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HORACE, S. 1.5.97–104

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Confident in writing *Lymphis* with a capital *L* at S. 1.5.97, I analyse the watery element in the satire's wider religious and physical context, and reinterpret *credat Iudaeus Apella, / non ego* (100–101), arguing in favour of the transmitted future *credet*.

Keywords: Horace; satire; textual criticism

Here is the text as most readers will know it:

dein Gnatia Lymphis	97
iratis exstructa dedit risusque iocosque,	98
dum flamma sine tura liquescere limine sacro	99
persuadere cupit. Credat Iudaeus Apella,	100
non ego ; namque deos didici securum agere aevom,	101
nec siquid miri faciat natura, deos id	102
tristis ex alto caeli demittere tecto.	103
Brundisium longae finis chartaeque viaeque est. ¹	104

“then Gnatia, which was built without the Water-Nymphs’ blessing², provided laughter and merriment in its wish to persuade us that incense melts *on the sacred threshold*³ without fire. Apella the Jew might believe it, not me, because I’ve learnt that the gods lead a life free from care, and that, if nature brings about some marvel, the gods do not send it down from their lofty home in heaven because they’re unhappy.⁴ Brundisium marks the end of both a long journey and a long screed.”

(Translation: P. M. Brown [1993]; the italics are mine.)

As one can instantly see, the famous saying – some will say infamous –, *credat Iudaeus Apella*, is an integral part of the lines about the final stop-over. What is left of the *iter/via* between Gnatia and Brundisium was probably in itself quite boring and even arduous (cf. Horace's epithet *gravis* about the *Via Appia* at line 6), not least owing to the sheer length (ca. 55 km). However, the character of that ultimate leg from Gnatia to Brundisium is not the main reason why Horace has chosen to skip it in his travel account; rather the reason is that the happy arrival at the destination does not belong naturally to the travelogue proper. Due to the character of the diplomatic mission of Maecenas, the whole company is bound to show up at Brundisium, a fact that does not and should not invite comments from the poet. The only aspect associated with Brundisium's name is that it meant, from Horace's point of view, the end of a very long and exhausting journey (emphasized by the hyperbaton *longae ... viae*⁵). Anyway, the satire's last line (104) brings tangibly close to us what the whole journey was about, namely *magnis de rebus* (28). These *magnae res* were obviously no theme in themselves for Horace's kind of satire. All the same, what a nadir not only for Horace but also for the whole group led by Maecenas to have a place like Gnatia as the scene for their last evening together! It looked as if it would be an utterly uneventful ending to the travelogue. Nevertheless, Horace is able to surprise.

(a) *Lymphis / iratis*

Gnatia is a sort of culmination in the course of the *Iter Brundisium* in more than one respect. In view of the genre, Gnatia brings not least a social peak towards the end of an overlong journey. The travellers are finally seen as a group of friends sharing a funny experience that gave rise to laughter and jokes. The company has clearly ideals in common and not least a sense of humour, at the expense though of the unimportant spot Gnatia and its inhabitants who are giving rise to the company's high spirits. Their laughter differs from those earlier hilarious occasions (previously attached to 35 [*nos ridentes*], 57 [*ridemus*], 62 [*iocatus*]): at Gnatia *risus* and *iocus* are intermingled and thus intensifying each other. The cause is the credulity of the townspeople whose zeal it is to persuade visitors of a local miracle, that frankincense burns and emits smoke without having been ignited. However, the amusement is seriously reflecting the company's, and especially Horace's own philosophy of

life: people's superstition is set against the narrator's own true enlightenment. The last lines are in this way a sort of *sphragis* to the first half of the *Sermones*.

So much in general about the whole tenor of the 14th and last stop-over.⁶ To return to the opening of the Gnatia episode: *Lymphae* are of course both nature deities (~ *Nymphae*), who are capable of human emotions, and a metonymy for the element water. This life's necessity has almost from the start of the journey been a recurring topic and relevant for the company's well-being, individually and collectively. The bad quality of the water embittered Horace's stay at Forum Appi (7); it annoyed him at the 10th stopover because one had to pay specifically for water (88f. *venit vilissima rerum / hic aqua*). At Canusium on the 11th day the problem was evidently more or less the same, but phrased quite differently (91 *aquae non ditior urna*); only the good quality of the bread on the 10th day made the route along the first part of Via Minucia somewhat more tolerable for the group in retrospect. With these latest experiences in mind, having reached Gnatia they seem at last to need some entertainment or a memorable form of respite. At first, the place does not seem more promising than some earlier stops. The combination *Lymphae* and the epithet *iratae* points again, and for the last time, to problems connected with water: the very foundation of Gnatia had been characterized by the ill-will of the competent goddesses, a fact which in plain language points to a shortage of freshwater.⁷

However, there is evidently more to the "Wrath of the Water-Nymphs" to judge from the way Horace has chosen to personify the element. We are being reminded of his almost religious attitude towards Feronia, the *nympha Campaniae* as Servius calls her, owing to the water provided by her *lucus*.⁸ After the travails connected with the night along the *palus Pomptina* Horace is able, together with the other passengers, to refresh himself in Feronia's grove: *ora manusque tua lavimus, Feronia, Lympha* (24). The contrast with the situation at Gnatia could hardly be sharper. To question whether Gnatia was in reality so badly off with regard to water, does not hit the mark either with respect to the immediate context or in relation to the travelogue as a whole.⁹ Horace may have taken hold of some tradition about the earliest settlers or he may be harping generally on his discontent with the water situation along the last legs of the journey. The main thing for him was that *Lymphis iratis* made good sense there and then in his carefully constructed satire.¹⁰

The Gnatia episode and indeed the whole travelogue ends with Horace professing his Epicurean creed. This explains his and the others' laughter and jokes at the expense of the superstition of the Gnatians. The whole town stands behind the interpretation given to the visitors; *Gnatia* ... *dedit risusque iocosque, / dum ... / persuadere cupit* (a concomitant *dum* being as often close to *quia*, cf. *OLD s.v. dum* 4). We may see the ensuing quotation from Lucretius as provoked by the scene with the town's cicerone. It sends a strong signal when Horace resorts to a verbatim quotation: after having stated that he does not believe in the miracle (worded as if it were something more than a solitary occurrence) he says:

... . namque deos didici securum agere aevom,	101
nec siquid miri faciat natura, deos id	102
tristis ex alto caeli demittere tecto.	103

While explaining that the gods have no influence on the course of the sun and the moon and that men need to learn that the *cursus perennes* of the celestial bodies are not ordained according to some divine plan Lucretius states: *Nam bene qui didicere deos securum agere aevom, / ...* (5.82 = 6.58). Horace turns Lucretius' relative clause into a main clause: "For I have been taught that the gods lead a life without care". The central word here is *securum* "carefree". Horace probably also had in mind the opening of the Sixth Book of *De rerum natura* which praises Athens for having brought forth the man who was able to free men from anxieties, fear and *curarum tristis* ... *fluctus* (6.34). The fear of gods believed to exercise their harsh rule over men (*deorum ... imperium* and *regnum* 55) stems from men's *ignorantia causarum* (54) "ignorance about the real causes". If men yet marvel at incomprehensible phenomena taking place before them (Horace *siquid miri* 102 ~ Lucretius *si ... mirantur* 6.59-60a), they should not believe that almighty and grim gods (Horace: *deos ... tristis* ~ Lucretius: *dominos acris* 6.63) are sending them from their heaven above us (Horace *ex alto ... tecto* 103 ~ Lucretius *supera caput aetheriis ... in oris* 6.61). We cannot attribute to gods who are living quietly in imperturbable peace a thirst for severe vengeance caused by anger (Lucretius' *ex ira* 6.72 heightened in men's fantasy to *magnos irarum ... fluctus* 6.74).

Clearly, Horace has established a close link between the adjectives in the Gnatia episode. From the seemingly conventional poeticism of the Water-Nymphs' wrath (*Lymphis iratis*), he proceeds to a sphere of

philosophical enlightenment when he denies divine beings power over nature and ability to intervene in our world. This fact is emphasized by means of descriptive terms based on Epicurus' creed about the gods, their carefree existence (*securum* ... *aevom*) and absence of wrath and serious concerns about our earthly affairs (*nec* ... *tristis*). A further witty conclusion to draw from this is that there is no reality behind the angry Water-Nymphs (*iratis*) of popular religion either (cf. Lucretius 6.62 on *antiquae religiones*).

(b) *Credat Iudaeus Apella* (100)

So far, we have not yet commented on the transition from Gnatia's desire to convince (*persuadere cupit*) the visitors about a miracle in their midst to Horace's contrasting belief in the Epicurean creed:

Credat Iudaeus Apella,¹¹
non ego; namque etc.

Credat is transmitted by the majority of manuscripts whereas *credet* is found in *C K z g* (*C*= Monacensis Lat. 14 685, late 11th c., *K*= cod. S. Eugendi, 11th c., *g*= Gothanus B 61, 15th c.).¹² To my knowledge, no edition has adopted *credet*. The one certain thing one can say about these two alternative readings is that they are *per se* fairly equal. Therefore, their respective qualities must be judged in relation to their context.

As to the subjunctive *credat*, it is legitimate to focus on its possible function. The subjunctive in main clauses is a mixed class, covering a whole range of modes, usually divided into *coniunctivus potentialis*, *deliberativus*, *irrealis*, *optativus*, *hortativus* (or *jussivus*) and *concessivus*. The more precise nature of each depends to a high degree on the context. Only the last-mentioned, the concessive subjunctive, is a relevant category to be discussed here. The most quoted example in grammars stems from a comedy by Accius (203 Warmington), *Oderint dum metuant* ("Let them hate so long as they fear"), that is: "I don't care if they hate me provided they fear me". Or Cato speaking of the Rhodians (Gellius 6.3.50): *sint sane superbi; quid id ad nos attinet?*, that is to say: "Let the Rhodians be arrogant, what is that to us?" Plautus *Most.* 772 (Tr.): *attamen inspicere volt.* (Si.:) *Inspiciat, si libet* ("But he wants to inspect it" – "Let him do so if he wishes"). What these examples of concessive subjunctive convey to us is that the reality is a possible

or even probable one but that the speaker keeps aloof from it as a matter of no great personal concern. *Credat* in combination with *Iudaeus Apella* does not guarantee that Apella believes in the miracle, only that he is supposedly a believer not to be taken too seriously whereas, on the other hand, the poet's "I" stands for a firm rejection of miracles caused by a god.

Having defined and exemplified the category of subjunctive operative in *credat Iudaeus Apella*, the stark elliptical *non ego* is hardly to be called a smooth and natural syntactical continuation: *non* is the signal that an indicative is called for if the space left by the ellipsis is filled in. The poet's real creed is set against the attitude of devout acceptance of miracles to be expected in a person like Apella.

In this light, the future *credet* is better suited to the paratactic construction at hand signalling a balanced prediction of an expected future. The statement is factual and relatively neutral in opposing two values, lifestyles, creeds. Vergil's famous lines at *A.* 6.847-852 may serve as an illustrating example: *Excudent alii ... ducent ... orabunt ... describent ... dicent; tu regere imperio ... memento*. Horace employs a similar mode of expression several times: *Carm.* 1.7.1 *Laudabunt alii claram Rhodon aut Mytilenen ...*; (10) *me nec tam ... nec tam ... percussit ... quam ...* on which Kühner–Stegmann comment: "[lässt] ebensogut eine futurische wie eine konzessive Bedeutung zu".¹³ In fact, a concessive nature is implied in this kind of preamble as well, but it is slight and secondary. The poet, however, is nevertheless confident that he is right about his prediction, more so than if he had used a concessive subjunctive or a concessive conjunction. He brings "a statement of fact" according to Nisbet and Hubbard (1970, 95) on *Carm.* 1.7.9 who rightly recommend the rendering "will celebrate" instead of "may celebrate".

In the light of the above examples and the future alternative offered by the transmission, we are able to substitute for a rather condescending subjunctive an indicative future that goes much better with the elliptical continuation: The typical Jew is liable to accept the idea of divine intervention, vengeance included. The following main clause closely attached to the first one, with its easy ellipsis of *credo* or *credam*, contrasts the rationalistic creed of the poet with the superstitious one of Apella. The religious practises and ceremonies of the Jews were based on an uncompromising monotheism. Their Jahve was almighty and could at any time vent his anger and wrath on men. The history of the Jews was full of

miracles caused by the *acer dominus* (Lucretius 6.63), far more than those caused by the Jupiter of the Romans.

Notes

1. For a fundamental modern commentary, see Emily Gowers' (2012) edition, in particular, pp. 211–214.
2. “while the Water-Nymphs were angry” would suit my Epicurean interpretation better.
3. I would dare to propose that *limine sacro* be taken as a *pars pro toto* for (local abl.) *templo* (in reality: *adyto* or *penetralibus*). For interesting poetic parallels one should take note of the examples collected by OLD s.v. *limen* 2 c. (where the examples point to what is *behind* the threshold as the topical space referred to). The meaning of *limine sacro* would anyway have been clear enough to visitors. If I am correct, then, the incense would be closely attached to the representation of the divine being as worshipped by the inhabitants *in its shrine*.
4. “it is not grim gods that send it down from their lofty home in heaven” would be a better rendering from my point of view.
5. The effect of the distant *longae* is probably underscored even more by the addition of *chartae* that shares *longae* with *viae*. A papyrus *charta* with 103 lines of text is quite something.
6. For a list of these stops, see Kiessling–Heinze (1921, 90 and 104).
7. The ancient exegesis cited by Kiessling–Heinze is still fully valid by pointing to Porphyrio saying: *per haec hoc quoque oppidulum significat penuria aquae laborare*, Suda s.v. ‘nymph’ is pointing to ἄπορία νομάτων as the result of μήνις νομφῶν. Cf. A. Bianchi s.v. ‘Feronia’ in EO II, p. 376, defining the nymph as: “numen tutelare della natura incolta ... e delle acque.”
8. Feronia was taken by Porphyrio to be a Water-Nymph. According to Servius on A. 7.799 and 800 Feronia’s *lucus* had miraculously become green again after a fire had burnt it down, obviously owing to its sacrosanct character and maybe its holy water.
9. Kiessling–Heinze raise the objection to Horace’s information and the scholia above that the place in reality had excellent springs and that the poet through faulty memory may have put Gnatia on a par with the other small towns belonging to *siticulosa Apulia* (*Epod.* 3.16). The commentary then immediately continues the discussion like this: “immerhin noch glaublicher als die Erklärung, dass H. die Bewohner der Stadt auf Grund ihres unsinnigen Aberglaubens als *lymphatici* νομφόληπτοι hinstellen wolle: ‘Verzücktheit’ [i.e. ‘ecstasy’, ‘rapture’] oder ‘Besessenheit’ wäre eine durchaus ungeeignete Bezeichnung für die hier gemeinte *superstitio*.” Gowers (2012), on the other hand, is more favourable to the idea quoted in the next note from the Budé-edition.
10. At the same time, a double entendre would be in tune with Horace’s whole account of the Gnatia experience. An occasional drop of spite would anyway be close to the nature of his satirical art. Consequently, one should not deny outright the possibility of an indirect sting that is so excellently captured by Villeneuve’s (1946) note:

“Comme il y avait de l’eau à Egnatia, il faut entendre que les habitants sont *lymphatici*, c’est-à-dire que les nymphes leur ont dérangé le cerveau.”

11. ‘Apella’ is a highly suggestive name in the context; Porphyrio saw in the name an allusion to Jewish circumcision (a- ‘privativum’ and *pellis* ‘skin’); cf. TLL X, 1 s.v. *pellis* X, 1, col. 1004, 41. Here its function is that Jews are under a certain religious duress and therefore an easy prey to superstition by nature.
12. For the mss., see also Brink’s *Ars Poetica* II, p. 4ff.
13. I, p. 144; cf. Szantyr’s *Syntax* p. 311 (§ 174 b) β).

Disclosure statement

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