

***Stans pede in uno* (Horace S. 1.4.10)**

In the fourth of his first book of *Satires*, Horace passes some strong criticism on his predecessor Lucilius, the traditional *inventor* of the genre of satire in Rome. Not only does Lucilius largely depend on the Greek poets of the Old Comedy, Horace argues, but his method of composition is anything but perfect. Having stated that Lucilius is *durus componere uersus* ‘rough in writing verse’ (1.4.8), Horace explains that the older poet simply wrote too much:

nam fuit hoc uitiosus: in hora saepe ducentos,
 ut magnum, uersus dictabat stans pede in uno; 10
 cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere uelles.

These lines are traditionally interpreted as an instance of relatively mild literary criticism. With some exaggeration, Horace estimates Lucilius’ poetical output at two hundred lines per hour and compares the older poet to a muddy river which carries much that seems superfluous.¹⁾

The comparison of a poet or his poetry to a river seems fairly common in Hellenistic and later literature.²⁾ For the expression *stans pede in uno* ‘standing on one foot’, however, no certain explanation can be given. Older scholars suggested it must have been a common, metaphorical expression for a lack of effort or care³⁾ and it is commonly taken as ‘easygoing’, ‘casual’, ‘offhand’.⁴⁾

¹⁾ Thus e.g. *TLL* VII.1900.46 s.v. *lutulentus* quotes Hor. S. 1.4.11 as a case of *sermo poetae* compared to a muddy river, and refers to a scholion: *lutulentus: sordidus... hoc est non liquida et pura copia*. This interpretation of the Horatian passage can also be found in recent work, e.g. Schlegel 2000, 95-6 (and cf. 107 n. 117).

²⁾ Several scholars refer to Callimachus, e.g. Watson 2005, 273 n. 5 with some references; see also discussion below. On a different note, it has been suggested that Horace’s use of *lutulentus* here consciously plays on its poetical opposite *luculentus*; cf. Marinello 1995.

³⁾ For instance, Kiessling & Heinze (1921, 71) comment: “wohl volkstümlicher Ausdruck für “läßlich”: wer schwere körperliche Arbeit tut, muß fest auf beiden Beinen stehen”, and compare Quint. 12.9.18 *itaque in iis actionibus, ut aiunt agricolae, omni pede standum est*.

⁴⁾ According to Knapp (1923, 62-4), the expression cannot mean ‘easily’, as it is often taken, since this would imply a compliment, whereas Horace is condemning Lucilius here. Instead, he argues, the sense must be ‘carelessly’, for which he also adduces Trimalchio’s boast in Petr. 39 *multis pedibus sto*, (‘I have many resources’); further Ter. *An.* 161-2 and 675-7; Cic. *Tusc.* 2.56 *toto corpore atque omnibus unguis, ut dicitur*; Verg. *A.* 4.252 *toto corpore*. Against this view it may be argued that ‘easily’ actually could be meant as a piece of

Although this reading makes good sense, the expression may also be taken in a rather more literal manner, which sheds a different light on the whole passage. Possibly, Horace wishes us to visualize Lucilius as standing on one foot,⁵⁾ that is, raising one leg and producing a stream of verses as if he is suffering from diarrhoea. Thus, there would be a direct connection of *stans pede in uno* with *cum flueret lutulentus*.

In favour of this interpretation, some arguments may be brought forward. First, Horace's satires generally do not shun harsh words and images and they even include some primary obscenities such as *cunnius* (1.2.36, 70; 1.3.107) and *futuo* (1.2.127). References to excrement (both of animals and men) can be found as well. Thus, the talking Priapus in 1.8.37-9 self-assuredly says:

mentior at siquid, merdis caput inquiner albis
 coruorum atque in me ueniat mictum atque cacatum
 Iulius et fragilis Peditia furque Voranus.⁶⁾

Clearly, even in Horatian satire a scatological pun would not strike a false note. As a matter of fact, Lucilius' satires included many references to excrements and dung, as numerous fragments clearly show.⁷⁾ In the words of Amy Richlin, the scatological humor in Lucilius at times produces a "befoulment of the reader".⁸⁾

A famous example of bad poetry likened to excrements is, of course, Catullus' *carmen* 36 on *Annales Volusi, cacata carta*. In a recent 'miscellaneum' in this journal, C. Lindsay Watson has suggested that Catullus' *cacata carta* is a "wickedly scatological recasting of the image of the turbid, mud-polluted Euphrates which Callimachus famously employed in the *envoi* to *Hymn 2*" to characterize the

criticism rather than a compliment: according to Horace's poetical criteria, writing verses should be an activity that requires great effort and *limae labor* (*Ars* 291) and therefore is 'difficult' rather than 'easy'.

⁵⁾ Likewise, *pendet* in line 6 *hinc omnis pendet Lucilius* might equally be taken somewhat more literally as 'is hanging', 'is clinging on to'.

⁶⁾ Cf. further 1.2.44 *hunc perminxerunt calones*, where *permingere* (or *permeiere*) 'to urinate all over' seems to be used in an obscene sense for a form of homosexual rape; thus e.g. *OLD* s.v. *permeio*.

⁷⁾ It is probably more than a coincidence that scatological (and 'scatophagous') humour abounds in Old Attic Comedy, the genre that Horace claims as Lucilius' main model; for a survey of Greek passages see Henderson 1991, 187-94.

⁸⁾ See Richlin 1992, 169-70. For the Latin vocabulary relating to human excrements and 'bodily functions', see Adams 1982, 231-50.

poetry that is unlike his own refined work.⁹⁾ Watson does note that the initial image of Callimachus, recast by Catullus, also resurfaces here in Horatius' remarks against muddy Lucilius and his tendency to verbosity (p. 270). However, she does not raise the point that Horace's use of *fluere lutulentus* may be a conscious intertextual reference to Callimachus *and* Catullus, and therefore be both poetical and scatological.¹⁰⁾

In our view, the scatological association of *fluere lutulentus*¹¹⁾ is prepared and reinforced by the preceding *stans pede in uno*. No direct model for this use of the phrase can be adduced, but there is a passage in Petronius which may be relevant here. In *Sat.* 117 it is told how the mercenary Corax is shamelessly and funnily raising his leg so as to break wind:

Nec contentus maledictis tollebat subinde altius pedem, et strepitu obsceno simul atque odore viam implebat. Ridebat contumaciam Giton...

Although the result here is obviously not diarrhoea, the passage does show that for a Roman reader, 'standing on one foot' may well carry a scatological connotation.

It could perhaps be objected that Horace's words *erat quod tollere uelles* (1.4.11) would become rather unpleasant for the reader he addresses if an association with diarrhoea were meant in these lines. This, however, might also be seen as part of the fun: in a way the reader has to 'clear up' much of Lucilius' dirt. Alternatively, one might take *cum* in a concessive sense, and argue that the line means: 'although he flowed muddily, there were some (good) things you would wish to take out'. But a complimentary remark by Horace on Lucilius' style seems out of place here.

More importantly, it might be argued that Horace himself seems to deny the scatological interpretation of 1.4.10-1 in his later *Satire* 1.10. There, he continues and refines his criticism on Lucilius, seemingly as a reaction to hostile comments on his earlier remarks.

⁹⁾ Cf. Watson 2005, 270; cf. also Scodel 1987, 203-4. On the Callimachean passage itself, see Kahane 1994.

¹⁰⁾ It is argued by some (e.g. Skutch 1962, 212) that Horace's words *ut magnum* (1.4.10) imply that his lines are a reply to some boasting verses by Lucilius himself. It would not seem impossible, then, that Horace in addition is playing on some scatological note by Lucilius himself.

¹¹⁾ For the use of *fluere*, cf. *OLD* s.v. *fluo* 2b (of blood, tears and other bodily fluids) and 5b (of the bowels) 'to be relaxed'. *Fluxus uentris* was a common, more or less polite expression for diarrhoea, according to Adams (1982, 241; the more vulgar term being *foria*).

At dixi fluere hunc lutulentum, saepe ferentem 50
plura quidem tollenda relinquendis. Age quaeso,
tu nihil in magno doctus reprehendis Homero? (1.10.50-2)

In this second case *fluere lutulentum* seems to carry merely the Callimachean, subtle association of bad poetry with a river carrying mud. But in this passage it is Horace's obvious aim to soften his tone and play down some of his criticism on Lucilius. No wonder then, that a clearly scatological element is missing here. Perhaps significantly, in 1.10 Horace does repeat the image of the 'muddy stream', but not the initial one of 'standing on one foot'.

Our scatological reading of Horace S. 1.4.10-1 is not intended to discard or exclude the common interpretation of the lines. The eye-catching elements may still be Lucilius' allegedly easygoing attitude and the image of his poetry as a muddy river, which is resumed in 1.10.50-2. But for advanced readers, we suggest, a second, playful allusion becomes visible in Horace's passage 1.4.10-1, which even deepens its comical and literary power.

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