
Albrecht Classen

*University of Arizona*

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compensate somewhat for these shortcomings, but their format is too small to allow for a close examination of the geographical details.

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Horace's "Ars Poetica" exerted a tremendous influence not only throughout antiquity but also in the Middle Ages and far into the modern times. In fact, the Horatian tradition has never really come to an end, although modern writers might no longer refer to him specifically and would rather practice his teachings than discuss them explicitly. Proverbial sayings such as "delectare et prodesse" have had their impact on all ages since antiquity. Recognizing the need both to provide the modern reader with an English translation and to trace the continuous afterlife of Horace's treatise, again in English translation, O. B. Hardison, Jr., and Leon Golden here offer an anthology of the relevant texts. After a general introduction follows the "Ars Poetica" itself, then the "Poetria Nova" by Geoffrey of Vinsauf as the most important medieval representative of Horatian thinking. In chapter 3 we discover the theoretical discussion by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, in chapter 4 the "Essay on Criticism" by Alexander Pope, in chapter 5 Lord Byron's "The British Bards: A Satire," and finally in chapter 6 Wallace Stevens's "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction."

We can certainly agree with this selection as being representative insofar as it reflects the major steps in the reception process of Horace's treatise far into the twentieth century. In terms of translation, the individual texts would not really have required an additional treatment because they all have appeared before in separate printing or within other anthologies. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's "Poetria Nova," for
instance, appeared in O. B. Hardison's own anthology *Medieval Literary Criticism* (1985), and the same applies more or less to the other texts as well. The unique feature of this volume is, however, the combination of all of these important texts which document the far-reaching influence exerted by Horace throughout time. Moreover, the individual texts are accompanied by extensive commentaries. The remarks on Geoffrey, to focus on the one important medieval voice, are highly readable, place the writer within its adequate context, and examine the text as a typical art-theoretical statement from the Middle Ages. The same can be observed in the case of the subsequent treatises.

An extensive name index and a list of foreign terms conclude this pleasant volume. It does not contain much new material for scholarship but encourages all readers, whatever their research interests might be, to comprehend the long tradition of Horatian thinking. In this sense Geoffrey of Vinsauf was not the only critic who constructively adapted this famous treatise for the examination of the poetic arts of his own times. But his “Poetria Nova” clearly constitutes a bridgehead connecting antiquity with the modern age.

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In five brief but extremely interesting chapters, John Kleiner investigates the minor imperfections of an author who has traditionally been considered a master of order and consistency—a theomimetic cosmographer—poet driven by the idea of perfection. Through an analysis of a mismeasured giant, an inaccurate translation, a flawed experiment, and much more, Kleiner points out both the place of