

HORACE, ARS POETICA 254: A CONJECTURE

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The paradoxos of line 254 of the *Ars Poetica* includes the beginning of a proposition that Horace would have known is not true. As far as I know, no one has offered a justification on literary grounds for his deliberate use of an untruth, so I am inclined to suspect, with others, that the text is corrupt. Below I propose something that Horace might have written (and known to be true), and suggest a way that it might have gotten twisted into an untruth.

Shackleton Bailey:

*Syllaba longa breui subiecta uocatur iambus
pes citus, unde etiam trimetris accrescere iussum
nomen iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus
primus ad extremum similis sibi. †non ita pridem†
tardior ut paulo grauiorque ueniret ad auris
spondeos stabilis in iura paterna recepit
commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
cederet aut quarta socialiter.*

(Hor. Ars 251–258)

Conjecture:

*Syllaba longa breui subiecta uocatur iambus
pes citus, unde etiam trimetris accrescere iussit
nomen iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus
primus ad extremum similis sibi, moxque uicissim
tardior ut paulo grauiorque ueniret ad auris
spondeos stabilis in iura paterna recepit
commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
cederet aut quarta socialiter.*

Shackleton Bailey put the last two feet of line 254 in daggers, and Brink dismissed the various conjectures, both of punctuation and reading.¹ The problem with the transmitted text is that the iambic trimeter admitted spondees a long time ago (from Horace's standpoint), which Horace knew, so that *non ita pridem*, "not so long ago", does not make sense. Brink observed that the thought requires *mox*, or something along those lines – that is, shortly after the invention of the iambic trimeter,

1) C. O. Brink (Ed.), *Horace on Poetry: 2. The 'Ars Poetica'* (Cambridge 1971) 299. A. Y. Campbell, 'Two Notes on Horace 'Ars Poetica'', *Bull. Inst. Class. Lond.* 5 (1958) 67, suggests *nouit at item* at the end of line 254 and a line 254a beginning with the word *taedia*.

poets started incorporating spondees into their iambic lines.² In line with Brink's suggestion, I propose that we read *moxque uicissim* where MSS have *non ita pridem*. Delz's conjecture of *comiter idem* for *non ita pridem* has Horatian parallels,³ but is doubted by Shackelton Bailey and Rudd.⁴ Although graphically economical as well, it strikes me as redundant – *comiter recipit, non [ita] socialiter ut cederet* would be a possible paraphrase.⁵ We know that the *iambus* is behaving *socialiter* when he lets the spondees in – just not so *socialiter* that he lets them go anywhere in the line. Whether we take *socialiter* more closely with *cederet* or *recipit* does not seem to me to make a great deal of difference.⁶ To also modify *recipit* with *comiter* seems unnecessary, whether or not it is already being modified by *comiter*.

With most editors and for the sake of what I take to be the best narrative sense, I maintain the MSS reading *iussit* at the end of v.252, with the personified *iambus* as the grammatical subject of the whole passage after *pes citus*.⁷ *Iussit* can then be coordinated with *recipit* at v.256, although the transmitted text, which is hard to punctuate, does not contain a conjunction that coordinates the two verbs in the indicative.⁸ Of course, if a word with *que* is inserted, the asyndeton is removed. Furthermore, this emendation makes better sense of the passage than the vulgate based on what Horace actually knows about the history of iambic meter.⁹ It links, through the coordination in *moxque*, the two events in the narrative – the applica-

2) Brink (n. 1 above) 299. A similar suggestion, “some indication of time, like ‘soon afterwards’”, is offered by N. Rudd (Ed.), Horace, Epistles Book II and Epistle to the Pisones (‘Ars poetica’) (Cambridge 1989) 193.

3) J. Delz, Textkritische Versuche an der Ars Poetica des Horaz, MH 36 (1979) 147–148.

4) D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Ed.), Horatius: Opera (Stuttgart 1988) 320; Rudd (n. 2 above) 193.

5) For *ita*, cf. Brink (n. 1 above) 300: *non ut = non ita ut*.

6) On the syntax of *non ut cederet ... socialiter*, cf. Brink (n. 1 above) 300. A translation would run “the iambus admitted spondees, not so amiably that he abdicated from the second or fourth place”.

7) F. Klingner (Ed.), Horatius: Opera (Leipzig 31959) 303; Brink (n. 1 above) 297; Delz (n. 2 above) 147. See the paraphrase in Rudd (n. 2 above) 192.

8) E. Kraggerud, Critica (IV): Some fresh conjectures on Horace: Epistles II and Ars Poetica, SO 79 (2004) 122, suggests starting a new sentence with *non ita longe* at the end of line 254. I am unsure whether an adverbial form of *longus* can refer to the near future (relative to the speaker, or to another past event) without the further specification provided by a word such as *futurum* or *post* in his parallels (except one found in the medieval *Epistula Alexandri*). In two parallels from Gellius, he asks us to read *longe* without *post*. I am confused by his claim that *post* after *longe* at Gell. 17.21.35 is a conjecture of Hosius, as it already appears in the earlier Teubner text of Hertz (Leipzig 1853) and the editions of Lion (Göttingen 1824) and Proust (Paris 1681); neither Hosius (Leipzig 1903) nor Marshall (Oxford 1968) indicates that it is a conjecture.

9) And what Terentianus Maurus, writing several hundred years after Horace, says happened (vv.2196–2204).

tion of the name ‘iambic’ to the trimeter, and the trimeter’s admission of the spondee in the first half of the foot.

If Horace actually wrote *moxque uicissim*, the root of the corruption I believe lies with a change of *moxque* to *non ita*, at the latest shortly before the composition of the archetype on which the tradition of the commentary attributed to Porphyrio depends. The copyist could have been working from an insular script such as that of the Bernensis.¹⁰ The first part of *M* becomes *N*, with a macron added for *non*. *O* is broken into *I* and *T* and *X* gets turned into *A*. *Q* is then flipped into *P* (*VI* may also have become involved in this slip, if the *I* was written as a descender, as often after *V*, *M*, and *N* in the Bernensis), with a series of vertical elements in *uicissim* providing the raw material that, if not wholly legible, could be forced into *pridem*. Since *uicissim* does not make sense when someone has mistaken *moxque* for *non ita*, the scribe will have to either try a conjecture of his own or make something else out of *uicissim*. *Vicissim*, depending on the hand, may have looked sufficiently like *pridem* (which would not, as far as the scribe could tell, do violence to the sense) that he wrote the latter.¹¹ The next step would then be for someone working from this copy of Horace on his copy of Porphyrio to add a lemma for *non ita pridem* and concoct the explanation that the commentary gives for the development of the hexameter.

If this is in fact how the corruption of line 254 occurred, a series of propositions outlining the transmission of the text of Horace in the eighth and ninth centuries can be put forward. The copying of MSS of Horace resumed in the Carolingian period among Irish monks in Northern France.¹² Renewed interest in Horace seems to have led to the rediscovery of other MSS on the continent, some perhaps

10) B. Bischoff, *Latin Paleography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and David Ganz (Trs.) (Cambridge 31990) 45, gives examples of the continued use of insular scripts by Irish monks on the continent during the ninth century.

11) Kraggerud (n. 8 above) 123, posits that *longe* would have been taken as an unfamiliar way of expressing the sense of *pridem*. I cannot find any instances where *longe* means the same thing as *pridem*, nor is it clear why a scribe would have wanted something with the sense of *pridem* (absent having been misinformed about the development of the iambic trimeter, in which case, what was the source of his bad information?).

12) P. von Winterfeld, *Wie sah der Codex Blandinius Vetustissimus des Horaz aus?*, *RhM* 60 (1910) 33, suggests the mid-ninth century for the arrival of the text of Horace in northern France; G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Florence 21952) 374–375, suggests that the Irish monks would have received the text of Horace in Italy in the early eighth century; at least one lost MS would intervene between this text and our earliest surviving witnesses. The Carolingian court library may have held a copy of the *Ars Poetica* around the year 790 (B. Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, M. Gorman [Tr., Ed.] [Cambridge 1994] 94–95), although C. Villa, *Die Horazüberlieferung und die ‘Bibliothek Karls des Großen’*: Zum Werkverzeichnis der Handschrift Berlin, *Diez B.* 66, *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 51 (1995) 33–34, doubts that what we have is actually a library catalog.

witnesses to a separate tradition from antiquity.¹³ It is during this period that the tradition became contaminated in a complex way.¹⁴ Perhaps because *non ita pridem* happened to be supported by the commentary of Porphyrio in the version that came into existence in Carolingian times,¹⁵ and because people of the time did not know enough about the history of Latin tragedy to confute its facile claim that trimeters had started to include more spondees around Horace's time,¹⁶ the corrupt version of the text came to displace *moxque uicissim*, if that were still present in the hypothesized 'continental' MSS. Confusion of letter forms and somebody's creative but ill-informed explanation of this confusion defeated the genuine knowledge of the past preserved until this point in the authentic text of Horace and for posterity in the work of Terentianus.

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13) Pasquali (n. 10 above) 377, surmises that a number of the pairs of variants in Horace arise from a split in the tradition, perhaps when the works were copied from scrolls into codices.

14) Pasquali (n. 10 above) 375; Brink (n. 1 above) 12–21.

15) The text of Porphyrio may date largely from the fifth century, with later accretions (J. Zetzel, review of A. Kalinina, *Der Horazkommentar des Pomponius Porphyrio: Untersuchungen zu seiner Terminologie und Textgeschichte* [Stuttgart 2007], *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* [2009] available online). Accretions could date, as in the case of Servius Auctus, from the point at which different commentaries were combined into one (C. E. Murgia / R. A. Kaster [Eds.], *Serviani in Vergili Aeneidos libros IX–XII commentarii* [Oxford 2018] xi). The oldest witness is Vat. Lat. 3314, copied in central Italy during the ninth century (Bischoff [n. 12 above] 50–51). This is the period at which commentaries on a number of authors began to circulate as separate books, often with much addition to material that had previously been included in marginalia (J. Zetzel, *Marginal Scholarship and Textual Deviance: the "Commentum Cornuti"* and the Early Scholia on Persius, London 2005, 6, 8, 78).

16) In fact, per Brink (n. 1 above) 201, and Horace (*Ars* 258–262), the older Latin tragedians are the ones who put too many spondees in their trimeters.