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Horace and Marvell's "Horatian Ode"

An Analysis of the Influence of the Political Odes of Horace on
Marvell's "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ire-
land"

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Chapter One: Horace and the Ode _____

Andrew Marvell, as a classical scholar, had a solid knowledge of Antiquity and its literary canon.¹ When he entitled his first poem on Oliver Cromwell “An Horatian Ode”, he was well aware of the genre he was pointing at and of the implications it carried. The genre to which he refers, the Roman political ode, had been developed in Rome by the poet Horace. Using Greek models and adapting them to the Roman spirit, Horace had gradually established a style of his own. The manner in which Horace made use of the work of his Greek predecessors and the effect that it produced find an echo in Marvell’s later treatment of his Latin forebear; so does the style of his odes.

The variety of Horace’s poetry prevents us from making general statements about his style that would be applicable to all the odes.² The content and especially the historical characters praised in Marvell’s poem direct the search for a model towards Horace’s odes of a political character. The “Cleopatra Ode” (1.37) and the ode “To Augustus” (1.2) are particularly good representatives of this type of ode.³ Together, they demonstrate most of the characteristic features of Horace’s political writing. Form and content are intimately linked in Horace’s poetry. The “Cleopatra Ode” in particular is an excellent example of his ability to merge poetry and the historical context. As for Horace’s political convictions, the picture provided by the two sample odes is incomplete without the examination of the rest of his political writing. This analysis is therefore limited to a brief presentation of the political aspect as it

¹ At the age of sixteen, Marvell was already publishing poems in Latin and Greek, and even imitating Horace in the Cambridge volume celebrating the birth of Queen Mary’s fifth child in 1636/7 (in Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell, Poet, Puritan, Patriot*, second edition, Oxford, Clarendon, 1968, 5).

² R.G.M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, xi.

³ These titles are not Horatian but come from modern critics. They are used here for the sake of convenience, being more explicit than the simple number.

appears in each ode without any attempt at generalisation. Indeed, the political stance of Horace in his poems has been the subject of considerable study.

After a first part dedicated to Horace's role in literary history and especially in the rise of Roman lyric poetry, the second part of this chapter focuses on the sample odes. The purpose of this part is to list a series of features, including the political aspect, that undeniably mark a text as Horatian. These features will serve to assess the echo that Horace found among his contemporaries and successors previous to Marvell. The Latin poet's influence on poetry assumed many forms on the way to Marvell's seventeenth century. Charles Martindale, in *Horace Made New*, explains it very clearly: there has been a myriad of supporters and detractors of the Roman writer, and, as for the political aspect, as many visions of the "real" Horace.⁴ With the help of the characteristic features identified in the analysis, the second chapter will attempt to distinguish between these visions and justify or invalidate the derivation from Horace that Marvell claims in the title of his "Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland". As for the present chapter, it will find its end where it begins, with Horace's role in literary history.

Marvell and Horace assume, in this context, a similar role. Like Marvell, the Roman poet represented, for his own time, a link between two literary cultures, between the newly born Latin lyric poetry and the ancient Greek tradition. The poetic form that the English writer borrowed from his Latin predecessor came originally from Greek lyric poets that Horace had adapted into Latin. Where Marvell deliberately chose to call upon the classical Latin poet, Horace was himself obeying the "*lex operis*, the rules of the genre". Among other things, these tacit rules urged the ancient poet to claim his allegiance to a particular genre by imitating "familiar passages of

⁴ Charles Martindale and D. Hopkins, *Horace Made New*, Cambridge, CUP, 1993, 1.

illustrious predecessors” (Nisbet, xi). However, due to the rich variety of genres combined in his work, Horace does not express his allegiance to every one of them with a quotation; he limits this gesture to his main models. In fact, Horace does not simply comply in his odes with the principle of the *lex operis*; he adds further meaning to it. The borrowed forms and the number of direct allusions to certain Greek lyric poets confirm this point of view.

When Horace started writing his odes in the 30s BC, Greek lyric poetry had already come to full maturity and produced what we now regard as classical Greek poetry. In such a context, he was not the first to look towards Greece in search of a model. Several of his predecessors had already initiated the movement. Catullus and Laevius, earlier, had tried to use Greek lyric metres in Latin.⁵ Despite this fact however, Horace is still regarded as the real founder of Roman lyric verse. If we consider the number of Greek metrical systems that he adapted into Latin and the rigour of the rules that he designed, this dominant status is justified.⁶ Brought to Rome by foreigners, Latin poetry before him was living on imitations based on Greek originals (Waltz, 13). As Adolphe Waltz puts it, *La muse latine eut la muse grecque pour mère et pour nourrice* (Waltz, 78).

For the ancient poets, imitating a predecessor was not a confession of weakness. On the contrary, it was considered a mark of strength and of respect for a shared culture. The Latin writer, for example, saw the technical difficulty of adapting a Greek model and producing a new meaning out of a second-hand topic, the *retractatio*, as an admirable challenge that justified the writer’s claim for innovation.⁷ Ad-

⁵ Adolphe Waltz, *Des variations de la langue et de la métrique d’Horace dans ses différents ouvrages*, Rome, L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1968, 18.

⁶ Ibidem: Horace introduced thirteen regular metrical systems into Latin and fixed the structure of other forms that he did not bring to Rome himself.

⁷ Nisbet, xi / Pierre Grimal, *Le lyrisme à Rome*, Paris, PUF, 1978, 29-30. Further references to this work are indicated by the abbreviation *Grimal-Lyr*.

olphe Waltz places this rise to independence of Roman poetry around the time when Quintus Ennius (239-169 BC) introduced the dactylic hexameter as a rule for epic poems in Latin (Waltz, 13). This rule required the Roman writers to pay much more attention to the language, the length of the syllables and the shape of words in order to fit the verses. This restriction launched in Rome a search for the regularity and enrichment of the Latin language that would lead, among other things, to the emergence of Roman lyric poetry as an autonomous genre. This development owed again much to Greek literature as the vocabulary and the forms that Roman writers included in their works came mostly from Greek sources.

Horace's talent at this point lay in his ability to transcend imitation, to fuse the richness of Greek lyric poetry with Latin and create something new.⁸ Horace was neither a blind imitator, nor a complete innovator.⁹ Catullus, Laevius and others before him had already begun enriching the vocabulary and establishing some Hellenic poetic forms. Horace's achievement throughout his work was to ban the last traces of Greek licence left by Catullus, to create new words, imagine new stanzas or improve previous ones and this with the following goal: to transform Latin poetic language, making it richer, stronger but smoother, more calculated, more precise, closer to perfection. Simultaneously with Virgil and his bucolic poetry, with Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid and elegiac verse, Horace gradually lifted Roman lyric poetry to the state of excellence that Latin prose had reached with Cicero and Caesar (Waltz, 16 / Grimal-Lyr, 169). The radiance of the latter inevitably shone over the growing lyric poetry. The philosophy of Cicero and Seneca, other writings of geography and ethnography like Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, and the Latin tradition of panegyrics stand among the

⁸ Waltz, 18-19 / see also Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine, A History of the Ode*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, 23.

⁹ Waltz, 79 / Grimal-Lyr, 170 / Maddison, 23.

prominent influences.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for most of his inspiration, Horace turned to the same source as his predecessors, Greek poetry, and produced *carmina non prius / audita*, “songs never heard before” (*Odes* 3.1.2-3).¹¹

To compose these brand new poems, Horace borrowed from various Greek lyric writers. These sources provided him not only with forms but sometimes with themes also stemming from previous literary traditions (Waltz, 78). The Horatian ode as we call it today is in fact a compound of elements from different origins, most of them Greek.

One form especially dominates the books of odes: the four-line stanza. As Jacques Perret notes, Horace uses almost exclusively variations of this specific stanza for his odes. The critic even reminds us that the consistency in the use of such a form does not surprise us precisely because Horace has made us accustomed to it (Perret, 94). Before Horace, the dominant structure was the couplet sometimes supplanted by the verse *kata stichon*, the continuous sequence of similar lines also used in a few occasions by Horace. He brought the four-line stanza to the forefront and declined it in different ways. All of them came from Greece and especially from its lyric poetry.

Back in the seventh and the sixth century before Christ, Greek lyric poetry had existed in two forms characterised mainly by the number of singers. Choral odes were designed for choirs and monodies for single performers.¹² Among the choral ode writers, the virtuosity of one poet, Pindar, brought the form to its apogee in odes

¹⁰ See Nisbet, xiv-xv. There is a controversy about the role of the Latin panegyric tradition in Horace's odes. Critics like J. Perret consider the panegyric form as too rigid for Horace's purpose and therefore deny its presence in his poems (Jacques Perret, *Horace*, Paris, Hatier, 1959, 91). However, as we will deal with the genres that Horace combines in his writing, evidence of its presence will emerge from the examples provided by various other commentaries.

¹¹ For the Latin text and English translation of Horace, I have used *Horace, Odes and Epodes*, tr. Niall Rudd, Loeb Classical Library, London, Harvard University Press, 2004.

¹² John D. Jump, *The Ode*, London, Methuen, 1974, 3.

dedicated to victors at the Greek games.¹³ His influence affected even Horace. However, despite Pindar's importance, the Latin poet did not use the three-stanza system of strophe, antistrophe and epode for which the Greek poet became so famous during and after the Renaissance.¹⁴ For the form, Horace found most of his inspiration in the work of the monodic poets.

In the closing poem of the third book of his odes, Horace presents himself as the first poet who "adapted Aeolian song to Italian measures" (Maddison, 22).

princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
deduxisse modos. (*Odes* 3.30.13-14)

The tradition indicated by the term Aeolian generally recalls what others describe as Lesbian literature. Both adjectives, Aeolian and Lesbian, indicate the literary culture of the Greek island of Lesbos where an Aeolian variety of Greek was spoken (Grimal-Lyr, 22). The two traditions, Aeolian and Lesbian, indeed merge on this island. Their main representatives, Sappho and Alcaeus, were born there and are both considered the leaders of the monodic writers. Horace's lines quoted above clearly designate this literary movement as the model for his *Italos modos*, his Italian or Latin verse. Jacques Perret, however, explains that the Aeolian tradition goes back in time far beyond these two poets (Perret, 99). The metrical forms that we commonly describe as the Alcaic and the Sapphic stanzas were created long before Alcaeus and Sappho started using them. The names that we use for these verse-forms were how-

¹³ In fact, these are all that we have left of his work which contained many other different poems. As a result, Pindar's present renown relies essentially on these epinician odes. See Maddison, 5-6.

¹⁴ Horace says it himself in 4.2: *numerisque fertur / lege solutis*—"and is carried along in free unregulated rhythms" (11-12). The Pindaric form was indeed too loose and variable to suit Horace's taste for regularity and density (Perret, 93).

ever established later in the Alexandrian period.¹⁵ Horace became familiar with these stanzas through the work of the two Lesbian poets.

The main source seems to have been Alcaeus. Horace found in him a model not only for the Alcaic stanza but also for the other Aeolian verse forms. Like the Sapphic stanza, these forms appear in Alcaeus' poems but less frequently than the Alcaic stanza. Perret infers that Alcaeus' capacity for switching easily from one form to the other, from the Sapphic stanza to the asclepiad, for example, might have been a good reason for Horace's decision to imitate his style (Perret, 93). The Greek lyric is probably the only model that Horace used to find a new metrical basis for Roman lyric poetry. Considering that Horace wrote over a third of his lyric poems using the Alcaic stanza, there is little doubt about the extent of Alcaeus' influence. The Ode to Cleopatra (1.37) provides a good illustration of this dominant form:

Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
pulsanda tellus, nunc Saliaribus
ornare pulvinar deorum
tempus erat dapibus, sodales. (Odes, 1.37.1-4)

Now let the drinking begin! Now let us thump the ground with unfettered feet! Now is the time, my friends, to load the couches of the gods with a feast fit for the Salii!

The sequence of two hendecasyllables, an enneasyllable and a decasyllable constitutes the usual pattern of the Alcaic stanza. In Alcaeus' writing, the rule determining the length of the syllables for each line is very loose. Horace started his adaptation of the Aeolian verse by introducing a much greater regularity. This example shows his

¹⁵ The Alexandrian or Hellenistic period is the time when the library of Alexandria and its critics dictated the literary canon over the Greek-speaking world. It lasted approximately from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC till 30 BC, in other words centuries after Alcaeus and Sappho (see "Alexandrian poetry", OCD, second edition, 43-44).

achievement. The Sapphic stanza went through the same process. Only a little less frequent than the Alcaic form, it appeared in Rome before Horace. Nevertheless, most of the changes that the metrical form underwent towards a more Roman order happened under his guidance. In Greece, both Sappho and Alcaeus use this form. However, they differ from each other in the subjects that they treat. Sappho describes a variety of personal feelings, stages and events in a woman's life.¹⁶ On the other hand, Alcaeus's tumultuous life inspired him with verses on political and military topics.¹⁷ This, together with his erotic and banquet poems, is what made him famous; and this fitted perfectly Horace's purpose for his political odes. Alcaeus offered Horace an "engaged and resonant voice" that the Latin poet could claim for himself through clever imitation.¹⁸ The ode "To Augustus" represents an example of the borrowing of this "engaged voice" by Horace. The common affinity of the two poets for political subjects helps to explain Horace's choice of Alcaeus as his model for the political odes.

Despite this affinity, the most obvious aspect of Alcaeus' influence remains on the technical level of the form (Nisbet, xii). Horace's use of the stanza differs however slightly from the model. The Roman poet exploited the Alcaic stanza with long words and long syllables more often than his predecessor, producing an impression of "weight and dignity" (Maddison, 23). This distinction reminds us that Horace was not a blind imitator: his own touch of "independence" can be traced in all the forms that he borrowed (Nisbet, xi).

¹⁶ Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influence on Western Literature*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949, 226.

¹⁷ See *Odes* 1.32.3-8. Gilbert Highet particularly underlines this "political sensitivity" common to both Horace and Alcaeus, very likely transmitted from the Greek model to the younger writer (Highet, 226).

¹⁸ Denis Feeney, "Horace and the Greek Lyric Poets", *Horace 2000: a celebration*, ed., Niall Rudd, London, Duckworth, 1993, 49.

There is another difference: the two poets were addressing a different audience. Horace wrote for a reading public; Alcaeus, on the other hand, often recited his work with musical accompaniment for a circle of friends at a banquet or at a religious festival.¹⁹ This difference has an effect on the language used by the poets. Horace was addressing a cultivated few, and, as we said earlier, attempted to make Latin poetic diction more subtle and precise. This sophistication contrasts with Alcaeus' rather straightforward diction (Nisbet, xii). In fact, the sophistication of Horace's language belongs more to his handling of the words than to the quality of the words themselves. Horace uses a prosaic language that even epic poets and elegists deliberately avoided (Nisbet, xxii). He devotes, however, greater creative energy to the positioning of the words.

The freedom of the word order is indeed of particular importance in Horace's poems. Both Greek and Latin are inflected languages. Combined with the regularity of his metrical forms, this linguistic feature allowed the poet to play with the order of the words and build emphasis on any element of the sentence.²⁰ The finesse of meaning resulting from the meticulous positioning of the words became one of Horace's most characteristic features (Maddison, 29). In ode 1.2, for example, the expansion of certain pairs of words over two lines, the run-overs like *u/xorius* (19-20), reflects the wild character of the river out of control (Nisbet, 27). This is not a feature that poets in an uninflected language like English can easily imitate. Milton sometimes attempts to do so: Marvell does not. However, other similar devices allow modern poets to vary the sentence structure to match the content or to change the position in focus.

¹⁹ Gauthier Liberman, *Alcée, fragments, tome I*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1999, 23ff / Nisbet, xii.

²⁰ Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace, A Critical Study*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1966, 50.

As we have seen, the crucial role in the verse-shaping of Horace's political odes belongs, among the Greek lyric poets, to the monodic writers. On the contrary, the rest of Greek literature left the form untouched and exerted its influence almost exclusively on the content of our poet's writing. This part seems to owe its substance more to the choral odes than to the monodies. Pindar and his followers have indeed their share of influence on Horace's odes. Horace, however, declares that Pindar is inimitable. Whoever wants to imitate him "relies on wings that have been waxed with Daedalus' skill", and, like Icarus, will fall into the sea punished for his arrogance (See *Odes*, 4.2.1-4).²¹ In fact, as Nisbet explains, "in the tradition of rhetoric his protestations of reluctance are themselves an acceptance of the challenge" (Nisbet, xiii). Indeed, considering the evidence of Pindaric influence in his poetry, Horace's objection looks very rhetorical. Twice at least, Horace uses full Pindaric mottoes, at the opening of the ode 1.12 and the end of 1.8.²² Moreover, although the forms are monodic, the structure itself bears the mark of Pindar's weight (Nisbet, xiii). Its complexity recalls the elaborate style of the Greek poet. "Roundabout introductions", "rolling periods", "portentous maxims", "heroic speeches" etc, the list presented by Nisbet is self-explanatory. Horace's odes show a high level of complexity in their design. The sample poems of the next part illustrate this point very clearly. Themes are not left behind either. Among the Roman Odes (*Odes* 3.1-6) the paragon of the political odes, 3.4, expresses very Pindaric ideas. The exalted status of the poet in lines 21 to 28 echoes Pindar's view of his own profession; the presentation of the myth of the giants as metaphor for the force of mindlessness (3.4.42-76) recalls the eighth Pythic ode (Pindar, *Pythics*, VIII). However, Nisbet reminds us that

²¹ Extract quoted in Hightet, 525 & Nisbet, xiii.

²² The motto of 1.8 comes from Pindar's third Nemean and the one of 1.12 from his second Olympian (Nisbet, xiii).

one should not exaggerate the comparison since the “clipped rhetoric” of this poem is particularly un-Pindaric (Nisbet, xiii).

The monodies also left some traces in the content. Unfortunately, most of the texts of the Lesbian poets being lost, it is impossible to determine with precision how many themes and images find their roots in the monodic writings (Highet, 225-6). The remaining fragments reveal nevertheless a few themes that can be traced down to Horace’s poems. The theme of war, for instance, is very present in his poetry.

age dic Latinum,
barbite, carmen,
Lesbio primum modulate civi,
qui ferox bello, tamen inter arma,
sive jactatam religarat udo
litore navim, (*Odes* 1.32.3-8)

come, my Greek lyre, sing a Latin song. You were first tuned by a citizen of Lesbos, who was a valiant warrior, and yet, between attacks, or if he had tied up his storm-tossed ship on the still-wet stand.

The belligerent attitude of the sixth line is typical of Alcaeus’ verse and the adjective Lesbian confirms the allusion.²³ In his own poems, Horace takes over the same topic.

audiet civis acuisse ferrum,
quo graves Persae melius perirent (*Odes* 1.2.21-22)

[The young generation] will hear how citizens sharpened the sword which should rather have slain the deadly Parthians,

These lines of ode 1.2 describe the painful shame of the civil war in which Horace himself took part on the Republican side. In the “Cleopatra Ode” (1.37), war even

²³ François Villeneuve, *Horace, Odes (Introduction et notes d’Odile Ricoux)*, deuxième tirage, Paris, Belles Lettres, 2002, 79n.

pervades the whole poem: the central topic is the battle of Actium in 31 BC with the defeat of Cleopatra and Antony, the latter strangely forgotten in the poem.

Together with the thematic similarities, some Alcaic metaphors and images have found their way into Horace. Odile Ricoux acknowledges that, despite the importance of the theme of war inspired by his political activity on the island of Lesbos, Alcaeus was better known for his erotic lines and drinking poems at banquets with friends (Villeneuve, 80n). Horace took over the drinking image in the “Cleopatra Ode”, his best known civic ode using the Alcaic stanza. The image forms the core structure of the poem. Steele Commager provides a very clear description of its elaborate construction (Commager, 88ff).

The structure relies primarily on a multi-level antithesis linked at the same time to the form and to the content, to the repertoire of the Greek Lyric poets and to the historical context of 31 and 30 BC. The complex image of the drink incorporates all these aspects. This image borrowed from Alcaeus opens the poem and gives the tone (Grimal-Lyr, 28). *Nunc est bibendum* perfectly translates the *Nūn χρη μεθύσθην* of Alcaeus’ fragment 332 (Villeneuve, 90n): “Now must men get drunk”.²⁴ The antithesis is based on the two facets of this image, the literal and the metaphorical sense of being drunk. The introductory motto is a very literal command and the same stanza includes two other allusions to this literal meaning of drinking. The word *libero* that ends the first line is a very likely pun on the name of Liber assimilated with Bacchus the god of wine, art and drinking, and the *caecubum* of the second stanza refers to the Caecuban region that produced wines much appreciated in Rome (Villeneuve, 335).

²⁴ The number of the fragment mentioned by Villeneuve comes from the 1994 Loeb classical edition of Alcaeus’ work. As for the English translation of Alcaeus, I have used *Greek Lyric I, Sappho and Alcaeus*, tr. David A. Campbell, Loeb Classical Library, London, Harvard University Press, 1990.

In the third stanza, Horace introduces the figurative sense of being drunk. The poet describes here the main character of the poem, the Egyptian queen Cleopatra as being drunk. This qualifies her state before the battle that she is about to lose; the adverb *antehac* in line five indicates this temporal situation. This time, however, the source of the drunkenness is not any Caecuban wine but power and illusions (*fortunaque dulci / ebria*, 1.37.11-12 / *dementis*, 7 / *impotens*, 10 / *furorem*, 12). The effect remains so similar to wine that Horace suggests that the Mareotic wine is partly responsible for the queen's state (14).²⁵ Cleopatra's fondness for drinking was notorious, as Steele Commager reminds us (Commager, 94). We find confirmation in Propertius:

‘Non hoc, Roma, fui tanto tibi cive verenda!’

dixit et assiduo lingua sepulta mero. (Propertius, 3.11.55-6)

‘Having so great a citizen as this, O Rome, you need not have feared me’:

thus spoke even a tongue drenched in ceaseless toping.²⁶

Having pointed out Cleopatra's drunkenness, Horace ends the poem with her last drink: *conbiberet venenum* (28)—“she drank the poison”. This image brings the two levels of interpretation together, the literal and the figurative. The physical act of drinking poison represents her last surrender to her “drunken irresponsibility” in the literal sense (Commager, 91). Her defeat by Octavian's fleet, described in the fourth stanza, had already shattered her vain hopes of glory and power (*quidlibet impotens sperare*, 10-11). The successful Roman attack had brought her back to real fears (*veros timores*, 15). She flees. By drinking the poison, Cleopatra obtains at last her freedom from the illusions representing the figurative side of her drunkenness. She

²⁵ Marea was an Egyptian city next to Alexandria and, like Caecuba, it was well known for producing a sweet and perfumed wine (Villeneuve, 342).

²⁶ For the Latin text and English translation of Propertius, I have used *Propertius, Elegies*, tr. G.P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, London, Harvard University Press, 1999.

celebrates with this last drink an ultimate triumph, her escape from an undignified treatment as a defeated enemy of the Romans. This conclusion offers a view of Cleopatra that is very different from the negative picture at the beginning.

Horace's presentation of the Egyptian court most certainly provoked in any Roman a feeling of disgust: the unmanly retinue of eunuchs carrying diseases (*contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo virorum*, 9-10) led by a woman, a *fatale monstrum* (21) daring to defy Rome clearly bears an extremely negative connotation for Roman male gentility (Commager, 92). This description dominated by a feminine element becomes positive in the end when Cleopatra is granted male features just before she dies.²⁷ The adjective *generosus* (*generosius*, 21) is one of the main attributes of the Roman noble citizen *par excellence*. The fact that she does not fear the enemy's sword like a woman (*nec muliebriter / expavit ensem*, 22-23) and does not hide from it (*nec latentis / [...] reparavit oras*, 23) proves her manly courage. Brave and fierce (*fortis*, 26 / *ferocior*, 29), she dares to escape Octavian's custody by choosing a *deliberata mors* (*deliberata morte*, 29). All these masculine qualifications transform the despised queen into a respectable enemy. The main antithesis relies on this particular aspect.

Around the middle of the poem, Horace skilfully diverts the sympathy of the reader from the sober and triumphant Octavian of the beginning towards his drunken Egyptian enemy. She is rehabilitated *in extremis* by her dignity in facing death. In the first part, the triumph belongs to the Roman nation embodied by Octavian. The Alcaic motto of stanza one invites the banquet companions, the *sodales*, to drink and celebrate this victory. At the very end of the ode, the position of the word *triumpho* assumes its full meaning and the victory changes sides. This arrogant triumph (*su-*

²⁷ Steele Commager, "Horace, *Carmina* 1.37", *The Phoenix*, 12 (1958), 50-51&54. Further references to this article are indicated by the abbreviation *Commager* (1958).

perbo [...] *triumpho*, 31-32) could have belonged to Octavian and his allies, the Liburnian pirates (*saevis Liburnis*, 30). In the last stanza, however, by choosing the freedom granted by death, Cleopatra captures the triumph for herself. The song of victory of the beginning turns finally into a panegyric, an elegy to the vanquished queen.

The transition happens in lines 17 to 24:

Caesar, ab Italia volantem
remis adurgens, accipiter velut
mollis columbas aut leporem citus
venator (*Odes* 1.37.16-19)

Caesar pursued her as she flew away from Italy with oars, like a hawk after a gentle dove or a speedy hunter after a hare.

In this passage, Horace introduces an image from epic literature (Nisbet, 415n). The metaphor of the hunter and the hunted, here declined in a double simile as the hawk and the dove and the hunter chasing the hare, finds its origins in the *Iliad*.²⁸ Other Latin authors like Virgil and Ovid used the same epic image. In 1.37, the allusion remains discrete but undeniable and well-situated in the centre. The epic metaphor of the hunter and the hunted constitutes the main articulation of the poem; with it, Horace transforms the female enemy drunken with illusions into a dying queen who arouses pity and admiration for her defiance. This transition is obviously deliberate and confirms Horace's fondness for an elaborate structure.

To achieve such a shift of sympathy, transforming a hideous enemy into a hero, the Latin poet manipulates a series of facts (Commager, 91). He omits, for example, to present Antony and his role in the battle of Actium. He also skips the years

²⁸ Villeneuve and Nisbet refer more precisely to *Iliad* XXII, 139-144 (Villeneuve, 91 / Nisbet, 415-6).

between Cleopatra's defeat at Actium and her noble death in Alexandria, building thus a dubious link of cause and consequence between the two events. Horace then gives as the only motive for her suicide her refusal to submit to Caesar's triumph, a hypothesis discounted in other accounts. The writer of the odes also leaves out Cleopatra's attempts to seduce Octavian as she did Julius Caesar and Antony. Horace in the end reduces the battle of Actium to a double opposition. On one hand, he sets against each other the sober Octavian and the drunken queen and on the other hand, he opposes this same drunken queen to her dignified self on the verge of death (Commager, 91-92). To this double contrast Horace adds a whole set of antagonisms to nourish the basic antithetical structure. On a wider scale, beyond Octavian and Cleopatra, the poem opposes two different cultures: the Eastern Egypt and the Western Rome, the old traditions and the new rising power, the defeated feminine and the victorious male. Using these, Horace builds up the tension throughout the poem. In the last stanza, with the death of Cleopatra, one of the poles of the antithesis disappears and resolves this tension (Commager, 74).

This development and resolution are particularly significant for Horace's style. Their presence in a series of other odes corroborates this argument. In the ode to Agrippa (1.6), Horace opposes the war in the literal sense, *bella*, to a metaphorical understanding of it, the constant struggle of the lover, the *bella amoris*. In the ode 4.2, Nature stands against Art. Earlier, in the first book, the ode to Pyrrha (1.5) contrasts external and internal beauty. This structural pattern rules many of Horace's odes, including some that are political. Commager identifies this antithesis between the literal and the figurative, between the description and the metaphor as the "most distinctive element of his verse" (Commager, 69). In Horace's writing, the metaphor

becomes a principle of organisation, illustrating a characteristic blending of content and form (Commager (1958), 54).

The unfolding of the drinking image in 1.37 also reveals that Horace uses history as an element of structure in a similar way as he does with metaphors. The poem presents a chronological description of the battle of Actium in 31 BC, its outcome and the consequences. Obviously, the poet remains very sketchy and omits some important details. The figure of Antony is the most important omission. Historically, he is at the core of the conflict that led to the events of Actium; but his presence would have seriously weakened the male-female, Roman-non-Roman opposition between Octavian and Cleopatra. By mentioning Antony, Horace would have revived the controversial topic of civil war where Romans fought other Romans. The “dissident” would have tarnished the glorious aura of Octavian’s victory and shaken the patriotic hostility towards Cleopatra and her effeminate court. In such conditions, the transformation of Cleopatra into a triumphant figure at the end of the poem would have failed to produce its dramatic impact. Horace could, of course, have included the submissive unmanly figure of Antony among the *turpium* [...] *virorum* (9-10) of Cleopatra’s retinue. This would have been in tune with Octavian’s propaganda, but Horace needed to exclude Antony from the opposition between Octavian and Cleopatra; his absence reinforces the structural antithesis that the drinking image helped to build. This example shows how Horace selects among the events and the characters of the years 31 to 30 BC the components that serve his purpose and how he leaves others out.

The political stance of Horace in 1.37 is as complex as the structure. The latter perfectly serves the former. Robin Seager rightly remarks that, in the first part,

Horace presents the battle of Actium as an act of defence rather than a civil war.²⁹ His manipulation of the facts that we discussed in the previous paragraph allows him to do so. He leaves out Antony, the senators that had fled Rome to join him, and his soldiers, all of them Romans. Instead he depicts Cleopatra as a deadly threat to Rome; she was the queen that could bring down the Capitol (6-8). Fortunately, Octavian has won the battle and forced her to flee. This is how the first part starts, on a note of celebration. After the two central similes, the situation changes. The poet uses rather negative adjectives like *saevus* (30) to describe Octavian's allies, or *superbo* to describe his triumph. Cleopatra, on the other hand, enjoys a rather admiring treatment in complete opposition to the initial portrait. Horace's sympathy at the end of the poem is mainly marked by its division and its ambiguity. His technique of selection and his antithetical structure are not irrelevant to this outcome.

As we have seen with the Greek models, Horace built his own style exploiting a wide variety of sources. He applies this method to the language too. He carefully picks from the genres words and images to fit his ambition of originality for Latin lyric poetry. To introduce his narration in the ode 3.4, Horace invokes Calliope, the muse of epic poetry (2). The genre of the epos enjoyed the highest consideration in the ancient literary world; its presence in Horace's poems dealing with battles and military conquests is predictable. The two central similes of 1.37 are a good example (Nisbet, 415). Ode 1.2, earlier in the book, contains a similar epic picture. The image in the seventh line of a seal-herd pasturing in the mountains comes ultimately from the *Odyssey*.³⁰ The *ridens* of line 33 qualifying *Erycina*, another name for Venus, is also Homeric (Nisbet, 31). In the same ode, Horace describes a terrible flood threatening Rome. In the description, the poet evokes several mythological characters: Pyr-

²⁹ Robin Seager, "Horace and Augustus: Poetry and Policy", *Horace 2000: a celebration*, ed., Niall Rudd, London, Duckworth, 1993, 32.

³⁰ Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.411ff (Original lines quoted in Nisbet, 23).

rha, Proteus, Ilia and her husband the river Tiber. Adolphe Waltz explains that such mythological allusions typically belong to the genre of the epos (Waltz, 26). In fact, she argues that historical allusions act also as links to the same genre. The historical allusion in ode 1.2 is obvious: the sixth stanza evokes the shame of the Civil War. The ode 3.4 adds another dimension and shows a combination of history and mythology. The method is simple: a mythological simile serves to illustrate a historical situation. The poet recalls in this poem the war between the gods and the Titans. Horace exhorts the semi-divine Octavian to fight the mindlessness of the barbaric Parthians as Jove fought against the Titans. In the next Roman Ode (3.5), Horace again mentions the Parthians, now called Persians, and presents them as the most urgent enemy of Rome. There the poet praises the fighting spirit and the devotion to the Roman cause of the national hero Regulus. These historical characters place history at the centre of 3.5 as it is in 1.2. Horace' political odes provide numerous examples of this feature.

The Ode 1.2 "To Augustus" also includes elements characteristic of other literary genres popular in Horace's time. The poem calls on three different generic traditions to distinguish three definite parts in the text. The general structure of the ode corresponds first to a typical Roman augur interpretation. Francis Cairns' investigation details the different stages of the Roman formal procedure revealed in the poem.³¹ This genre appears in the first part and develops throughout the text counting the other two as parts of its own development. As in the "Cleopatra Ode", the structure of the ode "To Augustus" depends strongly on the content. The epos, as we have seen, is also present throughout the text in historical and mythological allusions. It

³¹ Francis Cairns, "Horace, Odes 1.2.", *Eranos*, 69 (1971), 70-76.

does not however influence the structure. It mainly grants solemnity to the language of the ode.

Stanzas 1 to 6 constitute the first part. It opens on a description of a gigantic tempest of snow, hail, lightning and a flooding river (stanzas 1,4,5). The whole is orchestrated from the sky (*terris [...] misit Pater*, 1-2), the signal that a god has been offended. Violent natural events, especially hail (*dirae / grandinis*, 1-2), were seen in Rome as evident signs of an offence to a god. Public officers were appointed for the analysis of these omens and the search for explanations and solutions; their work was compiled in priestly records often used as sources by historians.³² Livy and Pliny the Elder, for example, describe *prodigia* like those mentioned by Horace (Cairns, 71). Horace, however, follows here the example of Virgil's first Georgic where his contemporary accounts for "the portents that attended Caesar's assassination" (Nisbet, 16). In the second and third stanza of 1.2, Horace compares the opening tempest with the mythological flood with which Jove wiped out the human race, saving only Pyrrha and Deucalion to recreate it. After the description introducing the poem, Horace identifies the offended divinities, Vesta (16) and Ilia (17) and tries to determine the cause of their anger. Stanza 6 states this cause as being the Civil War where Romans fought against other Romans (21-24). Some critics, pointing at the similarity with Virgil's first Georgic, also mention the murder of Julius Caesar in 44 BC as the *scelus expiandi* (29)³³ and see both Vesta and Ilia as demanding revenge for this event. As *pontifex maximus*, Julius Caesar was a *sacerdos Vestae*—a priest of Vesta (Cairns, 73n22)—and thus the flood attacking Vesta's temple (16) could be understood as an allusion to his murder. Moreover, Caesar's kinship with Ilia through a common an-

³² See OCD on divination.

³³ This popular interpretation was originally formulated by Porphyrio, the first commentator of Horace's work who lived in the early third century AD (Commager, 178 / OCD, 864). Nisbet and Commager, however, refuse to count the murder of Caesar as one of the causes of the anger of the gods (Nisbet, 17&26-27 / Commager, 178).

cestor, Aeneas, was normally acknowledged (Nisbet, 27). Both goddesses have therefore good reasons for expressing their divine wrath.³⁴

In the second part, from stanza 7 to 11, the poet appeals to various gods for their help in resolving the cause of the tempest. The genre changes here to that of a paean, a formal prayer to a god (Cairns, 68). *Precamur*—“we pray you”, says Horace (30). The poet addresses various gods all related to Octavian. In line 25, Horace turns first to *augur Apollo*, the patron of the lyric arts, precisely because of the lyric genre of the ode and also because of his patronage of Octavian and of the victory of Actium.³⁵ Then he calls for the help of Venus (*Erycina ridens*, 33) and Mars (*auctor*, 36), parents of the Roman race. He finally prays to Mercury (*filius Maia*, 43), the true avenger of Caesar (*Caesaris ultor*, 44). This last role can easily be passed on to Octavian. As Nisbet notes, “Octavian rose to power as the avenger of his adopted father Julius Caesar”. He fought Brutus and other Republican opponents including the young Horace at Philippi in 42 BC and executed the last murderers of his father after the victory at Actium in 31 BC (Nisbet, 36 / Grimal, 20-22). This mixed figure of Octavian-Mercury, the avenger of Caesar, introduces the third part.

In these eight final lines, Horace reveals at last the addressee of the poem, suggested already by the formula *Caesaris ultor*. The position of these two stanzas at the end of the ode confers on them a particular weight. They represent the final stage of the augur interpretation described by Cairns. The poet reveals here the means of expiating the crime that is the cause of the gods’ anger and therefore of the portent. In other words, the two last stanzas provide the answer to the central question of the poem: *Quem vocet divum populus ruentis / imperi rebus?* (25-6)—“What divinity are

³⁴ Nisbet and Commager object to this conclusion by putting forward, among other things, the fifteen years that had elapsed since the death of Caesar (Nisbet, 17 / Commager, 178). Cairns answers that such delay was common in ancient literature (Cairns, 73n). The controversy still goes on.

³⁵ Pierre Grimal, *Le siècle d’Auguste*, Paris, PUF, 1968, 37.

the people to call upon to restore the fortunes of their crumbling power?”. The answer is Octavian-Caesar (52). In line with the previous part about divinities, he is directly assimilated to a god, the future Augustus, when asked to delay his return to heaven (*Serus in caelum redeas*, 45). Only he shall cast away the modern vices (*nostris vitiis*, 47), fight against the Parthians (*Medos*, 51) and bring back peace.

This third part owes its content to one of the oldest oratorical genres, the panegyric discourse. Originally, it meant a praise of a god written in prose; later it could address any prominent figure, in this case Octavian (Nisbet, 17). As we have seen, Horace’s ode 1.2 obviously does not follow the form of the original prose panegyric; it is a regular ode written in Sapphic stanzas. On this point, Jacques Perret’s objection to the presence of the panegyric form, too rigid for the odes, is justifiable.³⁶ However, despite his opinion on the form, the involvement of the panegyric genre in Horace’s odes remains evident. It provides a general outline for Horace’s political odes (Nisbet, xv&xvii). By general outline, Nisbet means that these odes with few exceptions have Octavian-Augustus and his achievements as their main topic of praise. The ode “To Augustus” is not an exception. The praises differ from each other in form and in the aspects of the Augustan regime that they treat. Nisbet provides a list of the panegyric conventions present in Horace’s odes (*ibid.*).³⁷ As for 1.2, a few items appear under close analysis, items grouped in the two last stanzas. First, Horace evokes the vices of the Roman people that Caesar will combat (*nostris vitiis iniquum*, 47). He will restore Rome to its former grandeur and virtues, and start conquering again, especially the land of the Parthians who have so far held the Ro-

³⁶ See footnote 10.

³⁷ Two ancient authors in particular list the various conventions of this genre: Menander Rhetor and Aristotle. In Rome, the tradition finds in Cicero a very talented representative. See Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique de l’éloge dans le monde Gréco-romain*, vol. 1, Paris, Institut d’études augustiniennes, 1993, 12-13. For an analysis of the Latin panegyric conventions in seventeenth-century England, see James D. Garrison, *Dryden and the Tradition of Panegyric*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1975.

man armies in check (*Medos*, 51). The *imperium cruens* of lines 25 and 26 will be saved and restored, and all this by the avenger of Caesar, Octavian. This praise concludes the ode.

Horace in this poem is definitely turned towards the future. 1.37, on the contrary, looks back to the battle of Actium. In 1.2, the present storm of snow and hail makes the speaker wish for a divine intervention in the near future. Octavian is presented as the solution. His praise includes an element of advice in addition to the encomiastic association with a god. Horace is ready to elevate his ruler to divine status but on the condition that he saves Rome from its vices and from civil war. More precisely, what the poet is asking is for Octavian to eliminate the Parthian threat. Horace sees this as the answer to all problems. A foreign enemy would unite the people again and distract them from the vices of civil strife.³⁸

The position in end-focus of this panegyric part grants to the praise an importance superior to the other genres. The presence of Octavian already in the second part as *Caesaris ultor* and as the implicit solution to the problem outlined in the first part goes in the same direction. The overall structure confirms this hierarchy of the different elements. The structure itself is provided by the first genre, the interpretation of portents. The paean and the epos then introduce the epic metaphors, the solemnity and the divine character to support the panegyric which, as final purpose of this poem, is delayed until the end.

This “interbreeding of genres” illustrates a method already in fashion before Horace, in particular in Hellenistic literature (Feeney, 44). This rich culture provided Horace with the scrolls of Greek lyric texts and therefore with models to inspire

³⁸ Louis A. MacKay, “Horace, Augustus, and Ode, I,2”, *American Journal of Philology*, 83(1962), 173.

him.³⁹ Hellenistic editions were “the only medium through which he had access to the earlier archaic and classical culture” (Feeney, 44). This definitely had consequences on his writing. The moralizing tone, for instance, for which Horace was well-known, finds its origin in Hellenistic moral philosophy though some of its theories had already made their way into Roman prose literature (Nisbet, xiv). The semi-divine figure of Octavian owes much to the ruler-cult tradition initiated by Caesar but is also inspired by Hellenistic examples (Commager, 169). As for Hellenistic literature, its best representative was probably Callimachus who shares a number of features with Horace. Beyond the mixing of genres, both poets composed and organised their poems in books, for instance. Their use of mottos, typical of Hellenistic literature, is another common feature. Horace’s use of models shows however that he does not belong among the post-Hellenistic poets (Feeney, 45). In fact, neither does he belong among the archaic ones.

As Martindale explains, Horace maintains throughout his odes a constant opposition and combination of modern subjects with archaic forms (Martindale, 3). This feature makes him a compound of the two traditions previously held in opposition, somewhere between the Hellenistic Callimachus and the archaic Alcaeus (Feeney, 44). As Waltz’s analysis of Horace’s vocabulary and meters shows, Horace was neither too fond of archaic language nor excessively influenced by Hellenistic over-sophistication (Waltz, 59 / Feeney, 45). The novelty of Horace’s style lies in his ability to combine these distinct literary traditions and produce something different without inventing anything. He borrowed forms, words and images from the magnificent Greek lyric poets, added some Hellenistic features and married the whole to the Roman ideal of order and simplicity. He looked for the best in every genre and

³⁹ We mentioned on pages 7 and 8, for instance, that this Hellenistic tradition, also called Alexandrian, invented the names of Alcaic and Sapphic for the two main stanzaic forms that Horace borrowed from the Greek lyric Alcaeus.

adapted it, to the Latin language for the Greek sources and to the lyric form for the few Latin ones.

With every genre that the poet endeavoured to imitate, he took over a new persona, a new mask of a typical writer of this genre. Horace's speaker is like "an actor wearing different masks" (Nisbet, xxvi). The praising Horace of 1.2 is a mask, and so is the witness of Cleopatra's flight from the battle of Actium in 1.37. The Horace that Steele Commager or R.G.M. Nisbet describes is a series of masks, a "construction of words" (Martindale, 17). The purpose of this particular feature is evident. Wearing a mask, Horace says what he wishes to say but "denies us the right of holding him personally responsible for it" (Commager (1958), 56n). He gains a "protean" ability and avoids the danger of taking sides. Indeed, Horace likes to see both sides of every situation in order to reach an overall view (Commager (1958), 55). In 1.37, for example, Horace presents two opposite attitudes, one in praise of Octavian and the other of Cleopatra and maintains a balance between them. The juxtaposition of the two points of view creates the ambiguity of the poem. In turn, in 1.2, Horace praises the divine Octavian in the last stanzas but also reminds him of his earthly duties towards Rome, to solve the Parthian threat in particular (Commager, 194). In such conditions, definitive statements about the style or the political stance of Horace the "actor" are difficult to formulate. Every critic uses his own terms to describe the style of Horace; and some of the comments stand in complete opposition to each other. We can account for this by saying that Horace's style is the result of decades of gradual maturation.⁴⁰ These decades saw many crucial events and the evolution of Horace's political inclination alongside them. An argument based on the early work of the poet can become irrelevant if applied to his later poems. The rebel-

⁴⁰ Maddison, 31 / Waltz, 3 / Grimal-Lyr, 170.

lious style of Horace's youth is indeed hardly comparable with that of the solemn Roman Odes. From the rebellious young man who went to Greece for studies and joined the Republican side at the battle of Philippi in 42 BC to the respectable imperial poet praising Octavian, his former enemy, as a divine ruler while enjoying a bucolic life on his Sabine farm around 25 years later, the change in attitude and style is significant (Commager, 160). The odes represent this development very well, if we consider the events and the time elapsed between the writing of the first odes around 32 BC and the publication of the fourth book in 13 BC (Villeneuve, xv&xvii). A general analysis of Horace's work must take the time-factor into account. The main objective of this first chapter, however, is not to indulge in speculation on this topic but remains the search for a series of recurrent features in Horace's political odes to provide material for a comparison with later poems. The examination of representative samples has drawn attention to typical aspects of these odes' form and their content.

In the "Cleopatra Ode", we saw Horace's ability to manipulate the content to constitute the structure of the poem. Written in Horace's adaptation of the Greek Alcaic stanza, the ode 1.37 is a perfect example of the antithetical organisation very frequent in Horace's odes. To ensure the strong polarity of the opposition, the poet manipulates certain historical facts. As a result of the antithetical positions of the poet, his political stance is blurred, probably on purpose. History and structure, form and content and the notions of hero and enemy are, in this ode, closely linked. The structure of the ode "To Augustus" reflects the same complexity. Here, the poet uses three sets of generic conventions. Through this "interbreeding of genres", this political ode in praise of Octavian shows Horace's debt to the Hellenistic literary culture.

The language that the Latin poet uses in his odes is in itself not remarkable. Adolphe Waltz concludes her analysis of his language by saying that despite the presence of new words and few archaisms, Horace's originality manifests itself more clearly in the style and the syntax of his odes than in the lexical fields (Waltz, 76-77). In other words, the "manner" is more interesting than the "matter" (Nisbet, xxvi). The subtlety of the word order is indeed one of the main features that made Horace's lyric stanzas famous. For Nisbet and Hubbard, Horace's words "click into place with seeming inevitability, and no rubble is needed to fill the cracks" (Nisbet, xxii).

To elaborate his particular style, Horace relied on two main models, the Greek poets Alcaeus and Pindar. The reason why the Latin poet chooses to derive his inspiration from Greek lyric verse, remains however uncertain.⁴¹ Denis Feeney presents on this subject a particularly interesting hypothesis (Feeney, 41-46). A hundred and fifty years before Horace started writing his odes, the literary canon of the lyric poets was established. They were nine poets in the list of Aristophanes of Byzantium: Alcman, Alcaeus, Sappho, Stesichorus, Pindar, Bacchylides, Ibycus, Anacreon and Simonides. Horace writes at the end of his very first ode that he wants to be the number ten and join them in immortality.

quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres,
sublimi feriam sidera vertice. (*Odes* 1.1.35-6)

But if *you* rank me among the lyric bards of Greece, I shall soar aloft and strike the stars with my head.

The quest for immortality finds partisans among the rest of the critics. Nisbet underlines that, in 4.8 and 4.9, Horace borrows from Pindar the particular theme of the

⁴¹ Perret declares that the decisive factor was Alcaeus' ability to switch from one metrical form to the other (see above p.8: Perret, 93). MacKay, on the other hand, declares that using Alcaic forms, Horace appropriates for himself Alcaeus' voice against tyranny and thus prevents the worries about the grouping of all power in one man, Octavian (MacKay, 174).

poet's power to confer immortality (Nisbet, xiii). Highet then recalls how Horace compares himself to a bee in 4.2, the bee that produces honey, the symbol of immortality (Highet, 226). This desire for immortal fame within the Greek lyric canon is for Feeney the reason why Horace turned to Alcaeus for the verse forms and probably to Pindar for other features. Writing in Latin, he needed a strong Greek presence in his verses in order to enter a Greek literary canon. He also needed to move beyond Hellenistic modernism and light forms. He wanted to write something new, something that would make his praises last like the works of the Greek poets. Horace, however, could not simply copy the work of Alcaeus or any Greek poet. Between him and the archaic literature stood the Hellenistic tradition. The poet in the end combined the two. He adapted the archaic forms to modernity and used the same forms to react against the literary trend of his own time. He thus gave a more serious character to the Hellenistic features. Neither completely archaic nor exclusively modern, Horace's style is unique.

In fact, the poet dissociates himself so much from his contemporaries that none of them will follow him (Villeneuve, xxiii / Grimal-Lyr, 195). He is formal, literally conventional and keeps on polishing the "harmony of design" of his poems (Nisbet, xxii-xxiii / Maddison, 23). For the other poets, he is "unfashionable" and thus not particularly representative of his own time that preferred "surface beautification" (Nisbet, idem). Posterity, however, will offer him the fame that he sought so arduously; but he will have to wait until the sixteenth century to inspire something beyond the simple moralizing maxim.⁴² Despite a first appearance of ease in the poetic flow, the complexity of his work makes accurate translation extremely difficult (Martindale, 3 / Nisbet, xxv). Authors who sought to emulate his work favoured

⁴² Hubert Zehnacker et Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Littérature latine*, Paris, PUF, 2005, 166.

therefore the borrowing of selected features to the complete imitation of his style. In his “Horatian Ode”, Andrew Marvell selected a number of elements that he judged representative of Horace’s style and certainly chose them to obtain specific effects. The following chapter devotes itself to the search for these characteristic features on the basis of those established in this present chapter. The final purpose is to describe the probable relation between Marvell’s use of Horace and his own political convictions.

Chapter Two: Marvell and Horace _____

Andrew Marvell composed “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland” in 1650. The old royal order had just been destroyed, and questions and doubts were arising about the nature of the new regime. Marvell’s choice of Horace as a model for his first political poem seems to indicate that Marvell turned to Rome for answers. The repeated civil wars endured by the Romans offered obvious analogies with the troubled times of Marvell’s England. The influence of Horace on the “Horatian Ode”, and of his odes 1.2 and 1.37 in particular, is complemented by the presence of the later poet Lucan and his *Pharsalia* also named *De Bello Civili*.⁴³ If Horace appears as the hopeful witness of the situation, Lucan shares his own fears about the man most likely to take the power, Caesar.⁴⁴ This role of the rising leader was held in England by Oliver Cromwell, the central figure of Marvell’s “Ode”. This portrait of the historical man was designed for contemporary readers who, like Marvell, had a direct memory of the recent events. A few centuries later, the knowledge of the background needs to be refreshed to allow the analysis of both the particular content of Marvell’s poem and the message of its author.

In Marvell’s England, the stormy relationship between King Charles I and the Puritan opposition in the Parliament was the source of continuous conflicts, political and military.⁴⁵ A climax was reached in November 1641, when the Long Parliament, summoned a year before by a penniless Charles, passed the text of the Grand Remonstrance. In this text, the Parliament denounced officially a whole series of

⁴³ J.D. Duff, *Lucan, The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, Loeb Classical Library, London, Harvard University Press, 1977, xii. This edition serves as basis for further references to Lucan.

⁴⁴ R.H. Syfret, “Marvell’s Horatian Ode”, *RES*, 12 (1961), 171.

⁴⁵ C.V. Wedgwood, *Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts*, Cambridge, CUP, 1960, 61&63 / Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Cromwell, la révolution d’Angleterre et la guerre civile*, Paris, PUF, 1993, 3. These authors provide most of the historical background roughly sketched here.

Charles' abuses of power.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, a violent rebellion against English protestant rule burst out in Ireland. The atmosphere of suspicion that arose then between Charles and the Parliament sufficed to kindle the first English Civil War. This war ended with the defeat of the Royalist armies and Charles' arrest in 1647. During his captivity, the King remained nevertheless very active and sought alliances, among others with the Scottish Presbyterians. His efforts were fruitful and in spring 1648, new Royalist uprisings accompanied by a Scottish invasion launched the second Civil War. This time, the war was short and at the end of the year, the parliamentary forces had had the upper hand. A few months after the war, a trial was organised and in January 1649, Charles was sentenced to death and executed. The same year, the Parliament sent an army to Ireland under the command of Oliver Cromwell. His task was to crush the rebellion neglected during the internal conflicts. Unknown before 1641 to the public outside his native region, Cromwell had acquired during the Civil Wars a solid reputation and authority as a popular commander (Poussou, 4). In August 1649, when leaving for Ireland, he was second-in-command of the Parliamentary army after Lord Fairfax. Some months later, summoned urgently by the Parliament, Cromwell had returned from Ireland and was about to lead a preventive attack against the Scots now allied to Charles II. These are the circumstances in which Marvell composed the "Horatian Ode", circumstances that bear a significant influence on its content and its meaning.⁴⁷ As it appears, these events share similar features with the Roman background of Horace's odes.

In both periods, a strong shift of political regime occurred. Horace and Marvell witnessed first the brutal death of the previous ruler. Charles I, executed a year

⁴⁶ Poussou mentions some of the details of this text that in fact blames Charles' advisors rather than directly the King himself (Poussou, 29-30).

⁴⁷ Blair Worden, "Marvell, Cromwell, and the Horatian Ode", *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth Century England*, ed., Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, University of California Press, 1987, 152.

before the composition of Marvell's poem, ruled as an absolute King with divine rights despite the Parliament's efforts to limit his prerogatives.⁴⁸ In Rome, just before his assassination in 44 BC, Julius Caesar had been elected dictator for life, having gathered for himself most of the power of the Republic and enjoying thus a status similar to that of a king. From a monarchy, England turned into a republic in 1653; on the contrary, Rome subjected her Republican system to the will of a single man and became therefore a monarchy in the etymological sense. Indeed, the title of *Augustus* and the godly nature of Julius Caesar, his foster father, granted Octavian a semi-divine aura that made him more a king than a simple senator as the name of *Princeps* might suggest.⁴⁹ As some like Poussou argue, the same was soon to be true for Cromwell after his victory against the Scottish royalist troops, a victory still in the future in the "Horatian Ode" (Poussou, 93). Elected Lord Protector of England, Ireland and Scotland in 1653, he enjoyed until his death a privileged status comparable to that of Augustus. This popular vision of an autocratic Cromwell is nevertheless not unanimous and cannot therefore be considered as factual.⁵⁰

At the time when Marvell and Horace wrote their poems, Cromwell and Octavian were still on the battlefield building up their power. Horace composed the two sample odes presented in the first chapter shortly after the end of the Roman civil war between Octavian and Antony. Both poems, *Odes* 1.37 and 1.2, were indeed

⁴⁸ Bruce King describes very clearly Charles' autocratic behaviour that reached a climax during the 1630s when Charles ruled without Parliament. As for the divine rights, Charles obtained them in 1640 when the Church passed a series of new canons; they were however declared illegal by the Long Parliament the same year (Bruce King, *Seventeenth-Century English Literature*, Hong-Kong, Macmillan, 1981, 83-85).

⁴⁹ Octavian-Augustus held indeed the official office of *Princeps*, as in *Princeps senatus*—first senator of the Republic, and not emperor. In reality, however, all the power was in his hands and not in those of the Senate.

⁵⁰ Peter Gaunt, for instance, places Cromwell's power as Lord Protector on equal level as that of the Council of State (Peter Gaunt, "'The Single Person's Confidants and Dependents'? Oliver Cromwell and his Protectoral Councillors", *Cromwell and the Interregnum, The Essential Readings*, ed., David L. Smith, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 110-111).

written around the year 30 BC.⁵¹ This places their composition after the battle of Actium in 31 BC, centre of the ode 1.37 and the last battle of this civil war. It places them also before 27 BC which is the latest possible date of composition mentioned by the various critics. This detail is significant; it is in 27 BC that Octavian received from the Senate the title of Augustus, an event generally acknowledged as opening the so-called Roman Empire era (Grimal, 7-10). When he wrote the two odes, Horace was therefore at an early stage of his involvement in political life and of Octavian's programme for Rome. When Marvell composed the "Horatian Ode", his situation was the same. Their experience of the civil war was however different.

During the war that led to Charles' capture and finally to his execution, Marvell was away and did not fight.⁵² He avoided the first years of the crisis by leaving England for a four-year trip around Europe.⁵³ Back in 1647, he witnessed the second Civil War of 1648 and Charles' death, the following year. Despite having been raised in Hull, a parliamentary stronghold, Marvell first held openly Royalist sympathies; but when the troubles started, he soon discovered it wise to keep his thoughts more private.⁵⁴ This probably accounts for the difficulty encountered by modern commentators in finding out his later political convictions as, for example, in the "Horatian Ode".

Horace, on the other hand, took in his youth an active part in the civil war triggered by the murder of Julius Caesar. At the battle of Philippi in 42 BC, opposing the Triumvirates Octavian and Antony to Brutus and the other murderers of Caesar,

⁵¹ Villeneuve places the composition of *Odes* 1.2 in 29 BC (p.6) and that of *Odes* 1.37 at the end of 31 BC or beginning of 30 BC (p.90). Nisbet mentions other possibilities, but in the end agrees more or less with Villeneuve (Nisbet, xxviii & 17-19).

⁵² L.C. Knights, *Public Voices, Literature and Politics with Special Reference to the Seventeenth Century*, Totowa, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, 83.

⁵³ Nicholas Murray, *World Enough and Time: The Life of Andrew Marvell*, New York, 2000, 73.

⁵⁴ Muriel Bradbrook, "Marvell our Contemporary", *Andrew Marvell, Essays on the Tercentenary of his Death*, ed., R.L. Brett, Oxford, OUP, 1979, 115.

the young Horace fought as a tribune on the Republican side against Octavian. When mentioning later his implication in this battle, he never expressed regrets for having fought for this cause.⁵⁵ Like Marvell, his later sympathies are harder to determine.

Both writers have also in common their proximity with those in power, a point of view from which they witnessed the tumultuous events of their time. On his return from Europe, Marvell was appointed tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter and later, to Cromwell's ward; he came thus in close contact to two consecutive chief commanders of the Parliament's army. As for Horace, after the defeat of Philippi, the young man came back to Rome. Dispossessed of all his family wealth and estate, he managed nevertheless to buy himself an office as *quaestor* (Nisbet, xxvii). Some time later, friends introduced him to the Roman patron Maecenas whose literary circle granted him eventually access to Augustus' ear and favours. His appointment as official herald of the regime for the secular games of 17 BC represented the culminant point of this rise in the hierarchy (Martindale, 10). For both Horace and Marvell, such involvement in the circles close to power has aroused many questions on the authenticity of the opinions formulated in their poems; its impact on their political attitude is however impossible to evaluate here with enough accuracy.

Civil war, the death of the previous ruler, the change of regime—the similarities between the two periods and the lives of the two poets make the comparison tempting. For Syfret, Marvell probably saw these connections and drew some of his inspiration from the Roman background (Syfret, 162-3); but Coolidge, among other critics, disagrees and rejects this historical comparison (Coolidge, 116). Considering the temporal and cultural distance between the two poets, certain reservations are in

⁵⁵ John S. Coolidge, "Marvell and Horace", *Modern Philology*, 63 (1965-1966), 118 / For precise references to Horace on the topic, see Chester G. Starr, "Horace and Augustus", *American Journal of Philology*, 90 (1969), 58.

order. A pragmatic approach needs therefore to concentrate on the text itself and its technical aspects.

The form of the ode was already popular in England but in various versions. The Pindaric ode, for instance, very irregular in form, was by now established.⁵⁶ As for Horace's ode, Marvell was not the first English poet to imitate it. Jump places the start of the movement a century before, recalling, for instance, a transcription made by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (Jump, 26). Marvell's poem, nevertheless, often bears the title of "the finest Horatian ode in English", an opinion which is often approved but also disputed (Highet, 248). Like Horace, Marvell was not an innovator but the skill that the great majority of critics grant him allows Marvell to dominate the other poets attempting such an imitation. The English poet designed for the "Horatian Ode" a new form, a new adaptation of the original verse.⁵⁷

One would expect the Latin metrical system to be impossible to adapt in English due to the different rhythmic patterns of the two languages. Latin bases its metrical system on the length of the syllables. English, on the other hand, uses stress-patterns (Highet, 249). Aware of this difference, Marvell managed to turn the Alcaic stanza with two hendecasyllables, an enneasyllable and a decasyllable into another fixed four-line stanza and to preserve most of the effect. He chose to conserve the combination of a long and a short couplet with two four-foot and two three-foot iambic lines (Hamer, 224). As in Horace, the form remains unchanging throughout the poem. Every stanza is self-contained. Most couplets even form an independent syntactic entity. There are only two examples of run-on-lines that both happen within a couplet (4,8). Such regularity over the thirty stanzas of the poem recalls Horace's

⁵⁶ Enid Hamer, "The English Ode", *The Metres of English Poetry*, London, Methuen, 1969, 224.

⁵⁷ The latest translation of Horace to which he had access was published in 1647. Thanks to his classical education at Trinity College, Cambridge, however, the English writer could already read and compose in Latin (Legouis, 3&25), which suggests that Marvell certainly consulted the original text at some point.

own consistency in his lyric verse. The second couplets in the whole poem are almost exclusively introduced by either a conjunction (“And” or “But”) or a pronoun (“Where”, “While”, “That”, “How”). These elements and the regularity of the form denote a syntactic subordination of the second to the first couplet. This subordination affects the meaning: the second couplet, a coordinated or relative clause, develops the topic introduced in the first. The third and fourth lines of the first stanza, for example, detail what the “muses dear” of the second line are alluding to: the “numbers” sung by the “forward youth” stand in fact for poetic verses. Marvell revived also the rhyme accused by certain fellow writers, like Milton, of corrupting the language.⁵⁸ His achievement with such formal constraints is the impression of an apparent fluidity of his text. The same remark was made about Horace’s work when the Latin poet used a complex Greek metrical form with fixed caesuras and managed to hide this complexity from the reader or the listener.

Having successfully adapted the Horatian form, Marvell applied the same care to the design of the structure. For Peter R. Moore, this structure divides into three chronological sections.⁵⁹ The first, including stanzas 1 and 2, is set in the present of 1650 and looks forward to the next military campaigns. The second, from stanza 3 to 6, goes back to the beginning of Cromwell’s career in 1642 at the outburst of the civil war and describes it until the King’s death in 1649. As for the third part, starting in stanza 7, it returns to 1642 and moves from then onwards until the present of 1650 where it predicts some future conquests. This division of the text is however incomplete. It does not take into account the tenses used by the author. As Moore correctly points out, the chronological structure relies on a series of historical events

⁵⁸David Norbrook, “Marvell’s ‘Horatian Ode’ and the Politics of Genre”, *Literature and the English Civil War*, ed., Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday, Cambridge, CUP, 1990, 156.

⁵⁹Peter R. Moore, “The Irony of Marvell’s Horatian Ode”, *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, 84 (2003), 36.

spread out through the poem. These elements punctuate with notes of objectivity the development of this poem, highly subjective because of its political character. Moore, however, fails to notice that while most past events are told in the past simple tense, some are recounted from the present point of view of the narrator of 1650. At the end, the poet even looks forward to events that are bound to happen in the near future like the attack on Scotland in stanzas 27 and 28. Marvell uses there the future tense but turns again to the present simple to conclude the poem.

A different chronological structure of the ode can now be designed, inspired by Moore's division of the text but modified by the information provided by the tenses. The first section remains the same: "Now" (2) is the present of 1650. The second one, however, differs. It includes all the stanzas set in the past from the third to the eighteenth. In three of these stanzas where he introduces a more general reflection, the poet uses the present tense to set them apart: stanzas 5 and 10 play a simple reflective role whereas stanza 7 carries the additional function of transition between the two parts of this second section. Stanzas 3 to 6 and stanzas 7 to 18 constitute indeed two separate but coherent entities. Both parts cover the same period of time between 1642 when Cromwell was still unknown, and 1649 when Charles I was executed. Each presents however different events with the exception of the last, Charles' death. The third part starts again with "now" (73) as does the first. From stanza 19 to stanza 24, the narrator's discourse is set in the present, the poet commenting on previous events from his own point of view of 1650. Beginning with stanza 25, Marvell turns then towards the future and reflects on Cromwell's prospective victories and England's consequent rise in Europe. The conclusion goes back finally to the sentential present that Marvell used for his remarks in stanzas 5, 7 and 10. This elaborate structure recalls the care that Horace attached to the design of his own odes. Such a

conclusion fails to mention, however, that complexity was not the privilege of Horace alone. It merely suggests that the two poets shared a similarity of interest for complex poetic constructs, but does not go as far as seeing in it a deliberate mark of allegiance.

The content of Marvell's portrait of Cromwell reflects a comparable interest for complexity. Throughout the poem, Marvell recalls a series of events and political decisions in which Cromwell took part and that led him to power; Cromwell appears here as a man of action. The poet adds to this active behaviour indications of a divine cause and thus seems to present Cromwell as driven in his actions by God's will.⁶⁰ Despite such a clear plan, the detailed analysis of Marvell's presentation reveals indeed that it is dominated by ambivalence; a scenario that blurs Marvell's attitude. On one hand, Cromwell could in fact be a man of ambition, using all means possible to work his way up to power.⁶¹ On the other, he could represent a "scourge of God", the instrument of the implacable divine will (Moore, 41). Between these two, all kinds of variations also exist.

After two stanzas of introduction to the warlike atmosphere of the poem, stanza 3 inaugurates the first aspect of Cromwell's portrait, the ambitious man. Cromwell chose to become a soldier to urge "his active star" (12). It is indeed the victories and the experience in battle that would earn him his reputation and his authority in the future, more than his talents as an orator or politician;⁶² in other words, it was the "adventurous war" that opened before him the way to power. In stanza 4,

⁶⁰ Poussou's description underlines the importance of Cromwell's conviction of serving a "godly cause" (Poussou, 55).

⁶¹ Moore explains by quoting Ben Jonson that ambition in Marvell's time was considered a vice rather than a virtue (Moore, 42).

⁶² A.J.N. Wilson, "On 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland'" (1969), *Andrew Marvell, Poems*, ed., Arthur Pollard, Hong-Kong, Macmillan, 1980, 181. Poussou evokes Cromwell's difficulty in speaking clearly in public, in Parliament, for instance (Poussou, 10&30-31) where he sat in 1628 and in 1640 (Poussou, 13). He also mentions Cromwell's popularity in the army (Poussou, 4).

Marvell tells how Cromwell, rising, forced his “fiery way” through “his own side” (15-16). Moore’s historical analysis provides here an interesting interpretation of the passage (Moore, 37-8). Moore takes into account the first couplet of the next stanza where Cromwell identifies the “emulous” as “enemy”. The critic understands the term “emulous” as meaning here “rival”, a definition accepted in the OED (Moore, 37). During the years preceding the Irish campaign, Cromwell had successfully disposed of three rivals in the course to power. The number coincidentally equals the forks of the trident-shaped lightning (“three-forked”, 13), and all three rivals were from his own party, his “own side”. First in 1645, the Self-Denying Ordinance was voted in the Parliament to “forbid any member of Parliament from holding a military commission“(Moore, 38). The only exception was Cromwell who, leaving the post of second-in-command of one of the old Parliamentary armies became second-in-command of the New Model Army moulded from the regiments of the three rival commanders. The three of them, the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Manchester and Sir William Waller, all Presbyterians, had to resign from their military office. The Presbyterians thus lost the control of the army to Cromwell and the Independents.⁶³ Two years later, the Parliament was in turn purged by the same military forces. All opponents to the Army’s plans were arrested; others were excluded and some refused to come back after Pride’s Purge.⁶⁴ Both events, the Purge and the vote of the Ordinance, were collective decisions but the public apparently knew that Cromwell was the dominant figure behind them.⁶⁵ After this “fiery way” “thorough his own side”, Cromwell and his party had free hands for the rest of their political projects.

⁶³ In reality, the ordinance was only the result of political manoeuvres after a period that saw Cromwell’s popularity rising and the commanders performing very poorly in battles (Moore, 38-39).

⁶⁴ The event was named after the officer in charge of the operation, Colonel Thomas Pride (Moore, 40).

⁶⁵ Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth, Literature in the English Revolution*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, 128.

In the ode, these events showing Oliver Cromwell making progress on his way to power are the earliest allusion to the historical context. They place this first part of Marvell's description in the years preceding the execution of King Charles I, itself appearing in the next stanza, stanza number 6. In the first couplet of this stanza 6, Marvell recalls the historical events of the previous lines. The Purge and the ensuing decisions of the purged Parliament to abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy virtually "rent" the "palaces" (22) of the Parliament and the King alike (Moore, 40). As for the "temples", Bruce King reminds us of a list of measures that the Long Parliament, to which Cromwell belonged, passed to weaken the Anglican Church (King, 85-86). This happened in the 1640s before the Purge. The majority of the Parliament supported by Cromwell and the Independents figuratively "rent" the "temples" of the Anglican Church. Among other measures, lands were confiscated, members of the clergy thus ejected, and the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden. Cromwell was not behind the process itself, being too busy with the war; but as popular leader and promoter of the movement of the Independents, he was still responsible for their influence (Moore, 40).

The same reflection applies to the second couplet of stanza 6. Cromwell as the "three-forked lightning" of stanza 4 finally hits its target, Charles' or "Caesar's head".⁶⁶ After the Purge, the remaining members of the Parliament organised his trial and his execution. At that time, Cromwell was in Ireland; but, for Moore, it was common knowledge that without his consent, the trial would never have taken place. Poussou even attributes to Cromwell the decision to form the court (Poussou, 58). This is clearly the opinion that Marvell's lines express here. Cromwell's popularity

⁶⁶ Caesar obviously stands here for Charles I (Elisabeth Story Donno, *Andrew Marvell, The Complete English Poems*, London, Allen Lane (Penguin Books), 1974, 239n).

and eminent position imply indeed that he had part in all major decisions during this period.

The metaphor of the lightning makes Cromwell and his intense activity directly responsible for Charles' death. The expression "at last" (23), possibly marking the relief after the strike, could indicate Marvell's approval of Cromwell's action and make him a clear supporter of the military leader. The poet even includes in this picture a little allusion to Cromwell's divine cause. The "three-forked" form of the lightning definitely evokes the Ancient pantheon where the trident was wielded by various major deities. This epithet and the stanzas following it should thus be another hint at the divine character of Cromwell's mission. His formulation of these stanzas 3 to 6 allows however a very different interpretation in addition to the first. The restlessness (9) that drives Cromwell to urge "his active star" (12) is very close to ambition; and the ungratefulness of his attack on "his own side" (15), "where [he] was nursed" (14), is not very difficult to imagine. Besides, "at last" (23) has also the simple chronological meaning of *at the end*. Marvell's passage, in the end, could well be more critical than the first reading suggested. The doubt remains.

Starting in stanza 7, the second description of Cromwell's career offers a new example of this ambivalence. Cromwell becomes here the irresistible "angry heaven's flame" (26), an image that echoes the previous image of the "three-forked lightning" (13). This anger coming from heaven clearly reminds us of the offended divinities of Horace's ode 1.2 whose anger manifested itself as a gigantic flood attacking Rome. If we assume that it was Marvell's intention to allude to Horace's ode, the two natural events, the flood and the lightning, represent the divine reaction to a crime against heaven. In Horace, the crime is evoked in the text though not clearly enough to make the interpretation indubitable. In the "Horatian Ode", on the other

hand, the crime would have been committed by the last monarch at whom the lightning has been directed. Charles' unpopular decrees, touching among other things the functioning of the Church of England (King, 84-5), aroused much anger among the citizens and eventually started a war; they could have had the same effect on heaven. Cromwell would then only be the instrument of heaven's anger. Marvell claims that trying to "resist or blame" this divine "flame" can only be "madness" (25). There is madness in the resistance to Cromwell first because of the divine power that he represents: opposing him can be seen as an opposition to God's will, a point of view very frequent in this Puritan period.⁶⁷ Cromwell is thus the mere agent of heaven's will and cannot be blamed for actions that God himself inspired him to take. Beside the dangers in opposing God's decisions, Marvell declares in the second couplet of stanza 7 that people should in fact praise Cromwell because they owe him much.

In the two following stanzas, Marvell sets the example himself and praises the dedication of the "reservèd and austere" Cromwell to a task that appears Herculean, that of changing the course of history (34). As in the first part of the portrait, however, Marvell's praise contains flaws. The other name of the bergamot that Cromwell intends to plant, the "prince's pear", insinuates that the future Lord Protector could have been planning his career and nourishing ambition in his garden already (Story Donno, 239). His action on "the great work of time" (34) then was to "ruin" it, a rather negative achievement. His industrious climbing of the ladder of power reveals again the possible presence of ambition. Cromwell's climbing, however, was done with "valour" (33), a notion that moderates the negative sequence. The second couplet continues with the same positive mood. The kingdoms were old and Cromwell was the man who made possible the change for a new "mould" (36).

⁶⁷ Even Cromwell's rapid rise to celebrity and power is seen as the sign of a divine intervention, and so do the Parliamentary victories in battles after Charles' execution, supposed to bring them God's anger instead (Wedgwood, 113).

As usual now, Marvell ratifies Cromwell's earthly deeds with a divine approval, expressed here by the notion of "Fate" (37). Even "Nature" (41) takes his side. In the 1640s, Cromwell seemed, for Marvell, to be the "strong" man and the "greater [spirit]" (44).

Stanzas 12 and 13 turn away from this triumphant view of Cromwell and show him again as an artful man. They recall Charles' pointless escape in 1647 from Hampton Court to Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight (Story Donno, 240n).⁶⁸ Marvell echoes here an opinion popular among his contemporaries but discounted by historians. This common belief was that Cromwell had tricked Charles into leaving Hampton Court in order to break the trustworthy image that the people still had of him (1.47-52 / Moore, 43). The goal was to prepare the public opinion for the elimination of the monarch (Wilding, 130). Marvell emphasises here Cromwell's aptitude at plotting, a feat that should normally not be encomiastic; his purpose in doing so is obscure for the moment. The consequence of this plot for Charles, on the other hand, is clear.

In the next three stanzas, from 14 to 16, the poet stages the whole beheading of King Charles as a theatrical scene. Charles seems to appear in a very positive light. His head is "comely", his eye "keener" and none of his gestures is simply "common". The adjective "memorable" that Marvell repeats twice (58,65) underlines the significant impact that this episode had on people's memory in Europe (Wedgwood, 102). The precision of Marvell's description and the slow, almost religious pace of his narration, unique in the poem, allow us to visualise the scene as if the scaffold were a theatre stage. The "royal actor" climbs the few stairs of the "tragic scaffold" that he is about to "adorn", with his presence or with his blood, depending

⁶⁸ Charles' flight was short. The governor of the Isle had been in fact recently appointed by the Parliament; he handed Charles rapidly back to the Army (Legouis, 54).

on the point of view. He gives first a keen look at the axe and bows “his comely head” under it without any “vulgar” vindication. At the fall of the axe, the “armèd bands”, gathered around the scaffold like a theatre audience, cheer and “clap their bloody hands”. It is interesting to note that Marvell spills Charles’ blood over the hands of the soldiers and not over Cromwell’s. The effect of such a simple shift is considerable. Marvell thus transfers the heavy responsibility of the King’s execution onto the anonymous number of soldiers (Wilding, 133). The victorious Cromwell, accused earlier of having plotted to condemn Charles (48-50), comfortably gives his responsibility up to the lower ranks. Absent during the execution, the “forcèd power” (66) appears again as soon as it is over.

Marvell brings together this bloody description with that of a legendary event of Roman history. Charles’ head is compared to the “bleeding head” (69) that the builders of the temple of Jupiter dug up on the Capitoline.⁶⁹ The interpretation of Charles’ beheading should therefore be seen, as in the Roman legend, as an omen for a “happy fate” for England (72). According to this comparison, it predicts that England, like Rome, will become the leader of the world (Moore, 44). With this prediction from the past, Marvell comes back to the present of 1650, as the tenses suggest.

“Now”, Cromwell has returned from Ireland and prepares his next campaign against the Scots (73). Marvell’s line 74 presents the Irish rebellion as having been put down. Historically, however, we know that this is not true. Cromwell came back to England before completing his mission and left most of his troops in Ireland to finish the task (Poussou, 64-65). The praise that Marvell places in the mouth of the Irish people appears particularly sarcastic to a modern audience. “How good”, “how just, and fit for highest trust” (79-80). After the massacre of Drogheda and the other

⁶⁹ This episode appears in Pliny (N.H. XXVIII, 4) and Livy (Annals I.55.6), for example (see Story Donno, 240).

violent repressions ordered by Cromwell, the population can hardly have had such words to describe their oppressor. If Cromwell's description is considered ironic, the criticism that the two stanzas express is very blunt: Cromwell is neither "good", nor "just" and cannot be trusted with higher responsibilities. Nevertheless, considering the widespread indifference of most Englishmen towards their Irish neighbours (Wilson, 186), a moderate position should be adopted. Certain critics, like Worden, have argued that his praise of the victorious by the defeated is in fact purely conventional.⁷⁰

The next stanzas take over the topic of trust and high command evoked in the previous passage. The first couplet of stanza 21 states that Cromwell is still under the Republic's command. From an instrument of God's will, he "That can so well obey" (84) becomes the instrument of the Republic. Marvell uses two metaphors to build this new portrait of the English leader. In stanzas 22 and 23, he starts with an echo of a well-known episode of Octavian's rise in ancient Rome. Just before his nomination as *Augustus* in 27 BC, Octavian offered to surrender all his power back to the Senate to show his allegiance (Coolidge, 115). His fame and influence over the Romans were however so important that it was obviously pointless to deprive him officially of powers that the people would unofficially still grant him. The move was political, and clearly directed at the senators to force them to re-invest him officially with the powers that he had already gathered himself.⁷¹ Pretending to show the same allegiance to the Parliament, Cromwell lays down his "sword and spoils" to the "Com-

⁷⁰ To support this argument, Worden provides quotations from articles or letters contemporary to the events (Worden, 174).

⁷¹ Both Wallace and Coolidge see in this passage a strong similarity between Octavian and Cromwell (Coolidge, 115 / John M. Wallace, "Marvell's Horatian Ode", *PMLA*, 77 (1962), 40-42).

mons' feet".⁷² Cromwell's gesture is here as symbolic as that of Octavian; his authority based on military force completely outweighed that of the Parliament. Again, the apparent irony of Marvell's allusion can be countered by a reflection on convention. At the time, the effect of this political gesture was particularly favourable to both Octavian and Cromwell. Its hypocrisy might only be evident to a modern view and not to contemporaries whose conception of symbolism and politics was different. This remains a conjecture.

In stanzas 23 and 24, Marvell represents Cromwell as a falcon (90) that "Falls heavy from the sky" (92) on a prey, an image that recalls the "three-forked" lightning that broke through the clouds to blast Charles' head. This connection designates the first potential target of Cromwell's attack. In these lines, Marvell is therefore accusing Cromwell for his active part in Charles' death: he "killed" the monarch, even if indirectly. The expression "having killed" (93) allows however another prey for the winged Cromwell. Chronologically, his last military action had been against the Irish rebels. Marvell's image can thus also be an allusion to Cromwell's recent campaign. In contrast with the first interpretation, this reference does not constitute *per se* an accusation. Like many of his contemporaries, Marvell very likely considered Cromwell's violent conduct of the campaign as normal or even deserved; the general opinion at that time was indeed hostile towards Irish Catholics after the 1641 massacres of Protestants, an event that shocked many in England (Wilding, 118).

"Having killed" her royal or Irish prey, the falcon flies back to its falconer "when he first does lure" her (95). This last clause looks peculiar in the political context. Indeed, from Ireland, Cromwell came back to London only after the third official summoning of the Parliament, the falconer (96) of the metaphor (Worden, 153-

⁷² In the text, Cromwell in fact lays down "A kingdom" "to the Commons' feet" (85-86) and "his sword and spoils" "at the public's skirt" (89-90); but the two sentences express the same idea and are therefore interchangeable.

154). Marvell's description of Cromwell's obedient attitude towards the Parliament appears therefore exaggerated. The Army's occupation of London that led to Pride's Purge (Wilding, 127) and the fact, that in 1653, Cromwell finally dissolved the Parliament and ruled the country as Lord Protector, show on what side the authority was. The balance of power that the image of Cromwell as a tamed falcon describes appears consequently to be in contrast to the political reality of 1650. A first possible explanation for this is irony; the image would be mocking the official discourse that presented Cromwell as a servant of the Republic. Wilding, on the other hand, supports the view that Marvell is participating here in Cromwellian propaganda (Wilding, 126-7). This image of the falcon that only searches to place herself where "The falconer has her sure" is supposed to "counter the memory" of the Army's resistance to the Parliament, of the march on London in particular.

The third part, starting with stanza 25, opens with a prediction of future conquests. The first lines echo Horace's odes, especially the Roman ode 3.3 where the poet describes how the fear of Rome started spreading across Europe (*Odes* 3.3.45). Marvell sees in line 99 the same fear rising before Cromwell's and England's new power. Cromwell is the next Caesar, the conqueror of the Gaul, or the next Hannibal who will invade Italy and France, and liberate "all states not free" from the yoke of papacy (101-103).⁷³ This vision obviously never came true. Wilson attributes the conquering spirit of these lines to the conventions of the "eulogy" of a "warrior hero" (Wilson, 187). He argues that prophecy requires, in such praise, the prospect of "boundless conquests". As Wallace notes, the project of a Protestant alliance against Rome and the pope circulated in fact for a while but soon died away; it never went further than the state of a dream for a faction of radical English Protestants (Wallace,

⁷³ Wallace, 42 / Syfret, 161.

42). This dream of future battles that will never happen finds some of its origin in Horace's odes again, in the odes 1.2 and 3.5, among others, where he calls on Octavian to tackle the Parthian problem and conquer Britain (1.2.51, 3.5.2-4, 1.21.14-15). These regions never successfully passed under Roman dominion during the lifetime of Octavian-Augustus. The attack on Scotland evoked in Marvell's poem is very real, on the other hand, considering the threat of Charles II and the troops that he had gathered to re-conquer the throne. This is one of the reasons why the Parliament sent so hastily for Cromwell in Ireland, to prevent such an invasion by attacking first. Marvell chooses the figure of the Pict warrior to represent the Scottish troops and describes him in his colourful plaid as already fearing Cromwell's arrival (105-108). Cromwell, on the other side, appears as "The English hunter" chasing "The Caledonian deer", a metaphor for the hunted Scot (110,112).

After this enthusiastic passage on the future victories of England's new leader, Marvell leaves the third person discourse and addresses Cromwell directly. Having swayed during the whole poem between Cromwell and Charles as the subject designated by the pronoun "he", Marvell finally uses the direct second person singular: "But thou, the War's and Fortune's son" (113). In this line, Marvell puts together the two principles that, in his picture, ruled Cromwell's life: war and fate. The first part of this line evokes the future conquests and the global belligerent attitude of the character; and in the last, Marvell evokes the divine nature of Cromwell's mission as an instrument of God's will. Both elements form here a whole that summarises the portrait drawn throughout the poem. Marvell then ends his ode on a note of warning or advice addressed to Cromwell: for his power to last, Cromwell will have to rely

constantly on the force that helped him reach such a level, the army.⁷⁴ It is curious that from the two aspects of Cromwell's portrait, Marvell chooses the "arts" of war as conclusion and not God's power, as if they were in fact more important.

From the beginning to the end, the ambivalent mixture of praise and criticism that the "Horatian Ode" provides makes it difficult to interpret Marvell's position towards the subject of his portrait. "If we could know just what Marvell included in his adjective 'Horatian'", says R.H. Syfret, "perhaps there would be no unsolved problems about the meaning of his Ode" (Syfret, 169). She argues that Horace's influence may be the key to understand the poem. William Raymond Orwen, quoted by Coolidge, considers that the Latin poet only influenced Marvell on the formal level (Coolidge, 111n3). The poetic form of Marvell's ode certainly bears the mark of this influence, but what matters are the traces of Horatian features in the other aspects of the poem. Indeed, with such a fixed form, easily identifiable as of Horatian inspiration, most of Marvell's message is carried by the content. Horace's part there is more delicate to determine, especially in competition with the other acknowledged sources.

The narrator starts the poem by exhorting the "forward youth" to abandon poetry and books, and take up arms to defend the country. These opening words recall already various elements from Horace. The call-to-arms, for instance, will echo throughout the poem as the theme of war does in Horace's ode 1.37 (Wilding, 136).⁷⁵ Marvell addresses also the same *juventus* as in the ode 1.2 (*Odes* 1.2.24): "the young men in military age" (Nisbet, 28) that are singing now "in the shadows" (3). This life

⁷⁴ In his last couplet, Marvell expresses in fact a commonplace. Wallace quotes, for instance, John Speed's *The Historie of Great Britaine*, published for the third time in 1632; there the author comments on Henry VII's rule by saying "*That things are kept by the same Arts whereby they were gained*" (Wallace, 43).

⁷⁵ For the presence of the theme in Horace, see page 12.

“in the shadows” had a specific name in Rome, the *vita umbratilis* (Wilson, 178-9).⁷⁶ It described the sheltered life of the rich or of the shepherds who lived in peace and did not have to walk in the sun in “dry and bare lands” like the Roman soldiers. It carried a particularly negative connotation. In Marvell’s poem, the poet exhorts the youth living in this *otium* to abandon this way of life and seek the higher virtues of battle. Horace would have agreed. The Latin poet himself urges the young to learn to appreciate the harshness of a soldier’s life (*Odes* 3.2.1-2). The theme of the “*vita umbratilis*” reappears in stanza 3 in connection with Cromwell. The “inglorious arts of peace” (10) that he, “restless” (9), could not enjoy suggest the same idea that the inactivity associated with peace was a subject of shame for warlike societies like Rome and Cromwell’s England.

The analogy between Horace’s few exhortations to the youth and the beginning of Marvell’s poem is clear but not very consistent. It seems that the *topos* circulated in Roman literature before Horace. Wilson gives as examples an extract of Cicero’s *Pro Murena* composed in 65 BC and one of Virgil’s *Georgic IV* composed between 36 and 29 BC (Wilson, 179).⁷⁷ Despite the popularity of this theme in the first century BC, most critics quote as a source for Marvell’s opening the passage in Lucan’s *Pharsalia*⁷⁸ where he narrates the reaction of the citizens of Araminum, the first to encounter Julius Caesar after his crossing of the Rubicon (Lucan, *Pharsalia* I.185ff / Worden, 151).⁷⁹ The allusion is particularly accurate. After a period “in the shadows” (3) of peace, the rust that made the arms of the Araminum men useless

⁷⁶ About the general opinion in Rome, see Peter L. Smith, “*Lentus in umbra*: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil’s *Eclogues*”, *Phoenix*, XIX(1965), 301-2.

⁷⁷ The dates are from the OCD.

⁷⁸ Lucan’s epic poem was translated into English by Thomas May, poet and playwright at the court; in 1650, his translation was published for the third time. Syfret’s examples of allusions to the original Latin poem or its translation make the link between Marvell’s ode and Lucan’s epic almost indubitable (Syfret, 162-8).

⁷⁹ The precise lines are given by Wallace (Wallace, 35).

(Lucan, I.240-3) also eroded the “corselet” of Marvell’s “youth” (6&8). With the adverb of comparison “So” (9), Marvell seems to identify this “forward youth” with the “restless Cromwell”. From an “inglorious” (10) life in the country and with no military education, Cromwell took up arms and fought Charles who virtually crossed the Rubicon in 1642 in open conflict with the majority of the Parliament (King, 85-6). Marvell here exhorts the youth to imitate Cromwell and take part to the war against the Royalists, a war that Charles launched in the first place as the allusion to the Rubicon suggests. The precision of the match with Lucan’s passage leaves no doubt about Marvell’s allusion and strongly pleads in favour of this interpretation, although this is but one of the possibilities.⁸⁰ What is certain, however, is that Lucan’s presence minimises the possible influence of Horace on the content of this part.

Later in the poem, the similarity between the divine anger that Cromwell incarnates in line 26 and that of Vesta and Ilia in Horace’s ode 1.2 allows also a counterargument. On both sides, the angry divinities express through nature their anger at an offence committed against them or their will. In Marvell’s literary environment, such metaphysical explanation for natural disasters existed, however, in many classical texts besides Horace’s *Odes*.

The third example that can represent an allusion to Horace is the metaphor of the hunter and the hunted that Marvell employs twice near the end of his poem. Horace introduced this image at the centre of the ode “To Cleopatra” describing Octavian’s pursuit of the fleeing Cleopatra in a double simile. Marvell separates both parts of the simile and modifies it slightly; in stanzas 23 and 24, the falcon is not chasing anymore but tamed and in stanza 28, Marvell simply changes Horace’s hare

⁸⁰ Coolidge and Syfret, for instance, connect Lucan’s Caesar with Cromwell (Coolidge, 113 / Syfret, 163). Their analysis is of considerable interest for the understanding of the ode; it creates however many contradictions within the poem. The one adopted above seems, on the contrary, to merge in the poem more smoothly.

for a deer better fitting the English rhyme and the Scottish setting. In the end, despite the fact that the simile has been used before Horace in original epic poetry, the strong similarity makes Marvell's allusion to the Latin poet very likely, which is already a start despite the lack of certainty. The rest of the allusions to Horace, the spreading of the fear in stanza 25 and the future conquests of stanzas 27 and 28,⁸¹ are secondary in importance.

The situation becomes finally unequivocal when we look at the characteristic features that the analysis of Horace's political odes has identified in the first chapter. The presence of most of them in the "Horatian Ode" clearly shows that Marvell's debt to Horace is in fact not as limited as Orwen suggests. Among the typical Horatian traits, Marvell adopted, for instance, the Hellenistic "interbreeding of genres". Beside incidental incursions of genres like the epic in the metaphors or the tragic theatre of Charles' execution, the first source for generic information is the title (Norbrook, 149 / Wilson, 176). The ode in the manner of Horace to which "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" first alludes, was, in Marvell's time, associated with the genre of the panegyric. It had lost the universal quality that characterised its ancient form⁸² to become "the conventional vehicle of praise for victorious generals" (Wallace, 35). All critics agree that the panegyric genre dominates the portrait of Cromwell. Dissentions appear nevertheless when analysing the use of the conventions involved by this genre. The example of the Irish episode, in stanzas 19 and 20, is symptomatic. In addition to Worden,⁸³ two other critics point to the conventional aspects of the words of praise (Wilson, 185-6 / Wallace, 39) and attribute them to the panegyric genre. Wilson judges nevertheless that the irony of the first

⁸¹ See above on pages 48-49 for the precise references.

⁸² For a description of the ancient ode, see Ralph Cohen, "The return to the ode", *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Poetry*, ed., John Sitter, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, 208.

⁸³ See above on page 46.

impression cannot be completely ruled out by this explanation. Moore adopts a different position and places this irony at the centre of the poem, arguing that the “Ode” is in fact a bitter criticism of Cromwell and not a eulogy (Moore, 34-5). This example clearly demonstrates that the presence of the panegyric is very intimately linked with the debate on Marvell’s political stance, and thereby acknowledges the importance, in the “Ode”, of the genre already announced in the title.

Norbrook and Patterson detect in this title another genre in addition to the panegyric. The fact that Cromwell, the leader who is object of the praise, was coming back from a series of battles in Ireland suggests a combination of the usual panegyric with a *propheticon*, the celebration of the return of a king or hero.⁸⁴ This genre enjoyed a wide popularity in the first part of the seventeenth century when universities like Oxford and Cambridge competed with the publication of various volumes of “commendatory verse” celebrating King Charles’ returns. Marvell himself took part to these publications while a student at Cambridge (Legouis, 5); it seems therefore reasonable to think that he used his knowledge of the genre to praise the new leader. Worden suggests moreover that Cromwell, victorious, was greatly expected by the English people and that his arrival was much celebrated; plots and dissensions between moderate and radical members of Parliament, between the Parliament and the Army had apparently been rampant since he left for Ireland (Worden, 152-3). Norbrook and Patterson argue, however, that Marvell’s only purpose in choosing this genre is to invert its royalist or Caroline origin. Their analysis reaches a conclusion unexpected by its similarity with our own. It shows that, whereas Charles fits perfectly the generic conventions, he is limited by them; Cromwell, on the contrary, transcends them and reaches some kind of sublimity. The laudatory spirit of the ode

⁸⁴ Norbrook, 149f / Annabel M. Patterson, “The Cromwell Poems”, *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, 62.

is, in the end, preserved. Norbrook reminds us in his conclusion that this view of the English Revolution as transcending the conventions was widespread in Marvell's time (Norbrook, 154-155).

Marvell may not be using the same genres as his Latin predecessor, though both understandably rely on the panegyric and the epic. He may be playing with these genres and diverting them from their original purpose. What matters in the comparison, however, is the common intention of the poets to free themselves from a particular genre, to transcend the conventions and transform them for their own particular purpose. Their common liking for the manipulation of poetic devices, their "wiser art" (58), expresses itself also in their handling of historical facts and characters. The analysis of ode 1.37 in the previous chapter pointed out Horace's deliberate omission of the years separating the battle of Actium and Cleopatra's death in order to create an artificial link of cause and consequence. Marvell took over the same device in the "Horatian Ode". Between Charles' escape from Carisbrooke Castle (stanza 13) and his later execution (stanza 14), over a year is missing; Marvell deliberately left aside the events between November 1647 and January 1649 (Moore, 43-44). This jump in time allowed the poet to pass over in silence the actual reasons that led to the decision to execute Charles and present the beheading as the direct consequence of the escape ("That thence", 53). The whole responsibility of Charles' death lies thus with Cromwell and his "wiser art". Historically, the situation was different. As Moore and Wilding point out, the major cause of Charles' execution was his own behaviour at Carisbrooke Castle where he plotted for more uprisings (Wilding, 130 / Moore, 43). Tired of facing constant insurrections and endless negotiations, the Parliament tried and sentenced the King to death to deprive his partisans of the hope of

bringing him back on the throne. Marvell modifies the cause but the consequence remains the same.

Another omission brings the two poems closer. Neither the “Horatian Ode” nor the “Cleopatra Ode” mention middle grounds in the political conflict that they describe. The two poems rely exclusively on the direct opposition between their two main figures, respectively between Cromwell and Charles, and between Octavian and Cleopatra. The other historical actors intervening in both contexts are completely left aside. Most evident is the disappearance of Antony and his Roman followers from Horace’s description of Actium; on Marvell’s side, it is the Parliamentary opponents to the Irish and the Scottish campaigns, violently repressed by Cromwell and the Army, that stay on the bench (Wilding, 134). Wilding rightly remarks that this deliberate exclusion of the “Revolutionary elements” reduces the political context to “a simple, binary opposition” and leaves no other alternatives (Wilding, 120). Moreover, it almost rubs out from the historical picture the notion of civil war and the traces of citizens’ blood that both Cromwell and Octavian spilled on their way to power.⁸⁵

This “simple, binary opposition” that remains after manipulation is abundantly nourished by the two poets. Marvell reproduces in the “Horatian Ode” the antithetical structure that characterises Horace’s “Cleopatra Ode”. Strictly speaking, despite the similarities, it is not exactly the overall organisation of the poem that Marvell takes over but rather the omnipresent antithesis that opposes the two main characters. The structure of the “Horatian Ode” includes indeed, as does Horace’s ode 1.37, a striking central image and two similar halves that it connects; but Marvell does not place the two parts in opposition to each other: the second part of Crom-

⁸⁵ The same conclusion was drawn in the analysis of the ode 1.37 in the first chapter (page 18).

well's portrait is a continuation of the first. The main transformation is simply the consequence of the central image, the disappearance of Charles from the equation, a disappearance to which the antithesis survives though with a different composition.

This antithesis, between Charles and Cromwell, constitutes the central topic of the first half of the ode. The list of antithetical features is consequent and, for most items, has already been mentioned during the previous developments of the analysis. Marvell presents Cromwell as the agent of Fate and Fortune, the "angry heaven's flame" who brings down the old and "vain" (38) body of Justice personified by King Charles. The "ancient rights" (38) that Charles, ruler of "kingdoms old" (35), embodies are indeed useless against the new brute power of Cromwell's army.⁸⁶ Charles is also the "royal actor" (53), symbol of courtly artifice⁸⁷; and to him, Marvell opposes Cromwell as the hero of "Nature" (41). Cromwell is also the "restless" (9) and "industrious" (33) soldier who, like a lightning bolt, works his way through the cloud of rivals to blast the regal head.⁸⁸ The result of the opposition becomes clear by the middle of the poem when Charles is executed. Force and Fate have prevailed over "helpless" (62) Justice, Nature over Artifice, and the arts of war that introduce and conclude the poem over the "inglorious arts of peace" (10). In the second part, starting with stanza 19, Cromwell continues on his "fiery way" without Charles. The last targets were the Irish royalists; the next are to be the Scots and perhaps the people of Gaul and Italy, as Marvell suggests in stanzas 26 to 28. These opponents maintain the antithesis but show themselves very weak in this task; those from the Isles pass

⁸⁶ Elliott recognises in the expression "strong or weak" of stanza 10 that Marvell now associates power with military strength, even political power since "Cromwell's army could make the law exactly what they wanted it to be" (Kenneth Elliott, "Andrew Marvell and Oliver Cromwell", *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 26 (1982), 81).

⁸⁷ Charles I was very fond of court masques and acted in many of them (Wilding, 124 / Wedgwood, 16).

⁸⁸ This interpretation of the cloud image comes from Mortimer and Wilson (Wilson, 181 / Anthony Mortimer, "Poems for Cromwell", Lecture given on December 13th 2007, Fribourg University (CH)).

by very quickly, defeated one after the other and the rest are conjectures. These past and future victories nevertheless confirm that Cromwell is the new dominating power.

The “Horatian Ode” contains also other oppositions beside that of Cromwell against Charles: the general opposition between peace and war, for instance. There, the connection of the poem with Rome determines in advance to which side the scales must tip, to that of war. The textual antitheses, between “hold” and “break” (39), “strong” and “weak” (40), have almost all some link with the main conflict between Charles and Cromwell. The consequence is clear: there is always a side that wins, that closer to Cromwell. Marvell indeed never seems to consider Charles as a valid counterpart. All the adjectives related to him are depreciative: his “kingdoms” are “old” (35), his “rights” “ancient” (38) and “helpless” (62), and his claim for “Justice” “vain” (37-38). Even the external beauty that characterises him in the central part is probably artificial as the staging of the execution suggests (Wilding, 124).⁸⁹ There is, however, nothing extraordinary in this situation. That Cromwell, despite the negative aspects, is always shown as having the upper hand is only the extension of a simple fact: in 1650, Charles had already been executed and Cromwell was the strongest man in England and *de facto*, the only remaining solution.

The demonstration of the presence in Marvell of Horatian features has so far successfully shown Marvell’s debt to Horace; it has, however, left unsolved the ambivalence of Marvell’s portrait of Cromwell. Unlike the other oppositions, that between Cromwell the divine agent and Cromwell the cunning and ambitious man remains open. The final message of the ode, Marvell’s attitude towards Cromwell, is therefore still ambivalent. Coolidge holds on this point the same view as Syfret

⁸⁹ See also footnote 87 about Charles’ court masques.

quoted earlier; they argue that the key to this problem is to be found in the allusions to Rome's literature and history. Both critics point to Horace and Lucan, in particular, whose influence on the "Ode" has now been demonstrated, and more precisely at their representation of the figure of "Caesar" (Coolidge, 111). Marvell uses the name of Caesar twice in his ode, once at the beginning for Charles (23) and once at the end for Cromwell (101). Considering the period of Roman history in which the Latin sources are set, these references admit two possible objects: Julius Caesar and Octavian, his adopted son. The two historical characters appear in Horace and Lucan under a very different light. In Horace, Julius Caesar is a divine hero and Octavian, praised in ode 1.2, the "legitimate ruler" that Rome has awaited for a long time (Coolidge, 115). Lucan, on the contrary, describes Julius Caesar as an "usurper", a "scourge of nations". In addition to Caesar, each of Marvell's allusions to the Latin poets evokes also other characters present during the events. Like Caesar, these characters bear a positive or negative connotation depending on the source of the allusion. The relationships between these figures and Caesar recall, in fact, the basic Cromwell-Charles antagonism. In the present hypothesis, the combination of all these antagonisms should allow us to shed some light on the character towards whom Marvell shows more sympathy at certain stages of the poem. The ultimate purpose is clearly to determine whether Marvell associates Cromwell with the more positive Horatian "Caesar" or with Lucan's ambitious tyrant. An answer to this question would solve the ambiguity at the core of Marvell's portrait of Cromwell. This stake makes the hypothesis formulated by Coolidge and Syfret worth investigating.

As explained in our previous analysis, it is Lucan's negative view of Caesar that opens Marvell's poem.⁹⁰ Charles assumes, from then on, the role of Julius Cae-

⁹⁰ See above on pages 51-52.

sar, the despot of the *Pharsalia*. This remains unchanged throughout the first half of the ode until Charles' execution. The explicit connection between the two characters comes in line 23 with the first allusion to Charles' beheading. The King shared with Julius Caesar a common fate: they both launched a civil war and were later murdered for the good of a Republic. Here the antithesis places Cromwell in the role of the Republican murderer, that of Brutus or Cassius (See Mortimer). Thus, if Charles' death was a relief for Marvell, as our analysis of the expression "at last" inferred,⁹¹ Cromwell becomes logically the saviour of the Republic for his part in the process leading to the execution of the King; here his guilt turns at his advantage.

After the execution of the King, the character of Caesar falls, for the second half of the ode, to Cromwell himself. This time, the textual allusions of stanzas 21 to 24 make the figure evoke first Octavian and his relationship with the Senate.⁹² Since each of these images seems to respect the conventions of praise, and since Octavian is himself praised in Horace's 1.2, the connotation is in the end positive. It remains so when Cromwell changes into the conquering Julius Caesar in line 101. There, the image of the hunter, initiated in the precedent stanzas, finds its second half; and the two together, reflecting the two parts of Horace's central simile in 1.37, unify both poles of the Caesar figure, Julius Caesar and Octavian, in a positive sequence. The "Caesar" of the end is therefore Horatian, as the title of the ode suggests, and not Lucanian as at the beginning. Despite their different interpretations of the precise Roman characters of Marvell's allusion, Coolidge and Syfret reach a very similar conclusion. Nevertheless, neither Coolidge nor Syfret want to decide whether Marvell's portrait reflects, on the whole, more of Horace's or Lucan's Caesar. When Coolidge finally qualifies the "Horatian Ode" as a prudent praise of the inevitable future ruler,

⁹¹ See above on page 42.

⁹² The reference is established on pages 46-47.

Syfret stays put and sees Marvell as not giving up to Lucanian fears and softening them with Horatian hope (Coolidge, 119 / Syfret, 172). With an identical analysis, the two principal critics who undertook this approach reach a different conclusion. The search in Horace for a key to understand Marvell has benefited from the introduction of Lucan; in the end, however, the ambivalence is still unsolved.

Despite the intertextual information that such an approach based on the Latin echoes and allusions provides, the interpretation of the results poses serious problems, especially those concerning the central part. Even though the episode of Charles' beheading does not include the actual name of Caesar, the similarity of the protagonists with the characters of Horace's ode "To Cleopatra" is of certain interest.⁹³ Charles occupies in the "Horatian Ode" the same position as Cleopatra in 1.37. Both are the weaker poles of the antithetical structure: Charles' death is first presented as a probable relief and Cleopatra as a threat for Rome, whose death should therefore also be welcomed. Both nevertheless face, in the poems, a death full of dignity that contrasts significantly with their previous depreciative portrait.

In his analysis of Horace's odes, Commager describes the bipolar structure of some poems as a means to build up a tension that, completed by other oppositions, comes to its resolution when one of the poles collapses (Commager, 74).⁹⁴ By glorifying the death of the weakest pole, both poets may simply be amplifying the dramatic impact of the resolution. Indeed, the positive components of the episodes of Charles' execution and Cleopatra's suicide essentially describe their way of dying and not the characters themselves whose previous negative portrait is still valid; if Charles and Cleopatra had still been alive at the time of the poems' composition, it is very likely that the reversal of opinion would not have occurred. In this context, the

⁹³ Marvell's reference is discussed on page 52.

⁹⁴ See page 17.

positive description is a dramatic device and not a modification of the narrator's opinion of the characters. Some critics conclude on this basis that by making the portrait of the defeated more positive, the poets are in fact emphasising the value of the victory and therefore of the victorious.⁹⁵ This position is difficult to defend. In Horace's ode, for instance, Octavian's triumph vanishes completely behind Cleopatra's own ultimate victory; the finale seems therefore to leave to the Roman almost nothing to celebrate. In addition to that, this argument fails to account for the importance of the contrast caused by the diametrical change of point of view towards the defeated, and also for the ambiguity of the portrait of the victorious. In other words, this observation does not lead to a satisfactory understanding of Marvell's purpose either in praising Cromwell with ambivalence or in presenting Charles under such a positive light.

The only sustainable explanations come from Wilding and Mortimer. In their analysis, these controversial aspects, and especially Charles' execution, are parts of a strategy to persuade the defeated royalists that Cromwell's action was for the common good and that he is the best solution for England (Wilding, 133). As suggested previously, Wilding recalls Charles' likeness for court masques and analyses therefore the theatrical component of the execution as showing Charles' gift for artifice (Wilding, 124-5); the positive aspect in which the King is presented only demonstrates that he is a good "actor" and that, if he can play even at his own execution, he is untrustworthy of ruling the country. Mortimer provides the complete details of the whole strategy of propaganda. It consists of three steps corresponding to the three main parts of the poem. In the first, Marvell tries to match the Royalist point of view on Cromwell. This should explain the initial presentation of Cromwell as an ambi-

⁹⁵ Commager quotes this other interpretation and formulates already some reserve (Commager, 93n).

tious lightning bolt that fires through his own side (15) and destroys the work of time (34). The ambiguity serves to introduce in this not so glorious portrait the possibility of an alternative and more positive view of the English commander. In a second time, Charles' execution is embellished to touch his admirers, and its interpretation then reversed so as to present it, in the end, as a favourable omen. The prophetic notion of a "happy fate" (72) is indeed rapidly attached to this event in the two stanzas following the beheading. Cromwell's role in this affair, minimised by his absence from the description, should thus be seen as positive. In the last part, the poet finally turns the ambitious Cromwell of the beginning into a faithful servant of the new republic (stanzas 21-24) and moreover, into the living promise of the future greatness of England (stanzas 25-28). The portrait adds then to this most positive note a few lines of advice to conclude the poem.

The particular value of this interpretation lies in the fact that it matches most of the variations of connotation pointed out by the analysis of the Caesar figure. By doing so, it offers a first solution to the ambiguity that these variations create in Cromwell's portrait, answering thus the question about Marvell's attitude to Cromwell in the "Horatian Ode". The conclusion to which Mortimer arrives is similar to that reached by the identification of the Caesar figure: the "Horatian Ode" is a praise of Cromwell. Mortimer adds a conclusion more accurate than Coolidge's: the poem contains nuances in its laudatory tone in order to convince the sceptics of the Royalist camp to join Cromwell's cause.

Again, despite all its accuracy, this analysis does not answer all the questions that Marvell's ode raises. The "Horatian Ode" contains a number of contradictions that the investigation of Horace's influence is unable to clarify. It suggests certain conclusions that are more likely than others but no definite key to Marvell's stance.

Objectively, beyond the clear inspiration for the form, Marvell definitely found in Horace an echo of the universal opposition of legitimacy against force and fortune that he himself witnessed in England (Coolidge, 116). The conflict there sees Cromwell prevailing; that is a fact, but Marvell's opinion thereupon remains in the shadows. Mortimer's valuable explanation of the flaws in the first part of the praise remains however isolated in the large body of criticism and creates new difficulties. For instance, the conclusion that this present work shares with him, of Marvell's ode being a praise of Cromwell, stands in contradiction with Marvell's royalist stance held a few months later in 1650 in the poem "Tom May's Death". Marvell there vituperates his fellow writer for having betrayed the Royalist creed and joined the Republican cause (Coolidge, 116), an attack hardly compatible with a praise of Cromwell within three months. The positive conclusion of our analysis, and particularly its interpretation of the central part on Charles, does not explain either why Marvell's tribute to the King was so universally praised for its emotional impact. An opposite conclusion would certainly solve these problems but generate also new apparent incoherencies within the poem. For example, if Marvell's opening is an attack against Caesar-Cromwell, as Coolidge and Syfret suggest, the passing of the title to Charles in line 23 is difficult to explain. The opposite interpretation would also put forward the irony present in various passages of the praise, as Moore does. Moore's assertion that Marvell's ironic tone would have been apparent for an educated contemporary reader (Moore, 53) hits, however, a rock. The 1681 publisher of Marvell's work apparently did not judge it so obvious, considering his refusal to publish the poem. Moore answers that the publisher did not have the same experience of the events as the 1650 reader; the thirty-year difference leaves some doubt that this was the case.

In the end, after centuries of criticism, there are still many possibilities of challenging any of the conclusions published so far. Various possible reasons can account for this global indecisiveness. Marvell intended perhaps to reproduce the confusion of the situation and the difficulty, for his contemporaries and himself, of having a definite opinion considering the historical and political circumstances; this position is popular among the critics. Marvell's explicit reference to Horace, widely renowned for the flourishing variety of contradicting portraits of him, could argue for a will to blur his own view for fear of retribution or censorship; but the private audience that the English poet was addressing seriously weakens this hypothesis already. Mortimer again proposes a decisive argument: the ambiguity that all point out could be due to Marvell's inexperience at the time of composition of the "Horatian Ode".⁹⁶ The poet indeed had only published small poems in colleges' collections before that date. The episodes of the second part of the ode stand in favour of this hypothesis. Marvell meant the falcon image, Cromwell's surrendering of his "sword and spoils" and the Irish praises to be laudatory, as the reference to the ode in the title suggest; but he underestimated the other possible interpretations. A praise is never completely realistic and needs some embellishment that creates a gap between reality and its presentation in the praise. In Marvell, the gap is too wide; and when critics investigate the details of the allusions, the quality of the praise fades. Doubt remains at various levels of Marvell's ode, doubt that the analysis of its Horatian features does not solve. As Syfret notes, Marvell and Horace definitely shared a common ability to create "division of opinion everywhere" (Syfret, 169). If that was Marvell's goal in the poem, the "Horatian Ode" completely deserves its title of "finest Horatian ode in English" (Highet, 248).

⁹⁶ Commenting on the body of criticism dealing with Marvell, Thomas N. Corns reaches a conclusion similar to Mortimer's: critics have probably overrated Marvell's writing (Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue, English Political Literature, 1640-1660*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, 310).

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Wladyslaw Senn

Fribourg, le 5 février 2008.