

NOTES ON HORACE'S SATIRES

Abstract: Debated passages of Horace are explained.

Key words: Horace, Textual criticism.

Resumen: Se explican pasajes controvertidos de Horacio.

Palabras clave: Horacio, crítica textual.

I, 1, 94-100:

*ne facias quod
Ummidius quidam. non longa est fabula: dives
ut metiretur nummos; ita sordidus, ut se
non umquam servo melius vestiret; ad usque
supremum tempus, ne se peniuria victus
opprimeret, metuebat. at hunc liberta securi
divisit medium, fortissima Tyndaridarum.*

Fairclough¹ explained that Clytemnestra, daughter of Tyndareus, slew her husband Agamemnon with an axe. He then stated that “possibly the freedwoman’s name was Tyndaris”. I would like to suggest that the words *medium*²... *Tyndaridarum*, in line 100, mean “in the midst of the Tyndaridae”. The Tyndaridae were Castor, Pollux and Helen. Thus Horace is referring here to the temple of Castor³ and Pollux in the forum at Rome, where pecuniary affairs were transacted. Horace states that the miser, Ummidius, was killed by a very strong freedwoman with an axe, in the midst of the Tyndaridae, i. e. in the Roman forum⁴.

I, 1, 120-121:

*Iam satis est. ne me Crispini scrinia lippi
compilasse putes, verbum non amplius addam.*

Fairclough translated as follows: “Well, ‘tis enough. Not a word more will I add, or you will think I have rifled the rolls of bleary-eyed Crispinus.”

Fairclough explained that “the *scrinia* were the cylindrical boxes in which rolls of manuscript were kept.”

¹ Cf. H.R. Fairclough, *Horace, Satires*, ed. Loeb 1970, reprint, page 12.

² Cf. Lewis And Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s. v. *medius* I, A: “... With gen.”

³ Cf. *O. L. D.* s. v. *Castor* I, b.

⁴ The difficulties of explaining feminine *fortissima* with the masculine *Tyndaridarum* are acknowledged by Villeneuve (Budé edition) and Lejay *ad loc.*

I would like to suggest, however, that *scrinia*⁵ means here a casket for ointment. At *Sat.* I, 3, 25 Horace states that when people look at their own faults, their eyes are covered in ointment and they cannot see. Thus Horace means that he will not say any more, lest you think that he has stolen the ointment case of blear-eyed (*lippus*)⁶ Crispinus, and is therefore blind to his own faults⁷.

1, 5, 60-64:

*at illi foeda cicatrix
saetosam laevi frontem turpaverat oris.
Campanum in morbum, in faciem per multa iocatus,
pastorem saltaret uti Cyclopa rogabat:
nil illi larva aut tragicis opus esse cothurnis.*

line 64 *larva* : *barba* v. l.

In this passage Horace describes Messius Cicirrus, who was an Oscan: cf. line 54. Scholars have been puzzled by the reference to the “Campanian disease” in line 62. I would like to suggest that Horace is referring to the fact that Messius was an Oscan. Hence the scar on his brow is described as a Campanian (i. e. Oscan⁸) disease.

In line 64 perfect sense is provided by the reading *barba*. Messius did not need to wear a beard or buskins in order to imitate Polyphemus⁹, since he was already tall and hairy¹⁰.

I, 6, 1-6:

*Non quia, Maecenas, Lydorum quidquid Etruscos
incoluit finis, nemo generosior est te,
nec quod avus tibi maternus fuit atque paternus,
olim qui magnis legionibus imperitarent,
ut plerique solent, naso suspendis adunco
ignotos, ut me libertino patre natum.*

Palmer noted that the phrase *naso suspendis adunco* recalls *Sat.* 2, 8, 64: *Balatro suspendens omnia naso*. I would like to suggest that Horace means that Maecenas does not interrupt (*suspendis*¹¹) low born men (*ignotos*) with hooked sarcasm (*naso*¹²... *adunco*). Similarly, at *Sat.* 2, 8, 64 Horace describes Balatro as interrupting (*suspendens*) everything (*omnia*) with sarcasm (*naso*).

⁵ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *scrinium* II: “Transf., a case or casket, ... *unguentorum*” (Plin. 7, 29, 30).

⁶ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *lippus* II: “Trop., blind to one’s own faults.”

⁷ The difficulty presented by coupling “l’aveuglement de Crispinus” with *scrinia* in the sense “rolls” is well explained by Lejay.

⁸ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *Osci*. The Oscans were a primitive people of Campania.

⁹ Polyphemus had a beard and shaggy hair on his body: cf. Ovid, *Met.* 13, 850 *barba... saetae*. Polyphemus was also tall: cf. Ovid, *Met.* 13, 842.

¹⁰ Cf. line 61 *saetosam... frontem*.

¹¹ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *suspendo* II, B, 2: “To stay, stop, check, interrupt”.

¹² Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *nasus* B: “Of scorn, derision, satirical wit, satire, sarcasm”. Note that the adjective *adunco* has been used in a metaphorical sense. Sarcastic comments are imagined to be “hooked” or “barbed”.

I, 9, 11-13:

*“o te, Bolane, cerebri
felicem” aiebam tacitus, cum quidlibet ille
garriret, vicos, urbem laudaret.*

line 13 *vicos* : *ficos* v. l.

The variant *vicos* is inept, as has been observed (cf. Lejay *ad. loc.*, quoting L. Müller), because *vicos*, in the sense “streets of Rome” (so Lejay) or “districts of Rome” (cf. *O. L. D.* s. v. *vicus* 2b) is a notion subsumed in the word *urbem*. It follows that *ficos* is the correct reading, as is confirmed by the context. The accusative *ficos*, as we learn from Martial (I, 65, 4), means “piles”, and the word *ficus* in the sense “piles” was much talked about in the genre “satire” (Martial 4, 52, 2; 7, 71, 1; 14, 86, 2).

Garriret means “talk inconsequentially”, and governs *quidlibet*¹³: *laudaret* means here “mentions” (Forcellini, s. v. *laudo*, II, 2: “*nominare, citare*”). The sense is that the man, in his blabbering on anything, mentioned inconsequentially his piles and the town of Rome. Charisius, who as is well known, preferred the variant *ficos*, evidently understood all this¹⁴.

1, 10, 44-45:

*molle atque facetum
Vergilio adnuerunt gaudentes rure Camenae.*

Fairclough translated as follows: “To Virgil the Muses rejoicing in rural life have granted simplicity and charm.”

Fairclough noted that Horace is referring here to the *Eclogues*. I would like to suggest that *molle atque facetum*¹⁵ means “gently and elegantly”. Horace states that the Muses, who rejoice in the country, have favoured (*adnuerunt*¹⁶) Virgil gently and elegantly. Horace means that Virgil’s *Eclogues* are gentle and elegant poetry.

2, 2, 121-122:

*tum pensilis uva secundas
et nux ornabat mensas cum duplice ficu.*

Fairclough translated as follows: “by and by raisins and nuts and split figs set off our dessert.”

¹³ Cf. *garrimus quicquid in buccam*, Cic. *Att.* 12, 1, 2.

¹⁴ The criterion “*utrum in alterum*” indicates that *ficos* (“piles”) is the genuine reading. Certain critics opine that *vicos* was the original variant, which they think was erroneously altered into *ficos* by a mediaeval scribe (obviously German speaking) who mispronounced *v-* as *f-*, but the reading *ficos* was already known to, and accepted by, Charisius. In reality, *ficos* and *urbem* are not logically connected because Horace wants to show that the man

talked inconsequentially, and therefore a scribe, wishing to eliminate such illogicality which he could not comprehend, altered *ficos* into *vicos*, since there is a logical connection between these two words (*vicos* = “streets”, or “quarters”, and *urbem* = “town”).

¹⁵ Cf. Ovid, *A. A.* 3, 513 *ridere mollia* = “to smile gently”. Cf. also *Sat.* 2, 4, 18 where *malum* = “badly”.

¹⁶ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *annuo*. Cf. also Virgil, *Georgics* I, 40 *audacibus adnue coeptis*.

Palmer¹⁷ commented thus on the words *duplice ficu*, in line 122: “the fig slit up for drying, and so doubled.” I would like to add that Horace has employed a pun based on the meaning of *ficus* = “fig”¹⁸ and “piles”. Hence he describes figs as “ambiguous” (*duplice*¹⁹).

2, 4, 17-20:

*Si vespertinus subito te oppresserit hospes,
ne gallina malum responset dura palato,
doctus eris vivam mixto mersare Falerno;
hoc teneram faciet.*

line 19 *mixto* : *musto*. v. l.

I would like to suggest that the correct reading in this passage is *musto*. We should translate as follows: “If a friend suddenly drops in on you in the evening, and you fear that your tough (*dura*) hen (*gallina*²⁰) will suit his taste badly (*malum*), you will be wise to drown (*mersare*²¹) the lively woman (*vivam*²²) in Falernian must (*musto... Falerno*). This will make her tender.”

2, 4, 37-39:

*nec satis est cara piscis averrere mensa
ignarum quibus est ius aptius et quibus assis
languidus in cubitum iam se conviva reponet.*

Scholars²³ have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 38-39. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be restored to this passage if we understand that Horace is referring to aphrodisiacs. We should translate as follows: “Nor is it enough to sweep up fish from the expensive stall, not knowing which are better with sauce, and with which ones broiled (*assis*) the languid guest shall again restore himself for copulation (*in*²⁴ *cubitum*²⁵).”

¹⁷ Cf. A. Palmer, *Horace, Satires*, London 1968, reprint, page 271.

¹⁸ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *ficus* II, B.

¹⁹ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *duplex* II (l): “Of words, of a double sense, ambiguous”. Cf. my note on *Sat.* 2, 4, 63.

²⁰ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *gallina*: “a hen... As a term of endearment.”

²¹ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *mergo* II: “Of drinking to excess.”

²² Note that the adjective *vivam* is proleptic. Wine will make the stern (*dura*) woman lively, i. e. it will make her polite to the guest. The *gallina* is probably one of the girls who are usually invited by the host to entertain his guests. Needless to say, if the flesh of a real

hen is hard, it is softened by being boiled in water not wine.

The *hospes* has arrived earlier than expected (cf. Lejay, p. 452).

On *dura* of a girl, cf. Nisbet-Rudd, note on Horace, *Odes* 3,7, 31-2.

As regards Horace and his guest, speed is vital. Softening a real hen by boiling would take hours, whereas inebriating a girl with wine would take a few minutes.

²³ Cf. Palmer *ad loc.*

²⁴ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *in* II, C, 2: “Of the object or end in view... *quos ardere in proelia vidi*, Verg. A. 2, 347”.

²⁵ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *cubitus* I, B: “Esp., of *coitus* (for *concupitus*), in plur., Plaut. *Am.* 5, 1, 70”.

2, 4, 63-69:

*Est operae pretium duplicis pernoscere iuris
naturam. simplex e dulci constat olivo,
quod pingui miscere mero muriaque decebit
non alia quam qua Byzantia putuit orca.
hoc ubi confusum sectis inferbuit herbis
Corycioque croco sparsum stetit, insuper addes
pressa Venafranae quod baca remisit olivae.*

Scholars²⁶ have been puzzled by the meaning of the words *duplicis... iuris*, in line 63. I would like to suggest that Horace is referring to the fact that the noun *ius*²⁷ could mean either “sauce” or “justice”. We should therefore translate as follows: “it is worth while to study the nature of ambiguous sauce” (*duplicis*²⁸... *iuris*).

2, 4, 78-80:

*magna movet stomacho fastidia, seu puer unctis
tractavit calicem manibus, dum furta ligurrit,
sive gravis veteri craterae limus adhaesit.*

Fairclough translated as follows: “It strongly turns the stomach, if a slave has handled the drinking cup with hands greasy from licking stolen snacks; or if vile mould clings to your ancient bowl.”

I would like to suggest that Horace refers in line 80 to a dirty apron. The words *sive gravis craterae limus adhaesit* mean “or if an offensive (*gravis*) apron (*limus*²⁹) clings to an old bowl.”

2, 5, 39-41:

*persta atque obdura, seu rubra Canicula findet
infantis statuas, seu pingui tentus omaso
Furius hibernas cana nive conspuet Alpis.*

Fairclough³⁰ explained that “Horace makes satiric use of some verses from Furius Bibaculus”. He then adds that “in Bibaculus, as we know from Quintilian VIII, 6, 17, the second citation opened with Iuppiter as subject.” Fairclough translated as follows:

or Furius, stuffed with rich tripe,
“With hoary snow bespew the wintry Alps”.

²⁶ Cf. Palmer *ad loc.*

²⁷ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *ius* (1) and (2).

²⁸ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *duplex* II, 1: “Of words, of a double sense, ambiguous”. Cf. also my note on *Sat.* 2, 2, 122.

Lejay is puzzled by *duplicis*, which he thinks means “probablement” a sauce to which oil is added.

²⁹ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *limus* (3): “a girdle or apron”. Horace mentions dirty coverlets (*illuta toralia*) in line 84.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, page 200 (note c).

I would like to suggest that better sense can be made of this passage if we understand that Furius is imagined to ejaculate *semen* onto the Alps. We should therefore translate lines 40-41 thus: “or lecherous (*tentus*³¹) due to rich tripe, Furius bespews the wintry Alps with white snow (i. e. with *semen*)³².”

2, 8, 13-17:

*ut Attica virgo
cum sacris Cereris, procedit fuscus Hydaspes
Caecuba vina ferens, Alcon Chium maris expers.
hic erus: “Albanum, Maecenas, sive Falernum
te magis appositis delectat, habemus utrumque”.*

Scholars³³ have been puzzled by the meaning of the words *maris expers* in line 15. I would like to suggest that Horace describes the host as “free from the sea”. He means that the man is a rich merchant³⁴, who was forced to travel by sea in order to make money. We should therefore place a full stop after *Chium*, and translate as follows: “Then said our host, who was free from the sea: ‘If Alban is more to your taste, Maecenas, or Falernian, we have both.’”

2, 8, 27-30:

*nos, inquam, cenamus avis, conchylia, piscis,
longe dissimilem noto celantia sucum;
ut vel continuo patuit, cum passeris atque
ingustata mihi porrexerat ilia rhombi.*

These lines present a complex (textual, ichthyological and culinary) problem, which I hope to solve. The *Wortstellung passeris atque ingustata mihi porrexerat ilia rhombi* shows, as Palmer (in his Macmillan edition) has indicated, that the emphatic *ingustata ilia* are solely those of the *rhombus*, not also those of the *passer*. This is confirmed by the fact that the *passer* is a much smaller flatfish (flounder? dab? plaice?) than the *rhombus* (whose belly contains voluminous entrails worth cooking), and its entrails are too minute to be used for culinary purposes. The solution to the problem is simple: *passeris* is not a genitive singular, but an accusative plural (like the preceding *avis, piscis*): Horace was served *passeres* seasoned with a sauce made with the entrails of a *rhombus*, a sauce which imparted to the *passeres* a flavour never before tasted by the poet (*dissimilem noto sucum, ingustata*).

³¹ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *tendo* I, A, 2: “In partic., *nervum tendere*, in mal. part., ...Hence, *tentus*, a lecherous man, Mart. 11, 73, 3”.

³² The parody of this line with open reference to Bibaculus’ *Juppiter hibernas cana nive conspuat Alpes* is obvious.

The hyperbole is meant to indicate jocularly to the reader the enormous size of Furius’ *mentula*.

³³ Cf. Palmer and Lejay, *ad loc.*

³⁴ For rich traders cf. Nisbet-Hubbard’s note on Horace, *Odes* I, 1, 16. Cf. also Horace, *Epistles* I, 1, 45.

Note the *enjambement*, dear to Horace: *maris expers / hic erus*.

On the motif of the rewards and risks of voyages made by sea by merchants, cf. Nisbet-Rudd, note on Horace, *Odes* 3, 7, 3.

2, 8, 39-41:

*invertunt Allifanis vinaria tota
Vibidius Balatroque, secutis omnibus; imi
convivae lecti nihilum nocuere lagoenis.*

line 40 *imi* : *imis* v. l.

The reading *imis* is correct (cf. Scol. Cruq. as quoted by Lejay). The sense is that all the vulgar guests, including Vibidius and Balatro, drank to excess (*invertunt vinaria tota*), whereas the *convivae lecti* ("the choice guests") did not do likewise³⁵.

2, 8, 93-95:

*quem nos sic fugimus ultri,
ut nihil omnino gustaremus, velut illis
Canidia adflasset peior serpentibus Afris.*

line 95 *Afris*: *atris* v. l.

In line 95 the variant reading *atris* makes good sense. Canidia is said to be worse than malicious (*atris*³⁶) snakes.

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³⁵ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *lectus*: "Chosen, picked out, selected; choice, excellent."

Secutis omnibus cannot be taken on its own, i. e. followed by a semicolon, because not all the banqueters drank to excess. The semicolon, in sum, must be placed after *imis*.

Cf. also Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *imus* A, 2: "Trop., lowest, meanest, basest in quality or rank."

³⁶ Cf. Lewis And Short, *op. cit.*, s. v. *ater* II, B, 1: "... malevolent, malicious." For the treacherous nature

of the snake cf. my *Studies In The Poetry Of Nicander* (Amsterdam 1987), page 109.

The variant *Afris* is not justified by Lucan 9, 607 ff, as Villeneuve maintains: the "haleine des serpents d'Afrique" was not poisonous, whereas the breath of certain European serpents "was supposed to be deadly" (Palmer *ad loc.*). The variant *Afris* was prompted by the fact that "les serpents d'Afrique... étaient fort redoutées" (Lejay *ad loc.*).

On *atris* referred to snakes in Horace, cf. Nisbet-Rudd, note on *Odes* 3, 4, 17-18.