

In Satire 1.5, Horace and his companions break their journey at the villa of Cocceius, near the taverns of Caudium (50-51); they have a leisurely and pleasant dinner (70). Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) takes line 70 as the epigraph and the theme for his poem *Cena in Caudiano Nervae* (1895), an imaginative reconstruction of the conversation at the dinner.

The major topic of conversation is poetry. Capito suggests that Horace could write a mime about the "battle" they've just witnessed, between Sarmentus and Cicirrus (l. 2-3). Maecenas points out that Horace does not like limping iambics (4), the traditional meter for Greek mime. The group begins to discuss what kind of poet Horace actually is, based on which earlier Greek and Roman poets he imitates or dislikes. Horace himself finally breaks in at line 54 and immediately broadens the terms of the comparison from lyric and iambic poets to Old Comedy, Homer, and even sculpture (54-86). Virgil speaks up briefly for pastoral, but Horace wants to be a lyric poet in the Aeolic tradition. "I could break heads with my verse," he says, "but I'd rather not"; that is, Horace will not emulate Archilochus. Virgil gets the last word, encouraging Horace to "bring out a Latin song on the curved lyre" (140) and to sing of "the return of Faith and Peace, and the life-giving Sun which will see no city more beautiful than Rome" (141-142).

Like most of Pascoli's Latin poems, the *Cena* fills in a gap in the story line of a classical text, here Horace's satire (Mahoney, 2006). More explicitly than most of his work, in either Latin or Italian, it is about poetry; Pascoli's more typical themes are parents and children, nature, and death (Brand and Pertile, 1999; Goffis, 1969; LaValva 1999). Although Pascoli's Latin poems are all on classical themes, they are modern in style and ethos (Fogazza, 1992; Goffis, 1969; Traina, 1961), and the *Cena* is no exception.

On the surface, the *Cena* gives us Pascoli's reading of Horace's poetic program, specifically during the period when he is thinking about the Satires (the dramatic date of the *Cena*, as of Sat. 1.5, is two or three years before the publication date of the Satires). In fact, however, the program outlined here is also Pascoli's own. The poem comes early in his career, as Pascoli is working out how to find a voice of his own within the traditions of Latin and vernacular poetry, just as his Horace is finding his own place among his Greek and Latin predecessors. Horace's rejection of Archilochean poetics did not last, for the Epodes echo Archilochus in form and style. Pascoli, on the other hand, never "breaks heads" in his verse. I will argue that the *Cena* is programmatic, to a greater extent than previous scholars have acknowledged.