



# Horace between Freedom and Slavery: The First Book of Epistles (Wisconsin Studies in Classics)

*Stephanie McCarter*

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During the Roman transition from Republic to Empire in the first century B.C.E., the poet Horace found his own public success in the era of Emperor Augustus at odds with his desire for greater independence. In *Horace between Freedom and Slavery*, Stephanie McCarter offers new insights into Horace's complex presentation of freedom in the first book of his *Epistles* and connects it to his most enduring and celebrated moral exhortation, the golden mean.

She argues that, although Horace commences the *Epistles* with an uncompromising insistence on freedom, he ultimately adopts a middle course. She shows how Horace explores in the poems the application of moderate freedom first to philosophy, then to friendship, poetry, and place. Rather than rejecting philosophical masters, Horace draws freely on them without swearing permanent allegiance to any—a model for compromise that allows him to enjoy poetic renown and friendships with the city's elite while maintaining a private sphere of freedom. This moderation and adaptability, McCarter contends, become the chief ethical lessons that Horace learns for himself and teaches to others. She reads Horace's reconfiguration of freedom as a political response to the transformations of the new imperial age.

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