SPATIAL STRUCTURES IN THE PORTRAYAL OF HORACE'S AND MAECENAS' STATUS IN THE *ODES*

In Horace's *Odes* the portrayal of the poet's social status is intimately and inseparably linked with his artistic aspirations and is to a great extent inserted in the context of his relationship to his patron Maecenas. The nature and course of this relationship involves also questions of personal nature, of dependence and autonomy, which have been thoroughly studied[1]. It is important to be reminded that the status of patron and poet in the *Odes* interrelate and define each other. In addition, the social order is obscured by extraneous elements and overlaps with, or is superseded by, aesthetic and ethical values. The present study explores the spatial structures of the Maecenas *Odes* in Books 1-3 with reference to the status of poet and patron. The spatial features encountered in the *Odes* appear only marginally in the *Epodes*, the *Satires* and the *Epistles*, at least in explicit terms. Considerations of genre and style account to a great extent for the difference with Horace's other works; but the fact that the writing and publication of *Odes* 1-3 coincides with the mature period of Horace's relationship to Maecenas should not be entirely overlooked.

In the opening *Ode* of the collected edition of his poems, which is addressed to Maecenas, Horace announces his devotion to poetry and the related aspiration to be included in the canon of the classic lyric poets by employing the stylistic device of the priamel, that is by making it the climax of a long list of diverse human pleasures and pursuits. The theme of the *Ode* unfolds against a spatial background of upward extension («high» and «low») and distance («far» and «near»). Victory at the chariot-race and winning offices with the people's support are portrayed in terms of «raising high», respectively in terms of exalting the athlete to the gods (*euehit ad deos*) and of raising the politician to the triple magistracies (*tergeminis*

1. For a survey of scholarship on the Horace-Maecenas relationship see E. Doblhofer, *Horaz in der Forschung nach 1957*, Darmstadt 1992, 41 ff. For the overall appreciation of this relationship I am especially indebted to M. Santirocco, «The Maecenas *Odes*», *TAPA* 114 (1984) 241-53.

tollere honoribus). The pursuits of the grain-importer, the small-time Italian farmer and the overseas trader oppose wealth to poverty or simple living in terms of a contrast between «far» and «near», home and overseas. The lifestyles of the idler, the soldier and the hunter oppose open-air to city activities; the latter two involve also separation from the loving person, respectively from the anxious mother and the tender young wife.

Horace's pleasure vis-á-vis other people's preferences uniquely combines «height» with «apartness in space». Poetic achievement associates him on the one hand with the gods (30 *dis miscent superis*) and on the other hand with the select company of the woodland deities, the Muses and the classic lyric poets in isolation from the common herd. «Mingling with the gods» (*dis miscent superis*) is a phrase of Pindaric flavor (*I.* 2. 29), while distance from the tastes and values of ordinary people echoes Callimachean aesthetic principles.

Through the opening and the closing address to Maecenas the poet places his own desire and ambition in the context of the patron-client relationship in terms of «height» and «proximity», the latter involving the privileged association of a select group of people. The only comparable instance outside the *Odes* where Horace's relationship to Maecenas is conveyed through combined spatial features is *Satires* 2. 6. 52. There the poet is pestered by people with inquiries because he «stands so close to the gods» (*deos quoniam propius contingis*). The opening and concluding lines of *Odes* 1. 1. contain repectively an address to Maecenas as descendant of kings and Horace's patron, and the image of the poet hitting the stars with exalted head (*sublimi feriam sidera uertice*), following Maecenas' recognition of his poetic achievement. «Height» is a semantic component of kingship (cf. the two meanings of *editus*, «born» and «lofty») and it is significant in this respect that at *Odes* 3. 26. 11 *regina* is immediately followed by *sublimi*. In addition, Maecenas extends patronage (2 *praesidium*) to Horace and to a select group of people whose circle implicitly parallels the band of Nymphs and Satyrs and the company of the Muses. He is thus, by virtue of his position, a competent judge of Horace's poetic achievement and the appropriate person to include him in another select company, that of the classic lyric poets.

Two further points need our attention in this *Ode*. The ivy (*hederae*) that «mingles» the poet with the gods (30 *dis miscent superis*) differs from the palm of the Olympic victor and the laurel with which the poet is crowned in *Odes* 3. 30. 15-16, in that it is a climbing plant that adheres to upright surfaces. Elsewhere (*Odes* 1. 36. 18-20 and *Epodes* 15. 5-6) the poet associates the adhering of the plant to the oak with a lover's

clinging to the beloved person as an indication of eternal devotion. The only parallel in Horace for this use of *misceo* is *Odes* 4. 5. 34-5 where the vine-grower «mingles» (*miscet*) Augustus' *numen* with that of the Lares after having earlier «wedded» the vine to the supporting tree, according to Roman farming practices. We are thus tempted to see in the properties of the ivy a probable metaphor for the poet's rise in status and his inseparable attachment to the company of the gods. The ivy is also explicitly the reward of the few («apartness») as the crown of *doctarum ... frontium* (29), where *doctarum* is probably an allusion to Callimachean σοφία.

Horace's pursuit requires in addition the inspiration of two Muses, Euterpe and Polyhymnia, whose name and function *in the specific context* seem to relate respectively to «height» and «distancing». *Euterpe's* name, which is derived from τέρπω («please»), subtly encapsulates the poet's aesthetic pleasure. It echoes *iuuat* (4), *gaudentem* (11) and *iuuant* (23), encountered in the earlier lifestyles, and is inserted in a context where supreme joy and pride are conveyed through the metaphor of hitting the stars with exalted head. Polyhymnia's role and name seem more properly suited to the poet's distancing from the common herd (32 *secernunt populo*). The component *Poly-* («many») of *Polyhymnia* is ironically an antidote to the pleasures of the many (*populus*): the *barbitos* was πολύχορδος (Theoc. *Id.* 16. 45) but its «many strings» combine to produce refined sound as does the coming together of dancing Nymphs with Satyrs, of the Muses and of Horace with the lyric poets of the canon.

Keeping in mind the significance of the ivy in the opening *Ode* we turn to *Odes* 2. 17 which reworks elements of *Odes* 1. 1 in an ethical context. Horace calms Maecenas' fear of death by stressing their joint fate, respectively the poet's rescue from the falling tree and his patron's recovery from illness. In this poem we encounter the most powerful portrayal of «proximity» with regard to the Horace-Maecenas relationship: their destiny is so closely linked together that not even hundred-handed Gyges could tear the poet from his side (14-15). Gyges' hundred hands reverse the function of the ivy's numerous clinging aërial roots. *Aeneid* 10. 317 ff. offers an eloquent parallel by making *Cisseus* («Ivy-man») and giant Gyas, a variant of Gyges, brothers and comrades in arms. The destinies of Horace and Maecenas are further joined together along the vertical axis. Horace addresses Maecenas as *mearum ... columenque rerum* (3-4) and the stars of poet and patron are inseparably linked (17 ff.). Near death is portrayed in terms of two vertical movements, the flight of winged *Fatum* with regard to Maecenas and the falling of the tree with regard to Horace (22 ff). The account of the poet's miraculous salvation, who numbers himself

among the *uiri Mercuriales*, echoes in part the language of the poet's rescue from Philippi through the aid of winged Mercury (*Odes* 2. 7. 13-14), just as later at *Odes* 3. 4. 26-7 the two events appear together.

In *Odes* 1. 1 the social disparity between patron and poet was adroitly manipulated towards their presumably common aesthetic pursuits; in *Odes* 2. 17 it seems to point in the opposite direction. The saving deities, Jupiter and Faunus, hold respectively the highest and the near-lowest rank in the hierarchy of the gods. Thanksgiving offerings consist in a votive shrine and several sacrificial animals for Maecenas, and in a «humble lamb» (*nos humilem feriemus agnam*) for the poet. Taking into consideration the unity of Horace's ideals of life and aesthetic principles[2], which by the way is prominently brought out in the previous *Ode* (2. 16), it would not be inappropriate to detect, as already suggested[3], a Callimachean allusion in the sacrifice of the «humble lamb». In *Odes* 2. 16. 37 ff. the poet links his λιτὸς βίος with the «slender style» and with the scorn of the crowd; in the present *Ode* Maecenas receives the loud applause of the *populus frequens* at the theatre and makes rich thanksgiving offerings while the poet merely sacrifices a modest lamb. *Odes* 1. 20 offers an interesting parallel. There the poet celebrates with cheap (*uile*) Sabine wine Maecenas' recovery from illness announced by the warm applause his patron received at the theatre, which was echoed by his native Tiber —an allusion to Maecenas' royal descent. Maecenas' distancing from the common herd in *Odes* 1. 1 reflects a deliberate and complimentary illusion on the part of the poet which is here unavoidably dispelled by the reality of his patron's political prominence and popularity. *Odes* 1. 1 and 2. 17 contrast further in terms of the poet's «high» and «low» aspirations in relation to Maecenas as portrayed in the concluding lines of the two poems: *sublimi* is semantically opposed to *humili*, the stars and the lamb stand at the two extremities of the vertical axis, *feriam* and *feriemus* convey opposed movements along the same axis.

«High» and «low» are in *Odes* 2. 12 contrasted in terms of Maecenas' and Horace's proposed and actual generic preferences, respectively historiography and lyric poetry. *Reges et proelia* are unsuited for lyric treatment in the spirit of the Callimachean literary programme. Consequently, the poet remains committed to *Polyhymnia* by celebrating the «sweet singing» of *Licymnia*, a girl of low social status whose name, as noted by commentators, is here apparently derived from λιγύς + ὕμνος (13-14 *dul-*

2. J. V. Cody, *Horace and Callimachean Aesthetics*, Brussels 1976.
3. Santirocco (note 1 above) 246.

ces ... cantus). By contrast *reges et proelia* should appropriately be treated by Maecenas, whose name is inserted amid the accound of Augustus' exploits (*Caesaris*) and the mention of a triumph with foreign princes (*regum*) paraded through the streets of Rome (9-12). *Caesaris* and *regum* in association with Maecenas evoke the patron's status and royal descent, and they simultaneously determine the choice of the «grand» genre. Only love can eliminate social differences: just as the poet recognizes Licymnia as his *domina*, Maecenas on his side succumbs to her charms preferring them to the riches of the East. The necks of threatening kings (12 *regum colla minacium*) were humbled but the girl's neck (26 *ceruicem*) turns to receive or give kisses on equal terms with Maecenas when he engages in erotic battles with her.

Odes 2. 12 prepares the ground for the concluding *Ode* of Book 2, where the poet openly proclaims the relative value of the privilege derived from noble birth. The *Ode* is meaningfully addressed to Maecenas, whose royal ancestry Horace praises in the opening *Ode* of the collection. The poet declares that he has transcended his humblé birth (5-6 *pauperum/ sanguis parentum*) by winning immortality through his songs, an idea conveyed through his transformation into a swan that soars high and views distant lands from above. Noble birth is effaced by death but poetry transcends the limits of mortal condition. Political disfavor may have caused the poet to return to Rome after Philippi «with wings clipped» (*decisis humilem pennis*, *Epodes* 1. 2. 2. 41 ff.) but he has won back his wings through his fame as a lyric poet. Now the flight of the swan offers him a view of the world from above and an extent of fame that are equated with the geographical limits of the Roman empire. Horace achieves here a sense of «height» that makes the star-hitting image of *Odes* 1. 1 sound naïve and, most importantly, does not depend on Maecenas' approval. On the contrary, he metaphorically flies as far away as possible from his patron. The sound of Maecenas' invitation (6 *quem uocas*) and the sound of pointless and unseemly lamentation conforming to common values (21 ff.) are outranked by the melodious singing of the swan (15-16 *canorus/ales*).

To the wealthy land-owner and the overseas trader of *Odes* 1. 1 distant places are a source of wealth; to Horace in *Odes* 2. 20 they signify intellectual achievement, spiritual and social independence and extent of fame; to Maecenas in the next *Odes* of Book 3 they are a source of concern and worry. *Odes* 3. 8, 3. 16 and 3. 29 pursue and deepen the role reversal in the Horace-Maecenas relationship but from a different perspective. Horace has become Maecenas' mentor on ethical issues which are once again treated against a spatial backgound of distance and upward extension.

In *Odes* 3. 8 Maecenas is invited to drink in celebration of his friend's escape (13-14 *amici/sospitis*) from the tree that nearly killed him and is called upon to banish public cares (15 *procul ... esto*; 17 *mitte*), worries about what goes on at the frontiers of the empire as well as his concern for the people. Proximity and farness convey the contrast of private to public. In addition, the fall of the tree (downward movement) is counteracted by the uncorking of the wine-jar (upward movement), near death by the enjoyment of life (7-12).

In *Odes* 3. 16. 19 ff. the poet declares that he «has shrunk» (18 *perhorrui*) from «raising his head high to be seen on all sides» (19 *late conspicuum tollere uerticem*) while addressing Maecenas as the «glory of Knights» (20 *equitum decus*). *Perhorrui* in its literal sense («become stiffly erect») is semantically related to *tollere* and so is the language employed for the acquisition of wealth (17 *crescentem ... pecuniam*). An *eques* makes himself conspicuous anyway either as a «horseman» or by virtue of his social status, especially when he constitutes the «glory» (*decus*) of the order of Knights. The metaphor of the raised head conveys prominence resulting from material possessions as opposed to *Odes* 1. 1 where it conveys the joy and pride of the recognition of poetic achievement. It does not safeguard the possessor but generates greed for more riches and invites bribery leading to downfall (11 *concidit*; 14 *subruit*), as shown by the preceding *exempla* of King Acrisius' brazen tower, of King Philipp's rivals (*aemulos reges*) and Sextus Pompeius' navy commander[4]. No mention is made of Maecenas' royal descent as in the next *Ode*, but the address to the poet's patron characteristically follows the list of sovereigns and prominent individuals; in addition *equitum decus* is probably indicative of a lifestyle as gathered also from *Odes* 1. 20[5]. By contrast, the poet's own choice is his Sabine farm, a gift from Maecenas, which has become an emblem of contentment and simple living. The poet could have asked for more from his patron (38), but has chosen instead to keep his needs within the proper limits (39 *parua cupidine*) rejecting the riches of king Alyattes.

Odes 3. 16 anticipates 3. 29 where Maecenas is addressed as «descendant of Etruscan kings» (1 *Tyrrhena regum progenies*). His mansion on the Esquiline is distinguished for its offending height (10 *molem propinquam nubibus arduis*) and himself for his wealth (13 *diuitibus*) in contrast with the poet's humble home (14 *paruo sub lare*) and simple meal

4. See R. J. Schork, «*Aemulos reges:* Allusion and Theme in Horace 3. 16», *TAPA* 102 (1971) 515-39.

5. Shork (note 4 above) 531.

(14-15 *pauperum/cenae*). Maecenas' *royal* ancestry is no longer an encomiastic element as in *Odes* 1. 1 and social disparity has openly shifted to the poet's favor. The contrast between the patron's and the poet's home and lifestyles picks up an analogous one between the mansions of the rich and Horace's Sabine farm in *Odes* 2. 18 and 3. 1. 45 ff. and more generally recalls the *regum turres* and the *pauperum tabernas* of *Odes* 1. 4. 13-14. From the «heights» of his mansion Maecenas has a view of Tibur and Tusculum but his vision remains desperately limited: he is preoccupied with the affairs of state and the situation in the distant limits of the empire —like the anxious *mercator* when caught in a storm at sea (57 ff.) in a situation recalling *Odes* 1. 1. 15 ff.— and cannot see that happiness is found in Horace's *nearby* modest Sabine farm. «Height» as a sign of material wealth depends on the whims of winged *Fortuna*, whose flying away the poet will not lament remaining content with his own simple and virtuous living (49 ff.).

«Height» as an expression of material wealth and social prominence was in the three *Odes* just discussed set in contrast with the poet's modest home and lifestyle. In *Odes* 3. 30, the *sphragis* of the collection, it contrasts with an alternative dimension of «height» as a sign of spiritual and poetic achievement in conjunction with an unlimited extension in future time. Horace claims that his lyric work will outlast bronze and ranks it higher (*altius*) than the pyramids of Egyptian Kings, a glaring testimony to man's mortality and a monument of material prominence (1-2). In the opening lines of Book 3 the poet had professed to be a «priest of the Muses» (3. 1. 3 *Musarum sacerdos*) and in this *Ode* he measures his future growth in stature (8 *crescam*) by the Pontiff's ascent (9 *scandet*) to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill. This act of worship as well as the place where it is conducted are envisaged as having unlimited duration, an emblem of Rome's spiritual eternity and power intended to contrast with the pyramids.

The climbing of the Capitol constitutes the focal point of the *Ode* and is linked with the poet's achievement also in etymological terms. *Capitolium* through its derivation from *caput* («head») relates to the concluding statement of the *Ode* where the poet calls upon the Muse Melpomene to assume the appropriate *superbia* (a derivative of *super*) in order to crown his «hair» (*comam*) with Apollo's laurel, a recognition of his having achieved the highest rank in poetic hierarchy. A similar semantic chain occurs in *Odes* 4. 3. 6-12 (closely modeled on 3. 30), where the poet argues that the poet is chosen at birth by Melpomene and no military or other career is open to him. In those lines the Capitol is bracketed by the *Deliis foliis*

(«laurels») wreathing the head of the victorious general and the *comae* («foliage») of the grove, a metaphor for the pursuit of poetry and more specifically, as in *Odes* 3. 30, of lyric poetry in Aeolic strain (*Aeolio carmine*).

Between the climbing of the Capitol and the request to be crowned by a *Musa superba* Horace inserts another upward movement, his rise to power from a low status (12 *ex humili potens*); and next he implicitly speaks of his poetic achievement in terms of political achievement (*princeps ... deduxisse). Potens* and *princeps* evoke respectively the highest ranks of the social and political order and follow the mention of the *Pontifex Maximus*, the highest position in religious hierarchy[6]. *Princeps ... deduxisse* is applied to poetic innovation with the poet playing the leading role, as indicated also by *Ep.* 1. 19. 21 ff. (*princeps ... dux reget examen*), and probably also entails allusions to the poet as a *triumphator* or a colonist[7].

Horace's ambition to be remembered in his birthplace marks a shift vis-á-vis *Odes* 2. 20 where he claims world-wide fame equated with the extent of the empire. The spatial limits of fame are restricted as opposed to the temporal ones but, in recompense, they gain in depth. Horace seems to be suggesting that the extent of his fame and his rise in prominence are intimately linked with features of his native land. The loud noise of raging Aufidus (10 *uiolens obstrepit Aufidus*) has a precious parallel in *Odes* 4. 9. 1 ff. where the poet declares that the lyric song of one born near the «far-sounding Aufidus» (*longe sonantem Aufidum*) will not perish. The far-sounding river water as a metaphor for poetic fame is furthermore restricted to lyric poetry through the pun on *Aufidum* (2), *chordis* (4, «strings») and *fidibus* (12, «lyre»). In addition, the phrase *pauper aquae Daunus ... regnauit* (3. 30. 11-12) involves a semantic contrast between *pauper* and *regnauit* analogous to a certain extent to the one encountered in *ex humili potens.*

Horace's language of confident self-assertion leaves no room for an address to Maecenas, which would probably have caused embarassment to both. Consequently, the poet's patron is left entirely out of the picture. Through his poetic achievement Horace has not only transcended the restrictions imposed by his low status but has also placed himself on equal rank with the leading individuals in the religious, social and political hierarchy. He no longer needs a patron's approval to hit the stars not even the wings of a swan to soar high. For his achievement he demands *uncon-*

6. For *potens* as a metaphor from social and economic power cf. *Odes* 4. 8. 25 ff. where it is said that the prerogative of a *potens uates* is to immortalize the deeds of worthy individuals and more specifically to procure for them a place in the *diuites insulae.*

7. For a survey of literature on *Odes* 3. 30 see Doblhofer (note 1 above) 111 ff.

ditional recognition from Melpomene whom he calls upon to rise to *his own status* (*sume superbiam / quaesitam meritis*) before proclaiming him the supreme Roman lyric poet.

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