

# Leeds Studies in English

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adaptation of *seynd bacoun* in the Nonne Preestes Tale. This may in its turn owe something to

sordida terga suis nigro pendentia tigno  
in Ovid's episode of Philemon and Baucis (*Met.* viii, 648).

Incidentally the reference to *broun breed* in the preceding line is a century earlier than the first in NED. It should be noted too that it was probably made of rye flour and a good deal darker than anything we understand by 'brown bread.'

B.D.

### MN.E. COBLE

NED. (s.v. *Coble*<sup>1</sup>) plausibly suggests that Mn. E. *coble* 'kind of boat' is a British loan-word; cf. Welsh *ceubal*, Breton *caubal* 'kind of boat.' The Celtic word is itself in all probability a borrowing from Latin; cf. Lat. *caupulus*, *caupilus*, *caupillus* 'kind of little boat';<sup>2</sup> Provençal *caupol*, Spanish *copano*. The word must have been borrowed into Celtic at an early date, for Lat. *au* is represented by Mn. Welsh *eu* (< Pr. Brit. *ow*), as in Mn. Welsh *Meuric* O. Welsh *Mouric* from Lat.

<sup>1</sup> 'A short, flat-bottomed rowing-boat, used in salmon-fishing and for crossing ferries, etc. [Scotland]; an open or deckless fishing-boat used principally on the north-east coast, with sharp bows, flat, sloping stern and without a heel.' Scotland, Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and East Anglia (J. Wright, *English Dialect Dictionary* s.v. *coble* sb.<sup>1</sup>). This evidence and the quotations from NED. seem to indicate that the word has been confined to certain areas from the earliest times. Cobles are still to be seen in plenty at Holy Island.

<sup>2</sup> See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. *caupulus*. The etymology of the Latin word is doubtful; see A. Walde, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *caupulus*. Semitic origin for the word seems possible: Arabic *quff-at-un* 'panier (*espuerta*, *goja en que cogen las espigas*); grand panier rond enduit de bitume dont on se sert à Baçra en guise de barque' (Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* ii, 382-3); see Niebuhr, *Reize naar Arabië* ii, 204; Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia etc.* ii, 260. A picture of the modern *guffa* as used on the Tigris will be found in Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* i, 251 and, at p. 179 of L. W. King's *History of Babylon*, a bas-relief in the British Museum showing its Assyrian prototype is depicted. Cf. also Ethiopic *qaffō* 'large basket between five and nine feet long used for beehives and storing grain.' In order to explain the Latin *caup-* we should have to assume (i) that the word reached Latin, not from Arabic direct, but *via* East Syriac which has a *ṣ* in such positions—hence \**qup-* (see Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* p. 15)—and (ii) that the Semitic *qu* (with back *q*) was heard as [kau] which is phonetically very probable. (From information kindly placed at my disposal by Dr. G. R. Driver and Mr. A. F. L. Beeston).

*Mauricius*, not by Mn. Welsh *aw* (Pr. Brit. *aw*), as in O. Cornish *caul* Welsh *cawl* from Lat. *caulis*.<sup>3</sup> The *b* for Lat. *p* is regular; cf. Welsh *cybydd* < Lat. *cupidus*, Welsh *pobl* < Lat. *populus*. For Pr. Brit. we may postulate a form with \**coub*-.

In the Lindisfarne Gospels Mt. 8, 23 'in nauicula' is glossed in *lytlum scipe* † *in cuople*. If we emend *cuople* to \**couple* the word would agree well with the postulated Pr. Brit. form in vocalism; we may regard it as the first instance of the British loan-word *coble*.<sup>4</sup> The *p* in the Lindisfarne form is probably due to reanalogy with Lat. *caupulus* (cf. *grēcisc* beside the regular *crēcisc* 'graecus' in Lindisfarne).<sup>5</sup>

A.S.C.R.

#### OBTHRUST IN NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE.

In his article on "English Names and Old English Heathenism" in *Essays and Studies* (xix, 58-9), Professor Dickins mentions OE. *þyrs*, or perhaps ON. *þurs*, as being probably the second element of the Yorkshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire dialectal *Hob-thrush* or *Hobthrust*; *Hob* is a diminutive of *Robert* (cf. *Hobgoblin*). No Middle English form with metathesis of *r* is recorded in NED., Stratmann-Bradley or Mayhew-Skeat; but Dr. G. R. Owst (*Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, p. 270) cites from a sermon of Master Rypon of Durham a reference to 'a certain demon—in English *Thrus*'—which ground corn till furnished with a fine new coat. Nor is any form of *Hobthrust* recorded as current in Lincolnshire in either edition of Edward Peacock's *Glossary of Words used in the Wapentakes of Manley and Corringham* or in Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen* i §131.

<sup>4</sup> The Lindisfarne form can hardly be explained as a direct loan from Latin; corresponding to a Latin *au* we should expect O.E. *ēa* in early loan-words (cf. *cēas*: Lat. *causa*) and OE. *āw*, *āu* in late ones (cf. *cāwel*: Lat. *caulis*); see K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* § 216.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that a (learned) reformaté with \**coup*- also existed in Pr. Brit.; cf. Mn. Welsh *epistol* beside M. Welsh *ebostol*: Lat. *epistola*; see Pedersen, *op. cit.* § 144 note 4.