VI HORATIAN STYLE AND LITERARY TEXTURE

1. Introduction

In this section I will briefly survey the literature on Horatian poetic style, and then offer some detailed translations and analyses of particular poems from different genres to try to show how Horatian expression works on the page, especially in terms of intertextuality, structural arrangement, and word order.[1] Horace's exceptionally dense and refined poetic texture has been recognized as such since antiquity: Ovid (*Tristia* 4.10.50) refers to Horace's *carmina culta* ('cultured poems'), and Petronius (118.5) to his *curiosa felicitas* ('painstaking felicity of style'), while Quintilian (10.1.96) sees him as *uerbis felicissime audax* ('most felicitously bold in expression'). All these comments are likely to refer primarily to the *Odes*, but can be applied in general to Horace's style through different genres. For the basic facts of Horatian diction and syntax, Bo 1960 remains unrivalled in its sheer level of detail; for more recent overviews and useful scholarly bibliography on Horatian poetic style see the excellent Muecke 1997 and the rest of the major section on style of which it forms the chief part in the *Enciclopedia oraziana* (Mariotti 1996–8), the list of publications in the area up to 2006 by Holzberg,[2] and the helpful survey of the development of Horace's style and metrical practice in Knox 2013. On the metres of the *Odes*, the introductory section in Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 remains a reliable guide;[3] for some more adventurous attempts to relate metre to literary content in Horace see Morgan 2010. The elaborate and expressive word order of the *Odes* is the topic of Nisbet 1999. But the best resources for the analysis of Horatian style and metre are the recent detailed commentaries on Horace's works (listed in Chapter I, section 3), which are closely used in what follows.

[1] Translations here are my own.
[2] Holzberg 2007: 126.
[3] Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: xxxviii–xlvi.

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2. *Epodes* 4

Lupis et agnis quanta sortito obtigit,
tecum mihi discordia est,
Hibericis peruste funibus latus
et crura dura compede.
licet superbus ambules pecunia,
fortuna non mutat genus.
uidesne, sacram metiente te uiam
cum bis trium ulnarum toga,
ut ora uertat huc et huc euntium
liberrima indignatio?
'sectus flagellis hic triumuiralibus
praeconis ad fastidium
arat Falerni mille fundi iugera
et Appiam mannis terit
sedilibusque magnus in primis eques
Othone contempto sedet.
quid attinet tot ora nauium graui
rostrata duci pondere
contra latrones atque seruilem manum
hoc, hoc tribuno militum?'

The degree of strife that falls to the lot
Of wolves and lambs is mine with you,
You with the side burned by Spanish ropes,
With the calves hardened by slave fetters.
Though you strut about, loftily proud with cash,
Fortune cannot change breeding.
Can't you see, when you cover the Sacred Way
Walking with your good nine feet of toga,
How the faces of those who pass, going here and there,
Are turned to you in the rage of free men?
'This man, once cut by the law officers' whips,
Until the herald had had enough,
Now ploughs a thousand acres of Falernian farmland
And wears out the Appian Way with his smart ponies,
And as a mighty knight sits in the front seats,
Scorning Otho and his law.
What's the point of so many ships' prows,
Beaked with heavy weight, being launched
Against those brigands and their band of slaves
When this, this man is a military tribune?'

The political and cultural references in this poem are excellently treated by Watson 2003: here I want to focus more on diction. The enmity of

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wolves and lambs with which the poem begins recalls Achilles' famous declaration of hostility to Hector at *Iliad* 22.262–4 ('just as wolves and lambs cannot have a common mind, but always intend evil to one another, so it is not possible for you and me to be friends'). The Homeric epic model is brought down to the lower level of the iambic genre by its context – not an exchange between heroes but one between lower characters – and this may suggest that the poet and his target might be more on the same level than is at first apparent: commentators have noted the disturbing similarity between the ex-slave and Horace (servile background, now a knight and a military tribune owing to civil war disturbances).[4] The language is mixed: *discordia* can be lofty, going back to Ennius and Lucretius, but the adverb *sortito* and the verb *obtingere* are colloquial and ordinary, found only in Plautus and prose authors before Horace.[5]

Note the expressive word order: the hostility between the two enemies is clear in the juxtaposed pronouns *tecum mihi*, and the identifying elements of other place-names are put up front for emphasis (7: *sacram … uiam* for the normal *uiam … sacram*; 13: *Falerni … fundi* for the normal *fundus … Falernus*), stressing that this interloper is taking over the best of Rome and Italy. The emphatic *liberrima indignatio* (10) is similarly delayed and pithily presented in a single iambic tetrameter, just like the gnomic maxim *fortuna non mutat genus* (6).

The language of the epode makes clear reference to Catullus, an important predecessor for Horace's iambics:[6] the picture of the parvenu walking proudly around Rome and his sudden acquisition of an agricultural estate both recall Catullus' similar arriviste Mamurra (29.6–7: *et ille nunc* superbus *et superfluens* / perambulabit *omnium cubilia* ['and he now, proud and overflowing, will wander through the beds of all']; 115.1: *Mentula habet iuxta triginta* iugera *prati* ['Dick has some three hundred acres of meadowland']; cf. 114). Another important model here is Lucretius' similar attack on contemporary materialism: the rich man rushing along the Appian Way with his fashionable ponies (*manni*) picks up the similar picture of the speedy elite member at *De rerum natura* 3.1064: *currit agens* mannos *ad uillam praecipitanter* ('speeds along, driving his smart little ponies to his villa, all in a rush').

[4] Cf. Watson 2003: 150–2.
[5] *Sortito* is only otherwise found in verse at Silius 10.593.
[6] See Heyworth 2001; Putnam 2006.

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The imagined speech of the passers-by adds a vivid element to the poem and confirms the poet's judgement as generally shared at Rome: it also allows a move from second-person address to third-person description of the target, a variation neatly placed in the centre of the poem, a point where Horatian poems often pivot in various ways. The speech naturally has a colloquial air, but is still self-consciously artistic: note how the name of one legal officer is followed directly in the next line by another (*triumualibus* / *praeconis*), displaced from its natural position to allow this effect. Likewise, in line 15 the interlaced word order seems to express the sense of the line – the parvenu sits in great state in the midst of the front equestrian rows at the theatre, just as *magnus* is enclosed within the phrase describing the prestigious seating area (*sedilibus . . . in primis*), and the expression referring to the weighty ships provides another example of complex poetic word order in lines 17–18 (more natural Latin might read *quid attinet tot ora nauium graui pondere rostrata duci*). The repeated pronoun *hoc, hoc* rhetorically expresses the emotion of the speaker, as often in the invective of the *Epodes*.[7]

3. *Odes* 2.6

Septimi, Gadis aditure mecum et
Cantabrum indoctum iuga ferre nostra et
barbaras Syrtis, ubi Maura semper
aestuat unda,
Tibur Argeo positum colono 5
sit meae sedes utinam senectae,
sit modus lasso maris et uiarum
militiaeque.
unde si Parcae prohibent iniquae,
dulce pellitis ouibus Galaesi 10
flumen et regnata petam Laconi
rura Phalantho.
ille terrarum mihi praeter omnis
angulus ridet, ubi non Hymetto
mella decedunt uiridique certat 15
baca Venafro,
uer ubi longum tepidasque praebet
Iuppiter brumas et amicus Aulon

[7] Watson 2003: 171 compares 5.53, 6.11, 7.1, 14.6, 17.1, and 17.7.

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fertili Baccho minimum Falernis
inuidet uuis.
ille te mecum locus et beatae
postulant arces; ibi tu calentem
debita sparges lacrima fauillam
uatis amici.

Septimius, who would go with me to visit Cadiz
And the Cantabrians not yet taught to bear our yoke,
Or the wild Syrtes, where the African swell
Seethes unrelenting,
May Tibur, set down by an Argive founder,
Be the place of rest for my old age,
May it be the end point for one who is tired of sea,
Journeys, and service!
But if the Fates' unkindness deny this wish,
I will seek out the Galaesus river, sweet water
For leather-jacketed sheep, and the fields once ruled by
Spartan Phalanthus.
That corner of the world smiles to me above all other,
Where the honey yields no place to Hymettus,
Where the olive-fruit is able to compete
With green Venafrum,
Where Jupiter grants a lengthy spring
And warm midwinters, and the Aulon,
Friend to fertile Bacchus, feels no envy of
Grapes of Falerii.
That is the place that calls you and me
With its happy citadels: there you will scatter
With due tears the still-warm ashes of
Your friend the poet.

The four-line stanzaic metres (here the Sapphic stanza) of most of Horace's *Odes* are an important element in their poetic texture, since they create internal structural building blocks which can be variously exploited. This poem turns in the middle, after three of the six stanzas, as often in the *Odes*.[8] The first half is full of movement from the wild to the tame, presenting possible extreme exotic destinations and then reaching the peaceful and mild Tarentum (the city of Spartan foundation) via Tibur, while the second half is a static encomiastic account of an imaginary life in residence at Tarentum. The second and third stanzas balance each other in each containing a brief account of alternative

[8] See Harrison 2004.

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Italian destinations, the 'suburban' Tibur and the deep southern Tarentum, while the fourth and fifth stanzas stand together as a unit more fully praising the climatic advantages of Tarentum. The first and last (sixth) stanzas are linked by ring composition, both focusing on Septimius' extreme loyalty as a friend, shown in his readiness to travel with the poet to the ends of the earth and to attend to his funeral rites; and the concluding Italian 'home' location of Tarentum clearly contrasts with the distant 'away' locations of the first stanza, providing a closure which is quieter and less dramatic than the opening.

This structure is carefully articulated by verbal signposts. The first and second stanzas stress the two balancing place-names by initial location (1 *Septimi, Gadis*; 5 *Tibur*) while succeeding stanzas are linked by paired relatives (9 *unde*; 16 *ubi*), and by repeated demonstrative pronouns (13 *ille*; 21 *ille*), all again carefully initially placed. As often, place-names provide extended poetic colour. In this poem, as in *Epodes* 4, allusion to Catullus, the great lyric poet of the previous generation, can be seen. The poem's opening theme of perilous possible journey into theatres of war and far-distant lands as a token of friendship recalls Catullus 11, a poem in the same Sapphic metre, the opening stanzas of which are evoked by Horace here (both first stanzas end with the word *unda*).[9] In his poem Catullus had combined distant historic Eastern locations associated with the achievements of Alexander and places recalling more contemporary campaigns in the 50s BCE (Crassus in Parthia, Caesar in Britain), and Horace follows this, linking the contemporary Cantabrian battlefields of northern Spain with the legendary Syrtes. West has rightly suggested that Horace's ode provides a calmer and more mature response to Catullus' passionate request, where the friends addressed are asked to deliver a devastating message to the poet's *puella* rather than invited to share his retirement.[10] Friendship is about lifelong companionship rather than momentary support in an erotic crisis.

Poetic language is as important here as structural effects and literary intertextuality. The first stanza picks out environments which are distant, forbidding, or actually hostile as potentially testing destinations for Septimius' loyal companionship, and the three destinations are described at increasing length, forming an ascending tricolon (a list of three with the last element longest) linked by *et* ... *et*. The phrase

[9] See Nisbet and Hubbard 1978: 97.
[10] West 1998: 42–3.

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Cantabrum indoctum iuga ferre nostra is especially rich: the collective singular used of the enemy and *noster* of 'our' Romans strongly evoke the language of historians,[11] while *indoctum* and *iuga ferre* (pointing to yoking bulls) suggest the stupidity and animalistic character of Rome's barbarian enemies.

The manipulation of proper names and adjectives is again prominent here. The foreign locations or peoples *Gadis*, *Cantabrum*, and *Maura* are all put at the earliest possible point in their clause, against natural Latin word order, while *Syrtis* is put as close as possible to *Maura*, reflecting the fact that both locations belong to North Africa. Each of stanzas 2–5 has two different place-names or geographical adjectives, while stanza 1 has four and stanza 6 has none; furthermore, in each of stanzas 2–5, one of the two place-names is Latin (*Tibur*, *Galaesi*, *Venafro*, *Falernis*), while the other is Greek (*Argeo*, *Laconi*, *Hymetto*, *Aulon*). This especially suits the cultural environment of Tarentum in the heavily Hellenized deep south of Italy. Likewise, the two balancing destination cities of Tibur and Tarentum are described in a wholly balanced way by reference to their Greek founders, even with matching constructions of participles and dative of agents: *Tibur Argeo positum colono* (5) is closely mirrored by *regnata … Laconi / rura Phalantho* (11–12). Similarly, the rival place-names of *Hymetto* and *Venafrum* are carefully placed in appropriately opposing positions at either end of their clause in 14–16.

Personification is a notable technique here: in 14 the charms of Tarentum are said to smile on the poet (*ridet*), while in 14–16 products are poetically said to compete directly with places, using nouns not the expected topographical adjectives, with the adjective 'green' transferred from the olive to its origin in Venafrum. The verbs *decedunt … certat* ('yield to', 'compete') are striking, perhaps evoking Roman aristocrats jockeying for political or social position. There is also a nice variation between two poetic uses of number in 15–16, with *mella* a poetic plural and *baca* a collective singular, both usages found in Virgil's *Georgics*, which may be echoed thematically here in this list of Italian products recalling the so-called 'praise of Italy' at *Georgics* 2.136–76.

The short last line of the Sapphic stanza (the adonaean) is clearly used to good effect here: the important term *militiaeque*, expressing exhaustion with campaigning and perhaps an end to the need for it

[11] Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 214; *OLD*, s.v. *noster* 7.

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in civil war, is reserved for this emphatic position in the second stanza, filling the whole line in a rare effect reserved elsewhere in Horace for the stressing of proper names (cf. *Odes* 1.12.40: *Fabriciumque*; 1.30.8: *Mercuriusque*). The adonaeans of the third and fourth stanzas are perfectly balanced in shape, with a disyllabic common noun followed by a trisyllabic name, with matching vowel endings (12: *rura Phalantho*; 16: *baca Venafro*), while that of the last stanza provides an epistolary-style signature to the poem as well as an implicit statement of its motivation (24: *uatis amici*). The poem thus returns to its initial theme, marked by the formal ring composition between the opening of the first stanza and the last: *ille te mecum locus* (21) clearly picks up the first line's *Septimi, Gadis aditure mecum* with its focus on the addressee, its specification of a place, and its suggestion of a shared journey of friendship.

4. *Epistles* 1.11

Quid tibi uisa Chios, Bullati, notaque Lesbos,
quid concinna Samos, quid Croesi regia Sardis,
Zmyrna quid et Colophon? Maiora minoraue fama?
cunctane prae Campo et Tiberino flumine sordent?
An uenit in uotum Attalicis ex urbibus una?
An Lebedum laudas odio maris atque uiarum?
Scis Lebedus quid sit: Gabiis desertior atque
Fidenis uicus; tamen illic uiuere uellem,
oblitusque meorum, obliuiscendus et illis,
Neptunum procul e terra spectare furentem.
Sed neque qui Capua Romam petit, imbre lutoque
aspersus uolet in caupona uiuere; nec qui
frigus collegit, furnos et balnea laudat
ut fortunatam plene praestantia uitam;
nec si te ualidus iactauerit Auster in alto,
idcirco nauem trans Aegaeum mare uendas.
Incolumi Rhodos et Mytilene pulchra facit quod
paenula solstitio, campestre niualibus auris,
per brumam Tiberis, Sextili mense caminus.
Dum licet ac uoltum seruat Fortuna benignum,
Romae laudetur Samos et Chios et Rhodos absens.
Tu quamcumque deus tibi fortunauerit horam
grata sume manu neu dulcia differ in annum,
ut quocumque loco fueris uixisse libenter
te dicas; nam si ratio et prudentia curas,
non locus effusi late maris arbiter aufert,

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caelum, non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt.
Strenua nos exercet inertia: nauibus atque
quadrigis petimus bene uiuere. Quod petis, hic est,
est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit aequus. 30

How did Chios seem to you, Bullatius, and famous Lesbos,
And pretty Samos, and the palace of Croesus at Sardis,
What of Smyrna and Colophon – better or worse than their fame?
Or are they all as dirt beside the Campus and the Tiber's stream?
Or does one of the cities of Attalus surface in your prayers,
Or do you commend Lebedus, now sick of sea and travel?
'You know what Lebedus is, a mere village, emptier
Than Gabii or Fidenae – yet there I'd like to live,
And forgetting my friends, to be forgotten by them,
Watch Neptune raging at safe distance from the shore.'
But he who makes for Rome from Capua, spattered
With rain and mud, would not want to *live* in an inn,
And even he who has caught a cold does not praise stoves and hot baths
As the only purveyors of the truly happy life.
Nor would you, if a strong south wind should toss you on the deep,
Sell off your ship across the Aegean as a consequence.
For one in good health, Rhodes and fair Mytilene
Do the same as a cloak in midsummer, a light tunic in snowy blasts,
A Tiber dip in midwinter, a furnace in the month of August.
While you can and Fortune keeps her features kind,
Let Samos and Chios and Rhodes be praised at Rome for their distance.
Whatever hour god has kindly bestowed on you,
Grasp it with grateful hand and don't postpone pleasure for another season:
This way you can say that wherever you were
You lived most gladly: for if reason and good sense,
Not a place which commands a wide spread of sea, banish cares,
Those who speed across the sea change their climate, not their temper.
Our energetic sloth gives us a workout: by ship and chariot
We seek for the good life. But what you seek is here,
Here at Ulubrae, if you have sufficient steady mind.

The style of the hexameter epistles is looser and more relaxed than that of the *Odes*, and closer to the *Epodes*, but still full of artistry. Here, once again, place-names are carefully positioned, with a list of three islands followed by a list of three cities: *Chios*, *Lesbos*, *Samos*, and *Sardis* all stand either at the main caesura of the hexameter, at its formal centre, or at its end, *Zmyrna* at the start of the line, and *Colophon* again at the caesura. Note too the artistic variation of expression in the list of names: Chios has no epithet, Lesbos and Samos a single one, Sardis a phrase in apposition, then Zmyrna and Colophon no epithet. These

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places have resonance for the connoisseur of Greek literature: Chios was often seen as the birthplace of Homer, while Lesbos was that of Sappho and Alcaeus, and Samos the origin of the epic poet Choerilus and the epigrammatist Asclepiades; Sardis was the capital of Croesus, whose defeat and capture there by Cyrus is a famous episode in Herodotus (1.81–90), Zmyrna the home of the bucolic poet Bion, Colophon of the elegiac and hexameter poet Nicander. Horace as poet perhaps asks his friend about places with particular literary connections. There are other poetically effective juxtapositions of proper names: *Capua Romam* (11) fittingly places together a journey's starting place and its destination, while *Tiberis, Sextili* (19) nicely cuts across two clauses to suggest that river swimming is in fact a real pleasure in high summer.

Lucretius, an important precedent for Horace's hexameter moralizing,[12] also features here, as in *Epode* 4. The elegant line 10 – *Neptunum procul e terra spectare furentem* – is Lucretian in both style and content. Its two highly poetic features – the metonymy of 'god for thing' Neptune = 'sea', and a line-enclosing noun–adjective/participle pair – are both found in Lucretius (2.472: Neptuni *corpus acerbum*; 1.9: placatumque *nitet diffuso lumine* caelum[13]), and recalls Lucretius' penchant for the famous one-line *sententia* (rhetorical maxim): compare, for example, Lucretius 1.101: *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* ('so great an evil could superstition urge'), another memorable moral notion encapsulated in a single hexameter. This technique is in fact common in the *Epistles* to highlight key ideas.[14] The line's theme, the idea of calmly contemplating dangers at sea from the safety of land as a metaphor for mental peace, clearly recalls the famous opening of Lucretius' second book (2.1–2): *Suaue, mari magno turbantibus aequora uentis / e terra magnum alterius* spectare *laborem* ('pleasant it is, when winds could trouble on the great expanse of the ocean, to gaze at another's mighty tribulation from the shore'). Similarly Lucretian is the picture of the man who vainly seeks relief from anxiety and boredom in travel, picking up both the image of rapid equine transit (29: *quadrigis*) and its moral futility from Lucretius 3.1063–4, already alluded to in the *manni* of *Epodes* 4.14 (see above). Meanwhile the

[12] See Freudenburg 1993: 19.
[13] See further Pearce 1966: 162.
[14] See Harrison 1995c.

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famous one-line *sententia* of 27, *caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*, once again makes use of a Lucretian technique (see above).

Pointed verbal style is still evident in the more relaxed texture of the *Epistles*. In line 4 we find the juxtaposition *flumine sordent*, a neat oxymoron as river water (*flumine*) naturally cleans rather than dirties, the root meaning of *sordent*; a similar oxymoron is found in 28: *strenua ... inertia*. Such expressions are a central part of Horace's style.[15] In line 9 there are two varied forms of the same verb in a neat and pithy expression in a chiastic order, each time with a balancing complement referring to the same group of people as both subjects and objects of forgetting (*oblitusque meorum obliuiscendus et illis*). The word order of line 21 postpones the crucial *absens* as a neat sting in the tail: 'at Rome you can praise all places – provided you don't go there', just as the last word of the whole poem (*aequus*) sums up its doctrine: that equanimity is the most important virtue.

[15] See West 1973.

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