

PART I

**Biographical and  
Social Contexts**

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CHAPTER ONE

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The Biographical and Social  
Foundations of Horace's  
Poetic Voice<sup>1</sup>

*David Armstrong*

Descende caelo et dic age tibia  
Regina longum Calliope melos,  
seu uoce nunc mauius acuta  
seu fidibus citharae Phoebi.

Auditis? An me ludit amabilis 5  
insania? Audire et uideor pius  
errare per lucos, amoenae  
quos et aquae subeunt et aerae.

Me fabulosae Volture in Apulo 10  
nutricis extra limen Apuliae  
ludo fatigatumque somno  
fronde noua puerum palumbes

texere, mirum quod foret omnibus  
quicumque celsae nidum Aceruntiae  
saltusque Bantinos et aruum 15  
pingue tenent humilis Forenti,

ut tuto ab atris corpore uiperis  
dormirem et ursis, ut premerer sacra  
lauroque conlataque myrto, 20  
non sine dis animosus infans.

Vester, Camenae, uester in arduos  
tollor Sabinos, seu mihi frigidum  
Praeneste seu Tibur supinum  
seu liquidae placuere Baiae;

uestris amicum fontibus et choris 25  
 non me Philippis uersa acies retro,  
 deuota non extinxit arbor  
 nec Sicula Palinurus unda.

Vt cumque mecum uos eritis, libens  
 insanientem nauita Bosphorum  
 temptabo et urentis harenas 30  
 litoris Assyrii uiator,

uisam Britannos hospitibus feros  
 et laetum equino sanguine Concanum,  
 uisam pharetratos Gelonos 35  
 et Scythicum inuiolatus amnem.

Come down from heaven, sing to the flute,  
 queen Calliope, lasting music,  
 let your piercing voice sound over it,  
 or choose Apollo's harp, or lyre.

Do you all hear it? sweet madness playing  
 with me? I hear and seem to wander  
 through sacred groves, with pleasant waters  
 drifting through them, and pleasant breezes.

There is a fable that fabulous doves  
 in Apulia, on the Vultures' Mountain,  
 outside my nurse's Apulian threshold,<sup>2</sup>  
 strewed me, a child, with fresh-grown leaves

(tired out with play, tired out with sleep),  
 and hid me—a miracle known to all  
 that live in Acherontia, the Eagle's Nest,  
 and the groves of Bantium halfway up  
 and the rich farms of flat Forentum—

that I might sleep there, already covered  
 in sacred laurel heaped with myrtle,  
 safe from black vipers and forest bears,  
 by the gods' favor, precocious infant!

Still yours in the Sabine hills, Italian Muses:  
 yours halfway up in cool Praeneste,  
 yours further down in the canyons of Tibur,  
 or if I like in breezy Baiae.

Neither the rout at Philippi's field  
 nor the accursed tree could kill me,  
 charmed by your sacred springs and dances,  
 nor storms from Sicily, come to the cape  
 of Palinurus: with you I'd tempt

the raging Bosphorus as a sailor,  
and be a traveller through the sands  
that burn on the Assyrian shore,

to Britons, savages to guests,  
to Spaniards drunk on the blood of horses,  
Ukrainian archers and their quivers,  
or the Don's frozen mouth, safe always. (Horace, *Odes* 3.4.1–36) <sup>3</sup>

This is poetry, or at least the original Latin is, as exalted and complex in its lengthy periodic phrasing as even Horace ever attempts. Its obvious theme is poetry and opening spaces by it, yet nothing about it is obvious or simple. Doves carry ambrosia to Zeus (*Odyssey* 12.62), and bees fed Pindar as a child, and similar miracles are told of Stesichorus and Aeschylus. In the second part of the poem, 37–80, Horace will tell Augustus the story of the war between Zeus and the Olympians and the Giants, as a parable of the new emperor's own hard work to establish the *Pax Romana* across the Roman and the known world. He ventures up the scale of difficulty in poetic imitation to the greatest height yet heard of in lyric, to Pindaric models, particularly to the *First Pythian*. There a similar comparison is made between Zeus' wars and triumphs over the Titans and Giants and the king of Syracuse, Hiero, triumphant in a chariot victory at Delphi, triumphant over Carthage and Etruria, but old, sick, and with many enemies at home. The doves, which feed Zeus the stuff of immortality and keep Zeus strong to keep the world at peace, along with the legendary infancy of great poets, are the points of comparison for Horace's childhood. The poet is the helper of the king, and the same gods inspire him as inspire Augustus. This is foreshadowed even at the beginning. The laurel and myrtle that the doves pile over Horace to hide him from beasts are both the typical crowns of poets and Roman military crowns, for laurel crowns were the triumphs for great military victories and myrtle crowns were for the ovation for lesser or peaceful victories, laurel the crown of Apollo and myrtle the crown of Venus.

But this is an essay on Horace's biography, and its relation to his poetry.<sup>4</sup> And the spaces opened to Horace by the Muses are all literal, historically attested, autobiographical spaces that were opened to him in life in one way or another—especially Philippi, where he fought at age 23 as a legionary officer *against* Octavian, the future Augustus, and Antonius, Octavian's rival. For that, the two triumvirs confiscated his properties in his native town of Venusia in Apulia, now Venosa, located in the middle of a vast plain of farmland that it still serves as a farm-town. But by the time Horace published *Odes* 1–3 in 23 BCE, Augustus' court and inner circle included many who, like Horace, had once served with Brutus and Cassius against him, and others who had served with Antony and Cleopatra, and some who had done both. Horace throughout his poetry addresses as patrons and friends many veterans of Brutus' wars with Caesar and Antonius,

and of Antonius' wars with Caesar, now safe and forgiven, like himself, under Augustus' regime and a testimony to Augustus' clemency and willingness to forget the past.

Venosa lies several miles from a broad, long-extinct volcano, Monte Vulture, and from Venosa the little villages Horace describes, Acerenza high up, Banzi halfway down, Forenza in the plain, are still visible.<sup>5</sup> What we can verify about Horace's life and times is essential to understanding his poetry, even the details of his upbringing, property, and status. All the first readers of Horace's publications knew that even in the lyrics he would not have fictionalized his claims to status as an ex-military officer, a Roman knight, a scribe of the treasury, a *index selectus*. All of them knew what the land, on the other side of the Italian boot from the Bay of Naples, where he came from, was like. Italy is a small country, and not all the north of it was even "Italian" in Horace's lifetime, and all Italian citizens were also by then citizens of Rome, and all prosperous Italian citizens had and did business there.

His birthplace was a historic Roman town, a quiet farm-town, and in Horace's day a favorite retirement place for ex-soldiers. Probably a dozen tourists who know something about ancient history go to see the Sabine Farm outside Rome near Vicovaro, for every tourist that goes all the way to Venosa, far out in the southeastern countryside around the ankle of the Italian boot, looking for yet further light on Horace. Venosa is still small even now (12,000 people), still a farm-town, with a few handsome buildings and churches, and some attractive Roman ruins near it. It also features a statue of Horace in the town square, put up as late as 1898, with the unadventurous inscription Q HORATIO FLACCO/VENUSIA/MDCCCXCVIII, suggesting that the local schoolmasters hesitated even to choose a quotation from the works of the most famous citizen ever to have lived there. Horace was a *pugliese*, an Apulian, and harks back to his homeland all his life: in lines 9–10 of *Odes* 3.4 (whatever the text of line 10) he emphasizes that twice. An earlier text shows him uncertain whether his territory is far enough west from the coast toward Greece to be also Lucanian: *Lucanus an Apulus anceps*, he calls himself ("I might be either", *Satires* 2.1.34). Before we were quite at Monte Vulture, driving from Naples on our way there in 1986, I remember being charmed to see a two-armed fingerpost roadsign painted "LUCANIA" on one arm and "APULIA" on the other, as if to embody this question. Monte Vulture is several miles long and looms, at its height of blue-gray stone, 3,000 feet above the fertile plain first created around its volcano, extinct half a million years. It is still cooler in summer there at the top, of course, than the plain below, which is why the infant Horace was sent there by his businessman father. Its top is crowned with resorts, which we drove through, and also to Acerenza, 2,500 feet up at one side, and Banzi, 12 miles southeast of Venosa, and 1,900 feet up. Horace's Forenza was in the plain, which is 1,300 feet above sea level, but it comes with a view of all three places. Deforestation has made it hard to picture Horace's

“bears” roaming the mountain any more (they did then), but his native towns are all still instructive to see.

Our poem claims that everyone up and down the mountain and in the plain knew of the miracle of Horace's childhood. Little had happened in history to Venosa. It was made a Roman colony with the limited form of citizenship called *ius Latii*, Latin rights, in 291 BCE. It served as a refuge for defeated troops fleeing from the defeat at Cannae in 216. In the Social War, 91–88 BCE, it was the only city with Latin rights to join a pan-Italian revolt against the Romans. Though its inhabitants won their full citizenship in the end, the city was taken during the war and many were enslaved. Horace's father was a freed slave, and perhaps he was one of these, and had to earn his freedom all over again. Horace *never* speaks of himself as anything but Italian, a pose that would have gotten him derision had it been false. Most scholars assume that, though a slave, Horace's father was born Italian also.

“Freedmen” like Horace's father—*libertini*—could be found in every economic class in the Roman Empire, from the poorest to the wealthiest. When Horace was born, on whatever day may have been indicated by what we call “December 8, 65 BCE,” according to the calendar before Julius Caesar revised it, possibly in early autumn.<sup>6</sup> His father, who was perhaps born between 100 and 90 BCE, was already free and already prosperous enough to send his son in summer as a matter of course up the mountain and away from the heat, to the house of a nurse, whether free or slave. And his father was well enough known and respected, in an area the size of a large American county, that “everyone” who lived round the mountains and plains knew, before Horace was more than an adolescent, that he had a brilliant and promising son. Thus Horace did not begin his life without space to roam in—that of a whole rural county where he was known and respected—even before his father took him to Rome and bought a house there, from which to supervise his education.

Horace's father, like many freedmen who succeeded in business, was eager to advance his son further in life, and open more space to him, than he could himself ever climb or travel. The ambitions of freedmen of Roman citizens and towns, some of whom had already acquired substantial property before being freed, legally theirs (called their *peculium* and including even personal slaves), were one of the great engines of Roman business. Such talented slaves, like all freedmen of Roman citizens or Roman cities with the franchise, had Roman citizenship on being freed, and could hope for yet more social progress for their children and descendants. And though Horace's father came from a country district, he had easy access to the rest of south Italy, and to the area from Rome, down to Naples, round to Rhegium, Tarentum, and Brundisium, which was the heart of the whole Mediterranean business and trade of the Empire, and to all the resort towns and villa towns on the Bay of Naples, like Baiae and Salerno. Horace's poetry continually evokes these landscapes as well as those of his native district.

We have at least a brief digest of Suetonius' *Life* of Horace. Both it and the poems (no fragment of written prose or of anything supposed to have been said by Horace in conversation survives, but all but a few of the poems are spoken in Horace's own *persona*) give us a number of facts about Horace, particularly about his class, property, and standing. It was not socially acceptable or, as far as property and standing and offices held go legal, for him to misrepresent these in writing. Whatever you could get away with in the provinces, in Rome itself pretenders to rank were mercilessly ridiculed, even prosecuted in court.<sup>7</sup> Horace was born a free Roman citizen, and to parents who were most probably *both* freed slaves, though we know nothing about his mother. His father was a freedman, and freedmen tended to marry freedwomen. He was also an auction broker, *coactor auctionum*, a lucrative profession at the heart of Roman business, which depended on the conversion of goods and real estate into coin. Dull as Venosa was, its inhabitants had been Roman citizens since the Social War of 81–78 BCE. By Roman law, whatever Roman inhabitant freed the elder Horatius (if it was not the town of Venosa itself, whose *servus publicus* he could equally well have been) gave him and his children Roman citizenship. It was full citizenship with all privileges, but with the limitations the law imposed on freedmen. You should behave as the faithful client of whoever freed you for the rest of your life or his. However much wealth you accumulated, you could never wear the gold ring that identified the two highest classes of citizens, to which all Horace's great patrons and friends belonged, the senators and the knights. You could acquire many times the legally required property for the status, yet could never be a Roman knight, *equus Romanus*, which gave you immense privileges in civil law even above ordinary Roman citizens throughout the rest of the Empire. Much less could you be a senator, a lifetime privilege which required election to at least one major magistracy in Rome in addition. The rich freedman Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon* only dares to wear a gold ring "covered with iron ornaments like stars" (32). And that although he is rich enough to buy and sell many a Roman knight, and both he and his guests make the point explicitly that he could do so if he chose.

Horace's father was debarred from these ranks, but he had a son—evidently an only or only surviving son, for Horace mentions no brothers and sisters, and he and his father are apparently thought of as a pair confiding in each other alone when he describes their relationship in *Satires* 1.4 and 1.6. How far freedmen's sons could rise in rank was a gray area of the law. Five years before Horace's birth, in 70 BCE, came the last census ever successfully conducted by the ex-consuls who were chosen as censors by the laws of the Republic.<sup>8</sup> After that, for forty years, the census was often started but always abandoned. The power the censors had to strike Roman citizens from the list and cancel their privileges exercised all over the empire, such as their tax exemptions, the superior status in provincial governors' law courts, or their right of freeing slaves and paying a 5 percent tax on their value to convert them into Roman citizen clients of their

own, was too frightening. So also the censors' power of dismissing even senators from their lifelong status as senators, and *equites* from their "public horse," was too explosive and controversial for two senior senators, however respected, to exercise it successfully on their own sole responsibility. When Augustus finally revised the lists of the senate, knights and people in 28 BCE, having awarded himself and Agrippa censorial powers, he was accompanied to the Senate to announce his new list of senators by soldiers concealing arms under their togas. It encapsulates some important aspects of Horace's career that the *equites*, one of whom he now was, and the *plebs* were generally as willing to accept the new census as they were to accept nearly everything else the new regime did. But Horace was an enthusiastic convert to the new regime, and his status remained unquestioned.

The law required that to be *equus* or *senator* you should have property valued at 400,000 sesterces, which were only units of account and not really coins in Horace's youth, or 100,000 denarii, the real currency of daily life in Italy. Augustus thought proper in revising the Senate to raise the qualification to 1,000,000 sesterces for senators. But that really only brought to full definition a view which Horace endorses, that senators ought to have and spend more to support their rank than the *equites*. In *Satires* 1.6, published at age 30, he already claims that he could be a senator if he liked, but it would cost too much and gain him too little. When he pictures in *Satires* 2.3.168–86 a self-made Italian businessman, "Oppidius," *dives antiquo censu*, "rich by standards of earlier times," telling his two sons he will curse them and disinherit them in his will if they waste his money buying their way into the Senate, just for the "vain titles" of aedile or praetor, he is picturing a situation similar to his own and his father's, though I think no commentary says this explicitly. Whatever one chooses to make of this claim, it seems plausible at face value. Thus in 35 BCE, while Octavian and Antony were still disputing the leadership of the Roman world and would for another four years, the 35-year-old Horace can write of himself as one who could be not just a Roman knight but a marginal senator, one of the 600 in the House of Lords of the Roman Empire. However, he knows he could have a status among the aristocracy equivalent only to that of a Labor life peer, not that of a hereditary earl or duke. His father is spoken of already in this book as no longer living, but it is doubtful that his wildest dreams for Horace's future status went even that far.

The beautiful denarii of the Republic, with which Italy was fairly well monetized in Horace's day—at least by the standards of the ancient world—are still not expensive to buy at coin sales, at least in common types (\$25 in average condition on Ebay as of February 2009). In terms of US dollars in 2009, their purchasing power seems to have been that of the common currency that stuffs our wallets, \$20 bills, or perhaps not quite: I thought of denarii as \$5 bills when I first wrote about this subject in 1986, but probably the \$20 bill will not even be enough before long. A person with a secure net worth of two million dollars

in our society in 2009 has about the sort of status and influence the equestrian class claimed in the Roman world. On this equestrian minimum census of 100,000 denarii you could expect a yield of 5 percent, or 20,000 sesterces a year, in a society where bare subsistence could be had for 200–400 sesterces. So Juvenal’s disappointed male gigolo Naevolus, who mentions this income (9.140) as his minimum that he had hoped for, was hoping to be *pauper ... et eques* (Martial, 4. 40.4), on the minimum census. Martial thinks you can even get 6 percent out of the minimum equestrian fortune (cf. Courtney on Juvenal 9.140) and have 24,000 a year. I know that ancient and modern incomes are difficult to compare, but \$120,000 a year in New York City and that notionally equivalent income in Rome c.100 BCE—100 CE seem at the beginning of 2009 a fair comparison none the less.

Money had depreciated a little from Horace’s day to Martial’s and Juvenal’s, but the minimal equestrian census even then still made you a person of respect, even in Rome, let alone the countryside. You could also have lots more than that, and be *equus splendidus* and *clarus* to distinguish you from the herd. Indeed, you could be like Horace’s immensely rich patron Maecenas or (at a more reasonable level) Cicero’s friend Atticus, who had two million sesterces of *census*, which made him moderately rich, and twelve million after an inheritance, which made him very rich. And still, like both these men, you could refuse to enter the Senate, and simply keep the rank of *equus Romanus*. Horace’s colleague in poetry, Vergil, another rich knight, died worth twenty million sesterces, richer even than Atticus. At all levels, the equestrian class was proud of its business abilities and its endless interactions with greater people as patrons and clients. Yet even for the most merciless Roman businessmen and moneylenders a pretence of leisure and landowning and a wish to retire from the City to the country for quiet was part and parcel of equestrian rank. Thus Horace’s poetry, especially after Maecenas had given him the Sabine Farm (by 30 BCE, when he was 35), is full of what his rank required of him, unenthusiastic references to the boredom of business work in Rome as *scriba* and *index*, and idealizations of country quiet, study, and peace at the farm (*Satires* 2.6–7). For that matter in *Satires* 1.6.111–31, as part of his self-portrait as a potential senator, he makes perfectly clear that even in Rome he already had abundant leisure, daylong if he liked.

How did Horace reach this enviable position, even before Maecenas became his patron? Wealth and *census* were denominated in theoretical denarii, not real ones. Very much revenue was in kind, and property in land, houses, and slaves had also to be realized into silver coins when they were sold (Augustus and his successors introduced gold and bronze on a large scale). All this coin was carefully realized, collected, and guarded by commission brokers and dealers. “Auctioneers” were at the cash foundation of Roman business life. That was the business Horace’s father was in, probably for both private persons, and for the local, and later on the central, Roman government. Horace calls him (and so does the *Life*) a *coactor*, goods gatherer, for the auctions. But probably he could

double as a *praeco* or goods-barking auctioneer, or as *argentarius*, collector of money from bidders. These were not always separate roles. There were 1 percent commissions from the state and from private persons for each of these to earn from this trade, and these commissions built the houses—for example—of such Pompeiian freedmen as L. Caecilius Jucundus, some of whose auction account books survive, and the Vettii brothers. Probably the tough survivor's face of Jucundus' portrait statue is the sort of thing to think of in picturing Horace's father. But it is worth noting that art historians are beginning to discard the theory that these big, handsome town houses with their elegant and discreetly erotic decorations are mere McMansions in imitation of the greater artistic culture of the aristocratic villas outside the towns.<sup>9</sup> Horace's poetry, particularly his earliest publications, the two books of Satires, published at age 30 and age 35 in 35 and 30 BCE, is full of clues and explicit statements about his upbringing and about the exact rank it bought for him. And while poetry and imagination to some extent color these statements, they can be shown to have a factual basis.

The first of these factual claims made in the Satires is that Horace's father moved him to Rome, and bought a house there on the Esquiline, to a city where already for a hundred years visiting client kings had famously found themselves too poor to rent anything that suited their station, without planning elaborately in advance. He could, says Horace, have sent his son to school at Venusia with the sons of centurions—these made nearly half an *eques*' minimum income in the army, and were important people in small towns—but moved him to Rome, and gave him an education that put him squarely among the two upper ranks.

macro pauper agello  
 noluit in Flavi ludum me mittere, magni  
 quo pueri magnis e centurionibus orti  
 laevo suspensi loculos tabulamque lacerto  
 ibant octonos referentes idibus aeris, 75  
 sed puerum est ausus Romam portare docendum  
 artis quas doceat quivis eques atque senator  
 semet prognatos. vestem servosque sequentis,  
 in magno ut populo, siqui vidisset, avita  
 ex re praeberi sumptus mihi crederet illos.  
 ipse mihi custos incorruptissimus omnis  
 circum doctores aderat.

Low born, and not rich in land,  
 he would not have me sent to Flavius' day-school,  
 where hulking centurions' hulking louts of sons,  
 with pack and tablets hung on their left arms,  
 went clutching their eight brass pennies on the Ides:  
 but dared to take his son to Rome and teach him  
 whatever studies the greatest knight or senator  
 would teach his sons. My clothes and my train of slaves,

as is necessary in crowded cities, whoever saw  
 would believe an ancestral fortune supported my spending.  
 He himself, the most incorruptible of protectors,  
 went with me to all my teachers'... (*Satires* 1.6.71–82)

Horace's father must have been born about 100–90 BCE. He was declaring a certain amount of leisure from business by now (c.50 BCE, in the middle of the civil wars caused by the First Triumvirate), just by taking off work and accompanying his son back and forth from his Roman house to school. But the rewards for auction-broking in Rome itself were the greatest in the Empire, and no doubt his south Italian connections made him a success. One of the fashionable teachers we know he hired for Horace was from south Italy, not far from Venosa, Orbilius of Beneventum, now Benevento, who taught Horace the early Latin poets (Horace mentions Livius Andronicus) and was famous for inflicting beatings on his students. Orbilius was remembered affectionately by them, as were many brutal Victorian schoolmasters by their aristocratic students (like John Keate, DD, 1773–1832, headmaster of Eton, who was adored by his students throughout their later life though he once flogged eighty of them in one day). Such parallels with the *plagosus Orbilius* are often mentioned in Horace commentaries of the nineteenth century, but they do not often enough draw the obvious conclusion that Horace was being educated among schoolmates of the two higher ranks in the Republic, in order to push himself as high in rank as he could be made to go. Where Horace is testing the reader's credulity is in saying immediately about his father:

nec timuit, sibi ne vitio quis verteret, olim  
 si praeco parvas, aut ut fuit ipse, coactor  
 mercedes sequerem: neque ego essem questus: at hoc nunc  
 laus illi debetur et a me gratia maior.

He was never afraid it would be a reproach to him  
 if as auctioneer or, as he was, auction broker,  
 I piled up small gains: nor would I complain: as things are,  
 I owe him praise and gratitude all the more.

These lines suggest that Horace's father, by pushing him ahead in society, enabled him to attain the rank of Roman *eques*, with several times the necessary fortune. Horace goes on to assert that at Rome, in his house there, he can spend all the day free from business if he wants (*Satires* 1.6.110–31). The morning has no business duties, the afternoon can be spent wandering around lonely as a cloud, checking out the goings-on in the Forum and attending services at one temple or another, and then having dinner by himself at home, a dinner "served by only three slaves." (116) Commentators have sometimes talked as if these were the only slaves he had at his Roman house. But Horace characterizes in the same book Tigellius, a monster of excess in both directions, as being someone

he has seen sometimes rich enough to keep 200 slaves (therefore a rich senator's household) and sometimes so poor he is down to his last ten (*Satires* 1.3.11–12). Horace's point is that he only needs three of his slaves to serve him dinner *when he dines by himself*. This assertion does not appear to be a mark of ostentation. Along with the house they served him in—for owning one's own house in Rome was as unusual as in modern New York City—it places him clearly in a certain class and rank. The house alone will have had two or three dozen slaves at least, not to mention his other properties.<sup>10</sup>

This is in the first of his books, published at age 30, and we know something about how he got to this point. His father sent him to Athens, to be educated with “senators’ and knights’ sons” like those he had gone to school with. And like the fashionable Roman boys’ schools, it cost him a lot. Philosophy, studied at Athens, was the culmination of aristocratic educations. Cicero gave his son the income of an entire apartment house he owned to live on during his philosophical studies at Athens, and if Horace had not been able to hold up his head in this sort of society, one of the central events of his life would never have happened. He began philosophical studies that he claims lasted the rest of his life, and he clearly values this knowledge both in itself (he kept a lifelong but skeptical preference for the Epicureans, as Cicero kept a skeptical preference for the Stoics) and as a class marker and bond with aristocratic Roman amateurs of philosophy. When he was 22, not long after the assassination of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius the Liberators arrived in Athens and enlisted all the young aristocrats there who would come into their army against Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus, the new Triumvirs. We may assume on the evidence of the *Life* that Brutus personally conferred, probably at the request of Horace's friends, the rank of *tribunus militum* on Horace. As one of the board of six officers who formed the officer corps of a legion, the rank conferred the equestrian gold ring for life, as monuments show,<sup>11</sup> in its most unquestionable form, earned by military office in youth; the grant of the *equus publicus*, a cavalry horse paid for by the state; and the right for life to sit not just in the front fourteen rows at spectacles and theatre performances that were reserved for the *equites*, but in the first two of these rows. In other words, officer service, for the upper classes, was repaid with lifetime, upper-class privileges.

In the end, after the loss at Philippi, Horace expressed no great affection for Brutus at any time in his life. In *Satires* 1.7 he pictures Brutus as a distant, contemptuous presence, listening to two noisy litigants, both wealthy Romans, in a business case. Brutus does this in his role as provincial governor, on which his right to lead his army was founded. The litigant Persius calls Brutus “the sun of Asia, and his suite of companions lifegiving stars,” *Satires* 1.7.23–4, for the court of a governor and the governor himself were sometimes addressed even by Romans in language appropriate to regal flattery. But his opponent Rex is the Dog Star, and since Brutus cuts kings’ throats, the satire concludes, why not Rex’s throat also? <sup>12</sup>

Whatever he thought of Brutus as a person, Horace is clearly proud that he won this distinction in the last armies of the Republic, rather than from the triumvirs or the emperor. Though he says the appointment was controversial, with soldiers in camp chanting the words *libertino patre natus*, “born of a freedman for a father,” (*Satires* 1.6.45–8) and the defeat cost him much property, by confiscation (*Epistles* 2.2.49–53), he had enough left to buy the *scriptus quaestorius* when he returned.

He could have lived the rest of his life in ease in this position, a splendid “job” in both senses of the word, both several ranks higher in the state service than the state’s auctioneers and auction brokers, and far more of a sinecure. The board of scribes to the annually elected quaestors who ran the treasury had the equestrian census, or near it, though the freedmen among them could not wear the ring. Indeed, the office itself cannot have cost less than the equestrian census, because it gave the holder a 4 percent commission on the revenues he registered, and this must have been far more than the 24,000 sesterces the minimum equestrian property could yield at best. This generous commission was not considered an instance of corruption,<sup>13</sup> and it implies a lot of practical work which Horace does not describe. It was so profitable that one did not exercise it every year, and thus attended board meetings and committees only in off years.

Horace will probably have bought the position of scribe at about age 25, in 40 BCE. We know this was the minimum age to be an equestrian *iudex selectus*, or justice/judge of the peace, as Horace became at some point in the thirties BCE. He may even have attained the rank this early, as an ex-tribune of the soldiers.

Then his friend the poet Vergil, and the tragic poet Varius, sponsored his introduction as a promising writer to Maecenas, with Agrippa, one of Octavian’s two most trusted associates. Maecenas’ circle of friends, and now Horace’s, included not only Vergil and Varius but Plotius Tucca, later Vergil’s editor after his death, and the literary critic Quintilius Varus. All four of these wealthy young men of equestrian rank, together, are now known to have been addressees of a treatise written in the forties BCE by the Epicurean poet and philosopher Philodemus (c.110–c.35 BCE), whose verses and even prose treatises are referred to by Horace, among his many other models, throughout his poetic career. All four names occur frequently together in Horace’s early poetry, but Maecenas’, as his principal patron, the most often.

There was a third equestrian rank, or the equivalent, that Horace held, probably in 35 BCE when he wrote *Satires* 1, and certainly in 30 BCE when he wrote *Satires* 2: *iudex selectus*. In *Satires* 1.4, he pictured his father holding the Roman *iudices selecti* up for admiration to him, as a boy, and clearly hoping his behavior would merit comparison with theirs and possible admission to their rank (*Satires* 1.4.120–3).<sup>14</sup>

For the whole last hundred years of the Republic, the right to be a *iudex* and decide on one’s own authority smaller cases between parties and smaller criminal

offences, as well as sit on larger juries and permanent legal commissions for larger cases, had been battled over by senators, *equites* of high rank, and *equites* and marginal census-holders of lower rank. Horace was one of these *iudices*. It was a time-consuming occupation for gentlemen of leisure, similar to the duties of a landed gentleman or rich Londoner who is “justice of the peace” in a Victorian novel. These also were required, not to be legal experts, but to have legal experts (*juris consulti*) accessible for consultation, and, like Roman *iudices*, were unpaid, and expected to be vital elements in the maintenance of order and upper-class rule. Aulus Gellius was a *iudex selectus* under Hadrian, and describes with some pride his duties and the required consultations with aristocratic juriconsults it entailed to make decisions correctly,<sup>15</sup> even as Horace flaunts his acquaintance with the two Epicurean-leaning juriconsults, Trebatius Testa (*Satires* 2.1) and Manlius Torquatus<sup>16</sup> (*Epistles* 1.5). Recognized moral character in business matters was required for this office, as his father had told him (he claims) in his boyhood, not just in business matters, but even in sexual relations. Romans disapproved of adultery and of interference with freemen’s children, and also valued chastity in childhood at least until the assumption of the *toga candida* at 14 or 15. This Horace’s father required of him (*Satires* 1.4.103–26). He seems to have attained the ranks of *equus equo publico* (far from the poorest among these), *scriba quaestorius*, and *iudex selectus*. That is as much and more than his father, now dead, had hoped, though he would supposedly have settled for less.

More surprisingly, in his first book publication, Horace asserts in detail in *Satires* 1.6 that he has the money and influence to get himself even the rank of senator. He could easily be elected as *quaestor*, the first of the elected ranks that made you a senator for life. He could even borrow money as did a certain foolish “Tillius,”<sup>17</sup> a mirror of what would happen to Horace if he went too far with this imaginary career-track (*Satires* 1.6.24–5, 105–9). He could (one supposes, by giving the expensive games or doing the expensive public works demanded of senators of the next rank, the aediles) raise himself to be one of the praetors. The board of these officials doubled as army generals during their term and provincial governors after it, but they were also the supreme judges that preside over the *album iudicum* Horace belonged to as *iudex selectus*, though his fantasies do not include the ultimate honor of the consulship. This too is a claim that would have made him ridiculous if not supported by facts.<sup>18</sup> But like his patron Maecenas, who (cf. *Satires* 1.8) was already building a palace on the Esquiline that astounded all Rome by its magnificence and yet did not think the Senate worth entering, he would rather keep his leisure than overcome doubts about his birth on the part of the public by offering himself at the election, or risk more doubts from any possible set of censors that came along. His right to be *equus Romanus* was presumably already secure. Moreover, he would be merely wasting time and money. “Tillius” was compelled, first as quaestor and then praetor, to appear in public with *servos sequentes*, a train of five slaves, in Tillius’ case carrying his chamber-pot and wine-jar (107). But this is far too few for a person of praetorian

rank, even on Tillius' journey to suburban Tibur, presumably already known as Horace's own summer resort.

nunc mihi curto  
 ire licet mulo vel si libet usque Tarentum  
 mantica cui lumbos onere ulceret atque eques armos:  
 obiciet nemo sordes mihi quas tibi, Tilli.

As things are, if I like,  
 I can go on a bob-tailed mule as far as Tarentum,  
 a pack irritating its loins, and a Roman *Eques*  
 on its shoulders, and no one calling me cheap, like you...  
 (*Satires* 1.6.103–5)

He had already said, in *Satires* 1.4, in describing his first visit to Maecenas,

ut veni coram, singultim pauca locutus,  
 infans namque pudor prohibebat plura profari,  
 non ego me claro natum patre, non ego circum  
 me Satureiano vectari rura caballo,  
 sed quod eram narro.

When I came before you, talking in gulps and briefly,  
 for speechless modesty kept me from babbling out more,  
 I did not say my father was noble, nor round my fields  
 there was a nag from Tarentum carrying—me,  
 but I told you what I was. (*Satires* 1.4.56–60)

Maecenas had perhaps asked, why are you wearing the equestrian gold ring? Horace replied that he had the rank but was not high-born, a freedman's son, but without immense landed property, though he had property in south Italy (whatever he lost at Venusia). Nor was there a "nag from Tarentum," a *caballus*, the popular word for horse, carrying this particular *eques*. His joke is that he is an *eques* on a *caballus*, or even, if he felt like it, a *mulus*.<sup>19</sup>

Presumably Horace even had business interests at Tarentum, a commercial port on the sea at the middle of the sole of the Italian boot, since he parades journeys there in his *Odes* and even asks a friend, Septimius, to invest with him there in real estate, *Odes* 2.6.9–24.<sup>20</sup> In *Odes* 1.28, 29, the speaker is sailing to Tarentum for profit, 27–9. The corpse of the dead man lying on the shore who asks the speaker for burial addresses the speaker, whom I take to be Horace, as being a citizen of Venusia (26), and also remarks that the ancient philosopher Archytas had been buried, as he wishes to be, on the "Matinian shore," near Tarentum (3). Horace famously contrasts himself to Pindar, the Theban Eagle, as the "Matinian Bee," *Odes* 4.2.27–8.

However that may be, his Epicurean circle and their connections raised his prosperity still higher. Between 35 and 30 BCE, Maecenas gave Horace a farm with several tenant farms in the Sabine hills above Rome to the northeast. Horace

already had a house in Rome that had probably been his father's. We do not know when in the twenties Augustus gave Horace, or he bought, property in Tibur, now Tivoli, but he had a house there too by the time he published the *Odes* in 23 BCE. Nor do we know whether Horace had yet another house north of Rome and above it at Praeneste, now Palestrina, or merely liked to stay there for extended periods. He later—in *Epistles* Book I, published three years later in 20 BCE—claims to have read all the way through both Homeric epics during a stay at Palestrina, in order to versify what proves to be Philodemus' allegory of Homer's teachings about good and bad "kings," and apply it to Roman people of rank, *Epistles* 1.2.2.<sup>21</sup> As for Baiae, also mentioned in *Odes* 3.4 among the spaces opened to Horace by his success and his patrons, he probably visited resorts on the other side of south Italy from his birthplace whenever he liked, particularly in winter, but did *not* own property there. For he was perfectly willing, according to *Epistles* I, to change Baiae for Velia (Elea) and Salerno for the winter on the advice of his doctor, Antonius Musa, who was also Augustus' doctor (*Epistles* 1.15.1–3). Horace apparently contemplates both renting lodging in these places, as he will have done yearly in Baiae before, and buying himself better wine and concubines than his Sabine farm could provide (15.18–21). He asks a senatorial friend, Numonius Vala, whose ancient and illustrious family were the hereditary patrons of the Greek city of Paestum nearby, about how to travel there. But he explicitly classes himself below those few, like Vala, who were rich enough to *own* seaside villas at the great resorts on the Bay of Naples:

Nam tuta et parvula laudo  
cum res deficient, satis inter vilia fortis:  
verum ubi quid melius contigit et unctius, idem  
vos sapere et solos aio bene vivere, quorum  
conspicitur nitidis fundata pecunia villis.

for I praise what is safe and small,  
when my balance is low, brave enough to live on the cheap side;  
but when things are better and richer for me, I hold  
that only you are the wise men and know how to live  
whose solid funds are on show in your glorious villas. (15.42–6)

Horace separates himself deliberately, as an equestrian of rank, from the villa-owning classes but moves in their circle.

We can return at last to the claims Horace makes for himself at age 42, in 23 BCE, in the passage from *Odes* 3.4 with which we began. As a favored poet of Augustus' new regime, at the time of publication of the three first books of odes in 23 BCE (indeed, on some datings, already in 28 BCE, if *Odes* 3.4 was written separately, or reflects his situation five years earlier as well as at the time of publication), all Italy is open to him. He owns country houses both in the Sabine hills, at what is now Licenza, 4,500 feet above sea level, and farther down at Tibur, now Tivoli, 770 feet above sea level. He can summer at Praeneste, 1,500

feet above sea level, and winter at Baiae down on the Gulf of Naples, if he likes, theoretically a health resort with hot baths and sulphur treatments, but also famous throughout both the life and the literature of the Republic and the Empire as (literally) a byword for expense, luxury, and decadence. These are the parallels for high Acerenza, medium-high Banzi, and flat Forenza and Venosa where he came from. Life had not been without challenge. Horace once risked his life to fight the Triumvirs—that is, Caesar, later Augustus himself, his addressee, along with Mark Antony—in the army of Brutus and Cassius. Later times were more peaceful, but he was nearly killed by a falling tree on his Sabine estate, and on one of his numerous visits to his native south Italy, he was nearly drowned in a shipwreck off Cape Palinurus south of Salerno. All these places are real.

But in imagination, Horace claims in *Odes* 3.4, he would gladly face the further challenge of traveling as a tourist round the whole Roman Empire. Not just to provinces already visited by Roman armies and open to Roman conquest, like Spain or Britain, but places not yet conquered. Even to places unthinkable for ordinary Romans when he was born, like the land of the Geloni, whose name means the “frost people,” in Ukraine, or the burning Assyrian sands, or the mouth of the Tanais, now the Don, but even so not entirely beyond Augustus’ and Agrippa’s ambitious projects for foreign relations and conquest. He will see them as a boat traveler, *navita*, and a land traveler, *viator*, and just for the pleasure of seeing them, *visam*, “I shall go sightseeing”: *visere* is to travel for the pleasure of travelling. We do not actually know that Horace ever left Italy for the rest of his life, even for easy places like Greece, after he returned from Philippi to find his lands confiscated at Venosa and took up the scribeship and his literary pursuits for a living. But there is much more here than the literal meaning. Juno has just said in the previous Ode, 3.3, that when she abandons her temporary hostility to Rome, the one portrayed in the *Aeneid*, she will open it up to the Romans both to conquer, and to tour as avid sightseers, the whole known world:

quicumque mundo terminus obstitit,  
 hunc tanget armis, visere gestiens,  
 qua parte debacchentur ignes,  
 qua nebulae pluviique rores.

whatever limit is set the world  
 he shall reach in conquest, longing for new sights,  
 wherever the fires, wherever the clouds  
 rage highest and the storms of rain. (*Odes* 3.3.53–6)

The ancient commentary handed down as “Porphyrio” is quite right to explain that *Odes* 3.4 begins with *descende caelo*, “come down from heaven,” as a reference to Horace’s concluding deprecation of his pretence to know Juno’s exact words at the end of 3.3 (69–72). It is quite impossible to understand Horace’s reason for these grandiose travel plans without looking at the previous

poem also, for Horace would only look silly if he had issued *Odes* 3.4 on a sheet by itself. *Odes* 3.3.53–6 is essential to explain what he means in *Odes* 3.4.30–6. Like the Roman soldier of 3.3 he can travel in book form until the world ends, travel both in time and in space. Julius Caesar had conquered Gaul and had wanted to conquer Parthia as well, and had named for himself a month in the Julian calendar. Augustus had already named August for himself and put it right after July, and Augustus' and Agrippa's cartographers were already making up the maps of world organization, conquest, and frontier diplomacy that resulted in such monuments as the great Map of Agrippa, set up in Rome in the *Porticus Vipsania* not long after Horace's death. Their propaganda during Horace's lifetime was centered on pacification and expansion now that the long era of civil war was over and Rome united under the Principate. But Horace has a third meaning which is not literal, and which only works in the context of the Roman *Odes* as a set and of the three books of *Odes* as a whole. In the real world other Romans than himself may conquer and travel, in his lifetime and after his death, *but they will take his poetry with them*. Already in his lifetime he values the Roman peace for his personal safety, as he makes clear in *Odes* 3.14.14–16, and believes as long as Augustus rules the whole earth, the civil wars will not return,

ego nec tumultum  
nec mori per vim metuum, tenente  
Caesare terras,  
  
nor shall I fear  
insurrection or death in riots if Caesar  
keeps hold of the world.<sup>22</sup>

But if Horace ever left Italy and Sicily again after his return from Philippi, even to go as far as Greece, he does not mention it and neither does any ancient source. He means the reader to take in what looks like the literal meaning, that Horace will personally travel and sail under the Muses' protection anywhere currently under Roman rule in 23 BCE as the book is published, or even in diplomatic contact with Rome, and then discard it.

For Horace's figurative meaning, the real one, is set forth fully at the end of Book 2 of the *Odes*, 2.20, where he forbids mourning at his funeral: he is already in his lifetime turning into a swan that will fly over the whole map of empire. He will live forever all over it in the memory of provincials now not civilized enough to read, like the Spaniards, currently drinking horse's blood, who will later read Horace once they know how:

Iam Daedaleo notior Icaro  
visam gementis litora Bospori  
Syrtisque Gaetulas canorus  
ales Hyperboreosque campos.

Me Colchus et qui dissimulat metum  
 Marsae cohortis Dacus et ultimi  
 noscent Geloni, me peritus  
 discet Hiber Rhodanique potor.

More famous than Icarus the craftsman's son  
 I shall explore the shores of Bosphorus  
 and the sands of Africa, a singing  
 bird, and the Hyperborean fields;

Medea's countrymen, Dacians pretending  
 no fear of South Italian soldiers,  
 the farthest, frozen men, and learned  
 Spaniards, and those by the Rhone shall learn me  
 by heart<sup>23</sup>... (*Odes* 2.20.13–20)

Horace assumes you have already read this concluding Ode of Book 2, if you are to understand *Odes* 3.4.1–36 and his “travel plans” there.

Thus the grand Pindaric passage with which we began turns out to be solidly factual and autobiographical as well. It is even a fact that Horace is still read, even memorized, in more countries today than Agrippa's map contained, including all the ones he mentions. But the claim to have won status in Rome and space of his own all throughout Italy, and all over the Empire for his poetry, from a start in the rustic farmlands of the south, is historically accurate. Yet the passage shows satisfyingly, thus taken, that though perhaps a poem here and there is to be taken as written and read to friends earlier than the publication of the whole, the Roman *Odes*, 3.1–6, are meant to be read together rather than separately, and even with the last odes of Book 2 as a background.<sup>24</sup> Horace places himself through this series of poems in the whole context of time and space, of vast and expanding empire, of the sense of all the centuries of Roman history coming to a climactic point, of a memory of this climactic point that will last for ages, that the optimistic art of the early Augustan period loved to portray.

All four of the satirists, Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal, and also the epigrammatist Martial, their congener, make it clear that they were Roman *equites*, and proud of their rank (as were many other Roman writers; and the three senatorial literary men one thinks of first, Cicero, Lucan, and Seneca, were all born to equestrian families). All five, though rich by everyone's standards but those of the few thousand greatest men in the Empire, claim that they are men of moderation occupying an ideal mean in their life style, an *aurea mediocritas* between the truly great and the poor, but none at such length and in such detail as Horace. Why Horace says more about his rank than the others is clear enough. He was a freedman's son, and it was important to him, and presumably to Maecenas' circle, including the future Augustus, to create a self-portrait explaining his title to be among them. But all the equestrian poets who mention their rank, and many like Lucretius and Vergil who do not explicitly do so, are assuming

not just the *otium equestre*, the equestrian leisure from senatorial politics, but the *libertas equestris*, the freedom of speech and comment, which their property and rights and interest in the welfare of the Roman state give them. This is a freedom the poor do not have, nor anyone who is compelled to please a patron, whose side he has to take or renounce his friendship, including even the rich freedmen, whose political interests were legally required to be their patron's; or even the marginal knights who are booed by the people or actually removed by the ushers for entering the fourteen rows. The *equites* incurred neither the expense nor the responsibilities of senatorial politics, nor did they receive the great rewards that came with commanding armies and governing provinces. But even where they were themselves dependent on patrons, they had the title of *amici primae admissionis*, friends of the first admission, let in by the slaves ahead of the crowd, and the opportunity of friendship on terms of something like equality, even with grandees and their families.

And by the terms of Roman friendship, they were occasionally *obliged* to speak their mind if they were not to be written off as mere flatterers. Horace details the difficulties felt by equestrian clients of the great in balancing between the required flattery and the required freedom of speech vividly in *Epistles* 1.17.41–57 and especially *Epistles* 1.18.1–20. And by the terms of Roman society, since they were both *clientes*, clients, or rather *amici* (“friends” as a formal term denoting clients on terms of greater equality) of the rich, and *patroni* of poorer men,<sup>25</sup> they occupied a station in Roman politics that required them to protect inferiors and speak independently now and then for themselves and their clients to superiors.<sup>26</sup>

This sounds like a precarious freedom of speech, and open only to a few, a class of several thousand Romans in Italy ranking just below the senators. But Lucilius (a richer and better-born knight than Horace, for Horace says he was *infra Lucili censum*, “not so rich as Lucilius,” *Satires* 2.1.75) seems to have had little trouble exercising it when the Roman Republic was really a Republic, if not in any way a democracy. Persius avoids politics, since he lives under Nero, as a young and orphaned *equus* with country estates where he can study philosophy and poetry instead. Juvenal's and Martial's experience of equestrian rank conforms with what both senatorial and equestrian rank became in the full light of Empire: primarily ranks in the imperial civil service, entitling you to jobs in Rome and jobs in the provinces. Horace was born to something that was still like Lucilius' way of thinking about the two top ranks and Lucilius' way of asserting position and *auctoritas* among them. His books show him stage by stage accepting that, for senators and *equites* alike, the world in his time was in the first stages of becoming like Persius' and Juvenal's and Martial's: the senators as those capable of high imperial commands, and the equestrians *puro nomine* as those who were capable of lesser profitable offices given by the emperor.

Indeed, he lived to be offered late in life by Augustus, presumably between 20 and 10 BCE, what became a fairly high equestrian court office similar to that

held by Suetonius under Hadrian, the post of *ab epistulis privatis*, secretary of the imperial private correspondence. This would have placed him in the center of imperial politics and made him more a patron of his own aristocratic patrons than a client. He declined it—a piece of independence Suetonius noted in the original of our present *Life*, along with his refusal to write poetry to Augustus in the character of a personal friend, which was also explicitly requested of Horace by Augustus and declined. Hadrian would not have taken either of these refusals easily. Horace's father would not have known what to make either of the offer of so magnificent a position or of his son's refusal of it.

It is an indication, however, that we know some things about Horace's life but only a few. This position, which would have made him *the* example and poster-child for the transition from ordinary equestrian rank in society to a leading rank among imperial bureaucrats, would not have been offered him had he not been as good at managing business, *negotium*, as at enjoying his leisure, *otium*. We know nothing about his prose or his conversation. Augustus' letters to Horace and to Maecenas were there for Suetonius to cite, preserved in the palace files, but what we have of the *Life* does not cite their replies. But if Horace had not been a complete master of Latin prose styles, formal and informal (we can know from his poetic transformations of epistolary style in *Epistles* 1 that he was a student of such models as Cicero's correspondence), a shrewd and politic manager of people, and a hard worker when he worked, Augustus would not have made him this offer. Yet about his prose, conversation, and work style this conjecture must suffice. This side of his life is as closed to us as the cases he decided and voted on as *iudex selectus*, or his activities as a scribe of the treasury. Horace constantly represents himself, for his own amusement, as too idle to write a new poem, even as he in fact writes one (*Satires* 2.3.1–6, the opening of a satire three times longer than all the others, *Epistles* 1.1.1–12, *Epistles* 2.1.1–4, 2.2.1–25). What little we know about him can be supplemented from both the history of events and from social and legal history, but it is all that he wants us to know: he also had a work life and social life barely hinted at in his poems.

Horace's poems reflect this change in what was expected of people of his rank at every stage of their publication. He is most like Lucilius, the prosperous Republican knight and onlooker (but much more reserved) during the period of the Second Triumvirate, *Satires* 1, 35 BCE,<sup>27</sup> when the Republic still lived in lively elections to the lower, and even the higher, levels of the Senate. Octavian is described there as *Caesar qui cogere posset*, "Caesar who can get what he wants," in just one offhand phrase (*Satires* 1.3.4), but his power is not a theme. Just as the Triumvirate ended and Octavian became master of the world, but before his return to Rome (cf. *Satires* 2 and the Epodes, which date to 30 BCE), Horace's role has changed a little. Now he is at the margins of the court of the victorious Triumvir, but still at the center of his assertion of this fact is Maecenas, not Octavian. In *Satires* 2 he only hints once (1.10–20) that he might be expected to sing Octavian's conquest of the world, and he deprecates this expectation with

a mock *recusatio*. But in the Epodes, though Horace rejoices that Caesar won the battle of Actium in 31 BCE shortly before their publication (1 and 9) the two epodes where he exercises the *libertas fandi*, the *parrhêsia*, of a Roman knight do not mention Caesar's name, though their subject is that the Roman state is in evil case from civil wars and needs reforming, or even a mass migration to the Isles of the Blessed in order to cleanse it (7 and 16).

In the Odes two different stages of the Augustan monarchy are portrayed, and these correlate with their dates of publication, Books 1–3, 23 BCE, and Book 4, 13 BCE. *Epistles* 1, 20 BCE, is also important in reflecting the growing confidence and stability of Augustus' government, and so is the *Carmen Saeculare* written in 17 BCE for the great celebration of the Secular Games, one of the two greatest triumphal shows of the new regime, the other being the dedication of the Ara Pacis Augustae in 13 BCE, the same year as Book 4 of the Odes was published. In 23 BCE the regime was approaching a crisis: Maecenas' circle was feeling threatened by what would shortly be the triumph of his rival for second place in the regime, Agrippa, after the death the next year of Augustus' first choice for his successor, his nephew Marcellus. Augustus and his conquests in time and space and the new peace he has brought the Roman world are a constant theme: yet the books end with odes to Maecenas and an address by Horace to himself on the immortality he has won himself (3.29.30), and not with one of the odes in praise of Augustus, like 3.28.

His later poems reflect a world in which the imperial regime solidifies. Maecenas becomes more retired in relation to Agrippa and his and Livia's family, the new heirs of the regime. Horace accepts, not a high position in the regime at the top of the equestrian service, though this was offered him, but at any rate the position of laureate to Augustus and his family. In *Epistles* 1, the familiar contrast of Rome and the Sabine farm is expanded spatially as Horace follows the progress of Tiberius, the son of Livia, across the Roman world to receive the peaceful submission of the Parthians and the return of the Roman eagles lost by Crassus in 54 (20 BCE). Friends and patrons of Horace's own serve in Tiberius' suite (*Epistles* 1.3.1.8, 1.9, 1.11, 12.25–9). The *Carmen Saeculare* sung to Apollo and Diana by a chorus of patrician boys and girls at Horace's own direction before the emperor and all Rome in 15 BCE was so much the climax of Horace's poetic career that he wrote another and far more magnificent ode about the thrill of directing its performance (4.6). Maecenas is demoted to a bare mention in *Odes* 4.11.18–20. Now that the princes of the imperial family, Tiberius and Drusus, are more like imperial royalty than republican generals, their easy conquest of Switzerland and south Germany up to Augsburg in 15 BCE, along with the Empire's other immense conquests of new space, and the vast imperial peace, are celebrated, also without irony, throughout. Only the central Odes, 4.7 and 4.8, of the fifteen remind us that death too rules over all space and time, and takes away Aeneas (4.7.15), the recently dead Vergil's hero, Augustus' prototype, as easily as Lucretius' example, which Horace borrows, Ancus Martius (Lucr. *De*

*Rerum Natura* 3.1025). Gods and heroes, Romulus, Dionysus, Hercules, are alike the creation of the poets' imagination (4.8.22–34, and 4.9.25–8). *Odes* 4.7–8 cast a tone of Epicurean disillusion and distance over the religious and political imagery of the book as a whole. If Horace praised the Empire with unreserved energy and without irony, he still did not give himself entirely to the task. His late poems all treat Augustus as a great ruler. But the Emperor's request (in his own words as given in the *Life*) for poems in which *mecum potissimum loquaris*, "you should address yourself rather to me," only produced according to Suetonius the late *Epistle to Augustus*, in which Horace addresses him indeed for a few lines at the beginning, and for fifty lines at the end, but as a busy public figure and a patron of poets, not in any way as an intimate friend. The other two long late epistles, 2.2 to Florus and 2.3, the *Ars Poetica*, addressed to the family of the Epicurean Philodemus' patrons, the Calpurnii Pisones, mention Augustus not at all.

If we know anything from factual history, however, it is that none of this affected Horace's and Maecenas' *amicitia*, or probably either of their friendships with Augustus. For when Maecenas died in 8 BCE, he left Augustus the instruction, *Horati Flacci ut mei memor esto*, "remember Horatius Flaccus as if he were myself," which implies (to say the least) that he had little to complain of in Augustus. And when Horace died suddenly a month or two later, just before his 57th birthday, thus fulfilling in reality a promise he made in verse to accompany Maecenas both in life and in death (*Odes* 2.17.9–12), he left all his property by word of mouth to Augustus. He is the only distinguished Roman we know by name to have left a declaratory will, legal as these were. Romans of property built their monuments while they were living, and disposed of their property as diligently to family and long lists of friends as modern people would dispose of Christmas cards and thank-you notes. His tomb, clearly by both their wish, was placed (apparently after his death) next to Maecenas' on the Esquiline hill, and Suetonius' life implied it was still shown to tourists, as were Horace's house in Tibur and the Sabine Farm, a hundred years later.

In this brief essay I have tried to delineate the social foundations of Horace's *auctoritas* as a poet speaking of Roman life in his days. This authority, which is well portrayed in modern criticism,<sup>28</sup> is exercised in striking and interesting ways. Horace portrays himself always as a "have" and nearly never as a "have-not," as MacMullen puts it, and interested mainly in the society of other "haves" and his precise position in that society. He is a little interested in social injustice committed by rich against poor, but not much. In Roman society freed slaves and their families were instantly identified with the free and not slaves. Horace identifies himself as free. Some of his comments about vulgar freedmen, slaves, and the pretensions of such people as centurions and city officials in small cities outside Rome are hard to take. Michael Wigodsky has suggested to me<sup>29</sup> that the bankrupt Damasippus, the Stoic speaker to an unsympathetic Epicurean Horace in *Satires* 2.3, and the slave Davus, who has learned Stoicism from a

philosopher's doorkeeper and lectures Horace on it in *Satires* 2.7, represent an uncomfortable and honest acknowledgment on Horace's part that those who were really up against it in life needed a harder and more uncompromising philosophy than that of Epicurus to deal with their problems. Against that, one might set Horace's sometimes astonishing (to a modern person) insensitivity, unbuffered by irony, in talking about slaves. Apparently he was wholeheartedly with Augustus in promoting family values—as the Romans understood them. But he sees nothing wrong with the remark of the elder Cato that prostitutes keep one away from free men's wives, and a young man had better use them than commit adultery (*Satires* 1.2.31–5). Even more startlingly he says in the same poem that “when your private parts swell up, and a maid or a home-born boy is right there” (he means, a slave not remarkable for beauty or bought specially for it) “and you can attack him or her right there, why burst with frustrated lust? Not I, for I like ready and easy sex.” He also says “Do not let some maidservant or boy stir your lust inside the marble doors of your powerful friend, for the pretty boy's or dear girl's owner may make them his cheap gift to you,” thus cheating you of something more valuable, “or torment you with his jealousy,” *Epistles* 1.18.72–5. This is a remarkable detail of Roman “good manners,” and again said apparently with no irony, at least of the kind we would expect.

On the other hand this adumbration of sexual mores which might be compared to the brutality of the television series *Rome* about sexual and class matters, or the anything-goes attitude of another television series, *Sex and the City*, is not all to the bad for his poetry. Many of those who find his preference for Epicurean friendship, *amicitia*, with his lovers, mostly female but some male, over such passionate *amor* as one finds in Catullus or Propertius is cold and off-putting are not valuing for itself his upper-middle-class realism. Nor the attractive portrait he offers of Roman bachelor life among a whole gallery of free, wealthy, and equal sexual opportunists, centered perpetually in the Odes round the Campus Martius, the beautiful exercise ground of Rome. There the military exercise grounds and the jump-off points for healthy swims in the Tiber are also meeting-grounds for all kinds of lovers, and a vantage-point for the connoisseurs of beautiful bodies. Among these connoisseurs (*Odes* 1.3) are even the dignified consul Sestius. He was once a comrade-in-arms in Brutus' army, now is just appointed consul for the year 23 BCE in which *Odes* 1–3 are published. He is reminded of the inevitability of death and the shortness of the precious time available to admire the youth and beauty before him.

If Horace had been a poet of passionate love for one woman, we would have been deprived of his picture of a splendid society of male and female “haves” with their own houses and slaves, free, emancipated and available, but increasingly frustrated as their poet and his lovers grow older and older, and finally, like Lucretius' good-mannered guest at the table of life, are compelled to leave gracefully before they are thrown out by the young. Jasper Griffin's picture of this kind of society (1998) is a model for further research. And America at the

beginning of 2009, troubled and in recession at last after two decades of dubious, showy conquest and prosperity, is a fine place to follow Horace's adventurous rise to the top of the great City's society, and share his privileged view of the possibilities of an empire larger in space and more durable in time than anything ever seen before it, in the opening decades of a brilliant new reign whose darker final years he did not live to see.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

What we know of Horace's social status or philosophical attitudes, or about his patrons as they appear in other historical sources, or any other such topics from the world of *Realien*, is precious because it illuminates the poetry and gives it more complexity and mystery, not less. We know more about the generalities of his rank and the attitudes it entailed in him than the specifics of his life. Rome wrote him: Horace provides only enough details to explain his own tone and voice as the specific kind of Roman he was, and the ancient *Vita* only a little more.

There are two easily available surveys of Horace's work and life in English: Perret (1964) and the Twayne's World Authors volume by Kenneth Reckford (1969), valuable for deep historical scholarship lightly worn. I began by thinking these two critics more nimble and subtle by far than Fraenkel (1957), with its famous index entry *s.v.* Horace ("never lies"), and by admiring Steele Commager's *The Odes of Horace* (1962), which first introduced the ambiguities and subtleties of New Criticism into a large-scale reading of Horace. I do not think any of these books are too dated for the general reader trying to form an overall picture of Horace and the real world round him. Indeed, the picture would be very much like that in Philip Hills, *Horace* (2005) forty years later. For treatments of biographical issues that avoid the literalness of interpretation that limits Fraenkel's kind of criticism, I admire and recommend the accumulation of historical information in Lyne's *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry* (1995), without being much alienated by its pose of cynicism. Besides what I have cited in the body of the text, there are also the essays of Gordon Williams on Horace's background (1995), and Roland Mayer on Horace's ascent in Roman society (1995), whose spirit I hope I have echoed.

## NOTES

- 1 I am very much obliged to the editor for asking me to contribute this essay, and for his patience and help, his questions and corrections, both stylistic and scholarly. My friend Michael Wigodsky has also removed some of my errors and contributed valuable advice. All remaining faults are my own entirely.
- 2 The reading in line 10 is uncertain, but some sort of sound play on the letters APVL- is certain.

[*Editor's note*: The received text of line 10 is almost certainly corrupt. The variant ms. reading, *limina Pulliae*, adopted by several modern editions (including the two Teubner editions of Borzsák and Shackleton Bailey) is grotesquely incongruous with the hymnal tone and stylistic elevation of the poem. Of the plethora of emendations so far proposed, see the attractive conjecture of Courtney 1986: 319–21. A rhetorically grounded analysis of the whole poem is available in Davis 1991: 98–103]

- 3 My own translation, as are the others in the essay.
- 4 I gratefully acknowledge the editor's and Blackwell's offer of a chance to expand and revise some views I have published earlier here and there, particularly in Armstrong 1986 and 1989.
- 5 Throughout this essay I have been immensely helped by the massive scholarly and historical information available in the *Enciclopedia Oraziana*, 1998, particularly its reviews of people and places mentioned in Horace, and such excellent commentaries on the purely historical aspects of the *Odes* as Nisbet and Hubbard on 1–2 (1970, 1978) and Nisbet and Rudd on 3 (2004) as well as treatments of these topics in Taylor 1925, 1968; Nicolet 1966: 44–56; 1974: 914–15; Zanker 1975, and Lyne 1995. I am also indebted to the commentaries of Michael Brown, *Satires* 1 (1993), Frances Muecke, *Satires* 2 (1993), and Roland Mayer, *Epistles* 1 (1994).
- 6 Cf. the account of the imperial aspects of this calendar transformation in Feeney 2007: chs. 1–5. The conquest of the Julian calendar proclaimed in 45 BCE when Horace was 20, over the confused and irregular calendars that preceded it in Rome and the Mediterranean world, the Romanizing of time, is no less an influence on Horace's poetry than the Romanizing of the imperial map, a major theme of *Odes* 3.4 (for mapmaking as an influence on Augustan culture, embodying visions of conquest and peace, see Nicolet 1991). For an amusing review of the evidence (and a conjecture of 64 for the birth) Bradshaw 2002.
- 7 Cf. in particular Reinhold 2002, 25–53; Lendon 1997: 173–236 on the system Horace would have been defying by making these claims in published writings. Even in the thirties BCE, Sarmentus, a freedman in Maecenas' circle and a *scriba quaestorius* exactly like Horace, who pictures him as a buffoon (*Satires* 1.5.51–70), was booed by the people out of the equestrian seats at the theatre when he tried to sit there (scholiast on Juvenal 5.3) and taken to court over his claim of status. So important was the distinction even between freedmen themselves and their freeborn sons—especially in eligibility for offices requiring the gold ring—that Horace would have been vulnerable to ridicule, had he misrepresented his status even in this detail.
- 8 Wiseman 1969.
- 9 Petersen 2006 gives a new view of the society and houses of rich freedmen like Horace's father in Pompeii and Herculaneum: they were people of far superior culture to Trimalchio's.
- 10 So also it is often said that the Sabine Farm, which according to Horace had five substantial tenant farms attached to it (*Epistles* 1.14.3), was worked with a mere eight slaves, because he threatens his sarcastic slave Davus with sending him there as the ninth fieldhand: *accedes opera agro nona Sabino: Satires* 2.7.118. *Opera* is the word for fieldhand, so there were more house-slaves also, and bailiffs there. But Ps. Acro's note is both more likely historically and much funnier, in a brutal way: *quasi octo servos in ergastula miserit agri Sabini*, "as though Horace had sent off eight slaves

to the chain-gang at the Sabine Farm (already).” I believe, and so does Bernard Frischer (private conversation) that what one sees at “Horace’s Villa” at Licenza is more suitable for one of the tenant farms. (If it had anything to do with Horace at all, which is doubtful.) It may plausibly be assumed the real villa was somewhere nearby. See Frischer 2006a, 2006b, and 2006c; and his essay (Chapter 4) in this volume.

- 11 Zanker 1975: 304–5 w. fig. 44; Armstrong 1986: 256–7, a relief of a contemporary freedman and freedwoman’s son, Appuleius, wearing an oversize gold ring, as *extribunus militum* (so the inscription says), and standing between his admiring parents.
- 12 Cf. Henderson (1994).
- 13 In spite of the disapproval of MacMullen (1990: 124–6), a good description of the *apparitores*’ “rake-offs” in the late Republic and the early Empire. No doubt Horace’s aristocratic friends from Brutus’ army helped him find this position, whatever he paid for it.
- 14 This scene has long been known to be borrowed from a comedy of Terence, and only an idealization of what his father said in real life, cf. Leach 1971. But that does not affect the point about *iudices selecti* as objects of admiration, which is not in Terence. Cf. Horace’s more explicit claim to possess the equestrian ring and to be a *iudex selectus* at *Satires* 2.7.53–4.
- 15 There are good descriptions of the sort of work equestrian judges did in casework in Holford-Strevens 1988: 22–5, and 294–301, emphasizing both the amateur standing of these “judges” in the law (shared by the praetors who assigned them cases) and the necessity for learned consultants, like Trebatius and Torquatus. They served on juries in great civil and criminal cases also, but did not think of themselves primarily as “jurymen.”
- 16 The addressee also of the Epicurean ode on death, quoting Lucretius, *C.* 4.8: on the interrelation between the two poems, see Putnam 2006.
- 17 On Tillius cf. most recently Toher 2005.
- 18 Historians seem to see nothing extravagant in taking this claim at its face value, e.g. Talbert 1984: 24 n. 60, on the concluding lines 5.130–1, Oliensis 1998: 30–6.
- 19 See Armstrong 1986: 259–61, where I interpret *Satires* 1.6.58–61 and 100–11, apparently for the first time in the exegetical literature, as being Horace’s oblique references to himself as *eques* but with a *mulus* or *caballus* to suit his low birth. Other passages in Horace’s works appear to corroborate the hypothesis that *eques* may be plausibly taken to refer to rank with implicit application to the speaker. For example, the famous line *Odes* 3.1.40 (*post equitem sedet atra cura*, “depression sits behind even the *eques* (horseman, person of rank like myself)”. See also *Epistles* 1.15.11–14, where Horace the lonely *eques* and his *equus* are in the same situation as Horace the lonely *eques* on his *mulus* at *Satires* 1.6.100–11.
- 20 So I construe the praise of Tarentum’s farms and farm-products and the promise Horace will always be there as a companion for Septimius (if he accepts), 9–24. Cf. Shackleton Bailey 1982: 57; Lyne 1995: 10–11.
- 21 I have detailed some of Horace’s many intertextualities with Philodemus, *On the Good King according to Homer*, in Armstrong 2004: 267–98; see also the introduction, 1–22.
- 22 *tumultus*, of wars like the Social War in which Venusia took part; see Nisbet-Rudd 2004.

- 23 I take it that *noscent* and *discet* reinforce each other.
- 24 Nisbet and Rudd 2004 are conservative enough to analyze the Roman Odes as being as many as six separate entities, but I prefer very much the approach of critics like Santirocco 1986, Putnam 1986, or Zetzel 1980, which hardly entails a concept of forced organic unity in poetry books as a whole, only the amount of unity necessary to make them a coherent performance as a whole and encourage the reading of them all together. See the essay by H.P. Syndikus in this volume, Chapter 10.
- 25 Horace had clients of his own, whom he portrays in his poems, like the guests he sends away unfed to have dinner with Maecenas, *Satires* 2.7.32–4.
- 26 The concept of the “tactless” and of “sapping” one’s praise of “grandees” with implied criticism, which runs through Lyne’s useful book (1995) would be better described as exercise of friendly (cf. Plutarch, *How to tell a flatterer from a friend*) and philosophical (Philodemus, *On Frank Criticism*, 1998) *parrhêsia* or freedom of speech as Roman friendship and the pursuit of philosophy required: cf. Armstrong (1997: 394–400).
- 27 See *Satires* 1, written circa 35 BCE. Cf. the classic essay of Du Quesnay 1984a.
- 28 Perhaps nowhere better than in Oliensis 1998.
- 29 Private conversation.