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HORACE

A NEW INTERPRETATION

BY

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liberius si
dixero quid, si forte iocosus, hoc mihi iuris
cum venia dabis: instituebat Horatius hoc me

["If some things I have said are too bold, and others too
jocular, you must allow me at least one excuse—the precedent
of my author himself."—Horace, *Satires* I. iv. 103-5, adapted]



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PREFACE

I HAVE to thank three old Cambridge friends, Mr. F. M. Cornford and Mr. D. S. Robertson of Trinity, and Mr. R. Hackforth of Sidney Sussex, for reading parts of this book in manuscript and helping me with criticism. My chief debt, however, is to my colleague, Professor Slater, who has most kindly read and criticised the entire work in proof.

Chapter II. is perhaps stiff reading, and although indispensable to my *thesis*, may be omitted without serious detriment to the understanding of the remaining chapters. The Conspectus, on the other hand, is designed solely as an aid to the reader in following the argument.

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CONSPECTUS

PART I

GENERAL

CHAPTER I

A CLASSIC AS SEEN BY ROMANTICS

The fountain of Bandusia and its apparently gratuitous pollution—Other and stranger odes—Horatian Habits that puzzle the modern reader—Landor's marginal anathemas—Romanticism generally votes against the Odes—Reason: the Romantic's preference for superficial attractions to the true beauty of form—The XVIIIth Century no true Classic Age, Romantic rather—Its failure to grasp the real point of the Horatian Ode—The so-called "Romantic" Revival is properly much more a Classic Revival—Its new understanding of Form in Lyric—But its poets were prejudiced against Horace as an XVIIIth Century idol; and XIXth Century perpetuates rather their romantic qualities; result, Horace's Odes still unappreciated, their fundamental merits unrecognised—Enemies of the Odes among scholars proper—Tyrrell—*Per contra*, Sellar—Contemporary literary spirit dead against Horace—Poetry in the ancient world has a totally different function and position—True appreciation of Horace impossible until that is understood; therefore object of following chapter will be, radically to revise our conception of Poetry in the light of the Ancient view page 1

CHAPTER II

THE FUNCTION OF POETRY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Poetry, nowadays treated as parasitic upon life, was regarded by the early Greeks as having a function, *viz.*, the spiritual education of the community. This, *the Classical*, conception of it, is right (I.) historically, (II.) theoretically.

I. (pp. 30-54).

Ritual Origin of Art—Ritual Origin of Poetry—The Vedas—Primitive Latin Poetry—Greek Poetry not only had ritual origin, but *re-roots* itself at intervals in this native soil of poetry, the rite, thus going through several "literary cycles" page 30

What is a Literary Cycle?—An "ideal" or *typical* one described in full; literary history of certain "Utopians"—A complete literary cycle presents three *phases* (i) Lyric, (ii) Dramatic, (iii) Sophistic—(i) and (ii) are functional, (iii) is not—(iii) comprises many minor literary genres, but principally (A) Abortive Drama, in various forms, *e.g.* dramas with a *thesis* to defend; or "mimes," *i.e.* realism; (B) Narrative, including Epic and Novel page 34

This theory applied to Classical Literature—The first cycle in Greek Literature: (i) not extant, (ii) nil, (iii) (B) Homer and Hesiod—Second cycle: (i) the Lyric poets, (ii) Attic Drama, (iii) (B) Herodotus, Thucydides, and the Sophists, (A) Euripides.—Third cycle: (i) *e.g.*, Theocr., X. 42-55, (iii) (A) Epicharmus, Sophron, Plato, the Dialogue, and the Diatribe page 38

Latin literature mainly reproduces Greek forms, but had one native "cycle," abortive yet distinguishable: (i) crude lyric, (ii) the fescennines, and early *dramatic satira* (iii) (A and B) the *satira* of Ennius—"Roman satire" proper, *i.e.*, from Lucilius on, has roots in both (ii) and (iii), and accordingly is largely sophisticated, yet still retains to a fair extent a politico-moral function. *page 50*

Thus through Roman satire the old politico-moral function of Poetry is to a fair extent restored to Classical Literature, after having lapsed in the Greek Decadence—How this affects Horace both in his *Satires* and in his other work *page 53*

II. (pp. 54-5).

A summary and dogmatic defence of the Classical, or religious-moral, conception of Poetry—But the Poet does *not* "teach"; he trains *page 54*

CHAPTER III

HORACE'S OWN THEORY AND PRACTICE OF POETRY

Of the ancient, or classical, conception of Poetry, as defined and illustrated in the preceding chapter, the most all-round and complete exponent is Horace. He voices the religious-moral view of Poetry in (i) his statements on the Theory of Poetry, and (ii) his accounts of Poetic Origins; and, consistently, he is faithful to it in (iii) his own poetic practice *page 56*

i. The Horatian THEORY OF POETRY. The vocation of Poet is a high one; he has a function in the community; a spiritual and moral function; a *kind of a* priesthood, a priesthood "of the Muses"—*i.e.*, he is dedicated not to this or that god, but to the purely *literary* service of gods and heroes in general. He is dedicated, also, to the moral education of his fellow-men *page 58*

ii. Horace on POETIC ORIGINS. Discussion of *Epist.*, II. i. 139-60. Reference to other passages *page 65*

iii. Horace in his POETIC PRACTICE. In his mature work—*Odes* and *Epistles*—he speaks as "priest of the Muses" and Mentor of his fellow-countrymen. [The *Epodes* and *Satires* show at least the destructive or "exorcising" aspect of the same function.] *page 67*

As "priest of the Muses," he celebrates gods and heroes. The gods he celebrates are mostly Greek, the Olympians; but he celebrates these as a national and moral poet, because (a) they had to a great extent become *national* Roman gods, (b) they traditionally represented the *moral* order. He also celebrates some strictly *national* Italian deities. His main "hero" is Augustus. In his serious poems he employs a sacerdotal and oracular style, derived to a large extent from Pindar. Formally, his poems are practically all either (1) Hymns, (2) Prayers, or (3) Injunctions or "Sermons" *page 69*

In his capacity of Mentor, he is chiefly to be seen in this last-mentioned category; these "admonitory addresses" comprise the great majority of the *Odes*, and the *Epistles* generally *page 74*

The endeavour after an oracular and arresting manner explains many features of the *Odes*, *e.g.*, the deliberate abruptness and tendency to sudden transitions; instances (I. iv and vii) considered, and further explained in light of the particular "admonitory" purpose in view. This last is often a key to disconcerting contrasts between end and beginning of numerous odes. Further examination deferred to chapter on the *Odes* (ch. VII.) *page 76*

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AND WORK

Born 65 B.C. at Venusia—History of that town—His father—To school in Rome—To the University of Athens—The war—Return to Rome—Patronage of Maecenas—His enlightened conception of Reconstruction—Journey to Brundisium, and the frogs—*Epodes*—*Satires*, I.—The Sabine farm—Before Actium—At Actium—Publication of *Satires*, II.—Habits about this time *page 82*

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Last Years—*Epistle*, II. ii—Direct patronage from the Emperor—The *Carmen Saeculare*—The fourth book of *Odes*—*Epistle*, II. i—Deaths of Maecenas and Horace *page 122*

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CHAPTER V

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Further desiderata of the Horatian ode: nos. (ii) to (vii), see text *page 202*

The Odes examined according to various types [N.B.—This is *not* a classification]—(a) Elaborate and complex, largely after Pindar—II. xi, xxvii, xvi—(b) Hymns and Prayers—III. xiii, xxi, xxxi—The *poetical* prayer makes good a deficiency of Roman religion—III. xviii, xxii, *Carm. Saec.*—*εὐκτικόν*—*κληρικόν*, *ἀποπεμπτικόν* to gods, to mortals—From hymn to character-sketch—II. xix, I. x; II. viii—(c) Injunctions or Exhortations—The Second Book—(d) Poems illustrating Various Devices—The conclusion of the *Regulus* Ode—Types of conclusion, (i) relief, (ii) *παρὰ προσδοκίαν*, (iii) climax—Poems on poetry—Deprecating but Doing—II. i, a Symphony of Word-music *page 203*