

THE *GARLAND* OF MAECENAS
(HORACE, *ODES* 1.1.35)

The outline structure of Horace, *Odes* 1.1 is not complicated. The poet addresses himself to Maecenas in the first two lines, then goes on to list eight possible careers before finally asserting his own choice: poetry. The mode is that of the priamel and Horace refers to the exponent of each life (3 *sunt quos*; 7 *hunc*; 9 *illum*; 11 *gaudentem*; 16 *mercator*; 19 *est qui*; 23 *multos*; 26 *uenator*) before offering at 29–34 an emphatic statement of his own devotion to verse and, in particular, to both choral and monodic lyric:

me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium
dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus
nympharumque leues cum satyris chori
secernunt populo, si neque tibia
Euterpe cohibet nec Polyhymnia
Lesboum refugit tendere barbiton.

The ivy, prize of learned brows, puts me on a level with the gods, the cool grove and the playful choruses of nymphs with the satyrs separate me from the crowd, if Euterpe does not withhold her flutes or Polyhymnia does not shun the stringing of the Lesbian lyre.

Yet Horace is not quite finished here. For all the delight that poetry brings, Maecenas has it in his power to take his client to even greater heights of pride. Thus the concluding verses 35–6:

quodsi me lyricis uatibus inseres,
sublimi feriam sidera uertice.

But if you will insert me amongst the lyric bards, I will strike the stars with my lofty head.

This note is a contribution to the understanding of these lines.

Critics and commentators on Horace appear to be of one mind as to the favour that Horace looks to receive from his patron: to be enrolled as a tenth member in the Alexandrian canon of the nine great lyric poets.¹ There is, in fact, no direct

¹ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Textgeschichte der griechischen Lyriker* (Berlin, 1900), 4–6; E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 232–3; A. Kiessling and R. Heinze, *Q. Horatius Flaccus Oden und Epoden*, 9th ed. (Berlin, 1958), 9; R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes, Book 1* (Oxford, 1970), 15; H.P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz. Eine Interpretation der Oden* (Darmstadt, 1972), 1.35–6; A. Ghiselli, *Orazio, Ode 1, 1. Saggio di analisi formale* (Bologna, 1983), 25; D.C. Feeney, ‘Horace and the Greek lyric poets’, in N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace 2000: A Celebration. Essays for the Bimillennium* (London, 1993), 41–63, esp. 41–2; R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry* (New Haven–London, 1995), 71–2; D. West, *Horace Odes 1: Carpe Diem. Text, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford, 1995), 6; A.J. Woodman, ‘BIFORMIS VATES: the *Odes*, Catullus and Greek lyric’, in A.J. Woodman and D.C. Feeney (edd.), *Traditions and Contexts in the Poetry of Horace* (Cambridge, 2002), 53–64, esp. 53–4; M. Citroni, ‘The concept of the classical and the canons of model authors in Roman literature’, in J.I. Porter (ed.), *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (Princeton, 2006), 204–34, esp. 212, 223–4; J. Farrell, ‘Horace’s body, Horace’s books’,

proof of the creation of such a canon in Alexandria, but much circumstantial evidence supports the hypothesis.² Three points may here be emphasized. First, a parallel list of the great Greek orators did exist and those included in it were known as οἱ ἐγκριθέντες.³ Second, an anonymous epigram dated on stylistic grounds to c. 100 B.C. lists the nine lyric poets and describes them as the beginning and the end of their genre.⁴ Third, where before writers of lyric poetry might have been described as μελοποιοὶ or μελικοί, the term οἱ λυρικοί now becomes prominent and is used to designate membership of the nine.⁵ Pfeiffer assembles all this evidence and connects it to one crucial phenomenon: the edition of the lyric poets produced in the second century B.C. by Aristophanes of Byzantium.⁶

When therefore Horace requests that Maecenas insert him (*inseres*) in the lyric poets (*lyricis*), critics rightly contend that *lyricus* points to the technical sense of λυρικός as indicating a member of the canon of lyric poets.⁷ In the same spirit, the verb *inserere* is taken to be a Latin equivalent for the Greek ἐγκρίνειν and to refer to the act of judging a writer worthy of membership of the canon. It is my contention that the first of these claims is entirely valid, the second importantly inexact.

It will be of value to consider more closely the verbs *inserere* and ἐγκρίνειν. What they most obviously have in common is the prefix *in-* and ἐγ-. Yet at this point things rather come apart and the idea of passing judgement expressed in the Greek κρίνειν is much less obviously present in the Latin *serere*. In their note on *inseres* at *Odes* 1.1.35, Nisbet and Hubbard are untroubled by this and argue that it alludes to ἐγκρίνειν. Yet when this verb recurs at *Odes* 2.5.21 *si puellarum insereres choro*, the same scholars make a fundamental observation that can with profit be read back to 1.1.35.⁸ For here they note that *inserere* ‘suggests the twining of a flower in a circular garland (*serta*)’ and quote Pliny, *Natural History* 20.247 *sisymbrium inseritur coronis*.⁹ The point is well made in this context and might be strengthened by reference to the Roman tendency to derive *corona* from *chorus* and vice versa.¹⁰ Yet what is good for 2.5.21 is perhaps even better for 1.1.35, where what Horace appears to suggest is, not so much that Maecenas judge him

in S.J. Heyworth (ed.), *Classical Constructions: Papers in Memory of Don Fowler* (Oxford, 2007), 174–93, esp. 189–90.

² Wilamowitz (n. 1), 4–6; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), 182–3, 205–6; Citroni (n. 1), esp. 209–12.

³ Pfeiffer (n. 2), 206 n. 2 gives *Suda* s.v. Δείναρχος ... ῥήτωρ τῶν μετὰ Δημοσθένους ἐγκριθέντων εἰς; *ibid.* s.v. Πυθέας ... οὐκ <ἐν>εκρίθη μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ῥητόρων ὡς θρασὺς καὶ διεσπασμένος; Phot. *Bibl.* 20b25 Αἰσχίνην ... καὶ Φρόνιχος ... εἰς τοὺς ἀρίστους ἐγκρίνει, κανόνα μετὰ γὰρ τοὺς πρώτους Ἀττικοῦ λόγου τοὺς ἐκείνου ἀποφανόμενος λόγους.

⁴ *Anth. Pal.* 9.184.

⁵ Pfeiffer (n. 2), 182. Note esp. the reference to the Augustan critic Didymus’ study *Περὶ λυρικῶν ποιητῶν*.

⁶ Pfeiffer (n. 2), 205.

⁷ For similar uses of *lyricus*, see Cic. *Orat.* 183; Sen. *Ep.* 49.5; Petron. *Sat.* 2; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.61; Stat. *Silv.* 4.7.5.

⁸ R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes, Book 2* (Oxford, 1978), 91.

⁹ This sense of *insero* is absent from Lewis and Short and *OLD*, but is given at *TLL* VII.I.1870.16–19 s.v. *insero*.

¹⁰ R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies* (Leeds, 1991) s.v. *chorus* gives Isid. *Etym.* 6.19.5: ‘dictus chorus quod initio in modum coronae circum aras starent et ita psallerent’, while s.v. *corona* he offers Paul. Fest. 37L, ‘corona cum uideatur a choro dici, caret tamen aspiratione’; Isid. *Etym.* 19.30.3: ‘nomen coronae hac ex causa uocatum, eo quod initio circum

worthy of entry into the canon of lyric poets, as that he weave him into a garland, or more properly a *Garland*, of those poets.

The weaving of flowers is a common metaphor for poetic composition from the Greek lyric poets onwards.¹¹ Writers were also accustomed to give collections of shorter poems titles that suggested a multiplicity of different flowers: Cicero's *Limón* or *Meadow* is a case in point,¹² and later Martial would represent his eighth book as a garland.¹³ Yet here the key point of reference must be the c. 100–80 B.C. publication of the *Garland* (Στέφανος) of Meleager and with it the suggestion that a poetic collection may be made through artful interweaving of other men's flowers.¹⁴ And the verb that Meleager's proem uses to describe this process is precisely ἐμπλέκειν. I quote the first six lines and with it the opening of the list of poets, each one identified with a flower, who have found a place in the *Garland*:

Μοῦσα φίλα, τίνι τάνδε φέρεις πάγκαρπον αἰοιδάν;
ἦ τίς ὁ καὶ τεύξας ὕμνοθετᾶν στέφανον;
ἄνυσε μὲν Μελέαγρος, ἀριζάλωι δὲ Διοκλεῖ
μναμόσυνον ταῦταν ἐξεπόνησε χάριν,
πολλὰ μὲν ἐμπλέξας Ἀνύτης κρίνα, πολλὰ δὲ Μοιροῦς
λείρια, καὶ Σαπφούς βαιὰ μὲν, ἀλλὰ ῥόδα.¹⁵

Dear Muse, to whom do you bear this song rich in fruit of every kind? And who is the maker of this garland of composition? Meleager wrought it and completed this act of grace as a keepsake for brilliant Diocles, weaving in many lilies of Anyte, and many white lilies of Moero, and other small roses of Sappho ...

The ensuing distichs follow through the structure established in vv. 3–6, as Meleager gives the accusative of each flower woven into the *Garland* and with it the genitive of the poet to whom it relates. The catalogue is punctuated by occasional verbs and participles that describe the gathering or the weaving of the flowers.¹⁶ Five distichs also begin with the simple ἐν δὲ followed by the accusative,¹⁷ while line 25 reintroduces the key verb found in line 5: τῆισι δ' ἄμ' Ἑγήσιππον ἐνέπλεκε μαινάδα βότρυν.

It will be apparent that the correspondence between *inserere* and ἐμπλέκειν is considerably more exact than that between the same Latin verb and ἐγκρίνειν.

aras curreretur, atque ad imaginem circuitus vel chori et formatam et nominatam coronam.' See also Apion at Ath. 680D.

¹¹ Nisbet and Hubbard (n. 1), 306 at Hor. *Carm.* 1.26.8 offer Sapph. 55.2–3 V; Pind. *Ol.* 6.86–7, 9.48–9, *Nem.* 7.77–9, fr. 179; Antip. Sid. *Anth. Pal.* 7.14. See also Pl. *Leg.* 669D; Antiph. 207. 9 K–A; Callim. *Hymn* 4.29.

¹² M. Tullius Cicero fr. 2 Courtney.

¹³ Mart. 8.82.4 *serta*.

¹⁴ See A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1965), 2.594 n. 2; K. Gutzwiller, *Poetic Garlands: Hellenistic Epigrams in Context* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1998), 279–81; L. Argentieri, 'Meleager and Philip as epigram collectors', in P. Bing and J.S. Bruss (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden–Boston, 2007), 147–64.

¹⁵ Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 4.1.1–6.

¹⁶ Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 4.1.9 σὺν δ' ἀναμιξ πλέξας, 17 ἀπέθρισε, 32 διακνίζων, 43 ἐν δ' ... ἦκε, 51 ὅμον βάλεν, 51 ἐν ... μίξας.

¹⁷ Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 4.1.15, 21, 31, 35, 37.

lyricis guarantees that the idea of the lyric canon is still very much present in these lines and indeed it must be; for Horace would have no reason to butt the heavens in pride were his verses anthologized alongside those of any others than the acknowledged masters of his form. The weaving of a garland therefore implies the same critical judgement as does the reconfiguration of the established canon, but it does so through a figure eminently more visual than what has previously been proposed. The delicacy implicit in the interweaving of flowers also contrasts strikingly with the agonistic imagery of the ensuing verse: Horace is at once a flower woven into a garland and a titan bursting the bounds of earthly existence and striking a blow against the stars; he and his collection will encompass everything from the garlanded intimacy of a Sappho to the sublime grandeur of a Pindar.¹⁸

It has long been noted that the first poems of both Catullus and Propertius allude to the works of Meleager.¹⁹ More recent scholarship has sought to identify the garland (*coronae*) in the closural Horace, *Odes* 1.38 as an allusion to the closural *koronis* of Meleager, *Anthologia Palatina* 12.257.²⁰ This case is greatly strengthened if it is accepted that the programmatic *Odes* 1. 1 alludes to Meleager's proem and does so by reference to the interweaving of flowers. For now the two collections both begin and end with a garland, and the plurality of voices, metres and motifs that Meleager anthologizes in his *Garland* finds its response in the efforts of Horace to make but one voice encompass features distinctive of all nine members of the established lyric canon.

The *Garland* of Maecenas never was published. The lyric verse of Horace was not woven into the same pages as that of Pindar, Stesichorus, Sappho and the rest. But this surely is the conceit that *quodsi me lyricis uatibus inseres* suggests.²¹

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¹⁸ The visual is also important to Farrell (n. 1), 189–90. Farrell sees in *inseres* an image of Maecenas filing Horace in his private library. The body of the poet is identified with the physical reality of his book, and confinement on the shelf contrasts with the boundary-breaking ascent of 1.1.36.

¹⁹ W. Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus. Herausgegeben und Erklärt* (Leipzig, 1923), 1 at Catull. 1.1 pointing to Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 4.1.1; P. Fedeli, *Sesto Propertio. Il primo libro delle elegie. Introduzione, testo critico e commento* (Florence, 1980), 62–3 at Prop. 1.1.1–4 citing Mel. *Anth. Pal.* 12.101.1–4.

²⁰ A. Barchiesi, 'The search for the perfect book: a PS to the new Posidippus', in K. Gutzwiller (ed.), *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (Oxford, 2005), 320–42, esp. 322–3 and 325. For *κορωνίς* as both a diacritic mark and a term for 'garland', see P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Gröningen, 1988), 34 citing Stesichorus 187 PMG. It is significant that Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.14–16 closes the final poem of the original three-book collection of *Odes* with the image of the poet garlanded by Melpomene.

²¹ A version of this paper was delivered to the September 2008 Trieste European Summer School in Classics. I have gained much from conversation with my friends Marco Fernandelli, Marko Marinčič and Llewelyn Morgan as well as from the very helpful comments of the anonymous *CQ* referee.