

SYMPOSIUM AND GENRE IN THE POETRY OF HORACE*

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I

The concept of the genre is a problematical one, not least because each critical tradition uses the notion in different ways.¹ My own approach is related to the needs and interests of the cultural historian; it will thus at least serve to clarify basic points of methodology if I first try to define what I mean by the genre. For me the genre takes its origin in the literary expression of basic social needs, and the differences between the genres begin as differences in both the *occasion* of performance and the *purpose* of performance. Thus to take classical examples, a tale of heroic exploits, a wedding song, a lament, a hymn to the gods, a drinking song, are performed on different *occasions* and therefore have different characteristics, different accompaniments of dance, ritual, music or action; but a particular event in each category will have similarities with other events in that category, and therefore appropriate conventions and appropriate metrical patterns will emerge. Similarly the *purpose* of the event will affect its presentation in a variety of ways: a hymn to the gods may praise or call for aid, a public speech may seek to expound a policy or to secure a condemnation. In this sense, and to this extent, I find myself in agreement with Francis Cairns: "The genres are as old as organized societies; they are also universal. Within all human lives there are a number of important recurrent situations which, as societies develop, come to call for regular responses, both in words and in actions."²

Thus the genre is born of historical circumstances as they transform human needs; literature can be seen from this point of view as a form of ritual, a response to the human desire for regularities and for the communication of shared experience. As an expression of the mentality of a particular society the genre is therefore of fundamental importance to the cultural historian. But literature as ritual is a conservative force; whether by feat of oral memory or through the permanence of the written word, it becomes difficult to forget what has been created; most societies live in a universe of discarded mental forms. So alongside the living genre we must expect to find the dead genre, surviving as artistic form without context, as memory pattern. It is in this way that we can also explain a third characteristic of the literary genre, its capacity for transformation to other purposes: the form remains the same, but its purpose, or its relation to an occasion of performance, have changed to fit the needs of a changed society. The result of this process is that complexity and ambiguity of relationships between literature and life which we all know.

Roman society is a society in which the relationship between literature and life is particularly difficult to grasp because of its acceptance of the thought patterns of a different, Greek culture: the problem exists for both the literary and the cultural historian. In trying to understand the development of Roman society within the context of the hellenization of its thought patterns, the cultural historian must lay especial emphasis on the alterations that particular genres undergo in their adaptation to Roman needs, on the transformations of the genres. For these transformations point to essential differences between the mentality of the Romans and the mentality of that Hellenistic culture from which they derived so much of their ways of thought.

My subject is specific: I take the poetry of Horace as example, and ask what is the role of the symposium in Roman poetry. I consider first Horace's response to traditional

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¹ See for instance F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (1972); G. B. Conte, *Memoria*

dei poeti e sistema letterario (1974); id., *Virgilio, il genere e i suoi confini* (1984). My own views were in fact formed under the influence of E. R. Curtius' masterpiece, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948; Eng. trans. 1953).

² Cairns, op. cit., 34. The relationship between genre and rhetoric derives from the fact that the rules of rhetoric are the literary formulation of such regularities.

attitudes (II), then the changed position of poetry in the symposia of the late Republic and early Principate (III). The discussion of the transformations of the Hellenistic genres in Horace and others in relation to public life (IV) and Roman social customs (V) leads to a final evaluation of Horace as sympotic poet (VI). Horace is both unique and representative of his society; the specific example illuminates more general questions: how can the symposium become so important to Roman poetry? what does this genre mean in the Roman context? how does the poet use it? is the sympotic allusion merely literary, or does it still reflect the needs of contemporary conviviality? is the genre dead or alive?

II

Despite the strong Greek influence on Italian social customs from the earliest period, the Roman *convivium* continued to differ from the Greek *symposion* in important respects, two of which are especially significant for Roman sympotic poetry.³ Firstly, the Greek *symposion* was essentially a male gathering, at which women were present only for the purposes of entertainment and sexual pleasures: the *hetaira*, the dancer and the flute girl were essential furniture, but not full participants. But in Italy from the Etruscan period women seem often to have been present as equals. Theopompus describes the extraordinary sexual licence of the Etruscans, who permit even their wives to attend symposia (FGH 115 F 204): the picture he draws is exaggerated and belongs to the tradition of attributing to distant peoples inversions of Greek customs; but it is of historical value in so far as it demonstrates through misunderstanding the Greek perception that a difference existed between Greek and Etruscan sympotic customs, despite the fact that Etruscan customs were derived from Greek.⁴

Secondly, the Greek *symposion* was essentially a meeting of equals, in which social gradations were ignored; even the Hellenistic king at his *symposion* was expected to behave as if he were equal, and to welcome the *parrhesia* of his drinking companions.⁵ In contrast the Roman *convivium* was often arranged hierarchically, with the couches ranked in order of importance, the *clientes* stacked 'five to a couch' and served inferior food and drink. So at least the moralists complain, in drawing a contrast between the behaviour of the uneducated host and the proper equality of the cultured symposium. Cicero's picture of the *cenae* of Piso rests on this antithesis: 'Graeci stipati quini in lectulis, saepe plures; ipse solus'. In a later period Martial, Pliny and Juvenal repeat the distinction.⁶

Historically, of course, poetry had a place in the Roman *cena*, at least in the fantasies of Roman antiquarians. According to Cato and Varro, the old Romans had listened to 'carmina cantitata in epulis de clarorum virorum laudibus', sung to the accompaniment of the *tibia* by individuals (Cato) or choirs of 'pueri modesti' (Varro).⁷ The tradition was well known; repeated in Cicero, Valerius Maximus and Quintilian, it was recognized and accepted by Horace:

³ See O. Murray, 'Symposion and Männerbund', *Concilium Eirene* XVI. 1 (1982), 47–52. There are of course other differences mentioned there, notably the greater importance of food in the Roman *convivium*: cf. E. Fraenkel, *Elementi Plautini in Plauto* (1960), 408–13. For the archaeology of the Roman banquet and the significance of cooking utensils, see A. Rathje, 'A Banquet Service from the Latin City of Ficana', *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 12 (1983), 7–29. But this finds no reflection in sympotic poetry.

⁴ See further below p. 48.

⁵ Hence the existence of story patterns which emphasize either the *parrhesia* of guests towards their host or the arrogance of kings in refusing to tolerate such *parrhesia*. The question of Hellenistic royal entertainments is complicated by the fact that Macedonian drinking customs were rather different, as the traditions about Philip and Alexander show.

⁶ Martial 1. 20, 43; 2. 43; 3. 60, 82; 6. 11; 9. 2; Juvenal, *Sat.* 5; Pliny, *Ep.* 2. 6; cf. Horace, *Sat.* 1. 4. 83 ff., and

the Elder Pliny's account of Cato's practice in distributing wine: *N.H.* 14. 91.

⁷ On this tradition and its subsequent fortune see A. Momigliano, *Secondo Contributo* (1960), 69–87. The most important passages are:

Cato ap. Cic., *Brutus* 75: 'atque utinam extarent illa carmina, quae multis saeculis ante suam aetatem in epulis esse cantitata a singulis convivis de clarorum virorum laudibus in Originibus scriptum reliquit Cato.'

Cato ap. Cic., *Tusc. Disp.* 4. 2. 3 (F 118 Peter = 124 Schönberger): 'gravissimus auctor in Originibus dixit Cato morem apud maiores hunc epularum fuisse et deinceps qui accubarent canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes.'

Varro, *de vit. pop. Romani* II ap. Non. Marc. p. 77 M = 107 L (F 84 in B. Ripsati, *M. Terenti Varronis de vita populi Romani* (1939): 'in convivii pueri modesti ut cantarent carmina antiqua in quibus laudes erant maiorum et assa voce et cum tibicine.'

Cf. Val. Max. 2. 1. 9; Quint. 1. 10. 20.

nosque et profestis lucibus et sacris
inter iocosi munera Liberi
cum prole matronisque nostris
rite deos prius apprecati,

virtute functos more patrum duces
Lydis remixto carmine tibiis
Troiamque et Anchisen et almae
progeniem Veneris canemus.

In these last stanzas of the last ode of his fourth book, Horace offers to sing in a Roman style on the *tibia*, *more patrum*, of the great leaders of the past, in a *convivium* of the traditional Roman type in the presence of women and children. Such a statement of intention is surely impossible in the last poem of a book; in fact our poem is not the last, but the first in a new collection addressed to his new patron Augustus, and presenting new, more Roman, themes. That the poem was intended as a preface, not as a valedictory, is shown by its composition from elements traditionally regarded as suited to the proemium: the deliberate echo of the proem of Callimachus' *Aitia* in the first stanza, the praise of the patron Augustus in the central part of the poem, and the concluding statement of poetic intent designed to mirror the contents of the book. The combination of these three elements in a single poem marks it out as originally composed to stand at the head of the collection which became Book 4. We seem to be in the presence of a declaration of new intent closely related to that made by Propertius in the preface to his fourth book of *Elegies*, at exactly the same period, and doubtless for very similar reasons. Why Horace chose to discard the poem and replace it with the unsatisfactory 'Intermissa Venus diu rursus bella moves?' is another problem,⁸ which would take us too far into politics and the proprieties of poetry and patronage, and also into Horace's own changing attitude to the relation between poetry and public life. From whatever cause, ultimately such a grandiloquent declaration came to seem inappropriate for a book which had not wholly succeeded in breaking new ground; and of course in its present position the discarded preface takes on a slightly different colour.⁹

This poem seems then to show that at one point Horace had intended to recreate a more Roman tradition of sympotic poetry, perhaps under the direct influence of the emperor himself, an influence more harsh, less sympathetic, less *doctus*, than that of Maecenas. Such a failed intention would at least demonstrate that it was possible for poetry to find a justification in *mos maiorum* and in the context of the *convivium*. It also raises the interesting question whether Horace here envisages turning in a wholly new direction, or whether he does not already regard some of what we call the public poetry as sympotic poetry, in this sense of poetry for the Roman *convivium*. We may recognize here one possibility of overcoming the conflict between the two *personae* of Horace, the *vates*, the poet of serious moral intent and religious hymns, and the poet of the symposium. But we should also recognize the limitations of this possibility. The poetry accepted in the Roman *convivium* is essentially epic praise of past generations; the obvious model is that of Homer, as we can see in the little treatise of the poet Philodemus for his Roman patron L. Calpurnius Piso, *The Good King According to Homer*, which equates the world of the Roman *nobilis* with the world of the Homeric hero, and specifically recommends Homeric poetry for the symposium.¹⁰

⁸ On the unsatisfactoriness of 4. 1 as proem it is enough to quote A. La Penna, *Orazio e l'ideologia del principato* (1963), 136: 'L'ode di proemio, che annunzia la ripresa della poesia erotica rientra in un genere proemiale nettamente diverso da quello di 1. 1: al centro non sono qui la dignità del poeta e la funzione della poesia.' These elements are found precisely in 4. 15. La Penna himself is forced to regard the first two poems as a joint proem in order to solve the problem. Equally for the oddity of 4. 15 as a conclusion it is enough to quote from the latest article on that poem, published in 1985: 'Invece il finale del quarto libro cambia del tutto spirito e tono [from the other books]: non è più la limpida nota

dell'anima oraziana che si effonde attraverso i semplici moduli del *Persicos odi, puer, apparatus* . . . e neppure la confessione dell'agognata celebrità della gloria poetica, ma è la figura di Augusto . . .' (B. Riposati, 'L'ultima ode di Orazio (IV, 15) e i carmi conviviali', *Riv. di Cultura Classica e Medioevale* 25 (1983), 3).

⁹ Compare p. 44 below on 1. 38.

¹⁰ See O. Murray, 'Rileggendo il *Buon Re secondo Omero*', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 14 (1984), 157-60; cf. H. Dahlmann, 'Zur Überlieferung über die "altrömischen" Tafellieder', *Abh. der geisteswiss. u. sozialwiss.-Kl. Akad. Mainz* 1950, Nr. 17.

The distinction was already drawn by Cato: on the one hand, the martial poetry of the ancient *convivium* was natural to Rome; on the other hand, Greek forms of sympotic poetry were unnatural and unRoman: 'poeticae artis honos non erat. si quis in ea re studebat aut sese ad convivia adplicabat, grassator vocabatur'.¹¹ An anecdote in Aulus Gellius confirms the traditional absence of sympotic poetry in Rome.¹² As a young man he once attended a *cena* given by a wealthy and cultured young *eques* from Asia: the rhetor Antonius Julianus was also present, and the date will be sometime in the reign of Hadrian. Choirs of boys and girls sang songs of 'Anacreon' and Sappho, and more recent *elegeia erotika*. The Greeks present began to attack Julianus for the lack of such things in Roman culture, the absence of the poetry of pleasure and love. 'What did he think of Anacreon and other poets of this type? Had any Roman poets created such flowing and delightful songs?—except perhaps for a little of Catullus, and a little too of Calvus': the rest was worthless. Julianus replied in true Catonian fashion that such absence of folly and vice was no bad thing; but, lest they condemn Latin literature for total *anaphrodisia*, he proceeded to sing 'resupinus capite convelato' a few Roman love songs, by Valerius Aedituus, Porcius Licinus, and Quintus Catulus. The response of the Greek guests is not recorded; but the anecdote illustrates well the general belief in the weakness of Latin poets in the sympotic genre, and the correctness of this belief; for the verses sung by Julianus are wholly derivative on a Greek tradition of *elegeia erotika*.

III

The development in Rome of a Greek sympotic life style was part of that *elegantia* of which Cato disapproved. It began early, but became a dominant fashion only in the last generation of the Republic and the age of Augustus. It lay behind the creation of Latin love elegy and established new themes and new roles for the poet; it also brought tension and reaction, in the attempts of Augustus to reassert the values of *mos maiorum* through the *leges de sumptu*, *de adulteriis* and *de maritandis ordinibus*, and through the deliberate destruction of the leading poet of love in the exile of Ovid.¹³

Earlier, the chief role of the poet in Rome had been as *laudator rerum gestarum*, as the author of panegyric epic on historical events, a genre virtually unknown in the Hellenistic world, but created for Roman patrons and the mainstream of Roman poetry since Ennius;¹⁴ the poet wrote for his *patronus*, accompanied him on his campaigns in order to do so, and was therefore welcome at his *convivia* as a *cliens* and rewarded for his poetic services. But as *elegantia* became a mark of the man of culture, the poet came to be needed also for his ability to create poetry for the symposium. Again Cicero reveals many of the tensions involved in this development in his malicious account of the private life of Piso.¹⁵ Piso disdains the *convivium publicum*, he prefers his private *luxuries*. That *luxuries* is described in the poetry of his client Philodemus, who 'omnes hominum libidines, omnia stupra, omnia cenarum genera conviviorumque, adulteria denique eius delicatissimis versibus expresserit'. Cicero must have it both ways: on the one hand the poet, 'Graecus facilis et valde venustus', reflecting accurately in his sympotic poetry the *convivia* of his patron, on the other hand the patron incapable of achieving true *luxuries*: 'nihil apud hunc lautum, nihil elegans, nihil exquisitum . . . Graeci stipati quini in lectulis, saepe plures; ipse solus'. This description was deliberately intended to hurt Piso as much as possible; for it was surely the *elegantia* of his symposia on which he especially prided himself, and which of course required the presence of a poet of love. It may be malice to suggest that

¹¹ Aulus Gellius 11. 2. 5 = *carmen de moribus* F 2 Jordan p. 83 = F 389 Schönberger; on the meaning of 'grassator' see J. Préaux, 'Caton et l'ars poetica', *Latomus* 25 (1966), 710–25: it corresponds to the Greek *parasitos*, *kolax*, *akletos*, professional entertainer or sponger.

¹² Aulus Gellius 19. 9; Plutarch also mentions the practice of singing Sappho and Anacreon at contemporary symposia, *Quaest. conviv.* 7. 8. 711D.

¹³ See J. Griffin, 'Augustan Poetry and the Life of

Luxury', *JRS* 66 (1976), 87–104. It will be seen that I am unable to accept the view of P. White, *JRS* 68 (1978), 74–92 that the poet's position was no different from that of any other *cliens*, though they were of course expected to perform many of the same duties: cf. N. Horsfall, *Ancient Society* (Macquarie) 13 (1983), 161–6.

¹⁴ Contra K. Ziegler, *Das hellenistische Epos* (1934): I hope to return to this question later.

¹⁵ *In Pisonem* 65–72.

Philodemus' poems accurately portrayed the symposia of Piso, but Cicero was surely correct to imply that they were written for those symposia.

We must not of course enquire how far the poetry of Horace was actually performed within the symposium, for the problem of occasion of performance is not so simple: the question of actual performance is subordinate to the deliberate intent to evoke the image of sympotic performance. Yet behind the image lay reality. It might be held that the style and metrical qualities of Horace's verse preclude the possibility of actual performance; certainly the style is literary, and certainly the development of the metrical rules for lyric imply that metrical regularity has been substituted for musical accompaniment in the mind of the poet. But this is merely a symptom of the decline in musical sensibilities which can be seen in other areas: for instance, the metres of Pindar are no longer understood by Horace. The symposium described by Aulus Gellius reveals the extent of this musical debasement: the mechanical rhythms of the *Anacreontea* are attributed to 'Anacreon senis', and, instead of monodic song, the performance is by a chorus of boys and girls, singing presumably in unison. One shudders to think what Sappho sounded like under these conditions.

It is not entirely clear whether the Greek critics present on that occasion believed that Catullus and Calvus had composed for the symposium; but Antonius Julianus strikes what he imagines to be the appropriate sympotic attitude for a monodic performance of his Roman love elegists, when he sings 'resupinus capite convelato'. This is the typical attitude of the sympotic singer in so many archaic Greek representations, with head thrown back and right hand covering the brow. Here at least was a man who knew how to sing Roman poetry in the proper sympotic manner. In the case of Horace's lyric poetry, public performance is proved for the *carmen saeculare*, and may perhaps be suspected for some others of the hymns and the public poetry; among his sympotic poems, it is hard to see why *Et ture et fidibus* (I. 36) was written, if not as a commission for actual performance at the *cena* in question (p. 47). Horace would not have disowned the centuries-old tradition of singing his odes to music, still alive (*crede experto*) on the Wiltshire Downs thirty years ago.

We come closest to the reality of sympotic performance with the so-called Auditorium of Maecenas, found in the area of the Gardens of Maecenas in 1874: it is indeed probable that this building, dated by building materials and decoration to about 30 B.C., and part of a larger villa complex, is to be associated with the villa of Maecenas. It is a sumptuously decorated hall, 24.40 m by 10.60 m, half sunk in the ground and lit from above, with seven semi-circular rows of 'seats' or shelves in an apse at one end. The original floor was of fine white mosaic; the walls were covered with frescoes, and the niches were decorated as *trompe l'oeil* windows opening on to a painted garden, in the manner of the villa of Livia at Prima Porta and perhaps by the same artist.¹⁶ It has been variously interpreted as an auditorium for poetic recitations or as a nymphaeum or 'greenhouse'; but Lugli rightly saw difficulties in both types of interpretation. One clue as to its purpose was first noted by Thylander: a connection with sympotic poetry is demonstrated by a Greek graffito found painted on the outside wall, which is in fact a *paraklausithyron* of Callimachus (no. 80 GP = 42 Pfeiffer), asking pardon for bad behaviour brought on by wine and love. There could hardly be a better example of that fusion of poetry and life which we are seeking: the scribe recreates the original function of the literary genre by actually writing the poem on a wall (leaving it as a 'kiss on the doorstep'); but the apology is surely for bad behaviour at the symposium, not outside the house of the loved one. Combined with the decoration, this graffito would suggest that the building was designed as an elaborate setting for literary symposia.

¹⁶The building was the centre of an exhibition in 1983-4; the paintings were restored and photographed, many of the building's sculptures identified, and a number of documents published for the first time in the catalogue, *L'archeologia in Roma tra sterro e scavo, Roma Capitale 1870-1911* 7 (1983); see especially the contributions of C. Häuber, S. Rizzo, M. de Vos and C. Scandurra, 204-52. The original publication is still

fundamental: V. Vespignani and C. L. Visconti, *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica* 2 (1874), 137-71; the graffito is described pp. 161-4. See also H. Thylander, *Acta Archaeologica* 9 (1938), 101-26; G. Lugli, *I Monumenti antichi di Roma e Suburbio* 3 (1938), 466-8. I thank Carmine Ampolo for drawing my attention to this building and its graffito.

The point need not be pressed too far; for the sympotic image to work, it is only necessary to believe in the possibility of performance. For the Roman literary scene envisages also at least two occasions of performance other than the real or imagined primary one: there is the publication or circulation of the poem to a wider group, and finally there is its preservation in the collected works of the poet.¹⁷ Thus the presentation of the sympotic image may often be a more important occasion than the symposium itself; and that image may be either personal to the poet or social, related to his role within the symposia of his patrons. There is indeed an important distinction to be made among poems belonging to the sympotic genres, between those which specifically invoke a Roman context or display the name of a patron, and those which refuse to connect themselves with the Roman world, though this distinction is not in fact one between world of reality and world of literature, and can never be an absolute one. The latter group may often represent more clearly the poet's view of himself and his relation to his craft. For although there is nothing to prevent such poems from having been written to delight a Roman symposium (like the erotic elegies which Julianus sang), in their published form they claim a position for the poet as heir and rival to the Greek sympotic poets, rather than displaying him in a social relationship; they announce his skills and his view of poetry. They therefore can serve more serious personal ends; so the last poem of Horace's first book, *Persicos odi* (1. 38), might seem an innocent imitation of an Anacreontic theme, and may originally have been intended as such; but its present position as the last poem in the book, together with its echo of Callimachus, make it inevitable that it should be read as a statement of poetic principle.

IV

It is however the first group of poems within the sympotic genres which is more interesting, poems which specifically relate themselves to the contemporary Roman world; for they reveal the alterations and development of the sympotic genres in response to the differences between Greek and Roman styles of life: the transformations of the genres reflect the differences in *mentalité*. Here Horace can be seen responding to the same pressures as contemporary Greek epigrammatists, pressures which are revealed most sharply in the differences between the earlier Hellenistic *Garland of Meleager* and the *Garland of Philip*.

The Hellenistic epigram belongs to a world divorced from public life: it pays no attention to war or politics, and no attention to patronage or inequalities within the poetic group.¹⁸ In contrast it is plain that the Greek poet at Rome works for a patron and composes within that context: his poetry therefore reflects the concerns of his patron at all levels, from the panegyric epic through the commemoration of events in the patron's public career (such as consulship, priesthood or triumph) to the adornment of his *otium* in appropriate verse. The patronage system at Rome is a new phenomenon in ancient literature, and binds together both Greek and Roman poets in their responses.

The invitation poem is a common theme, related to that of the preparations for the feast.¹⁹ In Hellenistic poetry the invitation is between equals; and, when the plea of poverty is entered, it is reciprocal poverty which makes a virtue of simplicity and asks for all to share their resources in a common feast. Catullus 13, *cenabis bene, mi Fabulle*, plays on this theme: Fabullus is asked to bring the food, the drink, the girl; Catullus can offer only the perfume because his purse is full of spiders—but what perfume!

The theme is used quite differently by Greek poets at Rome. Philodemus addresses Piso:

¹⁷ See the excellent discussion of P. White, 'The Presentation and Dedication of the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams*', *JRS* 64 (1974), 40-61.

¹⁸ For Hellenistic sympotic epigrams see the fundamental study of G. Giangrande, 'Symptic

Literature and Epigram', *L'Epigramme grecque, Entretiens Hardt* XIV (1967), 93-177.

¹⁹ See Giangrande, *op. cit.*, 140-3; G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (1968), 7-10; 103-31.

Tomorrow from the ninth hour, dearest Piso, your poetic friend drags you to his humble cottage, giving a dinner for the anniversary of the Twentieth (i.e. Epicurus' birthday). If you find no udders or Chios-born draughts of wine, yet you shall see true friends, yet you shall hear things far sweeter than Phaeacia did. And if ever you turn your eyes even towards me, Piso, we shall celebrate a richer instead of a humbler Twentieth.

(Philodemus 33 Gow-Page = *Anth. Graec.* 11. 44)

A generation later Antipater addresses Piso's son, Lucius Calpurnius Piso the *pontifex*, consul in 15 B.C.:

Dew is enough to inebriate grasshoppers; but when they have drunk, they sing louder than swans. So the poet, in thanks for acts of friendship, knows how to give songs in return to his benefactors, even if he has received little. Wherefore I, on this first occasion, turn to you; and, if the fates are willing, your name shall lie often on my pages.

(Antipater 2 Gow-Page = *Anth. Graec.* 9. 92)

Antipater's appeal for patronage is direct; Philodemus sets up the antithesis between wealth and poverty in his invitation in order to mediate the same request: the invitation poem is no longer a simple invitation, but an appeal for assistance, resting on the inequalities of the Roman sympotic world of patrons and clients.

Horace offers the same contrast between wealth and poverty in two odes to Maecenas, 1. 20 and 3. 29, and in *Epistle* 1. 5 to Manlius Torquatus. In each case the contrast between host and guest is strongly marked:

Vile potabis modicis Sabinum
cantharis . . .

The simplicity of the feast is emphasized, and the rank and importance of the guest: Maecenas is 'care Maecenas *equus*' (1. 20. 5)²⁰ or 'Tyrrhena regum progenies' (3. 29. 1); such an emphasis on inequalities is foreign to the Greek sympotic genre. Unlike Philodemus and Antipater, Horace does not ask for money directly; perhaps that is understood, or not to be mentioned between Roman *amici*; there is an important difference between what the Greek *cliens* may say and what is appropriate for a Roman poet.²¹ In Roman hands the theme becomes a celebration of the *civilitas* of the great man who will honour an inferior by being his guest; it also establishes the importance of the poetic host who has such a powerful friend. So the status of the guest, his public standing, his *nobilitas* must be emphasized. Of course this is in overt opposition to the principle of equality embodied in the invitation to a Greek *symposion*; yet in a more subtle sense it enables the poet to suggest his acceptance by the great, and therefore his equality with them in and through the sympotic setting.

Already another distinction emerges in these poems, that between public affairs and the private world of the symposium. Once again that distinction is not found in Greek sympotic poetry: for Horace's model Alcaeus, public and private are one—the drinking group is a political group. Later sympotic poets simply ignore the public sphere. In principle there is no reason why Roman sympotic poetry should not similarly have regarded the symposium as a world enclosed within itself—except for the desire of the poet to sacrifice the artistic unity of the symposium in order to present his patron in a Roman context. For Horace, as for other Roman poets, the contrast between public life and leisure is fundamental: he even reinterprets Alcaeus to allow this distinction:

²⁰ At first sight the reading 'clare', much championed recently, might seem to fit my argument even better, but compare φίλτατε Πείσων in Philodemus 33. The tension between friendship and inequality is the essential point of the poem, well brought out in the opposition 'care . . . equus' centred around 'Maecenas'. I do not agree with those who think that for Horace an *equus* was not of high social status.

²¹ Compare the treatment of the same theme, the wealth of the millionaire Sallustius Crispus, and the good use he puts it to in Crinagoras 40 GP = *Anth. Graec.* 16. 40 and Horace, *Odes* 2. 2, with the comments of Nisbet and Hubbard ad loc.

tamen inter arma
sive iactatam religarat udo
 litore navim . . . (1. 32. 6–8)

As Cato says, the man who spends all his time at *convivia* is a *grassator*, a professional sponger; so for the Roman sympotic poet the invitation to *otium* demonstrates the existence of *officia*:

mitte civilis super Urbe curas (3. 8. 17)

tu civitatem quis deceat status
 curas et Urbi sollicitus times
 quid Seres et regnata Cyro
 Bactra parent Tanaisque discors. (3. 29. 25–8)

In a poem to a less important political figure such a distinction may suggest that we need not concern ourselves with public affairs; life is short, ‘carpe diem’:

Quid bellicosus Cantaber et Scythes,
 Hirpine Quincti, cogitet Hadria
 divisus obiecto, remittas
 quaerere . . . (2. 11. 1–4)

But for the great man such an anarchic gesture is not allowed: it is only possible to contrast the pleasures of the life of the poet with the patron’s preoccupations, to praise the simple life, and invite him to share in it, as a gift that will be welcome:

dona praesentis cape laetus horae ac
 linque severa. (3. 8. 27–8)

It is obvious enough that this contrast between public and private worlds can be used to reinforce the theme of *recusatio*, which of course always in a certain sense satisfies the recipient by praising him through the very declaration of the poet’s unworthiness. So Agrippa’s name is ensured a place in Horace’s collection by only one poem, a refusal to write in praise of him (1. 6). Knowing the tensions that existed between Agrippa and Maecenas,²² such a refusal might seem almost an insult, if Horace had not gracefully turned it into a compliment to Varius as a more suitable poet, and rested his case on the contrast between the grand theme of public duty and the symposium, whose idle poet can sing only of the ‘proelia virginum’ with their sharpened nails. The eminence of the person addressed ensures for the poem a prominent position in the collection, and an awkward moment passes.

The sympotic situation also allows the poet to comment himself on public events, while avoiding direct political statement, or that commitment which is implicit in the stance of the *vates* or the public prayers which are the contexts of the Roman odes. Symposia may suitably celebrate a victory: so in Epode 9 Horace accurately describes the battle of Actium from the safety of a symposium which is both present and future, in the form of a prediction, so retrojecting the evidence of his loyalty to before the event: the chronological confusion obscures his prudent unwillingness to commit himself before victory was certain.²³ The famous victory ode *Nunc est bibendum* (1. 37) shows the poet free from the embarrassment of explaining his own conduct, and able to offer a measured comment on the Great Event, without offending the victorious party: the Alcaean invective and the sympotic setting give a literary colour which distances the political events, and permits the poet to express his genuine admiration for Cleopatra’s death in the last stanzas.

²² See Seneca Rhet., *Controv.* 2. 4. 12–13 for the best example of the ‘malignitas Maecenatis’ against Agrippa.

²³ See most recently R. G. M. Nisbet, ‘Horace’s

Epodes and History’ in *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (1984), ed. A. J. Woodman and D. A. West, pp. 11–18; though I am not convinced by his attempt to regard the poem as an eye-witness account of the battle.

More ambiguous is that curious poem with which Horace chose to welcome Augustus back to Rome from Spain in 24 B.C., *Herculis ritu* (3. 14): here the *vates* and the poet of the symposium confront each other in uneasy opposition. In the hieratic style later used for the *carmen saeculare*, Horace addresses the people and the ritual choruses prepared for the hero's return, and then turns to his own private feast, whose conventional preparations are described in especially vivid colours: warfare and victory are deliberately contrasted with the quarrels of the lover. The tone is exaggerated, almost parodic, throughout: everyone is a *virgo* or a *matrona Romana*—even Livia, twice married, is implausibly 'unico gaudens mulier marito'²⁴ until Neaera appears on the scene, a *virgo* from a very different world. The first words of the poem remind the people that Augustus had nearly died; and the poem ends in an ambiguity surely intended and prepared for by the emphatic contrast of two worlds:

non ego hoc ferrem calidus iuventa
consule Planco.

The date is carefully placed in the sympotic context, as if it were a mark of vintage;²⁵ but the vintage is the year of Philippi: why should Horace recall his youthful republican exploits in the year which saw the first return of Augustus to Rome since the Restoration of the Republic? We may remember that 24 B.C. was a year when the thoughts of many turned to the freedom they had lost: for it was in this year that the great conspiracy was formed, to be ruthlessly suppressed in January 23 B.C.²⁶ The absent hero had returned to a welcome less than enthusiastic from his loyal people; in his very uncertainty of tone, Horace reveals perhaps unconsciously his sense of unease.

v

These examples show how the range of the sympotic genres may be extended from the private to the public sphere through the function of the symposium as celebration of a public event. The symposium may also celebrate a private event of Roman type. The *cena adventicia* to welcome the return of a friend was a traditional Roman occasion which could be given an elegant sympotic colour. 1. 36 (*Et ture et fidibus*) shows the genre at its most conventional: once again a traveller returns from Spain, this time Numida, young aristocrat and friend of an Aelius Lamia: the reference to the ceremony of the *toga virilis* (8–9) recalls epigrams of Crinagoras, Diodorus and Antipater:²⁷ young aristocrats who wished to prosper in the new regime would do well to demonstrate their loyalty by serving the great proconsul in his Spanish wars; even Horace had had to refuse (*Septimi Gadis aditure mecum*, 2. 6).²⁸ But the poem seems merely an occasional piece, doubtless designed for performance at the *cena* it celebrates, and paid for by the family who organized it.

A more complex example is *O saepe mecum* (2. 7): Pompeius returns from long exile, restored to Italy after fighting at Philippi and beyond.

quis te redonavit Quiritem
dis patriis Italoque caelo . . . ?

²⁴ In his important study of the text of the poem (*Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983), ed. Francis Cairns (*ARCA* 11), 105–19) Nisbet denies that 'unico' would be understood as implying that Livia was a 'femina univira'. Yet the context bristles with traditional Roman categories of women, 'virgines', 'matres' and pre-nubile girls. The situation is precisely paralleled in the *ludi saeculares* seven years later (*ILS* 5050): Livia and Octavia lead the 'matres familiae nuptae' (123–5); the 'pueri et puellae' are those who in 17 B.C. will sing the 'carmen' (147). The poem describes a religious celebration: in a context where marital status is so important, and in a period when marriage legislation was under discussion, the wife of the *princeps* becomes an honorary 'femina univira', just as under the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* she was declared to possess three children in the first grant of the 'ius trium liberorum': 'Ulpianus XIII ad legem Iuliam et Papiam:

Princeps legibus solutus est; Augusta autem licet legibus soluta non est, principes tamen eadem illi privilegia tribuunt quae ipsi habent.' (*Digest* 1. 3. 31).

²⁵ cf. Nisbet, *op. cit.*, (n. 23), 17: 'Not enough attention has been paid to the wines, which as usual in Horace have a symbolic significance'.

²⁶ The best account is still D. Stockton, 'Primus and Murena', *Historia* 14 (1965), 18–40.

²⁷ On 1. 36 see the excellent commentary of Nisbet and Hubbard. For the combination of return from Spain and assumption of *toga virilis* see Crinagoras 10 GP = *Anth. Graec.* 10. 19, for the return of Marcellus in 25 B.C.; related epigrams are Diodorus 1 GP = 9. 219 (return of Tiberius in 24 B.C., too young for ceremony); Apollonides 26 GP = 10. 19 (assumption of *toga virilis* by son of L. Calpurnius Piso).

²⁸ On this episode see A. Rostagni, *Suetonio de Poetis* (1944), 113–15.

Doubtless the poem offers graceful and silent thanks to Augustus who has pardoned Pompeius; but, if so, we may surmise that it is Horace who obtained the pardon. The poem suitably subordinates such themes of gratitude to the feast for the return, and to memories of the past, purged by poetic allusion from the taint of treason—the poet loses his shield as Archilochean poets should, and is wafted from the battlefield wrapped in a Homeric mist. On such an occasion the past need not be forgotten, but may be transformed through the poetic vocabulary of the symposium; the poet celebrates a genuine friendship and the lost idealism of his youth, without offending the present age.

One of the characteristics of Roman literary patronage is of course that the relationship is not exclusive: the poet may celebrate other patrons provided that the primary relationship is asserted both in the dedication of individual poems and in the arrangement and dedication of the final collection:²⁹

Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende Camena, . . .
Maecenas (Epist. 1. 1. 1–3)

Such a patron may even transmit and encourage the requests of others. The informality and group nature of the symposium make it an ideal vehicle for such lesser relationships. The poems to Agrippa (1. 6) and Numida (1. 36) are obvious examples. The address to a wine-jar, a traditional motif (*O nate mecum consule Manlio* (3. 21)) may be used for a delicate compliment to Maecenas' chief rival in the world of poetic patronage, M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, who demands such a rare vintage as the poet is, at a symposium which is carefully delineated as philosophic not poetic, and therefore no rival to those of Maecenas. Again, while Tibullus uses the voice of the *vates* to celebrate the election of Messalla's son to a priesthood (2. 5), Horace celebrates the augurate of Murena with a symposium (3. 19): the occasion of such poems is the traditional Roman one, where the poet commemorates the public honours of the patron or his family;³⁰ the symposium of celebration preserves the gesture from frigidity.

Adaptable though the conventions of the symposium are to the demands of Roman society on poetry, they do not fit perfectly. One such misfit relates to the position of women at the *cena*. Horace was not alone in finding the presence of Roman aristocratic *matronae* a problem. The passage of Theopompus quoted already (p. 40) shows how the Greeks took this custom as evidence for the extraordinary sexual licence practised by the Etruscans. In response to such Greek attitudes, Roman antiquarians were at great pains to establish the propriety of early Roman convivial customs in relation to women. Both Cato and Varro claimed that originally women had been prohibited from drinking wine; the rule was provided with an appropriate *exemplum*: Egnatius Metennius had clubbed his wife to death for drinking from the vat, and Romulus himself had acquitted him of murder.³¹ Cato coupled the question with another problematic Roman custom, that of kissing female relatives on the lips: he claimed that the purpose of this was to discover whether they had been drinking.³² Varro also asserted that originally the Romans had used *sedes*, and that 'afterwards, when the men began to recline, the women had been seated, because reclining seemed immoral in a woman'.³³ This insistence on separating women from the drinking of wine and the customs of the symposium, whatever basis it may have in fact,³⁴ is a clear response to Greek criticisms of Roman convivial practices: it is

²⁹ See White, *op. cit.* (n. 17).

³⁰ See the list in Murray, *op. cit.* (n. 10). Horace's playful juxtaposition of different sympotic styles in this poem (the literary discussion, the plain man's *cena*, the bacchanalian orgy) has produced some strange interpretations: cf. Nisbet, *CR* 33 (1983), 25 f. It is perhaps better to read the poem as a private joke for a particular occasion.

³¹ Aulus Gellius 10. 23. 1–2; Pliny, *N.H.* 14. 89–90; Val. Max. 6. 3. 9; F 38 Riposati. The *exemplum* seems to derive from Varro, not from the annalistic tradition, where Fabius Pictor (Pliny, *N.H.*, loc. cit. = F 37 Peter) offers another *exemplum* with a rather different meaning: see Riposati, pp. 53–7.

³² Pliny, *N.H.*, loc. cit.; Plut., *Quaest. Rom.* 6.

³³ Isidore, *Etymol.* 20. 11. 9; F 30 Riposati.

³⁴ Wine and viticulture were introduced into central Italy in the late eighth and early seventh centuries (C. Ampolo, *Dialoghi di Archeologia* n.s. 2 (1980), 31); for the earliest period the persistence of sitting and the presence of women seem confirmed: for the latter see G. Colonna, '“Graeco more bibere”': l'iscrizione della Tomba 115 dell'Osteria dell'Osa', *Quaderni del Centro di Studio per l'Archeologia etrusco-italica, Archeologia Laziale* 3 (1980), 51–5. Michel Gras ('Vin et société à Rome et dans le Latium à l'époque archaïque', *Modes de contact et processus de transformation dans les sociétés anciennes (Actes du colloque de Cortone 1981), Collection*

implicitly admitted that (in contrast to Greece) women had always been present at Roman *convivia*, and the accusation of immorality is accepted for contemporary society. The honour of Rome is saved by constructing a former age when women (though present) did not drink and did not recline. This typical appeal to *mos maiorum* must have puzzled the Greeks, who would have found such prohibitions unnecessary, since for them the symposium excluded respectable women.

Horace followed the antiquarians in admitting the moral dangers inherent in the Roman adoption of Greek sympotic customs, in language even more lurid than that of Theopompus (*Odes* 3. 6. 17–32). Writing in the sympotic mode the problem was especially acute: Livia may be contrasted with Neaera in 3. 14, but how can the wife of the patron take her place in the world of the symposium? As a Greek host said on another occasion, when pressed by his Roman guest to produce his daughter, ‘it is not the custom of the Greeks for their women to recline at a *convivium* of men’; when the Roman tried to insist, he was nearly lynched by an angry mob of respectable Greeks.³⁵ I am not brave enough to assert with pseudo-Acro and Bentley the identity of Licymnia with Terentia, wife of Maecenas, in 2. 12: the portrait is certainly not that appropriate to a Roman aristocratic lady in real life. Yet in the context of the symposium, how else could Maecenas’ wife be described? The poem is ostensibly a *recusatio*: let Maecenas write a history of Caesar’s wars in prose (a private joke, since Augustus was known to despise Maecenas’ effeminate prose style, which would anyway have been quite unsuitable for the historical genre),³⁶ while Horace praises the faithful girl who combines religious purity in the choruses with passion at the symposium. Licymnia is certainly puzzling, and certainly a Roman lady, not a *hetaira*; she is out of place in any symposium, Greek or Roman. If she is not Maecenas’ wife, who is she? The question concerns literary propriety as much as social customs; our sense of unease at the lack of decorum implied by any solution is surely an indication of Horace’s failure to solve this particular problem.

VI

The archaic Greek *symposion* had provided both occasion and purpose for much of Greek monodic lyric and elegiac poetry; the themes of lyric had developed as reflections of the life style of the aristocratic sympotic group: politics, military virtue, the pleasures of drink, love and song, the vanity of human life—these interests of an aristocracy at ease offered material for the elaboration of a rich lyric tradition. The *symposion* also provided a home for the poet, a social setting; whether he was a full member of the drinking group (as Alcaeus for instance) or whether his admission was related to his role as professional entertainer (as with Anacreon), his position was assured as an equal among equals, and his skills were valued.

It was Horace’s achievement to recreate a complex sympotic poetry adapted to the Roman world: those who regard his sympotic poetry as literary or Greek in inspiration misunderstand its character. Certainly Horace had forerunners and rivals, notably among his Greek contemporaries; but he was the first to attempt to create a Roman sympotic tradition which could compare with that which he recognized in the world of archaic Greece. The acceptance of a Hellenistic life style by the Roman aristocracy offered the opportunity for the poet to relate the world of his patrons more closely to the literary tradition; but it also created a tension between new aspirations and old Roman virtues. Again and again we have seen the literary themes of Greek sympotic poetry reshaped to suit the world of Rome with a subtlety and sophistication which can only increase our understanding of the genius of Horace. But in this process of recreation, perhaps most important of all was Horace’s recognition that the symposium could give to the poet

Ec. Fr. d’Athènes et de Rome 67 (1983), 1067–75) interestingly interprets the prohibition on contact with wine as a religious taboo referring only to unmixed wine. We are here of course concerned not with the reality, but with the interpretation offered by the anti-

quarian tradition, which rather seeks to explain those sympotic customs which are unacceptable to Greeks.

³⁵ ‘Negavit moris esse Graecorum ut in convivio virorum accumberent mulieres’: Cic., *Verr.* 2. 1.26. 66.

³⁶ Macrobius, *Sat.* 2. 4. 12.

himself a role which would restore to him that social equality and that literary authority which he had lost in the transition of poetry from Greece to Rome. This is the reason why the symposium is so important to Horace.

So the sympotic vision becomes a way of life for poet and patron alike, creating the possibility of a genuine *amicitia*. Sympotic poetry offers a mode of expressing the meaning of a relationship, not a mask to disguise it. The great ode to Maecenas, *Tyrrhena regum progenies* (3. 29), closes Horace's collection before the final *sphragis*, a collection which is opened by *Maecenas atavis edite regibus*. The patron is invited to shed his wealth, his greatness and his cares, and partake of a simple symposium on terms of equality and friendship. Horace offers him a way of life secure from fortune's changes; the poet of the symposium unites with the poet as moral counsellor.

Horace looks back on the sympotic world which he had created and which had expressed so well his relationship with Maecenas in one of his finest poems, 4. 11. Once again a feast is announced: the wine is more than nine years old. The house is full of provisions and of preparations: but who is the guest? It is indeed nine years since that fateful season when Horace published his great collection of sympotic poetry in 24 B.C.,³⁷ and since the power and patronage of Maecenas began to decline as a result of the events of 23 B.C. The new patron of Horace may be forgiven for wishing the name of Maecenas to be absent from his collection. So Horace can no longer invite Maecenas to his symposium; nevertheless he will remember his birthday with the traditional celebration. It is a poem for the lost world of the symposium, *à la recherche du temps perdu*: let us recall those who fall from high places, Phaethon and Bellerophon, and resign ourselves to the present. Only the poetry of the symposium retains its power:

minuentur atrae
carmine curae.

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³⁷ Not 23 B.C., as I shall argue elsewhere.