







## THE COMPLETE ODES AND EPODES

ADVISORY EDITOR: BETTY RADICE

QUINTUS HORATIUS FLACCUS was born in late 65 B.C. at Venusia in Apulia. His father, though once a slave, had made enough money as an auctioneer to send his son to well-known teachers in Rome and subsequently to the university at Athens. There Horace joined Brutus's army and served on his staff until the defeat at Philippi in 42 B.C. On returning to Rome, he found that his father was dead and his property had been confiscated, but he succeeded in obtaining a secretarial post in the treasury, which gave him enough to live on. The poetry he wrote in the next few years impressed Virgil, who introduced him to the great patron Maecenas in 38 B.C. This event marked the beginning of a life-long friendship. From now on Horace had no financial worries; he moved freely among the leading poets and statesmen of Rome; his work was admired by Augustus, and indeed after Virgil's death in 19 B.C. he was virtually Poet Laureate. Horace died in 8 B.C., only a few months after Maecenas.

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BETTY RADICE read classics at Oxford, then married and, in the intervals of bringing up a family, tutored in classics, philosophy and English. She became joint editor of the Penguin Classics in 1964. As well as editing the translation of Livy's *The War with Hannibal* she translated Livy's *Rome and Italy*, the Latin comedies of Terence, Pliny's *Letters*, Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* and *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* for the Penguin Classics. She edited and introduced Edward Gibbon's *Memoirs of My Life* for the Penguin English Library, edited and annotated her translation of the younger Pliny's works for the Loeb Library of Classics, and translated from Italian, Renaissance Latin and Greek for the Officina Bodoni of Verona. She collaborated as a translator in the Collected Works of Erasmus in preparation by the University of Toronto, edited an eight-volume production of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* for the Folio Society, and compiled the Penguin Reference Book *Who's Who in the Ancient World*. Betty Radice, who was an honorary fellow of St Hilda's College, Oxford, and a vice-president of the Classical Association, died in 1985.

# HORACE

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## The Complete Odes and Epodes with the Centennial Hymn

TRANSLATED, WITH NOTES, BY W. G. SHEPHERD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY BETTY RADICE

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*For Michael Benson and Peter Whigham*

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# INTRODUCTION

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It is unfashionable today to look into a poet's background to gain a better appreciation of his poetry; and yet such places as Rydal Water, Laugharne, the Lincolnshire wolds, and Oxford – still branchy between towers in spite of an increasingly base and brickish skirt – gave something to their poets to carry through life and to influence their writing. The difficulty with the poets of ancient Greece and Rome is that, more often than not, we simply do not know enough about them as individuals to be able to guess at the influences at work on them, possibly because they chose to tell us little or nothing. *Sulmo mihi patria est*, wrote Ovid, and his statue stands in modern Sulmona; but Rome, not the Abruzzi, was his spiritual home. Juvenal too was evidently quick to leave his native Aquinum in Volscian country for all that Rome could offer him. Mantuan Virgil is, of course, one exception; another is Horace, about whom we know a good deal. Horace enjoyed writing about himself, either quite factually in his longer conversational poems, or in teasing hints in his lyric odes. Three places move in and out of his poetry: the small provincial town in southern Italy where he spent his early childhood; Rome at a time of political upheaval and literary activity; and his refuge from the pressures of urban life – the villa and small farm he owned in the pleasantly wooded Sabine hills not far from modern Tivoli.

Horace fixes the date of his birth himself in addressing his faithful wine-jar 'that was born like me when Manlius was consul' (III.21). Lucius Manlius Torquatus and Lucius Cotta were consuls in 66–65 B.C. The *Life of Horace* which Suetonius included in his biographies of the poets adds the day: 8 December.<sup>1</sup> His father was a freed slave who had worked as a *coactor*, an auctioneer's broker or assistant, and retired to Venusia (Venosa), a small settlement of ex-soldiers in Apulia down near the heel of Italy. Like many of us lucky enough to be born in a region of character, Horace never lost the feeling that this was where he belonged. He is 'a son of Lucania – or is it Apulia? For the settler at Venusia ploughs on the border of both' (*Satires* II. 1.34–5).<sup>2</sup> There the 'familiar hills' of Apulia are 'scorched as usual by the Scirocco which Horace calls by its regional name, Atabulus (*Satires* I.5.77–8); there he was 'born by sounding Aufidus' (IV.9.2), the river Ofanto, which provides the powerful simile of *Odes* IV. 14.25–8:

As bullish Aufidus rolls on,  
flowing by the realms of Apulian Daunus,  
and rages and threatens the cultivated fields  
with horrifying floods...

One of his grand Pindaric odes (111.4) moves straight from an invocation of the Muse Calliope to the poet's childhood in the Muses' special care:

On pathless Vultur, beyond the threshold  
of my nurse Apulia, when I was exhausted  
with play and oppressed with sleep,  
legendary wood-doves once wove for me

new-fallen leaves, to be  
a marvel to all who lodge in lofty

As Fraenkel remarks (*Horace*, p. 274), the three townlets named were 'presumably unknown to anyone who had not lived in that far-off part of Italy'. And in the coda to *Odes I* his confidence in his 'monument more lasting than bronze' shows him as a prophet expecting honour in his own country:

Where churning Aufidus resounds, where Daunus  
poor in water governed his rustic people,  
I shall be spoken of as one who was princely  
though of humble birth, the first to have brought  
Greek song into Latin numbers.

Horace mentions no other relative, not even his mother, but in *Satires* 1.6 he pays tribute, in terms both affectionate and unsentimental, to his father, who thought the local school not good enough for his gifted son, and evidently wanted to remove him from the snobbery of the freeborn centurions' sons:

He was a poor man with a few scraggy acres, yet he wouldn't send me to Flavius' school where the important boys, the sons of important sergeant-majors, used to go, with satchel and slate swinging from the left arm, clutching their tenpenny fee on the Ides of every month. Instead he courageously took his boy to Rome...

Horace writes with feeling; here perhaps is a childhood humiliation remembered over the years.

In Rome he had the best teachers, including Orbilius, who thrashed Livius Andronicus' Latin version of the *Odyssey* into his pupils, unaware that he would be immortalized as *plagosus* (*Epistles* II.1.70). He would also study rhetoric and Greek, which as a southern Italian he must have known to some extent already. Again he writes affectionately of the father who escorted him through the streets as his *paedagogus*, taking the opportunity to point out as warnings or examples the persons they met. 'And so he would talk my young character into shape' (*Satires* 1.4.120), and awake the boy's interest in the quirks of human nature that he retained for life. After school came a university education, which for young Romans meant Athens:

I had the luck to be raised in Rome, where I learned from my teacher  
how much harm was done to the Greeks by the wrath of Achilles.  
A little more was added in the way of a liberal training  
by Athens; there I was keen to distinguish straight from crooked  
and to go in search of truth among the Academy's trees.

(*Epistles* II.2.41–5)

All this ended after Julius Caesar was murdered in March 44 B.C. At the end of August Brutus arrived in Athens. There, says Plutarch (*Brutus*, 24), he attended lectures at the Academy, discussed philosophy, 'and appeared to be completely engrossed in literary pursuits. But all this while, without anyone suspecting it, he was making preparations for war... and at the same time he rallied to his cause all the young Romans who were studying in Athens.' One of them was Horace, aged not quite twenty-one, and for the first time not

under the watchful eye of his father. There is no suggestion that, like Cicero's son, he had a strong political feeling against tyranny; he is more likely to have joined Brutus on romantic impulse or simply to go along with his fellow-students. He followed his hero to Asia Minor, and by the time of the fighting at Philippi he had been made a military tribune – one of six young officers in temporary command of a legion, as an emergency measure in the battle – despite his humble origins and lack of experience. At the second battle, in November 42 B.C., Brutus was defeated and killed himself, and Horace fled with the remnants of the army. He says nothing of how he escaped, only that he threw away his shield. If that is literally meant it would be practical, for a shield could only slow down a man running for his life; but it would be recognized by any educated audience of his poetry as a familiar motif. The Greek lyric poet's, Archilochus, Alcaeus and possibly Anacreon, had all said the same of themselves.

The shield discarded is a symbol of cowardice, and it marks something which Horace might well have put aside as part of a youthful episode in his life which was best forgotten. Instead his failure on the losing side and his loyalty to the leaders (who were defeated but held to the ideals they fought for) keeps recurring; for instance, he never loses his admiration for Cato. The defeat at Philippi in a sense marks the end of Horace's youth; the army of Brutus and Cassius was the last to fight with liberty as its cause. It is touched on like a raw nerve in a brief mention in line 25 of III.4 ('the broken line at Philippi'), and prompts one of the most delicately tactful of the Odes (II.7), the welcome to an unknown friend who had not fled from the battlefield but retained his loyalty to the lost republican cause and gone on to fight for Pompey's nephew, Sextus Pompeius:

O my friend and oldest comrade...

... so often led with me  
into extremity by our general  
Brutus; who has restored you  
to citizenship, your native

Gods and Italian skies? With you I knew  
the rout at Philippi and my shield,  
to my shame, left behind  
where manhood failed and words

were eaten. Luckily Mercury  
bore me away, in my fright, in a cloud:  
but the undertow sucked you back  
to the weltering straits of war.

The mock-heroic reference to his rescue by Mercury, in the style of a Homeric hero, is wholly characteristic of Horace's ironic self-depreciation; but it does not mask the sense of personal inadequacy revived by thoughts of Philippi.

Once back in Italy, with his wings clipped, as he says himself (*Epistles* 11.2.50), his father apparently dead, and his modest patrimony of house and farmland in Venusia confiscated, Horace took to writing verse to make a living, or rather to invite a patron to support him. More solid remuneration came from the post he obtained after the amnesty of 39 B.C. From the Suetonian *Life* we know that he became a clerk to the quaestors in the Treasury, which

was also a record office, where State documents were copied and stored. The work may not have been arduous and could have been delegated; he seems still to have been holding it several years later, when *Satires* II.6 was written.

His position was radically changed when Maecenas, a wealthy, cultivated *equus* and personal adviser to the emperor, offered him patronage on the recommendation of the poets Virgil and Varius, and presented him with an estate and farm in the Sabine hills, in the valley of the Digentia (now Licenza), some fourteen miles beyond Tibur (Tivoli) <sup>3</sup> :

This is what I prayed for. A piece of land – not so very big, with a garden and, near the house, a spring that never fails, and a bit of wood to round it off. All this and more the gods have granted.

(*Satires* II.6.1–4)

In about 35 B.C. he published his first book often *Satires*, *saturae* or miscellanies, for which the model was the Roman Gaius Lucilius, the metre that of the standard Latin hexameter, and the subject the faults and follies of man. Horace himself refers to them as *sermones* – a term which aptly describes their easy conversational flow. All ten poems are dedicated to Maecenas, and are presumably the ones chosen for publication out of a wider range of *sermones* which had been made known by public readings; *Satires* 1.4 is written in self-defence against accusations of personal malice and suggests that Horace was already known for this kind of verse.

At the same time he must have been working on the early *Epodes*; a collection of seventeen was published in 31 B.C. The name is Greek, derived from *epōdos stichos*, the shorter line of an iambic couplet. Horace always calls them his *iambi*.

I was the first to show

the iambics of Paros to Latium, keeping Archilochus' rhythms and fire, but not his themes or the words which hunted Lycambes.

(*Epistles* I.19.23–5)

Here Horace is claiming (as he is later to claim for the greater metrical variety of the *Odes*) that he is introducing something quite new into Latin verse, namely the iambic metre of Archilochus of Paros. There is too little surviving of Archilochus' poetry for us to make a fair comparison: Fraenkel (p.27 ff.) quotes a passage as a source for the tenth epode only to show the difference between its fierce invective and Horace's literary adaptation, which was not directed against any unfortunate Lycambes. This is not unlike his extended use of Lucilius as a model for the *Satires*. Possibly Horace's debt is no greater than that of Virgil to Theocritus in his pastoral poems; the tone can often be more like that of Hellenistic epigram.

The ten years between Philippi and Actium had been politically disturbed; first by the proscriptions of republicans, the last fling of the army at Utica, and the continued resistance of Sextus Pompeius, who was not finally defeated until 36 B.C.; and then by the growing tension between Octavian and Mark Antony which culminated in open rupture in 32 and declaration of war on Egypt, and ended with the victory at Actium (in 31 B.C.) and the capture of Alexandria. Some of the *Epodes* reflect these troubled times. Epode 7, on the suicidal civil wars in Rome, was probably written between 38 and 36; 16, perhaps Horace's first wholly serious poem, was inspired either by, the Perusine War of 41 or, more probably, by a

renewed outbreak of war with Sextus Pompeius in 38; for the first time Horace speaks of himself as an inspired prophet, a *vates* haranguing an imagined assembly of the Roman people and urging them to escape to the mythical Islands of the Blest. His vision owes something to Virgil's fourth Eclogue, already published in 40, and the description of the toil-free bounty of nature is rich in loving detail:

where every year the earth, untilled, yields corn;  
and the vines, unpruned, forever bloom;  
and the never failing sprigs of olive bud;  
and dusky figs adorn their trees;  
and honey drips from the hollow oak; and the stream  
with plashing feet leaps lightly down from the lofty crag...

Epodes 1 and 9 are both addressed to Maecenas, the first reflecting Horace's anxiety and devotion to his friend about to take part in the engagement at Actium, the other evidently written when reports of the sea-battle and Cleopatra's defeat were encouraging but victory was not yet certain. It is interesting here to see Horace ignoring possible criticism. By the time the Epodes were published it was common knowledge that Maecenas did not, after all, join Octavian on this historic occasion.

Yet we may wonder how far Horace's deeper feelings were involved in several of these poems. We cannot expect the youthful intensity of Catullus; at thirty-four Horace was no angry young man – he was securely settled under a wealthy and sympathetic patron, and the author of a successful book published some four years previously. Very few of the Epodes can be dated, and the majority offer wit and elegance rather than personal sentiment: the diatribe against garlic (3); the attack on the swaggering upstart (4); the 'cowardly cur' (6); the harsh ill-wishes (10) to the Maeuius who may be the poetaster of Virgil's *Eclogues* 3.90, and for which the Greek model referred to above marks the contrast between its own fierce personal note and Horace's professional expertise. Two brutally obscene taunts (8 and 12) are directed against ageing women still looking for lovers – a standard theme in antiquity. The late epode 14 is no more than a graceful apology to Maecenas for the book's being behind schedule because of a love-affair with 'the promiscuous ex-slave Phryne', but, in 11, the feeling 'sound and genuine, a vivid picture of the misery, helplessness and loss of self-respect that may torment the lover'.<sup>4</sup> The Neaera of 15 is presumably a pseudonym, following the convention Horace will adopt throughout the Odes, but there is more raw emotion here than Horace will often allow himself to show – no urbanity or ironic detachment, only a bitter jealousy which might be voiced by Catullus or Propertius:

– And you, whoever you are, who amble  
happy and proud in my misfortune,  
though perhaps you are rich in flocks  
and land and Pactolus flows for you alone  
and Pythagoras' reincarnations pose  
no problems for you and your beauty  
surpasses that of Nireus, alas,  
you shall bewail her favours transferred  
to another, and I shall laugh last.

One name stands out as a personality: the witch Canidia is a fearsome figure. She is named in epode 3 and vividly portrayed and cursed by her child victim in 5, while in 17 she is treated to an ironic recantation by the poet, to which she replies with unrelenting fury. Canidia (with her ally Sagana) appears in the graveyard orgies of *Satires* I.8, and is named as a poisoner in *Satires* II. I.48 and in the final line of II.8 ('Canidia, whose breath is more deadly than an African snake's'). She is identified by the scholiast Porphyrio as Gratidia, a Neapolitan sorceress and poisoner. This cannot be confirmed, but the way in which she haunts Horace's earlier poems suggests that she has some basis in reality.

The eight *sermones* of Book II of the *Satires* were published at about the same time, in 30 B.C., and after that Horace moved away from the genre of social commentary into what was to establish him as a lyric poet. Three books of *carmina*, eighty-eight lyric poems of widely varying style and length, appeared only seven years later; some of them must have been written while he was completing the *Epodes*. Indeed, there are two poems in the early collection which point so clearly forward that they cannot be classed as experimental. Epode 2 dwells on the simple life of the farmer in nostalgic detail – for farming was not really like that in Horace's own day – a theme which will often recur with the same delicate sentiment. It should not seem false here because of the mocking irony of the last five lines which bring us down to earth before we can float away into rosy sentimentality:

– Thus Alfius, a moneylender,  
on the point of turning farmer:  
he called in all his capital  
on the Ides, and on the Kalends  
he's busily loaning it out again.

This was a device copied from Archilochus. The change of mood is very Horatian, as is the withholding of the true identity of the speaker until the end. Finally, epode 13 is close in spirit to *Odes* I.9, where 'A violent tempest narrows the heaven' or 'the trees cannot bear/their loads and bitter frosts/have paralysed the streams'. The poet tells us to shut out our cares with the comfort of good wine by a blazing fire. Then we are lifted into the wider context of the heroic age by the centaur Chiron singing of 'wine and song,/sweet ministratio to ugly hurts', to Achilles, mortal son of an immortal mother, who cannot escape his destiny and will not live to return home. In such a context Lord Lytton wrote:

When a proper name is thus used – a proper name suggesting of itself almost insensibly to the mind the poetic associations which belong to the name – the idea is enlarged from a simple to a complex idea, adorned with delicate enrichments, and opening into many dim recesses of imagination.<sup>5</sup>

The first three books of the *Odes* are so richly varied in style and subject that they are difficult to classify. They are not arranged either by theme or chronology, the *persona* of the poet or the interests of the patron, though they start with an address to Maecenas ('descend from olden kings,/my rampart and sweet admiration') and end with a similar address in III.29 (III.30 being the coda to the whole collection).

In the first poem Horace sets himself above ordinary men by his devotion to the Muses:

and should you list me among the lyric bards  
I shall nudge the stars with my lifted head.

In the coda he celebrates his achievement as the first to introduce Greek metres into Latin verse. He was not literally the first. Ennius had adapted the Greek hexameter to early accentual Latin; the dramatists Plautus and Terence had taken the iambics of Greek New Comedy for their model, and Terence claimed creative originality in doing so; two of Catullus' extant poems (11 and 51) are closely imitative of Sappho. But just as Horace had re-created the iambics of Archilochus in the Epodes, he now extended his range to the elaborate metres of the lyric poets of Lesbos, Alcaeus and Sappho; to Anacreon, Simonides and Stesichorus, and to the Hellenistic poets who in their turn had been influenced by the early lyricists. For his lofty poetic themes he looked to Bacchylides and Pindar. But Horace is no slavish imitator. His complex measures are creative modifications of his equally complex Greek models in order to suit the Latin language, and his mastery of his technique is complete. His pride in this, shown too in *Epistles* I:19, is very proper in a great poet who knows his capabilities.

What survives of Greek lyric poetry is sadly fragmentary, so that its influence on Horace cannot be as closely traced as one would like. Sometimes light is thrown on a puzzling poem by analogy with a known fragment: I.28, for instance, where it is a surprise to find half-way through that the dead mathematician Archytas is addressed by a drowned sailor, is paralleled by passages from Simonides of Ceos.<sup>6</sup> In III.4 the Muse is hailed in terms used by Pindar in *Pythians* I.1. On the other hand, the scholiast Porphyrio says explicitly that 1.27 is taken from Anacreon's third book, but the surviving fragments of this (43D) are in a different metre, and the connection is probably no more than that of the plea for less riotous behaviour in Horace's first two stanzas. It would have been impossible anyway for Horace to have re-created the atmosphere of the Greek lyricists. Alcaeus and Sappho write very personally, Alcaeus in particular as an aristocratic opponent of the reigning tyrants of Lesbos. Their poems were sung to the lyre, while for Horace the lyre is a poetic convention. Their audiences were limited to a small social circle, and through their poetry they spoke in their own voices. So too did Catullus speak, and even more so Virgil and Lucretius, with single-minded purpose.

But Horace offers an elusive variety by assuming a wide range of poetic *personae*. He can speak now as the Muses' priest, the inspired follower of Bacchus, the immortal bard, and then be gently chiding some wayward girl in almost avuncular terms; he is the wryly humorous man of forty of whom lovers need not be jealous, and then he is himself a lover locked out. Sometimes he seriously attacks the social evils and insecurity of his times, the decay of family life, the overspending and overbuilding, and then he escapes to his country retreat to enjoy the good things of life – while they last, for his mood quickly shifts to the inevitability of approaching death. He is at once the loyal friend to the companions of his republican youth, the grateful admirer of Maecenas and Agrippa, the supporter of Augustus' measures to restore political stability to Rome, and the self-sufficient individualist who can still enjoy taking part in a simple rustic festival for the gods of rural Italy.

As with the *personae*, so with the localities from which Horace addresses his audience. In some of the Odes we are firmly in Rome, addressing individual Romans, as in the Satires; we see the wealthy building their grand houses in the City or their villas at Baiae, the drinking parties and the young men riding in the Campus Martius or swimming in the Tiber, the girls peeping out of doorways, and the 'lonely crone in an alley'. More often the scene moves to

Tibur or the Sabine farm with all the pleasures of the simple life. But frequently the poems are not localized at all: Greek and Roman elements are interwoven as are Greek and Roman proper names, and this has the liberating effect of taking the poem out of a factual context into a commentary on the human condition. Indeed, perhaps too much editorial effort has been applied to pinpointing a time and place. Take the famous I.9 ('See how Soracte stands deep/in dazzling snow...'); for Wilkinson (p. 130), Mount Soracte is local colour and the whole scene symbolic of old age. For Fraenkel (p. 176) the poem 'is dear to many of us primarily because it reminds us of the days when, either from a *terrazzo* on the roof of one of the tall and weathered houses off the Corso or from the height of the Gianicolo, we gazed at the queer silhouette which the isolated sharp peak of Monte Soratte forms against the northern horizon'. For West (p.6) the scene is set at Thaliarchus' home somewhere in the country from where Soracte can be seen in the near distance. Fraenkel finds that the combination of a wintry beginning (based on Alcaeus) and a summery ending means that the poem 'falls short of the perfection reached by Horace in many of his odes'. Yet others can see the perfect link in 'this is your green time, not your white/and morose' – salad days for the enjoyment of summer nights; and Wilkinson is surely right when he sees how the third stanza unites the poem 'if we feel the storm to be the storm of life, and the calm the calm of death'.

Horace also makes use of mythology to establish an individual ode in a general context. The 'grey wolf loping down from Lanuvium' on the Appian Way gives a Roman setting to Galatea's impending journey across the stormy Adriatic in III.27, but what remains with the reader is the transfer to a grand-style treatment of Europa's destined journey with Jove. In III. 11 Mercury is asked to bring all his persuasive powers to bear on Lyde – powers which can comfort even the Danaids in hell, so that mention of their name carries us on to the noble refusal of Hypermnestra. (See Lord Lytton's comment quoted on pp. 17–18.) History is freely used in the same way, the expanded episode being either from the distant past (Regulus and the quiet heroism of his self-sacrifice in III.5) or one taken from the recent political turmoil. Thus in 1.37 ('Friends, now is the time to drink') the celebration of the victory of Actium is less important than Cleopatra's fortitude:

resolved for death, she was brave indeed.  
She was no docile woman but truly scorned  
to be taken away in her enemy's ships,  
deposed, to an overweening Triumph.

Though it is so hard to fit the Odes into categories, there are about twenty in Books I to III which can be called symposium (drinking-party) poems, on the Greek model; here too their originality and often their depth rest on Horace's expanded treatment of the type. The girls are always Greek, while the young men may be Greek or Roman; rustic festivals are likely to be Italian, and the gods have Greek attributes. Only rarely is an actual drinking-party taking place, and the wine may be Greek ('of Lesbos' in I.17) or Roman, 'put up to bask in smoke' from Horace's own vintage (III.8), in Greek jars, 'a modest Sabine wine', no choice Caecuban or Falernian (1.20). Often the symposium features only in the initial request to a girl to make preparations or to a friend to accept an invitation, before the poem moves on to its true purpose. One ode (III.29) opens with a plea to Maecenas to leave the crowds and smoke of Rome in the unhealthy season and shed his cares of State for 'a jar of smooth wine as yet untilted', but the real message is that

Wisely the God enwraps in fuliginous night

the future's outcome, and laughs

---

if mortals are anxious beyond mortality's

bound...

The future may be stormy, but the self-sufficient man may enjoy the present and say,

'I have lived: tomorrow the Father

may fill the vault with dark clouds

or brilliant sunlight, but he will not render

the past invalid, will not re-shape

and make undone whatever

the fleeting hour has brought.'

He can easily dispense with Fortune's gifts and 'pay court to honest Poverty'; not for him to risk his life at sea for valuable cargo – he takes to his dinghy before the storm. Here, as in similar poems, Horace neatly sums up his whole philosophy of life.

The Greek form of prayer or invocation was also adapted by Horace for his purposes. He variously addresses Apollo, Diana, Venus, Mercury, the Muses Clio, Calliope and Melpomene, Fortune, Bacchus and Faunus, often only to move into an unlocalized scene or sentiment which may be lightly felt or deeply serious. He calls on objects which range from the lyre of Alcaeus, dedicated to Apollo (I.32), and the ship (I.14) which is symbolic of the ship of State (an image taken from Alcaeus), and perhaps reflects the political uncertainty which was not wholly removed by the victory of Actium, down to a wine-jar to be broached (III.21) and the notorious tree of II.13 which fell and narrowly missed him. Persons named may be little more than pegs on which to hang great poems – who cares now for Postumus as the poem develops, though his name is reiterated in the first line of II.14?

Earth, home and kindly wife

must be left, nor will any of the trees

you foster, except the unloved cypress,

follow their brief master.

So too with Sallustius Crispus (II.2), Iccius (I.29), Sestius when 'Sharp winter thaws for the spring and West-Wind', in I.4, and Dellius in II.3, since:

All are thus compelled;

early or late the urn is shaken;

fate will out; a little boat

shall take us to eternal exile.

As for the girls who flit through the poems, rarely repeated and barely differentiated – Chloe, Galatea, Glycera, Lalage, Lyce, Lyde, Lydia, Myrtale, Pyrrha and Tyndaris, to name a selection – if these are Horace's loves, his attitude towards them would usually seem to involve nothing more profound or disturbing than a gently teasing affection. These docile, often silly young things are treated tenderly but never over-sentimentally, much as the innocent sacrificial victims of whom Horace writes with a kind of sympathy – the young boar 'practising sidelong thrusts' in III.22, the white-marked calf in IV.2, and the touching young

## kid of III.13:

---

a little goat  
whose forehead bumpy with budding  
  
horns prognosticates love and war –  
in vain: the kidling of wanton herds  
shall dye with his scarlet blood  
your icy streams.

Yet Horace can so quickly sheer away into irony and self-parody that it is hard to be sure. Pyrrha, in that much-translated ode I.5, appears to some to have had a real hold on Horace's affections, so that his relief at his escape is genuine; others find the charm of this fine-wrought little poem to lie in its detachment and irony. It is one of the paradoxes of Horace that this most elusive of poets gives rise to a conflict of opinions which are so definitely and personally held. But Lyce in III. 10 (who may or may not be the 'aged crow' of IV. 13) is certainly no docile victim, and Horace speaks here in a voice helpless with male frustration. The 'I' who 'will not always tolerate sky, and rain, and doorstep' is not to be taken as Horace himself, but the feeling of powerless subjection throughout the poem is real enough.

The only woman of whom Horace writes differently here (Cinara is not mentioned yet) is the 'lady Licymnia' of II.12. The name is a pseudonym (Horace never names a Roman lady and *domina* implies a wife); the scholiast Porphyrio says that she was Terentia, wife of Maecenas and half-sister to the consul Terentius Varro Murena. For her Horace writes one of his best poems, one of great delicacy and respect. And of course he has his real friends, men of whom or to whom he writes with warm affection: Maecenas, 'the half of my heart', to whom he swore in II.17:

I have taken  
no false oath: we shall go, we shall go,  
whenever you lead the way, comrades prepared  
to take the last journey together.

The poet Virgil too, in I.3, is 'the half of my soul'; Pompeius is his 'friend and oldest comrade at Philippi; the poet Quintilius Varus, contemporaries such as Aelius Lamia (I.36) and the unknown Valgius of II.9, are all treated as personal friends.

Horace describes himself as an Epicurean in the much-quoted lines which end *Epistles* I.4:

Come and see me when you want a laugh. I'm fat and sleek, in prime condition, a porker from Epicurus' herd.

His early scepticism, not unlike that of Lucretius, is shown in his amusement at a temple miracle on the famous journey to Brundisium in *Satires* 1.5.100–104:

Apella the Jew may believe it – not me, for I have learned that the gods live a life of calm, and that if nature performs a miracle, it's not sent down by the gods in anger from their high home in the sky.

The philosophy would suit his need for detachment and enjoyment of the simple pleasures of the day, though he shows no deeper interest in Epicurean teaching; and he combines his scepticism with an apparent acceptance of the Olympian gods as great poetic figures, and with an affection for unsophisticated ritual in a country setting, comparable with an

unbeliever's pleasure in the Christmas story or evensong in a village church.<sup>7</sup> So at the Faunalia in III.18:

---

The whole flock plays on the grassy plain  
when the Nones of December come round;  
in the fields the parish and its idle cattle  
make their holiday;

the wolf now roams among fearless lambs;  
for you the wild-wood sheds its leaves;  
and the ditch-digger loves to tread his opponent  
earth in three-four time.

As always, his irony makes it difficult to know when he is serious. I.34 ('A parsimonious and infrequent worshipper') can hardly be taken' as a conversion, and quickly passes on to the capriciousness of Fortune. But in areas where he is totally committed there is no understatement, no teasing vanishing trick, no *persona* lightly assumed and tossed aside. He is very conscious of his vocation as a poet, and has a real sense of being under divine protection. The Bacchic and Dionysian odes on the poet's inspiration show genuine ecstasy (II.19, 11.20 and, as follows, III.25):

O master of the Naiads  
and Bacchanalians strong to uproot the princely ash,  
I shall utter nothing  
insignificant, lowly or not immortal. Sweet the risk,  
Lenaeon, to follow the God,  
crowning one's brows with sprouting vine leaves.

Poems which celebrate the liberating influence of god-given wine are also written with sure simplicity; in III.21:

you bring back hope to despairing minds;  
add spirit and strength to the poor,  
who after you tremble neither at the crowns  
of angry kings nor at the soldiery's weapons.

Often his need to disengage himself from what he sees as corruptive influences on mankind, and his enjoyment of immediate pleasures are set against his acute awareness of life's uncertainties and of the inexorable advance of death which is the end of all; thus II.18:

What more can you need? Earth  
opens impartially for paupers  
and the sons of kings, and Charon could not  
be bribed to ferry back  
even resourceful Prometheus. He holds  
Tantalus and Tantalus'  
progeny, and whether or not invoked  
is alert to disburden  
the serf when his labour is done.

Horace was not by temperament melancholic, in the way Virgil was; but his sense of *lacrimae rerum* is no less poignant and profound because it is so simply, even baldly expressed by one who chose on the whole to smile – if wryly – at himself and the vanities of life. Any suggestion that because Horace was never openly anguished or resentful he was no more than a tubby little man fond of girls and good wine fails to see that no less than Marvell he felt at his own back Time's winged chariot hurrying near; and that he well understood how the poet's heightened awareness gives him the power – even the duty – to speak for the civilized values as he understands them.

Of course Horace was a Roman of his time, and as such accepted uncritically certain things which we find hard to take today: animal sacrifice, for instance, and the institution of slavery to provide him with girls for his entertainment, and labourers and managers for his farm. Still less could he escape the troubled period in which he lived; the Sabine farm was no ivory tower. Horace's most impressionable years had been lived during the tension and violence which followed the murder of Caesar, and that wise father of the Satires must also have remembered the earlier civil wars ending in the death of Pompey. The Epodes were marked off by the continuing insecurity after Actium, and several of the Odes – I.2, I.12 (prompted by the dynastic marriage of the young Marcellus and Augustus' daughter Julia) and I.14, with its sense of foreboding – arise out of the fear that after his victory Octavian (Augustus) would last no longer than his predecessors. In spite of Augustus' successes in Spain and Illyria, there is uncertainty on the frontiers – Tiridates in Parthia in 1.26 – and anxiety for Augustus in 1.35:

Preserve our Caesar, soon to go out  
against ultimate Britain; preserve our young  
recruits, soon to plant fear in Eastern  
realms and along the Arabian seaboard.

The horrors of civil war, the theme of II. 1, addressed to the historian Asinius Pollio, recur; and the repeated allusions to the evils of the getting and spending which wasted Rome's powers, along with the nostalgia for a happier society, all stem from Horace's longing for security.

In 28 B.C. Augustus embarked on a series of social reforms, mainly concerned with marriage and education, and in 27 he 'restored the Republic', claiming for his own authority no more than a tribune's powers as representative of the people. This is what is called the Augustan revival, for which Livy, Virgil and Horace were spokesmen; though Horace, as a native of a Hellenized south Italy, was perhaps never so wholehearted a 'Roman' as the others. It is easy now to be critical of one-man rule in the interests of efficiency and the domestic virtues; many of us have seen what price could be paid for making the trains run on time and supporting a doctrine of *Kinder, Kirche und Kirche*. Tacitus, writing over a century later, bitterly condemned the Augustan revolution for its destruction of liberty:

He seduced the army with bonuses, and his cheap food policy was a successful bait for civilians. Indeed, he attracted everybody's goodwill by the enjoyable gift of peace. Then he gradually pushed ahead and absorbed the functions of the senate, the officials, and even the law. Opposition did not exist. War or judicial murder had disposed of all men of spirit. Upper-class survivors found that slavish obedience was the way to succeed, both politically and financially. They had profited from the revolution, and so now they liked the security of the existing arrangement better than the dangerous uncertainties of the old regime.<sup>8</sup>

Horace was probably not very politically enthusiastic. For the Epicurean the dignity of office which Augustus was always trying to persuade his senators to assume (and which Maecenas consistently refused) was less important than the banishment of care; but a quiet simple life could be comfortably led only against a stable background. There are few specific references to Augustan reforms. 111.6 appears to refer to Augustus' programme to rebuild the temples and the hopes of checking the moral degeneracy of which Horace was always conscious, but the beauty of the poem lies in its backward glance:

... manly comrades, yeoman soldiers  
taught to turn the soil with Sabine hoes  
and carry cut firewood at a strict  
mother's bidding when the Sun

advanced the shadows of the hills  
and lifted the yokes from weary steers,  
his departing chariot leading in  
the hours of comfort.

And the link with Regulus as a symbol of Rome's heroic past, much as Livy saw it, is what gives III.5 its visionary breadth. It is customary to group as 'political odes', all written in the somewhat solemn Alcaic metre, the first six odes of Book III. These noble poems form Horace's main tribute to the new regime, inspired by the cautious hope that in the emperor's hands Rome would take a new turn. It is noticeable that he is not carried away – he never allows himself to call Augustus a god, only to *associate* him with the gods – but his sincerity in these grander, Pindaric measures is not to be doubted, even if he has won more affection through his personal lyrics.

When the Odes appeared in 23 B.C. they were poorly received. The depth of Horace's disappointment may be measured by the fact that he gave up writing lyrics for some six years and reverted to the smooth-flowing hexameters of the Satires in his conversational verse letters. A first book of these Epistles was brought out in 20–19 B.C. Horace addresses Maecenas in the first of the twenty poems (*Epistles* I. 1. 10–15):

So now I'm laying aside my verses and other amusements.  
My sole concern is the question 'What is right and proper?'  
I'm carefully storing things for use in the days ahead.  
In case you wonder whom I follow and where I'm residing,  
I don't feel bound to swear obedience to any master.  
Where the storm drives me I put ashore and look for shelter.

So his intention was to withdraw from the urban rat-race and seek contentment in his ideal country life.

Three more long epistles (which include the *Art of Poetry*) provided a second book and appeared, it is generally thought, soon after 17 B.C. In the first, addressed to Augustus at his request, Horace defends the role of the poet and modern poetry against the prejudices of the Roman public in favour of archaic Latin verse, however unintelligible.

If poems like wine improve with age, would somebody tell me  
how old a page has to be before it acquires value?

Take a writer who sank to his grave a century back –  
where should he be assigned? To the unapproachable classics  
or the worthless moderns?

Suppose the Greeks had resented newness as much as we do,  
what would now be old? And what would the people have  
to read and thumb with enjoyment, each man to his taste?

(*Epistles* II. 1.34–8, 90–93)

The second is a wry apology for his abandoning lyric poetry:

And yet it's best to be sensible – to throw away one's toys  
and leave to children the sort of games that suit their age,  
and instead of hunting for words to set to the lyre's music  
to practise setting one's life to the tunes and rhythms of truth.

(*Epistles* 11.2.141–4)

In the *Ars Poetica* (303–5) he justifies his shift to literary criticism:

No one could put together better poems; but really  
it isn't worth it. And so I'll play the part of a grindstone  
which sharpens steel but has no part itself in the cutting.

But the tone of *Epistles* I.19, addressed to Maecenas, who *did* appreciate the extent of Horace's achievement, is unusually bitter (35–41):

Perhaps you would like to know why readers enjoy and praise my pieces at home, and ungratefully run them down in public? I'm not the kind to hunt for the votes of the fickle rabble by standing dinners and giving presents of worn-out clothes. I listen to distinguished writers and pay them back; but I don't approach academic critics on their platforms to beg their support. Hence the grief.

Yet it is understandable that the Odes were caviare to the general. Not only were they difficult metrically, but the purists could and did criticize them for the Latin innovations Horace introduced into the Greek lyric metres. The language is highly compressed, the allusions often cryptic, the mythology sometimes obscure. *Odes* 11.3 ("The just man tenacious of his purpose") is a noble poem of reconciliation expressed mainly through Juno's speech, which is hard at first to grasp unless it is remembered that she had supported the Trojans in the Trojan War, and that Romulus was her descendant and founder of the new city of which Augustus was the second founder. To understand why Teucer is introduced into *Odes* I.7 we have to know that after Teucer returned from the Trojan War without his brother Ajax, he was sent straight into exile by his father Telamon, and that Horace's friend the consul Plancus had permitted or procured the proscription of *his* brother in 42 B.C., many years before this poem was written; cf. Velleius Paterculus II.67.3–4, quoted by West, p.115, and the notes to this poem, p.205. So if Teucer could find comfort in wine, Plancus can too.

Such detail delights commentators, but does it make for immediate appreciation of a poem? Horace is careful to contrive an appearance of casualness in the shifts of tone in his long poems, as he does in his ordering of serious and lighter poems in each book, and each

ode is entirely self-contained, with nothing like a title or any opening lines to set a scene. All this can create difficulty, and outside the sophisticated coterie surrounding Maecenas a Roman audience may well have found it a puzzling collection. Being so far removed in time, we are likely to find it even more puzzling, though possibly less daunting, accustomed as we are to grappling with obscurities and allusions and metrical inventions in the poetry of Hopkins, Yeats and Eliot, and to turning to factual notes (such as are provided for this translation) to resolve the initial problems. We no longer look for a 'message' of the kind we expect from Virgil or Wordsworth, and the sudden surprises of the Odes may be more in keeping with our own fragmented moods in an uncertain age.

If Horace's contemporaries were irritated by his elusiveness and felt that they could never pin him down, it might also be because in the two books of Satires he had already established a more consistent self-portrait as an altogether more genial figure – *l'homme moyen sensuel* who took a humorous view of himself and of life's oddities; and, in *Epistles* I.20.24–5, he was to describe himself as

Of small build, prematurely grey, and fond of the sun,  
he was quick to lose his temper, but not hard to appease.

But the Horace of the Odes wears so many masks: amused and ironic in one poem, he castigates moral corruption in the next; the heart-aching beauty of the spring's renewal becomes a *memento mori* under the inexorable advance of 'Pallid Death'; the proud awareness of the poet's calling slides into the disclaimer (I.6):

Flippant as ever, whether a fire  
or fancy free, I sing of banquets and 'battles'  
of eager girls with neatly trimmed nails  
against the young men.

Life for Horace at this time was generally less kind. Twice he mentions his poor health (*Epistles* 1.7 and 15), and there had been reminders of mortality. The poet Quintilius Varus died in 24; Virgil and Tibullus in 19 B.C. The charmed circle round Maecenas suffered in late 23 when the leakage of the discovery of conspiracy against the emperor was traced to Maecenas, who had mentioned it to his wife, half-sister of a conspirator.<sup>9</sup> After this Maecenas ceased to be of influence with Augustus, though Horace himself seems to have been on increasingly friendly terms – to the extent of being a butt for Augustus' heavy, somewhat schoolboyish humour.<sup>10</sup>

It was in fact Augustus who brought Horace back to writing lyric poetry by commissioning the Centennial Hymn (*carmen saeculare*) to commemorate the revival of the Secular Games in 17 B.C. This was to be a typical Horatian ode, written in Sapphics, sung by a double choir of boys and girls, addressed to Apollo and Diana,

not meant to be part of the religious ceremonies but to be an ideal image of them, and therefore to be performed after the completion of all the sacrifices. By making this arrangement Augustus and his advisers showed that they respected the limits which Horace himself had set to his art. They encouraged him to persist in his own manner because they understood the meaning and aims of his poetry. This complete recognition stirred Horace profoundly. Disappointment and resignation gave way to fresh impulses, and the damned-up stream of his lyrics began to flow again.<sup>11</sup>

The Centennial Hymn is a triumphal ode which is unique in the way it breathes serenity.

The prayers it offers are a list of the Augustan regime's achievements in establishing peace, security and prosperity:

Now the Parthian fears the Alban axes,  
the forces mighty by sea and land;  
now Scythians and Indians, lately so proud,  
await our answer.

Now Faith, and Peace, and Honour,  
and pristine Modesty, and Manhood neglected,  
dare to return, and blessed Plenty appears  
with her laden horn.

Its reception put Horace somewhat in the position of poet laureate. Thus he had good reason to ask in *Epistles* II. 1.132–3:

Where would innocent boys and girls who are still unmarried  
have learnt their prayers if the Muse had not vouchsafed them a poet?

Augustus then asked him to follow up this highly professional poem with odes to commemorate the victories of his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus over the Alpine tribes, and to add a fourth to his three books of Odes.

There are fifteen poems in the final collection, generally thought to have been brought out in 13 B.C. or rather later, about ten years after the earlier lyrics. The two victory odes requested are 4 and 14; 2 is also in the grand style – it is Horace's tactful refusal to write a Pindaric ode to celebrate the triumphal return of Augustus from Gaul in 16 B.C., and is his final tribute to 'the swan of Dirce' by contrast with his own 'small talent' expressed in lines 27–32:

... but I, very much in the manner  
of a Matinee bee

laboriously harvesting thyme  
from numerous groves and the banks of many-  
streamed Tibur, inconspicuously accrete  
my intricate verses.

Odes 5 and 15 directly address Augustus: 5 appears to have been composed during his absence in Gaul and Spain in 13 B. C., while 15 is an epilogue to sum up his country's debt to the emperor. Both express Horace's hopes for continued peace and security – to be celebrated, as ever, by festive wine-drinking in a rural scene. The earlier vision of the poet's calling has now grown (in odes 8 and 9) into a splendid assurance of immortality for Horace's own lyrics and for their subjects, since 'The Muse forbids the praiseworthy man to die./The Muse bestows heaven...' (IV.8.28 –9) and

Many heroes lived before Agamemnon,  
but all are oppressed in unending night,  
unwept, unknown, because they lack  
a dedicated poet.

(IV.9.25–8)

Now that Horace is more Augustus' man and his *persona* is a public one, many of us will agree with Wilkinson (p. 86) that there is some 'blunting of sensibility. The poet who had shown such fine imaginative sympathy for the captive barbarian boy and girl in the ode *Icci beatis* (I.29) now mentions the courage of the Rhaetians fighting in defence of their freedom merely as enhancing the prowess of the young Tiberius':

a fine sight in martial combat  
for the chaos he made in havocking  
those resolved to die unconquered...

(IV. 14.17–19)

But we have not lost the Horace we knew. The seventh ode looks back to the fourth in the first book, written in similar (Archilochian) metre and on the same theme – the return of spring and the reminder in the recurring seasons that for man there is no return – and A. E. Housman was not alone in thinking this Horace's most beautiful poem. Spring when 'meadows no longer are frozen, nor do/the rivers roar, turgid with winter's snow' (IV. 12) also prompts the invitation to Vergilius to

Set aside delay and thought of gain  
and mindful of darkness burning mix  
brief sottishness with wisdom while you many:  
it is sweet to play the clown upon occasion.

And if Phyllis, invited in IV. 11 to celebrate Maecenas' birthday in simple domestic revels, is the 'last of my loves' and recalls all the Greek-named girls who have gone before, the opening poem, in which the middle-aged poet calls on Venus for mercy now that desire has awakened in him 'after so long a truce', is one of Horace's most poignant – not for the Ligurinus who is the cause of the awakening (the boy of the lightweight IV. 10), but for the bleak statement:

I am not as I was in the reign  
of my dear Cinara...

Cinara is mentioned twice in the Epistles, each time with regret for departed youth. In *Epistles* 1.7.25–8

... you'll have to restore

the strong lungs and the black hair thick on my forehead,  
the charm of words, the well-mannered laughter, and the sad lament  
uttered, with glass in hand, when naughty Cinara left me.

*Epistles* 1.14.32–5 is in the same strain:

the man who went in for fine togas and sleek hair,  
who charmed, as you know, the greedy Cinara without a present,  
and would drink the clear Falernian wine from midday on,  
is content with a simple meal and a doze on the grass by the river.

So she was *rapax* – greedy for gifts, though she was willing to take Horace empty-handed; she was *proterva* – mischievous, naughty; she left him – and she died young. In *Odes* IV. 13 we are

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