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POPE AND HORACE: STUDIES IN IMITATION

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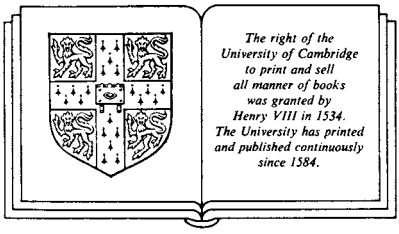

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For
FREIDA, JESSICA, *and* JOHN

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F.S.

Southampton, 1984

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Abbreviations

Corr.	*The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. G. Sherburn, 5 vols., Oxford, 1956.
Dacier	*Remarques Critiques sur les Oeuvres d'Horace, avec une nouvelle traduction*, 10 vols., Paris, 1683–97. All references are to this edition unless otherwise indicated. I have not modernized Dacier's French.
'Discourse'	'Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' in John Dryden, *Poems 1693–1696, Works*, IV, ed. A. B. Chambers, William Frost, and Vinton A. Dearing, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974.
Shaftesbury, 1714	*Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 2nd edn, 3 vols., 1714.
Shaftesbury, 1900	*The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. Benjamin Rand, London and New York, 1900.
TE	*The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. J. Butt, *et al.*, 11 vols., London, 1939–69.

All quotations from Pope's poems are from the Twickenham edition, references normally giving line number only. All quotations from the Horatian poems which Pope imitated are from Pope's own Horatian text reproduced in the Twickenham edition (IV) ed. John Butt, with occasional errors silently corrected. Quotations from other Horatian poems are from *Q. Horati Flacci Opera*, ed. Wickham and Garrod, 1901. Dr F. J. Williams and I have provided new translations for all the Latin poetry.

References to other works are made by using the author/date system which enables the reader to find the work in the alphabetically arranged bibliography. This is divided into works written before and after 1800, editions being listed by author rather than

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editor. Editions of Horace, however, are listed by their editors in order to distinguish those published before from those published after 1800.

Pope's index numbers linking the Latin and English poems are given the first time lines are quoted, but not thereafter.

All Greek quotations have been transliterated.

Imitation has been capitalized when it refers to the formal genre.

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Preface

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE for this book is the fact that Pope printed alongside his *Imitations of Horace* the texts of the original Horatian poems on which they were based. By doing this he asked his readers not merely to remember those famous Horatian poems, but actively to re-read them while they were reading his *Imitations*. In the case of each Imitation, two poems were being offered rather than one. Indeed, the texts of the Horatian poems were carefully prepared to encourage this double reading in the closest detail: individual Latin words, phrases, or whole lines were picked out from the italic text in roman type; parts of lines, whole lines, or even whole sections of some poems, were cut; emendations to some of the uncertainties in Horace's text had been chosen.[1] Moreover, an elaborate system of index numbers or letters linked, from beginning to end, particular points in Pope's text to the parallel sections of Horace's poem. The result was that these well-known Latin poems commanded attention in a new way, and at every point begged comparison with the *Imitations*.[2]

The importance of Pope's parallel texts has long been recognized, but there is no study which analyses this practice in detail and assesses its importance in all the *Imitations*. In offering such a study I emphasize the extraordinary complexity of the relationship between each Imitation and the poem on which it is based. Sustained comparison reveals that in each Imitation Pope has here slightly modified and there utterly transformed, here intensely echoed and there ironically undercut the countless minute particulars of Horace's rich poetic language and subtle poetic forms. In addition, I argue that there is a vital and dynamic intertextual relationship between Horace's original poems and Pope's *Imitations*. Criticism of these poems often implies, I think, that the *Imitations* are variations on 'fixed' Horatian texts. I suggest that the relationship between the texts is much more fluid. The key words in the Latin often draw attention to unsuspected or novel details and thus constitute a 'reading' of Horace. Furthermore, Pope's *Imitations* are themselves, in one sense, highly original 'interpretations'

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of Horace, and next to these *Imitations* those 'traditional' poems actually look different.

In order to appreciate this fully it is necessary to provide an historical context. How was Horace read in the eighteenth century? How were the particular poems Pope imitated read? What was novel or striking about Pope's *Imitations* as versions of those particular poems? How challenging to us now is his treatment of Horace? Some of these questions have been raised before, but not, I think, adequately explored, mainly because it has not been fully realized how complex and difficult the questions are.[3]

It might be useful to set out briefly some of the problems. First, there was no simple or agreed view of Horace in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Dryden's 'interpretation' of Horace was different from André Dacier's which was different from Isaac Casaubon's which was different from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's. As we shall see, there was as much disagreement as there was agreement about the nature of Horace's political positions, the value of his 'low' style in the hexameter poetry, the strength of his 'forms' in satire and epistle, or the strength of his moral commitments.

Second, Pope's *Imitations of Horace* operate at a level well below, as it were, generalizations about 'Horace', however fine they may be. The group of Horatian poems which Pope imitated is remarkably varied in tone, form, and content, and in itself belies any simple view of Horace. *Satire* II.i. is a sophisticated dramatic dialogue, but *Satire* II.ii. is a simple moral diatribe. In contrast to both, the early *Satire* I.ii. is a notoriously immoral work full of personal allusions. The very late *Ode* IV.i. poses problems concerning lyric form and vision; while the mature *Epistles* II.i. and II.ii. require consideration of the interrelationship between moral vision, poetic structure, and self-consciousness. Different again are the questions about scepticism, 'contentment', and irony raised by the last poems Pope imitated, *Epistle* I.vi., *Satire* II.vi., *Epistle* I.vii., and *Epistle* I.i.

Third, Pope's treatment of these poems is so detailed, so intense, and so original, that he changes our perception of them. It seems to me that Pope, Shaftesbury, and Bentley, in their different ways, were the most challenging and imaginative readers of Horace in the first half of the eighteenth century. As I hope to show, to read the *Imitations* is, ultimately, to reassess traditional views of Horatian satire, Horace's images of 'himself', his moral teaching, and his psychological ideals.

The thrust of this study is to emphasize the radical nature of Pope's treatment of Horace. Pope's extraordinary attention to detail forces us to read Horace in a very concentrated manner. 'Horace' here is

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not so much the well-known classical figure as the intense details of his poetic language. The Horatian text is seen as a dynamic catalyst: not as containing fixed meaning but as creating new meanings within the intertextual field of the parallel poems. Pope's language seems at once to extend Horace's meanings and to discover latent possibilities within them. Furthermore, Pope's *Imitations* vigorously focus attention on the nature of Horatian self-portraiture; indeed, they explore all the ideas of the 'self' found in Horace. In this area they reassess the significance of one of Horace's own favourite themes, the profound inconsistencies of human feelings and actions which question the very idea of the unity of self. Finally, if these *Imitations* reassert the validity of Horace's finely achieved poetic forms, especially the epistle, they also question it. If they endorse, they also in some ways deny, the value of Horace's moral and political positions. Ultimately, they extend Horace's satiric vision to a point at which it undermines the nature and purpose of satire itself. As a group, Pope's *Imitations* confirm and question all that 'Horace' is.[4]

Fully to appreciate these aspects of Pope's *Imitations* we must adopt two critical positions simultaneously, one which is historical and another which is much more modern. On the one hand, we must see Pope's reading of Horace in a historical context, and compare his approach to Horace with those of his contemporaries. Only by doing so does his real originality emerge. On the other hand we need to recognize that these perspectives do not do full justice to his achievement. Pope's creative response to Horace in the *Imitations* was more personal and more challenging than most of his contemporaries realized. Only now, I think, can we fully appreciate that challenge.

In order to bring the historical perspective to bear on Pope's Imitations I have used extensively two eighteenth-century readings of Horace: André Dacier's detailed commentary on each poem Pope imitated in his *Remarques Critiques sur les Oeuvres d'Horace, avec une nouvelle traduction* (1683–97), and Shaftesbury's interpretation of Horace as evident in detailed comments on, and quotations from, individual Horatian poems in both *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (2nd edn, 1714) and *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. Benjamin Rand (1900). Dacier's edition of Horace was the most respected interpretative edition in the early eighteenth century, and his comments on individual poems offer the best guide to the way in which these works were generally read. This edition gives a full and rich view of the classical Horace: Dacier comments sympathetically, indeed enthusiastically, on the whole of Horace's work, and tries to appreciate in turn the individual qualities of odes,

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epodes, early and late satires, and the two books of epistles. He emphasizes the moral seriousness of *Epistle* 1, and comments particularly on the encouragement to virtue in those works, in contrast to the satiric castigation of folly and vice in the satires. To point up this seriousness Dacier draws parallels, when possible, between Horatian passages and a wide range of classical and biblical texts. Throughout, he comments thoughtfully on the structure of Horace's poems, and on his elegant play of tone and irony. Finally, and so importantly, he attempts to put Horace's poems into a specific historical and social context: he identifies the many individuals mentioned in Horace's poetry, tries to date each of the poems, comments on the social mores and customs Horace mentions, and seeks to explain the significance of the historical and political events to which Horace alludes. In doing so, Dacier opened up a rich Roman milieu with which Pope could compare his own times in sharp and often surprising detail.

Shaftesbury's interpretation of Horace was much more personal, at times highly erratic, and yet imaginatively searching, not least when it seems strange and we are tempted to call it simply 'wrong'. If Dacier allows us to measure Pope's originality in his approach to Horace, Shaftesbury permits us to compare one very personal response to Horace with another. There is no doubt that Pope knew and used Dacier's edition, as will become evident. Although I am not specifically concerned with Shaftesbury's 'influence' or otherwise on Pope, the references 'Shaftesbury, 1714' for the *Characteristics* indicate what Pope would have known, while 'Shaftesbury, 1900' indicates Shaftesbury's private writings, such as the personal and speculative 'Philosophical Regimen', a moral and psychological self-examination, not published in the eighteenth century. Modern critical studies of Horace, however, also inform my own readings of Horace, and the headnotes to each chapter provide a basic guide to modern criticism of each Horatian poem, as well as each Imitation. In interpreting the Horatian poems I have drawn primarily on the work of Eduard Fraenkel, M. J. McGann, Gordon Williams, Niall Rudd, and Charles O. Brink.

The first of two introductory chapters considers more generally the ways in which Horace was interpreted and evaluated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in order to provide an historical context and to isolate points of reference for later comparison with Pope's *Imitations*. The second outlines briefly the tradition of the theory and practice of the Restoration and 'Augustan' Imitation, and stresses the originality of Pope's practice within those traditions. Thereafter each chapter concentrates on a single Imi-

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tation. Pope's first Imitation, the *Imitation of Satire II.i.*, is analysed in full, even though it is well known, in order to demonstrate that these *Imitations* can only be fully understood if they are approached as complete works read at every line in relation to the Horatian originals. Thereafter the poems are treated selectively, except for the Imitations of the two odes and the short *Imitation of Epistle I.vi.* The *Imitations* are treated chronologically and the chapters are divided into three parts to emphasize how Pope's approach to Horace changed and developed during the five-year period in which they were written. If each of the Horatian poems Pope imitated offers a different view of Horace, the *Imitations* as a group seem to be a dynamic and creative struggle with those changing visions. To start we must ask, what were the views of Horace with which Pope himself began?

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