
The reader looking for a new angle on Horace’s poetry should know that *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage* is not a study of Horace’s poetry in the first place, but rather an attempt to focus on what is gained by reading Horace from a specific cultural anthropological perspective. This ‘packing out’ of mostly the *Epistles* and the *Odes* in terms of an economic imperative introduces the reader familiar with Horace’s work to a valuable perspective on it.

Apart from a broad overview of imperial patronage as a form of public expenditure, the introduction reviews recent studies on Horace and literary patronage as well as reviewing what Bowditch typifies as the ‘social discourses of benefaction’ (15) as reflected in the rhetoric of literary patronage. In a section on literary *amicitia* she deals with the difficulties arising from culling evidence on the poetry from the poetry concerned. The ambiguity involved in the language used to describe literary patronage further complicates the issue.

Five chapters cover different aspects of gifts, reciprocity and patronage, while a final conclusion focuses on the reading community as gift recipients or consumers of poetry. The bibliography is comprehensive and the subject index as well as *index locorum* well structured and useful.

The first chapter (‘The Gift Economy of Patronage’) deals with the functionalist basis for an ancient gift economy and the subsequent contradictions in Roman discourse on benefaction. The chapter focuses on Horace’s *Epistle to Augustus*, explaining how the poet converts an obligation of benefactions received into cultural capital of poetry for the people. It points out the basic conflict between the pretence or the ideology of voluntary gifts and the reality of economic gain and possible exploitation. This conflict is brought to bear on the analysis of every poem discussed irrespective of any other perspective also reflected in the poems concerned.
Chapter 2 (‘Tragic History and the Gift of Sacrifice’) discusses *Odes* 2.1, *Odes* 2.13 and the Roman *Odes* 3.1-6 as public gifts representing a metaphoric and sacrificial expenditure which represents the poet’s contribution to society. In this aim to promote social cohesion, Horace’s poetry, as well as other public gifts or *munera*, is seen to promote a national identity and to support Augustus. Ideologically these poems serve to cloud the immediate issues at stake by creating a vision of a divine *imperium*, the *pax deorum*, that justifies the *pax Augusta* that in turn deserves support.

An ideological focus on literature informs ch.3 (‘Land, Debt and Aesthetic Surplus’) underlining calculated self-interest as the basis of patronage and even of social cohesion. *Satires* 2.6 and *Odes* 1.17 are interpreted as examples of a hermeneutic sleight of hand that undermines the expectations imbedded in patronal discourse. Bowditch points out that a specific cultural discourse covering expenditure on various levels (religious as reflected in sacrifice, imperial as in public buildings and social as in private liberality) is reflected and manipulated in the rhetoric of both the *Odes* and the *Epistles*.

In ch.4 (‘The Economics of Refusal’) the author deals with the refashioning of a changing relationship between Horace and Maecenas as reflected in the course of *Epistles* 1, especially 1.1, 1.7 and 1.19. The implicit self-interest behind patronage is reflected in the abundant economic imagery, in contrast to the *amicitia* between equals where an ideology of voluntary giving is the norm. In my opinion this chapter seems to contribute most directly to a better understanding of the constraints of patronage and Horace’s creative response to these constraints.

The final chapter (‘The Epistolary Farm’) focuses on the two poems of the *Epistles* (1.14 and 1.16) in which the estate Horace received is discussed in great detail either as an entity embroiled in a market economy or as a source of pleasure in an economy of *otium*. The possible dispossession of the poet’s sense of self, one of the basic constraints in a system of patronage, is reversed by the capacity of the estate to generate aesthetic returns that re-establish the poet’s sense of himself. The most basic obligation generated by the farm as benefaction under a system of patronage is creatively countered by the construction of the farm in
language. This poetic embodiment of the farm serves as an image of a site of pleasure, not profit, where debts or obligations no longer apply. In short, the farm represents a reassessment of the implications of a gift economy of patronage.

The concluding section ("The Gift and the Reading Community") allows for the possibility that the poems themselves encourage the audience to resist reading them in terms of purely material considerations; that they suggest that the audience read them not only in terms of the do ut des principle at the basis of a gift economy of patronage. Instead the poems themselves have established a new egalitarian cultural community in which they represent the gift of a common cultural possession.

The proposed cultural anthropological approach supplies a viable reading of the poems concerned by contributing to our understanding of their social environment rather than to our literary appreciation of them. I have found myself beguiled by a theoretical exposition, that explains the social economy and environment in great depth and with considerable skill, but an exposition that, to make its case, presupposes a thorough familiarity with the poems on the part of its reader. I am not convinced that even a reasonably comprehensive theory of patronage can be made to bear fully the interpretative weight assigned to it. The accumulation and manipulation of symbolic capital on the part of both poet and patron in a strict do ut des situation does not, in the final analysis, adequately account for the creative imperative. However, since some understanding of the poet's original environment is a prerequisite for an intelligent reading of his poetry, I would consider this study essential reading for the more advanced student of Horace. Its consistent cultural anthropological approach provides a stimulating and sophisticated perspective on a poet who always demands (and repays) ever greater effort from his reader.

Sjarlene Thom  
University of Stellenbosch