

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

EROTIC BRAMBLES AND THE TEXT OF HORACE *CARMEN* 1.23.5–6

Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloe,
quaerenti pavidam montibus aviis
matrem non sine vano
aurarum et siluae metu.
nam seu mobilibus veris inhorruit
adventus foliis seu virides rubum
dimovere lacertae
et corde et genibus tremit.
atqui non ego te tigris ut aspera
Gaetulusve leo frangere persequor:
tandem desine matrem
tempestita sequi viro.

Whenever animals come on stage, they steal the show. The skittish fawn and predatory felines of Horace *Carmen* 1.23 are no exceptions. With such an array of fauna, who pays attention to flora? The scenery of this poem might well have gone entirely unnoticed if it weren't for the striking expression *veris . . . adventus*, which drew the attention of commentators as early as Porphyrio.¹ Bentley objected to the incongruity of the natural phenomena: fawns have not yet been born nor have leaves sprouted on the trees nor have lizards emerged from hibernation when spring arrives, i.e., in early spring.² Bentley adopts the emendation *vepris . . . adventum*, arguing that *vepris* complements *rubus* and coheres with the sense of *inhorrescere*, to bristle.³ While zoological or meteorological realism is not, as Renihan observes, required of poetry,⁴ coherent imagery is desirable and bristling brambles seem incongruous as an expression of Chloe's erotic seasonality.⁵ I would like to offer a brief comment on the sexual imagery of leaves and brambles and on the erotic dynamics of the poem, showing how this erotic imagery supports the reading *mobilibus veris inhorruit adventus foliis*.⁶

1. A. Holder, ed., *Pomponi Porfyrionis Commentum in Horatium Flaccum* (Innsbruck, 1894), p. 32.

2. R. Bentley, *Q. Horatius Flaccus, ex recensione et cum notis atque emendationibus*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1869), p. 55.

3. Bentley, *Horatius*, p. 55, offers a selection of literary passages where *vepres* nestle with *rubi* and other passages illustrating *inhorrescere*. Ov. *Met.* 5.628 (to which Bentley does not refer) also perhaps supports the emendation *vepris*. This passage is a simile through which Arethusa describes how Alpheus hunted her down as a dog traps a hare hiding in the bramble. Ovid seems to conflate the situation of Hor. *Carm.* 1.23 with the image of Odysseus' brooch (Hom. *Od.* 19.228).

4. R. Renehan, "Shackleton Bailey and the Editing of Latin Poetry," *CP* 83 (1988): 321–22.

5. On the theme of seasonality, see for example, E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 183–84; S. Commager, *The "Odes" of Horace* (New Haven, 1962), pp. 237–38, 298; M. Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace's "Odes"* (Chapel Hill, 1986), pp. 56–57.

6. Among modern editors, only D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Stuttgart, 1984) prints *ve·poris . . . ad ventum*. Cf. S. Borzsák, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Leipzig, 1984); F. Klingner, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Leipzig, 1950); E. C. Wickham and H. W. Garrod, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Oxford, 1901).

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Lines 5–6 elaborate the causes of Chloe's fear, the woods and the wind, and these natural phenomena attain erotic significance. In two recent interpretations, by Nadeau and Ancona,⁷ the erotic imagery of this stanza is read as a naturalistic representation of sexual desire and its satisfaction through sexual intercourse. The arrival of spring is a metaphor for the dawn of Chloe's sexual awareness: the rustling of spring breezes in the leaves expresses her response to the erotic overtures of the poet/lover.⁸ The lizard represents the phallus;⁹ its parting of the brambles the sexual act. So far Ancona and Nadeau, who are both more interested in the animals than the foliage. The two sets of imagery are, however, related. The choice of brambles for the nest of the lizard, *rubrum* (6) may have involved a pun based on colors: the description of the lizards as *virentes*, vigorous and green, triggers in *rubus* an echo of *ruber*, which points to the sexual symbolism of the lizard. The color red is both physiologically accurate and poetically resonant with erotic lizards, as in epigrams from the *Anthologia Palatina*, where the phallic lizard is described as ῥοδοδάκτυλος and ῥοδόπῃχς (*Anth. Pal.* 12.242 = 11.21).¹⁰ This chromatic punning might ease the awkwardness of imagining lizards bedding down in the bramble, but it does not justify adding thorns to the picture of Chloe's sexual awakening in lines 5–6. The association of brambles with Chloe remains problematic. While they may suggest (what might seem to be) the thorny problem of seducing a virgin, brambles are a singularly inappropriate image for that virgin. In erotic verse, thorns are commonly associated with undesirable hair, a sign of age marking the hairy as too old, past the bloom of youth.¹¹

Occasionally, nettles represent the goad of desire—for example, *Anthologia Palatina* 12.124 or 12.98, where desire torments the poet on a bed of thorns—and they have a similar significance in the erotic pursuit in *Carmen* 1.23. Before she's caught, Chloe is desirable because she is as vulnerable as a fawn, delicate like spring leaves.¹²

In the moment of intercourse, she becomes capable of response and resistance expressed in the image of the bramble: the suggestion of color in *rubum* and the shape of the thorn is also suggestive of the female genitalia. Her resistance ups the erotic ante: it is a kind of goad that challenges the poet/lover to respond with aggression symbolized by the predatory cats. Although the sexual tension escalates through the end of the poem, the metaphorical intercourse occurs at the climactic center of the

7. Y. Nadeau, "Aenigma, an eloquens structura? Hor. c. 1.23 (*vitae inuleo*)," *Latomus* 46 (1987): 778–80; R. Ancona, "The Subterfuge of Reason: Horace *Odes* 1.23 and the Construction of Male Desire," *Helios* 16 (1989): 49–57.

8. Nadeau, "Aenigma," p. 779, cites as a parallel Lucretius' description of the epiphany of Venus (1.6–20).

9. On the lizard, see *Anth. Pal.* 12.3, 12.207, 12.242; and Nadeau, "Aenigma," pp. 779–80 and Ancona, "Subterfuge," p. 53.

10. Cf. *Priapeia* 1.5 and 26.9, in W. H. Parker, ed., *Priapeia: Poems for a Phallic God* (London, 1988), pp. 66 and 110, where Priapus' fortitude is associated with his ruddy complexion.

11. Explicitly undesirable on old women: Hor. *Epod.* 12. On boys, thorns and other sharp, dry plant matter can represent the growth of hair (facial and otherwise), which makes boys no longer attractive, e.g., *Anth. Pal.* 12.36 and 12.225 (dry stubble), *Anth. Pal.* 12.195 (as summer's heat kills flowers, so hair destroys beauty), *Priapeia* 12. See A. Richlin, *The Gardens of Priapus* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 34–44 (boys), 52, 109–13, 123–24 (women), and J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, 1982), p. 76.

12. Commentators compare Anacreon frag. 408, where a fawn is lost in the woods, bereft of her mother. See Bentley, *Horatius*, p. 56; R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: "Odes" Book I* (Oxford, 1978), p. 273; A. Kiessling, *Q. Horatius Flaccus "Oden" und "Epoden"* (Berlin, 1958), p. 104. Both images, the fawn and the new leaves of spring, convey a sense of ripeness as well as vulnerability, both in keeping with the erotic dynamics described by Ancona, "Subterfuge," pp. 53–54.

poem where the plant imagery mediates a change in the erotic dynamics. The change in symbolism from leaf to thorn reflects a transition from flirtation to consummation.¹³ The plant imagery provides the backdrop for the conventional dance of hunter and prey in which "no" can be converted into "yes" by force. Emending the text to add thorns to the fragile leaves in lines 5–6 would diminish this erotic drama. The suggestion of spring breezes advances the characterization of Chloe and her sexuality as something that evades and teases the poet/lover. The image of the lizard parting the brambles can suggest the lover's success in catching the elusive object of his desire. The brambles here may convey some resistance by Chloe, but it is the silent and ultimately ineffective resistance of grasses trodden by a stalking tiger.

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13. The intensification of the erotic activity also corresponds to the change in season: spring breezes turn into the summer heat that lizards love to bask in; spring to late spring or summer, pursuit to capture. The syntax of the stanza also marks the transition with each *seu* clause describing a different season and a different stage of the romance. On the seasons and the syntax, Renehan, "Shackleton Bailey," pp. 321–23.

SUBSISTENCE ANNUITIES AND PER CAPITA INCOME IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

In 1984, the economic historian Raymond Goldsmith estimated the average per capita income of the early Roman Empire at approximately HS 380 per year, plus or minus fifteen percent: thus, a range of about HS 320 to 440.¹ Granted the state of our evidence, Goldsmith's estimate is, of course, necessarily speculative. Nonetheless, in this short article I examine neglected evidence from the Roman jurists that tends to support Goldsmith's estimate.² The evidence is twelve passages, all but one from the Antonine jurist Cervidius Scaevola, describing small subsistence annuities left by testators mainly to their freedmen or foster-children (*alumni*).³

Coinage in the Jurists. In preserved juristic writings that antedate the Justinianic codification, the jurists express monetary values in two main ways: for archaic law

1. R. W. Goldsmith, "An Estimate of the Size and Structure of the National Product of the Early Roman Empire," *Review of Income and Wealth* 30 (1984): 263–88, esp. 273–74; also *Premodern Financial Systems: A Historical Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 34–59.

2. The data derive from a computer data base of 1,557 monetary values in the Roman jurists, compiled with the aid of my research assistant David Leitao. A computer printout of this data base is available from the author upon request. On money in juristic sources, see K. Hasler, *Studien zu Wesen und Wert des Geldes in der Römischen Kaiserzeit von Augustus bis Severus Alexander* (Bochum, 1980), with further literature; at pp. 1–22, Hasler surveys the classical Roman coinage system.

3. See generally L. Boyer, "La Fonction Sociale des Legs d'après la Jurisprudence Classique," *RHD* 43 (1965): 333–408, at 342–55; and E. Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford, 1991), pp. 133–34. On *alumni*, B. Rawson, "Children in the Roman *Familia*," in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, ed. B. Rawson (Ithaca, 1986), pp. 170–200, at 173–86; H. S. Nielsen, "*Alumnus*: A Term of Relation Denoting Quasi-Adoption," *C&M* 38 (1987): 141–88; many were former slaves. I focus on annuities with a probable yearly value of HS 1,000 or less; for some larger annuities, see note 41. Estimated values are summarized in the Table (p. 230 below). On the legal form of Roman alimentary annuities, P. Voci, *Diritto Ereditario Romano*, vol. 2 (Milan, 1963), pp. 307–10.