

REWRITING AND PROTEST IN VICENT ANDRÉS ESTELLÉS'S *HORACIANES*

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Abstract || This paper focuses on *Horacianes*, a poetry book by Valencian poet, Vicent Andrés Estellés, and explores how it becomes an exercise of rewriting the *Satires*, and *Odes and Epodes*, by the Latin poet Horace. In this case, however, intertextuality and identifications have a critical component because they allow Estellés to bypass censorship and talk, from the point of view of the quotidian, about topics like sex and eroticism, but also about the hardships of war and issues of political corruption.

Keywords || Rewriting | *Horacianes* | Poetry | Postwar.

0. Introduction: "Aut insanit homo aut versus facit"

In the book *Més discordances*, Joan Fuster confesses that his "dòcil costum és un trosset de Mediterrani, suau, horacià, amistós..."¹ This aphorism could well had been written by Estellés, whose own habit was not always docile nor soft, as it was not in Horace. Their language transmits something visceral and critical with the times in which both authors lived. And yet, their common 'Mediterraneaness' and vitality, their friendly habits, might stand as reasons for Estellés deciding to play at being Horace, to exchange space, time, friends, even enemies; in short, to rewrite him.

When dealing with rewriting, we should distrust the innocence in the choice by the author who decides to reinvent another one. Parodic intent, vindication, identification? Why Horace? And about the corpus, why the *Satires* or the *Odes* and *Epodes*? It is true that we often find exercises in style, merely formal imitations. In contemporary Catalan literature, and particularly in short tales, we find examples of authors using rewriting to try different narrative techniques, as Mercè Rodoreda's *Vint-i-dos contes* or in some of Francesc Serés' *Contes russos*. But the genre in which we can find a larger number of purely formal rewriting is poetry, for obvious reasons. In fact, Mallorcan poet Miquel Costa i Llobera approached Horace in this manner. As Jaume Medina wrote, "si l'imitador és conseqüent fins a l'últim extrem, la seva obra corre el perill de respirar el mateix alè que l'obra inspiradora" (1977: 106), and Costa i Llobera did not want to be identified with the pagan and epicurean worldview of Horace.

But we are discussing Vicent Andrés Estellés (Burjassot, 1924-Valencia 1993), a writer committed with his time, a reality that Fuster (1972: 31) defines as "la sinistra etapa dels grans pànics, quan no hi havia espai ni temps per al respir, i la gent respirava com podia". Civil War erupted when Estellés was twelve and he had to quit his education. The fact that his family, of humble origins, had to burn some books did not prevent him to read anything that reached his hands, especially poetry in Spanish like Garcilaso de la Vega's. But "llegir", en aquella època, era un drama. I clandestí" (Fuster, 1972: 24); it was not until 1942, upon obtaining a scholarship to enroll in the Official School of Journalism in Madrid, when Estellés discovered the poetry of Vicente Aleixandre, Neruda, Lorca or Alberti. As for Catalan poetry, as Fuster, he read Teodor Llorente before than poems by Foix or Ribà. The lack of a local learned tradition was precisely a major problem. Instead, he found a language that was "prima i vacil·lant, i no sòlida i cerimonial com la dels mallorquins [...] Calia establir la provatura enmig d'un buit desanimat" (Fuster, 1972: 26). This circumstance translated in a simple and popular Valencian language. In his work, "les paraules del carrer, grolleres tal volta, o sovint, o de

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1 | The book collects articles that Joan Fuster published between 1981 and 1984 in *Jano*, a weekly with the subtitle "Medicina y humanidades". A first volume also published by Bromera and called *Discordances*, collects articles published between 1974 and 1980 in the same magazine. Originally, these articles were written and published in Spanish, and they have been translated by the poet Enric Sòria.

somrient gentilesa menestral, els sobreentesos sardònics, els clixés i les interjeccions del diàleg de veïnat, es convertien així en materials 'lírics' d'una potència inesperada" (Fuster, 1972: 26).

Even though Estellés made a living from journalism, he threw himself into poetry, submerged into it with the same poetic furor we can find in Horace. We should also keep in mind his condition as exiled, an inner exile, as he cannot express his voice in public due to the restrictions imposed by the Francoist regime, a fact that explains the usual mismatch between the date of writing and the date of publication of his works. Actually, when Estellés started publishing, he did it all at once. Up to that point, he had written much and published scarcely, but between 1971 and 1972 four different poem books and a first volume of complete works appeared in press.

The poetry book *Horacianes*, which we will analyze to understand the influence and role of Horace in Estellés poetry, was written in the 1960s but was not published until 1974. Thus, in the same way that *Llibre de Meravelles* becomes a chronicle of sorts of the postwar period, many of the poems in *Horacianes*, reflect the reality of their time, the somber Valencia of the 1960s. How is that possible, when the book travels to Rome, dialogues with Virgil and vindicates Sappho? We might wonder whether is precisely this interplay with the Latin and Greek classics, and especially with Horace, what allows Estellés to constantly refer, directly or indirectly, to the suffering caused by the Francoist regime; a way of saying without explicitly saying so. As Estellés himself acknowledges in one of his lines, "l'ofici de poeta em determina a no dir-ho tot."

We know much less, or less certainly, about Horace's life. There is *Life of Horace*—criticized abundantly by Estellés in *Horacianes*—written by Suetonius approximately between 75 and 160 A.D. The best source about his life is his *Satires*, which frequently relate anecdotes and everyday characters. We also know, as Estellés himself underscores, that his literary quality is connected to the fact that he could study in Rome with good masters, and even complemented his education in Athens between 45 and 42 B.C. He returned to Rome when Mark Antony and Octavian (members of the Second Triumvirate) confronted Brutus and Cassius (the advocates of the Republic, who had murdered Julius Caesar) in the battle of Philippi. This context of civil war would translate, as in Estellés' case, in anxiety and concern for the present and future of the society in which he lived. Horace obtained the support of the victors (the party of Octavian) and, thanks to his friendship with Virgil, he was introduced to Maecenas, who would help him access important circles. From this moment onwards, his literary activity began, and he finally found the so much desired peace and quiet in the Sabine Villa that Maecenas gave him as a gift.

Of his poetic works, we will focus on those rewritten by Estellés, the *Satires*, the *Odes* and the *Epodes*. The latter are seventeen compositions, of iambic meter, written with the model of the Greek poet Archilochus in a tempestuous period of both Rome's history and Horace's life (between 43 and 30 A.D.) The proposal of the poet to his fellow citizens who abandon Rome stems from the disillusionment generated by the civil confrontation. As Josep Vergès noted (1981: 110), the *Epodes* "reflecteixen tot això quan expressen la repugnància del poeta pels vicis que enllordaven la societat romana, l'angoixa que li causaven les lluites fratricides dels ciutadans romans i el sincer agraïment i franc companyonatge que l'unia al seu protector."

Conversely, the *Odes*, written in the poet's mature years, follow the model of Alcaeus and Sappho. Through his poetry, Horace aimed at immortality; he wanted to dodge what Romans termed *secunda mors*: forgetfulness. Thus, by means of a very depurated technique, Horace transformed his direct reality in a well-polished poetic mosaic, a round artistic work constructed from a certain distance, and therefore, from a perspective that tends to objectivity. In addition, the work proposes to bring back the serenity of classical art and offers an insightful meditation on life and the pass of time (*carpe diem*). Rather than unleashing the senses and succumb to pleasure, he advocates for building an inner shelter from where it is possible to administer, wisely and with restraint, the passage of time.

As for the *Satires*, they present some similarities with the *Epodes*, though with a less violent and sarcastic tone. Written in dactylic hexameter after Lucillus, they represent a novelty in Roman literature. As Jaume Joan Castelló notes in his prologue (2008:16), there were no Greek antecedents. "*Satura tota nostra est* —va dir Quintilià—. Que quedi per als romans, doncs, el mèrit de la sàtira, però també, de retruc, la seva problemàtica".² They are characterized by thematic variation, although personal criticism leaves room to social observation, to a reflection on social mores. In them, Horace gathers moments of his life, philosophical discussions, describes travels, and even ventures to give culinary advice. He witnesses the vices and meanness of society with the intention to extract a moral lesson and a personal rule of life, rather than aiming at changing society, as a sort of search for personal balance close to the epicurean ideal. And yet, according to Jaume Joan Castelló (2008: 18), "Horaci actua no com un filòsof assenyat i censor, sinó com un artista urbà i juganer. [...] Horaci no és un moralista, Horaci, ja en aquest fruit primerenc del seu enginy que són les *Sàtires*, se sent i se sap poeta, només poeta."

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2 | The quote from Quintilian is not literal. It is evident that there is a diachronic dimension of the genre beyond the Latin poets, but Quintilian was the first in understanding satire as a strictly literary form, and to appropriate it as a critical concept to refer to the work of Lucilius.

1. An Estellés-Horace or a Horace-Estellés?

We have indicated from the start that, in contrast with Costa i Llobera, Estellés' appropriation of Horace's poetry goes beyond the formal aspects and the imitation of the poetic language, but it is also important to highlight two traits they do share: the narrative character of their poems and the conversational style among different voices at play. Thus, in Estellés' poems we often find a sort of poem-dialogue in which the poetic 'I' splits into a 'you' that in occasions stands for the poet, but at other time may correspond to a friend (Virgil, Maecenas), an enemy (Suetonius), a poetess like Sappho, a lover, or death itself. This confers a confessional note to the text, it amplifies its meaning, and establishes an ambiguity that hides ideological connotations and social commitment.

1.1. A popular, pagan, humble vision of life

From a thematic point of view, in Estellés' as in Horace's work we find an understanding of life and poetry characterized by its vitality. When we read their poems, we may have the feeling that the everyday prevails over all other aspects. Eating and drinking, as well as other eschatological aspects of life, become poetic in Estellés' universe. In poem XVI, for instance, the authorial voice confesses to prefer escargot and Turis wine to the beauty of dusk over Perelló.³ In XXXII, he relates how the smell of bay from a seafood casserole being cooked nearby seduces him. In yet another poem, he praises Sagunt wine and the pleasure of drinking it along a side of crushed olives. He does not avoid confessing the eschatological consequences of an overnight session of drinking (XLIV), or to praise "aquestes belles i molt agradables albergínies/ que tu m'has enllestit" (L). Poem LVI praises *allioli* over mayonnaise, which Jaume Medina interprets as a vindication of Horace's universe ("*l'allioli*") over the simple formal rewriting of Costa i Llobera (defender of mayonnaise, "adjuunt testimonis cultíssims de gourmets"). In fact, at a certain point the authorial voice addresses Virgil and acknowledges that "nosaltres, que passem com a poetes,/ cantem o bé enaltim, t'ho concedesc, certes banalitats." In poem LII, the poet defends the legitimacy of using poetic language to refer to everyday elements, in writing a eulogy of the left big toe. The irony and criticism is obvious; the poem himself acknowledges that many critics would deem his poetry banal; nonetheless,

i què hem de fer-hi.
 ¿tot ha de ser
 transcendental?
 mira, diria,
 ets un imbècil
 hermafrodita.

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3 | In all Estellés poems, toponyms and proper names are always decapitalized. It should not be interpreted as a Latinizing convention, but rather as a worldview that celebrates small, common and anonymous things, a conception that implies the subversive element characteristic of the avant-gardes and that contrasts with other totalizing visions of a Romantic root.

faig el que vull,
i l'idioma
se'm fa flexible
i apte per tot.
cante diana
o invoque zeus
o evoque grècia,
en faig l'elogi
de la política,
cante els benignes
fruits de la terra,
i ara mateix
cante el dit gros.
¿i qui s'oposa?

We should not be fooled, though; while Estellés might sing to the everyday and vindicate simple poetics, “aquesta senzillesa no deixa de ser aparent ja que la construcció poètica presenta un elevat grau d'elaboració que no escapa al lector atent” (Aparicio 2004:153).

In Horace's poems, quotidian anecdotes and gastronomical references also become poetic elements. Epode III, for instance, in a lighthearted and friendly tone rebukes Maecenas for having offered him some food full of garlic, which he knows it does not suit him⁴. Ode XXI in book III, though written in a more delicate and serious manner that reproduces the structure of religious hymns, is dedicated to a jar of wine, an amphora, and distills good humor and optimism. But the eulogy to the everyday is particularly present in the *Satires*. Indeed, satire V in book I, which narrates a trip from Rome to Brindisi, includes many details such as the fact that the water was stinky and that there were mosquitos everywhere. In satire II in book II, we are illustrated on the benefits of eating frugally and includes reflections on the origin of foodstuff that echo very contemporary concerns of our globalized world: “But where have you derived/ the capacity to determine that this pike gasping here/ was caught in the Tiber or in the sea? Whether it was scooped out of the waves between two Roman bridges or at the mouth of the Etruscan stream?” In turn, satire IV constitutes a true cooking book: “En aquest cas Caci, un admirador d'una mena de nouvelle cuisine, no té altre maldecap que procurar recordar els preceptes culinaris acabats de descobrir” (Joan Castelló, 2008: 191). We are even advised about ways to counter constipation or how to relive someone who had drink too much...In addition, many scenes need to be understood as humoristic, such as the one, in epode X, in which Horace criticizes somebody called Mevi because he stinks (clearly, an excuse to express the poet's hate towards him), or the one in which a wooden statue of the phallic god Priapus boycotts a witches' charm by farting sonorously (satire VIII, book I).

This simple vitality and modest view of life cannot be divorced from

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4 | It is evident, then, that although Horace was not a well-known poet at the time of writing the *Epodes*, he had a close friendship with Maecenas.

the Epicureanism defended by Horace, who in his poetry insisted in the idea that a wise man should devote himself to whatever makes him happy. It is precisely the search for pleasure and happiness in simple things what can bring self-sufficiency (autarky) and peace of mind (ataraxy). It should not come as a surprise that in the first satire of book I, Horace criticizes the fact that, in general, mankind is unable to value and feel content with what they have. He particularly focuses in the miser, whom Horace, with fierce pragmatism, reproaches that he accumulates wealth without putting it to any use: “Do you not know what money serves for?/ How it’s to be used? To buy bread, vegetables,/ a sixth of wine, other things deprived of which/ human nature suffers.” At the end of this satire, and even though Horace wants to differentiate himself from the stoicism of the philosopher Chrysippus, he has to admit some similarities. His Epicureanism is also connected to the theme of *mediocritas aurea*, which advises a serene enjoyment of life and judicious acceptance of what life brings every day, without renouncing to the most immediate pleasures, like the company of friends or having fun around a table. In poem XLVII, Estellés-Horace feels satisfied of having lived “simplement/ en una amable i ponderada mitjania”, while criticizing those who seek the favors of Caesar or sleep with the Empress. In turn, in the sixth satire, Horace also proudly rejoices in his refusal of honors and simple life. He defends his life over the senator’s, whom he addresses, and describes his placid routine: he goes to the market and asks for prices, strolls in the Circus, the Forum, has a meal of leeks and chickpeas, pays visits to his friends. “...After a modest lunch/ just enough to sustain me the rest/ of the day on an empty stomach,/ I laze away the day at home./ Such is the life of those who are free/ from unhappy and dismal ambitions./ Thus I console myself to be able/ to live more peacefully than my grandfather,/ or father, or uncle, had any of them been a *questor*.”

In the poem XLII of *Horacianes*, Estellés begins saying that “M’he estimat molt la vida”, in what constitutes a statement of his principles. Here he makes explicit the idea of enjoying the little things of the everyday, and admittedly, some hedonism. Far from conceiving life from an intellectualized perspective, the poet compares it with a table set for lunch. His exaggerated minimalism appears in the dismemberment of the decasyllable lines, in his explicit avoidance of capitals and the diverse metonymies: the elementary, “aquest got d’aigua”; love, “una jove que passa pel carrer”; eroticism, “aquell melic”, or tenderness and innocence, “la primera dent d’un infant”. In this same sense, the poem that opens *Horacianes* can be read as a song to hedonism, in that,

parla de les coses elementals i de l’existència diària, que queden dignificades gràcies al caire classicista que, de nou, traspuen els versos. Hi és present, a més a més, el gust per la selecció acurada dels mots,

per la seua sonoritat, i una actitud vitalista amarada, com és freqüent en Estellés, d'ironia. (Aparicio 2004: 154)

The poet confesses liking over anything else “enramar-me d'oli cru/ el pimentó torrat, tallat en tires”, and establishes a sort of analogy between the Eucharist and eating a red pepper, thus sacralizing the commonplace. A quite explicit comparison turns the pleasure of eating this pepper into an orgasm, in what we can interpret as yet another signal of his impulse towards a communion with a simple and hedonist form of life.

Another theme connected to Epicureanism relates to one Horace's most celebrated composition, the one beginning with *beatus ille*, in which the poet extolls the delight of living in the countryside over the anxiety created by urban life and the world of business. The last four lines, though, gesture toward the critique, irony or a kind satire: the poem gives voice to a usurer, who is moved when the debtors paid the interests back, and upon collecting the money, only thinks on investing them again. In another instance, in satire VI in book II, Horace thanks Maecenas for having bestowed him a rural villa. He begins saying, “This is what I prayed for: a plot of land/ not very large where there could be a garden,/ and a perennial spring near my house, / and besides these, a little patch of wood.” Estellés also acknowledges the *beatus ille*, for example in poem XXXIII, in which he praises—with envy, even—the simple ways of fishermen: “aquestes pobres gents que mengen les anguiles/amb aquella elegància ancestral. me n'aniria amb elles.” Poem XXXV can also be interpreted in this sense: in this case, the poem praises a farmer who, hearing about man's arrival to the Moon, gazes at it, sees nothing different, and continues working his plot of land, which is none other than Horta, the region where Estellés was born.

Next to the vitality of this attitude, we find the weight of memory, the nostalgia for landscapes and times past, idealized by the poet⁵ as the Civil War erupted when he was twelve years old. Estellés seems to feel a bit guilty of thus avoiding the present, and timidly he says that, “si m'és permés,/ evocaré dies de la infantesa” (XV). Such evocations, which take him back to the farms, the orchards and myrtle, to “una aigua de guitarres” (XX), are painful: as the etymology of ‘nostalgia’ indicates, missing implies suffering. Sometimes, perhaps trying to distance himself from it and minimize the pain, he remembers his youth by means of Horace's Voice, attributing “aquell molt dolç enyor” to the times he lived in Greece (XLVI):

secretament enyore grècia,
pecaminosament enyore grècia.
enyore l'aspra terra,
aquell ramat de cabres, unes vinyes, unes oli-
[veres, aquells núvols de pols,

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5 | We cannot expand on the issue of toponymy, but it is important to underscore, even in passing, that all the landscapes that appear in *Horacianes* either correspond with the time and space of Horace (Rome, Greece, Venusa...) or belong to the País Valencià (el Perelló, el Saler, Sagunt, Turís, Burjassot, Sueca...), in a relation with the memories of a time past that, in its idealization, become a sort of *locus amoenus*.

enllà un plint, l'abatiment d'una columna,
llunyanament la mar.
des de grècia,
alguna horabaixa d'aquelles,
enyorava profundament roma,
la meua roma,
aquesta.

(vv. 5-16)

Moreover, it is not mere chance that *Horaciones* finish with a poem that longs for Roman sunsets (“ah roma, rica en capaltards,/ en savieses molt recòndites!”) which the authorial Voice beautifully compares to the moment in which we look at our lover before leaving the bed, “i lentament, després, se’n va, entre la murta i els/ xiprers”.

1.2. “En la intimitat nocturna del llit”: Love, eroticism, sex

At this point, it should not come as a surprise that Estellés, as did Horace, freely refer to sexual intercourse. The theme of love has a leading role in Estellés poetic work, but it surprises because it is treated in a very explicit way, in spite of the historical circumstances. Critics have identified two elements:

d'una banda, l'amor presentat des d'una òptica essencialment lírica, tendra i amorosida, referida especialment a la muller i companya del poeta al llarg de tota la seua trajectòria vital i poètica, Isabel; de l'altra, situaríem l'amor en la seua vessant més eròtica i sexual, sovint lligada a la mort, on es reivindiquen amb força els plaers de la carn acompanyats, o no, d'una vinculació sentimental o emotiva. (Aparicio 2004: 151)

Thus, next to tenderness, we find violence, explicit and non-idealized love and sex, always in a confessional tone. Only in *Horacianes*, there are about fifteen poems directly referring to love—and, as always in Estellés, connected to sex. Passion and sensual pleasure become, along with memory and poetry, a way to rebel against, and free himself from, the oppressive, miserable reality that surrounds him. An extreme case of his unabashed and elementary vision of sex is probably poem XXIII, a sort of elegy to a condom that the poet addresses as if he was in interlocutor. The first two lines are revelatory: “et veig gastat, flàccid, llançat,/ condó”. Other poems refer to the asymmetry of bosoms (XIII) or, in another case, their perfection, after having raised five kids (XXXVII). Also, the love triangle, in XXXVI, of characters from Horace, like Miletus, Chloris and Pholoe, or the narrative of the failed attempt of making love in the poem that begins “he passat la tarda i la nit bevent”. There are other more sensual poems, in which he praises female beauty, and more subtle analogies between sexual pleasure and the pleasure of eating and drinking. But they are always written in a plain and direct language, and whenever he refers to intercourse he does not shy away from terms like ‘coitus’, ‘copulation’, ‘moaning’ or ‘orgasm’.

In Horace, we find a similar way of treating love and sex. For example, in satire V from book I, the poet confesses that one night during the trip to Brindisi, “lewd dreams assail me/ in the night and stain my night clothes/ and supine belly.” In satire VIII book I, in contrast, it is god Priapus, mentioned before, who scares the thieves by his “red pole jutting obscenely/ from my groin”. In this sense, though, the most revelatory of the satires is the second in book I, in which Horace warns about the passions of love and advices to be careful with married women, as they can bring disaster. Cupiennius, one “who admires only cunts in white robes”, relates the story of “one had his testicles/ and salacious prick hacked off with a knife”. In the satire, ‘the conscience of the prick’ is invoked, and Cupiennius acknowledges that he enjoys available and uncomplicated sex: “So, when your loins are swelling tumescent/ and your passion is glowing incandescent...do you prefer to burst/ of damned desire? I, no, the Love that pleases/ me is ready and available”.⁶

In this treatment of Love and sex we can recognize the influence of Ovid and his *Ars amatoria*, a sort of textbook in seduction that parodies didactic literature, a *divertimento* that scandalized its society. Irony is again a determinant element in Ovid, as it is in Horace and Estellés. Ovid laughs at those who criticize his works, as Estellés, and indulges even more in salacity. In poem LV of *Horacianes*, we find an explicit reference:

em divertien les
 amables bestieses de l'ovidí, el pobre,
 escandalitzant fins i tot els déus
 més benvolents, però jo no ho hauria
 sabut fer mai. sentia un darrer pudor.
 (vv.12-16)

1.3. “Marcat a foc per la injustícia”: Consciousness and commitment, the critical component

As Estellés, as Ovid, was exiled, it is possible to trace further parallelisms. An inner exile, in the case of Estellés, who suffered the lack of freedom of expression in his country, in contrast to Ovid’s real one in Tomis (by the western shore of the Black Sea), caused by his possible complicity in the loves of the two Julias (the daughter and granddaughter of Augustus), a profanation of the Isis cult, or his participation in a divination ritual which inquired about the successor of Augustus.⁷

Returning to *Horacianes*, we find more or less explicit references to the situation of Valencia under the Francoist regime in the 1960s. For instance, in LI, the poet alludes to the massive burning, in 1963—“aquest any miserable”— of Joan Fuster’s *Nosaltres els Valencians*, in an attempt to choke dissident voices. The tenor of the

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6 | It was possibly this relaxed way of treating things sexual what originated the criticism of Suetonius, Horace’s biographer, who qualified his as a vicious and dissolute man, and spread the idea that in his House there was room covered with mirrors so he could observe himself during sex. Estellés would retort and criticize Suetonius in different occasions (cf. poems LXIII, LXV, LXVI).

7 | Cf. the poem *Exili d’Ovidi* from “Llibre seté: pòntiques” (*Versos per Jackeley, Obra completa* 7) in which Estellés adopts the rol of Ovid as authorial voice and establishes an explicit parallelism with his own condition as an exile.

poems in which we find references to the hardships of the historical moment fluctuate between sadness and rage. Poem LIV distills the pain and impotence (“arraparia les parets”) of the poet and his wife listening to a record by Raimon. And appropriating Ovid’s voice, rather than Horace, Estellés asks himself “quan voldran els déus o qui siga/ que acabe aquesta situació”, a situation that poem LXXVIII qualifies as “aquest moment funest i brut i trist”. In other moments, rage and even a visceral hatred imposes over everything else (LXIV):

estic parlant de coses terriblement concretes.
no estic fent un poema: narre un procés d’un odi.
de l’odi, al capdavant, de tot l’odi del món
i no accepte banderes ni receptes amables.
estic parlant d’un odi essencial, estricte.
(vv.27-31)

Some authors have consigned the apolitical character of Horace’s Satires, in considering that there are scarce explicit references to his political context. But we should take into account that the positive references to some members of society might have political implications:

to a certain extent some of the names deployed can be associated with negative attack on political targets, but more importantly, *Satires* I constructs a positive image of Maecenas, the young Caesar and the values they represent. This image is not just at the service of Horace’s portrait of himself but is a calculated attempt to win over his readers to the new ruler (Muecke: 115-116)

In displaying his sympathies, Horace also takes sides, in a more subtle and complex way, with his reality. Another mean by which he implied his opposition to the ideological model of the Triumvirate is making explicit the influence of Lucilius, whom Horace transform into briefer, more condensed themes, with an intent of marking distances, “not so much to criticize Lucilius, but to distinguish himself from the political motivations of more recent supporters of Lucilus” (Muecke: 116).

In another poem (LXXIX), Estellés-Horaci directly insults politicians (consuls and proconsuls), calling them sons of bitches and bastards and, in a more subtle way, murders who “practiquen un vici que hom diu necrologia”. Indeed, the understanding of death as an inherent aspect of life is another of the omnipresent themes in Estellés poetry. The same poet acknowledges that he “parle molt de la mort aquests darrers dies” (XIV), something we cannot separate from his immediate historical context. It is a death with an strikingly vital aspect (“una aparença de vida”) in that it forces us to take advantage of the fleeting pleasures which we encounter (*carpe diem*). Precisely because we all have to die, Estellés says that he loves life so much (LX). Without gloominess, in poem VII he says not being afraid of

death, and yet he is concerned about what others would think of his poetry. Using Horace's voice, he asks himself whether he will end up being considered "un pallasso de roma". In another poem (LVII), he says he will leave his death in an amphora, or a cooking pot, and that it will be thanks to his poems how we would know about his life, the same that occurs in the case of Horace and his poetic compositions. If in *Llibre de meravelles*, death is "cadaver", here death shows us sometimes its most physiological side, as when the poet highlights that "el nostre darrer acte o darrera voluntat/ serà també una cagada gratuïta, uns orins" (XVII), or when he desires to "oblidar-me que un dia me n'hauré d'anar no sé/ on ni com ni quan,/ fet un paquet de merda i de tristesa" (LX).

One of the keys to understand why Estellés identifies with Horace is, as we may well imagine by now, the fact that it allows him to add political and critical content to his poems. Horace's biographer, Suetonius, who appears in different poems, should be interpreted as a reference to José Ombuena, director of the newspaper *Las Provincias* from 1959 to 1992. Before Ombuena's appointment, Estellés worked in the newspaper for over a decade (1949-1958), under the then director Martí Domínguez Barberà. Even though he was supporter of Franco's regime and had fought in the rebel side in the Civil War, Domínguez Barberà kept an attitude of transparency and criticism, which brought him to criticize the government management of the economic aid intended to alleviate the devastating outcomes of the flooding of 1957. As a consequence, he was demoted and substituted by Ombuena, whose editorial line would be characterized by anti-Catalonianism and a distancing from the cultural and ideological principles of supporting Valencian identity at the linguistic, literary and political levels. Not surprisingly, then, in Estellés' *Horacianes* Suetonius/José Ombuena is accused of "tindre la llengua molt bruta", and described as a "fill de puta", "cabró", "bord", or "mesquí" in multiple occasions. In this criticism, we also find a vindication of Estellés/ Horace's father, and a defense of their humble origins.

El meu pare era «de l'horta». Mai no he sabut aclarir si la barraca on va néixer, i que, temps enllà, per una evolució bàrbara i natural, es convertiria en una modesta alqueria, pertanyia al terme municipal de València o a què collons. Treballava de forner. Abans havia estat aprenent de mecànic i quatre o cinc coses més. [...] Amb el temps fou un paler de molta anomenada: d'anomenada, fins i tot, comarcal. (Estellés, 1986:19)

Estellés-Horace thus reproaches Suetonius that, in his biography of Horace, he criticizes his father, and tried to slander him referring the fact that his father was a fisherman, when he was in truth the son of a freedman: "t'has demorat moltíssim referint/ que el meu pare fou pescater" (LXII). However, the most interesting aspect in all the poem that Estellés dedicates to Horace's father (and his own) is the

tenderness that distills from his vindication of humility and simplicity, tenderness which goes hand in hand with his thankfulness for the fact that while his parents “no sabien de lletra”, he could receive an education (V):

intuïtiu, em vares dur als millors mestres de venusa,
més endavant de roma
i fins i tot em vas permetre anar a grècia.
com t'ho podria agrair, pare.
(vv.10-14)

In other occasions, poems dedicated to his father are declarations of filial love and of an intense longing felt by not being by his side. In Horace's *Satires* we find a similar admiration, love and sincere thankfulness for the father. In satire IV book I, Horace thanks his father for teaching him, through his example, to avoid vices. And particularly in satire VI, in which he tells Maecenas that he is not shamed by his origins, and that he thanks his father taking him to Rome to study, and teaching him “a ser honest, que és la virtut principal d'un home”.⁸

2. Conclusions: “Sóc llatí, amargament, llatí”

Even though there are many more aspects to analyze in Estellés' poetry book, at this point we can extract some conclusions about the reasons behind his rewriting and reinterpretation of Horace. Firstly, as we have noted in advance, the classics, in this case the Latin classics and particularly Horace, “es revelen, precisament, com un mecanisme que, a banda de posar de manifest l'aïllament cultural que patien els escriptors de l'època, [...] permet superar el control estricte que imposava la censura gràcies a la interposició de la dislocació geogràfica i temporal” (Aparicio, 2004:155). The world of Horace—his landscapes, friends, enemies, his worries—become a very powerful weapon in Estellés' hands, a weapon that allows him to rebel and fight in spite of the limitations of his inner exile.

In addition, and while we have insisted that his rewriting and identification is thematic rather than formal—in contrast, for example, to other poetry books in which Estellés would rewrite Ausiàs March or other Valencian Golden Age poets—it is nonetheless evident that in *Horacianes* there is an attempt of formal elaboration, experimentation and renovation of the poetic language. Moreover, as Aparicio notes (2004), there is an explicit intention to affiliate his work with the universal literary tradition, as well as with Catalan literary circles beyond provincialism. Thus, by recurring to the Latin roots of poetry he is able to generate both a contrast as well as a paradoxical balance with a language full of dialectalisms and colloquial words.

NOTES

8 | The figure of Maecenas, to whom Horace dedicates much of his works, is repeatedly invoked by Estellés in poem XXX (“que els déus t'ho paguen o mecenes”). Thus, in same way as there is a correspondence between Suetonius and Ombuena, we can also detect Maecenas in the figure of Eliseu Climent, Estellés' editor, to whom *Horacianes* was dedicated.

Finally, it is worth to consider, with Italo Calvino (1995), that every reading of a classical author is, in truth, a rereading. Perhaps *Horacianes* are mostly so: an experience of reading a Latin classic in a space, a time and a language “terriblement concretes”. If this is possible at all, it is precisely because Horace, in his condition of classical author, is susceptible of being read and rewritten from a contemporary standpoint and satisfies the horizon of expectations of a 20th, or even 21st century reader. We can think of a more creative, bold and radical way of doing so. As Jaume Medina writes,

l'obra de Vicent Andrés Estellés ha encertat, pel camí de la imitació i de la identificació amb el món i l'obra del clàssic llatí, amb les seves pràctiques, amb les seves creences, amb les seves maneres de viure, a donar-nos un Horaci valencià, un Horaci de casa nostra, que no solament contempla el món a distància, en l'«objectivitat» de la història, sinó que ha assumit tota la manera masculina de viure i de veure el món, ja en la perspectiva històrica, ja en el moment present, donant-nos, alhora, una colla de personatges antics que, potser, tenen molt i molt a veure amb els moderns.

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