

HORACE DIRECTS A CAROUSE: *EPISTLE* 1.19

WARREN S. SMITH, JR.
University of New Mexico

The purpose of *Ep.* 1.19 has been variously seen. There has been a general consensus that Horace intends this epistle as a vindication of his *Odes* and *Epodes*, especially the former; recently, however, several critics have argued that literary criticism is not central to the epistle, but that “Horace has withdrawn from the field of literary controversy” and that he mentions his poetry as “simply an example” in what is essentially a philosophical or ethical framework.¹ A large part of the epistle is made up of denials or disclaimers; some sort of negative idea is conveyed in almost every sentence, with three brief exceptions. These are the “edict” (8–9) of Horace which forbids the writing of poetry by non-drinkers, and two passages (23–27 and 28–34) which assert Horace’s innovations in Latin poetry. Even the last of these is qualified, woven as an aside into a series of disclaimers (26–31 and 35–40). I read the epistle as essentially a statement of literary criticism, not an ethical treatise; yet the statement is largely a negative one which demonstrates the wrong way to view literary models. The theme is akin to *Ars Poetica* 133–35, on the scrupulous following of literary rules (cf. Brink’s note ad loc.). In contrast with the absurd behavior of imitators, Horace asserts the importance of self-confidence (*qui sibi fidet*, 22) and a discreet following of those models which set standards of technique (cf. 27). For the rest, Horace strives to disassociate himself from satiric malice, a theme carried over from the literary satires.

Readers of the poem, I believe, have not fully realized the extent to which the topic of poetic wine-drinking creates a context which continues to be felt even after line 11, when the poet would appear to have moved on to other themes. The dramatic setting of the poem is not a symposium, but an address to Maecenas on the topic of poetic imitation; it is an epistle,

¹ Vindication of *Odes* and *Epodes*: E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 342; R. Kilpatrick, *Phoenix* 29 (1975) 127. Literary criticism is not the main purpose: M. J. McGann, *Studies in Horace’s First Book of Epistles* (Brussels 1969) 84; C. W. Macleod *CQ* 28 (1977) 359–76 (esp. the last page) = *Collected Essays* (Oxford 1983) 262–79.

not a mime or satiric skit. Yet the lampoon of Horace's poetic imitators will be better understood if we read it in part in the light of the conventions of classical symposium literature. While using a minimum of technical symposium language, Horace ascribes to his imitators a type of behavior which is patterned on that of heavy drinkers in literary accounts of banquets. We can speak of the drunkenness of Horace's poetic rivals as the controlling metaphor of the epistle which is operative throughout despite a variety of temporary tropes which intrude; e.g. the rival poets are seen as bees (*examen*, 23), and a dispute with a critic is a gladiatorial sparring match (46-47). I will argue that the edict of lines 8-9 can be understood as delivered by a *magister bibendi* in the presence of poetic imitators who are guests at a banquet. Their imitation of Horace and others (10-20) is described in terms appropriate to a "party game" in which the poets compete in performance of mimicry. Horace's withdrawal at the end after confrontation with an unnamed speaker (41b-49) wins our applause for the poet's failure to match the aggressive and combative behavior which the poet has condemned in others and which is a traditional by-product of drunkenness.

The mixing of metaphors which occurs in *Ep.* 1.19 is partially paralleled in the final epistle of the book, 1.20, where the book of epistles itself is a runaway slave trying to make its own way in the world; the "slave" never quite ceases to be thought of as having the characteristics of a book which can be put up for sale, be read in school, and so on. We are of course aware that both concepts are figurative, since Horace could not literally be engaging in dialogue with his book as a sentient creature, nor could the book literally run away from home and prostitute itself; the non-figurative level of these tropes must lie in Horace's mixed feelings about publishing his book of epistles and seeing it handled by the rabble. Thus by the end of *Ep.* 1.20 as in 1.19 we have been compelled to see the meaning on both a literal and figurative level, yet the figurative meaning is not a simple one but hovers between several frames of reference, i.e. involves a play on metaphors.

One of the traditional associations of wine-drinking is its use as a fuel for the talents of "inspired" poets. In *Ep.* 1.19, playing on that association, Horace takes a qualified stand on the side of wine-drinkers (in particular, Archilochus) against "water-drinkers" or pure craftsmen, such as Callimachus and other Alexandrian writers.² However, wine-drinking is also the source of brawling and total lack of order and control, and

² On the criticism of the water-drinking Callimachus, see the commentaries of J. Préaux (Paris 1968) and Kiessling-Heinze (Berlin 1961⁷) ad loc. An important discussion, with citations from ancient authors, of the symbolism of wine and water in literature is A. Kambylis, *Die Dichterweihe und ihre Symbolik* (Heidelberg 1965) 118-23.

thus detrimental to poetic *ars*.³ The chaos and excesses of the drinker, and others who will not submit to artistic control, threaten to dominate this epistle, and are responsible for Horace's hasty retreat at its close.

I will now consider each section of the epistle in more detail. The poet recalls the recommendation of intoxication by old Cratinus, the forerunner of Roman satire and noted consumer of wine:

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

"Old" (hallowed by age, but also primitive) Cratinus is contrasted with "learned" (refined, up-to-date) Maecenas. The qualified appeal to Cratinus' opinion is highly ironic;⁴ moreover the recommendation of drunkenness by one of the inspirers of Roman satire (cf. *Sat.* 1.4.1-5) prepares us for an association of ideas which is central to this epistle: excessive drinking is connected with combativeness and, on a literary level, with vituperative or "Archilochian" satire. Thereupon we learn that many poets are seizing upon such precedent and becoming regularly intoxicated:

ut male sanos
adscriptis Liber satyris faunisue poetas,
vina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae. (3-5)

The rustic "satyrs and fauns" of Father Liber suggest a context like that of *Ep.* 2.1.139-55, the account of native Italian literature which shows that abuse was a prominent feature of its early stages (the Italian setting extends here into line 5 with *Camenae*). The fauns are traditionally mentioned in connection with the beginnings of Latin poetry,⁵ and they are often named together with satyrs, or regarded as interchangeable with them; *Ars Poetica* 244-50 stresses their crudity and offensiveness.⁶ In the passage quoted above, Father Liber appears as a military recruiting officer;⁷ he seeks to enlist "inspired" (but also "crazy") poets among the disreputable company of his fauns and satyrs and, with comic servility, they instantly follow his train. Line 5 wittily shows the resulting

³ Warnings against the effects of drinking: Vergil *Georgics* 2.454-57; see Nisbet and Hubbard's note on *Odes* 1.18.7. On the need for control and discipline in poetry, see esp. *Ars Poetica* 410-52. Cf. Alexander Pope, *Dunciad* 3.169-70: "Flow, Welsted, flow! Like thine inspirer, Beer, / tho' stale, not ripe; tho' thin, yet never clear. . . ."

⁴ See Préaux's commentary; also Kilpatrick (above, note 1) 117-19; Macleod (above, note 1) 363-67.

⁵ Ennius, *Annales* 221-24 Vahlen.

⁶ See C. O. Brink's note on A.P. 244: *Horace on Poetry: The Ars Poetica* (Cambridge 1971) 291.

⁷ On *adscriptis* Porphyrio comments *tamquam in legionem suam: nam hoc verbum militare est*.

debasement of poetry, having somewhat the force of "the sweet Muses woke up in the morning with bad breath."

Next (6–8a), consistent with a supposed connection between drinking and fighting, the *male sani* poets seek a precedent in Homer, the writer of war, who also praises wine; he is closely followed by Ennius, writer of the Roman national epic, who actually "strides out to sing of battles" (*ad arma / prosiluit dicenda*) after drinking fully. These claims about the two poets seem to parody a type of biographical criticism which seeks to reconstruct an author's life from his works—the issue raised in Catullus 16. No doubt, as Macleod argues,⁸ there is a tenuous connection among the poets named so far as writers in the "high style," but in the jumbling together of Cratinus, fauns, satyrs, Homer, and Ennius, there may also be an element of bibulous confusion as though the list were ticked off by someone who, in seeking precedent for his indulgence, gropes for names which have been hallowed by the veneer of age. The poetasters in their naive search for inspiration drag Homer and Ennius down to the taste of the unlettered rustic, the uncultivated spectator who is *potus et exlex* (*Ars Poetica* 224).

While drinking is associated with lack of restraint, poetry requires the imposition of rules, of *ars*; even a passage like *Ep.* 1.5.16–19 shows full awareness that the *artes* acquired at the symposium are only illusory. Yet Horace now quotes an "edict" he has issued against sobriety in poets:

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

The parodic nature of lines 10–11 (see Brink's note on *Ars Poetica* 269, which this passage seems to prefigure) suggests that some absurd misunderstanding has followed Horace's pronouncement. The lines perhaps burlesque an epic motif in which the orders of someone in authority are followed by quick obedience and strenuous action (cf. *Il.* 3.259–60, *Od.* 9.100–104, *Aen.* 5.139–40 and 6.176–78 where note *iussa . . . haud mora . . . certant*). *Edico*, as many commentators point out, is used of formal decrees such as are issued by a praetor, and this is combined with other legal language. The forum and puteal are drawn from the business world over which the praetor presides. *Mandabo* and *adimam* reflect the praetorian *edicta perpetua* in their combination of first person singular (the praetor sets down the law under his own authority) with future tense; such phrases as *iudicium dabo*, *iubebo*, and *animadvertam* recur

⁸ Macleod (above, note 1) 364. His discussion of "biographical criticism" should be consulted (364–65 and note 25).

in surviving edicts.⁹ *Mando* in particular is associated with the praetor's designation of jurisdiction (Ulpian *Dig.* 2.1.16, Livy 24.44.2).

We are being invited, in fact compelled, to imagine that on some particular occasion Horace issued a pronouncement against sobriety, and that his words were regarded as having as much authority as a praetor's edict. What sort of occasion is most likely to be meant? Long ago, Bentley conjectured that Horace refers either to praise of wine in his writings (he cites *Ep.* 1.5.16, *Odes* 3.25.1) or to a pronouncement made *inter convictores*.¹⁰ Bentley's suggestion has rarely been followed up by modern commentators; Macleod, for example, in his very thorough study of the epistle, simply states: "No one would maintain . . . that Horace ever issued an edict forbidding sober men to write poetry," and others show a similar disinterest in reconstructing the dramatic context.¹¹ Such a banishment of the sober, couched in formal legal terms, may recall the strict management of Roman drinking bouts by a *magister* (also called *rex* or *dominus*) *bibendi* (or *epuli* or *cenae*); his function parallels that of the Greek symposiarch defined by Plato in the opening books of the *Laws* (e.g. 640A–641D). The edict of Horace was like that mentioned in Catullus 27.3, *ut lex Postumiae iubet magistratæ*,¹² and references to the custom are so widespread in Horace that it would be folly to ignore them as a background to this epistle, where enforced drinking is at issue. Moreover, legal language is compatible with a banquet setting, as the passage from Catullus shows, as does *Ep.* 1.5.21–26, where Horace prepares for a party at his own house while using the language of an aedile who is passing along the directive of a consul or censor: *haec ego procurare et idoneus imperor et non / invitus*,¹³ cf. also *imperium fer* in line 6. In the same humorously imperious tone, *edixi* in *Ep.* 1.19.10 classifies Horace as the official in charge of enforced poetic inspiration, a

⁹ See the examples in O. Lenel's *Das Edictum Perpetuum* (Leipzig 1927³; rpt. Aalen 1956).

¹⁰ R. Bentley, *Horace* (Berlin 1869³) 72: "sed et inter convictores, cum *homuncio lepidissimus* ab Augusto vocari meruit, sine dubio *siccos et severos* Helicone saepe excluserat."

¹¹ Macleod (above, note 1) 359; Kiessling-Heinze (on line 8) "Wann Horaz dies Wort gesprochen hat, wissen wir natürlich nicht. . . ." But cf. A. Wilkins, *The Epistles of Horace* (London 1892²; rpt. NY 1965) 401.

¹² The parallel is quoted by Kiessling-Heinze without comment. On Roman "laws" for drinking-bouts see Fordyce's commentary on Catullus 27; in addition (as only a sample) Plautus, *Stichus* 723–24; Cicero *De Senectute* 46. Some of the more important passages on the *symposiarch* are discussed by W. Jaeger in *Paideia* (NY 1944, transl. G. Highet) 2.177 and 397, note 11; 3.222–23. Professor Robert Renehan called several of these references to my attention.

¹³ Explained by Kiessling-Heinze; strangely reversed by Macleod (above, note 1), who writes ". . . he goes on to speak of his task as a host in the terms of a consul or censor giving orders to an aedile" (361).

literary *magister cenae*. As we know, the *magister cenae* was appointed by a roll of the dice (cf. *Odes* 1.4.18 and 2.7.25–26) at the start of the evening, prescribed the amount to be drunk by each guest (he was supposed to stay sober himself) and made sure order was maintained. One might see his function as analogous to that of the praetor, who issued an *edictum perpetuum* at the start of his year in office, outlining the “maxims of law and forms of procedure” which he would follow.¹⁴

Only Maecenas, to whom the epistle is addressed, would be expected to know whether or not Horace did make such a pronouncement at a particular banquet; such an actual occasion cannot be ruled out, and is perhaps the easiest way to interpret *edixi*. But no more than a literary *topos* may be at issue; Horace may have passages from his own poetry in mind. Bentley saw this possibility, but a parallel even closer than those which he adduced is *Odes* 3.19.13–15:

Qui Musas amat imparis,
ternos ter cyathos attonitus petet
vates. . . .

Horace in this ode, unambiguously assuming the role of *magister bibendi*, urges the “inspired” (*attonitus*) poet to drink deeply at his symposium. The pronouncement in *Ep.* 1.19 is similar, but there Horace emphasizes and exaggerates the legal jargon of the *magister* to call attention to the eagerness with which his rivals hang on his every word, as if they were obeying a praetor’s decree. A telling commentary on their slavishness is *Sat.* 2.2.49–52 where Horace concludes that if someone issued an edict (*edixerit*) ordering the eating of roast gulls, the Roman youth, ready to follow the worst, would obey. Here the lines on the edict (8b–11) balance closely with 3b–5 on Liber, stressing that the poetic rivals behave like automatons. Bacchus drafts the poets into his army; instantly obeying, they wake up next day with bad breath. When Horace the *magister* issues an order, the result is the same. It is this slavishness rather than drinking in itself which is objectionable. Horace’s decree banishes the *severi* from writing poetry (note the variation on this in *Cat.* 27.5–7). *Sicci* and *severi* are notoriously undesirable as drinking-companions, indeed as companions on any occasion,¹⁵ and Horace’s treatment of them elsewhere is not any more sympathetic (*Odes* 1.18.3–4). The poets had thought that they could reconstruct Homer’s and Ennius’ personal behavior out of references in their poetry; now they seek to reverse the process in their own lives, hoping that a particular behavior pattern (heavy drinking) will automatically lead to the production of inspired poetry. The resemblance of line 11 to *Ars*

¹⁴ F. Abbott, *History and Description of Roman Political Institutions* (NY 1963³) 190.

¹⁵ Compare Plutarch *Moralia* 620C, and Martial’s dismissal:

siccus, sobrius est Aper; quid ad me?
servum sic ego laudo, non amicum. (12.30)

Poetica 269 is a reminder that “reading Greek models” is guaranteed to improve one’s *ars*; but drinking guarantees only a hangover, not an improved *ingenium*. Moreover, drinking is essentially a “lawless” activity in which one escapes from daily cares and societal restrictions; note the significant choice of words in *Ep.* 1.5.9–11. *Sat.* 2.6.69 even dismisses the laws of urban drinking-bouts as *insanae* because they do not allow for freedom of choice. This highlights the self-defeating side of Horace’s imitators who, in seeking to obey the “law,” are drawn into the lawless activity of brawling all night (10–11; compare the warning made at *Odes* 1.18.7–9).

In lines 12–13 Horace says that would-be imitators of Cato fall short because they fail to match his virtuous character; they think it enough to copy his most bizarre habits: wearing a scanty toga, going barefoot, and putting on a “strange, wild expression” (*vultu torvo feras*). This inclusion of Cato as an object of imitation enforces the lesson about drinking and writing by an analogy in which Cato’s inimitable *virtus* is compared with the *ingenium* of a great poet. The inevitable failure of imitators is further illustrated by an anecdote about Iarbitas and Timagenes:

rupit Iarbitam Timagenis aemula lingua,
dum studet urbanus tenditque disertus haberi. (15–16)

Iarbitas, in trying to imitate the eloquence of Timagenes (an Alexandrian orator, at Rome after 55 B.C.) burst himself like the frog in the fable who tries to imitate a calf (cf. *Sat.* 2.3.314–20).¹⁶ The jealousy aroused by Timagenes as an orator is parallel to that aroused by Horace as a poet. Porphyrio thus reports the context for Iarbitas’ disastrous attempt:

Nam hic Iarbuta [*sic*] Maurus regio genere fuit ortus, qui, dum
Timaginem imitatur post convivium et inter pocula declamantem,
propter insolentiam faciendi, quod conabatur, ipse diruptus est.

It might indeed be argued that Porphyrio introduces little information beyond what he might have deduced from Horace’s own words, but it is significant that he instinctively sees the context as a symposium in which Iarbitas tries to rival Timagenes in an after-dinner speech. The effort with which Iarbitas “strives” (*studet*) to convince others (*haberi*) of his eloquence (*aemula lingua*) is consistent with competition in a speaking-contest. The phrase *nocturno certare mero* in line 11 may also suggest a kind of competition; we can compare the literary contest between Catullus and Licinius in *Cat.* 50.1–6 as they strive to top one another’s poetic efforts over the wine. Lines 12–13 of Horace conjure up the

¹⁶ Wilkins (above, note 11) and Fairclough (Loeb edition) miss the point of *rupit*, but Préaux, Kiessling-Heinze, and Macleod (above, note 1, 366) catch the reference.

image of a buffoon dressing up and twisting his face in an effort to look like Cato. Then in lines 17–18 we hear that the imitators would drink cumin in order to copy Horace's expression if he grew pale (Pliny *N.H.* 20.14.159f. describes a similar use of cumin). All of these descriptions—dressing up like Cato, Iarbitas declaiming until he bursts, the drinking of cumin—give us a visual picture of the ludicrous nature of imitation, one which is far removed from the abstract philosophical antecedents for Horace which are cited by some commentators. We know from other sources of party-games in which revellers, like actors in a mime, performed imitations of one another or of well-known figures; and Horace's vivid account seems to summon us into the midst of such games. In a version reported by Plutarch, anyone must pay a forfeit who cannot follow up a challenge by the person who is "it" during a round of drinking.¹⁷ These games are usually associated with advanced stages of inebriation, and participation in them by freeborn men is considered undignified. (It might also be noted that Quintilian 6.3.29 criticizes orators who distort their facial expressions in imitation; he says that such tricks are more appropriate to mimes.) Impersonations at parties are often made by slaves, while the guests encourage, applaud, or reward them; thus the drunken slaves compete with one another in stunts at the end of Plautus' *Stichus*, and in Petronius 69 a slave is promised a new pair of boots for his imitation of a flute-player. In Horace *Sat.* 1.5.56f. the *scurra* Messius mimics a wild horse, and is urged by the revellers to perform the Cyclops' shepherd-dance. A *scurra* is a kind of professional parasite, who affects *urbanitas* but stoops to low imitations: see Wilkins' note on *Ep.* 1.15.27, and cf. *Juv.* 13.111; likewise Timagenes wishes to be considered *urbanus* as a result of his feat of mimicry. In Xenophon's *Symposium* (1.21–27) the buffoon Philippos, saying that drinking creates a more sportive (*παιγνιωδέστερον*) mood, orders the cupbearers to gallop from table to table in an imitation (*μιμῆσθαι*) of charioteers; again we have the idea of baiting the servants to perform stunts for the amusement of the cultured guests.

Horace's reaction to the imitators is a mixture of laughter and contempt:

o imitatores, servum pecus, ut mihi saepe
bilem, saepe iocum vestri movere tumultus! (19–20)

O imitatores, servum pecus is reminiscent of sarcastic greetings in passages like Hesiod *Theogony* 26 and Lucilius frag. 70 (Warmington). However,

¹⁷ Imitations of well-known figures: Petronius 52 (the actor Syrus) and 70 (the tragedian Ephesus). Other drunken imitations: Plautus, *Stichus* 766–72; Demosthenes 54.9, where a drunken bully is urged by his friends to flap his elbows in imitation of a crowing rooster. On forfeits, see Plutarch *Moralia* 621ef. (further discussion below).

Horace may also be thinking of the drone bees of Vergil's *Georgics* 4.168 who are an *ignavum pecus* which has to be driven away from the hive (compare also *mutum et turpe pecus* used of primitive man in *Sat.* 1.3.100); the bee-analogy also suits the epithet *examen* just below (23). The adjective *servum* reminds us that it is the prerogative of slaves to do exaggerated and undignified imitations.¹⁸ When we hear just below (21) that Horace as poetic pioneer has put down *libera vestigia*, the adjective is used in significant contrast with the imitators' slave-like behavior.

Lines 21–23 are a transitional passage in which Horace takes a broad view of his poetic achievement:

libera per vacuum posui vestigia princeps,
non aliena meo pressi pede. qui sibi fidet,
dux reget examen.

Horace sets himself up as a leader in introducing iambics and lyric poetry to Rome. His words have been compared with Lucretius' boast of his pioneering achievement in philosophy (book 4 init.)¹⁹ but they even more closely recall Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue (25–38) where the poet is a trail-blazer whose cicada-like chirpings contrast with the asses' brays of others. Horace's clever phrase, *dux reget examen*, pleases by its anti-climax: Horace is a mighty general who presides over a swarm of bees. Alternatively, *reget* could establish Horace as "king" of the bees (cf. Vergil *Georgics* 4.210f.) who obey his commands. A similarly comic note is struck at *Sat.* 2.8.73–74 where the host of a banquet is said to plot strategies like a crafty *dux*.

On the issue of his own imitation of the Greeks, Horace in lines 23b–25 presents himself as a poet who follows (*secutus*, 24, despite the bold declaration just two lines earlier *non aliena meo pressi pede*) the lead of Archilochus, whose bitter iambics (Horace twice reminds us, 25 and 30) drove Lycambes and his daughters to suicide. And yet Horace claims he has not reproduced Archilochus' invective in his own poetry, but rather his "lofty spirit, rhythms, and art" (*numeros animosque secutus . . . quod timui mutare . . . artem*, 24–27). The word *artem* singles out the quality which Horace clings to with pride (defiantly citing Archilochus as his own model) as he distinguishes himself from his bibulous imitators.

Lest the reader somehow disparage his achievement (26–27), the poet cites Sappho and Alcaeus as a precedent for his own approach to Archilochus:

¹⁸ *Clamor* is the more usual word for drunken shouting, cf. *Odes* 1.27.7, Cicero 2 *Verr.* 5.28, but *tumultus* is more pregnant in meaning, punning on the dazed minds and muddled logic of Horace's rivals, cf. *Sat.* 2.3.208, *Odes* 2.16.10. According to Dr. Johnson, "wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment" (Boswell's *Life*, Modern Library edition, page 636).

¹⁹ See Kilpatrick's discussion (above, note 1, 121).

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. (28–31)

The interpretation of this whole passage, particularly line 28, continues to be disputed. Fraenkel (whose discussion is still basic) translates: "Sappho of the man-like spirit softens the poetry (the form of the poetry) of Archilochus by the way in which she treats the metre."²⁰ To follow Fraenkel in seeing a reference to a metrical change helps us connect *pede* and *temperat*: Sappho's transformation of Archilochus' iambs into other meters corresponds to her blunting of his iambic attacks. But can Horace really condone Sappho's changes of Archilochus' meter, when he has refused (viz. in the *Epodes*) to make such changes himself (27)? Seizing on this difficulty, Anthony Woodman, in an important recent study, finds a negative connotation in *temperat*:²¹

... if you complain because I failed to change the metre, look at the poetry of Sappho and Alcaeus [who did effect such a change]: they produced only a diluted version (*temperat*) of Archilochus' poetry [and thus failed to reproduce his spirit] though on the credit side (*sed*) they too avoided the attack on Lycambes.

Woodman's interpretation of 28–31 has Horace allowing Sappho and Alcaeus only the most meager credit; this may indeed seem consistent with the generally negative tone of the epistle (above, p. 255) but it requires a dubious reading of the phrase *temperat Musam* since the "tempering" of the muse in Horace is more likely to be seen as an achievement than a shortcoming (see below). There seems to be a mild oxymoron in the juxtaposition of *temperat* (common in Latin in the sense of softening wrath, mitigating the force of winds, for example) and *mascula* (which may suggest the high-spiritedness of men in battle). *Temperat* may further extend the drinking imagery by suggesting that Sappho and Alcaeus have watered down the hard-drinking Archilochus (compare Woodman's word "diluted");²² or, if there is a play on words with *pede* (cf. *Ars Poetica* 80, and perhaps line 22a of *Ep.* 1.19), the suggestion is that the manly Sappho tones down Archilochus' muse by treading on it and thus checking its rising anger. Such a conceit would fit

²⁰ Fraenkel (above, note 1) 342–46.

²¹ A. Woodman, *MH* 40 (1983) 74–81 (quoted from 78–79). The bulk of the evidence seems to go against Macleod's interpretation of *temperat* as "control" or "master" (above, note 1, 370), and his translation, "gets the better of the muse," does not seem to me to convey a coherent picture.

²² *Masculus*: *Odes* 3.6.37; cf. *Ars Poetica* 401–3. On *temperat* as a possible metaphor taken from the mixing of wine, see Woodman (above, note 21) 79, note 14 (repeated as a suggestion made by Macleod). In addition to references cited there, cf. *Odes* 2.16.26–27, *Epode* 17.80, Tib. 3.6.58.

the picture of *Ars Poetica* 79 where Archilochus is “maddened with rage” (*rabies*) and “armed” (*armavit*) with iambs.²³ Moreover Horace’s own satiric muse, in contrast with Archilochean attack, is “pedestrian,” i.e. it creeps along the ground (*Sat.* 2.6.17, *Ep.* 2.1.250–51). Horace does not view the muse as some bland equivalent for “poetry,” as commentators seem sometimes to assume; the muse has a life of her own, and will seize control if not expertly governed by a poet. On the need to “tone down” a spirited muse, compare a passage like *Odes* 2.1.37–40 or the last stanza of *Odes* 3.3:²⁴

non hoc iocosae conveniet lyrae:
quo, Musa, tendis? desine pervicax
referre sermones deorum et
magna modis tenuare parvis. (69–72)

Ep. 2.1.156–57 is Horace’s *locus classicus* about a relatively crude, undeveloped state of the arts being re-directed by a more cultured influence: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis / intulit agresti Latio*. The *rusticitas* of old Rome needed the moderating influence of Greece. The change in gender is significant: the feminine (and presumably weaker) Greece “captures” her rough, male conqueror. In *Ep.* 1.19 we have a related paradox: the manly Sappho performs an action (softening) which we would associate with feminine qualities. The single line describing Sappho’s achievement combines two concepts:

A. Sappho (a woman) softens, “waters down,” the virile abuse of Archilochus;

B. Sappho (manlike) is equal to the challenge posed by her male rival.

Horace, then, defends his copying of the form of Archilochean poetry by an analogy with Sappho and Alcaeus, who imitated Archilochus but still managed to maintain their own originality; the repeated *temperat* insists on the independence of the two later poets, while conceding that they have used the earlier poet as their model. We may follow Woodman in concluding that at line 31 Horace concludes his defense of his practice in the *Epodes*, turning at 32–33a to an analogous argument about the *Odes* (cf. *fidicen*, 33) in which he now cites Alcaeus (*hunc*, 32) as a predecessor; this corresponds to the mention of Archilochus (25) as his predecessor in writing the *Epodes*.²⁵

²³ Macleod (above, note 1, 371) also compares this passage. The clash between the meanings of *temperat* and *mascula* was noted by M. B. Ogle in *AJP* 42 (1922) 59.

²⁴ See R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes* 1 (Oxford 1970) 81–82 and 86 on Horace’s espousal of the *genus tenue*.

²⁵ Fraenkel (above, note 1, 345) rightly insists on a syntactical parallelism between Horace’s approach to Archilochus (26–27) and that of Sappho and Alcaeus (28–29); Macleod’s attempt (above, note 1, 368–70) to find a contrast between them does not convince. I

Lines 26–40 contain careful and significant juxtapositions. Each of the two pairs of lines, 26–27 and 35–36, raises the possibility of some doubt or criticism on the part of the reader. The first pair is answered by 28–31 which cite Sappho and Alcaeus as precedent; 32–33a briefly touch on the *Odes*, and 33b–34 round off the issue of the originality of Horace's achievement. Then 35–36 raise the new issue of Horace's personal unpopularity. Lines 37–40 offer a defense:

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.

These lines, falling naturally into an ABAB arrangement by the repetition of *non ego*, suggest a lyric variation on 28–31 which are arranged AABB (*temperat/temperat, nec/nec*); the two negatives joined with Horace match those joined with Alcaeus. This parallelism invites us to see Horace's personal restraint (in courting public favor) in the same light as Sappho's and Alcaeus' literary restraint. Alcaeus is actually a benefactor of all mankind for having avoided the dangerous tendencies of Archilochus, whose invective could even drive relatives to suicide. Horace shows equally temperate behavior: he avoids public recitations, seeing them as a form of getting "revenge" on one's rivals;²⁶ the irony of *ultor* is consistent with the disparaging tone of 37–40 in which the currying of public favor is seen as a demeaning performance of publicity stunts (*non ego ventosae plebis suffragia venor*, 37) to win meaningless "votes." The self-sufficient poet will not need the public's favor any more than he will need the approval of his peers.

Horace's failure to court the public does not please a speaker who now abruptly enters the poem. (Persius imitates this passage in *Sat.* 1.40–44, where a speaker chides the poet for his literary elitism. Persius' passage follows a banquet scene in which the bad taste of *convivae* has been exposed—possible evidence that he so interpreted Horace's setting as well).²⁷ Horace's interlocutor demands that Horace give a recitation, and will not accept his heavily ironic explanation that his writings are *spissis indigna theatris* and that he is too modest to recite (*pudet*, 42). He accuses Horace of snobbery:

cannot accept Woodman's idea (above, note 21) that *pede* at line 28 is enough to call attention to a sharp contrast between Sappho's and Horace's metrical practice, but Woodman's conclusions about the structure of the center of the poem seem to me basically correct.

²⁶ This interpretation of *ultor* is defended by Macleod (above, note 1, 372) against Fraenkel's view; so also Shackleton Bailey, *Profile of Horace* (Cambridge 1982) 102.

²⁷ On the speaker as a *grammaticus*, and the meaning of *grammaticas tribus*, see Kilpatrick (above, note 1) 123. Yet the introduction of this speaker is unexplained and abrupt; it may have been Horace's vagueness here which inspired Persius, in his imitation of this passage (*Sat.* 1.44), to call attention to the fiction of imaginary interlocutors.

fidis enim manare poetica mella
te solum, tibi pulcher. (44–45)

The expression ties these lines in with *qui sibi fidet / dux reget examen* of 22–23 above, and shows that his rivals want to begin gathering poetic honey as he does (for Horace the Matine bee, see *Odes* 4.2.27–32). There may be an implied threat that Horace's angry bees may cease to be passive imitators and turn on him. There is now the threat of a physical attack on Horace: metaphors of a gladiatorial contest are introduced, and the combatant (*luctantis*, 46) tries to scratch him with his nails. Horace retreats, seeking a truce and not wishing *naribus uti*, to turn up the nose or show scorn, the phrase again suggesting satiric invective.²⁸

There has been some dispute about the tone of this concluding debate and Horace's retreat. Fraenkel objects that "the cold irony of the other speaker is most offensive" and that "it is without a smile that we are dismissed at the end of this letter . . ." (*Horace* 349–50). A variation on Fraenkel's charge of cold cynicism is McGann's claim that Horace is too timid:²⁹

The faint-hearted Horace who appears at the end of the epistle is very different from the hardy Oscan warrior of *Sat.* ii, 1, 34–60. . . . Horace does not fight back. . . . This is not the Horace of old, *calidus iuventa*. But it is the Horace of *Ep.* 1—*non eadem est aetas, non mens*, the Horace who saw himself as a retired gladiator.

Each of these readers approaches the passage with uncharacteristically subjective criticism which, in Fraenkel's case, detects "moods" which few others have been able to sense³⁰ or, in McGann's biographical method, tries to find some mellowing or weakening of character in the aging poet.³¹ Rather than pass judgment on Horace's moral fiber, as though we were referees in a sparring match, we must see how he uses the incident in the context of the epistle. Several overall points are clear. Horace's retreat from a fight reinforces his earlier disclaimer: his epodes do not attack in the manner of Archilochus; he is a literary craftsman, not a lampooner whose primary intention is social reform. If such an attitude does not sound like Horace who is an "Oscan warrior" in *Sat.* 2.1, it is not inconsistent with the Horace whom we see elsewhere even in his early work, notably in *Sat.* 1.4 (cf. esp. 72–73) which makes a similar point, that the proper method of reform is gentle admonition, not

²⁸ On *naribus uti* see Kiessling-Heinze; Macleod (above, note 1) 375, note 85.

²⁹ McGann (above, note 1) 82, 84.

³⁰ Fraenkel's comments are convincingly answered by G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968) 27–28; but see below, p. 268 and note 34.

³¹ McGann (above, note 1) is more convincing on page 40 where he contrasts *Ep.* 1.3 with 1.19 saying that the latter can be profitably compared with the literary satires.

slander.³² But secondly, and brought into significance by the address to Maecenas at the start of the epistle, Horace's retreat repeats a motif from the *Satires*—the attack by a critic who is jealous of Horace's high connections in the emperor's circle. Such scenes are a *topos*, a joke Horace shares with Maecenas about the price of fame. We can find a recurring format in *Sat.* 1.9 and 2.6 which is repeated here. There is a lame comment by Horace himself, the very ineptness of which stirs up his antagonist to a new height of aggression. Instead of returning this aggression, Horace is silent, submits, or tries to escape:

Sat. 1.9.16–21: HORACE. To accompany me across the Tiber
would be too much trouble for you.

ANTAGONIST. No trouble! I'll follow you wherever you go.

Horace lowers his ears like an overloaded donkey.

Sat. 2.6.38–39: ANTAGONIST. Please have Maecenas sign these papers.

HORACE. I will try.

ANTAGONIST (insistently): You can if you want to.

Horace makes no further comment.

Ep. 1.19.41–47: HORACE. I dislike giving recitations.

ANTAGONIST. You are saving your work for Jove (Augustus). You think you are the only true poet.

HORACE. A truce, please! Let's not fight here!

Note also how in *Sat.* 2.6 the aside, *hoc iuvat et melli est, non mentiar* (32) helps tag the whole encounter as a private joke Horace shares with his friend. In the same spirit, *Ep.* 1.19 humorously seeks Maecenas' commiseration for the effects of his poetic preeminence and intimacy with the imperial circle.³³

Commentators have argued that Horace's reaction to the antagonist reflects his guilty awareness of the truth of the charges against him.³⁴ Such an analysis fails to take into account the negative connotation of fighting which has already been established in this epistle; by the time we reach line 42, we have been carefully prepared to see the aggression of the antagonist in a very biased light. By his submission, Horace wins our approval of his restrained behavior and turns the tables on his bullying opponent. If that were not enough, the Terentian tag *hinc illae*

³² On Horace's defensive attitude in *Sat.* 1.4 see J. C. Bramble's chapter "The Disclaimers of Malice," *Persius and the Programmatic Satire* (Cambridge 1974) 190–204. Bramble shows how Horace's disclaimers fit into the rhetorical, satiric, and ethical tradition.

³³ See E. A. McDermott's interesting study in *Hermes* 110 (1982) 211–28 on the "extended poetic dialogue" carried on over the years between Horace and Maecenas.

³⁴ McGann (above, note 1) 84; Macleod (above, note 1) 375; Williams (above, note 30) 27.

lacrimae (41) is a clue to the reader that the motives of Horace's critics are not above suspicion. By his retreat Horace refuses to serve the demands of the public (this is really the meaning of the ironic disclaimer in 41b–42), and also shows that he will not resort to Archilochean lampoon to answer his critics; their very hostility (even if their accusations should be true) condemns them.

The epistle closes with a general reflection:

ludus enim genuit trepidum certamen et iram,
ira truces inimicitias et funebre bellum. (48–49)

What is the connotation of *ludus*? Those like McGann and Préaux, who see *Ep.* 1.19 as the renunciation of writing made by a tired warrior, would read *ludus* a reference to poetry³⁵ and compare his disavowal of *ludus* here with *Ep.* 1.1.10 or *Ep.* 2.2.141–44 which do bid a farewell to verse-writing. Within its own context, however, *ludus* is introduced as a parallel to the phrase *naribus uti* (45) “to turn up the nose” i.e. use satiric scorn; Horace fears that the scorn his accusers heap on him in “sport” may turn into an all-out fight, that is *ludus* may become a *certamen*. On the literary level, the lines are a disclaimer of malice rather than a renunciation of poetry. Horace “fears” to show scorn; earlier he had “feared” (*timui*, 27) to tamper with the art of Archilochus. His conservatism is asserted; he will not depart from a model when it sets a standard of artistic excellence; nor will he follow it when its *licentia* gets out of hand.

The “edict” on poetry had a comically disastrous effect on the drinking habits of a whole generation of poets, and its effects continue to be felt later in the epistle. Horace's derisive attitude (*bilem iocumque*, 20) is thrown back at him by the *rides* (43) of the antagonist. Horace then justifies his retreat from his boorish companion in words which humorously hint that his hostile attitude is the result of excessive drinking. He describes a progression: good-natured fun (*ludus*) in the form of mockery (*naribus uti*) gives rise to a contest (*certamen*, picking up *certare* from line 11) and wrath (*ira*); wrath gives rise to hatred and war (*inimicitias et bellum*). Such a crescendo is traditionally triggered by heavy drinking, cf. the collection of passages assembled by Athenaeus 2.36A–E, including a citation from Epicharmus which contains the line ἐκ δὲ πόσιος μῶκος, ἐκ μῶκου δ' ἐγένεθ' ὕβρις. Cicero tells how Verres' dinner-parties moved from shouting (*clamore*) to quarreling, and finally hand-to-hand combat (2 *Verr.* 5.28).³⁶ At the same time, by the use of

³⁵ Préaux ad loc.; McGann (above, note 1) 35, 84.

³⁶ Epicharmus fr. 148 Kaibel. Demosthenes 54.19 says that abuse (*λοιδορία*) leads to blows, wounds, and death; some commentators cite this passage as a parallel to *Ep.* 1.19.48–49 without noting that Demosthenes' context is an action for drunken assault. Thus wine is the first step in the chain leading to violence.

epithets Horace adds to these lines an epic coloring which takes us back into the world of Homer and Ennius with which the epistle opened. To offer some possible parallels for the language here: *trepidum certamen* = φόβος "Αρης *Iliad* 2.767, cf. *belli trepidus tumultus* Lucr. 3.834; *trucis inimicitias* = ἀργαλέος "Επίς *Il.* 11.3, cf. 18.119; *funebre bellum* = "Αρης ἀνδροφόνος *Il.* 4.441, cf. *bellum acerbum*, Ennius *Annales* fr. 386–87V. The epic language humorously exaggerates the catastrophic results of the quarrel.³⁷

To prevent quarrels at the table is one of the duties of the *magister cenae*, and Plutarch's prescription for decorum at a party recalls Horace's advice:

ὅσαι δ' ἄνευ σπουδῆς ἐπεισκωμάζουσιν τοῖς συμποσίοις παιδιαί, ταύτας ἐπιμελῶς διακελεύσεται τοῖς συμπόταις εὐλαβεῖσθαι, μὴ λάθωσιν ὕβριν πικράν καθάπερ ὕοσκύαμον ἐμβαλόντες οἴνῳ, ὥς τοῖς λεγομένοις προστάγμασιν ἐξυβρίζουσιν, προστάττοντες ἄδειν ψελλοῖς ἢ κτενίζεσθαι φαλακροῖς ἢ ἀσκωλιάζειν χωλοῖς. (*Moralia* 621E)

He will carefully bid the drinkers to watch out for any games which, with no seriousness, burst riotously into the parties, lest the drinkers not realize they are adding violence bitter as henbane to the wine, while they grow insolent with what they call 'commands,' ordering people with their speech impediments to sing, or bald people to comb their hair, or the lame to hop on one leg.

In fact, adds Plutarch, the main duty of the prudent symposiarch is to guard against the hatred and anger (ἐχθρα καὶ ὀργή) which might result from the enforcement of inappropriate rules (622B). Plutarch's terms have significant parallels in Horace who has, however, elevated them by epic additions, as we said. These are the "orders" for the banquet (προστάττοντες, cf. *edixi*) and the "game" (παιδιά = *ludus*) which gets out of hand producing anger and hostility (ἐχθρα καὶ ὀργή = *ira et inimicitia*). The gaucheries feared by Plutarch have intruded themselves into Horace's epistle several times, beginning with the edict which led to excessive drinking and fighting, though Horace departs from Plutarch in transferring the blame from the maker of the edict to those who follow it too literally. The original edict was like a party-game which misfired. At the close of the poem Horace proposes to leave the scene before another such *ludus* (the challenge proposed by his companion who, like a belligerent drunk, will not take no for an answer) escalates into an open fight. The situation is amusingly like that described by Periplectomenus,

³⁷ Similarly Kilpatrick says (above, note 1, 127): "... he magnifies the seriousness of the situation and reminds us of the opening of the *Epistle* (7f.) with an Ennian line" (apparently in reference to line 49). I am unaware, however, of any attempts to demonstrate that the language in the closing lines can be traced to epic. A. D. Booth, *LCM* 4 (1979) 195–96 also sees a connection with epic, but his conclusions are not convincing.

the urbane middle-aged bachelor and social sophisticate of Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* (whose sentiment may be traced back to a commonplace in the literature of symposia).³⁸

Neque per vinum ex me exoritur discidium in convivio:
siquis ibi est odiosus, ab eo domum, sermonem segrego.
Venerem, amorem, amoenitatemque accubans exerceo. (M.G. 654–56)

Horace's close shows how much he is above the fray, that he can witness the wrath of poets and critics alike with Olympian detachment. In the face of aggression, a sounding of retreat is the sensible course of action for a *poeta sanus* who is also an *urbanus conviva*.

I will now summarize the poem briefly, calling attention to the main points of my interpretation.

Lines 1–20 are on the issue of drinking and literary production. Horace's imitators hope to gain poetic inspiration by drinking, taking too literally a pronouncement of the poet's in which he banished the *sicci* and *severi* from Helicon (Bentley's phrase). The role of *magister bibendi* is frequently mentioned in Horace and sometimes filled by the poet himself. Here Horace as *magister* is thought to have praetorian authority. The servile behavior of his rivals parallels the clownish antics of slaves who give impersonations at parties.

Lines 21–34. Horace is a true pioneer in Roman poetry. He follows Archilochus' *ars* while rejecting his malicious attacks. In this he has models in Sappho and Alcaeus, who correctly "tempered" the headstrong Archilochus (*temperat* perhaps alludes to the watering down of strong drink).

Lines 35–49. Horace will not conform to the standards of the *vulgus* or of professional critics. His withdrawal from a fight (like leaving a drunken party) is a demonstration of his disavowal of the kind of aggression which may be triggered by excessive drinking. The epistle alludes to various kinds of aggressive behavior: epic battles (6–8, 48–49), brawling (10–11), malicious attack (25–31 Archilochus, 45–47 the anonymous critic); even poetic recitations (*ultor* 39). The poem concludes with a warning that teasing may lead to a crescendo of violence. This is compared with similar language in passages about ill-feeling or violence at symposia (Plutarch, Epicharmus, Cicero, Plautus).³⁹

³⁸ Compare the sentiment of Anacreontea 42 (Edmonds) on "hating drunken quarrels"; this is cited by L. Schaaf, *Der Miles Gloriosus des Plautus und sein griechisches Original: ein Beitrag zur Kontaminationsfrage* (Munich 1977) 427, in order to demonstrate the probable Greek origin of Periplectomenus' statement. Even closer to Plautus is a fragment of Panyasis (quoted by Athenaeus 2.36D) who advises the dinner guests to go home peacefully after two rounds of drinking to avoid ὕβρις and ἄρη.

³⁹ This paper owes much to the criticisms of Professor Renehan, the helpful suggestions of the editor and referees, and the advice and encouragement of my wife.