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HORACE ON TERENCE

(EPIST. 2,1,59)¹

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Abstract: In Horace's *Epistle to Augustus* the estimate of Terence may be less positive than is generally believed. This reinterpretation is based first on classical views of acoustic concinnity, then on etymological considerations.

Keywords: Terentius, Horatius, *labor limae*, homoeoptotic homoeoteleuton, *callida iunctura*

The article on Terence in *Enciclopedia Oraziana* opens with the following sentence: "Dal giudizio assai poco lusinghiero che H. formula sul teatro latino arcaico... T. esce tratteggiato in maniera sostanzialmente benevola, al contrario di autori in senso lato coevi".² Particular reference is made in this connection to the line which concludes Horace's review of the older Latin poets in his *Epistle to Augustus*: *vincere* (sc. *dicitur*) *Caecilius gravitate, Terentius arte* (*Epist.* 2,1,59). Here Minarini understands *ars* as denoting *labor limae*.³ The aim of the present note is to suggest that in this line Horace may however be less "benevolo" than is commonly supposed.

This epistle to the *princeps* himself repeatedly preaches the importance of *labor limae*.⁴ Horace's own style in this epistle should therefore be especially *soigné*. Part of this concern with *labor limae* is to ensure *ne ultima syllaba prioris verbi eadem sit quae prima posterioris*.⁵ It is therefore noteworthy that a flat breach of this rule should mark the beginning of the name *Terentius* itself,

¹ Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptio-num*. 2nd ed. Leipzig 1990.

² A. Minarini, Terenzio. in: *Orazio: Enciclopedia Oraziana* 1 (1996) 912.

³ The same view is taken by P. Fedeli, Q. Orazio Flacco: *Le opere* 2,4. Rome 1997, 1338 (ad loc.).

⁴ Cf. esp. 66-68 (*si quaedam nimis antique, si pleraque dure / dicere credit eos, ignave multa fatetur; / et sapit et mecum facit et love iudicat aequo*); 76-77 (*indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse / compositum illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper*); 167 (*sed turpem putat inscite metuitque lituram*); 224-225 (*cum lamentamur non apparere labores / nostros et tenui deducta poemata filo*).

⁵ So Julius Victor, *Rhet.* p. 85,4-5. The prescription is found already in Isocrates, *Tech. fr.* 6 Blass

which is the first of the two words Horace devotes to this author: an inconcinuous *-te Te-* is our introduction to Terence. Here the violation of the precept cannot be excused on prosodic grounds by the need for a pyrrhic sequence in the fifth *biceps* to assure a dactyl, since in this case the fifth foot is not at issue, but the fourth. The inelegance of *-te Te-* could moreover have been easily avoided by a grouping such as *arte valere Terentius*.⁶ It may accordingly be concluded that here the flaw is intentional. Such purposive lack of polish can be shown to have been deployed elsewhere in Horace's *oeuvre* in order to underline his meaning.⁷ In the reference to Terence the point of artless *-te Te-* is evidently to signal Horace's opinion that in reality this poet evinces a corresponding "artlessness".

Further confirmation of this view would seem to be supplied by the other word which Horace devotes to his treatment of Terence: *arte*. The very same sentence of Julius Victor as the one censuring such a collocation as *-te Te-* also issues the following prohibition: *ne homoeoptota, ne homoeoteleuta* (p. 85,3). The second hemistich of the line at issue in the present note is the cause of some puzzlement to Brink, who comments: "*gravitate...arte*: two nouns oddly juxtaposed".⁸ It is therefore worthy of note that this "odd" juxtaposition should engender a striking instance of homoeoptotic homoeoteleuton. In particular the whole word *arte* is a virtual homophone of the second half of the foregoing noun (*-ate*). Moreover the long *a* of these trochaic units (*-āte / ā[r]te*) is in each case placed *in arsi* at the start of the fourth and sixth foot respectively: this repetition of long *a* is acoustically all the more impactful, since the present verse is the only holodactylic in the first two hundred lines of the poem.

The resultant cacophony is exacerbated by the *Terentius* that stands between *-āte* and *ā[r]te*, since this name's own ending (*-ius*) generates another homoeoptotic homoeoteleuton by reproducing the final *-ius* of foregoing *Caecil-ius*. Furthermore the homophony of *ā[r]te* is made worse because the second half of this word consists of the same *-te* that produces the afore-mentioned dissonance of *-te Te-*. The element *te* is accordingly found conspicuously at the beginning or end of three consecutive words: its inconcinuous salience is fur-

(μηδὲ τελευτᾶν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς συλλαβῆς [*sc. δεῖ*], οἷον "εἰποῦσα σαφῆ", "ἡλίκᾳ καλᾷ", "ἐνθα Θαλῆς").

⁶ For such use of *valere* with the ablative cf. Oxf. Lat. Dict. 2006 (s.v. 5b): "to be...superior (by reason of a quality)".

⁷ Cf. the present writer, Three Deliberate Inconcinuities in Horace's *Ars Poetica*. in: *P. Defosse* (ed.), *Hommages à Carl Deroux 1: Poésie*. Brussels 2002 (Coll. Latomus 266), 3-5. The first of these "inconcinuities" entails a breach of the same precept at issue in the present *-te Te-*.

⁸ *C. O. Brink*, *Horace on Poetry: Epistles, Book II: The Letters to Augustus and Florus*. Cambridge 1982, 110.

ther increased by the identical length of the vowel on each occasion. In particular this *te* frames the two words that deal with Terentian drama in the present epistle: *Terentius arte*. Horace has accordingly succeeded in packing a lot of auditive inconcinnity into a mere three feet. No such inelegance marks the preceding ten lines that make up the rest of this survey of old Roman poetry.⁹ The tripod in question is given particular prominence by its location at the end of line, sentence and section.¹⁰ Special emphasis attaches to the very last word, *arte*: the sound of this very term that commends Terentian “art” in fact belies the commendation.¹¹

The article in *Enciclopedia Oraziana* from which the present note began states with reference to Horace’s use of *ars* here that “è evidente la sua valenza positiva”.¹² It would seem possible to show that this view is likewise in need of modification. After the line that ends with *Terentius arte* Horace continues: *hos ediscit et hos arto stipata teatro / spectat Roma potens* (*Epist.* 2,1,60-61). Here the *hos* are the poets of the foregoing survey. These two verses that deal with them would appear to be marked by etymological word-play. The article on “Etimologia” in *Enciclopedia Oraziana* ends by observing that “e. e accostamenti etimologici hanno un ruolo fino ad oggi quanto meno sottovalutato nella lingua di H.”¹³ The long section which Gini devotes to word-play in the *Epistle to Augustus* gives no attention to the lines currently at issue.¹⁴ Similarly the very substantial commentaries of Brink and Fedeli on this epistle fail to detect any etymologizing here.¹⁵ It would appear nonetheless that the *Roma potens* which concludes this sentence is a *jeu étymologique*:¹⁶ *Roma* was etymologized

⁹ The next ten lines are similarly free of blemish.

¹⁰ On the aural noticeability of such terminal position cf. (e.g.) Quintilian, *Inst.* 9,4,61-62.

¹¹ Horace’s own efforts to produce a half-line conspicuously lacking in *labor limae* supply handy confirmation that such is indeed the meaning of *ars* here. He wishes to show by acoustic means that the conventional view of Terence is wrong.

¹² *Minarini*, art. cit. 912.

¹³ *V. Viparelli*, Etimologia. in: *Orazio: Enciclopedia Oraziana* 2 (1997) 835. For recent attempts to identify Horatian etymologizing cf. the present writer, Etymologizing in Horace, Epistles 1,2,62-63. *Acta Classica Univ. Scient. Debrecen.* 38-39 (2002-03) 239-240; id., Horace’s Weak Sheep: Etymologizing in Epode 2,16. *Invig. Lucern.* 31 (2009) 7-8; id., The Etymology of *amnis* in Horace’s *Ars Poetica*. forthcoming in *Acta Classica* 53 (2010). For etymologizing in the Horatian scholia cf. id., Further Supplements to Marangoni’s *Supplementum Etymologicum: The Commentators on Horace*. *Invig. Lucern.* 30 (2008) 261-277.

¹⁴ *A. Gini*, *Philosophy and Word-Play in the Epistles of Horace*. Diss. Brown University 1989, 87-103.

¹⁵ *Brink*, op. cit. 111-112; *Fedeli*, op. cit. 1338. The same impercipience also marks the shorter commentary by *N. Rudd*, *Horace: Epistles, Book II and Epistle to the Pisones (Ars Poetica)*. Cambridge 1989, 86. All these commentators likewise miss the afore-mentioned inconcinnities.

¹⁶ For such “a ‘coupling’, i.e. where the two words etymologically linked are placed side by side”

from *ῥώμη*.¹⁷ It would seem that further etymologizing is also to be found in the previous line: this time the point at issue is the etymology of Terence's *ars*.

Artus is not an appropriate epithet to qualify *theatrum*: the Roman theatre was not “narrow”.¹⁸ Here *arto* has been located immediately after the main caesura, while *arte* occupies final position in the preceding line: these *loci* are the most important of the etymological markers.¹⁹ Although the more usual etymon to be given for *ars* was *ἄρετή*, the Latin noun could also be derived from the adjective *artus*.²⁰ It would seem that this second etymology is being evoked by Horace here:²¹ Terentian art is “narrow”.²² What the “narrowness” of Terence's theatrical art might entail is conveniently illustrated by a near-contemporary passage of the *Ars Poetica*,²³ where Horace prescribes (134): *nec desilies imitator in artum*. Here Ps.-Acro's gloss runs: *sensus est: siquid transferes, non erit, inquit, fideliter interpretandum nec in has angustias descendendum*. The “fidelity” of Terentian translation is notorious: in the prologue of the *Adelphi* (11) he himself employs the phrase *verbum de verbo*. The same wording is used in the immediately preceding line of the *Ars Poetica* (133), where Horace condemns this practice: *nec verbo verbum curabis reddere*. The *Epistle to Augustus* is accordingly making the wry suggestion that Terence's theatrical “art” is not a “virtue” (*ἄρετή*), but on the contrary “narrow” literality (*artum*). It may be said in conclusion that here Horace's treatment of *ars* would seem to qualify as a good example of *callida iunctura* (*AP* 47-48): *dixeris egregie notum si callida verbum / reddiderit iunctura novum*.

as an etymological marker cf. *F. Cairns*, Ancient “Etymology” and Tibullus: On the Classification of “Etymologies” and on “Etymological Markers”. *Proc. Cambr. Philol. Soc.* 42 (1996) 33 (= id., *Papers on Roman Elegy 1969-2003*. Bologna 2007 [Eikasmos, Stud. 16], 317).

¹⁷ Cf. *R. Maltby*, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies*. Leeds 1991, repr. Cambridge 2006 (ARCA 25), 529-531. For *ἑρρωμένος* glossed as *validus*, which is in turn glossed as *potens* cf. *G. Loewe* and *G. Goetz*, *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum* 7. Leipzig 1901, repr. Amsterdam 1965, 502 (s.v. *δυνατός*); 634.

¹⁸ Cf. (e.g.) *Fedeli*, op. cit. 1338, who is obliged to admit that “*arto* non indica che il teatro è angusto, ma che lo sembra”. No further instance of the application of *artus* to *theatrum* is provided by the online Library of Latin Texts.

¹⁹ Cf. *Cairns*, art. cit. 33 (= id., op. cit. 317).

²⁰ Cf. *Maltby*, op. cit. 54-55.

²¹ In this connection it may be noted that for *artus* a large number of synonyms were available; cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 2 col. 64,11-21 (s.v. *angustus*); ib. 2 col. 723,46-49 (s.v. *artus*).

²² The point may also be made that *arto* is placed immediately after anaphoric *hos*: since Terence has been mentioned last, here he is uppermost in the mind. Similarly *theatro*, with which *arto* agrees, is assigned the same emphatically final *sedes* as *arte* in the line directly above.

²³ For the relative chronology cf. *Rudd*, op. cit. 37.