

A FRAGMENT OF ALCAEUS IN SENECA?

*nam sive Graeco poetae
credimus "aliquando et
insanire incundum est" eqs.*

(Seneca *Dial.* 9. 17. 10)

The words cited above appear in a discussion of the thesis that *nonnumquam et usque ad ebrietatem veniendum, non ut mergat nos, sed ut deprimat*. No attempt, to my knowledge, has been made to identify this *Graecus poeta* in Seneca. In considering this problem three passages from Horace's *Odes* are of much importance:

	<i>recepto</i>	
<i>dulce mihi furere est amico</i>		(2. 7. 27-8)
<i>insanire iuvat</i>		(3. 19. 18)
<i>dulce est desipere in loco</i>		(4. 12. 28)

Each example has two things in common: it is a) a sweet or pleasant thing b) to be mad. Examination of the contexts reveals a third similarity: in each instance the "madness" meant is intoxication. In *Ode* 2. 7 Horace is celebrating the safe return from war of an old army companion, Pompeius. A banquet therefore, is the order of the day; preparations are made and the poem ends: *Quem Venus arbitrum/dicet bibendi? non ego sanius | bacchabor Edonis: recepto | dulce mihi furere est amico*. *Ode* 3. 19 introduces Horace at a banquet in the capacity of *συμποσιαρχος*; after stating the correct proportions to be observed in mixing the wine and water he then exclaims *insanire iuvat!* Finally, *Ode* 4. 12 announces the return of spring; Horace invites Vergil (the poet?) to celebrate the occasion by sharing a cask of good wine with him. The poem ends *misce stultitiam consiliis brevem: | dulce est desipere in loco*. The three-fold agreement in these three passages is no accident; Horace has given thrice the same thought in different words. What is the source? For *Odes* 3. 19 and 4. 12 no original is known. *Ode* 2. 7, however, — a poem composed in *Alcaics* — is modelled on a still partially preserved piece by Alcaeus (*frg.* 50 Diehl); in this poem Alcaeus celebrates the return of his brother Antimenidas from war, just as Horace celebrates the return of Pompeius. Another "drinking" ode, the famous *nunc est bibendum* (1. 37), is also modelled on Alcaeus, namely on his poem celebrating the death of the tyrant Myrsilus: *νῦν χρῆ μεθύσθην καὶ τινα πὲρ βίαν | πόνην, ἐπειδὴ κάτθανε Μύρσιλος* (*frg.* 39 Diehl). Again, *Ode* 1. 9, with its call for wine, is partially copied from Alcaeus *frg.* 90 Diehl. Alcaeus' *φιλοῦνία* is copiously illustrated by Athenaeus 10. 430 a sq. and in general it seems very likely that he is Horace's source¹).

To return to Seneca; here the complete agreement with Horace is striking: Seneca's *insanire* corresponds to Horace's *furere | insanire | desipere*; *incundum est* answers to *dulce est | iuvat*; and finally, the reference, as in Horace, is specifically to *Bacchic μανία*. It does not seem that such close agreement can be accidental and yet we know that Seneca is not borrowing directly from Horace: as he himself tells us, he is quoting a *Graecus poeta*. The agreement between the two Latin authors therefore is probably to be explained by assuming a common source. We have seen that it was likely that Horace's source was Alcaeus; it is thus quite possible that Alcaeus was Seneca's

source as well. The words *aliquando et insanire iucundum est* deserve to be printed as a doubtful fragment, in Latin dress²⁾, of the great Aeolic poet³⁾. (The *et* [= "even"] is no doubt part of the quotation and should be noticed.) It was for similar reasons – the intoxication theme and the Alcaic metre – that Bergk ascribed to Alcaeus the anonymous fragment preserved by Demetrius Laco, *περὶ ποιημάτων β* col. xxx in *Vol. Hercul. Oxon.* I. 122, an ascription which has been generally accepted by later editors⁴⁾.

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1) Some commentators compare the *Anacreontea* 8 (Bergk) where the expression *θέλω θέλω μανῆναι* occurs several times. This cannot be Horace's source (*μαίνεσθαι* is hardly decisive, since it is not unusual to find this verb used of intoxication in Greek); there is nothing in Horace corresponding to *θέλω θέλω* and nothing in the *Anacr.* corresponding to *dulce | iuvat*. Actually, the Greek poem (too long to be reproduced here) with its mythological parallels sounds a quite different note. Others compare Menander *frg.* 354 (Körte) *καὶ συμμανῆναι δ' ἔνια δεῖ*. This too is different and is in fact a variant of a common Greek proverb; see my note in *CR* 13 (1963) 131–2.

2) For another fragment of Alcaeus preserved only in Latin, see Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 1. 28. 79: *naevos in articulo pueri delectat Alcaeum*.

3) It should be noted that Seneca's vague expression *Graeco poetae* implies that both the poet and the quotation were sufficiently well-known to be recognized by his readers without further identification. Obscure poetasters are to be excluded from consideration.

4) *Frg.* 50 Bergk = *frg.* 102 Diehl = *frg.* Z 35 Lobel and Page.