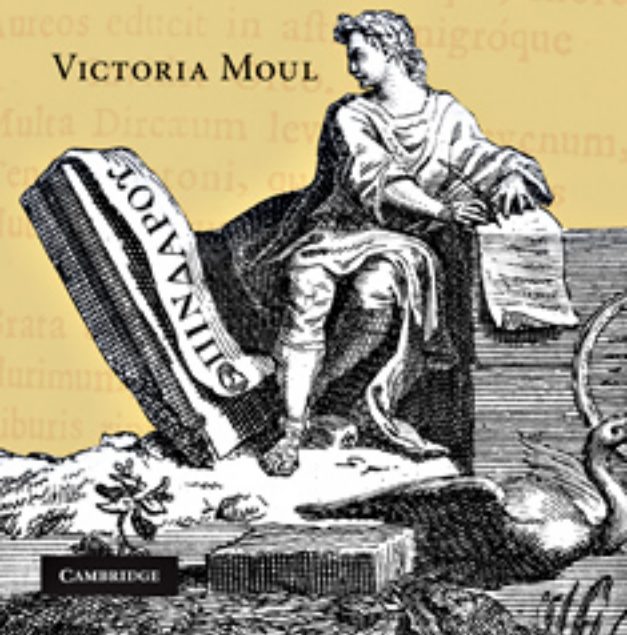


Jonson, Horace and the Classical Tradition

VICTORIA MOUL



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JONSON, HORACE AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

The influence of the Roman poet Horace on Ben Jonson has often been acknowledged, but never fully explored. Discussing Jonson's Horatianism in detail, this study also places Jonson's densely inter-textual relationship with Horace's Latin text within the broader context of his complex negotiations with a range of other 'rivals' to the Horatian model, including Pindar, Seneca, Juvenal and Martial. The new reading of Jonson's classicism that emerges is one founded not upon static imitation, but rather upon a lively dialogue between competing models – an allusive mode that extends into the seventeenth-century reception of Jonson himself as a latter-day 'Horace'. In the course of this analysis, the book provides fresh readings of many of Jonson's best-known poems – including 'Inviting a Friend to Supper' and 'To Penshurst' – as well as a new perspective on many lesser-known pieces, and a range of unpublished manuscript material.

VICTORIA MOUL is Lecturer in Latin literature at the University of Cambridge. She is an active translator of early modern Latin, contributing to several major recent translation projects. In addition, she has published a range of articles on classical material in Jonson, Donne and Milton, and on the reception of Virgil, Horace and Pindar.

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For my parents, with love and gratitude

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Abbreviations

H&S	C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (eds.), <i>Ben Jonson</i> , 11 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1925–52)
OCT	Oxford Classical Text
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
STC	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland; And of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640</i> , 2nd edn, 3 vols. (1976–91)

Jonson's verse is cited from H&S. Titles of collections are abbreviated as follows:

<i>Forest</i>	<i>The Forest</i> (1616 folio)
UV	Ungathered Verse
UW	<i>The Underwood</i> (1640 folio)

Introduction
Imitation, allusion, translation:
reading Jonson's Horace

To the admired Ben: Johnson to encourage
him to write after his farewell to the stage. 1631
alluding to Horace ode 26. Lib: 1
Musis amicus &c

Ben, thou arte the Muses freinde,
greife, and feares, cast to the winde:
who winns th'Emperour, or Sweade
sole secure, you noethinge dreade.
Inhabitante neer Hyppo-crene,
plucke sweete roses by that streame,
put thy lawrel-crownnet on.
What is fame, if thou hast none?
See Apollo with the nine
sings: the chorus must be thine.

John Polwhele¹

Benjamin Jonson, born in 1572, worked under, and latterly for, three successive monarchs before his death in 1637. A close contemporary of Shakespeare, he wrote in almost every important literary genre of his age, from the satires and epigrams fashionable in the 1590s to the elaborate court masques of the early seventeenth century. His influence in most of these forms – including lyric, epigram, stage comedy and verse epistle – continued to be felt for several generations. A Catholic for a substantial portion of his adulthood, his personal life was colourful, including imprisonment, murder, high patronage and poverty. He befriended (or alienated), rivalled and collaborated with many of the great men of his

¹ This touching and typical example of contemporary reception of Jonson's Horatianism is transcribed from John Polwhele's notebook, Bodleian MS English poet. f. 16, 10^v. I have edited it only lightly. Line 3 refers to the invasion of Germany by Gustav Adolf of Sweden in 1630, which brought Swedish forces into the 'Thirty Years' War and led to the first major Protestant victory of the conflict at Breitenfeld in 1631. The poem is printed in H&S, vol. XI, p. 346 but that transcription omits line 3. Semi-diplomatic transcriptions of all unpublished manuscript material are given in the Appendix.

day, both in England and abroad, including Shakespeare (who took a part in his 1605 play *Sejanus*), John Donne, Inigo Jones and the classical scholars Thomas Farnaby and Daniel Heinsius. But at almost every turn of this long, varied and highly public career his chief literary model, the man whose memory he honoured and whose achievement he claimed to outdo, was not any one of his talented contemporaries, but a Roman poet of the first century BC: Quintus Horatius Flaccus; 'thy Horace'.²

That Jonson liked to think of himself as Horace, and that this identification was considered realistic enough to be accepted by many of his followers, has often been acknowledged in passing in the scholarly literature.³ Jonson has, moreover, long been recognised as a poet of classical imitation in general, for whom 'imitation' carries a moral as well as aesthetic force.⁴ Several of these critics have offered helpful and intelligent readings of individual 'Horatian' poems, but none have developed a sustained account of Jonson's Horatianism, and no monograph exists devoted to Jonson's appropriations of Horace.⁵

This book aims to fill that gap, discussing all of the more significant instances of Horatian allusion, imitation or translation in Jonson's verse (and the satirical comedy, *Poetaster*, which stages Jonson as Horace himself).⁶ Such a survey demonstrates the extent of Jonson's Horatianism,

² Thomas Randolph, 'A Gratulatory to Mr. Ben. Johnson for his adopting of him to be his Son', line 14. Printed in *Poems with the Muses looking-glasse: and Amyntas. By Thomas Randolph Master of Arts, and late fellow of Trinity Colledge in Cambridge* (Oxford: printed by Leonard Lichfield printer to the Unversity, for Francis Bowman, 1638), STC (2nd edn)/20694, pp. 22–3. Addressing himself, Jonson refers to 'thine owne Horace' in the ode he composed after the hostile critical reception of *The New Inn* in 1629 (H&S, vol. x, p. 493, line 43).

³ See for instance Richard S. Peterson, *Imitation and Praise in the Poems of Ben Jonson* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981) and Burrow's remarks on Jonson's Horatian satire (Colin Burrow, 'Roman Satire in the Sixteenth Century', in Kirk Freudenburg (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 243–60).

⁴ Jonson's 'classicism' is a critical commonplace, and by 'classicism' is meant, among other things, self-conscious imitation of the style and form of Greek and Roman writers, including Juvenal, Seneca, Tacitus, Martial and Cicero among the Romans, and Lucian, Homer and Pindar among the Greeks. A great deal has been written on Jonsonian imitation in its many senses. Of particular importance are: Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 264–93; Peterson, *Imitation and Praise*; Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁵ The fullest account is found in Joanna Martindale, 'The Best Master of Virtue and Wisdom: the Horace of Ben Jonson and His Heirs', in Charles Martindale (ed.), *Horace Made New* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 50–85. See also Robert B. Pierce, 'Ben Jonson's Horace and Horace's Ben Jonson', *Studies in Philology*, 78 (1981), 20–31. For a particularly imaginative example of a reading of an individual Horatian poem, see Bruce Boehrer, 'Horatian Satire in Jonson's "On the Famous Voyage"', *Criticism*, 44 (2002), 9–26.

⁶ A list of passages discussed, in both Jonson and Horace, is given in a separate index.

but also its importance to Jonson's literary *persona*: Jonson used Horace, and his relationship to the Roman poet, to model his own self-conscious poetic 'authority' (a well-established *topos* of Jonsonian criticism), to mark his laureate role as a poet of courtly panegyric, and to insist upon his artistic freedom despite the network of patronage and financial dependence within which he was compelled to operate. That these functions are sometimes in conflict is testimony to the subtlety and depth that Jonson found in Horace, and to the attention with which he read the Latin poet: in several respects Jonson's response to, and appropriation of Horatian themes anticipates much more recent developments in classical criticism.⁷

The relationship between Jonson and Horace was widely noted – and sometimes mocked – by his seventeenth-century contemporaries.⁸ In time the association between them, and so between a certain kind of Horatianism and the royalism of Jonson's Stuart career, became central to the reception and perception of Jonson and Horace alike in the troubled years of the mid seventeenth century. This book is focused upon Jonson's work, not his *Nachleben*, but I have at several points discussed instances of his own reception among friends and followers (often from unpublished manuscript sources). This largely untapped material is important supplementary evidence, shedding light on the various associations and identifications between Horace and Jonson in the minds of his seventeenth-century readers.

⁷ Several recent studies of the *Satires* and *Epistles*, for instance, have focused upon their nuanced exploration of the balance between freedom and dependency in Horace's address to his patrons, superiors, equals and subordinates. Work of this kind is of great help in reading the ambiguities of Jonson's poems of praise. I am thinking in particular of Kirk Freudenburg, *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Denis Feeney, 'VNA CUM SCRIPTORE MEO: Poetry, Principate and the Traditions of Literary History in the Epistle to Augustus', in Denis Feeney and Tony Woodman (eds.), *Traditions and Contexts in the Poetry of Horace* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 172–87; R. Hunter, 'Horace on Friendship and Free Speech: *Epistles* 1.18 and *Satires* 1.4', *Hermes*, 113 (1985), 480–90; W. R. Johnson, *Horace and the Dialectic of Freedom: Readings in Epistles I* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993). Ellen Oliensis' chapter on the *Ars Poetica* makes no reference to Jonson's translation of the poem but is nevertheless perhaps the single most suggestive guide to Jonson's fascination with the *Ars* (Ellen Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Jonson's translation is discussed in Chapter 5, pp. 175–93.

⁸ Thomas Dekker calls him 'Horace the Second' in the Dedication to *Satiro-mastix or The vntrussing of the humorous poet. As it hath bin presented publikely, by the Right Honorable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants; and priuately, by the Children of Paules*. (London: Edward White, 1602), 4°, STC (2nd edn)/6521, and the play makes much of this connection throughout.

STARTING POINTS: EARLY MODERN
CLASSICAL TEXTS

When I write of Jonson's 'Horatianism', I do not mean to imply that Jonson's English poetry regularly *sounds like* Horace's Latin (whatever that might mean), or that the experience of reading Jonson always or often resembles that of reading Horace's work. Even a very detailed and extended allusive interaction with another text is not the same thing as a reproduction: Virgil alludes constantly to Homer in the *Aeneid*, and an awareness of that conversation is crucial to the reader's experience of Virgil, and of his or her pleasure in it. But that is not to say that Virgil is always very much *like* Homer. On the contrary, the pathos and beauty of Virgil's text arise in part from the ways in which the reminiscences of Homer draw our attention to the *un*Homeric features of the *Aeneid*: we are moved by Aeneas' austere farewell to Ascanius, for instance, because of what it lacks in comparison with the scene between Hector, Andromache and the baby Astyanax in *Iliad* 6.⁹

Some of the difficulty we find in reading Jonson's Horace emerges from this distinction between intertextuality and resemblance: to follow an intertextual conversation, a reader must know well the text, or texts, that form the ground of the engagement – well enough to note divergences from the model. She must also expect to make such connections and comparisons, and enjoy making them. Even the well-educated modern reader does not necessarily find it easy to read in this way. This is partly because modern education, unlike the Renaissance schoolroom, does not encourage us to know a narrow range of texts extremely well (to the point of extensive memorisation).¹⁰ But it is also because even if we

⁹ Perhaps the single most useful discussion of Renaissance modes of imitation is to be found in George W. Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980), 1–32. He suggests three primary 'modes' of intertextuality, which he terms 'transformative', 'dissimulative' and 'eristic'. We can, I think, see traces of all three in Jonson's appropriation of Horace, but the most directly relevant is the 'eristic' mode, by which a 'continual insistence on conflict [in the imitative relationship] suggests that a text may criticize, correct, or revise its model' (27). Jonson's texts very often cite Horace, for instance, only to 'cap' the Latin text – to go one better.

¹⁰ The best recent overview of early modern education and its effect upon the reading and interpretation of classical texts can be found in the introduction to Craig Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: 'Pessimistic' Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture*, Classical Presences (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1–16. Kallendorf's notes are an invaluable guide to further bibliography on the topic. For more detailed information on the Elizabethan schoolroom in particular, see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944).

have read closely in classical literature, the texts in which we read Virgil or Horace do not generally encourage us to make these sorts of connection or comparison.

By contrast, the classical editor of the Renaissance – such as Thomas Farnaby or Daniel Heinsius, with both of whom Jonson corresponded – was naturally concerned to establish the Latin or Greek text upon which he was working, but also to point out connections between texts: one aspect of what we would now call 'intertext'.¹¹ He also, typically, makes *judgements* about these comparisons – that is, editorial comment not only sets up parallels or points out differences between passages but also adjudicates between them, on both moral and aesthetic grounds. Early modern editors are not squeamish about stating their preference, or claiming (for instance) that Horace is better than Pindar – to name one example which is, as we shall see, directly relevant to Jonson's experiments in English lyric form.¹²

THE JONSONIAN 'EDITION'

It is often remarked that Jonson's printed texts – even, or especially, the texts of the masques, that most ephemeral of genres – closely resemble contemporary editions of the Latin and Greek classics, complete, in many cases, with extensive notes upon the classical parallels or sources of his work. In the case of the 1616 folio of Jonson's *Workes*, this resemblance extends even down to the type used for its setting.¹³ This quirk of Jonsonian self-presentation, aptly dubbed 'editorial authorship' by Joseph

¹¹ These editorial interventions are also literally 'paratextual', surrounding the text densely on three sides in many early modern classical editions.

¹² Examples of such debates, with which Jonson would certainly have been familiar, appear in several contemporary editions or works of criticism. See, for instance, Julius Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem* ([Lyons]: Apud Antonium Vincentium, 1561), 2^o, Book 5. Roger Ascham describes Pindar and Horace as 'an equall match for all respectes' (Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. John E. B. Mayor (London: Bell and Daldy, 1863), Book 2, p. 155). For further information on this topic, see: Stella P. Revard, *Pindar and the Renaissance Hymn-Ode: 1450–1700*, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 221 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), pp. 33–9.

¹³ On the bibliographic originality and importance of this folio, see Martin Butler, 'Ben Jonson's Folio and the Politics of Patronage', *Criticism*, 35 (1993), 377–90; D. Heyward Brock, 'Ben Jonson's First Folio and the Textuality of His Masques at Court', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 10 (2003), 43–55; Richard C. Newton, 'Jonson and the (Re)Invention of the Book', in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds.), *Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), pp. 31–55; Jennifer Brady and W. H. Herenden (eds.), *Ben Jonson's 1616 Folio* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991); Martin Butler (ed.), *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, Performance, History* (New York: Macmillan, 1999); and Douglas A. Brooks, *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 3. Loewenstein stresses the extent to which

Loewenstein, has been much discussed in recent years, most richly and convincingly by Loewenstein himself.¹⁴ But although Loewenstein speaks perceptively of *imitatio* and its place in Jonson's poetics, he locates it – and its significance – within the emergent rhetoric of the 'possession' of intellectual property.¹⁵ I want to take on board much of Loewenstein's excellent work; but this book is not primarily concerned with Jonsonian 'possessiveness'. Rather I am interested in the way in which Jonsonian intertextuality *itself*, especially in the juxtaposition of competing classical 'voices', invites the reader, as surely as Jonson's sometimes hectoring prefaces, prologues and dedications, to construct an authorial voice that compares, judges and even claims to outdo his classical sources.

Of course Horace is not the only classical author whom Jonson read with attention. His works are filled with references to, and imitations of, Tacitus, Juvenal, Martial, Seneca, Pindar and Lucian as well as the poets of the Greek Anthology and many neo-Latin authors. Horace is not a major presence in all of Jonson's works – he is of less importance, for instance, to his later comedies (which are in any case not the subject of this book) – and the 1605 play *Sejanus*, which, like *Poetaster*, is built substantially from translation, is based not upon Horace but Tacitus.¹⁶ What is striking about Jonson's Horatianism is that even when Jonson uses his poetry to think about and engage with other authors, he so often does so in juxtaposition, contention or conversation with an Horatian voice.¹⁷

Jonson's textual originality predates the folio (Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 182–6).

¹⁴ Joseph Loewenstein, *Possessive Authorship*. He uses the phrase 'editorial authorship' in Chapter 5. Genette notes the complicating effect of editorial notation upon the conventional construction of the author by the reader (Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 337). Jonson's 'authorial' editorial interventions – including prefaces, glosses and dedications as well as extensive marginal notation – collapse that distinction between editor and author.

¹⁵ 'Jonson had long since made the ethics of imitation his own proper problematic. His unrivalled importance for the historiography of intellectual property stems from the centrality of this problematic not only to his professional and intellectual career, but also, it seems, to his very sense of self' (Loewenstein, *Possessive Authorship*, p. 111).

¹⁶ Even in *Sejanus*, however, Jonson defends the form of his play in the prefatory letter with a reference to his forthcoming edition of Horace's *Ars Poetica*: the implication is that even if this is not an Horatian play at a textual level, it is the kind of thing a modern Horace might have written.

¹⁷ Loewenstein comes close to what I mean when he writes that 'one way of mapping Jonson's creative development would be to follow the process by which other literary models – Aristophanes, Lucian, Cicero, but above all, Martial – jostle Horace', although he makes this observation in passing and does not follow up his own suggestion (Loewenstein, *Possessive Authorship*, p. 120). The difference between the list of 'rivals' to Horace suggested by Loewenstein here and those with which this book is concerned probably stems from the fact that his book is concerned primarily with Jonsonian drama, this one with Jonson's verse; although Loewenstein does in general underplay Jonson's Horatianism.

KINDS OF CONTENTION: RIVALS TO HORACE
IN JONSON'S VERSE

Recent work on classical (especially Latin) literature, making use of – if not wholly adopting – post-structuralist theories of the wide-ranging scope of intertextuality, has expanded our sense of the ways in which one text may evoke another (or several others). Focusing in particular upon the poets of Augustan Rome, these critics have explored the extent to which not only the content but also the *context* of a source text may be evoked by a range of allusive strategies; and, most significantly, how these activated sub-texts and sub-contexts contribute to the creation of meaning in the literature – of Virgil or Horace, for instance – under consideration.¹⁸ The subtlety and potential scope of this kind of reading has not been much applied to Jonson. This is the case despite the acknowledged density of classical (especially Roman) material in Jonson's work, the centrality of close textual study of Roman authors to Renaissance education, and the fact that classical editions of Jonson's own day were typically concerned to point out instances of 'imitation' between one ancient text and another. A broad understanding of intertextuality – including imitation, allusion and translation – is fundamental to my discussion of Jonson's Horace. Although the specific terms and texts of the allusive 'dialogue' with Horace (and, especially, the political and cultural force they bear) varies in the course of Jonson's career, and between different poetic genres, the relationship itself is a constant feature of his work, and the central topic of this book.

Both early and late, in poems dating from the 1590s just as in late odes of the 1630s, we find Jonson's relationship to Horace played out in the negotiations between Horatian and Pindaric lyric models and their associated modes of praise and poetic power. This aspect of Jonson's Horatianism is discussed in [Chapter 1](#). [Chapter 2](#) is concerned with Jonson's epigrams and epistles and, more widely, the poetics of his address to patrons and noble friends. In these poems, an analogous 'dialogue' emerges between the ambiguous 'freedom' of Horatian hexameter verse

¹⁸ I am thinking in particular of: Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, ed. and trans. Charles Segal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Don Fowler, 'On the Shoulders of Giants: Intertextuality and Classical Studies', *Materiali e Discussioni*, 39 (1997), 13–34; Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

(the *Satires* and *Epistles*) and rival models of address found in Martial's epigrams and Seneca's philosophical letters. In Jonson's satiric poetry, explored in [Chapter 3](#), a related kind of 'freedom' – to criticise rather than to praise – sees both Horatian and Juvenalian models of satiric verse invoked and allowed, as it were, to 'compete'.

In *Poetaster* – a play very explicitly about imitation, both aesthetically and morally – the Horatian voice contests and finally, in its pervasiveness, triumphs over Ovidian, Virgilian and even Homeric models, as well as a wide range of contemporary dramatic material (including references to plays by Marlowe, Marston, Dekker, Chapman and Shakespeare). The bravura demonstration of *imitatio* in the play ranges from structural resemblance, through extended allusion or imitation, to close translation and even outright borrowing (or 'plagiary'). *Poetaster* is the main subject of [Chapter 4](#).

MANUSCRIPT CIRCULATION

But it is not only the details of printed presentation that invite the Jonsonian reader to enter into an assessment – an editorial 'adjudication' – of the competing models (Horace and Pindar, or Horace and Martial, for instance) that stand behind a text. Jonson's work was circulated widely in manuscript, both before and after his death; and contemporary verse manuscripts and miscellanies are filled, too, with examples of classical imitation and translation – especially of Horace – which are in varying ways and to varying degrees 'Jonsonian'. The epigraph to this introduction, Polwhele's consolatory ode on the failure of *The New Inn*, is an example of just this kind of thing. Polwhele uses a version of Horace to honour and console Jonson: by doing so, he flatters Jonson, but also implies and acknowledges the success of Jonson's own project of self-presentation *as* Horace.

Manuscript evidence of various kinds, including copies of Jonson's own poetry as well as the translations and imitations of others, reveal a great deal about how Jonson's 'Horatianism' was read by his contemporaries and immediate successors.¹⁹ In manuscript miscellanies, individual choices in the editing, titling and ordering of poems are often suggestive in this respect. In Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poetry 31, for instance, *Forest* 3 ('To Sir Robert Wroth') is titled 'To Sir Robte Wroth in / prayse of a Countrey

¹⁹ There has been very little work on such material in relation to Jonson's classicism, though Riddell's notes on marginalia are a useful starting point (James A. Riddell, 'Seventeenth-century Identifications of Jonson's Sources in the Classics', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 28 (1975), 204–18).

lyfe: / Epode'.²⁰ The subtitle 'epode' invites the reader to associate the poem with Horace, *Epodes* 2; and that association is further strengthened when we compare the title of *Forest* 3 with the titling of Jonson's own translation of *Epodes* 2, which appears a few pages earlier in the manuscript: 'An: Ode in Horace in Prayse / of a Countrey lyfe, Translated'.²¹ If we read the Wroth poem as *primarily* a response to, or version of *Epodes* 2 – that is, if we prioritise the Horatianism of the poem over, say, its models in Martial – our interpretation of the piece may be significantly altered.²² Details of this kind reach behind Jonson's own powerful, almost obsessive, attempts to control his readers' responses, and give some indication of the extent to which his Horatianism was noted by his contemporary readers, and what significance they attached to it.

In addition to evidence of this kind, which points to how Jonson was read and his poetry understood by his contemporaries, manuscript material offers a wealth of information about the broader literary culture to which Jonson responded and which he in turn helped to shape. Surviving verse manuscripts testify, for instance, to a culture of classical translation and imitation that extended to the imitation and even the translation (into Latin) of Jonson himself. This cultural context, in which the practice of translation, a paradigmatic school exercise, remained a focus of literary energy and creative response in adulthood is essential background for an understanding of, for instance, Jonson's unfashionably 'close' translations of Horace (such as the *Ars Poetica*) as well as the many explorations of close translation that are embedded in his works. That broader culture is not the main focus of this book, but it informs and supports my readings of Jonson's Horatianism, and I discuss various examples of Jonson's own reception alongside his close translations in [Chapter 5](#) ('Translating Horace, translating Jonson').

WHOSE HORACE?

If Horace is indeed so important to Jonson, why has the relationship gone relatively unremarked? The answer is in part, I think, to do with the 'version' of Horace most alive to Jonson and his contemporaries. For the modern well-educated reader – even the classicist who does not specialise in Horace – the most familiar features of Horatian style, his 'signature

²⁰ Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poetry 31, 34^r.

²¹ Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poetry 31, 28^r.

²² The implications of this manuscript evidence for our reading of the poem in question is discussed in [Chapter 3](#), pp. 122–6.

elements', are probably a certain notion of Stoic 'resignation', a perception of (sometimes discomfiting) political loyalty, and above all a beautifully expressed commitment to 'wine, women and song' in the face of time and death.²³ Other possible strong associations are his social position as a friend of Virgil, a favourite of Maecenas, and finally also of Augustus; and perhaps the peculiar concentration and elusive force of his lyric style. In each of these cases, the perception of Horace is founded upon the *Odes*.

With a couple of exceptions – 'Drinke to me, onely, with thine eyes' (*Forest* 9); or perhaps 'My Picture left in *Scotland*' (*UW* 9), with its rueful pose of aging self-deprecation – these are not likely to be the first associations we have with Jonson's verse.²⁴ The so-called 'Cavalier Poets', the self-consciously imitative 'Sons of Ben' are by these criteria much *more* Horatian than Jonson himself, and criticism has to some extent reflected that perception.²⁵ Jonson's Horatianism, by contrast, has been undernoticed and inadequately described partly because his version of Horace is quite different to ours: his 'favourite' passages – the individual poems and sections of poems to which he returns most frequently over the course of a long career – are drawn largely from the hexameter verse, the *Satires* and *Epistles* (currently mainly the preserve of professional classicists) and the unfashionably panegyric *Odes* IV.²⁶ Jonson took Horace's moral authority – like his own – seriously.

It is not just a matter of genre. The themes with which 'Jonson's Horace' are most prominently concerned are also unfashionable – of the *Odes*, for instance, he concentrates upon Horace's boldest and least ironic declarations of the poet's power to immortalise (*Odes* I.1, III.30, IV.8 and IV.9). Amongst the hexameter verse, the favoured passages are concerned with male friendship (the *Epistles*, plus a few epistolary odes), or with the negotiation of freedom and power, in politics and art alike (the *Satires*, *Epistles*

²³ Charles Martindale offers an excellent overview of the various constructions of Horace at different periods in his introductory essay to *Horace Made New* ('Introduction', in Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (eds.), *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–26.

²⁴ The *Song. To Celia* ('Drinke to me, onely, with thine eyes, / And I will pledge with mine') is actually modelled upon sections of the *Epistles* of Philostratus. 'My Picture left in *Scotland*' does have many elements of the lyric Horace: an aging authorial voice, an ironic awareness of physical decline, a sense of real humour as well as convincing pain and desire. It is however unusual among Jonson's lyric.

²⁵ Joanna Martindale gives an excellent, albeit brief, account of the relationship between Jonson's Horatianism and that of his successors (J. Martindale, 'The Best Master of Virtue and Wisdom').

²⁶ Certainly included in this list are: *Odes* I.1, III.30, IV.1, IV.8 and IV.9; *Satires* I.4, II.1 and II.7; *Epistles* I.5, I.11 and I.18; portions of the *Ars Poetica*. A list is included in the index of passages discussed.

and *Ars Poetica*).²⁷ Some passages, such as *Odes* IV.8, to which Jonson returned almost obsessively, combine these themes: that poem is one of Horace's boldest statements of the 'monumentalising' power of verse, and lies on the margin between lyric and verse letter.²⁸ To read Jonson's Horatianism well, we must reread Horace.

IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

This study will contribute to our understanding of Jonson's classicism, his poetics and the nature of his authority as it was constructed both by himself and by others during and after his lifetime. But the conclusions presented here are significant, too, for students of the period more generally. It may be true that Jonson's patterns of thought and connection were more deeply and specifically intertextual than those of many of his contemporaries; but the sophistication of the allusive 'conversation' in his work is not unique. Other early modern authors benefit from attention of this kind, as does the study of classical reception in the period. Donne's Horatianism has, for instance, been relatively little studied (perhaps because it is most evident in the less popular verse satires and epistles), but exhibits a very similar kind of intertextual sophistication to that we find in Jonson.²⁹

Amongst studies of classical reception, the possibility of 'negative' or equivocal appropriations of major authors has produced some of the most interesting work of recent years.³⁰ Craig Kallendorf has reminded us that we, in our twentieth- or twenty-first-century sadness or cynicism, are not uniquely sophisticated in our sensitivity and response to the compromising sorrow and ambiguities of the *Aeneid*. Jonson can easily seem a brash or self-satisfied author to the modern reader, a much less satisfying *persona*

²⁷ Jonson was particularly interested in explorations of the inequalities and varieties of power between the poet and his patron (as in *Odes* I.1, *Epistles* I.17 and I.18, for instance), the poet and his noble friends (many of the *Epistles* and *Ars Poetica*), and the poet and his slave (as in *Satires* II.7).

²⁸ Putnam describes the 'monumentalising' effect of *Odes* IV.8 in his analysis of the poem (Michael C. J. Putnam, *Artifices of Eternity: Horace's Fourth Book of Odes* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 145–56). References to this poem are found in UV 1, UW 77 and *Forest* 12, among others. This material is discussed in Chapter 1, pp. 14–24.

²⁹ See Victoria Moul, 'Donne's Horatian Means: Horatian Hexameter Verse in Donne's Satires and Epistles', *John Donne Journal*, 27 (2008), 21–48. Verse by Jonson and Donne circulated very widely in the same manuscript collections in this period, and in some cases attribution remains hard to determine between them and other more minor members of their circle.

³⁰ I am thinking in particular of Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil*. We could compare the ambiguous role of Virgil in *Poetaster*, discussed in Chapter 4.

than that of Shakespeare, or Donne, or even the bold and troublesome young Marlowe (we might be inclined to like Jonson more if he had died a little earlier). But his urgent reading and rereading of Horace is far from strident or unworried.

On the contrary, Jonson's powerful and sustained response to the complexities and compromises of Horatian 'libertas', the problem of freedom in a climate of patronage, amounts to a compelling interpretation, especially of the hexameter verse. Jonson, in accord with his time and culture as well as his own personality, takes Horace seriously in all the ways that we, currently, find hardest to appreciate – as a laureate poet of politicised praise, as a literary critic, as a moralist and as a friend. Jonson's departures from Horace – the determination, for instance, to read and write into Horace a hope for stability that the Latin so often denies – are among the most moving and emotionally sophisticated passages in Jonson's work. There is no doubt that we read Jonson better, and may appreciate him more, if we read Horace – *his* Horace – with attention and respect. That is the chief aim of this book. But it works the other way too. I have known and loved Horace for more years than I have been reading Ben Jonson; but I read, and will continue to read Horace the better for Jonson's help.

CHAPTER I

Jonson's Odes: Horatian lyric presence and the dialogue with Pindar

Me, in whose breast no flame hath burned
Lifelong, save that by Pindar lit ...

Rudyard Kipling¹

Katharine Maus, writing of Jonson's relationship to Horace, remarks that for the 'first two-thirds of his career his model is the moral satirist Horace', rather than the Horace of the *Odes*.² She is right to stress the centrality of Horatian satire to Jonson's project – a role to be explored in Chapters 3 and 4 – but I would like to challenge her dismissal of the lyric Horace. Horatian lyric influence is in fact discernible across a very wide range of Jonson's texts, including epistles, masques, drama, translation and prefatory material. Moreover, this engagement is marked by an almost obsessive return to a handful of key odes (I.1, III.30, IV.8 and IV.9), all of them powerful statements of the poet's intention and ability to create work which will prove immortal. The fact of this consistent engagement, and its significance, has not been discussed.³

Michèle Lowrie traces the 'personal narrative' of Horace's career in the course of the *Odes* from 'light lyricist to serious praise poet'.⁴ Jonson's early assumption of Horace's voice at his most politically and poetically established (especially in the odes of Book IV) launches his own poetic trajectory directly into the *end* of this story: from the earliest texts of his career, Jonsonian authority is figured in Horatian vatic terms. Moreover, each of the Horatian odes to which Jonson most systematically alludes is indebted to a Pindaric model. (Such selectivity is noticeable because it is not true of Horace's lyric in general, which draws its models from a

¹ Rudyard Kipling, 'A Translation: Horace, Bk V, Ode 3', *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 588.

² Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind*, p. 17.

³ The best general overview of Jonson's Horatianism remains Joanna Martindale, 'The Best Master of Virtue and Wisdom'.

⁴ Michèle Lowrie, *Horace's Narrative Odes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 322.

wide range of Greek lyric verse, including Sappho, Alcaeus and Anacreon, among others.) Although Jonson's late ode for Cary and Morison (*UW* 70) is widely acknowledged as an imitation of Pindar, there has been little consideration of the implications of his adoption of a Pindaric mode of praise.⁵ The second part of this chapter accordingly considers Jonson's appropriation of – and finally contention with – Pindaric style and tone in the odes composed throughout the course of his writing life.

Even in the earliest examples (*Forest* 12, for instance, discussed below), Jonson's work deploys Horatian material to express not only poetry's lasting power, but also its ability to immortalise those whom it addresses – a rhetorical turn Horace himself conspicuously avoided in his lyric until his very latest work (*Odes* IV.8 and IV.9). The obscure Bandusian fountain is ironically committed to posterity at III.13, and many of the erotic lyrics tacitly centre upon the contrast between the swift passing of youth and beauty and its arrest in Horace's poetry, but even the most straightforwardly panegyric of the political odes (IV.2, IV.4, IV.5 and IV.15, for example) never entirely escape an edge of *recusatio* – the poet's refusal to write political epic – and nor do they promise directly to immortalise the regime of which they speak. This is in contrast to Pindar, almost every one of whose victory odes promises immortality of just this kind; indeed that hope is the central point and purpose of those poems, which emphasise the necessity of achievement *and* the memory of that achievement for true glory.⁶ In this sense, Jonson's fixation upon IV.8 and IV.9 is much more Pindaric than it is Horatian.

Odes IV.8 and 9 feature in Jonson's work from the earliest years of his literary career until late in his life. Early examples include line 29 of IV.8, appended as the motto at the end of *Ungathered Verse* 1, an early poem in praise of Thomas Palmer's *The Sprite of Trees and Herbes* (1598–9). Similarly, the dedication to Camden inserted in the Huntington copy of the quarto of *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) takes its pointed epigraph

⁵ On the reception of Pindar at this period in general see Revard, *Pindar and the Renaissance Hymn-Ode*. Shafer gives a brief but useful overview of the Pindaric and Horatian material in Jonson's odes (Robert Shafer, *The English Ode to 1660: an Essay in Literary History* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), pp. 97–109). A briefer version of some of the arguments of this chapter can be found in Victoria Moul, 'Versions of Victory: Ben Jonson and the Pindaric Ode', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 14 (2007), 51–73.

⁶ Instances of this theme in Pindar are so numerous that an exhaustive list would be extremely long. Examples can be found at: *Olympians* 4.12, 5.25–7, 10.91–3, *Pythian* 1.92–6 and 99–100, *Pythian* 3.107–15, *Isthmian* 4.41–7, *Nemean* 6.26–30 as well as *Nemean* 7.12–16 (discussed below) and 31–2. Citations of Pindar refer to the Oxford Classical Text edition: C. M. Bowra (ed.), *Pindari Carmina cum fragmentis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935).