

Borges felt as his own. His words emphasize the symmetrical nature of the death of Snorri and his assassin and in addition he interprets the latter's death as imagined by his antagonist. Death is in relation to a few words: "Arni's death seems imagined by Snorri. That man to whom a few laconic words announce his death sentence is one of Snorri's characters, a figure under the control of destiny and even that of the rhetoric of the sagas".

In *Medieval Germanic Literatures*, the author takes up the question of the metaphor again, and often returned to it in connection with the *kenning* or metaphorical form of Ancient Icelandic. During his Martinfierrista period Borges had written about this figure, locating the question in the very framework of the avant-garde. The essay "Las kenningar" is included in a book of particular importance in the author's theoretical-artistic projection, *Historia de la eternidad* (1933) ['History of Eternity']. Much later, the poem "Fragment", from *El otro, el mismo* ['The Other, the Same One'] (1964) will include several *kenningar*, adapted as much as possible to Spanish.

It has been said that Borges turns to the *kenningar* because of a theoretical change: he saw what there is of creativity and at the same time repetition in the framework of a series. The *kenning* is not important to the Argentinian writer because of a desire for radical novelty, from the moment in which he believes that only a small repertoire of metaphors has been provided in history, what becomes decisive is the variant, the fragment, which can be introduced within the large patterns. The *kenningar* with their intensely crafted nature, belong to a heritage, an established model. Each one represents the carrying out of a possibility in an abstract system, thus it acts not as an irruption of the new but as the metaphorical image of cultural values of the Icelandic community. The *kenning* is the example of how the new cannot be considered an absolutely surprising act, but rather that one must see in it, according to Borges, that what is strange or new should not be reduced nor situated in a mysterious isolation but that

instead it should be manifested, for the sake of its strangeness, in the center of a poetic discourse that constitutes it but does not nullify it. It is at once both culturally universal and specific.



### The «Gulo filfros» and narrative fables.1. Some of Olao Magno's Imitators

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#### 1. The «Gulo» by Apollonio Menabeni.

The fascination of the narrative fables about the people in the North in Olao Magno's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1557: see the main entry for *Olaus Magnus* in S. Lindroth's *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 10, New York 1974, p. 197, but 1568 in Michaud, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, 26, Paris s. a., p. 52) did not leave the poet and philosopher Apollonio Menabeni - who was born in Milan and later became doctor of the Swedish King John III - unmoved. For Menabeni, in his *Tractatus de Magno Animali quod Alcen nonnulli vocant, Germani vero Elend, et de ipsius partium in re medica facultatibus: item Historia Cervi Rangiferi et Gulonis Filfros vocati*, wanted to reserve several pages (70-73, in the Coloniae edition, apud Maternum Cholinum 1581) for an animal named «Gulo».

This beast, whom the Germans called «Filfros» to indicate his voraciousness («id est multum vorans»), was never seen by Menabeni, nor - as we now think - by many other Italian travelers in those times.

One can, therefore, well imagine how much curiosity and amazement was aroused by the events in which the readership saw it as a main character, even if those events were already described by Olao, from whose work Menabeni drew part of his descriptive and naturalistic elements, above all, when

they read about one of its curious eating habits.

The «Gulo» had such a craving to eat that it ate without restraint and swelled up out of all proportion; but since it had to feed itself continuously «ex sua natura», when it could not «aliud capere», it went looking for two trees so close together as to not be able to pass through them with its swollen belly. Then, with an outburst, it propelled itself through the trees with all its might «dum venter eius hinc inde pressus, quod intus habet in partes posteriores propulsum excernit», and so doing, emptied out.

According to Menabeni, the only surviving specimens were in Sweden; actually, not even he had ever seen a live one, but this did not mean whatsoever that they did not exist, because he had been able to touch their skin. The only fact that he could not be certain of was that perhaps there were also some in Lithuania. Menabeni limited himself to saying, in short, that he had heard «ab alijs» and seen «ipse», apparently only the characteristic skin (from the copy of Bologna, B.C.U. Tab.I.G.I.466/4 belonging to the late Ulisse Aldrovandi):

Inter cetera animalia, quae soli Sueciae attribuuntur, est etiam illud, quod ipsorum Suecorum, ac etiam Germanorum lingua Filfros, id est multum vorans, nominatur: et a Cardano cognitum lib. 10 *De subtilitate* describitur sub nomine Rosomachae, seu Gulonis. Hoc ipsum an in Lithuania inveniatur, intelligere non potui, cum multos diligenter sim percunctatus huius viri autoritate motus. Animal itaque hoc vivum non vidi, sed ipsius pellem pertractavi. Quare quae ipse vidi, et ab alijs ibi audivi, breviter referam. Longitudine, et altitudine parum superat Vulpem, crassitudine multum. Cauda paulo brevior. Subnigro est colore. Pilorum longitudine, et densitate Vulpem aequat, mollitie, et gracilitate superat. Unde sit, ut ipsius pellis mollis sit, tactui iucunda, et delectabili colore. Propter quas conditiones, et paucam copiam magno pretio etiam apud Suecos venditur, et est in usu apud principes, et primarios homines. Ferunt animal ipsum esse edacissimum, ac voracissimum: nullam enim fere comedendi intercapedinem facit. Ex quo venter multum intumescit: et quando nil aliud capere potest, neque illud, quod habet, cito egerere; ac insuper ingerendi desiderio ex sua natura semper teneatur, egerendi hanc opportunitatem, et modum quaerit, ut iterum, ac saepius ad inexplebilem satietatem usque ingerat. Quaerit itaque duas arbores ita prope terram vicinas, ut capite praemisso venter tumidus

per illas transire non possit. Vi igitur, et impetus facto in angustum illum transitum se conijcit, ut transeat. Quod tandem assequitur, dum venter eius hinc inde pressus quod intus habet, in partes posteriores propulsum excernit. Olaus autem Magnus cum hoc ipsum animal sensu fortasse oculorum cognitum eandem voracitatem recensendo describit, ab re non erit, ab eo quoque alia quaedam huc plenioris doctrinae causa transferre; quibus cum laude Dei Opt. Max. huic opusculo coronidem imponemus. Magnitudinem itaque, et figuram animalis ita exprimit: grossities eius, ut magni canis; aures, et facies velut cati; pedes, et ungulae asperrimae, corpus villosum, et prolixorum pilorum subfuscum: cauda, ut vulpis licet brevior, sed crinium densiorum. Caro omnino inutilis. Sed pellis multum commoda, et pretiosa: quibus quoque insidijs circumveniant animal, his explicat verbis: venatores in silvam cadaver recens portant. Quod dum animal comedit, sagittis (hoc tempore parvis bombardis) conficiunt; vel in foveas, et cavernas cadaver reponunt, ibique animal conficiunt occupatum. Ungula, et dentes adeo acutos habet, ut eius congressum formident canes, qui in ferocissimos lupos vires suas extendere solent. Idem quoque haec habet: dormientibus sub harum pellium tegumentis evenire solent somnia quasi eius animalis vitae, naturaeque conformia in insatiabilitate devorandi, et bestijs insidijs faciendis, et praecanendis. His etiam pellibus induti bibendo, et comedendo nullum saturitatis vestigium relinquunt. Ex huius intestinis chordae pro citharaedis conficiuntur. Ungulae in modum circuli vertiginosis capitibus, et tinnientibus auriculis appensae celeriter recuperandae sanitati prosunt. Sanguis aquae calidae admixtus venatoribus est pro potu, et melle conditus propinatur in nuptialibus triumphis. Pinguedo putridis ulceribus illinita plurimum confert. Dentium usus incantatoribus patrocinatorum ungulae recenter extractae, et demonstratae canes, catosque fugant, uti aniculae viso vulture.

## 2. Menabeni between Olaus and Cardano.

Menabeni's narration isolated the tale of «Gulo filfros» (or rather «filfras», as I argue below) from the rest of the *Tractatus* on elk and "reindeer"; actually, he wrote a separate tract. It set, therefore, the animal inside an even more fantastic air than that of his teacher Olaus - to whom I dedicated in the *Appendix* (see below) reference passages - as another of his sources, Gerolamo Cardano (1501-1576) had done.

This last person had already left evidence of the belief in the legend of the «Gulo», and it is possible to read the following short tale in his *De subtilitate libri xxi*, edited for the first time in Nuremberg in 1550, later in

Basel in 1553 (from the Basilea edition, 1582, p. 317):

nasci animalia hominum moribus similia in singulis ferme regionibus, edocet in Lithuania Rosomacha seu Gulo, animal quantitate canis, facie felis, dorso et cauda vulpis. Hoc enim adeo est vorax, ut cum cadavera depascatur, plenum iam ventre toto, inter duas arbores quae parum invicem distent alvo compressa emittat quod ederit, inde ad saginam revertatur. Sic Lithuani hominum sunt voracissimi. Referunt huius animalis pelles esse pulcherimas, quas si quis gestet, gestant autem nobiles multi, praeter etiam gentis communem voracitatem fiunt inexplicabiles comedones. Aut igitur potentia pellis talis est, ad actum autem calore hominis deducitur: aut refrigerato ventriculo id contingit: ventriculus enim calore plurimo atque exiguo abundans vix satiatur.

A comparison with the description by Menabeni shows that the latter basically relies upon Olao, while laying claim to having its own specific features: the «Gulo», as a matter of fact, is slightly larger than a fox and very fat and dark; whereas for Olao, it is the size of a large black dog. Both of them, however, agreed that it had a short but very hairy tail.

The burden of a thick pelt was the most obvious physical characteristic for them both. The animal was not edible, but it had such a «commoda et pretiosa» skin as to make it the target of an unmerciless hunt, details Cardano ignored (or was unaware of), preferring to place emphasis on the Lithuanian peoples (whom Menabeni, too, connected in the first lines of his history) and on the symbolical value assumed by the existence of such a voracious animal in their lands («sic Lithuani hominum sunt voracissimi»), as well as on the characteristic of heat, a detail indeed ignored by both Olao and Menabeni, but which was already a characteristic of «potentia» linked to the fur. Menabeni's references to Olao - who, it seems, had written about it after having admitted to a great personal voraciousness (but Menabeni precisely defined this last concept with a «fortasse») - thus were integrated with those of Cardano, thereby creating in chronological order the latest version of the story. The references had to contribute, moreover, to strengthen a by-now con-

solidated myth in order to transmit and, we believe, render it credible to everyone.

Menabeni also wanted, perhaps, to put to rest some of the sonorous laughter of the shrewder readers, above all those who had ignored the sources and had attributed the unlikely and disagreeable, hygienically-speaking, eating habits to him alone.

None of the well-known sources, and Menabeni less than the others, posed the question how the animal could survive such treatment ... such a drastic dietetic (according to Olao, it could be repeated during the same meal); and thereby, the tricks used by the hunters, such as bringing a «cadaver recens» into the forest and waiting for the greedy animal to hurl itself on top so that they could pierce it with arrows (but «hoc tempore parvis bombardis» noted down once again the precise Menabeni) seem equally exaggerated.

The modern reader might suspect that the hunters were even more stupid than the Gulo, because it would have been less tiring to wait calmly for the moment of the animals forced discharge, when even such a wild animal would have exhibited some difficulties, at least of a respiratory nature, and then could be knocked out with a blow to the head, thereby preserving its precious pelt from piercing arrows or other damages caused by small mortars.

Indeed, by checking through Olao's text one can verify that, in this detail as well, Menabeni wanted to go his own way, because the hunt, according to his teachers narration, occurred just at the moment in which the animal was busy discharging itself and the hunter could kill it without harm by shooting a single, precise arrow. This method was quite well-known to all of Olao's readers, because the engravings that accompanied the chapters of the *Historia* illustrated this detail with clear and simple signs, to almost didactic ends.

The «Gulo» was actually depicted in the form of a large lion-like feline, with long cat whiskers, in the act of discharging; tightly posed, but not stationary, between two trees, in front of the remains of a rotting carcass of uncertain features and in front of two hunters

armed with bows. The detail in the symbolic portrayal of the cited 1555 edition is crystal clear. See facsimile:



3. *The narrative fables.*

It is not unrealistic to believe that many older readers as well—no less shrewd than modern readers, nor more accustomed to rude, violent, and illogical behaviors—would have commented ironically on the fact that faced with the violently squeezing trees and the unmerciless hunts, the «Gulo» would have quickly been on its way to extinction, more or less voluntarily, if only for its name.

They were obviously aware of the fabulous contents of the old travel narratives, so much so that most of the interpretations written by Olao were eventually refuted by Giovanni Scheffer (1621-1679), in his *Lapponia, seu gentis regionisque Lapponicae descriptio accurata*.

A few irreverent annotations in Oloas editions still today give testimony to the incredulity of several readers. The most famous, written anonymously, wanted to define the tale about how Finnic women used magical arts as «coglioneria da orbi» (see A. Maranini, *Edizioni postillate di Giovanni e Olao Magno in alcune biblioteche emiliane*, in «Classiconorroena», 2, 1993, pp. 5-6).

The majority of the readers, all the same, adored the stories in which realistic elements mixed indissolubly with fantastic ones. Among the enthusiasts there also had to be illustrative devotees of these works; for instance Rudolf II, to whom Menabeni dedicated his *Tractatus*. For all of these people the «Gulo», and especially the conditions in which it would digest, had to be a symbol, among others, of a curious, unknown, and far-off world.

It should not be forgotten that the «Gulo»

was also an animal whose magical connotations were accentuated: its fur was so beautiful as to be coveted by the rich and powerful. If used as a blanket, however, the fur brought dreams in conformity with the animal's life, and those sleeping seemed to be possessed by an insatiable appetite and seductively inclined towards other beasts. Even those who would dress again in the furs were not satiated by food or drink. Its fingernails helped against illnesses, the fat healed ulcerous injuries, its blood was blended with honey and used at weddings, and the teeth were sorcerer's charms.

The curious and savage eating habits were present in Olao's tales, but the summary by Menabeni, in a continued history, became a way of isolating these features in respect to other ones. Menabeni had twisted the teaching of Olao, condensing three chapters into one, connecting it as well with Cardano and his doubt about the presence of the animal in Lithuania, and stressing the magical features - even by means of that strange name «filfros», which appeared new.

This in fact seemed absent in Olao; but after a more careful study, it comes to life as the alphabetization of the pronunciation of the name of the animal used by the Germanic peoples: «Vielefraff» or «Vielefrafs», as one reads in Olao, in his translations, and in many other sources that narrate the «Gulo»'s exploits.

It is possible therefore to hypothesize an error in the text of Menabeni's tract and correct the epitaph «filfros» to «filfras», as did the *Dictionnaire universel, historique, critique et bibliographique*, 11, Paris 1910, p. 414, which in listing Menabeni's works wrote of the «*Tractatus de Magno Animali quod Alcen nonnulli vocant, Germani vero Elenndt, et de ipsius partium in re medica facultatibus: Item Historia cervi rangiferi et gulonis, filfras, seu vielfras vocati*».

Nevertheless, one can also find the form «uilfrofs» in Olao, not in the *Historia*, but rather in one of "advances" of the *Carta marina (Ain [sic] kurze Auslegung der neuuen Mappen von den Goettenreich und andern Nordlenden)* that was printed in 1539.

4. *Francesco Negri*.

Bewitched by the «gulone di scandinavia», Alessandro Citolini (1500 - c. 1583), too, accepted the testimony of its eating habits, and he enumerated this beast, among others, in his *La tipocosmia* (Venetian edit., 1561, p. 236), pointing out its insatiability and contributing to the passing on of its legend; he seemed to put into doubt, for the first time, «la strana forma del suo votarsi» [its strange method of emptying itself out], but, in spite of his travels in northern Europe he apparently could not ascertain its validity.

Francesco Negri (1623-1698), a priest from Ravenna, on the other hand, was absolutely certain that none of the preceding authors had ever actually eyewitnessed the actions narrated in this distant land, far from Europe; consequently, in the 17th century, he set out for the wide expanses of Scandinavia.

The accounts of his long journey, which took place between 1663 and 1666, were edited by his heirs and published posthumously in Padua under the title *Il viaggio settentrionale di Francesco Negri* (Francesco Negri's Northern Travel) in 1700 (see also the Milan edition of 1929, edited by Enrico Falqui) and reprinted in Bologna in 1883, edited by Carlo Gargioli, who included as well the *Annotazioni sopra l'opera di Olao Magno* (Annotations on Olao Magno's writings).

Negri attributed to the Upsalan archbishop two types of errors: those which could be detected easily even from one who had never set foot in northern Europe - for example, the non-existence of the land Olao called «Biar-mia» and indicated as «regio septentrionalis, cujus zenit est in ipso polo arctico, e jusque horizon est idem cum circulo aequinoctiali», since at the pole «sono sei mesi di continuo giorno, e sei di continua notte, che è l'istesso che aver il polo verticale, e l'orizzonte conveniente all'equinoziale» [there are six months of continuous daylight and six of continuous night, which is the same as having a vertical pole, and the horizon convening towards the equinox] - and those which could be proven by an actual visit to those areas; for example, that Olao could

never have had, as he declared, friendly conversations with the inhabitants, since the terrain was so icy and uninhabitable «circa elevationem graduum poli arctici 86».

Negri was fond of making, as he wrote, only «veridica relazione» [verifiable accounts], which would not give rise to fancies, and he criticized Olao not only for his genuinely geographical and astronomical features, but also for his fabulous and extravagant narrative episodes: men on horseback, wearing armor that would roll along with the horse as the (non-existent) highly gustful Icelandic winds blew; Norwegian lakes filled with boiling water; seven brothers who had been sleeping in a cellar for a hundred years; gigantic and heavy elks' racing skills; pigmies in Greenland riding sheep into battles against cranes; and other similar things. These shameful inventions or obvious evocations of myths and ancient authors that Olao had manipulated in order to make his narration more fascinating seemed indeed highly reprehensible to Negri, who censured with considerable severity the attribution to Pliny and Solin - two of his most adored Latin authors - of a falsehood; namely, that «in polari regione omnia solis ardore periclitari».

The most striking fact wherein he deduced - without a shadow of a doubt - that Olao had never been to Lapland, was in his description of the "rangifero", «bestia tricorns, de genere cervorum» that pulled wagons on wheels.

Negri had been able to see it in great herds, he described its life and habits and he designated it as the proof of the survival of the population. This beast was in fact the cherished reindeer, called by locals «puozzo», that fed on «ieghle» grass, that is, on lichen. And it pulled sleighs and provided food for the Laplanders, meat as well as milk and cheese; hides for clothing, sleeping, wrapping up newborns and making ropes; sinews for sewing; tallow for candles; and, it was even money and barter. But it did not have three horns, nor did it pull wagons on wheels - as Olao had fantasized - because it would not have been able to move along the roads, which were covered with snow for

almost the entire year and practically inaccessible even for people on foot.

There was also, among the others, an animal called «Iefr», because of its bulk: «mediocre cane, ma più grosso e pesante» [an average dog, but bigger and heavier], with its long, black, and shiny coat used as linings on expensive birettas. They were hunted like other animals, with bows or crossbows (the «archibuso», ancient musket, was reserved for the bear, having one single shot and seldom used), and perhaps they were identifiable as that which the Latin speakers called «Hyaena».

Thus, more than a century after Olao and Menabeni, the «Gulo» reappeared in Negri; however, it was revealed only in part. It was not yet actually entirely clear which beast it was.

Its disagreeable eating habit disappeared, leaving behind only its characteristic voraciousness, which was newly established two centuries later by Melchorre Gioia, in his *Esercizio logico sugli errori d'ideologia e zoologia ossia arte di trar profitto dai cattivi libri* [Logical exercise on ideological and zoological errors; or rather, the art of drawing profit from bad books], Milano 1824 (pp. 249, 194). There he demonstrated the untruthfulness of the idea that the animals did not allow themselves to be dominated by voraciousness: «il ghiottone si pasce sì inconsideratamente e sì voracemente di carne, che talvolta ne rimane strangolato» [the Glutton enjoys meat so inconsiderately and so voraciously that at times it gets strangled]. For Negri, the «Gulo» was perhaps similar to the Latin Iena (Hyena), an animal that he apparently had not seen, which corroborates the opinion of recent critics (see *Viaggiatori del Seicento* [Wayfarers in the Seventeenth Century], edited by M. Guglielminetti, Torino 1967, pp. 49-53). According to them, even Negri - more linked to Olao than he would have us believe - resorted, in part, to the same investigative methodology as his predecessor, making an appeal, if you like, in the permanent postmortem of the narrated events to literary data and parallel fancies in which narrative and descriptive incongruen-

cies and uncertainties had already been pointed out.

##### 5. *One of Negri's sources.*

It is rather probable that to make his comparison to the Iena, Negri used what Conrad Gesner had already written about in his *Historiae animalium libri*.

As can be seen, in fact, in the *liber primus*, entitled *De quadrupedis viviparis*, whose first edition was published in 1551, followed by a second edition in 1620: «Pinicianus grammaticus nostri saeculi hyaenae nomen Germanicum finxit, grabthier, quod circa sepulchra versetur: Ego filfrafs interpretater [sic]: quoniam vel gulo est, velomnino congeneri ei fera, ut iam supra in Gulonis historia dixi» (Frankfurt edition, 16202, p. 555).

Gesner, too, was basically dependent on Olao, in particular on the «libello quem adiunxit septentrionali regionum descriptioni», in which he had treated the symbolical refiguration of the «Gulo» that decorated his *Liber* (p. 554), unidentifiable in any of the surviving editions of the *Historia*.

These editions, as a matter of fact, dedicate chapter XVIII - which included the most sweeping treatment relating to the entire Northern world to date - to the text and to the drawings relating to the «Gulo».

What does still survive, however, in copies at the Vatican Library and Augusta Library in Perugia is the already cited, small, 8-page booklet published in Venice in June 1539 in Italian (*Opera breve*) and in July of the same year in German (*Ain kurze Auslegung*, cit., see also the Stockholm reproduction of 1912), in which Olao "advanced" to his readership the publication of a major future work.

As Olao explained in the Italian edition, his intention was to offer a summary of the main themes, a «brevissimo indice» [very short index] of a «piu giusto volume» [more suitable volume], namely his already begun «Geografia delle settentrionali terre» [Geography of the northern lands], the work that would then lead to the *Carta marina* and the *Historia*.

Among the "advanced" themes there is, on an unnumbered page (that is 3r), the story of the «Gulo», limited to his mildly fascinating digestive portrait, but bearing as well an astonishing implication:

bedeut die thieren die man hayst auf Schuedisch Ierff auf teütsch uilfrofs uelche seind unmeslich im essen an underschait. So aber die natur überflisig uuiizdt bezungen stellen sysich zuyschen zuay baummen und trucken ihren bauch byss das sysich burgieren und lauffen vider zum frissen als dan kumbt der ieger und schuist sy allain umm ihr haut uuille dan die selben heut dienen dem adel und gross heruzubeklaudung dann syscindt hüpsch gebluemet uue ain tamasch. Aber uuanu sysolche rock tragen uuerden syschier ueruuan delt in der natur des thiers.

From the Italian publication:

G. Animali voraci, li quali per nome fitticio si chiamano guloni, perche non intermetteno mai la loro voracita se non quando i scaricano, over purgano il ventre stringendosi fra doi arbori: non dimeno quando col divorare et col digerire vivono, sono amazzati dalle faetre de cacciatori: et hanno le pelli molto preciose, le quali si applicano al culto de principi et accade spesso che vestiti di quelli a fatica si possono satiare.

The Italian publication shows that the two booklets were not published as translations one from the other but rather as two different versions; moreover, since in the title page he warned against whomever wanted to publish tales on the northern peoples without first obtaining permission from Magno («severiore Summi Pontificis et Veneti Senatus decreto cautum est, ne quis intra decennium, Geographiam Aquilonarium Regnorum, et libros eam declarantes, excudere, vel ab aliis excussam vendere praesumat sine authoris Olai videlicet Gothi licentia»), one could conclude that Olao was pressured into such an advance to prevent plagiarism or to block analogous editorial plans.

The «Gulo» had to serve, evidently, to excite the interest in a project of more sweeping importance.

It is possible that Gesner's «libellus» may refer to Olao's booklet - other sources have as yet escaped my attention, if one excludes the «Tabula Septentrionalium ad Europam

regionum» from which Gesner himself as we can read in the «Gulo» icon drew *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum quae in Historiae animalium C. Gesneri libro I et II describuntur*, Tiguri 1560<sup>2</sup>, p. 78. Certainly it was by means of the indication in Olao's *Historia* that Gesner consulted the «Sarmazia» [Sarmatia] of the «Mechovita», that is the *De Sarmatia asiana atque europea libri duo* of the Krakowian Canon Matthias of Miekow who, even before Cardano, in 1517, had described that «animal voracissimum et inutile» by the name of «Rossomaka», which lived exclusively in Lithuania and Moscow (see the Basileae edition of 1555, in S. Grynaeus, *Novus orbis regionum ac insularum veteribus incognitarum una cum tabula cosmographica*, pp. 480s.).

It had a particular eating custom that was perhaps imposed on it by nature for the purpose of making the many greedy people who populated those lands ashamed of their own voraciousness. Those - as Olao would have specified - who would provoke vomiting in order to continue eating.

Gesner resorted also to tales he heard himself («ut audio»); among his friends there was a certain «Schenebergerus» who sent him a physical description of the «Gulo», which clarified ordinary characteristics («pili in ea [fera] sunt longi, sed non admodum dense dispositi, nigri, splendentes, ut Zobellae videri possint: minoris tamen quam Zobella venditur»). Another friend, I. Zimmerman from Vilnius, also wrote reviving anew its habitual food practices (see *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum*, cit., p. 79).

Despite the diverse and conflictory sources, Gesner seemed to have attempted a more scientific investigation than his predecessors and to have given the most credence to this description:

Rossomaka minor lupo, brevioribus cruribus, adeo repletur ut venter propendens terram fere contingat. Rictum fere suis habet, dentes lupinos, longos. Genera sunt duo, unum nigrum, et aliud lupino fere colore. Hominem et animalia viva non laedit: morticina tantum vorat, et nimis repleta in suo latibulo revomit: ac rursus ad multum tempus ijs quae

evomerit pascitur. Ursus occidere eam obviam non potest, ita dentibus se defendit.

The tale did not in any way eliminate the digestive habits of the animal, because these had a deeply symbolic and ethical significance (and because any information whatsoever played a role in science then). The *De quadrupedis viviparis* takes them up again, however, in a couple of lines attributed to Olao, citing with accuracy all of his sources and smoothing the way for successive naturalistic studies in which the «Gulo» would be given an even bigger place - in the quest for historical sources and, above all, in the confirmation, now amplified, of the symbolical significance inherent in its strange behavior. (*continued*)

6. *Appendix from the Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus autore Olao Magno, Romae 1555.*

a) b. XVIII (c. 7 De Gulonibus), p. 605 (end of the *Epitome* by C.S. Grafeo: *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus authore Olao Magno a Cornelio Scribonio Grapho in Epitomen redacta*, Antverpiae 1562, p. 137):

Inter omnia animalia, quae immani voracitate creduntur insatiabilia, hoc animal praesenti figura expressum, in partibus Suetiae Septentrionalis praecipuum suscepit nomen, ubi patrio sermone Ierff dicitur, et lingua Germanica Vielefrafs, Sclavonice Rossomaka a multa comestione: Latino vero non nisi fictitio, Gulo, videlicet a gulositate appellatur. Grossities eius, ut magni canis: aures, et facies, velut catti: pedes, et ungulae asperrimae: corpus villosum, et prolixorum pilorum subfuscorum: cauda ut vulpis, licet brevior, sed crinium densiorum: unde optima conficiuntur hyemalia capitum tegumenta. Hoc igitur animal voracissimum est. Reperto nanque cadavere, tantum vorat, ut violento cibo corpus instar tympani extendatur: inventaque angustia inter arbores, se stringit, ut violentius egerat: sicque extenuatum, revertitur ad cadaver, et ad summum usque repletur: iterumque se stringit angustia priore, repetitque cadaver, donec eo consumpto, aliud sollicita venatione inquirat. Creditur a natura creatum ad ruborem hominum: qui vorando, bibendoque vomunt, redeuntque ad mensam, noctes et dies continuaturi, prout Mechovita in sua Sarmatia opinatur. Caro huius animalis omnino inutilis est ad humanam escam: sed pellis multum commoda, atque

pretiosa. Candet enim fuscata nigredine, instar panni Damasceni, diversis ornata figuris: atque pulchrior in aspectu redditur, quo artificum diligentia et industria, colorum conformitate, in quocunque vestium genere fuerit coadunata: soli Principes, et magnates eo indumento tunicarum more confecto, hyemis tempore utuntur: quia calorem adducit citius, et eum diutius seruat inductum: idque non solum in Suetia et Gothia, sed et in Germania, ubi raritas harum pellium maiorem sortitur aestimationem, quando navigiis una cum caeteris mercibus fuerit appetiata.

b) b. XVIII (c. 8 De honestandis hospitibus in harum pellium tegumentis), p. 606 (end of Grafeo's *Epitome*, p. 137):

Neque incolae terrarum quaestus causa permittunt has pelles educi in alienas regiones, cum et earum tegumentis tractent in hyeme hospites honorabiliores: argumentum ostendentes sufficiens, sese nihil amoenius, clariusque ducere, quam bonos hospites quovis tempore et ordine magnificare, etiam in vehementi frigore, quando inter alia beneficia lectos tam pretiosis pellibus stratos, eisdem exhibent praeparatos, prout xvi. libro de hospitalitate gentis cap. xii. extitit declaratum. Sed neque silendum existimo, quod dormientibus sub harum pellium tegumentis, evenire solent somnia, quasi eius animalis vitae, naturaeque conformia, in insatiabilitate devorandi, et bestiis insidiis faciendis, et praecavendis: quod forsitan sub ratione sit, ut qui species calidas, zinziber, aut piper comedunt, comburi videantur: et saccharum manducantes, aquis suffocari credantur, prout Plutarchus habet in *Problematibus suis*. Videtur et aliud sabbesae naturae secretum, ut iis pellibus induti, bibendo et comedendo nullum saturitatis vestigium relinquunt. Intestina huius animalis, citharoedorum opera ad usum chordarum (voluptate gentium) formata, seu extensa, raucum generant sonum: qui temperamento chordarum dulcium cito resolvitur in amoenitatem. Ungulae in modum circuli vertiginosis capitibus, ac tinnientibus auriculis appensae, celeriter recuperandae sanitati prosunt. Sanguis eius aquae calidae admixtus, venatoribus est pro potu: immo etiam melle rarissimo conditus, in nuptialibus triumphis propinatur. Aruina, seu pinguedo eius, putridis ulceribus per modum unctionis adhibita, celerrime sanitati confert. Dentium usus incantatoribus patrocinatoribus. Ungulae praedictae recenter extractae, catts, canesque demonstratae fugant, quemadmodum aviculae viso vulture, vel erythrotaone.

c) b. XVIII (cap. 9 *De modo venandi Gulones*), p. 607:

Venatorum arte varia acquiritur hoc animal insidiosum (cuius facies partim catto, partim cani similis est) solo respectu pretiosae pellis, hoc modo:



portatur in sylvam cadaver recens, ubi frequentius hae bestiae vagari videntur, praesertim in nivibus altis: (aestate enim nil valent pelles) quo cognito per odorem, et apprehenso, vescitur, donec ventrem instar tympani extensum, inter arbores angustas, non sine cruciatu cogatur exonerare: sicque occupatum, lata dimissa sagitta venator occidit. Est et alius modus huius bestiae capiendae, per trabes tenuissima chorda distinctas, ut eius levi motu, cadaver edendo stranguletur: vel etiam in effossas scrobes, seu cavernas obliquas, ut fame urgente cadavere immisso vescatur, incidens capitur. Aliaque via vix conceditur, ut a canibus apprehendatur, cum ungulas, dentesque, adeo acutos habeat, ut eius congressum formident canes, qui in ferocissimos lupos vires suas extendere solent [end of Grafeo's Epitome, p. 138]. Huic guloni in avibus magnis assimilantur harpyae, quae in solitudine iuxta mare Ionicum morantur, tam rabidae famis, ut fere nullo cibo perhibeantur satiari. In marinis monstris ahunus cunctis aliis insatiabilior: cuius corpus extenditur, donec vomitu extenuet ventrem, prout Albertus et Vincentius attestantur. Ita et hippopotamus, fluvialis equus: qui naturali astutia inter arundines pedem vulnerando, saginam deponere novit, impressaque complanare vestigia, ut venatores fallat insequentes, prout Plinius et Solinus dicunt.



## SAXO GRAMMATICUS AND ENNIUS\*

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For the Middle Ages Ennius was little more than a name (for us it is somewhat more: a list of fragments). But not just any name: in Horace, Ennius is the poet *et sapiens et fortis et alter Homerus* (epist. 2,1,50); in Cicero (Arch. 22), in Ovid (ars 3,409-410) and in Jerome's *Chronicon* (a.Abr. 1850) he is a poet so great as to merit a position in the sepulchre of Scipio; in an anecdote recounted by Cassiodorus, Ennius is a prized source of Virgil's, *dum Ennium legeret* [scil. Vergilius], *a quodam quid faceret inquisitus respondit: "Aurum in stercore quaero"* (inst. 1,8). A name recurring so frequently, in different authors, could not but excite interest on the part of Medieval readers, as well as an ambition to track down his works: Adhelm of Malmesbury (VII Century) cited

Ennius among the titles of the library of the abbey, but obviously knew only the name (see L.Bönhoff, *Adhelm von Malmesbury*, Dresden 1894, pp. 71 ss.); in the age of the Renaissance Pomponio Leto boasted the possession of Ennius' *Annales*, arousing the envy of the other Humanists (see A.J.Dunston, "A Student's Note of Lectures by Giulio Pomponio Leto", *Antichthon* 1 [1967], p. 92). Some of the attestations that I quote below hypothesised that the work could have been preserved in some codices originating in the Middle Ages and then lost, but this is a hypothesis that can be discarded: at the time of Macrobio (end of IV Century) the work of Ennius had already been lost, *quia saeculum nostrum ab Ennio et omni bibliotheca vetere descivit, multa ignoramus, quae non laterent, si veterum lectio nobis esset familiaris* (Sat. 6,9,9); Corippus (VI Century) drew on quotations of Macrobius and others, as Baldwin has recently shown (see B.Baldwin, "Corippus and Ennius", *Illinois Class.Stud.* 13 [1988], pp. 175-82).

With the impossibility of tracking down the Ennius text, the Middle Ages remembered his name, recovering noticeable appraisals in the sources: Beda (VIII Century) quoted Ennius in *De schematibus et tropis* (p. 610,20 *Rhet.Lat.Min.* Halm) by Sedulius, *Carm.Pasch.* 1,136; Muadwin of Autun took his cue from Ovid (*trist.* 2,423-424), *Carmina lusit item variis en maximus odis / Ennius, ingenuis scribens monimenta priorum; / Propterea in terris tenuit tum culmen honoris* (ed. Dümmler I p. 387, ll. 79-81); Theodulus (IX Century) from Martianus Capella's *distichum Ennianum* (1,42), *Adsint praecipue qui curant florida Tempe, / Quos in distichii serie complecteris, Enni* (ecl. 285-286); Alan of Lille (XII Century), *Illic pannoso plebescit carmine noster / Ennius et Priami fortunas intonat* (*Anticlaud.* I.5, ed. Wright), derives, for Förster, from Priscian, who quotes (*gramm.* II p. 97,8-9 Keil) Ennius' fragment *ann.* 17 Vahlen<sup>2</sup> [= 14 Skutsch], *cum veter occubuit Priamus sub Marte Pelasgo* (see R.Förster, "Zur Handschriftenkunde und Geschichte der Philologie", *Rhein.Museum* 37 [1882],