PUNCTUATING CLEOPATRA

This note proposes a change in the punctuation of the last stanza of Horace, *Odes* 1.37 (*Nunc est bibendum*), in order to restore the sense understood by the scholiast and the punctuation as it was accepted until 1553. This removes certain difficulties inherent in the currently received punctuation.

It is the Cleopatra Ode, and the last two stanzas (7 and 8), punctuated as in the OCT, read as follows:

ausa et iacentem visere regiam
vultu sereno, fortis et asperas
  tractare serpentis, ut atrum
    corpore combiberet venenum,

deliberata morte ferocior,
saevis Liburnis scilicet invidens
  privata deduci superbo
    non humilis mulier triumpho.

David West[1] translates:

Daring to gaze with face serene upon her ruined palace,
and brave enough to take deadly serpents
  in her hand, and let her body
    drink their black poison,

fiercer she was in the death she chose, as though
she did not wish to cease to be a queen, taken to Rome
  on the galleys of savage Liburnians
    to be a humble woman in a proud triumph.

The comma after *ferocior* separates the first line (29) of the last stanza from the last three. This creates difficulties both of grammar and sense.

1. There is a grammatical ambiguity in the second line (30). It is not clear whether *saevis Liburnis* is to be taken as dative (governed by *invidens*) or ablative (of place, with *deduci*).[2] West's translation opts for the ablative ('on the galleys'), and so does Commager's ('She … scorned … to be led … on board the haughty Liburnian galleys for a proud triumph.'),[3] and this is the more remarkable since the proximity of *invidens* to *Liburnis*, enforced by the existing punctuation, makes dative the natural choice. Certainly the balance of learned opinion appears to favour the dative. Wickham[4] translates: '… she grudged to the cruel Liburnian sloops their will that she should be led … in a proud triumphal procession.' And Quinn[5] roundly says '*saevis Liburnis* is dative with *invidens*, not ablative with *deduci*' and

[1] *Horace: The Complete Odes and Epodes* (Oxford, 1997), 55.

[2] See J.Gow, *Horace: Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge, 1896), 212: '*Liburnis* dat. after *invidens*: "begrudging the fierce Liburnians". Some edd. however regard *Liburnis* as abl. of *Liburnae* i.e. "Liburnian ships" (cf *Epod.* 1.1), notwithstanding the epithet *saevis*.' Gow seems not to have benefited from the insights of Vettori (below).

[3] *The Odes of Horace* (New Haven, Conn., 1962), 90.

[4] *Horace for English Readers* (Oxford, 1903).

[5] *Horace: The Odes* (Basingstoke and New York, 1980), 195.

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adds, explaining the force of the personification, 'the *Liburnae* want what they were entitled to regard as their reward for victory, to have their enemy led in triumph'.

Neither solution disposes of all the attendant difficulties. If the case is dative, the construction (*invideo* + dative + passive infinitive) is awkwardly compressed and seems to be otherwise unexampled.[6] This may be why the dictionaries[7] preserve neutrality on the point: they acknowledge the use of *invideo* with the infinitive, in each case citing this passage, but they omit any reference to the complicating presence of *saevis Liburnis*. If the case is ablative, the question is why Cleopatra should suppose that such an incomparable prize as herself would be carried to Rome by the *Liburnae*. The larger battleships would surely have been more appropriate candidates for this honour (see n. 18).

2. The isolation of line 29 creates a weakness of sense and structure. The weight of the line falls on the comparative *ferocior*, but what is the comparison? West's translation accurately reproduces the uncertainty. An implied comparison often relates to an earlier time,[8] and this is the only possibility which comes to mind here.[9] But the context supplies no clear time of comparison. Actium was dismissed in line 21 (at *quae generosius*[10]), and cannot be intended;[11] it cannot be the handling of the snakes, since that is the episode still being described; it can hardly be the episode before that (the ruined palace), which called for fortitude rather than *ferocia*. What makes this lack of focus the more damaging is that it stands at the climax of a rhetorical crescendo. At *quae generosius* Horace changes emotional gear from gloating to sympathy, and proceeds to describe Cleopatra's enhanced courage in four graduated steps, two negative (*nec … nec …*) and two positive (*ausa et … fortis et …*), culminating in the snakes. He then rounds off the ode with an explanation (*scilicet*) of her motivation. An indeterminate comparative makes at best a limping conclusion to the description of her growing courage; what is needed is an express comparison, pointed enough to tie down the sequence.

The smallest possible emendation will remove the need to puzzle further over these difficulties, by extinguishing them. Shift that comma at the end of the first line, and place it instead after *saevis Liburnis*. This produces the following advantages:

(1) There is no longer any ambiguity over the case of *Liburnis*: it is ablative of comparison after *ferocior*.

(2) The awkwardness of *invideo* + dative + infinitive disappears. The construction is simply *invideo* + infinitive, recognized by the dictionaries.

(3) The comparison no longer hangs in the uncomfortable limbo of implication: it is an express comparison with the *Liburnae*. This carries a strong point because

[6] Inscriptions apart, the relevant examples listed in *TLL* (7.195.36–45) all appear to be acc. and inf., recognized after *invideo* by B.L. Gildersleeve and G. Lodge, *Latin Grammar* (London, 1895[3]), para 533. Quinn says (loc.cit.) 'syntax is strained for the sake of compactness'.

[7] See Lewis and Short, IIB; *OLD*, 2e ad loc.

[8] As examples from the *Odes* (among many) see 2.8.4: *turpior ungui*, 2.9.22: *minores … vertices,* 3.21.8: *languidiora vina.*

[9] *Ferocior ... quam prius fuerat*, says Lambinus (1568).

[10] A comparative which has a clear comparison in the chains of line 20.

[11] See R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Bk I* (Oxford, 1970), 420: 'Horace is not contrasting Cleopatra's spirit with her timidity at Actium: rather he is saying that her innate *ferocia* is now increased.' Which leaves unanswered the question: compared to what?

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of the major role played by the Liburnian galleys in Cleopatra's defeat: she is compared to her prime tormentors at Actium. A fitting climax to the preceding eight lines.

(4) *scilicet* now stands appropriately at the beginning of its clause, introducing the final explanation.

Research establishes that this reading is not just an outlandish conjecture, but represents the natural way of taking the unpunctuated Latin, for the scholiast Pseudo-Acro took *Liburnis* as an ablative of comparison.[12] And consistently with this understanding the early printed editions all placed the stop (whether a comma or something stronger) after *Liburnis* rather than *ferocior*.[13] This punctuation survived until 1553.[14] In that year, however, the great Florentine scholar, Petrus Victorius (Pier Vettori, 1499–1585) published the first 25 books of his *Variae Lectiones*, which contained a note on the final stanza proposing the punctuation which has been adopted ever since.[15]

Vettori started by setting out the stanza in its repunctuated form. He robustly condemned the scholiast's explanation as wrong (*perperam*) on the ground that he had regarded *Liburnis* as people, whereas H was referring to the fast galleys named after the Liburnian pirates who had developed them. In support he cited (among other evidence) the very first line of the *Epodes*,[16] where Horace had already used the word in exactly this sense.[17] Nobody has ever quarrelled with this verdict, nor shall I. In addition Vettori realized that applying the adjective *saevis* to *Liburnis* involves what would now be called focalization from the point of view of their prey (Cleopatra), for he says that it is used *ex affectu animi Cleopatrae*. But neither separately nor cumulatively do these insights provide a justification for repunctuating the stanza. The ablative of comparison does not depend on treating *Liburnis* as referring to men rather than ships, nor is it undermined by the focalization. On the contrary, the personification of the ships, which is Vettori's primary point, allows the comparison still to work. So why did he make the change?

Vettori does not expressly give any reason for his change, but it appears from his explanation of the motive for Cleopatra's suicide: '… because she refused to concede to Octavian's fleet the great glory of carrying her as a prisoner to Rome …'.[18] It seems that he took *Liburnis* as dative after *invidens*, and moved the comma to admit this construction and thus to emphasize the motive of denying them their glory. Here, it seems, is the crux of the issue. With the old punctuation the Liburnians were present only as a measure of Cleopatra's *ferocia,* and Cleopatra's

[12] On *ferocior*: *Promptior saevis Liburnis fuit ad mortem ... quia gens Liburnorum ad moriendum prompta dicitur, qua illa ferocior fuit.* For this information I am indebted to Professor Roland Mayer, whose generous help I gratefully acknowledge, but who is not associated with the proposed change.

[13] See e.g. the Aldine edition of the *Odes* (1519), which has a semi-colon.

[14] See a Venetian edition of this date of Horace's works (Cambridge University Library Fff.38), using commentaries by the scholiasts Ps-Acro and Porphyrio (and sixteen others).

[15] *Var. Lect.* lib. x cap. ix.

[16] *Ibis Liburnis inter alta navium, | amice, propugnacula …* (*Epod.* 1.1–2), an ablative of place. Lambinus strongly agreed (*prorsus assentior*), adducing further evidence from Plutarch and Vegetius.

[17] *saevis* does not stand in the way, since Horace's usage does not restrict it to people: see e.g. *Carm.* 1.12.43: *paupertas*, 1.18.14: *tympana.*

[18] *... quod nollet Octavianae classi, quum illis captiva Romam veheretur, tantum honoris gloriaeque acquiri ....* Note the glide from the Liburnians to *classi*, implying that Vettori did not expect the Liburnians to have this honour.

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motive was to escape the pain and humiliation of figuring in a Roman triumph. But Vettori's perception was that she was motivated by resentment of the Liburnians, which had played such a conspicuous part in her defeat, and this is the change in the sense achieved by his new punctuation. One consequence of a return to the old punctuation would be the rejection of this reading, and a return to the old motive. It is a wrench to discard a reading hallowed by long familiarity, but this aspect of the change should occasion no regret.[19] Historically the notion that Cleopatra was moved by resentment of the Liburnians is unconvincing, being both stale and petty. Nearly a year passed between the debacle of Actium and her death, and at the end of that time we know that she was consumed by the threat of a triumph, for, as the scholiasts tell us, her repeated response, when treated with calculating consideration by Octavian, was '*non triumphabor*'.[20] Beside that fear the desire to spite the Liburnians pales into triviality.

But historical plausibility does not necessarily conclude the matter. The real question is which motive is more likely to have been intended by Horace. He is here concerned to evoke admiration for the almost Roman courage of a proud, queenly woman, and thereby implicitly to magnify the might of Rome and the success of Augustus in reducing her to her desperate but honourable end. The introduction of the Liburnians into the limelight to the extent of making them the reason for her suicide is a distraction from this Augustan agenda which it is hard to suppose that Horace intended. The truth is, *pace* Quinn's extreme formulation (above), that in the drama of Cleopatra's death the Liburnians are a sideshow, deserving no greater prominence than as a yardstick of her ferocity. By promoting them to her motivating factor Vettori overburdens their significance.[21] The original motive is both more convincing and more Horatian.

To sum up, my contentions are (1) that the received punctuation involves difficulties of grammar and sense, serious enough to have divided learned commentators and translators; (2) that restoring the older punctuation by postponing the comma for two words removes these difficulties completely; (3) that this reading represents the natural meaning of the unpunctuated text, gives point to the comparative, strengthens the climax, attributes a more convincing motive to Cleopatra, relegates the Liburnians to their proper standing, and is, for all these reasons, to be preferred.

My translation of the two stanzas, adopting the restored punctuation, is:[22]

> but bore to look upon her fallen walls
> with face unmoved, and found the hardihood
> to grasp the scaly serpent, so its
> venom could be drunk into her blood;

[19] It has already been discarded by the distinguished scholars mentioned above who prefer to treat *Liburnis* as ablative. Note how West tones down *invidens*.

[20] Pseudo-Acro: *Livius (lib. cxxx) refert Cleopatram, cum de industria ab Augusto capta indulgentius tractaretur, dicere solitam "non triumphabor".* Porphyrio adds *identidem* and gives the Greek: *οὐ θριαμβεύσομαι*.

[21] It is interesting to note that Vettori's reference to focalization (and his whole note) ends: *... ex affectu Cleopatrae: eorumque omnium qui reginam, formosamque mulierem, dolerent tam male acceptam.* Perhaps it was this admiration which unconsciously prompted his attribution of a motive which he may have thought less unheroic than fear of a Roman triumph.

[22] C. Sydenham, *Horace: The Odes* (London, 2005), 69, where the restored punctuation is printed. This note discharges the undertaking there given (p. 9) to attempt to justify this departure from orthodoxy.

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once set on death she was more ruthless than
the fierce Liburnians, her high disdain
refused to countenance the public
degradation of the triumph-train.

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ANTONIA AND THE PIRATES

Plutarch prefaces his remarks on Pompey's victory over the pirates in 67 with an account of the proliferation of piracy in the preceding decades. Plutarch observes that the pirates were initially based in Cilicia and restricted their operations to the eastern Mediterranean, but during the course of the Mithridatic Wars their fleets became so large and powerful that they ventured to attack Italy itself where: *ἦλω δὲ καὶ θυγάτηρ Ἀντωνίου, θριαμβικοῦ ἀνδρός, εἰς ἀγρὸν βαδίζουσα, καὶ πολλῶν χρημάτων ἀπελυτρώθη* (*Pomp.* 24.6: 'They even captured the daughter of Antonius, a man who had celebrated a triumph, as she was visiting the country and exacted a large ransom for her'). Since M. Antonius (cos. 99) was the only Antonius to celebrate a triumph prior to Pompey's victory there has understandably been near universal agreement that the luckless Antonia was an otherwise unattested daughter of the consul of 99.[1] But the kidnapping of Antonia is also referred to by Cicero and Appian and the testimony of Cicero is crucial.[2] Cicero's catalogue of the crowning indignities inflicted on the *maiestas populi Romani* by the pirates prior to Pompey's victory includes the seizure from Misenum of the child of a man who had himself fought against the pirates (*Leg. Man.* 32: *an uero ignoratis … ex Miseno autem eius ipsius liberos, qui cum praedonibus antea ibi bellum gesserat, a praedonibus esse sublatos?*).[3] At first sight Cicero's words

[1] Thus *inter alia*: W.K.A. Drumann and P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms*[2] (Berlin, 1899), 1.396 Antonia no.24; E. Klebs, *RE* 1.2591 M. Antonius no.28, and 1.2639 Antonia no.109; H.A. Ormerod, *Piracy in the Ancient World* (Liverpool, 1924), 231; M. Gelzer, *Pompeius* (Munich, 1949), 75; J. van Ooteghem, *Pompée le Grand bâtisseur d'empire* (Brussells, 1954), 164–5; F.T. Hinrichs, 'Die lateinische Tafel von Bantia und die *Lex de piratis*', *Hermes* 98 (1970), 471–502 at 495; R. Flacelière and E. Chambry, *Plutarque Vies VIII* (Paris, 1973), 295; D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Onomasticon to Cicero's Speeches*[2] (Stuttgart, 1992), 16; H. Pohl, *Die römische Politik und die Piraterie im östlichen Mittelmeer vom 3. bis zum 1. Jh. v. Chr.* (Berlin, 1993), 214 n. 21; S. Tramonti, *Hostes communes omnium. La pirateria e la fine della repubblica romana (145–33 a.C.)* (Ferrara, 1994), 65; H. Heftner, *Plutarch und der Aufstieg des Pompeius: Ein historischer Kommentar zu Plutarchs Pompeiusvita Teil 1: Kap. 1–45* (Frankfurt, 1995), 184–5; P. de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 1999), 103 n. 34, 166 n. 59; and T.C. Brennan, *The Praetorship in the Roman Republic* (Oxford, 2000), 2.434. Antonius' triumph took place in December of 100 B.C.; see *MRR* 1.568, 576.

[2] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 33; App. *Mith.* 93.

[3] For the use of the masculine plural *liberi* of a single female child see: *TLL* 7.2.1301, 1303 and especially Gell. *NA* 2.13; Gai. *Dig.* 50.16.148; Donatus on Ter. *Hec.* 212; and Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.65, 76, 106, 113.

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