Horace. Image, Identity, and Audience, Randall L. B. McNeill. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8018-6666-9. Pp. 188.

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McNeill's short book revisits a tried and true Horatian topic, the theory that the author speaks in a persona. Or rather, it revisits a number of Horatian topics, since McNeill also approaches such chestnuts as the poet's relation to his patron Maecenas, to the emperor Augustus, and to the various other rings of his audience. His angle is always the poet's self-presentation in relation to others and the strength of the book lies in his emphasis on the variability according to context of what appears to be Horace's self. He does a nice job of putting these topics together, but the book reads like a dissertation, and it inspired in me an acute sense of *omnia iam uulgata*. It is not the author's fault that the same year produced Phebe Lowell Bowditch, *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage* (Berkeley 2001), and Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore 2001), but the contrast could not be sharper. Bowditch reaches out of the narrow domain of classics to anthropological and sociological theory and brings a fresh outlook to Horace's relation to his patron. Edmunds, from an entirely different angle, uses the techniques of hermeneutics to question the recuperability of any original context that could give us a pragmatic understanding of occasional utterances. McNeill tries to achieve a middle ground, but he speaks almost entirely from within the field. Although I do not believe that progress can be made *only* by bringing modern critical theories to classical texts, it certainly can help see old questions in a new light. Interpretations stand or fall on the basis of close reading. In this respect,

however, McNeill falls short of Ellen Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (Cambridge 1998), who covers similar ground. These reservations aside, McNeill writes clearly and his argument that the different Horaces presented by the texts do not need to be unified is salutary.

McNeill's central aim is to "offer a reconciliation of once irreconcilable positions: to suggest that the biographical and the rhetorical are by design inextricably linked in Horace's self-portrayal, with both elements constantly being deployed in the other's service" (7). Gregson Davis, *Polyhymnia. The Rhetoric of Horatian Lyric Discourse* (Berkeley 1991) has already shown how a *bios* is a rhetorical entity, but McNeill would retain more of the experiential aspect of the life in question in his notion of biography. McNeill does not deconstruct this opposition, but rather attempts to unify ideas whose histories have been at odds. On one extreme, Bowditch's Marxist approach aims to unmask the economic realities underlying Horace's representations of his social relations; on the other, those like Davis and Oliensis take rhetoric seriously as constructing reality. McNeill wants to stake out a third, middle position, one closer to Oliensis, but with concessions to there being some external reality in operation, even if not recuperable. Not even Edmunds would dispute this. The question is rather what you want to know. Do you want to know the Q. Horatius Flaccus who lived and died over 2,000 years ago? McNeill's description of our perception of Horace's "lively and engaging personality" (1) is certainly on the mark. Or do you want to come to some understanding of the texts that have come down under his name? In this case, one must admit, as McNeill does, that our perception of the author is a product of his poetry. I think you must choose. In the book's conclusion, McNeill uses the language of "creating reality." Here he has come to an understanding of the problem that does not differ significantly from those who argue for reality as a construction, but he does so with reluctance.

The question of rhetoric's role in making the real becomes more salient once we leave the domain of poetry to consider Horace's contribution to Augustan ideology. McNeill maintains a sharp distinction between "image" and "substance" (131). I am uneasy with this conception once we concede that realities are made, whether or not consciously and whether by groups or individuals. Could we rather not speak of competing images, or conversely of competing realities? These would hold sway according to their acceptance by the community, which could reject images contrary to their understanding. The logical result,

however, of a sharp divide between image and substance would not be a Horace who was a potent contributor to the realities of Augustan ideology, but a manipulative image-maker always at risk of the accusation of insincerity. This is exactly the pitfall McNeill wants to avoid. On the one hand, he keeps the question of sincerity squarely in the domain of the irrecuperable, and on the other, he wants access to reality. The problem with the middle ground is trying to have it both ways when the alternatives are incompatible.

When McNeill gives up his desire to unify, he puts forward a nuanced and flexible approach. He takes us through the variety of Horatian self-images with a focus on their particular context, whether generic or social, and argues that our attempts to unify them into a consistent picture are misguided. He convincingly sets out a system of increasingly broad circles of different audiences to whom Horace directs his utterances. A leitmotif of the book is how the same utterance would mean something different to different readers. At Sat. 2.6.32, Horace admits to liking it when accused of rushing through the streets to Maecenas: *hoc iuuat et melli est, non mentiar* ("This pleases me and is like honey – I cannot lie"). McNeill sees Horace as first acknowledging his gratitude to Maecenas, and then deflecting sneers of toadyism by admitting his weakness. "Thus, the poet both celebrates and deprecates his lofty position, boldly and unexpectedly giving simultaneous reassurance to both sets of readers" (49). The widest of his readership circles is posterity, and here he could take his argument further and explore the extent to which readers in one circle can or are meant to see meanings targeting another circle. Does Maecenas also recognize the deflection, and do those who consider Horace a toady see the acknowledgment? Are we to see both aspects and is there any communication special to us?

This pragmatic approach could be developed to help McNeill out of the stalemate of the biography/rhetoric dichotomy. If we take Horace's statements as operating in the world, we still need to recognize their rhetorical dimension. We cannot peel off the rhetoric to uncover the biography; unrhetorical speech does not exist. The utterance from Sat. 2.6 would have the same double meaning if spoken in an ordinary speech situation as it does in the poem. McNeill is well aware that the difference as he sees it between image and substance operates as much in the world as in literature, but he appears to think some fundamental substratum exists beyond or below representation, even though it is inaccessible. All kinds of representations take place that leave no traces, but they are

representations nevertheless. Oliensis's substitution of "face" for "persona" is useful in this regard because the rhetorically constructed face operates in the world. What Horace writes in his poetry is as much a part of who he is and was socially (*multa … pars mei*, *Odes* 3.30.6) as whatever witticisms he may have made at dinner. His different expressions accord to the different contexts and McNeill is right on target in resisting unifying all the contradictory things Horace said at different points in his life and his thinking – and even during particular moments. McNeill's chapter on Augustus, for instance, shows that "various members of his contemporary audience were … invited to take away the message they had hoped to find, regardless of whether they welcomed or abhorred the growing power in Rome of Octavian's faction" (97). At the same party, different people can interpret a friend's remarks in contradictory ways. Despite his willingness to entertain multiple meanings for multiple audiences, McNeill has a bottom line, and this is Horace's support for the regime. When Horace ends the Ode to Pollio (2.1) with a retreat into a private world of pleasure and song, the declaration of unhappiness with civil war redounds to the credit of Augustus who has freed the Roman people so that they may safely and peacefully devote themselves to their private pursuits (130).

The question remains, however, what happens to an utterance when divorced from its context, as happens in literature. This has been a preoccupation among Horatians since Richard Heinze's seminal article from 1923, "Die Horazische Ode", *Vom Geist des Römertums. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Darmstadt 1972) 172-89. Lyric poetry reflects without reproducing genuine speech situations, and one of the connections between Horace's satire and his lyric is the impression created of speech arising from some context, although the speech in neither genre can ever be pinned down entirely to its purported context. Heinze was the first to declare Horace's apparent speech situations fictitious and much of recent scholarship has revolved around this issue (Denis Feeney, "Horace and the Greek Lyric Poets", in N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace 2000: A Celebration, Essays for the Bimillenium* [London 1993] 41-63; Florence Dupont, *L'Invention de la littérature: de l'ivresse grecque au livre latin* [Paris 1994], reviewed by Denis Feeney, TLS, April 28, 2000: 9; M. Citroni, *Poesia e lettori in Roma antica: Forme della communicazione letteraria* [Rome 1995]; too late for McNeill to see are Alessandro Barchiesi, "Rituals in Ink: Horace on the Greek Lyric Tradition", in M. Depew and D. Obbink, *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* [Cambridge, Mass 2000] 167-82, notes 290-46; and

Lowell Edmunds' critique of Heinze and Citroni, cited above). The divide would then shift from one between rhetoric and biography, as McNeill presents it, to one between rhetorically constructed literature and rhetorically constructed worlds.