Hyperboreus 23:1 (2017) 78–91

A FOX AND A WEASEL
(HOR. *EPIST.* 1. 7. 29–36)

> Forte per angustam tenuis volpecula rimam
> repserat in cumeram frumenti, pastaque rursus
> ire foras pleno tendebat corpore frustra;
> cui mustela procul: "Si vis" ait "effugere istinc,
> macra cavum repetes artum, quem macra subisti".
>
> Once upon a time a lean little fox crept into a basket of corn through a narrow chink, but after she stuffed herself she could not get out with her belly swollen full. A weasel, which was nearby, said to the fox: "If you want to escape, you must crawl out through the small chink being as lean as when you came here".

The addressee of this epistle is Maecenas. According to it, Horace did not keep his promise and failed to come to Rome, when his patron asked him to, and so he is sending his apologies, making various excuses for his absence, giving reasons and examples. The tone of the epistle is very friendly and ironic, so a little fable fits in very naturally. The Aesopian text that Horace uses here is most probably Ἀλώπηξ ἐξογκωθεῖσα τὴν γαστέρα ("The Fox with the Swollen Belly", 24 Perry). We have the following version of the fable:

> ἀλώπηξ λιμώττουσα ὡς ἐθεάσατο ἔν τινι δρυὸς κοιλώματι ἄρτους καὶ κρέα ὑπό τινων ποιμένων καταλελειμμένα, ταῦτα εἰσελθοῦσα κατέφαγεν. ἐξογκωθεῖσα δὲ τὴν γαστέρα ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἐξελθεῖν, ἐστέναζε καὶ ὠδύρετο. ἑτέρα δὲ ἀλώπηξ τῇδε παριοῦσα ὡς ἤκουσεν αὐτῆς τὸν στεναγμόν, προσελθοῦσα ἐπυνθάνετο τὴν αἰτίαν. μαθοῦσα δὲ τὰ γεγενημένα ἔφη πρὸς αὐτήν· "ἀλλὰ μενετέον σοὶ ἐνταῦθα, ἕως ἂν τοιαύτη γένῃ, ὁποία οὖσα εἰσῆλθες, καὶ οὕτω ῥᾳδίως ἐξελεύσῃ".
>
> ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ, ὅτι τὰ χαλεπὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ὁ χρόνος διαλύει.
>
> A hungry fox had noticed bread and meat left by some shepherds in a hollow in a tree, crawled in there and ate its fill. The fox was unable to escape with its belly swollen and started weeping and wailing.

> Another fox passing by heard the cries, approached, and asked what had happened. When she understood the whole situation, she advised: "You must stay there until you become as thin as you were when you entered; this way you will escape easily". The fable shows that time can resolve difficult problems.

The final moral obviously cannot be authentic and must have been added to the fable by mistake, since it has nothing to do with the meaning of the story (the fox with a swollen belly does not have time to become thin again – the shepherds will certainly come to have lunch earlier and will kill the fox; the second fox gives useless and sardonically funny advice). Horace, on the other hand, conveys the true idea of the Aesopian fable. It is impossible not to notice that he changed the well-known story a little. In the "Epistles" the main characters are a fox and a weasel instead of two foxes. Why did he choose a weasel? It seems that weasels, much more familiar to Romans than to us, were used to ward off mice. Weasels were kept in granaries and mills and hunted rodents, just like cats later.[1] If this is true, this Horatian change is directly connected with the change of location: instead of a hollow of a tree we see a *cumera*.

These lines became famous for the many controversies that arose around them due to this very fact. Foxes do not eat nor steal corn; commentators have reacted differently to this striking contradiction for three centuries, trying to justify it or to change the text.

The discussion was started by Richard Bentley, who flatly refused to accept *volpecula* (29) found not only in all the manuscripts and scholia (Porph. *ad Epist.* 1. 7. 1), but also implicitly in some classical and late ancient paraphrases of the passage.[2] Calling hunters, farmers and physicists (*physicos*) to witness, Bentley notes that, first, foxes do not eat corn, and second, a fox cannot get into such a stupid situation, because it is a personification of intellect and wit.[3] Moreover, it seems impossible to him that this wild creature was able to creep not only into a man's house, but also into a basket through the tiniest chink, through which not even grains spill. His conjecture *nitedula* (a field mouse) was accepted, for instance, by C. Lachmann, M. Haupt, T. Martin, G. B. Wheeler[4] and many others.

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[1] Keller 1912, 164–165.

[2] Augustin. *Contra mendac.* 28 (*ad mores spectat fabula: ut apud Horatium mus loquitur muri, mustela vulpeculae*) = *Isid. Orig.* 1. 40. 6.

[3] It is worth noting that in the original Aesopian fable we can already see stupidity of a fox (F. R. Adrados speaks of an "atypical role" of the fox in this particular case: Adrados 1999, 32).

[4] Lachmann 1882, 204; Haupt 1871, ad loc.; Martin 1881, 290; Wheeler 1856, 283.

At the same time many solid counterarguments were made against this famous improvement. O. Keller argues that a weasel would certainly eat a mouse instantly instead of giving it advice;[5] Th. Keightley added that a field mouse was very unlikely to come to a man's house, as those animals are wild and feed mostly on grass.[6] A. Kiessling: a mouse would not be troubled trying to escape a *cumera*, but would enjoy staying there.[7] R. Mayer: a field mouse is not found among fable characters.[8]

In 1968 a conjecture offered by G. Giangrande competed with Bentley's. Admitting that a fox eating corn is nonsense, Giangrande suggests changing *volpecula* to *cornicula* ("a small crow").[9] He notices that Servius (*ad Aen.* 11. 522) citing Hor. *Epist.* 1. 3. 19 from memory replaced *cornicula* with *vulpecula* (according to Giangrande this should mean that these two words were easily confused); what is more, this corruption would be easier to explain paleographically for Roman cursive writing; finally, the ancients mentioned confrontations between weasels and crows. But although this weird improvement was accepted in D. R. Shackleton Bailey's edition,[10] it is impossible to put up with a crow creeping through a narrow chink or having a swollen belly.

On the other hand, most of the numerous defenders of the manuscript reading suggested forgiving Horace for his zoological mistake. Orelli had already proposed this popular theory: the poet needs this brief story not for its plot, but to display a smart and witty idea (*doctrina*), and that is why he might have been inattentive to realistic details (*physica*).[11] In a well-known book by L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson Bentley's suggestion is criticized as a typical example of an over-logical conjecture, when a too exceptious reader corrects an inspired poet, without understanding his concept. [12]

In our opinion, we do not serve Horace well if we assume that he could be so inattentive to such an obvious detail. One of the important skills of a storyteller is to make a story credible. Ancient rhetoric theorists from Theon to Aphthonius paid great attention to the credibility

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[5] Keller–Holder 1925, 194.

[6] Keightley 1848, 213

[7] Kiessling–Heinze 1957, 75.

[8] Mayer 1994, 163.

[9] Giangrande 1968, 55–58.

[10] Shackleton Bailey 1985, ad loc.

[11] Orellius 1852, 455. R. Mayer argued in the same way almost 150 years later: "it is the vixen's cunning, not its diet, that matters to the fabulist" (Mayer 1994, 163).

[12] Reynolds–Wilson 1991, 186.

of narrative and the necessity to maintain real features and characteristics of animals in fables.[13]

Munro's arguments ("whose foxes were not as our foxes" – as if the foxes in the fable were so different from those familiar to us that their diet was irrelevant)[14] seem rather unfortunate as are C. Stocchi's (a fox in fables is not necessarily clever – it might be naïve as well; in our fable the fox stupidly ate the wrong type of food).[15] We believe that we should defend *volpecula* differently.

It has been proposed several times, that Horace's fox feeds not on corn, but on *something* else. At first this idea was under a shadow of reading *camera* instead of *cumera*; *camera* appears in two 9th-century manuscripts (**R**^{2} **p**^{1}) and was accepted by early editors starting with J. Locher:[16]

> Forte per angustam tenuis volpecula rimam
> repserat in *cameram* frumenti.

Camera frumenti was understood to mean a granary or a barn, something of a synonym for *horreum*, *granarium*. This reading seemed plausible to André Dacier (it is his comment that Bentley vehemently refutes),[17] because it cancels the problem of incredibility: if a fox crawls into a barn, it might feed on chicks or doves living there. As a result Bentley (who by the way thought that this was Locher's conjecture), saw this proposal as being inseparably tied to the reading *camera*, and he spent most of his comment on rejecting it – noticing that the juncture *camera frumenti* is to be found nowhere in Latin texts and that *camera* itself means "cover", "dome". In fact, no matter what the fortune of this word was in later Romance languages, in classical Latin it does not mean "room". The closest meaning would be "a small covered ship".[18]

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[13] For a representative list of quotations on this: Gasparov 1968 [М. Л .Гаспаров, *Басни Эзопа*], 254–255. Gasparov himself cites examples of how the "principle of credibility" are sometimes defied in Aesop's fables. However all of them, unlike our example, are strictly motivated by the logic of the plot (e.g. a lion and a donkey hunt together in a fable about the lion's share).

[14] Munro 1869, 26: "Bentley's famous *nitedula* for *vulpecula* deserves all praise: it is brilliant; it is what Horace ought to have written: – but I sadly fear did not write, not from ignorance probably, but because he had in his thoughts some old-world fable, whose foxes were not as our foxes".

[15] Stocchi 2014, 134–137.

[16] Locher 1498, 430. On this edition of Horace (the very first in Germany) and the sources of Locher's commentaries see Pieper 2014, 61–90.

[17] We used the re-edited version with supplements by Sanadon.

[18] ThLL, s. v. *camera*.

Bentley's lexical arguments seem indisputable, but his "poetical" reasoning is much weaker. He asks: "Why was it necessary to mention *frumentum*, if the fox fed on something else? Why did Horace mix new details into an Aesopian fable, if the story is well-known?"[19] He does not ask, however, why it was necessary to change the Aesopian fox to a field mouse. But to be honest, Dacier with his chicks and doves which are absolutely out of place in a barn, gave him solid cause for scathing criticism ("Vah commentum facetum et callidum! Frugi sane rusticus, qui in horreum pullos admiserit!" etc.).

However, reading *cumera* does not oblige us to think that the fox fed on corn. The word *cumera* (*cumerum*), which we translated above as "a basket", is not very frequently used and seems quite specific.[20] Ancient lexicographic sources and modern dictionaries based on them give the following explanations:

- Vas est ingens vimineum vel fictile simile doliis, ubi frumentum suum reponebant agricolae: vel vas minus, capiens quinque sive sex modios.
  It is a very big wicker or ceramic container, similar to a barrel, in which farmers used to keep corn: or a smaller container, holding five or six modii (Ps.-Acro *ad Hor. Serm.* 1. 1. 53).[21]

- Cumera vasi frumenratii genus factum est vimine admodum obductum.
  A type of a corn container made of rods tightly entwined (Porph. *ad Hor. Ep.* 1, 7, 30).

- Cumerum: vas nuptiale a similitudine cumerarum, quae fiunt palmeae vel sparteae ad usum popularem, sic apellatum.
  Cumerum – a basket for dowry used in wedding ceremonies, which got its name for looking similar to common baskets made of palm leaves or needle grass (Fest. 50 M, 43 L.).[22]

- Cumeram vocabant antiqui vas quoddam, quod opertum in nuptiis ferebant, in quo erant nubentis utensilia, quod et camillum dicebant.
  The ancient used the word *cumera* for some type of a container, that was carried sealed in bridal processions and which contained the dowry; the same thing was called *camillus* (Fest. 63 M, 55 L.).

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[19] Bentley 1869, 32.

[20] See Siebert 1999. 217–218. On the etymology of "cumera" see Breyer 1993, 254–255.

[21] 1 modius in Roman measuring system ≈ 8,7 kg.

[22] For more detailed information on baskets in bridal processions: Hersch 2010, 162.

- Vas vimineum, vel sparteum, vel palmeum, vel etiam fictile, acuminato coperculo cameratum, unde et nomen suum accepisse videtur, quo rustici utuntur ad condenda frumenta.
  A container made of entwined rods, needle grass, palm leaves or even ceramic with a cone-shaped lid, for which it got its name [an attempt to derive the etymology from the word 'camera'] used by countrymen for corn storage (Forcellini 1771, I, 911).

- A great earthen or wicker vessel, in which poor people kept their small provision of corn (Gardin Dumesnil 1819, 290).

- A box or basket used to hold corn, etc., also ritual objects in a bridal procession (OLD, s. v. cumera).

- Noms donnés à des vases et à des corbeilles servant principalement dans l'usage commun à garder le grain, […] grandes corbeilles d'osier…
  Names given to containers and baskets used mostly for everyday corn storage, […] big baskets made of rods… (Saglio 1877, 1588).

According to these explanations, *cumera* was not a small basket (Dacier should not have called it "petit vaisseau"), but a voluminous woven or ceramic vessel with a lid: even the smallest of them, based on Pseudo-Acron's testimony, could hold up to 50 kg of corn (which means that their capacity could be about 60 liters). We believe it is fair to assume that something like a *cumera* is depicted on the tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the baker near Porta Maggiore in Rome (around 50–20 BC). On one of the friezes we see all the stages of bread-making: the apportioning of corn, milling, flour bolting, the baking of the final product and the weighing of loaves.[23] In the top left corner workers are carrying big baskets on their shoulders – not of corn, but of freshly baked bread – big enough to be about 50–60 liters in volume.

A fox of average body length (about 70–77 cm without tail) and weight (about 6–7 kg) could easily crawl into such a vessel through a crack, which could appear if a lid was left ajar (and through which no corn could spill). In the Aesopian fable used by Horace the fox climbs into a hollow in a tree that was surely not bigger than a *cumera*. Just as the second fox was speaking from elsewhere in Aesop's version, Horace's weasel most probably was not inside the basket: it is said that it was standing nearby (*procul* means "away", "over some distance"). Certainly, as in

[23] For more details on Eurysaces' mausoleum and the economic history of Rome in the Augustan age see e.g.: Rostovtzeff 1957, 32.

any fable, we must not take all the details literally, but leave some scope for poetic or moralistic exaggeration. Maybe Horace's fox climbs into a basket and not into a barn, which would fit excellently here, precisely because Aesop's fox was stuck in a small space and because *cumera* was the biggest vessel commonly used for storage. The poet needs an enclosed space for the story: the main character has to be stuck. But at the same time he can't pick a tiny basket, so that the story is believable. He uses the same word in his "Satires", where he depicts a miser who amasses riches and does not spend them (*Serm.* 1. 1. 53): *cur tua plus laudes cumeris granaria nostris?* ("why do you praise your barns more than our baskets?"). Apparently, the *granaria* of a rich man are opposed to the *cumerae* of ordinary people: those who did not possess enough corn to fill a barn stored it in big baskets.

The word *cumera* is obviously non-poetic. In all the surviving Latin literature, except for scholiasts and lexicographers, it appears only twice – in Horace's poetry. An electronic thesaurus also shows lines from Ovid's "Women's Facial Cosmetics" (61–62), but *cumeris* there was suggested by R. Merkel as a conjecture for *innumeris*:

> Iamque ubi pulvereae fuerint confusa farinae,
> Protinus *in cumeris* omnia cerne cavis.[24]
>
> And so, when it is mixed with fine flour, sift it into hollowed baskets immediately.

F. W. Lenz questions this conjecture, as line 89 of the same poem (*per densa foramina cerne*) indicates a sieve finer than woven basket;[25] as it seems, our research provides one more argument against this improvement: a *cumera* is too big to be used as a sieve.

Going back to the question what exactly the fox ate it would be useful to mention that these animals (and also weasels) do not in fact feed on corn. An amusing attempt by E. S. Robertson to testify through personal experience that at least in India foxes come to feed in corn fields was disproved by zoologists, who explained that what attracts foxes into the fields is not corn, but rodents.[26] However, not calling an object by its name is a usual device for Horace. Stefan Borzsák comes to the same conclusion, suggesting that fables often lack details, so that

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[24] Merkel 1862, *ad loc*.

[25] Lenz 1960, 120. *Innumeris* was also saved in the text by E. J. Kenney 1961, *ad loc*.

[26] Robertson 1906, 216; G. Giangrande consulted with London's Zoo staff on the question (Giangrande 1968, 58).

the readers have to figure a lot of things out themselves.[27] We agree with Borzsák that the very presence of a weasel hints at the fact that there are mice, which feed on corn. And the weasel makes a spiteful remark about the trapped fox: the latter has stolen its lunch. So we believe the plot to be the following: a hungry lean fox crawls into a barn and climbs into one of the baskets through a lid left slightly ajar, where it eats several mice; after that the fox cannot get out because of its swollen belly. A weasel, who thinks that the barn is its own hunting ground, laughs at the unlucky rival: the fox got into a trap very well-known to and, what is more, not even dangerous for the weasel, due to the weasel's miniature size.

An equally important question that has to be discussed to understand the story better is the role of the fable in the context of the *Epistle* 1. 7. The key is in the lines right below it (34–36):

> Hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno:
> nec somnum plebis laudo satur altilium nec
> otia divitiis Arabum liberrima muto.

What causes trouble is line 34, especially the verbs *compellor* and *resigno*. Porphyrion and Pseudo-Acron understand *compellor* as a form of *compellere* ("to provoke, to incite"): *si cogatur* (Porph.), *si* […] *non concedatur* (Ps.-Acro). This explanation seems fallible, since our fable does not provoke anything; on the contrary, it warns. The latest commentators, e.g. Orelli, associate *compellor* with the verb *compellare* ("to vituperate, to address with a speech"), which is often used in the ablative case (for example, *edicto*: Cic. *Phil.* 3. 7. 17). This is how Orelli interprets the first half of line 34: *si ad me applicari potest haec imago, id est, fabella*…[28] G. Krüger compares the line *Epist.* 1. 7. 34 with *Serm.* 2. 3. 297 (*posthac ne compellarer inultus* – "so that I am not insulted with impunity later"), mentioning that in our case the verb does not carry any negative connotations of reproof and that we should translate *si compellor hac imagine* as "if this fable applies to me".[29]

Cuncta resigno is another stumbling block for translators and interpreters. The verb *resignare* has a direct meaning – "to unseal" (for example, a letter): Horace uses it in this very meaning in the same epistle (line 9). The second, figurative meaning for *resignare* is "to pay, to

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[27] Borzsák 1969, 225–234.
[28] Orellius 1852, 455.
[29] Krüger 1872, 226.

repay". Finally, there is the meaning that is usually suggested when the lines in question are discussed – "to cancel, to annul, to return".[30] Krüger speaks about the semantic development of *resignare* and its affinity with *rescribere* and *reddere* in his commentary.[31] But what does the poet refuse and what (and to whom) does he return?

R. Kilpatrick proposed to understand line 34 this way: "If I am the man impugned by this fable, I refute it all!"[32] Horace has no reason to compare himself to the fox in the fable, because he has used Maecenas' gifts only modestly; he denies (*resigno*) all accusations of that nature. Kilpatrick does realize though that his explanation lacks parallel examples that could prove this meaning of *resignare*. However, despite the vast lexicological review (somewhat exaggerating the obscurity of the word: "it's a very uncommon Latin word", "the word's meaning was not always clear" etc.), he fails to find such examples. We must be very careful with the meaning "to annul, to refute, to invalidate", which Kilpatrick finds in the Lewis–Short dictionary: relying on the inner form of *resignare* (literally "to break a seal"), this verb can mean "to refute" only in the sense of "to destroy, to cancel" (this is why it technically can mean "to give back what was borrowed"), but not "to deny, not to accept"; this is what it means in the quote from Cicero, cited by Kilpatrick (*Pro Arch.* 9: *omnem tabularum fidem resignasset*). It seems that Kilpatrick was confused by the English verb *to resign*; what he wants it to mean would probably apply to something like the Latin verb *refutare*.

The *opinio communis*, against which Kilpatrick argues, is represented rather well in Kiessling–Heinze's commentary, where they retell every epistle in brief. Line 34 is paraphrased like this: "If someone wants to apply to me the fable about a fox who could not escape with its belly swollen and persuades me to refrain from everything, I am ready to return everything that I owe you, to you – this is how much I love and respect you". Kiessling and Heinze interpret *cuncta resigno* as "I give you back everything that I owe you".[33] Compare this with a similar paraphrase in Villeneuve's edition: "Horace has never forgotten that everything he has he owes to Maecenas; but if it is necessary, he is ready and willing to give him everything back with no regrets".[34] In our opinion, this understanding demands the potential mode of *resigno*, not *praesens indicativi*, as we find in Horace's text.

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30 *OLD*, s. v.
31 Krüger 1872, 226.
32 Kilpatrick 1986, 19–20.
33 Kiessling–Heinze 1957, 69,75.
34 Villeneuve 1934, 67.

E. Fraenkel notices that this seemingly playful story, which at first sight can be easily excluded from the epistle, takes on a very serious meaning when it comes to the poet's relationship with Maecenas.[35] The fox's unlucky fate is something that Horace should always keep in mind. According to Fraenkel, Horace associates himself with the fox and displays his readiness to give up "his most cherished possessions". Fraenkel calls the divisive line 34 "unambiguous". However, Fraenkel is convinced that Horace's determination is illusory and that Horace realizes that he cannot give up everything, hence *nec somnum plebis laudo satur altilium* in line 35.

R. Mayer also thinks that Horace here means to return all his property, including his Sabine farm. He draws a parallel with *Carm.* 3. 29. 54: *resigno quae dedit* [Fortuna] ("I reject everything that Fortune gave me").[36]

We tend to disagree with the generally held opinion. The whole preceding part of the Epistle 1. 7 convinces Maecenas to forgive the poet for his long absence and appeals to the reason of his patron, who sees the difference between beans and coins (line 23) and does not weigh down his client with unwanted gifts (about a Calabrian guest – lines 14 sqq.). Is it possible that Horace says "I'll return everything" if he himself claims that he did not get anything extra? Horace always describes his (friendly and financial) relationship with his patron as rational, moderate, and mutually beneficial,[37] he calls himself *parvus* in line 44. The Aesopian fable is being used for the sake of contrast "me vs. the fox". We believe that *compellor* is a reflexive form, not a passive one. The iterarive *praesens indicativi* points to the thoughts that come to the poet, who is of two minds about coming to Rome. He says, "You, Maecenas, want me to come and I realize that I have to. But as soon as I recall this fable and apply it to myself (*compellor*), I drop (*resigno*) this idea". *Cuncta* is not something that he possesses, but all the goods promised by life in Rome under the wing of his rich friend. The poet understands that if he succumbs once to the capital's temptations, he will never be able to go back to his simple life in the country.

The fable about a fox and a weasel is followed by two other detailed stories, centered on the idea that it is unwise to take more than you need. In the first one, which is practically a sketchy translation of the *Odyssey* (4. 601–608), Telemachus refuses to accept the horses given to him, because it is impossible to manage them on Ithaca (40–43):

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[35] Fraenkel 1957, 334.

[36] Mayer 1994, 163. For a very representative list of other scholars adhering to the same explanation of *cuncta resigno* see: Hayward 1986, 19.

[37] Kilpatrick 1973, 47–53.

> Haud male Telemachus, proles patientis Ulixei:
> "Non est aptus equis Ithace locus, ut neque planis
> porrectus spatiis nec multae prodigus herbae;
> Atride, magis apta tibi tua dona relinquam".
>
> Telemachus, sufferer Ulysses' son, once said well: "The land of Ithaca is not suitable for horses, since there are no fields and no lawns rich with grass; I will leave your gift to you, Atreides, because it is more useful for you".

Horace addresses the moralistic conclusion (ἐπιμύθιον) to himself (44–45):

> Parvum parva decent; mihi iam non regia Roma,
> sed vacuum Tibur placet aut inbelle Tarentum.
>
> Little befits little: and so not regal Rome is dear to me, but quiet Tibur or peaceful Tarentum.

In this case it seems obvious that Horace approves of Telemachus' response: like Ulysses' son, who wisely does not take horses with him to a rocky island, Horace wisely does not come to the capital against his own will. Telemachus' situation is the reverse of the fable about a fox – unlike him the fox took what it did not need and got into trouble.

Another example that Horace uses to enforce the idea "every man to his trade" is a lengthy story about Volteius Mena. Mena falls for the graces of his patron (in fact, solicitor) Philippus, leaves the city he loves and starts living in a country. He fails to organize a profitable business, because he is not used to farming and was never meant for it. In the end he pleads with his patron to change things back. This story occupies lines 46–95. It shows in detail what can happen if someone is forced to give up his true inherent aims and wishes. Certainly, Horace sees and wants to keep his relationship with Maecenas entirely different. To draw a conclusion for this real life example he uses a fable-like moral (line 98): *Metiri se quemque suo modulo ad pede verum est* ("Each should measure himself by his own rule and standard").

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The article discusses Hor. *Epist.* 1. 7. 29–33, with a version of an Aesopian fable. These verses are notoriously difficult. They describe a fox that crawls into a basket of corn (*cumera frumenti*), cannot climb out because it has eaten too much food, and is laughed at by a weasel; this surprisingly appears to mean that the fox feeds on corn. The author argues that, contrary to the prevailing opinion, Horace should not be charged with zoological ignorance or with poetic disregard of zoological facts; nor are Bentley's famous emendation to *nitedula* instead of *vulpecula* or some manuscripts' reading *camera* instead of *cumera* acceptable. The data of the lexica shows that *cumera* designates not a small basket, but a voluminous twiggen or ceramic vessel with a lid for grain; the fox climbs into it and eats several mice, not corn.

The meaning of the fable in the context of Horace's *Letter to Maecenas* is further revisited: the v. 34 *Hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno* is often taken to mean that the poet is ready to give Maecenas back everything that he got from him, fearing the fortune of the fox; however, this does not fit the poet's conduct; moreover, in this understanding, *resigno* is in the conjunctive, not the indicative case. Rather, the verse means that the poet, although desiring to please Maecenas and to come to Rome, remains in the countryside and thus abandons all eventual goods of life under Maecenas' tutelage, because he duly applies to himself (*compellare* in the reflexive meaning) the example of the stuffed fox.

В статье рассматриваются стихи Hor. *Epist*. 1. 7. 29–36, содержащие в себе вариацию эзоповской басни. В интерпретации Горация лиса забирается в корзину с зерном (cumera frumenti) и не может выбраться обратно из-за разбухшего от еды живота, вследствие чего над лисой насмехается ласка. Исходя из этих строк можно подумать, что лисы, по мнению поэта, питаются зерном. Автор статьи спорит с распространенным мнением о том, что Гораций допустил зоологическую ошибку по незнанию или в поэтических целях, и не принимает чтение nitedula вместо vulpecula, предложенное Бентли, а также чтение camera вместо cumera, присутствующее в некоторых

рукописях. Согласно мнению автора, лиса забирается в корзину, чтобы полакомиться мышами, а не зерном. Слово cumera означает большой плетеный или глиняный сосуд с крышкой, применявшийся для хранения больших объемов продовольствия.

В статье также обсуждается значение басни в контексте послания к Меценату: стих 34 *Hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno* нередко понимают так, будто поэт выражает готовность вернуть Меценату все, что он когда-либо от него получал, поскольку близок к положению лисы из басни. Однако такое прочтение не вполне вписывается в общую линию повествования. Скорее всего, поэт говорит, что оставаясь в деревне, несмотря на настойчивые приглашения друга приехать в Рим, он отказывается от всех благ и роскоши, которые ждут его там под покровительством Мецената, поскольку сам не желает оказаться на месте лисы (compellare в возвратном значении).

CONSPECTUS

SYMBOLAE *CHRISTIANO HABICHT NONAGENARIO*
OBLATAE, QUAE *HYPERBOREI* VOLUMINIS XXII FASCICULO II
IN EIUS HONOREM EDITO ADICIUNTUR

Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке
Summary in Russian and English