A Translation and Interpretation of Horace's *Sermones*, Book I
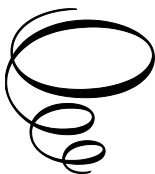
A Translation and Interpretation of Horace's *Sermones,* Book I

By

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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

For Alessandra
dulcissima

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Preliminary Notes

The Latin text is that of E. Gowers, Horace: Satires Book I (Cambridge 2012), which is in turn based on that of F. Klingner (ed.), *Q. Horati Flacci Opera* (Leipzig, 1959), except that I follow Lewis and Short (LS) with regards to 'v' and 'u' and have made some minor punctuation changes. I remark on the rare times that I make any other deviations.

All translations from Latin and Greek are my own, unless stated.

Horace's *sermones* of Book I are indicated by *sermo* and line (e.g. 3.69). Other works, incl. Horace, are indicated in full, (e.g. Appian. *Bell. Civ.* 4.5).

Non-English words are in italics.

Words and phrases placed in quotation marks are either from original Latin or Greek texts, are my translations, are external quotations or, occasionally, they are so marked simply for ease of emphasis.

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INTRODUCTION

The assassination of Julius Caesar on March 15th 44 BCE set in motion a 13-year chain of civil wars and unrest which brought widespread violent upheaval to the social, personal and political lives of people from all strata of Roman life. Eventually, after the battle of Actium on 2nd September 31 BCE, a new order was conceived which, despite the formal pronouncements, presentations and protestations to the contrary, turned 500 years of Roman history into just that. History[1].

A defined past now existed. A 'time before'. A 'time when'. The Roman Republic had ended and something new was starting. The battle of Philippi in October 42 BCE avenged Caesar's murderers and drew a line under the assassination. Actium formalised Caesar's legacy of one-man-rule and pointed to a future. Autonomy gave way to autocracy. Such constitutional change was absolutely not the salient feature of the equally violent periods of the Gracchi, of Marius or of Sulla, although the self-serving structure of 'The First Triumvirate' presaged events of some twenty years later [2].

The assassination immediately threw three key players into a theatre of war: Mark Antony, Sextus Pompeius and Octavian. They were like three attack dogs ready to snap at the slightest of provocations. Each was able to assemble an effective military force; each threatened the central power base at Rome; and each had a compelling story to peddle to the bemused and disenfranchised public at large. Alliances between the three were formed, broken and re-formed, and fast-tracked laws (some almost certainly illegal) were made to endorse new, and often personal, political powers[3]. As each

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[1] Even when the emperor Augustus was clearly operating a monarchical system, he protested that it was not regime change, but simply the restoration of the liberties and traditions of the Republic, see Caesar Augustus. *Res Gest.* 1 and 8. For good assessments see Syme (1939), Millar (1973), Osgood (2006a). For Augustus' image projection and manipulation see Zanker (1988)

[2] The Gracchi to 'The First Triumvirate' covers a period of 73 restless years from 133 BCE to 60BCE.

[3] Valerius Maximus. *Fact.* 6.2.12. A distinguished yet obstinate lawyer named Cascellius placed all the triumvirs' legal proposals outside the official codes of roman law. The new political powers included the *'praefectus classis et orae*

month passed, new vitriol, more violence, transparent physical destruction and sweeping social deprivations further underscored the unpredictability of these times.

The proscriptions issued by Antony and Octavian (and Lepidus) in November 43 BCE had led to the execution of many established names, threatened many lives and appropriated many homesteads[4]. Although Cicero's murder figures as one of the most high-profile, ordinary people living in Italy at this time will have surely known, or heard of, someone who had been assassinated in pursuit of a New Order[5]. The proscriptions could connect people directly to the mass slaughter under Sulla, who had instituted the system back in 82/81 BCE.

But with a difference. This time families turned on each other. It was personal. Wives turned on husbands, slaves turned on masters. The aristocracy and the elite were hit hard. The eminent scholar Varro was on Antony's list, but he escaped death by pleading to Octavian. He did however lose his property. In fact, land confiscations took place on an industrial scale to feed the promises made to the soldiery of the various vast roman armies at war with each other. The ownership map of Italy was redrawn displacing thousands of landowners, regardless of status, history or class.

According to the historian Appian, the best parts of Italy, 'τὰ κάλλιστα τῆς Ἰταλίας' were given to the army veterans and amongst these was included Horace's birthplace, Venusia[6].

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maritimae ex Senatus consulto' given to Sextus Pompeius in April 43 CE (giving him control of the seas and, importantly, the coastline of Italy) and the *Lex Titia* of 27 November 43 BCE which gave powers to Mark Antony, Lepidus (an establishment Republican figure) and Octavian to establish a three-man commission to restore order (*'triumviri rei publicae constituenda'*). They used this power to draw up the names of those to be proscribed. History distorts Lepidus (and obfuscates Sextus Pompeius) by branding these the powers of the "Second Triumvirate" – not a term used at the time.

[4] Lepidus was a weaker player than Antony and Octavian and never posed an existential threat to the central power base of Rome. Dio Cassius tell us that his name was not even included on official edicts of the triumvirs (*Hist. Rom.* 48.22.2). He was eventually forced into retirement.

[5] Appian. *Bell. Civ.* 4.5.

[6] Appian. *Bell. Civ*. 4.3. Horace talks about growing up around Venusia in *Carm*. 3.4.

During this period of upheaval many of the towns of Italy were appropriated or ransacked. Some famous old towns were burnt to the ground. The poet Propertius wrote that Perugia, his birthplace, brutally razed to the ground in the winter of 41/40 BCE, had become the nation's cemetery, *patriae sepulcra*, demolished not by foreign invasion but by discord at the heart of Rome - *'discordia'*[7].

As well as the proscriptions and land confiscations there were disruptions to sea trade, and therefore the food supply, caused by blockades set up by Sextus Pompeius. There was periodic looting. Shops closed their doors and magistrates neglected their duties. Checkpoints were set up to examine the credentials of people moving around the country. Bandits abounded[8]. People would use any and every method to beg favours from whomsoever they thought might be powerful or influential enough to help. Petitioning became a fine art.

The Battle of Philippi eliminated Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, but it also emboldened the three power players. Mark Antony relocated to the east, gaining wealth, influence and power. He would soon acquire a partner too, the intelligent and gifted Cleopatra. Sextus Pompeius, operated to the south and west of mainland Italy and became a focal point for the disgruntled republicans who had nowhere else to go. He was in control of Sicily from where he maintained his piratical stranglehold on the grain supply of Italy. Octavian, whose lineage was less gentrified than the other two, took Caesar's famous name and operated centrally from Rome with two key right-hand men, Agrippa the general (a man from humble origins) and Maecenas the administrator (an *'eques'*, about whom history has been unable to record very much). These three key players were managing and manoeuvring from the centre of Rome.

By 41 BCE, immediately after Philippi and almost three years after Caesar's assassination, still no one could see the post-Caesar future. Life was a blur of change and confusion. For the masses, loyalty, betrayal, freedom and survival became the issues at stake.

The idea that creativity should flourish during this period might seem at odds with the uncertainty and fear that both public figures and ordinary people would have experienced. The great statesman Asinius Pollio was

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[7] Propertius. *Eleg.* 1.22.3-5 published c. 25 BCE.
[8] See Cicero. *ad. Fam.* 10.31.

said to have joked: *'at ego taceo. non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere'*, ('I'm staying silent It's not easy to write against he who is able to write a death warrant back at you')[9].

But creativity there was. Although this post-assassination and pre-Actium period might have limited the opportunity for oratory, which had thrived on the fundamental civic right of freedom of speech, *'libertas'*, there was plenty of new, bold material being produced in Rome in other formats, for example that of Sallust (Histories), Varius (Tragedy, e.g. Thyestes) and Cornelius Nepos (Biography e.g. Life of Atticus)[10]. Vergil had introduced Rome to his pioneering *Bucolicae* at this time, and, of course, amongst the chaos and the creativity, there was Horace[11].

ENTER HORACE

Precise details of Horace's journey into the heart of the Octavian regime during this extraordinary time are not available. General details are vague. And any biographical detail from Horace himself comes with a caveat; he was a poet, not an autobiographer, or historian. But Horace can be placed into the larger theatre of activity taking place, about which we have some information from contemporaries and near-contemporaries (Varro, Cornelius Nepos, Cicero, Sallust, Vergil, Livy, Seneca the Elder, Tibullus, Propertius), from later historians, (Appian, Plutarch and Dio Cassius), from the (not wholly accurate) scholiasts Pomponius Porphyrion (Porphyrio) and Helenius Acron (Acro), and from archaeology and inscriptions[12].

Horace was studying philosophy in Athens when Caesar was assassinated, and he and other young Romans who were studying there were recruited into Brutus' republican army to fight against the pro-Caesar forces of Octavian and Antony[13]. The battle came at Philippi, a town near the coast

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[9] Macrobius. *Sat.* 2.24.21.
[10] See Osgood (2006b). Aulus Gellius. *Noct. Att.* 15.28 records that Cornelius Nepos wrote a biography of Cicero.
[11] Johnson (2012) pp 1-29, provides a personal and valuable context for Horace's relationship to events around him, albeit with a focus on the *Iambi.*
[12] For the difficulties attached to both Porphyrio and Acro (known also as Pseud-Acro) see Zetzel (2018) pp149 -150. The treatise of the lyric poet Caesius Bassus written in the reign of Nero was less a commentary and more an instruction book on Horatian meter.
[13] Horace. *Carm.* 2.7. Plutarch. *Brut.* 24.3.

in north east Greece, just above the island of Thasos.[14]. When the Republican forces lost, the carnage of the battle was revealed. 'No other war had cost the blood of so many illustrious Romans'[15]. The survivors from the republican army were enrolled into the triumvirs' armies and Horace himself was pardoned and repatriated along with many others including luminaries such as Valerius Messalla Corvinus, Lucius Calpurnius Bibulus, Lucius Sestius, Quintus Dellius and Cicero's son[16]. There was nothing unusual about such pardoning and re-assimilation, and some even prospered serving under their erstwhile enemy. Bibulus, for example, went on to work closely with Antony, and other republicans of note, like Cicero's son, not only survived but became distinguished and high-ranking government officials in Octavian's government. As Appian curtly and memorably noted about that chapter of history: 'that period of time threw up many things that challenged expectations': *'οὕτως ὁ καιρὸς ἦν ἐκεῖνος ἐπίδειξις παραδοξολογίας'*[17].

Soon after the defeat, possibly in early 41 BCE, Horace was back in Rome where he had been at school prior to university at Athens. He tells us that he was deprived of both his family home and his land[18].

It is not clear however whether Horace's family plot in Venusia (modern day Venosa in the province of Basilicata) was requisitioned precisely in the triumviral period of proscriptions and confiscations, i.e. pre-Philippi, or once Horace was back in Rome, i.e. post-Philippi; but the historian, Dio Cassius, might offer some circumstantial evidence.

Dio tells us that individual parcels of land that were smaller and of less value than the officially recommended size allocated to veterans were not included in the confiscations[19]. Horace himself tells us at 6.71 that his father, a freedman, was *'macro pauper agello'* before the battle of Philippi. *'pauper'* is contained by *'macro ... agello',* ablatives of cause, and the context suggests that it is the smallholding that made his father (look) impoverished when measured against the land owned by the big-boy centurions *magni centuriones* who lived in the neighbourhood. Maybe Horace's family estate was simply too small for the official confiscations of

[14] Horace. *Epist*. 2.2.41-52.
[15] Velleius Paterculus. *Hist. Rom.* 2.71.2.
[16] Cicero. *ad Att.* 12.32.2. See also Citroni (2000) pp 28.
[17] Appian. *Bell. Civ*. 4.15.
[18] Horace. *Epist.* 2.2.49-50.
[19] Dio Cassius. *Hist. Rom*. 48.8.5.

43 BCE to accommodate, but big enough to be expropriated as punishment for fighting on the side of the republicans. A few lines later, (86), we learn that his father was a small-time businessman, *'ut fuit ipse, coactor'* possibly making *'parvas mercedes'*. It is possible, then, that his father was quite simply an entrepreneur with an insignificant plot of land, but one who had earned enough to be able to pay for his son's education in Rome and maintain the costs of keeping a house there.

In Rome it would have been natural for Horace to continue his interest in philosophy. He may have befriended the 'new-wave' Epicurean Philodemus; he was certainly aware of him[20]. Horace was socially integrated. His circle of friends included, amongst others, his university colleagues, his war-time associates, the poets Vergil, Plotius and Varius and (the important) Asinius Pollio, and possibly even Cicero's son[21]. His acquaintances were notable, society people; many were representatives of the Roman (and Greek) intelligentsia, and some were of senatorial material. He himself was almost certainly an *eques*, a rank signifying, ironically, a propertied person, with money.

"Almost certainly", because Horace does not ever say explicitly that he was an *eques*. He does, however, hint at it in his second book of *sermones*[22]. But, again, place him in the larger scheme of things and his precise circumstances seem less curious. At that specific time in Rome's history, issues of status could often be a muddle. At one point in 39 BCE the triumvirs recruited non-senatorial ranks into the senate to help replenish the state coffers after, ironically, their own proscriptions led to reduced revenue. In the chaos that ensued even slaves crept through the screening process and landed a seat[23]. To gain the position of *eques* you needed to have registered formally that you had the qualification of property valued at a minimum of 400,000

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[20] 'New-wave' because, for example, Philodemus' brand of Epicureanism embraced and informed political activity whereas the original Epicureans spurned politics. For more on Philodemus: Tsouna (2007), Gigante (2002).
[21] Horace lists some associates and friends at 10.78-88. Vergil of course needs no introduction. Lucius Varius Rufus (c.74 – c.14 BCE) was at this time emerging as a creative force and would be known for his tragedy Thyestes, which was as good as any of the best Greek tragedies according to Quintilian; *'iam Varii Thyestes cuilibet Graecarum comparari potest'* (*Inst. Orat.* 10.1.98). Asinius Pollio features prominently in histories of this time; for a review of why see Morgan (2000).
[22] Horace. *Serm.* 2.7.53-56. Horace is seen to change his smart clothes of an *eques* for the garb of a slave, so that he might enjoy illicit sexual adventures at night.
[23] Dio Cassius. 48.34.4.

sesterces, but such a figure does not correspond to *'macro pauper agello'*. Horace does however tell us he was a *tribunus militum* in Brutus' army at Philippi (6.48). That position was conventionally held by an *eques*. If he was unable to afford to buy into the rank of *eques*, could it have been an emergency war-time commission that stuck[24]? Being the son of a freedman who ranked as *eques* would not have been unusual[25].

It's a debate, but it's not a major one. There were many others at the time who also gained the rank of *eques* under similarly uncertain circumstances[26]. But what Horace does tell us is that he had been afforded a good (and expensive) education at Rome and at Athens. It was the standard education for the upper tiers of society comprising studies which any knight or senator would have their own children taught (6.77-78). And what becomes clear is that very quickly Horace is in the company of people of prestigious rank, education and standing, *eques* or no *eques*.

Suetonius tells us he acquired a position as *scriba quaestorius*, a clerk in public finance[27]. This was not a straightforward placement to get given its importance and perks. The job offered access to magistrates, Consuls and Proconsuls and came with a significant level of financial responsibility. It also came with high social status and job security for life[28]. But it was a clerical role. Horace was a civil servant – an a*pparitor*, an accountant. It is

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[24] Günter (2013) pp 26 n.30 has suggested that Horace might also have been *iudex selectus*, a juror. The term *selectus* also indicates someone of equestrian rank.

[25] Armstrong (1986) pp 256 where he fleshes out the story of the military tribune and *eques*, L. Appuleius

[26] For a clear assessment of Horace's status, see Taylor (1925).

[27] Suetonius. *Vit. Hor.*: *'victisque partibus venia impetrata scriptum quaestorius comparavit'*. This might have been like 'buying' into a dental practice, for example. See Cicero. *Verr*. 3.184 for more evidence of the practice. For *scribae* and the Roman Civil Service see Randolph (1925), Jones (1949), Purcell (1983), Badian (1989). Randolph makes the point that Horace does not refer to this employment (in fact he states that because he was penniless, he resorted to poetry), but he makes the case for Suetonius' accuracy of this detail.

[28] It is interesting to note Cicero's pleasure at compliments paid to him by *scribae*, Cicero. *de Domo Sua*. 74: *'Scribae, qui nobiscum in rationibus monumentisque publicis versantur, non obscurum de meis in rem publicam beneficiis suum iudicium decretumque esse voluerunt'*.

possible, even, that the role had been pre-assigned to him three years earlier, before Philippi[29].

Horace's more junior colleagues and associates in 36/35 BCE would have been rank and file public officials (again, *apparitores*) permanently registered at the Treasury, *aerarium*, who were junior to middle management public servants. Amongst the other more colourful characters he would have brushed shoulders with were: *praecones* (variously: sales and marketing assistants at auctions, court summoners, town criers, masters of ceremonies), *viatores* (runners, messengers, organisers), *medici* (physicians) *architecti* (surveyors) *haruspices* (decoders of omens) and *lictores* (assistants to the magistrates).

The *scribae quaestorii* were organized into three teams of ten people, *decuriae*. Each team seems to have served in the *aerarium* annually in rotation, as did the *praecones* and *viatores* who reported to them. Horace would have had time on his hands while also being gainfully employed.

Horace tells us that the poets Varius and Vergil (who published his ten *Bucolicae* just before Horace published his first work) were the first to introduce him to Maecenas. That must have been sometime after 41 BCE, when he was back in Rome from Philippi, but before 36 BCE, when Maecenas is mentioned in the first line of Horace's first poem.

HORACE THE POET

A simple truism is that when Horace published his *sermones* they represented the totality of his formal output at that point in his career. He almost certainly will have had to hand scraps of other poetry, ideas, lines etc., but when he issued these ten *sermones* they could only be read and judged at the time on their own merit. Connecting and comparing them to Horace's as yet unwritten future work is a genuine and fruitful scholastic pursuit, but it is not the remit of this book, which reads his 1030 lines discretely and solely in the context of the world in which they inhabited up to 36/35 BCE; that is, as unaware as Horace was of how his future might unfold.

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[29] This is because of Sulla's *Lex de Viginti Quaestoribus* 81 BCE*;* the *apparitores* are not appointed by those under whom they serve. Purcell (2001) pp 651. Also see Cicero. *Verr.* 3.184.

It might be considered another simple truism to say that the starting place for 'Horace the Poet' is his words. Every. Word. Counts. He was meticulous. He was a perfectionist. Each word is a valued member of a patterned piece. Ignoring or misunderstanding a word will reveal a glaring emptiness. Horace was a fabricator, a maker, a craftsman. And he was daring with it, as Quintilian noted, *'verbis felicissime audax'*[30]. In fact, for Quintilian, when it came to satirical writing, Horace was by far the best, *'praecipuus'* and he praised Horace's 'neatly concise and pure style', *'multum est tersior ac purus magis Horatius'*[31].

History follows timelines, letters address people, but a poet can march to the beat of their own drum and Horace gives himself licence to construct as he sees fit.   What you think his poetry is about at the first reading, may not be what it ultimately reveals. We might think that Horace has deviated off track, only to discover halfway through that is it we who are on the wrong road. This is not unusual of many writers, of course.

For example, if you think Horace's second poem, *sermo* 2, is about sex, you miss a different and important pinch-point. It is not *'not about sex'*, but the poem strategically deviates to a more publicly sensitive place. Horace looks at the importance of prudent and planned decision making when you are in pursuit of what you want. Such planning can safeguard against financial and reputational loss.

And the same for *sermo* 5. The *sermo* is obviously about a journey, but to where and from where become complex questions as an ulterior purpose emerges and the physical waypoints give way to personal checkpoints.

sermo 1 concerns much more than μεμψίμοιρία (a complaining of one's fate). It is about where Envy takes you and the importance of the concept of 'Enough'. When viewed through this lens, the seemingly disjointed poem unites and collapses into a whole.

And *sermo* 9, charming on the surface, just a simple tale of an irritating bore, contains a subtext which reveals a suffocating experience.

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[30] Quintilian. *Inst. Orat.*10.1.96. Ezra Pound remarked, 'A specialist may read Horace if he is interested in learning the precise demarcation between what can be learned about writing, and what cannot'. Pound (1931) pp. 30.
[31] Quintilian. *Inst. Orat.*10.1.94.

It can be very easy to approach these poems as an assembly of individual pieces, and they might well have been at some point. But Horace clearly applied his own advice to his work and with a stylus in one hand and an eraser in the other he wrote, re-wrote, re-assembled and edited. Given his public declaration for the need for quality writing, this has to be the case. 'Brevity is needed' he says, *'est brevitate opus'* (10.9); 'you have to turn your stylus upside down and cross things out if you want to write something that stands the test of time', *'saepe stilum vertas, iterum quae digna legi sint/scripturus'* (10.72). His poems are so clearly the product of hard work, (4.12-13) and careful thought, *'compressis ... labris'* (4.139) that his description of his *modus operandi* as *illudere chartis* would rank as one of the more astonishing acts of self-deprecation (in a book that contains many) were it not itself a piece of integrated and complex wordplay.

The result of this hard work becomes clear early on. Horace links his *sermones* such that they can be structured and re-structured in a number of different ways. Each *sermo* links to the next, but the connectivity stretches even further to create one book comprised of a network of multiple and interconnecting parts. The result is an artwork that has 'architectonic completeness', it is a poetic achievement, and it put him on the map, and it set him up for life[32].

THE IRONY IN AND OF THE *SERMONES*

Quintus Horatius Flaccus, twenty-six years old, pardoned, connected and employed, arrived on the scene at the most fervent point of the post-Philippi confusion and change, when all three key players were actively jostling for position. His first published book, ten poems in hexameters, appeared in 36/35 BCE[33].

Horace did not call these poems *saturae.* We do not know if Lucilius published any of his verses under that name, but in the fragments that exist we find he labels them: *c[h]arta, ludus, sermones* and *schedium[34].* The first use of the word *satura* by a poet to describe his own work comes in the first line of Horace's second book of *sermones,* published around 30/29 BCE.

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[32] Reckford (1969) pp 11. Structural analyses can be found in Armstrong (1964) and van Rooy (1968, 1970, 1971, 1972).
[33] For publication date see DuQuesnay (1984) pp 20.
[34] Lucilius. *Sat.* 1014, 1039, 1131.

Horace might there be referring to a recognised genre of poetry in which Lucilius also wrote[35].

The earliest texts we have refer to these ten poems as *sermones*, but today, by convention, they are called 'Satires', a term which, in fact, Horace seems to go out of his way to avoid[36]. Horace describes his poems as 'more akin to discussions' – *'sermoni propriora'* (4.42). Elsewhere in the book he simply calls his tightly honed and beautifully polished lines of poetry, 'this', 'this stuff', 'these things' and even 'these (pieces) such as they are' – *'his', hoc', 'hoc', 'haec', 'quibus haec, sint qualiacumque'* (4. 56, 4.65, 10.46,10. 83 and 10.88). The *sermones* certainly contain irony, sarcasm and ridicule and they denounce failings. *sermones* (1, 2 and 3) expose universal follies using examples of individual characters and character-types. *sermo* 4 exposes (and exploits) the *turba* entire. *sermo* 5 begins the process of turning the spotlight on the poet himself which carries on with some vigour in *sermo* 6, such that *sermones* 7, 8 and 9 descend into fevered self-reflection. This (satiric) work clears the path for *sermo* 10 and, possibly, the beginning of the end of his 'work-in-progress'. It will bring some closure to the poet's persistent self-scrutiny and allow *'sint qualiacumque'* to be formally labeled (some six years later), *satura.*

As a book of *satura,* the *libellus* starts as one might expect, but it soon descends into self-administered satire for the purpose of explication, redress and social acceptance and there is some irony in the fact that not only do the *sermones* work differently from each other, providing a platter of mixed satirical ingredients, they also target the author himself.

It is a further irony that the journey from *satur*, meaning 'replete' through the adjective in the feminine, *satura*, to the inflexion *satura*, a noun meaning a dish of various ingredients, as well as 'satire' itself, was as unclear to Romans of the republican age, and beyond, as it is to us. The late fourth century CE grammarian Diomedes provides four derivations of the word *satura*, enshrining its complicated provenance, which suggests that the term

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[35] Gratwick (1982) pp 168.
[36] The *Pomponi Porfyrionis Commentum in Horatium Flaccum* and the *Acronis Commentarium in Horatium Flaccum* title these poems *'Sermones'*. Horace does not mention the word *'satura'*, meaning satire, in his first book, even when he mentions 'the godfather' of roman satire Lucilius specifically, although there are 'Horatian hints' in his first *'sermo'* (*'satur'*, 1.119, *'nil satis est'*. 1.1.62, *'iam satis est'*, 1.120. Possibly his choice of *'Satureiano'*, 4.59 was deliberate too).

had always gifted Horace just the type of delicious ambiguity he might enjoy [37].

Diomedes' four derivations are[38]:

1. Funny and rude satyr plays.
2. A dish packed with fruits.
3. A sausage stuffed full of different ingredients.
4. A statute containing many condensed laws.

Plautus had much earlier supplied these three definitions of *satura*[39].

5. Replete with food.
6. Full of stories
7. Pregnant.

Horace may not have worried about the derivation of a word he is careful not use, but his studious avoidance offers the possibility that he knew it was a word to play with[40]. There are three things to note. First, he certainly 'stuffs' his *sermones* with argument, characters, literary and learnèd influences and so on. Secondly, he fills the book with *sententiae* or *exempla*, suggesting that everyday *saturae* as loosely defined by Diomedes' fourth point had relevance for Horace too. Thirdly, although Horace never calls the poems of Book I *saturae*, he weaves in the words *satis*, *sat est* and *sat* regularly both overtly and covertly, as if he is desperately trying to poke the head of that genre through a veil of uncertainty[41]. But if this is Horace's deliberate attempt to mask the word *satura* he does it in plain view.

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[37] Coffey (1976) pp 11 covers the etymology in some depth.

[38] Keil (1857) pp 485.

[39] For 5 and 6: Plautus. *Poen*. 6-8. *'et qui esurientes et qui saturi uenerint: qui edistis, multo fecistis sapientius,*
qui non edistis, saturi fite fabulis'.
    For 7: *Amph*. Sos: *'quia Alcumenam ante aedis stare saturam intellego'.* Amph: *'grauidam ego illanc hic reliqui quom abeo'.*

[40] He will open his second book with *'sunt quibus in satura videar nimis acer et ultra / legem tendere opus'.* (It is not the remit of this book to note that, given Diomedes' fourth point, *'legem tendere opus'* might be a play on words).

[41] Duffalo (2000) demonstrates how new perspectives open up once you (mis) hear *satura* for *satis* and how the pun carries through the book to the last poem. The two words perpetually undermine each other in a process which builds typical Horatian ambiguity throughout.

Horace's *sermones* are a mixture of genres, philosophies and metaphors assembled to create an arc of direction from *sermo* 1 all the way across to *sermo* 10. The complexity of the journey becomes apparent as it unfolds, and the possibility emerges that Horace's satire is itself a satire of *satura* and that an objective of the journey is to redefine a word which loosely defined a genre.

'sermo', however, has a clear definition. It is 'a speaking or talking with anyone; talk, conversation, discourse'. In a more formal sense *sermo* can be a 'literary conversation, discourse, discussion'; and less formally 'ordinary speech, speaking, talking, the language of conversation', 'gossip'[42]. This definition gains in credibility as you read through the ten pieces. Horace crafts his work so that he weaves complex thoughts and structures into his lines whilst appearing conversational.

These *sermones* employ colloquial Latin words and at times we feel we are hearing language that sounds very close to a real conversation – *'sermoni propriora'*. It is deliberately the opposite of highfalutin. Peter Knox notes a number of examples of vocabulary, including common obscenities and diminutives, that are suggestive of genuine conversation[43]. Horace's words are working at street level, mixing common myths, children's lessons, farce, bon mots, local proverbs, hearsay, anecdotes, chit-chat and banter. He melds formal philosophy with commonplace aphorisms, as if philosophy itself was a topic of everyday conversation[44].

When they are described, scenes in the *sermones* predominantly take place in the city (1.5 takes place *from* the city, 1.8 *overlooking* the city); they are 'street-scenes' and 'ordinary', familiar hangouts like the baker's, the baths or the barber's shop. Horace's urban setting contrasts noticeably with the pastoral world of the first book of his close friend, Vergil.

sermones, by definition, suggests that there is more than one person involved. We expect, and we get, a 'round-table' discussion, a chat, gossip, comments *'en passant'* or *'en train de'*, with personalities and with interruptions. Character after character joins the stream of conversation. Sometimes they are easy marks, set up and used as an exemplar. Other times they are called on to support a position or to prove a point.

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[42] LS and OLD.
[43] Knox (2013).
[44] Zetzel (2015).

In the first half of the *libellus* the featured characters come mainly from the *turba*. In the second half they are principally from the upper echelons of society. That shift, too, represents a journey for the character Horace, who slowly writes himself out from the background of the *turba* and into the foreground of an elite group of poets.

Horace ends his artwork with an opening not a closing. It is the sort of unexpected device we will have ironically come to expect. The opening comes after 1029 lines of (often painful) social observation and self-examination. The last lines of the last *sermo* are a tally of key creative personalities which releases an expression of confidence, of freedom, a *cri de coeur* for the power of new Latin literature and a *post scriptum* dedication. Horace's *libellus* pointedly ends on the word *libellus,* not *sermo,* or *'hic'*, *'haec'* etc. The *libellus,* an artwork, a work of art, if you like, is his hard-won accomplishment. It is a snapshot of Rome at a critical point in the city's history; it has detailed his personal poetic journey; and it has re-defined *satura.* The fabrication of all these is woven carefully into the lines, using threads of philosophic, comedic, tragic, anthropomorphic and, of course, ironic hues.

ORAZIO SATIRO

When I first read Horace properly in the mid-Seventies under the watchful eye of Niall Rudd, the Odes were very much to the fore, this despite Rudd's personal commitment to the Satires which he published in 1966[45]. Today in the UK (some of) the Satires can be studied at A Level, a rehabilitation that could be described as a long time coming. The Satires held their own right up to and through the Middles Ages and into and out of the Renaissance. For Dante, he was *'Orazio Satiro'*, not *Orazio Poeta Lirico*[46]. Gian Bagio Conte neatly captured the ebb and flow of the journey of the Satires through post-Renaissance European history as the sprightly Odes began to repeatedly triumph over their longer hexameter stablemates[47]. Although English poets of the Enlightenment admired and emulated Horace's Satires (and Epistles) for the deep fabric of their ideas, it was the Romantic movement that again re-accelerated the Odes. The movement relished the emphasis on capturing the imagination in short motifs (later described by

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[45] Rudd (1966).
[46] Dante. *Div. Comm. Inferno*. 4.89.
[47] Conte (1994) pp 318-319.

Tennyson as 'jewels five-words long') and the Satires began their slow retirement into the shadow of the Odes[48].

For me, Classics was always more than a hobby, but less than a career. Horace in small doses was good company on a long-haul flight, like a (literary) glass of wine with an old friend, and it was the Odes that did the trick. The longer, labyrinthine Satires seemed at first glance to be not as immediately rewarding – hard work even. It took 45 years and retirement to muster up the resolve to dive in and try to understand, in however limited a way, what the younger Horace was writing and what the poetic root might be that spawned the later poetry.

What I discovered is that Horace's first book is more than just conceptually complex. Intertextuality itself becomes an integral part of the artwork, and of the communication[49]. Horace wants to keep moving, he wants to get to the end of his *libellus,* yet at the same time he wants to remain stationary so that he can leave important strains and stains of his presence throughout the *sermones*. Words are left behind, revisited and reconnected later. The reconnections make for an enormous colour palette of ideas.

Delusion and Enough. Cutting out versus keeping in. Comedy and Confrontation. Vision versus Blindness. Frustration and Fairness. Boundaries versus End-less. Greek and Roman. Old versus New. Liquids and Flow. Change versus Status Quo. Language and Body. Self-Control versus Out-of-Control. Children and Philosophers. High Status versus Low Status. Mathematics and Myth. Satire versus Sermonising. Joy and Despondency. Speed versus Delay. Family and Birthright. Real Relationships versus Fabricated Friends. Humiliation and Shame. The Haves versus the Have-nots. Tales and Anecdotes. Loneliness versus Crowds. Anger and Contempt. '*Libertas'* versus Freedom of Speech.

All these ideas and more are repeatedly sewn through the text[50]. One criticism of my interpretation of these *sermones* might be that it is repetitive

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[48] Alfred Tennyson. The Princess, Part 2. Line 355.

[49] Such considered intertextuality can sometimes be hard to verify, but when one feels it is proven it generates the kind of pleasure one might feel, for example, on discovering that Eliot's footnotes to The Waste Land are no mere explanations but are an integrated part of the poem as a whole. You meet the artist at work. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) pp 484.

[50] Also featuring strongly (in fifty percent or more of the poems) are: Bread and Grain (in short supply thanks to the piratical actions of Sextus Pompeius), Fate and

in places. My defence is that this is done in service of the repeated ideas and themes that emerge throughout the book.

These themes have been taken up and discussed with increasing enthusiasm and depth by professional scholars. Today any work on Horace's first *libellus* must obviously pay its respects to those who have dedicated time to unstitching it, understanding it, and weaving it back together again. 'Way back when' these included Anthon, Bentley, Düntzer, Greenough, Kirkland, Müller, Orelli, Peerlkamp, Voss and Wickham. But it was Palmer who moved the 18th and 19th century commentaries forward with his important contribution of 1893. The twentieth century saw early works by the likes of Gow, Rolfe, Lejay, Morris and Kiessling somewhat eclipsed by Fraenkel's landmark volume on Horace which included focused and organised analyses on the Satires. Rudd's pioneering book, the first to be wholly dedicated to the Satires in English, appeared in 1966. It has been the *fin de siècle* work of academics such as Van Rooy, Zetzel, Brown and Fedeli that has accelerated Rudd's thinking. Anderson has progressively and impressively opened up Roman satire in general, and Freudenburg marked a clear step forward with his cornerstone book, The Walking Muse, which he has followed with further perceptive analyses into Horatian satire. Particular, and unanticipated, favourites of mine have been Reckford, Henderson, Curran and Hill. But if you want to attempt to follow Horace on his 1030-line journey there is one companion you cannot do without. By far the biggest contribution to *Sermones* Book I is Emily Gowers' 2012 commentary, a towering achievement. The adjective 'comprehensive' does not do it justice. Professor Gowers' commentary provides detail and direction that will allow you to make the same journey afresh many, many times over.

What did I discover about *Orazio Satiro* after all the learnèd books, the hours of reading, the weeks of writing and the months lost in thought? Did I find that creative 'root'? Well, first and foremost I found premier league literature which was of a standard I had not, for some reason, expected. I felt I experienced Horace's early poetic genius, his oh so subtle nuance, his deft wordplay, his crafted word-smithery - *callida iunctura* - and his wry sense of humour[51]. I want to think I had also caught a glimpse of his hopes, fears, anxieties and certainties, but I cannot be sure. The truth is that the

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Fortune, Horses/Donkeys/Mules, Money and Business, Faults and Vices, Kings/Queens, Nature, The Simple Life, Fire and Burning.
[51] In advice from the future, Horace will reference his penchant for (and skill at) wordsmithery. *Ars Poet*. 46-48.

sermones were written over two thousand years ago by a writer we sadly know, objectively, little about. We are able to analyse the poems and make an interpretation, and we can occasionally cross reference people and situations with other sources, but we are not able to go much further than that. Horace is not open, not even a little, like Cicero or Pliny. He is the opposite. He can be both inscrutable and playful, so that regularly, when making any comment about, or interpretation of, Horace, it is wiser to say, "might be", rather than "is". To avoid writing a book labouring under the weight of subjunctives and conditionals, the essays on each *sermo* are here labelled Interpretations. And even under that umbrella, the occasional "might be" regularly slips in.