

PHILOSOPHICAL IMAGERY IN HORACE, *ODES* 3.5

The high moral tone of Horace's *Regulus* ode (3.5) makes it unsurprising that the poet should employ the traditional imagery of philosophers, both in the speech of *Regulus* and in the final simile. I should like here to point out some instances which seem to have escaped the notice of commentators.

(i) 27–30

...neque amissos colores
 lana refert medicata fucō,
 nec vera virtus, cum semel excidit,
 curat reponi deterioribus.

This passage is intended to illustrate the lost 'virtus' of the prisoners in Carthage, who, *Regulus* claims, will be of no greater use to the Romans if ransomed since they were cowardly enough to surrender in the first place. For the first image of dyeing wool *Kiessling-Heinze* refer the reader to *Lucretius* 6.1074–7:

purpureusque colos conchyli iungitur una
 corpore cum lanae, dirimi qui non queat usquam,
 non si Neptuni fluctu renovare operam des,
 non mare si totum velit eluere omnibus undis.

This gives the first hint that the image belongs to the philosophical tradition, though it does not seem to occur in the extant remains of *Epicurus*. This is confirmed by a passage of *Plato*, who at *Rep.* 429d ff. has an elaborate image taken from the dyer's art. The Guardians of the ideal city are to be carefully selected and prepared like wool for the dyeing process of education; then, as good wool keeps its colour after dyeing, so the Guardians will keep right opinions when they are taught them. The image is summarized by *Socrates* at 430a ff.:

μηδὲν οἶον ἄλλο μηχανᾶσθαι, ἢ ὅπως ἡμῖν ὁ τι κάλλιστα τοὺς νόμους πεισθέντες δέξονται ὥσπερ βαφὴν, ἵνα δευσοποιὸς αὐτῶν ἡ δόξα γίγνοιτο καὶ περὶ δεινῶν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων διὰ τὸ τὴν τε φύσιν καὶ τὴν τροφὴν ἐπιτηδεῖαν ἐσχηκέναι, καὶ μὴ αὐτῶν ἐκπλύναι τὴν βαφὴν τὰ ῥύμματα ταῦτα, δεινὰ ὄντα ἐκκλύζειν, ἣ τε ἡδονή, παντὸς χαλεστραίου δεινότερα οὐσα τοῦτο δρᾶν καὶ κούρας, λύπη τε καὶ φόβος καὶ ἐπιθυμία, παντὸς ἄλλου ῥύμματος.

This passage was imitated by *Cicero* in his lost *Hortensius*: the relevant fragment (96 in *Grilli's* edition) is preserved by *Nonius* (p. 838.19ff. *Lindsay*):

ut ii, qui conbibi purpuram volunt, sufficiunt prius lanam medicamentis quibusdam, sic litteris talibusque doctrinis ante excoli animos et ad sapientiam concipiendam imbui et praeparari decet.

The points of comparison between the two images are instructive: *Plato* regards right opinion as the dye to be used on the virgin wool of the young Guardians, while *Horace* conversely equates dye with decadence and vice.¹ One puzzling element in *Horace's* formulation is 'amissos colores', referring to the original white before dyeing: the plural 'colores' would be much more appropriate for the colours

¹ The more usual associations of dye – cf. *H. Kornhardt, Hermes* 82 (1954), 112. The metaphor of dyeing for education occurs elsewhere in *Cicero* and also in *Quintilian* – cf. *E. Fantham, Comparative Studies in Republican Latin Imagery* ([Phoenix Suppl. 10], Toronto, 1972), 162, *G. Assfahl, Vergleich und Metapher bei Quintilian* ([Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 15], Stuttgart, 1932), 103.

produced by the dye, as in Quintilian's imitation (1.1.5): 'nec lanarum colores, quibus simplex ille candor mutatus est, elui possunt'. What Horace has done is to conflate two notions, that of the loss of virgin white in dyeing and that of the dyed wool losing its colours. This latter notion is a central idea of the image in the *Republic* (μὴ αὐτῶν ἐκπλύναι τὴν βαφήν), and Horace has surely been influenced by Plato here. The cause of the lost colours is a further point of comparison between the two writers. According to Horace's *Regulus* the cause of the lost 'virtus' of the prisoners, illustrated by the 'amissi colores' of the image, is the cowardice which led them to surrender (31–6):

si pugnat extricata densis
 cerva plagis, erit ille fortis
 qui perfidis se credidit hostibus,
 et Marte Poenos proteret altero
 qui lora restrictis lacertis
 sensit iners timuitque mortem.

The comparison with the timid deer, the sarcastic 'erit ille fortis' and the contemptuous 'timuitque mortem' all stress this quality of fear. Fear is also found in Plato's list of agents likely to dissolve the young Guardians' dye of virtue (ἡδονή...λύπη τε καὶ φόβος καὶ ἐπιθυμία) and therefore liable to produce a loss of colour. These particular details as well as the general similarity of the image suggest that Horace knew and used this passage of Plato; what is in any case clearly established is that the image of dyeing belongs to the philosophical tradition.

The second image in lines 27–30 has not been identified by commentators. The verbs of the passage point to a particular metaphor: both 'excidere' and 'reponere' belong to the technical terminology of medicine. 'Excidere', a calque on ἐκπίπτειν in the Hippocratic treatise *Περὶ Ἀρθρῶν* (*De Articulis*), refers to the dislocation of a limb, 'reponere', corresponding to ἐμβάλλειν, to putting the limb back in its proper position.² Both terms can be conveniently illustrated from Celsus:

8.11.4 sed ut excidere omnes articuli non possunt, sic non omnes reponuntur...ac quibus (articuli) in pueritia exciderunt neque repositi sunt, minus quam ceteri crescunt.

8.20.4 magnum autem femori periculum est, ne vel difficulter reponatur, vel repositum rursus excidat.

So the Horatian passage means that 'virtus', like a dislocated limb, cannot be fitted back into position once 'put out'. The image makes sense in terms of ancient medicine, since both Celsus and Hippocrates stress that putting a joint back is sometimes highly difficult and not always possible (cf. Celsus above 'non omnes reponuntur' and note the fearsome apparatus of the 'scamnum' or Hippocratic bench).³ However, as in the previous image from dyeing, the metaphor is contaminated: the personification of 'virtus...non curat' and the moral disapproval of 'deterioribus' have no counterpart in the medical sphere, but rather recall the lofty and Stoic contempt of 'virtus' for the common failings of man, very much in the manner of *Odes* 3.2.21ff.:

Virtus, recludens immeritis mori
 caelum, negata temptat iter via,
 coetusque vulgaris et udam
 spernit humum fugiente penna.

² Cf. Hippocrates, op. cit. 2 (= Littré 4.80.23ff.): ὅσοισι μὲν οὖν πυκινὰ ἐκπίπτει ὁ ὤμος, ἱκανοὶ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλείστον αὐτοὶ σφίσι αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβάλλειν εἰσὶν. For 'excidere' and 'reponere' in these medical senses cf. *TLL* 5.2.1235.82ff. and *OLD* s.v. 'repono' 1 respectively.

³ Conveniently illustrated in G. Majno, *The Healing Hand: Man and Wounds in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 162–6.

Of course 'deterioribus' refers in particular to the prisoners in Carthage, 'amissa virtute deteriores facti' (Kiessling-Heinze) rather than to the general moral failings of mankind, but the movement of thought is closely similar.

Unlike the metaphor from dyeing, that of dislocation does not seem to be found in philosophy before Horace. However, Seneca has it (*Ep.* 104.18):

Fregit aliquis crus aut extorsit articulum: non vehiculum navemque conscendit, sed advocat medicum ut fracta pars iungatur, ut luxata in locum reponatur. Quid ergo? animum tot locis fractum et extortum credis locorum mutatione sanari?

Note that Horace's 'reponere' occurs here, while 'extorquere' and 'luxo' are the transitive counterparts of his intransitive 'excidere'. Here as often Seneca is pursuing the common analogy between physical and moral sickness, a theme found in Plato and Epicurus and in Horace's own explicitly philosophical *Epistles* but particularly associated with Stoic and Cynic writers.⁴ Horace's metaphor matches Seneca's in this respect, and this fact together with the *a priori* likelihood of a Stoic source for Seneca points to a Stoic antecedent for Horace. This is not improbable considering the other Stoic elements in 3.5, such as the poet's emphasis on the uncompromising nature of 'virtus' and the status of Regulus as a Stoic hero, clear both from Horace's poem and from Cicero, *Fin.* 2.65, where Cicero uses Regulus as an example of Stoic 'virtus' against the Epicurean Torquatus.⁵ Thus a Stoic image neatly counterbalances the Platonic simile of dyeing, and both give a welcome philosophical colour and tone to the weighty speech of Regulus.

(ii) 49–56 atqui sciebat quae sibi barbarus
 tortor pararet; non aliter tamen
 dimovit obstantis propinquos
 et populum reditus morantem

 quam si clientum longa negotia
 diuidicata lite relinqueret,
 tendens Venafranum in agros
 aut Lacedaemonium Tarentum.

In this simile for Regulus' departure for torture and death in Carthage, Horace evidently describes a 'lawyer going for a well-earned vacation to an estate in the country'.⁶ Venafrum (Venafro) and Tarentum (Taranto) are mentioned together as suitable places for Horace's retirement in *Odes* 2.6, and both were pleasant resorts where Romans might have holiday homes.⁷ The simile is normally seen as illuminating the heroism of Regulus by contrast:⁸ he is about to return to a hostile country in order to suffer a particularly unpleasant death, but behaves as if he were taking the traditional vacation of the Roman upper classes of Horace's day.⁹ However, the

⁴ Cf. J. C. Bramble, *Persius and the Programmatic Satire* (Cambridge, 1974), 35 n. 2–3, Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace, *Odes* 2.2.13.

⁵ Cf. Kornhardt, art. cit. (n. 1), 118, P. Blätter, *Studien zur Regulusgeschichte* (Diss. Sarnen, 1945), 61. For the later history of Regulus as an 'exemplum' cf. E. R. Mix, *Marcus Atilius Regulus: Exemplum Historicum* (The Hague/Paris, 1970).

⁶ Gordon Williams, *The Third Book of Horace's Odes* (Oxford, 1969), 59.

⁷ Thus the poet Pacuvius retired to Tarentum (as Horace himself wished to – *Odes* 2.6).

⁸ Cf. Williams, op. cit. (n. 6), 60 'It is a sharply devised contrast to the grim reality' and similarly H. P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz: eine Interpretation der Oden* (Darmstadt, 1972–3), 2.84.

⁹ The simile is of course anachronistic (cf. G. Pasquali, *Orazio Lirico* (Florence, 1920), 706): the Regulus story, however much of it is true (see Walbank on Polybius 1.35 and Klebs in *RE* 2.2086–92), belongs to the years 251–48 B.C., while the first pleasure-villa we hear of is that of

change of domicile described in the simile has an intrinsic positive value in addition to its function of contrast. Compare the acute remarks of A. Y. Campbell: 'This [the simile] does not only indicate his heroic fortitude, though it does that and vividly; the illustration itself is in tone with the true situation; we feel, as we are surely meant to feel, that the *longa negotia* of life are over, the stress of the final contest has ceased with the decision which he had himself advised [cf. 'diudicata...lite'], and although he has the ordeal of martyrdom before him, his soul is at rest, he is going to his long home'.¹⁰ Here a connection is hinted at between the change of domicile in the simile and the change of abode from this world to the next. The hint may be amplified.

'Change of domicile' is a natural characterization of death given the frequency of the notion of the 'house of the dead' in classical literature from the time of Homer onwards.¹¹ More particularly, it is precisely the serene and philosophical view of death put by Plato into the mouth of Socrates, using the term *μετοίκησις* or *ἀποδημία*. Three passages are relevant:

(i) *Phaedo* 61d (introduction to the main discussion of the dialogue): καὶ γὰρ ὥσως καὶ μάλιστα πρέπει μέλλοντα ἐκείσε ἀποδημεῖν διασκοπεῖν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀποδημίας τῆς ἐκεῖ, ποίαν τινὰ αὐτὴν οἴομεθα εἶναι· τί γὰρ ἂν τις καὶ ποιοὶ ἄλλο ἐν τῷ μέχρι ἡλίου δυσμῶν χρόνῳ;

(ii) *ib.* 117c (the words of Socrates before drinking the hemlock): Μανθάνω, ἦ δ' ὅς· ἀλλ' εὐχεσθαὶ γέ που τοῖς θεοῖς ἕξεστί τε καὶ χρὴ, τὴν μετοίκησιν τὴν ἐνθένδε ἐκείσε εὐτυχῇ γενέσθαι· ἃ δὲ καὶ ἐγὼ εὐχομαί τε καὶ γένοιτο ταύτῃ.

(iii) *Apol.* 40c (reflections on death in the peroration of the speech): δυοῖν γὰρ θάτερόν ἐστιν τὸ τεθνάναι· ἡ γὰρ οἷον μὴδὲν εἶναι μὴδὲ αἰσθῆσιν μὴδεμίαν μὴδενὸς ἔχειν τὸν τεθνεῶτα, ἡ κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολὴ τις τυγχάνει οὐσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον.

Again like the image of dyeing this notion is taken over from Plato by Cicero, who translates the *Apology* passage at *Tusc.* 1.97:

necesse est enim alterum de duobus, ut aut sensus omnino omnis mors auferat aut in alium quandam ex his locis morte migretur.

Particularly interesting is a more concrete occurrence of the image in a fragment of Cicero's *Hortensius*, the work in which the Platonic dyeing image is also to be found (115 Grilli = Augustine, *De Trin.* 14.19 (26)):

'quapropter' inquit 'ut aliquando terminetur oratio, si aut exstingui tranquille volumus, cum in his artibus vixerimus, aut si ex hac in aliam haud paulo meliorem domum sine mora demigrare, in his studiis nobis omnis opera et cura ponenda est.'

Cicero specifies the image as a moving from house to house; this surely corresponds to the detail of Horace's simile, where the advocate is described as leaving his normal life and business in Rome for the pleasures of his country home.

Scipio Africanus at Liternum, whither he retired in 184 B.C. (Livy 38.52.1) – cf. J. H. D'Arms, *Romans on the Bay of Naples* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 1–9. For other anachronistic similes in Augustan poetry cf. Vergil, *Aen.* 9.710–16 (building piles) with M. Coffey, *BICS* 8 (1961), 69–70, Ovid, *Met.* 1.200–5 (Caesarian conspirators), 3.111 (the 'aulaea' – cf. W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 3rd. ed. (London, 1964) App. E).

¹⁰ A. Y. Campbell, *Horace* (London, 1924), 226.

¹¹ The house of Hades, home of the dead: (e.g.) *Iliad* 15.251, *Odyssey* 12.21, Hesiod, *Th.* 767, Aeschylus, *Persae* 642, Sophocles, *El.* 110, Euripides, *Her.* 808, Callimachus, *Aet.* fr.75.15ff.; for Latin uses cf. *TLL* 5.1978.79ff. For the characterization of death cf. Chaucer, *Knight's Tale* fr. A 2809–10 (the death of Arcite): 'His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther, / As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher', and what looks like a parody of philosophical *μετοίκησις* at Petronius 71.7 (Trimalchio on his grand tomb) 'valde enim falsum est vivo quidem domos cultas esse, non curari eas, ubi diutius nobis habitandum est' (it has been suggested to me this may have

Thus, like the imagery of 27–30, the final simile of the poem has distinct philosophical overtones. What then is the artistic effect of this allusion? In order to answer this we can consider a parallel instance in a work closely contemporary with the *Odes* – Cornelius Nepos’ eulogistic life of his friend Atticus.¹² The biographer relates the words in which Atticus informs his friends of his intention to hasten the inevitable course of a disease by starving himself to death (Nepos, *Att.* 21.6):

‘Nam mihi stat alere morbum desinere. Namque his diebus quidquid cibi sumpsi, ita produxi vitam, ut auxerim dolores sine spe salutis. Quare a vobis peto, primum, ut consilium probetis meum, deinde, ne frustra dehortando impedire conemini.’ Hac oratione habita tanta constantia vocis atque vultus, ut non ex vita, sed ex domo in domum videretur migrare, ...preces...depressit.

The use of the *μετοίκησης* motif has a clear purpose here: Nepos is concerned to bring out his hero’s philosophical resignation in the face of death by using a Platonic image describing the similar resignation of Socrates: Atticus is thus glorified by illustrious precedent. Something of the same sort is, I think, implicit in Horace’s more oblique use of this same motif. In Seneca Regulus is frequently joined with Socrates as an example of philosophic martyrdom,¹³ and Horace’s use of *μετοίκησης* here, an image closely associated with the death of Socrates, suggests a similar analogy between their two ends. Both die for principle, submitting to fates which they could have avoided: Plato’s *Crito* makes it clear that Socrates could have escaped but chose to die in obedience to the laws of Athens (cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.71), while Regulus is bound to return to death in Carthage only by his own promise (id. *Off.* 1.39). The Socratic dimension of *μετοίκησης* thus adds to the heroic status of Regulus in *Odes* 3.5, and he is appropriately enshrined as a heroic martyr in the philosophical tradition.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that Regulus is a patriot as well as a philosopher, and his exemplary patriotism,¹⁴ the real point of his appearance in the poem, is highly relevant in the final stanza. The last line of the poem, ‘Lacedaemonium Tarentum’, has often been viewed as a quiet close to the poem with its flowing ornamental epithet, but may also suggest the patriotic dimension of Regulus’ death. Elsewhere in Horace Tarentum is called ‘molle’ and ‘imbelle’ in keeping with its luxurious character (*Sat.* 2.4.34, *Ep.* 1.7.5 – cf. further Nisbet and Hubbard’s introduction to *Odes* 2.6). Here, on the other hand, the evocation of its supposed Spartan origins¹⁵ might suggest austere Laconic virtues, prime amongst which was a willingness to die for one’s country,¹⁶ memorably celebrated by the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus in a passage (fr. 10, 1–2 West) imitated by Horace elsewhere in the Roman *Odes* (3.2.13):

τεθνάμεναι γὰρ καλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχοισι πεσόντα
ἄνδρ’ ἀγαθὸν περὶ ἧ πατρίδι μαρνόμενον

more to do with house-shaped tombs than with *μετοίκησης*). Similar too is Bion’s comparison of leaving the body to leaving a house (Bion, ap. Teles pp. 15.11–16.2 Hense), using the expression ἐκ τοῦ σωματίου ἐξοικίζεσθαι.

¹² The second edition of Nepos’ *Lives*, in which he added the death-scene of Atticus (*Att.* 19.1), must be dated between the death of Atticus in 32 B.C. and that of Nepos himself in 24; it is likely to have been written before 27 B.C. since the ‘princeps’ is still preferred to as ‘Caesar’ (*Att.* 19.4) rather than ‘Augustus’: *Odes* 1–3 were probably ‘published’ in 23 B.C. – cf. R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book I* (Oxford, 1970), xxxv–xxxvii.

¹³ On five occasions (collected by Blättler, op. cit. in n. 5, 64): *Dial.* 1.3.4, 9.16.4, *Ep.* 67.7, 71.17, 98.12.

¹⁴ Cf. Horace’s placing of Regulus in his gallery of Roman heroes at *Odes* 1.12.37 and Cicero’s many mentions of him, collected by Blättler, op. cit. (n. 5), 59–63.

¹⁵ Its legendary founder was the Spartan king Phalanthus, as Horace mentions at *Odes* 2.6.11 – cf. Nisbet and Hubbard ad loc.

¹⁶ Cf. also Lycurgus, in *Leocr.* 197, Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.102.

Thus it is stressed that Regulus' death brings benefit to his country as well as satisfying personal scruple, a combination of lofty morality and national interest which well suits the atmosphere of the Roman Odes.¹⁷

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