

Seeing in Society. Social glances in the first book of Horace's Epistles

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“Video”, the Latin verb meaning *to see* was etymologically associated by Varro – a great scholar and writer of the Roman Republic – with the term “uis”, which indicated strength, power, violence, tracing an etymological link which, although in itself wrong, suggests a spontaneous association, in the Roman mind, between visual dynamics and the exercise of power (Varro *ling.* 6, 80): “uideo a ui: quinque enim sensuum maximus in oculis: nam cum sensus nullus quod abest mille passus sentire possit, oculorum sensus uis usque peruenit ad stellas” [Translation: “uideo”, to see, from “uis”, force, for the greatest of the five senses is in the sense of sight. While no other sense is able to perceive something a thousand feet away, the force of the visual perception reaches even to the stars]¹. Seeing is a force that wins out

- 1 While the codices give “uisu”, modern editors print either de Pauw’s or Spengel’s corrections (“ui[su]” secl. de Pauw; “<id a ui>” add. Spengel), the former being generally preferred. Despite these textual problems, though, the key-term “uis” is indubitably present in the following sentence. And, after all, the etymological association so highlighted remains alive up to Isidore (*Et.* 11, 1, 21): “uisus dictus, quod uiuacior sit ceteris sensibus ac praestantior siue uelocior, ampliusque uigeat”. The superiority of sight as a crucial means in the perception of the reality is a deep-rooted conception in antiquity, already present in Heraclitus (Heracl. 55, 101a; 107 D.-K.) and in Herodotus, who tells the story of Candaules, the Lydian king who secretly showed the nudity of his wife to Gyges in order to elicit a confirmation of her beauty, which no words could ever have done (Hdt. 1, 8, 2). For these and other examples see Berardi’s introduction (Berardi 2012, 5–9) to his recent monograph on *euidencia* (*enargeia*, in Greek) in ancient literature and rhetoric, namely the effectiveness that words can have through the construction of vivid and almost visual effects. Horace himself admits the effectiveness of visual communication (Hor. *ars* 180–182): “segnius inritant animos demissa per aurem / quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae / ipse sibi tradit spectator”. Horace’s poetry as well, which shapes vivid, mimetic sketches, displays a highly visual character and

other senses and is able to give insights into the outside world, penetrating it in its ultimate distance, up till the stars. It is no accident that vision frequently becomes an instrument and metaphor of developing knowledge. Undeniably, visual metaphors are used at different stages in Plato's *Republic* (in the myth of the cave, to give just one example²) as well as, in the Roman world, in the Lucretius' Epicurean conquest of philosophical sight over the darkness of ignorance³.

If human eyes can penetrate the external world, though, it is through the eyes themselves that the external world penetrates into our minds. Indeed, ancient ocular theories reflected this twofold process, claiming that sight was made possible either by "the presence of a material effluence from the eye that made contact with the thing seen" or by "a stream of particles given off by the object and penetrating the eye"⁴. In both cases, seeing appears as a tactile force which can be both exercised and endured, potentially making the eyes simultaneously an aggressive weapon and a vulnerable breach. Here

demonstrates Horace's acute sensitivity to visual power as an instrument of communication. However, as the title of my paper suggests, I wish to focus less on the literary/rhetorical aspects and more on the political/social aspects of Horace's use of visual devices. In this respect, it is worth mentioning here, at the very beginning of my paper, two useful bibliographical references: Bergmann – Kondoleon 1999 and Fredrick 2002. These collections of essays give a varied overview of the role played by visual dynamics in several social occasions (such as triumphs, funerals and public games). On the social and political function of visibility in ancient Rome, see also Bartsch 2006, 115–152.

- 2 Having overcome the deceptive images projected on the cave's wall, the man who exits the cave will finally be able to look straight into the light of the sun (as Plato writes in *R.* 516b). For the role played by sight not only in Plato but, overall, in ancient Greek philosophy, I think Nightingal 2015, 54–67 gives a useful and updated insight.
- 3 "To see the truth, for Lucretius, is to be free of fear and so ethically enlightened; to be blind is to be immoral or fearful": thus writes Lehoux 2013, 139. De Lacy 1964, 49–55 also stressed how Lucretius frequently relies on the imagery of viewing from afar while representing the condition of serenity and awareness that can be reached by following Epicurus's path. The extent to which this path takes on a visual shape in Lucretius's poem is also discussed in Hardie's studies on the reception and (contra)imitation of sublime Lucretian visions in Augustan authors such as Vergil and Horace himself (see Hardie 2009, 180–227 in particular).
- 4 Bartsch 2006, 3–4. Bartsch focuses on the role played by the mirrored gaze in several aspects of Roman society, such as sexual relationships, self-knowledge and construction of social-identity. Keeping an eye open on the Greek world, she also gives concise insights on ancient ocular theories (58–67).

again, Varro appears close to the mark. Indeed, although it is very fragmentary, Varro's passage seems to continue with a quote from the poet Accius, concerning the myth of Actaeon, who inadvertently sees the goddess Artemis bathing. If sight here appears as a penetrating power which hints at sexual abuse, the episode also seems to demonstrate the necessary adherence of visual dynamics to a kind of precise etiquette: who's in power (in this case the goddess) may get quite upset when one looks upon what is not meant to be seen (according to the myth, Diana has Actaeon torn to shreds by his own dogs!). Visual dynamics, indeed, express power relationships, and, consequently, have to be carefully controlled in order to mirror and define the hierarchical roles involved, showing the visual dominance of the viewers in power, while protecting them from being exposed to potentially diminishing and intrusive gazes⁵.

In a society like Rome's, founded as it was on systems of patronage and interpersonal relationships, the great potential visual dynamics have, in staging social identities and hierarchies, offered unparalleled opportunities for having them persistently spotlighted. Moving in this context, my paper deals with the approach to the visual experience in the Roman world, as expressed within the first book of Horace's *Epistles*. To the best of my knowledge, the attention Horace seems to pay in his *Epistles I* to the dynamics of social gazing has till now been overlooked by critics⁶; I believe that in this work Horace

- 5 For visual dynamics as delicate instruments and dangerous mirrors of power relationships see, for example, Barton 2002, 217–220. Barton reflects on what she defines as “the risky oscillation” for the person of honor in Rome between self-display and the need of self-preservation from potentially violating gazes. Likewise, Parker 1999, 167–168 speaks of “the paradox of the gaze” while describing how being the object of others' sight in ancient Rome might be a proof of social power and a source of potential insult, depending on different subjects and situations.
- 6 Some studies have so far been focusing on Horace's use of traditional visual imagery. On the one hand, for example, Ferri 1993, 115–126, while reflecting on the way Horace reworked the sublime tension of Lucretius's Epicureanism in his own human and sympathetic sensitivity, also gives interesting insights into the imagery of the distant, philosophical view on human troubles that Horace re-shaped from Lucretian models. On the other hand, Sutherland's studies have been concerned with the erotic kind of visual relationships enacted in Horace's most *elegiac* (so to speak) poems between the poet and his beloveds (Sutherland 1997, 23–43 and 2003, 57–80). As far as I know, the social

shows a heightened sensitivity to the visual dynamics of Roman life in society, which is insistently carried out precisely by a poet who is stating his intent to get away from them. Through this sensitivity, I will argue, Horace gives us a meaningful insight into the political and civic use the Romans made of visuality as a means of defining power relationships and social identities.

Visual displays and the spectacle of social life

Horace was one of the chief figures of the circle of Maecenas and, of course, one of the greatest Augustan poets. Horace's poetry itself, in his *Odes*, often draws on an imagery which is very similar to the celebrative imagery and motifs employed in Augustus's architectural transformation of Rome. His first book of *Epistles*, published after his first three books of *Odes*, moves on a different plane. Not opposite, but different. Horace seems to have decided to abandon the lyric poetry of his *Odes* and turn his poetry toward a dimension of ethical meditation. And he manifests his intent, being aware that by doing so he is going against what Maecenas would probably have preferred. His poetic choice is therefore charged with a will to individual affirmation, which he lays claim to precisely by virtue of the poetic authority he knows he has achieved, and through and for which he declares himself determined to cultivate his independence from his patron and dissociate himself from the life of the great Roman world, which marks his patron-client relationship with Maecenas. Already in the second verse of the first epistle, Horace declares himself "spectatum satis et donatum iam rude" (*epist.* 1, 1, 2): he claims to have been literally *watched enough*, and so to have been tested, to have proven himself to a sufficient extent. Now, Horace writes, he wants to retire from that scene, like a gladiator who has been granted his "rudis", the wooden foil, which is his certificate of freedom. Indeed, the passages are many in which Horace seems to consciously dramatize the visual essence of what already seems form these first lines

essence of visual dynamics as perceived and functionalized by Horace (and by his *Epistles I*, in particular) has not yet been adequately discussed.

to be presented as the spectacle of life in society, a spectacle Horace criticizes as ruthless and deceptive, claiming his need to get away from it (or, as will become clear, to reshape his role in it).

The occasions and venues of Roman life were in fact permeated by a constant spectacle of watching and being watched: we see this in the public space of the forum, where the most eminent personages strode majestically, surrounded by retinues of assistants and slaves, presumably attracting the gaze of passers-by; we see it private homes as well, which hosted the parade of morning visits of clients, a daily show of each patron's influential social connections. Seeking and obtaining visual attention was a way for Roman notables to display and confirm their social identity in full view of the collectivity⁷. Visual exposure, however, is a condition that needs careful calibration. If the reputation of a prominent, famous citizen took shape in the catalyzation of the collective gaze, at the opposite pole were the “infames”, literally those having no “fama”, those of ill-repute, such as actors, gladiators, prostitutes, whose infamy stemmed likewise from their exposure to the gaze of others, by offering their bodies to the spectator's desire. The difference between these two *visual-intensive* poles of Roman society is essential and lies in control: the Roman notable did not offer himself to the penetration of the gaze of others but directed the scrutiny of his social image, thus promoting his self-presentation.

Cicero was well aware of this, as he wrote in a letter to Brutus (*Cic. ad Brut.* 1, 9, 2). In this letter, Cicero reminds Brutus, forlorn at the death of his wife, that all eyes are fixed on him – “coniecti oculi

7 There is a vast bibliography on the visual display performed by Roman notables and, although it is clearly impossible to provide a complete list here, some useful references may be added. See, for example, Bell 1997, 1–22 (whose embryonal content is further developed in Bell 2004, 199–248). Here, Bell analyses how the Roman elites constantly enact a spectacular self-display in front of their fellow-citizens, visually enhance and socially confirm their leadership role through the eyes of the entire society. On the crucial function of spectacle in Roman politics, see also the introductory chapter by Feldherr 1998, in particular 4–12. Finally, see Hekster 2005, 157–176, who, although he focuses on the visual dynamics exclusively concerning emperors, gives important insights into the extent to which visual attention is sought and controlled in order to show and confirm political dominance.

sunt” – and he, who has always set an example of strength for the community, cannot afford to appear weak; that even in moments of weakness it is imperative to maintain one’s self-control and, as it were, one’s performance level on the social *stage*. The use of the term “scaena”, the limelight, the stage, is indicative: the ethical exemplarity that Cicero stresses appears to move on a visual, almost theatrical level of communication⁸. In Cicero’s sincerely positive conviction, the Roman notables – like Brutus – who are the guides of society, have to be not only the constant focal point but also the directors of the self-staging they are called upon to offer as fundamental examples at the service of the community: “tibi nunc populo et scaena, ut dicitur, seruiendum est”, as Cicero significantly writes to Brutus⁹.

Now, what does Horace do? Horace seems to perceive the staging of the public image of the self as it is constantly enacted by Romans. In the first book of the *Epistles*, the same verb “specto” that occurs in the programmatic expression “spectatum satis” will be adopted by Horace as a recurring lexical choice in describing the visual essence of the social life and power dynamics¹⁰. But Horace marks the idea it evokes of *spectacle* with a negative connotation: he perceives the or-

8 For Cicero himself it is essential *to be seen* on the scene of Rome, namely to take part in the routines of civic visibility and to build his own authority through the constructive embodying and promotion of common values (see again Bell 1997, 1–3 and 8–10).

9 Here, the text in full (Cic. *ad Brut.* 1, 9, 2): “tibi nunc populo et scaenae, ut dicitur, seruiendum est. Nam cum in te non solum exercitus tui sed omnium ciuium ac paene gentium coniecti oculi sint, minime decet propter quem fortiores ceteri sumus eum ipsum animo debilitatum uideri.” [Translation: now you have to regard the people and the limelight, as they say. For since the eyes not only of your army, but of all the citizens, and almost of the whole world, are fixed on you, it is not seemly that the man who makes us all stronger is himself seen to be broken in spirit].

10 Although I will not be able to discuss all the relevant occurrences of “specto”, I must at least briefly discuss two exceptions that might be detected. They both belong to that philosophical imagery of distant views that Horace absorbs most of all in Lucretian tones: 1) in *epist.* 1, 6, 5, “specto” alludes to the epicurean, fearless sight of *ratio* over the natural phenomena; 2) in *epist.* 1, 11, 10, the same verb appears in a passage that most explicitly reshapes *Lucret.* 2, 1–2. The so obviously intertextual matrix that characterizes these two cases therefore justifies their exceptionality and explains their departure from the more social and political scope which unites all the other occurrences of “specto”. For a discussion of these two visual inheritances see the useful studies of Ferri in 1993, 118 and 125, and Cucchiarelli 2004–2005, 57.

chestration of glances, as it is directed by eminent Romans, and presents it as a calculated choreography of public self-presentations, constructed with a high degree of artifice. Horace, then, appears to consciously mark the deceptive aspect of what Cicero had positively defined as the social stage. For instance, in a clearly ironic exhortation, Horace writes:

gaude quod spectant oculi te mille loquentem
 nauus mane forum et uespertinus pete tectum,
 ne plus frumenti dotalibus emetat agris
 Mutus et – indignum, quod sit peioribus ortus –
 hic tibi sit potius quam tu mirabilis illi.

Hor. *epist.* 1, 6, 19–23

[Translation: rejoice that a thousand eyes look upon you as you speak; in your diligence, get you to the forum early, to your home late, so that Mutus may not reap more grain from his lands gained in dowry, and – oh the shame, for he sprung from meaner parents – that he may not be an object of admiration to you rather than you to him.]

Horace alludes to one of the central roles in the life of a Roman politician, that of the orator who, while he spoke to the people or to the Senate, pulls the thousand eyes of his fellow citizens (“spectant oculi te mille loquentem” – the verb is, precisely, “specto”). Then the poet continues with the equally ironic exhortation of steeping oneself in the civic life of the forum: thus, he says, you can earn more than others and be the object of your rival’s admiration, instead of the other way around. The anxiousness to be the one most “mirabilis” – the one most looked at – becomes the aim and hallmark of social ambition. Not only. To achieve the admiration desired, one can also reach the point of artificially building one’s self-image¹¹. In this sense, quite disturbing tones mark the staging concocted by the “uir bonus”, the role-model of Roman values, who is supposed to be an example for the community:

uir bonus, omne forum quem spectat et omne tribunal,
 quandocumque deos uel porco uel boue placat,
 lane pater! clare, clare cum dixit, Apollo!
 labra mouet metuens audiri: pulchra Lauerna,

11 Other passages may be relevant to discuss, although I have decided not to include them in the limited space of this paper: this is the case, for example, of the faked hunting expedition which Gargilius concocts in *epist.* 1, 6, 58–61.

da mihi fallere, da iusto sanctoque uideri,
noctem peccatis et fraudibus obice nubem.

Hor. *epist.* 1, 16, 57–62

[Translation: the honest man, whom the entire forum and the entire court looks upon, whenever he makes an atonement to the gods with a swine or an ox, cries with loud voice: 'Oh father Janus', with loud voice, 'Oh Apollo!'. Then he moves his lips as one afraid of being heard: 'Oh fair Lauerna, grant me to escape detection; make me look just and pious, shroud my frauds in night, my lies in clouds'.]

Horace's "uir bonus", like Cicero's Brutus, attracts the eyes of the entire community, who look at him (the verb is again "specto"). However, his public image alone is presented as exemplary, while in line 61 he secretly asks the goddess of thieves ("pulchra Lauerna") to make him look just and pious and hide his dirty dealings. Even in these few examples, and in sharp contrast to the positive and necessary self-staging of Brutus in Cicero's passage, Horace lays bare the most disturbing aspects of the elite's studied staging of its social image to the rest of the community.

But what happens when the elite watches its subordinates? What happens when not the *being looked at* but the active exercise of looking from above may take part in the imbalance of power that is established in the relationship with a subordinate? The dynamics of watching were reflected in the myriad relationships between patrons and clients, which interwove the social body of Rome. In performing the morning salutations, as well as at the banquets – where the very arrangement of the guests respected their social position – the patron not only directed the show of his self-representation but visually staged and graphically emphasized the role of his subordinates. Again, it is also on account of these dynamics that I believe Horace's text can give us an interesting insight.

Looking down from above, looking up from below

In the course of reflecting on his client-patron relationship with Maecenas, Horace narrates, as a negative example, the story of a certain Volteius Mena. The tale is grotesque but something of interest can be gleaned from the attention Horace seems to give to the description of visual relationships:

strenuus et fortis causisque Philippus agendis
 clarus, ab officiis octauam circiter horam
 dum redit atque Foro nimium distare Carinas
 iam grandis natu queritur, conspexit, ut aiunt,
 adrasum quendam uacua tonsoris in umbra.

Hor. *epist.* 1, 7, 46–50

[Translation: Philippus, the famous pleader, an active and valiant man, was returning from work about the eighth hour and, being now somewhat on in years, he was complaining that the Carinae were too far from the forum, when, as they say, he spied a person clean shaven in an empty and shady barber shop.]

It is said, Horace writes, that the aristocrat Philippus, on his return from the forum, spied (“conspexit” shares, once again, the same root of the verb “specto”) the stranger Volteius Mena, a citizen of low social rank who leads a tranquil life “in umbra”¹², but, so to speak, gets caught in the visual web of patronage. Philippus invites him to dinner, one of the theater-venues of the relationships of patronage, but Volteius Mena, nonplussed, at first refuses (Hor. *epist.* 1, 7, 61–63): “non sane credere Mena / mirari secum tacitus. Quid multa? ‘Benigne’ / respondet.” [Translation: Mena cannot believe it; he marvels silently within himself – why should I make it too long? – ‘No, thank you’ he answers]. The verb that describes his astonishment is however “miror”, to marvel, which aside from amazement also indicates admiration. Thus the glance of the aristocrat determines the glance of Volteius, who immediately becomes a spectator, an *admired spectator*. Next morning, it is again Philippus who swoops down on Volteius with an attention which verges on a desire to possess. The tone is almost military (*epist.* 1, 7, 66): Philippus “occupat et saluere iubet prior”, literally occupies, attacks Volteius, and greets him first.

12 If in ancient Rome the most notable are often those who attract the eyes of the community, Volteius appears significantly “in umbra”, in a shady barbershop. He is a herald who knows how to earn a living and lead a peaceful life without pretentious demands. It is the favours offered by Philippus that first invade the shady world of Volteius and draw a visual line (“conspexit”) which will bring Volteius in the unevenness of social (and correspondingly visual) interactions, being seen by and being able to look up to eminent citizens such as Philippus. He will be made a client, a condition that at first will grant him marvellous benefits but in the end will destroy his tranquil life. Since it is impossible to treat the topic extensively in this paper, I intend at some future time to devote further attention to the order in which the dynamics of patronage seem to take place in this episode. This may offer relevant insights into the well-known practice of Roman *beneficium*, and on how Horace seems to present it in his first book of *Epistles*.

Volteius reacts to this attention as if he already felt cast in the role of client, and he shows that he is aware of the visual duties this role requires. Indeed, he feels compelled to justify himself for not having participated in the spectacle of the morning visit, and for not having been the first to offer his glance to his superior: in *epist.* 1, 7, 68–69, Volteius apologizes “quod non / prouidisset eum”, literary, for not having seen him first. But there’s more. On the one hand Volteius ends up responding to the snare of Philippus’s visual stimuli, and further on – *epist.* 1, 7, 78: “non cessat laudare” – will not cease praising the beauty of the country estate Philippus brings him to visit and admire. On the other hand, Mena is constantly denied his own visual impact. In *epist.* 1, 7, 74, for example, he is seen to “occultum uisus decurrere piscis ad hamum”, to fall under the spell of the client relationship. The passive diathesis is important, and is repeated through other verbs, such as (*epist.* 1, 7, 73. 75. 77): “dimittitur”, “iubetur” and “impositus”. It is in fact Philippus who pulls the strings of these visual relationship, and he who in the end (*epist.* 1, 7, 78) “uidet ridetque”, looks at and laughs about his vanquished spectator.

To conclude, I would like to note that, significantly, Horace seems to pay equal attention to the visual relationships in redefining *his* client relationship with Maecenas. Maecenas, not much differently from Philippus, laughs about Horace:

si curatus inaequali tonsore capillos
occurri, rides; si forte subucula pexae
trita subest tunicae, uel si toga dissidet impar,
rides: quid, mea cum pugnat sententia secum,
quod petiit spernit, repetit quod nuper omisit,
aestuat et uitae disconuenit ordine toto,
diruit, aedificat, mutat quadrata rotundis?

Hor. *epist.* 1, 1, 94–100

[Translation: if, when some lopsided barber has cropped my hair, I come your way, you laugh. If it happens that I have a tattered shirt beneath a new tunic, or if my gown sits askew, you laugh. What, when my judgement is at strife with itself, scorns what it craved, asks again for what it lately cast aside; what, when it shifts like a tide, and in the whole system of life is out of joint, destroying, building up, and changing square to round?]

Maecenas laughs about Horace’s look: he laughs, for example, about Horace’s uneven toga, and some critics suggest that this attention to

the *unevenness* of the toga refers to Maecenas's attention to the social *unevenness* which undeniably marks his relationship with the poet¹³. Horace, then, on the one hand, says he wants to loosen the ties of patronage and turn from the gaze of life in society towards an ethical remoteness. Horace implicitly criticizes the way Maecenas sees him, asking, for example, why Maecenas does not care about his inner consistency. On the other hand, Horace is actually writing a work of poetry, which is in itself a social act, not an act of remoteness¹⁴. Also, the individual assertion he states while manifesting his independent, philosophical choice is in itself a social act, as well. And social acts have to be expressed in a social environment. Horace then knows he cannot or perhaps doesn't even want to sever his relationship with his patron and with society life, which incidentally is what can guarantee him the confirmation of the poetical and philosophical authority he proclaims for himself.

Here, then, Horace is also careful not to sever the visual link. On the contrary, Horace declares that he is looking back to his protector-friend Maecenas: at *epist.* 1, 1, 105 Horace describes himself as a “*respicens amicus*”, a friend of Maecenas who constantly looks back at him. The choice of the verb “*respicere*” is interesting. Although, at a first reading, it can simply mean *to look back*, “*respicere*” is often used by Latin writers to describe the glance of a superior toward someone

13 See Bowditch 2001, 176, who points out how Horace's uneven toga “tellingly imply the stratified and unequal nature of the patronal relationship”.

14 As Ferri 2007, 123 writes, Horace's first book of *Epistles* seems to verge on the secluded world of ethical meditation, far from the public world of poetical success. However, “*Epistles* are themselves poems” (Ferri 2007, 122, n. 10): Horace is writing a work of poetry, which is in itself a social act, and the same independence he proclaims for himself aims precisely at redefining his poetical, philosophical, and social authority towards his public, his superiors and, above all, his patron Maecenas. Horace does not really call for a drastic withdrawal but, while claiming his right to independence, he is actually renegotiating – and not rejecting – his social role within the ties of patronage. Another fundamental study of this theme is Oliensis 1998, where Horace's works are seen as constantly (re)defining Horace's ‘public face’, namely his poetic and social role. As for the first book of *Epistles*, Horace mostly reflects on his relationship with Maecenas (and also writes to an almost encyclopedic social-spectrum of addressees), providing, as Bowditch 2010, 65 writes, “one of the richest sources [...] concerning patronage in Latin literature”. It is precisely the same attention Horace pays to redefining this relationship that, as it will become clear, opens the way to a substantial redefinition of visual relationships.

in need¹⁵ and, for example, Bentley in his commentary even suggested correcting “respicere” to “susplicere”, to look up from below, precisely because here the visual action is initiated by Horace, ergo by a subordinate. Bentley’s suggestion is probably unnecessary and has been cautiously rejected by modern commentators, who generally keep the verb “respicere”¹⁶ but fail to stress its importance. On the contrary, it is precisely by using “respicere” that Horace is perhaps trying to give the expression an additional, deeper meaning. Although reconfirming his client-spectator position, he reveals the visual movement as an autonomous choice, not controlled by the direction of the patron; furthermore, by resorting to a mode of looking usually associated with an authoritative observer, the verb “respicere” could also manifest Horace’s conscious search for an egalitarian redefinition of glances, in sharp contrast with the negative and passive example of Mena, who drowns in the constantly passive role of the client/seen (*epist.* 1, 7, 74: he is seen, “uisus”, while being caught in the web of patronage).

Horace is not a mere poet-client anymore, on whom the patron casts his superior and controlling gaze (as Philippus does with Mena); thanks to his literary “rudis”, Horace is now capable of claiming his poetical and philosophical authority and to return the patron’s glance. In this light, then, the authority involved in the lexical choice of “respicere” highlights Horace’s assertion, playing a meaningful role, which should not be underestimated. The redefinition of the glance reveals itself once again a significant and functional element in the self-affirmation that permeates Horace’s entire work.

15 I give here three relevant examples. Terence, the well-known Roman playwright who lived in the second century B.C., makes his character Geta – the slave of one of his comedies – refer to the noble Hegio as the only one who can *look after* (“respiciet”) the problems of his (Geta’s) masters (*Ad. Ill.*, 2): “nam hercle alius nemo respiciet nos”. Almost three centuries later, the Roman poet Martial provocatively writes that he will start to call “rex” whoever “respiciet” him, namely, whoever gives him protection (10, 10, 5): “qui me respiciet, dominum regemque uocabo”. Finally, in the *Aeneid*, the great Augustan poem, Aeneas and the other Trojans *look at* (and then *look after*) Achaemenides, who appears deeply in need. The verb is once again “respicere” (*Aen.* 3, 591–594): “ignoti noua forma uiri miserandaque cultu/ procedit supplexque manus ad litora tendit. / Respicimus: dira inluuies inmissa que barba / consertum tegumen spinis, at cetera Graius”.

16 See, for example, Kiessling 1914, Klingner 1950 Mayer 1994 and Fedeli 1997.

I am currently doing a Ph.D. in Classics at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. The aim of my project is to investigate the surprisingly overlooked presence of the character of Ajax in Latin literature: a character which, I will argue, became an embodiment of Roman cultural models. My supervisors are Professor Gianpiero Rosati (Scuola Normale) and Professor Stephen Harrison (Oxford University), who I had the opportunity to work with while spending one year as a visiting student in Oxford.

I achieved my MA in Classics at the University of Pavia, writing a thesis concerned on the concept of *umbra* in Virgil's *Aeneid*. As a master student, I spent one year in Germany (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and Universität Konstanz, thanks to fully funded exchange scholarships) and one year at the University of Cambridge, where I worked at my Master thesis in close relationship with Professor Emily Gowers.

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