**Preface and Acknowledgments**

It gives me great pleasure to thank Scott McGill and Mirjam Elbers for their willingness to take me on as a contributor to this series. A significant portion of the manuscript was written in the Department of Classics at Princeton University, where I spent 2022-2023 as an academic visitor. I would like to thank my host, Andrew Feldherr, and the department as a whole for its hospitality. The year was supported by a sabbatical year at Amherst College; I am grateful to the Provost, as well as to my colleagues Becky, Chris, Hans, Libby, Niek, and Rick. The year was productive in many ways. Most notably, it saw an addition to my family – my greatest thanks accordingly go to my wonderful Mina and our daughter, Adelaide Clio, our *laborum dulce lenimen*.

 As will be apparent, my feelings about Horace are complex; they have changed with the times. I imagine that they will again be different in another ten years, and this research guide naturally has no claim to being a *monumentum perennius aere*.In any case, Horace does not need to be handled like crystal and the greatest risk to him is unreflective praise. His craftsmanship, poise, and independence of mind, which impressed such disparate free-thinking contemporaries as Thomas Hardy, Friedrich Nietzsche, and José Rizal, are his best defense.

Some conventions: I cite scholars by both first and last names when introducing them for the first time in the body of the text, thereafter by last name only; books are cited by last name only. Cross-references within the book are preceded by “p.” I use both “Octavian” and “Augustus,” although in certain contexts the correct nomenclature may be uncertain – I ask for the reader’s understanding in advance.

**Introduction**

*quo teneam uoltus mutantem Protea nodo?*

“With what knot might I hold this Proteus, always changing his appearance?” (*Epistles* 1.1.90).

As one nervously flicks through the pages of Niklas Holzberg’s 200-page bibliography to Horace (most recently compiled in 2017),[[1]](#footnote-1) it is difficult to repress a shudder. Where on earth to begin? The present volume is designed to provide the newcomer with orientation in the sea of Horatian scholarship and to offer some directions forward. The study of Horace has experienced a lull in recent years in comparison to that of, say, Ovid, Lucan, and Apuleius, and it is possible that it is his turn to undergo a resurgence of interest. While the amount of writing devoted to him from the twentieth century is undeniably daunting, Horace remains relatively untouched by the most recent academic trends and represents an opportunity for scholars seeking a corpus of material to investigate with modern intellectual tools. The poet also has his unique contributions and provocations, and elements of his work have yet to be explored – we still lack, for example, a matter-of-fact catalogue of the poet’s complicities with the autocratic regime from which he benefited, as well a full confrontation of his untimely views on numerous topics. More positively, we also need an up-to-date discussion of the originality and appeal of Horatian ethics, the processes of concept formation and expansion that he masterfully harnessed, and the mechanisms that led to the generation of his imagery.

But Horace is difficult to approach for reasons beyond the bibliographical: his mercuriality, subtlety, and frankly his evasiveness render him among the most difficult ancient authors to generalize about. In order to make blanket claims scholars are inevitably forced to shoehorn him into their theories. To misquote one of Horace’s greatest twentieth-century interpreters,

“The relation of a critic to [Horace] tends to be that of some uneasy Procrustes, confronted by a Proteus.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Horace seems to take particular pleasure in contradicting himself, and has the disconcerting ability to simply disappear in front of one’s eyes.[[3]](#footnote-3) One is never entirely certain about his true beliefs, especially when he is apparently confiding them – a startling feature when one thinks back to the confidence of Horace’s Victorian readers in having access to the poet’s innermost thoughts. In combination with the sheer amount of scholarship on Horace, this second obstacle to the study of his writing is deadly, as the number of concessions that must preface any serious discussion makes it difficult both for the critic to establish clear lines of argumentation and for the reader to recognize them. The result is that one often comes away from the scholarship with an amorphous impression of the poet. Indeed, as I was completing this volume, I felt on many occasions that I knew Horace less well than when I started.

Even Horace’s biography – one of the most extraordinary from the ancient world – is hazy, and the uncertainties have only compounded over time. Both his own statements and the evidence provided by the Suetonian *Life of Horace* are unreliable. The standard narrative is well known:[[4]](#footnote-4) Horace was born in 65 BCE to a freedman father (see p. 000) and an unknown mother. He spent his childhood near Venusia in central Italy before receiving an elite education at Rome with the noted *grammaticus* L. Orbilius Pupillus on his father’s initiative (*Satires* 1.6.71-78; *Epistles* 2.1.69-71; 2.2.41-42). He proceeded to higher study in Athens, where he moved in the same circles as Cicero’s wayward son, Marcus, and joined the forces of Brutus and Cassius in the late forties BCE. In perhaps one of the regicides’ less enlightened moves, he received the rank of *tribunus militum* (*Satires* 1.6.48; *Epistles* 2.2.43-48).[[5]](#footnote-5) After the defeat at Philippi, having lost his family property in the confiscations, Horace returned to Rome and gained a profitable position in the treasury (*scriba quaestorius*); it was a salaried role, but the main financial reward was generally through the surreptitious monetization of its functions.[[6]](#footnote-6) In any case, the post gave him the wherewithal to buy a property in Rome (Suetonius, *Life of Horace*; *Satires* 2.1.36-37), a feat similar, according to David Armstrong (2010), to purchasing a house in New York City. Soon after 42 BCE, Horace began to devote himself to poetry and was ultimately introduced to Maecenas by Vergil and Varius, probably in 38 BCE (*Satires* 1.6.54-62; *Epistles* 2.2.49-54). He thereupon rose in stature; after a first book of *Satires* published around 35 BCE, his *Epodes* and second book of *Satires* were in circulation around 30 BCE, and his first three books of *Odes* were published in 23 BCE.[[7]](#footnote-7) After stepping away from lyric for some years to compile a book of philosophical verse-letters, the *Epistles* (20-19 BCE), his composition of the *Saecular Song* (i.e. *Carmen Saeculare*)for Augustus’ *ludi saeculares* (“saecular games”) of 17 BCE represents the pinnacle of his career. The fourth book of *Odes* (13 BCE), together with the second book of *Epistles* and *Art of Poetry* (various dates), were products of his maturity – a period when he wrestled with his new status as a living classic.[[8]](#footnote-8) He died in 8 BCE, soon after his patron Maecenas.

Many features of this rags-to-riches tale have been questioned. Scholars have long discussed the possibility that elements of Horace’s autobiography in the much-admired *Satires* 1.6 are modeled on the life of the Cynic philosopher, Bion of Borysthenes (c325-250 BCE).[[9]](#footnote-9) For instance, the phrase “*libertino patre natum*”(“son of a freedman father” *Satires* 1.6.6, 45, cf. 46), which Horace applies to himself in the context of a poem about his relationship to Maecenas, seems to translate Bion’s “ἐμοῦ ὁ πατὴρ μὲν ἦν ἀπελεύθερος” (“my father was a freedman,” Diogenes Laertius 4.46 = fr. 1 Kindstrand) from the philosopher’s audience with his own future patron, Antigonus Gonatas. It has been contended that Horace may have recycled material from other sources as well; notably, Eleanor Winsor Leach (1971) has adduced Terence’s *Brothers* (*Adelphoe*), a play in which a father (Demea) explains his strategies for educating his sons to his slave (Syrus), where the wording of the relevant passages resembles Horace’s own report of his father’s admonishments in *Satires* 1.4.[[10]](#footnote-10) Besides borrowings, fabrication and misrepresentation are also possible, and Horace’s modest means, frugality, and inner contentment, so emphasized in his poetry (e.g. *Satires* 1.6, *Odes* 2.18) and revered by his readers, have been increasingly queried. While the most recent excavations (1996-2003) of the “Sabine Villa” near Licenza suggest that the structure remained relatively humble in Horace’s day, it seems that Horace owned at least two (and possibly more) such properties in addition to his townhouse in Rome.[[11]](#footnote-11) Prior to 42 BC he clearly had substantial means, since he was able to afford an elite education in Athens and attain the rank of *tribunus militum*, whichnormally presupposed equestrian status and thus a fortune of at least *HS* 400,000.[[12]](#footnote-12) While his family’s land holdings were confiscated after the defeat at Philippi and he later complained about his poverty during this period (*Epistles* 2.2.49-52), he never appears to have been destitute,[[13]](#footnote-13) and his position among the *equites* by about 30 BCE is relatively secure: it is implied by *Satires* 2.6.48, where Horace watches the shows together with Maecenas (seating was arranged by rank), and *Satires* 2.7.53-55, where Davus suggests that Horace wears a gold ring, i.e. the marker of the equestrian class.[[14]](#footnote-14) In short, far from being the Augustan poet we know best, Horace’s autobiography appears largely questionable: what are we to believe?

The gaps between Horatian fiction and reality became pronounced in the mid-to-late twentieth century in the light of what is known as *persona* theory – in essence, the idea that the author presents a mask to the reader that does not necessarily correspond with his or her actual identity. This understanding of the poet’s voice has been particularly productive when it comes to the *Satires*, and we will revisit it in Chapter One, but it has also been applied to Horace’s other works. The first chapters of Anderson (1982), originally published in the sixties and seventies, are classics that reveal the craft and artistry behind Horace’s apparently ingenuous statements, but the approach came into its full maturity in the 1990s and early 2000s in the work of scholars such as Susanna Morton Braund (1992), Kirk Freudenburg (1993), and Randall McNeill (2001). For Freudenburg (1993), for instance, Horace’s adoption of the *persona* of an inept philosopher, attempting and failing to deploy Stoic and Epicurean ideas, in the early poems of *Satires* 1 allowed the poet to lampoon contemporary pretensions (26). In a subsequent paper (2010), Freudenburg sums the approach up thus:

“The poet’s autobiographical entries into his work I take not as documentary evidence for who he was, but as the first moves of a back-and-forth game played between writer and reader” (271).

As he puts it, we all become “the authors of Horace” (273). The fictive nature of the Horatian narrator is now widely accepted, and in fact a different “Horace” has been found in each of the genres in which he wrote*.*

There is, however, a worry that this might be taken too far – that suspicion of the authorial *persona* might lead to complete critical *aporia* – and in recent years there has been something of a reaction against *persona* theory. Jerome Kemp (2016) and Sergio Yona (2018) have objected to the notion that everything in Horace is contrived and have sought instead to find a middle ground, one in which the use of the poet’s statements as evidence may co-exist with an acknowledgement of his frequent massaging of fact. Their view is attractive, since it is difficult to say much that is meaningful about Horace without admitting the possibility of genuine statements within his writing, but it of course leaves it up to the critic to decide how much to trust the poet. One answer has been offered by Chrysanthe Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (2018), who stresses the importance of intratextual links between the various collections in establishing the poet’s consistency at different points of his career. For example, the similarity of Horace’s self-characterizations as someone torn between the city and the country in *Satires* 2.7 (in the voice of Davus) and *Epistles* 1.8 (in his own) might lead us to suppose this concern to be genuine. In many ways, however, this simply represents a return to old scholarly practice and, as Tsitsiou-Chelidoni herself admits, does not really solve a bigger question: what if the *persona* has been generated in such a way that it displays a degree of coherence? Tsitsiou-Chelidoni gives some strong responses, for instance:

“Why should we suppose that a late first century BCE Roman poet would have preferred to indulge in a series of imaginary literary exercises, rather than using verse and its generic conventions to express whatever really concerned him, his personal experiences and his individual concerns?” (189).[[15]](#footnote-15)

But ultimately, the virtue of her contribution lies in her emphasis on the possible modernity of our suspicious or “paranoid” mode of reading in the wake of the “death of the author” proclaimed by Roland Barthes and the face theory of Erving Goffman.[[16]](#footnote-16) The modern mode of interpreting the Augustan poets is perhaps out of keeping with their own literary horizons.[[17]](#footnote-17) Another – somewhat sophistical – way of locating the “real” Horace is to shift the question to the level of poetry. For instance, Armstrong (1989) has put forward the view that even if Horace’s description of his father is artful, it is genuine insofar as it is the product of his unique mind (1-5). Again, however, it is unclear how far this gets us, and frankly the question of the trustworthiness of the Horatian narrator, i.e. the blending of fact and fiction within the poetry, remains *the* sticking-point for the interpretation of Horace. We will return to it throughout this book.

So much for preliminaries. In the chapters that follow, I will discuss the main genres of Horace’s poetry in roughly chronological order (*Satires*, *Epodes*, *Odes*, and *Epistles*).[[18]](#footnote-18) Within each chapter, I will survey central trends in the scholarship before focusing on a specific issue or theme germane to the genre under discussion: in the chapter on the *Satires*, for instance, I will discuss the representation of slavery, while in that dedicated to the *Epodes* I will consider genre in light of modern theory about categories. Chapter Three will end with a discussion of the application of conceptual metaphor theory to the *Odes*, and I will offer a new interpretation of Horatian ethics at the close of the chapter on the *Epistles*. One or two comments should, however, be made before beginning. (a) One might argue that the chapters on the *Satires*, *Odes*, and *Epistles* ought to be divided in two, so as to reflect the temporal distance between the individually published collections – e.g. the five years between the first and second books of *Satires*.[[19]](#footnote-19) There are good reasons, however, for treating them together, and the chapters will in any case be structured to take account of change and development in Horace’s approach. Similarly, (b) one might question the compartmentalization of the discussion of, for instance, slavery within a chapter on the *Satires*: surely, themes in one of Horace’s collections are reflected in his other genres as well? I agree and will make references to the poet’s other works where appropriate and space permits. A final issue is (c) the inevitable selectivity involved in such a volume. In putting it together, I have found it advisable to adopt a reasonably clear line of approach rather than attempt to cover the entire bibliography (an impossibility in any case), and I hope that my rationale is understandable. Holzberg (2017) provides the complete bibliography up to 2017, and Harrison (2013a) is an excellent port of call for a compact introduction to the scholarship on Horace’s career, a helpful analysis of Horatian style across the different genres, and concise bibliographical essays on the individual books.[[20]](#footnote-20)

At this point, it is important to introduce the basic resources for researchers new to Horace. The standard text has traditionally been the third edition of Klingner (1959), available online courtesy of the Packard Humanities Institute, although the forthcoming Oxford edition of Richard Tarrant will probably supplant it.[[21]](#footnote-21) Much of the most important work on Horace has been done in the form of commentaries, and these can be taxonomized. (a) The Cambridge “Green and Yellow” series on Horace is complete as of 2022, thus fully opening the author up to intermediate Latinists.[[22]](#footnote-22) These compact commentaries offer a natural bridge to (b) the monolithic Oxford and Cambridge editions of the *Epodes*, *Odes*, and second book of *Epistles*, which provide a vast number of parallels and are indispensable for serious study of the poet, but which are aging and notoriously ungenerous when it comes to grammatical aid.[[23]](#footnote-23) This latter point is not insignificant, as Horace is often thought an easier poet than he in fact is. As one spends time teaching the poet, one finds that the clearest points of entry for the beginner are often (c) the old Victorian editions of Thomas E. Page (1886) and Edward C. Wickham (1874, 1891) designed for school use, together with the influential German commentaries of Adolf Kiessling and Richard Heinze (many editions, foundationally 1914, 1921, 1930), even if they do not contain recent findings.[[24]](#footnote-24) (d) The running prose commentaries of Hans Peter Syndikus (1972-1973) and David West (1995, 1998, 2002) offer an alternative to the lemma-based approach. These are the main modern guides, but there are also (e) useful resources from further back. The notes in Richard Bentley’s edition from 1707-11 still contain much that feels fresh, even if many of his ideas have been incorporated into the recent commentaries,[[25]](#footnote-25) while the two collections of ancient scholia that go under the names “Pomponius Porphyrio” and “Pseudo-Acro” are unreliable yet indispensable when it comes to understanding the poetry and its tradition.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In terms of reference works, (a) the *Enciclopedia oraziana*, initiated by Francesco Della Corte and edited by Scevola Mariotti (1996-1998), contains much useful material, even if it has been criticized as being uneven.[[27]](#footnote-27) One hopes that a digital version will be made available soon, as few libraries possess the series and copies are prohibitively expensive.[[28]](#footnote-28) Pauly-Wissowa’s original *Realencyclopädie* has been partly digitized in the public domain, and important contributions can be found in the ongoing publication of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. Other resources include (b) the three companions devoted to the poet – Harrison (2007a), Davis (2010), and Günther (2013). These contain articles on most aspects of Horace’s life written by well-known scholars and, even if three companions may seem excessive, each is quite distinctive: the chapters in Harrison are short and to the point (around 10-15 pages), those in Davis go into somewhat more detail (around 20-25 pages), while those in Günther can be quite expansive – for instance, Edward Courtney’s chapter on the *Satires* is over a hundred pages in length (other contributions are, however, shorter). Finally, (c) seminal articles on each of the genres are contained in Freudenburg (2009) and Lowrie (2009a).

The modern era of Horatian criticism is generally considered to begin with the monograph of Eduard Fraenkel (1957), who covered the entire corpus selectively (e.g. he does not discuss the *Art of Poetry*).[[29]](#footnote-29) Fraenkel’s views about the political poems are unfashionable – he admired the *Saecular Song* and the problematic fourth book of *Odes* – but he remains indispensable as the baseline from which scholarship has grown. Armstrong (1989) and Hills (2005) are probably the most engaging introductions in English to Horace’s complete works.[[30]](#footnote-30) When it comes to monographs on the individual genres, the following may be considered prime entry-points, although they are somewhat dated and unfortunately the Latin is often left untranslated. Niall Rudd (1966) covers the *Satires*, paraphrasing them elegantly and bringing out the subtleties of their argumentation and social context (Rudd is particularly good on matters of philosophy and prosopography). Steele Commager (1962) brilliantly communicates the sophistication and charm of Horace’s *Odes*. His discussions of wine, time, and his contentious relationship with the elegists have been foundational for all subsequent discussions, including that of Tarrant (2020), a more up-to-date introduction. For the two books of *Epistles*, the discussions of Ross Kilpatrick (1986, 1992) are solid, although the level is often high. The *Epodes* are less well-covered when it comes to introductory works; Carrubba (1969), although quite old, is a good place to begin,[[31]](#footnote-31) as it gets to the heart of many questions about Horace’s iambic writing that remain current, while Watson (2007) and Mankin (2010) offer contrasting article-length overviews. Another good place to start when it comes to this collection is the recent volume of Philippa Bather and Claire Stocks (2016).

Through which theoretical lenses has Horace been read? The subsequent chapters will go into more detail, but some general comments are not out of place here. Deconstruction is not strongly represented, although there are gestures toward Derrida and De Man in e.g. Fowler (2009 [1995]), Lowrie (1997), and Miller (2019). Reception studies (the Constance School) were popular in the 1990s and continue to be so – a prime example being the exploration of Jaussian “horizons” of expectation and multiple readings with respect to *Odes* 1.9 by Lowell Edmunds (1992). Goffman’s theory of “face-work” as a possible alternative to the aforementioned theory of the *persona*, together with the concept of the “overreader” (i.e. a reader beyond the speaker and the addressee, in Horace’s case often Maecenas or Augustus), are applied to Horace by Ellen Oliensis (1998), while Phebe Lowell Bowditch (2001, 2010) brings René Girard’s theories of sacrifice, Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital, and Marcel Mauss’ investigations of gift-giving to bear on Horace’s interactions with his contemporaries, especially Maecenas. Thought-provoking Freudian interpretations of the poet, his relationship to his father, and his presentation of his biography are to be found in Anderson (1982) and Johnson (1993). The days of high theory may be over but, as mentioned earlier, more recent theoretical directions have yet to be fully applied to Horace – e.g. environmental studies, cognitive methodologies, and post-colonial theory.[[32]](#footnote-32)

One issue for Horatian studies is the difficulty of dealing with aspects of the poetry that are unattractive to modern readers. To be frank, Horace is not well suited to modern tastes. This is strikingly the case when it comes to his support of Augustus, and in this regard the question the emperor posed to Horace was prescient:

*an uereris ne apud posteros infame tibi sit, quod uidearis familiaris nobis esse?*

“Are you afraid that being seen as a friend of mine will harm your reputation with posterity?” (Suetonius, *Life of Horace*).

Perhaps Horace himself suspected the danger. In any case, it cannot be denied that Horace survived and thrived in the tempests of the triumviral years while others foundered. And despite the many undeniable beauties of his verse, much of his later poetry is difficult to read in the aftermath of the traumas of the twentieth century. As we will see in the chapter on the *Odes*, there are different ways to respond to this – some, like Fraenkel, embraced Horace’s more jingoistic writing, whereas others speak of “reluctance” and “sapping.” As mentioned above, a clear-eyed tabulation of Horace’s many complicities with the Augustan regime is called for to follow up on the astute observations of Ronald Syme (1939), Antonio La Penna (1963), Oliver Lyne (1995), Bowditch (2001), and Ian Du Quesnay (2009 [1995], 2002).

But Horace’s questionable status is not just a matter of his political collaboration; the poet manages to situate himself on the wrong side of many of today’s key issues. By turns, he can be accused of sexism, orientalism, and exploitation – not to mention possible smugness and snobbery. These factors make him an unlikely hero for classicists today, despite the ubiquity of his attitudes in antiquity (and the likelihood that our own enlightened views will be considered medieval by future readers). His treatment of women, for example, has only been confronted in the past couple of generations.[[33]](#footnote-33) *Satires* 1.2, in which Horace philosophizes about the physical and reputational dangers of engaging in sexual relations with (a) matrons, (b) prostitutes, and (c) freedwomen, ultimately suggesting, as a safe option, letting one’s sexual needs out on (d) one’s own slave boys or girls, has dismayed even Horace’s most sympathetic readers (see p. 000). As Courtney (2013) notes, there is no affection in this satire, and women are merely represented as bodies and commodities (72). Indeed, women are generally only mentioned in the *Satires* in sexual contexts. The situation is not much better in the *Epodes* (see Chapter Two), and Ronnie Ancona (2010) is straightforward about Horace’s attitude toward female figures in the *Odes*:

“There are some who feel a need to ‘redeem’ Horace, when it comes to female figures in the Odes by pointing to moments of true affection and mutuality in them. I would argue that those moments are hard to find” (191).

In her earlier monograph, Ancona (1994) illustrates how much Horace’s erotic poetry depends on his male gaze, arguing that the ugly representations of human aging in *Odes* 1.25 (Lydia as dried leaves) are not generalizable to humanity in general but specifically target the female gender. In fact, Ancona finds disturbing undertones even in apparently innocent Horatian poems, such as the laughter at the end of *Odes* 1.9 (the Soracte Ode):

“By mistakenly merging the gentle whispers with the final episode involving the girl, we miss the fact that nothing in the scene with the girl indicates gentleness, and thus lose much of the force of what is described” (67).

The description of the girl, to follow Ancona, is in fact marked by violence (*dereptum*) and a lack of access to her perspective. Elsewhere, women are depicted as cardboard cutouts of virtue and vice – for instance in the contrast between the *matura uirgo* (“marriageable virgin”) and *seuera mater* (“severe mother”) in *Odes* 3.6.[[34]](#footnote-34) Sexism has been found in the author’s constructed autobiography – it is often remarked that while Horace speaks readily about his father we know nothing of his mother – and the objects of his desire move swiftly in and out of his poetry. Whereas other poets of the era offer realistic if partial depictions of their girlfriends (Cynthia, Delia, Corinna, and Lesbia), Horace’s *Odes* reveal only a procession of sexual partners.

Still, Horace’s attitudes contain much intriguing material. His reception serves as a weathervane for prevailing social *mores* in the modern world, and social changes have offered new modes of reading him. Even the ability to read him in full has not been consistent: Harrison (2012) shows how collections of Horace of the Victorian period were in general purged of their sexual content (*Epodes* 8 and 12 were frequently removed). Richard Thomas (2006) in turn surveys how the Victorians responded to apparently moments of bisexuality in the *Odes* – for instance, the masculine name “Ligurinus” of *Odes* 4.10 was transformed by e.g. John Conington in his 1863 translation into an ambiguous “Ligurine,” which could “pass” as feminine (its bearer becoming a socially permissible object of male desire), while Edward Bulwer Lytton simply excised Ligurinus in his own 1869 translation of *Odes* 4.1.[[35]](#footnote-35) Another Victorian, Edward Garnsey, ascribed Ligurinus to the iambo-lyric tradition rather than to Horace himself, noting the following in his translation of *Odes* 4:

“Had Alcaeus never celebrated Lycus of the dark eyes and hair, we should probably not have heard anything from Horace of ‘Ligurinus’….”[[36]](#footnote-36)

It is only relatively recently that scholars have been able to investigate Horace’s use of figures such as Ligurinus and tentatively suggest an appreciation for male beauty on the part of the poet. Harrison (2018) surveys the evidence, describing how Horace makes value-judgments about the appearance of younger males sometimes obliquely, sometimes directly. One author who probably did appreciate this aspect of Horace was A. E. Housman, who ends a poem to his beloved Moses Jackson in terms that are reminiscent of the homoerotic close of *Odes* 4.7.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Modern reception studies, then, are a productive area of research when it comes to Horace.[[38]](#footnote-38) There are few Roman poets whose fortunes have wavered as greatly in terms of scholarly perception. While interest in Ovid soared between 1980 and 2010 (his fortunes have fallen somewhat since), Horace’s prominence in journals and book lists has plummeted. Precisely how he achieved his earlier reputation is a fascinating subject: Harrison (2017a) discusses how Horace was used to reinforce class distinctions in Victorian England – to be able to quote Horace was to affiliate oneself with the social elite. Horace was a key figure in the interweaving of Classics and class, offering social and cultural capital (Harrison is following Bourdieu here):

“Cultural capital can be seen as claimed through means such as the writing of literary works which show the marks of an elite education (such as Horatian allusion)” (2).

The link between Horace and elite status is movingly dramatized in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, published in book form in 1895, where the titular character (who bears many similarities to Hardy himself) attempts to overcome the disadvantages of his class by studying Latin. Dreaming of a university education, Jude is depicted reciting from Horace’s *Saecular Song* in an early moment of rapture, but ultimately on his deathbed with his faded and superseded Delphine editions of Vergil and Horace on his bookcase, his aspirations for social betterment unfulfilled. This aspect of Horace, and of classical antiquity in general, is well documented on Edith Hall and Henry Stead’s Classics and Class website.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Non-European reception studies on Horace are set to boom – Horace appears in unlikely places due to his popularity during the centuries of European expansion. For example, the national hero of the Philippines, José Rizal (1861-1896), quotes Horace in the original Latin in his powerful anti-clerical novel *Noli Me Tángere* and its follow-up, *El Filibusterismo*. The society dedicated to his memory, the Knights of Rizal, has used “*non omnis moriar*”(“I shall not die completely,” *Odes* 3.30.6) as its motto since the early twentieth century, albeit not without friction. Readings of Horace by Black authors have already attracted much interest; to give an early example, Francis Williams (1702?-1770), a Jamaican born to free parents, was trained at Cambridge as a social experiment, gaining a deep knowledge of Horace. After returning to the Caribbean, he taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and Latin, and composed Latin poetry at a high level, although his lamentable internalization of racial stereotypes is clear. We can see this in his best-known poem, addressed to the Scotsman George Haldane (appointed governor in 1756), here given in prose translation:

“Know well, man dear to Mars, that it is not my part as an African to sing about the wars of military leaders. Buchanan should sing of you, Achilles’ equal, and write about you in the assembly and in arms.

…

Accept this [poem] then, coated in soot from a mouth trying to sing. Its power comes not from the skin, but from the heart. Set up by a powerful hand (nourishing God, denying nothing, has given the same souls to all kinds), virtue itself is colorless, as is wisdom. There is no color in the soul, nor in art.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

There are echoes here of the beginnings of the Agrippa *recusatio* (*Odes* 1.6, *scriberis Vario fortis et hostium | uictor*) and the Sallust ode (*Odes* 2.2, *nullus argento color est avaris | abdito terris*). To turn to the United States, Phillis Wheatley (1753?-1784) presents another example of a Black author experimenting with Horatian forms (albeit this time in English). Her *To Maecenas* has echoes of *Odes* 1.38 (“beneath the myrtle shade”) and 3.30 (“as long as *Thames* in streams majestic flows”). As a former slave herself, some have suggested a poignancy to her appropriation of the voice of Horace, a freedman’s son.[[41]](#footnote-41)

In sum, although Horace seems an author ill-suited to the twenty-first century, he nevertheless offers powerful provocations and important questions for today’s society, and the fact that he has been relatively understudied in recent years should be a spur to further research. Perhaps the most challenging task for the next generation of scholars will be to increase the accessibility of his work, which is difficult in the Latin and unfortunately even more so in translation. While Armstrong (1989) hoped that Horace’s evanescence from school curricula (where he provided material for the learning of grammar and meter) might lead to a resurgence of interest in the *Odes* as poetry, this has not yet occurred. Today Horace is avoided by classical scholars and virtually unread by the public. Without ignoring his manifest flaws, it is highly desirable that access to the author be increased, as his mature detachment, ethical sophistication, and human warmth have much to offer today. On a more practical level, Horace’s poetry is indissolubly tied to the tradition – take the influence of his *Art of Poetry* on western literature alone (*ut pictura poesis*, *in medias res*, and *purpureus… pannus*) – and it would bode ill for our understanding of cultural history if future scholars were unable to engage with it.[[42]](#footnote-42) While the British author and army major Patrick Leigh Fermor and his captive, the German general Heinrich Kreipe, may have shared a moment of peace on war-torn Crete through their communal recitation of the Soracte Ode,[[43]](#footnote-43) the fountain from which they both once drank has become lost in the thickets and undergrowth. It remains to find it again and to open it up, *splendidiorem uitro*, to sustain a new, global readership of Horace.

**I. *Satires***

I. Directions in the Scholarship

It is unclear what Horace’s earliest poetic endeavors were; he tells us that he wrote verse in Greek before giving it up (*Satires* 1.10.31-35). The first collection that he released to the public, however, was the first book of *Satires* (35 BCE). This was followed up by a second book published around the time of Actium, and the collection of *Epodes* appeared soon after the battle (probably in 30 BCE). Horace’s first published works, then, were in genres marked by their *libertas* (“freedom,” “outspokenness”), apparently risky choices for a young man who had been on the losing side at the Battle of Philippi (42 BCE).[[44]](#footnote-44) Horace’s ambition was certainly noteworthy: already in the first book of *Satires* we see the poet consciously creating a position for himself within literary history and wrangling with a ghostly paternal figure (both literary and actual). As will be the case in the subsequent chapters, I will first cover some salient trends in the recent scholarship before focusing on a particular aspect of the collection – in this case, the theme of slavery. There are good reasons for selecting this topic: (a) Horace presents himself as the son of a freedman; (b) slavery arises frequently in his writing both literally and as a metaphor; (c) the topic is especially fraught in the context of the modern age; and (d) nobody to my knowledge has assembled all the evidence provided by the *Satires*.

 Horace is the second exponent of Roman verse satire whose writing survives to any extent; the first was Gaius Lucilius (fl. c. 140-103 BCE), from whom we have just under 1300 fragments (in Warmington’s edition) of an original 30 books. An earlier poet, Ennius (c. 239-169 BCE), had certainly composed verse that went by the name “*satura*”(“satire”), but it was Lucilius who introduced the dactylic hexameter and gave the genre its character.[[45]](#footnote-45) As Quintilian put it:

*satura quidem tota nostra est, in qua primus insignem laudem adeptus Lucilius.*

“Satire is entirely our own [i.e. Roman], a genre in which Lucilius won especial praise” (*Institutes of Oratory* 10.93).

For Horace’s readership in the 30s BCE, then, the genre of verse satire would have reached its definitive form in the second century BCE.[[46]](#footnote-46) It was up to the younger poet to respond to Lucilius and to carve out space for himself. We find explicit statements of how Horace perceived their relationship in both *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10, among the more notable of which is the following:

*fuerit limatior idem*

*quam rudis et Graecis intacti carminis auctor*

*quamque poetarum seniorum turba; sed ille,*

*si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in aeuum,*

*detereret sibi multa…*

“Although he [Lucilius] was more polished than that crude originator of the genre untouched by the Greeks [possibly Ennius] and the crowd of elder poets, he would delete much from his work if he were to slide down by chance into this age of ours” (*Satires* 1.10.64-67).[[47]](#footnote-47)

The sometimes quite tenuous intertexts between Horace and Lucilius were collected by George Fiske (1971 [1920]), who plausibly argued that Horace started out working relatively closely with Lucilian satire but moved away from his model in the second book. Anxiety of influence, to use Harold Bloom’s phrase, certainly looms large in the first collection: *Satires* 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, and 1.9 all take their cues from Lucilius, but the relationship is competitive (*aemulatio*) rather than merely imitative (*imitatio*). For example, Porphyrio tells us that Horace’s *Satires* 1.5 was modeled on a satire of Lucilius about a journey to Sicily (94-148 Warmington), butHorace’s satire appears to have been significantly shorter: as far as we can tell, Lucilius’ poem took up a whole book, whereas Horace’s description of his trip to Brundisium in *Satires* 1.5 is over in around hundred lines (and he says even that is long).[[48]](#footnote-48) Indeed, in the first collection Horace studiously avoids Lucilius’ own title, “*Saturae*,” either calling his poems “*Sermones*”(“conversations”) or using periphrases such as “*genus hoc scribendi*”(“this type of writing” *Satires* 1.4.65).[[49]](#footnote-49)

Much effort has been spent on accounting for the fact that Horace’s own satire is less outspoken and aggressive than that of Lucilius: he rarely attacks prominent targets such as Marcus Antonius, but aims his barbs at nobodies such as the minor Stoic philosopher Crispinus and the singer Tigellius (and his targets are often safely dead).[[50]](#footnote-50) In contrast, Horace himself describes Lucilius as the spiritual descendant of the old Attic comedians (e.g. Aristophanes), who “used to brand [wrongdoers] with great freedom” (*multa cum libertate notabant*, *Satires* 1.4.5).[[51]](#footnote-51) Clearly, the sort of aggression that was possible for the aristocratic Lucilius was impossible for the supposed freedman’s son, but there would have been other factors in play. As Freudenburg (2001) stresses, the “vertical” relationship between Horace and his model, Lucilius, needs to be reconciled with the “horizontal” relationship between the later poet and his historical context, including the gradual lockdown on Republican *libertas* ushered in by the second triumvirate (3). Quite aside from the traditional legislation against libel, which forms the backdrop for *Satires* 2.1, there was a new political force that needed to be reckoned with. This is clear from the well-known quip of Pollio:

*Temporibus triumviralibus Pollio, cum Fescenninos in eum Augustus scripsisset, ait, “at ego taceo. non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere.”*

“In the triumviral period Pollio, when Augustus had written some mocking verses against him, said: ‘but I shall remain silent. For it is not easy to write (*scribere*) against one who has the power to proscribe (*proscribere*)’” (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.21).

While the situation had not devolved into the policing of speech of the first century CE, it was clearly dangerous to speak too freely: the proscriptions of 43 BCE, besides getting rid of the triumvirs’ enemies, served as an unmistakable warning to those who remained.

One question that Horace had to face, then, was the meaning of the word “*libertas*”(“freedom”) in the new cultural context. As Peter Brunt (1988) notes in a substantial review of the Republican concept, “*libertas* meant different things to different people” (283). For Lucilius, *libertas* had been the old Republican power that marked one as an elite Roman citizen endowed with freedom of speech (*parrhesia*), but, as noted, the times were different and Horace’s status less exalted.[[52]](#footnote-52) The situation was complicated by the word’s incorporation into political propaganda – it was the watchword of the Republicans at Philippi on the first day of fighting (Dio 47.43.1),[[53]](#footnote-53) and the regicides had used the *pilleus* (“freedman’s hat”) set between two daggers on their coinage. The term was later co-opted by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*, where he famously declared that he had “delivered the Roman people into freedom” (*rem publicam… in libertatem uindicaui*, 1). The word “*libertas*” recurs throughout the first book of Horace’s *Satires* and possesses meanings ranging from “noble freedom” to “reckless lack of restraint,” but in recent years scholars have seen in Horace an attempt to redefine the term. Instead of Lucilian freedom, the “power to speak his will and to enforce it upon others,” Horace suggests that true freedom entails the ability “to mind his own business, write poetry, and go wherever he likes,” things that a prominent Republican aristocrat was prevented from doing.[[54]](#footnote-54)

 Moreover, the perceived tightening of the old Republican freedoms no doubt constituted something of an image problem for the triumvirs (Antonius, Lepidus, and Octavian). As under the early Principate, one of the goals of Octavian during the triumviral years was to preserve a sense of continuity with the Republic. In this regard, Horace’s defanging of the genre of satire can be seen as opportune: in the wake of Philippi and Naulochus, it would have reflected well on the regime to have the appearance, at least, of satiric *libertas* projected. Horace’s project would have been theoretically encouraged by his powerful sponsors. Hawkins (2016) makes the point that some extent of freedom of speech is essential for an autocratic regime to “keep up the appearances” of a free republic: antagonistic speech, such as that offered by satire and iambic, so long as it was contained and controlled, could confer legitimacy on the myth of continued Republican *libertas* under the triumvirs.[[55]](#footnote-55) This is a compelling interpretation, one that fits well with the general absence of notable historical targets in Horace’s *Satires* mentioned above. The impression of traditional *libertas* is conveyed, but it is unleashed on historical non-entities and therefore rendered harmless.[[56]](#footnote-56)

 Indeed, the collection’s role in the formation of proto-Augustan ideology has become more apparent over the years. While the *Satires* are traditionally thought of as apolitical and private, scholars have isolated political concerns in play within the collection. Du Quesnay (2009 [1984]) reveals how Horace subtly portrayed the faction of Octavian, as represented by Maecenas, in a favorable light, responding to current buzzwords and painting a wholesome picture of the new regime. Why, Du Quesnay asks, would Maecenas have included Horace in his circle of poets and disseminated his first collection of *Satires* if they were indeed “irrelevant to the [political] needs and preoccupations of [Octavian]”? To give a straightforward example of the ideological role Du Quesnay sees the early Horace as performing, the run-in with the pest in *Satires* 1.9 allows Horace to characterize the circle of Maecenas in a positive way: this is a group marked by integrity and fair relations, impervious to infiltration by the unscrupulous, and unsullied by social climbing (here Horace may be quietly defending himself). The shared trip to Brundisium documented in *Satires* 1.5, on the other hand, gives us a privileged glimpse into the pursuits and activities of the clique: “nothing alarming here,” we are told. In making these observations, Du Quesnay reclaims the word “propaganda” for use with respect to the triumviral era –Horace’s *Satires* propagated ideal values and beliefs about the new ruling elite. In this, they were perhaps more effective than the strident “public” *Odes* because of their professions of apolitical quietism.

The rejection of unrestrained *libertas* and embracing of moderation and control is instantiated in Horace’s very style, his abstinence from Lucilian aggression corresponding to a rejection of the unpolished quality of his predecessor’s verse. Absolute freedom went against the principles of concision and purity that he brought to the genre. Horace censures Lucilius by saying that he “flowed muddily” (*flueret lutulentus*, *Satires* 1.4.11, cf. 1.10.50), an allusion to Callimachus’ river imagery in the *Hymn to Apollo*, and criticizes Lucilius’ prolixity in the briefest of terms: “brevity is required” (*est breuitate opus*, *Satires* 1.10.9).[[57]](#footnote-57) The two poets’ stylistic differences were noted already in antiquity:

*multum est tersior ac purus magis Horatius…*

“Horace is much terser and purer [than Lucilius]…” (Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.94).

In contrast to Lucilius, Horace avoids synonyms, redundant pronouns, grandiloquent Latin-Greek compounds, and other padding.[[58]](#footnote-58) Emily Gowers (1993) has further found in Horace’s use of gastronomical language a reflection of the stylistic antagonism between the two authors: Horace’s application of terms such as *satis* (“enough”) and *nimis acer* (“too sharp / bitter”) suggests a Callimachean restraint in tune with his contentment with simple salad. Sometimes, of course, this restraint goes too far, in that Horace’s language becomes compressed to the point of obscurity; as William S. Anderson (1982) puts it:

“Even the transitions from sentence to sentence often escape the casual reader, who suddenly finds himself in new territory, totally unable to explain how he got there” (19).

This aspect makes Horace’s *Satires* deceptively difficult and the interpretation of the train of thought in several poems remains unresolved: as the poet himself would later say, *breuis esse laboro, | obscurus fio* (“I labor to be brief but become obscure” *Art of Poetry* 25-26). The uncomfortable consensus is that this choppiness is intentional and, beyond its Callimachean brevity and concision, designed to mimic the desultory quality of actual conversation, but it must be admitted that it is a relief when Horace moves from literary criticism to narrative – for instance in the transition from *Satires* 1.4 (on Lucilius) and 1.5 (the trip to Brundisium).

The first book of *Satires* stays true to its author’s stylistic principles by displaying the same artfully artless arrangement of poems that will later be in evidence in the *Epodes* and *Odes*. There have been many attempts to pin down a precise rationale; the ten poems have been said to have

“A ring structure, a pattern of responsion around the fifth poem, and divisions into halves, pairs, and triads.”[[59]](#footnote-59)

Most scholars, for example Rudd (1966), divide the book into three separate triads with a final poem tacked on the end to revisit the debate about Lucilius broached in *Satires* 1.4. Nevertheless, while he supports the division into triads and accepts that the book is undergirded by a series of interconnections, the collection of ten poems representing a conscious response to Vergil’s book of ten *Eclogues*, Jim Zetzel (2009 [1980]) stresses that the overriding sense the reader gets is one of ironic self-contradiction and unresolved question marks, “a coherent pattern of incoherence” (40). The unifying feature binding some of Rudd’s triads is undeniably vague – the first three poems (the “diatribe” satires) fit together nicely, but the unity of the second triad is shaky, and what are we to make of the decidedly weird *Satires* 1.7 and 1.8 (beyond a shared “dramatic” quality)? Like much else in Horace, it is difficult to pin down the structure of book one of the *Satires* precisely – like a literary octopus, the poet disappears in a jet of his own ink.

Comparison of the two books of *Satires* reveals differences between them. For a start, the structure of the second book appears cleaner – it is divided in half, with correspondences between dramatic consultations (2.1 and 2.5), poems about country simplicity (2.2 and 2.6), and so on.[[60]](#footnote-60) Moreover, the Horatian *persona* recedes into the background in the second book, with Horace appearing to distance himself even further from the statements made within the poetry. In an essay originally published in 1963, Anderson (1982) argued influentially that the figure of what he termed the *doctor ineptus* (“inept teacher”) is a novel fixture of *Satires* 2. In the first book, the *persona* provides ethical advice, albeit often ironically, attacking the sin rather than the identifiable sinner: he is a certified *doctor* in contrast to Lucilius’ unrestrained *lusor* (“player”).[[61]](#footnote-61) The second book of *Satires*, however, depicts a series of extremists who represent antitheses of Horatian balance and moderation – each *doctor ineptus* attempts to establish the rectitude of his point of view, but ultimately ends up only demonstrating his own failings.[[62]](#footnote-62) The two “philosophers,” Damasippus and Catius (*Satires* 2.3 and 2.4), are cases in point: unstoppable in their enthusiasm for debauched forms of Stoicism and Epicureanism respectively, they monopolize the text and leave little space for the authorial *persona* to get a word in edgewise. Conversely, scholars have found that Horace’s confidence as an author increases between the first and second collections. Jeffrey Tatum (2009 [1998]), for instance, brings out the way in which Horace suggests that his later poetry is “above the law” when it comes to libel due to his consolidated position within the governing clique (*Satires* 2.1). Horace need no longer fear litigation, it is suggested, as his work appeals to Octavian, and Octavian is the only audience that still matters. If Horace should attack someone who deserves abuse,

 *solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis*

“The lawsuit will be dismissed with a laugh and you will leave having been absolved” (*Satires* 2.21.86).

*Satires* 2.1, according to Tatum, thus illustrates the way that the democratization of legal affairs in the late Republic had been successfully undermined by Octavian.

The *Satires*, then, are today seen as calculated rather than ingenuous – poetry marked by control, deliberation, and artifice rather than the poet’s frank admissions. As mentioned in the Introduction, however, this has not always been the case. James Lonsdale and Samuel Lee (1887) put it thus in the Victorian period:

“The man Horace is more interesting than his writings, or, to speak more correctly, the main interest of his writings is in himself. We might call his works ‘Horace’s Autobiography’. To use his own expression about Lucilius, his whole life stands out before us as in a picture. Of none of the ancients do we know so much, not of Socrates, or Cicero, or St. Paul. Almost what Boswell is to Johnson, Horace is to himself. We can see him, as he really was, both in body and soul. Everything about him is familiar to us. His faults are known to us, his very foibles and awkwardnesses… He seems almost as a personal friend” (9-10).[[63]](#footnote-63)

In hindsight, the reasons for this trust are obvious: Horace does indeed seem to speak to us directly and unreservedly, claiming to follow generic convention. As he says of Lucilius, in the excerpt to which Lonsdale and Lee allude:

*ille uelut fidis arcana sodalibus olim*

*credebat libris neque, si male cesserat, usquam*

*decurrens alio neque, si bene; quo fit ut omnis*

*uotiua pateat ueluti descripta tabella*

*uita senis. sequor hunc, Lucanus an Apulus anceps…*

“[Lucilius] entrusted his secrets to his books as if they were his trusted companions, nor did he go anywhere else whether things went badly or well; so that the whole life of the old man lies exposed as if written down on a votive tablet. I follow him, even if it is ambiguous whether I am a Lucanian or an Apulian…” (*Satires* 2.1.30-34).

Although the twin images of (a) books as confidantes and (b) the author’s biography exposed as if on a tablet were probably inaccurate even for Lucilius, Horace asks that they be applied to himself (*sequor hunc*).[[64]](#footnote-64) However, since the mid-twentieth century a different view has come to dominate; thus Anderson (1982):

“The main point is that Horace produced a Socratic satirist probably quite unrepresentative of himself; and this satirist, the speaker in his *Sermones*, is one of the greatest achievements of Horatian poetry” (29).[[65]](#footnote-65)

“Horace,” on this reading, is the poet’s own creation, although the degree to which this is the case varies with the scholar. As noted, recent critics have objected to the complete reduction of Horace to a literary phenomenon: Horace’s construction of his poetic *persona* differs in degree but not in type from all public-facing *personae*, whether in literature or in real life, and so skepticism about Horace’s self-presentation potentially translates into a skepticism of a much broader kind.

The poet’s lubricity become more pronounced the more one looks, to the extent that it becomes difficult to take anything Horace says at face value. His criticism of Lucilius for writing two-hundred verses per hour, “as if that were a big deal” (*ut magnum*,1.4.10), is undermined in the final line of the book, where Horace rushes to add a few lines to his book of poetry before it is published:

*i, puer, atque meo citus haec subscribe libello*

“Go, boy, and quickly write these lines at the end of my book” (*Satires* 1.10.92).

This last gesture, which squanders all the credibility he had built up within the book as a critic of Lucilian garrulity and haste, is typical of the poet and unsettles attempts to securely pin him down – is Horace in fact any better than the target of his criticism? Is he intentionally ironizing his stance? We will return to this issue in the final chapter on the *Epistles*, but it should be stated at this point that this evasiveness was probably not a game for Horace: it is plausible that his technique was honed perforce during the uncertainties of the triumviral years, when Horace experienced first-hand the dangers of full commitment.

We noted in the Introduction how the presentation of Horace’s father appears to have been inspired by Terence, and how Horace’s self-characterization as “the son of a freedman” may derive from the interchange between Bion of Borysthenes and Antigonus Gonatas.[[66]](#footnote-66) Horace, so some argue, constructed his own father – a man about whom we know nothing beyond his references. Anderson (1982) reminds us that Horace’s father only appears in *Satires* 1.4, 1.6, and some fifteen years later in *Epistles* 1.20. In the 1990s, Gordon Williams (2009 [1995]) threw further doubt on the idea that Horace’s father had been a real slave, arguing that the expression “*me libertino patre*”arose from Horace’s father having briefly entered slave status during the Social War (91-87 BCE). Venusia had gone over to the rebels but was taken by the Romans in 88 BCE, whereupon three-thousand captives, including (so Williams) Horace’s father, were made captive.[[67]](#footnote-67) After the cessation of hostilities, Horace senior would have been manumitted and enrolled, together with the other Italians, as a Roman citizen. Horace’s background, on Williams’ reading, was therefore not really servile, but Venusia’s defeat allowed Horace to suggest that he had succeeded against the odds and on his own merit. Williams’ argument has found support in differing degrees with e.g. Watson (2003), Robin Nisbet (2007), and Harrison (2013a), although historians of slavery have tended to take Horace at his word: Romans did not distinguish between real and *pro forma* freedmen, and the lifestyle of Horace’s father seems to have been within the reach of freedmen in the late Republic.[[68]](#footnote-68) In what follows, I tentatively follow Horace’s self-identification as a freedman’s son, and furthermore assume that his father had been enslaved for a significant period of time before manumission, even if the uncertainty about such an important aspect of Horace’s biography makes the argument necessarily contingent.

Given current debates about the intergenerational legacy of slavery in the modern context, the origins of Horace’s father are naturally of interest. Many have tried to determine his background and particularly his nationality. It has been argued, for example, that Horace’s father refers not to the *mores maiorum* in instructing his son but rather to the *traditum ab antiquis morem* (“custom handed down from the men of old” *Satires* 1.4.117) for the simple fact that he was a newcomer to the community and could not really say that ancient Romans were his *maiores*. Bernard Stenuit (1977) goes through the various theories – Jewish, Syrian, Greek, Italian – and reveals the problems with each; the current consensus is that he was of Italian stock.[[69]](#footnote-69) Given that Horace spent his earliest years in southern Italy before being taken to Rome for his education,[[70]](#footnote-70) it is plausible that his father was manumitted in the testament of his former owner. In this way he would have achieved the independence required to eventually take his son outside the region.[[71]](#footnote-71) In addition, since Horace describes him as initially a farmer (*Satires* 1.6.71), it is likely that he was bequeathed either property in his former master’s testament or the money with which to purchase it.[[72]](#footnote-72) Such a scenario would have provided Horace’s father with independence from an immediate *patronus*, the ability to move at will, and the financial wherewithal to do so.[[73]](#footnote-73) In any case, it is likely that he was educated and from a privileged class – menial workers on a larger property were unlikely to be manumitted – even if it was impossible for him to shake his legal status as a *libertus*. It is accordingly not hard for us to envision him as entertaining great hopes for his son’s career (in spite of what Horace says at *Satires* 1.6.85-87).

Indeed, some scholars have seen Horace’s father as motivating much of the son’s anxiety; as Johnson (1993) put it, in a vigorously argued if idiosyncratic work on *Epistles* 1:

“Self-hatred in Horace? Is that possible? Well, it is a human feeling after all, one that probably most human beings have some experience of at one time or another in their lives” (5).[[74]](#footnote-74)

Johnson psychologizes Horace along Freudian lines, interpreting him as a squirming knot of impulses particularly tangled when it came to his relationship with his father.[[75]](#footnote-75) On his reading, Horace’s father made sacrifices for Horace that the latter, the “offspring of poor parents” (*pauperum sanguis parentum*, *Odes* 2.20.5-6), felt forever burdened by.[[76]](#footnote-76) According to Johnson, Horace considered himself a failure in the light of his father’s ambitions: his excellent education had been squandered and his political career wrecked by the disastrous decision to fight for Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. Horace’s poetry can thus be read as an attempt to sever himself from his father and establish himself as an independent, self-made individual. Horace had done it all himself: as he says in the *Epistles*, “Whatever you subtract from my family background, you add to my personal talents” (*quantum generi demas, uirtutibus addas*, *Epistles* 1.20.22).[[77]](#footnote-77) In this wrestling with his past, the figure of the slave becomes entangled with his father and his own quest for independence and freedom. This calls for an investigation of how Horace related to Roman institutions of servitude; in what follows I will examine how Horace characterizes slaves and slavery in his *Satires*, before returning to Horace’s relationship with his freedman father at the end of the chapter.[[78]](#footnote-78)

II. Slavery in Horace’s *Satires*

In a disturbing essay originally published in 1973, Gilbert Highet pointed out the frequency and ugliness of Horace’s references to slaves:

“It is natural, therefore, that [given Horace’s background] he wrote a good deal about slaves and slavery: the subject haunted him. But it is surprising to observe that his tone is seldom sympathetic, and often downright cruel.”[[79]](#footnote-79)

This feature of his poetry is generally acknowledged.[[80]](#footnote-80) Indeed, Highet noted that Horace regularly pokes fun at freedmen of the same status as his father, such as Sarmentus (*Satires* 1.5.51-70), who is characterized by his rival (Messius Cicirrus) as a formerly chained run-away slave,[[81]](#footnote-81) or thewealthy freedman of *Epodes* 4, who rides through the streets of Rome to the indignation of passersby. Scholars of Roman slavery such as Mouritsen (2011) have objected to the latter equation – the *parvenu* of *Epodes* 4 had been whipped and shackled and behaves in an unbecoming manner, unlike Horace’s father, who represents an “ideal freedman” from a Roman perspective (27-28) – but be that as it may, Horace’s treatment of actual slaves is undoubtedly alarming to twenty-first century readers. Some of these moments are unremarkable within their context, in that similar attitudes are found in Roman comedy and feature in Lucilian satire, but their frequency in the *Satires* is nevertheless noteworthy and it will be instructive to go through them.

Horace was surrounded by slaves throughout his life. As Yona (2018) has stressed, it was his workforce that provided him with the leisure to talk about philosophy and write poetry (42-43): we have Horace’s slaves partly to thank for the *Satires* and *Odes*. We learn at *Satires* 1.6.78-80 that Horace’s father provided his son not only with good clothing but also with attendant slaves (*seruosque sequentis*) while he was a boy at Rome. To illustrate the modesty of his household, Horace mentions that only three (!) slaves wait the table at his unpretentious evening meal.[[82]](#footnote-82) In *Satires* 2.7, we read of Horace’s frenetic commands to these or similar slaves upon receiving a late invitation to Maecenas’ for dinner.[[83]](#footnote-83) We also observe slaves accompanying Horace about town and on longer trips: in *Satires* 1.9, Horace tries to shake the pest by whispering something into his slave’s ear,[[84]](#footnote-84) and slaves, although probably not Horace’s own, shout at the boatmen during the trip south in *Satires* 1.5.[[85]](#footnote-85) The presence of slaves is even felt in the writer’s studio: the final words of his first book of *Satires* are a command to a slave-scribe to add *Satires* 1.10 to the book.[[86]](#footnote-86)

One prominent location for the activity of slaves in Horace is the dinner party. At the banquet of Nasidienus in *Satires* 2.8, which continues a theme from Lucilius,a slave dutifully brushes up crumbs while another polishes the table.[[87]](#footnote-87) A guest speaks of the possibility of a slave (referred to as an *agaso*, “stableboy,” i.e. “klutz”) breaking a plate, while a different guest, after the curtain falls upon the dinner party, asks the slaves (*pueros*) whether the wine jar is broken.[[88]](#footnote-88) Slaves thereupon enter once again as if by clockwork, carrying in a massive plate of exotic food (*Satires* 2.8.85-90).

Slaves in Horace could not be trusted – a stereotype well represented in comedy and pervasive throughout Roman culture.[[89]](#footnote-89) In *Satires* 1.1, the light-fingered slave is listed among the threats that beset the wealthy.[[90]](#footnote-90) In *Satires* 1.4, slaves are represented as vectors of gossip at the proverbial water-cooler.[[91]](#footnote-91) They can provide insidious access to powerful individuals – for instance, the pest in *Satires* 1.9 plans to get to Maecenas by bribing his slaves.[[92]](#footnote-92) To return to the topic of dining, Horace liked to note the tendency of slaves to surreptitiously eat the food that they serve, an idea already found in Lucilius.[[93]](#footnote-93) In expounding the doctrine of moderation, for example, Horace refers to the way slaves hand out glassware with fingers dirty from the food they have been dipped in:

 *hic neque seruis,*

*Albuci senis exemplo, dum munia didit,*

*saeuus erit, nec sic ut simplex Naeuius unctam*

*conuiuis praebebit aquam: uitium hoc quoque magnum.*

“He will neither be savage to his slaves, following the model of Albucius, when he gives them tasks; nor will he, like gullible Naevius, offer greased water to his dinner guests: this too is a grave sin” (*Satires* 2.2.66-69).

The reference to slaves’ dirty fingers from dinner scraps crops up elsewhere,[[94]](#footnote-94) and Horace himself connives at the practice to an extent.[[95]](#footnote-95) Even the city mouse at the end of *Satires* 2.6 behaves “like a house-born slave” (*uernaliter*) in pre-licking the courses he serves to his country cousin.[[96]](#footnote-96)

Sex with slaves features quite prominently in Horace’s poetry (again, I only note instances in the *Satires*).[[97]](#footnote-97) *Satires* 1.2 is notorious (see p. 000): in arguing for a middle course between vices in the same poem, Horace puts forward the dichotomous extremes of sleeping with a matron and a woman “standing in a stinking brothel”(*olenti in fornice stantem* *Satires* 1.2.30), before admitting that even a “freedwoman” (*libertina*) or a “slave girl in a toga” (*ancilla togata*) can be expensive (*Satires* 1.2.47-63).[[98]](#footnote-98) Still, one can at least inspect the limbs of the *togata* before making a purchase, just like when one buys a horse (*Satires* 1.2.82-89, 101-103). Horace thereupon describes how he calls his prostitutes whatever name he likes; while he fucks one (*dum futuo*), he has no fear that her husband will suddenly appear (*Satires* 1.2.127-131). Nevertheless, even this outlet must be carefully regulated and not turn into an obsession.[[99]](#footnote-99) Horace ultimately claims that slaves serve as an ideal outlet for sexual energy – why should one prefer to suffer when there is a maid or slave nearby, “on whom an attack may be made at once” (*impetus in quem | continuo fiat*, 1.2.117-118)?

*non ego; namque parabilem amo uenerem facilemque*

“Not I, for I prefer convenient and easy sex”(*Satires* 1.2.119).

Horace moreover emphasizes the indignity of servitude when it comes to death and burial. In the Canidia satire (*Satires* 1.8) we read of how the Esquiline, prior to its renovation by Maecenas, had served as the communal graveyard of the slave class: Horace graphically describes how corpses were thrown out of their tiny *cellae* (“cells”) to be set upon the cart bound for the mass grave, “a field disfigured by white bones” (*albis informem… ossibus agrum*, *Satires* 1.8.16).[[100]](#footnote-100) In the same poem, we learn the macabre detail that a “slavish death” is preceded by a suppliant stance (*suppliciter* – literally, “kneeling”).[[101]](#footnote-101)

Role-reversal when it came to slavery is frequent in Horace: the shameful qualities of the status could be used to special effect when free individuals behave like enslaved ones. For instance, even though Ummidius was so rich that he measured his money rather than counting it, he nevertheless dressed like a slave (*Satires* 1.1).[[102]](#footnote-102) An actual switching of roles between “free-born” (*ingenuus*) and slave can be seen in *Satires* 2.5, where Teiresias advises Ulysses to engage in legacy hunting and to cultivate potential benefactors even if they be a former “runaway slave” (*fugitiuus*). Should Ulysses turn up his nose at this practice and fail to court Dama (the name suggests a slave), he will remain poor (*Satires* 2.5.15-20). As Teiresias continues, it might even help to join forces with a scheming freedman, or, if the wealthy individual makes use of prostitutes (*scortator erit*), to offer him his own wife, Penelope (*Satires* 2.5.75-76). In fact, Teiresias suggests that Odysseus figuratively “enslave” himself to his target, since the wealthy friend’s death will be kind of manumission:

*cum te seruitio longo curaque leuarit,*

*et certum uigilans “quartae sit partis Ulixes”*

*audieris “heres”: “ergo nunc Dama sodalis*

*nusquam est? unde mihi tam fortem tamque fidelem?”*

*sparge subinde…*

“When he will have relieved you from your long slavery and fretting, and (definitely awake) you will have heard ‘Ulysses should be the heir of a fourth of the estate,’ drop in the occasional: ‘then my companion Dama is no more? Where will I find someone so brave and so true?’” (*Satires* 2.5.99-103).

Slaves, then, offered a useful yardstick for the behavior of the free. They feature in Horace’s images, moral examples, and parables for the establishment of proper ethical practice; as is often noted when it comes to the ancient institution, slaves were good to think with. To make the point that human needs are met as easily by the poor man as by the wealthy in *Satires* 1.1, for instance, Horace notes that a slave who carries a breadbasket does not get more than his companions.[[103]](#footnote-103) In *Satires* 1.3, the keeping of slaves acts as a barometer for constancy of mind: sometimes the vacillating Tigellius would keep two hundred slaves, sometimes only ten.[[104]](#footnote-104) In the same poem we are told that one would be insane to crucify a slave for licking food off a plate, in a cultural script that we have already mentioned (*Satires* 1.3.80-83).[[105]](#footnote-105) In outlining the inconveniences of wealth and fame, and illustrating the desirability of his own humble position, Horace describes the praetor Tillius as being forced to travel with a retinue of five slaves carrying his chamber pot and wine jar in order to keep up appearances while Horace himself can travel as far as Tarentum on a gelded mule without being accused of cheapness (*Satires* 1.6.107-109). In a different example of slaves figuring in exhortations to moderation, Damasippus, the mad Stoic, quotes his guru Stertinius on how the Cyrenaic philosopher Aristippus precipitously exhorted his servants to throw away his gold in the desert.[[106]](#footnote-106) The management of slaves, then, reflected the mind of their owner – like the Roman villa, slaves were a public index for psychological aberration.

The most elaborate engagement with slavery in Horace’s works is the role-reversal of *Satires* 2.7, where Horace’s slave Davus takes his master to task during the Saturnalia.[[107]](#footnote-107) The way that Davus introduces himself is unsettling for modern readers; in beginning his harangue, he first attests to his nervousness about telling the truth to his master as a slave (1-2), and then goes on to describe himself as a “piece of property” (*mancipium*):

*ita, Dauus, amicum*

*mancipium domino et frugi quod sit satis…*

“That’s right – I’m Davus, a piece of property friendly to his master and tolerably honest…” (*Satires* 2.7.2-3).

In what follows, Davus’ criticizes Horace himself for being a slave to his lusts, availing himself of the Stoic paradox “that only the wise man is free and every fool is a slave” (Cicero, *Stoic Paradoxes* 33-41). While his master, as we have seen, had counseled “convenient and easy sex” in *Satires* 1.2, Davus attacks Horace for his failings on this very score:

*te coniunx aliena capit, meretricula Dauum*

“Someone else’s wife snags you, a little prostitute snags Davus” (*Satires* 2.7.46).

According to Davus, to seduce married women Horace disguises himself as a shameful Dama, a foreign-born slave (54-55); in doing so he is effectively selling himself into a degrading status (*quid refert… auctoritatus*, “what does it matter whether you have sold yourself…” 58-59). In fact, Horace is a slave many times over (*o totiens seruus*,70), in that he returns to the same activity even after escaping from the enraged husband. Davus wonders what the precise relationship between Horace and himself is – are they co-slaves (*conseruus*), or is one slave the other’s slave (*uicarius*)? Horace thus falls victim to the role-reversal that his *persona* had used against others.

At this point, Davus, elaborating his Stoic posture, describes Horace himself as a puppet dancing at the whim of its personified drives:

*tu, mihi qui imperitas, aliis seruis miser atque*

*duceris ut neruis alienis mobile lignum.*

“Surely you, who give commands to me, are in your misery a slave to other things [i.e. sins and lusts] and are manipulated like a wooden doll moved by another’s muscles” (*Satires* 2.7.81-82).

The closing image communicates slavery at its most elemental: the manipulation and ventriloquizing of one human being by another (the Greek term “*neurospastos*” is more evocative than the Latin “*pupa*”). But more to the point, there is a discrepancy when it comes to the self-destructiveness of Horace and Davus’ wrongdoings: Horace sells entire estates to satisfy his urges, while a slave simply barters a stolen strigil for a bunch of grapes in the middle of the night (109-111). And Davus apparently touches a nerve: at the end of the satire Horace threatens to turn Davus into a ninth laborer on his Sabine farm. The word he uses, “*opera*”(“work unit,” “drudge,” grammatically feminine),[[108]](#footnote-108) corresponds with the similarly denatured “*mancipium*”(“piece of property,” neuter) that Davus used of himself at the poem’s opening.

I provide all this detail from the *Satires* merely to illustrate how thoroughgoing Horace’s engagement with slaves was. I emphasize that I have only rarely touched upon the *Epodes*, *Odes*, or *Epistles*, from which many other hints can be gleaned – for example, Horace’s self-characterization as a jaded gladiator at the beginning of the first book of *Epistles* (1.1.1-6), or the analogy that opens the *Epistle to Florus* (2.2.1-22), both of which are important for the way they depict Horace himself in servile terms. To give a notorious instance from Horace’s lyric, scholars have suggested that *Odes* 3.22 *Montium custos*, an exquisite two-stanza hymn to Diana in her role as protectress of women in labor, was in fact written to mark the successful birth of an illegitimate child via one of the slaves he speaks of as *uenus parabilis* in *Satires* 1.2 (see above).[[109]](#footnote-109) Certainly, we do not see much of the Stoic generosity of Juvenal, Horace’s successor within the genre of satire (for example, at Juvenal, *Satires* 14.15-17), even if *Satires* 2.7 does much to deflate Horace himself as one enslaved to his passions.[[110]](#footnote-110) What are we to make of Horace’s attitude, especially given that his own father had been a slave?

The dismissiveness that Horace displays has certainly been read as entirely normal. Legally, he was unmarked by slavery. A crucial distinction divided him from the lot of his father: the Roman jurists recognized the status of slave (*seruus*), freedman (*libertus*), and freeborn (*ingenuus*), and Horace belonged to the last of these categories. As Henrik Mouritsen (2011) puts it:

“We may therefore conclude that the ‘freedman’s son’ as a distinct social category is essentially a modern invention. The sons of freedmen enjoyed *ingenuitas*, which was an absolute quality that could be neither gradated nor forfeited” (265).[[111]](#footnote-111)

Horace, then, need have been no more tolerant of slaves than a Roman without slaves in his family tree; it is here that it is crucial to strip away our modern assumptions. The brutal fact is that Horace probably subscribed to conventional views of a Roman *ingenuus* about *serui*. Stenuit makes the point with specific reference to Highet, who, according to Stenuit (1977),

“Insists very severely on the harshness, even the brutality of Horace toward slaves... But is it necessary to demand of [Horace], son of a slave as he was, an attitude which will develop and will only triumph later under the twin influence of Stoicism and Christianity?” (142 n. 117).

The salutary influence of Stoicism and Christianity mentioned here may be questioned, but Stenuit’s point is a good one. Given his legal status at birth, Horace would conceivably have felt himself immune from criticism. Any residual social prejudice he encountered (“son of a freedman”) did not impede his progress, and indeed could later be spun into evidence for the meritocratic nature of Maecenas’ circle and the Augustan regime (*Satires* 1.6).[[112]](#footnote-112)

 Still, there was probably a tension between the legal separation of *serui*, *liberti*, and *ingenui* and the psychological imbrication or overlapping of the categories – a tension that Horace himself may not have been able to put his finger on. The legal division between slaves, freedmen, and the free refers to discrete classes, but human beings rarely think in such clear terms. Instead of the branching tree of definition by process of division found in Gaius’ *Institutes*, people generally construct categories and concepts in a messy and fuzzy fashion; we will see this illustrated when it comes to the ancient literary genres in the following chapter. It is to be assumed, then, that Horace would have imported considerations external to the pure legalities when it came to his understanding of the relationship between his own free status and that of his formerly enslaved father. This would conceivably have been compounded by his personal experiences. In his time at Athens, Horace may have become aware of the arbitrariness of his father’s status, given that he was surrounded by Greek freedmen who had not acquired citizenship in the way that it was conferred via manumission at Rome.[[113]](#footnote-113) Back in Rome itself, Horace would certainly have been aware of prejudice against freedmen: in fact, lower-class manumitted freedmen bearing signs of e.g. corporal punishment were soon to be removed from the city of Rome and banished to the hundredth milestone.[[114]](#footnote-114) The point is not that Horace had anything to worry about himself, but that his father’s status as *libertus* (and his own as *ingenuus*)was based on localized and contingent laws of manumission and citizenship. It could all have been very different. His own status was certainly not that of his father, but some residual insecurity and uneasiness may well have remained.

 Even after manumission, the *macula seruitutis* (“stain of slavery”) persisted and could potentially afflict those in contact with the freedman: for instance, Verres is said to have been corrupted by association with his freedmen and their servile nature, and it is likely the same taint by association was possible when it came to parent-child relationships.[[115]](#footnote-115) On the one hand, Horace emphasizes his father’s virtuous, non-slavish behavior in order to escape this charge: as noted, the often-cited example of the freedman depicted in *Epodes* 4, who acts in contravention of the laws of his station (flouting, for instance, the law of Otho concerning seating in the theater), bears no relation to Horace’s father, who had behaved like an exemplary freedman.[[116]](#footnote-116) Horace presents his father as a “model new citizen” – hardworking, respectful of his own limitations of status even if not responsible for them, and entirely accepting of the ideology of the society in which he had been enslaved and manumitted. On the other hand, the similarity between the two freedmen in status and rapidly acquired wealth cannot be denied. Moreover, the sons of freedmen were themselves vulnerable when it came to exalted political careers, as Horace himself had witnessed at the age of fifteen, when freedmen were ejected from the senate in an unusual censorial decision by Appius Claudius (*Satires* 1.6.19-21; Dio 40.63.4).[[117]](#footnote-117) In short, Horace was probably torn between the two types of categorization – the one that asserted that he was free (*ingenuus*), the other stating that he was nevertheless slightly flawed by association; it was the latter form of categorization that led him to reject a political career at *Satires* 1.6.22. As Mouritsen (2011) states in reference to this poem:

“As an *ingenuus*, Horace suffered no personal disabilities, and he therefore refuses to acknowledge any flaws in his character that should prevent him from holding high office… But he also recognizes that the world has never been kind to new men, however talented… He is what he is – the son of a freedman – which means that he is not made for a public career… He is therefore happy with his lot and would not have chosen differently had he the chance. In this way his father’s humble status has – somewhat paradoxically – ensured for his son an ideal life free of social burdens” (272-273).

It is no surprise that the relationship between Horace, his father, and the unique institution of Roman slavery offers a tempting study for psychological speculation. Ultimately, Horace covered his origins well, and the only surviving portrait of his father is the one he provides, but it is possible that modern comparative, sociological, and cognitive approaches may shed further light on it in the future.

**II. *Epodes***

I. Directions in the Scholarship

It is a cliché to say that Horace’s *Epodes* are understudied, and the adjective is no longer really justified. Although these seventeen poems tended to be swept under the rug as an immature experiment until the mid-twentieth century,[[118]](#footnote-118) there are now three independent commentaries dedicated to the collection – the elegant Cavarzere (1992), the adventurous Mankin (1995), and the expansive Watson (2003) – as well as a volume of essays edited by Bather and Stocks (2016) that contains an excellent overview of the scholarship. Still, the *Epodes* remain mysterious in many regards: they are disparate in tone and material, and several poems, most notably the long epodes on Canidia (5 and 17), continue to bemuse critics. We are not even certain of the title of the book: Horace refers to the poems as his *iambi* but, as Cavarzere points out, this may simply refer to the genre.[[119]](#footnote-119) The title “*Epodes*,”first attested in Porphyrio’s commentary and appearing in the genitive as “*Liber Epodon*” (“Book of Epodes”) in the manuscripts, has been adopted by most scholars,[[120]](#footnote-120) but it is probably safest to say that we cannot know for sure, and the situation is emblematic of the uncertainties surrounding the collection in general: of all of Horace’s works, the *Epodes* stand most in need of either a new papyrus discovery or systematic interpretation to clarify his models and motivations. They continue to present an opportunity for the ambitious critic and, given the scholarly infrastructure, there has never been a better time to investigate them.

Looking back on his career around 20-19 BCE, Horace stressed the originality of his book of *iambus*:

*Parios ego primus iambos*

*ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus*

*Archilochi, non res et agentia uerba Lycamben.*

“I – the first – revealed Parian iambs to Latium, following the rhythms and spirit of Archilochus, but not the subject matter and the words that hounded Lycambes” (*Epistles* 1.19.23-25).

This statement has caused some consternation, given that Catullus, Bibaculus, and possibly Lucilius had composed iambic poetry in Latin before the Augustan poet (Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.96; *Grammatici Latini* 1 p. 485.11-17).[[121]](#footnote-121) Furthermore, although Quintilian notes that the genre of *iambus* itself was considered something of a rarity in Roman culture, iambic meters had been used in Roman comedy from early on. Mankin (1995, 2010) and Tarrant (2007) reconcile Horace’s statement with the evidence by laying stress with on the adjective *Parios*: nobody, including Catullus, had imitated Archilochus’ *iambi* in quite the same way before. Yet Horace’s brash assertion of primacy within the genre should be compared with his other distortions of literary history. Perhaps most notably, he also claims that he was

*princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos*

*deduxisse modos*

“The first to have led Aeolian song to Italian measures” (*Odes* 3.30.13-14; cf. *Odes* 1.26.10-12, *Epistles* 1.1.32-34)

despite Laevius and Catullus already having written lyric poetry (Catullus 11 and 51 are in Sapphic stanzas, an Aeolic meter).[[122]](#footnote-122) Again, scholars have identified rationales for Horace’s apparent blindness when it comes to his Roman predecessors, A. J. Woodman (2002) arguing that *Aeolium carmen* here refers to the combination of both Alcaeus and Sappho (in which case Horace would indeed be “first”). It must be said, however, that Horace appears generally perverse in questions of literary priority.[[123]](#footnote-123)

The *Epodes* may be inscrutable as a collection, but this is in keeping with the early history of Greek *iambus* itself. Archaic *iambus*, as represented by the fragments of Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax (seventh and sixth centuries BCE),had a range of tones, but during the Hellenistic period its scope apparently “narrowed” to poetry characterized by (a) iambic meters and (b) invective.[[124]](#footnote-124) The latter feature (invective) was certainly found in the genre’s charter myths: according to the tradition, the Lycambes mentioned in the excerpt above promised his daughter, Neoboule, to Archilochus to be his wife but then reneged. In revenge, Archilochus attacked Lycambes and his family with such brutal poetry that Lycambes, Neoboule, and her sisters all hanged themselves.[[125]](#footnote-125) The story is referred to within the fragments of Archilochus himself (e.g. fr. 172-173, 196a West). This prominent aggressive streak seems, however, to have come to be associated with the genre in general, and indeed Horace himself repeats the characterization both within the *Epodes* and his later meta-poetic writing. Take the following declarations from the *Odes* and *Art of Poetry*:

*me quoque pectoris*

 *temptauit in dulci iuuenta*

 *feruor et in celeres iambos*

*misit furentem…*

“Madness of the heart also tempted me in my sweet youth and sent me raving to swift iambs…” (*Odes* 1.16.22-25).

*Archilochum proprio rabies armauit iambo*

“Rage equipped Archilochus with its / his own iamb” (*Art of Poetry* 79).[[126]](#footnote-126)

We will return to generic questions below, but we might note at this point that defining *iambus* strictly as the genre of anger misrepresents the variety not only of the Greek examples but also of Horace’s own *Epodes*. The tone of aggression is certainly prominent within *iambus*,but it fails to fully characterize either the early genre or Horace’s emulation of it.

In any case, Horace’s prime model in the collection is clear from both external (*Epistles* 1.19) and internal evidence.[[127]](#footnote-127) Archilochus provided both the meters and the *ethos* of the *Epodes*. As such, attempts to find actual historical relationships behind Horace’s attacks on old women in *Epodes* 8 and 12, for example, have met with little support.[[128]](#footnote-128) However, while Horace predominantly follows Archilochus, he could also associate his poetry with the broader category of Archaic *iambus* that included poets such as Hipponax. Within the *Epodes*,we see Horace explicitly aligning himself with both Archilochus and Hipponax in the sixth poem:

*caue caue, namque in malos asperrimus*

 *parata tollo cornua,*

*qualis Lycambae spretus infido gener*

 *aut acer hostis Bupalo*

“Beware, beware, for I, most intolerant of the wicked, lift my horns at the ready, just like the spurned son-in-law for the unfaithful Lycambes or Bupalus’ harsh enemy” (*Epodes* 6.11-14).

Horace associates himself with Archilochus and Hipponax in this excerpt by referring to their respective enemies, Lycambes and Bupalus. It is possible that the sexual invective of *Epodes* 8 and 12 was particularly indebted to Hipponax, in whose fragments such matters are well represented.[[129]](#footnote-129)

Scholars have also posited a link with a later composer of iambic, Callimachus (c. 310-240 BCE),[[130]](#footnote-130) suggesting that Horace likely drew the image of the poet as a bull lifting its horns just quoted from the Alexandrian poet’s fragmentary thirteenth *iambus*:

…ἀ]οιδὸς ἐς κέρας τεθύμωται

κοτέ]ων ἀοιδῷ…

“…Poet angry with poet storms against his horns” (Callimachus, *Iambi* 13.52-53 Pfeiffer).

One might also compare the following excerpt from the beginning of Callimachus’ *Iambi* to the passage from *Epistles* 1.19 printed above (*secutus… non res et agentia uerba Lycamben*).[[131]](#footnote-131) Here, Callimachus’ model, Hipponax, rises from Hades to accost the scholars in Alexandria:

φέρων ἴαμβον οὐ μάχην ἀείδοντα

τὴν Βουπάλειον

“Bringing *iambus* that does not sing of the battle against Bupalus” (Callimachus, *Iambi* 1.3-4 Pfeiffer).

Both Callimachus and Horace, then, compose *iambus* but state that they will not attack their Archaic predecessors’ enemies – Callimachus appealing to Hipponax, Horace mainly to Archilochus. Interestingly, Horace avoids using the *scazon* (*choliambi*, “limping iambs”), the signature meter of Hipponax employed by Callimachus in six of his thirteen iambic poems. Some scholars have therefore suggested that Horace is working with the analogy *Callimachus : Hipponax :: Horace : Archilochus*, the Augustan poet “following the rhythms and spirit of Archilochus” (*Epistles* 1.19.24) and avoiding reference to Hipponax for the most part, since Callimachus had already adopted him as a model in his *Iambi* (although given that Horace clearly does align himself with Hipponax in *Epodes* 6 the avoidance cannot have been overwhelmingly strong). In any case, the general connection with Callimachus has been widely accepted.[[132]](#footnote-132) Given the splicing of the Archaic and the Hellenistic in his subsequent *Odes*, it would certainly be surprising if Horace onlyappealed to the Archaic representatives of the genre of *iambus*. Further evidence for the influence of Callimachus on the *Epodes* includes the fact that the Hellenistic poet’s *Iambi* may also have contained seventeen poems, an odd number for an ancient poetry book,[[133]](#footnote-133) and the suggestion of Heyworth (1993) that the first word of the *Epodes* – *ibis* (“you will go”)– refers to Callimachus’ invective poem *Ibis*. According to the standard view, then, Horace looks back to the Archaic models but does so following Callimachus’ *modus operandi* in altering the subject matter and potentially toning down its aggression.

As mentioned, a peculiar feature of Horace’s *Epodes* is his silence about the earlier Roman writer of iambic, Catullus.[[134]](#footnote-134) Not only does Horace fail to explicitly mention Catullus as a generic forerunner, but unambiguous allusions to the latter’s poetry are difficult to detect in the *Epodes*. Henri Hierche (1974) maintained that “Horace was filled [imprégné] with Catullus” (157), but the connections that he lists for the *Epodes* do not speak necessarily for direct influence and may merely rest on shared Latin idiom (155-161). Probably the best case for an allusion is presented by the mountain crossing described by *Epodes* 1 (*per Alpium iuga*) and Catullus 11 (*trans altas… Alpes*);[[135]](#footnote-135) another possible candidate is the refrain shared by Catullus 42 and *Epodes* 17:

*“pudica et proba, redde codicillos”*

“You chaste, you upright woman – give back my notebooks!” (Catullus 42.24).

*“tu pudica, tu proba*

*perambulabis astra sidus aureum”*

“You will cross the stars as a gold constellation, you chaste, you upright woman” (*Epodes* 17.40-41).

The context (a groveling apology) is similar, but this may be coincidental and the refrain generic. On a more general level, scholars have noted affinities between the iambics of Horace and Catullus (and the Neoterics in general) when it comes to their erotic material, use of invective, sense of occasionality, and undermining of traditional *grauitas*.[[136]](#footnote-136) Lindsay Watson (2003) has even has argued that Horace’s *Epodes* were formed partly by his patron Maecenas’ partiality to Neoteric poetry: the fragments of Maecenas’ own verse are full of the diminutives and exotic vocabulary used by Catullus, and the Catullan informality of Horace’s private poems to Maecenas (*Epodes* 3 and 14) may be intended to meet this preference.[[137]](#footnote-137) However, similarity in tone is a rather weak index of influence, and the absence of distinctively Catullan vocabulary from the *Epodes* suggests that Horace accommodated his patron’s tastes in a tempered way at best.

As was the case with the *Satires*, the structure of the book of *Epodes* is suggestive of deliberate organization,[[138]](#footnote-138) for which Carrubba (1969) remains a good introduction. (a) The meter common to the first ten poems (iambic trimeter + iambic dimeter) clearly unifies the first half of the collection. Poems 11-16 then run through a variety of meters that prominently feature dactylic hexameter, and a final poem in pure iambic trimeters without an epode (i.e. a second verse tacked onto the main one) closes the book. Besides metrical progression, there are also signs of (b) a thematic arrangement involving interlocked “twin poems.” Thus, *Epodes* 1 and 9, the first and central poems of the collection, concern Maecenas and Actium, 7 and 16 are about the civil wars, 8 and 12 form a pair of invective poems. In fact, the only poem that does not have a potential twin is *Epodes* 13.[[139]](#footnote-139) Scholars have also sought significance within (c) the sequence of the poems, an idea supported by the fact that the first and final words in the book are *ibis* and *exitus*, as well as by the multiple “associative bridges” connecting the individual poems.[[140]](#footnote-140) David Porter (1995) suggests that poems 1-7 and 9-16 reveal twin descending arcs from hope to pessimism, while Timothy Johnson (2011) discerns a progression within the collection from a society afflicted with rage (1-7), to a dialogue between aggression and non-aggression (8-15), to a final reconciliation (16-17). Mankin (1995, 2010) argues that the sequence of poems reflects historical events: the book starts in spring of 31 BCE, with Horace pledging to follow Maecenas, continues through to Actium that summer in *Epodes* 9, and closes in the wake of Octavian’s victory at Alexandria (30 BCE) with an unsettling poem about Canidia (*Epodes* 17). Yet such arguments inevitably involve painting with a broad brush, and Mankin’s theory is made problematic by the need to see the gloomy *Epodes* 7 and 16, generally dated to the early 30s (see below), as set respectively in the context of Actium (31 BCE) and the Siege of Alexandria (30 BCE). It must be said that a thematic unity for the collection has yet to be demonstrated.

Perhaps thematic or tonal unity is not to be sought in Horace’s *Epodes* anyway, given that the collection was likely composed over a decade.[[141]](#footnote-141)Horace tells us that he started writing poetry soon after returning from Philippi (*Epistles* 2.2.49-52), and indeed *Epodes* 16 appears to have been a rapid response to Vergil’s fourth Eclogue (c. 40 BCE). *Epodes* 9, however, was written soon after the Battle of Actium (31 BCE),[[142]](#footnote-142) and Du Quesnay (2002) argues that its thematic twin, *Epodes* 1, was designed to allay the demands of Octavian’s supporters (the equestrians and senators) for financial remuneration in the winter of 30 BCE when Octavian was strapped for cash. The earliest poems were probably composed, then, during a period of personal insecurity and stress, while the last were penned when Horace was an acolyte of one of the most powerful men in Rome. The *uariatio* on display within the collection conceivably reflects the change in Horace’s status from outsider to insider during the triumviral period. To push things tentatively further (bearing in mind the influence of Archilochus), it is even possible that the book’s chaotic jumble of styles represents a rejection of the classical sense of proportion and order prized by writers of the previous generation and evident in Lucretius’ careful disposition of topics and the use of dialectic by Cicero and Varro. Horace’s organization of the collection by meter reveals discipline, yet he seems to have set rational principles aside when it came to giving his *Epodes* an overarching tone.[[143]](#footnote-143) One might, again tentatively, hypothesize that after a century of civil warfare such chaos was clearly the appropriate response: the *Epodes* represent a rejection of the norms of order and clarity that had been ushered in by the Roman intellectual revolution of the sixties and fifties BCE and seen to have spectacularly failed.

While Horace explicitly identifies his *persona* with that of Archilochus (and Hipponax) in his invective iambic, his own *ethos* is often subdued in comparison. Fraenkel (1957) showed that his “inverse propempticon” on Mevius (*Epodes* 10), for example, is weak when compared to imprecations of the Strasbourg Epode (27-36). The militaristic opening of *Epodes* 1 also comes across as mild-mannered when its feeble *utrum iussi persequemur otium* (“shall we, under orders, pursue a life of ease?” 7) is compared to Archilochus’ grizzled independence, and collapses altogether when Horace characterizes himself as a mother bird concerned for Maecenas:[[144]](#footnote-144)

*…inbellis ac firmus parum?*

“…unwarlike, and not very firm?” (*Epodes* 1.16).

Even the political voice of the *Epodes* 7 and 16 is ineffectual – in the former, the *persona* addresses a throng of Romans to no avail, while in the latter he advises his listeners to abandon Rome. Despite his claims to aggressive iambic virility, then, Horace seems forever to suffer from *impotentia* (“impotence”) – a theme concretized in a moment of actual impotence in *Epodes* 8. Some have seen Horace as following Callimachus in this, and Watson (2007) argues that the stance went back to Archilochus himself (99),[[145]](#footnote-145) but most scholars view it as Horace’s own innovation. In an influential article, Fitzgerald (2009 [1988]) traced the theme of the “impotent iambist” throughout the *Epodes*, arguing that Horace constantly undercuts his *persona* – playing, for instance, on the name “*Flaccus*” (“Mr. Floppy”):[[146]](#footnote-146)

*nam siquid in Flacco uiri est*…

“For if there is anything at all manly in Flaccus…” (*Epodes* 15.12).

Fitzgerald’s deflationary reading is attractive. It is even possible that this undermining of his own *persona* in the *Epodes* later offered a model for his “sapping” of the figure of Augustus in his *Odes*.[[147]](#footnote-147)

Although Horace undercuts his *persona*’s masculine authority, there is plenty of aggression in the collection – particularly directed at women. Misogyny is of course represented in the genre from Archilochus onwards (compare the story of Lycambes and his daughters) and is one of the least appealing but most interesting traits of the *Epodes* to modern readers. *Epodes* 8 and 12 are nearly unparalleled in Latin poetry in their vulgarity, a feature brought out by Henderson (1987), which contains, in the phrasing of Watson (2003), a translation of *Epodes* 8 in the form of “a gratuitous technopaegnic vagina” (40). Even in *Epodes* 11, where Horace describes his former infatuation for Inachia in tones that are close to elegiac, the relationship seems to have been sub-ideal, while the aggression directed at the lover of Neaera at the end of *Epodes* 15 is vicious even in its feebleness:

*…ast ego uicissim risero*

“…but I will get the last laugh” (*Epodes* 15.24).

Oliensis (2009 [1991]) strikingly emphasizes the collection’s misogyny, focusing particularly on the portrayal of the witch Canidia, the “dark muse” of Horatian iambic.[[148]](#footnote-148) A dubious ancient explanation for her presence in the collection, transmitted by the commentator Porphyrio, is that she is a cipher for a certain Gratidia – a Neapolitan perfume-seller with whom Horace had been romantically involved. After the relationship ended, Horace supposedly vented his fury against her in his poetry. It is more likely, however, that Canidia is simply a fictional stand-in for the typical female target of iambic aggression. Modern etymologies, discussed by Oliensis (1998), involve the terms “*canis*”(“dog”), “*canities*”(“hoary whiteness”, i.e. “old age”), and “*Canicula*” (i.e. Sirius, the Dog Star). In Oliensis’ view, the Canidia epodes expose the gendered quality of heat, violence, disorder, and debility – a constellation of baleful influences summed up by the alternate meaning of “*impotentia*” (“lack of self-control”). Horace’s sexual impotence (a negative form of *impotentia*) in the face of unbridled female sexuality (positive *impotentia*) is, according to Oliensis, linked to political anxieties.[[149]](#footnote-149) It is certainly intriguing that Canidia’s is the last voice we hear in the *Epodes*.

The genre of *iambus* is marked by what we might call today “toxic masculinity.” Alessandro Barchiesi (2001) points out that the only woman traditionally understood to have influenced the genre, rather than functioning as a target of abuse, is the mythical Iambe in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (202-204).[[150]](#footnote-150) Still, arguments have been made to recuperate the collection. Gowers (2016), for example, investigates the question of the gendered aspects of the genre anew, studying the dissolution of the boundaries separating male and female within the *Epodes*; as she puts it:

“The gender of Horatian iambic seems to converge on a midpoint where the distinctions are hard to see” (106).

We have already observed how Horace describes himself as a mother bird fearful for its young in *Epodes* 1. Gowers further suggests that the women of *Epodes* 8 and 12 are oddly masculine (or at least *cinaedus*-like), and that Cleopatra and her eunuchs in *Epodes* 9 represent a febrile intersection of orientalism and gender reversal. The dissolution of boundaries in *Epodes* 9 was simultaneously underscored by Elena Giusti (2016), who shows that the poem’s “Bacchic frame of dissolution” presents a

“Topsy-turvy world where the enemy is an *amicus* (10), Cleopatra’s eunuchs are Romans (11), and the Gauls sing the name of Caesar (18)” (132).

Questions of gender fluidity are still a relatively fresh topic when it comes to the study of Horace’s *Epodes*, and much work remains to be done on the erotic figure of Lyciscus in *Epodes* 11 and Bathyllus in *Epodes* 14 – a name associated with the *eromenos* of both Anacreon and Maecenas. Maecenas was incidentally known in antiquity for his “womanly softness,” which may play a role in this constellation of questions as well.

To pick up on this last point, Horace’s relationship with the shadowy Maecenas in his early poetry has drawn understandable scrutiny (as we saw in the previous chapter). In general, the poet confines his references to Maecenas to the private sphere – in *Satires* 1.5, for instance, he avoids emphasizing the political purpose of the journey to Brundisium (i.e. the Treaty of Tarentum, 37 BCE), focusing instead on the joys of friendship and tribulations of travel. In the *Epodes*, we see them heading off for battle, dining together, and drinking on board ship, but their relationship, even if it is not sealed off from official business (see e.g. *Epodes* 1 and 9), generally exists at the rarefied and abstract level of *amicitia* (“friendship”). This notoriously capacious word (“*amicitia*”)helped Romans of unequal rank mitigate their different statuses as patron and client by emphasizing a shared affinity when it came to tastes and outlook on lifeover sordid economic and political exchange. As Peter White (1993) puts it:

“In a Roman context, the emphasis on friendship serves to blunt the consciousness which each of the two parties has of belonging to a particular lineage, census-class, or order, and to refocus attention on particular pursuits and ideals which they share” (14).[[151]](#footnote-151)

Bowditch (2010) is more trenchant:

“Members of the elite tended to avoid the terms *patronus* (“patron”) and *cliens* (“client”) to refer to relations between a benefactor and his aristocratic protégé, preferring the more egalitarian and emotive connotations of *amicitia*, or friendship” (55).[[152]](#footnote-152)

Horace was by no means financially dependent on Maecenas – he remained a *scriba quaestorius* even after he had been Maecenas’ *amicus* for several years (*Satires* 2.6.36-37). As an *eques*, he had assets worth at least 400,000 sesterces, which would have generated enough income to secure a comfortable life.[[153]](#footnote-153) Nevertheless, just like Propertius and Vergil he received from his patron endorsement, symbolic capital, dissemination (“publication”), and so forth.[[154]](#footnote-154) Horace would later describe the relationship as one involving both security (*praesidium*) and prestige (*decus*, *Odes* 1.1.2). He sets up the link to Maecenas and Octavian in the first lines of the book: Maecenas is heading off to Actium, ready to undergo every danger that threatens Caesar (*Epodes* 1.1-6), and in the course of the poem, Horace determines to do so in turn on Maecenas’ behalf, pointedly calling him his “friend” (*amice*, *Epodes* 1.2).[[155]](#footnote-155) Nevertheless, the inequality of the relationship was clear to Horace throughout his career, and the need for personal autonomy becomes a theme in his later *Epistles*.[[156]](#footnote-156)

In terms of political stance, Horace plays his cards close to his chest throughout the earlier *Epodes*, even expressing unmitigated pessimism about the future of Rome in poems 7 and 16 (perhaps included in the collection either as a reminder of how bad things had been or to narrate his own arc of political conversion), yet he reveals them in a flourish in *Epodes* 1 and 9. These have a dramatic setting prior to the final outcome at Actium but were undoubtedly composed after the battle; as Du Quesnay (2002) points out (19), how else could Horace know that Maecenas’ departure was to reach a climax in a sea-battle involving Liburnians pitted against Antonius’ larger vessels, as noted in *Epodes* 1? Apart from these late poems, there are few references to actual contemporary political figures in the *Epodes* besides Maecenas– merely references to Sextus Pompeius as the general of a slave fleet (*Epodes* 4.17-20, 9.7-10).[[157]](#footnote-157) Just as he declined to follow Lucilius in rubbing down the city with salt in his *Satires*, so too does Horace refrain from attacks on public figures in the early *Epodes*. R. O. A. M. Lyne (1995), with depressing cogency, explains Horace’s reticence in criticizing figures such as Marcus Antonius and Sextus Pompeius in terms of Horace “hedging his bets:” the poet had already been on the wrong side once and was not going to be caught out again. As soon as Octavian triumphed over his last major rival, however, Horace swiftly declared his allegiance by castigating Antonius and Cleopatra in *Epodes* 9, retroactively celebrating the victory over Sextus Pompeius in 36 BCE in the same poem. These later *Epodes* lead directly into the encomiastic poetry of the twenties BCE, for example *Odes* 1.37, which was written around the same time as *Epodes* 9: Horace has emerged from his protective chrysalis to become the partisan of the new regime.[[158]](#footnote-158) It was still a gamble, of course, but one that this time paid off.

II. The *Epodes* and Genre

The generic aspects of the *Epodes* have always been a puzzle, with scholars seeking to determine precisely what about the collection makes it “iambic” – that is, to isolate a common feature among the individual poems beyond their relationship to putative Archilochean prototypes. The dual definition of iambic (vituperation + / - iambic meter) mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is already found in Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1448b24-1449a5). It is expressed succinctly by the grammarian Diomedes in the fourth century CE:

*Iambus est carmen maledicum plerumque trimetro uersu et epodo sequente compositum, ut*

 *mala soluta nauis exit alite*

 *ferens olentem Maeuium.*

*Appellatum est autem* παρὰ τὸ ἰαμβίζειν*, quod est maledicere, cuius carminis praecipui scriptores apud Graecos Archilochus et Hipponax, apud Romanos Lucilius et Catullus et Horatius et Bibaculus*.

“Iambus is an invective poem, generally composed in a trimeter verse with an epode following, such as: ‘may the ship carrying smelly Maevius leave under an evil star once it has been unmoored’. However, it is named from ‘*iambizein’*, which means ‘speak evil of’, of which type of song the best authors among the Greeks were Archilochus and Hipponax, among the Romans Lucilius, Catullus, Horace, and Bibaculus” (*Grammatici latini* 1.485.11-17).[[159]](#footnote-159)

Diomedes quotes from Horace’s own *Epodes* 10 in this excerpt, illustrating how influential the poet had become in definitions of the genre of *iambus* by Diomedes’ time. As we have seen in *Epodes* 6 (*namque in malos asperrimus | parata tollo cornua…*, 11-12), Horace certainly composed invective in an iambic meter elsewhere within the *Epodes*. Still, it is telling that the Horatian example Diomedes selected is an outlier within the collection. The *Epodes* contain, as mentioned, a great variety of meters, tones, and topics. If we attempt to reduce the genre to the iambic meter, defined as a short plus a long syllable, then we cannot account for *Epodes* 12, which has dactyls as its base. If we seek to find unity in vituperation, poems such as *Epodes* 11, which Leo famously described as *plane elegia iambis concepta* (“clearly elegy conceived in iambic”), and *Epodes* 13, often compared to Horace’s lyric poetry, become problematic.[[160]](#footnote-160) An “either… or” characterization may still work, but it is a fudge, as the genre is in that case not identified on the basis of a single unifying property.

The question of the genre of Horace’s *Epodes* naturally revolves around the nature of the Archaic Greek genre of *iambus* itself, as Horace’s collection was inspired by the received text of Archilochus, and many of the same issues can be found there. Hellenists have, for instance, characterized early *iambus* as a form of “Blame Poetry.”[[161]](#footnote-161) According to this view, the purpose of the genre resided in finding fault with the conduct of a figure who stood either within or beyond a circle of *philoi* (“friends,” “comrades”), thus affirming the values of and connections between the *philoi*. Iambic poetryreinforced *philotes* (“friendship”): attacking the target served as a warning to the members of the group and regulated behavior within it. Thus conceived, the poetry would have likely been recited in the Archaic assembly or *sumposion*. Importing this anthropological interpretation of the genre into the context of triumviral Rome, Mankin (1995, 2010) argued that Horace selected the genre of *iambus* because of the threat to Roman *philotes* posed by civil warfare: *iambus* represented a mechanism that “that affirmed ‘friendship’ in its community” (1995, 9). Blame poetry, moreover, need not take the form of direct abuse, but could encompass “blame narratives” (such as that of Archilocus fr. 196a West or Horace’s fifth epode). The argument is elegant, but suffers from the fact that early *iambus* (e.g. Archilochus, Hipponax, and Semonides) was not as tonally unified as the theory requires – Archilochus seems not to have been uniformly aggressive, and the situation grows more complicated as one reckons in the other poets.

Neither tone nor meter, it turns out, is sufficient to define even the early form of the genre: what appears to have been considered Archilochean *iambus* involves poetry that was neither aggressive (e.g. fr. 31 West, in iambic trimeters, describing a girl’s hair) nor composed in iambic meter (e.g. fr. 195, a line of dactylic tetrameter catalectic, referring to oncoming evil) Moreover, certain Archilochean poems notcomposed in iambic meter seem to have an iambic “voice” (e.g. fr. 5 West, in elegiacs, where Archilochus discloses that he feels no regret for abandoning his shield). Poems that feature abuse set in iambic meters, such as Archilochus fr. 21 West (on the island of Thasos) are by no means representative of the fragments. Scholars have, therefore, sought the necessary and sufficient feature that qualifies a poem as *iambus* elsewhere – most notably in its performance context. The key statement is that of Kenneth Dover (1964):

“This survey of terminology offers no grounds for doubting the conclusion which I drew from the community of ethos between the elegiacs and ἴαμβοι of Archilochos: no grounds for believing that he regarded them as different genres. It also leaves open the possibility that he used the word ἴαμβοι with reference to all the forms of poem which he composed, their common characteristic being not their metre or language but the type of occasion for which they were composed – their ‘social context’ in fact” (189).

This new defining feature, i.e. performance or social context, has been influential. Nevertheless, establishing the original context for the Archaic performance of iambic is difficult. As Andrea Rotstein (2010) points out,

“There was probably no single performance context of Greek *iambos*, there were probably various re-performance scenarios” (276).

In any case, the criterion is less useful for Horace, given that the occasionality of his poetry is a fiction. As has been generally agreed since Heinze ([2009] 1923), Horace was a literary poet divorced from the putative original performance context: the most that we could speak of is a “fictive” or “mimetic” performance context for his poetry.[[162]](#footnote-162)

There has, however, been something of a breakthrough in the past decade or so in understanding the forces that led *iambus* to be as diffuse as it is, even if it cannot explain the precise nature of the genre for either Archilochus or Horace. In what follows, I will be recapitulating the views of Andrea Rotstein, whose book *The Idea of Iambus* (2010) imported concepts derived from the cognitive sciences into the study of the ancient genre of *iambus* (and of genre in general).[[163]](#footnote-163) These serve as a supplement to the influential notion of the Crossing of the Genres put forward by Wilhelm Kroll (1924) – i.e. that the Archaic genres came to be detached from their ritual contexts and blended in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Rotstein’s argument is that ancient genres (*genera*) correspond to categories and that, given that our understanding of categories has changed dramatically in the past half-century, some of these insights can be helpfully applied to genre studies. In the 1970s, the linguist Eleanor Rosch published a series of articles, e.g. Rosch (1978), proposing a new model for mental categorization (i.e. conceptualization), one that undercut the importance of (a) essential features and (b) fixed boundaries. Her ideas, summarized and augmented in Lakoff (1987), are a continuation of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later thought; as Wittgenstein observed in his *Philosophical Investigations* (§65), many categories, such as game,[[164]](#footnote-164) do not involve a single essential feature shared by all its members. Some games are fun, but war games are not; some are make-believe, but others involve no imaginative aspect (ring-a-ring-a-roses); some are played by several players, yet solitaire, true to its name, is played by a single individual. The category game is bound together by a set of interlocking relationships and links rather than a single unifying property.

The same phenomenon, according to Rotstein, manifests itself in the Greco-Roman genres: the word “tragedy,” for example, refers to a vast number of plays. While it is certainly possible to list necessary properties (e.g. composition in meter) that are shared with other genres (e.g. epic, comedy), it is difficult to identify a sole unifying feature sufficient to define the genre. The number of surviving examples of Attic tragedy is miniscule, yet even within this subset of the original totality we see astonishing variety, e.g. the *Persae* of Aeschylus, the *Prometheus Bound* of Pseudo-Aeschylus, the *Oedipus the King* of Sophocles, and the *Alcestis* of Euripides. In the course of time even more exotic productions went by the name “tragedy,” such as the Hellenistic *Exagoge* of Ezekiel (third orsecond century BCE, a dramatization of the journey of Moses from Egypt in iambic trimeters). Accordingly, Ruth Scodel (2010) states the following in offering a definition:

“It may be most useful, if we want to define tragedy, to use Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘family resemblance’” (13).

Such considerations are also helpful for our understanding of *iambus*. It is possible that early *iambus* was irreducible to an individual feature (e.g. meter or tone), the genre instead being held together by a family resemblance. Some features would have been more prominent than others, but no single property would have been essential.

Certainty is impossible, of course, given the fragmentary state of the evidence, but the idea found early support in Bowie (2001), an article about narrative in early *iambus*:

“We may postulate that *iamboi* constituted a more loosely linked network of poetic types, into which all the above-mentioned fragments fell: that within that network the iambic trimeter was the most commonly used metre; and that within that network poems involving ψόγος were also sufficiently prominent for the term ἰαμβίζειν to develop the meaning ‘abuse’” (6).[[165]](#footnote-165)

Bowie’s latter points are important, as they illustrate how meter and tone may have come to be associated with the genre: iambic trimeter and abuse were highly prominent (albeit not universal) features within the loose group of poems that went by the name “*iambus*” and so came to be linked with it in general. Even in the fifth century, the status of Archilochus was ambiguous when it came to tone: on the one hand Pindar describes him as “fattened on bitter-worded hate” (*Pythian* 2.55-56), but on the other he refers to him as a poet of praise (*Olympian* 9.1-5).[[166]](#footnote-166) To follow Rotstein, it is possible that Archilochus, and with him *iambus*, came gradually to be associated exclusively with anger in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE as the genre began to narrow, and that this was cemented in the Hellenistic period. By Horace’s time, under the influence of Aristotle and other Hellenistic categorizers, the idea of *iambus* had shrunk around the essential properties of composition in iambic meters and vituperation (as noted by Diomedes).

Instead of the “classical paradigm of categorization” employed by Plato and Aristotle, which involves the listing of essential qualities and definition by process of division (compare Gaius’ definition of slaves noted in the previous chapter), Rosch and her colleagues presented a new understanding of categories involving notions such as (a) moveable edges, and (b) intersection, and (c) prototype effects (in addition to Wittgenstein’s notion of family resemblances). Given that these mechanisms are employed within human categorization and concept formation in general, they can be applied to literary genre, as Fishelov (1993) has shown, and indeed to the category of *iambus* as it was understood by Horace. For example, to take (a) moveable edges: at present, there is a given set of items in the category “former US presidents,” but the set will grow over the coming years. The items within the category change, and the “shape” and “weighting” of the category itself changes with them; so it would have been for the category of *iambus* as new poems came to be added to the genre. As far as (b) intersection is concerned, some categories appear to be the products of overlapping genera – a manifestation of “the Crossing of the Genres” that produced blends such as *Epodes* 11, composed in an Archilochean meter and opening with a translation of Archilochus yet “enriched” by Roman love elegy.[[167]](#footnote-167) The notion of (c) the prototype ties much of the re-evaluation of *iambus* together. Just as some birds are more “bird-y” than others (for example, robins are considered by experimental subjects to be more birdlike than penguins), so too would some examples of *iambus* have been perceived as more typical examples of the genre than others. Accordingly, Rotstein argued that the received genre of *iambus* could be represented as a set of concentric circles radiating out from the poetry of Archilochus in the middle (typical) to less representative (atypical) examples of the genre on the periphery.[[168]](#footnote-168) In turn, some poems of Archilochus may have been thought of as more *iambus*-like than others. Certain categories (e.g. that of tall men) in fact have no boundaries as such, in which case the category becomes susceptible to the *sorites-*paradox: how tall do you have to be (i.e. how typical of tall men) to qualify as a tall man? This, too, may play a role in the affiliation of a poem at the “boundary” of a genre category.

Rotstein does not consider Horace’s iambic poetry directly (although she adduces him as evidence for the post-Aristotelian conceptualization of the genre), but the ramifications of category theory for our understanding of the *Epodes* are major. Released from Diomedes’ dual definition of “an invective poem, generally composed in a trimeter verse with an epode following,” which is partly based on a selective reading of Horace anyway,the genre of *iambus* becomes a far more flexible and cognitively realistic structure. It accounts for the tonal and metrical variety of both Archilochus and his emulator. The difficulty of defining the genre felt by modern scholarship derives from the pressure to identify an essential element – be it meter, tone, or performance context – in the face of the fact that the category operates by principles alien to the classical one. While some genre categories may be easily definable via classical categorization (the modern haiku or limerick are good candidates due to their strict metrical / formal uniformity), others are not. There are, in short, different categories of category, and to expect them all to function within the Aristotelian framework is unrealistic. This latter framework – the classical model – was the province of experts and educators, whose aim was to describe itemsin as clear a way as possible. Rotstein makes the excellent point that the definitions it generated were potentially not even intended as the final word by ancient educators, in that once the most prominent features (meter + vituperation) were understood by the student, exceptions and subtleties could be introduced (130).

Horace was certainly aware of essentialist methods of defining the genres (i.e. classical categorization). In an important section of the *Art of Poetry* (73-92), he defines various genres in a way reminiscent of the Aristotelian procedure in stressing the importance of a “fitting” relationship between a poem’s form and content: the iambic meter is appropriate to anger, the dactylic hexameter accommodates wars and the deeds of kings, and so on. Each genre has its own modes and tones that cannot be violated, with Horace soon afterwards referring to the “law of genre” (*operis lex*, 135) that forbids poets from certain usages. Here, Horace is clearly working within the classical paradigm, sifting and separating the relevant genres and their functions in a way almost reminiscent to Plato’s discussion in the *Laws*. His view of the genres as expressed in the *Art of Poetry* has the following commitments:

1. Works are assigned to genres based on their possessing certain essential features.
2. All members of a genre category are equal members of that category – there are neither central nor peripheral exemplars.
3. Works are either in a category or out of it – there are no borderline cases or blends.
4. There are clear boundaries that divide the genre categories.

On this model, each of the genres has an inventor (e.g. Homer for epic, Archilochus for iambic), a form (e.g. hexameter, iambic), and subject matter that fits into the form (e.g. deeds of kings, aggression). The matching of meter and subject matter makes use of a pair of conceptual metaphors (ideas are objects, words are containers) whereby content is loaded into conceptually hollow words and either fits them or fails to. Horace even plays with the metaphor by reversing it – compare the picturesque example of the metonymic “sock” of comedy and “boot” of tragedy “taking” the iambic foot:[[169]](#footnote-169)

 *hunc socci cepere pedem grandesque cothurni*

“The sock of comedy and boot of tragedy took this foot” (*Art of Poetry* 80).

As with much else in the *Art of Poetry*, however, it unclear how serious he is being in his categorization of the genres, not least because of (a) the quizzical generic status of the poemitself and (b) the exceptions to generic propriety that Horace himself explicitly invokes (see below, p. 000). The tensions within Horace’s use of genre (the classical versus the intuitive) in the *Art of Poetry* suggest that his employment of the classical model in dividing up the *genera* of poetry is likely ironic.[[170]](#footnote-170)

Further evidence for this reading can be found in the poet’s own *iambus*, in that Horace’s *Epodes* resist analysis according to the essentializing model he proposes in the *Art of Poetry* (iambic meter + anger).[[171]](#footnote-171) Various authors in the collection of Bather and Stocks (2016) follow Rotstein, viewing Horace as returning to the original multiformity of Archaic *iambus* in the wake of the categorizations of the Hellenistic editors that worked to narrow it. Andrew Morrison (2016) suggests that Horace began his book of iambic with a poem about friendship, supposedly a marginal topic for iambic as he received it, to highlight this reversion: Horace’s iambic, like that of early Greece, could be about friendship as well as hate.[[172]](#footnote-172) The different forms that iambus could adopt are rehearsed in *Epodes* 3-7, finding a programmatic crescendo of sorts in the explicit references to Archilochus and Hipponax in *Epodes* 6. Horace’s apparent looseness when it comes to his definition *iambus*, according to this view,is not a mistake butreflects an important feature of Archilochus’ own poetry: according to Morrison, Horace effects a leap back past Aristotle and the Hellenistic critics to the colorfulness of the original composers of the genre. He also notes, however, that Horace does not entirely bypass the Hellenistic period, since Callimachus himself was an important figure within the iambic tradition (and the very editions of Archilochus that Horace is using were assembled by the critics of the period).[[173]](#footnote-173)

Indeed, Horace’s approach to genre, as manifested in his poetry rather than in his ironic theoretical discussions, may have been influenced by contemporary philosophical ideas. Earlier scholars such as Charles Brink (1963) traced Horace’s views on genre back to the shadowy Peripatetic philosopher Neoptolemus of Parium, mentioned at the beginning of Porphyrio’s commentary on the *Art of Poetry* (quoted below, p. 000) and attacked by Philodemus. Recent scholars, however, have become pessimistic about our ability of finding out much about Neoptolemus. More promising are the fragmentary books of Philodemus’ *On Poetry* themselves, whichhave been made significantly more accessible by the recent Oxford editions and commentaries of Richard Janko. The views of Philodemus, who wrote in the Bay of Naples in the first century BCE, and his adversaries about poetry have been investigated by Michael McOsker (2021), and it is likely that the Epicurean influence on Horace’s poetic praxis will become more studied in the coming years. One might, for example, tentatively turn to Epicurean concept formation as a possible alternative to classical categorization in understanding Horace’s approach to categories of genre. Epicureans such as Philodemus relied on what they called *prolepseis* (“anticipations,” “preconceptions”) for conceptual material.[[174]](#footnote-174) Essentially, a *prolepsis* resembles the concept to which words correspond, a kind of composite built up by repeated exposures to a given item. Repeated observations of a cow, for instance, give one the *prolepsis* of cows (i.e. the mental item) to which the word “cow” attaches. A *prolepsis*, then,is an empirically derived mental idea. While the specifics are unclear, given the nature of the sources, *prolepseis* appear to have played a major role for the Epicureans in grounding debate in reality rather than mere words. Given that they issued from experience, *prolepseis* served as a criterion of truth that could be used in philosophical discussions. A figure with Epicurean leanings such as Horace may have been tempted to conceive of a genre (e.g,. *iambus*) in terms of a *prolepsis*, a mental idea built up over successive exposures to instances of the genre, rather than a monolithic all-or-nothing classical category arrived at by division. In short, Horace had philosophically principled alternatives to the classical model of categorization on display in the *Art of Poetry*, and these would seem a promising area of study.

Rotstein’s account of the genre of *iambus* (and of genre in general) is compelling but modest in its payoff. It helps us better understand how the genre of *iambus* may have been conceptualized, as well as the forces that influenced the tradition, but does not claim that we can establish either whatthis concept was for Archilochus or Horace: far too little Archaic poetry has survived in full to be able to establish what prototypical *iambus* might have been for either. The Augustan poet had access to the complete works of Archilochus (Damasippus describes Horace taking an edition of Archilochus with him to the country at *Satires* 2.3.11-12), and until we discover more of the latter’s work we will remain largely in the dark about Horace’s approach. What the new model offers us, however, is a theory for how human beings construct categories that would appear to be valid for ancient thinkers as well. Despite relaxing the need for essential properties, moreover, it does not permit a situation of “anything goes,” as individual poems would have been included within a genre category by their relationship to the best-case (“typical”) examples of it. Moreover, the theory interacts productively with more traditional ways of understanding literary influence and genre expansion within antiquity, for example Kroll’s notion of the Crossing of the Genres and Bloom’s theory of the Anxiety of Influence.[[175]](#footnote-175) Even if “by adopting a genre a poet simultaneously appropriates that genre’s *persona*,”[[176]](#footnote-176) it is rarely the case that an author of note imitates a predecessor in every detail. Horace’s iambic *persona* itself would have borne a family resemblance to that of Archilochus rather than replicating it precisely. The application of modern findings about how the mind works can aid us in understanding how poets such as Horace used inherited generic matrices; we will encounter a further way in which recent findings in the cognitive sciences can assist our reading of Horace in the following chapter.

**III. *Odes***

I. Directions in the Scholarship

Horace’s reputation today rests on his first three books of *Odes*. These eighty-eight poems were unparalleled in their scope and ambition, looking back to the melic song of, e.g. Alcaeus and Sappho through the lens of Hellenistic scholarship. Their blend of old and new was in keeping with the classicizing tendency of other Augustan media (e.g. the reliefs on the Ara Pacis Augustae). As Michael Putnam (1986) puts it, with respect to *Odes* 4.5:

“Horace’s ode stands as metaphor for the Augustan Age itself. It revives the old and discovers the new, carefully incorporating the past into a present that, for all its façade of conservatism, has its share of bold invention” (109).

On the one hand, Horace drew on his Archaic models in deep ways. The translations of the Greek lyric poets in the first lines of several of his poems (the “mottoes”) have been studied ever since Giorgio Pasquali’s seminal *Orazio lirico* (1920).[[177]](#footnote-177) For example:

*nunc est bibendum*

“Now it must be drunk” (*Odes* 1.37.1).

νῦν χρὴ μεθύσθην

“Now it is necessary to drink” (Alcaeus fr. 332.1).

Links with early Greek models continue to emerge. Morgan (2016), for example, has noted a parallel between Horace’s “Soracte Ode” (*Odes* 1.9) and the “Brothers Poem” of Sappho, discovered only in 2014.[[178]](#footnote-178) On the other hand, Horace’s *Odes* are manifestly a different cultural product from the poetry of Alcaeus and Sappho. In an influential article, Denis Feeney (2009 [1993]) stressed that Horace’s connection to the canonical nine lyric poets was necessarily mediated by the scholarship of the Hellenistic age: the Augustan poet had no access to the works of Sappho and Alcaeus save through the editions assembled by the librarians and categorizers mentioned in the previous chapter.[[179]](#footnote-179) Gregor Bitto (2012, 2020) has augmented Feeney’s point by arguing that Horace was familiar with the Hellenistic scholia to lyric poets such as Pindar. Even Horace’s publication of his poetry in book format was a Hellenistic practice. All this use of Greek material was moreover incorporated into a Roman context. Thus, while it may seem monolithic to us,[[180]](#footnote-180) Horatian lyric in fact represents a fusion of disparate influences (Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman) in a kind of premodern postmodernity.

It is probably the *ethos* of Horatian lyric that has been found most distinctive. Horace may have disagreed with Callimachus about many things (wine, for one), but in an appropriately understated article Hans Joachim Mette (2009 [1962]) showed how Horace’s aesthetics in the *Odes* were in step with the Alexandrian librarian’s poetic principles.[[181]](#footnote-181) Horace prizes the small, well-wrought poem over the grand epic, an affinity showcased in his *recusatio* to Agrippa where he declares himself “too subtle for grand themes” (*tenues grandia*, *Odes* 1.6).[[182]](#footnote-182) It has been observed that Horace uses superlatives (e.g. *-issimus*) less frequently in his *Odes* than other poets, opting instead for subtler comparatives and litotes,[[183]](#footnote-183) a form of linguistic restraint consistent with his general adherence to the golden mean. Yet while Horace’s poetry is indeed marked by its emphasis on moderation, he nevertheless frequently departs from it, for example in the triumphant *Odes* 1.37 and the exalted “Roman Odes” (or “Alcaic Hexad”).[[184]](#footnote-184) Horace needed to celebrate the powerful, and Callimachus only offered a limited model for this. Ultimately, Alexandrian literary tendencies are combined, sometimes uncomfortably, with Archaic and Classical models – a feature that McDermott (1981) has characterized as the “paradox” of the Horatian program (1643).

The generic definition of Horatian lyric has been less vexed than that of the *Epodes*, largely because the representatives of Greek lyric were more varied and offered a greater range of styles and tones. There is no pressure to unite the collection of *Odes* around an essential property as seems to be the case when it comes to *iambus*, and Davis (1991) and Harrison (2007b) have studied how material from different genres can in fact be “assimilated into” and “enrich” Horace’s lyric. In the early 1920s, Heinze (2009 [1923]) offered something of a typology of the Horatian ode, emphasizing three traits in particular: (a) fictionality in terms of the form of address, and the pretense that the poet is standing opposite the addressee; (b) an expression of the poet’s will and desire to affect the addressee, and therefore a concern with future events; and (c) the suggestion of a performance context within which Horace is extemporizing.[[185]](#footnote-185) According to Heinze, then, Horatian lyric poetry is to be differentiated from the modern genre of lyric, which often lays emphasis on monologue and the poet’s present – his or her feelings, hopes, etc. Modern lyric in fact has more in common with Roman love elegy than Horace’s lyric poetry – a crucial point when it comes to attempts, such as that of Jonathan Culler (2015), to unite lyric as a transhistorical genre. Barchiesi (2009) has built on Heinze in characterizing the *Odes* loosely in terms of prominent features: the *Odes* tend to situate themselves in the country rather than the city, involve an addressee, strophic meters (stichic meters are rarer than in Catullus although Horace never goes for the full Pindaric strophe-antistrophe-epode model), and the pretense of occasionality, yet not all of these features need be present in any individual poem.

The morphology of the Horatian ode continued to be studied throughout the twentieth century. Piet Schrijvers (2009 [1973]), for example, noted how many Horatian odes have a common word in their first and final lines, a common topic at the beginning and close, or a “breaking-off formula” (*Abbruchsformel*) at their end. Ring structure (ABA) and other structural patterns (e.g. ABC) in the *Odes* have been recently revisited in Tarrant (2020); like most things in Horace, there is no universal principle and *uariatio* tends to predominate. In line with his avoidance of superlatives, scholars have noted the constrained vocabulary of the *Odes* in comparison with that of his lyric forebears: this is clearly apparent when he is compared to Pindar, but the same goes for less exalted lyric composers such as Catullus.[[186]](#footnote-186) Nowhere in Horace’s poetry, for instance, do we find the lexical experimentation, liberal use of Greek, and predilection for compound words and diminutives as we do in the latter: instead, in the words of Syme (1939), what we get is

“a clear, firm and even metallic style, a distrust of sentiment and a realistic conception of human life” (255).

As Maurice Bowra (1953) noted, in contrast to the Rococo aesthetics of the Neoteric poets, Horace’s artistry consisted in giving “new life to words by unusual combinations and figures of speech” (444). Indeed, in a typically reflexive move, the very expression that Horace later coined to describe this action, *callida iunctura* (“artful joining,” *Art of Poetry* 47-48), is an instantiation of the principle it describes.[[187]](#footnote-187)

One feature of Horace’s *Odes* that has always drawn debate is the structure of the poetry book (compare the discussions of the *Satires* and *Epodes* above). As Matthew Santirocco (1986) has remarked in surveying this tradition:

“By the turn of the century [i.e. 1900] an investigator could justly complain that not a single possibility had been left untried” (1).

The 1980s saw at least three additional contributions to the debate. Helena Dettmer (1983) put forward complex notions of ring structure and correspondence, and Santirocco (1986) himself identified an *aurea mediocritas* between (a) intentional structure and (b) *uariatio* in the Horatian poetry book. Porter (1987), meanwhile, studied the first three books as unfolding poem by poem in a quasi-narrative. The openings and closings of the individual books especially reveal the poet’s organizational hand, where meter has long been recognized as an important feature (as with the *Epodes*): the first nine poems of book one are marked by different meters (the “Parade Odes”),[[188]](#footnote-188) the first eleven poems of the second book alternate between Alcaic and Sapphic stanzas, while the first six poems of book three (the “Roman Odes” or “Alcaic Hexad”) comprise an unparalleled run of Alcaic stanzas. Other organizational principles have included Horace’s lyric models. Thus, Lowrie (2009 [1995]) argues that the set of odes that follows upon the Parade Odes (i.e. *Odes* 1.12-18) constitutes a parade of lyric predecessors – for example, *Odes* 1.12 alludes to Pindar, 1.13 to Sappho, 1.14 to Alcaeus, and so on.

The bookishness of Horace’s *Odes* is on display already in *Odes* 1.1, where significant debate has surrounded the interpretation of a single word, *insero* (“insert,” “include”):

*quodsi me lyricis uatibus inseres,*

*sublimi feriam sidera uertice*.

“But if you include / insert me among the lyric poets, I will strike the stars with my lofty head” (*Odes* 1.1.35-36).

While Robin Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard (1970) followed Rudolf Pfeiffer (1968) in taking the word *inserere* to translate ἐγκρίνειν (“include,” i.e. “canonize”), thus referring to Horace’s being “included” among the nine canonical lyric poets by Maecenas, Joseph Farrell (2007) takes *inserere* as suggesting that Horace is being metonymically equated with his poetry book and quite literally “inserted” among the Greek lyricists in Maecenas’ library: Horace’s body figuratively becomes Horace’s book.[[189]](#footnote-189) Matthew Leigh (2010), on the other hand, has argued that the verb “insert” (*inserere*) refers rather to Horace being “woven into” the garland of the lyricists, a metaphor for poetry familiar from Meleager.[[190]](#footnote-190) The debate has reached somewhat vertiginous heights. Sullivan (2021) has recently maintained that *Odes* 1.1 itself represents a “parade” of lyric predecessors: the reader encounters allusions to each of the nine lyric poets in turn throughout the poem (from Pindar through to Sappho). On Sullivan’s reading, the poem practices what it requests from Maecenas, Horace ultimately “inserting” himself withinthe canon of Greek lyric poets at the poem's close.[[191]](#footnote-191)

Questions of medium and voice have drawn a significant amount of attention in recent years, and the work of Michèle Lowrie is probably the most prominent within this category. Lowrie (1997) focused on Horace’s narrative odes – poems within the collection that bucked the generic trend by exhibiting a significant amount of narrative content rather than the simple description of a scene / situation or interaction with an addressee. That is, she studied the points where “lyric begins to turn into something else” (2). Narrative, according to Lowrie, depends on continuity, while apostrophe, a frequent feature of lyric, serves to break it: the two modes of speech appear to be at odds. Lowrie shows how the disjunction could be productive, arguing that groups of poems within and across Horace’s books themselves constitute “narratives” – for instance, the civil war series *Odes* 1.37, 1.38, and 2.1. These narratives built across poems may disrupt easy interpretations of individual pieces as pro- or anti-Augustan – *Odes* 1.37, for example, is deflated by the progression to the quiet *Odes* 1.38.[[192]](#footnote-192) Lowrie (2009b), on the other hand, focuses on Augustan descriptions of their written media in negotiations of power and in negotiations with the powerful, paying particular attention to the *Odes*, a collection that embeds the notion of performance within the practices of literary culture. For Lowrie, the question of the orality of his song was moot – Horace’s odes may or may not have been actually performed (94), but written poetry could be effective too:[[193]](#footnote-193)

“Horace challenges the idea that the divorce between writing and performance leads to poetic alienation” (235).

Horace was keenly aware of the ideological power of song in Roman culture; the party at the end of *Odes* 4.15, which depicts the Roman people singing of Troy, Anchises, and the “offspring of Venus” in unison, brings the probably fictional tradition of the *carmina conuiualia* (“communal songs”) anachronisticallyinto the Augustan age.

 Discussion of poetic medium can also be found in Lauren Curtis (2017), who considers the role of the chorus and the representation of lyric within Horace’s *Odes*. Building on Barchiesi (2000), she investigates how Horace depicts “the creation of lyric within lyric” in *Odes* 1.17, where Tyndaris is invited to play the “Teian lyre” (*fide Teia*, 18).[[194]](#footnote-194) The resulting *mise-en-abyme* illustrates lyric “folding into” itself, Horace describing lyric production in a bucolic context radically removed from that in which *Odes* 1.17 itself was actually produced. The contrast between image and reality is stark:

“Horace reconstructs Greek lyric poetry’s framework of occasional, ‘live’ performance within the space of a book whose technologies of writing will, the poet hopes, ensure his work’s survival” (132).

By focusing in turn on the chorus in Augustan culture (“Roman *choreia*”), and its evolving role in Horace’s lyric between the satyrs and groves of *Odes* 1.1 and the more civically engaged poetry of *Odes* 3.1, Curtis arrives at original interpretations of the *Saecular Song* and the fourth book of *Odes*, in which the poet and his chorus finally fuse into one.

In another work devoted to medium, Kathleen McCarthy (2019) considers what she calls the Roman I-voice (i.e. first-person poetry) and analyzes lyric speech via the narratological distinction between “story” and “discourse.” “Story” involves the actual situation dramatized within the poem – for example, Horace’s address to his slave in *Odes* 1.38. “Discourse,” however, refers to what the poet is attempting to communicate not within the “story world” but to his reader – for example, in *Odes* 1.38 the point seems to be about Horace’s aesthetic principles. It is in the tension between these two levels within Horace’s poetry, so argues McCarthy, that we can distinguish Horace’s writing from, say, that of Catullus or Propertius. Catullus typically draws us more into the story world of the poetry (his negotiations with Furius and Aurelius, for example) than Horace, who strives for distance and abstraction from the events he narrates.[[195]](#footnote-195)In *Odes* 1.9, for example, addressed to Thaliarchus, it seems that Horace’s point is to speak to the reader (“discourse”) by drawing him or her out toward the historical poet (Horace himself), rather than to draw the reader into the communicative engagement portrayed within the poem. McCarthy’s distinction between story-world and discourse is helpful for understanding individual poems, and there are many penetrating moments in her analysis of, for instance, Horace’s deviation from traditional hymnic style in his *Odes*. However, it remains to be seen if the situation for Horace can be generalized over the entire body of his lyric, given that certain poems would seem more immersive than others.

In line with McCarthy’s emphases, a prominent strand in the study of the *Odes* has consisted in detailing the pragmatics of lyric speech – the relationship between the speaker and addressee, the effectiveness of the poetry, and so on. Mario Citroni (2009 [1983]) pointed out that Horace writes for different audiences – the addressees themselves, the group of “insiders” or friends privy to the exchange, and finally the broader readership. Within this situation, ostensibly private poems become public acts requiring a high degree of tact and poise – a feature that also conditions the *Epistles*. According to this mode of reading, literary criticism verges on sociology. Oliensis (1998) followed up on Citroni’s approach, investigating the networks of readers and “overreaders” of Horace’s writing (see above, p. 000). Horace, for example, knew that his poetry would be read by people besides Maecenas – Augustus, for one – and also knew that these overreaders knew that he knew. One corollary of Oliensis’ idea of the overreader is that the poems could in fact be addressed to figures beyond the “dummy” addressee. The likelihood of putting a step wrong in this delicate dance was high. One gets no sense of paranoia from Horace’s works, but the poet was clearly aware of the risks of an inept statement: as he says elsewhere, *nescit uox missa reuerti* (“a word sent forth cannot return” *Art of Poetry* 390).

Scholars have at times sought to pin down the evolution of Horace’s personal relationships from his poetry, supplementing the verse itself with the suggestive statements of the Suetonian *Life of Horace*. Santirocco (2009 [1984]), for example, has argued that Horace’s relationship to Maecenas was dynamic and changing – in the first book of odes he is deferential, but he starts to give advice and guidance to his patron in the second book. The third book of *Odes*, according to Santirocco, then depicts Horace as philosophically more advanced than his friend – becoming, “in a sense, the spiritual patron of Maecenas” (121). A prime exhibit is *Odes* 3.29, with its reference to Maecenas as “worried” (*sollicitus* 26) about Rome’s well-being. Finally, by the fourth book in 13 BCE, Horace’s patron has been largely supplanted by the *princeps* himself. This progression is plausible and reflects a gradual slide toward the center of power, although it depends on an intentional narrative being presented in *Odes* 1-3 (which most scholars believe to have been published simultaneously).[[196]](#footnote-196) Certainly, it is unlikely that there was any abrupt rupture between Horace and his patron.[[197]](#footnote-197) His relationship to Augustus, for which we are largely dependent on the information provided by Suetonius, seems to have been rather unique, highly informal, and based on mutual admiration. Suetoniusreports, for example, the light humor of Augustus’ complaint that no mention had been made of him in Horace’s *sermones* (probably here referring to the first book of *Epistles*):

*irasci me tibi scito, quod non in plerisque eiusmodi scriptis mecum potissimum loquaris. an uereris ne apud posteros infame tibi sit, quod uidearis familiaris nobis esse?*

“Know that I am angry at you because you do not talk rather with me in the majority of your writings of this type; do you fear that your reputation will suffer because you seem to be friendly with me?” (Suetonius, *Life of Horace*).

We saw in the Introduction that Augustus’ words were probably truer than he imagined, yet from their informality we can see the degree to which Horace had “insinuated himself to Augustus” (*insinuatus Augusto*), to use Suetonius’ phrase.

The political nature of the poetry for Augustus in the first three books has been a source of discomfort to readers since the mid-twentieth century. Italian (and to a lesser extent German) fascist iconography and propaganda was influenced by the Augustan model, and the emphasis on rebirth (“palingenesis”) after a period of decadence was common to both.[[198]](#footnote-198) Poems such as *Odes* 2.15, 3.6, and 3.24 all speak of Rome’s decline from a supposed ideal along vectors that had been (or were in the process of being) addressed by the *princeps*. In *Odes* 2.15, for example, luxurious villas represent Roman decadence, whereas in *Odes* 3.24 the emphasis is on the need for a strong leader to establish laws to restrain license; both poems feed into Augustan ideological and legislative concerns. *Odes* 3.6, the last of the “Roman Odes,”[[199]](#footnote-199) is perhaps the bluntest of the political poems, recounting the dereliction of Rome’s temples, pollution of the sanctity of marriage, and subsequent debasement of Rome’s military precisely to emphasize the need for Octavian and his policies. The poem is dated by reference to Octavian’s renovation of some eighty temples soon after his return to the capital in 28 BCE (Augustus, *Res Gestae* 20.4). It is both a virtuoso performance and sickeningly “on the nose.” Debate about it has, however, been intensifying; on the one hand, Armstrong (1989) puts it thus, emphasizing the poem’s context in Horace’s book of poetry:

“To me [this is] the low point of all Roman poetry, because no lesser poet could have galvanized this plate of dead frogs’ legs [i.e. *Odes* 3.6] into so much rhetorical life. No doubt the virgin should walk over onto the next page and learn morals from Asterie, Gyges, and Enipeus!” (101).

Indeed, *Odes* 3.7 seems to undercut or “sap” the blunt statements of *Odes* 3.6 by reveling in the possibility of marital infidelity.[[200]](#footnote-200) Armstrong’s accusation, then, is not only of collaboration but of hypocrisy. On the other hand, T. P. Wiseman (2022), in a typically vigorous and adventurous argument, has recently posited that the poem was composed for actual performance at *ludi* (“games”) held by Octavian in February of 28 BCE to celebrate his vow to restore the city’s temples. Horace, as the protégé of Maecenas, was called upon to publicly accuse Octavian’s enemies (i.e. the Roman elite) for their part in Rome’s decline and to highlight the salvific policies of the *princeps* (including the reconstruction of the temples). The poem, according to Wiseman, thus represents a kind of agitational precursor to the *Saecular Song* performed a decade later.[[201]](#footnote-201) It is of course possible that both Armstrong and Wiseman are right – that the poem was both (a) composed to fulfil a public function at the behest of Horace’s patron and (b) situated within the third book of *Odes* with a certain degree of irony.

Indeed, Horace, as an individual, seems to have been far from Augustus’ model Roman citizen: quite aside from the lurid albeit doubtful details of Horace’s mirror-lined bedroom relayed by Suetonius, the poet remained unmarried in the face of Augustan legal measures.[[202]](#footnote-202) Ultimately, he would leave everything he owned to Augustus by word of mouth (Suetonius, *Life of Horace*); as a bachelor, he was banned by the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* from leaving property to anyone but blood relatives to the sixth degree.[[203]](#footnote-203) Feeney (2009 [2002]) tentatively suggests that the author of the *Art of Poetry*, which professes to instruct in the composition of drama, might have even been technically barred for a few years from attending the theater by Augustus’ theater and marriage legislation.[[204]](#footnote-204) In any case, Horace was a man who fell on the wrong side of most of Augustus’ policies, and therefore offers an interesting case-study of the cleft between Augustan legislation and practice. Given his closeness to the *princeps*, Horace’s waywardness would seem to reflect the instrumentality of Augustus’ aims – that, following Catharine Edwards (1993), the measures to curb adultery and promote marriage were chess-moves calculated to respond to the Roman moralistic tradition (as represented by Sallust) as much as they were designed to resolve any acute demographic or social problems (36).

Syme himself, in *The Roman Revolution* (1939), comes across as surprisingly soft on Horace upon re-reading; either that, or his irony is almost imperceptible. Although he describes Augustus as being the first to exploit and monopolize literature as “an instrument of government” (251) on a grand scale, and speaks of Horace as one “favored by the government” who contributed poetry “designed to be civic rather than individual, more useful than ornamental” (460), he nevertheless gives the artist his due:

“This Epicurean man appeared to surrender to a romantic passion for frugality and virtue, a fervent sympathy with martial and imperial ideals. In his *Odes* may be discovered the noblest expression of the Augustan policy of social regeneration and the most illuminating commentary upon it” (462).

Even if it was not his ideal, Horace was a realist when it came to the need for the *princeps* as a guarantor of peace: the material benefits that Horace received from the regime “may have reinforced, but did not pervert” his sentiments (465). If Syme pulls a punch or two, other scholars have not been so kind. Lyne (1995) uses expressions of Horace such as “turncoat” (13), “image management” in his portrayals of Maecenas’ circle (14), “hedging his bets” before Actium (28, see above p. 000), “distortion of truth” (42), and “indirect method” (57).

Horace’s support for Augustus, virtually non-existent in the early *Epodes*, surges after Actium and reaches a crescendo in the *Saecular Song* (17 BCE) and fourth book of *Odes* (13 BCE). The former has been much debated since the recovery of the *acta* of the Saecular Games or (the *ludi saeculares*) of 17 BCE on the banks of the Tiber in 1890, which allowed Horace’s poem to be connected to and compared with an actual event.[[205]](#footnote-205) Some, such as Barchiesi (2009), have discussed the practicalities of performing this “*paean* in Sapphic stanzas.” The poem seems to have been sung in different locations by a choir of boys and girls, but what were the specifics? Did the boys and girls sing in unison or in turn? Ernst August Schmidt (2009 [1985]) sought to divide the poem between the choirs of boys and girls, going beyond the tripartite structure initially advocated by Fraenkel (1957). Others have discussed the novelty of religious thought and expression within the poem, Feeney (1998) suggesting that Horace, probably taking a hint from Augustus himself, largely eclipses the old Capitoline gods Jupiter and Juno in emphasizing the Palatine divinities situated close to Augustus’ own house,

“Parading one name after another for Apollo and his sister (Phoebus, Sol, Apollo; Diana, Lucina, Luna)” (34).

Feeney further shows how Horace glosses the Hellenic divinities Ilithyia and the Moerae as their Roman equivalents, thus offering clarifying commentary on the Greek nomenclature of Augustus’ *ludi saeculares*. Against Feeney, Habinek (2005) argues that the *Saecular Song* was more organically incorporated within the *ludi* than generally believed, viewing it as enacting the ritual initiation of the singers to assure the state’s continuation (151), although his claims about the early history of the *ludi* and their “reanimation” in 17 BC have been controversial.[[206]](#footnote-206)

Even the category of speech that the poem represents has been debated: the poem begins with the subjunctives of prayer but ends by stressing the accomplishment of what has been requested in a series of indicatives. This anomaly, already noted by Bentley, is summed up by Thomas (2011) in the following way:

“The hymn states the fulfilment of its imprecations even in the course of its own performance.”[[207]](#footnote-207)

Putnam (2010; cf. 2000) calls this “a surprising but brilliant maneuver on the poet’s part,” stressing the Horace’s emphasis on “the magic power of his own song” (240). There is definitely something to this (the poet’s own statement about the efficacy of prayer at *Epistles* 2.2.134-138 is often compared), but the question remains as to whether the move is entirely convincing.[[208]](#footnote-208) Horace delivers a fine balancing act within the poem between modest prayer and celebration of the accomplishments of the regime, but it is unclear whether these two modes of speech – prayer and panegyric – are entirely reconcilable. In any case, in the wake of the *ludi saeculares* Horace clearly read the inscription

*CARMEN COMPOSVIT Q. HORATIUS FLACCUS*

“Q. Horatius Flaccus composed the song” (*CIL* 6.32323.149)

on the *acta* of the Saecular Games with pride, as he boasts of his achievement in *Odes* 4.6. Incidentally, as noted by Woodman (2019), the sentence above incorporates an Asclepiad line, the meter that brackets *Odes* 1-3: in addition to identifying Horace as the composer of the *Saecular Song*, the sentence “also acknowledges the collection of poems which won him the commission” (912).

The fourth book of *Odes* (13 BCE) is the most partisan book of Horace’s *oeuvre*.[[209]](#footnote-209) As Lyne notes, it is here and in *Epistles* 2.1 that Horace begins to write to Augustus in the second person: his earlier lyric at times engaged with but scarcely ever addressed the figure of the *princeps*.[[210]](#footnote-210) For example, in *Odes* 3.14 Horace celebrated Augustus’ return from Spain in the third person by means of an appeal to the Roman people (*o plebs*, 1), while in *Odes* 3.24 the poet alluded to Augustus’ moral program obliquely through an indistinct reference to a certain *quisquis* (“whoever…” 25); in the *Saecular Song* Augustus is mentioned in the act of melding with the figure of Aeneas, but again only in the third person. At *Odes* 4.15.4, however, Horace praises the accomplishment of *tua, Caesar, aetas* (“your age, Caesar”).[[211]](#footnote-211) While Book Four has many beauties – the discussion of aging in *Odes* 4.1, the description of the inexorable passage of time in *Odes* 4.7 (Housman’s favorite), and the assertion of the power of song in *Odes* 4.8 – the political poems dedicated to Augustus (4.5, 4.15) and his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus (4.4, 4.14) are central within the book, and their fulsomeness has been off-putting. In fact, Harrison (2013a) relates that David West and Robin Nisbet demurred to write commentaries on the book because of its questionable allegiances and themes (64).

The debate about the book’s poetic status came to a head in the postwar years. Fraenkel (1957), who considered the *Saecular Song* “the greatest triumph of Horace’s achievement as a lyric poet” (382), found the Augustan odes of the fourth book to be forthright, superlative poetry, calling *Odes* 4.5 (*diuis orte bonis*) “one of [Horace’s] most perfect poems” (440). For Fraenkel, the public facing poetry is the core of Horace’s work. Fraenkel’s was, however, a minority position; compare the verdict of Brink (1982):

“E. Fraenkel, for all the vigorous and critical scholarship of his *Horace*, seems to me to have been a little naïve about the nature of political life” (523).

Fraenkel’s *Horace* merits study as a fascinating act of reception in its own right, but it was an outlier in the mid-twentieth century.[[212]](#footnote-212) La Penna (1963), writing in the context of postwar Italy, found Horace’s political poems to be cold, rhetorical, and without real poetic value: the poet’s heart was not in it, even if his mind was. Horace’s true nature is reflected in the more melancholic private poetry on the fleeting nature of human existence. This indeed has been the site of many debates about the political poetry – the extent to which Horace’s heart is in the propaganda, whether the poems that exhibit it can be separated from the “private” poetry, and whether any of that actually matters.

A minority of recent scholars have taken the civic poems of *Odes* 4 at face value – as blatant examples of Augustan propaganda, a term that scholars have traditionally hesitated to use of a premodern society without mass communication and top-down dissemination.[[213]](#footnote-213) Du Quesnay (2009 [1995]) sets *Odes* 4.5 within its ideological and historical contexts, connecting it with the directions for rhetorical panegyric given by the later rhetorician Menander Rhetor. Du Quesnay suggests that the hymn is a *kletikon* (“invitation”) to Augustus, in which the *princeps* is envisioned as penetrating the very households of the Roman people to be toasted each day together with the family *Lares*. This application of rhetorical principles would seem to meet one of the core questions for the poets of the Augustan period: how precisely to celebrate Augustus?[[214]](#footnote-214) This question is also discussed by Don Fowler (2009 [1995]) in a contribution from the same year. Fowler further suggests that Horace’s Epicureanism may have primed him to surrender the cares and worries of statecraft to an emperor:

*quis Parthium paueat, quis gelidum Scythen…*

*incolumi Caesare?*

“Who would fear the Parthian, who the Scythian… with Caesar intact?” (*Odes* 4.5.25-27).

The anodyne ideal described at the ends of *Odes* 4.5 and 4.15, where the Roman people recede to the hills, cultivate their vines, and rejoice in the gifts of alcoholic oblivion can be read as a sinister abdication of personal autonomy for the security of autocracy.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Attempts have been made along various lines to recuperate the fourth book and make it more palatable to the modern age. Putnam (1986, 2000) has focused on the undeniable artistic achievement of *Odes* 4 and the *Saecular Song* rather than on the dubious politics, reminding us to pay attention to the language and take the poetry on its own terms; thus Putnam (1986):

“By its very indirection [*Odes* 4.5] avoids the bombast that so readily invades panegyric poetry” (114).

In general, Putnam sees Horace as “fitting Augustus to his own mental vision, not his plan to Augustus’ design” (23). Indeed, many have seen resistance in play when it comes to Horace’s stance in the later *Odes*.[[216]](#footnote-216) Thomas (2011) has argued that Horace’s praise of the now consolidated *princeps* was at best reluctant. This line of interpretation draws support from the Suetonian *Life*, which claims that it was Augustus who “enjoined” (*iniunxerit*)the poet to write both the *Saecular Song* and the odes to Tiberius and Drusus, and “compelled” (*coegerit*) him to put together a fourth book. It is already found in Wilkinson (1945), endorsed by Armstrong (1989), and strongly represented by Lyne (1995), who introduces the notion of “sapping” – i.e. Horace’s intentional undermining of his praise for Augustus, chiefly via self-allusion.[[217]](#footnote-217) As we have noted (see p. 000), apparent examples of such undermining are present in Horace’s earlier poetry, for example in the transition from the moralistic *Odes* 3.6 to the apparently immoral *Odes* 3.7; yet Lyne argues that it is a particular feature of his final lyric pieces, expecially in his retrospectives of earlier praise for Augustus.[[218]](#footnote-218) For example, Horace had proclaimed that Augustus will become immortal after death in *Odes* 3.3, but then illustrates how immortality is in fact only a figure of speech conferred by poets in *Odes* 4.8 (Klingner brackets the first line):

[*dignum laude uirum Musa uetat mori*]

*caelo Musa beat*

“[The muse forbids a man worthy of praise to die:] the Muse blesses him with heaven” (*Odes* 4.8.28-29).

As Lyne comments:

“In 3.3 [Horace] was content to offer that splendid image of Augustus (Stoical earner of immortality, a Hercules, etc., in aura an Alexander); in 4.8 it pleases him implicitly to take it away (such immortality does not really exist). 4.8 does indeed sap 3.3 in what, at the date of 4.8, must have been a satisfying fashion.”[[219]](#footnote-219)

Lyne sees Horace at such moments as “not wholehearted” in his resumption of his lyric office. Indeed, some of Horace’s choices, such as on Tiberius and Drusus as being the natural sons of the *princeps* (*Odes* 4.4.25-28), would seem to a modern reader practically beg to be read as ironic: although Horace suggests that she only had one husband at *Odes* 3.14.5, Livia had been previously married to Tiberius Claudius Nero, and Tiberius and Drusus were his biological sons.[[220]](#footnote-220) It must be said, however, that the wind seems to have left the sails for the cases for both Horace as a collaborator and as a sapper – several recent commentators prefer instead to speak of intentional poetic doublethink, evolution of ideology, multiple meanings, and the importance of interpretation (that of both poets and readers).[[221]](#footnote-221)

The mid-twentieth century was not the only inflection point in the reception of the later poetry. It remains a question as to whether citizens of the USA can read the Augustan age in the same way after 2016 as they did before.Certain instructors of Roman History classes used to find it difficult to describe how the Julio-Claudian dynasty emerged and monopolized power in the way that it did, but no one doubts the possibility anymore: if the safeguards of an entrenched republic with a written constitution failed in the face of a leader with neither concern for them nor sense of shame, then it was certainly possible in the far less constitutionally reinforced polity of ancient Rome regulated mainly by peer pressure and precedent. Donald Trump instinctively employed a palingenetic slogan (“Make America Great Again”) that had been peddled in different forms by a raft of leaders of the twentieth century and that had precedents in Augustan thinking.[[222]](#footnote-222) His use of legislation to create an illusion of a return to earlier values in the form of restrictions on immigration and the rolling back of certain civil rights is crudely reminiscent of Augustus’ legislation on manumission and the Julian marriage laws. The notorious lines from Horace’s *Saecular Song* on the success of the senate’s marriage legislation are not as foreign to modern consciousness as they once were.[[223]](#footnote-223) Trump’s executive order concerning the enforcement of certain architectural styles in public spaces, and the proliferation of eponymous golf-courses and skyscrapers at the periphery and heart of New York City, are reminiscent of Augustus’ recreation of the physical structure of Rome. Despite one’s awareness of the incommensurability of historical events and the need to historicize (the comments within this paragraph will become swiftly dated), it is difficult not to see in Augustan ideology, as reflected in Horace’s later poetry, both a closer parallel to today than recently believed and a caution for the future.

II. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the *Odes*

Scholarship on Horace tends to follow critical trends at an even slower pace than in other areas of classical studies. Despite the application of the New Criticism to the poet’s work by Commager (1962), Edmunds’ study of the Jaussian horizons of expectation of *Odes* 1.9 (1992), the feminist critique of Ancona (1994, 2010), the application of Goffman’s face theory by Oliensis (1998), Bowditch’s use of Girard and Marx (2001), and Harrison’s appeal to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital (2017a), research on Horace cannot be said to have been at the cutting edge of literary theory. This may in fact not be an entirely bad thing, but it does not have to be the case. As we saw in the previous chapter, Horace’s approach to literary genre can be better understood in the light of the modern study of the mind. Moreover, Horace’s poetry is itself an attractive corpus on which to test new ideas, and in the realm of imagery, metaphor, and metonymy in particular Horace represents something of an ideal subject for the application of theories in the cognitive sciences. By what processes does the poet generate his images? How do mechanisms such as synecdoche and paronomasia function? How are images blended to create something new? These questions are important, because Horace’s use of metaphor has never been entirely clarified: Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) state that

“Horace’s style is down-to-earth in other ways besides vocabulary… His metaphors are sparse and trite, and even his similes may be cautiously expressed” (xxii).

Most readers would dispute this, and Harrison (2013a) points out that the verdict is not reflected in their publications (49), but Nisbet and Hubbard’s claim about Horatian metaphor should nevertheless be investigated. The application of cognitive approaches to Horace is promising: many of the principles are grounded in empirical research and evidence of language processing.[[224]](#footnote-224) While approaches inspired by cognitive science can come across as scientistic and pretentious when done in the wrong manner, done well they can be unassuming, clear, and productive. In what follows, I would like to discuss how a single approach, conceptual metaphor theory (often abbreviated to CMT), can offer refreshing new lines of investigation.

According to the proponents of conceptual metaphor theory, whose early contributions include Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Lakoff and Turner (1989), and Lakoff (1993, 2002), metaphor is more about connections on the level of thought than on that of language. Essentially, we conceptualize many abstract phenomena – time for instance – by employing physical concepts. When it comes to time, we generally think in terms of space, thus codifying our thoughts in spatial language:

“The days pass”

“Christmas arrives”

“We go through the week”

“We approach Christmas.”

Note that in these examples, time is conceptualized in two different ways – either (a) as a moving entity that passes us or (b) as a static landmark that we approach, pass through, and depart from. Nevertheless, the terminology is in both cases metaphorical – days do not pass us in the way that cars do, nor do we approach Christmas in the way that we approach a traffic intersection. This exemplifies one important claim of conceptual metaphor theory – that a single target domain (the thing being described, in this case time) may be conceptualized in different ways.[[225]](#footnote-225) It is in fact rare for any culturally important target domain to be structured by a single source domain: to give a different example, originally put forward by Reddy (1978), we frequently conceive of words as hollow entities (words are containers) into which we put ideas (ideas are objects), as in the phrase “I could not put it into words,” but we also conceive of words as weapons (“a cutting statement”).

I do not wish to dwell at length on the nuances of the theory, as it is by now quite well known within classical studies (it has generally been found an easy sell for philologists).[[226]](#footnote-226) In any case, it is probably better articulated via examples than in the abstract. Let us begin with a well-known example, related to the metaphors of time just mentioned, from the earliest stage of conceptual metaphor theory – death is a departure:[[227]](#footnote-227)

“The departed”

“Those who have left us”

“She’s passed away”

“Those who remain.”

Each of these phrases depends on a mapping in which death is conceived of as a departure: the mapping occurs on the level of thought and motivates the language selected. It is based on the engrained experience of having a companion depart from our sight (e.g. by turning a corner or leaving the room). When people die, they are no longer “there.” Importantly, this same mapping is found in many other languages (e.g. German: “er ist von uns gegangen”) and is instantiated in Latin, where we find the verb “*ire*”(“to go”) used to describe death (“*interire*,” “*perire*,” “*obire*,” “*exitium*,” etc.). Tellingly, the verb “*uenire*”(“to come”) is not used of people dying save in the sense of “coming to the end,” as discussed in the examples concerning time above.

The conceptual metaphor was engrained within Roman culture and was naturally used by Horace. To cite just one example from many:

*non ille pro caris amicis*

 *aut patria timidus perire*

“He was not afraid to perish for his dear friends or for his fatherland” (*Odes* 4.9.51–52).

It is worth stressing at this stage that Horace was likely unaware of the mapping that he was employing – conceptual metaphor theory works from the assumption that many instances of metaphor are unconscious and the status of the terminology not necessarily transparent to the speaker. Take the metaphor birth is an arrival (cognate with death is a departure): how many of us really notice the relationship between the phrases “the new arrivals ward,” “welcoming a baby,” or “expectant mothers?” The mapping death is a departure is manifested in other mundane ways in Horace, even though the examples do not necessarily strike us as metaphorical as such:

*cedes coemptis saltibus et domo*

*uillaque…*

“You will depart from your purchased glades, your house, and your villa…” (*Odes* 2.3.17–18).

The verb here, “depart,” coupled with physical objects (glades, house, and villa) in the ablative case, primarily suggests physical movement, but in this context it is used to denote death. Here, Horace uses the metaphor to make the point that the physical belongings will “remain” even after our “departure.” At other times, the conceptual metaphor can be combined with another mapping, such as death is darkness.

*sed omnis una manet nox*

*et calcanda semel uia leti*

“But one common night awaits us all, and the road of death is to be trodden but once” (*Odes* 1.28.15–16).

Here we can see the usefulness of distinguishing prominent metaphors for the same target domain within Horace’s work: two independent metaphors (death is a departure, death is darkness) can be clearly identified within the logic of Horace’s thought.

But the culturally embedded nature of conceptual metaphor means that it plays a role beyond the mere choice of vocabulary and phrasing. For example, the mapping death is a departure has at times calcified into myth; take the following Horatian example from *Odes* 2.3:

*omnes eodem cogimur, omnium*

*uersatur urna serius ocius*

 *sors exitura et nos in aeternum*

 *exilium impositura cumbae*

“We are all forced to the same place. The lot of everyone is shaken in the urn; later or sooner it is going to come out and set us on a boat bound for eternal exile” (*Odes* 2.3.25–28).

The example was used by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their original exposition of conceptual metaphor theory. Charon’s boat represents one mode by which human beings depart life within Greco-Roman culture – in this case, the departure is conceptualized as taking place across a body of water. Other mythological elaborations of the metaphor death is a departure reside in the notion of Hermes in his role as *psychopompos*, “leader of the dead,” or in the Homeric conception of the “house of Hades:” the notion of departure yields slots within the metaphor for a guide (Hermes) and a destination (the house of Hades), even if they are not always utilized.[[228]](#footnote-228) These elaborations of the metaphor illustrate how far back the conceptualization goes; they are by no means original to Horace but were passed down within myths from a very early period.

 Horace certainly presents some interesting case studies, however. One of the important aspects of conceptual metaphor theory is that it reveals the biases and blind spots of our thought. Thinkers since Aristotle have been aware that metaphor can lead to distortions of reality, but conceptual metaphors are particularly tricky in that they are often highly conventional and not always interpreted as metaphors. Take the following, where Horace is addressing Maecenas:

 *ibimus, ibimus,*

 *utcumque praecedes, supremum*

 *carpere iter comites parati*

“We will go, we will go, whenever you lead, ready as comrades to take the final journey” (*Odes* 2.17.10–12).

The final journey, of course, is that of death. Nevertheless, Horace suggests here that the journey can be undertaken with a friend (Maecenas), which would seem to be an impossibility – death is something that we undergo on our own. Even the notion that we may exist after death is dubious. Horace here exploits the conceit that his bond to Maecenas is unbreakable, yet their *post mortem* companionship is only possible within the metaphorical conceptualization of death is a departure.

 Horace could also exploit such ideas when it comes to the metaphor’s sister, metonymy, traditionally considered to involve a relationship of contiguity rather than of similarity or analogy (as is the case with metaphor). In fact, the first three books of his *Odes* are bracketed by moments where Horace appears to cheat death through metonymical identification with his poetry. In *Odes* 1.1, as we have seen, Horace describes Maecenas as “inserting” him among the canonical lyric poets, an expression that appears to rest on the metonymy author for book (a species of the generic metonymy producer for product). At the other end of the collection, in *Odes* 3.30 Horace uses a similar metonymy to argue for his immortality: he will not die completely (*non omnis moriar*, 6), but a great part of him will survive, and he will continue to be recited / spoken of (*dicar*, 10) throughout Italy. Again, immortality is a fiction only possible within the conceptualization, since in fact, even though his books continue to be read today, Horace’s actual consciousness and body no longer exist. It is hard to imagine that Horace was unaware of this mismatch between the linguistic trick and reality.[[229]](#footnote-229)

Conceptual metaphor theory also offers a new framework for inter- and intratextuality; over the past fifty years, the investigation of Roman literary allusiveness has generally revolved around finding connections between individual word forms – most famously, perhaps, “*arma*”(“weapons”) at the beginning of Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Amores*. The entire project of allusion and intertext builds on such lexical identifications, which can now be delivered by machines. However, analyzing the various instantiations of conceptual metaphors allows us to ground allusion at a deeper level. It is, for instance, often noted that in *Odes* 4.5 Horace refers to his earlier narratives of decline in order to illustrate Augustus’ achievement by 13 BCE; the following example is often cited:

*nullis polluitur casta domus stupris,*

*mos et lex maculosum edomuit nefas,*

*laudantur simili prole puerperae,*

 *culpam poena premit comes.*

“The chaste house is polluted by no debaucheries, custom and law have tamed beflecked wickedness, new mothers are praised on account offspring that resembles their parents, punishment presses closely upon guilt as its companion” (*Odes* 4.5.21-24).

Putnam (1986) makes the good point that *polluitur*, *stupris*, *maculosum*, and *edomuit* “all appear for the first and only occasion in Horace’s work” (108-109). Nevertheless, even though the terminology itself is fresh, the metaphors that motivate it are well-established within Horace’s political poetry, and we may note close connections with at least two of Horace’s poems written in the 20s BCE that stress the need for the *princeps*. *Odes* 3.6 describes the misdeeds of a married couple, decrying such examples as both symptom and cause of Rome’s decline:

*fecunda culpae saecula nuptias*

*primum inquinauere et genus et domos…*

“Ages fertile of sin first polluted marriages, family, and homes…” (*Odes* 3.6.17-18).

The verb *inquinare* (“pollute,” “befoul,” “stain”) is elsewhere used in Horace of the adulteration of the golden age (*Epodes* 16) and of a gull excreting on the head of the speaker of *Satires* 1.8 (the scarecrow Priapus): it offers good metaphorical correlate for *polluitur* and *maculosum* in *Odes* 4.5 (immorality is dirt).

The unparalleled verb *edomuit* of *Odes* 4.5 can likewise be accounted for in this way. In *Odes* 3.24, Horace links civil warfare explicitly with sexual immorality: if a leader should wish to have “father of cities” written beneath his statues,

*indomitam audeat*

 *refrenare licentiam*

“Let him dare to rein in untamed license” (*Odes* 3.24.28-29).

Here, we see the metaphor immorality is a wild animal instantiated in the terminology of taming and bridling. The metaphor is revisited later in *Odes* 4.15, where Horace praises the age of Augustus for having “thrown the reins on license that diverges from what is correct” (9-11). In both cases, the later poem (*Odes* 4.5) can be read as referring not to the individual words but to a conceptual metaphor that Horace had previously used (*Odes* 3.6, *Odes* 3.24). Conceptual metaphor theory therefore provides us with a principled method of comparing these different moments beyond pure lexical parallel; the mappings immorality is dirt and immorality is a wild animal are conventional both within Roman and modern culture (“a spotless reputation,” “unrestrainable wickedness”), but Horace uses them to construct a bridge between his earlier and later poetry to celebrate Augustus’ achievement.

Such examples demonstrate how conceptual metaphors can frame situations in certain ideological ways – consider the framing of the US political landscape in terms of conservatives and progressives. Conservatives, to go by their name, seek to protect something, whereas progressives seek to advance down a path toward an implied destination; both metaphors in themselves mischaracterize the respective political persuasions (what conservatives protect is selective and often invented, while progressives posit only one destination, i.e. their own, toward which to advance), but they notably fail to connect with each other, each attempting to install its own metaphorical frame. According to Lakoff (2002), conservatives and progressives also employ different metaphors of the family (the state is a family) to frame debate, and these influence a range of policy choices on matters of incarceration, taxation, and welfare. He calls these the Strict Parent versus Nurturant Parent metaphors of governance. While Lakoff’s account is unlikely to be the whole story, and we might expect the ancient Roman metaphors for the state to differ in any case from modern ones, the metaphor the state is a family undeniably undergirds a good deal of Roman discourse about society: the word “*gens*”can mean both “family” and “people,” “*patria*”(“fatherland”) derives from “*pater*”(“father”) and can be combined with it as “*pater patriae*”(“father of the fatherland”), and “*senatus*”(“senate”) comes from “*senex*”(“old man”) and is made up of figures called “*patres*”(“fathers”). The patriarchal model of the metaphorical state-as-family clearly played a role in Roman politics, and it would be productive to further chase up this line of inquiry. How is the Roman state structured around the model of the family in Horace’s verse, for instance in the weird description of the feminine *patria* (cf. “*pater*”) as a *mater* desiring her *iuuenem* (Augustus) at *Odes* 4.5.9-16?

The study of metaphor in Horace is nothing new. Commager (2009 [1957]), for example, powerfully discusses Horace’s use of wine imagery to symbolize release from cares, forgetfulness, joy, and the *kairos* of the present moment.[[230]](#footnote-230) Nevertheless, conceptual metaphor theory would appear to add to discussion on multiple fronts: the establishment of systemic conventional mappings within Roman culture gives strength and clarity to the investigation of individual manifestations of metaphor. Far from being simply another piece of theoretical fluff, conceptual metaphor theory provides force to the analysis of figurative language. Beyond this, it may allow the study of Roman allusion and intertext to be broadened in a rigorous way beyond the repetition of word forms. But in return, Horace offers contemporary linguists an important new corpus of literature for the elucidation of conceptual metaphor. The commonalities and differences between the metaphors he employs and those of the modern day contribute a more nuanced appreciation of the transformation of conceptual mappings within the tradition. There is much in Horace’s usage that promises a unique case-study: both Horatian studies and contemporary cognitive linguistics would benefit from a thorough study of the author’s lyric in the light of conceptual metaphor theory.

**IV. *Epistles***

I. Directions in the Scholarship

In this final chapter, I will address two perennial questions in the criticism of *Epistles* 1 – (a) whether the poems were real letters and (b) Horace’s philosophical affiliation – before moving on to consider briefly the second book of *Epistles* (the *Epistle to Augustus* and *Epistle to Florus*) and especially the *Art of Poetry*.[[231]](#footnote-231) In the second part of the chapter, I will present a speculative argument about what I take to be an original feature of Horatian ethics: the implicit injunction to apply the doctrine of the golden mean, invoked ubiquitously in late-Hellenistic philosophy, to the very application of the golden mean. In essence, this entails practicing moderation in moderation (i.e. occasional moments of excess are permitted despite a general tendency toward temperance). Such a modified principle, I argue, would cohere with Horace’s general views about human thriving and represent a sophisticated response to what could easily be a mechanical rule – one that embraces human fallibility, plasticity, and need for *Rausch* (“exhilaration”). Horace does not state the idea explicitly, however, and it must be extracted from remarks made over the course of his career. Crucially, I cannot prove that he fostered it, and therefore ask for the reader’s forbearance for what will be a personal and somewhat telegraphic argument. Still, hypothetical reconstructions serve a role in presenting new avenues for study and are not unwarranted in such a contribution as this.

The first book of *Epistles* broke new literary ground.[[232]](#footnote-232) Letters had admittedly been a medium of intellectual communication for centuries, and Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus had all written them to maintain links with friends and disciples across the Mediterranean.[[233]](#footnote-233) The voluminous correspondence of Cicero illustrates how prominent and versatile the format of the letter was in elite circles in Republican Rome, and indeed Suetonius transmits excerpts from Augustus’ letters to Horace himself (one of which we encountered in the previous chapter). Moreover, by Horace’s time the letter format had been absorbed into poetry: Lucilius had written epistolary verse (e.g. 186-189 Warmington) and poetic letters can be found in Catullus (e.g. *Poems* 13, 35).[[234]](#footnote-234) Nevertheless, a sequence of twenty epistles in uniform dactylic hexameter such as that found in *Epistles* 1 was a novelty. This raises the question of how genuine the correspondence was, a point of keen debate throughout twentieth-century scholarship: were these letters really sent to their purported addressees? What was Horace’s relationship with these men beyond these poetic windows of, on average, a little over fifty lines?

From the scholiasts onwards the tendency was to take the *Epistles* to be genuine letters, and we also see this view represented into the twentieth century. Edmond Courbaud (1914) suggested that “with [Horace], the epistle remains a personal letter” (29), and Fraenkel (1957) argued that the degree of extraneous detail within some of the letters indicates that they “bear the stamp of reality” (311), although he noted that they were “also written for us, the readers of the book” (313). Nevertheless, uncertainty had crept in: given the tenuousness of the letter-medium in poems such as *Epistles* 1.6 (to Numicius), where epistolary features appear only fleetingly at the beginning and end of the poem, Heinze (1919) understood the collection as diverse yet representingat the very least a “literary self-portrait” (311) influenced by Lucillian *sermo* and the letters of Epicurus:

“Horace intentionally offered in his book of letters, if I understand him rightly, a picture of his soul or, shall we say, his personality” (308).

Edward Morris (1931) focused expressly on demonstrating the collection’s non-epistolary nature, for instance pointing out that the fifth poem purports to be an invitation “written on the day of the dinner… and… expecting a reply before sunset,” even though such haste contradicts everything we know about Horace’s laborious mode of composition (93-94). Michael McGann (1969) likewise showed that letter13 to Vinnius, the bearer of the poet’s lyric books to Augustus, was unlikely to be genuine given the shortness of the distance Vinnius had to travel coupled with the careful composition of the letter (91), and suggested that the collection constituted

“Not real letters intended to have their purported effect in the real world, but poems cast in the form of letters” (94).[[235]](#footnote-235)

More recently, Anna de Pretis (2002) has sought to deconstruct the dichotomy of “real” and “poetic” altogether, stressing that the letters’ “reality” may be irrecoverable and focusing instead on the collection’s crafted epistolic features – for example, its often digressive and impromptu character.[[236]](#footnote-236) As she notes (92), the book encourages the belief that it is merely a sample from a much larger collection of letters: most of the addressees (Maecenas and Lollius excluded) only receive a single letter, even if their intimacy with the poet would suggest a longer exchange. Furthermore, Horace seems to be responding to cues external to the letters themselves, the reader being invited to fill in the imagined scenario behind the poems. In sum, recent scholars have tended to view the epistles as fictional literary productions and to interpret the degree of detail Horace provides as an “imitation of the miscellaneous character of real correspondence.”[[237]](#footnote-237) In so doing, they do not altogether discount the possibility that these verse letters were sent to their addressees, but observe that they were at the very least carefully crafted and designed for a readership beyond their addressee (e.g. an overreader such as Maecenas or Augustus).[[238]](#footnote-238)

As with the *Satires*, *Epodes*,and *Odes*, the first book of *Epistles* shows signs of deliberate arrangement, and topics, themes, and addressees are carefully interwoven throughout the collection.[[239]](#footnote-239) Letters to Maecenas occur at important intervals – beginning, middle, and end (1, 7, and 19) – and there are strong links between *Epistles* 1 and 19 (Maecenas) and between 2 and 18 (Lollius), the two pairs bracketing the book of poetry.[[240]](#footnote-240) *Epistles* 1.20, an ironic letter to the book of letters itself, serves as a “seal” poem that contains the poet’s biography. The content is, however, undeniably diverse. Certain letters perform standard functions (there are two letters of recommendation) while others seem to transcend the typical epistolary framework altogether (e.g. *Epistles* 1.6). Indeed, the collection appears to be a carefully orchestrated symphony of incongruities, revealing Horace constantly backsliding in his views. One might compare, for example, the advice about how to “manage” (*uti*) one’s “patron” (*rex*) in *Epistles* 1.17 and 1.18 with the emphasis on securing personal freedom earlier in the collection.[[241]](#footnote-241) This aspect of the *Epistles* may in fact go to the heart of the book’s message about moral progression and perfectibility, Horace revealing himself as guilty of the very weaknesses that he criticizes (a tactic he had adopted via the figure Davus in *Satires* 2.7).

By the time of the publication of *Epistles* 1 in 20-19 BCE Horace was in his mid-forties.[[242]](#footnote-242) The first book of *Epistles* accordingly presents a different *persona* from that of the *Satires* and *Odes*: barring isolated references, there is no description of love or sex.[[243]](#footnote-243) Horace now represents himself as a man of retirement, an elder writing from pastoral seclusion to younger men still at large in civic life:[[244]](#footnote-244)

*mihi iam non regia Roma, sed uacuum Tibur placet*

“Nowroyal Rome does not please me, but rather empty Tibur” (*Epistles* 1.7.44-45).

In *Satires* 1.5, Horace had accompanied the men of power, but now that time is behind him and his preoccupation is with his mental and physical wellbeing (*Epistles* 1.1, 1.6). In fact, to use Heinze’s image, the collection depicts Horace filing through the various chains that had once held him one by one – for instance his concern for Rome, love affairs, and even his tie to Maecenas (although the dedication of the book to Maecenas attests to the continuing health of their relationship).[[245]](#footnote-245) The tone is often didactic, as is appropriate to Horace’s years, but it is shorn of pretension. As he notes at *Epistles* 1.6.67-68, he is open to better ideas should someone suggest them. The gentleness of his approach is facilitated by the epistolic genre; just as in Seneca’s correspondence to Lucilius, the letter format allows Horace to discuss ethics informally rather than pronouncing *ex cathedra* (one might compare Plato’s dialogues).[[246]](#footnote-246)

Horace’s claim in the collection’s very first poem to have exchanged poetry for philosophy has received much attention:

*nunc itaque et uersus et cetera ludicra pono:*

*quid uerum atque decens, curo et rogo et omnis in hoc sum:*

*condo et conpono quae mox depromere possim.*

“Now, therefore, I set aside poetry and other toys; I am concerned with what is true and proper; that is my question, and I am totally consumed by it. I store up (*condo*) and arrange (*conpono*) things that I may at some point decant (*depromere*)” (*Epistles* 1.1.10-12).

His concern now is ethics in its broad sense, i.e. how to live one’s life. Colin Macleod (2009 [1979]) took this as a serious conversion, arguing that the *Epistles* constitute practical ethics applied to daily life. Still, the finality of Horace’s departure from poetry is somewhat ambiguous: as Macleod himself notes, the final line of the quoted excerpt can be interpreted in two ways, in that “*condere*”and “*conponere*”can be verbs of poetic composition as well as storage:[[247]](#footnote-247)

“So in the same breath as Horace renounces poetry, he announces that that is what he is writing, and that its purpose is to supply ‘provisions’ for his new life” (258).

The same apparent contradiction (rejection of poetry via the medium of poetry) rears up elsewhere in the late poetry, where Horace likewise affirms that he is no longer writing poetry with hexameters as the vehicle.[[248]](#footnote-248) Some have argued that the *uersus* referenced in the excerpt above must refer to Horace’s lyric and that Horace did not consider unpretentious “conversation” (*sermo*) in dactylic hexameter such as that of his *Satires* and *Epistles* to be proper poetry.[[249]](#footnote-249) This interpretation is validated by his distinction between his “conversations” (*sermones*) and the “real” poetry of Ennius at *Satires* 1.4.39-62. On this reading, the *Epistles* occupy the same sub-poetic level as the *Satires*.[[250]](#footnote-250) Nevertheless, at *Epistles* 2.2.55-60, Horace appears to include his *Satires* among his *poemata* (“poems”), and it must be said that Horace’s stance in the question of the poetic character of *sermo* is peculiar. The idea of rejecting poetry in poetic form may well constitute a running joke.[[251]](#footnote-251)

Horace’s philosophical eclecticism and resistance to doctrinal orthodoxy finds its quintessential statement later in *Epistles* 1.1.[[252]](#footnote-252) Well acquainted with the different systems available from his time in Athens (*Epistles* 2.2.43-51), Horace nevertheless prefers to blow where the wind takes him rather than to settle on a specific philosophical school:

*nullius addictus iurare in uerba magistri,*

*quo me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.*

*nunc agilis fio et mersor ciuilibus undis,*

*uirtutis uerae custos rigidusque satelles,*

*nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor*

*et mihi res, non me rebus subiungere conor.*

“I have no master / trainer whose words I am forced to swear by. Wherever the storm blows me I am carried as a guest: first I become engaged in civic life, and I plunge into the waves as true virtue’s guardian and stalwart protector. Then I furtively slip back into the precepts of Aristippus and attempt to take charge of things rather than have them take charge of me” (*Epistles* 1.1.14-19, translation by Freudenburg).

Despite the explicit statement here, many have attempted to pin Horace down to a main philosophical approach. Alfonso Traina (2009 [1991]), for instance, maintained that the prefix of *relabor* (“I slip back into”) suggests that the hedonic Aristippean position was the default for Horace – the position to which he reverted after momentary spasms of Stoicism.[[253]](#footnote-253) Stephanie McCarter (2015) reads the entire first book of *Epistles* as a measured modulation on the thought of Aristippus, Horace constructing the image of the philosopher “as his philosophical alter ego,” a figurehead for the poet’s own freedom, moderation, and adaptability (22). There are certainly similarities between Aristippus and Horace, both men (a) being willing to associate themselves with powerful patrons (while aiming for a degree of freedom through moderation) and (b) seeking to accommodate themselves to the situations in which they found themselves, always striving for better but ultimately happy with what is immediately available:[[254]](#footnote-254)

*omnis Aristippum decuit color et status et res,*

*temptantem maiora, fere praesentibus aequum*

“Every condition, status, and affair suited Aristippus; seeking greater things, he was generally fine with what he had” (*Epistles* 1.17.23-24).

*nam tuta et paruola laudo,*

*cum res deficiunt, satis inter uilia fortis;*

*uerum ubi quid melius contingit et unctius, idem*

*uos sapere et solos aio bene uiuere, quorum*

*conspicitur nitidis fundata pecunia uillis.*

“For I praise safe, easy goals when my resources are lacking, brave enough amidst cheap surroundings; but when something better and more luxurious falls to my lot, I say that you alone are wise and live well, whose cash is seen to be resting in gleaming mansions” (*Epistles* 1.15.42-46).

Yet the influence of Aristippus must be set beside Horace’s statement in the epistle to Tibullus that he is a “piglet from the herd of Epicurus” (*Epicuri de grege porcum*, *Epistles* 1.4.16).[[255]](#footnote-255) Horace probably personally knew Philodemus, the guru of the Epicurean school in the Bay of Naples frequented by Vergil, Plotius, and Varius, and Epicurean thought is certainly prominent in his earlier *Satires*: Yona (2018) has argued that Horace’s *Satires* are profoundly indebted to Philodemus’ texts pertaining to wealth management, the hedonic calculus, and free speech.[[256]](#footnote-256) The argument for an early connection to Epicureanism is reinforced by Horace’s apparent recantation of it in *Odes* 1.34.[[257]](#footnote-257)

Horace, however, was an unconventional Epicurean at best (his references to divinization are too frequent for a start),[[258]](#footnote-258) and scholars have discerned further philosophical influences on Horace’s poetry. The poet associates his earlier *Satires* with the “conversations” of the Cynic philosopher Bion of Borysthenes (*Bioneis sermonibus*, *Epistles* 2.2.60) and, as we have seen, possibly interweaves Bion’s biography with his own.[[259]](#footnote-259) Moreover, although figures such as Fabius and “bleary-eyed” Crispinus are satirized (*Satires* 1.1), Stoic ideas have been identified in the *Epistles*, for instance in the first two poems of the collection, with McGann (1969) taking the word “*decens*” (“fitting,” “proper”)at the opening of *Epistles* 1.1 as referring to the Stoic Panaetius’ idea of τὸ πρέπον (“that which is fitting”).[[260]](#footnote-260) The list of influences does not end there: some have argued that Horace’s ethical stance is at root Socratic due to his description of his education in Athens “among the glades of the Academy” (*Epistles* 2.2.43-45),[[261]](#footnote-261) and Platonic vignettes are discernable in the *Satires* and *Epistles*,[[262]](#footnote-262) while Kilpatrick (1986) takes Horace in *Epistles* 1 to be an Academic Skeptic influenced by Cicero. Peripatetic literary theory is behind parts of *Epistles* 1.19 (and resurfaces in the *Art of Poetry*).[[263]](#footnote-263)

Thus, in line with Horace’s statement (*nullius addictus iurare in uerba magistri*)it seems difficult to associate him with any one school exclusively; the poet was prepared to pick up a philosophical system and put it down again as the circumstances demanded. Indeed, it might be argued that the *Epistles* represent a quiet demolition of dogmatic philosophy in general. We sense his unease with orthodoxy reflected throughout *Epistles* 1, and this could take an ironic, reflexive cast. For instance, the sixth poem deflates all pretensions when it comes ethics and philosophy in general:

*nil admirari prope res est una, Numici,*

*solaque, quae possit facere et seruare beatum.*

“‘Being awed at nothing’ is almost the one and only thing that can make one and keep one happy” (*Epistles* 1.6.1-2).

Horace seems to be clear here: one should not focus solely on cultivating any one ethical outlook.[[264]](#footnote-264) And yet it should also be noted that Horace manages to reflexively undercut this very principle: the word *prope* (“almost”) sets the entire statement in question. We are being warned to be suspicious of the idea being pronounced. “Being awed at nothing” will ensure happiness most of the time, but there may be other methods. Horace, ever prepared to change with the circumstances, provides himself with an escape hatch. The reflexive quality of this imperative – not to cling to the enunciated principle too tightly – has a bearing on the argument of the following section.

The two lengthy poems to Augustus and Florus (270 and 216 lines respectively), together with a third poem devoted to literary topics (the *Art of Poetry*, 476 lines), are often dated to the final phase of Horace’s life.[[265]](#footnote-265) If this is accurate, they would represent a return to the *sermo* of the early *Satires*, the two collections of non-epic hexameter serving as “complementary bookends to the poet’s career.”[[266]](#footnote-266) The apparent parabola of Horace’s genres, moving from lowly *sermo* in the early years to exalted lyric in the twenties and teens (peaking with the *Saecular Song*), only to relapse into *sermo* at the end, has been compared to the generic ascent of Vergil (from bucolic poetry to epic).[[267]](#footnote-267) Given this, it is attractive to take the three aforementioned hexametrical poems as forming a group, even if their relative dating remains a matter of debate and the argument risks implanting a teleology on the poet’s generic choices. In the following paragraphs I will focus on the *Art of Poetry*, due partly to considerations of space but mainly to the fact that this poem has received the bulk of the attention in recent years.[[268]](#footnote-268)

 The *Art of Poetry* is a notoriously difficult poem to introduce. As Donald Russell (2006 [1973]) notes:

“It is difficult to write a sentence about the *Ars*, especially one which claims to paraphrase it, without acute diffidence. Problems posed, solved or dissolved by four centuries of scholarship have resulted in a neurotic confusion unexcelled even in classical studies” (328).

It is the longest and most influential of Horace’s poems, and many of its tags and images – e.g. “purple patch” (15), *in medias res* (149), Homer’s nodding (359) – have entered the popular lexicon (see p. 000). Far more than a mere guide for how to write drama, its statements on style and genre were respected in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and it continued to loom over subsequent literature even as Aristotle’s *Poetics* rose in prominence.[[269]](#footnote-269) Nevertheless, the poem has never been easy to read, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe perhaps said it best:

“This problematic work will appear different to different people, and every ten years it will also appear different to the same person.”[[270]](#footnote-270)

Even for the Middle Ages, the degree to which it was used as a practical guide for the composition of poetry has perhaps been overestimated.[[271]](#footnote-271) In the twentieth century, views about its advice and usefulness certainly varied, with artists and critics sometimes reacting strongly to its didactic tone.[[272]](#footnote-272) It is among the most difficult and bemusing poems of Horace’s works.

The poem’s (a) intellectual background, (b) genre, (c) occasion, and (d) degree of irony have been heavily discussed in the past decade. (a) To turn to the first of these, the relationship between Horace and the Peripatetic critic Neoptolemus of Parium has long been at issue.[[273]](#footnote-273) This is largely due to a statement of Horace’s commentator Porphyrio in his introduction to the poem:

*in quem librum congessit praecepta Neoptolemi* τοῦ Παριανοῦ *de arte poetica, non quidem omnia, sed eminentissima. Primum praeceptum est* περὶ τῆς ἀκολουθίας.

“Horace has piled into this book the teachings of Neoptolemus of Parium on the art of poetry – not all of them, but the most notable. The first teaching is that concerning natural succession [of words or ideas]” (Porphyrio, p. 162 Holder).

Porphyrio does not mention Neoptolemus anywhere else in his (brief) commentary on the *Art of Poetry*, and many are skeptical about the degree of influence he alleges.[[274]](#footnote-274) Certain ideas of Neoptolemus do make an appearance in the fragments of Philodemus’ *On Poets* – for instance Philodemus reports that Neoptolemus divided the art of poetry between “poem” (diction and style), “poetry” (content, plot, and character), and “poet” (the role and agency of the poet) – although how these distinctions are to be applied to Horace’s poem is debated.[[275]](#footnote-275) In any case, the *Art of Poetry* undoubtedly engages with Aristotelian / Peripatetic thought:[[276]](#footnote-276) the emphasis on fitting content with genre, for instance, is also found in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and yet Horace appears to quibble with a strict interpretation of Aristotle’s views on generic appropriateness, arguing in an important passage (93-97) that sometimes comedic characters may speak in a more grandiloquent manner, and that figures in tragedy may sometimes be prosaic in the attempt to move the audience. In short, diction can on occasion conflict with generic *decorum*.Horace’s procedure here is quite modern in its flexibility, in that he presents the prototypical situation but also admits of exceptions to the rule.[[277]](#footnote-277)

(b) This generic flexibility seems to reflect back onto the *Art of Poetry*, and debates about how to categorize this text, itself foundational for our understanding of the ancient genre categories, have centered around whether it constitutes a textbook, a letter, a didactic poem, or *tertium quid*.[[278]](#footnote-278) Brink (1963) argued against the poem being a poetic handbook, emphasizing its status as a letter.[[279]](#footnote-279) Bernard Frischer (1991) classed it as a mixed form of *sermo* including technical handbook, didactic, and letter; for him, it was most clearly aligned with the parodic monologues of the second book of *Satires*. If this is the case, as Philip Hardie points out, Horace’s presentation of the mixed-up painting at the poem’s opening is an example of self-reflexive irony.[[280]](#footnote-280) The most recent commentator, Jennifer Ferriss-Hill (2019), considers the *Art of Poetry* to be:

“a new and profoundly Horatian form of hexameter composition that admits of all these classifications [didactic, epistle, satire] while adhering to no individual one” (35).

She reads the poem as continuing in the vein of the *Satires* and *Epistles* rather than as a genuine textbook (*ars*), one filled with irony and self-scrutiny yet bound together by a clear set of themes (see below) In any case, it would seem as if the poem’s generic originality were an implicit challenge to the traditional partition of genres as Horace received it.

(c) To turn to the poem’s occasion, even such elementary questions as the identities of the addressees – the Pisones, apparently a father and two (or more) sons (*Art of Poetry* 6) – have no definite answers.[[281]](#footnote-281) One identification of the father that has been favored since antiquity is Lucius Calpurnius Piso (48 BCE-32 CE), consul in 15 BCE, and often known as “Pontifex” to distinguish him from other members of the *gens*. If this is the addressee of the *Ars Poetica*, then the text is to be dated roughly to 10 BCE. The trouble with this identification is that we have no information that Piso Pontifex had any sons (for a family of this prominence we would expect it). A second option is to go back a generation: the Pontifex was himself the son of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (consul of 58 BCE), who was the target of Cicero’s *Against Piso* and who appears from that text to have had philhellenic tendencies. Caesoninus was probably the owner of the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum, where the texts of Philodemus were discovered, and has therefore also been suggested as addressee of the poem.[[282]](#footnote-282) If this attribution holds, then the poem must have issued from the early 20s BC, as the Pontifex would have already been twenty in 28 BCE. It is, however, also problematic: Caesoninus had only one attested son and a daughter, Calpurnia (the wife of Julius Caesar), whereas the fatherof the *Art of Poetry* had at least two. As a third possibility, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso (suffect consul with Augustus in 23 BCE) and his two sons, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso (consul in 7 BCE) and Lucius Calpurnius Piso Augur, have been put forward. On this scenario the poem would likewise have to have been written in the 20s BCE for the two sons to be young enough for their characterization within the poem (*Art of Poetry* 366-367).[[283]](#footnote-283) Yet this family seems to be entirely uncultured and unlikely to have been the addressees of a poem ostensibly about how to craft a poem. As a final alternative, Ferriss-Hill (2019) understands the *Pisones* simply as a metonym for the ruling class of Rome, “a particular class of person: Rockefellers or Kennedys, Morgans or Mellons,” who become placeholders for the reader.[[284]](#footnote-284) Yet it will be important to square this with the specificity of the address to both a father and his sons (*Art of Poetry* 24), and especially with the apostrophe to the elder son (*O maior iuuenum*, 366), for it to become the standard view.

(d) To turn to the degree of the poem’s irony, Horace seems to willfully undermine his own precepts through his actual practice throughout the *Art of Poetry*.[[285]](#footnote-285) This has led many scholars to argue that we should distinguish the poem’s incompetent speaker from the actual poet Horace, a form of the *persona* theory reminiscent of that applied to the *Satires*.[[286]](#footnote-286) Certainly, the *Art of Poetry* is winkingly self-referential. We already have noted elements of wordplay (e.g. when it comes to the word *pes*, see above p. 000), and might offer the following as a further instance:

*sumite materiam uestris, qui scribitis, aequam*

*uiribus et uersate diu quid ferre recusant,*

*quid ualeant umeri.*

“You who write: take up a subject / wood equal to your strength, and ponder for a long time what your shoulders are able to carry and what they refuse to bear” (*Art of Poetry* 38-40).

The pun here is on *materia*, which means both “subject matter” and “wood / timber.” The quasi-technical vocabulary (*materia*) is translated into the image of a poet carrying timber on his shoulders (*umeri*). Many other peculiarities have been noted. Schwindt (2014) analyzes the bizarre quality of poem’s opening image of the composite creature: the *Ars* begins with an anti-*Ars*, a pathology of the failed artist, the poem focusing more frequently on how not to do things rather than how to do them.[[287]](#footnote-287) Moreover, the poem’s discussions seem anachronistic and obsolete in the wake of neoteric theory (and Horace’s own *Odes*),[[288]](#footnote-288) and the opening seems to stand at odds with its close, the poem’s chimeric structure contradicting the apparent injunction to the poet that he may create whatever he likes *simplex dumtaxat et unum* (“so long as it is simple and unified,” 23). The unity of the poem is, however, tentatively defended by Laird (2007) who links the “hybridization of the human with the bestial” at the end of the *Art of Poetry* (the poet mutating into a bear / leech, 474-476) to the image of the composite creature at its opening in a form of ring-composition.[[289]](#footnote-289) Ferriss-Hill (2019) accepts this, adding that the poem’s concern for human activity, fathers and sons, and laughter – themes that are flagged in corresponding key words at the poem’s opening (*humano*, *Pisones*, *risum*) – also adds unity.[[290]](#footnote-290) While attractive, it remains to be seen as to whether this view establishes itself, and one cannot help suspecting that the *Art of Poetry* is likely to remain a bemusing work.

II. The Application of the Golden Mean to the Golden Mean

Throughout this study we have observed Horace’s love of self-contradiction. Indeed, to allude back to the equivocating “almost” (*prope*) of *Epistles* 1.6.1-2, it is almost (*prope*) a law that any broad ethical statement that Horace makes will be undercut by the poet elsewhere. This leads us to question even the deepest Horatian imperatives, for instance the notion of the “golden mean” so strongly associated with his verse (he of course coined the phrase *auream… mediocritatem*). The mean, according to its classic Aristotelian rendering, situates excellence between two extreme vices. In what follows, I will argue that Horace sought to communicate a reflexive golden mean, a doctrine whereby the mean was to be applied to the application of the rule itself. The revised rule amounted to something like the following: “strive for moderation but do so in moderation.” In adopting this amended principle, I suggest that Horace furnished himself with the flexibility to advocate for both moderation and excess at different moments. If this holds, Horace’s stance would represent (a) a characteristically reflexive interpretation of a long-standing ethical principle, and (b) a vindication of his status as an original ethical thinker.[[291]](#footnote-291) The possibility of the doctrine’s application to itself also raises interesting philosophical questions in its own right, ones that cannot be addressed here – for instance, whether there are any further layers of regression, and whether it permits a situation of “anything goes.”

Why might one wish to apply the golden mean to its own application? First, there is the basic point that universal maxims ought to be tested against themselves. Statements and imperatives such as “the only rule is that there are no rules” and “always question authority!” present a paradox which, although it might not automatically invalidate the statement or imperative, nevertheless draws attention to a quirk in its formulation. Second, there is the worry that a blanket injunction to always strive for *mediocritas* or the *medium* (“middle,” “mean”) will result in a purely mechanical application of the rule that does not reflect human nature; do human beings really behave in such a joyless manner? And third, there is the appeal of the revised principle in comparison to certain strands of ancient thought. For example, Stoicism envisioned excellence as a set goal toward which one must strive. To at least the dominant strand of Stoicism, excellence was all-or-nothing (Diogenes Laertius 7.127).[[292]](#footnote-292) Setbacks along the way might be tolerated as inevitable but were nevertheless regrettable: as Cicero puts it, for the Stoics “all faults are equal” (*On Ends* 4.55).[[293]](#footnote-293) For a thinker who subscribes to the notion of a reflexive *aurea mediocritas*, however, such setbacks are not vices but rather an integral ingredient of excellence for a human being. Apparent exceptions to the rule – momentary fits of fury or ecstasy – prove in fact to be instances of it. Application of the golden mean to the application of the golden mean thus presents a humane augmentation of an already humane injunction.

The notion of the golden mean goes back a long way and takes various related forms. It is found in rough outline in the Delphic inscription “μηδὲν ἄγαν” (“nothing in excess”), and the sixth-century poet-philosopher Cleoboulos espoused the maxim “μέτρον ἄριστον” (“the best thing is moderation” Diogenes Laertius 1.6.89).[[294]](#footnote-294) The idea runs like a ribbon throughout classical Greek thought on proportion and harmony; it is applied to mathematical and musical proportion as well as to the governing of states and definition of beauty by the philosophers.[[295]](#footnote-295) The Presocratic thinker Democritus (B.191 DK) argued that *euthumia* (“tranquility”) and *athambia* (“lack of astonishment”) are to be sought through the application of *metriotes* (“moderation”). In one of Xenophon’s dialogues, the character of Aristippus (whom we met earlier) uses the principle in conversation with Socrates, stating that he strives neither to rule nor to live as a slave, as both restrict one’s freedom, but seeks to find a “middle path” between the two extremes:[[296]](#footnote-296)

οὐδὲ εἰς τὴν δουλείαν αὖ ἐμαυτὸν τάττω, ἀλλ᾽ εἶναι τίς μοι δοκεῖ μέση τούτων ὁδός, ἣν πειρῶμαι βαδίζειν, οὔτε δι᾽ ἀρχῆς οὔτε διὰ δουλείας, ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἐλευθερίας, ἥπερ μάλιστα πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν ἄγει.

“…Nor do I side with slavery, but there seems to me to be a middle path between these two, which I attempt to walk. This path is neither through ruling nor slavery, but through freedom, and it most of all leads toward happiness” (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.11).

McCarter (2015) argues that Aristippus’ stance here was influential on Horace in his regulation of his own relationships and striving after freedom (see p. 000 above).

It was, however, Aristotle who made clearest use of the principle in his discussions of moral affairs, most notably in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[[297]](#footnote-297) Here is his famous definition of ἀρετή (excellence):

ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡρισμένῃ λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν. μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ᾽ ἔλλειψιν.

“Excellence is a disposition (ἕξις) concerned with choice (προαιρετική), lying in a mean (ἐν μεσότητι) relative to us and determined by a rational principle (λόγῳ), the principle by which the man of practical wisdom (φρόνιμος) would determine it. [It is] a mean between two evils – on the one hand of excess and the other of lack” (Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1106b36-1107a3).

This excerpt requires unpacking. For Aristotle, excellence involves determining the middle way between the alternatives at two opposing ends of a spectrum of possibilities. On the one hand, the principle can be applied to the emotions: to allow ourselves a certain degree of anger at a reprehensible act is to satisfy an instinct within us, but to allow oneself outright fury is to overstep the mark. As Ross (1923) puts it:

“[Aristotle’s theory] is in effect a protest against the ascetic, Manichaean view which condemns all natural impulses, and equally against the naturalistic view which elevates them above criticism and adopts them as the guide of life” (195).[[298]](#footnote-298)

The principle can also be applied to our daily choices: how much food to ingest, how much money to donate to charity, and so on. There is, however, subtlety to its operation. The precise nature of the mean will vary from individual to individual and circumstance to circumstance: it needs to be calculated with respect to our own persons and the surrounding context (1106a32). A moderate amount of food for Milo the wrestler may differ from a moderate amount of food for a beginner (1106a33-b5). Aristotle therefore contrasts the type of moderation that he advocates and the “mathematical mean” between the numerals 10 and 2, i.e. 6. The mathematical mean provides no analogy for the golden mean in human life (1106b1-2), as at times the golden mean for us will be closer to one of the extremes than to the other.

The idea of the mean thrived in post-Aristotelian thought and came to be associated with most of the philosophical schools, even if it continued to be especially associated with the Peripatetics; Panaetius, for example, a Stoic of the second century BCE, incorporated the ideals of moderation and appropriateness into his own teaching.[[299]](#footnote-299) Scholars have also argued that it figured in the Epicurean “hedonic calculus” – the pleasure-pain calculation would, it is argued, naturally tend to drive one toward a moderate position, in that extremes of all kinds were prone to generate pain. Drinking too much wine, for example, may be pleasurable in the short-term, but will lead to a preponderance of pain; drinking no wine at all, it could be claimed, leads to a dull existence. Kemp (2016) and Yona (2018) have argued that this hedonic calculus was a strong influence on Horace (particularly in the *Satires*). In a word, in the blurring of the philosophical schools in the Roman era a general principle such as the golden mean could become common coin.[[300]](#footnote-300) Horace would have been exposed to the notion from a variety of sources, and his reactions to it would doubtless have resembled those to any prevailing orthodoxy: we might expect Horace to be wary of it, and, in keeping with his tendency to undercut platitudes and truisms, to seek ways to stretch and amend it. These are precisely the conditions under which we might expect an adventurous meta-ethical to be developed.

Evidence of the application of the golden mean is prominent throughout Horace’s hexameter works.[[301]](#footnote-301) In *Satires* 1.2, probably one of the poet’s earliest surviving poetic endeavors, Horace discusses various types of excess to argue for a middle path.[[302]](#footnote-302) He begins by discussing the extremes of financial wastefulness and miserliness:

*dum uitant stulti uitia, in contraria currunt*

“While stupid men avoid vices, they rush into their contraries” (Satires 1.2.24).

All well and good. In the example that follows, however, the focus is on the correct choice of sexual partner:

*nil medium est. sunt qui nolint tetigisse nisi illas*

*quarum subsuta talos tegat instita ueste,*

*contra alius nullam nisi olenti in fornice stantem*

“There is nothing in the middle. There are those who prefer not to have touched any women save for those whose hem covers their ankles, with a flounce sewn onto their dress [i.e. married women]; on the other hand, another man touches no woman save for one standing in a pungent alleyway [i.e. a low-class prostitute]” (*Satires* 1.2.28-30).

This last excerpt well exemplifies Horace’s ability to use the idea ironically: the joke is that the doctrine of the mean is being invoked to establish rectitude in sordid affairs.[[303]](#footnote-303) Moreover, according to Kemp (2016), the narrator bungles the three-term division (i.e. extreme-mean-extreme): between the Roman matron and the prostitute, he offers the freedwoman as the “happy medium,” but he subsequently affirms that she too a dangerous proposition if pursued in excess (one can lose one’s good name and inheritance in chasing actresses and freedwoman call-girls). The undercutting of the freedwoman reveals that

“The mean can itself lead to an extreme, when instead of rushing to opposing vices (as at line 24), fools make vices and excesses out of the mean – by rushing too eagerly in that direction” (135).[[304]](#footnote-304)

In other words, adherence to the mean can be taken to excess. The inherent desirability of the golden mean in this case is undercut and no option appears to be truly ideal. As we have seen (see p. 000), the narrator’s own solution is to let out his energies either on household slaves (116-118) or a moderately priced call-girl (120-131), but to do so casually and not obsessively, i.e. in moderation. This is, of course, a depraved application of the principle; indeed, the notion of the golden mean is ironically used throughout the *Satires*.[[305]](#footnote-305)

To give a complementary example from the *Epistles*: in *Epistles* 1.18, Horace congratulates his addressee Lollius on avoiding the extremes of sycophantic parasitism and boorish rudeness, managing instead to hit the ideal between the two, i.e. being a true friend:

*est huic diuersum uitio uitium prope maius,*

*asperitas agrestis et inconcinna grauisque,*

*quae se commendat tonsa cute, dentibus atris,*

*dum uolt libertas dici mera ueraque uirtus.*

*uirtus est medium uitiorum et utrimque reductum*

“But there is a different vice from this vice [i.e. being a parasite], one nearly more severe – boorish rudeness, awkward and offensive, which commends itself by its shaved skin and black teeth, while it attempts to be called simple candor and pure excellence. Excellence is the mean between vices that recedes from both extremes” (*Epistles* 1.18.5-9).

The final line is perhaps the purest distillation of the idea of the golden mean in Horace’s writing. The word order is amusing, as *uirtus* in fact stands at one of the extremes of the line with the word *uitia* at its middle. While there is no explicit reference to the source of the thought, the line would not be out of place in Aristotle’s ethics and its three-term definition of ἀρετή.[[306]](#footnote-306) In fact, Harrison makes the point that it is a clever repackaging into dactylic hexameter of Aristotle’s very definition of ἀρετή given above.[[307]](#footnote-307) Once again, however, the joke seems to be that the lofty Aristotelian ideal is being applied to the somewhat inglorious activity of cultivating a patron.

So far, we have noted (a) how Horace suggests that the golden mean can itself be pursued to excess and (b) that the principle does not in itself lead to morality, as it can be applied in aberrant ways. Other examples further refine our understanding of Horace’s attitude to the principle. Irony is also apparent in *Epistles* 1.2 where, just as in Aristotle, the attainment of excellence depends on experience. It is best to undertake the cultivation of good habits while still young: as Horace puts it, the horse is best trained while its neck is tender, the hunting dog while it is still a puppy. Nevertheless, the poet closes with a self-deprecating allusion to his own moderate abilities when it comes to self-improvement:

*quo semel est inbuta recens seruabit odorem*

*testa diu. quodsi cessas aut strenuos anteis,*

*nec tardum opperior nec praecedentibus insto.*

“The jar that is wettened once when it is new will retain its smell for a long time. But if you lag behind me or go swiftly in front, I neither wait for the slow nor press hard upon those who precede me” (*Epistles* 1.2.69-71).

In other words, Horace opts for moderation when it comes to self-improvement: he does not seek precocity in moral progress but regulates his advancement on the path toward excellence so that his pace is steady yet unremarkable.[[308]](#footnote-308)

The image of Horace as neither the quickest nor the slowest, i.e. hitting the golden mean, in his pursuit of excellence reappears later in the book. In the extraordinary *Epistles* 1.6, Horace states that even *uirtus* should be pursued in moderation:

*insani sapiens nomen ferat, aequus iniqui,*

*ultra quam satis est uirtutem si petat ipsam*

“The wise man should bear the name of madman, the just of an unjust one, should he pursue excellence itself beyond due bounds” (*Epistles* 1.6.15-16).

Roy Gibson suggests that Horace is here attacking Stoic thinkers who rejected the middle way of Aristotle.[[309]](#footnote-309) The key term “*sapiens*”(“wise man”) certainly validates this: going beyond what is enough (*satis*) in seeking excellence (*uirtus*)would be insane and unjust for the Stoic sage.[[310]](#footnote-310) Yet the statement can also be taken as applying to the cultivation of *mediocritas*. Aristotle himself characterized ἀρετή (“virtue,” “excellence” – i.e. *uirtus*) as residing in moderation, as we have seen, and so Horace could be interpreted as stating that only a madman would pursue the golden mean beyond what is sufficient. On first glance, then, the thought is quizzical, as it appears that Horace is advising the reader to strive for excellence moderately, but only until one realizes that this is precisely what Horace is advocating: a moderate application of the principle of the golden mean in aiming for *uirtus*.

Further clever applications of the mean become apparent when one looks closely at the *Epistles* – for instance, Horace’s avoidance of Rome (and Maecenas) during the hot and cold seasons in *Epistles* 1.7 can be construed as a denial of both extremes in favor of the mean (i.e. spring).[[311]](#footnote-311) References within the later epistles and *Art of Poetry* also might be discussed – for instance, the lengthy section on moderation at *Epistles* 2.2.190-204. But in the interests of space, let us sum up the argument thus far. Horace, well-versed in the philosophical systems current in his day, refused to ascribe to any one of them in particular: *nullius addictus iurare in uerba magistri*. The doctrine of the mean is advocated by figures as disparate as the depraved voice of *Satires* 1.2 (who uses it for unelevated purposes) and the ironic narrator of *Epistles* 1.18 (who applies it to the management of one’s patrons). In *Epistles* 1.6, the insanity of striving after *uirtus* too strenuously is stressed: instead, one should seek excellencemoderately and with reference to what is *satis* (“enough”). While he undoubtedly did prize moderation, Horace was skeptical that *mediocritas* contained the entire answer. One should, to judge from the excerpts considered, pursue excellence in moderation rather than accelerate maniacally toward perfection. Moderation itself, moreover, is to be pursued in moderation. The idea can be found throughout Horace’s writing, at least on an implicit level, and it will be worthwhile to return briefly to his lyric.

The centrality of *mediocritas* can be felt in the *Odes* quite literally. Scholars have argued that Horace even draws attention to his coinage “*aurea mediocritas*”by setting it at the center of his second book of *Odes*, and therefore of his first collection of lyric poetry.[[312]](#footnote-312)

*rectius uiues, Licini, neque altum*

*semper urgendo neque, dum procellas*

*cautus horrescis, nimium premendo*

 *litus iniquum.*

*auream quisquis mediocritatem*

*diligit, tutus caret obseleti*

*sordibus tecti, caret inuidenda*

 *sobrius aula*

“You will live better, Licinius, neither by always pressing upon the deep nor, while you cautiously shudder at the storms, by pressing the unkind shoreline too much. Whoever appreciates the golden mean avoids the shabbiness of a worn-out roof and soberly avoids the hall to be shunned” (*Odes* 2.10.1-8).

Tall trees invite the storm, high towers collapse more heavily, and lightning hits the highest mountains. Further on in the poem, we read about how a well-prepared disposition can help to determine the correct attitude for each set of events. One should be bold in difficult circumstances but not go overboard in prosperous ones. The probable addressee of the poem (Licinius Murena) had Peripatetic interests, and the Aristotelian theme would have been tailored to him.[[313]](#footnote-313) The principle is accordingly treated respectfully here, even if its ultimate placement at the center of the first collection of *Odes* communicates a knowing wink to the reader.

The golden mean is prominent elsewhere in the *Odes* and has been taken as a particular feature of *Odes* 2.[[314]](#footnote-314) *Odes* 2.3 begins with the exhortation to Dellius to retain a level or balanced (*aequam*) and controlled (*temperatam*) state of mind (*mentem*) in both difficult and prosperous situations (1-4). The poems to Valgius (2.9) and Quinctius (2.11) counsel their addressees to put aside their immoderate sorrow and anxiety, and in the second half of the book Horace suggests self-sufficiency and simplicity while attacking luxury. The principle is also prominent in the third book: in *Odes* 3.16, Horace declares his fear to raise his head too high (18-20),[[315]](#footnote-315) and the notions of constraint and the middle path take on political overtones in *Odes* 3.4.[[316]](#footnote-316) Elsewhere, words suggestive of moderation appear frequently in Horace’s self-characterizations; while Maecenas drinks wines from prestigious regions, Horace quaffs cheap Sabine wine from “modest cups” (*modicis… cantharis*, *Odes* 1.20.1-2).[[317]](#footnote-317) Satisfaction of needs rather than the attainment of extreme pleasures is a pervasive idea throughout Horatian lyric.[[318]](#footnote-318) All this is in line with the conventional notion of the mean.

Yet Horace’s failures in maintaining *mediocritas* are just as notable in the *Odes* as they are in the *Satires* and *Epistles*. In *Odes* 4.12, for instance, he advises occasional suspensions of judgment:

*uerum pone moras et studium lucri*

*nigrorumque memor, dum licet, ignium*

*misce stultitiam consiliis breuem:*

 *dulce est desipere in loco*

“But set aside delay and your striving after wealth, and, keeping in mind the black fires (while there is still time), mix a brief stupidity into your planning: it is sweet to be witless on occasion” (*Odes* 4.12.25-28).[[319]](#footnote-319)

The expression “*in loco*”here can be interpreted as meaning “in its proper place,” “at the right moment,” “opportunely,”[[320]](#footnote-320) and can therefore play into the notions of appropriateness and temperance that Horace espouses in the excerpts just mentioned, yet it needs to be read in tandem with the references to *stultitia* (“stupidity”) and *disipere* (“be witless”). According to Horace, one should reckon brief bouts of foolishness into one’s planning – a paradoxical thought at best. Horace is giving his addressee permission to lapse every so often from the rationality that would supposedly include strict adherence to Aristotelian moderation. Horace suggests that it is unhealthy for human beings to adhere to the principle incessantly and that lapses on occasion are to be welcomed.

Indeed, the more one looks in the *Odes*, the more evidence for *immoderatio* (“immoderation”) one finds amidst the praise of the mean. This cannot simply be ascribed to the exigencies of genre and emulation of Greek models. In *Odes* 2.7, for example, Horace plans to celebrate the return to Rome of his friend Pompeius, a comrade from the Philippi campaign, with a drinking frenzy:

*non ego sanius*

 *bacchabor Edonis: recepto*

 *dulce mihi furere est amico*

“I shall revel not more sanely than the Thracians; it is pleasing for me to go mad because my friend has been restored” (*Odes* 2.7.26-28).

While the return of Pompeius warrants the occasion (compare “*in loco*”above), can there be a moderate way to “go mad” (*bacchabor*, *furere*)? A feminine version of this is provided in *Odes* 3.15, where we read of Chloris’ daughter “more correctly” (*rectius*) behaving like a bacchant “maddened by the drum” (*concita tympano*,8-10). These examples do not entail any negative judgment on madness and emotional excess – in fact, madness and excess are conceived of as healthy responses in such contexts. They reflect the side of Horace that values irrational reactions to extraordinary stimuli and looks askance at the philosophical means of stifling them, even if the basic tendency should be toward moderation.

A few further examples will illustrate the way in which different poems contradict each other – the perpetual bane of interpreters seeking to get a bead on the poet’s moral principles (especially given his admonishments toward self-consistency in the *Satires*). Despite his advice to Albius to practice moderation in mourning his wayward girlfriend in *Odes* 1.33 (*Albi, ne doleas plus nimio memor | inmitis Glycerae*, “Albius, do not grieve too much thinking of bitter Glycera” 1-2), for instance, we find Horace himself on the doorstep of Lyce in *Odes* 3.10, freezing and prostrate. In *Odes* 1.18 (*nullam, Vare, sacra uite prius seueris arborem*, “Varus, plant no tree before the sacred vine” 1) and *Odes* 1.27 (*natis in usum laetitiae scyphis | pugnare Thracum est*, “to fight with cups created for the experience of joy is Thracian” 1-2) Horace goes out of his way to recommend the measured enjoyment of wine,[[321]](#footnote-321) yet calls on Lyde to mount a drunken attack on fortified wisdom in *Odes* 3.28 (*munitaeque adhibe uim sapientiae*, “apply violence to the citadel of wisdom” 4) and demands that he drink himself to stupefaction in *Odes* 3.19 (*insanire iuuat*, “it is pleasing to go mad” 18). In the same poem (*Odes* 3.19), he commands roses to be thrown about in excess,[[322]](#footnote-322) a statement that goes against his programmatic claim in *Odes* 1.38 that he abjures the search for where “the late rose dallies” (*rosa… sera moretur*, 3-4) and is content with myrtle.[[323]](#footnote-323) These examples reveal not only inconsistency across poems, but also deviation from the mean. How better to account for these moments than by assuming that Horace is critical of any unreflective adherence to an ethical imperative or avowed allegiance – that he takes the golden mean indeed to be a desirable principle, but one that should be cultivated moderately?

But to return to the *Epistles*: we might cautiously link Horace’s stance when it comes to the *mediocritas aurea* back to his general statements about the relationship between poetry and philosophy – domains that were traditionally at war with each other.[[324]](#footnote-324) In *Epistles* 1.2, whose close we have discussed (see p. 000), Horace begins by telling Lollius that he has been re-reading Homer at Praeneste. He starts out by describing the moral lessons that can be derived from Homer, before continuing to more general advice for the younger man:

 *qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,*

 *planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.*

“[Homer,] who describes what is attractive and what unseemly, what is useful and what is not, more lucidly and better than Chrysippus and Crantor” (*Epistles* 1.2.3-4).

Richard Hunter (2014) has noted that Horace’s eclecticism is reflected in his interpretation of Homer as laid out within the letter.[[325]](#footnote-325) While the voluminous Chrysippus (third century BCE) and Crantor (late fourth and early third century BCE) were conventional in their allegiance to Stoicism and the Old Academy respectively, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contain the entirety of human experience. In short, if we take Horace at his word, Homer provides a more practical education in human dealings than the abstract theorization of the Hellenistic philosophers: clearer, briefer, more alive to nuance, and unbound by an individual ethical system (compare Horace’s own *nullius addictus* *iurare in uerba magistri*), his take on ethics is purer and more accurate than that of his philosophical competitors.[[326]](#footnote-326) The way his heroes act in praiseworthy and unpraiseworthy ways moreover dovetails with the education that Horace’s father supposedly gave him in his youth (*Satires* 1.4.105-126). Here, then, we perhaps see how Horace could derive life lessons from sources other than the philosophers – Homer’s heroes were far from being steered by pure adherence to moderation, and their actions could have both praiseworthy and shameful results. Literature, together with Horace’s practical experience of life and his father’s advice, may conceivably have influenced his innovative twist on the notion of the golden mean.[[327]](#footnote-327)

In sum, the phrase “*auream… mediocritatem*”has been called a “brilliant oxymoron” (how can something so unexceptional be described as golden?).[[328]](#footnote-328) The expression of itself suggests that its coiner viewed the principle it communicates with irony. Rudd (1966), in summing up the way in which Horace allows himself the occasional moment of excess in his *Satires*, provides an assessment of Horace’s personality that coheres with the argument of this section:

“The essence of Horace’s life, as of his style, will therefore be found in the idea of controlled variety. Because the limits are relatively narrow and the movement normally *is* controlled, the poet is in a position to mock the wild oscillations of Priscus and Tigellius. But he does not pretend that the control is infallible. He admits that, sometimes at least, there is a gap between his principles and his performance. And it is this faculty of wry self-criticism that makes him the most likeable of Roman moralists” (201).

While there is no smoking gun in the form of an explicit statement in which the poet straightforwardly advocates moderation in applying the mean, this is not to be expected from Horace. The key lies in the poet’s statements themselves, which cannot be reduced to a simple rigid observance of the mean. The amended principle, i.e. the reflexively applied golden mean, accounts for these apparent moments of indiscretion and self-contradiction. We have moreover seen, in an admittedly compressed argument, instances throughout the hexametric poetry where the author seems to directly satirize the notion of the golden mean, even as he advocates for it in general. In the *Odes* – I have not listed moments of excess in the *Epodes* simply because they are permeated with it (see Chapter 2) – Horace fails to maintain his equilibrium all too often. There is further material to discuss, but the principle “strive for moderation but do so in moderation” emerges clearly enough from his writing. This in turn invites us to ask ourselves about its applicability to life in the twenty-first century, and whether here Horace has something to teach us about escaping the trap of ethical fundamentalism.

 For I believe he does. To adopt a personal voice in conclusion, I hold that Horace’s dislike of the unreflective acceptance of verities, appreciation of the complexity of human frailties, and suspicion that each of us is ethically compromised (and himself most of all) combine to form an outlook to be valued over and above his more famous meditations on love and death. It is possible that he acquired it not from his education in Athens but rather from his abortive flirtation with commitment in the run-up to Philippi. That he kept Augustus at arm’s distance, even as both men’s fate became inextricably intermeshed toward the end of his life,[[329]](#footnote-329) says much about his need for independence amidst his many accommodations – most notably, the delivery of his political odes and epodes. Moreover, those of us (and I often count myself among them) who respond negatively to his support of Octavian / Augustus might consider whether they are *absolutely* certain that they would have acted differently. This question brings us to deep and troubling waters, ones that cannot be crossed here. Suffice it to say that Horace’s poetry is the most subtle and penetrating ethical corpus that remains from the Augustan age; studying it will not lead to easy ethical answers or revelations, but that indeed seems to be part of the point. The poet invites us to turn our eyes away from the vices carried on the backs of our contemporaries and to fix our gaze on our own. And this, perhaps, is a fitting image with which to end a volume devoted to a flawed yet brilliant Roman.

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1. Holzberg (2017). See Holzberg’s website: <http://www.niklasholzberg.com/Homepage/Bibliographien.html> (accessed: April 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Commager (2009 [1957]), 48. I have changed “a poet” to “Horace.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See e.g. Brink (1971), 107, on Horace’s “astonishing practice of partly displaying and partly concealing his personality.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See e.g. Armstrong (1989), 9-25; Lyne (1995), 1-8; Armstrong (2010); Bather (2016), 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Taylor (1925), 165, suggests that Brutus and Cassius may have been short on officers. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lyne (1995), 4. On the roles of the *scribae quaestorii* and Horace’s possible knowledge of accounting practices from his father, see Hartmann (2020), 18-19, 68-75. Hartmann discusses the various modes of self-enrichment, which Horace may or may not have exploited, at 94-110. Horace’s tenure is discussed at length in Armstrong (1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is the standard view. Hutchinson argued in 2002 (reprinted in 2008, 131-161) for separate publication of the books (possibly in 26, 24, and 23 BCE), partly for metrical reasons, but see Tarrant (2020), 35-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Feeney (2009). On the tricky dating the *Art of Poetry* and second book of *Epistles*, see p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Fiske (1971 [1920]), 316; Freudenburg (1993), 5, 14, 205; Moles (2007), 165-168. For the few extant fragments of Bion, see Kindstrand (1976). Alternatively, Woodman (2009) has linked Horace’s claim about being the son of a freedman to the Republican hero Gnaeus Flavius, who had also been a *scriba* (“scribe”) but was eventually elected as an aedile for 304 BC; for further discussion of Flavius, see the index of Hartmann (2020), s.v. “Flavius, Cn.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See also Anderson (1982), 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Frischer (1995, superseded by 2010); the elaborate structure visible today dates to the first century CE and was built on top of a more modest Augustan villa. Frischer and his colleagues could find no positive evidence for Horace at the site, but the likelihood that the villa passed into imperial possession is coherent with Horace’s final bequest of his property to Augustus (reported by Suetonius). Lyne (1995), 9-11, argues that Horace in fact owned between three and five properties in fashionable districts around Italy. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Taylor (1925); Mayer (1994), 280; Lyne (1995), 1-8, especially 3 n. 7, who also notes Nicolet’s view that elevation to the military tribunate in fact conferred equestrian status on Horace (Horace’s financial qualification alone not being enough). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Armstrong (1986) argues that Horace remained an *eques* even between 43-38 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Taylor (1925), 162-163; the debate about the ring revolves around whether the *tu* refers to Horace or not. For a discussion (and agreement with Taylor), see Armstrong (1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (2018), 187: “the onus on us is not to explain why we can recognize elements of historical referentiality in the personality of the poet recorded in his poetry, but rather why we should not do so” (187). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (2018), 189-194. Compare Felski (2015), who argues that the paranoid, suspicious style of reading has become the default one within modern literary criticism: “all too often, we see critics tying themselves into knots in order to prove that a text harbors signs of dissonance and dissent – as if there were no other way of justifying its merits” (17). For Felski, this is a product of modernist texts themselves – “literary works [such as *Pale Fire*] thus train their readers in a hermeneutic of suspicion – a hermeneutic that can subsequently be put into play in order to query the sacrosanct authority of the same works” (43). See further p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Nevertheless, as Ahl (1984) showed, suspicious interpretation was built into ancient rhetorical practices of “figured speech” (i.e. innuendo rather than blunt statement). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On the parabolic “literary career” of Horace in ascending from the lower genre of *sermo* to *iambus* to the heights of lyric, and thence back to *sermo* in the *Epistles*, see Harrison (2010) and below, p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The internal development of Horatian satire was emphasized by Fiske (1971 [1920]), 25-26. For an approach sensitive to such issues, see the following footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Williams (1972) remains useful for the earlier bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Tarrant (2016) discusses the characteristics of earlier editions before describing his own tentative rationale. For instance, he states that he may break from the conventional ordering of Horace’s works (*Odes*, *Epodes*, *Satires*, and finally *Epistles*, which is based on a combination of meter, prestige, and chronology) in his new text in order to create a purely chronological edition (e.g. by separating *Odes* 1-3 from *Odes* 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Epistles* 2 and *Ars Poetica*, Rudd (1990); *Epistles* 1, Mayer (1994); *Epodes*,Mankin (1995); *Odes* 4 and *Saecular Song*, Thomas (2011); *Satires* 1, Gowers (2012); *Odes* 1, Mayer (2012); *Odes* 2, Harrison (2017b); *Satires* 2, Freudenburg (2021); *Odes* 3, Woodman (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ars Poetica*, Brink (1971); *Odes* 1, Nisbet and Hubbard (1970); *Odes* 2, Nisbet and Hubbard (1978); *Epistles* 2, Brink (1982); *Epodes*, Watson (2003); *Odes* 3, Nisbet and Rudd (2004). The *Satires*, *Odes* 4, and *Epistles* 1 remain uncovered in the large-scale Oxford / Cambridge format. For a comparable commentary on the *Satires*, see Fedeli (1994); Lejay (1911) is still helpful. For *Odes* 4, see Fedeli and Ciccarelli (2008). For *Epistles* 1, see Cucchiarelli (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Garrison (1991) provides a modern introduction to the *Odes* and *Epodes*, even it is not as effective as Garrison’s earlier edition on Catullus, while Brown (1993) and Muecke (1993) are good starting places for *Satires* 1 and 2 (although their facing translations may or may not be desirable). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Cf. Shackleton Bailey (1982), 111: “To read those notes, even when they do not extort at least temporary assent, is one of the most stimulating experiences Latin scholarship has to offer. *Mirabilis uir est.*” On Bentley and Horace, see Konstan and Muecke (1992-1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Holder (1894) for Porphyrio, Keller (1902) for Pseudo-Acro. For discussion of Porphyrio, see Kalinina (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See the review of Mayer (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. For example, it is not in the holdings of the library system of Princeton University, where I am writing this. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Influential works naturally antedate Fraenkel’s *Horace*, for instance, Wilkinson (1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See also e.g. Holzberg (2009) in German. Miller (2019) contains bracing interpretations but is probably best not tackled by beginners. Llewelyn Morgan’s contribution to Oxford’s *Very Short Introductions* series is forthcoming. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See also the more demanding Johnson (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. To give a brief example of the application of the last of these, Matzner (2018) has argued that Horace depicts the culturally colonized Romans as having internalized the structures of Greek literary history (Livius Andronicus being regarded as a *quasi*-Homer). Even in terms of literary history, then, it is the hegemon that is colonized in the end: *Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit* (“captured Greece captured the wild victor” *Epistles* 2.1.156). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Miller (2019), 5, makes the point that many of Horace’s best modern readers have been women. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See Lowrie (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Examples cited by Thomas (2006), 161-162. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cited by Thomas (2006), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See Harrison (2002); Rohland (2022), 32-33. Stoppard’s excellent play *The Invention of Love* (1997)portrays Housman engaging intensively with Horace. The connections between the ancient and modern poet have been studied at length by Gaskin (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See the edited volumes of Martindale and Hopkins (1993) and Houghton and Wyke (2009). The early modern period and the Augustan era have been especially fruitful; see e.g. Moul (2010), who discusses Horace and Ben Jonson. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. <https://www.classicsandclass.info/> (accessed: April 2023). See also Hall and Stead (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Cited by Classics and Class, <https://www.classicsandclass.info/product/135/> (accessed: April 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Cited by Classics and Class, <https://www.classicsandclass.info/product/106/> (accessed: April 2023). For discussion of *To Maecenas* and for further references on the fraught issue of Wheatley’s classicism, see Greenwood (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See Ferriss-Hill (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See Fermor (2005 [1977]), 85-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Feeney (2009 [2002]), 360-361. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On Ennius’ satire (of which little survives), see Gratwick (1982), 158; on the influence of iambic on this work, see Russo (2001). The early history of satire is a difficult topic; see Muecke (2013) and Ferriss-Hill (2015), 1-44, who stress the links with Roman comedy. Roman critics (e.g. Quintilian) note that the word “*satura*” encompassed two subgenres (Varronian and Lucilian). The satire of Lucilius was itself formally amorphous – Lucilius only came to use the hexameter in the course of his writing; see Ferriss-Hill (2015), 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Freudenburg (2001), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. On the unclear identity of the *carminis auctor* (“originator of the genre”), and its relationship to the earlier description of the *inuentor* (“inventor,” i.e. Lucilius) of satire at 10.48-49, see Gowers (2012), 328 and 332. Ferriss-Hill (2015), 10-13, summarizes the debate and takes the *carminis auctor* to be Lucilius. Certainly, Horace never elswhere mentions Ennius as an author of satire, and at *Satires* 2.1.62-63 he states that Lucilius was the first to dare “to compose songs in this type of genre” (*in hunc operis componere carmina morem*); see Freudenburg (2021), 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Porphyrio tells us (at *Satires* 1.5.1) that Lucilius covered his trip *in tertio libro* (“in his third book”), which seems to have only contained a single satire. The dimensions of Lucilius’ narration are unclear, but it was probably several hundred lines; see Tarrant (2007), 67. On the links between Lucilius’ poem, Horace’s *Satires* 1.5, and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, see Cucchiarelli (2001), 25-33, and Ferriss-Hill (2015), 42, 49-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Freudenburg (2001), 26; it is not until *Satires* 2.1.1 that the term “*satura*” is used. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See Rudd (1966), 132-159, for the prosopography of the minor figures in Horace’s *Satires*. It is unclear whether the Sallust mentioned as an admirer of freedwomen at *Satires* 1.2.47-49 is the historian or his great-nephew and adopted son; see Rudd (1966), 135, and Courtney (2013), 76. On the names mentioned in Lucilius’ fragments, see Ferriss-Hill (2015), 219-222. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Labate (2009 [1996]), 105, stresses that Lucilius situated Roman satire “between the poles of aggressiveness and autobiography.” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Freudenburg (1993) sees in Horace’s satire a negotiation between Aristotle’s “theory of liberal jest” (i.e. responsible laughter) and the “iambographic tradition” of undisguised and criticism using real names (52-108). On early Augustan *libertas*, its different meanings, and relationship to *securitas* (“care-lessness”) in Vergil’s *Eclogues*, see Galinsky (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Feeney (2009 [2002]). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Miller (2019), 20-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Hawkins (2016), 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Hawkins (2016), 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For a survey of Callimachus’ stylistic remarks and their relationship to Horace’s *Satires*, see Ferriss-Hill (2015), 134-138, 143-156. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Still, Ferriss-Hill (2015), 231-232, points out that unusual words are used e.g. at *Satires* 1.2.1: *ambubaiarum collegia, phramacopolae…* (“the college of courtesans, the drug-merchants…”). Gowers (2012), 22-24, stresses stylistic capaciousness: “Horatian satire is, not surprisingly, a sampler of verbal *uarietas* that subsumes all the other genres (*polyeideia*).” [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See Freudenburg (1993), 198, for references. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. This was pointed out by Boll (1913). Cf. Freudenburg (2021), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Turpin (2009 [1998]), argues for a first-person, Epicurean *doctor ineptus* within the early diatribe satires of the first book (*Satires* 1.1-3), and Freudenburg (1993) takes a similar view of the Horatian *persona* in these poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Harrison (2013b), however, suggests that the characters of *Satires* 2 are in fact covert versions of Horace himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Sellar (1892) also wrote about Horace’s “frank trust in himself and in his reader, and the self-respect with which he admits the world into his confidence” (5). Even in the 1950’s, Fraenkel (1957) could voice similar thoughts: “Horace tells us far more about himself, his character, his development, and his way of life (his βίος), than any other great poet in antiquity” (1). Compare his index s.v. “Horace, never lies.” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. For a deconstruction of this passage (did Lucilius reallyfully commit his life to his books? Why does Horace not explicitly state whether he is Lucanian or Apulian?), see Freudenburg (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. For early criticism of the “biographical fallacy” in Roman poetry, see Rudd (1964). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Fiske (1971 [1920]), 316; Leach (1971); Anderson (1982); Freudenburg (1993), 205-206; Moles (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Williams (2009 [1995]). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See Treggiari (1969), 108; cf. Mouritsen (2011), 266-267, and MacLean (2018), 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. For a relatively recent argument that Horace was Jewish, see Newman (2011), 446-458. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Cf. *Satires* 2.1.34-39 (see p. 000); *me fabulosae Volture in Apulo… fronde noua puerum palumbes | texere* (“wondrous wood pigeons covered me as a boy with fresh fronds on Apulian mount Vulture” *Odes* 3.4.9-13); *longe sonantem natus ad Aufidum* (“born by the loudly resounding river Aufidus [Ofanto]” *Odes* 4.9.2). See Armstrong (2010), especially 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Shackleton Bailey (1982), ix, suggests that the father was probably “a public slave belonging to the municipality,” the old theory of Grotefend. Against this, see Stenuit (1977), 130-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. On legacies granted to freedmen upon their owner’s death, see Mouritsen (2011), 154-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Mouritsen (2011), 242. Stenuit (1977), 132, explains the name “Horatius” as derived from the former owner of Horace’s father; the owner was in turn descended from the freed slaves of the ancient *gens Horatia*, which apparently went extinct during the early Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Cf. Johnson (1993), 17: “what nourishes [*Epistles* 1] are suffering and fear, resentment and anger.” [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See also Anderson (1982), 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See Stenuit (1977), 142 and 144, on Horace’s possible *post mortem* idealization of his father: “the dead often appear to us better than they were.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Compare Anderson (1982), 69, on Horace’s stance in *Epistles* 1.20: “Neither the father nor the Muses are given credit for Horace’s success. The implicit suggestion is that he has done it himself.” [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The topic of Roman slavery is vast; as an introduction, I cite only Patterson (2018 [1982]), who outlines the experience of Roman slavery from a comparative perspective and investigates the notions of “social death,” “parasitism,” “dishonor,” “powerlessness,” and “natal alienation” (i.e. detachment from bloodline). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Highet (1983), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Armstrong (2010), 29, also writes of “Horace’s sometimes astonishing (to a modern person) insensitivity, unbuffered by irony, in talking about slaves.” [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. For further details about Sarmentus, see Gowers (2012), 200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Cf. *cena ministratur pueris tribus* (“my dinner is waited on by three slaves” *Satires* 1.6.116). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Cf. *“nemon oleum fert ocius? ecquis | audit?”* (“will nobody swiftly bring me oil? Who’s listening?” *Satires* 2.7.34-35). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cf. *in aurem | dicere nescio quid puero…* (“I say something in the ear of my slave…” *Satires* 1.9.9-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Cf. *tum pueri nautis, pueris conuicia nautae | ingerere* (“then the slaves hurl abuse at the sailors, the sailors at the slaves” *Satires* 1.5.11-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Cf. *Satires* 1.10.92 (see p. 000 above); Gowers (2012), 338, suggests that this excerpt may be modeled on a Callimachean refrain. Horace appears to dictate his poetry to an amanuensis at *Epistles* 1.10.49-50, and would have been aware that his poems may have been read out by a slave-reader (*anagnostes*), in the words of Johnson (1993), 62, a “breathing lexicon-encyclopedia.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Cf. *his ut sublatis puer alte cinctus acernam | gausape purpureo mensam pertersit et alter | sublegit quodcumque iaceret inutile quodque | posset cenantis offendere* (“with these having been taken away, a high-belted slave dried the maple wood table with a purple cloth, and another [slave] picked up whatever was lying around for no purpose and whatever could offend those dining” *Satires* 2.8.10-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Cf. *si patinam pede lapsus frangat agaso* (“if a stableboy having slipped with his foot should break a platter” *Satires* 2.8.72); *Vibidius dum | quaerit de pueris, num sit quoque fracta lagoena* (“while Vibidius inquires of the slaves whether the flask was also broken” *Satires* 2.8.80-81). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. On these stereotypes, see Mouritsen (2011), 18-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Cf. *formidare malos fures, incendia, seruos, | ne te compilent fugientes, hoc iuuat?* (“is this pleasant – to fear wicked thieves, conflagrations, your slaves, who may rob you as they run away?” *Satires* 1.1.77-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Cf. *et quodcumque semel chartis inleuerit, omnis | gestiet a furno redeuntis scire lacuque | et pueros et anus* (“and whatever [the satirist] will have smeared once on his sheets of papyrus, he will be dying to have all the slaves and old ladies returning from the bakery or the well know” *Satires* 1.4.36-38). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Cf. *muneribus seruos corrumpam* (“I shall corrupt the slaves with gifts” *Satires* 1.9.67). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Cf. *iucundasque puer qui lamberat ore placentas* (“the slave who had licked with his mouth the pleasing cakes” Lucilius 629 Warmington). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Cf. *magna mouet stomacho fastidia, seu puer unctis | tractauit calicem manibus, dum furta ligurrit* (Catius speaking: “great revulsion seethes in the stomach, if a slave has handled a drinking cup with greasy hands, while he licks snatched items” *Satires* 2.4.78-79). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Cf. *ante Larem proprium uescor uernasque procacis | pasco libatis dapibus* (“I dine in front of my own Lar and feed the houseborn slaves with my barely tasted meals” *Satires* 2.6.66-67). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Cf. *praelambens omne quod adfert* (“licking in advance everything that he carries [to his guest]” (*Satires* 2.6.109). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. On this aspect of slavery, see Mouritsen (2011), 27, with further references. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. On these difficult lines, see Gowers (2012), 104-105. See p. 000 for discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. In *Satires* 1.4 we learn that Horace’s father had warned the poet off prostitutes when he was a boy: *a turpi meretricis amore | cum deterreret: “Scetani dissimilis sis”* (“when we would deter me from love for a prostitute [he would say]: ‘you should be different from Scetanus’” *Satires* 1.4.111-112). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Cf. *huc prius angustis eiecta cadauera cellis | conseruus uili portanda locabat in arca* (“in the past, a slave used to place in a cheap casket the bodies of his peers that had been ejected from their narrow cells to be carried hither” *Satires* 1.8.8-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Cf. *cerea suppliciter stabat, seruilibus ut quae | iam peritura modis* (“the waxen [doll] was standing in a suppliant position, as if it were soon about to die in a slavish manner” *Satires* 1.8.32-33). Cf. Gowers (2012), 275: “[death] by crucifixion, flagellation or torture.” Compare *Satires* 2.7.47 (Davus speaking): *peccat uter nostrum cruce dignius?* (“which one of us sins in a way more worthy of the crucifix?”). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Cf. *ita sordidus, ut se | non umquam seruo melius uestiret* (“so cheap, that never he clothed himself better than a slave” *Satires* 1.1.96-97). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Cf. *ut, si | reticulum panis uenalis inter onusto | forte uehas umero, nihilo plus accipias quam | qui nil portarit* (“[your stomach will not hold more than mine,] just as if you were carrying on a burdened shoulder a basket of bread amidst slaves for sale, you would not get any more than the slave carrying nothing” *Satires* 1.1.46-49). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Cf. *habebat saepe ducentos, | saepe decem seruos* (“often he had two-hundred, often he had ten slaves” *Satires* 1.3.11-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Cf. *populum si caedere saxis | incipias seruosue tuos… insanum te omnes pueri clamentque puellae* (Damasippus’ tirade: “if you were to beat the people on the street or your slaves with stones, all the boys and girls would call you insane” *Satires* 2.3.128-130). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Cf. *quid simile isti | Graecus Aristippus? qui seruos proicere aurum | in media iussit Libya, quia tardius irent | propter onus segnes* (“in what way is the Greek Aristippus similar to him? He commanded his slaves throw away their gold in the middle of Libya, since they were going rather slowly, sluggish due to their burden?” *Satires* 2.3.99-102). At *Satires* 2.3.129, Horace states that it would be considered insane to throw rocks at slaves whom one has purchased. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. On the following passages, see Freudenburg (2021). Compare the following, where a slave offers advice to a young lover (lifted from Terence’s *Eunuch*): *ecce* | *seruos non paulo sapientior* (“behold his slave, wiser by no small degree…” *Satires* 2.3.264-265). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. The translations are from Freudenburg (2021), 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Nisbet and Rudd (2004), 257, on Quinn’s theory; Quinn adduced Martial 1.84.4-6: *futuit ancillas | domumque et agros implet equitibus uernis. | pater familias uerus est Quirinalis* (“[Quirinalis] screws his maids and fills his house and fields with house-born slaves of equestrian rank. Quirinalis is a true *pater familias*”). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Horace’s attitude toward his slave *uilicus* (“superintendent”) in *Epistles* 1.14 has been read in different ways, Highet (1983) negatively but Fraenkel (1957) more positively. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Cf. Mouritsen (2011), 264: “while sons of freedmen undoubtedly faced prejudices, it is not given that they shared their parents’ ‘stigma of slavery.’ From a legal point of view they were *ingenui* on a par with any other Roman born to free parents.” [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Armstrong (1986) reads *Satires* 1.6 as a propaganda piece designed to represent Maecenas (and Octavian) as allies of the freedman class. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Cf. Mouritsen (2011), 29: “in Greece freedmen were kept separate from the citizen body and granted a status as metics, resident aliens, reflecting their collective inferiority to freeborn citizens.” [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Cf. Dionysius Halicarnassus 4.24.4-8; this was finally ratified by Augustus in the *lex Aelia Sentia* of 4 CE (discussed by Gaius). Mouritsen (2011), 34, points out that under this law the whipped freedman of *Epodes* 4 would not be allowed to remain at Rome. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. See Mouritsen (2011), especially 20-21, 102-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Mouritsen (2011), 266-270. The reference to the *parvenu* as a *tribunus militum* has been taken point to Horace himself; see e.g. Oliensis (1998), 66-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. See Mouritsen (2011), 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Cf. Fraenkel (1957), 58: “*Epodes* 8 and 12, with all their polish, are repulsive.” Carrubba (1969) was the first monograph in English dedicated to the *Epodes*. On the history, see Bather (2016), 14-15.Oliensis (2016), however, argues that the collection was comparatively well-read between 1600-1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Cavarzere (1992), 9-14. Mankin (2010), 93, argues that Horace used the title *Iambi*. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. For example, it is employed by the authors in Harrison (2007a), Davis (2010), and Bather and Stocks (2016). The term “*epodos* [*stichos*]” (“[verse] added to the song,” alternatively “spell”) came to be used in general of short poems in epodic couplets via metonymy. On meter in the *Epodes*, see Morgan (2010), 159-167, 177-180, with perceptive comments on, for instance, the collision of dactylic hexameter with iambic trimeter in *Epodes* 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. See Barchiesi (2001). On Catullus’ iambic poems, see Heyworth (2001). On the link between Lucilius and iambic, see Goh (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. On Catullus and Horace’s *Odes*, see Lee (1975); Putnam (2006); Tarrant (2007), 69-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Compare the question of the *inuentor* or *auctor* of Roman satire in *Satires* 1.10 (see above). On Horace as a polemicist rather than a historian when it comes to literary matters, see Tarrant (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. See Rotstein (2010), 32-33, on the Hellenistic “filter.” [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. For the story, see West (1974), 26. Only the daughters committed suicide in the earlier versions. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. For the interpretation of “its,” see Barchiesi (2001), 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. For Archilochus as Horace’s main model, see Mankin (1995, 2010) and Harrison (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. See e.g. Büchner (1970), 56: “wirkliche Liebeshändel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Watson (2003), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Cavarzere (1992); Barchiesi (2001, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. So Watson (2003), 4-19, with bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See Watson (2003) against Mankin (1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. On the debate about whether the *Iambi* originally contained thirteen or seventeen poems, see Kerkhecker (1999) and Watson (2003), 15-17. In any case, scholars reckon it likely that seventeen was the number with which Horace was familiar. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See above (p. 000) for the influence of Catullus on Horace’s *Odes*. For example, compare the *dulce ridentem* (“sweetly laughing”) of Catullus 51.5 with that of *Odes* 1.22.23, where Horace adds *dulce loquentem* (“sweetly laughing” 24) in a window reference back to Sappho’s ἆδυ φωνείσας (“sweetly speaking”); see Putnam (2006), 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Harrison (2001), 169-170; Tarrant (2007), 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. See Fedeli (1978) and Watson (2003), 17-18, for discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. See especially Watson (2003), 455-457, for Neoteric influence on *Epodes* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Carrubba (1969), 30; but see his groupings at 82-83. Deliberate arrangement of poetry books was standard in the Augustan period. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Porter (1995), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Watson (2003), 584 (*exitus*), 22-26 (“associative bridges”). [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. See Carrubba (1969), 16, for the order of the collection’s composition. For problems with dating according to internal evidence, see Kraggerud (1984), with the criticisms of Watson (1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Some used to think that the *fluentem nauseam* of *Epodes* 9 indicated that it was composed while on a galley at Actium; see the bibliography at Xinyue (2022), 83. Most scholars remain undecided; cf. Wistrand (1958), 19. It must be said that the suggestion that Maecenas and Horace were present at Actium would have reflected well on them immediately after the event. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. The uncertain status of Catullus’ polymetric poetry as we have received it remains a question here; for the argument that the Catullan corpus represents a collection of three books designed by the poet, see Schafer (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. See e.g. Harrison (2001), 169; Miller (2019), 64-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Watson points out that Pindar comments on Archilochus’ *amachania* at *Pythians* 2.54-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Parker (2000) maintained that the word *flaccus* (“flop-eared,” “floppy”) cannot refer to a flaccid male member, and Watson (2003) is skeptical, yet the pun has generally been accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. See Lyne (1995), 207-214. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Cf. Barchiesi (2009 [1994]). On Canidia, who also features in *Satires* 1.8, and appears briefly at *Satires* 2.1, 2.8, and *Epodes* 3, see Paule (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. See also Chapter Two of Oliensis (1998), picked up by Miller (2019), 51-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Rotstein (2010), 167-182, for discussion of Iambe as the constructed origin of *iambus*. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. On the intersection of the concepts *amicus* and *cliens*, see White (1993), 31-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Cf. Bowditch (2001), 19-27; Williams (1990), 269-270. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. On the cost of living in Augustan Rome and the ability of the poets to meet it, see White (1993). On Horace’s considerable personal wealth, see Armstrong (2010), cf. p. 000 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Compare Propertius, *Elegies* 2.1.74,3.9.59-60 and Vergil, *Georgics* 2.40, who express similar attitudes toward Maecenas. On the exposure poetic patrons offered, see White (1993), 19; on the way that the exchange was conducted symbolically, see Bowditch (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. See White (1993), 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. *Epistles* 1.7 is a key text. See Bowditch (2001, 2010), Roman (2014), 201-237, and McCarter (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Note also the possible reference to Sextus Pompeius in the phrase *super Neptuno* (“over Neptune” *Epodes* 7.3-4); Pompeius claimed that he was the son of Neptune. See Watson (2003), 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Fraenkel (1957); Carrubba (1969); Du Quesnay (2002). Compare, however, the comments of Giusti (2016) and Xinyue (2022), 131-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. See Rotstein (2010), 7, 126-127. On vituperation as the identifying characteristic of the genre, see West (1974), 22, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Leo (1900), 15; Watson (2003), 13-14. On generic enrichment, i.e. the incorporation of “guest” genres within the “host” genre, when it comes to the *Epodes* see in particular Harrison (2007b). [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. See Nagy (1979), especially Chapter 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. See, however, Lyons (2010), with the reservations of Moore (2010), discussed below (p. 000). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. See also the discussion of Morrison (2016), at p. 000 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. On the use of small capitals as a typographical convention for referring to mental categories and concepts (rather than words or things), see p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Cf. Rotstein (2010), 22. Cf. Morrison (2016), 33: “the boundaries between these types of poetry in the Archaic period are fluid.” [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Rotstein (2010), 284-289. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. See Harrison (2007b), 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. See the diagram at Rotstein (2010), 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. For play on the word *pes* (“foot”) elsewhere in Horace, see Barchiesi (1994), 135-137. On conceptual metaphor, see originally Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and the following chapter of the present book. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. For recent discussion of the poem as ironic, see Miller (2019), 9-14; cf. Frischer (1991). See p. 000 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. See e.g. Barchiesi (1994). However, Miller (2019) notes that while Horace restricts the *Epodes* to Archilochean meters (an essentializing move), he nevertheless reduces *iambus*, which as we have seen appears to have included poems composed in the elegiac meter for Archilochus, to epodic structures (save for *Epodes* 17). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Morrison (2016), 43. Morrison stresses that the poem contains an Archilochian setting and subject matter (war, seafaring); see also Harrison (2001), 167-174. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. For Morrison (2016), Horace’s *Epodes* constitute a fusion of Archaic, Hellenistic, and Roman iambic:“Horace’s *iambos* is steeped in the Greek iambic tradition, but it is also something new, Roman, and characteristically Horatian” (62). Compare the comments about Callimachus above, and the discussion of the *Odes* at the beginning of the following chapter, especially on Feeney (2009 [1993]). [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. See e.g. Bailey (1928), 232-274 and 557-558; Asmis (1984), 21-34; McOsker (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Hardie (1993), 101-119, applies Harold Bloom’s notion of quasi-Freudian *aemulatio* to Roman literary history. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Watson (2007), 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Interpretation of these translations is difficult, as often the first words are all we have of the Greek model. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. The status of the “Brothers’ Poem” remains controversial; on the ethics of publishing papyri of uncertain provenance, see Nongbri (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. The Alexandrian edition of the canonical nine lyric poets by Aristophanes of Byzantium is discussed by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1900) and Pfeiffer (1968), 205-208. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Cf. Nisbet and Hubbard (1970), xi: “The *Odes* of Horace are too familiar to be easily understood.” [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. See also Coffta (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. On *Odes* 1.6, see recently Rohland (2023), who argues that Horace incorporated a learned interpretation of Homer, finding parody of Homer within Homer himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Schrijvers (2009 [1973]), 67-68; cf. *perlucidior uitro* (“clearer than glass” *Odes* 1.18.16), *hederis ambitiosior* (“more clinging than ivy” *Odes* 1.36.20), and *fretis acrior Hadriae* (“harsher than the waves of the Adriatic” *Odes* 1.33.15). On Horace’s infrequent use of superlatives in the *Epodes* and *Odes*, see Büchner (1944), 23-37*.* See further Armstrong (1989), 69, who emphasizes Horace’s affection for litotes such as *non indecoro puluere sordidos* (“dirtied with not inglorious dust” *Odes* 2.1.22) rather than superlatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. See Woodman (2020) for the title “Alcaic Hexad,” which is picked up by Wiseman (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. On the question of performance, see below (p. 000). [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. See Nisbet and Hubbard (1970), xxii-xxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. See e.g. Miller (2019), 12. The term “*iunctura*”had not been used of words before. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. *Odes* 1.10 repeats the Sapphic stanza of *Odes* 1.2; Porter (1987), following Kiessling, extends the sequence with a coda to *Odes* 1.1-12. See Santirocco (1986), 14-41, 42 on Horace’s blurring of the parade’s boundaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Cf. Armstrong (1989), 71. There are intertexts here with *Odes* 3.25.3-6, where Horace ponders “inserting [*inserere*] the eternal glory of Caesar amidst the stars [*stellis*],” and *Odes* 4.3.14-15, where he states that the youth of Rome “sees fit to place [*ponere*] me among the pleasant choruses of the lyric poets.” [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Woodman (2002) points out that the final line seems to allude to Sappho (“I do not expect to touch the sky,” fr. 52). See also the discussion in Curtis (2017), 132-135. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Some of Sullivan’s cases for these allusions are more compelling than others, but his article demonstrates the kind of subtlety that can be applied to Horatian lyric. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Lee (1975), 41, refers to *callidae iuncturae* not merely between words but between poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. In recent years, there has been a push to see at least some of Horace’s odes as being also performed; see Lowrie (2009b), 63-64, 81-97. Wiseman (2022) postulates that *Odes* 3.6 was sung in 28 BCE (see p. 000 below), while Du Quesnay (2009 [1995]) takes *Odes* 4.5 (and indeed *Odes* 4 in general) to have been performed “as part of the celebrations of Augustus’ return.” Lyons (2010) argues that “Horace’s *carmina*, with the probable exceptions of the dedicatory prologue to Book 1 and the epilogue to Book 3, were composed in the first instance with a view to live performance in front of an audience” (176), suggesting that recitation and reading were not mutually exclusive. He surveys the evidence (although he does not mention Heinze’s arguments), but most scholars still take Horace’s poetry as transmitted primarily by the page rather than the poet’s voice; see the critique by Moore (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Curtis (2017), 112-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Horace’s preference for abstraction over the immediacy of Catullus is also discussed persuasively by Putnam (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Nisbet and Hubbard (1970), xxviii, argue “that the first book for the most part is earlier than the second, and the second than the third” based on the evidence of the Alcaic stanza. For the argument of Hutchinson (2008), 131-161, about the sequential dating of *Odes* 1-3, see p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. See above (p. 000). [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. See e.g. Scobie (1990) on architecture; Griffin (1993) on the role of palingenetic thought in fascism. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. For an efficient summary of these poems, see Hills (2005), 50-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. On sapping, see below. However, the role of *Odes* 3.7 with respect to the Roman Odes is debated; Cairns (1995) presents the possibilities and suggests that the poem is in fact designed to reinforce the moral stance of the preceding poems (a conservative “take-over” of elegiac conventions). [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Wiseman (2022) argues that certain long-standing problems in the poem (e.g. the contradictory opening and closing stanzas) can be resolved by assuming oral presentation. See also the commentary of Woodman (2022), 162 and 176, where the poem’s final lines are taken as a question. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. See e.g. Feeney (2009 [2002]), 380-381, for discussion and references to the plausibility and dating of the Augustan penalties for bachelors. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Cf. Syme (1939), 452; Galinsky (1996), 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. The ban may have been in place from 22 BCE. The evidence is indirect, and Feeney emphasizes the need for caution; it is unclear whether the penalties would have applied to Horace. For the privileges associated with equestrian status and service as *tribunus militum*, see Armstrong (2010), 17; cf. p. 000 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. On the multimedia evidence for the *ludi* and the mediality of the song, see Lowrie (2009b), 123-141.For a recent discussion of the poem against its main paratexts (the prophecy preserved by Phlegon of Tralles and the *Acta*), see Curtis (2017), 149-158. For a clear discussion of the Augustan hand behind the games, see Davis (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. See the review of Lowrie (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Thomas (2011), 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Lowrie (2009b), 135-137, discusses the technicalities of the shift. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. For general discussion, see e.g. Putnam (1986) and Johnson (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Lyne (1995), 196-197. The *te duce, Caesar* (“with you as leader, Caesar” *Odes* 1.2.52) is the lone exception pointed out by Hills (2005), 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. On this expression and its relationship to Augustus and Vergil, see Breed (2004). Cf. *tua tempora, Caesar* (“your times, Caesar” *Epistles* 2.1.4). [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Fraenkel was forced to leave Germany in 1934 due to antisemitic legislation, so one might *prima facie* expect him to be unsympathetic toward the rhetoric of the fourth book. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. On the subtleties of the give-and-take in the creation of ideology, see Feeney (1992) and Kennedy (1992). On the term “propaganda,” see p. 000 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. On the divinization of Augustus by the poets, see Xinyue (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. This form of *securitas* (“security,” “care-lessness”) is the focus of Lowrie’s recent work; cf. Galinsky (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. This is also the case for the earlier collection. Putnam (1990) argues for the conditionality of Horace’s bows to the emperor in the first three books. Santirocco (1986) interprets *Odes* 3 as resembling Vergil’s *Aeneid* in setting two voices – the public and the private – alongside each other. Thom (1998) likewise argues that the Roman Odes express unease at Augustan ideology via “double-talk” – Horace uses “lyric double talk to say one thing ostensibly, but in reality to suggest something completely different at the same time” (53). [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. However, for a critique of the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (a “thought style” that reads against the grain to draw out what a text “refuses” to state) in an Augustan context, see Giusti (2022), who draws on Felski (2015) – see p. 000. Giusti cautions against applying the hermeneutics of suspicion unreflectively to Horace – “all panegyrics include in themselves the germs of their subversive readings” (76). According to Giusti, Horace appears to play along with such paranoid readings, both offering and withholding historical toeholds that would permit interpretation of e.g. *Odes* 1.12: is *Odes* 1.12 about the death of Marcellus (the nephew of Augustus) or not? [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Lyne (1995), 207-214. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Lyne (1995), 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Cf. *unico gaudens mulier marito* (“[Livia], a woman rejoicing in her only husband” *Odes* 3.14.5); *Augusti paternus | in pueros animus Nerones | fortes creantur fortibus et bonis* (“[what] the paternal mind of Augustus could accomplish when it came to the Neronian boys; the brave are created by the brave and good” *Odes* 4.2.27-29). Nevertheless, Horace may just be reflecting the ideology of the time: in 9 BCE the senate awarded Livia the *ius trium liberorum* (i.e. rights of a mother who has given birth to three children), although Livia only had two, and a reader stresses to me that the phrase *paternus… animus* here may simply indicate that Augustus behaves as their father even though he is not related to them by blood. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. E.g. Pandey (2018), Xinyue (2022), broadly following Galinsky (1996). Kennedy (1992) is considered pivotal in transcending the Augustan versus anti-Augustan debate. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. On ultra-nationalistic cultural palingenesis in fascist thought, see Griffin (1993). On the reception of the Augustan paradigm of decline and fall, see Watts (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Cf. *diua, producas subolem patrumque | prosperes decreta super iugandis | feminis prolisque nouae feraci | lege marita* (“goddess, may you bring forth children and cause to flourish the decrees of the senate concerning women to be joined and the marriage law productive of new offspring” 17-20). For representative comments on these lines, see Lowrie (2009b), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Classic early expositions of how findings from the cognitive sciences can be applied to literary studies include Turner (1991) and Stockwell (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. I follow the convention of printing conceptual material in small caps. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. The study of conceptual metaphor theory in Latin is due above all to the work of Short (2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2016, 2018), who has applied it to the notions of time, mind, and communication. See also e.g. Zanker (2018) and Fedriani (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. See Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The following four paragraphs draw on Zanker (forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. On metaphors and metonymies for death in Homer, see Horn (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Even while still alive, Horace says that it is pleasing to be read and held by receptive eyes and hands (*Epistles* 1.19.33-34). Cf. Zanker (2016), especially Chapter 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. On this, see recently Rohland (2022), 76-139. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. I focus on the first book of *Epistles* and *Art of Poetry* as these have been more discussed than *Episles* 2.1 and 2.2 in recent years (see p. 000). In any case, as noted by Ferri (2007), 121, the later letters “belong in a tradition different from that of the first Book.” [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Kilpatrick (1986), xiii; Mayer (1994), 1-2; Trapp (2003), 23-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. See Dilke (1973), 94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. The letter format also appears in the poetry of Propertius (e.g. *Elegies* 1.11) and Ovid (e.g. *Heroides*, *Letters from Pontus*). See Dilke (1973), 96-97; De Pretis (2002), 33-37. For an anthology of Greco-Roman letters with an introduction and commentary, see Trapp (2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Cf. Becker (1963) also took *Epistles* 1 to represent poetry rather than actual recommendations, invitations, or inquiries. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Cf. McCarter (2015), 19: “Horace’s epistolary addressees… are every bit as fabricated as Horace’s own persona.” [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Ferri (2007), 122-123. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Harrison (2013a), 59. On Maecenas and Augustus as overreaders of Horace’s *Epistles*, see Oliensis (1998), 154-197. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. McGann (1969), 33-87, is particularly good on these links. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Dilke (1973), 107-109, seeks to trace ring composition all the way to the central tenth poem. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. This is pointed out by Ferri (2007), 126. On the differing tones of the two letters, see Fraenkel (1957), 322-323. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. The poems claim to have been composed over a long period; *Epistles* 1.13 concerns the presentation of the first three books of *Odes* to Augustus in 23 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. De Pretis (2002), 99-107, argues that the change in tone is due to genre rather than the poet’s age. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. See Ferri (2007), 126. The addressees are generally second-rank members of the elite, some of them unidentifiable. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Heinze (1919), 310. For a reinterpretation of the gradual disappearance of Maecenas from Horace’s later works in favor of Augustus (which had been understood as indication of a “fall from favor” since Syme), see Williams (1990), who understands Maecenas as astutely yielding Horace to his own patron when the time was right (after the passage of the marriage legislation); White (1991) likewise argues against an eclipse of Maecenas after 23 BCE. Cf. p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. On Horace’s self-deprecation in the *Epistles*, see Harrison (2009 [1995]), 274-275; on this aspect of the letter format, see De Pretis (2002) and Morrison (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. See also Mayer (1994), 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Cf. *Epistles* 2.1.111-113; *Epistles* 2.2.55-64; *Art of Poetry* 304-308. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. The term “*sermo*”appears to be the common generic category for the specific genres of satire and letter; see Dilke (1973), 94. Horace never calls *Epistles* 1 “*Epistulae*,” but refers to them as *sermones.* The commentator Porphyrio, however, suggests that the title *Epistulae* was Horace’s own (see his notes on *Satires* 1.1.1 and *Epistles* 1.1.1), and the title is transmitted in the manuscripts. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. See De Pretis (2002), 106-107, although Harrison (2009 [1995]), 273, takes Horace’s claims to be ironic. For discussion, see Ferriss-Hill (2019), especially the notes at 18-19 on *nil scribens ipse* (“writing nothing myself” *Art of Poetry* 306). For a different interpretation of *nil scribens ipse* (as “not writing [precepts] myself”), see Sedley (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. The idea of a “running joke” is from Armstrong (1989), 123. Compare *Epodes* 11.1-2, itself written in verse: *Petti, nihil me sicut antea iuuat | scribere uersiculos amore percussum graui…* (“Pettius, it helps me not at all as it did earlier to write verselets, having been struck by a grievous passion” *Epodes* 11.1-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. See Harrison (2009 [1995]). Dilke (1973), 99: “In philosophic outlook Horace is undoubtedly an eclectic, though one with Epicurean leanings.” On Horace’s eclecticism, see Maguinness (1938). For bibliography on Horace as a philosopher, see McCarter (2015), 281. A reader suggests to me that this aspect of Horace was likely to appeal to ancient readers of different philosophical persuasions. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Cf. Freudenburg (2009), 10, on Traina: “Traina provides a complete survey of the doxographical sources on Aristippus to argue that, in the first book of his epistles, Horace is, at heart, an Aristippean who is subject to episodic bouts of Stoic fancy.” Dilke (1973) also speaks of oscillation between the Stoics and Aristippus in the *Epistles*: *Epistles* 1.6 ends with an apparent “approval of Stoic suicide, whereas the very next letter has three mentions of Aristippus” (99). On the sparse remains of the Cyrenaic philosophers, see Lampe (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. See Mayer (1994), 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. On the importance of this statement, see Heinze (1919), 307. McGann (1969), 42-46, discounts it as a genuine statement of affiliation – Horace is referring to the Epicurean tag that he has just used – while Cucchiarelli (2019), 25, takes it to be a friendly joke. This, however, seems somewhat willful in the face of the Epicureanism found elsewhere in the corpus. On Horace’s Epicureanism, see Nisbet and Hubbard (1970), 376-379; Ferri (1993); Armstrong (1995); Armstrong (2004); Yona (2018). Cf. Moles (2007), 179: “Epicureanism proved to be the main thread, not just of his poetry, or even of his philosophy, but of his life.” [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. See Yona (2018), 72-128. Turpin (2009 [1998]) takes Horace’s *persona* in the *Satires* as an intentionally “incompetent Epicurean” (123), but this view is rejected by Yona (2018). Horace borrows from Lucretius at e.g. *Satires* 1.5.111 and 2.4.94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Cf. *insanientis dum sapientiae | consultus erro* (“I went astray as the expert of a mad philosophy” *Odes* 1.34.2-3);

Tarrant (2007), 68, points out that the poem is “not altogether serious.” [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. See Cucchiarelli (2019), 26-27, for his un-Epicurean civic engagement; on his references to divinization, see Xinyue (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. See Moles (2007); Moles (2009 [2002]); Freudenburg (1993), 16-17, argues that in the *Satires* Horace is burlesquing philosophy along Bionian lines. On Bion, about whom we know relatively little, see Kindstrand (1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. McGann (1969), 10; Moles (2007); see also above (p. 000). The idea of Stoic influence on Horace goes back to the scholiasts. Porphyrio comments *bene rigidus, secundum Stoicen* on the last two lines of Horace’s self-description as *uirtutis uerae custos rigidusque satelles* (“the guardian and rigid companion of true virtue” *Epistles* 1.1.17). [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. See Miller (2019); cf. Moles (2007); Sedley (2014) suggests that Horace received early training alongside Brutus in the Old Academy at Athens; Cucchiarelli (2019), 23-81, also argues for an undogmatic Academic background in an extended discussion (see especially 28-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. See Brink (1963), 202; Muecke (1993) 6-7. Anderson (1982), 13-49, makes the case for Horace as the “Roman Socrates,” the ironizing *doctor* to Lucilius’ *lusor*, comparing the reported speech of Ofellus in *Satires* 2.2 to that of Plato’s *Symposium*. Cf. Harrison (2013b), especially 156-158. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. It is unlikely (though not impossible) that Horace had direct access to our *Poetics*; it is more probable that Aristotle’s *On Poets* (together with other Peripatetic texts) was available to him. See e.g. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Cf. Mayer (1994), 156: “It is clear from the argument of [*Epistles* 1.6] (which formally owes much to Aristotle) that a single-minded attachment to any thing as an ideal possession or goal is bound to prove partial and so deny the many-faceted quality of life. The only ‘thing’ that matters is not a thing at all, but a disposition of the spirit to overvalue nothing, *nil admirari.*” [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. As Ferriss-Hill (2019), 17-22, points out, the *Art of Poetry* (which is transmitted separately from the *Epistles*)has been dated from as early as 28 BCE to the poet’s death in 8 BCE, although it is probably safe to say that most scholars today would take it, together with *Epistles* 2.1 (the letter to Augustus), to have been written after *Odes* 4 (i.e. after 13 BCE). *Epistles* 2.2 (the letter to Florus) is often dated to around 19 BCE, since its addressee Florus’ service to Tiberius also features in *Epistles* 1.3, but see e.g. Harrison (2010), who suggests that Florus may have accompanied Tiberius on two different campaigns and argues that *Epistles* 2.1, *Epistles* 2.2, and the *Art of Poetry* all date from the last years of Horace’s life. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 20-22, notes that Horace may have been working on the *Art of Poetry* over several years. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. See Harrison (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. For modern views on the second book of letters, see e.g. Harrison (2013a), 67-72. Much has been written on the *Art of Poetry* the past twenty years; see the special edition of *Materiali e discussioni* edited by Ferenczi and Hardie (2014), together with the major monograph by Ferriss-Hill (2019). The chapters by Laird (2007) and Reinhardt (2013) provide orientation. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. See Russell (2006 [1973]), 340-345; Ferriss-Hill (2019), 22-30, 244-271. For essays on the reception in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, etc., see the essays in Harrison (2007a). The *Art of Poetry* became fused in the imagination with Aristotle’s *Poetics* after the arrival of Greek manuscripts of the latter in Italy in the fifteenth century (and Aldus’ *editio princeps* of 1508). [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Cited by Hardie (2014), 54, and Schwindt (2014), 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Bertolt Brecht, cited by Laird (2007), 132, was predictably unimpressed by Horace’s comments on how to stir emotion in composing drama (99-103): “truly that has to be described as a barbaric operation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Brink (1963), 43-150, is foundational. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Russell (2006 [1973]), 326: “We do not believe Servius when he tells us that *Aeneid* IV comes *paene totus* from Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, because we can check the facts. Why then should we believe Prophyrio here?” Reinhard (2013), 504: “the third-century BC theoretician Neoptolemus of Parium is deemed to have played an unhelpful role in the debate.” [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. See especially Brink (1963); Russell (2006 [1973]), 326-327; Laird (2007), 134-135. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Reinhardt (2013), 505. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. See Laird (2007), 140. See above, p. 000. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. See Hardie (2014) for the didactic elements within the poem (and Horace’s *sermo* more broadly). Hardie sets the didactic of the *Art of Poetry* into relationship with that of Vergil’s *Georgics*: we do not expect to become farmers from the latter, so why should we expect to become poets from the former? [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Brink (1963), 15-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Frischer (1991), 87-100; Ferenczi (2014), 71: “it seems clear that Horace deliberately avoided giving his work the unmistakable stamp of any particular genre: it is instead an amalgam.” Yet Ferenczi makes the point that the distribution of generic markers is not constant over the course of the poem. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. For discussions of the dating, see Dilke (1958); Brink (1963), 239-243; Syme (1980); Ferriss-Hill (2019), 100-106. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Frischer (1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Geue (2014) is a recent advocate of this view. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 106, 107-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. See Frischer (1991), who views the poem as parodic. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. See Ferriss-Hill (2019), 13-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 42: “a (deliberately) bad ekphrasis.” [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Reinhardt (2013), 500. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Laird (2007), 137; the point is also made by Russell (2006 [1973]), 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Ferriss-Hill (2019), 44: “the poem’s opening makes the careful reader alert to the ways in which these various themes will be stitched together.” [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Horace is not generally viewed as a creative philosophical thinker; see Oates (1936); Anderson (1982), 23: “Horace is not an original thinker in his *Sermones*, and he does not pretend to be. It is so easy to parody his Golden Mean, for instance, that a teacher often finds himself embarrassed in commenting seriously upon it.” [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. On this issue, see Roskam (2005). Horace satirizes the Stoic paradoxes “all save the wise man are mad” in *Satires* 2.3 and “none save the wise man is free” in *Satires* 2.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Horace rejects this Stoic idea at *Satires* 1.3.96-97, arguing that it is unrealistic; he goes on to suggest that right and wrong is a matter of convention, following the Epicureans. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. For the commonplace in poetry, compare Pindar, *Pythians* 11.52-53 and Euripides, *Medea* 125-130. For the history of the concept, see Gibson (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 1.349e (on states); *Philebus* 64d-65a (on beauty). For Pythagorean and Sicilian doctrines on the mean, see Guthie (1962), index on “Medicine” and “Music.” [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. On the implications of this passage for Horace, see McCarter (2015), 40-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. See e.g. Ross (1923), 192-234; Hardie (1980 [1968]), 128-151. On the Roman reception of the specifically three-term idea (i.e. extreme – moderation – extreme) as Peripatetic, see Kemp (2016), 131: “We can therefore be reasonably certain that an educated Roman would have been aware that this specifically three-term format used to propound moderation (rather than the advocacy of moderation in general) was most associated with the Peripatetics.” [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Cf. Hardie (1980 [1968]), 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. His views are represented in the first book of Cicero’s *On Duties*; see Dyck (1996). Cicero was nevertheless aware that the doctrine of *mediocritas* was particularly associated with Aristotle and the Peripatetics: *mediocritatem illam… quae placet Peripateticis et recte placet* (“that moderation… which pleases the Peripatetics, and rightly so” Cicero, *De officiis* 1.89). For representative comments on *mediocritas*, see *De officiis* 1.128-130, 138, 140-141. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Rudd (1966), 19: “by the time when Horace was writing his *Satires*, i.e. from about 39 B.C. on, the distinctions between the main philosophical schools had become blurred at a number of points.” Rudd (1993), 70: “there seems no reason to doubt that the literate Roman who had no pretensions to being a philosopher would from time to time use expressions like *nil medium est*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. On the golden mean in Horace, see Mette (2009 [1962]), 54-55; Rudd (1966), 22-28; Gibson (2007). Gibson (2007), 16-17, investigates the vocabulary of the mean in Horace: *modus*, *modestus*, *modicus*, *moderari*, *mediocris*, *medius*. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. For a discussion of the doctrine of the mean in this poem, see Rudd (1966), 17-25; Gibson (2007), 19-42; Courtney (2013), 72-80; Kemp (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Freudenburg (2001), 16: “Aristotle rolls over in his grave. Epicurus winces. We, quite possibly, laugh.” [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. The faulty example is “designed for intentionally ironic purposes, to underline the mean’s elusiveness” (135). [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. For explicit references to the idea in the *Satires*, cf. *est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines, | quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum* (“there is a measure [*modus*] in things; there are, finally, definite boundaries above and below which correctness [*rectum*]cannot exist” *Satires* 1.1.106-107); *sordidus a tenui uictu distabit Ofello* | *iudice: nam frustra uitium uitaueris illud,* | *si te alio prauum detorseris* (“in Ofellus’ opinion, an excessively thrifty individual will differ from a simple one; for you will have avoided in vain the one fault if you twist yourself so as to become warped in a different direction” *Satires* 2.2.53-54). At times, Horace almost contravenes the golden mean only to pull himself back: *iam satis est. ne me Crispini scrinia lippi* | *compilasse putes, uerbum non amplius addam* (“now it is enough; I’ll not add a further word in case you think I have ransacked the bookshelves of Crispinus” *Satires* 1.1.120-121). [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Cf. *uirtus est uitium fugere et sapientia prima* | *stultitia caruisse* (“excellence is fleeing vice and incipient wisdom consists in having avoided stupidity” *Epistles* 1.1.41-42). [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Harrison (2009 [1995]), 276-277. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. The phrasing is reminiscent of Aristotle’s answer to a question about how students might make progress in philosophy: “they should chase those in front, and not wait for those behind” (Diogenes Laertius 5.20), noted by Hills (2005), 97. Compare also Horace’s self-characterization at *Epistles* 2.2.203-204: *uiribus, ingenio, specie, uirtute, loco, re* | *extremi priorum, extremis usque priores* (“in strength, talent, beauty, excellence, position, and wealth, the last of the first, ever the first among the last”). [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Gibson (2007), 18: “Horace clearly shows an awareness of sectarian rejection of the Peripatetic middle way, particularly from the Stoics who fetishized Virtue. Here ‘moderation’ is no trivial truism or banality, but an ideal that must be defended.” [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Moreover, according to the Stoics the wise man would not need to “pursue” (*petat*) excellence, since he would have presumably already acquired it. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. See Becker (1963), 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Santirocco (1986), 83; Tarrant (2020), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. See Gibson (2007), 18. On the debate about the addressee, see Nisbet and Hubbard (1978), 151-158. Licinius Macer, if it was him, may not have heeded Horace’s advice: he was executed in 22 BC for being implicated in a conspiracy against Augustus. Harrison (2017b), 128-131, argues against identifying the expression too closely with the precepts of Aristotle. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. See Santirocco (1986), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Cf. *iure perhorrui | late conspicuum tollere uerticem…* (“I rightly have been afraid to raise up my head so that it is broadly visible” *Odes* 3.16.18-19). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Cf. *uis consili expers mole ruit sua,* | *uim temperatam di quoque prouehunt* | *in maius…* (“power without planning crashes down by its own bulk. Power that is controlled, the gods increase…” *Odes* 3.4.65-67). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Cf. *mea nec Falernae | temperant uites neque Formiani | pocula colles* (“neither Falernian vines nor the hills of Formium mellow my cups” *Odes* 1.20.10-12). The verb *tempero* (“mix,” “soften,” “moderate”) and its derivatives are prominent in the *Odes*, e.g.: *nisi temperato | splendeat usu* (“unless [metal] gleams in moderate use” *Odes* 2.2.3-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Cf. *desiderantem quod satis est neque | tumultuosum sollicitat mare…* (“neither does the tumultuous sea disturb him who desires what is enough…” *Odes* 3.1.25-26). [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. The stress on exploiting life to its fullest before death is a cliché satirized by Horace elsewhere: the over-clever town mouse ends his speech with the idea: *dum licet, in rebus iucundis uiue beatus, | uiue memor, quam sis aeui breuis* (“while it is permitted, live happily in pleasant circumstances; live ever mindful of how brief a time you are allotted” *Satires* 2.6.96-97). [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. See Thomas (2011), 237, citing the *OLD* s.v. *locus* 21b. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Cf. *ac ne quis modici transiliat munera Liberi…* (“and in case someone should leap across the gifts of a moderate god of wine…” *Odes* 1.18.7). [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Cf. *parcentis ego dexteras | odi: sparge rosas…* (“I hate sparing hands: sprinkle the roses about…” *Odes* 3.19.21-22). [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Cf. Levin (1968), 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. On this, see Hunter (2014), 21, who points out that philosophers and poets could in fact be in alignment, for instance via allegorical interpretation of the latter. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Hunter (2014), 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. However, Sedley (2014) argues for the influence of Hellenistic literature on the duties (*kathēkonta*) in the section of the *Art of Poetry* dealing with *Socraticae… chartae* (309-311). For Sedley, these “Socratic pages” consist of works resembling Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* that contain material that could be used in characterizations within drama. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Hunter (2014), 40: “What *Satires* 1.4, *Epistles* 1.2 and this passage of the *Ars* [304-318, on the practical knowledge required by the poet] all share is a productive distinction between ‘technical philosophy’ and other sources of knowledge, notably poetry and the observation of experience.” [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. See Feeney (2009 [2002]), 362-363: “It is Horace and his poetic peers ‘who will eventually be in control of the *Princeps*’ posthumous fate,’ as the *aeditui* of the temple of Virtus. Conversely, it is now Augustus who is in charge of access to the libraries, housed in his temple of Apollo (214-18). They each control the temple that will guarantee the other’s immortality.” [↑](#footnote-ref-329)