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HORACE, EPODES 2,23–28

PIERRE–JACQUES DEHON

Except for the end (67–70), the whole of Horace's second Epode is a panegyric of country life¹. Verses 9–36, which scholars generally agree in seeing as a unit, are a long description of a countryman's pleasant occupations². Verses 17–22 picture autumn (*Autumnus*, 18) and verses 29–36, winter (*annus hibernus*, 29: "the winter season"³). Horace has not openly indicated the season of the scenes of verses 9–16 and 23–28. Nevertheless, critics have tried to find out whether these descriptions correspond to definite times of the year. This attitude seems to me correct, provided that we do not see here an account of the seasonal *cycle* or look for a symbolic or philosophical meaning – which, on the other hand, does exist in *carm.* 4,7–. L. Remy⁴ and R.W. Carrubba⁵ thought that the activities

¹ For the problems raised by the plan of the poem, see esp. L. Remy, *LÉC* 26 (1958) 266–272, esp. 267–268; R.W. Carrubba, *Hommages à M. Renard I* (ed. J. Bibauw), Bruxelles 1969, 229–237; A. Setaioli, *ANRW* 2.31.3 (1981) 1674–1788, esp. 1699–1700.

² Or of his *outdoor* occupations, as opposed to the pictures of verses 39–66; see e.g. Remy, art. cit. 267; Carrubba, art. cit. 232.

³ For *annus* meaning "season", cf. e.g. Verg. *ecl.* 3,57 (*formosissimus annus*); Hor. *carm.* 3,23,8 (*pomifero... anno*); Ov. *fast.* 5,207 (*nitidissimus annus*); Calp. 5,21 (*viridis... annus*); St. Th. 4,1 (*horrentem... annum*); cf. also the remarks of Isid. *orig.* 1,37,13.

⁴ Art. cit. 267.

⁵ Art. cit. 231–232.

mentioned in verses 9–16 suggested spring⁶. As for verses 23–28, these scholars⁷ consider them to be an extension of the autumnal description. In a recent article, S.J. Heyworth⁸ took a new look at the problem: using prose authorities, he has confirmed that verses 9–16 actually describe spring occupations and insisted on the fact⁹ that the scene of shaded rest in verses 23–28 is a picture of the hot season, a scene of summer (not autumnal) atmosphere. Hence the following structure:

- (1) spring atmosphere (9–16);
- (2) autumn (17–22);
- (3) summer atmosphere (23–28);
- (4) winter (29–36).

Surprised by the order according to which the seasonal sentences follow one another, Heyworth¹⁰ has proposed an alteration of the Horatian text: "What... has Horace gained by displacing summer, and leaving it obscure? May I suggest that verses 23–8 originally lay between 16 and 17, that a scribe's eye seeking *ovis* found *levis* and his hand omitted the lines, leaving them to float in the margin until they found another resting place?" I should like to show that this transposition cannot be accepted.

First of all, there is no lack of passages where poets disorder the seasons when reviewing them¹¹; indeed, in *carm.* 4,7,9–12, Horace enumerates them according to the natural order, but there he attempts, for the sake of a

⁶ And, so far as the last ones are concerned, end of spring-beginning of summer; cf. also L. Duret, *RÉL* 55 (1977) 173–192, esp. 183.

⁷ Remy, art. cit. 267; Carrubba, art. cit. 231–232; cf. also Duret, art. cit. 183.

⁸ *AJPh* 109 (1988) 71–85, esp. 74–80.

⁹ This had already been pointed out by A. Geikie (*The Love of Nature among the Romans during the Later Decades of the Republic and the First Century of the Empire*, London 1912, 74–78), A. Kiessling and R. Heinze (*Q. Horatius Flaccus I*⁸, Berlin 1955, 490 and 494).

¹⁰ Art. cit. 79.

¹¹ Yet Heyworth (*ibid.*) seems to be conscious of that. Cf. e.g. *Verg. ecl.* 7,45–60; *georg.* 4,134–138; *Ov. rem.* 187–188; *Man.* 3,618–665; *Priap.* 84 (Bücheler-Heraeus: same sequence as in Horace); *Sen. epigr.* 3,3–5 (Prato = A. L. 237,3–5 [Riese]); *H. O.* 1576–1579; *Mart.* 9,13 (12),1–4.

philosophical argumentation, to emphasize the idea of cycle¹²: this idea is not underlined in the Epode, so that such a clear sequence was not needed.

Besides, if the order of the manuscripts is maintained, the quadripartite composition *does* have a structure: the poet alternates scenes without an indication of season (with a seasonal *atmosphere*) with scenes openly fixed at a definite season, and also warm(er) with cold(er) seasons (i.e., in both cases, an a b a' b' structure). If we refer to the way Horace considers the *tempora anni* in his works, the four vignettes even seem to be disposed so that they produce a crescendo: the first season alluded to (spring) is a season which Horace finds very pleasing *in itself*¹³ and that is, quite normally, especially pleasing in the country; the second one (autumn), the time of ripe fruits¹⁴, but also of diseases¹⁵, is in the country *nothing but* the time of fruits; the two last seasons (summer and winter) are the ones that are by their very nature the most difficult to bear¹⁶ and of which the country life allows to discover the charms.

Moreover, the strong *At*¹⁷ opening verse 29 is entirely justifiable if it introduces, immediately after a picture of rest (*iacere*, 23 and *somnos*, 28) in a serene setting (*sub antiqua ilice*, 23; *in tenaci gramine*, 24; *aquae*, 25; *in silvis aves*, 26; *fontes*, 27), the description of a hunt, full of action (*trudit... hinc et hinc*, 31; *tendit*, 33; *captat*, 36), in bad weather (*tonantis*, 29 and *imbres nivesque*, 30); furthermore, in all his literary output, Horace likes to stress the contrast between hot and cold season¹⁸. On the other hand, this *At* would not be

¹² Cf. the context of these verses (7–16). Other poets also like to preserve the order when they have the seasonal cycle in view: cf. e.g. Lucr. 5,737–747; Ov. met. 15,199–213; Aetna 237–239; laus Pis. 145–154; Sen. Ph. 966–971.

¹³ Cf. carm. 1,4 (esp. 1); 2,6,17; 3,7,1–2; 4,7,9; ep. 1,7,12–13; see e.g. Geikie, op. cit. 240–241.

¹⁴ Cf. carm. 2,5,10–12; 3,28,3; 4,7,11.

¹⁵ Cf. carm. 2,14,15–16; 3,23,8; ep. 1,7,5–9; 16,15–16; sat. 2,6,18–19.

¹⁶ Cf. for summer, carm. 1,17,2–3 and 17–18; 3,1,31–32; 13,9–10; ep. 1,10,16–17; sat. 1,1,36 and 38; for winter, carm. 2,6,17–18; 10,15; 3,1,32; ep. 1,7,10–12; 10,15; sat. 1,1,39; 2,6,25–26.

¹⁷ M¹ codd. plerique. *Aut*, reading of BCu, is impossible for the sentence's construction (cf. already *Aut... /Aut...*, 31 and 33). *Et*, given only by M², is no more likely.

¹⁸ Cf. carm. 2,6,17–18; 3,1,31–32; ep. 1,10,15–17; 11,18–19; sat. 1,1,38–39; 2,5,39–41.

so easy to explain after an allusion to autumnal harvesting and offering (17–22).

A comparison with Martial seems to bring an additional argument against the transfer of verses 23–28. Scholars, especially L. Duret¹⁹, have shown how much the Spanish poet has been inspired by our Epode in epigr. 1,49; there we read those verses, that serve as a prelude, as in Horace, to a description of winter pleasures:

*At cum / Decem/ber || ca/nus et / bruma im/potens
Aquilone rauco mugiet... (19–20).*

Verse 19, as Duret²⁰ pointed out, is formally very near to verse 29 of the Epode – the same metre (iambic senarius) and structure, echoing sonorities –:

At cum / tonan/tis || an/nus hi/bernus / Iovis...

In Martial's poem, the brief characterization of winter is used as a transition between a picture of hot days, against which people fight by searching coolness (shade and water: 15–18), and a scene of winter hunting (21–26); Duret²¹ comments: "Ainsi, dans l'*Épigramme* comme dans l'*Épode*, la représentation de la mauvaise saison succède au même thème et nous achemine vers un même thème". Therefore, it is very likely that Martial had before his eyes a text where the four scenes followed one another in the same way as in our manuscripts. Since the argument taken from the Horace-Martial parallel comes in addition to others, it seems right to admit that it is a confirmation of their validity and a new indication against the transposition of verses 23–28.

¹⁹ See Fr. Olivier, *Les Épodes d'Horace*, Lausanne – Paris 1917, 49–50; G. Donini, *AJPh* 85 (1964) 56–60, esp. 59–60; Duret, art. cit.; P. Howell, *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial*, London 1980, 221 and 223.

²⁰ Art. cit. 181.

²¹ *Ibid.*