THE DIFFERENT MOODS OF HORACE*

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At the outset of this paper I should perhaps say that any who have come here hoping to hear a learned disquisition on Horace's uses of the moods of the Latin verb are going to be disappointed, interesting though such a consideration could be. The word 'moods' is here used in its popular sense, and none of the profanum volgus need steal away.

Secondly may I say that this list in no way claims to be exhaustive. It is eclectic, and I fear, somewhat arbitrary, though I hope it may cover, in a general way, most of the main shades of feeling to be found in our poet. But for my examples I shall go where the spirit leads me, so that I do not think you will hear anything to-night from the Ars Poetica, for instance, though I am sure this could also supply some.

The first mood with which I shall deal I have called 'The Centenary Mood', and I thought I had distinguished it specially for this occasion, the centenary of a university which takes its motto from Horace, and, no doubt, much else besides. But on further consideration I feel it is possibly so to be distinguished anyway. For was anything else that Horace wrote subject to quite the same limitations as the Carmen Saeculare, in which his Muse has, so to speak, been instructed as to just what flight or train to catch and just what luggage to carry? I think we must allow that the poet acquits himself as well as any other poet laureate would have in the circumstances, despite such prosaic stanzas as number 5, invoking Heaven's blessing on a recent marriage bill. The language, says Page, is simple and stately, and I would suggest that there is an attractiveness of sheer simplicity, in its proper place, which cannot be bettered by embellishment. For instance when the poet, in lines 23–4 speaks of die claro and grata nocte he is not, I suppose, using very unusual phrases. The latter almost immediately suggests the σηρόνη of the Greeks. Yet there is a satisfying feature both about the phrases themselves and in their contrast. May I quote a parallel from English writing to illustrate this point. We are all acquainted, I think, with the Miltonic paraphrase of the 136th Psalm 'Let us with a gladsome mind'; but there are various versions of it. I have always found the version

And the silver moon by night
Shining with her borrowed light

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more satisfying than any other for that verse, preferable even to Milton's original

The hornèd Moon to shine by night
Amongst her spangled sisters bright

though Milton's is doubtless nearer the Hebrew. And I would suggest that the attractiveness of the former lies very largely in its sheer simplicity—'silver moon', 'borrowed light', both commonplaces since Anaxagoras, the one long before.

So too I think we must allow that the Carmen Saeculare attracts by its very simplicity, and most of us, I feel, would always be willing to read it again, which is a kind of test. Nor should I leave it without recalling that the motto of the Cape Province is embedded in line 74 of it, which is a reason why some of us should be willing to look at that stanza again, and also perhaps additional evidence for our thesis, since the Cape motto was presumably just a translation from the Portuguese, and not taken from Horace.

Good hopes, high hopes, these are perhaps more the perquisite of youth than of any other age, so perhaps we should go from them to the 'Sentimental Mood' in Horace. 'Sentimental'—it is a difficult word. It is easier to know, than to define, what it covers. You will recall the Scottish translation 'ilka man o' decent feelin' for Catullus's 'quantum est hominum venustiorum', and I think the best Roman sentiment had a fair amount of 'decent feeling' in it. Not so long ago I read Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey' and found it readable enough, far easier to read than 'Tristam Shandy', but I still prefer Horace. The commentators tell us that Cinara is perhaps the only one of the women's names mentioned by him which points to a real attachment on his part, and I think it is true to state that he treats her with uniform consideration. The epithet *rapax* which he uses of her (Epist. I 14.33) could be quite playful, and I don't think *proterva* (ibid. 7.28) is at all a term of blame (cf. *grata protervitas*' Carm. I 19.7). But it is not to the passages describing Cinara that I think one would go for the best examples of Horace in sentimental mood. Two ladies at least, or rather the poems connected with them, seem to me to leave poor Cinara rather in the shade. I refer to Pyrrha and Lalage. Pyrrha (Carm. I 5) all men ought, I suppose, to be glad either never to have met or at least to have escaped from; but how attractively Horace portrays her, *simplex munditiis*, and in what a masterly way the lot of the wretched science student who was unacquainted (*nescius*) with the ode. Lalage (Carm. I 22) is, almost 'of course', sheer joy and, wedded to a German folk-tune, has become part of the music of the world. Modesty forbids my trying to intone the song here; but it has occurred to me that it might be used, with no great anachronism, in one or two of the Roman plays of Shakespeare. Lalage's ode is perhaps the best known of all Horace's odes, or would one oppose to it the 'Fons Bandusiae'?

Next I shall turn to the mood which I will call 'The Independent Mood'.

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This, more than some of the other moods of the poet, is, I think, part of the man, and there is perhaps no better example of it than the seventh Epistle of Book I, with its spirit summed up in the line

\[
\text{nee otia divitiis Arabum liberrima muto (1. 36)}
\]

—‘Nor will I change the utter freedom of my leisure for the riches of the Arabs’.

Maecenas has given him much; but if the price of these things is to be the loss of his independence, the great Peace Minister may have them all back again.

Another poem in which this spirit of independence comes out strongly is the sixth Satire of Book I, the one which deals with the poet’s parentage and his difficulties as a freedman’s son

\[
\text{quem rodunt omnes libertino patre natum (1. 46).}
\]

But, as he explains, this very descent, which he would not alter if he could, gives him an independence of behaviour which he values. He goes alone wherever he would, he takes a humble interest in the cost of living (*percontor quanti holus ac far*, 1. 112), he dines modestly (yet with 3 servants to look after him, 1. 116), he gets up when he wants to the next morning, he wanders about again, and when he has had enough of out-of-door activities, *domesticus otior*, he says (1. 128). He wastes time to wonderful advantage, as someone has said about Oxford.

The dates calculated for these two poems are of some interest here. The latter is assigned, tentatively, to 36 B.C., the former to 23 or 21. This I mention to show that the poet’s feeling for independence had, if it changed at all, perhaps grown with the years, not decreased.

Both passages quoted mention, not unnaturally, *otium*, and it may be worth while to recall that to the Roman, or at least to the Italian, this would seem to have been the basic word, describing the thing devoutly to be wished, while the mere derivative *neg-otium* implies perhaps something unpleasant, and to be avoided, like the English ‘unrest’. Contrast the English words ‘business’ and ‘leisure’. ‘Business’ is very much a word in its own right, and we say ‘business as usual’ to imply that we have overcome difficulties; but ‘leisure’ is from the Latin *licere*, time you are allowed to use as you wish when your work is over.

Horace of the independent spirit suggests to me another poet of similar spirit, the Scottish poet Burns. But Burns is, I think, more aggressively independent, Horace more quietly so. Both of course dislike cant and hypocrisy, empty pomp and ceremony and the man who

\[
\text{walks stiff, puffed up as if He’d bust with bumptious pride.}
\]
When he describes himself (Carm. III 4.12) as covered fronde nova by the friendly doves while a child lost on Mt. Voltur, one can almost smell the leaves in the passage. This is an experience one can also get from Theocritus. It betokens real feeling for Nature.

I turn now to 'The Satiric Mood', already noticed in connection with the Didactic. When an author is known as a satirist it is obvious that much of his work is written by the direction, if we may so phrase it, of this feeling, so that the type of the product becomes, as it were, more interesting than examples of it, where so much in the way of example exists. What I shall try to do therefore, is to show the Satiric Mood at work outside the more obviously satirical writings, referring you, for consideration of Horace as a writer of Satire as such, to more detailed and specialised studies, including those of members of our Association.

That being so, where could you find a more delicately satirical poem than Odes III 9, the quarrel of the lovers? The art is good, the touch is sure, and even the 'capping' of the answers clever, with the element of illogicality one might expect in such circumstances. It reminds me of the final round of an argument I once heard between two students (both men in this case): A: 'You think you're the only pebble on the beach' B: 'I don't, but I am the pebble.'

Another touch of satire in the same delightful vein is to be found in Epistles I 7.71, where Philippus has invited the freedman Mena to dinner the second time (he declined the first time, you may remember) and has requested his attendance post nonam, after which he says to Mena, who was an auctioneer,

\[\text{nunc i; rem strenuus auge,}\]

'now go and make money as fast as you can'.

And this leads me to the reflection that one of the chief targets of Horatian satire is money-making, or the wrong use of money, or the refusal to use it at all e.g.

\[\text{o cives, cives, quaerenda pecunia primum est,}\]
\[\text{virtus post nummos (Epist. I 1.53),}\]

or

\[\text{(tu) urges}\]
\[\text{summovere litora,}\]
\[\text{parum locuples continente ripa (Carm. II 18.20),}\]

or

\[\text{quo mihi fortunam, si non conceditur uti (Epist. I 5.12)}\]

Horace and worldly wealth—it is an intriguing subject for another paper, and with it we had perhaps better leave this mood.

The seventh mood, the 'Patriotic Mood', Horace as predominantly Roman,
what shall we say about this? We know that the mood is there; we have the
great national odes of the third book, set pieces of great dignity, and we have
more natural unrehearsed passages like the Cleopatra Ode, where feeling
breaks through the rigid restrictions of metre,

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act

or stanza rather, and like

quid debeas, o Roma, Neronibus? (Carm. IV 4.37)

and we have also passages like

commissa tacere
qui nequit, hic niger est, hunc tu, Romane, caveto
(Sat. I 4.84),

which sounds semi-humorous; but perhaps is not meant to be so.

About Horace the patriot several thoughts suggest themselves to me.
First, his patriotism seems not so intimately connected with love of the land
and of Italy as was Vergil's. This is perhaps because he had travelled more
as a young man. But the feeling for Italy is there, of course, as we may see
from the end of the Regulus Ode

tendens Venafranos in agros (Carm. III 5.55).

Secondly, Horace has become such a personal friend of Western Civilisa-
tion, and his name so varied in some of its languages that we tend to forget
that in its orginal form the latter is that of more than one of the heroes of
Ancient Rome—Horatius of the Bridge and the Three Horatii. This may
well have had its influence on a sensitive youth.

Thirdly, the tragedy of the Civil Wars is important for Horace the patriot.
We may quote Epode 7 and such passages as

ferrum
quo graves Persae melius perirent (Carm. I 2.21).

Lastly, Horace’s patriotism is, I think, a responsible one, in so far as such
was possible to a Roman of his day,

bellante prior, iacentem
lenis in hostem (C.S. 51)

This seems to me more happily expressed than Vergil’s well-known
parcere subjectis et debellare superbos (Aen. VI 853).

From the Patriotic to the ‘Mock-modest Mood’: this is that mood which
enables Horace to decline, gracefully, to attempt something for which he
feels his talents are inadequate, or to end a, perhaps lengthy, poem by a
similar device e.g.
laudes egregii Caesaris et tuas (Agrippa's)
culpa deterere ingeni (Carm. I 6.11).

and, at line 69 of Odes III 3,

non hoc iocosae conveniet lyrae;
quo, Musa, tendis?

Some editors have been a little hard on this latter: 'a convenient but rather
cumbersome device' says one, or rather two in unison.

I think Horace does this kind of thing quite well. It is patent and obvious,
no doubt, and to that extent less successful than the manner of a certain
Chairman of Senate of the old federal University of South Africa, of whom
the students used to say that he so refused leave for holding an extra dance
that they thought he had granted it. But let us refer the matter to Aristotle
(I quote from the translation of my old friend and tutor Sir David Ross):

'Mock-modest people who underestimate things seem more attractive in
character (sc. than boasters); for they are thought to speak not for gain but
to avoid parade; and here too it is qualities which bring reputation that they
disclaim, as Socrates used to do. Those who disclaim trifling and obvious
qualities are called humbugs and are more contemptible; and sometimes this
seems to be boastfulness, like the Spartan dress; for both excess and great
deficiency are boastful. But those who use understatement with moderation,
and understate about matters that do not very much force themselves on our
notice seem attractive. And it is the boaster that seems to be opposed to the
truthful man; for he is the worse character' (Eth. Nic. IV 7.127b).

Here, then, is the standard. For myself, I find Horace's understatement
not unattractive, and this would seem to bring him nearer to the truthful
man. His mock-modesty may in fact simply be a way of saying not that he
hasn't the skill, but that he must be allowed to use it in his own way. And
with this I think we should all agree.

The next mood I have called the 'Bizarre', or perhaps it should be the
'Macabre'. It is that mood in which Horace writes such poems as Epodes 5
and 17 and Satires I.8, about Canidia and her horrid sister-hags, and poems
such as Odes IV 13 against Lyce in her old age. These fed a certain taste of
the ancients, which Fraenkel (Horace, p. 64) indicates may have been origi­
nally Hellenistic. There is therefore a certain artificiality about these poems
even, I think, when compared with the similar ones of Theocritus, and this
mood seems not so much a mood of the poet as one assumed to please a
public.

The next mood I also find difficulty in naming. I doubt whether Horace is
ever utterly pessimistic, though the ending of Odes III 6

nos nequiores, mox daturos
progeniem vito siorem. (Carm. III 6.47)

may be quoted against this view. However, he is sometimes disconsolate, sad,
or perhaps the right word is sober, so we may perhaps call it "The Sober Mood". It holds sway over all those many passages, some of them very beautiful, in which the poet sets man's life against the background of Nature:

\begin{quote}
quo pinus ingens albaque populus
umbram hospitalem consociare amant
ramis? (Carm. II 3.9)
\end{quote}

and over such passages as the end of Epistles II 2 for instance:

\begin{quote}
lenior et melior fìs accedente senecta? (1. 211)
\end{quote}

It is a sobering question and a sobering thought. If you can't say yes, it is time for you to make way for younger colleagues, provided always they can prove they are by no means vitiosiores.

When I set out to record these moods of Horace, I thought I might find some ten of them, which number, though one more than that of the Muses, would have accorded well with the trend towards decimalisation and with centenaries. But two others obtruded themselves upon me, one perhaps just as a result of turning over the pages of a text. It is as if Horace had said 'Look, I am a Roman. Duodecim Tabulae for me, and not one fewer'. I therefore draw your attention, first, to what one may call the 'Aristocratic' or 'Golden Tower Mood', the idea of the poet as a vates, in the world but not quite of it, instructing, but somewhat austerely, ex cathedra, and not in the more friendly manner of the Didactic Mood. Passages written in this mood are, I think, common enough. In the first ode of the first book we are told

\begin{quote}
me gelidum nemus
nympharumque leves cum Satyris chori
secernunt populo (Carm. I 1.30).
\end{quote}

yet he feels that, despite this, the bard is

\begin{quote}
militiae quamquam piger et malus, utilis urbi
(Epist. II 1.124).
\end{quote}

and there follows the almost noble passage beginning

\begin{quote}
os tenerum pueri balbumque poeta figurat (1. 126).
\end{quote}

However, perhaps this is the place to recall that, surprising as it may be to us, the Odes were not an immediate success with the public (Fraenkel, Horae, Preface) whereas the Eclogues of Vergil apparently were (ibid., p. 34).

What shall we make the last mood of this list? I think we must make it the 'Simple Mood' in some ways the antithesis of the mood just described.

\begin{quote}
quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
vates? (Carm. I 31.1)
frui paratis . . .
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
nec turpem senectam
degere nec cithara carentem (ibid. 17–20)
\end{quote}
It is the mood which makes Horace prefer *Campana supellex* (Campanian crockery, *Sat.* I 6.118) to silver, one of the moods which endear him to the common man.

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus (*Carm.* I 38.1).

Some thirty years ago we were celebrating the bimillenium of Horace’s birth, and at least one South African newspaper carried a leading article on the subject, in which an interesting little tale was told. I will try to give the gist of it here. Two men were seated in adjacent chairs on the deck of an ocean liner, reading (it was in the days before the strike, of course). Eventually one, and then the other grew tired of reading, and they began to talk, and A enquired of B what he had been reading. And B said ‘Well, you may be surprised, but I’ve been reading some Latin, a Roman poet called Horace, who is about the only Latin author I really care to look at again’. ‘Well,’ said A, ‘would you believe it, but I’ve just been reading him too’?

Here were two ordinary travellers bound by a common affection for a Latin poet who sang, simply, things they could understand.

And now I can imagine someone thinking, ‘but what about Horace in convivial mood, what about his poems on wine? Here we sit with vines all round us, and you haven’t said anything about that’. I would reply that it is open to anyone to add this to the list: that to me however it seems not such a basic mood as some of the others; but rather to spring from them either as concomitant (e.g. in the Cleopatra Ode) or as a foil (e.g. Odes II 3, *quo pinus* etc. with *hue vina* . . . in the next stanza). And personally I prefer Horace quietly sipping to Horace exclaiming *ciboria exple* (*Carm.* II 7.22). So let us leave him—

sub arta
vite bibentem (*Carm.* I 38 fin.).
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