Horace

LIFE

Quintus Horatius Flaccus was born on 8 December 65 B.C. at Venosa, a Roman military colony on the border between Apulia and Lucania, to a modest family. His father was a freedman, probably a former public slave, and owned a small farm at Venosa; later, after moving to Rome, he was a collector in auction sales. Despite his modest social position, Horace was given the best education. When his first studies were completed at the local school, his father brought him to Rome so that he could attend the school of the grammarian Orbilius. An admirer of the archaic poets, Orbilius was accustomed to use lashes to persuade his pupils to study the *Odusia* of Livius Andronicus; Horace would later coin the epithet *plagosus*, "lavish with blows," for him. At about the age of twenty, Horace, as was the custom for young men of means, went to Greece to complete his studies. At Athens he deepened his knowledge of philosophy by listening to the lectures of teachers such as Cratippus of Pergamum, a Peripatetic philosopher, and Theomnestos, an Academic. His student career was violently interrupted, however. Greece at the time was the scene of historic events. Caesar's murderers had made it their principal base of operations, and it was natural that the young Horace, fresh from his philosophical studies, was attracted by the ideals of *libertas* (as well as enticed by the outstanding career prospects offered). He enrolled in Brutus's republican army and was given the command of a legion with the title of military tribune, which was a great thing for the son of a freedman. The defeat at Philippi (42 B.C.) interrupted his military career; with bitter self-irony he would later say that like Archilochus, Alcaeus, and Anacreon, he had thrown away his shield. He was able to return to Rome in 41 B.C., thanks to an amnesty, but the farm at Venosa had been confiscated by the triumvirs, and he needed to take employment as a *scriba quaestorius* in order to earn a living. He also began to write poetry and came into contact with poets and other writers. Probably around the middle of 38 B.C. Virgil and Varius present him to Maecenas, Octavian's minister, a man of letters and a patron of writers. Nine months later Maecenas admits him to the circle of his friends. Probably in 33 B.C. Maecenas presents him with a farm in the Sabine country, which would give him financial peace of mind and assure him a much-valued

refuge from the business and inconveniences of Roman life. From that point on, his life goes by without significant events, articulated only by the publication of his works under the patronage of Maecenas and later, with Maecenas's progressive withdrawal from the scene, of the princeps himself. Horace's relation to Augustus was quite close, one of devoted friendliness, but without servility: when the princeps asks him to become his personal secretary, Horace is able to decline the offer with grace and firmness. In 8 B.C. Maecenas died, fondly recommending the poet to the kindliness of Augustus. But Horace followed him to the grave only two months later, on 27 November.

WORKS

Epodes: Seventeen short poems, written between 41 and 30 and published together with the second book of the *Satires.* The name refers to the metrical form: an epode is, properly speaking, the shorter verse that follows a longer verse, forming a couplet with it. Horace calls them *iambi,* which refers to the rhythm that predominates in the *Epodes* and at the same time alludes to that aggressive tone that had been traditionally associated with Greek iambic poetry from its beginnings. The collection is arranged by the editorial criterion of meter that had been established in the Alexandrian period: poems 1–10 are in alternating iambic trimeters and dimeters, 11 in alternating iambic and elegiambic trimeters; in poems 12–16 the hexameter alternates with another verse, mostly the trimeter; the last poem, 17, in iambic trimeters, is not epodic. The collection is characterized by a variety of subjects. The prefatory poem is addressed to Maecenas: Horace declares himself ready to share with his friend any danger whatever—perhaps those connected with the expedition to Actium? Among the remainder various groups can be distinguished: poems of invective (8 and 12 against an old, lustful woman, 5 and 17 against the witch Canidia, 4 against a parvenu, 6 against an unknown slanderer, 10 against a poetaster; 3 is a playful invective against garlic and against Maecenas, who prepared it for him); erotic epodes (11, 14, 15); civil epodes (7 and 16, deprecations of the fratricidal war; 9, celebration of the battle of Actium); isolated, the "gnomic" epode 13 (an invitation to drink on a winter's day) and the ambiguous epode 2 (a praise of the rustic life put into the mouth of a hypocritical moneylender).

Satires: A first book of ten poems (from a minimum of 35 hexameters to a maximum of 143), dedicated to Maecenas, was published perhaps in 35, and in any event before 33. In 30 there appears, along with the *Epodes,* the second book (only eight satires, but the third, considerably longer than the rest, has 326 verses). In total the *Satires* amount to more than two thousand verses. The internal chronology is difficult: 1.7 and 1.2 are regarded as among the oldest; 1.2 is referred to in 1.4, which is certainly earlier than 1.10. The subjects vary: some satires have a literary-programmatic subject (in addition to 1.4, one satire that serves as an envoi, and another that serves as a preface: 1.10 and 2.1); 1.1 deals with human inability to be satisfied and with greed; 1.2 is against adultery, 1.3 about indulgence in

dealing with defects; 1.5, modeled on Lucilius's *Iter Siculum,* is a diary of a voyage (Horace along with other friends of his circle had accompanied Maecenas on a diplomatic mission to Brundisium); 1.6 is a meditation on his own social condition and relations with Maecenas; 1.7 recounts a squabble between a Greek merchant and a proscribed man from Praeneste; in 1.8 a statue of Priapus recounts a night of spells; 1.9 is a kind of very lively mime, in which the poet brings himself on stage struggling with a bore through the streets of Rome; 2.2 sets forth the arguments of a farmer from Venosa, Ofellus, against table luxury; 2.3 is a dialogue between the poet and Damasippus, a Stoic neophyte, who recounts a long sermon of the philosopher Stertinius against the four capital vices in order to demonstrate the Stoic paradox that all men, except the philosopher, are mad; in 2.4 Catius expounds his gastronomic theory; 2.5 has a mythological-fantastic setting of the Menippean type and presents Tiresias instructing Ulysses in how to build up his estate by hunting for legacies; in 2.6, as in the corresponding satire of the first book, Horace reflects upon himself and his relations with his patron Maecenas; 2.7 is another dialogue, between the poet and his slave Davus, who, referring at second hand to the teachings of the philosopher Crispinus, demonstrates another Stoic paradox, that all men, except the sage, are slaves; in 2.8 Fundanius recounts to Horace a dinner in the house of the rich man Nasidienus, who has pretenses to gastronomy (something similar was in Lucilius, and Petronius would take his cue from this satire for the *Cena Trimalchionis*).

Odes (in Latin, *Carmina*): A collection of three books (88 poems in total) was published in 23 B.C. Horace had worked on it for about seven years: among the poems that can be dated, the earliest is 1.37, a song of joy for the death of Cleopatra, which occurred in 30 B.C. He returned to lyric poetry six years later, to compose, at Augustus's behest, the hymn that a chorus of twenty-seven girls and as many boys was to perform during the celebration of the Ludi Saeculares: the *Carmen Saeculare,* in Sapphic meter, an invocation to the gods, Apollo and Diana especially, asking that they assure prosperity for Rome and the government of Augustus. Horace devoted himself to lyric poetry again later and added to the previous books a fourth book of the *Odes,* with fifteen poems. The last one that can be dated (4.5) refers to Augustus's return from the north, in July of 13 B.C. Horace's lyric poetry experiments with various meters: predominant are the Alcaic strophe (37 poems out of 103), the minor Sapphic strophe (25 poems), and the Asclepiadic strophe in its various forms (34 poems). The other meters are represented for the most part in isolated examples. All told, the four books of the *Odes* contain 3,034 verses, to which are added the 76 verses of the *Carmen Saeculare.* Some odes are very brief (the famous 1.11 and also 1.38 are only eight verses apiece, for instance); some are longer, up to a maximum of 80 verses (ode 3.4).

The arrangement of the poems within the collection deserves attention. The impetus had come from Alexandrian editions of the Greek lyric poets. In Alexandrian poetry and then, by imitation, in Roman poetry, poetry

books were organized artistically, in a significant architectural structure. The opening and closing odes are addressed to persons of note (1.1 to Maecenas, 2.1 to Pollio, 4.1 to Paulus Fabius Maximus, and 4.15 to Augustus), and often, in accordance with an established tradition, they deal with questions of poetics (1.1, 2.20, and 3.30 are the most famous). The second, the penultimate, and the central positions are also privileged. The poet often juxtaposes poems of similar content (e.g., 4.8 and 4.9 on the immortality conferred by poetry), and in one case he creates a genuine cycle (3.1–6), signaled by a proem (3.1) and by an intermediate proem (3.4) and dedicated to themes of national identity (the so-called Roman odes). But the preferred principle for the organization of the book seems to be *variatio,* both from the point of view of metrical form (the first nine poems of book 1 are in nine different meters, and 1.11 is in still another meter) and from that of tone and content (alternations of political subjects and private subjects, high style and light style). Unlike modern lyric poetry, the odes of Horace rarely express free meditation or introspection; they almost always have a dialogic structure and are addressed to a "you" who may be a real person (this is relatively more common, even though less common than in neoteric poetry), or an imaginary one (the women and the men with Greek names are usually considered such), or a god or the Muse, a collectivity, even an inanimate object.

Epistles: The first book of the *Epistles* was published in 20 B.C. Horace had worked on it for three years, after the publication of *Odes,* books 1–3. The collection comprises twenty poems in hexameters, from the 16 verses of the fourth epistle to the 112 of 1.18; in total the verses number slightly more than 1,000.

The prefatory epistle is dedicated to Maecenas and is a sort of combined presentation and justification of the new literary form; 1.2, to Lollius, is a meditation upon the moral lessons to be gotten from reading Homer; 1.3, to Florus, asks for information on the literary activity of Tiberius's friends; 1.4, to Albius (Tibullus), contains Epicurean precepts to his friend, the poet; 1.5, to Torquatus, is an invitation to dinner; 1.6, to Numicius, deals with the philosophical theme of impassiveness; 1.7, to Maecenas, is a graceful request for independence, and especially for the right to live at a distance from Rome; 1.8, to Albinovanus Celsus, is about the disturbing torpor that afflicts the poet; 1.9, to Tiberius, is a letter of recommendation; 1.10, to Fuscus, is on city life and country life; 1.11, to Bullatius, concerns the mania for travel and the *strenua inertia,* "frenzied torpor"; 1.12 is addressed to Iccius, administrator of Agrippa's estates, who is interested in philosophy; 1.13 contains instructions for Vinnius, who is charged with delivering to Augustus the first three books of the *Odes;* 1.14, to the bailiff of the Sabine farm, is about country life in contrast with life at Rome; 1.15, to Numonius Vala, requests information for a stay at Salerno and Velia; 1.16, to Quinctius, is on the ideal of the *vir bonus;* 1.17, to Scaeva, and 1.18, to Lollius, contain pieces of advice on how to deal with the powerful men of the world; in 1.19, addressed to Maecenas and on a literary subject,

Horace polemicizes against servile imitators and defends his own lyric poetry; 1.20, addressed to the book itself, is a farewell to the *Epistles* and a foretelling of the reception that awaits them.

The second book, which may have been published posthumously, was composed in the years 19–13. It contains two long epistles on literary subjects: the first, to Augustus, criticizes admiration for the archaic poets and examines the development of Roman literature; the second, to Julius Florus and more personal, is a sort of farewell to poetry, with a memorable picture of the Roman writer's daily life and a lengthy consideration of the pursuit of philosophical wisdom.

The epistle to the Pisos, the so-called *Ars Poetica*, is placed by many in the second book. Its date is debated: it is probably later than 13, the date of the epistle to Augustus, but many locate it between the first book of the *Epistles* and the *Carmen Saeculare*. The *Ars Poetica* is a treatise in 476 hexameters that sets forth basically Peripatetic theories on poetry, especially dramatic poetry. According to Porphyrio, Horace's source was Neoptolemus of Parium, a poet-grammarian of the third century B.C. With some difficulty a structure has been discerned within the work: verses 1–294 speak about the *ars*, 295–476 about the *artifex;* the first part, in its turn, seems divided into halves dealing with *poesis* (the content of the work, 1–44) and *poema* (the style, 42–294).

SOURCES

The principal source is Horace himself, whose works are strewn with autobiographical notices and allusions to contemporary reality; in the case of the latter it is often useful to consult the explanations of the ancient commentators. Several important Horatian manuscripts contain a *Vita Horati*, taken from Suetonius's *De Viris Illustribus;* in modern critical editions of the poet it is generally prefixed to the text.

1. THE *EPODES* AS POETRY OF EXCESS

The Epodes *and the youthful phase of Horace's poetry*

Horace's iambic writing seems linked, as the poet himself would declare, to the youthful phase of his poetic activity and to the particular conditions of life that marked the period immediately following the experience of Philippi:

> decisis humilem pennis inopemque paterni
> et laris et fundi, paupertas impulit audax
> ut versus facerem

("I was on the ground, my wings clipped, deprived of the house and the farm of my father: insolent poverty drove me to compose verses" [*Epistles* 2.2.50–52]).

It is natural to link with this situation of hardship Horace's harsh polemics, loaded tones, and violent poetic language. This makes the *Epodes* in many regards an isolated case in Horace's literary writings and gives us an image of the poet far different from the stereotyped one with which Horace

has always been associated in European culture (good taste, affability, warm humanity, detachment from passion, sense of proportion).

The Epodes *and their models*

Some interpreters of Horace, however, are rightly hesitant to link the *Epodes* so directly (and so mechanically) with this personal experience. What is required is the ability to judge how many of the distinctive features of this poetry go back to the rules of the genre, to the imitation of the models—that literariness that is not merely implicit but conscious and professed and is found as a characteristic throughout Horace's poetry:

> Parios ego primus iambos
> ostendi Latio, numerosque animosque secutus
> Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben.

("I was the first to transplant to Latium the iambs of the poet from Paros, following the rhythms and the spirit of Archilochus, not the subjects and the words that persecuted Lycambes" [*Epistles* 1.19.23–25]).

Of imitation in Horace and the Augustan poets generally we will speak later, in connection with the *Odes*. For the moment it is important to observe how this declaration, respectful and proud at the same time, is a claim to versifying ability, the merit of having transferred into Latin poetry the meters of Archilochus (and in fact the greater part of Horace's epodic schemes do have counterparts in the fragments of the poet from Paros). Yet Horace explicitly claims originality as well. He states that he has borrowed the meters *(numeri)* and the aggressive inspiration *(animi)* from Archilochus, but not the contents *(res)* and "the words that persecuted Lycambes" (Lycambes was the father of Neobule, Archilochus's fiancée; according to the tradition, the poet's invectives led to the suicides of father and daughter). Horace does not mean merely that the *Epodes* are not translations and that he draws on a Roman and personal reality; he probably also means to indicate several particular features of his Archilochean inspiration. If a sensibility that was irritated by hardship and bitterness could make him feel an affinity with the inflamed passion and fierce polemical spirit of Archilochus, the differences between him and Archilochus ought not to have escaped him. Archilochus expressed the hatreds and rancors, the civic passions and disappointments, of a Greek aristocrat of the seventh century B.C. Horace was writing in a Rome dominated by the triumvirs and would soon be joining Octavian's entourage. He was the son of a freedman and had barely escaped from a difficult and dangerous political experience. Horace's aggression can be directed only at smaller targets: unimportant, anonymous, or even fictitious people, such as a usurer, a parvenu, a sorceress, an aged woman. All this has contributed to create an impression of literary artificiality, and it has even been said that sometimes the *res* do come from Archilochus, without Horace's being able to recreate the *animi*.

Horace and Archilochus: dependence and originality

Epode 10

A famous example is the tenth epode. In a kind of reversed *propempticon* (a poem wishing someone a good voyage) Horace wishes for Maevius to be shipwrecked. The model for this is a poem of Archilochus (or possibly Hipponax), a significant fragment from which, the "Strasburg epode," has

fortunately come down to us. But Horace proves to be quite distant from the model, not so much because he cannot reproduce the seriousness and drastic ferocity of the Archilochean invective as because unlike Archilochus, whose enemy is an ex-friend who has injured and betrayed him, Horace mutes the personal character of the invective (we are not told who Maevius is or why Horace has it in for him). In this case, as in others, the violence of the threats and the curses seems rather empty, sometimes even playful (as it is in the epode on garlic, the third).

Yet undoubtedly the Archilochean spirit, apart from the question of the real or fictitious character of the individual targets, must have seemed suitable to Horace for expressing the anxieties and passions, the fears and indignation, of an entire generation: consider, for example, epode 4, which is a reaction to the sudden social upheavals connected with the Roman revolution, or the apprehensions expressed in the epodes relating to the civil wars.

The Iambs *of Callimachus and the pursuit of variety*

Influenced also by the *Iambs* of Callimachus, another of the Greek models important for the *Epodes,* Horace must have felt that variety was essential for an iambic collection. Working simultaneously on the *Satires* and the *Epodes,* he seems to reserve for the latter that multiplicity of themes, tones, and stylistic levels that Roman tradition assigned to satire. A very distinct group, for example, is composed of the erotic epodes, poems of love that develop motifs and situations of Hellenistic erotic lyric and reproduce even their language and pathetic tone. The tradition of the rustic idyll, together with ideological themes that are more specifically Roman, can be sensed behind the ambiguous praise of the country in epode 2. And from the point of view of expression as well, despite the fact that the typical language of the *Epodes* is taut and charged and dwells on the cruder and sometimes more repugnant aspects of reality, Horace's iambic poetry can also accommodate a more careful diction: alongside the poet of excess, we glimpse the poet of moderation.

2. THE *SATIRES*

An Entirely Roman Genre: Horace and Lucilius

Lucilius as Horace's model

In Quintilian's judgment, *satura tota nostra est;* that is to say, he did not know Greek authors who could have served as reference points for the authors of this literary genre. And Horace, too, in the programmatic poems that give the coordinates of his satiric poetry, points to Lucilius as the inventor of the genre. This attribution must have been something of a surprise. Leaving aside the early dramatic *satura,* about which we are poorly informed (it must have consisted in rudimentary stage action, accompanied by the flute, with mime, dance, and clownish fights), Ennius had written satire, to be sure. Here, too, we lack sufficient information. It is generally believed that his *Satires* were characterized by variety, of meter, style, and content, and included autobiographical references, gnomic thoughts, anecdotes, fables, and dialogues—many elements that would reappear in later

satiric poets. But Horace does not name Ennius, and Quintilian, too, would exclude him from the line that goes from Lucilius to Horace, Persius, and Juvenal.

The aggressiveness of satire

Lucilius therefore was identified as the one who had established the constituent features of satiric poetry. A fundamental element, particularly in the literary culture of the ancients, originated with him: the choice of the hexameter as the metrical form of satire. Lucilius had practiced this literary genre principally as a tool of personal aggression, of mordant criticism. The aggressiveness appeared to Horace as so characteristic an element that he was moved to link Lucilius, not with Ennius, but with the poets of Greek Old Comedy, Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes:

> siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
> quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
> famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.
> hinc omnis pendet Lucilius

("If there was someone who deserved to be held up to ridicule, because he was a scoundrel or a thief or an adulterer or a killer or otherwise notorious, they branded him as such directly. Lucilius depends on this entirely" [*Satires* 1.4.3–6]).

Lucilius thus organized his representation of contemporary society, and of the ruling class in particular, along these same lines. In his poetry, though, he had included a great variety of themes and concerns: literary polemics, philosophical discussions, linguistic or grammatical questions, conversations. The autobiographical element was the most important of all. Lucilian satire accommodated facts, persons, and observations connected to the personal life of the poet. Horace would be conscious of this inheritance, too, from his master:

The autobiographical element

> ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> credebat libris, neque si male cesserat, usquam
> decurrens alio, neque si bene: quo fit ut omnis
> votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
> vita senis.

("He used to entrust his secrets to books as if to faithful companions, and he had no recourse to anything else, not if things went badly for him, nor if they went well: thus it happens that the whole life of this old man stands before one's eyes, as if it were painted on a votive tablet . . ." [*Satires* 2.1.30–34]).

Satire and Diatribe: Horatian Morality

Aggressiveness and moral inquiry

To Horace's literary conscience his satire was "Lucilian" because he inherited from Lucilius the two distinctive traits of aggressiveness and autobiography. Yet Horace himself did not underestimate the differences that separated him from the *inventor* of the genre; he emphasized, however, chiefly those related to style, criticizing Lucilius's careless facility, espe-

cially in satires 1.4 and 1.10. But there were also important differences in the form of the contents. In Lucilius, though he devoted attention to themes of moral thought and reformulated motifs of the diatribe tradition, the relation between diatribe and aggressiveness was not clear. But a stable, organic connection between these two components is characteristic of Horace's satire. In him the personal attack is always tied to a purpose of moral inquiry. For the gratuitous pleasure of aggression, an Aristophanic trait still alive in Lucilius, Horace substitutes the need to analyze the vices (excess, stupidity, ambition, greed, fickleness) by means of critical observation and the comic representation of the characters. This empirical moral inquiry does not set out to proselytize, and it seeks neither to convert others to a preformed model of virtue nor to reform the world, but only to identify a path for a few, for himself and an enlightened group of friends, cutting across the mistakes of a society in crisis. In this sense Horatian satire is intimately linked, even more than his lyric poetry, to the circle of poets, writers, and politicians gathered around Maecenas, their intelligent guide. Lucilius's aggressiveness is conspicuously transformed precisely at the moment when its inheritance is being claimed. Lucilius virulently attacked eminent citizens, adversaries whose status he shared. This would not have been possible for the son of a freedman; what is more important, in order to derive instruction from the conduct of one's peers through criticizing their mistakes, it was not necessary to choose targets of high social level. Instead, Horace considers a small world of irregular types: courtesans, parasites, artists, swindlers, street philosophers, profiteers, small fry. As his father had taught him, he learns from those near him, those he meets in the street:

Horatian satire and the circle of Maecenas

Horace's targets

> insuevit pater optimus hoc me,
> ut fugerem exemplis vitiorum quaeque notando.

("that good man, my father, taught me to shun vices by having me learn them one by one from examples" [*Satires* 1.4.105–6]).

Horace and the diatribe: autarkeia *and* metriotes

Horace's morality thus has its roots in education, in traditional good sense—and Horace proudly points out the Italian, rustic ingredient in his wisdom—but it is constructed with materials developed by the Hellenistic philosophies, which also reached Horace through the filter of the diatribe, that is, the tradition of popular philosophical literature, illustrated by dialogues and anecdotes.

The basic objectives of Horace's inquiry were *autarkeia* (inner self-sufficiency) and *metriotes* (moderation, the just mean). Neither of these concepts belongs to a specific philosophical sect, and in any event distinctions of doctrine were weak in the tradition of the diatribe. *Autarkeia* is the property of nearly all the schools, which were committed to protecting the individual from the blows of fortune and from slavery to external goods. If the extreme formulations of it are Stoic-Cynic, the demand for *autarkeia* also could not be alien to Epicureanism, which limited the rights of *voluptas* to the satisfaction of a few natural needs. The morality of the just mean had

The satires and Epicureanism

received its most coherent formulation with the Peripatetic school, but the concept belonged to the oldest Greek wisdom, and the pursuit of pleasure could not be confused by rigorous Epicureans with a practice of excess. We emphasize Epicureanism because this is the philosophical tradition that has greatest weight in Horace's satire. The empiricism and the realism of Horatian morality, features that have stamped the *Satires* with that warm, good-natured reasonableness that has been valued in every period, could not but come into conflict with the rigor and the abstractness of the Stoics; satire 1.3, for instance, is devoted to this controversy.

Philosophical satires and descriptive satires

Connected directly to Epicureanism is satire 1.2, against adultery and its pointless follies (natural satisfaction of the need for sex is recommended), and particularly the prominence given in the *Satires* to problems of friendship and the representation of Horace's group of friends. Intellectual affinity, indulgence, dedication, sharing of life, solidarity before external pressures—all this is influenced by Epicurean theories and reflects the value that *philia* had in the thought of Epicurus and his followers.

Moral inquiry characterizes not only the satires that could be called "diatribal," that is, the ones, such as 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, in which a discussion in the manner of diatribe, with arguments, objections, examples, and anecdotes, is developed about a specific moral problem, but also those satires in which the poet, following the model of the autobiographical Lucilius, represents a scene, recounts an episode, or describes a situation. In these cases the moral interest is inseparable from the representation itself; it is like the lens through which the poet observes actions and people. The best examples of this are the satire of the journey and the satire of the bore. And there are also several instances in which diatribe and representation are joined in a single poem. Satire 1.6, for example, moves from autobiography (the poet's origin, his presentation to Maecenas) to argument over the value of birth and ambition, only to return to autobiographical representation (recollection of his childhood and his father, diary of a day at Rome).

The Second Book and the New Stance of Horatian Satire

Gap between poet and satiric voice

The fundamental mechanism of the satiric genre in Horace's first collection was the comparison between a positive model, the objective of the moral inquiry of the poet and his friends, and a plethora of negative models, the types found in Roman society who are the targets of comic aggression. This stance is revealed as extremely precarious in that the second collection of the *Satires* shows substantial changes. Let us note first of all that the representative-autobiographical element recedes dramatically; despite a proem that promises this, in fact there is only satire 2.6 to justify that promise. Then, in the argumentative satires the dialogue form becomes dominant (six out of eight), and as for the distribution of parts, the leading role is given, not to the poet, but to the interlocutor to whom he himself yields the stage. Even in 2.2, which is not in dialogue form, the speaking role does not belong to the poet: the thoughts on temperance and simplicity of life are delivered by a certain Ofellus of Venosa. The coincidence of

The moralist surrenders

the poet and the satiric voice that argues and refutes had guaranteed a point of reference for the moral inquiry of the first book. Now that the poet withdraws to a second level, it is no longer possible to extract a unitary sense from the contradictions of reality. All the interlocutors are repositories of a truth of their own, even if not all the truths are equivalent and several discourses refute themselves on their own in an unintended irony. But the poet no longer seems to believe that satire can be the locus of a moral inquiry that could empirically identify a satisfactory code of behavior. The balance between *autarkeia* and *metriotes,* which ensured a good observation post on reality, appears lost. The poet no longer represents his own ability to live among people without losing his own moral identity, but he allows his interlocutors to denounce, even unjustly, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of their choices. The only refuge is the Sabine villa (satire 2.6), where *autarkeia* takes advantage of the isolation and is not obliged continually to take into account the contradictions in life at Rome.

The Style of the Horatian *Sermo*

Satire and prose

Satire, Horace says, is not true poetry: to be called a poet one needs inspiration and a voice capable of sublime sounds:

> neque enim concludere versum
> dixeris esse satis, neque si qui scribat, uti nos,
> sermoni propiora, putes hunc esse poetam.

("neither would you say that to conclude a verse is sufficient, nor would you regard as a poet one who, like me, writes closer to prose" [*Satires* 1.4.40–42]).

Satire, then, is literature closer to prose, distinguished from it only by the obligation of the meter. But Horace should not be taken too literally, and in particular one should not infer that the style of the *Satires* is the result of facile improvisation. The language of educated conversation that he proposes to reproduce intentionally is the one that is adequate to express the confidential thoughts of an elegant, educated man of the world. But in fact the *Musa pedestris* requires refined and patient attention, no less toilsome than for more valued levels of literature. This need is observed by Horace with programmatic clarity and is the only point in which he resolutely wishes to distinguish himself from Lucilius. Horace aims at a disciplined, simple language. By contrast with the exuberant and "muddy" *(lutulentus)* style of Lucilius, who included the loftiest literary parody along with the roughness of the *sermo vulgaris,* Horace tries to obtain vigorous effect with a great economy of means of expression. The poet of the *Satires* shows that he has assimilated well the essence of Callimachus's lessons. He demands for satire a standard of expression that is anything but accessible and looks for concentration and suppleness:

The difficult pursuit of style

> est brevitate opus, ut currat sententia neu se
> inpediat verbis lassas onerantibus aures,
> et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocoso,

defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poetae,
interdum urbani, parcentis viribus atque
extenuantis eas consulto.

("brevity is necessary, so that the thought hurries along and is not hindered by words that weigh down and weary the ears; and a tone is necessary that is now austere, often playful, now taking the part of the orator, now of the poet, now the man of the world who spares his strength and deliberately weakens it" [*Satires* 1.10.9–14]).

Flexibility and variety of style

And indeed flexibility and variety are the first characteristics of the style of the *Satires,* which from time to time shape themselves to suit their subjects, now familiar, now serious and oratorical, now solemn and poetic, sometimes ironically solemn. To this we must add an affectation of negligence characteristic of prose: repetitions, free constructions, juxtapositions of short clauses. As for the general course of the argument, Horace has taken lessons from the popular, effective eloquence of the diatribe. The lecture continually yields to dialogue, involves the interlocutors, anticipates objections, and introduces dramatic scenes, examples from myth or history, parodies, anecdotes, and plays on words.

3. THE *ODES*

The Cultural and Literary Premises of Horatian Lyric

Horace and Alcaeus: imitatio *in Latin poetry*

Horatian lyric cannot be understood apart from its organic relation with the Greek tradition. This is in fact true for a large part of Latin poetry, and for Augustan poetry in particular. In these poets the consciousness of dependence on the Greeks is so alive that it is revealed in explicit declarations of poetics. If in the *Epodes* Horace proclaimed himself an heir of Archilochus, in regard to his lyric writings he proudly claims the title of the Roman Alcaeus (*Carmina* 1.1.34, 1.26.11, 1.32.5). But such declarations can easily be misunderstood by the modern reader. They actually refer to a relation of *imitatio* that signifies chiefly obedience to the *lex operis* (the rules governing the literary genre in which the poet wants to work) and thus respect for literary decorum, as well as the creation in the recipient of a consistent set of expectations. Imitation, as understood by a Latin poet, implies, in short, bringing into play the vast expressive possibilities offered by the different forms of poetic memory; it is an element of the poetic language, not an obstacle to originality of creation.

The theme of primus ego

For understanding these features of Latin poetry the *Odes* offer a special observation post. Not by chance has the literary success of Horace as a lyric poet always been closely linked to the more general question of the originality of Latin literature in comparison with Greek. Just as the Roman poets themselves, and Horace more than the others, were conscious of their literary ancestry, they were also jealous of their own original, creative contribution and did not fail to boast of it:

libera per vacuum posui vestigia princeps,
non aliena meo pressi pede

("I was the first to set my free feet upon free soil, and I did not tread with my foot upon the tracks of others" [*Epistles* 1.19.21–22]).

This is true especially of his relation with Alcaeus. Horace, *Latinus fidicen,* "the Latin lyric singer," is proud to have been the first to employ his measures; for this reason he deserves the appreciation that belongs to the one who opens unknown paths (*Epistles* 1.19.32 ff.). These proud claims, which become a commonplace of Augustan poetry, known as the *primus ego* motif, refer principally to the technical difficulties of transferring metrical and expressive structures from one language to another. The poet in fact behaved a good deal more freely towards his models: despite themes, occasions, and situations that were often traditional, a Roman setting and sensibility are always present, as is a specifically Horatian poetic language.

The multiple suggestions of the model

In recalling Alcaeus, Horace in any event was not merely meeting a requirement of Augustan classicism; he was availing himself of the *auctoritas* of his model to legitimize the conjunction of separate (and not always readily reconcilable) elements of his lyric world: attention to the happenings of his community and a song more linked to the private sphere (love, friendship, the banquet). Invoking the Aeolian cithara, the symbol of lyric in the style of Alcaeus, Horace himself indicates the multiplicity of suggestions that might come to him from the model:

> age dic Latinum,
> barbite, carmen,
>
> Lesbio primum modulate civi,
> qui ferox bello tamen inter arma,
> sive iactatam religarat udo
> litore navem,
>
> Liberum et Musas Veneremque et illi
> semper haerentem puerum canebat
> et Lycum nigris oculis nigroque
> crine decorum.

("Come, sing a Latin song, o lyre first tuned by the citizen of Lesbos, who, a valiant warrior, between one battle and another, or if he had tied his beaten ship to the damp shore, still sang of Liber and the Muses and Venus and the boy who is always by her side and Lycus, handsome with his dark eyes and dark hair" [*Carmina* 1.32.3–12]). Alcaeus in addition, as we now know from papyrus discoveries, had also been a gnomic poet. It is reasonable, then, to link to him the strong moralizing element in Horace's lyric, even though it is certainly more the result of more recent cultural traditions.

The "motto"

A feature typical of the way in which Horace understands his relation with early Greek lyric, and with Alcaeus in particular, is his borrowing of a poem's beginning. Several odes of Horace start with an obvious borrowing, sometimes nearly a quotation that serves as a "motto." Then, however, the poet proceeds in his own way, and the model is nearly forgotten (the most

well-known instances are 1.9, 1.10, 1.14, 1.18, 1.37, 3.12). The famous ode to Thaliarchus (1.9), for example, opens with a winter landscape that recalls a fragment of Alcaeus. As in Alcaeus, an invitation to drink is connected with it; then, however, the poem develops into a series of gnomic thoughts and ends with a picture of love in the city, a scene close in taste to Alexandrian realism.

Alcaeus and Horace: militant poetry and the poetry of otium

If the traits that Horace shares with Alcaeus are important, the differences are certainly no less so. The verses of Alcaeus were the expression of the loves and the hates of an aristocrat of Lesbos, directly engaged in the harsh political struggles of his city. Tied, as it is, to genuine social occasions, such as a symposium or a religious celebration, Alcaeus's lyric expects to be performed, which implies a simplicity of subjects and language. In Horace, however, the interest in the *res publica* is lively, but it is that of an intellectual who, after a passing involvement in the civil upheavals, lives under the protection of the powerful masters of Rome. For Horace, then, poetry as a relief from toil or as a pause in the midst of battles is little more than a literary image, all the more so because the private aspect of his poetry could not be separated from that pursuit of inner happiness, composed of *autarkeia* and *tranquillitas animi,* that had been the principal lesson of the Hellenistic philosophies. Horace's lyric poetry, moreover, is written for reading, it frequently describes imaginary or at least highly stylized situations, and it aspires to a quite elevated level of literary refinement and sophistication.

Other models of the Odes:
a) *Sappho*

The other great representative of Aeolic lyric, Sappho, has left a smaller trace in Horace's poetry. In a famous ode he imagines Sappho and Alcaeus bewitching an astonished Underworld with their song. The shades seem to prefer Alcaeus as singer of the civil disturbances over Sappho and her passionate laments (2.13.24 ff.); Horace certainly seems to have shared this judgment. The poetess who had sung of beauty and the upheavals of passion only occasionally seems to have provided the starting point for Horace's erotic verse. The ode on jealousy, already translated by Catullus, influenced 1.13, and Sapphic accents, as often happens, characterize the evocation of the poetess in 4.9.10 ff. (see also 1.22.23 f.). By contrast, Roman elegiac poetry is more indebted to Sappho for its own representation of love.

b) *Anacreon*

Horace's debt to another lyric monodist, Anacreon, is more significant (1.27 and 1.23 are the most evident cases). The delicate, elegant grace of the poet from Teos and his melancholy over lost youth appear to have more than a few affinities with the corresponding motifs in Horace's lyric.

c) *Pindar's choral lyric*

Choral lyric also played a notable role. Although Horace himself names him admiringly, Stesichorus does not seem to exert a conspicuous influence, and the same can be said of Simonides (*Carmina* 2.1.39, 4.9.8). More important was Bacchylides, from whom the mythological ode 1.15, with Nereus's prophecy to Paris, abductor of Helen, took its cue. Horace, especially in the first phase of his writing, must have contemplated a lyric poetry that, on a higher stylistic level, would accommodate material simi-

lar to that of the Alexandrian, neoteric epyllion; imitation of Bacchylides may have led in this direction. But there is no doubt that Pindar occupies the most important post among the choral lyric *auctores* of Horace. In recognizing his greatness, Horace notes all the perils to which the *aemulatio* of so bold and difficult a poet exposes one ("He who wants to imitate Pindar exposes himself to a flight as risky as Icarus'" [*Carmina* 4.2.1 ff.; see also *Epistles* 1.3.10]). Horace attempts a Pindaric lyric especially in the fourth book, where he is responding to Augustan cultural stimuli. But in the previous books as well (see, e.g., the motto of 1.12 or the fourth Roman ode) Horace's pursuit of the sublime, especially in the poems on civic subjects, seems to be fostered by suggestions originating in Pindar: ample periods, of impetuous movement, the solemn gravity of the *gnome* (the brief saying, packed with thought and having a moral bearing), improvised admonitions, bold transitions. Important ideas also come to Horace from Pindar, such as the consciousness of the high function of poetry, the poet's ability to confer immortality, and the appreciation of ethical-political understanding.

The experience of Alexandrian poetry

Horace's echoing of early Greek lyric undoubtedly had the characteristics of a precise programmatic choice and expressed his conscious desire to distinguish himself from the Alexandrianism of the *neoteroi.* Of course this does not mean that Horace is not a modern poet and that his lyric poetry neglects the Hellenistic experience. From this quarter comes a vast repertory of subjects, images, and situations, relating especially to love and courtship but also to public festivals and ceremonies, the banquet, and the countryside. And not this alone: Horace draws upon the Hellenistic world for central elements of his culture, his ideology, and his sensibility as a poet. The importance and richness of his relation with this poetry is today accepted as a given (and Italian philology has made important contributions to this), yet it is still uncertain whether the Hellenistic elements abundantly present in Horace go back to direct contact with Alexandrian lyric poetry, now mostly lost to us, or rather to contacts with different but kindred literary traditions, such as epigram and elegy.

But just as the example of Alcaeus as a civic poet met a contemporary need in Horace for passionate attention to the affairs of the *res publica,* so Alexandrian poetry does not have a purely literary attraction. It is the form of daily life at Rome, the Hellenized metropolis, a worldliness composed of loves, festivals, banquets, dance, and poetry.

Even though it is often neglected, the part played by prose literature in the culture of Horace the lyric poet is important, not only, of course, the tradition of the philosophical diatribe, but also Hellenistic treatises on good government, panegyrics, and rhetorical treatises.

Themes and Characteristics of Horace's Lyric Poetry

Meditation and philosophical culture in the Odes

Horace as the poet of serene balance, of detachment from passion, of moderation: this image is deeply rooted. And the traditional image, in this case as in others, is quite close to the truth. It leads us to sense, first of all,

the central role that thought and philosophical culture plays in Horatian lyric. Here it is natural to think of the poet of the *Satires* and the assimilation, through the diatribe tradition, of concepts and problems of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy; this feature renders Horace's pronouncements substantially different from those of early Greek lyric. Nonetheless, it is no more than a genuine moral inquiry based on the critical observation of others. In a certain sense one may say that the *Odes* begin where the *Satires* leave off, with a thoughtful meditation upon a few fundamental achievements of philosophy, Epicurean philosophy in particular. These basic notions, which, to be sure, also owe something to common sense, receive from Horace a formulation that is so clear and incisive that they have become part of the European cultural heritage, which has often drawn upon Horace's poetry as a storehouse of maxims.

The brevity of life

The cardinal point is the awareness of the brevity of life, which implies the need to take the joys of the moment, without getting lost in the fruitless concern over hopes, ambitions, or fears. The exhortation to Leuconoe is the most famous of all:

> sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
> spem longam reseces. dum loquimur, fugerit invida
> aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

("Be wise, strain the wine; and since time is brief, reduce lengthy hope. While we are speaking, envious life will have fled: pluck the day, and do not trust to tomorrow" [1.11.6 ff.]).

Epicurus had said: "One is born only once, to be born twice is not granted to us, we will not be forever. Though not master of your morrow, you put off pleasure; thus life goes by in this delaying, and each of us dies without having enjoyed tranquillity" (*Gnomologium Vaticanum* 14). The wise man will deal with events as they are and will be able to accept them. He relies on the present alone, which he seeks to capture in its flight, and he acts as if each day of life were the last. The *carpe diem* therefore should not be misunderstood as a banal invitation to pleasure; in Horace, as also in Epicurus, the invitation to pleasure is not separate from the keen awareness that that pleasure itself is fleeting, as human life is fleeting. The only possibility is to erect, against the imminence of death or misfortune, the solid protection of possessions already enjoyed, happiness already experienced:

> ille potens sui
> laetusque deget, cui licet in diem
> dixisse "vixi: cras vel atra
> nube polum Pater occupato
>
> vel sole puro; non tamen irritum,
> quodcumque retro est, efficiet neque
> diffinget infectumque reddet,
> quod fugiens semel hora vexit."

("He will live as master of himself, in happiness, who from day to day will be able to say, 'I have lived: tomorrow let father Jupiter cover the sky with dark cloud or shining sun; still, he will not make naught of all that is behind, nor will he cancel or undo what the fleeting hour has already brought'" [3.29.41–48]).

The laborious achievement of wisdom

This reflection can sometimes be translated into a song of serenity—the happiness of *autarkeia,* the condition of the poet-sage, freed from the torments of human folly and blessed with the protection of the gods. Divine favor manifests itself by transforming circumstances of daily life, such as dangers survived, into miracles, and it is always intimately connected with his vocation as poet: the gods and the Muses save Horace to preserve him for that destiny. And yet wisdom, tranquillity, balance, mastery of oneself, the *aurea mediocritas* of the man who can avoid all excess and adapt himself to every fortune—none of these is a secure possession, acquired once for all time. The poet of the *Odes* is not unaware of the insidious, attractive force of the passions. He is familiar with the soul's weaknesses, and he knows that what he hopes for and recommends to his friends must be won and defended at every moment. Wisdom thus runs into the unchangeable givens of man's condition in the world: the fleeting nature of time, old age, and death, subjects that animate some of the loveliest odes (1.4, 2.3, 2.14, 4.7). No wisdom can counterbalance completely so heavy a negative weight. Against the anguish and the grief of life one can only wage a brave warfare, demanding energy and a certain heroism, in order to transform apprehension and bitterness into acceptance of destiny:

immortalia ne speres, monet annus et almum
    quae rapit hora diem
. . . . . .
damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae:
    nos ubi decidimus
quo pater Aeneas, quo Tullus dives et Ancus,
    pulvis et umbra sumus.

("Not to nourish immortal hopes the year admonishes you, and the hour that carries away the life-giving day . . . still, in the sky the swift moons make good what they have lost: we, however, once we have fallen where father Aeneas has, and powerful Tullus and Ancus, we are dust and shadow" [4.7.7–8, 13–16]).

The civic poetry

The other pole of Horace's lyric, the poetry engaged with civic and national subjects, with the celebration of people, events, and myths of the Augustan regime, for long stretches is removed from the private subjects. Nonetheless, and this is an important difference from neoteric lyric, the private sphere in Horace always aspires to a general validity, aspires to express the comprehensive condition of man. The civic lyric, much discussed for its results, certainly does not lack originality. The celebratory poetry linked to the Hellenistic monarchs furnishes nothing more than some external features; onto this trunk (and of course onto that of early

Greek lyric) Horace has been able to graft national themes, suggestions originating in epic and historical writing. The procedure was ambitious and met profound personal needs that were deeply rooted in a generation that, after the devastations of the civil wars, with a combination of hope, enthusiasm, and some anxieties not yet laid to rest, looked upon the princeps as the victor and guarantor of the peace. It is not necessary therefore to think only of the energizing pressures of Augustan cultural politics. The image of Horace as a singer of Rome's greatness and of the eternal values of the Empire may be evaluated today, at last, without arousing the suspicions that the rhetoric of *Romanitas* has projected onto it in the twentieth century. Horace's civic lyric includes celebration and encomium and sometimes has a kind of official character, but it cannot be dismissed as propaganda in verse. The first reason is that even where he reflects, with a fidelity much valued by the sociologist and the historian, the themes and the successive stages of the ideology of the principate, he is able to take advantage of the amplitude and the flexibility of that very ideology in order to avoid dogmatic conclusions and to glorify the sublime quality of magnanimity, for instance, loyalty towards the republican cause and its unfortunate heroes (2.7, 1.12, 2.1) and admiration for *virtus* even in the most hated enemy (as in the famous picture of Cleopatra fearlessly facing death in 1.37). Another reason is that Horace as poet of the community can frequently become the interpreter of uncertainties and fears, of discouragement and then unexpected, liberating joy, of the deep sentiments and aspirations of contemporary society. Even the praise of the princeps generally avoids the courtly gestures of Hellenistic encomium to give utterance to the sincere, anxious gratitude toward the man who brought peace to the Empire. Horace's civic lyric shares in the moral structure of Augustan ideology; the crisis was produced by the decline of morals, the abandonment of that coherent system of ancient ethical-political and religious values that had brought about the greatness of Rome. This moralistic poetry may in places overlap with Horace's moral inquiry—in the criticism of luxury, extravagance, and folly, in the admiration for the self-sufficiency of *virtus*, in the appreciation of rationality against the forces of chaos (although generally a less vital note is heard in the civic poetry, one stiffened by the firmness of the Stoic sage). The conciliation, or rather the coexistence, of public sphere and private sphere was easier when some Hellenistic features of the civic poetry became dominant. A public festivity (a holiday, a ceremony, a joyous event) can also be an occasion of private joy: the poet celebrates with a banquet or an amorous encounter. Horace thus inaugurates a fashion that would be important for other poets of the Augustan age, for Propertius and especially for Ovid.

The ideology of the principate and the authenticity of Horace

Augustan ideology and Horatian morality

Variety of themes in the Odes

The polarity to which we referred is of course a simplification that ultimately obscures the thematic variety and vitality of Horace's lyric poetry, a variety that often corresponds to the different categories into which early Greek lyric was divided. These categories, functional for different occasions, would be classified normatively as true "genres" by later rhetorical

treatises. Thus we have convivial poems, which allude to the *sympotika,* the convivial poems, of Alcaeus but also owe much to Hellenistic epigram; and also invitations, with descriptions of the preparations traditional for the Hellenistic-Roman symposium (wine, flowers, music). Almost a quarter of the *Odes* can be classified as erotic. Horace's love poetry, unlike that of Catullus and the elegiac poets, seems to be fostered by ironic detachment from passion. With some exceptions, love is analyzed as a ritual the action of which is conventionalized and predictable: serenades, meetings, oaths, fallings-out, a sporting, gentlemanly life, banquets. The poet often observes with a smile the credulity of the young lover and the seriousness with which each person performs his part, swearing exclusive love and the undying nature of his own feeling. But Horace's irony is not ignorant of passion: he is familiar with its cruelty, he evokes its melancholy, he feels its unexpected arousal:

The love poetry

iam nec spes animi credula mutui
    nec certare iuvat mero
nec vincire novis tempora floribus.
    Sed cur heu, Ligurine, cur
manat rara meas lacrima per genas?
    cur facunda parum decoro
inter verba cadit lingua silentio?
    nocturnis ego somniis
iam captum teneo, iam volucrem sequor
    te per gramina Martii
campi, te per aquas, dure, volubilis.

("Now I like neither the trusting hope of love requited, nor to vie with the wine, nor to bind the temples with fresh flowers. But why, Ligurinus, why does the occasional tear fall across my cheeks? Why does my eloquent tongue cease in the very midst of words and fall into an undignified silence? In my dreams at night I have seized you, I hold you, I pursue you as you flit across the grass of the Campus Martius or—you hard one—across the flowing waters" [4.1.30–40]).

The hymn

The hymn, too, is well represented in Horace's lyric poetry. Here, naturally, the differences from early Greek lyric are conspicuous, since Horace's religious lyric, apart from the *Carmen Saeculare,* lacks any link to a ritual occasion or performance. He frequently retains the formulaic language and movement of the hymn—the invocation in the second person, the *epiclesis,* or "summoning," of the god, the setting forth of the privileges and sites of the cult, the invitations to be present, the stipulations and requests—but it is interwoven with references and developments of a literary nature.

The contamination of the lyric categories

It is not always easy, however, to place a Horatian ode within a well-defined type, since the poet is often fond of combining in the same poem different categories of lyric, in accord with the Alexandrian procedure of "crossing of genres," for example, a *propempticon* (a bon-voyage poem) and a mythological poem (3.27); a hymn and a mythological poem (3.11); an epigram on spring and a banquet poem (1.4).

Recurrent themes in the Odes:
a) *The landscape*

Certain themes recur often in poems of varying nature. The country is usually stylized to become the *locus amoenus,* a pleasant Italian landscape that accommodates banquets, repose, and the simple rustic life. Yet Horace also knows the attraction of the "Dionysian" countryside, a nature that is mountainous, wild and harsh, composed of cliffs, woods, and springs, a nature not tamed by man.

b) *The* angulus *as the locus of poetry*

Yet the most distinctively Horatian places are those defined by the limited, closed space of the small individual farm, a space that is dear because known and certain, unassailable because separate and deliberately modest (*hic in reducta valle* [1.17.17; see also *Satires* 2.6.1: *modus agri*]; but to find oneself sometimes all that is needed is just a bit of quiet country or a lonely beach by the shore). This privileged space functions in the text as a symbol of the poet's existence (it is the form of his affections), but it is also a symbol of his poetic experience (it is the aesthetic form of it, in that it is space meant to represent an order and a meaning). This place of refuge becomes a literary topos in the theme of the *angulus* (*terrarum mihi praeter omnes / angulus ridet,* "that corner of land smiles at me more than any other" [2.6.13]), the designated place for song, wine, and wisdom. And however conventional the theme may appear, it finds new functions in Horace and becomes the nucleus from which much poetry is produced, in that it is associated with two other great themes: the theme of death (even the thought of death approaching with time becomes less bitter in this privileged space and is reduced to melancholy) and particularly the theme of friendship. Friendship in the *Odes,* as in all the poet's other works, has a fundamental role and provides the individual poems with a wide range of dedicatees, each with his specific qualities as friend, and to each one affectionate attention is shown. Important also is the motif of the vocation of poetry. The *vates* feels that he is related to the Muses and the other inspiring divinities (Mercury, Bacchus, Apollo). Through the Hellenistic topos he expresses enthusiasm for his mission and pride in his work.

c) *Friendship*

d) *The vocation of poetry*

The style of the Odes:
a) *The utter simplicity*

One of the hallmarks of Horace's lyric is the perfection of the style, a refinement that owes much to the lesson of Callimachus and Callimacheanism. Horace employs a very simple diction that permits even words regarded as prosaic in other poetic traditions. The simple, essential nature also guides the choice of adjectives, the moderate use of sound figures, the cautious employment of metaphors and similes. The syntax, less predictable yet still always quite simple, is prone to ellipsis, Greek constructions, hyperbaton, enjambment. The dignified elevation of the style is secured by carefully reducing the means of expression, with a diction free from all redundance, concise and polished. Expressiveness is guaranteed, too, by Horace's metrical virtuosity and by his skill in the collocation of words, a skill already to be seen in Alcaeus.

b) *The art of the* iunctura

Shrewd placement of the words within the verse means pursuing a strategy that, while binding together the words in the texture of the phrase, places some close together and separates others, letting them recall one another at a distance. Thus ordinary words, receiving a distinction of their own, are perceived as if new, as if they were now spoken for the first time;

their meanings, with the opaque veneer of custom stripped off, find a new luminosity in the text. The strategic configuration that the elements of the discourse take on revitalizes the exhausted meaning of words and images that ran the risk of being nearly insignificant. For instance, an adjective separated from the noun that it is to complement or modify and displaced to a position in the metrical-rhythmic sequence that somehow draws attention to it—placed early, say, or held back to the verse following, in enjambment—appears isolated in the phrase and thus recovers its original resonance. At other times the adjective (or the participle or adverb) can be added to a word that is not its proper referent, creating new effects or unusual associations, allowing implicit meanings to emerge, causing latent images to blossom, or suggesting forgotten senses. Horace himself, when theorizing, mentioned among the most powerful procedures the simple artifice of the *callida iunctura* (*dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum / reddiderit iunctura novum,* "you will express yourself in a distinctive way if a clever combination will make a familiar word new" [*Ars* 47–48]). For instance, a very simple juxtaposition of words can create an effect of emphasis: *credulus aurea* in *qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea,* "he who now credulous enjoys your gleaming beauty" (*Carmina* 1.5.9); *simplex munditiis,* "simple in affectation" (1.5.5); *palluit audax,* "he grew pale at his own boldness" (3.27.28). Quintilian expresses thus his admiration for a sober but very powerful style of writing: *insurgit aliquando et plenus est iucunditatis et gratiae et varius figuris et verbis felicissime audax,* "he rises to grandeur at times and is also full of liveliness and charm; he shows variety in his figures and a remarkably successful boldness in his choice of words" (10.1.96).

c) Sobriety and neatness

Horace deploys the maximum economy of linguistic inventiveness in order to have the maximum of expressiveness. That is, he is parsimonious in his use of novel formations. His style of composition relies rather on new analogies and prefers neat contextual correspondences—members arranged in parallel, elements disposed simply by contrast or antithesis—well-planned structures in which the individual words, the individual things, by reciprocal action reacquire their proper communicative energy in its entirety. In short, the style produces an effect of sobriety and classical neatness, to which not a small contribution is made by the structure of the individual poem, carefully planned in a unified, compact manner. This does not always mean symmetry; *variatio* is a no less important stylistic principle.

4. THE *EPISTLES:* CULTURAL PROJECT AND PHILOSOPHICAL WITHDRAWAL

The return to sermo

After the great experience of the lyric poetry, Horace returns to the conversational hexameter. It must have been difficult for the ancient Horatian commentators (grammarian-readers, guardians of rules, literary genres, and definitions) to devise a critical formula that could distinguish the *Epistles* from the two collections of *Satires.* May it not have been the poet who applied the term *sermones,* "conversations," to both works, which in this

way were associated with one another by the same stylistic register "closer to prose"? In the final analysis the best definition was the one that emphasized two different pragmatic situations, or to put it another way, the different intensity of two voices: *hoc solum distare videntur, quod hic quasi ad absentes loqui videtur, ibi autem quasi ad praesentes loquitur,* "the only difference is that in the *Epistles* he appears to be addressing people who are absent, whereas in the *Satires* he addresses people who are present" (*Pseudoacronis scholia in Horatium vetustiora,* preface to epistle 1.1). In this way the ancient judgment, while it shrewdly recognizes the mimic-dramatic bent of the *Satires,* well emphasizes the specific epistolary configuration of the later work. As a collection of letters (such are the messages to the "absent" of pseudo-Acron), the *Epistles* acquire their first, important identity: all the poems have an addressee, and occasionally the typical signs of a letter, such as the formulas of salutation and farewell, are seen. The "real" character of these letters is debated. Of course, no one believes that they have a true private function, yet the possibility cannot be excluded that individual letters, though conceived as literary works and intended for the reading public, may occasionally have been sent to their addressees as a literary homage. In any event, the epistolary element guarantees for the Horatian *sermo* a more personal tone as well as the variety of styles and attitudes called for by regard for the addressee.

The verse epistle: a new literary genre

From the point of view of form the *Epistles* were almost certainly a novelty. In what remains to us, or what we have precise notice of, from Greek and Latin literature, we find nothing really similar. We know of epistles in verse (in the satires of Lucilius, for example, or certain poems of Catullus that proclaim themselves letters, such as 68), and there were well-known philosophical treatises in the form of prose epistles (Plato's letters and the letters of Epicurus to his pupils). But a systematic collection of verse letters such as Horace's is probably an original experiment; nor does the poet in this case refer, as he does in others, to an *inventor* of the genre he is practicing.

The loss of balance

But the factor that contributes the most to differentiating the *Epistles* from the collections of satires, in a novel way, gives it a physical distance, a different stage upon which the persona assumed by the author stands up to speak. The satire had belonged essentially to an urban setting, which corresponded to the social needs of the genre in that it opened room for movement among the cultivated classes—the *equites*—and provided easy material for the poet's comic imagination. All of Horace's letters, however, presuppose displacement towards a rustic periphery (the *angulus* of the *Odes,* as we will soon explain) that resonates with philosophical memories. Thus, exhortation is the truest aim of every single poem and of the whole of the first book of the *Epistles* as a collection. The addressees are invited to repeat the choice of wisdom that Horace visualizes as a journey towards the *angulus,* a road that signifies, metaphorically and metonymically, an entire mental *iter.* The poetic persona of the *Epistles* is portrayed against the background of a remote landscape that, if it sometimes refers to the Sabine refuge of individual lyric poems, proposes anew the Epicurean goal of

The poet's remote angulus *and the exhortation to wisdom*

Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura.* The *angulus* translates into Horatian terms the experience of the *sapientum templa serena* that Lucretius proposes to his readers.

The Lucretian premise

Even so, the collection develops a didactic discourse that revives the Lucretian poem by altering its significant features, to such an extent, indeed, that the very conventions of the letter assure a Lucretian situation, that is, the situation (and it is a marked innovation in the genre) that continually involved the reader in the choices made by the text. The relation between author and reader, which was lively and dramatic in the *De Rerum Natura,* here is imposed by a communicative structure entirely directed towards injunction and exhortation. Thus the author-reader relation becomes itself the subject of the discourse, to the point of assuming the forms of meta-literary consciousness. The project of the *Epistles* now develops within itself (i.e., in the individual episodes that realize it) the model of a Lucretian teacher who teaches his pupils the love of a withdrawn life. But where the work shows most evidently the typical traits of moderate Augustan classicism (which are common to Virgil and Horace) is in the melancholy perplexity that it discovers precisely in regard to a real didactic power of its message: the addressees will not always prove to be receptive to the suggestion of a new philosophical world, which in some respects is akin to that of the *Bucolics,* though that is more literary and imaginative.

The revision of the Lucretian model

Yet, still from the point of view of the form of the content, there are other conspicuous differences from the *Satires.* The *Epistles,* for instance, lack that comic aggression that for Horace is still the obvious mark of the satiric genre. The moral thought now does not proceed by means of observing contemporary society critically. Horatian morality seems to become more clearly conscious of its own weaknesses and contradictions; the balance between *autarkeia* and *metriotes,* on which the very possibility of satire rested, now appears irrecoverable, and one does not glimpse any other balance. Whether directed at itself, in a lucid and sometimes pitiless introspection, or realized in dialogue with the interlocutor and his point of view, the moral inquiry is vivaciously animated in the *Epistles* by the need for wisdom. The Horatian sensibility for the inexorable passage of time, sharpened by the impression of a premature old age, makes the achievement of wisdom seem an urgent task that cannot be postponed. But at the same time Horace no longer seems prepared to construct, either for himself or for others, a satisfying model of life. The rejection of social life and of ethical optimism is symbolized by his flight from Rome towards the concentration of the Sabine country, a restless withdrawal but at least one removed from the engagements, harassments, and passions of the city, before which the poet now feels himself defenseless. The need for *autarkeia,* that "self-sufficiency" in which more than one philosophical school located the secret of human happiness, is now livelier than ever, but not even *autarkeia* appears to guarantee the poet a consistent and constant attitude. He seems to waver, without ever really identifying a point of reasonable balance, between a moral rigor that attracts but frightens him and a hedonism

Moral inquiry and the need for wisdom

whose concreteness and yet fragility he perceives. In the epistle that serves as proem Horace declares himself independent of any philosophical orthodoxy:

> nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri,
> quo me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.
> Nunc agilis fio et mersor civilibus undis,
> virtutis verae custos rigidusque satelles,
> nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor
> et mihi res, non me rebus subiungere conor.

("I am not obliged to swear according to the formula of any master; wherever the wind drags me, I let myself be carried as a guest. Now I become a man of action and immerse myself in the civic storms, guardian and unyielding defender of true virtue. Now I slip into the precepts of Aristippus and attempt to subject things to myself, not myself to things" [*Epistles* 1.1.14–19]).

The uncertainties in Horace's morality

It is not a question here of claiming an original mediation between concepts and positions drawn from different philosophical traditions, or even from the syncretistic tradition of diatribe preaching. Horace is speaking programmatically of the wavering that characterizes the morality of the *Epistles,* in which, for example, epistle 16, of a clearly Stoic nature, focusing on the theme of inner freedom and the true ideal of the *vir bonus,* is juxtaposed with the pair of epistles 17 and 18, which present in a didactic manner a series of pieces of advice and reflections on the way to live near the powerful and assure oneself of their favor.

Dissatisfaction with oneself: the strenua inertia

With the *aporiai* of Horace's moral inquiry one ought, it seems, to link the notable space now granted to the diatribist's theme, already wonderfully developed by Lucretius and come to fruition in the second book of the *Satires,* of dissatisfaction with oneself, of inconstancy, of anxious, impatient boredom. The restlessness is presented as a kind of *mal de siècle:*

> caelum, non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.
> Strenua nos exercet inertia: navibus atque
> quadrigis petimus bene vivere. Quod petis, hic est,
> est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit aequus.

("He changes the sky overhead, not his soul, who runs across the sea. A restless lethargy wears us down, us who seek the happy life with ships and chariots: what you seek is here, is at Ulubri, if your soul does not lack balance" [*Epistles* 1.11.27–30]).

Yet the poet does not feel at all protected, nor do the promptings of wisdom seem able to assure his recovery from the tenacious, insidious disease afflicting him:

> si quaeret quid agam, dic multa et pulchra minantem
> vivere nec recte nec suaviter: haud quia grando
> contuderit vitis oleamve momorderit aestus,
> nec quia longinquis armentum aegrotet in agris;

sed quia mente minus validus quam corpore toto
nil audire velim, nil discere, quod levet aegrum;
fidis offendar medicis, irascar amicis,
cur me funesto properent arcere veterno,
quae nocuere sequar, fugiam quae profore credam,
Romae Tibur amem ventosus, Tibure Romam.

("If he will ask you what I am doing, tell him as follows: I, who threatened many lovely things, do not live in accord with either virtue or pleasure. This is not because the hail has pounded the vines or the heat has bitten the olives, nor because the herd is ill in distant pastures, but because, sick at heart rather than in my whole body, I do not want to hear, I do not want to learn what could relieve my ills, I grow irritated with my trusted doctors, I become angry at my friends, because they strive to free me from mortal torpor; I pursue that which I know does me harm; I shun that from which I expect pleasure; I am like the wind: at Rome I like Tivoli, at Tivoli Rome" [*Epistles* 1.8.3–12]).

The didactic structure

The weakness Horace demonstrates in his own ethical-philosophical position is accompanied, rather paradoxically, by an increasingly didactic structure to his discourse. The epistolary form itself corresponds in some ways to the position of an eminent and respected intellectual, who is the interlocutor and also a point of reference for the Augustan social elite. In the relation of two parties that inheres in a letter there is room to confess but also to warn and instruct, especially if the *persona* of an inexperienced addressee—many of the letters are addressed to young friends—seems somehow to call for it:

disce docendus adhuc quae censet amiculus, ut si
caecus iter monstrare velit, tamen aspice siquid
et nos quod cures proprium fecisse loquamur.

("Learn the view of your friend who himself needs instruction; it is as if a blind man should want to show the way. But take thought whether I am not also saying something that you might care to make yours" [*Epistles* 1.17.3–5]).

Horace as literary critic

This didactic aspect is accentuated in the letters of the second book and especially in the *Ars Poetica*. Augustan society is a society of writers and lovers of literature; the problems of literary criticism, poetics, and cultural politics are among the liveliest questions of the day. Horace participates in the discussion with the authority granted to him by a secure prestige and his personal relation with the princeps. Thus it is Augustus who comes to be the primary interlocutor, explicitly or implicitly, in these discourses on art and literature. In order to secure a wider ideological and cultural basis for the difficult social arrangement of the principate, Augustus looked with favor upon national, popular literature. The *Aeneid* had been a response, even if only a partial one, to the request for an epic-historic poem that would give voice to the stern ideology of the *maiores* and sing of Rome's imperial destiny. The question of Latin drama remained open (and in the

The question of Latin drama

eyes of the princeps, urgent). The generous reception accorded to Varius's *Thyestes* shows how much importance was attached to a form of art that was credited with the greatest possibilities for ideological penetration, in that it was the one most able to represent cultural values and models.

The question of drama is central in Horace's literary epistles. In the *Epistle to Augustus* (2.1) the poet polemicizes against the indiscriminate favoring of the poets of the archaic Roman theater. In a kind of "debate of the ancients and the moderns" Horace decisively takes the side of the latter, in the name of the Callimachean principle of cultivated, refined art. On this important point he resists Augustus's own preferences and recommends to the master of Rome a kindly attention to poetry that is intended for reading, the only poetry, according to him, that could achieve the levels of formal excellence that the culture and the very prestige of Augustan Rome necessarily demand. There is another reason why Horace does not show confidence in a true rebirth of the theater: an audience that is less select and refined than the one to which written literature is directed does not seem likely to appreciate a dramatic production of quality and prefers instead the pomp of spectacle and the commonplace jests of mimes and acrobats.

The Ars Poetica:
a) *Poetic theories of drama*

The *Ars Poetica*, nonetheless, orients its analysis of art and poetry by questions of dramatic literature, and not only tragedy and comedy, but even the satyr play, of whose vitality at Rome there is no trace. This orientation ought to be connected with the privileged position drama had in Peripatetic treatises, beginning with Aristotle's *Poetics*, with which Horace is linked in an indisputable, if problematic, manner. We must not imagine, however, a passive reception of a Greek source. After the perplexity and resistance expressed in the letter to Augustus, Horace agrees to offer in the *Ars Poetica*—the chronology is debated, but the later date of the letter to the Pisos is quite probable—his own contribution as theorist, if not as militant poet, to the question of the theater. In any event, in the *Ars* he remains faithful to his principles, preaching an art that is refined (it is recommended that one perfect one's writing with *labor limae* [v. 291]), patient (it is better to keep one's writings in the drawer for nine years before publishing them [v. 389]), cultivated (it is necessary to read and reread the great Greek models [v. 268]), and attentive (the fundamental principles are those of consistency and suitability, or decorum).

b) *A literary and cultural history*

In the framework of these thoughts Horace has occasion, among other things, to give a valuable sketch of the history of culture and literature, both Greek and Roman, as well as to open interesting perspectives on the daily life of the Roman writer and of the literary circles of the capital. In the latter regard the letter to Florus, with its more personal tone, is important.

5. LITERARY SUCCESS

Antiquity

Horace himself ironically foretold that he would become a school author (*Epistles* 1.20.17–18), and despite some initial coolness, at least on the part

of the broader public (especially towards the first three books of the *Odes*), he quickly became canonized as a proto–poet laureate *(Carmen Saeculare)*, and he has continued to be read in schools, virtually without interruption, almost until the present day. Although all his works seem to have become widely used school texts in antiquity, his influence as a satirist upon later Latin authors such as Persius and Juvenal was far greater than his impact as a lyric poet (only Statius's *Silvae* survive). His works were edited by the Neronian scholar M. Valerius Probus and were explained in at least two and perhaps three surviving ancient commentaries: by Pomponius Porphyrio (third century), the oldest and most important; by the "pseudo-Acron," an anonymous collection, in the Renaissance attributed arbitrarily to Helenius Acron (second century) but certainly postdating Porphyrio and Servius; and perhaps by the *commentator Cruquianus* (though much uncertainty and suspicion surround these notes, purportedly transcribed by the Dutch scholar J. van Cruyck from manuscripts now lost). As late as the sixth century, according to a subscription found in a number of manuscripts, Vettius Agorius Basilius Mavortius, the *consul ordinarius* for the year 527, aided by his assistant Felix, revised the text of the poet, but thereafter there are virtually no traces of familiarity with his writings for about three centuries.

Middle Ages

But Horace's poems had survived the Dark Ages in two, perhaps even three, codices, from which the medieval manuscripts are derived. Knowledge of the poet and manuscripts of his works reappear already in the eighth century: Alcuin took on the pen name of Flaccus and certainly knew the *Ars Poetica* and perhaps the *Sermones,* and a Carolingian commentary to the *Ars Poetica* survives that has sometimes been attributed to Alcuin himself. Thereafter he became one of the most important and best-known school authors after Virgil, excerpted frequently for philosophical maxims by anthologies and transmitted in around three hundred medieval manuscripts (these seem to have been more widely disseminated in Germany and especially in France than in Italy). For the Middle Ages, as for antiquity, Horace was above all a writer of epistles and satires (especially the *Ars Poetica*) rather than a lyric poet, perhaps not only for obvious reasons of content but also because the language and meter of his hexametric poems posed fewer difficulties. Over 1,000 medieval quotations from his *Satires* and *Epistles* have been traced, only about 250 from his *Carmina,* and for Dante he is still "Orazio satiro" (*Inferno* 4.89), second after Homer. In the tenth-century animal epic *Ecbasis captivi* a fifth of the verses are taken from Horace; a century later Horace inspired the satirist Amarcius. But as early as the tenth century Horace's lyric production gained in popularity as well. The ode to Phyllis (4.11) is set to music in a tenth-century Montpellier manuscript, and in the first half of the twelfth century Metellus of Tegernsee imitated a number of the odes and epodes in his polymetric praise of St. Quirinus.

Renaissance and after

Petrarch admired Horace and was perhaps the first writer to quote from his lyric and hexametric poems in equal measure, but it was above all because of Landino and Politian that in the Renaissance Horace's fame as a

lyric poet came to overshadow his *Satires* and the *Epistles* (with the exception of the *Ars Poetica*). For the vernacular literature from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century, Horace provides the dominant model both for private lyrics celebrating wine and love and for public lyrics celebrating affairs of state: in Italy, Spain, and France, especially in such sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets as Bernardo Bembo and Fulvio Testi, Garcilaso de la Vega and Luis de León, Ronsard and the other poets of the Pléiade, Martin Opitz and his followers; and in England, for a longer and richer period, lasting from Ben Jonson through Herrick, Marvell ("Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"), Milton (who translated *carmen* 1.5), and Pope ("Ode on Solitude") to later poets such as Collins ("To Evening," "To Simplicity") and Keats (the beginning of whose "Ode to a Nightingale" was inspired by *Epodes* 14.1–4). Imitations of Horace in Horatian meters were also composed in Latin, especially in the seventeenth century (M. K. Sarbiewski, J. Balde, S. Rettenbacher) but even down to our own day. Even at its most inspired, lyric in the Horatian mode does not cease to aim at moderation and control, in language, meter, and length; those who preferred a wilder alternative could always turn to Pindar (misunderstood, to be sure, through the filter of Horace's own *carmen* 4.2). Although the *Ars Poetica* had already become extremely influential through its paraphrase by Robortelli (published in 1548 together with Aristotle's *Poetics*), it was the seventeenth century in general that saw the high point of Horace's satires and epistles: in the France of Louis XIV, Boileau composed Horatian *Satires, Epistles,* and an *Art Poètique,* which became manifestoes of classicism; in England, Dryden and Pope, as well as hosts of lesser poets, composed in the same genres. Horace's elegant rationalism and moral wisdom made his poems, especially the *Satires* and the *Epistles,* favorite reading for the Enlightenment. In England, Bentley published in 1711 a celebrated edition in which he altered over seven hundred passages, often against the consensus of the manuscripts, by appeal to *ratio.* In Germany, Wieland translated him and Kant quoted him. And in France, Diderot translated the beginning of satire 1.1 and published two Horatian satires of his own, each with a Horatian motto: a first one on characters and a second one, better known as *Le Neveu de Rameau,* in which the parasite Rameau is a near cousin of the slave Davus in satire 2.7.

With the advent of Romanticism, Horace, like other Latin poets, suffered a decline, except among classically trained and oriented writers such as Leopardi, Carducci, and Nietzsche. His place in the classroom, however, was never seriously called into question; carefully expurgated editions, especially in the nineteenth century, ensured that even there he would not be able to do much harm.

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