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**Autor:** Parker, Laetitia P.E.

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# Micae Horatianae

Laetitia P. E. Parker, Oxford

**Abstract:** This paper examines three passages in the *Odes*. For *Odes* 2. 7. 9–12, close attention to vocabulary should eliminate one curiously persistent interpretation. *Odes* 3. 17 acquires more point and personal reference by examination of Horace's imagery. *Odes* 3. 4. 9–12 presents difficulties both of text and interpretation, but its influence in the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods is unquestionable.

## 1. *Odes* 2. 7. 9–12

*Tecum Philippos et celerem fugam  
sensi relictā non bene parmula  
cum fracta uirtus et minaces  
turpe solum tetigere mento.*

Horace here recalls a cruelly traumatic memory for both his addressee and himself. Nisbet and Hubbard<sup>1</sup> point out the paradox in *fracta uirtus*, but the sense of *fracta* here is illuminated by the passage quoted by Kiessling and Heinze<sup>2</sup> from Cicero, writing in the early autumn of 46 BC to M. Marcellus:<sup>3</sup> *uicti sumus igitur; aut si uinci dignitas non potest, fracti certe et abiecti*. Even if *uirtus*, like *dignitas*, cannot be defeated, it can still be smashed by sheer brute force. There is good reason to associate *uirtus* specifically with Brutus,<sup>4</sup> but might the term not be extended courteously to Horace's addressee, and, indeed, to the rest of Brutus' magnificently equipped, high-spirited and undisciplined army,<sup>5</sup> including the *minaces* who touched the ground with their chins?

Those last words have proved controversial. Nisbet and Hubbard, together with a majority of editors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see here a variation on the idea, familiar since Homer, of biting the dust. A rival interpretation, however, maintains a stubborn life. *Turpe solum* is explained by pseudo-Acro by *aut cruentum aut quo prostrati turpiter precarentur*. Porphyry's expla-

1 My debts will be evident throughout to R. G. M. Nisbet/M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 2* (Oxford 1978) and R. G. M. Nisbet/N. Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 3* (Oxford 2004).

2 A. Kiessling, *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Oden und Epoden* (10<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. by R. Heinze, Dublin/Zürich 1960).

3 *Fam.* 4. 7. 2. Cicero shows a certain fondness for the figurative use of *frangere* with various shades of meaning. He combines it with some violent verbs, such as *comminuere* (*Off.* 2. 11, *fin.*) and *contundere* (*Phil.* 13, *fin.*). He applies it to *uirtus* as part of a catalogue of admirable qualities at *Planc.* 4. 9.

4 For the relevant passages, see Nisbet and Hubbard *ad loc.*

5 On the magnificent equipment, see Plutarch, *Brutus* 38. 3. On the indiscipline, 46. 1.

nation is similar, but both longer and less explicit.<sup>6</sup> P. H. Peerlkamp seems to have been the first editor to argue strenuously for the view that Horace here refers contemptuously to capitulation after Philippi in terms of oriental grovelling.<sup>7</sup> Peerlkamp sought far and wide for parallels, but the only one of his passages to have been accepted as significant by later commentators is Quintus Curtius 8. 5. 22. There, Curtius, describing the Persian nobles prostrating themselves before Alexander,<sup>8</sup> recounts how a certain Polypercon shouted derisively at one Persian who was touching the ground with his chin (*unum ex eis mento contingentem humum*), urging him to hit it harder. But why did Polypercon pick on this one man if all the others were doing the same? Surely the others were *not* doing the same. This one man was doing something different, and wrong. The crucial word for both Curtius and Horace is *mento*. An essential part of doing obeisance, whether kneeling, crouching or lying prone, is to keep the face turned down. To rest the chin on the ground, and, in consequence, to turn the face upward, is disrespectful. *Solum tangere mento* cannot be equivalent to *procumbere* in the sense of “to prostrate oneself”. The appropriate word would be *fronte*.

More relevant to Horace is a line from Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* (1. 49): *Tunc et ense caesa uirtus triste percussit solum*.<sup>9</sup> The ground on which Prudentius’ Christian martyrs fall is *triste*; that on which Horace’s comrades in arms

6 O. Keller (ed.), *Pseudacronis scholia in Horatium vetustiora* (Leipzig 1902) 159. Porphyry: *aut cruore foedatum ... aut nomen est loco aduerbii positum: turpe solum tetigere pro “turpiter tetigere”*. See A. Holder (ed.), *Pomponi Porphyrii Commentum in Horatium Flaccum* (Innsbruck 1894, repr. New York 1979) 64.

7 *Q. Horati Flacci Carmina* (Haarlem 1834). Orelli, not in general an admirer of Peerlkamp, accepted his view here, and provided the best support for it yet found, Caesar, *Civ.* 3. 98 on the Pompeians after Pharsalus, who, allegedly, threw down their arms, *passisque palmis proiecti ad terram flentes ab eo salutem petiuerunt*. H. P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz I* (Darmstadt 2001) 378, with n. 30, revives Peerlkamp’s chief argument: that *turpe* is inappropriate to death in battle. He cites *Odes* 3. 2. 13, but needed only to read the following three lines to see that that is wrong. K. Quinn, *Horace: The Odes* (Basingstoke 1980), finds “a reference to the fact (reported by Appian 4. 135) that some of the leaders came after the battle in supplication”. Appian reports no such “fact”. He says only that after Brutus’ death his army “sent envoys” to Octavian and Antony and received pardon, while the troops occupying “the forts” surrendered. Appian’s later statement (5. 7) that L. Cassius and others came “as suppliants” to Antony in Asia Minor is irrelevant: that was some time after Philippi. Among editors, Kiessling and Heinze also follow Peerlkamp, while Nisbet’s and Hubbard’s view is shared by Wickham, Page, Palmer and Wilkins, Villeneuve and Lejay.

8 On *proskynesis*, the Persian practice of kissing the ground, see L. R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown 1931, repr. Ann Arbor post 1981) 18–19 and 247–255. Chins do not feature.

9 Cited by Nisbet and Hubbard and, earlier, by O. Keller and A. Holder, *Q. Horati Flacci I* (Leipzig 1899). For the echoes from two lines brought together, compare *Praefatio* 10, where *lasciua proteruitas* combines *lasciua* from *Odes* 1. 19. 3 with *proteruitas* four lines later in the same poem. For Prudentius’ echoes of Horace, see the *Index imitationum* in J. Bergman, *Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Vienna 1926) 455–469. Bergman collects sixty-seven Horatian echoes, but misses this one. Nisbet and Hubbard also note Silius Italicus 15. 380, where the dying Marcellus *impresso signauit gramina mento*. That too sounds like a reminiscence of Horace.

crash down on their chins is *turpe*. To be wounded in the back, so by inference in flight, is shameful. *Turpe solum* is a sort of opposite to the *non indecoro puluere* with which the great captains of *Odes* 2. 1. 22 are coated. In the first battle of Philippi, Cassius' forces fled; in the second, Brutus' centre was routed.<sup>10</sup> Horace had seen men running in panic over rough ground, stumbling, falling struck from behind. There is a painful reality behind his reticence and precise economy of language.

Nisbet and Hubbard pay generous tribute to Horace's tact, yet the poem "offends" them. But can one not sympathize with a man whose imagination was so saturated with literature that he could only make sense of his experience, or perhaps escape from it, in literary terms? Looking back on his experiences in the First World War, Edmund Blunden saw the valley of the Ancre as "alluring to naiad and hamadryad" and himself as "a harmless young shepherd in a soldier's coat".<sup>11</sup> But there is a gap between literary fantasy and reality: this "harmless young shepherd" had won the Military Cross. How Horace really conducted himself at Philippi we shall never know.

## 2. *Odes* 3. 17

Horace addresses Lamia as descended from "Lamus of ancient times", predicts bad weather, and urges his friend to gather firewood in preparation for a feast to be held on the following day, when he will indulge his *Genius* in company with his household. A. Y. Campbell asks the crucial question: "What is the *point*? And where is the *poetry*?"<sup>12</sup> Nisbet and Rudd answer: "The point and the poetry lie precisely in the contrast between pretentious fantasies about remote ancestors and the actual pleasure provided by a simple meal." True, no doubt, and typically Horatian, but is it all?

The addressee generally accepted as most plausible, L. Aelius Lamia,<sup>13</sup> was *legatus pro praetore* in Hispania Tarraconensis in 24 BC, and belonged to a fam-

10 Plutarch, *Brutus* 43 and 49.

11 *Undertones of War*, the last paragraph. Blunden relies on readers familiar with the English pastoral tradition to recognize that "shepherd" means "poet".

12 *Horace. A New Interpretation* (London 1924). Campbell's answer, a general one applying to all Horace's sympotic poetry, is to be found at 13ff.

13 Another L. Aelius Lamia was consul in 3 AD and died as an old man in 32. R. Syme (*The Augustan Aristocracy*, Oxford 1986, 395) wanted to place his birth "perhaps as late as 32 BC". That would make him consul at thirty-five or thirty-six and die at sixty-five. But would his *uiuenda senectus* (Tacitus, *Annals* 6. 27. 2) have been worthy of remark in that case? A date of birth around 40 BC, or a few years earlier, with death in his seventies, seems more likely. But he would still be too young to be Horace's addressee. A Q. Aelius Lamia was a *monetalis* in 19 or 20 BC, so probably born a little before 40 (Syme, 395). Syme dismissed the idea that he could be the brother of *Epist.* 1. 14. 6 who mourned the *legatus*, but that is not impossible. Anyone interested in trying to make connections of kinship between the four known Aelii Lamiae should consult S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford 1991, pbk. 1993) 398–403. In addition to the "considerable generation gap between most fathers and their children", early marriage

ily of provincial gentry from Formiae which was beginning to attain eminence in Rome in the last decades of the Republic. He is assumed to have been the son of another L. Aelius Lamia who had been a steadfast friend of Cicero in 58 BC and who was seeking the praetorship in 43 BC.<sup>14</sup> After 24 BC, the younger Lamia disappears from the record, which, as Nisbet and Rudd observe, “suggests that he might be the Lamia who is mourned by his brother at *Epist.* 1. 14. 6ff.”. In view of the office he is known to have held, Horace’s Lamia will have been in the prime of life (the late thirties, say, to early forties) when the poem was written, about 26 BC, before the addressee’s departure for Spain.

Lamus, the putative ancestor, is an obscure personage, mentioned just once in surviving Greek literature, at *Od.* 10. 81, where Odysseus and his fleet arrive at the “lofty citadel of Lamus”. This is the land of the Laestrygonians, an ambiguous people: city-dwellers whose king, Antiphates, has a Greek name, but also man-eating giants. Lamus was, presumably, the founder of their city.<sup>15</sup> One Greek tradition located the Laestrygonians in Sicily.<sup>16</sup> For us at least, the earliest author to place them on the mainland of Italy is Cicero,<sup>17</sup> who, in 59 BC, writing to Atticus from Formiae, suggests a visit to “this Laestrygonian Telepylos – I mean Formiae”. So the learned Atticus needs to have the allusion explained. Was the Laestrygonian connection of Formiae the invention of the Lamia who was Cicero’s friend, or of that friend’s father, designed to provide a creditable explanation for an opprobrious *cognomen*?<sup>18</sup> And was it a joke from the start, a parody on the current fashion for exotic genealogy? It may be so, but it is as well to keep open the possibility that these Aelii, if not all their friends, took their supposed descent from Lamus seriously. It is hardly more bizarre than other

for women could have produced long gaps between siblings. A woman who married at fifteen would be only thirty-five twenty years later.

- 14 See especially *Fam.* 11. 16. 2 and, more generally, H. H. Davies, “Cicero’s Burial”, *Phoenix* 12 (1958) 174–177.
- 15 A scholium on the Homeric passage (Dindorf II, 452) says that he was a son of Poseidon. Other scholia on the same passage suggest that Lamus was not a person at all, but a place. The only reason, other than similarity of sound, for associating him with Lamia, the child-eating bogey of Greek popular lore, is a scholium on Theocritus 15. 40 (Wendel, 309) which calls her “queen of the Laestrygonians”. But this may be no more than one scholar’s conjectural attempt to find a place for her in literary mythology. In the most common version of her legend, she was originally a Libyan queen. See J. B. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1959, repr. 1980) 100ff.
- 16 In the Hesiodic *Catalogue* (Merkelbach and West, fr. 150. 26) there is mention of the Laestrygonians in close proximity to Etna. According to Thucydides (6. 1. 2), the Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes “are said” to have been the earliest inhabitants of Sicily, but the historian prefers to leave the matter to poets.
- 17 *Att.* 2. 13. 2. Ovid (*Met.* 14. 233) does not locate the “city of Lamus” precisely. Silius Italicus (8. 529–531) places it at Caieta, at the end of the promontory, south of Formiae.
- 18 An earlier L. Aelius Lamia, presumably the father of Cicero’s friend, was *deformis* (Cicero, *De orat.* 2. 262).

mythical genealogies which were undoubtedly in some sense taken seriously by Roman and Italian gentry of the period.<sup>19</sup>

In any case, the proportions of the poem are strange: the address to Lamia, with the parenthesis on his ancestry, takes more than half. It extends over two stanzas and drifts on into the third. But then the startling monosyllable *cras* brakes in in mid-line,<sup>20</sup> making a leap from the remote, mythical past to the immediate future. “Tomorrow” can have sinister connotations in sympotic contexts, “for tomorrow we die”.<sup>21</sup> Here, it introduces a scene of devastation: trees are stripped of their leaves and the shore is strewn with “useless” sea-weed. Bad weather has an organic connection with sympotic poetry. For the farmer, it offers a rare opportunity for relaxation, for the gentleman, an agreeable contrast between wet and cold outside and warmth and conviviality within.<sup>22</sup> For Horace, weather can also provide an image for the uncertainty and turbulence of human life.<sup>23</sup> It is not difficult to see such symbolism here, for “like the generations of leaves are the generations of men”.

At this point we might expect the invitation to drink and enjoy oneself. Instead comes the peremptory: “While you can, gather dry wood.” Even the most literal-minded reader would not suppose for a moment that Horace is really ordering his aristocratic friend to run out and pick up sticks. But what is the point of picturing him suddenly as a peasant, and an improvident peasant at that? Is there not a call to action of some kind here? The summons may be very imprecise, but dry wood makes a bright fire. Pindar’s Pelops asks why, when death comes of necessity to all, a man should “sit in the dark, simmering a nameless old age in vain, with no part in anything noble”.<sup>24</sup> The metaphor is long-lived, we may recall Yeats:

- 19 T. P. Wiseman (“Legendary Genealogies in late Republican Rome”, *G&R* 21, 1974, 153–164 = *Roman Studies*, Liverpool 1987, 207–218) is also prepared to keep open that possibility. His paper is not only highly entertaining, but offers a valuable reminder of the “otherness” of the Romans, and his imaginative reconstruction of their attitude is convincing. The interpenetration of history and myth in people’s ideas about the remote past is typical of antiquity generally.
- 20 In the first two cola of Horace’s alcaics (the hendecasyllables), I find 83 clear breaks in sense within the colon in a total of 752 cola (11%). Of these breaks, 69 are at the caesura. So 9.2% of Horace’s hendecasyllables have a break at this point, with a slight preference for break in the second colon (36) over the first (33). Breaks within the colon are, not surprisingly, associated with a conversational style. The poem with the largest number (7 in all, including 4 at caesura) is 1. 27, the highly dramatic sympotic scene.
- 21 In the *Odes*, see 1. 9. 13, 3. 29. 43–45. At 1. 7. 32, *cras* promises adventure and danger. In Greek, see *Alc.* 783–784 (part of an anthology of sympotic commonplaces) and, for later examples, M. L. West, *Carmina Anacreontea* (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1993) 6.
- 22 For the farmer, see Aristophanes, *Peace* 1140–1147, for the gentleman, Alcaeus, *PLF* (Voigt) 338.
- 23 See, in particular, *Odes* 1. 7. 15–17 and 3. 29. 33–41. L. P. Wilkinson (*Horace and His Lyric Poetry*, Cambridge, pbk. 1968, 26–23, repr. London 1994) offers an excellent treatment of Horace’s use of “natural phenomena as symbolic of human experience”. His perceptive remarks on *Odes* 1. 9 seem to me undervalued by Nisbet and Hubbard.
- 24 *Ol.* 1, 82–84.

Some burn damp faggots, others may consume  
 The entire combustible world in one small room  
 As though dried straw ...<sup>25</sup>

The call suits a rising man, a future *legatus pro praetore*. It is in the manner of ancient poetic exhortation to call upon the addressee to do what he is known to be doing or intending to do.<sup>26</sup>

After the exhortation, a second *cras*, again breaking in after the caesura, introduces another striking change of scene: to the household feast. Kiessling and Heinze, followed by Nisbet and Rudd, argue that the repeated *cras* means that the feast must be an impromptu one, occasioned by the bad weather. But there is an anomaly here. Impromptu parties happen *today*. “Zeus is raining”, says Alcaeus, “there is a mighty storm from the sky.” Aristophanes’ farmers cannot “work on the vines today, nor loosen the soil, because the place is waterlogged”.<sup>27</sup> “Do you see how Soracte stands white with snow?” says Horace himself (*Odes* 1. 9). Hence the “ancient crow, prophet of rain”. Horace’s focus is on the future, on the risks and challenges of *tomorrow*. In fact, *cras* is not repeated: the first “tomorrow” is figurative and emotive, the second literal. Horace is probably better understood, not as imagining a particular occasion, but rather as celebrating his friend by evoking literary allusions familiar to both. In any case, *Lamia* is to refresh his *Genius* in company with his whole household. To look after one’s *Genius* could, of course, mean no more than to indulge oneself, but Horace never uses *Genius* simply in that sense, stripped of its ritual significance.<sup>28</sup> The whole household, as here, joined in celebrating the *Genius* of the *paterfamilias*.<sup>29</sup> The simple association of the *Genius* with a man’s procreative power is now out of favour, but the connection with the survival of the family as embodied in the *paterfamilias* remains.<sup>30</sup> The poem returns from a man’s individual ambition to its starting-point: the family.

25 *In memory of Major Robert Gregory.*

26 The point is well made by Nisbet and Hubbard in their introduction to *Odes* 2 (pp. 3–4).

27 See n. 22 above.

28 Other mentions of the *Genius* are all in the *Epistles*: 1. 7. 94, 2. 1. 144, 2. 2. 187 and *AP* 210. Only in this last passage does the cultic sense fade in some degree, though still maintained by the choice of words: *placari, festis ... diebus*.

29 Typically on his birthday. But that (*pace* Quinn) cannot be the case here, if Censorinus (*De die nat.* 2. 2) is right in saying that animals were not sacrificed to the *Genius* on a man’s birthday, lest the day which had given him life should take it from another creature. The reason given makes the ban apply exclusively to birthdays.

30 Thus, G. Dumézil (*Archaic Roman Religion*, tr. P. Krapp, Chicago/London 1970, 360) defines the *Genius* as “the deified ‘personality’ of the individual as he comes into the world proceeding from a long line of other men ... and summoned to bring into the world, through his offspring, another line”.

3. *Odes* 3. 4. 9–20

*Me fabulosae Vulture in Apulo  
 nutricis extra limen †Apuliae†  
 ludo fatigatumque somno  
 fronde nova puerum palumbes  
 texere ...*

Horace's initial summons to the Muse, Calliope, leads into a Keatsian fantasy of wandering in the sacred grove of poesy. Then, with *me*, the poet focuses on himself, with the adjective *fabulosae* asserting his own inclusion in the world of legend and imagination. *Palumbes*, the noun qualified by *fabulosae*, appears only as the last word of the stanza, while the next stanza begins with the main verb, telling us what the pigeons did. This striking word-order is, typically of Horace, carefully calculated. It marks the tale of how the poet as a small child once wandered on Mount Vultur in Apulia, and of how, as he slept, pigeons covered him with fresh leaves to protect him from bears and vipers, to the amazement of the people in the villages around. Those were leaves of bay and myrtle, sacred plants of Apollo and Venus, that protected him, a bold, spirited (*animosus*) child.

Horace has revived a dusty literary conceit by making himself the hero, an active not a passive hero, and placing the event in his own native country of southern Italy. Tales about birds and beasts showing favour to literary men in infancy have mostly reached us from prose-writers later than Horace, but some at least are likely to have originated earlier.<sup>31</sup> Given the pervasive Pindaric references in Horace's poem (*Pyth.* 1, also *Pyth.* 8),<sup>32</sup> it is interesting that such tales seem to be told about Pindar in particular. Antipater of Thessalonica, who lived at Rome and was roughly contemporary with Horace, tells of bees moulding their honey round Pindar's young lips.<sup>33</sup> Long after Horace's time, probably as late as the third century AD, Philostratus claims to describe a painting of the infant Pindar in his father's house, cradled on sprigs of bay and myrtle and, again, being fed by bees.<sup>34</sup> Autobiographical encounters of adult poets with the Muses (or Apollo) go back to Hesiod (*Theog.*) and are of doubtful relevance.

31 For references, see Nisbet and Rudd in their introduction to the poem, but note that *Od.* 12. 62ff. is not relevant to the story of the infant Zeus being fed with ambrosia by doves in the Cretan cave. Our earliest authority for that is the poetess Moero at the end of the fourth century BC (Athenaeus 11. 491b). See also A. S. Pease on Cicero, *De div.* 1. 78 (Ann Arbor 1920, repr. London 1980).

32 See, as ever, the commentary of Nisbet and Rudd, and also W. Theiler, *Das Musengedicht des Horaz* (Halle 1935), another valuable collection of data.

33 See A. S. F. Gow/D. L. Page (eds.), *The Garland of Philip* (Cambridge 1968), Antipater 75. Antipater's patron was L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (see Gow/Page II, 18–19), whose two sons were, according to Porphyry, the addressees of Horace's *Ars Poetica*. It must, however, be said that there is no record elsewhere of this particular Piso having two, or indeed any, sons.

34 Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2. 12, ed. A. Fairbanks (London/New York 1931, repr. 1960).

So far so good, but in matters of detail the stanza quoted above is highly controversial. For both logical and metrical reasons, *limen Apuliae* will not do.<sup>35</sup> Porphyry tells us that Horace was brought up on Mount Vultur by a nurse called “Apulia”. He takes *fabulosae* as genitive agreeing with *nutricis*, “because nurses are in the habit of telling tales to their charges”. Pseudo-Acro begins with an interesting idea: “He has given the name of the province as his nurse, because he was from there.” There follows a second instalment in which a new reading appears: “Pigeons covered [me] with fresh leaves on Apulian Vultur, outside the threshold of Pullia, [my] tale-telling nurse.” In fact, both commentators are pretty much at sea.

As well as appearing in pseudo-Acro, Nanny Pullia enters the text in some early MSS,<sup>36</sup> and has commended herself to several editors and commentators, including Gordon Williams, who is struck by “the authentic note of autobiography given by the name of his nurse, Pullia”.<sup>37</sup> Bentley (who had made short work of “Apulia” as a name) pointed out that Horace does not even tell us the names of his father and mother. *Limina Pulliae* would be an easy corruption from *limen Apuliae*: a misdivision and one extra letter.

Pseudo-Acro’s first idea deserves serious attention. A place can certainly be a metaphorical nurse. According to Cicero, Cato Sapiens called Sicily “the nurse of the Roman populace” (*Verr.* 2. 2. 5) and for Horace himself the “land of Juba” is “dry nurse of lions” (*Odes* 1. 22. 15–16). The view of Nisbet and Rudd that “in the context of a straying child *limen* can only mean the threshold of a house” need not rule out a place: a metaphorical nurse can surely have a metaphorical house. Paldamus’ *Dauniae* cures the metre, but not the sense. “Daunia” means Apulia, so Horace is left “on Apulian Vultur” outside Apulia. We need a small, insignificant place which could have occasioned the explanation “a village in Apulia”. Then *Apuliae* becomes an intruding gloss, which early drove out the original word. Maps of Roman Italy show the countryside round Venusia and Mount Vultur as mostly empty, but surely there were other villages or small

35 The clearest and most succinct account of the textual problem is still that of E. C. Wickham, *The Works of Horace* I (Oxford 1896).

36 Including A (Paris. Lat. 7900A), B (Bern. 363) and a (Med. Ambros. O 136 sup.), all dated by Shackleton Bailey to the ninth-to-tenth centuries.

37 G. Williams (ed.), *The Third Book of Horace’s Odes* (Oxford 1969) 51. It is advisable to be wary of Horace’s authentic notes of autobiography. Most notorious is the problem of how the poet’s father, if he really was “a poor man with a lean estate”, managed to afford that expensive education. Was there some rich patron whom Horace chooses not to mention, or was the poet simply lying? For an interesting investigation of the question, see R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Horace Behind the Public Poetry* (New Haven/London 1995) 4–5. For an enjoyable and informative, if highly speculative, account of the possible “freedman” status of Horace’s father, see G. Williams, “*Libertino patre natus*: True or False?”, in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Homage to Horace* (Oxford 1995) 296–313.

towns.<sup>38</sup> “... beyond the threshold of my nurse [unkown place]” may seem a disappointing solution, but it at least allows a plausible process of corruption, unlike *pergulae*, *villulae*, etc.

Apart from the text, the tone of Horace’s narrative has proved enigmatic. For Nisbet and Rudd, a major reason for rejecting Pullia, the nurse, is that she is out of place in “this grand poem”.<sup>39</sup> For D. A. West, however, “Horace is mocking the poetic claims of the Greeks and of himself”.<sup>40</sup> But in this poem Horace takes up nine stanzas out of twenty with presenting his own vatic credentials, before going on to the praise of Augustus. This is not the context for crude mockery. Again, this is a writer whose imagination was profoundly imbued with Greek poetry, who here mythologizes both his own southern Italian identity and his sense of belonging to the poetic world of Greece.

Such typically Horatian playful seriousness may not have presented such problems to readers educated in the literary culture inherited from the renaissance, at a time when every educated man knew his Horace and for men of literary tastes classical authors formed part of normal reading throughout their lives. Certainly, the idea of the future poet marked out from childhood by some sort of supernatural favour had strong appeal in the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods, and proved amenable to much individual adaptation.

Thomas Gray, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, is openly, indeed insistently, classical. In “The Progress of Poesy”, his *animosus infans* is Shakespeare:

Far from the sun and summer gale  
In thy green lap was Nature’s Darling laid,  
What time, where lucid Avon stray’d,  
To Him the mighty Mother did unveil  
Her awful face: the dauntless child  
Stretch’d forth his little arms and smile’d.

Near the end of the poem, Gray turns to mythologizing his own infant self:

Yet oft before his infant eyes would run  
Such forms as glitter in the Muse’s ray  
With orient hues, unborrow’d of the Sun.

38 In the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* the only places shown in the area are Ac(h)eruntia, Bantia and Ferentum (with query), in fact only the places mentioned by Horace.

39 Nisbet/Rudd apparently incline towards *nutricis* adjectival qualifying some word meaning “cottage”, or the like.

40 *Horace*, Odes III. *Dulce Periculum* (Oxford 2002) 46–47. West’s interpretation of this passage combines the perceptive and the perverse. A major perversity is the rendering of *infans* as “baby”. The word can mean “small child” and must mean that here. The choice is significant: the child is “without speech” in the full sense, but not without spirit.

Gray's poem begins with an extended allusion to *Pyth.* 1. Writing to Horace Walpole in 1752,<sup>41</sup> Gray refers jocularly to the poem as "a high Pindarick upon stilts", but he undoubtedly intended it to be taken seriously.

William Wordsworth, writing in 1822, tells Walter Savage Landor<sup>42</sup> that "in respect to Latin Poetry, I ought to tell you that I am no judge, except on general principles. I never practised Latin verse, not having been educated at one of the Public Schools. My acquaintance with Virgil, Horace, Lucretius and Catullus is intimate; but as I never read them with a critical view to composition great faults in language might be committed which would escape my notice." In Wordsworth's letters allusions to and quotations from Horace crop up throughout his life, but of particular interest is the poem "Liberty", composed in 1820.<sup>43</sup> Wordsworth's Horace, a reluctant eulogist of the Augustan regime, under "pressure of his gilded chains", seeks peace and solitude on his Sabine farm:

He proud to please, above all rivals, fit  
To win the palm of gaiety and wit;  
He, doubt not, with involuntary dread,  
Shrinking from each new favour to be shed,  
By the world's Ruler, on his honoured head.

Explicit reference to Horace is absent from Wordsworth's extended treatment of his own boyhood in *The Prelude*.<sup>44</sup> But the picture of the adventurous, solitary boy wandering in his native mountains, inspired and protected by some supernatural power – Nature, or the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe" – conforms closely to the Horatian model. Wordsworth's distinctive addition is a type of extended self-contemplation unknown to classical poets.

- 41 See P. Toynbee/L. Whibley (eds.), *Correspondence of Thomas Gray* I (Oxford 1971) 364. After visiting Tivoli in 1740 and being shown the supposed ruins of Horace's house, Gray sent nine stanzas of highly competent alcaics to his friend, Richard West. See Toynbee/Whibley, I, 158–159.
- 42 See A. G. Hill after E. de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth III. The Later Years*, Part 1 (Oxford 1978) 125. Wordsworth had, nonetheless, had an excellent classical and mathematical education at Hawkshead Grammar School. On arrival at St. John's College, Cambridge, he found himself a year ahead of most freshmen. Landor had been to Rugby and was a notable composer of Latin verse.
- 43 *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, IV, ed. E. de Selincourt/H. Darbishire (Oxford 1947) 153–157. The poem begins from the contemplation of some "gold and silver fish" transferred from their tank to freedom in a pond, continues with more wide-ranging reflexions on liberty, leading ultimately into the ideal life for a poet. The passage on Horace occupies the pivotal position. "The flowery path that winds by stealth" (91) may recall *Epist.* 1. 18. 103 *secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae*.
- 44 *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, ed. E. de Selincourt, rev. H. Darbishire (Oxford 1959) gives the text from 1805–1806, with, on the right-hand page, that published in 1850. Other drafts are added in the notes. On Wordsworth's boyhood, see Book 1 and again Book 5, 450 (426) ff. The boy who dies at the age of ten in the famous passage on Winander Lake in Book 5 seems like a sort of *alter ego*.

For Friedrich Hölderlin, master of the German alcaic and asclepiad,<sup>45</sup> the attachment of Horace and Wordsworth to their own mountainous homelands is replaced by a general sense of communion with nature, together with a thoroughly un-Horatian feeling of alienation from men. The divine protector is “a god” or “the gods”:

Da ich ein Knabe war,  
Rettet' ein Gott mich oft  
Vom Geschrei und der Rute der Menschen,  
Da spielt' ich sicher und gut  
Mit den Blumen des Hains,  
Und die Lüftchen des Himmels  
Spielten mit mir.<sup>46</sup>

The poem ends:

Im Arme der Götter wuchs ich gross.

There is a real sense of fear in the poem, of the need for protection.

At school, at least until his final year or so, Charles Baudelaire was a star pupil in classics. At the age of sixteen, he won first prize for Latin Verse Composition in the Concours Général, the national competition for pupils in the senior forms of lycées.<sup>47</sup> His poetic boy is not solitary from choice. He is cruelly rejected at once by his own mother:

Pourtant, sous la tutelle invisible d'un Ange,  
L'Enfant déshérité s'enivre de soleil,  
Et dans tout ce qu'il boit et dans tout ce qu'il mange  
Retrouve l'ambrosie et le nectar vermeil.

Il joue avec le vent, cause avec le nuage  
Et s'enivre en chantant du chemin de la croix;  
Et l'Esprit qui le suit dans son pèlerinage  
Pleure de le voir gai comme un oiseau des bois.<sup>48</sup>

Again, as with Hölderlin, the sense of a particular locality is missing. Nor is Baudelaire explicitly autobiographical. The distinctive feature of his version of the poetic boyhood is its strongly Christian character. Yet the mention of nectar

45 Commentators generally connect Hölderlin's use of alcaics and asclepiads with his hellenism, but his technical knowledge must have come from Horace. In “Der Gott der Jugend” he pictures Horace sitting under the trees at Tibur.

46 “Da ich ein Knabe war ...” was written in Hölderlin's highly productive period from 1798 to 1803, before his mental illness passed into its final phase.

47 He also won first prize in Greek Unseen Translation and was third *accessit* in Greek and Latin Prose Composition. See C. Pichois/J. Ziegler, *Charles Baudelaire* (Paris 2005) 121.

48 *Les Fleurs du Mal. Spleen et Idéal* I “Bénédiction”.

and ambrosia slips in quite naturally, as it might have done in a poet of the renaissance.

Correspondence:

Laetitia P. E. Parker

43 Cumnor Hill

Oxford

OX2 9EY

United Kingdom

dae@edwardsd.demon.co.uk