

**An early printed edition of Horace's epistles with copious annotations.**

Horace. *Q. Horatij Flacci Epistolae liber: liber ep[isto]laru[m] Horatij ad lectorem.*  
Leipzig : Jacobum Thanner, [ca. 1504]. 8 5/8 inches (220 mm), [92] pp.

Of Roman poets, Virgil is admired as the supreme artist (like Dante, who went with him to hell), while Horace (like Petrarch, who rediscovered him) is paid the compliment of imitation. The terms Horatian Ode and Petrarchan Sonnet have entered the vocabulary of most European languages.

In his mid-twenties, already a poet of some repute, Horace (65 B.C.–8 B.C.) was introduced by Virgil to the patron Maecenas, and soon became part of his circle of writers in Rome. Horace published epodes, satires, odes, and verse epistles, usually marked by a relaxed informality, genial autobiographical detail, and self-deprecating humor. The odes as well as Epistles 1 and 20 (**Spreads 2 and 26**) are addressed to Maecenas. Horace's longest epistle is the *Ars Poetica*, a significant influence on most later poetic theory, especially in the Renaissance, along with Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Horace has attracted not only imitators among the poets, but annotators among the scholars: a commentary is itself, in fact, often a sort of imitation or paraphrase. The first few stray lines of Horace's verse to appear in print were published in Mainz in 1465, but the *editio princeps* of his *Opera* was published in Venice in 1471 or 1472. The first edition of his works to contain a scholarly commentary appeared soon afterwards, at Milan in 1474. By the end of the century massively annotated editions had begun to appear, containing the composite commentaries of several hands. The actual Horatian text sometimes filled no more space than an ornamental initial, as for instance in the edition of Phillippus Pincius (Venice, 1495). Other editions, more sparing in their commentary, might instead invite the reader to add his own personal gloss (as here) by heavy leading of the text so as to allow interlinear additions and by ample margins for further commentary. A contemporary reader has not been able to resist ornamenting the text with a dense and exuberant thicket of annotation. Other characteristic intrusions are

the pointing finger (**Spread 11, right**) and the supplied initial letter “C” in the Epistle to Augustus (**Spread 28, right**). An example of a guide letter unimproved by the annotator may be seen in the “f” on **Spread 34, right**.

The *Epistolae* were first published on their own in Caen in 1480. The first Leipzig edition appeared around 1492 from the press of Martin Landsberg, who published further editions of the text. Other Leipzig printers followed suit: Melchior Lotter around 1500 and Jacobus Thanner a few years later. Thanner printed several other editions of various short works of Horace between 1498 and 1520.

This edition of Horace is now in the Cecil H. Green Library, which comprises roughly a third of the Stanford University Libraries’ 8.5 million volumes. The Green Library houses special collections amounting to a quarter million rare volumes; among the rarities are an extensive collection of Aldine editions and numerous incunables.