LATIN *UASTUS*

1. *uastae uirgines*

This collocation is known from but one occurrence: *abs te uiduae et uastae uirgines sunt* (Ennius *Sc* 233). Jürgen Untermann raises (*Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* XVII *Ennius*, Genève 1972, 233) the difficult question whether this use of *uastus* with a personal noun was normal or unusual in Latin, whether Ennius was being inventive in applying the word to persons. It is not likely that we can reach certainty on such a matter, but I think that we may make some progress by approaching the problem in an inverse direction from two points of departure.

Now we know that *uiduus* is usually used of persons; but it is found also in association with non-personal nouns: *ut uidua in nudo uitis quae nascitur aruo* Cat. 62, 49; and it is used of at least several sorts of trees when they are growing without vines. Even if such locutions are somewhat poetic, they are not at all in the outer margins of Latin usage. Since *uiduus* was known to a native speaker to be extensible for the feature of [±person] it seems likely that by being juxtaposed with *uastus* the latter could also be interpreted by a native as being so extensible. Note too that *uiduus* could refer naturally to plants.

Now, having considered the possibility of an extension in sense of *uiduus* in the inverse direction of what would apply to *uastus*, let us focus upon the features that characterized *uastus* in its neutral sense. A close synonym of *uastus* was *desertus*; its range of meaning was strongly opposed to *cultus*: *mons uastus ab natura et ab humano cultu* Sall. *Iu.* 48, 3. We see that *uastus* was characterized in a direction almost directly opposite to that of agriculture, ploughing and the like. This leads us in turn to consider the senses of *colo*, a verb connected fundamentally with the culture and exploitation of the soil. We read in the Oxford Latin Dictionary 355, sense 7: *quam coluit dulci gauisus amore puella(m)* CIL I. 1222. 3. In the TLL III, 1676 at II B2aβ 'amare', we read *colere meretricem*, and *colisti anum* CIL XII 5687.39. The erotic sense of this term of husbandry was clearly familiar.

As an equivalent of *deserta* in the sense [- *culta*] the value of *uasta* seems well secured, and an appropriate attributive to *uirgo*. Bound in alliteration with *uiduae* and *uirgines*, and linked by these strands of agricultural semantics, the choice of *uastae* in this collocation seems a particularly happy one. If it was not routine Latin, it was an imaginative and well chosen use of what appears to have been the normal semantics of the language.

2. The cognates of *uastus*

The general range of cognacy of this word is well understood, and can be found in the standard handbooks; but some pruning and refining is needed. Ernout-Meillet[4] 714–15 associates *uastus*, *uānus* and *uascus*; this rich set gives us $*uHs$-$tó$-, $*uHs$-$nó$-, and $*uHs$-ko-. Closely related are OIr. *fás* 'empty' and the groups represented in Germanic by OHG *wuosti*. In these two we have the full grade of the root $*ueHs$- or $*uoHs$-, but we cannot tell the colour of either the vocalism or the laryngeal. One should note here another instance of a close grouping uniting Germanic, Celtic and Italic – the West IE syndrome.

Ernout-Meillet are puzzled by *uacō uacuo*- (710), with its -*c* which does not appear outside of Italic, and we shall simply leave it out of consideration here. Any possible connexion with our root is quite unclear to me for Goth. *wans*, ON *vanr*, Skt. *ūná*-, Armen. *umayn*, and Germanic *ōdi* 'öde'; whether Greek *εὖνις* belongs in this set is even more unclear to me, and on this point Chantraine DELG 386 merely echoes Ernout-Meillet.

As I have mentioned above, the equation OIr. *fás* = *uastus* seems to me assured. We have also just seen on additional evidence from Ennius that the semantics of *uastus* can be understood only by starting from a sense of 'empty, desolate' vel sim. We must therefore reject on grounds both of phonetics and of meaning the suggestion made by Thurneysen (*Grammar of Old Irish* 50 § 80 note) that *uastus* is cognate with OIr. *fot* 'length'.

3. Welsh *gweilydd* ~ *gweili* 'empty'

It is now possible to add another formation to this family of forms which has not been recognized hitherto. The *Geiria-*

dur Prifysgol Cymru suggests tentatively that *gweilydd* goes back to a Celtic **uailid-* and compares OIr. *fáilid fáilid* 'happy'; this suggestion goes back to Lloyd-Jones, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 11, 1944, 37–8. Phonetically the equation proposed is impossible on grounds of the Irish first syllable vocalism, and there are even unsolved problems about the Irish word. Semantically the proposal is far from satisfactory. Instead we may derive *gweilydd* directly from **uasiliọ-* or **uaseliọ-*, i.e. **uas-el-ịo-* or perhaps **uǝsi-l-ịo-*. The intervocalic *-s-* would have been lost at an early date, yielding a diphthong *ai*. The formation was an *l*-verbal adjective, such as we see in Gaulish *Depro-sagi-lo-*.

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