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Horace in Sabinis

The paucity of information on the lives of ancient authors has encouraged surmise, which can in the course of time come to be unquestioned assumption. In turn a supposed "fact" may influence interpretation of the writer's text. A signal example of this is the belief that Horace was given a Sabine farm by his patron Maecenas.

Any standard biographical note on Horace is likely to contain something like this: "The poet's economic circumstances changed completely when, at some time before 31 B.C., presumably not long after the publication of the first book of his *Satires*, Maecenas presented him with the Sabine farm which was to mean so much to him" (1).

That Horace possessed a Sabine farm and that it was very important to him is beyond doubt, but do we really know how he came to own it? Did acquiring it represent a major change in his financial status and, if so, was it the source or the fruit of affluence?

The assertion that Maecenas gave Horace his country estate has been part of the modern commentators' tradition since the Renaissance, but the roots of the idea can be traced to the ancient scholia, and it is with them that enquiry must begin.

In assessing the value of a scholium the first question to ask is whether it implies a separate source of information or is an inference from the text. If the suspicion cannot be eliminated that the commentator is giving an explanation derived from his reading of the author, his comment may have no more merit than that of a critic of today. It is of course always possible that the scholiast had information which is unavailable to us, but this consideration presents us with a dilemma: do we have to accept everything he says, assuming that he may have had good evidence which is now lost, or do we apply our own judgment, allowing that the surviving evidence may be defective? The latter is the wiser, if more troublesome, choice.

Scrutiny of the references in Porphyrio and pseudo-Acro to Horace's farm suggests that it is extremely doubtful whether any of them show signs of

(1) E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford, 1957, p. 15.

knowledge independent of the text. It is probable, for example, that when they comment on Horace putting a wolf to flight (C. 1. 22) or being threatened by a falling tree (C. 2. 13) they are merely making a plausible supposition in locating these significant adventures on his Sabine property.

What have they to tell us about the acquisition of the farm and the part played by Maecenas in the matter? Among the many references in Porphyrio and ps.-Acro to Horace's estate there are three which describe it as the gift of Maecenas:

- (1) Porph. on *Epod.* 1. 31: *Donatum sibi in Sabinis fundum a Maecenate Horatius saepe testatur.*
- (2) Porph. on C. 2. 18. 12-14: *Hoc est: nec amplius a Maecenate opto, qui me satis beatum facit donando me uno fundo Sabino, qua possessione contentus satis beatum me iudico.*
- (3) Ps.-Acro on C. 2. 18. 12: *Maecenatem significat, a quo se dicit maiora non quaerere, dum beatum se factum fatetur fundo ab eo in Sabinis accepto.*

Of these comments (2) and (3) clearly look like interpretations of the text rather than information derived from elsewhere, while (1) is an explicit statement that Horace himself testifies to the presentation by Maecenas. Unfortunately that statement is false. If Horace had said, not necessarily often, but even once that Maecenas gave him his Sabine farm, there would be no problem and this article could not have been written. But Horace does not say anywhere that the farm was a gift, let alone that Maecenas was the donor.

We must admit that in this case the ancient commentators do not appear to offer dependable testimony, and we must look for evidence in Horace's text.

Apart from the places where the Sabine farm is named or indicated, there are numerous passages which have at one time or another been associated with it by suppositions ranging from the probable to the fanciful. For example, the villa by Diana's pine tree (C. 3. 22) might well have been the poet's; the Sabine farm has long been the most popular location for the Bandusian spring (C. 3. 13) (2); the devout Phidyle (C. 3. 23) has been identified as a Sabine neighbour or even Horace's *vilica*. A survey of all possible references, certain or imagined, reveals that many of them can

(2) Ps.-Acro asserts that Bandusia was the area in which Horace had his farm, while a mediaeval ecclesiastical record locates the spring near Venusia. A romantic synthesis of these conflicting reports long ago produced the theory that Horace named the spring on his estate after the distant fountain of his boyhood. See Kiessling-Heinze, Orelli-Baier *ad loc.*

contribute nothing to this enquiry, so what follows is a review of selected passages which invite closer examination.

Epod. 1 satis superque me benignitas tua / ditauit (31-32). Porphyrio's misleading and influential note has already been quoted, and it appears to have found favour with many modern commentators who believe that Horace is referring here to the Sabine farm and who have used the epode to date the gift to some time before 31 B.C.

By itself the statement in 31-32 must fail as evidence for the presentation of the Sabine farm for the obvious reason that no gift is specified, which means that what Horace says here could be adduced only in support of more precise testimony from elsewhere. I would raise another objection, but this time a debatable one, against taking the passage as proof of any gift. In my view *ditauit* should be taken metaphorically and Horace is saying something like this: "I'll follow you to the world's end and I'll fight any battle to gain your favour, not to get rich: your *kindness* towards me is wealth enough and to spare." This yields an extravagant compliment but one well suited to the context, which is highly charged with rhetorical colour: Maecenas' smile is more precious than gold. Horace is expressing appreciation of his patron's friendship, as he did in *S. 1. 6*, where there was no hint of the material benefits of patronage.

The literal-minded interpreter, following ps.-Acro (*benignitas: liberalitas*), understands Horace as saying that Maecenas' generosity has made him rich beyond his needs, which to some extent runs counter to the sense of 25-30 and to Horace's usual pose as *pauper*.

S. 2. 3. It is natural to assume that this luxuriant, sprawling poem is, or pretends to be, a product of Horace's country estate. The indications are given in 4-12: Horace has taken refuge from the Saturnalia, retiring to his *uillula* with a load of suitable books to help him settle down to writing satire. The irony is that, being accused of drying up through idleness and indulgence, he now composes the longest of all his satires; it is his most extended joke at his own expense.

Regrettably, although the setting is presumably the Sabine farm, we learn almost nothing about it from this satire except for one tantalising detail (306-313) which indicates that Horace is doing some building, in absurd imitation, Damasippus suggests, of Maecenas. The incongruity is underlined by the famous fable of the self-inflating frog, which is a clever and amusing compliment to his patron prominently displayed at the end of the satire.

S. 2. 6. It is commonly believed that this is the earliest poem to refer to the Sabine farm, and certainly it begins with an ecstatic expression of delight

which is appropriate to a newly acquired prize possession. It is one of the most fascinating of Horace's hexameter poems and it continues to accumulate critical appraisal, but we are concerned here only with indications which it gives on the manner of acquisition and Maecenas' role in the business.

The sixth satire has often been described as though it were a letter addressed to Maecenas expressing gratitude for the gift of the Sabine farm⁽³⁾. If it is a "thank-you" letter it is one of the oddest and most inept specimens of the genre, for the writer does not even address the supposed giver nor does he say that he has been given anything. Attempts to force the poem into this particular mould have led to some remarkably Procrustean argument on the part of eminent scholars⁽⁴⁾.

That Horace is grateful there is no doubt; he has got exactly what he longed for, and in very generous measure, *auctius atque / di melius fecere* (3-4). The thanks are directed at the gods, in particular Mercury, the luck-bringer. This has aroused sterile speculation on Horace's religious views which often reveals a strangely fundamentalist approach ("Did Horace believe in Mercury?") which ignores the fact that even the atheist or agnostic may express his satisfaction with good fortune in conventional ways⁽⁵⁾.

It is not necessary to identify a human recipient for Horace's gratitude, but if we look for one, is Maecenas the only or the chief candidate? Octavian himself is at least worth considering in this role.

The son of Maia makes a spectacular appearance in a famous ode:

*sive mutata iuuenem figura
ales in terris imitaris almae
filius Maiae patiens uocari
Caesaris ultor,*

(C. 1. 2. 41-44)

Why Horace chose to compliment Octavian by identifying him with Mercury is something of a puzzle, but there is no gainsaying that he did so — and that in a very significant position in the collection of his odes⁽⁶⁾. Let us for the

(3) See C. O. Brink, *On reading a Horatian Satire*, Sydney, 1965, p. 10; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Profile of Horace*, London, 1982, p. 36; G. Williams, *Horace (G & R New Surveys*, No. 6, 1972), p. 16.

(4) See Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 138-144, esp. p. 143; N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace*, Cambridge, 1966, p. 243-257, esp. 253; O. Seel, *Verschlossene Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, 1972, p. 13-93, esp. 36.

(5) Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 140-141, 163-164; Rudd, *op. cit.*, p. 247; Seel, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

(6) See the introduction to the poem in R. G. M. Nisbet & M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes I*, Oxford, 1970, p. 16-21; C. Neumeister, *Horaz und Merkur*, in *AA 22* (1976), p. 185-194; L. Voit, *Horaz-Merkur-Augustus*, in *Gymnasium* 82 (1982), p. 479-96.

sake of argument consider the possibility that in S. 2. 6 Horace is linking the son of Maia with the son of Atia⁽⁷⁾. It would not of course be a simple identification, MERCURIUS = CAESAR, any more than it is in the ode *Iam satis terribis*. It is the god who could fatten the flocks (14), but it is the Princeps who had power over property (5), while both Mercury and Octavian might share the title of Horace's *custos maximus* (15)⁽⁸⁾.

That Octavian favoured Horace is shown clearly in the Suetonian biography, and it is noteworthy that in the *Vita* it is he and not Maecenas who is named as the giver of gifts, *unaque et altera liberalitate locupletavit*. According to Suetonius Horace's friendship with Octavian began soon after his introduction to Maecenas; be that as it may, it is clear from 51 ff. of S. 2. 6 that at the time described by the satire the man in the street regarded Horace as "close to the gods" of government.

On the hypothesis that Horace's gratitude is intended for Octavian rather than Maecenas serious difficulties are removed from an important section of the satire which has troubled commentators, namely 40-59. From this passage it emerges that Horace's friendship with Maecenas "has some very tiresome drawbacks"⁽⁹⁾ and to harp on these is a strange way of saying thanks. The main disadvantage is *invidia*: *per totum hoc tempus subiector in diem et horam / invidiae noster* (47-48). This statement is flanked by two closely related passages, 40-46, where Horace stresses the superficial nature of his conversation with Maecenas, and 50-59, where he illustrates the kind of pestering he endures from those who seek to profit by his acquaintance with the mighty.

On the first of these flanking passages Brink observed: "If these two had nothing to talk about but the hour of the day, the weather and sport, Horace would not have been Horace, and Maecenas would hardly have been Maecenas"⁽¹⁰⁾. No doubt, but what requires explanation is why Horace chose to describe his conversation with Maecenas as mere idle chat (contrasting startlingly with the sort of philosophical *sermo* which Horace enjoyed with his neighbours in the country, 70 ff). If Horace is just boasting

(7) F. Galiani saw in the matronymic a wish to emphasize the relationship with the *divus Iulius* (F. Nicolini, *L'Orazzo dell' abate Gallani*, RAL 22 (1978), p. 11-315).

(8) Later Horace was to address Augustus as *Divus ore bonis, optime Romulae / custos genis* (C. 4. 5. 1-2) and to proclaim the security of a Roman World *custode rerum Caesare* (C. 4. 15. 17), and at this earlier period no one could be a more effective protector or have more influence on the assignment of land.

(9) Rudd, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

(10) *Op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 9.

of his friendship — and there is an element of this — it seems rather futile boasting. Who is likely to have been impressed by how *little* of importance Maecenas reveals to his companion? Not Maecenas himself surely; Octavian perhaps, for he certainly expected those close to him to be discreet⁽¹¹⁾.

The later section, 50-59, makes the point more explicitly: as a favourite of the gods Horace is thought to know what goes on upon Olympus, but he is no Prometheus; he knows nothing, has nothing to tell, and is not tempted to pretend otherwise.

These two passages make very good sense as reassurance for Octavian that Maecenas has not spoken indiscreetly even to so favoured a friend as Horace; as reassurance also for Maecenas that Horace can be relied upon to reveal nothing and indeed to deny that he knows anything of importance; as insurance for Horace himself, the former enemy whose loyalty still needed to be demonstrated. Horace proved his case one way or another, and in view of the self-portrait painted in this satire we need not be surprised that Augustus thought of appointing as his private secretary a man so wondered at *ut unum / scilicet egregii mortalem altique silenti* (57-58)⁽¹²⁾.

Having demonstrated his unassailable integrity in the streets of Rome and in the halls of Maecenas, Horace makes it plain that he would prefer to be in the country (60 ff.), and he gives details of what he would be doing there: reading and sleeping and loafing and enjoying the easy society of his own household and his unpretentious friends⁽¹³⁾.

Finally he sums up his feeling in the delightfully told tale of the country mouse and the town mouse. Those who interpret the satire as a thank-you-for-my-farm letter have to admit that the fable fits the message very loosely, and they are tempted to overload it with moral cargo. The reader who is free of that presupposition can extract a simple and straightforward meaning: Horace is at heart a countryman of modest tastes whose friends invite him to enjoy the excitement and grandeur of city life; he tries it, finds the experience alarming, and returns thankfully to the peace of the country.

(11) The story of Maecenas offending Augustus by a breach of confidence in the case of Murena may not be authentic, but even if it is apocryphal it conveys a great truth — ministers must be discreet. Horace was to give this virtue a special place in one of the Roman Odes (C. 3. 2. 25 ff.).

(12) A factor in Horace's decision to refuse might have been his awareness of the risks run by Augustus' secretaries. He would not have wished to have his legs broken like the indiscreet Thallus (Suet. *Aug.* 67).

(13) There is no reason to suppose they were "peasants," as Fraenkel does (*op. cit.*, p. 143).

Of course this is too simple ; it is not the whole story, and Horace knows perfectly well that he has a good deal of Johnny Town-mouse in his composition ; the following satire is intended, one suspects, to serve as a humorous corrective. The truth was that Horace needed – and took delight in – both the city and the country, and in all his writing he drew inspiration from the alternation, however inconsistent that might appear in philosophical terms. He had special need of a country retreat for both social and poetical reasons. S. 2. 6 concentrates upon the former, showing how on the Sabine farm Horace was free of the irksome social obligations, the demands, above all the *invidia* which life at Rome involved. The poetical benefits of country life do not appear in this satire but it is made clear that his time in the country is not devoted to idleness and frivolity alone ; the classics are read, friendship is cultivated, Epicurean principles are to some extent practised, philosophical questions are discussed⁽¹⁴⁾. Horace had shown in S. 2. 3 that his rural refuge was the ideal setting for massive literary creation, at least of satire, for it is not suggested anywhere that he was writing lyric. We have to wait for the Odes to find Horace expressing appreciation of the countryside as the haunt of the Muses of song.

Taken as a whole S. 2. 6 is best understood without reading into it an oblique message of thanks to Maecenas or indeed to any individual. I have put forward a case for supposing that, if Horace is thanking any human being for his wonderful good fortune, that person is Octavian, but it is not a convincing case. It is preferable to regard the allusions to Octavian and to Maecenas as a combination of tactful compliment and adroit self-praise. Whatever view is taken on this matter, it must be conceded that this satire does not prove that Maecenas gave Horace his Sabine farm.

S. 2. 7. The almost scurrilous self-mockery of this piece is an amusing let-down after the splendid self-congratulation of S. 2. 6. It contains one brief reference to the Sabine farm, interesting in itself but without value for this investigation. At the very end Horace silences his free-speaking slave by threatening him with banishment to the country estate, as though they were both characters in a comedy : *ocius hinc te / ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino* (117-118). This is usually taken to mean that Horace had eight slaves on the estate, a small *familia* but an adequate one for a single man of simple tastes. This may be accepted but with a slight reservation in view of the

(14) For the Epicurean significance of country life see A. Barbieri, *A proposito della satira II, 6 di Orazio*, in *RAL* 31 (1976), p. 479-507.

special significance of the number nine in many other contexts. Conceivably Horace's phrase has some proverbial basis and should not be taken literally.

Having failed to find the necessary evidence in the Epodes and Satires we turn to the Odes.

C. 1. 17 *Et hanc oden ad Tyndariden scribit Horatius. Cui ut plene satisfaciat, inuitat eam in fundum suum, quem in Sabinis habebat*. We may agree with ps.-Acro that Horace is inviting – or, as some modern critics prefer, pretending to invite – a girl to his country estate. The two place-names should give us a “fix” on the location but unfortunately both are uncertain. On Lucretilis the ancient critics may be stating a fact or guessing when they report that *mons in Sabinis est*. It has not proved possible to identify with assurance either the hill or an Italian name derived from the Latin one. For Ustica the scholiasts offer *mons / uallis / insula*, which tells us both more and less than we should like to hear⁽¹⁵⁾.

More helpful than the names is the pronoun in 4. Even if Horace is merely adopting a *persona* – complete with pantomime goats – he is presumably referring to his own real estate, the Sabine farm. To this idyllic spot he invites a girl to sample the delights of the Golden Age. This makes a fascinating poem with all sorts of intriguing resonances, but it does not forward this enquiry.

Much the same must be said of two remarkable poems in Book Two, 13 and 16, which may well refer to the Sabine farm. Unless the *triste lignum* was a garden tree it probably belonged to the woodland which Horace mentions in S. 2. 6. 3. As for the *parua rura* of C. 2. 16. 37 it is plain that the estate was no *latifundium* though perhaps not quite so small a “Gütchen” as modesty or mock-modesty suggests. The final stanza of C. 2. 16 is a very important clue to the character of Horace as a countryman and a poet of a most exclusive kind, as the admirable notes of Nisbet & Hubbard indicate⁽¹⁶⁾.

C. 2. 18. For those who believe that Maecenas gave Horace the Sabine farm this poem is, as it were, the certificate of presentation. Before examining the crucial passage, however, it is necessary to survey the poem briefly as a whole.

Ps.-Acro's introductory note is succinct and helpful, an object lesson for modern commentators : *De continentia scribit et paupertatem suam diuitiis*

(15) Porph. gives only *mons*. Ps.-Acro offers two alternatives : *mons / insula* and *mons / uallis* (cf. ad *Eplst.* 1. 16. 5-6, where the valley is identified as Ustica).

(16) *A Commentary on Horace Odes II*, Oxford, 1978.

omnibus praefert, culpans eos qui obliiti brevis uitae cupiditatibus et diuitiis student. The beginning of the poem links Horace with two other famous poets, Bacchylides (fr. 21) and Virgil (*G.* 2. 461 ff.). In the latter case, though it is probable that one Latin poet was aware of the other, priority remains uncertain, but both of them probably had in mind Lucretius 2. 20 ff.

Horace seems to have been fond of starting a poem with a deliberate echo of Greek lyric, and presumably he expected his learned audience to recognise the imitation immediately. If we had a comprehensive collection of the Greek models, doubtless we should appreciate many subtleties which we now miss.

In gleaning what we can from the surviving portion of Bacchylides we may observe that Horace goes beyond his pattern in a significant way. The Greek poet uses a neat double tricolon; in the first one *χρονός* is enclosed by two larger phrases of equal size; in the next (*ἀλλὰ ... ἡδύς*) there is expansion, the second phrase being longer than the first and the third being longer than the second. Altogether this is a very carefully designed structure. Horace, surprisingly for one who is a master of elegant design, has chosen at the start to replace the balance of Greek architecture with a forbidding pile of negatives: *Non ... neque ... non ... neque ... nec ...* (Virgil was content with four in his version). After this extravagance he comes down to earth with an exemplary expanding tricolon in lines 9-10 which matches Bacchylides. The final phrase is a comic surprise, *pauperemque diues / me petit*.

Well, we are forewarned. Horace is being heavily rhetorical; more than that, he is being satirical. Horace in rhetorical-satirical mood is excellent value, but it is unwise to take everything he says in sober earnest. There is of course a serious message in his fierce attack on ruthless greed unmindful of implacable death, but the starkness of this message contrasts sharply — and derives force from the contrast — with the savage humour of Horace's highly coloured pictures: gold and ivory, ladies in purple, palaces pushing back the sea, the grasping plutocrat ripping out boundary-stones and jumping over his dependants' fences, the pitiful eviction, Prometheus and Tantalus whom wit and wealth cannot release from an eternal death-sentence.

A contrast of another kind is equally effective: between the insolent and foolish *diues* and the honest and talented *pauper*, Horace himself. In 9-14 Horace has adapted Bacchylides to suit his Roman surroundings and his own personal position. For a Roman *fides* is as good a single word for "virtue" as any and it covers both the quality of the individual and the way he is regarded by society (his "social credit"). Horace has a rich vein of talent which has enabled him to earn his place in society, and that place is one of honour irrespective of wealth, *pauperemque diues me petit*. In the last phrase

Horace rises high above Bacchylides with his Boeotian boozing; here is role reversal worthy of Plautus. Horace is the patron of rich men. Or is it only one rich man, namely Maecenas? To that question most commentators have given the general answer. When it comes to *potentem amicum* (12), however, many switch to the particular.

There is a danger of being involved in a circular argument here (the *potens amicus* is Maecenas because Maecenas gave Horace his farm: Maecenas gave Horace his farm because he was the *potens amicus*). The identification of the *potens amicus* as Maecenas goes back to antiquity, as ps.-Acro's note quoted earlier shows. Was the scholiast right?

A clue to the answer is provided, I suggest, by the style which Horace adopts at this point. Even the most verbose commentators have paid little attention to those two verbs *laccio* and *flagito*, which are not mere equivalents to "pray" and "ask." *Deos laccio* is a violent expression, as Horace's use of the word elsewhere demonstrates; all three examples are concerned with provocation inviting death or bloodshed (*C.* 1. 35. 7, *C.* 3. 2. 10, *Epist.* 2. 1. 151). As for *flagito* Horace uses it in only one other place, *S.* 2. 4. 61, where it is applied to regurgitative messages emitted by the drink-soured stomach. It is apparently a word which better suits the needs of that coarse fellow Catullus (55. 9 and in the compound *reflagito* at 42. 6, 10) or of the impious bully of a Ulysses depicted by Virgil (*Aen.* 2. 124). It is plain that in 11-13 Horace is being highly satirical; *deos laccere* and *potentem amicum flagitare* are examples of vulgar impropriety of an offensive kind, and the addition of *supra* and *largiora* sharpens the bite of sarcasm. Never, one feels, would Horace have approached the gods or an influential friend in such outrageous ways. His condemnation of bad behaviour is cast in general terms throughout the poem, and it is inappropriate for his own particular benefactor to be indicated. Similarly unsuitable is the notion that Horace had Maecenas in mind when drawing his exaggerated cartoon of the man of property⁽¹⁷⁾. In fact he has insured himself against offending respectable members of the wealthy class by his shocking description of the wicked *auarus* committing acts which no honourable Roman would condone. At the same time he was bound to earn favour in the highest quarters by this diatribe against extravagant building⁽¹⁸⁾.

(17) In a long introductory note Nisbet & Hubbard come perilously close to this position. While denying that Horace is rebuking his patron they pile up details — some highly speculative — to show that Maecenas fills the bill as the man of property.

(18) Suet. *Aug.* 72.

Enough has been said, if not to convince those who agree with ps.-Acro, at least to suggest that in order to prove that Horace was given his farm by Maecenas more is needed than a text where Maecenas is not mentioned and is liable to insult if dragged in⁽¹⁹⁾. Doubt about the giver calls the gift into question also, but here we are confronted by a crux: *unicis Sabinis*.

Both words present difficulties but most of the debate has arisen over the question whether *Sabinis*, "Sabine country" by metonymy (v. Varro, *L.L.* 5. 32), can be taken in the restricted sense "Sabine estate". Nisbet & Hubbard draw attention to the problem, reviving without resolving an old controversy.

The lines of enquiry have been confused by infighting between scholars. The source of the trouble appears to be a rather careless note of M. Haupt in *Hermes* 7 (1876), 180 (= *Opusc.* 3. 578) in which he accepted Porphyrio's explanation and described a Latin usage which Lachmann had taught him. In view of the ensuing argument it may be as well to quote Haupt's own words: "nimirum fundi qui a populis dicuntur ubi non additur fundi vel praedii vocabulum non admittunt aliud nomen quam ipsius populi plurativum." He illustrated the rule with a list of references in Ovid, Martial, and Pliny in addition to one Horatian passage (*C.* 3. 4. 21).

In 1882 Lucian Müller published the first of his highly eccentric editions of Horace in which he printed a conjecture of his own, *unico Sabino*. A. Kiessling, Müller's detested rival, described this as a "howler" ("ein grober Schnitzer") being in breach of Haupt's rule. Müller's furious response to this insult turned out to be a Parthian shot because he died two years before his commentary on the Odes appeared in 1900.

His riposte took the form of an exceptionally long note devoted mainly to defending his own emendation. He rebutted the accusation that he had committed a howler by claiming no less an ally than Cicero, who had frequently used *Tusculanum* for *rus Tusculanum* or *uilla Tusculana*; he attacked Haupt's examples and demolished some of them including the one Horatian specimen (which will be considered when we come to *C.* 3. 4). He did, however, accept Pliny, *Epist.* 5. 6. 45 and he substituted a valid example from Martial (7. 31. 11) for the one quoted by Haupt which he showed to be faulty (10. 44. 9), but he asserted that the use of such plurals was rare and declared that the usual expression was "das Neutrum des Völker oder Städtenamens", as in his proposed reading *unico Sabino*.

(19) Horace had a lot to say later about the *potens amicus* in a context where nobody is eager to identify him with Maecenas: in *Epist.* 1. 18 he mischievously instructs Lollius how to wheedle and scrounge from a patron.

What has kept Müller's contribution in the public eye, it seems, is Housman's commendation expressed on two occasions. In *CR* 17 (1903), 466 (= *Cl. P.* 2. 613) while excoriating an unfortunate editor of Juvenal (H. L. Wilson) Housman denounced the interpretation of *in Lucanos* at 8. 180 as "your Lucanian farm": the masculine plural was non-existent in this sense; Lucian Müller had corrected Haupt on this point. In short the Lachmann-Haupt rule was to be superseded by the Housman law, thanks to Müller. But Housman was going beyond Müller by saying "non-existent" where Müller had said "höchst selten." In an article on Phaedrus in *CR* 20 (1906), 257 (= *Cl. P.* 2. 658) he referred to Müller having "refuted" Haupt; he did not, however, support Müller's conjecture but favoured Dinter's *uineis* for *unicis*, an emendation unlikely to earn much notice on its own merits.

But Müller had not entirely refuted Haupt. He had in fact allowed that there were examples of the masculine plural being used to designate an estate, his objections to cases in Pliny were unsuccessful, and he failed to produce a single exception to Haupt's rule. Furthermore his argument contained a fatal flaw: it ignored the distinction which Lachmann and Haupt had made between names derived from peoples, *a populis* ("Völkernamen"), and other names. Why such a distinction existed is not wholly clear but the fact is that while neuter singular estate names based on *towns* are very common, not one derived from a people has been adduced⁽²⁰⁾. The closest Müller could get to it was to cite *Sabinum* in the sense of Sabine wine (*sc. uinum*).

In the absence of a true parallel Müller's '*Sabino*' is indefensible, but by a strange irony the misbegotten name has flourished in the learned literature, where it has become common to refer to Horace's '*Sabinum*'⁽²¹⁾. Kiessling, of course, and later Heinze were unimpressed by Müller's case, and they continued to state the Lachmann-Haupt rule, though dropping the reference to Haupt in the later editions.

But is the rule valid? And, if it is, does it apply here? Müller's assault has deprived Haupt of the examples from Horace and Ovid, which leaves Martial and Pliny (and possibly Juvenal, if Housman's questionable pronouncement on 8. 180 is to be set aside). These writers are close together and all of them

(20) Examples in Cicero of estate-names derived from towns: Albanum, Anagninum, Antias, Arcanum, Arpinas, Calenum, Cumanum, Formianum, Lanuvium, Laterium, Neapolitanum, Pompeianum, Sinuessanum, Tiburtinum, Trebulanum, Tusculanum, Venusinum, Vescinum.

(21) Of course the howler existed before Müller adopted it. Lewis & Short must bear a good deal of blame for its propagation because Lewis' entry implies that Horace himself spoke of his *Sabinum*.

are a long way from Horace in time. Can nothing be found in earlier literature? The nearest I can come to it is a passage in Varro, *R.R.* 1. 15: *serunt alii circum pinos, ut habet uxor in Sabinis, alii cupressos, ut ego habui in Vesuvio, alii ulmos, ut multi habent in Crustumino*. It is not a satisfactory parallel because Varro seems to be writing primarily about areas, not individual estates, but it may encourage us to cut the knot by supposing that even in the Silver Age writers all that has happened is that the regular usage of designating a region by the name of the people has been extended colloquially to refer to that part of the region which has special significance for the writer — his estate. It is not — *pace* Lachmann, Haupt, and many eminent scholars before and after them — a regular, long-standing Latin idiom. In English a man might speak of retiring to “my beloved Lakes” when he owns a cottage in the North West of England, but this does not mean that “the Lakes” is the normal equivalent of “a Cumbrian estate.”

The question then is: did Horace use the same loose expression as Pliny? It is doubtful, and without evidence from earlier literature I think we are bound to take *Sabinis* to mean “Sabine country.” This is hardly an embarrassing conclusion because the acquisitive man with whom Horace compares himself is shown to be dissatisfied with *locality*. Instead of confining his thought to the narrow dimensions of the tomb which will soon enclose him he is obsessed with building houses (plural!), ignoring the limits of the landmass, going beyond all bounds to enlarge his estate. In contrast Horace is content to live in the backwoods, *in Sabinis*. The traditional qualities of the Sabine people, frugality, simplicity, toughness, accord well with Horace’s portrait of himself as a poor man of honest worth: he is the *rusticus mus* for whom *silua canusque* are all in all (*S.* 2. 6. 116-117).

But what of *unicis*? If *Sabinis* implies modesty it is difficult to take the adjective in the sense “outstanding” and we are driven back to the primary meaning “alone,” “only.” The expression is an odd one but it may be explained by Horace’s fondness for oxymoron and for contradictory collocations of all kinds. *Unicus* stresses singularity but here it is combined with a plural which describes a unit, “the Sabineland.” This poem has a number of surprising contrasts in the immediate neighbourhood (5-6, 10-11, 16, 17-18, 18-19) and so provides a pattern into which line 14 can fit, which encourages us to believe that the text is authentic and that attempts to emend it are misguided. The simplest interpretation is that Horace is saying “I am happy enough with Sabine country alone,” but there is a possibility that he is playing not only with the singular and plural but also with both senses of *unicus*, in which case we should have to understand line 14 as meaning

something like this: “I am happy enough with only one thing — those Sabines — there is no place like it.”

If in Horace’s time *Sabini* did not mean a “Sabine estate” it becomes harder to accept Porphyrio’s explanation; harder, but not impossible, because it was obvious to Horace’s friends and attentive readers that when he refers to Sabine territory in this way he is thinking of his property there. In the context *Sabini* means much the same as *fundus Sabinus*. What is missing, however, is clear evidence concerning the acquisition of that farm, and on this point it seems likely that Porphyrio is, as so often, simply guessing.

C. 3. 1. There are obvious similarities of thought between this ode and 2. 18. A central theme is the attack upon the pursuit of wealth and extravagance, while Horace associates himself with those who live and choose the simple life. The association is established both morally and geographically; morally by the *desiderantem quod satis est* (25) which describes one of Horace’s strongest philosophical principles⁽²²⁾; geographically by the *ualle Sabina* (47) which Horace would not exchange for more troublesome wealth. The Sabine valley and the idyllic rusticity painted in 21-24 are reminiscent of C. 1. 17, and that echo carries with it a religious resonance also. At the significantly central position of C. 1. 17 Horace declared: *di me tuentur, dis pietas mea / et musa cordi est* (13-14), while in C. 3. 1 he proclaims himself *Musarum sacerdos* in the arresting introductory stanza, which has been unjustly suspected by some to be an afterthought. In the light of Horace’s claim in C. 1. 17 his pose in the final two stanzas of *Odi profanum* can be seen to harmonise with his role in the first stanza as priest of the Muses. He is no ordinary countryman who happens to have an address *in Sabinis*: he is a poet who is loved and protected by the gods. This self-confidence of Horace does not stem from Epicurus (or Lucretius) but from his own self-appraisal as a poet of merit⁽²³⁾.

C. 3. 1 may enlarge our understanding of the significance of the Sabine farm in the poet’s life but it does not advance the present enquiry.

C. 3. 4. Horace’s assertion that he commands the protection and inspiration of the Muses is given its most powerful expression in this ode, where he goes to great lengths to emphasize divine authority before delivering an

(22) Cf. *S.* 1. 1. 59-62; *S.* 2. 3. 126-128, 176-178; *C.* 3. 16. 21-44; *Epist.* 1. 2. 46; 1. 10. 45-46; 2. 2. 190-192; *C.* 4. 9. 45-49.

(23) On the Epicurean background and the influence of Lucretius see H. P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz*, vol. 2, Darmstadt, 1973, p. 7 ff.

obvious political message. The question we have to ask is whether he is referring to his Sabine farm in 21-22, as K. Quinn, for example, states in the notes of his edition. As mentioned earlier, this passage was listed by Haupt as one of his supposed examples of *Sabini* meaning "Sabine estate." Müller objected, I think rightly, that the following references to Praeneste, Tibur, and Baiæ show that Horace is speaking of Sabine territory as a whole. No doubt when Horace had his Muse-minded talent carried up to the Sabine hills he usually visited his farm among other places, but he does not explicitly speak of it here.

C. 3. 16. This is a happy tour-de-force in which Horace has cunningly laminated together two incompatible elements: gold the universal seducer and Horace the incorruptible. The first five stanzas with their combination of myth and historical example lead up to an attack on greed and the pain which that vice brings with it. Horace has taken a resolve not to succumb to this evil and he shelters behind his patron, a great man whose grandeur is based on modesty (18-20). The next stanza, which is the central one of the ode, shows Horace in military metaphor deserting the camp of the wealthy to join those who desire nothing. This is immediately followed by the favourite paradox that the poor man is in fact rich, which is set in the context of Horace's own possessions. Although the Sabine farm is not mentioned by name it is clearly referred to by the description in the eighth stanza, where the details neatly suggest its limited extent while emphasizing its good qualities. Horace does not own the largest store of the best wheat (26-27); he does not have the best honey, the best wine, and the best wool in Italy (33-36); but exigent poverty is absent (37). In any case, if he should want more, Maecenas would not refuse to help (38).

It is the last phrase, *nec si plura uelim tu dare deneges*, which expositors have taken to imply that Maecenas gave Horace the Sabine farm. A cross-reference to C. 2. 18. 12-13 (*nec potentem amicum / largiora flagito*) makes this conclusion specious but does not conceal that it is arrived at by the logic of the children's playground: "If I give you more chocolate I must have given you what you have already eaten".

In fact the way in which Horace here and elsewhere stresses the humble nature of his property conflicts with the theory that Maecenas gave it to him. The recipient who is expressing gratitude to his benefactor is not expected to harp upon the small size of the gift, its ordinary qualities, and the sparing hand of the giver. It is irrelevant that the Sabine farm may have been in reality a substantial property; what matters is how Horace describes it and what impression he gives to the reading public.

The final sentence in 42-44 reminds us, perhaps in accordance with Horace's intention, of the end of C. 2. 16. 37-40. The memorable motto of that ode, *uiuatur paruo bene* (13), is the second theme of C. 3. 16 and it provides the solution to the contradiction between the corrupting power of gold and Horace's own integrity. The populace may desire profit, but for Horace *pretium, lucrum, pecunia* are pejorative terms which infect *aurum* and *munera* and *diuites*; empty-handed he runs away to join those who have no desires, and so he is in truth far better off. The cleverly spaced comparatives *splendidior* (25), *beatior* (32), *melius* (39) carry the contrast over five stanzas.

Inclusam Danaen is a statement about Horace's personal philosophy; it is not a way of saying either "Thank you" or, as some have more tortuously argued, "Please."

C. 3. 18. The light-hearted invitation to Faunus to visit *meos finis et aprica rura* is a companion piece to C. 1. 17 with similar echoes of the Golden Age. This ode contains no local names but it may presumably be located in *Sabinis*. Nevertheless it contributes nothing to our enquiry.

The same may be said of three other odes in Book III which have also been associated with the poet's country estate: 13, 22 and 23.

Tyrrhena regum progenies (C. 3. 29), the last and grandest of Horace's odes to Maecenas, is remarkable for many things and not least for the plain declaration of independence with which it ends. The poet is inviting his patron to visit him, at the Sabine farm, as we may reasonably suppose, for though it is not mentioned it lies behind the more eminent places referred to in the second stanza, Tibur, Aefula, and Tusculum. Once more Horace emphasizes his own humble station and resources (13-16) by implication and there is no hint that he is expressing thanks to a benefactor.

The Fourth Book of the Odes may conveniently be dealt with at this point although it was published much later at an undetermined date. It contains no reference to the Sabine farm, which has encouraged those who speculate that in later years Horace had richer property elsewhere. The silence need not be significant, especially as several of the poems appear to be commissions or refer to a commission. It is remotely conceivable that the "hortus" in C. 4. 11. 2 is the garden of the Sabine estate, and as this the only ode in the book which contains the name of Maecenas some significance might be read into the collocation. But the link is tenuous in the extreme; it cannot be taken as evidence that Maecenas gave Horace this garden full of celery and ivy. On the other hand Book IV contains two notable passages which splendidly

illustrate the connection between location and inspiration, but both of them refer to Tibur: C. 4. 2. 27-32 and 4. 3. 1-12⁽²⁴⁾.

The remaining references are all in the First Book of the Epistles.

Epist. 1. 7. This epistle is addressed to Maecenas from an unspecified place in the country. It begins with an excuse for absence from Rome, proceeds to discuss generosity and gratitude, true and false, asserts Horace's independence, and ends with the moral tale of the wealthy Philippus and his low protégé Menas. For all its chatty, apparently inconsequential style, the piece is most carefully constructed in a pattern involving four illustrations or fables. Three of these are short (the Calabrian, the fox, Telemachus), while the fourth (Philippus and Menas) is ten times as long. The first and the fourth are *exempla ex contrario* and describe relationships unlike that existing between Horace and Maecenas; the second and the third are appropriate to it.

The Calabrian provides an example with a double point: he tries to enforce an obligation and gives a worthless present. It is implied that Maecenas has done neither; his gift was valuable and the recipient's gratitude is genuine. But Horace is not therefore bound to be at Maecenas' beck and call and he is not obliged to remain in a setting which no longer suits or pleases him. Here again an illustration, this time in the form of a fable about the fat *uolpecula* who must get thin again if he is to regain his freedom. "If need be," says Horace, "I'll give up what I have been given. You should know me well enough to realize that I mean it just as I mean it when I call you *rex paterque*."

This is plain speaking but it causes embarrassment to anyone who believes that Maecenas' chief gift to Horace was the Sabine farm because of the apparent contradiction presented by Horace in rural retreat offering to let the very ground be taken from under him. The problem is increased by the *exemplum* of Telemachus refusing Menelaus' extravagant but totally unsuitable gift, which cannot correspond to the Sabine farm, a possession both modest and well-suited to Horace.

The full significance of the Telemachus allusion has not been brought out by commentators. In the *Odyssey* the episode represents a crucial stage in the

(24) The Suetonian *Vita* reports that Horace's house *circa Tiburni lucum* was on show to visitors, which provokes an ironic comment from Fraenkel (*op. cit.*, p. 21) on the propensities of local guides. Many have believed the story but see I. Troxler-Keller, *Die Dichterlandschaft des Horaz*, Heidelberg, 1964, p. 137 ff., for a dissenting view. The supposed identification of the villa by G. H. Hallam, *Horace at Tibur and the Sabine Farm* is demolished by R. L. Dunbabin, *Horace's Villa at Tivoli in CR 47* (1933), p. 55-61.

development of Telemachus, who had been sent by Athena on a journey, ostensibly to seek news of his father but, more importantly, to gain credit. In the course of his visits to Nestor and Menelaus he learns that he really is the true son of Odysseus, he learns what manner of man his father is, and he learns how to conduct himself among people of the same class as his father. As a kind of final test before he returns home, a mature hero fit to stand beside the victorious Odysseus, he has to solve the difficult problem of *how to refuse a gift*, a splendid gift from the wealthiest king in the world. He passes the test with increased honour, as Menelaus' reaction proves.

Horace could rely on Maecenas to appreciate the tact and sincerity of his assertion that he is willing to surrender what he has been given as well as the noble courtesy of his judicious refusal.

What were Maecenas' gifts, presented or proffered? Nothing is specified though *locupletem* (15) suggests money⁽²⁵⁾. It seems, however, that Horace is not simply refusing or offering to return gifts; he is declining a particular kind of life, the rich style that belongs to princely Rome. The couplet which separates the Homeric illustration from the story of Philippus and Menas conveys Horace's central message:

*paruum parua decent; mihi iam non regia Roma,
sed uacuum Tibur placet aut imbelli Tarentum.* (44-45)

More than half the epistle is occupied by the fascinatingly detailed story of a patron who, for unworthy motives, made sport with his randomly selected client, forcing on him gifts which were unsuitable and in the end worse than useless⁽²⁶⁾. In effect the great aristocrat is shown to be very like the Calabrian boor. I have already pointed out how embarrassing the Sabine farm is in the earlier part of the epistle if it is regarded as Maecenas' gift to Horace. It becomes even more awkward in relation to the story of Menas, whose downfall is due to the country estate which his patron encouraged him to acquire.

(25) *Locuples* is a general equivalent of 'rich'; when not referring to money the material in which the wealth consists may be defined by an accompanying noun (e.g. *mancipis l.*). Among Horace's nine examples of the word there is one which may involve a play on its derivation ("land-full"), as Nisbet & Hubbard claim (*n. ad C. 2. 18. 22*), but that usage is almost as rare as *pecunia* bearing an allusion to cattle.

(26) Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 337, thinks Philippus is "a real gentleman" who is not unkind and means no harm. More plausible is the judgment of M. J. McGann, *Studies in Horace's First Book of Epistles*, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 55: "both in respect of action and motive an unfavourable verdict on Philippus is demanded."

One final observation may be made about the four illustrations in this epistle: each one of them conveys an assertion of independence. The Calabrian's guest refuses to be encumbered with more than he wants. The fox must rid himself of surplus to regain his freedom. Telemachus becomes a man in his own right by an act of refusal. Menas in the end rejects patronage. Horace knows where he rightly belongs and he has his own measure, as the last three lines of the piece indicate.

Where in all this is the Sabine farm? If we are dealing with real circumstances at all and if Maecenas had given Horace the property on which he now wants to linger — which is what most commentators seem to believe — it is incomprehensible that he should not say something like: "You gave me this country retreat; can you blame me for cherishing it so much and spending my time here?" Admittedly arguments based on what the critic would have written had he been the poet are usually worthless, so I must simply point out that *Epist.* 1. 7 contains no reference to the Sabine farm, let alone any hint that it was given to him by Maecenas. This admirable poem is much better understood if the Sabine farm is kept out of it completely.

Epist. 1. 8. M. J. McGann has pointed out that this brief epistle, when read immediately after 1. 7, has an effect similar to the ironic codas which appear in some odes⁽²⁷⁾. The cynical might be tempted to suggest that Celsus had asked Horace for a poem but offered too small a fee.

Two details may concern us here: in lines 4-6 Horace implies that he is not a wealthy landowner with vineyards, olive groves, and flocks of commuting sheep; in line 12 he contrasts Tibur with Rome. The earlier passage supplements other evidence which can be collected about Horace's property. The second reminds us of line 45 in *Epist.* 1. 7 and raises difficult questions which cannot be dealt with here: Did Horace have a place of his own at Tibur? Does he mean the Sabine farm when he mentions Tibur? Is he using Tibur merely as an example?

Epist. 1. 10. This charming epistle links Horace with his dear friend Fuscus. They are *paene gemelli* (3); they are *uetuli notique columbi* (5); they differ only in that Fuscus loves the town, Horace the country.

Horace's picture of the blessings of rural life is highly significant. He praises natural beauty, pure streams, mossy rocks, woodland; warm winters and cool summers; carefree sleep and the distant view. These are "goods" but they are not property, and after hinting that even the rich city-dweller is dominated by the urge to keep close to nature, Horace develops a favourite

(27) *Op. cit.*, p. 56. E.g. *Epod.* 2. 67-70, *C.* 2. 1. 37-40, 3. 3. 69-72.

moral theme: he who wants little possesses much, while he who pursues success or wealth becomes a slave. There is a pleasing personal touch at the end where Horace completes his advice to his friend by asking to be scolded if he appears too acquisitive or does not take life easy as he should (44-46). The last sentence (49-50) gives the postmark, so to speak, as Vacuna's decayed temple, which identifies Horace's address as the Sabine farm.

What emerges clearly from this epistle is that Horace is presenting his abode as a place of retirement from the city life he once enjoyed. It is not depicted as a working (i.e. money-making) farm but as a peaceful place where a man can savour the free gifts of nature.

Epist. 1. 14. This epistle, which is addressed to Horace's farm overseer, corrects the impression given by *Epist.* 1. 10. Here we do find references to real agricultural labour, weeding, hoeing, ploughing, leaf-stripping, and ditching. There is no contradiction, however; the change of emphasis arises from the different points of view. Horace sees the farm as a *locus amoenus*, not a commercial enterprise, whereas for the overseer it is a place of hard work, poorly rewarded it seems if the statement in line 23 is to be taken literally and is not merely dramatic exaggeration.

Horace was always ready to make fun of himself and doubtless he was well aware of the irony of his present claim of consistency (16) compared with *Epist.* 1. 8 which focuses on his own inconsistency. The defence of his position is built into 1. 14 by both the place and the time. As for place, Horace has chosen to paint his down-to-earth contrast between town and country by writing — or pretending to write — from the city, to which he has been called by an inescapable commitment which is not business, which would have been totally out of place, but an obligation of friendship⁽²⁸⁾. From Rome Horace can imagine his Sabine farm in clear perspective and from Rome he can speak convincingly about his preference for the country. Horace's dislike of Rome is also related to time. Rome suited him when he was younger, but now the game is at an end (32-36).

In the last part of the epistle a particularly revealing comment is provided by a new contrast between city and country. In 37-38 he refers to envy and jealousy, evils which were to pursue him till near the end of his career⁽²⁹⁾.

(28) E. J. Kenney, *A question of Taste: Horace, Epistles 1. 14. 6-9* in *Illinois Cl. St.* 2 (1977), p. 229-239, has argued that Lamia's brother was *raptus amore* and that reference to a real death in so light a poem would have been a "bad error of literary and social taste." The argument is ingenious but many will remain suspicious of a case which relies on modern notions of good taste.

(29) *et iam dente minus mordeor inuido* (*C.* 4. 3. 16). Cf. *S.* 1. 6. 46-47, 2. 1. 75-77, 2. 6. 47-48, *C.* 2. 16. 39-40, 2. 20. 4, *Epist.* 1. 19. 43-44.

In Sabinis on the other hand his neighbours smile at him amiably as he tries his hand at landscape gardening (39). Thus we are presented with a pair of vignettes, self-portraits in different social contexts.

In this epistle the Sabine farm acquires greater definition in terms of its importance to Horace as a home but not of its physical details.

Epist. 1. 16. Here we might expect to find those details, and Horace has been censured by commentators for failing to fulfil the promise to provide them (4). But what he does tell us is all of a piece with what we have already learned about what the place meant to him: there he could enjoy the warmth and the shade, the primeval woods, the wild fruits, the cool, clear streams, all of which afforded him a pleasant and beautiful retreat refreshing to body and mind. At ease with his surroundings and himself Horace seems well set to give advice worth listening to. Unfortunately the brief dissertation on the good man is too much of a rhetorical exercise to be convincing. It appears that Horace's heart was not really in it when he chose to play a Stoic role, and the oblique praise of Augustus (25-29) seems to have been foisted upon the text even more intrusively than most similar compliments. Maecenas is not mentioned.

Epist. 1. 18. In this epistle Horace expounds at length how to get on with the great. For nearly 90 lines Horace pours out worldly advice to Lollius in a robust, knockabout fashion reminiscent of the Satires; then abruptly he turns philosophical and climbs to a Lucretian summit (102-103). After this exertion he goes to visit his Sabine farm in search of refreshment (104-105). Digentia and Mandela are mentioned by Horace only here, and by good fortune both of these names are thought to have survived as Licenza and Bardela. Horace shares his private prayers with us (107 ff.): to have what he already has or less; to live for himself for whatever time is left to him; to have plenty of books and food to see him through the year; to be free of day-to-day anxiety. The final statement proudly proclaims his own independence: *aequum mi animum ipse parabo*.

Appropriately this completes Horace's testimony about his Sabine estate, describing it essentially in spiritual terms as the place of mental equilibrium where Horace knows himself.

We have reviewed all possibly helpful references to the Sabine farm and failed to find conclusive evidence for the alleged gift of Maecenas. This leaves us with a choice: to accept the old tradition, admitting that it is not securely based, or to consider other possibilities, knowing that they too cannot be more than speculation. Caution favours the first course, but when a supposition has been tested against all available evidence it is sometimes useful to

pit it against rival theories. By this means confidence or doubt may be strengthened.

What are the other ways in which Horace might have acquired the estate? Three may be suggested: (1) as a gift from someone other than Maecenas; (2) by inheritance; (3) by purchase.

(1) There seems to be only one contender — Octavian. I have already advanced — and dismissed — this theory in commenting on *S.* 2. 6, where it was suggested that Mercury might be taken to represent Octavian. Additional support comes from the Suetonian *Vita* (*unaque et altera liberalitate locupletavit*), from *Epist.* 2. 1. 226-228 and 245-247, and from the poet's bequest of all his property to Augustus. Horace might have considered praise of the Princeps a more appropriate return than an explicit declaration of thanks, especially in view of the ruler's reservations about being made the subject of poetry⁽³⁰⁾.

(2) Ignoring the remote possibility that one of Horace's well-to-do friends left him the property, we must consider whether he could have acquired the farm as *paterna rura*. But in a famous passage Horace states that after Philippi he was *decisis humilem pennis inopemque paterni / et laris et fundi* (*Epist.* 2. 2. 50-51). On this ps.-Acro remarks: *H. cum aliis proscriptus est, id est, hereditate priuatus*, and this has become the accepted tradition. It is usually assumed that the confiscated estate was in Venusia but this is open to question.

In *S.* 1. 6 Horace speaks of his father in terms which have always been admired as a monument of piety. In line 71 he describes him as *macro pauper agello*. Nevertheless the father was sufficiently well off to bring his son to Rome and to give him the education which would have suited the son of a knight or a senator. What is he likely to have done with the *macer agellus* when he moved to Rome? Sold it, one might suppose, using the proceeds to establish himself and his son in or near the city. That he had lodgings or property there cannot be doubted; possibly he had a farm as well to supply income and produce; perhaps a *modus agri in Sabinis*? This is of course pure conjecture, but it receives a grain of support from a neglected — and probably negligible — source, the second *Vita* in A, which begins: *Poeta Q. Horatius Flaccus libertino patre natus in Apulia cum parente in Sabinos migravit*. The last part of this statement is not obviously derived from anything in Horace's text and it may deserve some small consideration on

(30) Suet. *Aug.* 89. 3.

that account. The migrant from Venusia with a modest capital might well have chosen a property which was some distance from Rome, one which the poet was to describe later as comparatively unproductive.

If Horace had inherited a farm of this kind he would presumably have lost it after Philippi; alternatively his father, if still alive, might have been deprived of it. Later when Horace was forgiven and gained favour, the poet might have recovered the family property or been given a comparable one in compensation. In either case he would have had reason to be grateful to Maecenas and Octavian.

Here we may allow this flimsy kite of speculation to flutter to the ground and fly another one with a longer and more attractive tail.

(3) When Horace's circumstances improved sufficiently it would have been natural, perhaps inevitable, for him to purchase property. Having bought the home of his dreams he might justifiably have cried: *Hoc erat in uotis* ... Earlier I questioned the interpretation of *S. 2. 6* as a letter of thanks to a benefactor. It reads very much better as thanksgiving for personal success and an explanation for Horace's choice of property with a remote and unfashionable address. Despised by jealous Romans, Horace the Sabellian parvenu, the political turncoat, the court toady (such must the lowborn Venusian have appeared to many), wanted a place where he could be his own master, where free from the constraints and ceremony of high society he could study or be idle as fancy took him and contemplate the good life while entertaining his cronies and his girls in simple comfort. In the fable the country mouse is the protagonist; he is drawn away from bucolic bliss by his flamboyant friend to sample the frenetic delights of the city, but in the end he returns to the simplicity which suits him best.

For a poet irked by the irritations of Rome, where he was tethered most of the time by official and social duties, the Sabine farm represented an excellent retreat. For a patron, on the other hand, the distant valley of the Digentia seems a most inappropriate place to settle a protégé whose company he valued.

Could Horace have afforded the purchase of a farm? Poverty is always relative, and in Horace's case it is clear that *pauper* meant different things at different stages of his career. We have no means of accurately assessing Horace's financial rating at any period of his life. We do not even know what he was worth when he died leaving all his property to Augustus. We are not well informed on the interesting question how poets made money out of writing, and the term "patronage" so freely used by biographers and commentators tells us almost nothing and may be seriously misleading.

Horace, who loved contrasts almost to the point of obsession, frequently opposes *diues* and *pauper*, and in terms of these alternatives he makes out that he himself is *pauper*, but that does not mean that he was at any time of his life seriously oppressed by *importuna pauperies*.

His origins were lowly by Roman aristocratic standards. His father was only a freedman from the outlands with an allegedly small parcel of land, but he could afford to bring his son to Rome, to provide him with the appearance of a well-to-do background, and to give him the best possible education. It is noteworthy that in Horace's fine tribute to his father in *S. 1. 6*, which is addressed to Maecenas, he does not say or imply that his father had to pinch and save to furnish his child with such an expensive upbringing; the emphasis is on the *moral* worth of the man of humble station who wanted to train his son in virtue and give him the widest choice of a career. Horace stresses the remarkable fact that his father would not have objected if Horace had chosen to go into commerce on his own modest level (85-88), but what were the grander alternatives for which the good man wished to make his son eligible? Presumably either big business or the *cursus honorum*, both of which would have required "the great 400,000" of the equestrian census. Horace's account of his upbringing indicates that his father planned to place his son in a position to claim the status of *equus*. Did he succeed?

The next stage in the young Horace's career culminated in his service under Brutus as a military tribune, an office which was normally restricted to candidates of equestrian rank. It has been argued that Brutus might have bent the rules in his eagerness to field a sufficiently large force, but there is no evidence that he did so. What happened to Horace after the disaster of Philippi? The only indication is his cryptic statement in *Epist. 2. 2. 49 ff.* which has usually been taken to mean that Horace's father had died and the estate in Venusia had been confiscated. Another possible interpretation is that he was deprived of his rank (*amissa dignitate* Porph.) and lacked wealthy ancestral backing, but if we assume the worst and accept the traditional view, it does not mean that Horace was left penniless. Indeed if his father had died it is probable that he left as much money as he could to his son, and it may have been this sum which enabled Horace to purchase the post of *scriba quaestorius* mentioned in the Suetonian *Vita: uictisque partibus uenia impetrata scriptum quaestorium comparauit* (31). Horace never

(31) See C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: Epistles Book II*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 295 and Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 14-15 and, p. 295. Both are more dogmatic about Horace's duties and income than the meagre evidence warrants. C. Ampolo, *Q. Orazio Flacco scriba poeta in PP*

mentions a legacy but there is one intriguing passage in the Odes which may indicate one :

*uiuatur paruo bene, cui paternum
splendet in mensa tenui salinum
nec leuis somnos timor aut cupido
sordidus aufert* (C. 2. 16. 13-16)

Frugality (cf. *parua rura* in line 37) and untroubled sleep are such basic features of Horace's ideal life that one is tempted to identify this description as a self-portrait. If it is, it suggests that the inheritance was small⁽³²⁾.

But in *Epist.* 2. 2. 50-52 Horace plainly states that poverty drove him to write verses, which raises very difficult questions. How was writing verses lucrative and how much did Horace make? Any answers must be largely guesswork.

We really know nothing about the ways in which a writer made money out of patrons or booksellers in the Augustan period, but that great wealth could be attained is demonstrated by the case of Virgil, who could have bought up 25 knights at the time of his premature death⁽³³⁾. Horace chose not to include bills and receipts among his poems, in this respect perhaps following the Lesbian poets rather than, for example, Pindar, who occasionally gives hints of the commercial side of his craft, but we know that he was familiar with many eminent, influential, and rich men, so that we can fairly suppose that he had many patrons in addition to the most useful one, Maecenas, and the most powerful one, Augustus. That he fulfilled commissions is certain and that he set a very high value on his own work is explicitly stated in *C.* 4. 8. It seems probable that in later life Horace was either rich or in a position to become rich had he chosen to do so, but was he sufficiently well off in the 30s to buy a country estate?

As it happens, there are two indications of Horace's credit-worthiness in *Hoc erat in uotis* ... (*S.* 2. 6). One of them is well known whereas the other has, I think, been overlooked. Horace's remark about attending the games in Maecenas' company (line 48) implies that he was entitled to sit in the rows

216 (1984), p. 193-196, argues that Horace was not a quaestorial *scriba* but a *scriba* in the *collegium poetarum*, which goes too far in another direction.

(32) In *C.* 4. 11. 6 Horace's house, which is prepared for a party to celebrate Maecenas' birthday, *ridet argento*, but by then Horace had made his fortune. The *paternum salinum* probably gave rise to the allegation in the *Vita* that Horace's father was a *salsamentarius*.

(33) A useful, if wide-ranging, account of patronage and the poets is provided by P. White, *Amicitia and the profession of poetry in early imperial Rome*, in *JRS* 68 (1978), p. 74-92. Later studies have nothing substantial to add which is relevant to Horace.

reserved for those of equestrian status. This detail, together with the reference to Horace's *anulus equestris* in *S.* 2. 7. 53, is prime evidence for the case that Horace was an *eques*⁽³⁴⁾. Support for the theory is provided, I suggest, by lines 6-7 of *S.* 2. 6: *si neque maiorem feci ratione mala rem / nec sum facturus uitio culpaue minorem*. To qualify as a knight it was not enough to satisfy property requirements; respectability was also necessary. On the other hand a knight could lose his status by extravagance or profligacy. The two lines fit those rules admirably.

If Horace was already a knight (whether his rank was restored or newly acquired) when he came into possession of the Sabine farm, it is probable that he could have bought it himself.

The argument can, of course, be reversed by claiming that the acquisition of the estate transformed Horace's economic position and enabled him to become an *eques*. We have no means of accurately computing the size and value of the *fundus Sabinus* and the possibility exists that it was commensurate with the demands of the equestrian census. It must be conceded that, although it seems probable that Horace was an *eques* before he became owner of the estate, absolute proof is unattainable. On the other hand there is good evidence that for some years before we hear of the farm he was making money both from his office as *scriba* and from "making verses" (*Epist.* 2. 2. 51-52)⁽³⁵⁾.

In this article I have questioned the validity of the long-cherished surmise that Maecenas gave Horace his Sabine farm, and I have put forward another hypothesis. If it gains little favour it may still have been useful to point out that the traditional view is merely a supposition and not the established fact which it has so often been represented to be. Where we are ignorant, scepticism is preferable to presumption.

Ultimately does it matter whether Horace was given the Sabine farm by Maecenas or bought it with his own fortune which Maecenas helped to

(34) The case was made by L. R. Taylor, *Horace's equestrian career* in *AJP* 46 (1925), p. 161-170 and *Republican and Augustan writers enrolled in the equestrian centuries* in *TAPA* 99 (1968), p. 469-486. In addition to the evidence assembled by Miss Taylor might be mentioned *Epist.* 1. 1. 57-59, where the man who is a few thousand short of the 400 is told *plebs eris*. Horace certainly did not regard himself as "plebs": cf. *Epist.* 1. 7. 35 and 1. 19. 37.

(35) C. O. Brink, *op. cit.* n. 31, *ad loc.*, claims that Horace's real livelihood came from the valuable official appointment, which he jokingly concealed here in order to make a covert reference to Maecenas' patronage. But by the time Horace wrote this epistle he was one of the most eminent and successful men in Rome and he owed that position, not to having been a *scriba*, but to poetry, so it was natural for him to mention the latter not the former, especially in a context where he is writing wryly about his poetic motivation.

found? It matters if what is merely possible is taken as certainty; if passages and poems are interpreted to accord with an assertion which is questionable; if Horace is judged to be dependent where he was independent⁽³⁶⁾.

When the Sabine farm is regarded, not as a present from Maecenas, but as a retreat and alternative home which Horace chose for himself, the emphasis is altered in a number of poems and passages. But Maecenas' importance as Horace's *praesidium et dulce decus* (C. 1. 1. 2) is not thereby diminished because it is plain that Maecenas' chief gift to Horace was status. By making Horace his *amicus* Maecenas admitted him to the highest stratum of Roman society. Once securely established in that position Horace was his own man.

Horace wrote much in praise of his patron, but he also wrote a great deal about his determination to live his own life in the manner and location of his choice. It is a pleasant irony that in a time and space far greater than he ever envisaged Horace proved to be the great patron and Maecenas the fortunate recipient of a priceless gift — immortality⁽³⁷⁾.

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(36) For temperate views of Horace's dependence on Maecenas see A. Dalzell, *Maecenas and the Poets* in *Phoenix* 10 (1956), p. 151-162 and K. J. Reckford, *Horace and Maecenas* in *TAPA* 90 (1959), p. 195-208.

(37) It is due to Horace more than to any other writer that the fame of Maecenas still flourishes, and his name is one of the very few personal names which have for honourable reasons become embedded in the languages of Europe, as any standard dictionary demonstrates.

Pallida Mors and Broken Promises : Convention in Horace, *Odes* I.4

Critics have generally regarded the Sestius ode as weaker than other Horatian odes on nature, especially those that have a fuller treatment of the seasons, in particular *Odes* I.9 and IV.7. Commager, for example, believes that Horace intends "nothing more than the familiar correspondence between nature's cycle and man's life"⁽¹⁾. For him, the poem is relatively simple. The presence of *Pallida Mors* in I.4, however, has troubled major critics since Landor. In Landor's opinion *Odes* I.4 is flawed by an illogical culmination, the shocking entrance of *Pallida Mors*; he sees *Mors* as inappropriate in an encomium to springtime. Subsequent criticism, including the recent commentary of Quinn⁽²⁾, has tended to accept *Mors* as an imagistic accompaniment to the *carpe diem* theme, and, therefore, a reinforcement of the ode's basic cohesion. In this reading, *Mors* intrudes into human life in the way that winter encroaches upon spring in the poem; such a view builds upon Fraenkel's recognition of the Death goddess as "Spring's dark foil"⁽³⁾. Nevertheless, he considers I.4 as a light piece because wine and sex, symbols of spring, are offered to Sestius as compensation for the grim reality foreshadowed in the poem. Recently, the relation of *Pallida Mors* to the springtime imagery in I.4 has received additional attention, with some scholars sensing a more complicated structure and meaning to the poem than has, hitherto, been recognized.

Heeding the warning of Rudd not to reverse a poem's literal statement without marshalling sufficient evidence to do so, Woodman detects an important paradox in the transference to the spring landscape of metaphors and diction associated with constraint⁽⁴⁾. The language of the ode suggests

We wish to thank Alison Coleman for her insight into the binding imagery of *Odes* I.4.

(1) S. Commager, *The Odes of Horace* (Yale 1962), 268.

(2) K. Quinn, *Horace: The Odes* (London 1980), 127.

(3) E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957), 420.

(4) N. Rudd, "Patterns in Horatian Lyric," *AJPh* 81 (1960), 374; A. J. Woodman, "Horace's *Odes Diffugere nives* and *Solvitur acris hiems*," *Latomus* 31 (1972), 768 ff. Woodman's paper establishes a method of examining the traditional material in the poem, and questions assessments of its simplicity. We are indebted to his analysis.



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