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The Correctness of the Manuscripts on Horace, *Odes* 3.20.8

By Robert W. Carrubba, Fordham

*Non vides quanto moveas periclo
Pyrrhe, Gaetulae catulos leaenae?
dura post paulo fugies inaudax
proelia raptor,*

*cum per obstantis iuvenum catervas
ibit insignem repetens Nearchum,
grande certamen, tibi praeda cedat
maior an illi.*

*interim, dum tu celeris sagittas
promis, haec dentis acuit timendos,
arbiter pugnae posuisse nudo
sub pede palmam*

*fertur et leni recreare vento
sparsum odoratis umerum capillis,
qualis aut Nireus fuit aut aquosa
raptus ab Ida.*

All the manuscripts of Horace *Odes* read *illi* as the last word of line 8. The commentary of Porphyrio¹, the scholia² and the early editors of printed texts, as well as Richard Bentley³, were also in agreement on *illi*. In his edition of 1811, P. Hofman Peerlkamp⁴ offered a correction of *illi* to *illa*. Since that time editors have been divided on whether to print the *illi* of the manuscripts or the *illa* of Peerlkamp. On the whole, however, the editors and commentators of the last two centuries have come to favor *illa*. Here is a representative sampling of opinions: *illi*: Wickham-Garrod⁵, Page⁶, Shorey/Laing⁷, Ussani⁸, and West⁹; *illa*:

- 1 A. Holder, *Pomponi Porphyronis Commentum in Horatium Flaccum* (repr. New York 1979) 121.
- 2 O. Keller, *Pseudacronis Scholia in Horatium Vetustiora*, I (repr. Stuttgart 1967) 290.
- 3 Bentley, *Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera* (Cambridge 1711).
- 4 P. Hofman Peerlkamp, *Q. Horatii Flacci Carmina* (Amsterdam 1862) 243.
- 5 Wickham/Garrod, *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera* (Oxford 1912) 76.
- 6 T. E. Page, *Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Libri IV* (repr. London 1959) 365.
- 7 Shorey/Laing, *Horace: Odes and Epodes* (Chicago 1919) 379.
- 8 V. Ussani, *Orazio: Odi ed Epodi II* (Turin 1946) 131.
- 9 D. West, *Horace: Odes III* (Oxford 2002) 174.

Orelli/Baiter/Hirschfelder¹⁰, Kiessling/Heinze¹¹, Gow¹², Darnley Naylor¹³, Tescari¹⁴, Klingner¹⁵, Terzaghi¹⁶, Williams¹⁷, Quinn¹⁸, and Shackleton-Bailey¹⁹.

Peerlkamp²⁰ remarked:

Sed quomodo hic proelium institui poterat de maiore an minore parte praedae? Praeda, Nearchus, male divideretur. Legendum: *tibi praeda cedat, Maior an illa*. Utrum tibi praeda cedat, an illa in certamine maior sit futura, hoc est, superior, victrix.

In other words, Peerlkamp understood Horace's phrase *praeda maior* to mean the greater part of the prey, and wondered how this division of the body of Nearchus could be managed. Since such a scene appeared absurd, Peerlkamp altered the text to avoid a division of the victim. Orelli-Baiter-Hirschfelder²¹ followed both Peerlkamp and Haupt²² because *an illi* probabilem explicationem non admittat. Kiessling-Heinze²³ also noted that Nearchus could only be *praeda* for Pyrrhus but not for the *leaena*, because she is portrayed as the mother of *catulus*. H. Darnley Naylor²⁴ accepted *illa* since, as he noted, "there is no parallel to *maior = magis*", to yield the sense whether the prey may fall to Pyrrhus or rather to the *leaena*. Gordon Williams²⁵ rejected *illi* since "*maior an illi* could only suggest that the prize was other than Nearchus". And lastly, Quinn²⁶ states firmly that *illi* "is clearly wrong" because "Nearchus is *praeda* only for Pyrrhus".

In support of the manuscripts, Wickham²⁷ argued that *praeda maior* meant not "more of the prey", but "who should rather win the prey". Such a confusion of language was, he noted, not "uncommon", and Wickham cited Horace's use of *multus* for *multum* in *Satires* 1.7.28, and Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.181. *Illa*, Wickham observed, was a "prosaic alteration". Page²⁸ judged that "*maior* is used some-

10 Orelli/Baiter/Hirschfelder, *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Odae* I (Berlin 1886) 439.

11 Kiessling/Heinze, *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Oden und Epoden* (Dublin 1968) 340.

12 J. Gow, *Q. Horati Flacci Carmina* (Cambridge 1906) 86.

13 H. Darnley Naylor, *Horace: Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge 1922) 162.

14 O. Tescari, *I Carmi e gli Epodi* (Turin 1936) 309.

15 F. Klingner, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Leipzig 1950) 93.

16 N. Terzaghi, *La Lirica di Orazio* (Rome 1962) 285.

17 G. Williams, *The Third Book of Horace's Odes* (Oxford 1969) 113.

18 K. Quinn, *Horace: The Odes* (Hong Kong 1992) 279.

19 D. R. Shackleton-Bailey, *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Stuttgart 1985) 96.

20 Above, note 4.

21 Above, note 10.

22 M. Haupt, *Ovidii Halieutica* (Leipzig 1838) 40.

23 Above, note 11.

24 Above, note 13.

25 Above, note 17.

26 Above, note 18.

27 E. C. Wickham, *Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera Omnia* I (Oxford 1877) 225–226.

28 Above, note 6.

what loosely, but perfectly clearly”, and that the reading *illa* “makes the stanza end with a very weak and awkward clause and gives a very unusual sense to *maior*”. Shorey/Laing²⁹ render *maior* as *rather*. The rhythm or turn of phrase as opposed to strict grammatical logic wins the day. The precise meaning of the greater or lesser portion yields, it is argued, to what is generally a clear meaning, namely, that the prize goes to one party or the other. Ussani³⁰ believed that Horace was not thinking of the contested youth, “*ma i leonici a lui paragonati*” by a case of synchysis analogous to that in *Odes* 3.11.41–42 where the sense is that each Danaid kills her own mate:

*quae, velut nactae vitulos leaenae,
singulos eheu lacerant.*

David West³¹ argues that in the metaphor *catulos* carries a true plural sense and that therefore the winner, we may imagine, could carry off two cubs and the loser one. But, he concludes, “there is only one Nearchus”, and Horace “throughout is deploying misfits” to burlesque the “unheroic affair”.

Finally, it is appropriate to note that after reviewing various opinions for and against *illi*, Nisbet and Rudd concluded simply that, “The question remains open”³².

Rather than attempt seriatim to accept or reject the individual arguments made for *illi* or *illa*, let me advance what appear to be the three most cogent items. First, the manuscript tradition for *illi* is unanimous, a consideration which, while not in itself conclusive, must be given great respect and which places a very heavy burden of proof on those who argue against it. It is instructive to observe how Villeneuve³³, who printed *illi*, dealt with this delicate matter:

J’ai traduit tant bien que mal la leçon des manuscrits, mais, en réalité, je crois qu’il faut lire, avec Peerlkamp: “*Grande certamen, tibi praeda cedat, Maior an illa*” et entendre: “enjeu illustre de savoir si le butin te reviendra, ou si elle va être la plus forte”.

Second, Peerlkamp and others have misunderstood the meaning of Horace’s phrase *praeda maior*. Third, *illi* makes the best sense and style in its immediate quatrain as well as in the larger context of the entire poem.

Let us now move on to the second point: *praeda maior*. Peerlkamp sought an emendation because he believed that the phrase had a partitive sense, namely, a “greater part of the prey”. There are, however, numerous examples in

29 Above, note 7.

30 Above, note 8.

31 Above, note 9.

32 R. G. M. Nisbet/Niall Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book III* (Oxford 2004) 243.

33 F. Villeneuve, *Horace: Odes et Epodes I* (Paris 1959) 131.

Horace and other authors where the word *maior* has no partitive force and simply means “greater”. Let us cite a few:

illi turba clientium sit maior (*Odes* 3.1.13–14)
qui maior absentes habet (*Epodes* 1.18)
concines maiore poeta plectro Caesarem (*Odes* 4.2.33–34)
quidquid erat nactus praedae maioris (*Epistles* 1.15.38)

In this last example, the very phrase *praedae maioris* occurs and with the clear meaning of a “greater prey”. The supporters of *illa*, on the contrary, have offered no parallel in Horace or another author where *maior* used with *praeda* has a partitive sense. While the *praedae* of Horace’s *quidquid praedae* may be termed a partitive genitive or a genitive of rubric, *maior* itself has no partitive sense, i.e., the meaning is “a greater” and not “a greater part”.

Let us examine the immediate context in our ode. Horace tells us that the *leaena* will go and seek *insignem Nearchum* (line 6), a phrase which very naturally suggests that Nearchus stands out among youths because of his handsomeness, that is, he is more easily identified and more desirable because of his better looks. In essence, this phrase conveys a comparative or “greater than others” meaning. As such, Nearchus is next described (lines 7–8) as *praeda maior*, or a “greater prey”, because he is an exceptional catch with regard to beauty and sexual attractiveness. There is no partitive idea but rather an obvious comparative one: Nearchus is a better prize than any other male and hence outstanding among them. While the word *iuvenum* in line 5 portrays the other young men who, like Pyrrhus, are seeking the ownership and favors of Nearchus, it also points us to a second party in the comparison, that is to say, Nearchus is outstanding (more handsome) among all other young men.

On the basis of style, the manuscript text displays an elegance of word order worthy of Horace, the preeminent Latin wordsmith (7–8):

[*utrum*] *tibi praeda cedat maior an illi*
 [Q] A B V b Q A

Notice how the question words *utrum* (here, as frequently, omitted, but necessarily understood) and *an* stand in balanced position, each immediately before the dative of the personal pronoun (*tibi* and *illi*). The full sense of the idea is: *utrum tibi praeda cedat maior an illi praeda cedat maior*. As the Latin stands, the corresponding pronouns *tibi* (A) and *illi* (A), as well as the noun *praeda* (B) and its modifying adjective *maior* (b) chiasmatically surround the verb *cedat* (V) at the center, to form a ‘golden’ construction. If one accepts Peerlkamp’s *illa*, the Horatian sophistication of style is totally lost, for the sense would be *tibi praeda cedat maior an illa [sit maior]*, which destroys all poetic symmetry.

With regard to the larger scheme of the poem, the reading of *illi* creates a symmetry of subjects:

Lines	Subject
1–4	<i>Pyrrhus</i>
5–6	<i>Leaena</i>
7–8	<i>Nearchus</i>
<hr/>	
9–10	<i>tu</i>
10	<i>illa</i>
11–16	<i>arbiter</i> (with comparison to Nireus and Ganymede)

Horace has created a pattern of subjects of verbs or actors beginning with the order of Pyrrhus (*vides, moveas, fugies*), *Gaetula leaena* (*ibit, repetens*), and *Nearchus* (*cedat*), in the first two quatrains (lines 1–8), and this same order is then repeated in the second two quatrains: *tu* [= *Pyrrhus*] (*promis*), *illa* [= *leaena*] (*acuit*), and *arbiter* [= *Nearchus*] (*fertur*). We may also note a supporting pattern: in the first half of the poem, all three actors are given a proper name: *Pyrrhe* (2), *Gaetulae leaenae* (2), and *Nearchum* (6); in the second half of the poem, the same three persons appear without a proper name: *tu* (9), *haec* (10), and *arbiter* (11). Concern with symmetrical patterns is a hallmark of Horatian poetry and can be further sampled within our own poem by *raptor* in the last line of the first stanza and *raptus* in the last line of the last quatrain – an artful repetition which frames the ode with thematic markers. Horace has also crafted a series of three references to Nearchus, each composed of two words. We move from *insignem Nearchum* to *praeda maior* and finally to *arbiter pugnae*. In other words, we first view Nearchus as outstanding, next we see him as a greater prey or catch, and by a striking transformation he becomes the arbiter of the contest. Nearchus has metamorphosed from the object of the hunt to the judge of the struggle while his cool detachment contrasts ironically with the passion and combativeness of his suitors.

There remains the critical argument made against *illi* which occurs repeatedly among supporters of *illa*: namely, that Nearchus is *praeda* only for Pyrrhus but not for the *leaena*. The sense is that Pyrrhus is hunting the whelp of lioness while she is its mother. But such an argument addresses the narrow confines of the *leaena ... catulos* metaphor. The woman who stands behind the metaphorical term *leaena* is just as much a hunter as is Pyrrhus. The points of the metaphor are the strength of the attachment, like that of a mother beast to cub, and the aggressive power of the animal. The metaphor does not extend to a true biological relationship, for in that case the woman would be perceived as having a sexual relationship with her own offspring. Horace employs metaphorical language, but only to a limited degree³⁴. Indeed, all metaphors signal points of comparison

34 D. West (above, note 9) 177, also stresses the limitations of the metaphor: “There is only one Nearchus. Horace throughout is deploying misfits in order to make fun of the portentous heroic view of his unheroic affair.”

but not complete identity, for in that case the two objects would not be compared but identified as wholly one and the same.

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