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H a n n u R i i k o n e n

In 23 B.C. Horace published his three books of odes in a collected form. As far as we know, the publication did not prove a success nor did it bring with it such public recognition of his merits as a lyric poet as he had hoped (cf. carm. 1,1,35-36 *Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres, / sublimi feriam sidera vertice*). The unfavourable reception (see epist. 1,19) did not, however, discouraqe Horace as a writer. It is true that for years he gave up writing lyrics, but instead he turned his attention to the composition of epistles on moral issues, and later on literary criticism. With characteristic humour Horace describes his transition from lyrics to more serious matters in his first epistle:

> *Est mihi purgatam crebro qui personet aurem:*
> *"solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne*
> *peccet ad extremum ridendus et ilia ducat."*
> *nunc itaque et versus et cetera ludicra pono:*[2]
> *quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo et omnis in hoc sum:*
> *condo et conpono quae mox depromere possim.* (1,1,7-12)

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1 I am very grateful to Professor Iiro Kajanto, who has drawn my attention to the importance of the contrast between city and country in Roman poetry.

2 *versus et cetera ludicra* refers here to lyric poems.

The originality of the epistles of Horace as a literary genre in the poetry of antiquity has been compared to that of satire, which Quintilian (Inst. Orat. 10,1,93-95) maintained was a product peculiar to Roman literature.[3] Their aesthetic value lies partly in an effective use of contrasts, of which the city - country antithesis is probably the most obvious. The frequent use of this contrast in the epistles also meant a return to Horace's favourite themes of the 30's (see especially satires 2,6 and 2,7 and the second epode), to the time when from the urban confines of Rome he had longed for the countryside and when his wishes were at last fulfilled by Maecenas, who bestowed upon him the Sabine farm (*fundus Sabinus*; cf. sat. 2, 6,1-3 *Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus, / hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons / et paulum silvae super his foret).* While imposing structural coherence and unity on the epistles (this applies to the satires, too, which would otherwise have a somewhat loose structure), the antithesis is also useful for moral and moralistic purposes, in that city and country with their inhabitants are used to represent various forms of life, different virtues and vices, moral obligations etc.

In the first book of epistles the city - country antithesis is most apparent in the seventh, tenth and fourteenth epistles, with hints of it in several others (1,8; 1,11; 1,15; 1,16; 1,18; cf. also epist. 2,2,65-80). The aim of this article is to concentrate on the seventh epistle and to examine what relation this antithesis in the seventh epistle bears to Horace's own personal views, i.e. to his

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3 See also Eduard Fraenkel, Horace, Oxford 1957, 309.

attitude to city and country and to Maecenas, the donator of the estate, in the light of his other poems which deal with this antithesis.

Classical scholars have often discussed Horace's seventh epistle in the first book as if it were an autobiographical document. The poem has been seen as a result of a quarrel between Horace and his patron and friend, Maecenas. The scholars are, however, not agreed how deep this quarrel went; in the extreme view the poem has been seen reflecting a crisis or even a deep rift between Horace and Maecenas.[4] An argument in support of this theory states that the fourth book of odes eschews any mention of *Sabinum*, and refers to Maecenas only once (carm. 4,11,19).[5] On the other hand, some scholars have denied the existence of any quarrel and have maintained that it was only a question of Horace's wish to preserve his independence as a poet and private citizen.[6]

It must, however, be admitted that the external evidence for any conflict in the relations between Horace and Maecenas is very meagre; the situation was rather the reverse, since Maecenas at least acknowledged his friendship with the poet at the end of his life in

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4 See e.g. H. Hommel, Horaz. Der Mensch und das Werk, Heidelberg 1950, 58-60. "The theory of conflict" was already known in antiquity itself, beginning with Horace's commentator Porphyry, see C. Becker, Das Spätwerk des Horaz, Göttingen 1963, 25-27.

5 See J.H. Gunning, Der siebente Brief des Horaz und sein Verhältnis zu Maecenas, Mnem. III Ser., 10(1942)319-320.

6 See R. Heinze, Die augusteische Kultur, 2.ed., Leipzig-Berlin 1933, 132; see also Fraenkel, op.cit. 339. Horace had the courage even to refuse to become Augustus' secretary, see Sueton., Vita Hor.

his will to Augustus: *Horati Flacci ut mei esto memor.*[7] Nor does the following analysis of Horace's attitude to city and country in this epistle support the theory of any deep rift in the friendship of Horace and his patron.

At the outset (lines 1-13) Horace gives an account of his activities to Maecenas, the addressee of the epistle. Although he had promised his friend to stay in the country for five days only, he has kept people waiting for him (*desideror*) for the whole of August; and now he says that he will not see Maecenas again until the following spring (*reviset cum Zephyris*). In some respects the situation recalls Horace's otherwise quite different ode 1,20, where the poet is in the country, on his Sabine farm, and Maecenas, the addressee of the ode, in the capital. The ode also states a clear antithesis: on the one hand, Horace and his modest Sabinian wine in the country, and on the other hand the Roman elite with their famous Caecuban and other fine wines (cf. also epist. 1,5, where Horace invites his friend, the lawyer Torquatus to come and partake of some wine and a modest dish of vegetables). So Horace also humorously emphasizes his own unimportance just as he does in the epistle, where with reference to himself he says: *parvum parva decent* (44; see below). Horace gives as his reason for staying in the country his fear of becoming ill in Rome (2-4) and describes very vividly the horrors of Rome in August and September, the time of *rabies Canis*, as he says in epist. 1,10,16 (see also epist. 1,16,15-16). Funerals and the unsealing of wills are then more numerous than usual:

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7 Sueton., Vita Hor.

dum ficus prima calorque
dissignatorem decorat lictoribus atris,
dum pueris omnis pater et matercula pallet
officiosaque sedulitas et opella forensis
adducit febris et testamenta resignat. (5-9)

In his descriptions of town life Horace has a keen eye for tragi-comic details,[8] as in the famous passus in the second epistle of the second book (line 74): *tristia robustis luctantur funera plaustris*. The vividness of the description of Rome in the seventh epistle also depends on the metrical scheme: the rapid dactyls in the eighth line are eminently suitable for the description of official affairs (*officiosaque sedulitas et opella forensis*).[9] In contrast to this passus (lines 8-9) Eduard Fraenkel has strikingly drawn our attention to sat. 2,6,18-19, where Horace mentions the troubles he can avoid on his Sabine farm: *nec mala me ambitio perdit nec plumbeus auster / autumnusque gravis, Libitinae quaestus acerbae.*[10] - Living on his farm to safeguard his health is nothing new, either to Horace himself nor to other Roman authors. Horace's poems afford some parallel instances (e.g. epist. 1,16,15-16) as do other works, e.g. Cicero (epist. ad fam. 7,26,1) and Seneca (epist. ad Lucilium 104).

The dimension of time in this introductory part is also interesting and affords a key to the basic tone of the epistle. Horace's stay in the country has been prolonged from five days to a

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8 Cf. Fraenkel, op.cit. 328: "The picturesque detail at 1,6, *dissignatorem decorat lictoribus atris*, is in the best parodic style of the *sermones*."
9 A. Kiessling - R. Heinze, Horaz: Briefe, 5.ed., Berlin 1957, ad loc.
10 Fraenkel, op.cit. 328.

whole month and finally he promises to return to Rome several months later. The poet is here exaggerating (humorously, as Maecenas probably understood it, although there is no external evidence of Maecenas' attitude to this epistle). This kind of exaggeration (from a few days to many months) puts the poem on a more fictional level, and a serious moral discussion (the problem of giving and receiving presents) also receives humorous treatment.[11] Moreover, bearing in mind Horace's former habits and judging by what he says in his satires, Maecenas knew that the poet could not be away from the capital for long (cf. below).

The rest of the epistle (lines 14-98) consists of four *exempla* (comprising short narrative pieces, an anecdote, 14-19, an Aesopian fable, 29-33, an *exemplum mythicum* taken from the Odyssey, 39-43, and a chat or essay, 46-95),[12] each being followed by general moral statements and personal views (lines 20-28, 34-39, 44-45 and 96-98).

By giving an account first of the Calabrian host, who behaves like a lout, Horace illustrates the moral dimensions connected with giving. The poet also wants to show how Maecenas did not make him rich in the same way as the Calabrian peasant gave pears to his guest. Such a lout does not know or understand the true claims of generosity or moderation. The expression *non quo more - - tu me fecisti locupletem* (14-15) hints at the donation of the farm to Horace by Maecenas, the very farm where Horace is now staying. The farm was

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11 See G. Williams, Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, Oxford 1968, 566. Cf. Becker, op.cit. 28 n.8.

12 Cf. Fraenkel, op.cit. 336: "No other Horatian satire or epistle contains, within so small a compass such variety of αἶνοι as does Epist. 1,7."

not the gift of a lout, for a *vir bonus* (22) like Maecenas knows the difference between *aera* and *lupini* (23).

The latter part (25-28) of the statements belonging to the first *exemplum* contains a kind of hypothesis: Maecenas desiring that he never (*quodsi me noles usquam*) leave his patron and Rome. This is again a kind of exaggeration as in the introductory part: Horace knows very well that Maecenas would never make a proposal like this. But Horace himself suddenly becomes a little melancholic; and such a change of mood is very appropriate to epistles, which are not logical expositions, although they deal with moral philosophy. We should not demand any strict logic from Horace's epistles. In a way he was aware of this himself when he wrote in the first epistle: *nunc agilis fio et mersor civilibus undis / virtutis verae custos rigidusque satelles, / nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor* (1,1,16-18). Eduard Fraenkel has emphasized, how this passus (lines 25-28) in the seventh epistle "reveals - - something of the inner life of the writer. There is under the smiling surface a note of nostalgic longing for the bygone days of his youth." This becomes more apparent when one notices the strong anafora *reddes - - reddes - - reddes* (25-27), anafora commonly being used by Horace to reveal deep emotions.[13] In this connection we should also remember the expression *mihi non iam regia Roma - - placet* in the third *exemplum* (44-45),[14] where Horace *expressis verbis* confesses that he no longer enjoys life in Rome as he used to. He also refers to the fact that he is growing older: he is no longer the young man about town who drank a lot of wine and

13 Fraenkel. op.cit. 333.
14 Ibid. 336.

fascinated the famous courtesan Cinara. This is a favourite theme in Horace's later works; in the fourteenth epistle he paints a vivid picture of his youth (31-34), but says that now he wants to enjoy a quiet life in the country: *cena brevis iuvat et prope rivum somnus in herba; / nec lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum* (35-36) (cf. also carm. 4,1,3-4 *Non sum qualis eram bonae / sub regno Cinarae* and epist. 1,1,4 *non eadem est aetas, non mens*). From this viewpoint it is interesting to consider Horace's other poems where he speaks of his stay on his farm. In his earlier works, in the satires, he speaks of his longing for the countryside. After receiving the farm, although he constantly professes his devotedness to country life, he cannot, however, be too long away from the pleasures of Rome (and *vice versa*). The most famous example of this attitude is the seventh satire of the second book, where Horace's slave Davus mocks his master's longing for Rome while he is in the country and for the country when he is in the capital: *Romae rus optas: absentem rusticus urbem/ tollis ad astra levis* (28-29). This can be compared to the second epode, where *fenerator* Alfius speaks enthusiastically of the pleasures of the countryside, although we soon find him hurrying to earn more money in the city. We can, however, say that at the time of the composition of the first book of epistles Horace was increasingly willing to stay on his farm (simply because he was growing old and because he wanted to concentrate on philosophy and writing). In the tenth epistle he calls himself *ruris amatores* (2) in contrast to his friend Fuscus, who is *urbis amator*. In the fourteenth epistle he speaks to his bailiff and says: *rure ego viventem, tu dicis in urbe beatum* (10). In the same epistle Horace also emphasizes his contempt

for the urban way of life in Rome: *me constare mihi scis et discedere tristem, / quandocumque trahunt invisa negotia Romam* (16-17). This is in clear contrast to the information Davus had given in sat. 2,7. And in the sixteenth epistle the poet gives a charming and detailed account of his Sabine farm (1-16).

In the eighth epistle,[15] however, Horace again confesses to his own changing attitudes and moods: *Romae Tibur amem, ventosus Tibure Romam* (12). It cannot be mere coincidence that this thought appears in an epistle in such close proximity to the seventh, as if Horace wanted to remind Maecenas of his longing for Rome. At all events Maecenas can be sure that he need not wait for Horace until the following spring. Unfortunately we cannot know whether Maecenas received the epistles one by one (although they are not of course normal letters being written in an artistic verse-form), or all of them later in the form of a collection. Neither of these alternatives presupposes a conflict, but if the latter assumption is correct, the fictional character of the epistles becomes even more apparent and in that case the seventh and eighth epistles together merely provide proof of Horace's changing attitudes, and are not real attempts on the poet's part to apologize to Maecenas for lingering in the country.

The following two examples further illustrate the moral problems with regard to the giver, the recipient and the gift. The crucial statement in line 34 *hac ego si conpellor imagine cuncta resigno* is only a possibility, based on the example, and does not im-

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15 On the contradictions between the seventh and the eighth epistles, see M.J. McGann, Studies in Horace's First Book of Epistles, Latomus 100(1966)56-57.

ply that Horace is threatening to return the presents given him by Maecenas.[16] Nor should we suppose that *cuncta* refers to Maecenas' city favours alone.[17] It includes the Sabine farm as well, but, as I have pointed out, the returning of all these gifts is only referred to as a possibility.[18] The examples are closely related to the practice of moral philosophical discussion in antiquity, and have many parallels in the texts of Aristotle, the Stoics and Cicero.[19] They are also in keeping with Horace's promise in the first epistle to discuss what is right and proper (*quid verum atque decens*). The latter of these two examples is closely connected with the city - country antithesis. After telling of Telemachus, who had rejected the present of horses from Menelaus, Horace says:

> *parvum parva decent: mihi iam non regia Roma,*
> *sed vacuum Tibur placet aut inbelle Tarentum.* (44-45)

The advantages that Maecenas could offer Horace in Rome are no longer necessary for the poet. On the contrary, Horace can fulfil the moral requirements of the recipient best in the modest circumstances of the countryside. If Maecenas were to offer him something more in the city, it would be too much. Only in his contentment with his present condition (on the farm presented to him by Maecenas) can he *do-*

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16 R.S. Kilpatrick, Fact and Fable in Horace, Epistle 1,7. CPh. 68 (1973)51, gives another interpretation, which depends on the meaning of the verb *resigno*: "So Horace's phrase could mean, *omnem criminis fidem resigno*, or *cuncta* (sc. *crimina*) *resigno*: 'If I am the man impunged in this fable, I refute it all!"

17 K.Büchner, Horaz. Studien zur römischen Literatur III, Wiesbaden 1962, 152, thinks that *cuncta* refers to all presents given to Horace by Maecenas except the Sabine farm.

18 Some scholars have supposed that Horace had another villa at Tibur, but this has been refuted by I. Troxler-Keller, Die Dichterlandschaft des Horaz, Heidelberg 1964, 137-140.

19 See Fraenkel, op. cit. 330-331.

nata reponere laetus, as he says in line 39. In the tenth epistle (lines 42-43, also a moral drawn from a fable) Horace again emphasizes how important it is to be content with a fitting property. Lines 44-45 in the seventh epistle contain great density of meaning and are based on a manifold antithesis: Horace - Maecenas; *parvus, parva - regia Roma - vacuum Tibur, inbelle Tarentum*; city - country. Tibur and Tarentum,[20] it is true, are towns. They are, however, small country towns and as resorts for the Roman upper class belong to the category of countryside rather than that of the city; in any case, they form a clear contrast to the capital. This category also includes Horace's Sabine farm. By using the adjective *regia* as an epithet for Rome, Horace may have (perhaps humorously) also hinted at the royal ancestry of Maecenas, who is an inhabitant of Rome (cf. carm. 1,1,1 *Maecenas atavis edite regibus*). Eduard Fraenkel, on the other hand, has emphasized that typical Horatian irony is involved in the words *parvus* and *parva*: "When Horace is resorting to his habitual expedient of semi-serious εἰρωνεία, *dissimulatio opis propriae*, he readily uses the word *parvus*."[21]

The fourth example is based entirely on the contrast between city and country. First, Horace paints a very vivid picture of life in Rome, a picture comparable to the depiction of town life in his satires. He tells how a man called Volteius Mena becomes a client

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20 On Tibur and Tarentum in Horace's poetry, see Troxler-Keller, op. cit. 119-126 and 133-140.

21 Fraenkel, op.cit. 335. Fraenkel mentions the following parallels: carm. 4,2,31f., 4,15,1ff. and epist. 2,1,257ff.

of the lawyer Philippus.[22] One day Volteius accompanies his new patron to the Latin festivities in the country, where he sees *arvum caelumque*,[23] a new experience for a town-dweller like him. He is immediately attracted to country life, and a small farm is bought for him with Philippus' money with the consequence that *ex nitido fit rusticus* (83). In two lines the poet describes the urgent agrarian tasks Mena is now faced with:

> *sulcos et vineta crepat mera, praeparat ulmos,*
> *inmoritur studiis et amore senescit habendi.* (84-85)

But soon Mena also becomes acquainted with the drawbacks of life as a farmer (86-87, cf. carm. 3,1,29-32 and epist. 1,8,4-6), which in fact prove to be so great that he has to ask - in more or less pathetic tones[24] - his patron's leave to return to Rome:

> *quod te per Genium dextramque deosque Penatis*
> *obsecro et obtestor: vitae me redde priori.* (94-95)

Volteius had first been quite happy in Rome:

> *- - notum*
> *et properare loco et cessare et quaerere et uti,*
> *gaudentem parvisque sodalibus et lare certo*
> *et ludis et post decisa negotia campo.* (56-59)

In his sudden enthusiasm to achieve greater happiness in unknown circumstances in the country, Volteius finds himself in difficulties.

The city - country antithesis is emphasized with a motif which Otto Hiltbrunner has paid special attention to. When living in town

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22 On the historicity of Philippus and the origin of the name Mena, see O. Hiltbrunner, Volteius Mena. Interpretationen zu Hor. epist. 1,7. Gymn. 67(1960)293-298. Knowing this does not, however, help us to interpret this poem.

23 Cf. Kiessling-Heinze, ad.loc.: "dem Volteius als echtem Grossstädter sind die grünen Saaten und die erquickende Landluft etwas ganz Ungewohntes."

24 Fraenkel, op.cit. 338.

Volteius Mena was *adrasus* (50) and Philippus met him for the first time just *vacua tonsoris in umbra / cultello proprios purgantem leniter unguis* (50-51). But when he returns from the country after his failure as a farmer, he is *scaber* and *intonsus* (90).[25] The urbanity of the city is symbolized by the emphasis on care of the skin, hair and nails, but in the country all this is of lesser importance. The phrase *ex nitido fit rusticus*, describing Mena's transition from city to country, is closely connected with this motif. In the later descriptions of town life in Roman literature the talk about barbers and their customers became even more common, especially in the works of Juvenal and Martial (e.g. Juv. 3,186; 8,166; 10,225-226 and Mart. 2,29,9-10; 3,43; 6,55; 7,95,9-13; cf. also Hor. epist. 1,1,94-95).

This tale of Volteius Mena and Philippus is interesting because of its ambiguity. On the one hand, it has many biographical features and reminiscences of the life of Horace and Maecenas and their mutual relations;[26] on the other, and taken as a whole, it describes a situation which is quite different from that existing between Horace and Maecenas.[27] The description of Volteius' nature and his activities resembles the positive picture which Horace in his works gives of his own father (even their social status is similar, Volteius being a *praeco*, Horace's father a *coactor*). Volteius' and Philippus' first meeting resembles that of Horace and Maecenas (i.e. unsuccessful). The donation of a farm is also an autobiographical feature, and both farms, Horace's and Volteius', are situated in the Sabinian

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25 Hiltbrunner, Gymn. 67(1960)296-297.
26 See Fraenkel, op.cit. 338; see also McGann, op.cit. 54.
27 I share the opinion of R.S. Kilpatrick, CPh. 68(1973)53: "The apparent resemblances to the events of Horace's and Maecenas' relationships are intended only to intensify the contrasts."

district (cf. line 77). Horace, however, did not like Volteius tire of farming, for he is a real *ruris amator* and he does not ask Maecenas for permission to return to Rome. He even enjoys himself, moving turf and stones, although the neighbours laugh at such an odd gentleman (epist. 1,14,39). Horace's farm is also larger than that of Volteius Mena and he has a *vilicus* and other people to help him (epist. 1,14,1-3), while Volteius had to do everything himself. Nor does Horace need to trust to such pathetic expressions as *te per Genium dextramque deosque Penatis / obsecro et obtestor* (94-95). Besides, the tale also provides a contrast to sat. 2,7, where Horace tells us about *mus rusticus* and *mus urbanus*, the former returning to the country. If Horace himself returned to Rome he would notice how what he has lost (the rural life on his Sabine farm) is preferable to what he is striving for (the opportunities in Rome offered by Maecenas) just as Volteius Mena noticed that urban life suits him better. Horace also wishes to prove that he is not like Volteius who only in a moment of enthusiasm (like Alfius in the second epode) desired a country life. Here Carl Becker's words are appropriate: "Die Geschichte von Volteius Mena (46-95) ist ein grosses, spielerisches Gegenbild zu den beiden Teilen 14-28 und 29-45. Sie zeigt, was dabei herauskommt, wenn bei einem solchen Verhältnis - das im völligen Gegensatz zu der Freundschaft zwischen Horaz und Maecenas äusserlich, durch Zufall zustande gekommen ist - der eine nicht in der rechten Weise zu schenken, der andere nicht in der rechten Weise zu empfangen (oder abzulehnen) versteht."[28]

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28 Becker, op.cit. 35; cf. McGann, op.cit. 55.

It has become apparent that Horace's seventh epistle, although containing a large number of hints with regard to the poet's own life and experiences, especially to his attitudes to city and country and to his estate, cannot be interpreted at every point as an autobiographical document. It is not a question of facts, but rather of certain resemblances to Horace's life which provide a lively background for the discussion of moral and philosophical problems. The discussion for its part consists of examples which touch on Horace's biography at many points. The poet refers freely, sometimes even in contradiction, to statements in his other poems, both by exaggerating them and by giving examples *ex contrario*.