

the credit for his own moral uprightness so that he need not be ashamed of being a freedman's son.

His father sent him to Athens, at great expense, to be educated with senators' and knights' sons at the Academy originally set up by **Plato**, where philosophy was studied as an important part of an aristocratic education. When he was 22, not long after the assassination of **Julius Caesar**, **Brutus** and **Cassius**, the Liberators recruited **Horace** along with other young aristocrats from Athens to join their army against **Octavian** (who later became the emperor **Augustus Caesar**). As an officer, **Horace** received the honour of the equestrian gold ring (making him one of the *equites*) personally conferred upon him by **Brutus**, although the Republican army was finally defeated at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.

In the new regime, **Octavian** (later **Augustus**) offered pardon to his opponents, which **Horace** accepted. Working in a minor easy-going civil service position, the budding poet found ample leisure to write his poetry. Through the intervention of his friend the poet **Virgil** (70-19 BCE), and the tragic poet **Varius** (74-14 BCE), **Horace** was extended the friendship and generous patronage of **Octavian's** right-hand man in civil affairs, **Maecenas** (68-8 BCE). Entering the literary circle of this diplomat, poet and counsellor and forming elite social connections raised the young poet's prosperity still higher. **Maecenas'** name in Italian has given rise to the word for patronage: '*mecenatismo*'. He was a wealthy man of equestrian status and the most intimate friend of **Octavian** from the early days. He was entrusted with important political missions and responsibilities and he was also clearly crucial to the flourishing of poetry around the time that **Octavian** came to power. As his patron, between 35 and 30 BCE, **Maecenas** gave **Horace** a farm with several tenant farmers in the Sabine hills to the north-east of Rome.

The Sabine farm gave **Horace** a kind of semi-retirement from active official life. This separation from the imperial court permitted him to write with a certain degree of independence, which **Horace** acknowledges in his *Odes* in touching upon the importance of a private, apolitical life. Thus, even in his routine celebration of the Empire, **Horace** sought to maintain a position of moderation and equilibrium, qualities that might contribute to much-needed peace of mind within a competitive Roman culture.

Horace's works carry images of the tensions and concerns of contemporary politics, as he confronts his various audiences, some of them actively hostile to him. More than any other writer of his age, **Horace** shows in his poetry the impact of political pressures on his personal world, and in dealing with them, uses conscious techniques of self-presentation as well as self-preservation throughout his works. For some commentators, **Horace's** association with the regime of **Augustus** was a matter of achieving a delicate balance to maintain his independence, although the 17th century English poet and satirist, **John Dryden** was to label him "*a well-mannered court slave*".

Against such a condemnation we might note that late in life, **Horace** is said to have been offered by **Augustus** and declined, a fairly high equestrian court office as secretary of the imperial private correspondence. **Horace** died at the age of 56, not long after his patron **Maecenas**, near whose tomb he was laid

to rest. Both men bequeathed their property to **Augustus**, an honour that the emperor expected of his friends. In the next section we shall look at what a satire is given that, **Horace** is largely known for his *Satires*.

2.3 THE GENRE OF SATIRE

Latin literature began in imitation of ancient Greek literary forms, from the epic stories of Greek heroes and tragedy to the short poems known as *epigrams*. Attacking the foolish, an important element of satire, is found in Athenian Old Comedy whose sole extant representative is the 5th century BCE Greek playwright, **Aristophanes**. According to **Horace**, the Romans borrowed from him and from **Cynic** and **Sceptic** preachers, whose extemporaneous sermons, called **diatribes**, carried anecdotes, character sketches, fables, obscene jokes, parodies of serious poetry, and other elements also found in Roman satire.

One of Rome's most important rhetoricians, **Quintilian** (35-100 BCE), however, claims the genre to be “*totally ours*”, connecting its origins to the early Roman practitioners of the genre, **Ennius** (**Quintus Ennius**, 239-169 BCE) and **Lucilius** (**Gaius Lucilius**, 180-103 BCE). Satire, as invented by the Romans, had a tendency from the beginning towards social criticism—some of it in the form of sharp attack in personal *lampoons* — which we still associate with satire. But the defining characteristic of Roman satire was that it was a mix or a medley.

The Romans produced two types of satires, the *Menippean Satire* and the *Formal Verse Satire*.

2.3.1 *The Menippean Satire*

The *Menippean Satire* was frequently a parody, blending prose and verse, also usually using a fictional third-person narrative. The first use of this form was by the **Cynic** parodist, **Menippus** (300-260 BCE). His works, now lost, influenced **Varro** (116-27 BCE), who brought it into Latin; followed by **Seneca** (4 BCE-65CE), the Stoic philosopher and satirist, who wrote *Apocolocyntosis*, a political parody of the deification of Emperor **Claudius**, which is the only surviving clear example of the *Menippean Satire*. We also have large segments of *Menippean Satire* in *Satyricon*, by **Petronius** (27-66 CE).

2.3.2 *The Formal Verse Satire*

Although earlier Latin writers were instrumental in developing the genre of satire, the official founder of this Roman genre is **Lucilius**, of whom we have only fragments from his voluminous output of 30 books of satire. **Horace**, **Persius** (34-62 CE), and **Juvenal** (c 60-c 130 CE) followed, leaving us many complete satires about life, vice, and moral decay they saw around them in their respective times. Verse satire was written in dactylic hexameter, like epics. Its stately meter partly accounts for its relatively high place in the hierarchy of poetry.

Formal verse satire consists of an outer structure in which the satirist interacts with an *adversarius* (interlocutor) on a point of debate, within a lightly-sketched setting. The inner core of the form, which is the satire itself, largely consists of two divisions: thesis and antithesis, presenting negative elements decrying and ridiculing current vices and follies, followed by positive elements in the satirist's

recommendations of the antithetical virtues to be embraced in order to achieve moral reform of society.

Another important pattern in formal verse satire is the *apologia pro satira sua*, the satirist's apology or defense of his satire. Miniature dramatic and allusive elements may also be used by the satirist to drive his point home by adding short sermons, lively anecdotes, and character sketches or "portraits" that bring alive the follies in action.

The satirical poet **Lucilius** being a senator's son could attack his patrician peers without fear, and his blunt but patriotic voice rails in angry invectives at the forces of modernisation ("*Hellenization*" or being heavily influenced by the alien Greek culture). Thus, **Lucilius** pokes fun at the likes of *Hellenizers* like **Ennius**. His purely Roman rage is cast on contemporary silliness and snobbery which makes Romans run to buy up all kinds of gorgeous, Greek luxuries, even to enthusiastically wearing underwear from Lydia.

The Horatian satire and sense of self on the other hand follows a different pattern of gentler and softer, more cautious ridicule of the absurdities and follies of human beings in general. It directs wit, exaggeration, and self-deprecating humour toward what it identifies as folly, rather than evil. In speaking self-referentially of the satire as a genre in *Satires: 1.4*, **Horace** tells us that it is a touchy business and difficult to get just right. Satires may be amusing, like party goers, but could get out of line and loose-mouthed, thereby embarrassing the company and sometimes making them cringe in fear, expecting the satirist to descend to personal attack even of his friends. In the next section we shall explore some of **Horace's** works.

2.4 HORACE: LITERARY WORKS

Horace is a centrally important author in Latin literature. His work is composed of a wide range of genres, from *iambus* to *satire*, and *odes* to *literary epistles*. The themes and issues touched upon in his writing may cover light-hearted matters related to love and wine, but it is as likely to carry serious discussions on philosophy and literary criticism. As a literary craftsman, before all else, **Horace's** chief interest was the improvement and reform of Latin poetry. He also became a key literary figure in the regime of the Emperor **Augustus**, and his career coincided with Rome's political change from Republic to Empire, again something we've discussed in Unit 1.

Although after having fought on the losing side against **Augustus**, **Horace** obtained pardon from the victors, yet in the confiscations that followed, he lost his family house and country estate at Venusia. Later (in *Epistles 2.2*, 51–2) he says of this loss jokingly that he turned to writing verse because of poverty. **Horace's** first book of *Satires*, probably his first published work (the 1st book of 10 satires around 35 BCE and the 2nd book of 8 satires in 30 BCE) marked his arrival in Roman society and Latin poetry. His *Satires* are addressed mainly to his patron **Maecenas**, within the poetic coterie of the circle of friends who also become jealous eavesdroppers of these companionable discussions.

The Roman literary scene is importantly linked to the organisation of Roman society on the basis of *amicitia* (loosely translated as 'friendship'). The

circulation of poetry and literary prose generally took place through recitations organised by the elite and by having copies made privately. A poet was like a ‘client’ of his patron, subject to similar duties (attendance at official and social events) and the recipient of similar rewards. He was also special as he had the power to celebrate his patron’s achievements and even to confer immortality upon him. For the Romans *amicitia* signified the entire network of social relations between superiors and inferiors, between ‘patrons’ and their ‘clients’. Literary patronage was just one way in which a great man could show himself a friend and in return he expected to be glorified by the poets among his friends, thereby making these into transactions within a gift economy with benefits accruing to both sides. **Horace** celebrated his relationship with **Maecenas** by dedicating to him most of his poetic output.

The *Epodes* (17 in number) also belong to his early period, in which he experimented with a new form of writing *iambi* (singular *iambus*) in Latin in the manner of the Ancient Greek poet **Archilochus** (680-645 BCE). They take their title from the fact that all of them use a poetic metre in which a longer line is followed by a shorter one, called an ‘after-song’. These poems are in the nature of ‘blame poetry’, including *lampoons* used for private revenge, and invectives for a more general denunciation of social offenders. **Horace** proudly claimed to introduce into Latin the iambic poetry of **Archilochus** but (unlike the ancient poet he imitated) without persecuting anyone in particular. The comic mockery of the *Epodes* is fierce, although **Horace** directs the ridicule not at individuals, but rather at social abuses. His low social origins as a freed man’s son required caution in the business of writing satires and kept him from attacking important individuals in either genre.

The *Epistles* (published in two books, in 20 BCE and 14 BCE, respectively) have been seen as a continuation of his satires in the form of epistles or verse-letters. The satiric and epistolary forms are well suited to the seeming revelation of homely or confessional detail, and as a result, personal revelations form the basis of much of **Horace**’s discussion there. For this reason, he elects in *Epistles* to characterise the craft of poetry as the practical mechanism of personal survival and social self-enhancement. In *Epistles* 1.20, he compares his book to a prostitute, eager to put itself up for sale to one reader after another in the booksellers’ district. The crucial point being made here is that of **Horace**’s successful social advancement as a totally self-made man, who raised himself from poverty and obscurity to occupy a lofty and honoured place in Roman society. The message one gets from *Epistles* 1.20 and 2.2 is that books of poetry are sometimes written in order to earn a living or to enhance the social reputation of their authors, and not so much for their own or for art’s sake. Thus, poetry here remains an important aspect of **Horace**’s self-image as it has been the instrument of his worldly success. Poetry is presented as being largely practical in its purpose and application, a somewhat worldly perspective adopted by the poet.

The *Odes* (Latin: *Carmina*) written in the lyric mode in conscious imitation of the Greek originals, **Pindar**, **Sappho** and **Alcaeus**, cover a wide variety of topics, from an eulogy in praise of **Augustus** to general themes like love, friendship, wine, patriotism, the virtues of contentment, and the observation of balance of mind, or the “golden mean”. Books 1 to 3 of the *Odes* were published

in 23 BCE, while a fourth book, consisting of 15 poems, was published in 13 BCE.

The period from 20-13 BCE when he published Book 4 of the *Odes* and the first book of *Epistles*, was also a time of the declining importance of **Maecenas** at the imperial court. **Horace** was offered and accepted the position of laureate to **Augustus** and his family. The *Carmen Saeculare* sung to *Apollo and Diana* by a chorus of patrician boys and girls at **Horace's** own direction before the emperor and all Rome in 15 BCE was the climax of **Horace's** poetic career.

The last of his epistles, *Epistula ad Pisones*, (*Letter to the Pisos, a father and two sons*), later titled *Ars Poetica*, or 'The Art of Poetry' is a verse epistle offering advice on writing successful poetry, keeping in mind the qualities of good 'decorum,' particularly in the context of an audience of the ruling elite of Rome. Let us look at **Horace's** *Satires* next.

2.5 HORACE'S SATIRES

Horace alternates between calling his satires *Satirae* and *Sermones*, or "Conversations". His awareness of the changed political climate within the new regime makes him particularly careful of his tone and hence this writing takes its interest from what it does not say. **Horace's** satire at this point had also to deal with the "Lucilius question", that is, the expectation of his audience that he would write in the aggressive manner of the master, the genre's inventor. However, the sharpness and uncompromised free speech of **Lucilius**, a senator's son writing invectives in Republican Rome could not be the satirical manner of his low-born successor, **Horace**, a freedman's son.

The inevitable shift of satire, from "open" to "understated", led to a new re-definition of the self-image and the literary stylistics of the poet writing at **Augustus's** court. Making a virtue out of political necessity, **Horace's** satire creates both literary and personal images of a new Roman civility. He represents the limits of his satire as aesthetic choices, and as aspects of civic refinement. He adopts a soft-toned and reticent expression, self-effacing yet well able to employ an oblique witty style, full of irony and innuendo.

The first three satires of Book 1 are part of a related group and follow the style of the Greek *diatribe* or philosophical street-sermon in the *Cynic* tradition, attempting to delicately criticise the faults of friends. The overall message and assumption here is that everyone has faults, some of which might be even attractive ones. The balanced and moderate tone of such a satire seems to suggest that one should be sparing of one's criticism of one's friends, and thus points toward the norm of a cultivated and urbane culture.

In 1.5 he describes a journey to Brundisium with **Maecenas**, who was on his way to negotiate the *Treaty of Tarentum* with **Antony** (in 37 BCE). In putting an emphasis on warm friendships and trivial mishaps while describing this trip, **Horace** artfully conceals any political involvement or views of his own. In 1.9 he tells of how a social climber and sycophant, who is also represented as a windbag, too free with his speech tries to exploit his new friendship with **Maecenas** (43–60). The negative images of such social "others" are significantly useful in staging the antithesis of the satirist's self-performance as moderate,

cautious and controlled. In 1.6, his most autobiographical poem, he gives an attractive and no doubt exaggerated picture of his simple life (104–31) as he potters around the market and asks the price of vegetables; he thus tries to avert the malice that attends his new success by emphasising his own austere country life. The thrust of the *Sermones* is ethical, and in the opening address to **Maecenas** (1.1) the theme of ‘contentment with one’s lot’ is not just an expression of gratitude but a denial of larger ambitions.

The Horatian satire has been appropriately termed “a restless genre” since in writing about himself he provides us with a composite picture made up of many comic types; adopts varied tones and faces, many of them masks. Fitting the modesty that the new regime might require of him as a minor civil servant he offers the pose of one deferential to authority, a parasite sometimes, at other times a recluse withdrawn from the world meditating on his own shortcomings, conspicuously on the margins of the aggressively ambitious city crowds. Though greatly admiring the older satirist’s sharp wit, **Horace** carried on the *Lucilian* tradition of satire not just by ridiculing vice and folly but by writing in an amusing and self-reflexive way about his own natural failings. The clearest image other than his own of a morally upright example set out against contemporary follies is that of his own father, a representative figure of the fine old-fashioned Roman virtues. In 1.4 and 1.6 **Horace** pays a tribute to his father for being his teacher in practical morality.

Although **Horace** is supposedly addressing himself to his patron, **Maecenas**, there is also by implication a conversation with poets contemporary (**Virgil**, **Varius**, and others of the court circle) and poets past, undertaken in constant inter-textual dialogue that attempts to sort genres, styles, and questions of literary aesthetics. Satire 1.4 and 1.10 both, include defenses of the Horatian satire. The genial, rambling and open-ended conversations held with a shadowy companion-figure disavows the satirical impulse, and also literary outspokenness, apart from any desire to gain literary fame or political status. There is however, a clear attempt to redefine the rules for satire so as to present an ethical, self-fashioned man refraining from personal abuse, since brought up by his father to improve himself against the negative examples of others.

Concerning the standards of the new kind of satire from a stylistic point of view, **Horace** places himself squarely against the slipshod spontaneity of a **Lucilius** whose “muddy river” had undergone no revisions or erasures. The Horatian literary principles offered to replace older standards are brevity, variety, amenability and refinement. The links between poetry and poet are constantly made in Satire 1.4 to suggest that in both, self-fashioning and the fashioning of a new stylistics of poetry there are ethical questions involved. The new satire, like the new civility is to be diplomatic, accommodating, and inoffensive.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have built an understanding of **Horace**’s life and the circumstances related to his life, and his writings. We have understood what a satire is as a *genre* and also looked at the two types of Satires. We know which satirical form **Horace** used and have been introduced to the poet’s works of art.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the social origins of Horace at the time of his birth and early childhood.
2. Describe the nature of the class hierarchies in ancient Rome.
3. What efforts did Horace's father make to improve the social position of his son?
4. Discuss how Horace balanced his social position at Augustus' court.
5. What were the origins of Latin satire?
6. Who were the early practitioners of Latin satire?
7. What were the two forms of satire practiced by the Romans?
8. Describe the differences between Lucilius and Horace as satirists.
9. What were the early experiences of Horace as a writer?
10. Discuss the system of literary patronage at the Roman court.
11. Trace the course of Horace's literary career after he gained success.
12. What were the factors that directed Horace's choice of tone in his satires?
13. What are some of the kinds of positive values that Horace represents in his *Sermones*?
14. Discuss the style of Horatian satire.

2.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

1. *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed., Stephen Harrison
2. *Horace: Image, Identity, and Audience*, Randall L. B. McNeill
3. *Readings in Classical Literature*, ed., Harriet Raghunathan
4. *The Satires of Horace*, Niall Rudd