XV. Horace and Maecenas

KENNETH J. RECKFORD

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Maecenas has become, and justly, a by-word for "patron." Even outside classical circles it is known what he did for the Augustan poets; what they did for him is more of an open question. This paper will re-examine the relationship between Maecenas and Horace; and all hypothetical answers will be based as far as possible on historical and literary evidence.

What we know of Maecenas' life falls into two parts which we shall sketch as background for his relationship with Horace. The first part, which is better documented, extends from 44 to 29 B.C. These are the years in which Octavian made himself master of the Roman empire. Maecenas' services to him fall into several categories. First—this is probable but not certain—he supported Octavian financially and helped him build up a following in Italy.[1] Then after Philippi he aided Octavian's divide-and-conquer policy by diplomatic efforts to prevent a coalition between Sextus Pompey and Antony.[2] In 40 he helped arrange the betrothal of Octavian to Scribonia, the sister of Pompey's father-in-law; the same year he helped negotiate with Antony the Peace of Brundisium which shut out Pompey, gave Octavian Spain and Gaul, and relegated Antony to the dangerous East. In 38 he

[1] Nic. Dam. *Vita Caesaris* 31.133 mentions L. Maecenas as one of Octavian's advisers in 44 B.C. Scholars are uncertain whether this is our Maecenas or not; cf. *RE* 27.206 (Stein) and *PIR* 2.316. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 129, calls Maecenas "one of the foundation-members of the faction." For possible early services of his, perhaps around Arretium, see also A. Feugère, *C. Cilnius* (sic) *Maecenas* (Paris 1874) 18; L. Homo, *Auguste* (Paris 1935) 103; and Syme, *op. cit.* 129. For Maecenas' presence at Philippi, cf. *Elegiae in Maecenatem*, ed. M. Miller (Philadelphia 1941, henceforth referred to as **Elegiae**) 1.43; and Pliny, *NH* 7.148.

[2] For Maecenas' diplomatic activities, see Appian 5.6.53; Dio Cass. 48.3.16 (Scribonia); Appian 5.7.64 (the Peace of Brundisium); Appian 5.9.79; Dio Cass. 48.46.2–3 (negotiations in 38 B.C.); Appian 5.10.93; Plut. *Ant.* 35 (negotiations in 37 B.C.). Maecenas' trip to Brundisium in preparation for the conference at Tarentum is of course described in Hor. *Sat.* 1.5; lines 27–29 show that he was not referring to an earlier conference. A valuable discussion of the events of the years 40 to 36 is furnished by T. R. Holmes, *The Architect of the Roman Empire* 2 (Oxford 1931) 101–13.

traveled to Greece to borrow ships from Antony to use against Pompey; in 37 he met Antony at Tarentum and somehow convinced him that his personal intervention in the war against Pompey was unnecessary. As a result of these negotiations, Octavian and Agrippa were enabled to defeat Pompey by themselves at Naulochus in 36 and turn their attention towards planning the ultimate victory against Antony.

Maecenas was not only indirectly responsible through diplomatic maneuvering for the victories of Naulochus and, because of Naulochus, Actium. He also kept order at Rome when Octavian was absent. Twice during the war against Pompey he suppressed revolutionary (or reactionary) agitation in the capital (App. *Bell.civ.* 5.11.99; 12.112). Near the time of Actium he crushed a conspiracy by the son of the former triumvir, Lepidus.[3] Although formally he held no office, he possessed all the powers of a *praefectus urbi* and more: he controlled local garrisons, he collected taxes albeit with difficulty; his frog sealed official documents; with Agrippa he opened and edited letters from Octavian.[4] And a rising young poet who had accompanied Maecenas on the diplomatic mission of 37 and was known, in the slang of the day, to be "close to the gods," was forced to answer with ironic protestations of ignorance the questions of a thousand street-idlers who wanted inside information about Octavian's foreign policy and about whose property was going to the veterans (*Sat.* 2.6.50–58).

Octavian's return and his triple triumph in the summer of 29 put an end to the special powers of the man who has been called

[3] The conspiracy of Lepidus is discussed by Appian 4.6.50, Dio Cass. 51.3.5, and Vell. Pat. 2.88. None of these sources refutes the positive evidence of Propertius 2.1.34–6 and *Elegiae* 1.45–8 that Maecenas was at Actium; see also Hor. *Epod.* 1 for his plea to accompany Maecenas to the battle, and *Epod.* 9, which dramatically places him on board a ship just after the tide of battle has turned. (Octavian spent the night at sea; cf. F. Wurzel, "Der Ausgang des Schlacht bei Actium und die 9.Epode des Horaz," *Hermes* 73 [1938] 364; the ode was actually written later on dry land.) Also, Horace's later claim in *Epist.* 1.20.23, *me primis urbis belli placuisse domique*, can only refer to his presence at Actium. If Dio Cass. 51.3.5 refers to the time of the battle, then Agrippa must have been absent as well as Maecenas! Vell. Pat. 2.88 pinpoints the conspiracy of Lepidus, *dum ultimam bello Actiaco Alexandrinoque imponit manum*. I would therefore guess with R. Schomberg, *The Life of Maecenas* (London 1766) 56, that "Maecenas might therefore have been in that action, and return afterwards to his office, while Octavian was pursuing Antony"; see also Wagenvoort, "De Horati Epodo nono," *Mnemosyne* 59 (1932) 406.

[4] For the powers of Maecenas during Octavian's absences, see Sen. *Ep.* 114.6, Plut. *Ant.* 75, Dio Cass. 47.16–17, 48.43, 51.3.5–7, and Pliny, *NH.* 37.4 and 10.

his First Minister.[5] There is not a single fact to support the idea that Maecenas' political career continued after 29. Not until 16 did Octavian (hereafter called Augustus) again appoint, unofficially or officially, a *praefectus urbi* to keep order in Rome during his absences in Spain and Gaul. Except for the year 22 when the consular elections somehow got out of hand and Agrippa was recalled from Syria in a hurry, Rome seems to have governed itself when the *princeps* was away. When he was at home, the proximity of his friend Maecenas may have disposed him towards greater humanity and clemency in dealing with his former enemies; and this kind of gentle influence—*lene consilium*, as Horace would say—may account for Maecenas' great popularity with the inhabitants of Rome.[6] But there is no evidence that he held any position of state or continued to advise Augustus in any official capacity, Dio's imaginary debate between him and Agrippa notwithstanding.[7] Nor is there evidence for rivalry between the sybaritic Etruscan and the lowborn admiral concerning the succession or indeed any other matter.[8] Even if—and the idea is rather

[5] Maecenas' position earlier is stated in indefinite terms by Dio Cass. 49.16.2, 55.7.1, Vell. Pat. 2.88, Sen. *Ep.* 114.6, *Elegiae* 1.27 and 114. In 40 B.C. Agrippa was similarly left in charge of Rome. V. Gardthausen, *Augustus und seine Zeit* 1 (Leipzig 1891) 765, says that Maecenas had the power of a *praefectus urbi* without the title; K. Hönn, *Augustus und seine Zeit* (Vienna 1943) 140, follows Th. Mommsen in calling this "eine Ausgenahmegewalt." Stein, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 212, suggests that the indefiniteness of the office increased Maecenas' power. Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.11, clearly distinguishes between the period of emergency and the later restoration of the office of *praefectus urbi* in 16 B.C.; see also Suet. *Aug.* 37. There is no evidence to support the contention of Gardthausen, *op. cit.* 766, that Maecenas enjoyed the same power during the later, long trips of Augustus as he had during 36–29.

[6] For Maecenas' clemency, see Dio Cass. 55.7.1–2, Sen. *Ep.* 14.4, 114.7; *Elegiae* 1.15–16 (exaggerated). For his general popularity, since he was neither haughty nor overbearing, see Dio Cass. 55.7.4. He was applauded in the theater after his recovery from a severe illness (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.20.3–8, 2.17.25–6).

[7] Dio himself (52.41.1) carefully hedges against a charge of historical anachronism. The thesis of P. Meyer, *De Maecenatis oratione a Dione ficta* (Berlin 1891), that the speech of Maecenas in Book 52 embodies Dio's own view of the Roman empire is now generally accepted; see, however, the reservations of M. Hammond, "The Significance of the Speech of Maecenas in Dio Cassius, Book LII," *TAPA*, 63 (1932) 88–101, who argues that it was not merely a *speculum principis* applicable to Septimius Severus but a real attempt to balance arguments *pro* and *con* as, in the light of later developments, they might have occurred.

[8] Agrippa's famous *dictum* on Vergil (in Donatus' *Vita, C. Suetonii Tranquilli Reliquiae*, ed. A. Reifferscheid [Leipzig 1860] 65) shows no great enmity between Maecenas and Agrippa (cf. F. Marx, "M. Agrippa und die zeitgenössische römische Dichtkunst," *RhM.* 74 [1925] 194); neither does the gossipy anecdote cited by M. Reinhold, *Marcus Agrippa* (Geneva [N.Y.] 1933) 68, from Sen. *Controv.* 2.4.12–13.

romantic—there was no love lost between Augustus' two earliest advisers, their feelings on the subject certainly never took on any political importance.

The facts that we do possess point to one simple and unromantic conclusion: Maecenas went into voluntary semi-retirement after 29. There were three sufficient reasons for his withdrawal from public life. In the first place, now that Augustus had firmly established his rule, the services of Maecenas as diplomat and caretaker were no longer indispensable. One might even go so far as to say that such an eccentric and untraditional figure as Maecenas scarcely belonged in public life at a time when Augustus was striving to return to republican forms and to reinstate ideals of old Roman simplicity and morality.[9] Secondly, Maecenas may have felt that he had borne quite enough responsibility on his shoulders. Why not retire and enjoy without political pressures the ample benefits of a princely income? Why worry about Dacians on the frontiers when he could be having a quiet dinner with Horace? Velleius (2.88) well describes Maecenas as "a man who, when the situation required vigilance, was far-sighted and capable of quick and decisive action; but who, the moment he could relax a little from responsibility, almost surpassed a woman in effeminate indolence." Finally, a third reason for retiring outweighs the other two together. As early as 29 or 28, Maecenas was a very sick man. Once at least he had a narrow escape from death; a psychological terror of death may have joined with insomnia to torture him in later life.[10]

Evidently completion of duties, love of indolence and the pressure of sickness are sufficient reasons for withdrawal from public life. There is no need to imagine, in addition to these, a "breach" with Augustus around 23.[11] This alleged breach has

Dio Cass. 51.1.2 and Tac. *Ann.* 3.30 state on general principles that Maecenas knew the "secrets of state," but there is no factual support for the view of Syme, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 304 ff., that there was "a secret struggle for influence and power in his [Augustus'] entourage."

[9] Syme, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 342, says in a characteristic understatement that Maecenas "could not stand as a model and an ornament in the New State"; cf. also J. Buchan, *Augustus* (Boston 1937) 261.

[10] For Maecenas' fevers and insomnia, see Pliny *NH* 7.172, Sen. *Dial.* 1.3.10. For his fear of death see his poem quoted by Sen. *Ep.* 101.10–11.

[11] For the "breach" see Tac. *Ann.* 3.30 (in time Maecenas came to hold the appearance of friendship with Augustus rather than the reality) and 14.53 (Augustus offered Agrippa and Maecenas a safe retreat when he no longer desired their services).

been attributed both to jealousy over the affections of Terentia and to Augustus' resentment over the betrayal to Terentia, who passed it on, of the secret that the conspiracy of her brother Terentius Murena had been found out. The political annoyance probably weighed more with Augustus than the sexual one, and Maecenas may have been from the first a sponsor of the unworthy Murena. But there is no solid evidence to support the view that Augustus' friendship for Maecenas cooled after 23, and we will do well to regard the romantic picture of a breach—one thinks of Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey—as another imaginative attempt by biographers to fill in Maecenas' supposed political career after 29. As has been suggested, indolence and sickness account adequately enough for the missing years, from semi-retirement in or around 29 to death in 8 B.C.

Against this background of activity followed by inaction we shall examine Maecenas' relationship with Horace in all its aspects. In recent decades the appalling vision of real dictatorships has made fashionable a portrait of Augustus as black as Tacitus at his angriest (cf. *Ann.* 1.10.1–8) might have contrived. Fashionable, too, as a kind of companion-portrait has been the representation of Maecenas as the chief of a press-bureau or a Minister of Propaganda.[12] The best refutation of such exaggerations is the record of how Maecenas and Augustus treated the great poets of the age and were treated by them; Horace left the most evidence since his poetry is largely autobiographical, but his example will to some extent be typical of Vergil and Propertius as well.

But both passages, like many in the *Annals*, are colored by later, darker days: Agrippa's "exile" is imaginary, suggested by the retreat of Tiberius in 6 B.C., and Tacitus is thinking less about Maecenas than about Sallustius Crispus and Seneca. The word *discidium* in *Elegiae* 2.7–10 clearly refers to Maecenas' notorious divorce from Terentia, not to a breach with Augustus. For Augustus' interest in Terentia see Dio Cass. 54.19.3 and 6; for the secret made public, Suet. *Aug.* 66; and in general on the rise and fall of M. Terentius Varro Murena, *RE* 9 (2 Reihe) s.v. "Terentius," 92 (Fluss) and *PIR* 3.74. For the lasting friendship of Maecenas and Augustus, see Dio Cass. 54.17.5, 54.30.4, 55.7, Suet. *Aug.* 72.2, Plut. *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 3.

[12] See especially Syme, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 242, 253, 460 ff. (a chapter on "The Organisation of Opinion"); and for the actual phrase, "minister of propaganda," Buchan, *op. cit.* (above, note 9) 164, and F. Wright, *Marcus Agrippa* (New York 1937) 199. A similar view is held by Hönn, *op. cit.* (above, note 5) 140–43; Stein, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 218; E. Shuckburgh, *Augustus* (London 1903) 281; B. Allen, *Augustus Caesar* (London 1937) 92. (Significantly, many of the books damning Maecenas were written in the 1930's.) See, however, the prudent warning of Gardthausen, *op. cit.* (above, note 5) 780, against such a view.

Indeed, of all the poets Horace entered into the most formal relationship with Maecenas. In the winter of 38/37, nine months after Vergil and Varius presented him to the great man, he was ceremonially received *amicorum in numero*.[13] This phrase, which implies a certain equality, should not obscure the fact that Horace became a client of Maecenas. He called him *rex* and *pater*, traditional epithets for a patron; and being *libertino patre natus*, as he so insistently repeats in *Satires* 1.6, he assumed a position of social dependence when he entered the circle of the descendant of Etruscan kings.

We should not underestimate the material benefits which he received from his patron. He was not of course the low and rapacious type of client pictured by Juvenal who sits on the doorstep mornings, waiting for his *sportula*. But without Maecenas' generosity he could never have devoted his life to the writing of poetry. A poet in Augustan Rome, as in republican Rome, required either independent means or a patron; there was no third way. He could not live off his sales; there were no royalties; there was no copyright; there were no chairs of literature and no Guggenheim Fellowships. When Horace returned after Philippi with his "wings clipped," his father was dead apparently, and his generous income ended. How little his job as a quaestor's clerk encouraged the writing of poetry may be adduced from the inferior quality of *Satires* 1.2, probably the only satire written between 41 and 38; compare the unhappy experiences of Nathaniel Hawthorne and A. E. Housman in their civil service jobs. But once he became a client of Maecenas his whole world changed. He gave up his job, and in his modest city apartment with only three slaves to wait on him he enjoyed the leisure necessary for writing poetry, the *otium* described so lovingly towards the end of *Satires* 1.6. Add to this financial independence the frequent dinner-invitations from Maecenas which attracted Horace not, as his slave maliciously claimed (*Sat.* 2.7.32–42), because of his instinctive gluttony, but rather because of the literate and witty society of which he was invited to partake, the élite literary circle of Vergil and Varius, Plotius and Quintilius, with their critical and independent standards of literature and life. If to all these benefits we add the gift, in 33 or earlier, of the Sabine farm, it will

[13] For the meeting see Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.45–64, esp. 61–2 (*iubesque esse in amicorum numero*) and *Sat.* 2.6.41–2 (*suorum in numero*). For *rex* and *pater* see *Epist.* 1.7.37.

be obvious that Horace voluntarily incurred a tremendous material and social obligation to Maecenas even though, having *satis superque*, he asked for nothing more.[14]

The crucial question then arises, what was the *quid pro quo*? Horace did not live in Maecenas' house nor did he pay him *salutationes* in the early morning. But comparison of *Satires* 2.6, in praise of the Sabine farm, with the earlier city-idyll of 1.6 shows that in time life in Rome became more complicated for the friend of Maecenas. Horace's days began to be wasted, as he says, in *officia*, and most of these revolved around Maecenas. He was forced to commute to Rome even in the malarial season, to visit the Esquiline, to carry letters for Maecenas to sign and to perform various other commissions for his patron. He was jostled in crowded streets, he was pounced upon by ambitious flatterers and envious gossips, and all the time he longed to be back on the Sabine farm. By fulfilling his social duties in the face of these annoying inconveniences, he paid part of his debt. At the same time, however, as he was bitterly satirizing the irritations of the city, he was also endowing Maecenas and his circle with ideal attributes. *Satires* 1.6 implies strongly that in Maecenas, for all his eccentricities, he found a second father to respect and love; the terms *rex* and *pater* may therefore be taken in a non-social sense. He felt that Maecenas gave him spiritual, not just material, patronage and that the inner circle which he had joined, the *amicorum numerus*, was a charmed society free from all self-seeking and distorted judgment.[15] He included Maecenas, along with Vergil and Varius, among the men whom he called *candidi*, "forthright" and "loyal." The evidence for the mutual affection of Horace and Maecenas is so extensive and so well known that we need not discuss it at any great length; suffice it to say that

[14] Horace insistently repeats that he desires no further gifts; cf. *Epod.* 1.23–34, *Carm.* 2.18.11–14, 3.1.45–48, 3.16.17–44.

[15] For Maecenas' good standards and right judgment, see *Sat.* 1.6, *passim*; for the incorruptibility of his circle, *Sat.* 1.9.43–60, esp. 48–52 (Horace to the bore):

> non isto vivimus illuc
> quo tu rere modo; domus hac nec purior ulla est
> nec magis his aliena malis; nil mi officit, inquam,
> ditior hic aut est quia doctior; est locus uni
> cuique suus.

For *candidi* see *Epod.* 11.11–12 (himself), 14.5 (Maecenas), and *Sat.* 1.5.41–2 (Vergil and Varius). By contrast see *niger* (*Sat.* 1.4.85).

amicorum in numero soon went beyond a formality, and Horace's gratitude beyond the conventional.

How far did his gratitude take the form of writing poetry acceptable to the government? This is the key question, and it is hard to give an unequivocal answer. Certainly he was never compelled to write anything. When Maecenas suggested in the late thirties that he publish his *Epodes* (and, one presumes, get on to something better), Horace declined in *Epode* 14 on the dubious ground that he was sunk in love. Later when Maecenas suggested that he celebrate Augustus' victories, he replied that he was only the poet of love: Maecenas should write the history himself in prose![16] What could be a more tactful yet firm refusal to harness the Muse to the chariot of political panegyric? Horace ended up, of course, treating Roman themes: the *Roman Odes* in Book 3 stand out, and the laudatory poems on Drusus, Tiberius and Augustus in Book 4. But the *Roman Odes*, which confront Augustus and Rome with a series of dire warnings and unconditional demands, are, to say the least, a highly original form of propaganda; and one may doubt that Augustus, who could not persuade Horace to become his private secretary, was able to "compel" him to write the odes of Book 4.[17] And yet his reconciliation with Augustus and his eventual celebration of Roman themes were probably due, at least in part, to his affectionate loyalty to Maecenas and to the gentle pressure from the man who gave him literary independence.[18] One is reminded of the story of the cold wind and the sun and the man with an overcoat: the warmth of affection may have helped to remove an obstacle which the cold blast of command could not.

[16] *Carm.* 2.12; Maecenas undoubtedly had no such intention! For other *recusationes* see *Sat.* 2.1, *Carm.* 1.6, *Epist.* 2.1.250–59. The technique of the *recusatio* was adopted successfully by Propertius, *Carm.* 2.1, 2.10, 2.15, 3.3.

[17] *Coegerit* in Suet. *Vita Horati* (p. 46, Reiff.) means little more than "encouraged" or "suggested"; cf. *Epist.* 2.1.226–28. For the refusal of the secretaryship see Suet. *Vita Horati* (p. 45, Reiff).

[18] In *Epod.* 1 Horace implies that he feels the same loyalty to Maecenas as Maecenas does to Octavian; therefore he will follow him to Actium. This was a big symbolic step towards reconciliation with Octavian. But Horace always maintained his integrity; cf. L. Wilkinson, *Horace and his Lyric Poetry* (Cambridge 1951) 23: "He declined suggested themes, criticized policy, and himself made suggestions, with complete freedom." Cf. also E. K. Rand, *The Building of Eternal Rome* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1943) 53 (on Verg. *G.*3.41): "Maecenas may have prompted him to the writing of the *Georgics*, but Virgil, despite his complimentary phrase, is taking orders from no one except his Muse"; and A. Dalzell, "Maecenas and the Poets," *Phoenix* 10 (1956) 153–57.

But again we should remember that Maecenas was not a part of the government after 29. He may have encouraged Horace to think about politics, but Horace at the same time was busy discouraging him from such concerns. "Do not worry," he said (to paraphrase a little), "about the corn supply; you are a private citizen now. Accept the gifts of the present moment, and leave off hard thinking" (3.8.25–8). And again, "You worry about the situation at home and what the Chinese and Russians are planning on the borders of our allied nations. Don't worry. Grasp the present, and the future will take care of itself" (3.29.25–32). Horace wrote eight odes of his first three books to Maecenas; no other friend received more than two. Of the eight, 2.20 and 1.1 are dedicatory, and 2.12 is the *recusatio* mentioned earlier. Of the other five (1.20, 2.17, 3.8, 3.16, 3.29) each has its own personality, its own special tone and quality of humor.[19] But all five have certain themes in common. First and perhaps most important, they all testify to Horace's great affection for Maecenas. These expressions of friendship are personal; they have nothing to do with the *officia* of a client. Secondly, Horace always stresses his own material and spiritual contentment: in neither sense does he desire more than he possesses, and he is even capable of surrendering his advantages to Fortune, who gave them in the first place (3.29.53–6):

> laudo manentem; si celeris quatit
> pennas, resigno quae dedit et mea
> virtute me involvo probamque
> pauperiem sine dote quaero.

Ironically expressed throughout these odes is the idea that Horace's spiritual resources are richer than Maecenas' material ones. This is the reason why Maecenas will prefer, it is understood, a simple cup of Sabine wine—mixed with affection—on the Sabine farm to his own flagons of priceless Falernian on the Esquiline; and the "poor man's hut" will be more comfortable, as a refuge from worries, than Maecenas' own great palace in the clouds (3.29.9–16):

> Fastidiosam desere copiam et
> molem propinquam nubibus arduis;

[19] For an excellent analysis of these odes, see E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 214–18, 222–29.

omitte mirari beatae
fumum et opes strepitumque Romae.

Plerumque gratae divitibus vices
mundaeque parvo sub lare pauperum
cenae sine aulaeis et ostro
sollicitam explicuere frontem.

Horace is exaggerating of course for the sake of humor, but the essential contrast remains: either Horace is happy and Maecenas is not, or else both will be happy together—provided that Maecenas enters into the Horatian spirit.

Although then Horace can refer to Maecenas as *praesidium et dulce decus meum* (1.1.2), their positions have become reversed. The client now supplies the spiritual patronage. Horace offers advice for the psychological problems of Maecenas, his need for extravagant luxury and his preoccupation with death, just as he counsels Dellius, Plancus, Licinius and his other neurotic friends and contemporaries. The first line of a humorous consolation to Maecenas for his sickness and fears (2.17.1),

cur me querelis exanimas tuis?

indicates, in spite of his joking hyperbole, the constant demands for moral support which Maecenas now imposed upon him. Yet fairly enough Horace could meet these demands by constantly refreshing his own spirit in the calm, untroubled atmosphere of the Sabine farm which Maecenas had given him. Here and not in political propaganda is the major return on Maecenas' wisest investment.

At times Maecenas' needs overtaxed Horace's energy. During the years 23 to 20 he too was in semi-retirement, studying philosophy on the Sabine farm as a relief from the life of poetry-writing and social activity in Rome. One of those summers Maecenas may have pressed him a little too urgently to come to Rome; the answer, in *Epistles* 1.7, was a tactful but uncompromising "No."

Scholars have tended, with a few exceptions, to take an *either/or* view of the epistle: either it is a brutal declaration of independence or it is a cheerful expression of gratitude for Maecenas' generosity.[20] The truth falls somewhere in between. In Part 1 of the

[20] For the view that *Epist.* 1.7 is an expression of gratitude, see K. Büchner, "Der siebente Brief des Horaz," *Hermes* 75 (1940) 64–79; and, for the opposite view.

epistle, the juxtaposed apothegms and parables add up logically to a definite warning:

> For reasons of health I wish to remain in the country, away from Rome and its wearying *officia* (1–13). The good man gives real gifts with no strings attached (14–24). I must leave Rome because I am no longer young (25–28). Trapped in a bad situation, one must escape at any cost: to regain my freedom I would give back all gifts (29–39). Life in Rome is unsuitable for me, a bad situation (40–45).

Clearly the implication is, "If you make me come to Rome, then your gifts have strings attached, and I must reject them." At the same time Horace conveys this warning humorously and with concern for Maecenas' feelings. Over and over again he insists upon his affection for him and his loyalty. He sincerely hopes to win an extension of his retreat "with your permission." He asserts that Maecenas is *not* like the Calabrian host who gives valueless gifts; it follows that Horace is not the fox caught in the trap. The first part of the epistle attests then to the rightness of their relationship, but it also warns against the possibility of its decaying.

The same holds for Part 2, the Philippus-Mena story. This is a parable of a patron-client relationship turned sour: Philippus exploits Mena for his own amusement with the result that Mena is trapped ("like a hooked fish") and eventually must request his patron to take back the ruinous gifts. Obviously Philippus does not equal Maecenas, nor Mena Horace. Horace was not exploited, and the gift of the Sabine farm was not, as for Mena, his ruin but more nearly his salvation. Yet Philippus, the rich patron who lives on the Esquiline, holds elaborate dinner-parties, loves a good joke and presents his client with a Sabine farm, certainly bears some resemblance to Maecenas; and Mena, the *praeco*, resembles Horace in that he is a morally upright fellow who

J. Gunning, "Der siebente Brief des Horaz und sein Verhältnis zu Maecenas," *Mnemosyne* 10 (3 ser.) (1941) 304–19. Both Büchner and Gunning exaggerate the importance of the Calabrian episode. I am in general agreement with Fraenkel, *op. cit.* (above, note 19) 327–36, except that (a) Horace did not "on the whole enjoy excellent health" (cf. *Carm.* 2.6 and *Epist.* 1.15), and (b) Fraenkel tends to whitewash Philippus' behavior in Part II (*op. cit.*, 337). Gunning (311–13) comes much closer to the meaning of the Philippus-Mena story. One may doubt that, as A. Noirfalise, "Horace et Mécène," *Ét. class.* 18 (1950) 302, suggests, the epistle was written as an answer to contemporary accusations of servitude.

dislikes material concerns and knows how to enjoy his spare time. The story, like that of the Calabrian and his guest or the fox and the bin of corn, mirrors the wrong kind of patron-client relationship, and as before Horace seems to imply, "This could so easily be us—but it won't be." Presumably Maecenas' forbearance justified his tact. The epistle was published, but no feelings were hurt.

All the same, Horace seems occasionally to have resented his position as a client. We saw how in earlier days he undertook his *officia* with a smile; but as he grew older, he began to object to them on principle. He says very deliberately in *Epistles* 1.18 that a client's life is not a happy one.[21] At the beginning he seems to encourage Lollius to assume, easily and without regrets, the responsibilities of clientship to some (unnamed) great man; too great *libertas* is as bad as too little (lines 1–20). But this preliminary advice turns into a discussion of the evils of clientship in general. The client will be censured if he imitates his patron in extravagance (21–36); he must keep secrets, even in his cups (37–38, 68–71); he must not covet his patron's maids (72–75); he must never recommend an unworthy person (76–85); his character, whatever its tendencies, will be seen in the worst possible light (89–95). In short, the man of experience knows better than to become a client (86–87):

> Dulcis inexpertis cultura potentis amici:
> expertus metuit.

The dangers of clientship may be common to all, but its inconveniences are especially hard on poets. "When he wishes to hunt, you must not be writing poetry. . . . If he feels that you approve of his pursuits, then he will turn thumbs up to your little game" (40, 65–66). One cannot help but sense Horace's resentment that poetry should ever be considered a plaything, to be interrupted at a patron's convenience, and that any poet should be forced to live in a place so unconducive to creative writing as Rome. Only by withdrawing into an inner life, he says to Lollius, can the creative urge be satisfied and sanity preserved; both are almost irreconcilable with social dependence.

Again, as in *Epistles* 1.7, the long reckoning of injustices

[21] Similarly *Epist.* 1.17 begins by advocating the life of experience but ends with sardonic advice on how a client may best win material advantages.

committed against clients cannot apply in any direct manner to Maecenas and Horace. Undoubtedly Maecenas always appreciated Horace's poetry; the dedication to him of *Epistles* 1.19, a defence of original poetry against bad critical standards, seems to say as much. The sinister relationships portrayed in *Epistles* 1.7 and 1.18 do, however, point to a certain disillusionment on Horace's part. We saw how he once looked on Maecenas as a second father, a source of sound judgment and good advice. We also saw how the stream of good advice came to flow the other way, from Horace to Maecenas. In the troubled years of retreat and reflection, from 23 to 20, Horace seems to have longed for paternal guidance. In *Epistles* 1.1 he begins by justifying his retirement from the "sport" of writing poetry on the ground that he needs to cultivate philosophy; he goes on to declare his independence of any school. Towards the end, however, he confesses the turmoil of conflicting goals into which this independence has cast him.[22] He looks to his patron, his "prop and support" (*tutela*), for help; but Maecenas, it turns out, is only concerned with social appearances (*Epist.* 1.1.101–5):

> insanire putas sollemnia me neque rides,
> nec medici credis nec curatoris egere
> a praetore dati, rerum tutela mearum
> cum sis et prave sectum stomacheris ob unguem
> de te pendentis, te respicientis amici.

The anti-Stoic joke with which the Epistle ends does not negate the seriousness of this complaint which represents the failure of an ideal.

It would be ridiculous to cite these *Epistles* as evidence that the friendship between Horace and Maecenas ever cooled. In *Odes* 4.9 Horace celebrates Maecenas' birthday which, he says, is almost as dear to him as his own. Maecenas left as part of his last will and testament the request to Augustus, *Horati Flacci ut mei esto memor*; and when they both died in 8 B.C., he and Horace were buried in nearby tombs on the Esquiline.[23] If Horace dedicated Book 4 not to Maecenas but to Fabius Maximus, it was not because of some new preference for the aristocracy, but rather because his last group of odes were especially meant for the ears

[22] For a still more explicit confession of the kind of indecision that Horace was undergoing in this period, see *Epist.* 1.8.

[23] Suet. *Vita Horati* (pp. 45, 48, Reiff).

of youth. Fabius Maximus represents the future of Rome. It is as if, having dedicated Books 1–3 to the patron whom he had regarded for so long as a spiritual father, Horace decided to dedicate Book 4 to the younger generation who were his spiritual children. As Maecenas played patron to Horace, so in the game of life the present always plays patron to the future.