Stephanie McCarter, *Horace Between Freedom and Slavery: The First Book of* Epistles, Madison-Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015, 378 pp., ISBN 978-0-299-30570-3.

Thanks to her welcome engagement with Horace's first book of *Epistles* Stephanie McCarter joins a distinguished band of enthusiasts for this endlessly fascinating collection of verse letters. It is one of the main attractions of the collection that it insists upon being read as a coherent book, something it would be difficult to do for, say, the books of satires. Michael McGann (*Studies in Horace's First Book of* Epistles, Brussels 1969), Ross Kilpatrick (*The Poetry of Friendship: Horace,* Epistles I, Edmonton, 1986), Ralph Johnson (*Horace and the Dialectic of Freedom*, Ithaca 1993), and David Porter ('*Playing the Game: Horace* Epistles 1' in *Classical World* 96.2002.21-60) have all demonstrated in their different ways how nigh on impossible it is to discuss any one of these fine poems in isolation from others in the book. Shared themes and echoed language seem to link the poems one to another, links further strengthened by the arrangement of the poems in the book. What is more, we look for a degree of consistency in what might once have been called its message or doctrine, since Horace is pretty clearly writing with a view to helping his readers get a grip on their own lives, thanks to what he chooses to tell us of his own situation, somewhere over half way down the road of life (even if that situation is to some extent fictionalized).

McCarter sets out her stall clearly in the introductory chapter. Her Horace is divided between presence and absence, a division intrinsic to the epistolary form of the poems: a letter comes from someone absent, who may promise presence, only to revoke it, or from someone who longs to exchange absence for presence. There are other absences too: chiefly youth, and what was appropriate to youth (lyric poetry, symposia, love affairs). But there are compensatory presences, above all moral reflection and the countryside. McCarter's primary focus is the problem of individual freedom or independence (pp. 4-18). This was of course a philosophical issue (pp. 21-23)—'autarkeia', but it could never be discussed as pure theory, especially within a hierarchical society like Rome's. Her aim is to discover how the poet negotiated his success, both personal and poetic, within and despite the constraints of Roman high society. Her plausible conclusion is that Horace took an eclectic approach to philosophy and advocated adaptability and moderation, which he himself had classically dubbed 'the golden mean'. Finally McCarter explains how she organized her argument on pp. 23-4; she feels there is a plot to the collection, a movement from a sort of intransigent freedom to moder-

ation and adaptability. She aims to demonstrate this by grouping the letters thematically, as they seem to be focused on philosophy, location, friendship, and poetry. McCarter also argues strongly that Horace's striving to establish a balanced freedom has a political dimension within the emerging principate. She reckons that the poet is responding to the political changes in Roman life in the early years of Augustus' rule.

Since these two matters, plot and political response, are the only ones on which I am at all inclined to disagree with her basic approach to the interpretation of the poems, I will first explain why I do so, and then move on.

As regards plot, which McCarter is not alone in advocating, it proves difficult to integrate into any notional plot a number of the letters. Take for instance the ninth, a 'letter of introduction' to Tiberius. It isn't concerned with independence or *libertas*, nor are philosophy, location or poetry an issue; unsurprisingly then it receives scant attention on p. 162. Friendship is the theme that justifies its place in the collection, and Horace seems to be doing no more than what any well-placed friend would do to give someone a 'leg-up'. But underlying the ninth letter is the problem of managing the great ones of Rome, an issue that resurfaces in the thirteenth poem, addressed to Vinnius. McCarter speaks of his 'bumbling servility' (p. 162, and cf. his alleged 'bumbling obsequiousness' on p. 21). But Horace's fear is that Vinnius prove maladroit, not servile; servility is foisted in so as to give the letter a place in the discourse of independence and the supposed plot of the collection. What Horace wants Vinnius to avoid (faults he implies he avoids himself) are pushiness and self-importance. So the issue in the ninth and the thirteenth letters is tact, not servile status, whether Vinnius', Horace's, or the poems'. Finally, consider the claim made on p. 83 that in line 63 of the second epistle—'hunc [animum] frenis, hunc tu compesce catena', 'the chain…in particular evokes ideas of slavery.' Only runaway slaves were chained once dispatched to an *ergastulum* in the country. Since the reins or bridle mentioned in the same line clearly allude to managing a horse, the chain suggests to me at any rate the guard-dog at the front door, not a human slave. The notion of slavery is once again dragged in, so that McCarter can assert on p. 84 that 'Horace makes issues of independence and servitude central to his poem'. Not in my view. To sum up: it is plain that in putting the collection together Horace indeed focused on the themes McCarter identifies, and they are deployed in varied combinations in most of the poems. But it is less than fair to the poet to impose 'Systemzwang' on every poem in the whole collection.

McCarter is also not alone in reckoning that Augustan poets had views on and responded to contemporary political life. Born into what we call the late Republic, survivors of civil war, they surely ought to have been concerned with the onset of autocracy, or so many believe. It may be suggested however that they need not have been troubled, given their civil status as equestrians. Ernst Badian pointed out in his *Oxford Classical Dictionary* article on *eq-*

uites that equestrians 'formed the non-political section of the upper class', a claim not easily set aside. Granted there were equestrians, like Maecenas, who exercised influence on public affairs, it was of a private nature. Maecenas never held public office, and the equally influential Atticus scrupulously avoided it (as scrupulously as he maintained valuable friendships with 'political' men of every persuasion). Badian went on to observe that the *equites* of the late Republic were too disparate in composition and too non-political to form a stable grouping. My own feeling is that this assessment of the political role of *equites* has not been sufficiently taken into account by those who detect political engagement in the 'Augustan' poets. Horace indeed fought for Brutus at Philippi, but that does not mean he fought in defence of the political system of the day; his attachment to Brutus may have been purely personal, as was, say, the attachment of Gaius Mattius to Julius Caesar (Cicero couldn't fathom it, oddly enough). Many will doubtless make no objection to McCarter's sense that Horace reconfigures the notion of 'freedom' to harmonize it with the political transformations of the day, but a modest demurer to the supposition can be made, for lack of evidence that the *libertas* of an *eques* was in any way compromised by the changes evolving in Rome's political life under Augustus. I therefore find with McGann the political reading of the end of the sixteenth epistle, the scene borrowed from Euripides' *Bacchae*, unconvincing (pp. 153-60). It might be worth remembering that Augustus could not compel Horace to become his private secretary.

A further point may be made on Horace's supposed response to the Augustan political settlement. His addressees generally appear to be young men, that is to say they have entered adulthood knowing only a post-Actium Rome. Their fathers could tell them about the free-wheeling *libertas* of yore, but it formed no part of their experience. They needed guidance in dealing with the new social hierarchy, something their fathers had to make the best of and might well have had difficulty accommodating themselves to; for their sons that hierarchy was both the present and very probably the future. So the intransigent independence of the Republic (think Cato) arguably wasn't something they might have regretted or aimed to re-instate. Now that I've set out my reservations regarding the search for an underlying plot to the collection and for a response to the evolving political situation, I turn to the individual chapters, with which, as I've already indicated, I am in broad sympathy.

The first chapter is dedicated to the fundamental issue of the collection, personal independence. Personal independence is most at risk in the relation between patron and client, and for Horace that means his friendship with Maecenas. The role Maecenas plays in the first epistle is interesting. In all the other introductory poems in which he appears he is simply the addressee. Only in this poem is he presented as trying to 'commission' poems from Horace, namely more lyrics. This prepares us for the issue of the valid personal

claims upon the individual and how he is to negotiate them. The guiding figure to emerge in the discussion is Aristippus, whose talismanic role in Horace's thinking has for some time been recognised; attention can also now be drawn to Mario Citroni's chapter entitled 'The value of self-deception: Horace, Aristippus, Heraclides Ponticus, and the pleasures of the fool (and of the poet)' in Philip Hardie (ed.), *Augustan Poetry and the Irrational*, Oxford, 2016. Aristippus will provide the doctrine of moderation (p. 25), so that in following him Horace can move from inflexibility to compromise (p. 34): freedom can only ever be partial.

The second chapter finds Horace dealing with issues of inconsistency and illness (poems 1, 8, 15). McCarter sees ethical contemplation as the avenue to equanimity. Now at this point she rightly announces that *aequanimitas* is one of the goals towards which the poet's reflections move (the index on pp. 350-1 provides helpful direction), but this wasn't announced in the introduction or in the first chapter. My point is that the issues the poems raise aren't so easily reduced in number, and the nuances of Horace's ethical reflections are varied. McCarter is justified in claiming that adaptability is needed to secure equanimity. And yet there is in this chapter an element of exaggeration: it is excessive to charge Horace with dishonesty in earlier descriptions of his dining habits (p. 58). He makes it clear that he wants better wine when he's on holiday by the sea: *ad mare cum ueni* (15.18); he can put up with anything at home. This is not to say that the important fifteenth epistle fails to expose Horace's inconsistency—I'm concerned only with its gravity. These poems can be funny too.

The third chapter opens out one of his central roles, as instructor in ethical thinking (poems 1 and 2, with focus on the latter). McCarter certainly secures my support in her able demonstration that the poet as reader of poetry has the advantages of eclecticism and flexibility over the philosopher; he is not bound to create or adhere to a system. Horace thus tacitly repudiates Epicurean cautions about the correct interpretation of Homer (pp. 72-3). The more philosophically grounded readings of Armstrong and Moles are repudiated, rightly in my view.

Horace's role as moral adviser in letters 4, 5, 6, and 12 is the theme of the fourth chapter. The keynote is moderation, since the addressees all seem to be given to an extreme (isolation, severity, pursuit of wealth). The opening words of the sixth poem, *nil admirari*, serve as a motto or keynote of the poet's advice, advice he needs to bear in mind himself.

The fifth chapter turns to the issue of leisure, *otium* (letter 7 and 16). The seventh is of course a poem of capital importance in the collection, and McCarter's treatment of it is well-balanced. I've already indicated that I part company with her in the interpretation of the final section of the sixteenth poem, but it must be made clear that her reading cannot be dismissed as eccentric. This is just one of those issues upon which opinion is divided.

The sixth chapter brings together letters 10, 11, and 14. The country life cannot after all completely satisfy, especially the claims of friendship. The eleventh letter is corrective of the tenth, in recommending indifference to place, another facet of *aequanimitas*. In the fourteenth poem the bailiff is a figure on to whom Horace can project the less flattering aspects of his own character, especially inconstancy. McCarter feels that their contest ends in a draw, but I demur: Horace is in charge and the bailiff stays in the country, so far as we can tell. It is Horace who is left to sort out his problems on his own; the bailiff must do as he is told.

In the seventh chapter McCarter brings Aristippus centre-stage for discussion of letters 17 and 18, poems which clearly form a sort of diptych. I find her reading of the seventeenth poem exemplary, but as regards the eighteenth, I feel that she errs in company with Johnson and Oliensis in failing to give sufficient weight to the considerable difference in social status between Horace (son of a freedman) and Lollius (possibly the son of a consul, at any rate born into the contemporary elite) when each 'entered' society. Still, this is the stand-out chapter in the book for me.

The eighth chapter combines letters 3 and 19, both concerned with literary production. Independence as a writer of poetry in Rome was peculiar, given that so much Latin poetry avowed its debt to Greek. So Horace can once again urge moderation in literary imitation; he can also substantiate his doctrine in his own practice—his poems are a sort of *techne* to guide practitioners on to the path of literary success.

The conclusion combines letters 13 and 20. I've already voiced my concern about the 'loaded' reading of the thirteenth poem, but agree that the 'manumission' of the book in the final poem is in fact a form of submission, now to the judgment of a reader.

It must be clear from what I've said that I find the interpretations offered in this work generally sober and reliable, and only occasionally do I part company with McCarter's opinion. When she disagrees with a scholar she deals fairly and fully with the position she deems unsatisfactory. Her extensive reading is up to date and comprehensive. And yet there remains one matter, the control of Horace's Latin, that causes me considerable disquiet, and to it I turn in conclusion.

To provide some context for what I am about to say, I need to make it clear that McCarter's is the third book by a debutant scholar that I have reviewed recently. All three show in different measures poor command of Latin. Now I'm well aware that those who start to learn this difficult language later in life than I was fortunate enough to do have a steep up-hill climb. But they also have supports, guides, and resources, such as grammars, dictionaries, and largely reliable standard translations against which to check their own understanding of the texts, which are the very foundation of their scholarly work. McCarter's book throws into relief some issues which I now want to address.

First, the presentation of the text. Horace's Latin is far too often misprinted, in many cases thanks to the word-processor's 'autocorrect', as I confirmed by my own attempts to type the Latin correctly; but that is no excuse nowadays, since even undergraduates learning the language must be alive to the problem. (Chrysanthe Tsitsiou-Chelidoni also noted the large number in her *BMCR* review of 2017.01.52, n. 2.) Here is my list of misprints or misquotations: p. 26 (*purgatum*, but correct on p. 86), 54 (*corpora* for *corpore*), 76, 96 & 110 (Cicero), 143, 144, 145, 148 (*frigid* for *frigida*), 149 (*platinum* for *platanum*! It reappears on p. 306 n.66), 150, 163 (*partier* for *pariter*), 167 (*receipt* for *recepit*), 168, 178, 180, 194, 198, 203 (*matron* for *matrona*), 207, 213 (*Docilis* for *Dolichus*, and this even enters the translation), 265, 283 n. 13, 287 n. 5, 310 n. 30 (*content* for *contento*), 315 n. 35. Are we becoming little better than the monkish scribes once vilified by textual critics?

Secondly, there is the more serious issue of defective translation. McCarter usually provides her own translations of Greek and Latin as announced on p. 276, n. 11. It is a good principle to make one's own translation, but that translation should be checked against others, since we can all make mistakes, however advanced we are. If we disagree with a standard translation, it is sound practice to make a case for our own interpretation. McCarter's translations are sometimes wrong, and sometimes 'loaded' in favour of her interpretation of the poem.

The translations I find wrong are the following and the translation of Horace's *Epistles* I regard as providing the standard is Fairclough's characteristically colloquial English in his admirable Loeb edition: p. 56 'offend' for *offendar* 'quarrel with'; on p. 61 Aristo of Chios is mistranslated (one rather wonders why no one noticed this sooner); 'voices' for *voces* 'sayings' (p. 68); 'grief' for *dolor* 'vexation' and 'frame of mind' for *mens* 'wrath'; p. 94 *candide* at 4.1 (and 6.68) is misunderstood: it isn't our 'candid' or 'frank' but 'well-disposed, kindly' (here I think Fairclough's 'impartial' is wrong); p. 110 Cicero mistranslated (*ecferri* = 'to be elated'); p. 116 'arts' for *artes* 'works of art'; p. 171 'is not agreeable' for *conveniet* 'will not fit'; p.179 Seneca mistranslated; p. 197 'suffering' for *patientia* 'endurance' and 'celebrated' for *celeberrima* 'crowded'; p. 198 'duty' for *negotio* 'business' [West]; p. 200 'the tranquil the name of the distressed' for *aequus iniqui* 'the just of unjust'; p. 201 *tamen* isn't 'moreover' but 'nonetheless'; p. 209 'obsequiousness more than is right' for *obsequium plus aequo* misconstrues: *plus aequo* qualifies the adjective *pronus*, not the noun *obsequium*; p. 277, n. 23 Cicero mistranslated.

Tendentious translation is a related problem, but fortunately rather less frequent a one than outright error. McCarter offers 'dark readings'; fair enough, but it won't do to darken the colours unnecessarily. For instance on p. 53, and again on p. 209 *occurri* at 1.95 is rendered with 'I have run to meet

you'. But 'I met with/bumped into you/I come your way' is the standard translation, adopted also in the *OLD* s.v. *occurro* 7, and cf. *Serm.* 1.4.135-6 *sic dulcis amicis* | *occurram* and 1.9.61. Horace's meeting with Maecenas is casual, accidental, not designed and not necessarily hurried. Before McCarter imposed her translation she might have checked to see if there was a sort of 'vulgate'; if there was (as indeed there is) and she didn't like it, then the onus was on her to undermine it in favour of her own translation. A second case of 'loaded' translation is 'servant' for *minister*, used of Vinnius (p. 258); as a free man, he's an agent or helper (*OLD* s.v. 3), not a servant. But McCarter wants the word servant because it bolsters her interpretation of Vinnius is servile. While on the subject of that epistle, I'll end with a case of skewed interpretation. McCarter ought to have balked on p. 258 at Oliensis' notion that Horace 'teaches' Vinnius, described in the opening line as *proficiscentem*, as if he were a 'Stoic wayfarer [a *proficiens*]'. *Proficio* 'I make progress' and *proficiscor* 'I depart' may well be related etymologically but they certainly aren't related in meaning, and the different quantities of the initial syllables make it unlikely (in my view) that any Roman reader would have thought *proficiscentem* suggested the Stoic *proficiens*.

McCarter has given lovers of the first book of *Epistles* a refreshing survey of its range and variety.

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