

# *Gender-oriented discourse in Horace*

Alba ROMANO FORTEZA

## RESUMEN

Horacio, o su *persona*, normalmente despliega insistente respeto hacia los otros y su discurso es siempre cortés y deferente. El seguimiento escrupuloso de las normas del trato social conduce a una comunicación efectiva, si bien a veces la excesiva preocupación por la *urbanitas* puede poner en peligro la eficacia del intercambio lingüístico. Esta oficiosidad formularia es el registro especial que los estudiosos han calificado como el estilo típico de las mujeres. Pero hay un marcado cambio, cuando las destinatarias de los versos de Horacio son mujeres viejas. Agresión, insultos y burlas se hacen presentes, y se ignoran las leyes de la comunicación. Nos sentimos con derecho a concluir que Horacio modifica su discurso de acuerdo con el sexo del interlocutor, y reserva para las mujeres viejas el lenguaje de dominio y distanciamiento que se considera característicamente masculino.

## SUMMARY

Horace, or his *persona* usually displays respect and consideration towards his fellow human beings making the discourse polite and deferential. Scrupulous adherence to the laws of special intercourse leads to effective communication even though some excessive concern with *urbanitas* may compromise the efficiency of his speech. This prolix etiquette is the language of affiliation which the scholars have identified as typical of female speakers. But there is a marked change when the addressees of Horace's writing are old women and a different discourse can be detected. Aggression, abuse and derision are present and the laws of communication are disregarded. We feel entitled to conclude that Horace modifies his speech according to the gender of his interlocutor and reserves for old women the language of control and dissociation that is considered characteristically masculine.

Women's studies and its political arm, feminism, have devoted a considerable amount of effort to and reached a not negligible degree of expertise in

establishing linguistic differences based on the gender of the speaker <sup>1</sup> and in the use of language as an instrument of control and power <sup>2</sup>. The Classical world and its speakers in the text have not escaped this type of scrutiny and I am aware of various projects in progress that try to ascertain the variations of Greek or Latin discourse according to the sex/gender of the person to whom the utterance is attributed by the authors.

If the study of gendered linguistic difference in contemporary subjects is extremely difficult given the innumerable variables, such as nationality, race, social status, education, professional sphere, not to mention individual idiosyncrasies, and requires great caution and rigorous control, then to translate this sort of inquiry into the Classical world, alien to us in language and culture, accessible only through documents, is almost impossible. Indeed it could be claimed to be futile given the impossibility of analysing actual speech production in observable subjects, but I am persuaded that no exploration is totally fruitless unless we want to take refuge in some paralysing but reassuring state of *aporia*.

To the barrier of distance and cultural diversity, we have to add another major hurdle. The direct female voice is absent –the exceptions being insignificant– so we have to content ourselves with only one voice, the male one, that can only be contrasted with a female voice creatively constructed by the male author. In other words, in the absence of another source of evidence we can only analyse female speech as male writers, free from any constraints of linguistic accuracy and verbatim reproduction saw fit, for artistic, ideological or personal preference to include it in their creations.

Renouncing the study of the female utterance as beyond my abilities, I choose a firmer ground and aim to explore gender oriented discourse in Horace according to the sex/gender of the addressee.

Before examining the examples available, which I shall restrict to older women, it seems imperative to deal cursorily with Horace's social and linguistic strategies in general to provide a frame work to the examples to be studied.

Horace presents himself to the reader as a most accomplished master of social intercourse and we are entitled to read his work as one of the main

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<sup>1</sup> "The observation that women and men speak differently qualifies sex for inclusion as an independent variable in the quest for descriptive linguistic parsimony", Philip M. Smith, *Language, the Sexes and Society*, Oxford 1985, p. 7, and this assertion is followed by reviews of innumerable surveys of gender and language. For an impressive, if somewhat dated, annotated bibliography see Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae & Nancy Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*, Cambridge 1983, 155- 331; Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language*, London 1985, gives detailed account of some of comparative studies of male and female discourse. Cf. also D. Cameron, *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*, London 1985 (reimpr. London 1988) and D. Graddol & J. Swan, *Gender Voices*, Oxford 1988 (reimpr. Oxford 1992).

<sup>2</sup> D. Spender, *Man Made Language*, London 1980 (reimpr. London 1983).

sources of information on good manners and etiquette in Rome. Very likely his awareness of and adherence to the rules governing social interaction derive from his much proclaimed humble origin, which might have rendered his position in Roman society quite precarious. Rome did not easily overlook a dishonourable ancestry, especially in those who had risen substantially above their origins and Horace, deft strategist as he was, stifled criticism by readily admitting his status liability.

This fact could explain, although not exclusively, Horace's sensitive approach to his contemporaries, even when, as a satirist, he is criticising their foibles. He addresses his equals and his superiors with similar deference<sup>3</sup>, he surrounds them with that invisible wall we put around those we respect, a wall that in social interaction is called politeness. This wall, willingly erected by the speaker, protects the addressee not only from any injury or insult but also from any invasion or transgression that could offend him/her. This is the negative aspect of politeness, the ritual of avoidance of the potentially unpleasant or unwelcome and it is essentially protective. When the other type of politeness, the positive one, is operating, the addressee is not only protected but also rewarded with praise, with approval, with signs of affection. In both types of deference Horace is equally skilful and examples are abundant. Any address to Maecenas will be a suitable illustration but Maecenas was not the only recipient of respectful and deferential treatment. For instance, *Epistle I 9*, where Horace recommends Septimius to Tiberius, is a masterpiece of tact. Horace is so weary of intruding into Tiberius' space and so diffident about imposing himself that he has produced the most verbose piece of writing, requiring nineteen circumvoluted lines to convey a two-line message: Septimius is an honorable man, accept him into your friendship and you will not regret your move. This deliberate linguistic inefficiency creates the effect of hesitancy, modesty and reluctance to ask a favour which must have been appreciated by the taciturn Tiberius<sup>4</sup>. In this example, used to illustrate the extent to which Horace was attentive to the interlocutor's or addressee's feelings,

<sup>3</sup> The lines by Rainer Maria Rilke come to mind when watching Horace dealing with his friends:

Erstaunte euch nicht auf attischen Stellen die Vorsicht  
menschlicher Geste? .....  
..... Gedenkt euch der Hände,  
wie sie drucklos beruhen, obwohl in den Torsen die Kraft steht.  
Diese Beherrschten wußten damit: so weit sind wirs,  
*dieses* ist unser, uns *so* zu berühren; stärker  
stemmen die Götter uns an.

*Sämtliche Werke, Duiniser Elegien, Die zweite Elegie*, Wiesbaden 1955, erster Teil, p. 692.

<sup>4</sup> Horace proliferates excuses and explanations that create an effect of overgentility. "The more particles in a sentence that reinforce the notion that it is a request, rather than an order, the politer the result". R. Lakoff, *Language and a Woman's Place*, University of Chicago Press, N.York 1975, p. 18. Lakoff's book, in spite of the time lapse since its publication continues to be one of the most important and justifiably most quoted work in the area of women and language.

the master of conciseness sacrifices this precious virtue of style out of regard for the other. The genre of *littera commendaticia*, a common practice among Roman males, is, paradoxically, the writing that comes closest to so called female speech, which is generally described as more circumlocutory, frequently faltering, unassertive and always watchful for the reaction of the interlocutor <sup>5</sup>.

Not only the powerful are treated to this verbal and social deference. The anonymous bore of *Sermones* 9 who intrudes into Horace's privacy, who commits every possible social solecism, who remains impervious to any type of discouragement, is heroically tolerated by Horace, too shy or too polite to get rid of him. During the encounter –the ordeal– and the ensuing dialogue Horace only allows himself an ironic question, bordering on the sarcastic, which the bore fails to decode and, consequently produces a reply limited to the literal content of the question <sup>6</sup>. An aside on the part of Horace follows and this is one of the very rare examples of breaching the rules of cooperative communication that we find in our poet, who, with this exception, remains courteous and mindful of the other's need to save face throughout the entire satire. To sum up, the bore does not hear an single unkind word from Horace who, although he was entitled to repel rudeness with rudeness, chose to maintain unrippled the smooth surface of the dialogue <sup>7</sup>.

The previous examples deal with extremes in the social spectrum: Tiberius, at the top of the social ladder (*Ep.* I 9), and the very obscure uncouth anonymous bore (*Serm.* I 8). However, when the exchange is between socially better balanced partners Horace does not relax his rules of linguistic exchange. The dialogue between Ulysses and Tiresias <sup>8</sup>, for instance, is a model of cooperation between the interlocutors and flows equably and efficiently. One may be dismayed at the content of the advice given to Ulysses but, from the point of view of effective communication, the dialogue is flawless. Something similar could be said about the conversation between Horace and Davus <sup>9</sup>, temporarily an equal under Saturnalian licence. After some tentative beginnings both partners engage themselves in conversation that results in a long and hardly flattering monologue on Davus' part and the anger of Horace, who threatens his slave with punishment but this does not detract from the fact that master has listened to his slave without interrupting him, thus making communication possible. Davus' utterances may have contained an ex-

<sup>5</sup> «...politeness involves an absence of strong statements, and women's speech is devised to prevent the expression of strong statements». Lakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> 'est tibi mater, cognati, quis te saluo est opus?' 'haud mihi quisquam. omnis composui.' 'felicis, nunc ego resto...', 26-28.

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed discussion see A. C. Romano, "La ineficiencia lingüística como estrategia social", *Revista de Letras*, Facultad de Humanidades y Artes, Universidad Nacional de Rosario, 2 (1990) 84-91.

<sup>8</sup> *Sermones* II, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* II, 7.

cess of truth and provoked the consequent annoyance in Horace but this happened precisely because Horace acted *bona fide* as an interlocutor and Davus' message got across.

In his preaching –and Horace is indeed extremely generous with his advice– in parallel to admonitions on topics such as avarice, unhealthy ambition and excesses of any type, Horace always advocates loyalty to friends and tolerance for their faults. His primary aim seems to be reconciliation with oneself, with one's desires, needs and lot and also reconciliation among peers and rejection of social practices detrimental to harmony. Leniency is the golden law. A good example is afforded by the famous passage in *Sermones* I 3, 43-54 where he says that we should talk of our friends as a father talks of a deformed or malformed son, minimising the faults by means of euphemisms. Mindful of his own advice, the satirist and his benign *persona* never attacks vitriolically those who embody the vices or follies that he wants to correct. He is convinced that the denunciation of those vices and follies with a smile, *ridendo*, will lead the perpetrators into commonsensical or moral behaviour.

If to the above described discourse –which none could fail to recognise as typically Horatian– we try to assign a classification or qualification along gender lines, it will be unquestionably feminine. I shall explain this assertion: as mentioned at the beginning of the paper, scholars have studied many factors and have attempted many lines or axes of approach –phonologic, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, etc.– to differentiate male from female speech and have reached conclusions of various degrees of complexity and certainty. P.M Smith analysed the speech along the lines of masculinity and femininity as a self-categorization and as an assigned social identity<sup>10</sup> and concludes:

Two main dimensions that emerge from these studies, and that account for most of the variation in the data, have been termed 'control' and 'affiliation'. The control dimension, which orders people, situations and episodes in terms of the extent to which they provide the opportunity for exerting active control over the process and outcomes of interaction, is highly correlated with traditional conceptions of masculinity. The affiliation dimension orders people, situations and episodes in terms of their tendency to elicit warmth and approach versus aloofness and avoidance. This dimension is highly correlated with traditional norms of femininity<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135. Of course assertions of this type do not go unchallenged by deconstructionist proselytes: "All relativising discourses and definitions will invoke, at some level and however provisionally, essentializing notions, and *vice versa*, whatever ostensible positions are adopted. This renders problematical any ultimate appeal to essentialism, for example gender studies, whether it be the long-established search amongst classical scholars for traces of [Feminine Latinity] in the Sulpicia poems or Hélène Cixous's [écriture féminine] or Luce Irigaray's [woman-speak]". The assertion of univocal male and female discourse or readings, or references to discourse as [androcentric], have a strategic function in context but no claims to transcendental truth'. Duncan F. Kennedy, *The arts of love. Five studies in the discourse of the Roman love elegy*, Cambridge University Press 1993, p. 41. We make no claim to 'transcendental truth' and remain contented with an attempt to describe some 'strategic functions'.

Horace, an author of professed bonhomie, only too willing to abdicate the 'control' to which his sex expectations entitle him, in constant search of the harmony and always warm towards the powerful and the humble, the fool and the wise, in other words actively searching 'affiliation' and thus conforming with the traditional norms of femininity, is, however, capable of the most vitriolic attack on old women and he is not an isolated example, since ancient authors in general do not spare old age which is frequently depicted in the least compassionate terms<sup>12</sup> and, more specifically, old women were the frequent target of attack<sup>13</sup>, specially if they did not conform to the expectations of a retired and sedate life. In Latin literature Martial and Juvenal are particularly brutal and vociferous on the topic and, to some extent, they could have claimed Horatian *auctoritas* in their invective against aged women.

Two categories of old women are discernible: the one sexually active beyond her young days and the witch who is always old and occasionally sexually active, a transgression additional to that of possessing magical powers.

In his early work Horace rejects in *Epode* 8 the sexual favours of an old woman whose ancestry, wealth and learned penchants<sup>14</sup> do not compensate for the repulsiveness of her body. The poet, parodying the convention of describing seriatim the attributes of beautiful women<sup>15</sup>, provides us with a brutal enumeration of the revolting features of this *moecha senex*. In her ugliness, her wasted and deformed body acquires bovine or equine characteristics and this assimilation with the animal world amounts to disenfranchising her from the human condition<sup>16</sup>. This is indeed the working of sexism which dehumanises-or reifies-women. If in the eyes of the Ancients the norm was the human male of Athenian or Roman citizenship, this woman becomes an outsider on two counts: her gender and her closeness to bestiality. Her citizenship, vouched for by her ancestors, remains intact but it is insufficient compensation. A look at the language could be interesting. The first noticeable feature is the absence of a name in a poet that seems so partial to the use of proper

<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive and perceptive analysis see Thomas M. Falkner and Judith de Luce (eds.), *Old Age in Greek and Latin Literature*, State University of New York Press 1989.

<sup>13</sup> The subversion of *decorum* is condemnable also in male senior citizens who incur the same disapproval when playing the role of lovers. Cf. Stephen Bertman, "The Ashes and the Flame: Passion and Aging in Classical Poetry" in T. M. Falkner & J. de Luce, *op. cit.*, 157-171, but the expectations for women's behaviour have been more clearly and loudly stated, cf. Propertius IV, 11. A splendid collection of adjectives is afforded by *CIL* 6.11602: 'Hic sita est Amymone Marci optima et pulcherrima, lanifica pia pudica frugi casta domiseda'.

<sup>14</sup> "For the opening image of the Stoic books in her luxurious bed, it must be remembered that *libelli* could be roll-shaped, and the book roll occasionally represents the phallus." A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus. Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humour*, New Haven 1983, p. 111. I fail to see what this suggestion adds to the interpretation of the poem.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ovid, *Amores*, I 5 where the description of the woman's beauty ends up in possession whereas in Horace the description of the ugliness results in rejection or at least in a proposition that would have been deemed unacceptable.

<sup>16</sup> Something similar is to be found in *Sermones* I 2, 86 ff. with the analogy between choosing a woman and buying a horse.

names, either as addressees or as subjects of his discourse. While the elegists, Horace's contemporaries, inaugurate a new era in love poetry by making the name of the loved woman central to their creation, our poet distances himself from the woman he rejects by not giving her even the modest gift of onomastic recognition. As a speech act, this iambic poem operates for eighteen lines in the area of the locutionary act<sup>17</sup>, the act of stating facts, which keeps the speaker detached in his protestations of inability to love such a woman. In the final lines, the poet moves into a perlocutionary speech act which tries to modify the situation with a piece of advice. Horace makes a move – admittedly a disingenuous one – but nevertheless a move towards control. This is the language of a male more preoccupied with his needs than with the needs or disposition of the partner.

In *Epode* 12 another old woman – or perhaps the same –, also compared with the least engaging species of the animal world, provokes the same the repulsion in Horace for similar reasons. The first half of the poem follows the linguistic pattern of the previous epode but midway, the woman, frustrated in her uncontrolled libido, addresses reproachful words to the poet. Horace makes her utter self-indicting words and the more she complains the more she reveals the lust which leads her to take mercenary lovers. In this poem the author is the puppeteer or ventriloquist in full command of the situation and resorts to an ironic self-betrayal which damns the plaintiff more effectively than authorial invective.

Detachment, disaffiliation, control. All seems to point to a masculine sex-preferential discourse but in what could also be described as self-sabotage, Horace introduces into his unabashedly misogynist poems feminine features of speech. These are to be found in the area of the lexicon. When describing the female body and when referring to his genitalia, Horace chooses a quasi scientific or technical vocabulary, shunning the picturesque richness of the Latin sexual vocabulary<sup>18</sup>. His topic is obscene but his language is almost chaste, sometimes clinical and always inoffensive. This is the way in which numerous studies describe women's language when dealing with sexual matters. Obscenity and profanity are the preserve of the male and

women exercise a great and universal influence on linguistic development through their instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and their preference for refined and (in certain spheres) veiled and indirect expressions<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> For a lucid treatment of J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford University Press 1962 see Jean Caron, *Les régulations du discours. Psycholinguistique et pragmatique du langage*, Presses Universitaires de France 1983, ch. VI.

<sup>18</sup> J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origins*, London 1922, p. 246.

Euphemisms are the next step in lexical restraint and Horace offers borderline cases such as *fascinum* which, being an amulet, is highly desexualised. The use of sanitised expressions to designate *quae honeste nominari nequeunt*<sup>20</sup> is typical of female speech<sup>21</sup>. The attitude is masculine<sup>22</sup> because of its aggression but the language does not match the obscenity of the topic<sup>23</sup>.

Always in the iambic mode, Horace turns his attention to another archetype of old woman: the witch, a more complex figure<sup>24</sup>. In the Roman world magical powers were the province of women and, if the female is always the other, the witch has this otherness enhanced by her connections with the chthonic and heavenly forces. Canidia (*Epodes* 5 and 16) is totally detestable because she is guilty of a threefold crime: she is old, sexually active and endowed with magical powers. In *Epode* 5 we see Canidia and her colleagues engaged in concocting a love philtre to reconquer the affection of an estranged lover. This philtre requires the eyes of a child who died of starvation while looking at food plus a series of other ingredients so revolting that they defy the most vivid imagination<sup>25</sup>. The initial prayers of the child remain unheeded and the poem finishes with his curse, which we know is a futile gesture. The poem is a succession of alternate monologues: the child's / Canidia's / the child's, and no communication is established. Both of them are too engrossed in their search for control: the child's request for compassion, Canidia's wish to override the power of another witch and reconquer her lover's attention and the child's brave and fruitless final outburst. Canidia is blatantly guilty of a nefarious crime – the death of a child – but she is also guilty of deliberate deafness since she refuses to enter the verbal exchange the child has initiated. Her linguistic behaviour is at odds with her sex or more precisely, with the societal expectations from a woman and she could be described as, as far as language is concerned, a sexual transgressor or, at least, as psychologically androgynous. The gender role reversal is not limited to Canidia, her colleague and accomplice, Folia from Ariminum, is described as

<sup>20</sup> [Sall.] *Epist. ad Caes.* 2,9,2.

<sup>21</sup> Lakoff, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> If this virulence were attributable to Horace's youth, we could expect some similar examples with males as subjects. But in fact, the attack on the *parvenu* (*Epode* 4) who, after having been slave became a *tribunus militum*, is merely a mild denunciation compared to the venom of *Epodes* 8 and 12.

<sup>23</sup> Eduard Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford University Press 1970, p. 58, fails to see these features when he speaks of "obscenity of both language and matter" and, few lines later, "coarse language".

<sup>24</sup> "He could not indefinitely go on exploiting such topic as form the themes of epodes VIII and XII, inveighing against the physical and moral repulsiveness of some old women devoid of any particular interest. With Canidia he hit something far better. Horace's Canidia, whether or not she has a prototype in real life, is an exciting figure." Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 63. For George Luck, *Arcana Mundi. Magic and the Occult in Greek and Roman Worlds*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1985, p. 30, the fact that all women who practiced witchcraft looked more or less like Canidia is beyond doubt.

<sup>25</sup> Only Lucan. VI 413-830, matches Horace's collection of horrors in his description of Erichtho's rites.



possessing a male libido<sup>26</sup> and the child himself, in his curse, usurps the magical discourse which in Rome was within the female precinct. We are moving in a lawless world since not only the civil laws are breached but also the natural laws given the practice of magic and, finally, the laws governing linguistic social exchange.

The last *Epode* is a dialogue between the author and the witch. Horace, victim of the witch's incantation, admits defeat and launches into a palinode in which he not only acknowledges the woman's power (thus damming her) but pledges a hecatomb in her honour or, alternatively, poems in her praise. The answer is immediate: the witch remains unmoved and, as in the epode previously discussed, she boasts of her wicked powers, which amounts to a confession of her guilt. We have here the counterpart to the non-dialogue of the *Epode* 5: the witch listens and responds to the author's plea but the communication is vitiated by elements of deception on the part of Horace who is not operating *bona fide*. H.P. Grice in his famous William James lectures at Harvard<sup>27</sup> tried to establish a general principle of conversation interaction and he called it the 'Co-operative Principle'. Resorting to the categories of Kantian logic, he suggested a codification of the Co-operative Principle of conversation in nine maxims that can be summarised as follows:

1. Quantity
  - i. Make your contribution as informative as possible.
  - ii. Do not make your contribution more informative than it is required.
2. Quality
  - i. Do not say what you believe to be false.
  - ii. Do not say that for which you lack adequate information.
3. Relation
  - i. Be relevant
4. Manner
  - i. Avoid obscurity of expression
  - ii. Avoid ambiguity

<sup>26</sup> Non defuisse masculae libidinis Ariminensem Foliam (41-42).

<sup>27</sup> These lectures delivered in 1967 have been seminal in the study of linguistic communication and their influence is acknowledged in all respectable studies on Pragmatics. See R. Lakoff, *op. cit.*, and "What can you do with words: politeness, pragmatics and performatives" in A. Rogers, B. Wall, and J. P. Murphy, *Proceedings of the Texas Conference on Performatives, Presuppositions and Implicatures*, Arlington Va. 1977; P. Brown and S. C. Levinson, "Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena" in E. Goody, (ed.), *Questions of Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*, Cambridge University Press 1978. Paradoxically Grice's lectures have never been published in full but the main content of them can be found in H.P. Grice, "Logic and conversation" in P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, New York 1975 and "Further notes on logic and conversation" in P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 9: Pragmatics*, New York 1977.

- iii. Be brief
- iv. Be orderly <sup>28</sup>.

In *Epode 17* the Gricean rules of conversation are violated on several accounts, the most blatant being the flouting of the principle of quality (rule 2, i.): Horace is lying and he knows it, Canidia knows it and so does the reader. In addition, the author revels in ambiguity (rule 4 i.), for example, *sive mendaci lyra/voles sonare* <sup>29</sup> admits various readings: the lyre was mendacious when the original defamatory poems were written or will be mendacious in the recantation and promised praise or, perhaps, it is always mendacious. With the introduction of intertextuality with *tu pudica, tu proba* <sup>30</sup>, which echoes Catullus' famous final line *pudica et proba, redde codicillos* <sup>31</sup>, the poet is not only inscribing himself in the tradition of mock palinode but, as always happens with parody, is saying more than the mere text indicates. The violation of rule 1, i. is complex: the author is making his contribution more informative than required in a covert way which may be deciphered only by the literary initiated and, in its hyperbole, is lending an air of disingenuousness to the utterance <sup>32</sup>.

The fact that the witch does not fall into Horace's trap does not detract from the attempts of the author to control the situation through deception. Co-operative communication and the ensuing affiliative element in the discourse is absent <sup>33</sup>. This Horace who resorts to *dolus* to achieve his aims is not the Horace the poet presents i.e., the straightforward son of a freedman who only tells the truth in a congenial and compassionate manner <sup>34</sup>.

The hatred directed to old women is not restricted to the *Epodes*. In the *Odes* the *moecha senex*, so brutally treated in the early iambics, is replaced by the *moecha senescens*, the woman whose young days are passed but who refuses to adjust her behaviour to her age. In *Ode I 25*, there are two scenes. In the first, revelling young men, admittedly fewer of them and less frequently, try to get admission into the courtesan's house. In the first stanzas the combined themes of the paraclausithyron and the *lupanar* song follow a well established tradition. But there is then a break <sup>35</sup> and from the third stanza on we

<sup>28</sup> "Logic and conversation", p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> l. 40.

<sup>31</sup> 42, 24.

<sup>32</sup> For an enlightened discussion of Grice's principle, cf. Talbot J. Taylor and Deborah Cameron, *Analysing Conversation. Rules and Units in the Structure of Talk*, Pergamon Press, Oxford 1986, pp. 81-97.

<sup>33</sup> This is the stuff of comedy where, for the sake of laughter, communication is defective because of misapprehension, *error*, or because of trickery, *dolus*.

<sup>34</sup> The witch survives in *Sermones I 8* but the humouristic treatment dissolves the animus and the benign satirist converts Canidia from a threatening powerful woman into an object of inoffensive derision.

<sup>35</sup> For the study of this break, cf. Viktor Pöschl, "Horaz O. 1, 25," in *Dialogos für Harald Patzer*, J. Corder, R. Leimbach & A. B. Neschke-Hentschke (eds.), Wiesbaden 1975.

are projected into the future and the *exclusi amatores* of the first lines are replaced by Lydia whose uncontrolled sexuality pushes into the streets and becomes herself the *exclusa amatrix* of her own house. We are back here to the *saeva indignatio* of the iambs: Lydia is compared with a mare in heat, de-humanised by the blurring of the distinction between human and beast and confined to the notorious *angiportus* in a renewed Catullan echo<sup>36</sup>. The content and tone of this ode has received the most varied descriptions ranging from rejection of its devastating realism<sup>37</sup>, to the conviction that it is the expression of the morality of time and the demands of decorum<sup>38</sup>, to an agonic mixture of sadness and contempt<sup>39</sup>. Whatever the right description may be, Horace has not abandoned his aggression towards old or aging women and the benign critic of mores shows no compassion for Lydia.

In *Ode* III 15, the poet advises an old woman to abandon her juvenile behaviour and adopt a conduct more consonant with her age and status. Scholars have seen in this ode a softening of Horace's stand vis-à-vis old women<sup>40</sup> and have overlooked some abusive elements: she is the wife of a poor man, *pauperis Ibyci* and very close, because of her age, to the grave, *maturo propior... funeri*<sup>41</sup>. Her unbecoming conduct is more decorous in her daughter who somehow replicates Lydia since she behaves as an *exclusa amatrix*<sup>42</sup> and is compared with an animal, a kid. However there is a fundamental difference because of youth which acts as a redeeming factor. The Horatian admonitory tone is easily recognisable (*decet, rectius, modus*) and we feel close to the understanding moralist who tries to seduce the addressee to the right path. Lamentably the paternalistic gnomic tone suffers a severe disruption in the last line with the reference to Chloris drinking habits<sup>43</sup>. Horace seems to be wavering between the discourse of association and the discourse of rejection.

Horace cannot hide his *Schadenfreude* at the fact that Lyce is growing old and losing her beauty in *Ode* 13 of Book IV. The poet seems to take delight in enumerating the ravages of age in the woman as he did in the *Epodes*, although the savage description is toned down. The structure of the poem is similar to *Odes* III 15 since Horace, after the initial rejoicing, launches into an attack and then, in clear break, the tone mellows into some sort of intimacy<sup>44</sup>

<sup>36</sup> 58, 4.

<sup>37</sup> "For three stanzas Horace unleashes a tirade of unflattering, frightening and very ungallant description that has caused some scholars disgust and discomfort." W. J. Henderson, "The paraklausithyron motif in Horace's Odes", *Acta Classica* 16 (1973) p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> S. Commager, *The Odes of Horace, a Critical Study*, New Haven 1962, p. 249.

<sup>39</sup> "E un cuadro vivo ed appassionato (ma di passione in cui lottano fra loro la pena ed il disprezzo)", Nicola Terzaghi, *La Lirica di Orazio*, Rome 1967, p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> "Il faut louer ici chez Horace une grande légèreté de touche", F. Villeneuve (ed.), *Horace. Odes et Epodes*, Collection Budé, Paris 1967, p. 125, n. 1.

<sup>41</sup> P. Connor, *Horace's Lyric Poetry: the Force of Humour*, Melbourne 1987, p. 187.

<sup>42</sup> W. J. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> It is not suitable *poti vetulam faece tenus cadi* (17).

<sup>44</sup> M. C. J. Putnam, *Artifices of Eternity. Horace's Fourth Book of Odes*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1986, p. 224.

created by the autobiographical elements. The philosophising about the passing of time, an universal human predicament, has an all encompassing effect and author and addressee share the same destiny. However, in the second last line, the poet disengages himself and derision enters (*multo non sine risu*) and we can perceive the same oscillation as in III 15. *Ode IV 13* is as close as Horace gets to a change of attitude towards old women but it does not go the whole way.

Though he goes further than other poets in accepting kinship with women in the aging process <sup>45</sup>, he (Horace) never takes the further step of recommending to them the compensating pleasures and satisfactions he finds appropriate to his own and other men's later years <sup>46</sup>.

Summing up, there are two Horaces, the one who addresses old women and the other one. The latter, deeply concerned with the effect of his words, is always respectful of etiquette and, mindful of the feelings of his addressee, uses the congenial and compassionate strategy of affiliation. But dissociation and aggression are the marks of the discourse reserved for old women, which reveals a controlling intention. The occasional mellowing is never allowed to thrive and the poet, on these occasions, maintains a typical male speech. To look for a reason may be adventurous but we may surmise that Horace did not like the mirror presented to him by his aging female contemporaries and that he was ultimately rejecting –through displacement– his fear of his own old age's ugliness. Fear can also be the reason for the attack on witches. Fear of what was beyond his control may have pushed the poet to betray his carefully constructed *persona* and seek some form of dominance by means of the discourse he used when addressing old woman.

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<sup>45</sup> A point I feel inclined to dispute.

<sup>46</sup> Carol Clemeau Esler, «Horace's Old Girls: Evolution of a topos», in T. M. Falkner and J. de Luce, *op. cit.*, p. 177.