

# HORACE ON HIS CRITICS: *EPIST.* 1.19

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THE PERSONALITY which Horace has presented to us through our reading of the *Epistles* is that of the retired gentleman poet who is now concerning himself, from the vantage point of rural retirement, with the specific social and ethical questions which occur to himself and his friends.<sup>1</sup> But although he may claim to have retired from poetry, *nunc itaque et versus et cetera ludicra pono* (*Epist.* 1.1.10),<sup>2</sup> and although the point of view with respect to his "real" poetry is now detached, these earlier works are still a concern to him in the new poetic role he has chosen to play.

This concern is expressed in a humorous situation overlaid with ironic self-depreciation in *Epist.* 1.13.<sup>3</sup> The subject is resumed in *Epist.* 1.19 but, apparently, in quite a different tone. For to Fraenkel it seemed "the only thoroughly bitter document we have from Horace's pen;"<sup>4</sup> and opinion ranges from that point of view to that of Villeneuve: "sans âpreté."<sup>5</sup> The assessments of its level of irony run all the way to complete denial: "It is one of the truest *Epistles*, since no irony puts its statements

Reference will be made below to the following by author only: C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1961); C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry. Prolegomena to the Literary Epistles* (Cambridge 1963); E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957); R. Heinze—E. Burck, *Q. Horatius Flaccus, Briefe*, erklärt von Adolf Kiessling, bearbeitet von Richard Heinze<sup>7</sup> (Berlin 1961); G. Maurach, "Der Grundriss von Horazens erstem Epistelbuch," *Acta Classica* 11 (1968) 73–124; M. J. McGann, *Studies in Horace's First Book of Epistles* (Brussels 1969); J. Perret, *Horace*, tr. B. Humez (New York 1964); N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge 1966); R. Sabbadini, *Orazio Epistole*<sup>2</sup> (Turin 1964); F. Villeneuve, *Horace III, Épîtres* (Paris 1934); W. Wili, *Horaz* (Basel 1948); G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968). The text of Horace used throughout is that of F. Klingner (Teubner, 1970).

<sup>1</sup>I have discussed *Epist.* 1.7 and 1.8 in the same vein: "Horace to Albinovanus Celsus: *Ep.* 1.8," *Mn* 21 (1968) 408–414; "Fact and fable in Horace, *Epistle* 1.7," *CP* 68 (1973) 47–53.

<sup>2</sup>Williams (4) is certainly right in his assessment of the irony here.

<sup>3</sup>In that poem there is no reference, anticipatory or otherwise, to any public reaction to the *Odes*. This does not suppose that Augustus is receiving an advance copy. The setting is artistically limited to the segment of the world of letters shared by Horace and the emperor, with its exclusiveness pointed out and then lightened and relaxed by the personalities of Horace and Vinnius. See "Mentioned in despatches: Hor., *Epistles* 1.13," *Humanities Association Review* 24 (1973) 294–299.

<sup>4</sup>Fraenkel 350. Cf. Heinze 177; Brink 180 (but see n. 4); Sabbadini 90; Rudd 158; McGann 85.

<sup>5</sup>Villeneuve 28. Cf. Maurach 120. The most emphatic denials of a bitter tone in this epistle are those of Williams (25 ff.) and Perret (102 f.).

in doubt.”<sup>6</sup> Even its shape as a formal epistle has caused disagreement.<sup>7</sup>

A cursory reading reveals two basic facts about the epistle. First, it is on the subject of poetry—his own poetry. Secondly, it is addressed to Maecenas. If we knew nothing of him before coming upon this document, we are informed immediately in which capacity he is being addressed, and what response Horace expects from him: *Maecenas docte*.<sup>8</sup> This address makes it clear that he is well-read, and to the poet’s exact taste discriminating in his literary judgement. We are not immediately informed whether Maecenas has (in the dramatic sense) solicited this letter or not; but it is clear that Horace is addressing himself to someone whose judgement he respects and upon whose sympathy he relies. This is important in assessing the poet’s tone, as we can anticipate the response he assumes from this silent correspondent. There is no suggestion that he must convince Maecenas of anything: the epistle is not protreptic.

*Prisco si credis, Maecenas docte, Cratino,  
nulla placere diu nec vivere carmina possunt,  
quae scribuntur aquae potoribus.* (1-3a)

Maecenas, you’re a man of discernment. If one accepts the view of old Cratinus, no poems can please for long—or endure—if written by water-drinkers.

This as an intriguing opening for a letter to a *vir doctus*. He would be familiar with the polemics involved and quick to see the humour behind the choice of Cratinus as the exponent of the tippler’s point of view. Cratinus had been the butt of his peers’ jokes (and his own) because of his fondness for the grape, and lived to age ninety-seven.<sup>9</sup> The view espoused by Cratinus is then supported by the *exemplum* of his patron, Liber himself—hardly an impartial witness:

*ut male sanos  
adscriptis Liber Satyris Faunisue poetas,  
vina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae.* (3b-5)

Since Liber conscripted those with wits crazed as poets among his Satyrs and Fauns, our own sweet Muses have usually smacked in the morning of wine.

From comedy and satyr-play the examination of the evidence for wine’s poetic virtues moves to the arch-poet himself, Homer, and his Roman counterpart, Ennius. Supporting testimony from them will clinch the case:

<sup>6</sup>Wili 263.

<sup>7</sup>Williams 28; Wili 263; McGann 82.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Brink 180.

<sup>9</sup>See the commentaries. Aristophanes quips (*Pax* 700) that Cratinus had dropped dead at the sight of a full wineskin burst open! See also the epigram *Anth. Pal.* 13.29. The allusion to Old Comedy helps set the tone.

*laudibus arguitur vini vinosus Homerus:  
Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma  
prosiluit dicenda.* (6-8a)

For his praise of wine Homer is proved a wine-bibber; and Father Ennius himself never sprang "to sing of arms" except when tipsy!

Homer's agreement is confidently inferred from his numerous epithets for wine: "honey-hearted," "manly," "satisfying." Ennius has left us a little evidence to appreciate the irony here:

*Numquam poetor nisi si podager.*<sup>10</sup>

I never write verse when not gouty.

So after this series of ironic *testimonia*, Horace returns to a dictum of his own (though not one expressed in any of his works) and its consequences:

*'forum putealque Libonis  
mandabo siccis, adimam cantare severis';  
hoc simul edixi, non cessavere poetae  
nocturno certare mero, putere diurno.* (8b-11)

"To the forum and Libo's wall shall I relegate abstainers, and the stern forbid to sing!" The minute I uttered this edict, poets strove ceaselessly in their cups by night and reeked of them by day.

Horace had ventured (in whatever context) a perfectly reasonable edict:<sup>11</sup> that those who never unbend cannot expect to write poetry, and should devote themselves to something else. If we recall (*Carm.* 3.21), Horace maintained that even the most austere old Cato knew when to relax, as did the philosophical Messalla (9-12):

*non ille, quamquam Socraticis madet  
sermonibus, te neglegit horridus:  
narratur et prisci Catonis  
saepe mero caluisse virtus.*<sup>12</sup>

But the response to his remark was perversely enthusiastic; for other "poets" took to drinking night and day. Here we ought to remember the ironic contrast between the *doctus Maecenas*, whom Horace relies upon to understand the subtleties involved in the wine-poet relationship, and the mob of poetasters who flock wherever they think they are led.

<sup>10</sup>*Sat.* fr. 21 W (=64 V = Prisc. G.L. 2.434.6 K).

<sup>11</sup>I.e., from the point of view of *extremes*. A praetor's edict would indicate which particular body of law would guide *him* in *his* policies, and not be a comprehensive legal statement. Cf. *Sat.* 2.3.227.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. *Carm.* 1.18.3. Horace sketches the opposite view of Democritus (and his slavish followers) at *Ars P.* 295-301.

Of course it is well for our perspective to recall that Horace does rise to ecstatic heights in his expression of the role of wine in the *poeticus furor*. *Odes* 2.19 and 3.25 give vivid flights of this fine madness. But while it is indispensable, it is not enough; and it may easily run to extremes, the sort of picture with which the *Ars Poetica* concludes (472-474):

*certe furit, ac velut ursus,  
obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clatros,  
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus.*

The poets then have seized upon a part of Horace's whole poetry and aped it—with disastrous results, we can assume! And this assumption is confirmed by the two parallels that follow:

*quid? si quis voltu torvo ferus et pede nudo  
exiguaeque togae simulet textore Catonem,  
virtutemne repraesentet moresque Catonis?  
rupit Jarbitam Timagenis aemula lingua,  
dum studet urbanus tenditque disertus haberi.* (12-16)

Suppose a man were to pretend to be grim, and with stern face, bare feet, and a thin-woven toga emulate Cato. Would he embody Cato's virtue and morality? Competing with the power of Timagenes, and striving with might and main to earn a reputation for eloquence, Jarbitas split himself!

For these two, Cato and Timagenes, were imitated and imitable only in superficial aspects. The sum of their virtues, especially their intellectual capacities, their personalities, and their achievements were beyond the reach of inferior minds. With this precise point Horace returns to himself:

*decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile: quodsi  
pallerem casu, biberent exsangue cuminum.* (17-18)

A model whose faults invite imitation is treacherous. If, say, I were *pale*, they'd be guzzling bloodless cummin!

It is important to note that so far Horace has been detaching himself from earnest pride in his achievement, maintaining the irony we remember from *Epist.* 1.13. He does want us to know (Maecenas knows already) that he *has* a rabid following among the *mali poetae*, even if it falls very short of the ideal! The transition to the next lines is easily inferred:

*o imitatores, servom pecus, ut mihi saepe  
bilem, saepe iocum vestri movere tumultus!  
libera per vacuum posui vestigia princeps,  
non aliena meo pressi pede. qui sibi fidet,  
dux reget examen.* (19-23a)

What a slavish flock of imitators you are! How often have you drawn my bile—and my mirth—with your babel! Unfettered were the steps I pressed through vacant land, and unclaimed the ground I trod. He who trusts himself will rule the swarm as leader.

With these lines the epistle—and the collection—reaches its highest pitch of poetry and poetic feeling: the antithesis (which stirs harmonics from his previous poetry) between the one and the mob, the first and the followers, the leader and the led. The apostrophe, the loaded diction,<sup>13</sup> the fierce pride—all are coloured and further heightened by the evocation of the grand lines from Lucretius,

*avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante<sup>14</sup>  
trita solo*

and the whole Alexandrian tradition it recalls. It is in this grand tone that Horace proceeds to express his personal theory and practice of lyric imitation:<sup>15</sup>

*Parios ego primus iambos  
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus  
Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben.  
ac ne me foliis ideo brevioribus ornes,  
quod timui mutare modos et carminis artem:  
temperat Archilochi musam pede mascula Sappho,  
temperat Alcaeus, sed rebus et ordine dispar,  
nec socerum quaerit, quem versibus oblinat atris,  
nec sponsae laqueum famoso carmine nectit.* (23b-31)

I it was who first discovered to Latium the iambics of Paros, following Archilochus in verse and verve, but not in his matter and his verbal hounding of Lycambes. And lest you deck me on that account with scantier laurels, that I lacked the daring to depart from his measures and poetic technique, the manly Sappho tempers the muse of Archilochus with her rhythms; and so does Alcaeus, though different (like her) in matter and arrangement. He does not borrow a father-in-law to smear with the venom of verse, nor does he wind a noose of scandalous poems for a fiancée.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>I.e., *servum, libera, vacuum, princeps, non aliena, sibi fidet, dux reget examen*.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Callim. fr. 1.25 (Pf.), Manilius 2.136-149. See Manilius here for the *poeta—turba* theme also.

<sup>15</sup>I.e., in both the *Epodes* and *Odes*. When he refers to the ground as *vacuum* he does not exclude some earlier experiments such as Catullus's. This question must be read with the question of *satiric* imitation in mind, too (*Sat.* 1.10).

<sup>16</sup>The controversy over the meaning of these three lines (28-30) can be traced in Fraenkel's account (341-347). He is correct in dismissing such constructions as *Archilochi . . . pede* and *pede mascula*. Similarly important is the explanation of what *temperare . . . pede* would have meant in terms of ancient metrical theory (341-347); Caesius Bassus (*G.L.* 6.271.5 K), for example, could call *silvae laborantes geluque* a trimeter minus cretic. There is one other consideration to add here. If Sappho and Alcaeus moderate the poetry of Archilochus *metrically*, and change the *res* and *ordo*, the *animi* must still be accounted for. Since Alcaeus' *animi* can be reasonably called Archilochean we need only consider Sappho's. *Mascula* might distinguish between two sides of Sappho's poetic personality, the vigorous and the feminine, and link the *former only* with that of Archilochus. It seems clear that Sappho was capable of biting attack (*Herod.* 2.134 ff.; see Bowra's note, *G.L.P.* 209), although this was not her usual tone. If we may understand *mascula* in a partitive sense it is in the correct position (preceding its noun). Cf. "the (more) traditional Picasso. . . ."

The *exemplar vitiis imitabile* is supported here by recourse to the practice of Horace's own models. Sappho on occasion, and Alcaeus, had imitated Archilochus' tone and rhythms; but they found their own material, avoiding those features of Archilochus which would have seduced lesser poets, such as his obsession with revenge.<sup>17</sup> This grand statement of his practice of imitation and originality concludes with his claim, echoed from *Carm.* 3.30, to be the first lyric poet in Rome:

*hunc ego, non alio dictum prius ore, Latinus  
volgavi fidicen. iuvat inmemorata ferentem  
ingenuis oculisque legi manibusque teneri.* (32-34)

And him, unsung before by any lips have I celebrated on Latin lyre. What pleasure to bear things untold to be read by eyes and held by hands truly free!

Here a new idea is added to the discussion of the poet's craft, which is closely related to the principle of originality. To whom will the poet speak his words, unheard before? This is a thought which had long concerned poets, and Horace in particular. In *Sat.* 1.4 Horace had maintained that he wrote for *few*, excluding the mob and specific critics:

*nulla taberna meos habeat neque pila libellos  
quis manus insudet volgi Hermogenisque Tigelli.*<sup>18</sup>

The *ingenui*, then, are those outside both the *volgus* and the professional critics. The word is also meant as the antithesis to *servom pecus*; that is, men of liberated and independent spirits and higher tastes.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear then that thus far Horace's views on originality and his reading public are consistent with those expressed in the *Satires*, and are hardly those of one to whom a bad press is new and intolerable. His impact upon the public at large had been first evident in a rash of inept imitations. In a sense these *fautores* have been both *grati* and *ingrati*, favourable but unwelcome. But there has been another response too, one in which Maecenas may be interested; and we ought to keep it in mind that what Horace says in the epistle is *dramatically* addressed to him. Readdressing him directly marks a return from the lofty tone of vv. 19-34:

*scire velis, mea cur ingratus opuscula lector  
laudet amēque domi, premat extra limen iniquus.* (35-36)

You may wish to know why the unfriendly reader speaks of my offerings with affectionate praise at home, but applies hostile strictures abroad.

<sup>17</sup>This kind of polemical defence of one's style of imitatio can be found in Terence (*Andr.* 19 ff.). The comedian justifies his practice of *contaminatio* by appealing to his models, Naevius, Plautus, and Ennius (19), *quorum aemulari exoptat neclegentiam/potius quam istorum obscuram diligentiam*. Horace quotes from the *Andria* elsewhere in this epistle (v.41).

<sup>18</sup>For the identification of this critic Tigellius, see Rudd 292-293.

<sup>19</sup>A *topos* in literary polemics: cf. Lucil. fr. 632-635 W. For the *ingenui* . . . *servom* antithesis see also Williams 26.

These readers' private communications are praise; but publicly they are highly derogatory and unfriendly. They are the Pantilii, Demetrii, Fanni, and Hermogenes Tigellii—the professional critics or *grammatici*, in whose schools the reputations of lesser poets are made or broken. Horace had already sent them packing in *Sat.* 1.10:<sup>20</sup>

*Demetri, teque, Tigelli,  
discipularum inter iubeo plorare cathedras.* (90–91)

And one would not expect him to court them *now*:

*non ego ventosae plebis suffragia venor  
impensis cenarum et tritae munere vestis;  
non ego nobilium scriptorum auditor et ultor  
grammaticas ambire tribus et pulpita dignor.  
hinc illae lacrimae.* (37–41a)

The reason is, I for one don't hunt for the votes of the fickle crowd with free dinners and the gift of an old suit.<sup>21</sup> I, for one, since I listen to writers of distinction—and retaliate—consider it beneath my dignity to canvass the tribes of critics in their magisterial seats. "Hence their chagrin."

Here too it is clear that his situation has not changed much in fifteen years. It had been Horace's experience that *grammatici* would flatter him to his face but condemn him behind his back. But he had been above it all (*Sat.* 1.10.78–80):

*men moveat cimex Pantilius, aut cruciet quod  
vellicet absentem Demetrius aut quod ineptus  
Fannius Hermogenes laedat conviva Tigelli?*

The portrayal of the *ingrati lectores* has moved from the slavish flock, through the *volgus*, to the hypocritical *grammatici*. When Horace rejects any attempt to flatter or in any way accommodate any of them in the interest of popularity or a good press he does so in terms of *ingenui*. The

<sup>20</sup>The reconstruction of the literary background of *Sat.* 1.10 is an interesting problem. Brooks Otis ("Horace and the elegists," *TAPA* 71 [1945] 177–190) sees Horace there as antagonistic towards the excessive Alexandrianism and anti-Augustanism of the school in general, and specifically towards the tendency to praise Lucilius for his extensive use of invective and grecisms, and thus to "defend their principles in terms of his" (179). But they may also have been most influential with their critical views in the *collegium poetarum* (n. 5), in spite of this political vulnerability. Rudd (118–121), while not referring to Otis directly, minimizes the certainty we can have regarding the political aspects of these controversies as viewed by G. L. Hendrickson and T. Frank (120). The final glimpse of Horace's adversaries there is that of the *grammatici* Demetrius and Tigellius, now driven from the field of serious criticism to their girls' schools to lament their defeat. The significant change in the situation lying behind *Epist.* 1.19 is simply that the academics (now unnamed) now long for Horace (who has by this time "arrived" in reputation and social status) to dignify their schools with recitations.

<sup>21</sup>The second time Horace has seen his predicament like that of a magistrate. Cf. vv. 8–11.

two sections of the epistle hinge upon this ambivalent term: his imitators are not *ingenui*, because they are a *servom pecus*; and neither are his scholastic critics, since they are far from "open" or "ingenuous." Horace's friend Albius had been a *candidus iudex* of his *sermone*s (*Epist.* 1.4.1) and was a close friend. The same kind of affection is reserved for Quintilius Varus, who was a severe and uncompromising critic (*Ars P.* 438-444):

*Quintilio siquid recitares, 'corrige sodes  
hoc' aiebat 'et hoc'. melius te posse negares  
bis terque expertum frustra: delere iubebat  
et male tornatos incudi reddere versus.  
si defendere delictum quam vertere malle,  
nullum ultra verbum aut operam insumebat inanem,  
quin sine rivali teque et tua solus amares.*

This is the picture of the practice of mutual criticism within Maecenas' circle; it is a picture of complete openness and objectivity, reminiscent of Horace's remarks to the "bore."<sup>22</sup> As *auditor et ultor* in the intimate recitations of Maecenas' friends, he is not likely to be in any way dependent upon the professional critics for either advice or favour.<sup>23</sup> "Hence their chagrin" (*hinc illae lacrimae*, 41).<sup>24</sup> And yet they continue to importune him to recite in their halls and add respectability to their judgements and schools. To illustrate the situation for Maecenas and to conclude the epistle, Horace dramatizes a typical such encounter;

<sup>22</sup>*Sat.* 1.9.48-52.

<sup>23</sup>The meaning of *nobilium scriptorum auditor et ultor* (39) is still troublesome. Horace is alluding clearly to recitations of poetry, but there is even disagreement as to whether these *nobiles scriptores* are the greats from the past (Fraenkel 348-349) or contemporaries of Horace. It is sometimes argued that *nobilium* is ironic (e.g., by Heinze). However, the antithesis in the context appears to be between the *nobiles scriptores* and the *grammaticae tribus*: between intimate recitations with Horace and his peers and the ones solicited by the *grammatici* for their schools. (Horace's refusals to coöperate earn him resentment.) *Utor* is the crux of the problem. Horace uses this word only in one other place: *Caesaris ultor* (*Carm.* 1.2.44), "Caesar's avenger." To suppose with Ps.-Acro that Horace is defending his colleagues from criticism is possible. But the give and take of single combat is a metaphor used elsewhere by Horace to describe the rivalry of a recitation: *caedimur et totidem plagis consumimus hostem* (*Epist.* 2.2.97). The idea of the poet listening to others, then getting even, is clear in Juvenal 1.1. (*Semper ego auditor tantum? numquam reponam?*) and in much friendlier way in Catullus 50.6 (*reddens mutua*). A passage of Cicero has been cited (*Cluent.* 141) to show *ulciscor* in a parallel courtroom context: *Crassus tum ita Brutum ultus est ut illum recitationis suae paeniteret*. On the subject of Horace's opinion of recitations see O. A. W. Dilke, "Horace and the verse letter," *Horace*, ed. C. D. N. Costa (London and Boston 1973) 171.

<sup>24</sup>The reference of *illae* is ambiguous, and must be determined by the context. It must refer back to Maecenas' question *scire velis cur* . . . (35), and to the behaviour of the *critics*, not to himself. In the Terentian passage where this quotation originates (Ter. *Andr.* 126), Simo's remarks are about Pamphilus, not himself. So here, *illae* = *illorum*. Horace has no reason for tears!



*'spissis indigna theatri  
scripta pudet recitare et nugis addere pondus'  
si dixi, 'rides' ait 'et Iovis auribus ista  
servas; fides enim manare poetica mella  
te solum, tibi pulcher.'*

(41b-45a)

Whenever I say, "It's not proper to recite worthless works in crowded halls and add weight to trifles," the rejoinder is: "You're laughing, and keeping yours for the ears of Jove! You think that you alone exude the honey of poetry—you think you're it!"

It might be tempting to understand this as a very disturbing sort of confrontation: but there is a controlling principle here. The listener (dramatically speaking) is Maecenas, and it is the unswerving devotion to him and his friends that produces such a confrontation. We saw its exact analogue in Horace's first *sermo* of an epistolary character, *Sat.* 2.6. There the issue was political, not literary; but Horace's insular position in Maecenas' group had made for hard feelings (47-54a):

*per totum hoc tempus subiector in diem et horam  
invidiae noster. ludos spectaverat, una  
luserat in campo: 'fortunae filius' omnes.  
frigidus a rostris manat per compita rumor:  
quicumque obvius est, me consulit: 'o bone—nam te  
scire, deos quoniam propius contingit oportet—  
numquid de Dacis audisti?' 'nil equidem.' 'ut tu  
semper eris derisor.'*

Yet the carping at him for his aloofness as the friend of Maecenas did not dismay him then:

*hoc iuvat et melli est, non mentiar.*

(32)

And there, as in *this* epistle, Maecenas is the imaginary addressee, and his circle is to the mind of the writer the all-in-all.

Nor is the attitude toward the *recitatio* a response to new circumstances. The attitude had remained a constant one (*Sat.* 1.4.73-78):

*non recito cuiquam nisi amicis idque coactus,  
non ubivis coramve quibuslibet. in medio qui  
scripta foro recitent, sunt multi quique lavantes:  
suave locus voci resonat conclusus. inanis  
hoc iuvat, haud illud quaerentis, num sine sensu,  
tempore num faciant alieno.*

And later (*Sat.* 1.10.37-39):

*haec ego ludo  
quae neque in aede sonent certantia iudice Tarpa  
nec redeant iterum atque iterum spectanda theatri.*

With this background, and aware of this insistence, we may approach the irony of this confrontation and this epistle:

*ad haec ego naribus uti  
formido et, luctantis acuto ne secer ungui,  
'displicet iste locus' clamo et diludia posco.  
ludus enim genuit trepidum certamen et iram,  
ira truces inimicitias et funebre bellum.*

(45b-49)

In reply, I'm too timid to scorn him openly; and lest I be gouged by my opponent's sharp nail in the match, I shout: "I don't like fighting on your ground!" and call for a time out. What begins in sport has begotten fearful strife and rage: rage has begotten savage enmity and deadly war!

It is clear, by now, that Horace's tone in the epistle had ranged from ironic detachment (1-18) to passionate affirmation (19-34). He is speaking from a position of strength and supreme confidence. His poetry has passed the scrutiny of his own friends (whose judgement is all that matters), and won the emulation or grudging appreciation of outsiders. This final confrontation is recounted in the spirit of *Sat.* 1.9. There his desperation to escape the clutches of the bore who would break into the charmed circle is relieved by divine agency. Here, Horace confronts himself with one of those *grammatici* who would splenetically force him out of his chosen circle into the world of hypocrisy and vicious petty rivalries. But the *deus ex machina* is not part of the epistolary apparatus. The *vir bonus et prudens* must extricate himself as best he can by his wits, and there we are left to guess whether he escapes or not. Yet as in *Sat.* 1.9, where an epic allusion in the last line serves to heighten by *magnificatio* the awkwardness of the situation, *Epist.* 1.19 leaves off with the battle about to break out in full fury, in two epic lines:

*ludus enim genuit trepidum certamen et iram,<sup>25</sup>  
ira truces inimicitias et funebre bellum.*

*Epist.* 1.19 is a reprise of a theme developed fifteen years earlier in the *Satires*: the world of *belles lettres*. Its focus is now upon the reception of his own lyrics by the reading public, outside of the friends of Maecenas who are the true *ingenui iudices*. The philistines include the slavish imitators on the one hand, and the hypocritical academics on the other, whose public pronouncements depend upon bribes and recitations. And it is to Maecenas that Horace reiterates his aloofness from them both—and indirectly his debt to him. The language is highly conventional and learned, in keeping with his addressee's accomplishments. The grand assertion of vv. 19-34 and statement of vv. 35-41 are framed by the ironic humour of the beginning and end, each colouring its own area: imitation or petty polemics. The witty handling of the wine and poetry *topos* leads to the theme of imitation as a coda to *Carm.* 3.30, in which the meaning of

<sup>25</sup>Cf. also the ironic conclusion to *Sat.* 2.3.

*princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos  
deduxisse modos*

(3.30.13-14)

is clarified, and the tone recreated.

At the conclusion, the light-hearted tone of the beginning is reestablished in a brief dialogue.<sup>26</sup> Ironically, Horace has left the magisterial safety of the praetor's chair (8-10) to find himself at the mercy of one of his hostile critics. And after comparing the encounter to a kind of school-boy scuffle (you know how *they* fight) he magnifies the seriousness of the situation and reminds us of the opening of the *Epistle* (7 f.) with an Ennian line.

Here, as in *Sat.* 2.6,<sup>27</sup> Horace chooses Maecenas as the foil in an analysis of his own role—something which on the sub-poetic level would be unnecessary. But an *epistle* needs an occasion, no matter how slight, and an interested correspondent. The purpose of this epistle is an expansion of *Carm.* 3.30 in a more dramatic setting, a setting which has changed little from the literary world of the *Satires*. We should not expect therefore, given the facts of Horace's situation, the identity of the addressee, and the personality that evolves from the first eighteen epistles to find a bitter, angry, or waspish reaction to a situation which has long been anticipated—with some pride:

*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*

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<sup>26</sup>Contrast Fraenkel (349): "The mood of resentment does not soften in the brief dialogue that enlivens the last section of the epistle (41-47). The cold irony of the other speaker is most offensive."

<sup>27</sup>On *Sat.* 2.6, see now O. Seel, *Verschlüsselte Gegenwart. Drei Interpretationen antiker Texte* (Stuttgart 1972).