

FROM MOUNTAIN TO LOVERS' TRYST: HORACE'S SORACTE ODE

By D. W. T. VESSEY

VIDES ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus
silvae laborantes, geluque
flumina constiterint acuto.
dissolve frigus ligna super foco 5
large reponens atque benignius
deprome quadrimum Sabina,
o Thaliarche, merum diota:
permitte divis cetera, qui simul
stravere ventos aequore fervido 10
deproeliantis, nec cupressi
nec veteres agitantur orni.
quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere et
quem Fors dierum cumque dabit lucro
appone, nec dulcis amores 15
sperne puer neque tu choreas,
donec virenti canities abest
morosa. nunc et campus et areae
lenesque sub noctem susurri
composita repetantur hora, 20
nunc et latentis proditor intimo
gratus puellae risus ab angulo
pignusque dereptum lacertis
aut digito male pertinaci.

(Horace, *Odes* I. 9)

‘This poem has been destroyed by the critics,’ David West has written.¹ And certainly a familiar dilemma arises in relation to it. We admire and remember the poem; but, when we turn to some of its interpreters, we may feel our confidence diminished. We may wonder if we overlooked something on first and later reading and if our impressions, however favourable, were ill-grounded.

When accusations are made against a poem, as against a person, defences often have an air of special pleading or of tautology. An assumption that a poem is a good one gives rise, though deviously, to a conclusion that it is indeed good, supported by arguments that are actually subordinate to and trivialized by their dependence on that assumption.

If poems could be explained they might well never be written. Commentators no less than translators may be engaged in the business of treason; interpreters are, indeed, often double agents. By defending the poet, they defend themselves. They vindicate their claim to a special understanding and counter, at one and the same time, views hostile to the poet and to their own opinions. But by supplementing the text critics may shift attention away from it to themselves; it cannot be plausibly argued that this re-direction is always, if ever, beneficial.

The difficulties that have been traced in the Soracte Ode spring largely from attempts to answer the question: ‘What is it about?’ There is no shortage of those willing to enlighten us. In a recent edition Kenneth Quinn summarizes what he sees as the ode’s plot in the following way:²

¹ *Reading Horace* (1967), 3.

² *Horace: The Odes*, ed. with an introduction, revised text and commentary (repr. 1984), 139–40.

A dramatic monologue, with Horace in his favourite role as the middle-aged commentator—detached, indulgent—on the human comedy; his companion is a young man on the verge of life (the foil for Horace's worldly wisdom), the scene a country retreat in sight of Mt Soracte on a winter's day following a storm.

Perhaps the general and particular misconceptions that underlie this description of the poem need no exposure. Essentially they rest in treating propositional statements that relate to the domain of a text in the same way as those referring to the actual world, as if the textual and the actual were subject to the same laws. Furthermore, the synopsis in no sense does justice to the ode. We can all have the benefit of the 'worldly wisdom' of the middle-aged without recourse to Horace.

Poems are made up of words; these words were put into the order in which we read them at some time and (usually) by some individual. We were not, however, present at the time of composition or at any historical moment which we might suppose was connected causally with the compositional act. In this instance, the individual is not someone who can in any important way be or become familiar to us. A poet may be presumed to have an intention of communicating with others in so far as poetic language is no less public than any other;³ but we cannot have full, or even partial, knowledge of his other intentions, if any, though inferences can sometimes be drawn. The communication rests within the text as text; even if we lost all information about the human and historical origin of a poem the words remain for us and they are not vacuous.

In this case, our condition is not so bleak. Of what we can know about the ode, one factor, for example, remains stable. It is in some way related to a poem of Alcaeus (frg. 90 Diehl, 338 L.-P.). As poets generally, if not universally, enter (consciously or unconsciously) into a dialogue with their predecessors, the survival of even a fragment of Alcaeus' work is valuable. We could still appreciate Horace without it, but its availability is an advantage.

Soracte is still there too. That may be less important, for the mountain hardly played the same role in the evolution of the poem *qua* text as did Alcaeus. We do not need to have seen Soracte to read the ode, even though the poet—or rather the narrative voice in the text—tells us that we are doing so (or possibly asks us if we are),⁴ at least in so far as the implied singular addressee stands as our surrogate. If our understanding of the ode depended on our ability to identify the name Soracte with a specific object, and not only that but also with our ability to see that object at a time when a particular predicate was true of it, the ode would become the private property of a select group (and, if Soracte had changed in any respect since Horace's day, a group that is now closed). Such a conclusion cannot be sustained; we should rightly dispute the view that a poem referring to an object that no longer existed in the actual world was beyond our comprehension.

Equally, when a poet uses the verb 'see', he is stating a position, or asking a question, which, for most people, cannot be actualized; there is no true ostension. The advent of television (say) probably enables us better to form a mental image—the term is used loosely—of objects that are outside our direct experience, so that life-long inhabitants of hot flat countries may now have an excellent idea of what a snowy mountain looks like. But they do not, for that reason, have a better idea of why Horace started *Odes* I. 9 with an allusion to one.

Unlike Alcaeus, Soracte was not a writer, and its contribution as an actual object to Horace's poem, if any, is outside our reach. The Horatian Soracte exists within the domain of the poem; it is part of an ordered sequence of words. As such, it is not accessible for appraisal outside the sequence, nor can anything be predicated of it beyond what is

³ This point is sensibly and briefly made by Bernard Harrison, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (1979), 13–14.

⁴ Bentley regarded the first sentence as a statement rather than an interrogative and has been generally

followed. R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, however, believe that 'in fact a question seems much more likely', *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I* (1970), ad loc. (p. 118). A Roman reader would have been no more certain than ourselves on this point.

stated or clearly implied by the words in the sequence.⁵ And so the season in which the Horatian Soracte is situated is always snowy. Our acquaintance with snow is not a necessary condition for coming to grips with the ode, though it may be said to form part of a general conceptual, or possibly semantic, background to our reading of it. (Readers on this or another planet with no knowledge of snow or mountains might well be in difficulties, but we should be rash to assume that the ode was, on that account alone, wholly beyond their intellectual or aesthetic grasp.)

For the name Soracte has, within the domain of the poem, one predicate only: 'alta stet nive candidum' (1). Any involvement Soracte has in the whole must be derived from this predicate and not from additional ones of our own. We are perfectly at liberty, if we choose, to imagine Horace, or his narrator, or indeed anyone else, to be at a certain point, in Rome or outside it,⁶ from which an actual mountain called Soracte can be seen. But this act of imagination must be recognized for what it is: a separate issue, a projection beyond what is predicated into a world that is outside the text.

This process of associative fantasy can easily blind us to what is in fact in the text. Four words comprise the entire account of Soracte. The verb *stet* is a forceful one, suggesting more than the English 'stands'. Orelli glossed it: 'saepe de re horrida aut rigida'.⁷ Nisbet and Hubbard assert that it evokes 'fixity and strength'.⁸ Or, to put it another way, prominence and permanence. These qualities are not, however, causally related to what is added by the three remaining words and the ancient commentators were surely wrong to take *nive* with the verb;⁹ yet it must be said that the four words are so closely bound as to form a single concept. *Nive* is more directly linked with the epithet *candidum*, 'gleaming white';¹⁰ snow is the reason for the whiteness of Soracte. The snow itself is *alta*, a word that combines—though without ambiguity in Latin—not only an indication of the snow's depth but also the notion that it forms an addition to the height of the mountain.¹¹ It may be said that, though the semantic fields of the four words of the predicate—with the possible exception of *nive*—differ from those of any English equivalents that might be chosen, the idea conveyed as a whole is uncomplicated. This attunes with the straightforward introduction *vides ut* which imposes nothing more than a (supposedly) visual perception of a state of affairs that would be true whenever snow had fallen on Soracte; that is, it is always true in a domain where the assertion of visibility is no less textual than the given object of vision. If we attribute some other, hidden significance to the predicate we exceed its sense. That Soracte is a feature of a poetic domain does not affect the simplicity of what is said about it. (Though, it should be added, words are never wholly simple.)

The rest of the first stanza is similar in tone:

nec iam sustineant onus
silvae laborantes, geluque
flumina constiterint acuto. (2-4)

⁵ In general, see the remarks of John Warden, *Fallax Opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius* (Phoenix Suppl. Vol. 14, 1980), vii-viii, 11-12. As M. M. van de Pitte has recently written: 'The theoretical impossibility of propositionally extrapolating the meaning of literary works has never prevented theorists from trying to systematize the whole business, much less deterred critics from analysing the unsayable' ('Hermeneutics and the "crisis of literature"', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 24 (1984), 99-112 at 100). Van de Pitte discusses and cogently criticizes the various schools of 'hermeneutic' criticism. The Soracte Ode has been examined in the light of such approaches in a series of papers by J. P. Sullivan, Charles Segal, Michael Murray and Richard E. Palmer, in *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Classical Texts*, ed. Stephanus Kresić (= *Univ. Ottawa Quart.* 50 (1981), 325-642), 277-98. Others may find them more helpful than the present writer has done.

⁶ Eduard Fraenkel, *Horace* (1957), 176-7 fixes the location with some precision; West, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 3 and Quinn, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 139 (among others) are no less

sure that the *mise-en-scène* is to be visualized as in the country.

⁷ J. G. Orelli, 4th ed., rev. J. G. Baiter and W. Hirschfelder (1886), ad loc. (p. 62).

⁸ Nisbet and Hubbard, *op. cit.* (n. 4), p. 118; they add that '*stet nive candidum* makes a single and characteristically Horatian complex' (118-19).

⁹ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, ad loc. (p. 119); Porphyrio, p. 15 Holder; pseudo-Acro, p. 32 Keller.

¹⁰ See *OLD* s.v. *candidus*, 264-5, 1 and (b) for the epithet's association with light and gleaming reflection. There might here be an element of personification, as *candidus* is used of garments (*OLD*, 4), especially, of course, of the ceremonial *toga* worn by aspirants for office; Soracte is clothed in snow.

¹¹ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, *op. cit.* (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 118), who appositely cite Dryden's translation. For *altus*, see *OLD* s.v., 110; its meanings include 'having a great extension upwards' and 'downwards', as well as 'high', 'deep', 'thick'. Its derivation from *alo* suggests extension ('swelling') in any direction from a fixed point.

It is here that Alcaeus may be profitably introduced. The two relevant lines from his poem are as follows:

ἕει μὲν ὁ Ζεῦς, ἐκ δ' ὀράνω μέγας
χείμων, πεπτάγαισιν δ' ὑδάτων ῥόαι.

Only the germ of Horace's first stanza is to be found in Alcaeus. The Roman poet introduces a defined topography—Soracte—for which there is no parallel in the Greek. He adds trees to his landscape, using words that come close to personifying them.¹² Closer is the responson between Alcaeus' ὑδάτων ῥόαι and Horace's *flumina*, and between the verbs πεπτάγαισιν and *constiterint*. *Flumina* has always been taken to mean 'rivers' or 'streams', but the view is not (to some) without difficulties.¹³ West (op. cit. (n. 1), 4) assures us that 'near Soracte . . . every valley has its *flumen*'. Nisbet and Hubbard (ad loc.) offer an explanation in terms of motif rather than (actual) topography: 'frozen rivers are a conventional part of the poet's wintry scene.' But such comments may be otiose.

More crucial to our understanding of *flumina* is a consideration of the epithet *acuto* applied to *gelu* in an emphatic position at the end of line 4. This word caused speculation in antiquity. Porphyrio remarked of it: 'utrum ad sensum frigoris pertinet quod <gelu> velut pungat, an quod fractum velut acutum sit' (Holder, p. 16). This gloss is—surprisingly—cited with some approval by Nisbet and Hubbard, who claim (ad loc.) that 'these explanations are not necessarily exclusive; Horace may be combining the ideas of nipping cold and sharp ice.' This seeks the best of both worlds, but neither world may be the right one. *Acuto* remains a problem; the fact that it is felt in need of explication should itself give us reason to look at it closely.

Gelu is indeed better taken as 'ice' than 'cold', in view of the verb *constiterint*, as Nisbet and Hubbard recognize. And yet the ice that forms over rivers and streams and 'immobilizes' them is not sharp or pointed, as is conveyed by *acuto*.¹⁴ We would do well to recall that *flumina* (from *fluere*) may be used of any liquid in motion; though it most commonly occurs in relation to rivers, streams and the like (as we should expect), it does not invariably do so.¹⁵ When applied to other liquids or water in other forms, it does so without the imposition of a metaphorical sense of the kind contained in English expressions like 'rivers of blood'. And here Horace uses *flumina* in direct imitation of Alcaeus' ὑδάτων ῥόαι; the connection between ῥόη and ῥέω parallels that between *flumen* and *fluo*. David A. Campbell has rendered the Greek words 'running waters'¹⁶—but their precise reference remains indeterminable. It is by no means certain that Alcaeus is speaking of rivers and streams.

We are indeed predisposed to view *flumina* here as 'rivers' (or the like) because it frequently and uncontroversially bears that meaning; but, whenever Horace uses *flumen* or *flumina* in this way, other words in the immediate context make the sense clear.¹⁷ Our predispositions may, however, be incorrect. Horace's words are more easily understood if we rid ourselves of the rivers and streams, and interpret *flumina* as descriptive of the downflows of water from the trees that have frozen hard into icicles—which are indeed 'pointed'. Conifers in wintry conditions manifest this phenomenon: *gelu acutum* projects along and beneath their branches.¹⁸ On this view, the last two sentences may be (loosely)

¹² *Laboro* (OLD, 991-2, 1, 2), *onus* (OLD, 1250, 1) and *sustineo* (OLD, 1892, 5) are all used of human labours—particularly, perhaps, of servile tasks. Carrying burdens was notoriously a job for slaves.

¹³ cf. G. Pasquali, *Orazio Lirico: Studi* (1966), 78-9; West, op. cit. (n. 1), 4 (on Wilamowitz); Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 120).

¹⁴ Nisbet and Hubbard, ad loc. (p. 113). For *consisto*, see OLD s.v. 416, 1 (b); for *acutus*, OLD s.v., 32: its connection with *acuo* makes clear its primary sense of 'sharpened to a point'.

¹⁵ See OLD s.v. *flumen*, 716, 1 (d) for examples.

¹⁶ *Greek Lyric* I (Loeb Class. Lib., 1982), 375.

¹⁷ There are some twenty instances to be found in the Horatian corpus. Some are linked to the names of specific rivers, others having defining epithets or verbs; none stands isolated. In other words, when *flumen*/

flumina means 'river(s)' the context leaves no doubt that this is the case.

¹⁸ Familiar to many today principally from the decoration (known as 'lametta') hung on Christmas trees. It is worth adding that *acutus*, as indicated by OLD s.v. 2(c) is 'especially [used] of pine and similar trees having sharp needles': cf. Ovid, *AA* II. 42; *Ep.* v. 137. Horace, in this instance, may be seen as hinting, through the choice of the word, that the conifers on Soracte have pointed icicles in addition to or in place of their normal pointed needles. The Latin word for icicle, *stiria*, is rare and used in classical poetry once, by Virgil, *Georg.* III. 366 (cf. Martial VII. 37. 5). To mention them presented, therefore, a lexical problem: but they are, after all, 'flow-things' that have been 'immobilized'.

translated: 'And the trees <on Soracte>, though struggling hard, cannot bear their burden, and the water that flows from them has frozen solid with sharp ice.' The whole of the first stanza is then occupied with a brief but dense description of Soracte and its ice-covered conifers. It is saved from triteness and the Alcaean echoes are given a new setting.

But our rendering has ignored *iam*, as have, for the most part, commentators and translators: which is remarkable in view of the attention lavished on *nunc* later in the poem. *Iam* here is not just a space-filler (as some older critics might have argued)¹⁹ but neither is it to be seen as indexical. The temporal and non-temporal uses of *iam* are multifarious and its force, as a syncatagorematic element in any sentence, must be largely inferred from its context.²⁰ Its logical function here is to emphasize the reason for the situation specified in lines 2–4: 'Soracte is white with snow and, as a result of this, the trees . . .' Trees have a natural burden by way of leaves, needles and so forth: but, in times of snow and ice, they are further encumbered in a way that—say—a mountain is not. *Iam* does not mean 'now' or 'at this moment', indicating a simultaneity between what is described and an imagined dramatic time in the poem. Whenever Soracte is snow-covered, the consequence for its trees holds good. And, as we have seen, this is always, tenselessly true in the domain of the ode. It is possible that we should find, had we the context, that the word ἔνθεν, which alone survives of line 3 of Alcaeus and which is rendered by Campbell 'thence', had a similar force to Horace's *iam*.²¹

The account of Soracte in the first stanza is static and 'objective'.²² By a direct progression of thought in both Alcaeus and Horace we proceed from the inanimate to the world of human beings;²³ both poets pass on to speak of the means available to mortals to counteract the effects of harsh weather. The two passages merit comparison:

κάββαλλε τὸν χεῖμων', ἐπὶ μὲν τίθεις
πῦρ, ἐν δὲ κέρναις οἶνον ἀφειδέως
μέλιχρον, αὐτὰρ ἀμφὶ κόρσῃ
μόλθακον ἀμφὶ<βάλων> γνόφαλλον

dissolve frigus ligna super foco
large reponens atque benignius
deprome quadrimum Sabina,
o Thaliarche, merum diota. (4–8)

Horace's *dissolve* differs from Alcaeus' κάββαλλε in that it follows more closely upon the preceding theme. The addressee is told to 'melt' the *frigus* by stoking up the fire.²⁴ *Ligna* too aptly follows from the allusion to *silvae* in line 3, there being an obvious contrast between living wood laden with ice and dead logs placed on the hearth to warm a human habitation. The detail is not found in Alcaeus, the closest point of contact being between ἐπιτίθεις and *reponens*, though the implications are not the same.²⁵ Alcaeus' ἀφειδέως is

¹⁹ cf., e.g., James Henry, *Aeneidea or Critical, Exegetical and Aesthetical Remarks on the Aeneid* (1889, repr. 1969) III, 112–13 (quoting *tu* in line 16 of this ode); and the views of R. Y. Tyrrell, *Latin Poetry: Lectures delivered in 1893 . . . in the Johns Hopkins University* (1895), 202–3 on Horace's supposed habit of 'filling in gaps' on a larger scale.

²⁰ *Iam* was fairly exhaustively discussed by F. Handius in *Tursellinus seu de particulis Latinis commentarii* (1886, repr. 1969) III, 110–58; see, esp., 112, 130–3, 136. Cf. also *OLD* s.v. *iam*, 815, 6 on *iam* 'emphasizing the reason for a change of situation'.

²¹ Campbell, op. cit. (n. 16), 375. For ἔνθεν, see LSJ⁹ 566, 1, 3.

²² cf. N. E. Collinge, *The Structure of Horace's Odes* (1967), 65–6.

²³ For Horace's use of and attitude to inanimate nature in the odes, see the writer's 'The *fons Bandusiae* and the problem of the text', forthcoming in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 4 (1985).

²⁴ The meaning of Alcaeus' κάββαλλε is not quite certain, owing to a lack of parallels: D. L. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry* (repr. 1959), 309–10. For *dissolvo* as 'melt', see *OLD* s.v., 557, 2 and (b).

²⁵ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 120): '*re-* does not imply a repeated action; it may suggest that the wood is being put where it belongs, or perhaps that it is replacing burnt logs . . .' Alcaeus' meaning is not absolutely clear; Page, op. cit., 310: 'The general sense seems to be "build up a fire"; literally, perhaps, "put fire on (the hearth)".' The subtle point in Horace is the responson between *reponens* (ἐπιτίθεις) and *appone* in line 15 (cf. παρατίθημι). Stoking up the fire and putting each day to profit are both activities that are available to man in the face of powers beyond his direct control (*frigus, fors*).

expanded into the two adverbs *large* and *benignius*; his ἐγκέρνοις is changed into a second imperative, with a different nuance, *deprome*.²⁶ In place of the traditional epithet μέλιχρον Horace specifies Sabine wine, which was not an especially fine variety, though, we are assured, here of reasonable maturity.²⁷ The changes are substantial, though the Alcaean substratum is kept visible.

When we turn to Thaliarchus, curiosities of explication abound. Critics have asked, for instance, what his status is and by what right Horace gives him orders.²⁸ Some—most recently Gordon Williams—picture him as the narrator-poet's Ganymede.²⁹ Such fancies mask the appropriateness—surely indisputable—of the name to its setting.

Thaliarchus means 'ruler of the feast' or 'of the festivities'; that much raises no problems, though it must be added that θαλία does not, as some have assumed, necessarily imply a symposium.³⁰ Although the name is attested for a κάλος,³¹ there should be little temptation even on the part of naive realists to regard the Horatian Thaliarchus as in any sense a real person. What is more important is that the use of *o* with the vocative, the name itself and the noun *diota* (8) all impart a Greek flavour to a context which includes the uncompromisingly Italian *Sabina*. The first stanza brought elements based on Alcaeus into a similar setting, marked by the appearance of the name Soracte. The inclusion of the Greek Thaliarchus harmonizes with this process of synthesis, and *Sabina* may be said to make absolute Horace's seizure and transformation of the Alcaean theme.

But too little has perhaps been made by commentators of *diota*. The word is a *hapax eiremenon*,³² derived from the Greek epithet δίωτος, which is itself applied (though not frequently) to a variety of large, two-eared vessels.³³ Would the word have struck a contemporary of Horace as unusual? We cannot be sure; it is possible that the Graecism reflects a linguistic affectation among a 'smart set', in the same way that French has from time to time been in vogue in the English-speaking world.³⁴ *Diota* might have a fashionable flavour, suggesting an intimate and informal occasion. Equally, the word fits well with the Greek name Thaliarchus and with the Alcaean connections of the ode; for it is likely that it is at this point that Alcaeus ceased to form a general model for the ode. But, whatever the explanation, the rareness of *diota* should not be overlooked, for it provides a striking conclusion to the second stanza.

It has been suggested that the rest of the poem reflects the talk that might follow dramatically from the broaching of a capacious container of wine.³⁵ Certainly, we move from the particular—winter on Soracte, the response indoors—to general reflections, which, at least in essence, are hardly profound or original. That is not in itself of great moment, as we shall see, for the force of such maxims must be judged within the textual field of which they are part. But the train of thought should not be subordinated to concentration on particular statements.

The second stanza contains two imperatives addressed to Thaliarchus (*dissolve*, 5; *deprome*, 7); the third begins with another, which does not envisage a specific response but rather urges the adoption of a broader outlook on life:

²⁶ For ἐγκίρνημι, cf. LSJ⁹ 427 'mix by pouring in'; *depromo* (OLD s.v., 521) means something like 'fetch up from the cellar'.

²⁷ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 120).

²⁸ See West, op. cit. (n. 1), 6; Gordon Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry* (1980), 202, for comments on such ideas. An example of wild realism may be found in Charles W. Lockyer, 'Horace, *Odes* 1. 9', *CJ* 63 (1967), 304–8 at 307–8, on which see Peter Connor, 'Soracte encore', *Ramus* 1 (1972), 102–12 at 107–8. But Connor cannot resist the temptation of developing an account of the supposed qualities of the speaker's personality beyond what is present in the text.

²⁹ Williams, op. cit., 202.

³⁰ For the range of meanings of θαλία, see LSJ⁹ s.v., 782; these include public festivals as well as private drinking parties and other forms of merriment.

³¹ cf. D. M. Robinson and E. J. Fluck, *A Study of Greek Love-Names, including a Discussion of Paederasty and a Prosopographia* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Stud. in Arch. 23 (1937)), 183.

³² Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 121). For similar borrowings from the Greek, cf. O. Weise, *Die griechischen Wörter im Latein* (1882, repr. 1964), 172–3.

³³ Only two literary uses of a relevant type are cited by LSJ: Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 288d (applied to χυτρά); Anticlidus ap. Athenaeus 473c (applied to καδίσκος, in a semi-technical context).

³⁴ cf. J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (1979), 43 with n.

³⁵ As implied by Lockyer, loc. cit. (n. 28), 307; a similar, though more delicate, train of thought may be found in Williams, op. cit. (n. 28), 202.

permitte divis cetera, qui simul
stravere ventos aequore fervido
deproeliantis, nec cupressi
nec veteres agitantur orni. (9–12)

The development is: 'do *a* and *b*, but as for everything else do *c*,' *c* being in the manner of a *parainesis*. *Cetera* implies that there might be a number of other matters, besides stoking the fire and broaching the Sabine wine, that require attention but that all are to be handed over or entrusted to the gods.³⁶ The relative clause defines one power, or sphere of action, that pertains to *divi*, narrowing what one must suppose to be a wide potential area of activity to a single aspect of it—their control over the weather. The clause has been found by some to be objectionable. Nisbet and Hubbard remark (ad loc.): 'It may be asked why in our passage Horace should choose this relatively unimportant manifestation of divine omnipotence.' They seek an answer in a supposed convention of sympotic poetry, concluding that 'in our poem Horace keeps the traditional reference to storms, though strictly speaking it does not suit the weather of the first stanza'. All of which seems to be ultimately the product of a curious brand of realism; it is not based on a logical imprecision that would immediately occur to a reader.

And surely the power attributed to the gods is not 'relatively unimportant', save perhaps to those who have been exposed to grander, Christian notions of omnipotence. It is manifestly, even proverbially true that the weather and its changes are beyond the scope of human interference. Beings who can intervene in this aspect of the natural world possess what may properly be called superhuman power, and from that single instance may be inferred the conclusion that much else too can be safely entrusted to them: or, if not safely, must be submissively so entrusted. Human defences against cold weather are merely palliative; they do not eliminate the cold but mask its unpleasant effects. Only *divi* are able directly to intervene—for whatever purpose—in such matters; they are far beyond mortal meddling.

The language of the stanza deserves close attention, for it has engendered more than one level of misunderstanding. The most striking lexical component, perhaps, is the portentous *deproeliantis* (11), which occupies the same metrical space as *o Thaliarche* in 7. It is once again a Horatian *hapax eiremenon*, and both its length and its position compel us to pay it heed. It is an impressive word, which forcefully conjures up a state of fierce conflict between the winds.³⁷

But where is this *proelium* taking place? By universal consent it is at sea and it may verge on impertinence to suggest otherwise. But niggling doubts have arisen. Nisbet and Hubbard opine that Horace 'abruptly moves from the sea to the land', which they find 'disconcerting' (ad loc.). This feeling is not groundless, for the close connection between the first and second ideas within the clause suggests that the trees are features of the *aequor*: and trees do not grow on or in the sea.

Some, however, like Pöschl, have taken the view that cypresses at least may grow near the sea. He adds: 'Wer einmal Zypressen im Stürme vor dem Hintergrund der tobenden See gesehen hat, wird das eindrucksvolle Bild nicht vergessen.'³⁸ This argument from experience may be convincing to those who share it, but it must be borne in mind that Horace (like Virgil) is sometimes concerned with factors other than strict botanical accuracy when he mentions trees.³⁹ For what it is worth, cypresses and ash trees tend to grow inland and not on the shore-line.⁴⁰ Of greater value than his resort to reminiscence is Pöschl's point that both trees are 'besonders starke', which reinforces our understanding that the storm is a particularly violent one.

³⁶ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 121); Leonard Moskovit, 'Horace's Soracte ode as a poetic representation of an experience', *St. in Ph.* 74 (1977), 113–29 at 123.

³⁷ The alliterative pattern, which supports the sense, should also be observed: *simul / stravere ventos aequore fervido / deproeliantis*.

³⁸ *Horazische Lyrik: Interpretationen* (1970), 39.

³⁹ cf. Russell Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (1982), 33–4.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 42.

It is more satisfactory to excise the sea from the passage altogether. The problem is similar to that of *flumina* in 4. We have a preconception that *aequor*, when storms are mentioned, means the sea; but the Latin word—a poeticism—does not inevitably have that meaning. *Aequor* can be applied to any level surface, of which the (calm) sea is only one.⁴¹ It can equally well be used of areas on dry land; *proelia* among humans are sometimes fought on *aequora*.⁴² If we are looking for antitheses, the opposite of a mountain is a plain. The contrary of snow is the heat of summer, which is evoked here by the epithet *fervidus*.⁴³ Trees can grow in flat country, or in its margins, and they enjoy a particular prominence in such a setting. On this supposition, the warring winds represent those violent and (to human eyes) rather inexplicable gales, occasionally accompanied by dust-storms, which blow overland in Mediterranean countries during high summer, often ending in dead and ominous calm. It is as if some deity takes sudden action; trees that seem at risk of snapping are rapidly still again. The rise and termination of such a gale is captured by and reflected in the climax and resolution that is achieved by the long word *deproeliantis* followed by *nec cupressi*.

The trees, too, have given rise to speculations of their own. Ash trees and cypresses, we are told, are associated with death, because they—the latter more especially—were planted in graveyards.⁴⁴ This may well be true; but they also flourish elsewhere. Horace does not give any detail as to what sort of terrain we are to envisage beyond the single word *aequor*, 'flat country'. There is no need to introduce death, and then to find some symbolic appropriateness for its hidden presence. Just as there were trees on Soracte, so trees are a feature of the *aequor*. If the *silvae* of line 3 are conifers, then in the third stanza two kinds of tree found in level country are precisely designated. The relative shape and colour of *cupressi* and *orni* reveal to the mind's eye a perfect contrast, or rather harmony of opposites. But, above all, as in the first stanza, the lines are endowed with an 'objectivity' of expression that requires little, if anything, to be supplied for their force to be perceived.

According to N. Collinge, the last three stanzas are 'nothing more than an informal and progressive train of thought, which starts from the cue *permitte divis cetera* but has its own plot, focussing more and more sharply upon one corner of an evening scene, and gradually forgetting philosophy in the preoccupation of one boy and one girl with each other.⁴⁵ Tracing this development (we leave aside the question of whether it is proper to speak of it as possessing a 'plot') by way of the text that confronts us is an illuminating exercise—but once more fraught with misunderstanding and dispute.

A starting-point must be the transition from the third to the fourth stanza. In the third, a generality is illustrated by an example from nature. At the beginning of the fourth the aphorisms that are to lead into the ode's conclusion are presented in more direct terms:

quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere et
quem Fors dierum cumque dabit lucro
appone . . . (13–15)

The impression is matter-of-fact. In contradiction of Steele Commager, Pöschl finds here a thought opposed to that which began the previous stanza, and a less comforting one: 'In dem einen Fall öffnet der Dichter den Blick auf die Zukunft, wobei sich das tröstliche Gesetz enthüllt, dass Stürme nicht ewig dauern. Hier aber rät er uns, nicht danach zu fragen, was morgen sein wird.'⁴⁶ And yet, whereas the gods alone can intervene in the

⁴¹ See *OLD* s.v. *aequor*, 68, 1; *TLL* s.v., 1022–3.

⁴² *OLD* s.v. *aequor*, 68, 2. Cf. Virgil, *Aen.* v. 456; vii. 781. For other uses, see e.g., Virgil, *Georg.* I. 50, II. 105, 541; Juvenal viii. 61.

⁴³ For *fervidus*, see *OLD* s.v., 692 1 and (d); cf. *Odes* II. 15. 9. Niall Rudd has remarked that '*fervidus* . . . suggests violent emotion and this appears to be the first known instance of its application to the sea' ('Patterns in Horatian lyric', *AJP* 81 (1960), 373–92 at 389). But, as we have suggested, this uniqueness may be illusory. The parallel of Virgil, *Aen.* vii. 24 is inexact: *vada*

obviously appear to boil or seethe, and may therefore be termed *fervida*.

⁴⁴ Orelli, ed. cit. (n. 7), ad loc. (p. 64); Williams, op. cit. (n. 28), 203. The epithet *veteres* implies that the trees survive for a long period despite such assaults from outside; cf. Virgil, *Aen.* x. 766. If there is a connection with *canities* in the next stanza, it is a slight one. Longevity and old-age are not the same concept.

⁴⁵ Collinge, op. cit. (n. 22), 66.

⁴⁶ Pöschl, op. cit. (n. 38), 40.

broader realms of nature and have in a sense to be entrusted with a great deal, man has to learn for himself how best to cope with his own life; the fact may not be consoling but that does not affect its truth, if any. It is pointless and an activity to be shunned to 'seek to learn' the future by any means; all that can be achieved is to count each day as an opportunity for positive gain.⁴⁷ Horace's lines, though they find many parallels in Greek poetry,⁴⁸ contain facets that are their own. *Quaerere* is to be taken as suggestive of active attempts to gain foreknowledge (for example, by astrology), to find an answer to the question of the future in positive terms and not simply an appraisal of possibilities.⁴⁹ So also the words *lucro appone* are borrowed from the world of commerce, where profits and losses are entered in a ledger.⁵⁰ Whatever *Fors* offers (*dabit*) may be turned to a gain or its opposite.

The appearance of the word *Fors* here has been largely ignored. Whether this be a personification, as the 'savage' *dea Fors Fortuna*, for whom there was a temple on the banks of Tiber, or is treated as an abstract noun (the distinction is not clear-cut), its inclusion has a sinister effect. This aspect of *Fors* was well brought out by Wagner in a note on Virgil, *Ecl.* ix. 5 (appositely cited by Orelli)⁵¹ when he contrasts the word with *sors*: '... Fors significat caecam quandam viam, res humanas temere ac nullo consilio regentem, nulla tamen adiuncta aut laedendi aut iuvandi notione, quare nullam usquam huic nomini adicitur epitheton. Non sunt igitur plane synonyma Fortuna et Fatum.' This dark and wholly unpredictable power, 'luck' in its most neutral and least compromising sense, may well be adjudged, as any entrepreneur is aware, to be what rules financial profit and loss. Its ability to overturn all expectations—'fors omnia versat', as Virgil writes (*Ecl.* ix. 5)—is presented by Horace as governing each and every day of human life. In the face of this power, arbitrary in all its ways, lacking even the purposiveness of divine or human caprice, the only course is to take such profit as one can from each day as it arises, even if it be no more than a blazing fire and a cask of wine in winter. Unpredictability, however, is not identical to hostility, though it may at times appear to be. There are seasons in human life just as there are seasons in nature; to humanity remains the hope of gaining rather than losing, whatever *Fors* may produce. Much has always to be left to the gods and the future should remain unscanned, but there is always some possibility of *lucrum*. It is on this note that the ode turns to a particular human season, youth, with a sketch of those pleasures that accrue to it if an individual lives in an appropriate way; or, to be more precise, in a way appropriate within the parainetic section of a Horatian ode.

Before we turn to the concluding section, however, it is worth pausing to ask ourselves why material such as this should be included at all. The problem goes back at least to Pindar. A common attitude in the past was to accept the moralizing aphorisms at face value, as if the poet in some, presumably optimistic way believed that his advice might be taken. Some have given the impression of believing that the advice might in fact be sensible.

More subtly, C. W. Macleod, in two papers on 'ethics and poetry' in Horace's odes, argued that 'a generally recognized achievement of Horace is his working into Latin lyric poetry of moral teachings of Greek philosophy' and that 'the particulars of his diction may be better appreciated if they are read in relation to Epicurean philosophy.'⁵² But the status of this achievement, if it exists, may well be questioned. It is true enough that there is an affinity between the ethos of lyric and some Epicurean tenets (just as there is between epic

⁴⁷ For *lucro appone*, see *OLD* s.v. *appono*, 153, 8; Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 122); Pöschl, op. cit., 41.

⁴⁸ Parallels quoted in Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit., ad loc. (p. 122). Cf. Giuseppe Giangrande, 'Symptotic literature and epigram', in *L'Epigramme Grecque (Entret. Fond. Hardt 14 (1967))*, 93–174 at 139: 'The themes of youth being short, and the need to enjoy life before it is too late, were in themselves banal and in any case already exploited to the full, by the time the Alexandrian epigrammatists were writing ...'; also, now, David A. Campbell, *The Golden Lyre: The Themes of the Greek Lyric Poets* (1983), 132 ff.

⁴⁹ The full force of *quaere* has not been noticed by commentators or translators; Nisbet and Hubbard's 'forbear' for *fuge* is probably too weak (op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc., p. 122); *fugio* retains its sense of 'run away from', 'flee from'. The sentiment is paralleled in l. 11: 'Tu ne quaesieris ...'

⁵⁰ See n. 47 above; the backward glance to *reponens* in line 6 has been indicated in n. 25.

⁵¹ Orelli, ed. cit. (n. 7), ad loc. (p. 64).

⁵² 'Ethics and poetry in Horace's odes (1, 20; 2, 3)', *GR* 26 (1979), 21–31; '... (1, 7; 2, 9)', *ibid.*, 28 (1981), 236–44 = *Collected Papers* (1983), 225–35, 236–44 at 225.

and Stoicism), but the connection is hardly profound. Clearly Horace could and did use Epicurean ideas in major and minor ways in the odes.⁵³ But precepts such as those in the Soracte ode are in themselves already traditional within poetry just as much as philosophy; only by stretching the facts can they justifiably be dignified with the term 'philosophical'.

Macleod went further with his suggestion, admittedly tentative, that 'the variety of philosophies and the combination of philosophical and unphilosophical attitudes are no doubt meant to reflect Horace himself', and that Horace may be traced in the odes as 'a credible and complex person'.⁵⁴ There is much room for doubt; this 'credibility' and 'complexity' emerges in fact only from an interaction of text and reader; it is extrapolated from a particular response to the text and from a more general view of how texts are to be handled. We have no access to Horace as a person, by which to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. Such features are not functions of the historic Horace but rather of the process of poetic writing itself, which may be prepared to live with contradictions and rival philosophical systems, given that its occasions may not always require uniformity.

What may be asserted, none the less, is that Horace was but one in a long series of poets (and the series is not yet complete) to rework and recapitulate such ethical truisms and that, even though he may give them a new verbal edge, as a conceptual cutting-tool they remain blunt. Their truth, if any, is confined to the textual world in which they are expressed. This restriction itself makes possible, if not inevitable, that 'variety' noted by Macleod but within it any division into 'philosophical and unphilosophical' is a supererogatory imposition.

Nothing is explained by the idea, expressed by many critics, that the narrator in the ode is to be envisaged as middle-aged and that his voice is here conferring the benefit of mature reflection on a younger man. The *parainesis* contains only what may be classified as gnomic, or poetic, truths and they are not to be pressed beyond their textual confines, unless we wish to reduce this ode, and others, to banality. These gnomic or poetic truths are rooted in the tradition they exemplify as well as in their immediate context. Such truths need have little, if anything, in common with actual truth. What is valid for Thaliarchus is not necessarily valid outside Thaliarchus' world, which opens with snow-bound Soracte and ends with a lovers' tryst. Are we to assume that the narrator himself had lived by his own quasi-Epicurean creed or that the ode embodies a wistful awareness of wasted years? There is no answer to such a question. Is the poem of value only to the young? Clearly not. We might as well speculate as to whether Shakespeare really believed that his Sonnets would persuade the Fair Youth and others like him to marry and procreate; we should hardly be prepared to maintain that they have no relevance to parents. The applicability of Horace's advice is, as has been remarked, limited to its own domain and to the population of that domain. Horace is not creating admonitions for some garrulous narrator but restating truths that are validable only within the ode and within the tradition of which it is part.

This lyric moralism leads on from the gnomic, through a fixing of the antinomies of human life to a seven-line section which contains a definition of the interests and pursuits of youth as conventionally understood. Immediately after the commercial metaphor in *lucro appone*, Horace turns to matters that appear to have little relationship with the acquisition of wealth:

nec dulcis amores
sperne puer neque tu choreas,
donec virenti canities abest
morosa. (15-18)

This contrast between youth and age is again a long-established poetic motif (indeed, much of the typical plot of Roman comedy depends on it). It may well be that it is for the

⁵³ For an instance, see the author's 'Horace's Archytas ode: a reconsideration', *Živa Antika* 16 (1976), 73-87.

⁵⁴ Macleod, op. cit. (n. 52), 226.

grizzled old to concern themselves with *lucrum* in the form of hard cash, while a *puer* should not disdain, even though they are transient, the pleasures of love and dancing. The image of youth is not original; it conforms to a static pattern. The epithet *dulcis*, glancing towards the Greek γλυκύς, has no truly descriptive role but serves only to mark out the *amores* as literary and lyric. No less, the noun *choreae* is, as Nisbet and Hubbard (ad loc.) note, 'less to do with Roman life than with Greek poetic convention'.⁵⁵ The *puer* is to reject, for no other reason than that of his age, everything save what exists for him within this stylized *Lebensform*. *Puer* and *tu* go closely together, confirming the individualism that characterizes youthful activities, even when they are associated with public places.

Some have sought to point a parallel between *canities* and the snow which tops Soracte; they draw attention to a supposed contrast of colour between the whiteness of the snow and hair and the green of young growth as contained in *virenti*.⁵⁶ But *virens* is not a strong colour term;⁵⁷ more dominant is its connection with ideas of burgeoning and strength. Nor is it easy to see any real force in a recollection at this point of the gleaming mountain. The antithesis between *canities* and *virenti* is that of decay and decline on the one hand and health and exuberance on the other. *Canities* cannot be separated from its epithet *morosa*; a word commoner in prose than verse,⁵⁸ it suggests the stinginess and irritability of the old, who might well see the precept *appone lucro* as applying only to material possessions and for whom the only kind of growth is in the credit column of an account-book. But above all the 'grey-haired time' is one that lacks strength both in the sphere of love and in the energetic movements of dance. There is, however, no hint that old age possesses the solidity and permanence of Soracte; the associations of *candidum* and *canities* are profoundly different.⁵⁹ The words *canities morosa* sum up the dismissive view of a young person towards his elders; and age is here presented solely in terms of the deprivations that it entails. The joys of youth are dependent on the absence of old age (*abest*); but come it must. Youth is provisional and temporary, subject to the limitation of the inescapable *donec*.

The last seven lines of the poem may be said to flesh out, delicately and almost obscurely, what befits a *puer*:

nunc et campus et areae
lenesque sub noctem susurri
composita repetantur hora,

nunc et latentis proditor intimo
gratus puellae risus ab angulo
pignusque dereptum lacertis
aut digito male pertinaci. (18–24)

It was surely obtuseness that prompted some critics to condemn the ode because of a presumed chronological incongruity between the first stanza and the adverb *nunc* in lines 18 and 21.⁶⁰ The word is no more indexical than *iam* in 2, and it was adequately glossed by Orelli (ad loc.): 'ut convenit aetati qua nunc es, adulescens.' It is this iterated 'now'—which follows closely from *donec*—that captures the urgency required in obeying the imperatives in 16–20; these are appointments that life enters in the calendar of the young

⁵⁵ Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 123). Dancing was—it hardly needs stressing—generally looked on with disdain and suspicion by the Romans. For Horace's use of motifs from Greek poetry, see the author's 'Pyrrha's grotto and the farewell to love: a study of Horace, *Odes* 1. 5,' *AJP* 105 (1984), 457–69.

⁵⁶ cf., e.g., Lockyer, loc. cit. (n. 28), 204; Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* (1962), 270; more generally, Pöschl, op. cit. (n. 38), 45–6; Williams, op. cit. (n. 28), 203.

⁵⁷ As is pointed out by Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 123). For a full discussion of *virens* and *viridis*, and their connections with springtime and

youth, see J. André, *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans les langues latines* (Et. et Comm. VII (1949)), 185–7, esp. at 187.

⁵⁸ See *OLD* s.v. *morosus*, 1135; other verse citations only from Horace, *Serm.* II. 5. 90; Ovid, *AA* II. 323.

⁵⁹ For *candidus*, see n. 10 above. Its connection with *candeo* 'to shine, gleam' in itself separates it from *canities*, from *canus*, 'of white or grey colouring' (see *OLD* s.v., 268), which suggests a dull surface, even if white. Cf. West, op. cit. (n. 1), 11.

⁶⁰ The criticism, trenchantly expressed by A. Y. Campbell, *Horace* (1924), 224, was endorsed by Fraenkel, op. cit. (n. 6), 177.

and to break them would be to lose the profit grudgingly available under the dispensation of *Fors*.

For *morosa* carries within it a feeling of restriction, of, as we might put it, 'small-mindedness'. After this emphatic word, there is a clear break before we reach words (*campus, areae*) that bring to mind the gregarious expansiveness of the young. But youth, individualist as it is, has its own smaller and more private worlds, where noises are hushed (*lenes . . . susurri*) and where great business is transacted in a little space (*intimo . . . angulo*). The movement opens and contracts, but this contraction is marked by laughter and a resistance that is only feigned (*male pertinaci*).

To neglect any word of a Horatian ode is rash. Here the first words are bald in their designation of places where the young might gather or pass time in the city. There is no need for a detailed description of their social function (which was certainly not restricted to sports and games);⁶¹ the plain words are enough, for all readers have walked through such places. But as darkness descends their character changes; *sub noctem* the public world fragments to a kaleidoscope of private encounters. The phrase *lenes . . . susurri* excellently evokes the sound of human conversation when it is just too low for words to be distinguished, continuous and barely modulated like the buzzing of bees.⁶² *Repetantur* implies that these exchanges 'take up again' or 'continue from' the louder talk of daylight. A time of meeting has been fixed (*composita . . . hora*), suitable to both parties.

This susurrant may be broken, however, by a single peal of laughter (*risus*), a welcome (*gratus*) sound for whoever is its recipient. It is a girl who laughs, from a narrow hiding-place—and what *puer* in lyric is complete without someone to love? Line 21 is, as has been noted by L. Moskovit, in a way 'mysterious', and its meaning is withheld until 22.⁶³ For *proditor* is an unexpected word, usually to be found in quite different applications, those of treason and betrayal.⁶⁴ The verb *lateo* can also often have a sinister edge.⁶⁵ But these associations are rapidly dissolved (or at least seem to be) when the circumstances are unveiled: the treacherous laugh is that of a girl *intimo ab angulo*. It is her *risus* that plays the traitor and she is the agent of her own discovery. The laugh is an intentional act.

The choice of *proditor* was bolder than English renderings suggest. Its military and political background relates to the rhetoric and vocabulary of love as warfare. So too *dereptum* in 23 is no bland selection; *deripio* is a compound found most frequently in poetry and it normally carries with it a sense of violence and compulsion directed against an unwilling victim.⁶⁶ Here, however, the defence is merely a token one. The girl, self-betrayed, in her nook, loses or forfeits what we assume to be some trinket, but she is not really unwilling to surrender it, as it is snatched from arm or finger.⁶⁷ (The glimpse is, as it were, that of a sidelong observer.)⁶⁸ Nisbet and Hubbard rather misleadingly mention 'engagement rings', though claiming, without providing their inferential grounds, that 'here a more temporary commitment [than marriage] is implied' (ad loc.).

Justice must be done to *pignus*. The metaphor is taken from the world of finance and the law, and as such it links with *adpone lucro* and with one nuance of *morosa*. Whatever is taken from the *puella* is 'possessed' as security or collateral against a debt, payment of which has not yet been demanded.⁶⁹ And the final words of the ode, *male pertinaci*, make the point that the finger is resistant only in pretence and that it, a metonym for its owner, will not be unduly recalcitrant or obstinate when settlement of the debt eventually falls

⁶¹ A facet unduly stressed by Pöschl, op. cit. (n. 38), 43.

⁶² For *susurrus*, see *OLD* s.v., 1893; of bees, Virgil, *Ecl.* 1. 55.

⁶³ Moskovit, loc. cit. (n. 36), 127.

⁶⁴ cf. *OLD* s.v. *proditor*, 1473; there appears to be no instance of its appearance in verse prior to Horace.

⁶⁵ See *OLD* s.v. *lateo*, 1005, 1, 4; this nuance is strengthened by the proximity of *proditor*: cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (p. 124).

⁶⁶ See *OLD* s.v. *deripio*, 522.

⁶⁷ The lack of specificity adds to the non-'objective'

tone of the stanza. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 4), ad loc. (pp. 124–5) rightly stress that *angulo* does not imply that the encounter takes place indoors: see *OLD* s.v. *angulus* 130, 6 and (b).

⁶⁸ cf. Nisbet and Hubbard, op. cit. ad 21, 22 (pp. 124–5); Moskovit, loc. cit. (n. 36), 127.

⁶⁹ See *OLD* s.v. *pignus*, 1377, 1, 3. For the legal significance of *pignus* and the circumstances under which such a pledge might be taken, see A. Watson, *The Law of Obligations in the Later Roman Republic* (1965), 179 ff.; B. Nicholas, *An Introduction to Roman Law* (1962), 151–3.

due.⁷⁰ What is owed is left unstated, nor does it need specification. No eagerness to define it should be allowed to shout down the uncurious reticence of the text.⁷¹ The debts of youth are not paid in coin. They are, too, obscure and impermanent.

The last seven lines of the ode differ radically from what precedes them. They are not perspicuous, not 'objective'. The final cameo has an enigmatic and unexpected quality, which embraces concept, vocabulary and the trailing syntactic structure. There is, too, a brevity which dupes the reader in an attempt to grasp and visualize the whole. To supplement the text is easy and mistaken; but such additions divert us from the text itself, which, discreet and subtle, must be left its silences.

What then is the ode about? We should not expect an answer. It opens with the clear vision of a snowy mountain and ends in the strait and half-hidden *angulum* where young lovers meet. The sweep of the six stanzas is broad and any reductive approach demeans it. The text is both encompassed and lost in each reading and re-reading, and it always surpasses them. The *trahison des critiques*, of which West complained, arises from an unwillingness to accept their own defeat.

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⁷⁰ See *OLD* s.v. *pertinax*, 1360, 1 and (c), 2; the word, with its twin connotations of tight-fistedness and intransigence is a perfect epithet to apply to a debtor who seeks to avoid payment.

⁷¹ It is hard to see how the stanza can be properly termed 'titillating', with Moskovit, loc. cit. (n. 36), 127.