
Ancona, Ronnie, *Horace: Selected Odes and Satire I.9*. 2nd edition.

Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2005. ISBN: 978-086516-608-0. \$31.00. Workbook, co-authored with David J. Murphy. ISBN: 0-86516-574-2. \$22.00.

In selecting an AP text for my class, I have certain priorities in mind. They are, in order of importance:

1. A list of vocabulary on the same page as the text.
2. Notes that guide students to discover the meaning of Latin words and expressions without my having to translate for them.
3. Thorough commentary. (Often editors become oddly quiet on the thorniest lines.)
4. Commentary that raises controversial views and makes students ask questions and debate issues.
5. Succinct and relevant historical and biographical information.
6. Clear and usable appendices on metrics and figures of speech.
7. A thorough and current bibliography.

In recent years, many AP texts have become more user-friendly by providing a list of vocabulary on the same page as the text under study and covering the basics of

metrics and poetic figures, but most, still, are sadly lacking in depth, thoroughness, and a desire to create a fuller learning experience for students. Ronnie Ancona is that *rara avis*, a college teacher who is truly interested in the preparation of secondary school students. Her text, while reflecting a depth of knowledge of the subject, is equally concerned with presenting ideas in a language that students can understand.

In her Introduction, Ancona remarks that she has been pleasantly surprised that many college teachers have welcomed her text. Certainly, it displays a degree of sophistication and erudition that elevates it above most AP texts. Her presentation is clear and elegant, showing a keen awareness of the unsophisticated understanding of her student audience.

I remind my students over and over that their class presentations contain much unnecessary information. By contrast, Ancona's background material is written in a lucid, concise prose, giving the students the essentials of Horace's life and works in a language they can understand. At the same time, she introduces them to the Latin lyric tradition, and Horace's unique position within it. She is particularly deft in suggesting the subtle challenges presented by translating Horace's elusive and allusive Latin.

Even though I put bibliography at the bottom of my list of priorities, Ancona's exhaustive bibliography at the beginning of her text is one of its major virtues. Listing both general works and articles on each poem studied, she reminds students that there is a wealth of information available to them as they read. Using the bibliography, students can easily prepare class presentations offering various perspectives on each poem to enrich and enliven their critical appreciation of Horace. Bibliographies are routinely relegated to the "basement" of books, whereas I feel that they should be the centerpiece.

To return to my list of priorities: although Ancona provides abundant vocabulary and guidance, I very much appreciate that she does not translate for students (as so many editors do), a practice that deprives them of the opportunity to think for themselves. On the other hand, her notes are both ample and helpful, illuminating often neglected details. Most texts are content simply to cite a metrical effect or stylistic device; however, Ancona clarifies the aesthetic purposes behind the literary techniques used. Lack of sensitivity to these features is a huge weakness in AP students, which few texts attempt to rectify. Ancona's notes explore these dimensions of Horace's poetry eloquently.

On a more complex level, Ancona provides insight into Horace's prismatic language from the outset. Take, for instance, this comment on line 6 of Ode I, 1:

Domínos looks to both the victors in the chariot race and to the gods and can be seen in apposition to another *quos* understood from line 3 or as in apposition to *deos* (6).

While the former is more appealing in terms of the general sense of the poem — victors become masters of the world — it is important when reading Latin, and Horace's poetry in particular, to preserve such ambiguities. This kind of ambiguity concerning what modifies what is typical of Horace and should be understood not as lack of clarity but rather as the poet's attempt to say more

than he could if he narrowed his possibilities to just one option. Notice the position of *terrarum dominos* between *quos* and *deos* (6). Remember that Latin word order is flexible because of the inflected nature of Latin. Horace exploits this flexibility perhaps more than any other Latin poet.

Here, right at the outset, Ancona alerts students to an essential perspective on Horace's style that will, with her continued assistance, enrich their reading of his poetry. Few editors take the time to provide such guidance.

In the area of raising controversial issues, Ancona doesn't back down. For instance, in the troubling Ode I, 13 (Telephus/Lydia), she asserts that *inrupta* may mean "interrupted," rather than having the accepted meaning "unbroken." Who knows? But her note has provoked stimulating debate among my students and has ultimately led us back to her bibliography to seek other critical perspectives.

This second edition, which numbers the pages and puts all useful vocabulary at the bottom of the page, simply adds a bit more clarity to an extremely useful, thorough, and thoughtful book.

As for the Workbook, I'm probably the wrong person to ask. I have to confess to considerable ambivalence — not about this one — but about the notion of using workbooks in a Latin poetry course. I understand that breaking the material down into manageable pieces helps students to master grammar, among other things, and to approach the AP exam with more confidence. But what would Horace think? More than anything (or any test score), I want my students to love Horace's poetry. If a student is utterly lost, a workbook is a valuable aid. Otherwise, I prefer to focus on helping students to love poetry. That said, if you need a workbook, Ancona's and Murphy's is extremely thorough, and will, I'm sure, be a godsend to those who need it.

Over the years (more than twenty!), I have probably used most resources on Horace available to prepare students for the AP exam. Ancona's book is the most useful and well-designed I have encountered in my career.

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Publisher's Response

Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers appreciates Betsy Dawson's careful and enthusiastic review of Ronnie Ancona's *Horace: Selected Odes and Satire 1.9*. We approached Professor Ancona to author this book and another AP textbook, *Writing Passion: A Catullus Reader*, precisely because she is an active scholar who has a rare sensitivity to the needs of secondary school students, and who knows, after many years' affiliation with Hunter College's MA program in the teaching of Latin, what kind of textbook helps teachers engage students.

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