto 1890, 100, s. v. *cucurbita* (1). Cf. Keulen 2003, 270.

<sup>56</sup> Scarcia 1964. Cf. also Todd 1943, 103. Needless to say, Scarcia sees an obscene meaning here too.

<sup>57</sup> If the head is referred to, in Italian a blockhead would be “testa di rapa” (“turnip-head”) rather than “testa di zucca”.

<sup>58</sup> Keulen 2003, 339 (Appendix. “The figure of the *ianitor*”, pp. 339-341); cf. Panayotakis 1995, xvii-xviii; 141.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. TLL IV 1284, 22-40.

<sup>60</sup> CCAG V 3, p. 93, 10-12.

<sup>61</sup> Cp. CE 930 *talìa te fallant utinam mendacia copo: / tu vendes acuum et bibes ipse merum*; Mart. 1.56; cf. 3.56 and 57. For these and other texts, see Citroni 1975, 190.

<sup>62</sup> Garg. Mart. med. ex oler. et pom. 6, p. 140, 6-9 Rose = 6.1-3, p. 9 Maire *veteres medici de cucurbita ita senserunt, ut eam aquam dicerent coagulatam. Galenus umidae putat virtutis et frigidae, idque ex eo probat quod in cibo sumpta... bibendi desideria non excitat.*

<sup>63</sup> Galen. simpl. med. temp. ac fac. 7, XII, pp. 33-34 Kühn κολοκύνθη ὑγρᾶς καὶ ψυχρᾶς ἐστὶ κράσεως... ἐστὶ δὲ καὶ ἐσθιομένη πλαδῶδης καὶ ἄδιψος.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. AP 9.532.2 οὐ σικύων ἐφάνη διερόν γένος, οὐ κολοκυνθῶν; Plin. NH

As I said, things related to water are regularly associated with Aquarius by astrological writers: we may refer to a passage in the fourth book of Manilius<sup>65</sup> and to an extended text of Firmicus Maternus<sup>66</sup>, where those born under Aquarius are associated with death in or because of water (shipwreck and dropsy)<sup>67</sup> and even more often with trades and occupations having to do with water<sup>68</sup>. Among these, the trade of the *hortulanus*, someone tending a vegetable garden, is mentioned twice. If we recall our Petronian poem, we will immediately see that the expression *horti tuber* is tantamount to an association of the *tuber* with the *hortulani*; these in turn are associated with Aquarius by Firmicus Maternus; and, finally, this constellation is associated with gourds by Trimalchio in his astrological dissertation. Thus the circle (*tuber*-vegetable garden-Aquarius-gourd) is closed and the logical identity of the *horti tuber* with the gourd is demonstrated.

The passage of Gargilius Martialis explains the text of the Petronian poem much better than a riddle by Symphosius on the gourd, which is adduced by Sommariva<sup>69</sup>. Symphosius' gourd says: *nutrior undis*, "I am fed by water". This could be said by almost any vegetable; but Eumolpus says *quod creavit unda*: his *horti tuber* is "generated by water", not merely fed by it. These words can only be explained by the text of Gargilius Martialis, not by the riddle of Symphosius, nor by Pliny, who says that gourds like irrigation and manure<sup>70</sup>. In other words, the *unda* in this poem is not simply irrigation water<sup>71</sup>, though this too is of course envisaged, but water as an element,

19.186 *aquatiles cucumeris, cucurbitae, lactucae* (i.e. cucumbers, gourds, and lettuce have a watery taste). It is perhaps worth noting that in comedy a discussion about the nature of the gourd (κολοκύνθη) is reported in jest as being held in the school of Plato itself: Epicrates fr. 11 Kock (CAF II 1, pp. 287-288) = 10 Kassel-Austin (PCG V, pp. 161-163). Cf. Helm 1906, 378.

<sup>65</sup> Manil. 4.259-272.

<sup>66</sup> Firm. Mat. *math.* 8.29.

<sup>67</sup> Shipwreck: Firm. Mat. *math.* 8.29.1, 5, 14; dropsy: Firm. Mat. *math.* 8.29.8.

<sup>68</sup> Firm. Mat. *math.* 8.29.4 *aquam hauriens*; 5 *balneatores*; 6 *piscator*; *hortulani*; *balneatores*; *haustores aquarum*; *urinatores vel nautas*; *in humidis vel in aquosis viventes locis*; 10 *ex cultura terrae habebunt vitae subsidia*; 12 *grande pelagus transibunt*; 14 *hortulanus*.

<sup>69</sup> Sommariva 1985, 49-50. She refers to Symphos. 43 (*Cucurbita*: AL 286.144-146, p. 232 Riese<sup>2</sup> = p. 215 Shackleton Bailey; I give the latter's text): *pendeo, dum nascor; rursus, dum pendeo cresco. / pendens commoveor ventis et nutrior undis. / pendula si non sim, non sum iam iamque futura*.

<sup>70</sup> Plin. NH 19.69 *amant rigua et fimum*, quoted by Todd 1943, 101, and Sommariva 1985, 50.

<sup>71</sup> This is how Sommariva 1985, 50, interprets the word. We have said that, by itself, *unda* can hardly refer to rain, but we should add that, besides water flowing on the surface,



which becomes a gourd in one of its allotropic forms, so to speak.

We have said that the logical identity of the *horti tuber* with the gourd is demonstrated by the synoptic reading of the texts we have placed side by side. But is this logical identity borne out by the linguistic documentation? *Tuber* never seems to be referred to self-standing fruits growing on the surface of the earth. Here, however, we may be helped by what my former university companion, Maria Gabriella Ferrari, has to say about a well-known expression we find in another work by Apuleius, the *Florida*: *ubi uber, ibi tuber*<sup>72</sup>. As used by Apuleius, it is surely equivalent to our "there are no roses without thorns"<sup>73</sup>. But as Ferrari adroitly observes, this must have originally been a farmers' saying meaning "plants – or rather, fruits – grow where the soil is fertile". As is well-known, *uber* can be either a breast or fertile soil. In this way it is possible to recover an early meaning of *tuber*: a bulging or swelling fruit, not necessarily attached to something larger. As Ferrari remarks, Apuleius could change the original meaning of the proverb because *tuber* – a bulging or a swelling – could also take a negative meaning; though she does not elaborate, we may remind that a *tuber* could be, for example, a boil, a wart, a bump, a hunched back and other undesirable outgrowths – we recall Petronius' *calvus tuberosissimae frontis* (15.4), we have mentioned before –, or a tumor growing inside. Hence, I would also add, *tuber* was used to describe an outgrowth or a swelling attached to something larger, in the manner of the unhealthy ones of the human body, for example the hump of a camel or the burl of a tree; but it could also describe a vegetable that – like an inner tumor swelling the human body – does not emerge to become visible: the roots of the birthwort and the cyclamen, or the truffle. The negative meaning behind this usage is still quite evident in Pliny, who calls the truffles (*tubera*) a "fault of the earth" (*vitium terrae*), adding that it is not possible to conceive of them otherwise (*neque enim aliud intellegi potest*)<sup>74</sup>. Shortly before he had called them the calluses of the earth<sup>75</sup>.

If this is so, in Eumolpus' poem we have a survival of the original mean-

it can also refer to the aquifer or water-table, which can also be used for irrigation: cp. Manil. 4.261 *cernere sub terris undas, inducere terras*.

<sup>72</sup> Apul. *flor.* 18. Cf. Ferrari II, 1969, 151-152. For the sound effect of this and other Apuleian expressions Facchini Tosi 1986, 160-161. Nothing of consequence, for our purpose, in Hunink 2001, 185.

<sup>73</sup> See Ferrari, *loc. cit.*, for the dispute between Wölfflin and Otto on Apuleius' meaning.

<sup>74</sup> Plin. *NH* 19.34 *crescant anne vitium id terrae – neque enim aliud intellegi potest – ea protinus globetur magnitudine, qua futurum est, et vivat necne, non facile arbitror intellegi posse*.

<sup>75</sup> Plin. *NH* 19.33 *nec terram esse possimus dicere neque aliud quam terrae callum*.

ing of *tuber*: anything that grows and swells, attached or not to something larger, which can be either undesirable or desirable – witness the *tuberans sinus*, the swelling bosom, of Apuleius' Photis, in the *Metamorphoses*<sup>76</sup>. Here *tubera* and *ubera* ("breasts") coincide, proving that in the saying *ubi uber, ibi tuber* the original meaning of the latter word was far from being necessarily negative. Now, for the farmer a desirable swelling would refer especially to growing crops. From this point of view – of a bulging or swelling in a positive sense, in this case not attached to something larger – gourds, pumpkins, and related plants would naturally be foremost. We have seen that *tuber* is probably related to the root of *tumeo*; and a number of Latin writers do refer *tumeo*, *tumesco* or *tumidus* to the *cucurbita* and related plants<sup>77</sup>. With this, I think, the linguistic possibility that the words *horti tuber* may have been used by Eumolpus to refer to the gourd is demonstrated.

One last point I would like to make is that the proverbial association of gourds or pumpkins with bald heads, which we have observed in the words of Psyche's sister in Apuleius, *cucurbita calviorem*<sup>78</sup>, has survived in Italian. The expression "zucca pelata", literally "plucked gourd", is common in colloquial speech. It would not mean much in and by itself, since the word "zucca" alone can be used to mean any head, hairy or bald, at least since Dante<sup>79</sup>, but it should be paired with the other common turn "pelato come una zucca" – "as bald (literally 'plucked') as a gourd". So a nursery rhyme, which I, as a child, used to recite, in a sing-song voice, for a bald-headed uncle, might be quoted to reinforce the points already made: "Plucked gourd of the seven hairs, all night long crickets sing for you – and then they serenade you, plucked gourd, plucked gourd"; or, in Italian:

"Zucca pelata dai sette capelli,  
tutta la notte ti cantano i grilli  
e poi ti fanno la serenata,  
zucca pelata, zucca pelata"<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> Apul. *met.* 2.16 *Photis mea... laeta proximat rosa sarta et rosa soluta in sinu tuberrante*.

<sup>77</sup> Cp. e.g. Colum. 10.394 (*cucurbita*) *nimum quae vasta tumescit*; Prop. 4.2.43 *tumidoque cucurbita ventre*; cp. *moretum* 78; Colum. 10.380; Verg. *georg.* 4.122.

<sup>78</sup> Apul. *met.* 5.9. Cp. above, note 42.

<sup>79</sup> Dante *inf.* 18.124-126: "ed elli allor, battendosi la zucca: / «Qua giù m'hanno sommerso le lusinghe / ond'io non ebbi mai la lingua stucca»".

<sup>80</sup> See Sommariva 1985, 49 n. 23, for references to similar rhymes.

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