

possibilities.⁶ For one, accident, the movement of waves, may have played a part: perhaps the sea was rough at the time – or even if calm, it would have been roiled by the manoeuvring of dozens and dozens of ships and the flailing of thousands of oars – and the prow of the Macedonian galley rose up on one wave at the very moment when the prow of Dinocrates' sank down on another. Or it may have been the result of movement of the personnel on deck, which would have a marked effect on the trim of such slender light ships as war galleys. The marines on the *oktêrês* may have run aft to confront a threat at the stern, thereby causing the vessel to rise at the bows, and Dinocrates, seizing the opportunity, launched his attack, at the same time sending the marines on his own ship all the way forward to depress the bows.⁷ Unfortunately he struck so hard that his ram struck in the enemy's hull and he could not break loose.

Thus the passage is to be translated:

In an attack on an *oktêrês*, Dinocrates' galley received a blow above the waterline, since the opposing vessel had its bows elevated, but struck the enemy ship below [the waterline?]; at first he was unable to break free despite repeated attempts to back water, etc.

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⁶ In Graevius xii.671–2.

⁷ For the shifting of men fore and aft to raise or depress bow or stern, see Dio Cassius 12 (Zonaras 8.16.4), a description of a Roman attack on Hippo in 247 B.C.: the Roman fleet, trapped in the harbour when the locals stretched chains across the mouth, 'escaped thanks to skill and luck. The vessels quickly headed directly toward the chains, and when their rams were just about to get caught on these, those on deck shifted their position to the stern; the bows, lightened in this way, cleared the chains. Then, when they rushed back to the prow, the sterns of the vessels were elevated.'

PLAUTUS, *PSEUDOLUS* 189: GRAIN-MOUNTAINS AND CATTLE-FODDER

Ballio. principio, Hedylium, tecum ago, quae amica es frumentariis,
quibu' cunctis montes maxumi frumenti acerui sunt domi: 189
fac sis delatum huc mihi frumentum.

(W. M. Lindsay's *OCT*)

In the most recent edition of this play (Bristol Classical Press, 1987) M. M. Willcock places an obelus before *montes* with the comment '*montes* and *acerui* get in each other's way'. But in view of its metaphorical use elsewhere in Plautus (e.g. *Aul.* 701, *Mil.* 1065, *Mos.* 352), *prima facie* suspicion does not fall on *montes*.

At *Cas.* 126 *post autem ruri nisi tu aceruom ederis/aut quasi lumbricus terram* etc., *aceruom* is open to objection because it lacks further definition: 'a heap' of what? Hence, among other suggestions, Lambinus' *aut eruom*, 'either vetch'. Here *acerui* is objectionable because it is superfluous. After the hyperbolic metaphor *montes* its prosaic literalness does not make stylistic sense. It has all the air of an intrusive gloss. Acidalius thought it was, and so did Leo. But if it is, what it has displaced is beyond recovery, and a past participle passive is as good an unfounded guess as any: hence Ritschl's *sunt structi*, Bergk's *aggesti sunt* and Bothe's *aceruati*.

Scribes are, however, capable of more subtle errors than merely supposing that marginal or suprascript variants, intended as explanations, are in fact corrections. A transcriber, forced by *frumenti* to extract from *montes* its literal meaning *acerui*, could write what was in his mind, if his mind's eye saw what he was thinking, i.e. if the

