II LIFE, POETIC CAREER, SELF-PRESENTATION

1. Life

A brief life of Horace survives from the ancient world, attached to the name of Suetonius and probably summarizing a longer life by that writer,[1] which is worth quoting in full here.[2]

Quintus Horatius Flaccus of Venusia had for a father, as he himself writes, a freedman who was a collector of money at auctions; but it is believed that he was a dealer in salted provisions, for a certain man in a quarrel thus taunted Horace: 'How often have I seen your father wiping his nose with his arm!' Horace served as military tribune in the war of Philippi, at the instance of Marcus Brutus, one of the leaders in that war. When his party was vanquished, he was pardoned and purchased the position of quaestor's clerk (*scriptus quaestorius*). Then contriving to win the favour, first of Maecenas and later of Augustus, he held a prominent place among the friends of both. How fond Maecenas was of him is evident enough from the well-known epigram: 'If I did not love you, my own Horace, more than my own vitals, you would see your dear friend leaner than Ninnius.' But he expressed himself much more strongly in his last will and testament in this brief remark to Augustus: 'Be as mindful of Horatius Flaccus as of myself.'

Augustus offered him the post of secretary, as appears in this letter of his to Maecenas: 'Before this I was able to write my letters to my friends with my own hand; now overwhelmed with work and in poor health, I desire to take our friend Horace from you. He will come then from that parasitic table of yours to my kingly one, and help me write my letters.' Even when Horace declined, Augustus showed no resentment at all, and did not cease his efforts to gain his friendship. We have letters from which I append a few extracts by way of proof: 'Enjoy any privilege at my house, as if you were making your home there; for it will be quite right and proper for you to do so, inasmuch as that was the relation which I wished to have with you, if your health had permitted.' And again, 'How mindful I am of you our friend Septimius can also tell you; for it chanced that I spoke of you in his presence. Even if you were so proud as to scorn my friendship, I do not therefore return your disdain.' Besides this, among other pleasantries, he often called him 'the cleanest of willies' and 'his charming little man', and he made him well to do by more than one act of generosity.

As to his writings, Augustus rated them so high, and was so convinced that they would be immortal, that he not only appointed him to write the *Carmen saeculare*, but also asked him to celebrate the victory of his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus over the Vindelici, and so compelled him to add a fourth to his three books of *Odes* after a

[1] For its origin, see still Fraenkel 1957: 1–13. Text and translation are most easily found in Rolfe 1914: 484–91.

[2] Translation from Fairclough 1927, modified.

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long silence. Furthermore, after reading several of his *sermones*, the Emperor thus complained that no mention was made of him: 'You must know that I am not pleased with you, that in your numerous writings of this kind you do not talk with me, rather than with others. Are you afraid that your reputation with posterity will suffer because it appears that you were my friend?' In this way he forced from Horace the selection which begins with these words: 'Seeing that single-handed you bear the burden of tasks so many and so great, protecting Italy's realm with arms, providing it with morals, reforming it by laws, I should sin against the public good, Caesar, if I wasted your time with long discourse [*Epist.* 2.1].'

In person he was short and fat, as he is described by himself in his *Satires* and by Augustus in the following letter: 'Onysius has brought me your little volume, and I accept it, small as it is, in good part, as an apology. But you seem to me to be afraid that your books may be bigger than you are yourself; but it is only stature that you lack, not girth. So you may write on a pint pot, that the circumference of your volume may be well rounded out, like that of your own belly.'

It is said that he was unrestrained in matters of sex; for it is reported that in a room lined with mirrors he had prostitutes so arranged that whichever way he looked, he saw a reflection of the sexual act. He lived for the most part in the country in the retirement of his Sabine or Tiburtine estate, and his house is pointed out near the little grove of Tiburnus. There came into my hands some elegies ascribed to him and a letter in prose, supposed to be a recommendation of himself to Maecenas, but I think that both are spurious; for the elegies are commonplace and the letter is even obscure, which was by no means one of his faults.

He was born on the sixth day before the Ides of December in the consulate of Lucius Cotta and Lucius Torquatus, and died on the fifth day before the Kalends of the same month in the consulship of Gaius Marcius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius Gallus, fifty-nine days after the death of Maecenas, in his fifty-seventh year. He named Augustus as his heir in his physical presence, since he could not make and sign a will because of the sudden violence of his illness. He was buried and laid to rest near the tomb of Maecenas on the furthest part of the Esquiline hill.

This is the key source for the basic data about Horace: his birthday (8 December 65 BCE; for confirmation of the month see *Epist.* 1.10.27), his birthplace (Venusia, modern Venosa, on the border of ancient Apulia and Lucania – *Sat.* 2.1.34–5), and his date of death (27 November 8 BCE). Most of its information is taken either from Horace's own works or from the (now lost) works of others such as Augustus and Maecenas. His father's career as auctioneer and financial agent and his freedman status is confirmed by *Satires* 1.6:[3] it seems likely that he was freed after temporary enslavement as a captive in the Social War,[4] and in later life the father seems to have made enough

[3] The unlikely idea that Horace's father was Jewish and from Alexandria has recently been revived for discussion by Newman 2011: 446–58.

[4] See Williams 1995.

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money to send his son to the prestigious school of Orbilius at Rome (*Sat.* 1.6.76–8, *Epist.* 2.1.71) and later to Athens for university-style study with the sons of the Roman elite (*Epist.* 2.2.43–5).

It was there that he attached himself to the cause of Brutus, who was in Athens studying philosophy in the months after the Ides of March (Plutarch, *Brutus* 24.1), and went with him on campaign in Greece, and perhaps in Asia too (*Sat.* 1.7?), serving as *tribunus militum* (*Sat.* 1.6.48), a rank for the young elite. In the autumn of 42 BCE he was on the losing side in the crushing defeat of Brutus at Philippi at the hands of Antony and the young Caesar (*Odes* 2.7), but escaped and returned to Rome, where he was able to buy the post of *scriba quaestorius*, a significant administrative position which he seems to have retained at least to the end of the 30s BCE (*Sat.* 2.6.36–7). In the early 30s he became attached to the circle of writers around Augustus' important adviser Maecenas, introduced by no less than Virgil (*Sat.* 2.6.40–2, 1.6.55–6), and for the next thirty years this was his key social group; it is now clear that several of these poets, including Horace, were linked with the Epicurean philosopher and poet Philodemus.[5]

Recent writing on the life of Horace has stressed that the poet's own presentation of his financial position after Philippi exaggerates his losses: though he claims that he lost his father's land, perhaps in the land confiscations of 41–40 BCE, and turned to poetry to make money (*Epist.* 2.2.49–52), he seems to have been able to buy his post as quaestor's clerk without special trouble, and any financial embarrassment must have been over by the 30s, when he was clearly of equestrian status and substantially wealthy.[6] Most modern scholars are clear, too, that Horace's financial position after the 30s was bolstered by the gift of a substantial Sabine estate from Maecenas, which contained several subordinate farms as well as a villa (*Sat.* 2.6), the remains of which are probably under the later grander building close to Licenza near Tivoli, which has been much investigated in recent years.[7] It is true that the poet never says in cold terms that the villa was Maecenas' gift (see further in section 3C below), but he expresses warm gratitude

[5] See Janko 2000:6.

[6] See e.g. Mayer 1995; Armstrong 2010.

[7] For the project of excavation see the details at <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/horaces-villa/Contents.html>. For a brief printed summary see Frischer 2010, and for the full publication Frischer et al. 2006.

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for the latter's generosity in enabling him to pursue a country existence (*Epist.* 1.7), and his poems tend to conceal the financial facts diplomatically while simultaneously acknowledging the consequent obligation in a form of gift economy.[8]

Horace's personal relations with Augustus seem to have been close, and perhaps became closer after 19 BCE when Augustus, who had been absent for much of the 20s, was generally in Rome: there seems no real reason to doubt the apparent documentary evidence of their intimacy in the Suetonian *Life*, especially since Suetonius would have had special access to the imperial archives given his administrative posts under Trajan and Hadrian.[9] The presence of the *princeps* in Rome as active patron perhaps explains why Maecenas receives only one (warm) mention in Book 4 of the *Odes* against two poems addressed to Augustus and several celebrating members of his family, and no mention at all in Horace's latest works, *Epistles* 2 and the *Ars poetica* (see below). The idea that Maecenas fell from grace in connection with a plot against Augustus at the end of the 20s is now believed by few, and it is not clear whether he 'retired' in any sense as a patron of poets.[10] It may have been directly rather than through Maecenas that Horace was commissioned to write the *Carmen saeculare* for the *ludi saeculares* of 17 BCE, but this is unclear. There is no reason to disbelieve the Suetonian *Life* that Horace died less than two months after Maecenas in 8 BCE, temptingly close though this would be to assertions in the poetry that the poet would not wish to outlive his patron.

The main chronology and sequence of Horace's works is generally agreed. *Satires* 1 belongs to around 36/35 BCE,[11] *Satires* 2 and *Epodes* to around 30/29 BCE,[12] *Odes* 1–3 to 23 BCE,[13] *Epistles* 1 to 20/19 BCE,[14] the *Carmen saeculare* to 17 BCE, and *Odes* 4 to 14/13 BCE.[15] Two points have been recently debated: whether the three books of *Odes* 1–3 were each published separately prior to their collective publication in 23, and

[8] Bowditch 2001, 2010.

[9] See Wallace-Hadrill 1985: 73–96; Malcovati 1977.

[10] See Williams 1990; White 1991.

[11] See *Sat.* 1.10.86 with Gowers 2012: 336 (the presence of Bibulus in Rome in the winter of 36–35 is a dating point). In general, *Satires* 1 seems to belong to the period of peace after Naulochus (September 36).

[12] Both clearly after the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra in autumn 30 but before the triumphal return of the young Caesar in autumn 29.

[13] Though the usual marker of the suffect consulship of Sestius in 23 (Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: xxxv–vii) has now been doubted by Hutchinson 2008: 138.

[14] After Tiberius' Eastern settlement of 20 (*Epist.* 1.12.26–7): see Mayer 1994: 8–11.

[15] Before Augustus' return to Rome in 13: see *Odes* 4.5 and Thomas 2011: 5–7.

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the continuing question of the dating of the second book of *Epistles* and the *Ars poetica*. A good case has been made for each of the books of *Odes* having a particular chronological range, with 1.4 perhaps predating Sestius' consulship of 23 and belonging to a book with no detectable dates after 26, Book 2 belonging to 25–24, and Book 3 to 23.[16] *Epistles* 2.1 is clearly dated to around 12 BCE, with its address of Augustus as sole ruler (after the death of Agrippa), but *Epistles* 2.2 has often been dated together with the first book of *Epistles*. This would create a two-poem book where the individual items may vary up to a decade in date, which seems strange.

Dates for the *Ars poetica* have varied considerably, but most scholars would now want to place it at the end of Horace's career as a final poetic statement. I have recently argued in detail (following a brief suggestion of Kilpatrick)[17] that *Epistles* 2.1 and 2.2 both belong to the period after 12 BCE and that they may have been combined with the *Ars poetica* in a single final book.[18] This thesis (the arguments for which are summarized in section 2D below) has found some acceptance and is at least an economic solution to the problem.

2. Poetic career

The tracing of the trajectory of Horace's poetic career has now to some degree displaced the reconstruction of his biography in contemporary scholarship. This seems justified, as most of the poet's traditional biography is hopefully reconstructed from the texts of the poems, which are complex literary artefacts rather than records of real life. Classical scholars share this interest in poetic careers with scholars of Renaissance literature, whose authors were of course responding to the evident self-fashioning of poetic careers by Virgil, Horace, and Ovid.[19] Interest in the phases of Horace's career has been an established theme since Becker, whose substantial book (Becker 1963) on the last period of Horace's literary production (after 23 BCE) argued for its unity as the work of a poet concerned with ethical principles. More recently

[16] See Hutchinson 2008: 131–61.

[17] Kilpatrick 1990: xi. Williams 1972: 38–9 also argued briefly that the three poems belonged in one book, but dated that book to soon after 17 BCE.

[18] Harrison 2008.

[19] See especially Hardie and Moore 2010.

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Cucchiarelli 2001 has presented the early Horace of the *Satires* and *Epodes* as a poet of bodily concerns and comic tendencies, but also as sufficiently interested in generic variety to cross the bridge to the next section of his career in the lyric *Odes*. In the following section I give a personal account of Horace's poetic career which incorporates recent scholarship.[20]

A. Satires *1,* Satires *2, and* Epodes*: from outsider to insider*

The three earliest books of Horatian poetry begin from self-consciously low literary predecessors: *Satires* 1 and 2 pick up the hexameter *sermo* of Lucilius, the humble and parodic cousin of hexameter epic, looking at least momentarily to Attic Old Comedy as a Greek parallel (*Sat.* 1.4.1–6), while the *Epodes* take on the rumbustious and low-life world of archaic Archilochean iambus. This constructs a poetic career as beginning near the bottom of the generic scale: such self-positioning, along with the elements of aggression fundamental to both these low genres, nicely fits a poet who starts the period as an angry young man who has suffered real worldly dispossession. It has been well argued that within *Satires* 1 we find a kind of autobiographical progress of Horace from the excluded moralist of *Satires* 1.1–3 to the Maecenatic poet of 1.4 and beyond who has entered the literary establishment:[21] we move from the apparently isolated street preacher to the *amicus* of Maecenas in 1.5, 1.6, and 1.9, who in 1.10 takes his place among the leading writers of the day.

This trajectory comes out especially in the two literary catalogues of this concluding satire of Horace's first book. In the first of these, Horace looks to take his place among the master poets of his time just as he has taken his place among the *amici* of Maecenas (1.10.40–8, listing Fundanius for comedy, Pollio for tragedy, and Virgil for pastoral). Indeed, the social and the poetic circles are to some degree coextensive: in 1.6 Varius and Virgil are said to have introduced Horace to Maecenas, and all three are found in Maecenas' train in 1.5, while it is Fundanius who reports to Horace in *Satires* 2.8 the gastronomic excesses of the *cena Nasidieni* at which Fundanius himself, Varius, and Maecenas were all present. The implication of this passage

[20] This section incorporates parts of Harrison 2010.
[21] See Zetzel 1980; Gowers 2003.

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is that Horace clearly places himself as the contemporary master of satire among the contemporary masters of other genres. The second catalogue is that of the critics whom Horace would like to please now that his poetic career is seriously under way (1.10.81–92, listing Plotius, Varius, Maecenas, Virgil, Valgius, Octavius, Fuscus, the Viscus brothers, Pollio, Messalla and his brother, Bibulus, Servius, and Furnius).

These lists obviously overlap, with Varius, Virgil, and Pollio appearing from the first one, but the second one addresses them in their critical rather than poetic capacity (like the poets of Hellenistic Alexandria, they are deemed to excel in both). Those added are partly further poet/critics (Plotius Tucca, supposed co-editor of the *Aeneid*, and the elegist Valgius, later addressed in *Odes* 2.9), but also important contemporary patrons – Maecenas (of course), Messalla and his brother – as well as those known only as critics (Octavius, Fuscus, the brothers Visci, Bibulus, Servius, and Furnius). This catalogue of potential reviewers is the last item in *Satires* 1: Horace's first poetic book is offered for the approval (presumably forthcoming) of his literary colleagues.

This epilogue to critics may have been fashionable in the period: in what seems to be the final sequence of a book from his *Amores*, to be dated either to the mid-40s BCE or not long after Naulochus in 36,[22] the elegist Cornelius Gallus (interestingly not mentioned by Horace at all) likewise addresses Viscus and Cato, two of the critics named in *Satires* 1.10. A final appeal to critics seems then to be a standard gesture in Latin poetry of the triumviral period, and a standard way of marking the entrance of a new work, and in Horace's case of a new poet, whose literary career is now launched under impressive auspices.

In *Satires* 2 and the *Epodes* we find the first example of Horace's working on more than one poetic genre simultaneously. This 'horizontal' aspect is an interesting part of his poetic career: such an implicit self-construction as a poet who operates on more than one generic front suggests the *poikilia* or generic versatility for which Callimachus represents himself criticized in the first of his *Iambi*, a collection which is certainly significant for Horace's *Epodes*.[23] *Satires* 2 itself shows only a little overt contact with the *Epodes*: its mention of Canidia in its final line (2.8.95) is presumably a clever allusion to the ending of the simultaneous *Epodes*, in the last poem of which (17) Canidia makes her most extensive appearance.

[22] fr.2 Courtney, *FLP*, lines 6–9; for the classic discussion see Anderson et al. 1979.
[23] See Watson 2003: 12–17.

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In general, the second book of the *Satires* reinforces the 'vertical' aspect of Horace's poetic career: five years or so on from *Satires* 1, he can open his new *sermo*-collection by implying that not just Maecenas but also Caesar is a supporter. *Satires* 1.1 began with an address to Maecenas, but *Satires* 2.1, addressed to the lawyer Trebatius, has as its first major topic a discussion of whether Horace should address Caesar directly (10–20) and ends with the poet's self-characterization as *laudatus Caesare*, 'praised by Caesar' (84). Maecenas himself has to wait for mention until the end of 2.3 (2.3.312), though he re-emerges in the last three poems of the book, especially in 2.6, effectively a thank-offering for the gift of the Sabine estate (see also 2.7.33 and the dinner-party of 2.8, mentioned above). The implicit support of Caesar through the *amicitia* of Maecenas in Book 1 is replaced by direct praise of the great man.

This apparent social elevation after the ascent of Book 1 is matched by a literary elevation. *Satires* 2 has only eight poems to the ten of *Satires* 1: this is mainly because of *Satires* 2.3 (a vast 326 lines), where the Stoic Damasippus comically fails to stick to Stoic brevity in his philosophical exposition. Such impressive length (even if parodic here) was not found in *Satires* 1, not least because that book criticized Lucilius for his prolixity and promoted Callimachean polish and brevity, and it represents a Horace unafraid to expand, even parodically. *Satires* 2 also contains a wholesale epic parody in 2.5, a rewriting of Odysseus' underworld consultation with Tiresias in *Odyssey* 11 as a set of instructions on how to repair an impaired fortune by *captatio* or legacy-hunting. This return to a traditional feature of Lucilius naturally stresses the affinity of satire with the higher genre of epic as its lower twin, only implicitly stated in *Satires* 1.

As already noted, this ascent between the two books of *Satires* is accompanied by the simultaneous emergence of Horace as an iambic poet in the *Epodes*. In generic terms this is again an ascent: the lowly *musa pedestris*, 'muse that travels on foot', of satire (*Satires* 2.6.17) and the self-image of Horatian *sermo* as not really lofty enough to be poetry (see section 3 below) mean that even the bluff, aggressive, and sometimes pornographic persona of Archilochus is a move up because of his undoubted status as a vigorous and inspired poet. As scholars have noted, Horace's version of Archilochus is toned down and less 'potent' than the original,[24] but once again we find the Horatian literary career paralleling his socio-political positioning. Though published

[24] See Watson 1995.

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after Actium, the *Epodes* show the whole extent of the movement from outsider to insider: the aggressive, Archilochean analyses of the ills of Rome in *Epodes* 7 and 16, which have plausibly been suggested as the poems which triggered Horace's recruitment into the Maecenatic circle,[25] turn into equally Archilochean celebrations of the victory at Actium in *Epodes* 1 and 9, both addressed in warm terms to Maecenas, which recall Archilochus' poems of friendship and ship-board action in war.[26]

This 'vertical' aspect of the *Epode* book is matched with the evident turn in its second part towards an interest in higher literary genres. As scholars have shown, the *Epodes*' opening sequence of ten poems in a strongly Archilochean metre is followed by a group of poems which look to other genres (11–14).[27] *Epode* 11, with its presentation of the *exclusus amator* ('locked-out lover'), and *Epode* 14, with its helpless lover, both evoke typical figures of Roman elegy, perhaps drawn from the lost *Amores* of Gallus, famously alluded to in the last poem (*Ecl.* 10) of Virgil's *Eclogues*, published in 38 BCE. On the other hand, *Epode* 13, with its scenario of a landscape description with a storm motivating a sympotic occasion and moralizing reflections, famously represents a striking anticipation of *Odes* 1.9 (the Soracte poem). Just as Virgil had been instrumental in Horace's social career in introducing him to Maecenas (*Satires* 1.6.54–5), so the same poet's first published poetry book (briefly commended as we have seen at *Satires* 1.10.44–5) exercises considerable influence over this first phase of Horace's poetic career. The ten poems of *Satires* 1 may follow the number of poems in the *Eclogues*,[28] while *Epode* 2 and *Epode* 16 plainly interact with the collection's poetic world: the praise of the rural life ironized in the former has clear elements drawn from Virgilian bucolic, while the fantastic dimension of the Islands of the Blest in the latter inverts in pessimistic mode the optimistic pastoral fantasies of the prophecy of *Eclogue* 4.[29]

This first and formative phase of Horace's poetic career, then, is marked by a rhetoric of literary and socio-political ascent. Horace rises from the humble exponent of rough Lucilian satire, refining it in Callimachean terms, through Archilochean iambus, tempered for

[25] See Nisbet 1984.
[26] See Harrison 2007b: 106–14.
[27] See Harrison 2007b: 119–30.
[28] See Zetzel 1980.
[29] See Harrison 2007b: 130–4.

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new times, to the brink of lyric operations, matching his movement from Republican defeat at Philippi and loss of property to the generous patronage of Maecenas and political engagement with the interests of the young Caesar. This vertical element is counterbalanced by a horizontal axis: Horace's simultaneous collections in *Satires* 2 and the *Epodes* look out not only to each other but also to the contemporary poetic scene sketched in detail at the end of *Satires* 1.10. Horace has arrived among the poets of triumviral Rome, and is concerned to negotiate his space on the current literary horizon by interacting with its important strands. As we shall discover, all these elements will continue in the lyric project of *Odes* 1–3.

B. Odes *1–3 and* Epistles *1: the turn to lyric and the first return to* sermo

Though it is possible, as we have seen, that it was also published serially in single books,[30] the collection of *Odes* 1–3 which emerged as a unit about 23 BCE must be conceived as a single stage in Horace's poetic career. Its opening and closing poems, *Odes* 1.1 and 3.30, share a metre (stichic first Asclepiad) not otherwise used in the eighty-eight odes of the three books, and the latter poem is clearly a pendant to the former. At the end of 1.1, itself constructed on the basis of a priamel framework from early Greek lyric, Horace famously asks for inclusion in the canon of Greek lyric poets (1.1.29–36), and at the end of 3.30 he suggests that he has done enough to deserve this (3.30.10–16).

One subject of justifiable pride in Horace's lyric achievement in *Odes* 1–3 is the dexterous employment of choriamb-based Greek lyric metres, harder to accomplish in Latin with its greater number of long syllables, something made even harder by Horatian tightening of the archaic rules.[31] This is clearly an ascent in complexity from the simple hexameters of the two books of *Satires* and the identical epodic metres of *Epodes* 1–10, though the more mixed metres of *Epodes* 11–17 (one of which – the first Archilochean – reappears in the *Odes*: *Epode* 12 = *Odes* 1.7 and 1.28) are some kind of anticipation of this move. This metrical prowess is famously stressed by the use of nine different metres for the first nine odes, followed by a sequence of poems (12–18) in which thematic elements appear from an identifiable range of individual Greek

[30] See Hutchinson 2008: 131–61.
[31] See Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: xxxviii–xlvi.

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lyric poets.[32] This appreciable technical step in Horace's career is thus strongly marked in a major group of initial poems.

Between the challenge of *Odes* 1.1 and its fulfilment in *Odes* 3.30, there is some sense of internal ascent and onward movement. While I do not fully subscribe to general interpretations of *Odes* 1–3 which regard their order as completely plotted by their author with narrative significance,[33] some element of progress through the collection seems clear. The initial window-display of the adaptation of Greek lyric through metre and themes just noted is followed in Book 2 by a more moderate approach to both metre and subject matter:[34] a set of topics in which moral philosophy is prominent is treated in twenty poems which in the first ten simply alternate the commonest Horatian lyric metres (the Alcaic and Sapphic stanzas). As the book comes to a close, it shows some anticipation of the national and grave themes of the Roman Odes at the beginning of Book 3: in particular, 2.18, with its criticism of luxury and commendation of the poet's own modest sufficiency in the Sabine estate, looks forward to themes from *Odes* 3.1.

In *Odes* 3, there is a clear elevation of content:[35] the opening sequence of six lengthy Roman Odes tackles major themes of politics and public morality in an enigmatic style which combines a vatic, oracular stance with elements of higher poetic genres. *Odes* 3.3 gives a version of the divine assembly approving the apotheosis of Romulus from Ennius' *Annales*, while *Odes* 3.5 tells the story of Regulus, likely to have been treated in the account of the first Punic War in Naevius' *Bellum Punicum*. Several other poems later in the book narrate myths associated with tragedy (Hypermestra in 3.11, Danae in 3.16) or epyllion (Europa in 3.27), and the lofty tone and impressive length of 3.24 and its address to a generalized reader pick up the initial Roman Odes symmetrically towards the book's end, just as 3.29 combines Roman Ode-style length and moralizing with a final address to Maecenas before the epilogue of 3.30. Here, in the final book of the first collection of *Odes*, Horatian lyric reaches its most elevated literary texture: though the *Carmen saeculare* and *Odes* 4 address equally lofty subject matter, in Horace's subsequent poetic career his mid-life lyric achievement seems to represent his finest moment, and his lasting

[32] See Lowrie 1995.
[33] See D. Porter 1987 for an extreme version of this thesis, Santirocco 1986 for a milder one.
[34] See Harrison 2010.
[35] See Lowrie 1997: 224–316.

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reputation is presented as that of the Roman Alcaeus (*Epist.* 2.2.99), a clear allusion to his extensive use of that poet in Books 1–3 of the *Odes* (see most explicitly 1.32) rather than to Book 4, where Alcaeus is barely present.

The first book of *Epistles* presents a conscious contrast with the first collection of *Odes*, which it follows a few years later. Its opening programmatic poem claims that Horace has renounced the frivolities of poetry for the serious concerns of philosophy (1.1.7–12). The pose of not writing poetry is surely ironic in this book of carefully crafted hexameters, and forms part of a consistent ambiguity about the poetic status of Horatian *sermo* (is it 'really' poetry? See further in Section 3 below). The collection's overt shape as a letter collection, though picking up epistolary elements in Lucilius, points to a genre of prose literature, as does its philosophical content (though one should not underestimate the influence of Lucretius' philosophical poem). In terms of Horace's poetic career, however, *Epistles* 1 represents a conscious return to the *sermo* of the 30s, in a slicker, more varied poetry book: the greater number of items (20 in *Epistles* 1 as opposed to 10 and 8 in *Satires* 1 and 2) reflects not only the relative brevity conventional for the letter but also a poet who has in the last decade produced eighty-eight lyric poems in three books.

The turn from Horatian lyric form is matched by a partial turn from Horatian lyric *persona*. Though Horace can still describe himself as *Epicuri de grege porcum* ('a porker from Epicurus' herd', *Epist.* 1.4.16) and can still suggest (in the same poem, at 1.4.13) that each day should be treated as one's last in the true Epicurean style, the poet's hedonistic involvement in the sympotic and erotic world of *Odes* 1–3 has indeed vanished, and he is presented as a trainee moral philosopher who encourages his friends along the same road by appearing equally fallible rather than a stern and superior sage.

The themes of love, drinking, and politics linked with lyric in the style of Alcaeus (*Odes* 1.32.1–12) are replaced by concerns with ethics, friendship, and patronage, all part of moral philosophy in Roman terms. This is best seen in two pairs of poems where an addressee is shared between the two collections. Horace's friend Fuscus can be teased for his Stoicism in both *Odes* 1.22 and *Epistles* 1.10, but where the former poem then turns to Horace's own comic love affair with Lalage, the latter develops an ethical argument about living according to nature. Likewise, the Quinctius invited to put away political concerns and attend a symposium in *Odes* 2.11 is in *Epistles* 1.16 called (via a

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description of Horace's Sabine estate) to match good reputation with good actions and determined moral character. Similarly, the political themes prominent in *Odes* 1–3 and soon to be central to *Odes* 4 are introduced only briefly and incidentally: the military doings of Agrippa, Tiberius, and Augustus are added as mere epistolary topical references at the end of *Epistle* 1.12 (25–9), while Augustus is further alluded to only in celebrating his birthday (*Epist.* 1.5) and as a presentee of the first collection of Odes (*Epist.* 1.13).

The last two poems of the first book of *Epistles* stress further this more relaxed and less grand self-presentation of the philosophical and self-ironizing poet. In 1.19, Horace, in a poem which wittily uses the idea of the drunken poet to pick up the sympotic themes of the *Odes*, asserts his literary importance as the introducer of Archilochean iambus and Lesbian lyric in Latin, taking stock of his poetic career so far while ignoring *sermo* as less important (1.19.21–34). But as so often (see section 3 below), this proud claim is counterbalanced by Horatian self-irony: the poem closes with the comic picture of Horace's determined avoidance of poetic recitation (1.19.35–49), and the collection's final piece takes up the witty conceit of addressing its own poetry book as if it were a slave-boy destined to lose its bloom and beauty through sexual experience. Both poem and book end with an ambivalent autobiography which provides the personal counterpart to the poetic career sketched in 1.19 (1.20.19–28), presenting for the reader's approval Horace's struggle from an unpromising background and early setbacks to the position of friend of Maecenas and Augustus. The marking here of his forty-fourth birthday in December 21 BCE is not so much a date for the book (which must have appeared in 20/19) as a parallel to the normal public career of the elite Roman: Horace has passed the usual consular age (forty-two in the Late Republic), and here sets himself as a private citizen with personal foibles and achievements against the consuls who would normally be his coevals. Just as *Epistles* 1.1 represented Horace as renouncing poetry, so the final poem in the same book presents him as a private individual in the context of the public magistracies of the Roman state.

C. Carmen saeculare *and* Odes *4: return to lyric*

Horace's commission to write a lyric poem (conventionally labelled the *Carmen saeculare*) for performance by a mixed choir of boys and girls at

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Augustus' ideologically crucial *ludi saeculares* of 17 BCE, celebrating the renewal of the *saeculum* or generation of 110 years, represents an anomaly in his career: it is a one-off lyric piece outside a collection, and it is written in a choral rather than a monodic mode.[36] Its link with the Greek lyric genre of paean is clear, but its importance in Horace's poetic career is not so much for its literary qualities as for its status as an occasional poem commissioned for an express politico-religious occasion; the ancient life of Horace attributed to Suetonius suggests the hand of the *princeps* himself in Horace's selection. The death of Virgil in 19 BCE had left Horace as the unchallenged chief poet of Rome, and the *Carmen saeculare* clearly presents him as a kind of laureate, addressing the gods on behalf of the Roman state on a public occasion of the highest profile.

This externally motivated resumption of Horatian lyric clearly led to a further period of production in the genre (this time in its monodic form), which culminated in the fourth book of fifteen odes a few years later. Whether or not (as the Suetonian *Life* suggests – see section 1 above) Augustus himself stimulated this sequel collection by requesting the poems in praise of the victories of his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus (*Odes* 4.4 and 4.14), the character of this last lyric book is distinctly different from that of the first three. Book 4 begins by figuring itself as a return to love (and therefore lyric love poetry), presented as inappropriate for a man past fifty (4.1.6–7): this figure adds six years to the age paraded at the end of the first book of *Epistles* (see above) and a decade to that advertised (at least partly ironically) as already past the time of love in the second book of *Odes* (2.4.22–4). Accordingly, love and its sympotic context appear only in the sequence of poems 4.10–13 (see further below), while the rest of the book is dedicated to weightier themes. This change from the first collection is interestingly indexed in 4.7 and 4.8: 4.7, the famous ode to Torquatus, linking the return of spring with thoughts of changing seasons and human mortality, echoes that to Sestius in 1.4, but without the explicit sympotic and erotic references of the earlier poem (1.4.16–20), while 4.8, stressing the power of poetry to commemorate great deeds, uses the first Asclepiad metre reserved in the first collection for marking Horace's own poetic ambitions in 1.1 and 3.30 (see section 2B above), and apparently honours Censorinus for his military services to Rome.[37]

[36] For recent helpful material on the *Carmen* see Chapter V below.
[37] See Harrison 1990.

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This turn to more nationalistic themes in Horace's final lyric book is partly thematized in 4.2.[38] There Horace addresses Iullus Antonius, claiming that it is impossible to imitate Pindar, the grandest of the Greek lyric poets, and encouraging Iullus in an alternative epic project to praise the victorious Augustus on his forthcoming return from German campaigns. Horace's strictures against Pindaric imitation are at least partly belied in this same poem, where Pindar's function as the encomiast of the victories of great leaders surely points to Horace's own celebrations of Augustus, as well in the Pindaric colour of 4.8[39] and the very obviously Pindaric victory odes for the two imperial princes Tiberius and his brother Drusus (4.4 and 4.14), which celebrate their conquests of the Raeti and Vindelici in 15 BCE. The framework of Pindaric celebration of athletic victory is here turned to the praise of Roman military success.

This nationalistic tendency of the book comes to a climax in 4.5 and 4.15, which address Augustus himself directly: 4.5 longs for his return to Italy and honours him as bringer of peace and prosperity,[40] while 4.15 rounds off Horace's lyric output with an equally enthusiastic encomium of the *princeps*.[41] In both these poems Horace moves into the first-person plural in his descriptions of the capacity of the Roman nation to praise its leader, suggesting solidarity with the community's feelings. This capacity to address and praise Augustus in a whole ode is a new feature in Horace's lyric output, no doubt expressing his increased personal and professional proximity to the *princeps*, but also matching the ability of Pindar to address the greatest figures of the Greek world: among the most enthusiastic political poems in the first collection, *Odes* 1.2 turns directly to Augustus only at the end (1.2.41–52), *Odes* 1.12 turns to Augustus at the end but actually addresses Jupiter (1.12.49–60), and *Odes* 3.5, though it suggests that Augustus will be a god on earth after his conquests, never addresses him personally.

The public and professional recognition conferred by the *Carmen saeculare* commission stimulates an important set of themes in *Odes* 4, which contains Horace's most extensive reflections so far on the status and function of the poet in Rome: the fame that the poet can

[38] See further Harrison 1995b.
[39] See further Harrison 1990.
[40] See DuQuesnay 1995.
[41] See Griffin 2002.

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himself achieve is compared with athletic and military achievement (4.3.1–9), while the fame that he can confer on others is consistently seen as outlasting more conventional modes of commemoration (thematized in particular in the pair of poems 4.8 and 4.9). Horace's public fame is alluded to openly. In 4.3 he thanks the muse Melpomene for his celebrity (4.3.21–4), while in 4.6 he imagines his name recalled in later life by one of the maidens who had served in the choir at the *ludi saeculares* (4.6.41–4). This is the only self-naming by Horace by his *nomen gentilicium* (family name) in the *Odes* and one of only two in all his works (the other is at *Epist.* 1.14.5); it points to his high public recognition after 17 BCE.

This increasingly public aspect of Horace's poetic stance is a crucial feature of Book 4. At the same time, however, continuities with *Odes* 1–3 should not be neglected: this final lyric book coheres with as well as departs from the framework of the previous three. The sequence 4.10–13 is important here: 4.10 picks up the ironic address of 4.1 to Ligurinus and similarly looks to pederastic material in the earlier collection, while 4.11 is a sympotic/erotic ode celebrating the birthday of Maecenas. The appearance here both of this lighter material and of the great patron of *Odes* 1–3 again looks self-consciously back to the earlier collection in its themes. Meanwhile, 4.12 is another sympotic ode, addressed to a Vergilius with evident echoes of the *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*: though it is possible that a relative is meant rather than the poet himself, dead for some years by the time of the poem's publication, both addressee and theme look back to the first collection (where the poet Virgil was addressed in 1.3). Likewise, 4.13 returns not only to an erotic theme of the first collection (the beloved grown old, also alluded to in 4.10 – compare 1.25) but also to a name used for a love object in *Odes* 3.10, to which it serves as an ironic pendant (in 3.10 Lyce rejected Horace, and now she no longer attracts him).

But the main emphasis in *Odes* 4 is undoubtedly that on the mature poet at the zenith of his career, having established himself in a public and national role. One further feature allied to this is the prominence in the book of odes to addressees who are both young and from the highest level of Rome's elite – the imperial princes Tiberius and Drusus (4.4 and 4.14), Iullus Antonius, the nephew and then favourite of Augustus (4.2), and Paullus Fabius Maximus (4.1, which alludes to his recent marriage to Augustus' niece Marcia). As with his more direct relationship with Augustus himself (see above), Horace presents himself as operating at the very highest level in Rome, but the youth of

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these addressees also allows him to come across as a fatherly figure dispensing wise advice to the younger generation. This stance, natural to the ageing poet, had been deployed with good effect with addressees such as Lollius, Florus, Celsus, and Scaeva in the first book of *Epistles*,[42] and will be seen as central to the last phase of Horace's career in his return to *sermo*. The older poet who advises the younger literary aspirant Iullus Antonius in *Odes* 4.2 is a recognizable anticipation of the national authority on poetry in the didactic mode of the second book of *Epistles* and the *Ars poetica*.

D. Epistles *2 and* Ars poetica*: final return to* sermo

As already mentioned, the three poems *Epistles* 2.1 and 2.2 and the *Ars poetica*, which may have been conceived by the poet as a unit and poetic book, seem to belong together in the final phase of Horace's poetic career.[43] *Epistles* 2.1 and the *Ars poetica* can both be dated to the period after *Odes* 4 and in particular to the period between 12 BCE and the death of the poet in 8; though *Epistles* 2.2 is usually dated shortly after the first book of *Epistles*, *c.*19 BCE, there are plausible arguments for grouping it chronologically with *Epistles* 2.1 and the *Ars*. In particular, Florus' service under Tiberius, which opens both *Epistles* 2.2 and *Epistles* 1.3, may refer to two different campaigns rather than the same Eastern expedition: indeed, 2.2.1, *fidelis amice Neroni* ('loyal friend to Nero') may allude pointedly to Florus' years of faithful service since *Epistles* 1.3. Meanwhile, the references in *Epistles* 2.2 to having given up writing lyric could be to the second 'lyric silence' after *Odes* 4 (13) rather than the gap between *Odes* 1–3 and the *Carmen saeculare* (23–17 BCE) alluded to in *Epistles* 1.1 (see above).

This sense of a final phase in a distinguished career is accentuated by several features of these three poems as a group. First, all deal with the theme of poetry in general from a didactic angle. *Epistles* 2.1, addressing Augustus himself, argues against the automatic honouring of older writers, criticizes the crudity of early Roman literature, and praises the civilizing influence of literary Hellenism. *Epistles* 2.2, to Florus, himself probably a poet, talks about the right and wrong ways to approach

[42] E.g. 1.4.19–20, 1.32.11–12, 3.20.5–16.

[43] See Harrison 2008, the arguments of which are summarized here, and have been accepted e.g. by Nisbet 2007: 18; Günther 2013a: 48; and Rudd 2007. Similar views are stated independently in Holzberg 2009: 28–29.

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the profession of poetry, using Horace himself as an example. Finally, the *Ars poetica* famously sets out a series of precepts on poetry, its kinds, and the behaviour of the poet for the appreciation of the young Pisones. This role of poetic preceptor follows naturally on the advisory role which Horace had assumed to some addressees in *Epistles* 1 and *Odes* 4 (see above).

Secondly, all three poems share a sense of Horace's self-location in the Roman literary tradition: a wide range of previous poets is discussed, and there is some emphasis on the now dead Virgil and Varius, suggesting that Horace has some consciousness that the great days of Augustan poetry are coming to an end and that he is the final survivor of the generation which emerged around the time of Actium (31 BCE). Thirdly, all three poems deal with the theme of the usefulness of the poet and of Horace in particular to the community of Rome (*Epist.* 2.1.124, 2.2.121; *Ars poetica* 396–401), though typically this self-elevation is on each occasion followed by some final self-deflation: *Epistles* 2.1 concludes with the lowly fate of bad poets and their verses which Horace seeks to avoid (2.1.267–70), *Epistles* 2.2 with a playful self-address which suggests that the poet has enjoyed more than enough of the pleasures of life (2.2.213–16), and the *Ars* with the celebrated picture of the mad poet who will not leave his listener alone (470–6).

Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, it is in these poems that Horace gives us the fullest retrospective on his poetic career, augmenting the account in *Epistles* 1.19 (see section 2B above). This is done through the poet's self-representation as the author of a body of works in various genres which can now be presented for comparison and assessment. In *Epistles* 2.2 Horace's friends are said to differ in their preferences between *Odes*, *Epodes*, and *sermones* (59–60), and this generic variety is matched at *Ars* 79–85, where Horace refers to Archilochean iambic invective and Pindaric lyric epinician. This last passage implicitly covers key elements of Horace's career with elegant indirection, moving from Archilochus (as the model of the *Epodes*) via a digression about the use of iambics in drama to a Pindarizing account of lyric, which clearly encapsulates the major themes of the *Odes*: hymns, epinicians (no doubt looking to the Pindaric imitations of *Odes* 4), love, and the symposium. Once again the element of surveying the poet's output, whether explicitly or implicitly, would be appropriate to a unified and self-consciously 'late' book in Horace's poetic career.

These factors, taken together, present a consistent picture of the poet in his fifties, a self-constructed Roman laureate at the end of a

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distinguished career, who combines proud self-elevation and self-inscription in the annals of literature with a beguiling touch of self-deprecation. In returning to *sermo* and his earliest and least ambitious literary mode, albeit in the refined epistolary form which he himself had created in the first book of *Epistles* and in a group of works including the longest poem in his output, Horace's poetic career has in a sense come full circle. Though the commitment and importance of his strictures on poetry are not to be underestimated, Horace here elects to bow out on a note of self-restraint and irony towards his own undoubtedly paramount poetic status, and to return to a modified form of the poetic mode in which he had made his name perhaps a quarter-century previously.

3 Self-presentation

The different poetic kinds which constitute Horace's output all seem to have been chosen in part because of the primacy of the poet's voice: Lucilian *sermo* with its strong 'autobiographical' element, Archilochean iambus with its 'personal' invective, Lesbian 'monodic' lyric with its prominent 'I', and epistolary *sermo* with its inevitably central letter-writer, further layered in the *Ars poetica* with the didactic voice of the instructor. Older critics used to regard the first-person voice in Horace as an unproblematic reporter of reality – indeed we can say that this biographical-realistic model was the reigning paradigm up to and beyond Fraenkel's *Horace* in 1957. Much recent work is more nuanced, arguing that any first-person Horatian statements are likely to have been influenced by rhetorical, social, and poetical strategies of various kinds,[44] and must be treated with suitable scepticism from the biographical perspective.[45] Discussions of the use of 'I' in the Greek lyric tradition which Horace uses in the *Odes* have yielded similar complexities,[46] as have discussions of the first-person voice in Roman satire for the *Satires*.[47] Critics used to be much concerned with *persona* theory, the idea that the poet puts on a mask and becomes a character in his own work;[48]

[44] Davis 1991; Oliensis 1998; McNeill 2001; Schmidt 2002b.
[45] See especially Horsfall 1998.
[46] See e.g. Lefkowitz 1991; Slings 1990.
[47] E.g. Muecke 2007.
[48] See e.g. Anderson 1982.

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in a post-theoretical age, most scholars are well aware of the potential complexities of any first-person statement in literature.[49] In what follows I want to consider some aspects of the poet's self-representation in Horace's work, in particular the deliberate downplaying in his poetic texts of some of the most important events in his biographical life and his sometimes self-deprecating presentation of his poetic status.[50]

A. The protected poet

Apart from the brief information about his schooling (see section 1 above), we hear little of the young Horace except for one memorable anecdote at *Odes* 3.4.9–20, when the poet reports that he was miraculously covered with leaves by birds when lost in the country as a child. Scholars rightly point out that such myths of miraculous preservation in deadly perils of childhood (very real in the ancient world) belong especially to stories about poets,[51] and the reader may legitimately suspect that this episode may not be wholly autobiographical. Yet the traditional form and likely fictionality of the myth is carefully counterbalanced by the reality effect inherent in the minute details of Apulian landscape: the poet name-checks three local places (Acherontia, Bantia, and Forentum), the only time that the reader of Horace hears about the small communities of his home country. Thus we find a clear combination of fantasy and realism which avoids spilling over into one or the other.

A similar technique seems to be operating in the famous encounter with the wolf at *Odes* 1.22.9–16, where the poet claims to have frightened off a wolf from his Sabine farm by singing love poetry. Once again, we may doubt whether such an encounter actually occurred: as commentators observe, the love-struck Horace here enjoys the freedom from harm traditional for lovers, and one might add that the poet is depicted as an amusing anti-Orpheus (wild animals flee his music instead of flocking to it). But once again an element of fantasy is combined with an element of detailed realism: the incident is carefully located on Horace's Sabine estate or indeed in the wilds near it.

[49] See e.g. Mayer 2003.
[50] Here I draw on Harrison 2007d.
[51] See e.g. Horsfall 1998: 46.

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A similar lack of clarity can be found concerning another reported incident in Horace's life, his escape from a falling tree. In the continued 'autobiography' of *Odes* 3.4, Horace names this among the three great perils of his life (3.4.25–8), while in *Odes* 2.17 it is seen as the greatest of them, from which he was saved by Faunus and the protection of Mercury, bringing in another deity whose patronage is claimed more than once (see below) for the poet (2.17.27–30). In *Odes* 3.8, on the occasion of the Matronalia which seems to have coincided with the time of the incident (early March), he offers an annual sacrifice of thanksgiving for his deliverance, while in *Odes* 2.13 a whole poem is devoted to a curse on the tree and to imagining the trip to the Underworld so narrowly avoided. It is hard to believe that the incident is wholly fictional, and the fact that it is not mentioned in the more sober autobiographical details found in the *Satires* and *Epodes* might suggest that it took place after 30 BCE; yet the poems offer no fixed date and location for such an important event, a gap which scholars have vainly sought to fill.[52] The symbolic point of the incident – the divine preservation of the protected poet – is clearly more important than its actual place in Horace's life.

B. The poet at war: Philippi, Naulochus, and Actium

As already noted (see section 1 above), Horace fought at Philippi in 42 BCE with Brutus against the future Augustus, a record which he does not attempt to conceal in his poetry (see *Sat.* 1.6.48, 1.7; *Odes* 2.7; *Odes* 3.14.37–8; *Epist.* 2.2.46–8), though flattering mention is usually made of the righteous might of the other side.[53] The main account of the battle is to be found in *Odes* 2.7, judiciously framed as a welcome for a former comrade returning to Italy via a post-Actium amnesty (2.7.9–14). Here, as commentators have noted, Horace gives a brief and almost mythological account of the battle, and the stress is not on his command of a legion (cf. *Sat.* 1.6.48) but on his loss of his shield, which recalls the similar losses suffered by Archilochus and Alcaeus, two of Horace's poetic models, while his protector is Mercury, god of poetry, removing him from the battle in a magic mist like a Homeric hero. Thus Horace's role in a crucial military

[52] See especially Schmidt 2002b: 180–1, who dates the tree-fall to 33 BCE.
[53] See especially Horsfall 1998: 46.

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event is seen through a symbolic and poetic perspective, and we are little wiser about what really happened. The choice of such a fantastic and poetic treatment also avoids the brutal details of the Philippi campaign in which thousands perished on both sides.[54]

In the list of Horace's three main life-dangers in *Odes* 3.4, mentioned above, the falling tree and Philippi are followed by a Sicilian incident, an apparent episode of near-drowning in 'the Sicilian wave' (3.4.25–8). It seems likely that it belongs to the period of the war against Sextus Pompeius and perhaps to the young Caesar's final and successful campaign of Naulochus (36 BCE.). The non-mention in Book 1 of the *Satires* of any connection with Naulochus is unproblematic, since that book is remarkably reticent about the political situation of the time. But, once again, an event which was clearly crucial in Horace's life and perhaps significant in his recently established position as *amicus* of Maecenas (Maecenas was at Naulochus, and Horace may well have accompanied him) is recorded in his poetry with tantalizing obscurity.

Whether Horace accompanied Maecenas to Actium, on which his poetry gives much more evidence, has been a question much debated by scholars.[55] In the *Epodes*, published soon after the battle and written with the hindsight of Caesarian victory, Horace begins his poetry book with a promise to attend his patron to the battle, and adds to this in the book's central poem what looks like a first-hand report of the battle, both of which strongly suggest that the poet was present with Maecenas. On the other hand, *Odes* 1.37 is cast as a celebration from Rome of the victory at Actium, the capture of Alexandria, and the suicide of Cleopatra: like Philippi in *Odes* 2.7, the battle is barely described, and there is no hint of autopsy. Of course, it is more than likely that Horace returned to Italy after Actium and did not go on to the Alexandrian campaign which concluded nine months later (the two are conflated in the ode), but it is surprising that he does not hint at his presence for at least part of the military proceedings which he describes. The poetic need for a schematic account of the battle, and the concentration on the end of Cleopatra, here elides any overtly autobiographical reminiscence.

[54] See Citroni 2001.

[55] Fraenkel 1957 held that both Maecenas and Horace were at Rome during Actium, but most scholars now place both Maecenas and Horace at Actium – see e.g. DuQuesnay 2002; Watson 2003: 57; Nisbet: 2007; 11–12; Günther 2013a. Anderson 2010:40 is still sceptical.

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C. Poet and patron: estates and rewards

Maecenas' gift to Horace of the Sabine estate (mentioned in section 1 above) gave him both financial independence and access to the relaxed rural life which he so often desiderates in his work. But, as already noted, this event is nowhere directly recorded in the poems, and indirect allusions are so vague that an argument has been made that Horace was never given the farm but bought it himself independently, albeit with wealth derived from his connections with Maecenas.[56] At *Satires* 2.6.1–5 the poet expresses gratitude for an estate and incredulity that it is now his property, but does not thank Maecenas, who is not even addressed in the poem (though his friendship for the poet is strongly emphasized in 2.6.30–58). And though allusions to the Sabine estate and its wine are common in odes to Maecenas and can easily be interpreted as elegantly understated thanks (*Odes* 1.9.7, 1.20.1; cf. 3.1.47, 3.4.22), the two further passages which refer to the Sabine estate could easily be taken as general or noncommittal. *Epodes* 1.25–32, addressed to Maecenas, implies that Horace is a landowner and says *satis superque me benignitas tua* / *ditauit*, 'enough and more than enough has your kindness enriched me'. Meanwhile *Odes* 2.18.12–14, not addressed to Maecenas, again makes the point (without direct reference to Maecenas) that Horace needs no more than he has been given already – *nec potentem amicum* / *largiora flagito,* / *satis beatus unicis Sabinis*, 'nor do I ask my powerful friend for greater largesse, rich enough with my single Sabine estate'. Again the comparative *largiora* suggests that the rich friend has already shown generosity in the form of the Sabine estate, and the rich friend is surely Maecenas, but again the overall impression is vague and generalized. As mentioned earlier, Horace's indirect approach to acknowledging the gift of the Sabine estate not only shows delicacy towards Maecenas but also serves to conceal the crudely material workings of the client–patron relationship.[57]

D. The poet's fame: immortality and self-deprecation

The poet's future fame is a common topic of self-presentation in the poetry of Horace's middle and later periods (the *Odes* and *Epistles*).

[56] Bradshaw 1989.
[57] See Bowditch 2001, 2010.

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In Book 4 of the *Odes* this topic seems especially serious, perhaps owing to the conscious closure of a poetic career and consequent concern with commemoration (see section 2C above). In *Odes* 1–3 and the first book of *Epistles*, however, the poet rarely treats this theme without some form of concomitant self-deprecation, one of his most attractive self-presenting strategies.

The future fame of the poet is immediately faced in the opening *Ode* (1.1.29–36). There, the proud boast of divine fellowship and of the patronage of the Muses and the ambition to become a member of the classic canon of lyric poets are lofty ideas, but all are punctured by the sting in the tail: the poet will strike the stars with his head (*sublimi feriam sidera uertice*), an incongruously literal picture which suggests a nasty headache. As we shall see, the deflation of grand claims is a topic of these Horatian self-promotions.

Similarly two-edged is the famous picture of Horace as a swan in the final poem of Book 2 of the *Odes*. Once again air travel is at issue, and the poet begins by presenting himself as in future metamorphosing into a grand poetic bird, soaring immortal above earthly trivialities through the fame of his poetry (2.20.1–8). But then, in the two central stanzas of the poem, this elevated picture is again deflated (2.20.9–16): the poetic swan here becomes jarringly literal, with strong focus on the physical details of the process of metamorphosis (rough skin, white hair, and feathered fingers and shoulders). It also pursues a dubious flight path: comparing oneself to Icarus (as he does) is not a recipe for a safe flight (as Horace notes at *Odes* 4.2.1–4), and this perhaps doomed swan will fly not to pleasant climes but to the ship-grave of the Bosphorus, the deserts of Africa, and the sterile tundra of Scythia. This is worldwide fame only of a sort; these virtually uninhabited regions are not cultured places or appreciative locales for poetry. Once again, immortality is rendered comical.

A similar approach can be seen in *Odes* 3.30, the mirror poem to 1.1 and in the same metre, and the seal poem of the first collection of *Odes*. This begins, like 2.20, with broad claims about immortality: Horace's poetic monument will be more durable than the Pyramids and last as long as Roman culture itself. But then the poem turns to more local ideas (3.30.10–14). There Horace names the river and mythical king of his own birthplace: his career and rise will be famous in his minor home region, a neat inversion of the common *topos* that a poet's work will make his marginal home city well known, comically suggesting

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that he will be appreciated (only?) in the backwoods by local fans. Yet again, grand claims are undermined by humour.

The last in this sequence of self-deprecations occurs in the seal poem to *Epistles* 1. There the poetry book of epistles is comically compared to a slave-boy to be prostituted/sold in the market. It (the boy/book) will lose popularity at Rome and then be exported to the provinces for less discriminating use (1.20.10–13). Here we can see a comic version of the worldwide fame of *Odes* 2.20: the boy/book goes not to glamorous and romantic locations but as a runaway slave or chain-gang member to two marginal developing towns of North Africa and Spain, both growing under Augustus. Finally, the boy/book will be called on to describe its author to potential buyers (1.20.19–28) – the poet was 'born of a freedman father' and in straitened circumstances 'stretched his wings wider than his nest', and was born in the year of Lollius' consulship. Here, in the more relaxed environment of the *Epistles*, we find clear ironization of the grander claims of the *Odes* about its author: the wings too large for the nest surely pick up and play with the poetic swan of *Odes* 2.20, and the stress on Horace's actual age and birthday is an undermining of lyric claims of immortality – he is a real and ephemeral person who fits the traditional framework of Roman consular dating. The date formula which ends Horace's epistle book amusingly echoes the kind of dating which begins the books of an annalistic Roman history, suggesting perhaps that the first book of *Epistles* is a kind of comic chronicle of his life at Rome.

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