Who wrote the poetry of Quintus Horatius Flaccus? The question is provocatively phrased – but the answer is perhaps not as facile as might be supposed. Was it the touchingly grateful son who attributes his education in virtue to so excellent a father in Satires 1.6? Or was it the understandably inadequate lover who in Epode 12 has somehow found himself on decidedly the wrong side of a repulsive partner better suited (he maintains) for a more elephantine bedfellow – the second time in the space of five poems we have seen him in flagrante (but not, perhaps, in fragrante) with a less than appetising mate? Was it the upright guardian of stern Roman morality we find in the Roman Odes, the priest of the Muses loftily intoning hitherto unheard strains to youths and maidens (Odes 3.1.2–4)? Or was it the speaker of Satires 1.2, who is all for jumping on the nearest maid or slave boy if the urge comes upon him? Could it have been the frugal gentleman-farmer of Satires 2.6 and Epistles 1.14, contentedly turning the clods as the neighbours chuckle behind his back – or was it rather the laid-back man about town strolling through the Circus and the Forum of an evening in Satires 1.6, before his (no less thrifty) dinner at home? Was it that genial figure at the end of Epist. 1.20, ‘of small build, prematurely grey, and fond of the sun . . . quick to lose his temper, but not hard to appease’ (Epist. 1.20.24–5, tr. Rudd)? Or was it the savage assailant of Mevius, the reviler of Canidia, the taunter of Lydia, Lyce and poor Ibycus’ wife Chloris? Was it all of these characters, or none of them, or some more or less ill-fitting combination of several?

The notorious Jesuit Jean Hardouin, who believed that the larger part of classical literature was a forgery perpetrated by thirteenth-century Benedictines, would no doubt have had a ready answer (although he made an
exception of the *Satires* and *Epistles*). Users of the most recent Teubner edition might be forgiven for thinking it was the late Professor Shackleton Bailey. The unwitting spectre of an *Horatian Question* on the Homeric model is raised by a lost fifteenth-century fresco cycle by Masolino, where ‘Oratius Flaccus’ seems to have appeared alongside ‘Oratius Satirus’. Though Horace has yet to find her Samuel Butler, he has been called a Syrian, a Greek, and a xenophobic Roman (this last no doubt co-terminous with an older picture of ‘fat, beery, beefy’ Horace; so much for all that girly Falernian, Caecuban, and the rest of his discerning cellar). He has been identified as a keen cyclist and a cricket lover – though he has less of a taste for fencing, at least over drinks, and is quick to retire from the wrestling-pit. Literary appreciation in England has occasionally risen to the giddy height of speculation on which London club Horace would have belonged to, or what school would most fittingly have nurtured such a pupil under the tender tutelage of ‘whacker’ Orbilius. But Horace has not merely been the victim of whimsy: far more threatening is the appropriation of his work in 1930s Italy to imply an ancient legitimacy for Mussolini’s fascist regime, and in the course of this volume we shall see a number of further exploitations of Horace to endorse the values of imperialism. If Horace’s poetic achievement, then, is a monument more lasting than bronze (*Odes* 3.30.1), it is also considerably more slippery.

The sheer number and variety of ‘Horaces’ that have been extrapolated from this one poetic corpus, comfortably contained within the pages of a single volume, are the result – the paradoxical and yet natural result – of the profusion of apparently biographical material offered by the works which make up that corpus. Through these purported authorial interventions,
Introduction: a Roman poet and his readers

readers have felt that the poet has granted them privileged access to the personality behind the poetry, in a way (or at least to an extent) unparalleled in any other ancient author, and in most modern authors as well. The multiple identities attributed to Horace not only prompt us to examine the ways in which ‘Horace’ as a text constructs its author, and how subsequent ages have constructed Horace from his texts; they also throw into particular relief wider questions about how we should approach the authorial voice in literature, and how we as readers are complicit in the construction of that authorial voice. In view of this, it is perhaps no accident that Horace and his later readers have played such a central role in the emergence of reception studies as a field within the discipline of Classics. In the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, for example, the first to feature an entry on ‘Reception’, it was Horace that Charles Martindale chose to illustrate the dynamics of reception study: ‘So Horace, as a man, as a body of texts, as an authority for different ways of living, has been diversely read in the west over the last 500 years, by scholars, poets, and “men of letters”, and our current images are shaped in response to that reception-history’.

Horace remains, then, what L. P. Wilkinson called him more than fifty years ago, ‘not merely a poet and character of two thousand years ago, but an international institution, a strand in the literary, social, and even political, fabric of European history’ – and it is fruitless to try to disentangle one ‘genuine’, definitive ‘Horace’ from the multitude of competing claims that together have erected and buttressed this institution and woven this strand of history. But while this poetic Proteus, like the butt of his own satire at *Epistles* 1.1.90, constantly eludes our grasp, that does not make the question with which we began redundant or irrelevant to the study of Horace and his texts. For if our perceptions of Horace are necessarily filtered through previous engagements with the poet and his work, it is of crucial significance that, as the essays in this volume abundantly illustrate, who wrote the poetry of Horace depends very largely on where you’re looking from. And that is an idea with an eminently Horatian pedigree, a close parallel to one of the poet’s most quoted and yet most misunderstood expressions.

---

14 A landmark in this respect is Martindale and Hopkins 1993; see also Krasser and Schmidt 1996. For older surveys of Horace’s *Nachleben*, see Stemplinger 1906 and 1921; Wilkinson 1951: 159–76; Curcio 1913; and essays in Chevalier 1988.
16 Wilkinson 1951: 159.
17 So Martindale 1993a: 1.
18 On the fortunes of Horace’s *ut pictura poesis* in later artistic theory, see especially Trimpi 1973; Lee 1967; Howard 1909.
Horace very nearly said (cf. *Ars Poetica* 361–5), constructions of an author are like painting: one will attract you more the closer you stand, another if you stand further away. This one loves the dark, that one wants to be seen in the light and has no fear of the judge’s sharp intelligence; this one has found favour once, that one will still please after ten encores. The Horace of fascism (let us hope) is one whose time has passed; but there are perhaps other, more appealing versions of Horace that will bear repeated viewing.

The title of our collection – *Perceptions of Horace* – is deliberately broad, and consciously ambiguous. It encompasses not merely other people’s perceptions of the Roman poet and his literary œuvre (that is, his ‘reception’ as the term is generally understood), but also the perceptions assigned by Horace to his own poetic persona – perceptions of himself, of his and others’ poetry, of his times, and of the human condition. This ambiguity, as the editors see it, should not be mistaken for a weakness in the coherence of the collection, dissipating its focus between two related but ultimately separable Horatian trajectories; rather, it reflects an important line of interpretation, with productive consequences. The arrangement of this volume stems from our conviction that every author is his or her own first reader, and hence that reception begins, as it were, very much at home. In this sense our subtitle, *A Roman poet and his readers*, while giving an accurate impression of the subject matter to be covered in the pages that follow, arguably implies an artificial dichotomy – for the development of the Horatian tradition is in many respects pioneered by Horace himself, the author and original reader of the texts on which that tradition is founded. That no author can fundamentally secure control over the meaning and fortunes of his or her text does not prevent that text from attempting to manipulate and direct its own reception, a strategy in which ‘Horace’ as a corpus engages extensively, predicting its own future career and suggesting ways in which it might be read. By locating itself within the context of different literary and cultural traditions, Horace’s poetry might be seen as endeavouring to precondition the reader’s approach to its interpretation (and such textual self-positioning may of course be cosmetic, disingenuous, ironic or self-serving). As Randall McNeill observes, Horace ‘does more than shape the way he presents himself; he shapes the way others (including ourselves) respond to these self-presentation’ by tailoring his remarks and addresses

19 Foucault 1997: 214; see also Denis Feeney’s essay in this volume, and the introduction to Barbara Graziosi’s chapter.

20 For Conte 1994: 3, ‘Every literary text is constructed in such a way as to determine the intended manner of its reception’.
to the specific interests, tastes, and expectations of a surprisingly wide array of readers and audiences’.  

This desire to regulate one’s own reception arguably supposes, however, what modern theorists maintain: namely, that meaning is ultimately realised at the point of reception. If this is the case, then by imbuing or overlaying Horace’s text with our own perceptions, and by continually re-inscribing Horace’s words – experienced differently with each subsequent reading – within our own consciousness, we ensure that the works of Q. Horatius Flaccus are constantly being re-written, in a process of collaboration between author and reader. In that sense, in looking for ‘Horace’ we are always, to some extent, looking at ourselves. Martindale remarks pertinently that ‘[t]here is a sense in which in reading a book, as in many other occupations, we are engaged in a process of finding, or making, a self for ourselves, though that self will always be provisional. This may be the special value of a poet like Horace, and could help to explain his influence and popularity. The reader is performing an activity mirrored within the poems themselves in which “Horace” is engaged in just such an act of self-fashioning’. Whether because the challenge inherent in the stark, even comic, disparity between different self-projections offered in his poetry prompts his audience to renewed self-analysis, or because his works (especially perhaps the Satires and Epistles) offer a particularly sustained exploration of the process of defining a self relative to the foils and foibles of others, Horace might be seen as a consummate example of a text that promotes reading as a route to self-knowledge.

The activity of reading Horace is not merely an exercise in egocentricity, however; for in tracing how we come to read an ancient poet as we do, we

21 McNeill 2001: 5–6; cf. ibid. 7 for discussion of ‘the poet’s employment of created self-images in order to shape the perceptions of those around him’.

22 See e.g. Martindale 1993b: 3 etc., and essays in Martindale and Thomas 2006. For qualifications of this (problematic) principle, see especially Kennedy 2006; also Most 2008. ‘Instantiated’ might be a safer expression – but that perhaps runs the risk of tautology identified by Most.

23 The text of Horace, that is, as it has come down to us, refracted through past encounters: it should be apparent from this that we consider the history of scholarship and textual criticism to be integral parts of the study of ‘reception’. The way in which the text is itself presented moreover serves to condition the response of the reader approaching the work in that particular physical manifestation; for this central tenet of the history of the book applied to classical reception, see e.g. Kallendorf 1999 and 2007.

24 Cf. Barchiesi 2001: 142 (= 1997: 211): ‘The author’s intention is only one component in a play of forces that also includes the textual reception “foreseen” by the author; both are only strategies, not ends, of reading’.

25 Martindale 1993a: 17–18; he maintains that the poets examined in that volume ‘used Horace to help define themselves to themselves’ (18). See also Russell Goulbourne’s conclusion (below, p. 270) that ‘studying the reception of Horace in eighteenth-century France shows not just how eighteenth-century French writers viewed Horace, but also how they viewed themselves’.
must look back to the various earlier receptions which have shaped – by acceptance or rejection, conscious or subconscious – our own approaches to that poet’s work. And, in considering the manifestations through which the ancient text has passed, we may well find that past perceptions of Horace (at least, again, as we ourselves perceive them) cause us to refine, revise or sharpen our own responses to his poetry. In other words, one function of the study of classical reception (and it is certainly not the only one) may be to enhance our understanding and appreciation of Antiquity itself.

*Perceptions of Horace* does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of the reception of Horace and his works in the western tradition; rather, the collection focuses on particular episodes in the life and afterlife of the Horatian corpus, encompassing a range of different media and historical periods. There are naturally omissions, and readers may regret the absence of particular favourites – but we hope they will not overestimate the interpretative implications of this distribution of coverage. The lack of discussion of Horace’s fortunes between Suetonius and Petrarch, for instance, should not be taken to imply in any way that his corpus was neglected from later Antiquity to the fourteenth century, but even necessarily to reinforce the traditional historical paradigm of a ‘Renaissance’ spearheaded by the antiquarian studies of Petrarch. The tenth and eleventh centuries, indeed, have been characterised (rightly or wrongly) as an *aetas Horatiana* corresponding to the *aetas Vergiliana* of the preceding two centuries; and even at the turn of the ninth century we find Alcuin using the nickname ‘Flaccus’ at the court of Charlemagne – though how far Horace’s poetry was known to Alcuin remains doubtful. There are excellent surveys devoted to Horace’s Nachleben in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in the recent *Cambridge Companion to Horace*, as well as a number of specialist studies, particularly by Karsten Friis-Jensen, to which the reader may be reliably directed.

---

16 The conference on which these studies are based did in fact include a paper on medieval commentary on Horace, which unfortunately we have not been able to publish here.


Introduction: a Roman poet and his readers

intensity of engagement with the ancient poet in this later ‘Horatian age’, from literature and the visual arts to archaeology and garden design.\(^{30}\)

The original Latin text sparks our investigations in *Perceptions of Horace*. Very soon into his first book of poems, Horace begins to give shape to his own readers as a means to fashion himself as author. In this volume’s opening essay, Denis Feeney demonstrates that the Horatian corpus itself takes reception as a central theme. From first to last, from the *Satires* to the *Ars Poetica*, Horace sets an ideal readership (small, familiar, aristocratic, and properly appreciative) against a vulgar audience of strangers that threatens to grow ever larger and out of control as the author metamorphoses from angry young man into mature poet laureate of the new regime. Horace enhances the social, political and aesthetic colour of his poetry when he depicts good and bad consumers of it. In Feeney’s nuanced analysis, however, we observe that Horace adopts different protocols in different parts of his *œuvre*. This is not just because his fame and authority increase, but also because his genre changes: the iambic and lyric works skirt round overt reference to their reception; the hexameter works abound with talk of the poet and his audience. By the end, Horace fears that any control he once had over his reception has slipped away into the hands of his many readers. ‘Horace’ now belongs to them.

Emily Gowers then takes us back to the beginning, to Horace’s poetic debut in *Satires 1*. Through the motif of ‘endings’, paradoxically, she explores how the Roman poet initially shapes for himself a playful autobiography as a consciously casual writer. In particular, re-tracing the journey from Rome to Brundisium (which Horace narrates in the middle of *Satires 1*), Gowers teases out for Horace the contours of an anti-teleological ethics, philosophy and poetics. Here, she argues, the satirist depicts both the randomness of life and the accidental qualities of his genre. Such claims have had consequences for the later reception of Horace’s first work. The poet acknowledges the philosophical authority of Cicero and Lucretius only to redirect his writing into irreverent, sub-didactic moralising. The poetry-book as a whole puts into reverse the arrival home of the Homeric Odysseus – this Roman hero travels away from his homeland. The experimental game Horace plays with topographical and ethical ends (or rather, with open-endedness) binds his first book of satires to these great predecessors. Yet for later readers, the game only serves to loosen the links of the first poetry-book with the rest of Horace’s *œuvre*. The ‘end’ or destination of

\(^{30}\) See essays in Frischer and Brown 2001; for general overviews, see Goad 1918; Ogilvie 1964; Money 2007.
Satires I becomes, ironically, its demotion to second rank in the hierarchy of the Roman poet’s works.

The next two chapters focus largely on the self-referential strategies of Horace’s lyric poetry. The protocols of the genre generally required that each lyric poem be cast as a spontaneous performance of song. If, then, the Odes barely allude to their publication as books or to their readership, they do make great play with their poet – his Bacchic inspiration (as Alessandro Schiesaro maintains) and his ambition to enter the lyric canon (as proposed by J. S. C. Eidinow). During the course of the Odes, argues Schiesaro, Horace sheds his customary praise of Callimachean slenderness and his aesthetics of small things to reveal, instead, a Pindaric grandeur and a new aesthetics of sublimity. What drives this transformation is the violent, ecstatic energy with which the Roman lyricist has been imbued by the god Bacchus. A Bacchic poetics demands a change of subject matter, from love, banquets and the rejection of epic to Caesar’s glorious deeds and the achievement of their vatic singer. A Bacchic poetics also calls for a change of authorial persona: the shy and modest poet swells into the bold fury of a Bacchant and soars to the heights of a snowy swan. The Horace of Odes 2.20 is no Everyman, instead he sets a vast distance between himself as lofty poet and his fellow human beings left standing on the ground. By thus predicting his immortality as a lyric poet, Horace stage-manages his reception. He also slips between identifying himself as a poet and as a text (as Eidinow goes on to argue), for the Odes impute to Maecenas the discernment of an Alexandrian scholar, capable of adding ‘Horace’ the poet to the canon of nine great lyricists and ‘Horace’ the text to the library shelves. Eidinow catalogues how a number of the Odes cleverly acknowledge the collection’s textuality despite the genre’s strictures mentioned above: some insinuate into their margins the critical marks used by the Alexandrian editors of the Greek lyricists; Odes 3.30 conflates the meaning of monumentum as tomb and book to grant its author licence to represent his poetic ambition as an inscription.

While Schiesaro and Eidinow focus on aesthetic aspects of Horace’s self-projection, the next two chapters focus on its ethical, economic and social aspects and turn for clarification to the Augustan context of that self’s production. Martin Dinter draws on contemporary rhetorical practice and its later elaboration to argue that, for his first audiences, Horace stood revealed not just in his first-person pronouncements. Simple, universalising judgements (such as ‘the greedy are never satisfied’, Epist. 1.2.56) recur across the poet’s works, most frequently to illustrate or sum up the narrative to which they are attached. According to the rhetoricians, authors
embedded such *sententiae* in their texts to attract attention and to disclose their thoughts. Readers, by virtue of excerpting, collating and recycling *sententiae*, bestowed on the originators of such expressions fame, an afterlife (however fragmentary), and an ideological essence. From Augustan times on into the Middle Ages, Dinter explains, readers crystallised from Horatian *sententiae* an *Horatius ethicus* – a man both meek and modest (and conspicuously at odds with the *Horatius poeticus* delineated in the preceding chapters). Next, Marden Nichols compares this authorial persona with that exhibited in the technical prose treatise on architecture by Horace's contemporary Vitruvius. Both poet and architect explore how Roman men fashioned themselves through education, wealth, or socio-political advancement. Both take on a pose of satisfaction with their own lot: educated in contentment, they renounce greed and ambition. They express pleasure in their obscurity and set these contented selves against a parasitic class of worthless clients who aggressively self-promote. Observing such textual commonalities, Nichols notes that historically Horace and Vitruvius shared similar scribal functions in the bureaucracy of the Augustan regime. She speculates, therefore, that both writers adopt the rhetoric of self-effacement to reassure readers that they, unlike others, will not overstep the normal boundary for public servants. For Nichols, then, the modesty of ‘Horace’ is not a unique expression but, intriguingly, a shared cultural idiom of first-century Rome.

There is no neat boundary between reception *in* Horace and reception *of* Horace, as the next two chapters of Perceptions – both concerned with the self-fashioning of poets – clearly reveal. Exploring the value of poetry, the canonicity of poets, and the problems of defective literary interpretation, *Tristia* 2 (Ovid’s verse letter to Augustus from exile) has long been recognised as the first surviving response to Horace’s own verse letter to the emperor, *Epistles* 2.1. Jennifer Ingleheart draws on this, and on other less commonly deployed Horatian intertexts, to demonstrate vividly how Ovid sets Augustus up as a flawed but nonetheless crucial point of reception. The emperor prefers seeing to listening or reading; he values mimes over poems; he exercises his right to include or exclude books from the Palatine Library; he brings Horace close into the orbit of his regime but banishes Ovid far from it. This is reception at its most literal and dangerous. In *Tristia* 2, ‘Ovid’ is set against the unnamed ‘Horace’, the innocent exile against the harmful court poet, in an attempt to persuade the letter’s powerful addressee that Ovid’s poetry and its author merit not punishment but reward. Yet if Ovid fashions a textual self through Horace, Horace has already constructed his textual self through the *Lives* of the Greek poets. In
the following chapter, Barbara Graziosi looks back to the Hellenistic biographies as an important influence on the self-presentation of Horace across his works and forward to Suetonius’ Life of Horace as equally influenced by them, thus demonstrating the productive absence of strict chronology in the reception history our collection unfolds. Summaries, fragments, quotations and inscriptions suggest that the Hellenistic biographies extrapolated poets such as Aeschylus or Pindar from their works and did so according to two contradictory reading strategies: the poet resembles his work (even, sometimes, corporeally) or the poet is wholly unlike his work (an ordinary person endowed with an extraordinary gift). Horace then plays with the structures of the Lives, but complicates them by transforming what were acts of homage into fanciful autobiographical claims. Not without wit and irony, those scattered claims are made available for readers to reconstitute into the life of a great poet, complete with humble origins, miraculous survivals, local worship, global fame, and sufficient failings to satisfy modesty. Yet, as Graziosi makes clear, poets cannot control the reception of their life any more than that of their poetry and Suetonius, following Hellenistic convention, draws on characteristics of Horace’s poetry as much as the self-proclaimed characteristics of its author to construct his memorable account of a short, fat, vain womaniser.

Marking the halfway point in Perceptions, L. B. T. Houghton’s chapter develops earlier discussion of reception in and of Horace, in particular the Epistles as a medium for reflection on literary production (as in Feeney’s chapter), and their author as a comparandum for later writers (as in the discussion by Ingleheart). Houghton also provides approximate parameters for the second half of the collection since he engages, chronologically, with receptions in the early fourteenth and the late nineteenth centuries and, conceptually, with receptions as identification and as distancing. Both Petrarch and Andrew Lang adopt the strategy of writing to the Roman poet directly as their dead muse. The Italian humanist constructs a portrait of Horace in his own image: king of lyric in Italy, secluded in its green meadows, poet of morality, disdain for the mob, imminent death, and immortality. In Latin and in lyric metre, he creates a Petrarchan Horace to authorise the Horatian themes and self-conception evident in his earlier vernacular works. Petrarch and Horace blend into one while, in the comparable letter by Lang, English prose provides the medium in which to communicate affinity but also distance. The Scottish critic and scholar shapes a contemporary Horace congenial to Victorian times (flush with patriotic pride, ‘mortuary musings’, and rustic faith). Yet in Houghton’s investigation of his intertexts, Lang also discloses a wide topographic and