Abstract: This paper compares Horace the Honeybee to his iambic predecessor Archilochus the Wasp. In particular, I argue that a hitherto unrecognized way in which Horace promotes himself as the *Italicus Archilochus* is through his “signature” [*qui sibi fidet, / dux reget examen* (*Epistle* 1.19.23)] ‘[Who trusts himself] will rule the swarm as leader’—an innovative Latin calque on the Greek name Ἀρχί-λοχος (*Arkhi-lokhos*), literally “Rule-swarm.”
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In *Epistle* 1.19, addressed to Maecenas and concerned principally with the subject of literary imitation, Horace confronts a problem well known to poets everywhere, namely how to chart a fair course between acknowledging one’s predecessors and asserting one’s own originality and greatness*. The central section — verses 21 to 34 — begins with boasts about the poet’s own achievements in the *Epodes* and then explicitly names Archilochus as his model:

libera per vacuum posui uestigia princeps,
non aliena meo pressi pede. qui sibi fidet,
dux reget examen. Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
Archilochi, non res et agentia uerba Lycamben.  

After this, Horace compares his own dependence on Archilochus to the debt Sappho and Alcaeus owe the same poet, going on to note that he himself is, as it happens, a follower of Alcaeus as well (in the *Odes*)¹. But Horace is no mere epigone of either Archilochus or Alcaeus; the great achievement of this self-described *Latinus / … fidicen* (32-33) «Latin lyre-player» (cf. *Carm. 4.3.23) is to have turned what was Greek into Latin².

Horace as the bringer of Greek iambic and lyric verse-forms to Rome and Latium — this is a topos, and there is a considerable body of secondary literature on it³. Scholarly discussions

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¹ «MD» for ‘AMD’ (βασιλεύϛ [μελιτῶν], expert on personal names, and Italian bringer of Greek language and linguistics to England): a version of this paper was delivered as «Β» at «Greek from Α to Ω: An Interdisciplinary Symposium in Honour of Anna Morpurgo Davies»  (Oxford, June 2007).


of *Epist.* 1.19, a poem that may seem scattered but whose fundamental unity was defended most thoughtfully by C. W. Macleod⁴, have tended to concentrate on verses 23b-25 («I was the first who showed Parian [i.e., Archilochean] iambics to Latium »; cf. *Carm.* 3.30.10-14) and, even more, on the nature of the relationship asserted to exist between Archilochus and the two lyric poets of Lesbos, especially Sappho⁵. But what about the «transitional passage»⁶ 21-23a, in which Horace, before admitting that he has followed the metrical feet of others, gives credit to his own feet: «I was the first to put free steps on virgin soil; I have pressed my foot on ground not owned by others» (21-22a)? And in particular, what is the significance of the «sententia

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⁷ There is a large bibliography on the Callimachean imagery in this verse and a-half and on Horace’s appropriation of Lucretius (quoted below in the text). Freudenburg (n. 5), pp. 136 + 234 gives some orienting references, and see also Mayer (n. 1), *ad* 19.21 (but read «Lucr. 1.926-7 [= 4.1-2]» for «Lucr. 1.925-6»). The beginning of Book 3 of *De rerum natura* is particularly important, as Freudenburg notes, since Lucretius there speaks not of stepping on untrodden turf (as in 1.926-927 = 4.1-2), but instead of being a follower (of Epicurus: *te sequor* [3] «I follow you»), of placing his feet where his predecessor walked (*inque tuis nunc / ficta pedum pono pressis uestigia signis* [3-4] «and now I put down my firm footsteps on the tracks left by you»), and indeed of being an imitator (*quod te imitari aueo* [6] «because I wish to imitate you»). On
[that] enunciates the self-reliance theme\(^8\), qui sibi fidet, / dux reget examen (22b-23a) «Who trusts himself will rule the swarm as leader»\(^9\).

This phrase has attracted modest attention on two grounds. For one thing, Horace seems with his choice of words to be assuming for himself quite a number of ‘political’ roles: dux (23) and rex (cf. reget [23]) and for that matter also princeps (21; cf. Carm. 3.30.13)\(^10\). And for another, examen «swarm» typically refers to bees, noble creatures whose honeyed activity is often likened to the poetic enterprise\(^11\). Indeed, these two ideas can be combined: Horace is presenting himself as the ‘king’ bee, called by Aristotle both βασιλεύς «king» and ἡγεμόν «leader» (cf. Hist. an. 553B6 for the juxtaposition of the two terms)\(^12\). Compare the phrase cum


\(^8\) Mayer (n. 1), ad 19.22-3.

\(^9\) Horace’s poetry is filled with kings, but there may be a significant connection between this maxim and the proverbial jingle that Horace quotes in Epist. 1.1.59-60: at pueri ludentes ‘rex eris’ aiunt, / ‘si recte facies.’ «But ‘You will be king’, boys at play [ludentes] say, ‘if you do the right thing’» (for fuller versions of this would-be «skipping-rope song» [K. Reckford, Pueri ludentes: Some Aspects of Play and Seriousness in Horace’s Epistles, «Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc.» 132, 2002, pp. 1-19, at 8] — e.g., rex erit, qui recte faciet; qui non faciet, non erit «He will be king who does the right thing; who does not, won’t!” — see A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Leipzig 1890, p. 300 [#1537]); see also Epist. 1.1.107 (rex … regum «king of kings»). It is well known that the first Epistle in Book 1 (which opens with the playful phrase includere ludo [3] «restrain in training») makes a ring with the last (Epist. 1.20, the concluding poem, is an epilogue addressed to the book itself, not a letter), where in the end Horace literally calls for a ludic time-out (diludia [1.19.47] «intermission»); see most recently Reckford, pp. 2-4 and 7-9, who refers particularly to O. A. W. Dilke.

\(^10\) Compare now Freudenburg (n. 5), pp. 134-140 + 234-235, who discusses Horace’s self-representation as triumphator in Epist. 1.19.


\(^12\) Compare W. R. Johnson, *Horace and the Dialectic of Freedom: Readings in Epistles 1*, Ithaca 1993, p. 90 (verses 22b-23a are a «nice poetic expropriation of the political metaphor for “trivial” artistic ends») and Smith (n. 6), p. 263 (who, however, considers Horace as a «mighty general who presides over a swarm of bees» and Horace as «“king” of the bees» to be «[a]lternative[s]»). On ‘kings’, see, e.g., Davies and Kathirithamby (n. 11), pp. 62-63, who note that «[i]t is notorious that Greek and Roman writers mistook the sex» of the leader (62); only in the 17th century was it properly established that the king bee is actually a queen, though there is evidence that some ancient Greeks imagined the leader as female (T. Hudson-Williams, *King
... ducent examina reges «when kings lead swarms» in verse 21 of the greatest Latin poetic treatment of bees, Vergil’s fourth Georgic, which was published a decade before the first book of Epistles and (as we shall see below) acted as a source for Horace, three of whose letters (1.1, 1.7, and our 1.19) and most of whose other works, are addressed to Maecenas, just as the Georgics are.

We can take this thought further, both within the epistle itself (and its reflection of earlier Latin poetry) and in connection with Archilochus. As to the former, the ancient Greeks and Romans were aware that there were three kinds of honeybees: the leader (king or queen; βασιλέως or ἕγεμων, dux [Varro+] or rex [e.g., Verg. Georg. 4 passim; note also ductores in verse 88, as well as duces in verse 4]); the usual (to us today ‘worker’) bees (μελιττων, apes), who (among other things) go from flower to flower; and the drones (κηφήνες, fuci), who stay put in the hive. Not only is Horace the dux rex apium (cf. Porph. ad Epist. 1.19.23), but an allusion right before the central section on which I am concentrating makes it clear that he, unlike the mindless imitators against whom he rails, is definitely not a parasitic drone: he addresses them, o imitatores, servum pecus, … (19) «O [you] imitators, servile herd, …», where the implied referent of pecus is not sheep or other barnyard animals, as it usually is, but rather bees since it clearly recalls Vergil’s ignauum … pecus (Georg. 4.168 [= Aen. 1.435]) «lazy herd», said explicitly of drones (fucos [168])14. Furthermore, as noted above, Horace’s verses 21-22a, libera per uacuum posui uestigia princeps, / non aliena meo pressi pede, owe much to Lucretius’ Callimachean pronouncements, auta Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante / trita solo (1.926-927 = 4.1-2) «I roam through the pathless places of the Pierides, never before trodden by any foot» and especially inque tuis nunc / ficta pedum pono pressis uestigia signis in the ‘imitatio Epicuri’-section (3.3-4; see n. 7)15, both of which have bees as part of their larger context. In 3.11,

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13 This is a convenient simplification of a significantly more complex picture: e.g., Aristotle (Hist. an. 553a26 and 553b7-11 [~ 624b21-27]) reports that there are two kinds of kings and four other sorts of bees.

14 Compare Smith (n. 6), pp. 262-263; see also, e.g., R. F. Thomas, Virgil, Georgics, vol. 2, Cambridge 1988, ad Georg. 4.168 («pecus has a strongly derogatory tone» in both Vergil and Horace), as well as R. A. B. Mynors, Virgil, Georgics, Oxford 1990, ad Georg. 4.167-8. Macleod (n. 4, 1977), pp. 370 and 374 (= Macleod [n. 4, 1983], pp. 273 and 277) believes Horace to be proclaiming himself king of the imitators (i.e., the drones), but this does not seem to me to be correct.

15 Note the emphasis on p’s in all three; compare R. Ferri, I dispiaceri di un epicureo: Uno studio sulla poetica oraziana delle Epistle (con un capitolo su Persio), Pisa 1993, pp. 50-51, with references on 51 n. 44.
Epicurus’ followers take in their master’s precepts just «as bees drink everything in the flowering meadows» (floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant); in the passage about Lucretius’ poetics (1.921-950, esp. 1.926-950 – 4.1-25), the poet says, «and it is pleasing to gather new flowers» (iuuatque nouos decerpere flores [1.928 = 4.3]) and then moves on to a lengthy account of poetic honey (1.935-947 – 4.10-22)\(^{17}\).

What, now, is the link between Archilochus and Horace’s self-presentation as leader of the swarm? Since ancient texts sometimes confuse bees and wasps\(^{18}\), it is tempting to think that Horace’s aphorism neatly brings his similarity to the famously waspish Archilochus (Callimachus [fr. 380 Pfeiffer = 357 Asper] refers to Archilochus’ κέφτρον / σφῆκός «wasp’s sting»)\(^{19}\) together with his own poetic sweetness\(^{20}\). At the end of Epist. 1.19, a scornful critic says of Horace something he himself does not wish to deny, namely, ‘rides ait ‘et Louis auribus ista / serus: fidis enim manare poetica mella / te solum, tibi pulcher’ (43-45) «You laugh», he says, ‘and keep those [works] of yours for the ears of Jupiter [i.e., Augustus]. For you believe that you alone, pleased with yourself, drip poetic honey’». In effect, the poet puts into someone else’s mouth his one-upmanship of Archilochus: certainly Horace has been an aggressive wasp himself, but he is really a honeybee, able to manare poetica mella. He really has no poisonous sting at all since, as already Aristotle (Hist. an. 553B6-7, 626A23, and 628B2-3) knew, the king bee, unlike others bees and of course unlike typical wasps, «does not use h[is] sting on a human

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\(^{16}\) It is amusing to realize that at least some Romans — including Vergil and Ovid — connected apis with ἄπους «foot-less»; see, e.g., A. Michalopoulos, Ancient Etymologies in Ovid’s Metamorphoses: A Commented Lexicon, Leeds 2001, pp. 32-33, with references.


\(^{18}\) The Greek evidence is briefly sketched in Davies and Kathirithamby (n. 11), p. 75; on wasps of various types, see also I. C. Beavis, Insects and other Invertebrates in Classical Antiquity, Exeter 1988, pp. 187-198 and 212-217. Already in the Iliad, the Achaeans are likened simultaneously to wasps and bees (ὡς τε σφῆκες … ἤ μελισσάων [12.167] «like wasps … or bees»). Note that both animals have kings (cf., e.g., Arist. Hist. an. 629A3-7; but Pliny [Nat. 11.74] denies that wasps have kings) and can travel in swarms: the Greek troops are compared to bees in the first extended simile in the Iliad, 2.87-93 (ἡῶτε ἐθερά έσι κελισσάων ἀδινάων [87] «just as the swarming bees go …»; for the use of ἀδινάων «thick; thronging» of bees, see C. Watkins, Old Irish saithe, Welsh haid: Etymology and Metaphor, «Étud. Celt.» 16, 1979, pp. 191-194 [= Selected Writings, ed. L. Oliver, Innsbruck 1994, pp. (II.)622-625], and the Myrmidon to wasps in a later simile, 16.259-267 (αὐτίκα δὲ σφῆκαςιν ἔοικότες ἐξεχέοντο [259] «and immediately like wasps they poured forth …»); compare, e.g., Davies and Kathirithamby, pp. 7 and 75-76, and note also examen uesperum «swarm of wasps» in Liv. 35.9.4.

\(^{19}\) Wasps (σφῆκας [acc.]) are mentioned in verse 6 of Gaetulicus’ epigram for Archilochus’ tomb (Anth. Pal. 7.71); on this poem, see now C. G. Brown, Arrows and Etymology: Gaetulicus’ Epitaph for Archilochus, «Class. Philol.» 96, 2001, pp. 429-432.

\(^{20}\) For Horace as a ‘softened Archilochus’ in the Epodes, see S. J. Harrison, Some Generic Problems in Horace’s Epodes: Or, on (not) being Archilochus, in Cavarzere, Aloni, and Barchiesi (eds.) (n. 3), pp. 165-186.
being»21. Note that rides (43) picks up iocum (20), Louis (43) picks up princeps (21) as well as dux (23), serus (44) picks up (the sound of) serum (19), and fides enim manare poetica mella / te solum, tibi pulcher (44-45) picks up the phrase with which I am particularly concerned, qui sibi fidel, / dux reget examen (22-23): fides ~ fidel, te solum ~ dux reget (cf. also solo in Lucr. 1.927 = 4.2), tibi ~ sibi, and poetica mella ~ examen22.

To be sure, some scholars have detected Greek antecedents in Horace’s dux reget examen. Most significantly, Alessandro Barchiesi (anticipated by Adolf Kießling, whom Barchiesi does not cite23) suggests that Cratinus’ depiction of prior poets as a σοφιστῶν σμῆνος «swarm of literati» in his Archilochoi (fr. 2 Kassel—Austin) is «perhaps the stingy [i.e., having a sting!] model»24. But what appears to have gone unnoticed, in both ancient commentaries and modern criticism25, is that Horace’s verse-initial «clever phrase»26 dux reget examen — the bridge between his boasts of independence and his admission of a Greek debt — is nothing less than an innovative Latin calque on the name of the poet to whom he owes that debt, named for the first time just two verses later and in the same metrical position: Archiloch[us], Ἀρχί-λόχος, literally «Rule-swarm»27.

21 Davies and Kathirithamby (n. 11), p. 63; they note that «in fact … the [king] bee’s sting has fewer and shorter barbs in comparison with worker bees … and is not employed except against rival [kings]». Pliny (Nat. 11.52) has a good brief account of whether the rex actually lacks a sting (as even Aristotle himself claims elsewhere: Hist. an. 629a25) or merely does not use it; cf. also Ael. NA 1.60.


23 See A. Kießling, Q. Horatius Flaccus, Briefe, ed. by R. Heinze, with additions by E. Burck, Berlin 19617, ad Epist. 1.19.21 (already in Kießling’s 1st ed. of 1889).

24 Barchiesi, Horace and Iambos (n. 3), p. 150; Horace mentions Cratinus by name in the first line of our poem (as also in the first line of Sat. 1.4). Differently, Freudenburg (n. 5), pp. 136-137 suggests that «examen = Gk θεασος» (136), arguing that the Bacchic imagery evident in the first part of the poem (verses 1-11) continues into this section.

25 Though my colleague Denis Feeney, whom I thank for his comments on this paper, has shown me his marginal note to the same effect in his copy of the OCT of Horace. Seeing this was both reassuring and a tad depressing.

26 Smith (n. 6), p. 263.

27 While ἀρχ- does not appear to be used of bees (or other insects) anywhere in Greek literature, hosts of warriors in Homer are on three occasions referred to with the collocation προκυνόν ἀρχ- (Il. 4.392 and 24.779 and Od. 11.525) «close-packed ambuscade/battalion vel sim. (acc.)» (see LfgE s.v. ἀρχ- [G. C. Wakker] and the literature cited there). Note that examen in Latin has a human sense already in Plaut. Truc. 534; in addition to referring to bees, Old Irish saithe «swarm», glossed as examen, is used, «by extension, for a host or throng» (Watkins [n. 18, 1979], p. 193 [= n. 18, 1994], p. 624). As for ἀρχ- see also the mention of
In the next book of Epistles, Horace notes that Ennius, famous for his epic hexameters, is *alter Homerus, / ut critici dicunt* (2.1.50-51) «a second Homer (as the critics call him)». Perhaps Horace, here writing in hexameters, wishes to hold this title himself; as far as his *Odes* are concerned, he probably «sees» himself, and represents himself as being seen, as a second Alcaeus» (and Sappho)\(^{28}\); but in any case, the playful ‘signature’ in *Epist.* 1.19.23 announces to the cognoscenti that his *Epodes* have already earned him the right to be called Rome’s king of the iambic genre, the leader of the swarm, the *Italicus Archilochus*\(^{29}\).

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\(^{29}\) As one of the anonymous referees notes, Horace’s verbal play is especially appropriate since Archilochus himself is notoriously fond of ‘speaking names’; see, e.g., M. G. Bonanno, *Nomi e soprannomi archilochei*, «Mus. Helv.» 37, 1980, pp. 65-88.