

# Three passages in Horace's Odes

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## Three Passages in Horace's *Odes*

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*Abstract:* This paper argues that the problems in Horace, *Odes* 1.35.21–24 are to be solved by the alteration of *nec ... ueste* to *sed ... mente*, as proposed by previous scholars, and that in 2.13.2 *primum* and in 3.27.13 *sis licet* should be emended to *prauam* and *scilicet*.

### I.

1.35.21     *Te Spes et albo rara Fides colit*  
              *uelata panno, nec comitem abnegat*  
              *utcumque mutata potentis*  
              *ueste domos inimica linquis.*

*at uulgus infidum et meretrix retro*  
*periura cedit*

These lines from Horace's ode to Fortuna present two main problems, which apparently have no connection whatsoever with each other:

(a) As Nisbet/Hubbard say, the antitheses between *rara* ("manifested by few") and *uulgus*, *Fides* and *infidum* are plain, and are stressed by *at*, a word which is not to be watered down to a mere connective as it is by e.g. Ker (1964, 43–44), reporting Housman in his lecture notes as holding the same opinion,<sup>1</sup> and R.G. Mayer in his commentary. This implies that whereas the *uulgus* runs away from houses which have fallen on misfortune, *Spes* and *Fides* remain there despite this misfortune. Nisbet/Hubbard aptly quote [Sen.] *Herc. Oet.* 601–3 (spoken by the chorus composed of friends of Deianira) *fidus comites accipe fatis: / nam rara fides ubi iam melior / fortuna ruit* and two passages from Ovid's *Ex Ponto* (to which Bentley adds a third, 2.3.10) praising friends for refusing to abandon their friend Ovid and become *comites Fortunae* when that goddess brings (?) misfortune. Many passages are quoted by Fraenkel in *TLL* s.v. *fides* 675.47 which criticise cases in which that quality is debased by following change of fortune, and praise the opposite; I quote only Lucan 8.485–6 *laudata fides cum sustinet ... quos fortuna premit*. In view of all this we cannot follow those

1 Ker quotes "Housman at Man. 3.112" as arguing for the change of *at* to *sed* in order to convey "a real antithesis". There is nothing about Horace at the indicated place (nor at 3.312 adduced below) nor could there be in Housman's commentary written in Latin, not English. I have not found any such comment anywhere in Housman's writings, and I cannot imagine what has happened here.

(e.g. Mayer) who think that *Fides* abandons great men who have fallen on hard times and goes off in the company of now hostile *Fortuna*, which is what the transmitted text says. It follows that we have to accept Peerlkamp's alteration of *nec* to *sed* in order to make Horace say that *Spes* and *Fides* do not accompany *Fortuna* in fleeing; thus the required contrast with *retro cedit*, to be added to the above-mentioned antitheses, is introduced. This emendation is accepted in Shackleton Bailey's text and argued in his *Profile of Horace* (91–92), where he refers to Housman's note on Manilius 3.312 for instances of the interchange of these two words in manuscripts. Housman quotes fourteen cases of this (including the passage of Manilius) in the commentary and addenda; of these two appear to be false references, one is based on a dubious reading, five have possible psychological as well as purely transcriptional causes (e.g. a neighbouring *nec*), but six are valid for comparison with this passage. To Housman's list one may add the scholiast on Juvenal 11.57 (see my article in *BICS* 14, 1967, 44).

(b) The phrase *mutare uestem* can be applied to acts of disguise and to a sociological change of apparel (e.g. *Odes* 1.36.9) and in a few other places to one-off situations plainly irrelevant here; otherwise it always is applied to going into mourning (*OLD muto* 4a, *uestis* 1b, *TLL muto* 1726.51); cf. *Epode* 9.27–8 *terra marique uictus hostis punico / lugubre mutauit sagum*. But if *Fortuna* is mourning her departure from powerful houses she cannot also be *inimica* to them; Kiessling/Heinze think that she can, swallowing what they themselves call “eine nicht ganz einwandfreie Mischung der Vorstellungen”. Shackleton Bailey's answer is to assert that the phrase here does for once imply not mourning but maleficence, though in Aesch. *Eum.* 370 adduced by him the Eumenides, though clothed in black, have not changed into it. Neither he nor Nisbet/Hubbard nor I can believe (though L. Mueller can) that the Latin permits us to understand that it is the powerful houses that go into mourning. It seems to follow that one of the contradictory terms must be corrupt. Which? Nisbet/Hubbard assume *inimica*, but this word seems to be quite appropriate; it is *mutata ueste* that is hard to interpret. Consequently an obscure 18th-century Dutch scholar, E. de Clerc van Jever,<sup>2</sup> altered *ueste* to *mente*. This may well be right; *mutare mentem* is found at e.g. Cic. *Catil.* 1.6, *Manil.* 4.257, and is the opposite of *eadem mens* (e.g. Nepos *Hann.* 2.5, Livy 8.31.3; *Epist.* 1.1.4 is different).<sup>3</sup> The passage will now mean “but they refuse to accompany you when you, your mind changed, abandon great houses”.

2 I had noticed this proposal many years ago, and the reference was recently checked for me by Professor R.G. Mayer in the midst of manifold calls on his attention. He is the “*Ieuerus*” of Housman's note on Lucan 1.481, but rates only a passing mention even in L. Mueller's *Geschichte der klassischen philologie in den Niederlanden* (Leipzig 1869) 100.

3 Also from long ago I have a penciled note that the same suggestion was made by Markland, but if this is correct I cannot now supply a reference.

## II.

2.13.1–4 *ille et nefasto te posuit die,  
quicumque, primum et sacrilega manu  
produxit, arbos, in nepotum  
perniciem opprobriumque pagi*

On this passage, which introduces the topic of the tree which almost fell on Horace, A.Y. Campbell sarcastically remarks “quotiens necesse sit arbor una eademque ponatur, dicant editors”. No editor has accepted the challenge. Kiessling/Heinze note “zum Ausdruck eines Beginnes das Pflanzen des Baumes schon der Anfang des Unheils war”, and Nisbet/Hubbard write a note listing passages which conform to the pattern adumbrated by Kiessling/Heinze, finally assuring us that “Once it is seen that Horace’s *primum* is wittily emphatic, its separation from *posuit* seems quite natural”, a sentence which conveys no clear meaning to me. The problem may be illustrated by a passage which superficially looks similar, Ovid *RA* 85–6 *arbor ... / quo posita est primum tempore, uirga fuit*, because Ovid goes on to contrast its former with its present state. Kiessling/Heinze have given the game away with their phrase “zum Ausdruck eines Beginnes”; *primum* is not the same as *olim* and always implies a following step, and there is none here. Campbell’s own conjecture is useless; instead I propose *prauam*, so that now the day was unlucky, the planter was criminal, and the tree itself was depraved.

## III.

In *Odes* 3.27 Horace’s persona is bidding farewell to a woman called Galatea; “Horace” would clearly prefer that she should not go, but, though concerned about the dangers of her journey, wishes her well. He begins by stating the wish that the journeys of the wicked be accompanied by bad omens, but he himself will look for good omens for those on whose behalf he feels concern. So, Galatea, let us hope that you will live happily and mindful of me wherever you settle, and that there are no bad omens for your journey.

3.27.13–16 *sis licet felix ubicumque mauis  
et memor nostri, Galatea, uiuas,  
teque nec laeuus uetet ire picus  
nec uaga cornix.*

As the discussions in the Nisbet/Rudd commentary and by Nisbet (in his *Collected Papers* 267) indicate, the basic problem is that the phraseology of 13 would naturally mean “as far as I am concerned”, as if “Horace” did not really care. Shackleton Bailey (*Profile* 97) follows T.E. Page in punctuating *licet* as paren-

thetical, but this is not only jerky, as Nisbet says, but puts the word in the wrong place before *felix*; and what could be more unpoetical than Shackleton Bailey's translation "yes, it's all right"? Many editors follow Bentley in assuming that between 12 and 13 "Horace" has in fact taken the omens and found them favorable. It seems quite a stretch to read this into the text which says nothing about this essential step, and those who accept the idea have to follow Bentley in accepting the very weakly supported variant *uetat* in 15; only Gordon Williams among those who follow this interpretation can combine it with retention of the subjunctive, the function of which receives little illumination from his translation "may forbid" and paraphrase "no thought of ill omen *need* prevent her journey" (emphasis added).

It seems to me that a satisfactory solution would be to read *scilicet*. The sequence of thought would then be this: "I shall look for good omens for those on whose behalf I feel concern (7–12); the fact is (*scilicet*) that I hope that you will live happily and mindful of me". The implication would be that "Horace" regrets the departure of Galatea but has no hard feelings about it. *Scilicet* (see *OLD* s.v. 3a) would introduce a motive for the preceding statement, as at 1.37.29 we are told that Cleopatra committed suicide by the asp's bite, the reason being (*scilicet*) her refusal to be paraded in a triumph. *sis felix* is admittedly a common phrase, but the phrase *uiuute felices* is applied by Vergil (*Aen.* 3.493) to the parting farewell from friends, and is taken over by epigraphical poets to express the final farewell by the deceased (*CLE* 804, 1095.9, 1117.9). There is also Lygdamus 5.31 *uiuute felices, memores et uiuute nostri*. This is surely a reminiscence of Horace, and it reproduces the syntactical form of my conjecture, *felix et memor nostri uiuas*, as in the translation above.

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