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Hesiod's Description of Winter

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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

HESIOD'S DESCRIPTION OF WINTER.

Works and Days, ll. 493-560.

IN histories of Greek literature and other appreciations of Hesiod it is often stated that the description of winter (ll. 504-535) is an interpolation, the work of an Ionic poet, while the next page will cite the 'conceits' *ἀνόστεος, ὑληκοῖται* and *τρίπους* occurring in ll. 524 ff. as among the most striking features of the Boeotian poet's style. This contradiction is the outcome of conflict between an authority which is almost traditional, and genuine instinct: on the one hand it is accepted as an article of faith that the (whole) passage is of Ionic origin; and literary feeling on the other insists that such modes of expression as *ἀνόστεος* are indistinguishable from a very important element in the *Works and Days*—an element which is therefore presumably Hesiodic.

The problem which this passage presents may, therefore, be stated as follows: either the whole is the work of one poet—in which case we must decide whether the Ionian interpolator is a straw bogie, or the 'conceits' are racy Ionic 'Americanisms'; or the passage is not homogeneous, but contains at least two elements. In the present case the Ionian interpolator seems to be more substantial than others of his fellows; only his bulk has been exaggerated. Both in tone and in colour ll. 504-523 stand out strongly from the background of the main part of the *Works and Days*: this judgment depends largely, no doubt, on an aesthetic feeling which cannot ade-

quately be analysed; but more tangible evidence is available. First, of course, is the Ionic month-name *Ληναιῶνα* in l. 504.¹ Secondly, there is much in the ll. 504-523 which recalls the *Hymn to Aphrodite*—a distinctly Ionian work: thus the structure of ll. 512-523 is very similar to that of ll. 7-32 of the Hymn; and in detail we find in the Hymn *οὐ γάρ οἱ ἄδεν ἔργα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης* (l. 9) answering to *οὐ πῶ ἔργα ἰδυῖα* (Lennep: *ἐργ' εἰδυῖα*, MSS.) *πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης* of our passage (l. 521), and *παρθενικὰς ἀπαλόχροας ἐν μεγάροισιν* (Hymn. *Aphrod.* l. 14) echoed by *παρθενικῆς ἀπαλόχροος . . . ἥ τε δόμων ἔντοσθε . . . μῦναι* (*W. and D.* ll. 519-520). It is certain that these parallels cannot be independent, and my own feeling is that it is the Hesiodic passage which is in debt; but whether this be so or not, reason sufficient has been shown for regarding the lines under discussion as Ionic.²

¹ Steitz, *W. u. T. des Hesiodos*, p. 136, would restore this line to Boeotia by reading *μῆνα δὲ Βουκάτιον* *κακά τ' ἤματα, βουδόρα πάντα*. But whatever is gained by the resultant play upon the words *βουκάτιον . . . βουδόρα* is lost by substituting *κακά τ' ἤματα* for the robust apposition of the traditional text; and nowhere else in the poem is a month referred to by name. *Ληναιῶνα* is therefore almost certainly the true reading, and the passage which it introduces of alien (*sc.* Ionic) origin. If any change were necessary it would be better to adopt *μῆνα δὲ χειμέριον* (cp. ll. 558-9) *κακά τ' ἤματα*.

² Steitz, however (*op. cit.*, p. 137), regards 504-512 as genuine and rejects 513-535; this depends altogether on the suppression of *Ληναιῶνα*. And is not the phrase *τροχαλὸν δὲ*

We are now left with the alternative, either *ἀνόστεος* and its like are Ionic, or the passage ll. 504-535 is composite. Firstly, then, are there any grounds for taking expressions such as 'the Boneless' to be Ionic? Fick¹ pronounces them to be Ionic, or at least due to an Ionian, Cercops of Miletus, apparently on the ground that the whole class² is Orphic or Pythagorean. What evidence there is to support this view does not appear; but though it is clear that a conscious literary use³ was made of such forms, in origin at least they are simply popular, as are 'hairy-bear,' 'yellow-belly' (= newt), 'woodpecker,' in English, and are due to the absence of any 'conventional' name. *πέντοζος*, indeed, in view of the context in which it occurs, and the part played by the hand in magic and witchcraft at all times, is no doubt due to popular superstition, but this is very different from Orphism or Pythagoreanism. Granted, then, the popular origin of such expressions, what is there to show that they are Boeotian or Hesiodic rather than Ionian? Most important is the broad fact that they are practically confined to Hesiod, and as a literary resource they are altogether Hesiodic. I can recall only one instance in which similar terms⁴ occur in an Ionic (sc. Attic) work—the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*. In l. 228 of that Hymn Demeter, seeking to become a nurse in the household of Celeus, promises that 'neither witchcraft nor the Undercutter (*ὑποτάμνον*)' shall harm the child, 'for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter (*ὑλοτόμοιο*), and I know a

goodly safeguard against woeful witchcraft.' It has been shown (I believe by Allen and Sikes) that 'Undercutter' and 'Woodcutter' are popular names for the worm believed to be the cause of teething and toothache; and the conjunction of these with witchcraft is absolute proof that the passage in the Hymn is dealing with popular superstition. That is to say, the Ionic (Attic) poet might use such expressions when he descended for a moment to the humble sphere of common life and pictured an old crone seeking a 'place' as nurse; but how often do Ionic poets so descend? It may be argued that the Ionic 'Redaktor' of Fick and others, having to deal with a 'low-life' poem dealing with farming and peasant concerns, might reasonably introduce such expressions as those with which we are dealing, just as the poet of the *Hymn to Demeter* has done. But this cannot be allowed: if we take away from the Boeotian poet his 'Boneless One' and his 'House-Carrier,' we must strip him also of a much wider-spread element—the attitude which treats inanimate or irrational beings as if human—which is often inseparably bound up with them: not only shall we lose the unforgettable picture of the 'Boneless One' who 'gnaws his own foot in his fireless house and cheerless abode,' but we must sacrifice the crane who 'brings the signal for ploughing and shows the season of rainy winter, but bites the heart of the teamless man,' and the 'toil for birds' caused by covering the sown seed. And this done we may well ask whether the whole poem is not Ionian, or, alternatively, why the Ionian 'redaktor' ever troubled himself to work up the meagre and colourless nucleus which is left. Surely the only reasonable attitude in this matter is to allow that an Ionic poet might occasionally condescend to such forms of speech, though the romantic tendencies of his work almost invariably forbade it, while the examples in the *Works and Days*, being systematically used for literary effect, indicate a style of poetry with different ideals and different methods. That style can hardly be other than the Boeotian (or Northern Greek, if the less dogmatic term be preferred).

γέροντα τίθησιν (518) almost certainly by the same hand as βουδόρα (504)? If so Steitz's distinction breaks down.

¹ *Hesiods Gedichte*, p. 85.

² The following list is complete, I think, for the *Works and Days*: Ἀθηναίης δμῶος (430), ἀνόστεος (524), ὑληκοῖται (529), τρίπους βροτός (533), φερέοικος (571), ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ (605), πέντοζος (742), ἴδρις (778).

³ In frag. 96. 91 (R), from the *Suitors of Helen*, ἀτρίχος is formed in imitation of ἀνόστεος, the whole line being cast in the mould of *W. and D.* 524.

⁴ τραφερή τε καὶ ὕγρή (*Hymn. Dem.* 43; cf. γλαυκῇ, *Theog.* 440) are formed on a totally different principle; while the 'grinders' and the 'almond-tree' of the famous passage, *Ecclesiastes* xii. are allegorical in intention.

But there is further evidence for the separation of the passage (ll. 524-535), in which *ἀνόστεος, ὀληκοῖται, τρίπους βροτός*¹ occur, from the preceding Ionian passage: ll. 523-524 do not agree well together. In l. 523 *νυχίη* is by far the best supported reading; but even if we adopt the inferior *μυχίη*, are we to believe that the girl goes to bed by day (*ἡματι χειμερίῳ*, l. 524) when the sun is still shining, though feebly, for the Panhellenes (l. 528)? Secondly, there are unmistakeable parallelisms between the two passages. Thus the sufferings of the beasts in winter are dwelt upon in l. 512 ff. and again in l. 529 ff.; the motive of the bent old man is introduced in l. 518 and again in l. 533. So too in ll. 507-8 we have the effect of the north wind upon the sea, while l. 524 (where however we no longer have the wind) can at least show a creature of the sea the 'Boneless One,' reduced by cold and defective sunlight to gnaw his own foot. And lastly *οὐρεος ἐν βήσσης* (l. 510) answers to *ἀνὰ δρία βησσήεντα* of l. 530. This is not a case of an M in Monmouth as well as in Macedon: without discussing the whole list further, can we believe that a poet after using the motive of the bent old man in l. 518 would repeat it in however different a verbal form in l. 533, or that he would have thought it necessary to dwell twice over on the miseries of the beasts? There can be little doubt that here, as so often elsewhere in the Hesiodic text, we have alternative versions united by an editor who was forming a standard text from copies which often diverged widely from one another.

Of these two versions, ll. 504-523 seem to be complete: it should probably be followed directly by l. 536 ff. The other version (ll. 524-535) likewise immediately preceded l. 536 ff., but, as it stands, is incomplete at the beginning. I would suggest that this beginning was l. 493, and that ll. 524-560 were designed to supersede or at least alternate with ll. 494-501. When alternatives occur in

the Hesiodic text, it is very common to find that the first line of the newer version begins with the same words as the original, or with closely similar words:² sometimes the structure of the whole original first line is imitated. So then, just as in *Theog.* ll. 590-1 we have

ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένος ἐστὶ γυναικῶν θηλυτε-
ράων

and

τῆς γὰρ ὀλώϊόν ἐστι γένος καὶ φύλα
γυναικῶν,

so here (in all probability) we have

ὄρη χειμερίη, ὅποτε κρύος ἀνέρα ἔργων

and

ἡματι χειμερίῳ ὅτ' ἀνόστεος δν πόδα
τένδει.

The resemblance between ll. 494 and 524 alone would be insufficient to prove that l. 493 ff. are yet another version of Hesiod's winter. Happily there is far more solid evidence. Both groups, l. 493 ff. and l. 504 ff., deal with the severest season of winter, yet each gives or implies different advice as to what should be done during this season. The former (ll. 494-5) says that field-work is prevented by the rigorous weather, and recommends home-industries;³ the latter, after giving directions for making a waterproof dress (cp. especially ll. 543-6), warns the farmer to get his field-work over before the rain comes on towards evening (l. 552) and get back home:

τὸν φθάμενος ἔργον τελέσας οἰκόνδε
νέεσθαι (l. 554).

Such contradiction can only be accounted for by granting that ll. 493-503 are a distinct version, apparently the work of a poet living in a more rigorous climate than the author of l. 536 ff.

In the *Winter* as a whole, then, we

² This may be a device to help the memory.

³ Possibly these are waggon-building and the like. One would be tempted to conjecture that ll. 455-7 have strayed from between 495 and 496; but if (as is probable) 455-7 are actually out of place, their proper position is between 426-7.

¹ In 533 all MSS. read *τρίποδι βροτῶ*; Wachler's *τρίποδι βροτοί* (accepted by Rzach) is not supported by comparison with *ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ*.

seem to have three layers, whose inter-relation may be expressed as follows:

1. ll. 493-503, first version (containing, however, a good deal of alien matter: see below).

2. ll. 493, 524-535 with 536 ff., elaborated Hesiodic version.

3. ll. 504-523 with 536 ff., version based on 2, but rewritten to suit Ionic taste.

Lest we should underrate the antiquity of 2 and 3, it should be added that in the former, l. 524 is imitated in the *Suitors of Helen* (Hesiod, frag. 96, l. 91, Rzach):

ὥρη ἐν εἰαρινῇ ὅτε τ' ἄτριχος οὔρεσι
τίκτει,

and that l. 509 seems to have been used by the author of the *Shield*, l. 376:

πολλὰι δὲ δρύες (Rzach, δρῦς, MSS.)
ὑφίκομοι.

If both the *Suitors* and the *Shield* are among the later Hesiodic works, they still belong to a relatively early period in Greek literature.

To complete our examination of this highly interesting passage, we must discuss certain noteworthy points in the first version (ll. 493-503). Schömann very justly points out that the warning conveyed in ll. 496-7 is unreasonable; for it is only industry in the spring and summer which will prevent the shrunken hand and swollen foot: mere industry in the winter will not reverse the result of idleness during the rest of the year. We may add also that the work done at home (making of implements and the like) is not—at least directly—of the kind which staves off the symptoms of starvation described in l. 497. It is indeed possible to defend the existing arrangement by assuming the meaning to be: 'if you do not get your implements ready in the winter, your field-work will be all put back (cp. ll. 407-9), and so, having lost your crop, you will starve *next* winter.' But this necessitates reading into the text a distinction between this winter and the next, of which we have no hint in the verses before us. Again, since Hesiod is not a methodical or exact reasoner, we may possibly suppose

his real meaning to be: 'if you are idle in winter, you will starve' (or even 'if you are idle [generally] you will starve in winter'); and that the dominant idea of winter has by unconscious attraction limited the application of the warning to winter. Any of these explanations may rank as possible; but it seems easier and simpler to accept Schömann's change and place ll. 496-7 after l. 492—a change which produces excellent sense.

It is not easy, however, to follow the same scholar when he adds ll. 502-3 to ll. 496-7 at the end of the section preceding the description of winter, for clearly ll. 491-2 are retrospective, and the addition of ll. 502-3 would introduce a new element. The meaning surely is: 'make sure you do your ploughing in good time (ll. 491-2), or you will starve in winter (ll. 496-7),' and its directness is only dissipated by adding: 'but take care to build your barns well before winter comes on.' However, Schömann is doubtless right in objecting to ll. 502-3 in their actual position: building barns is a secondary operation as compared with raising a good crop, and so very inappropriate here. Steitz's suggestion¹ is interesting. He points out that the couplet is out of place as it stands, and contemplates the possibility of placing it before l. 597, though he finds difficulty in the resultant proximity of δέικνυε δὲ δμώεσσι το- δμωσὶ δ' ἐποτρύνειν. Yet this difficulty is possibly a clue leading to the true explanation. As we have already seen, alternatives in the text of Hesiod commonly begin with the same or closely similar expressions: and the similarity of the beginnings of ll. 502 and 597 may indicate that these lines are to be referred to the same class.² In support of this it should be noted that θέρευσ ἐτι μέσσου ἐόντος (502) approximates pretty closely to the εἴτ' ἀν πρῶτα φανῇ σθένος Ἰαρίωνος (July) of l. 598. And, further, the command ποιῆσθε καλιάς is perhaps not very different in general sense from ἱερὸν ἀκτὴν δινέμεν. It is clear from l. 503 that καλιάι are certainly not barns in

¹ *op. cit.* p. 133.

² The couplet, of course, may be only the beginning of a longer passage now lost.

our sense, but something temporary remade every year and necessary only for winter.¹ Can ποιῆσθε καλίας then mean 'build stacks' (sc. of sheaves of corn to be threshed out from time to time under cover, as was formerly done in England)? If so, ll. 502-3 and ll. 597-8 stand for different kinds of farming. It would also be possible to dispose of ll. 502-3 after l. 603; and if Steitz's rendering for καλίας can be accepted, this arrangement would have the advantage of disposing of the *personnel* of the farm and the animals *en bloc* (ll. 602-608).

But, however we are to dispose of this couplet, there can be little doubt that it is out of place as it stands. There is yet another element to be banished from the 'first version' of Hesiod's winter. Ll. 500-1 are obviously only an alternative for ll. 598-9, as the following parallelisms show: ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ is practically equivalent to ἤμενον ἐν λείσχη, κενεὴν ἐπὶ ἐλπίδα μίμνων answers to ἐλπίς δ' οὐκ ἀγαθὴ . . . κομίζει and ἡχορίζων βιότοιο to κεχρημένον ἄνδρα. Of the two couplets it is ob-

viously the second which should be condemned, since it is a mere patchwork, l. 500 being identical with 317,² except that ἐλπίς is substituted for αἰδώς, and the second half of 501 τῷ μὴ βίος ἄρκιος εἶη from 577 ἵνα τοι βίος ἄρκιος εἶη.

If these three deductions be allowed, our 'first version' is then a very brief one, consisting only of ll. 493-5, 498-9, and it is not surprising that the successors of Hesiod whether in Boeotia and northern Greece or in Ionia should have felt it necessary to substitute something fuller and more striking for this meagre notice. The general monotony and absence of any cardinal operation in farming during winter will account for the liberal descriptive element, but along with it a generous sacrifice was offered to the gods of utility³ by adding careful directions for preparing suitable winter clothing.

HUGH G. EVELYN WHITE.

² 317 itself is a parody of ρ 347: αἰδώς δ' οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρῆιναι.

³ Ll. 559-560 are an abrupt change of subject, especially after the natural ending made by ll. 557-8. It is likely enough that they belong to the 'first version.'

¹ Steitz (*l.c.*) suggests hutments for the serfs; but the need for these at mid-summer would not be pressing.

ΜΟΤΣΕΙΑ ΛΟΓΩΝ.

I. IS A SPADE A SPADE?

THE proverb 'to call a spade a spade' seems to have taken its present form through the influence of Erasmus. Early translators rendered τὴν σκάφην σκάφην λέγειν by the non-committal *scapham scapham dicere*.¹ Twice over, however, Erasmus² took σκάφη as *ligo*. It may be supposed that he did so because he found the ambiguous words ἄγροικος or ἀγροίκως in his originals, and that these suggested the connection of σκάφη with digging. The same confusion has spread to words like σκάφος and σκαφίς, which must mean some-

thing hollowed out, and not an instrument for hollowing. With the *New English Dictionary* (s.v. *spade*) I take σκάφη in its natural sense. The following note attempts to explain how the proverb originated.

It appears in Plutarch³ as an apophthegm of Philip of Macedon, and was used to silence some Olynthians who objected to being called traitors, as they were. This gives 347 B.C. or thereabouts as a lower limit. Then as now the proverb meant that plain words should be used for plain things. But Philip did not coin the apophthegm,

¹ So the *editio princeps* of Plutarch's *Apophthegmata* (147. i) and the version of Jan of Pannonia.

² *Apophthegmata* IV. 14. *Adagia*, chil. II., cent. III.

³ *Apophthegmata* 178b, τῶν δὲ περὶ Λασθένη τὸν Ὀλύνθιον ἐγκαλοῦντων καὶ ἀγανακτοῦντων, ὅτι προδότης αὐτοὺς ἔνιοι τῶν περὶ τὸν Φίλιππον ἀποκαλοῦσι, 'σκαίους,' ἔφη, 'φύσει καὶ ἀγροίκους εἶαι Μακεδόνας καὶ τὴν σκάφην λεγόντας. The participle seems to indicate a quotation.