HORACE, *ODES* 2.14.14

Frustra cruento Marte carebimus
fractisque rauci fluctibus Hadriae, 14
frustra per autumnos nocentem
corporibus metuemus Austrum

In vain do we avoid the dangers of war, sea-faring, and climate, for inevitably (17–21) we must behold the Underworld and its infamous sinners.

As a rule, waves are 'broken' in Latin quite explicitly by – or on – rocks, reefs, sandbanks or the like,[1] and the fact that none of those is mentioned here to amplify *fractis* (14) may perhaps raise doubts about our text. Add the consideration that we should have expected a reference to the open sea's stormy waves, such as encountered by a typical traveller crossing the Adriatic, rather than an allusion to the perils of off-shore reefs or shoals, and doubts increase.

Horace speaks elsewhere of the Adriatic's notorious storms, whipped up especially by the south winds, Notus, *quo non arbiter Hadriae* / *maior* (*Odes* 1.3.14–16), and Auster, *dux inquieti turbidus Hadriae* (*Odes* 3.3.4–5). He claims to know personally *quid sit ater*/ *Hadriae … sinus* and prays, conventionally, that only enemies' wives and children might experience *caecos* / *… motus orientis Austri et* / *aequoris nigri fremitum* (*Odes* 3.27.18–19; 21–3). Of particular interest in these passages is his application of the adjectives *ater* and *niger* to stormy waters, for which we may compare his mention of a sea too stormy for fishing, *atrum* / *defendens piscis hiemat mare* (*Sat*. 2.2.16–17), and Virgil's description of waves darkened by the north wind, *fluctus … atros Aquilone* (*Aen*. 5.2); the winds themselves sometimes are called 'dark' or 'black': *Odes* 1.5.6–7, *et aspera* / *nigris aequora ventis*; *Epod*. 10.5, *niger … Eurus inverso mari*; Cat. 68.63, *in nigro iactatis turbine nautis*; Virg. *G*. 3.278, *nigerrimus Auster*.

The association of darkness with wind-driven, stormy waters will encourage a suggestion that, in the present line, Horace may have written not *fractis* but *atris*: *atrisque rauci fluctibus Hadriae.* It may be felt that this *atris* is uncomfortably close to *ater* in 17, *uisendus ater flumine languido* / *Cocytus errans*, but the repetition will have been rhetorically deliberate: in vain shall we eschew the Adriatic's *lively* dark waves for we must soon view Cocytus' *funereally* dark stream. While *atris* will entail a slight decrease in the verse's alliteration of *f* and *c*, the adjective's connotation of stormy, noisy wind may complement the aural imagery of *rauci … Hadriae*. As for the posited corruption, we might suppose that, with *frustra* just above (13) and also just below (15), *atris* will have been copied as *fratris* which then was corrected to the manuscripts' *fractis*.

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[1] Compare, for example, Ov. *Fast*. 4.282, *quaeque Carysteis frangitur unda vadis*; Lucan 9.308, *aequora fracta vadis*; Sil. Ital. 5.398, *fractasque in rupibus undas*. And see *TLL* s.v *frango*, II A 2, *de fluctibus sim*.

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