Horace Ode 3.9

Student Text, Notes and Exercises

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Horace: Life and Works

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) was born in Venusia, a small town in the southern Italian region of Apulia, on December 8, 65 BCE. His freedman father, a local financial official, had high hopes for his son and managed to provide Horace with a top-notch education in Rome and later in Athens. While studying in Athens, Horace came to support the republican cause of Brutus, who had fled from Rome to Athens after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE. Although he suffered the loss with Brutus's forces at Philippi in 42 BCE, where he says he was a military tribune in charge of a legion, Horace eventually returned to Rome under Octavian's amnesty and found work as a secretary (*scriba*) in the civil service. His father now deceased and the family farm lost, Horace made influential friends in Rome's literary circles, including the poet Vergil, who introduced him to Maecenas, the powerful and wealthy literary patron and close friend of Octavian.

Horace had begun writing at this point and, having been inducted into Maecenas's literary group, he published his first works, the *Sermones* (*Satires*) in 35 BCE. These were humorous, satirical verse (dactylic hexameter) essays on a variety of topics ranging from amusing anecdotes to literary criticism, with Horace himself as the central observer. Retreating to his farm in the Sabine hills outside of Rome, a gift from his patron and friend Maecenas, Horace was able to escape from the hectic nature of city life to the idyllic peace and quiet of country life which he so valued. After a second book of *Satires* published around 30 BCE, Horace put forth soon thereafter his *Iambi*, or *Epodes*. These poems, attacking in nature and full of ridicule, were modeled on the early Greek poetry of Archilochus and mark Horace's first forays into Greek inspired lyric poetry. They paved the way for the masterworks he produced over the next seven years, the three books of *Carmina*, or *Odes,* published together in 23 BCE.

Horace's *Odes*, influenced by numerous Greek lyric poets from Alcaeus to Callimachus but showing a technical prowess in a variety of meters on Roman themes, declared him the master of Latin lyric poetry. Horace was even offered a position as Augustus's personal secretary, but he declined. After the *Odes*, in 20 BCE, he published book one of a series of letters in hexameter verse, the *Epistles*. These were not merely letters between friends but also discussions of literary and philosophical topics. A second book, *Epistles 2*, containing three literary expositions would follow sometime after. Usually grouped third in *Epistles 2*, the *Ars Poetica* is an important piece of ancient literary criticism dealing chiefly with the genres of epic poetry and drama. In 17 BCE, Horace was commissioned by Augustus to write the *Carmen Saeculare*, a poem sung by a chorus of children in celebration of Augustus' revival of the *Ludi Tarentini*, an ancient religious festival. At the end of his life, Horace returned to lyric poetry with the publication in 13 BCE of a fourth book of *Odes*, most of them praising important Augustan figures. Horace died on November, 27, 8BCE, some weeks after his patron Maecenas, next to whom he was buried.

Ode 3.9

Odes 3.9 is an unusual poem of Horace, the only one written in the form of a dialogue. Here, two separated lovers quarrel about their former relationship and head towards a reunion. The overall structure is amoebean pastoral as seen in Theocritus (*Idyls 5,8*) and Vergil (*Eclogues 3,7*), where each speaker, in responding, tries to one-up the

other using similar phrasing and syntactical structure. Horace also takes Catullus 45 as a thematic influence where two lovers, Acme and Septimius, exchange verses about the extent of their undying passion for each other. The contest between the ex-lovers in Horace's poem however clearly has the two speakers on opposite sides of the blame-game about their former relationship. Each speaker sings a four-line stanza, with the structure of the poem conceding advantage to the second speaker, who always rebuts, never being cross-examined in the subsequent stanza by the first speaker. The struggle for that second speaker is to make the counter-point, using formal elements recalling the first speaker's attack. The new partners of each of the ex-lovers also play roles in this melodramatic battle, albeit non-speaking ones: their mention and description serve as verbal darts. After four stanzas of point and counter-point, with each of the ex-lovers speaking twice, the final two stanzas introduce a hypothetical "what if…?" by the male and a complete capitulation by the female.

The 2nd Asclepiadean meter of the poem consists of a Glyconic, __ __ __ U U __U X, alternating with a 1st Asclepiadean, __ __ __ U U __\\\\ __ U U __ U X.

Wall fresco of a Pompeian couple, 79 CE. See an unaltered version at www.marshall.edu/classical-studies/couple.jpg

1   **dōnec**, *as long as, while.*
2   **quisquam**: *any* (take with **iuvenis**).
       potior: comp. of **potis**; *better, preferable.*
       bracchium, bracchiī, n., *arm.*
       candidus, candida, candidum, *shiny, splendid, fair.*
3   **cervīx, cervīcis,** m., *neck.*
       dabat = **circumdabat**, *place around.*
4   **Persae, Persārum,** m., *the Persians.*
       vigeō, vigēre, viguī, *thrive, flourish.*

5   **magis**, comp. adv., *more.*
6   **ārdeō, ārdēre, ārsi, ārsus,** *to burn, burn with love* (take with abl. **aliā**).
       post, *behind, second to.*
       Chloēn: Greek accusative with **post**.
7   **multī…nōminis**: *of much name, of great renown* (gen. of quality).
8   **clārus, clāra, clārum,** *clear, brilliant, famous, illustrious.*
       Rōmānā Īliā: *than Roman Ilia* (abl. of comparison after **clārior**).
       Īliā: Rhea Silvia, mother of Romulus and Remus by Mars.

9   **Thrēssa**: *Thracian* (fem. adj. of **Thrāx**)
       regō, regere, rēxī, rēctus, *rule, control, be master of.*
10   **dulcīs:** poetic for **dulcēs** with **modōs**, *sweet melodies* (acc. of respect with **docta**, *skilled at*).
       cithara, citharae, f., *cithara, lute, guitar* (gen. with **sciens**, *knowledgeable of*).
11   **prō**: *for, on behalf of* (w/abl. **quā**).
       metuō, metuere, metuī, *fear, be afraid.*
       morior, morī, mortuus, *die.*
12   **anima, animae,** f., *breath*; *a dear soul*; *sweetheart* (dat. with **parcent**).
       fātum, ī, n., *fate, the fates.*
       superstes, superstitis, *surviving, remaining alive.*

13   **torreō, torrēre, torruī, tostus,** *burn, scorch.*
       fax, facis, f., *torch, firebrand; flame of love.*
14   **Thūrīnī…Ōrnytī**:Thurii, wealthy city in S. Italy; *Calais, son of the Thurine Ornytus.*
15   **bis**: *twice.*
       patior, patī, passus, *suffer, endure, undergo.*

17   **prīscus, prīsca, prīscum,** *old, former.*
       Venus: metonymy for love.
18   **dīductōs**: perf. pass. partic. of **dīducō**; take as substantive, *the separated, the parted.*
       iugum, iugī, n., *yoke, collar.*
       cōgō, cōgere, coēgī, coāctus, *drive together, bring together, force together.*
       aēneus, aēnea, aēneum, *bronze, made of bronze.*
19   **flāvus, flāva, flāvum,** *golden-yellow, blond.*
       excutiō, excutere, excussī, excussus, *cast out, drive out; kick out.*
20   **rēiciō, rēicere, rēiēcī, rēiectus,** *throw back, reject, scorn.*
       pateō, patēre, patuī, *lie open, be open.*

21   **sīdus, sīderis,** n., *star.*
22   **levis, leve,** *light;* of character *fickle, inconstant.*
       cortex, corticis, m., *cork.*
       improbus (in-pr-), improba, improbum, *not good, bad, wicked;* here *rough.*
23   **īrācundus, īrācunda, īrācundum,** *irascible, angry, easily angered, hot-tempered.*
       Hadria, Hadriae, m., *Adriatic sea.*
24   **amem**: *I would love…* (potential subjunct.)
       obeō, obīre, obīvī, obitus, *go to meet*; *perish, die* (**obeam**, potential subjunct., *I would die…*)
       libēns, libentis, *willing, glad, with pleasure.*

Dōnec grātus eram tibi
   nec quisquam potior bracchia candidae
cervīcī iuvenis dabat,
   Persārum viguī rēge beātior.

'Dōnec nōn aliā magis   5
   ārsistī neque erat Lȳdia post Chloēn,
multī Lȳdia nōminis
   Rōmānā viguī clārior Īliā.'

Mē nunc Thrēssa Chloē regit,
   dulcīs docta modōs et citharae sciēns,   10
prō quā nōn metuam morī,
   sī parcent animae fāta superstitī.

'Mē torret face mūtuā
   Thūrīnī Calais fīlius Ōrnytī,
prō quō bis patiar morī,   15
   sī parcent puerō fāta superstitī.'

Quid sī prīsca redit Venus
   dīductōsque iugō cōgit aēneō,
sī flāva excutitur Chloē
   rēiectaeque patet iānua Lȳdiae?   20

'Quamquam sīdere pulchrior
   ille est, tū levior cortice et improbō
īrācundior Hadriā,
   tēcum vīvere amem, tēcum obeam libēns!'

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1. In the first stanza, how does the male lover instigate the blame-game with his ex-girlfriend Lydia? How does he also reveal that he used to be happy with her?
2. In the second stanza, what specific words and phrases of Lydia counter the attack and one-up her ex? What words reveal that she used to be happy with him?
3. In stanza three, how does the male lover both flatter his new girl Chloe and jab at Lydia?
4. How do Lydia's words in stanza four rebut this attack, one-upping her ex once again?
5. Although the verbal duel continues in stanzas five and six, how does the tone shift with thoughts of reconciliation? How does Lydia outdo her ex once and for all?