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## Horace, *Ars Poetica*, vv. 125 foll

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The substitution of *v* for *b* is a common occurrence, which would result in this case in *mirantur*, passing easily into *mirantur*. This is one more instance of the need for paying attention to neglected errors in our

MSS., and the opening sentence of the *Verrines* should no longer be misquoted.

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Oct. 29, 1904.

HORACE, *ARS POETICA*, vv. 125 FOLL.

Si quid inexpertum scenae committis et  
audes  
personam formare novam, servetur ad unum  
qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.  
difficile est proprie communia dicere: tuque  
rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus  
quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.  
publica materies privati iuris erit, si  
non circa vilem patulumque moraberis  
orbem  
nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus  
interpretes . . . . .

I would suggest a way of throwing light upon the force of *proprie communia* and dispelling all ambiguity, by transferring here some lines (240-3) which cause an almost equal perplexity where they stand. If set before v. 128 they will shew that the force of *difficile* has been misapprehended, and remove the difficulty which is serious at first sight of taking *proprie communia dicere* in the most obvious sense 'to treat with originality themes that are common property.' It is always taken to mean 'it is hard, so do not attempt it.' But with this sense none of the proposed interpretations seem to suit the entire context. It is assumed that Horace is warning off the Pisos from a too difficult enterprise, and that *proprie communia dicere* is therefore in contrast with *Iliacum carmen deducis in actus*, and parallel to *proferre ignota indictaque*. This interpretation of Acron (and Mr. Wilkes) who takes *communias* as *intacta, non ante dicta*, would do very well if the sentence stood alone. But, as Professor Wilkins says, the parallelism of *publica materies privati iuris erit* is too close to be denied, and *publica materies* cannot bear the sense of 'unappropriated material' because v. 133 speaks of translation.

Orelli's (and Dr. Johnson's) interpretation, 'it is difficult to give individuality to abstract types' is subject to the same grave objection that the parallelism of *publica materies* is ignored. Even if this could be, it does not suit so well as Acron's view the

alternative parallelism with *ignota indictaque primus* which both these interpretations require. Neither is it much in the way of the ancient dramatists to individualise types.

Professor Wilkins offers another interpretation which has the merit of preserving the ordinary sense of *communias*. '(It is fairly easy to treat novel themes without inconsistency.) The difficulty arises when you endeavour to treat familiar themes in a distinctive and individual manner. You are selecting a theme from the *Iliad*: then you are wise to confine yourself simply to throwing Homer's poem into dramatic shape, instead of attempting an originality of handling which would probably lead you into inconsistencies.' On this view v. 128 whilst recommending *communias* dissuades from treating them *proprie*. This can hardly be right, for lines 131 foll. plainly give directions how to treat the theme *proprie*, with freedom and originality. It is not likely that a courtier like Horace would say to the Pisos 'It is too hard for you but this is how I should advise your betters to do it.' Moreover it would be very confusing to set *ignota indictaque primus* not parallel to *inexpertum* and *persona nova* but as belonging to the alternative contrasted with these. If now we set vv. 240-3

Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi  
quavis  
speret idem, sudet multum frustra que  
laboret  
ausus idem: tantum series iunctura que  
pollet  
tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris.

between v. 127 and v. 128 all these difficulties are removed and the sense is quite clear.

Horace has mentioned two courses

Aut famam sequere, aut sibi convenientia  
finge. (v. 119)

In the eight lines which follow he has given

the guiding principles to be followed in each case. Now he says, 'I should prefer the first method and work on familiar material, trusting to lend it distinction by the handling. The ordinary man thinks this easy: but let him try: such is the power of judicious setting, such distinction is lent to plots familiar to all. It is not an easy thing, as men imagine, but a hard thing to treat familiar subjects with originality: you yourself, Piso, have also preferred this, the better and harder course, in drawing the plot of your tragedy from Homer. The choice is worthy of your powers. But you must see that this *fabula communis* is treated *proprie*, and to this end you must avoid the following three faults . . .'

The Piso here addressed was writing a tragedy on some Homeric subject after the fashion of the day. This is shown by the form *deducis* in contrast to *profferes*, and confirmed by the disproportionate scale of the treatment of the drama in this epistle. By the emphatic *tuque* 'you as well' Horace affects to fortify his own theory by the practice of Piso, and indirectly conveys, not a depreciation, but an appreciation of his judgment, ability, and ambition.

Horace seems to have in mind Aristotle's *Poetics* c. 14, where it is said that the tragic poet usually, though not necessarily, draws his plots from the well known histories of a few mythical families which afford the fitting Recognitions and Catastrophes, keeping the names and traditional characters of the personages, but that none

the less he should display invention of his own in the artistic treatment of this material. αὐτὸν δὲ εὐρίσκειν δεῖ καὶ τοῖς προδεδομένοις μύθοις χρῆσθαι καλῶς.

It is of course impossible to delete altogether with Ribbeck vv. 240-3, some of the best and most Horatian lines in Horace. But they would be much better away from their present context, where they strangely interrupt a discussion of the style of the Satyr drama, *Silenus* v. 239 evidently referring to the *Cyclops* of Euripides and *Fauni* v. 244 to the Satyr chorus. Editors who retain them have to apply a little gentle violence to make them refer to the style of the Satyr play: but the expressions which are most refractory in this view *ex noto fictum carmen sequar*, and *de medio sumptis*, are just those which are most effective in the proposed context, the first stating Horace's preference for the usual course *famam sequi* (hence *sequar*), and the second anticipatory and clearing up the meaning of *communis*.

The above interpretation is not dependent on the proposed transference though less obvious without it. But if such transference solves two *crucis* at once and makes both contexts quite clear and smooth, it seems worth consideration in the case of a writer so deliberate and fastidious, so careful

ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici.

H. J. MAIDMENT.

#### AD APULEIUM.

*Met.* iv. c. 23, p. 85, 14 v. d. Vliet (Teubner, 1897):

'nec mora cum latrones ultra < *solitum* > anxii atque solliciti remeant, nullam quidem prorsus sarcinam vel omnino licet vilem laciniam ferentes sed tantum < *totis* > gladiis, totis manibus, immo factionis suae cunctis viribus unicam virginem filo liberalem—advehebant.'

'*totis*' addidit v. d. Vliet: ego in 'tantum' (tantū) latere puto 'tantis' i.e. 'tot,' cf. p. 125. 12 'tantorum seminum,' p. 67. 4 'rerum tantarum.' -if pro compendio -ū legebatur. Simili errore p. 56. 9 in F 'nonen' scriptum est pro 'non enim' (non enī).

*Met.* vi. c. 16, p. 129. 20:

'iam tu quidem maga videris quaedam mihi et alta prorsus malefica.'

Exemplorum copia docent viri docti verba 'maga et maleficus' (vel: veneficus) sic iungi solere, cf. etiam Apul. *Apol.* c. 78 (p. 96, 6, v. d. VI.). Inde est quod nulla quantum scio editio est post Oudendorpianam quae non sprete *Codicis* F auctoritate, *Codicis* φ lectionem 'maga' exhibeat. Et tamen illius fidem satis firmiter stabilitam puto. Quod aliud est verborum artissima coniunctio, aliud eorundem interruptum tenor, ut levius fortasse argumentum omitto: sed notandum est pronomen 'quaedam' suas proprias partes hic agere, ut addito adiectivo