Horácio e a sua perenidade

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At the outset of the *Odes*, Horace expresses the wish to be inserted into the canon of lyric poets, to become number ten in a group of nine: *quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres / sublimi feriam sidera vertice* (1.1.35-6). Notwithstanding the temporal and cultural gulf that separates him from the poets of archaic and classical Greece, Horace attempts to resuscitate the genre of lyric poetry and to establish himself, the Roman vates, as the primary heir to that great tradition – a project he declares fulfilled in the last poem of the three-book collection, where he envisions his future glory and prides himself on being the first to have “spun the Aeolian song to Italian rhythms” (*princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos*, 3.30.13-4). Given the emphasis with which Horace conceives his *carmina* as lyric poems and repeatedly evokes his lyric models (both via textual allusion and direct mention)\(^1\), one may not necessarily expect to find the *Odes* as intensely engaged with other genres. However, the inclusion of generically alien elements is an essential feature of Horace’s lyric discourse\(^2\) and may be associated with the fundamental changes that have taken place in the literary landscape since the times of Sappho or Pindar.

As Dennis Feeney has pointed out, “between Horace and this remote world was interposed yet another culture, that of Hellenistic Greece, of Alexandria – at first sight another barrier, but also a corridor, for Hellenistic Greece was […] the only medium through which he had access to the earlier archaic and classical culture” (1993: 44). Thus Horace encountered the texts of the lyric poets not in live performances, but on the page, in editions put together by Alexandrian scholars, and by artfully arranging his own *carmina* into books he clearly followed in the footsteps of Hellenistic authors, who were the first to treat the book as a compositional and semantic unit\(^3\). What is more, the incorporation of non-lyric elements into the *Odes* is a device very similar to the intrinsically Alexandrian technique of *Kreuzung der Gattungen*. Among the genres popular in the Hellenistic era, there is one that gained

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\(^2\) I borrow the term from Davis (1991), who analyses the dynamics of generic disavowal and assimilation, i.e. the ways in which Horace incorporates other genres within lyric, even those which, at first sight, he seems to reject. More recently, Harrison (2007) has studied the phenomenon of generic enrichment in Horace and Vergil, tracing, among other things, non-lyric elements in the *Odes* (pp. 168-206).

\(^3\) It is interesting to note that Horace, in organizing his poems, even alludes to the arrangement of Alexandrian editions by evoking poems which were obviously conceived as programmatic by the Alexandrians (and therefore put first) at the outset of his own books; cf. Barchiesi (2000) 171-3; Barchiesi (2001) 156 and Lyne (2005).