

An Analysis of Youth, Innocence, and Sexual Maturity in Horace's Odes 1.23 and 2.5

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April 28, 2020

The discussion of innocence and sexual maturity in Horace's Odes 1.23 and 2.5 is quite complex. This paper aims to understand Horace's perspective on these topics through the analysis of the figurative portrayals of *Lalage* and *Chloe*. By illustrating the maturation of the two girls over the course of numerous poems, Horace shows how this process, while always stepwise, manifests differently depending on the person. His discussion of what exactly makes a person "youthful" suggests that the innocence of a girl is tied to her defining character trait. Ultimately, only the change of seasons brings the arrival of sexual maturity, which is defined by a girl's attachment to her dominating husband.

Both Odes 1.23 and 2.5 utilize repeated Greek pseudonyms to show the character development of these women over the course of the Odes. The Greek names could either be interpreted as pseudonyms for free-born Roman women (which is typical of Augustan authors) or a Greek freedwomen. Both the names are mentioned in multiple Odes, but it is unclear whether these refer to the same or different women in each circumstance. By deconstructing their various depictions, it can be extrapolated that Chloe gains agency and dominance as she ages while Lalage loses her freedom and sense of self.

From her appearance in Book 1 to her last appearance in Book 3, Chloe grows from a young, inexperienced lover to a dominant mistress that controls her love affairs. It has been argued by some scholars that Chloe is a consistent character throughout the Odes and that the order in which she appears in the Odes is representative of her character changes.^[1] In 1.23, Chloe is a young girl, newly matured, finally ready for a relationship with a man. She is extremely scared of this unknown territory: everything from the lions and tigers (1.23.9-10) to the harmless breeze (1.23.4) and lizards (1.23.6) frighten this inexperienced girl. Chloe appears next in 3.7 as the unsuccessful temptress of Gyges, a married man. She is described to *ignibus uri* (3.7.11) for Gyges and that she *temptat mille...modis* (3.7.12). The outwardness of her fiery passion and her knowledge of seduction (she knows a million ways to seduce a man) indicate that Chloe has matured sexually. However, she is still not skilled enough to successfully capture Gyges; the poem implies that Chloe is *misera* (3.7.10) because of her failure.^[2] In Ode 3.9, a conversation between Horace and Lydia, Chloe is described as *docta* (3.9.10) as she has finally learned the *dulcis...modos* (3.9.10) necessary to steal a man, in this case, Horace. The fact that she *regit* (3.9.9) Horace indicates that Chloe is now in control of the love affair and of her actions, rather than being a passive recipient of nature's whims. The epithet *Thressa* (3.9.9) indicates that unlike her quiet demeanor in Ode 1.23, Chloe now has a "wild and passionate temperament."^[3] The placement of *Thressa* before *Chloe* further emphasizes this fact. Although she is more experienced and exerts more agency, Chloe is still somewhat powerless: she is still *executitur* (3.7.19) by Horace, the agent of Venus, as he controls the relationship. Finally, in 3.26, Chloe has reached the height of sexual maturity. She is the *regina* (3.26.11) of her erotic world, now rejecting Horace. Horace mentions *Sithonia nive* (3.26.10) to suggest that Chloe, who was once gentle like spring, is now reminiscent of the cold, unforgiving winter.^[4] The use of *arrogantem* to describe Chloe solidifies her completed transition: she changes from a *pavidem* (1.23.2) deer to a *misera* (3.7.10) temptress to a *docta* (3.9.10) lover, and finally, to a headstrong *regina*

(3.26.11).

[1] McCune 2016, 573.

[2] Ibid, 577.

[3] Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 137.

[4] Wickham, E.C. 1877, 222.

Although Lalage's character does not go through all the phases of maturity that Chloe does, she does make the passage from an innocent girl to a sexually-crazed adolescent; however, her maturity decreases her power. *Lagale* is the subject of the poem and the current love interest of the narrator in Ode 2.5. In Greek, *Lagale* means "chatterer", which fits the too-chatty young girl stereotype.^[5] Her name also appears in Ode 1.22 where she is the sweet lover of Horace. She is once again described as *dulce... loquentem... Lagalen* (1.22.23-24) to express her chattiness. However, the description of her to smile and speak *dulce* suggests that Horace finds her verbosity to be endearing. It is suggested that Lalage frees Horace from all his *curis* (1.22.11), as he is peaceful in the Sabine woods when he thinks of her - this hints at the innocent nature of their love and of Lalage herself. The extent of Horace's love for her and the power of her love is suggested when she, to some degree, metaphorically protects him from a wolf.^[6] It is interesting that in the last stanza, *amabo* (1.22.35) is used rather than the present form of the word. Perhaps Horace is conveying that his love for Lalage will continue into the future, even as she morphs into another version of herself such as in 2.5. Nevertheless, the romanticized depiction of her in 1.22 is in stark contrast to her sexualized heifer character in 2.5.

[5] Harrison, Stephen 2017, 90.

[6] Zumwalt, N. K. 1975, 421.

The ambiguity of subject and the depiction of Lalage as a heifer are used to distance her from her agency and free-will; she is merely the object of affection. In 2.5, the subject remains ambiguous in the first half of the poem; the *tuae* (2.5.5) in line five is the first indication of a subject. From the first two stanzas, through *tuae... iuvencae* (2.5.5-6) all that can be inferred about the female heifer/girl is that she is unprepared for sexual relations and marriage. The adjective *tuae* is particularly important to notice – not only is she a cow, a domesticated animal, but also the narrator's property. The subject's name is finally revealed in stanza 4, line 16, as *Lalage*. This incredibly late reveal suggests that her personhood is not particularly important - rather, her identity as a sex-crazed young girl is. Unlike in 1.22, where Lalage is portrayed as an almost all powerful lover, now she is merely an animal, directed by the will of nature and the narrator.

In addition to using Greek pseudonyms, both Odes also incorporate animal imagery to characterize the innocence of the two girls. In Ode 1.22, the first stanza pays homage to Anacreon 408, which describes a fearful, newborn fawn abandoned in the woods by its mother. The word *inuleus* is formed from a rarely used Greek word, ἔνυλος, which has only been found in the work of Hesychius. *Inuleus* has been characterized as a "flamboyantly Greek" word.^[7] This incorporation of Greek is thematically fitting with the addressee and his love interest, Chloe. Chloe, a Greek name which frequently appears in Horace's Odes, can be interpreted as a pseudonym for a recurring woman in Horace's life. In addition, *inuleus* is only used once more in Latin verse by Propertius. Its limited appearance in prose is most likely due to its three consecutive short syllables, which make it incompatible with most meters. The word's Greek derivation, syllable structure, and rarity in literature immediately draw attention to *inuleus* and the extended simile around it that follows.^[8]

[7] Wasdin, Katherine 2018, 132.

[8] Roche, Paul 2013, 346.

The introduction of the *inuleus* simile revolves around the perceived innocence of the fawn; to Horace, her innocence is inextricably tied to her fear. The verb *vitas* (1.23.1) as the first word in the poem stresses her

cautionary attitude towards the narrator. Rather than mocking her fearfulness, Horace acknowledges this trait as a symbol of her charming femininity and a facet of her attraction. He admits that her concerns are grounded in reality by admitting she is not reacting with *vano... metu* (1.23.3-4). The extent of her youth is summarized in the line where she is depicted to tremble in her *corde et genibus* (1.23.8) as fear dominates her internal self (heart) and her external self (knees). These anatomical terms are often used in situations where lovers are overcome by passion; instead, Horace twists this common association to portray how she is overcome by fear. The terrified attitude and reactions of the *inuleus* show that she is desperately trying to protect her innocence amidst the seasonal changes.

While fear represents Chloe's innocence, Lalage's innocence is wrapped up in her playful, somewhat flirtatious, spirit. Her *animus* (2.5.5) is focused on the *viuentis... campos* (2.5.5-6) and she is eager to *ludere cum vitulis* (2.5.8). The description of the fields as a lively green reflects the girl herself: she is youthful and immature. Her desire to play, more specifically, play with young calves, once again emphasizes her innocence. The anaphora observed in *nunc... nunc* (2.5.6-7) brings attention to how she, as an adolescent, lives in the moment and is focused on her present rather than dwelling on her impending marriage. This parallels the anaphora seen in *nondum... nondum* (2.5.1-2) to contrast the future with the present. Rather than mature feelings of love, Lalage feels *gravem aestum* (2.5.6-7) – like the heifer, she is simply in heavy heat, crazed by lust. The placement of *solantis* (2.5.7) next to *gravem aestum* might be to evoke images of the *sol* and emphasize the wildness of her character.^[9] Although Lalage is possessed by an apparent sexual craze, it resembles the fantasies of pre-pubescence more than mature sexual desire.

^[9] Harrison, Stephen 2017, 87.

Horace directly addresses Lalage's sexuality in the first stanza to convey that she is not ready to perform the sexual or emotional duties required in a mature relationship. The entire poem begins with *nondum* (2.5.1) to highlight that the girl is not yet a woman; the *nondum* is again repeated in the following to once again draw attention to her immaturity. Lalage, although not directly labeled a heifer in the first four lines, is assumed to be a heifer unable to bear the *iugum* (2.5.1). In this case, the *iugum* represents the metaphorical yoke of marital duties.^[10] Even with her *subacta... cervice* (2.5.1-2), which suggests that she has been tamed by her husband-owner, she is still too young to be a good mate. The girl's inability to *tolerare pondus* (2.5.4) once again references the burden of the yoke – it is heavy and cannot be lifted by anyone but the sexually mature. There is also a more graphic interpretation of the phrase; the cow must quite literally bear the bull's weight in intercourse.^[11] The word *compar* is chosen in particular because it refers to a yokemate and a sexual partner, further playing on the bovine metaphor.^[12] It is also interesting to note that the verbs Horace employs suggest female passivity during sex: she is portrayed to simply to *ferre* (2.5.1), *aequare* (3), or *tolerare* (4). She is not independently directing her sexual decisions but bearing or matching that of her possible husband's. From this stanza and the mention of her lively spirit in the following stanza, it can be concluded that Lalage's immaturity might derive from her *animus* (2.5.5) and inability to remain submissive to her husband.

^[10] Harrison, Stephen 2017, 85.

^[11] Ibid, 86.

^[12] Ibid, 86.

It is important to recognize the different portrayals of youth and innocence conveyed by Horace through these two characters. Chloe's innocence stems from her all-consuming fear: she is threatened by the breeze, lizards, and everything around her. Her fearfulness is a way for her to cling onto the remains of her innocence and express that she is not ready for sexual relations. On the other hand, in contrast to Chloe's timid nature, Lalage is characterized as innocent because of her free spirit. She is untamable and loves to capitalize on her sexual independence by flirting with young boys. While she is more sexually expressive than Chloe, she is still not ready for mature relations because she has not learned how to commit and be submissive. Although both these females are still innocent, through a discussion of nature and the seasons, Horace suggests that

their physical timelines will eventually differ.

The seasons are mentioned in these Odes to contrast the cyclical nature of time with the linearity of human eroticism.^[13] While the seasons continually cycle, both Chloe and Lalage can only mature; they cannot retreat back to their innocence, even if they wanted to. By depicting the seasons to bring sexual maturity, Horace suggests that the transition from youth to adult is organic and prompted by natural events. One cannot rush an immature heifer to bear the marital yoke or allow a matured fawn to remain under the supervision of her mother. The use of natural settings in the Odes further emphasizes the point that the loss of innocence is not an artificial event. Even though both poems discuss this biological transition, Horace employs different seasons to show how Chloe is ready for mature sexual relations while Lalage is not.

^[13] Ancona, Ronnie. 1994, 56.

In Ode 1.23, the advent of spring can be thought of as a metaphorical representation of the fawn's entrance into sexual maturity. The *veris...adventus* (1.23.5-6) stresses the change that is about to occur. Spring in particular is chosen to highlight Chloe's fertility and ability to produce life, as the fawn is now *tempestiva*, or "ripe" (1.23.12).^[14] The use of *virides* (1.23.6) to describe the lizards is chosen to remind us that although she is *tempestiva sequi viro* (1.23.12), she is still green and youthful. In addition, the breeze of spring, which is often depicted as "gentle" is suggestive of Chloe's compliant attitude - she will be a willing lover.^[15] Throughout the poem, Horace also foreshadows the impending threat to her youthful innocence through elaborate nature imagery. The woods and breeze that would have once provided her comfort become associated with *metu* (1.23.4), which is strategically placed beside *aurarum et silvae* (1.23.4). In addition, the use of *inhorruit* (1.23.5), which could be translated as "shudder" or "become erect" has a double meaning: it suggests Chloe's physiological reaction to fear while also showing her "symptoms of physical arousal."^[16] With the arrival of spring, although she clutches onto the remains of her innocence, the young Chloe has finally reached sexual maturity.

^[14] Nielsen, Rosemary M. 1970, 375.

^[15] Ancona, Ronnie. 1994, 55.

^[16] Nielsen, Rosemary M. 1970, 376.

Unlike Ode 1.23, it is not the arrival of spring that brings sexual maturity - Lalage will only ripen when Autumn appears. In opposition to *tempestiva* (1.23.12) Chloe, Lalage is compared to an unripe grape (2.5.10). The interpretation of *immitis* (2.5.10) as "unripe" shows that Lalage is not ready to be consumed; soon she will grow to be ready for marriage and sexual commitment. This metaphor is particularly interesting because it contradicts the customary depiction of brides as ripened fruit.^[17] However, *Autumnus...varius* (2.5.11-12) will turn the singular grape into *racemos* (2.5.11) of grapes. Lalage's portrayal changes from one to a bunch of grapes to allude to female body development, especially with regards to curves.^[18] The color of the grapes transitions from *lividos* (2.5.10), which refers to the blue-greyish color of growing grapes, to purple (2.5.12), the natural color of the mature grape. It has been suggested that the *purpeo* (2.5.12) refers to the purple veins that can be observed on developed breasts, once again, indicating sexual maturity.^[19] The adjective *varius* (2.5.12), or multicolored, which is commonly used to describe grapes, is transferred to Autumn since he effects the change. The personification of Autumn is commonly employed to hint at arrival of sexual maturity, as in this case.^[20] Horace uses this metaphor to convince his addressee that he must wait to pursue the innocent Lalage since she is, to some extent, out of season.

^[17] Stephen Harrison 2017, 87.

^[18] Maltby, R. 1991, 69.

^[19] Nisbet, R. G. M. 1995, 386.

^[20] Harrison, Stephen 2017, 88.

To Horace, the deciding sign of a woman's sexual maturity is her choice to abandon her current world and commit to a man. In the end, both women end up relinquishing their innocence and following their male pursuers (although at different points of time). Both these men are depicted as assertive and, to some extent, predatory in nature. They both watch the girls develop, waiting for the moment when they can *ruentis in veneram* (2.5.3-4) with them. The difference in age between the men and the girls and the aggressive dispositions of the men suggest that the abandonment of youth is a pressured process.

Chloe's initial rejection of men and sexual commitment is inspired by her fearful mother. It is important to note that the adjective *pavidam* (1.23.2) is used to describe *matrem* (1.23.3) rather than Chloe herself. This contrasts the depiction of the fawn as "frightened" in Anacreon 408.^[21] The transfer of *pavidam* to the mother could suggest that the mother sensed a predator and fled, warning Chloe to be cautious. This interpretation is consistent with the assumption that the narrator is unreliable. Even though he protests that he is not like a *tigris... aspera* or a *Gaetulus leo* (1.23.9-10), his intense description of violence suggests otherwise. For someone who insists he is not a predator, the description *frangere persequor* (1.23.10) is oddly specific; in addition, the *non* might be separate from the rest of the phrase to emphasize that he is actually violent. It can be assumed that Chloe's behavior was mirroring her *pavidam... matrem* because of her seeking (1.23.2) and wanting to follow (1.23.12) her mom. However, her pursuit of her mother is no different than wandering on *montibus aviis* (1.23.2) since she is following a pathless trajectory that leads to nowhere. Ultimately, nature compels Chloe to dissociate from her mother, thereby forfeiting her innocence - she is *tempestiva sequi viro* (1.23.12). *Viro* is emphatically placed at the end of the ode to show that in the end, a woman's development is tied to a man.

^[21] Roche, Paul 2013, 346.

Although Lalage does not reach sexual maturity in the poem, Horace describes how she will attain it by following a man. In both poems, some version of the verb *sequor* is used. This suggests that a matured woman follows; she does not fear like Chloe or flirt like Lalage. *Ferox aetas* (2.5.13) is mentioned to highlight that time (the cycle of seasons) dictates human growth and is inescapable. Logical pattern of nature is once again referenced through the use of accounting terms. Horace employs *adponet* (2.5.14) and *dempserit* (2.5.13) to show how years are economically "transferred" to the girl from the man.^[22] In this case, rather than being motivated by love or even sex, Lalage is influenced by logical reason to seek (2.5.15) a *maritum* (2.5.15). *Maritum* can stand for "mate" in addition to "husband", which solidifies the animal imagery present in the previous stanzas.^[23] All the verbs in the final stanza are in the future tense to matter of factly suggest the events that will occur, almost like according to a plan.

^[22] Harrison, Stephen 2017, 89.

^[23] Ibid, 89.

From the analysis of these Odes, it can be interpreted that Horace views the loss of innocence to be determined by natural order. Although he conveys that youth cannot be defined by a certain set of characteristics, the transition to sexual maturity is hallmarked by the adoption of a man. Both women are likened to animals to stress the motivating presence of survival instinct rather than of extraneous emotions: to survive, it is imperative that they find a mate. He incorporates the seasons to highlight that human eroticism is linear. It follows a standard pattern of irreversible steps that cannot be rushed or surpassed. By including both Lalage's and Chloe's names multiple times throughout the Odes, Horace is alluding to the process of sexual growth and the changes it has on one's character - both girls mature to be entirely different people than who they were originally. Ultimately, although it cannot definitively be concluded, the longitudinal-study-like nature of observation in these odes implies that Horace viewed maturation to be predominately a biological process.

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