

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09553-2 - Horace and his Lyric Poetry

L. P. Wilkinson

Frontmatter

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HORACE
&
HIS LYRIC POETRY

BY

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Hoc paces habuere bonae uentique secundi

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PREFACE

HORACE has the distinction of sharing with Homer a special volume in the Catalogue of the Cambridge University Library. The stream of writing about him continues to flow, swollen recently into spate by the bimillennium of his birth in 1935. The Bursian review covering the years 1929-36 deals with over three hundred books and articles. Yet substantial contributions to our knowledge and understanding of him can still be made. In 1918 Richard Heinze, who transformed Kiessling's edition until it became virtually his own, advanced a theory of Horace's metre which has driven from the field the old theory of Wilhelm Christ.¹ Shortly after the war of 1914 three works of first-rate importance on his sources appeared, Jensen's *Neoptolemos und Horaz* (1919), which has reopened the whole question of the plan of the *Ars Poetica* and its bearing on contemporary literature, Fiske's *Lucilius and Horace* (1920), a useful if rather indigestible contribution, and Pasquali's delightful *Orazio Lirico* (1920). Source-hunting has at least a negative value; it puts a check on false speculation.

Rediscoveries are commoner than discoveries. An interpretation of the end of Epode II recently advanced² had already its supporters in the sixteenth century, but was rightly rejected by Lambinus in 1561. It is well-nigh impossible to be sure that you are first in the field; sooner or later you find that your cherished *trouville* has been catalogued for years in some more or less remote museum; whereupon you may weep tears of joy, as Porson did when he found that his emendations had been anticipated by Bentley, or you may curse more humanly with Donatus, 'Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt'. The great mass of our common knowledge about Horace is due to Renaissance scholars. Gratitude to them would be more suitably expressed in a general service for the Commemoration of Benefactors than in footnotes which would each be the meagre product of laborious research; there is a limit to the claims of the dead. Nor, again, can one ever be sure that one's happy thought of to-day is not one's reading of last year. But where I am conscious of a debt

¹ *Berichte d. Sächs. Ges.*, Bd. 70, Heft 4. See p. 111.

² N. Salanitro: *L' Epodo secondo di Orazio* (1935).

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to any particular writer, I hope I have acknowledged it. And here at the outset I should mention how much I learnt from Housman's lectures on the text.

Horace's life and character and his relation to his times have been the subject of several recent works, such as D'Alton's *Horace and his Age* (1917), Tenney Frank's *Catullus and Horace* (1928), Turolla's *Orazio* (1931), Bione's *Orazio e Virgilio* (1934) and Zielinski's *Horace et la Société Romaine* (1938). But the work which I have found as stimulating (not to say, provoking) as any is Campbell's *Horace: A New Interpretation* (1925). For the historical background Syme's recent work *The Roman Revolution* (1939) is especially valuable, a welcome corrective to the uncritical panegyrics of Augustus to which we had become accustomed.

Though primarily written for classical students who are not Horatian specialists, this book is intended to be within the scope of anyone who can read Latin, or who could once read it. For the benefit of this last class I have given in footnotes a plain prose translation of most of the passages I quote. I make no apology for quoting familiar passages at length; few readers will know them by heart and not many would take the trouble to look them up. I make no claim to add much to what is *known* by experts on the subject (a feat which is in any case difficult enough at this stage), being more concerned with putting forward opinions than with establishing facts. In many matters reading and conversation have convinced me that mistaken ideas about Horace are widespread. What is needed is largely a readjustment of emphasis and the extension to a wider public of the increased understanding that time has given us. Where new light has recently been shed, I hope I have profited by it and passed it on. In particular, I have tried to do justice to Horace's poems as poetry, the more so because this side received little attention from Sellar in what is still, after fifty years, our standard account of him.

Most of this book has had to be written on odd evenings after days of war work, and at a country inn remote from libraries. I have been unable myself to check the numerous references, but have been fortunate in securing the scholarly help of the Rev. J. W. Earp, who, under the direction of Dr W. H. S. Jones, has spared no pains in this onerous task, and in that of making the indexes.

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My especial thanks are due to Professor W. B. Anderson, whose most generous help and fastidious scholarship removed many inaccuracies and some misapprehensions. Those that remain are my fault.

My thanks are also due to my University and College, for studentships which enabled me some years ago to do most of the spadework; to the Society of Authors as the representatives of the Trustees of the estate of the late Professor A. E. Housman, and Messrs Jonathan Cape, the publishers of his *Collected Poems*, for permission to print his translation of *Diffugere niues*; to Professor F. E. Adcock, Mr F. L. Lucas, Mr D. W. Lucas and Mr G. H. W. Rylands, who read the typescript and made valuable suggestions; and to other friends who have given me encouragement, among whom I would particularly mention the Provost of King's (Mr J. T. Sheppard), the late Mrs Arthur Strong, Mr Kenneth Fawdry and Mr Brian Treverton-Jones.

L. P. W.

THE DUNCOMBE ARMS

GREAT BRICKHILL *February 1944*

For the Second Edition I have made a number of modifications and corrections.

L. P. W.

June 1950

In this reprint of the Second Edition, I have only made slight alterations. But it is gratifying that the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press should have felt justified in undertaking a new issue, and I should like to express my thanks to them.

L. P. W.

March 1968