Death, Morality, and Verb Construction in *Odes 2.3*

Horace's *Odes 2.3* has proven difficult to critics such as Woodman as a result of three seemingly distinct aspects: a traditional Epicurean moral lesson, a pastoral scene, and a lament about death's inevitability. For Henderson, a focus on the temporal dimension of the ode provides one answer; I expand his analysis by connecting the grammatical inflection of the words of the poem to the theme of the death and the techniques of moral poetry. In this paper, I argue that Horace has constructed an extremely precise progression which dwells on transition– between the present and future, life and death–and in doing so creates a sort of anti-moral poem. At the same time as the speaker instructs the audience to temper their pleasure, constantly impending doom reveals the futility of this endeavor.

To investigate this claim, I specifically analyze Horace's construction and selection of verbs, including their tense, their mood, their voice, and their use in verb-like forms such as participles, as the verbs throughout *2.3* seem to form a backbone for its development. My arguments include future verbs such as *moriture, cedes,* and *exitura,* which disrupt the poetic present as described by Barber; the progression of tenses forming a symmetry and ring composition (Henderson 145); and other various aspects such as the use of passive voice and imperative mood verbs. In analyses such as these, I construct the argument that no verb in *2.3* is wasted, and together they enhance the poem with Horace's characteristic *carpe diem* mentality.

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