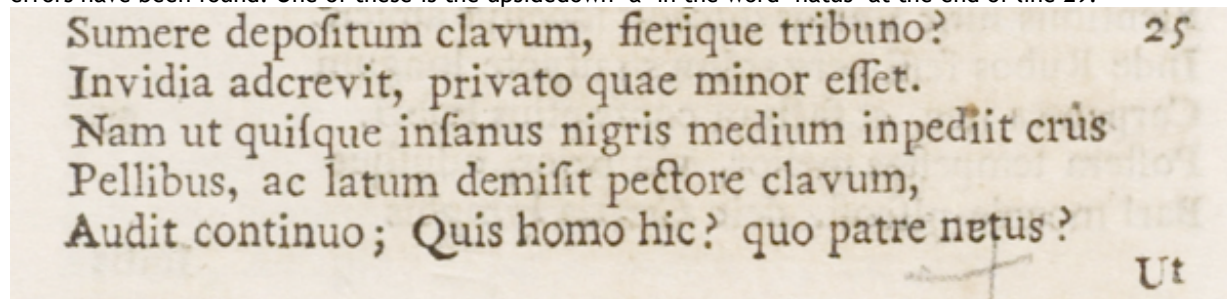


The immaculate Horace

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In the case showing books used in education we have included a copy of one of the many editions of Greek and Latin authors printed in the 18th century by the Foulis Brothers, Printers to the University of Glasgow. The one we've chosen is a book of Latin poems by Horace, printed in 1744. There is a special story about this book. In his *A View of the Various Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics*, published in 1775, Edward Harwood wrote "This is an immaculate Edition: the sheets, as they were printed, were hung up in the college of Glasgow, and a reward was offered to those who should discover an inaccuracy" and it is now known as the "immaculate Horace". As you might expect, people have tried to show that it isn't immaculate, and six errors have been found. One of these is the upsidown "a" in the word "natus" at the end of line 29.



I've chosen to highlight this error because in preparing the exhibition I looked at the National Library's two copies of this 1744 Horace, and in the other copy "natus" is printed correctly, as it is also in two copies I have seen in other libraries. I would like to find out how many copies survive with the upsidown "a" - please let me know if you see one! (For bibliographers: there were both octavo and duodecimo issues of this book. Our copy with the upsidown "a" is an octavo.)

One day I would like to find out more about the story of the reward and exactly what was Harwood's source for it. Last year I was researching another famous Foulis classical text, their Homer edition of 1756-1758, and I came across a letter of 1818 written by Thomas Jefferson (the American President, also a great bibliophile) in which he says that "the perfection of accuracy is to be found in the folio edition of Homer by the Foulis of Glasgow. I have understood they offered 1000 guineas for the discovery of any error in it, even of an accent, and that the reward was never claimed" (T. Jefferson, *Writings* (1984), pp.1413-1414). I have no idea where Jefferson got this story from. 1000 guineas is an unbelievably vast sum: when they were published, you could buy the four large volumes of the Homer edition on the best paper for 3 guineas.