

Seasons of *Eros*: Weather Imagery in Ibycus 286 *PMG*

The imagery of Ibycus' fragment 286 has eluded precise interpretation. The first six lines describe a blooming and beautiful springtime garden. But a sudden change occurs at lines 6–7: ἐμοὶ δ' ἔρος | οὐδεμίαν κατάκοιτος ὥραν ("But for me love rests at no season"). For the remainder of the fragment, the speaker launches into an intensely negative description of *eros*, likening love's effects to the stormy qualities of the wind Boreas.

I argue in this paper that the contrast between the sections is both more chaotic and more carefully constructed than scholars have previously noted. The poem's two parts are not diametric opposites; rather, the contrast is between the springtime garden in the first, and in the second, an impossible, violent time that is seasonally overdetermined.

The first word of the poem sets the garden scene definitively in spring (1: ἦρι). Scholars agree that the images in the second half of the fragment are carefully engineered to provide a contrast to the first: the wind's dryness and burning respond to water and growth in the garden, and the image of strong, dark Boreas contrasts with the initial peaceful *locus amoenus* (e.g., Gallavotti 1981, 126; Davies 1986, 400–401; Calame 1999, 168–169; Cazzatto 2013, 269–272). But in the second part, Ibycus does not simply present a storm scene; instead, he combines extreme meteorological phenomena from opposite times of the year to evoke the speaker's erotic distress. The hinge connecting the two sections of the poem thus becomes more pointed than has been previously noted: *eros* rests "at no season" but also literally "at no one season" (7: οὐδεμίαν...ὥραν).

Ibycus' imagery maps well onto Hesiod's depiction of summer and winter in *Works and Days*, a work that has previously been connected to this fragment (Davies 1986, 401). Summer

and winter are formally opposed in Hesiod's foundational poem (Canevaro 2015, 77). Ibycus' turbulent combination of opposing seasons, then, would have resonated with his audience and deepened the image of *eros* as a bringer of cosmic chaos. In particular, Ibycus' "Thracian Boreas" (9: Θρηϊκίος Βορέας) can be identified with Hesiod's representation of winter in *Works and Days* (504–558), in which Boreas, blowing from Thrace, represents deep midwinter (504–508; West 1978, ad 504, 377). Boreas is used as a structuring device for Hesiod's entire extended winter scene (Canevaro 2015, 74–75), and appears repeatedly as the agent of cold, wet, and dangerous weather (506, 518, 546, 553).

But Ibycus also uses the phrase " parching madnesses" (10–11: ἄζαλέαις μανίασι) to describe the effects of this wintry wind. Parching is part of the stock description of high summer found in Hesiod, Alcaeus, and generally in ancient Greek culture (Petropoulos 1994, 75), and cannot be reconciled with a cold, wet, and wintry Boreas. The rare word ἄζαλέαις and related forms are used in the *Works and Days* to describe only the hottest extreme of summertime, in which the heat of the star Sirius (587: Σείριος ἄζει) renders men weak and women lascivious (586–588). Both the pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles* (396: Σείριος ἄζει) and Alcaeus' fragment 347 (5–6: Σείριος | ἄσδει) pick up Sirius' parching from *Works and Days*, and in Alcaeus, Sirius is similarly sexually debilitating (4–6).

In Ibycus' fragment, then, an unrelenting *eros* brings upon the speaker a mixture of the worst of seasonal extremes as portrayed by Hesiod. In contrast to the carefully cultivated spring garden in the first half of the poem, Ibycus creates a season-less *locus horridus* in the second half: an unreal, impossible no-man's land characterized by difficult, harsh phenomena. The confusion of oppressive seasonal elements reflects the "madnesses" (10–11: μανίασι) of love, in that *eros* has the power to elide borders between natural opposites like summer and winter,

wet and dry (Carson 1989, 7). At the same time, the conflicting imagery shows the “madnesses” already affecting the speaker, and the utter turmoil *eros* has wrought upon his mind.

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