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VII. The Function of Wine in Horace's Odes

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Discussions of wine in Horace's work have tended towards the convivial rather than the critical. In them, Horace is more often conspicuous as a connoisseur than as an artist. The various wines he mentions have been catalogued, with their characteristics,¹ and critics have been fond of debating the degree of his indulgence. Yet many of the Odes are less instructive as a tribute to wine than as an example of how wine becomes an attribute of a poem's imaginative structure. It remains to consider these Odes, in which wine seems to represent not so much a subject as a symbol in Horace's thought, a crystallization of attitudes otherwise too abstract to be amenable to poetic development.

Libera vina is designated as one of the four traditional subjects of lyric poetry (*A.P.* 85), and it is wine's liberating effect which seems to have struck Horace most forcibly. The names Liber and Lyaeus, "the loosener," recommended themselves: is it not wine's function to relax? The drunken brawls of Centaurs and Lapiths (*C.* 1.18.8 ff.) prove freedom of action not invariably salubrious. Yet in the Odes wine customarily exercises a beneficent influence, and courage, eloquence, wit, and hope find a common source in Liber (*C.* 3.21; *Epp.* 1.5.16-20). Bacchus presented himself to Horace less as the traditional incarnation of violence than as a figure fostering peace and harmony, a likely companion for the Graces, Venus, and Cupid.² Again, Liber takes his place with the Muses, Venus, and Cupid in a group which represents peace as opposed to war (*C.* 1.32.9 ff.). A similar contrast underlies the festive scene of *Natis in usum laetitiae scyphis* (*C.* 1.27), which banishes brawling as unfit to a *verecundus Bacchus* (3). "Let Opuntian Megylla's brother tell with what wound he is blessed, by what arrow he perishes." The only wounds proper to banqueters are those from Cupid (11-12), the only destruction that of Venus (18 ff.).³ The symposium approaches an ideal of genial

¹ A. D. Sedgwick, *Horace* (Cambridge 1947) 62.

² *C.* 1.18.6; 1.32.9 ff; 3.21.21 ff. In *C.* 1.12.21-22 Liber appears between Athena and Diana in the catalogue of gods whom Horace honors.

³ A traditional conceit of the battle of love (cf. Ovid, *Am.* 1.9 for an exhaustive treatment) provides an antithesis for the actual battles of the Thracians. A guest at the feast is "blessed" (*beatus*, 11; cf. *impium lenite clamorem*, 6-7) in his wound; ruddy blushes (15) replace bloody brawls (4). In *C.* 1.6 Horace uses a similar contrast in rejecting epic military themes to write of the *proelia virginum* (17).

harmony, and in it Horace encourages us to find virtually an epitome of civilized intercourse.⁴

A drink may also function as an almost archetypal symbol of release. An obvious instance is the fabled cup of Lethe, which frees us from the totality of the past. The apotheosis of Augustus and Romulus suggests a variation of the same idea, for a drink of nectar seals their release from earthly existence and their assumption to the ranks of the immortals (C. 3.3.12, 34). On a mundane level a banquet most often signifies freedom from a specifically unpleasant past. *Hic dies vere mihi festus atrox eximet curas*—a feast celebrates the safe return of Augustus (C. 3.14.13–14) as it does that of Pompeius (C. 2.7) or Numida (C. 1.36). The feast marking an end to anxiety for Numida serves, probably by design, as a prelude to a grander celebration, final freedom from fear of Cleopatra (C. 1.37). *Nunc est bibendum*: as long as the threat from Egypt persisted, wine remained in the Roman cellars: *antehac nefas depromere Caecubum*.⁵ The poem is a *Trinklied* in a wider sense, and Cleopatra too is allowed a symbolic drink. Before Actium she had displayed the baser effects of intoxication, being literally drunk with power: *fortunaque dulci ebria . . . mentemque lymphatam Mareotico* (11 ff.). Irresponsibility changes to a higher freedom in her final drink, for *combiberet venenum* (28) marks a splendid release as surely as do the festivities of the Romans. Embracing the sting of death she makes the grave itself a victory. Her drink to the past matches the Romans' toast to the future, and her final draught celebrates a private triumph hardly less glorious than their public one.

A banquet often salutes release from more specialized forms of the past:

Quantum distet ab Inacho
Codrus pro patria non timidus mori
narras et genus Aeaci
et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio:

quo Chium pretio cadum
mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,
quo praebente domum et quota
Paelignis caream frigoribus, taces. (C. 3.19.1–8)

The sharp inquiries of the present (*quo . . . quis . . . quo . . . quota*) break in upon a mythically distant past, as Horace summons an anti-

⁴ Cf. C. 1.17.17 ff; 1.20; Sat. 2.6.65 ff; *Epp.* 1.5. For the symposium as a literary form see W. Jaeger, *Paideia 2* (New York 1943) 176 ff.

⁵ Cf. *curam metumque Caesaris rerum iuvat/dulci Lyaeo solvere* (*Ep.* 9.37–38).

quarian from his researches to a feast. Horace excludes aged Lycus (22-24), inviting as more suitable companions *tempestiva Rhode* (the adjective is important) and Glycera, whose name is practically synonymous with ripeness. The banquet seems to stand as a rejection of the past and a celebration of the present.⁶ A similar invitation, now amiable rather than impatient, calls a certain nobly pedigreed Aelius to practical preparations for a feast (C. 3.17). Domestic detail confronts the catalogue of his ancestral glories:

dum potes, aridum
compone lignum; cras Genium mero
curabis et porco bimestri
cum famulis operum solutis. (C. 3.17.13-16)

Only if Aelius abandons the past and commits himself to the present may he enjoy the banquet.

An invitation to Pompeius, formerly one of Horace's fellow soldiers under Brutus, places the same injunction in a political context:

ergo obligatam redde Iovi dapem,
longaque fessum militia latus
depone sub lauru mea, nec
parce cadis tibi destinatis.

oblivioso levia Massico
ciboria exple, funde capacibus
unguenta de conchis. (C. 2.7.17-23)

The Ode was probably written just after the amnesty of 29 B.C., and the promised feast is to celebrate the former Republican's homecoming. In the reference to Jove (17) Mr. Wilkinson has detected a glance at Octavian.⁷ *Oblivioso* (21) is then not merely a stock adjective. It hints that the time has come for Pompeius to forget, or at least forego, his doctrinaire Republicanism of the past, as Horace himself had already done.⁸

The claims of the future may be as binding as those of the past, and

⁶ Cf. C. 3.15.13 ff. A superannuated courtesan, Chloris, is banished from the wine, flowers, and music of the banquet, which are better suited to her daughter (7 ff.). Chloris prefers her memories of the past to the realities of the present. She is in fact too old (*maturo propior funeri*, 4; cf. *senex Lycus*, C. 3.19.24) to be allowed a place at a banquet celebrating present life.

⁷ L. P. Wilkinson, *Horace and His Lyric Poetry* (Cambridge 1946) 33-34.

⁸ Cf. C. 3.14.21 ff. The banquet welcoming Augustus back to Rome signals not only an end to Horace's immediate fears, but reminds us as well of his abandonment of a more distant past. Horace bids a youth summon clear-voiced Neaera; some

wine frees us from anxiety as it does from retrospection. In recommending to Plancus the example of Teucer, Horace presents a scene of wide applicability (*C.* 1.7.21 ff.). About to flee into exile, Teucer binds his wine-flushed temples with garlands, counselling his sad friends to seize the present moment with joy: *cras ingens iterabimus aequor* (32). In the less august cast of the Satires rustic philosopher replaces mythological hero, but the advice of Ofellus is Teucer's own. He smoothes anxiety from his brow with wine, luxuriating in the present happiness of a simple meal: "let Fortune storm and stir fresh turmoils: how much will she take off from this?" (*S.* 2.2.126-27). Horace's invitations to Maecenas command an equivalent commitment to the present (*C.* 3.8; 3.29). At the time of his narrow escape from a falling tree Horace vowed an annual feast to Liber, and on the event's first anniversary he calls Maecenas from *civiles super urbe curas* to join him in celebrating (*C.* 3.8.17). Death's closeness in the past, of which the occasion itself is sufficient reminder, is calculated to impress Maecenas with its unpredictable certainty in the future. To devote one's time exclusively to national plans, Horace intimates, is to take part of life for the whole, to lose the present for a hypothetical future.⁹ In summoning his patron to a banquet Horace does not so much belittle civic responsibility as urge a higher one, to present life itself:

neglegens, ne qua populus laboret,
parce privatus nimium cavere et
dona praesentis cape laetus horae ac
linque severa. (*C.* 3.8.25-28)

The ancient farmers are said to have propitiated *floribus et vino Genium memorem brevis aevi* (*Epp.* 2.1.144), and the banquet on Horace's anniversary of near death is not the only one with such ritualistic overtones. In a scene which approaches a paradigm Chiron charges Achilles to drink and be happy in the present, even if it be the eve of death: *illic omne malum vino cantuque levato* (*Ep.* 13.17). Achilles is about to

editors have felt such "licentious vigor" out of place in an Ode to the ruler; see T. E. Page, *Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Libri IV* (London 1895), *ad loc.* Horace warns the youth not to persevere if Neaera's gate-keeper prove hostile, for Horace is no longer so eager for strife as he was in the consulship of Plancus (25 ff.). Plancus was consul in 42 B.C., the year of Philippi, where Horace fought under Brutus. The banquet thus conceals a playful reminiscence of something Horace wishes to seem only a youthful indiscretion, and reminds us of his removal from the past and allegiance to the present.

⁹ Cf. *C.* 3.29.25-48, and *C.* 2.11. In the latter the reminder of old age is explicit (5 ff.), and adds urgency to Horace's advice that Hirpinus join him in a country picnic, complete with wine, flowers, incense, music, and young ladies (13 ff.).

set sail for Troy, from which he can never return: *te manet Assaraci tellus* (13). In a sense some corner of a foreign field awaits everyone, and that awareness imports moral urgency to many of Horace's invitations:

huc vina et unguenta et nimium brevis
flores amoenae ferre iube rosae,
dum res et aetas et sororum
fila trium patiuntur atra.¹⁰ (C. 2.3.13-16)

One can hardly explain the fondly elegiac tone of *nimium brevis flores* except in symbolic terms. The roses suggest life's impermanence as well as its beauty, and Horace invites us to an apprehension of both. If the fact of death separates us from the gods, the fact of our knowing it distinguishes us from the animals. The country picnic becomes almost an epitome of human possibilities, embracing both an awareness of death, and a simultaneous freedom from all delays to present living:

verum pone moras et studium lucri
nigrorumque memor, dum licet, ignium
miscere stultitiam consiliis brevem;
dulce est desipere in loco. (C. 4.12.25-28)

The Ode which ends with this summons began as a welcome to spring: *Iam veris comites, quae mare temperant, / impellunt animae lintea Thraciae*. The universal context suggests that Horace invites a companion not so much to a specific meal as to life itself. Other seasonal poems advance similar invitations, for a familiar symbolism made easy the transition from nature's changes to the cycle of human life. In both literal and figurative terms Horace's question was the same: if spring comes, can winter be far behind? *Diffugere nives . . . immortalia ne speres, monet annus* (C. 4.7.1 ff.). The transition here explicit remains tacit in the Ode's companion piece, where Spring Song — *Solvitur acris hiems* (C. 1.4.1) — modulates abruptly into Cautionary Verses:

pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
regumque tures. o beate Sesti,
vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam:
iam te premet nox fabulaeque Manes

et domus exilis Plutonia: quo simul mearis,
nec regna vini sortiere talis
nec tenerum Lycidan mirabere, quo calet iuventus
nunc omnis et mox virgines tepebunt. (C. 1.4.13-20)

¹⁰ Cf. C. 2.11.13 ff. and Lucr. 2.29 ff., though the principal Epicurean contrast is between wealth and simplicity rather than present life and future death.

The feast (*regna vini*) has become equivalent to life. The projected sorrow for its passing (*nec sortiere*) implicitly invites Sestius to enjoy it while he may: elegy conceals injunction.

Without directly exploiting a cyclical metaphor, *C.* 1.9 relies upon a tentative correspondence between seasonal progression and man's life. *Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte*: the snow-capped peak before us outlines the "hoary old age" which the Ode foresees.¹¹ Horace's response to the winter vision seems almost instinctive: *benignius deprome quadrimum Sabina* (6–7). To drink wine while confronting Soracte is to seize the present, though remaining aware of its briefness:

quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere, et
quem fors dierum cumque dabit lucro
adpone, nec dulcis amores
sperne puer neque tu choreas,

donec virenti canities abest
morosa.

(*C.* 1.9.13–18)

The famous *carpe diem* Ode (*C.* 1.11) reads like an explication of the Soracte Ode, which it follows after one intervening poem:

seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam
quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare
Tyrrhenum: sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
spem longam reseces. dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.

(*C.* 1.11.4–8)

Winter, now expressly significant of death, again challenges us — and again the answer is the same: "show wisdom, strain clear the wine." To accept death's unpredictability along with its inevitability is to free ourselves for commitment to the present, and wine becomes a token of that freedom and of that commitment.¹² Horace recognized that life was not only a gift but a calling. His invitations command not an

¹¹ *Canities* (17) has the primary meaning of a whitish or greyish color; the visual effect is emphasized by its juxtaposition with *virenti*, "blooming" or green youth. The contrast suggests the contrast in Mt. Soracte itself, its greenery covered with heavy snow, its flowing streams caking with ice (1–4). Cf. *C.* 4.13.12, where *capitis nives* is contrasted with blooming youth, *virentis* (6).

¹² *Vina liques* (6) may further suggest the clarity of allegiance to the present, as opposed to the obscure prophecies of Babylonian astrologers. The name of the addressee, Leuconoë, is perhaps manufactured from *λευκός* and *νόος*, thus serving as a kind of plaintive injunction. The etymology is accepted by L. Mueller, *Q. Horatius Flaccus, Oden und Epoden* (St. Petersburg 1900), *ad loc.*

easy oblivion, but an apprehension of the present's urgency. The vision of a long day's dying had pushed Catullus to perhaps his most famous protestations:

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus

 soles occidere et redire possunt:
 nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
 nox est perpetua una dormienda.
 da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
 dein mille altera . . . (5.1, 4-8)

Though meditated rather than impulsive, and general rather than specific, Horace's banquet invitations similarly voice a strong *vivamus*. Wine, incense, flowers, music, and complaisant girls are often called forth, as all the senses unite in the face of the ultimate blankness of *pallida Mors*.

Since the banquet has such associations for Horace, we may better understand why wine locked into cellars should be a favorite symbol for the failure to fulfill oneself in the present. With three hundred thousand jars of Falernian under lock and key a miser drinks vinegar:

filius aut etiam haec libertus ut ebibat heres,
 dis inimice senex, custodis? (S. 2.3.122-23)

Avarice is the most pernicious of vices (S. 2.3.82) in that it systematically denies man's mortality.¹³ Invective becomes elegy in the Odes, but the accusation remains:

absumet heres Caecuba dignior
 servata centum clavibus et mero
 tinguet pavimento superbo
 pontificum potiore cenis. (C. 2.14.25-28)

The heir is worthier simply because he does not guard the wine with a hundred keys. Even in wasting it he displays a non-inherited aware-

¹³ The continual land confiscations and huge constructions of the rich drew Horace's attack (C. 2.18.16 ff.; 3.24.1 ff.) primarily because they evidenced an arrogant refusal to recognize death. (The usual view holds that Horace's egalitarian sympathy for the evicted tenants was all important; see G. Carlsson, "Zu einigen Oden des Horaz," *Erano* 42 [1944] 15 ff.; C. W. Mendell, "Horace, Odes II, 18," *YCS* 11 [1950] 281-92.) *Sepulcri immemor struis* (C. 2.18.18-19): the rich man's disdain of the natural boundary between land and sea (20 ff.) is an emblem of his blindness to nature's final boundary of death. Such buildings suggest the same thing as the Satires' more colloquial symbol of storing wine in cellars.

ness that life continually flows away. The miser's self-denial is actually improvidence. He neglects the present for a never-to-be-realized future: his life is diminished, not fulfilled.¹⁴

A banquet might equally well invite a Maecenas from his plans (C. 3.8 and 3.29) and a Plancus from his fears (C. 1.7), an Aelius from his research (C. 3.17) and a Pompeius from his memories (C. 2.7); it summons Achilles (*Epp.* 13), Dellius (C. 2.3), Vergil (C. 4.12), Sestius (C. 1.4), Hirpinus (C. 2.11), Thaliarchus (C. 1.9), and Leuconoë (C. 1.11) from whatever delays their plucking the flower of the moment.¹⁵ Chloris, who refuses the present for her memory of the past (C. 3.15), or a miser, neglecting the present for some future heir, are the only ones untouched by Horace's logic. In addressing himself to these various situations Horace appeals to the authority of no doctrinaire scheme. Unembarrassed by the definitive austerity of allegory, his poems suggest a more evocative symbolism, of which he had guaranteed the terms as early as the first Satire:

inde fit ut raro, qui se vixisse beatum
dicat et exacto contentus tempore vita
cedat uti conviva satur, reperire queamus. (S. 1.1.117-19)

Life itself is a banquet, which at death we leave. To the Lucretian image (*De Rer. Nat.* 3.938-39) Horace gives a characteristic emphasis. Where Lucretius found difficulty in persuading the full man to leave graciously (*cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis?* 3.938), Horace proclaims how few (*inde fit ut raro*) there are who may be called full, and the preponderance of invitations over banishments is eloquent of his real concern. The present, he saw, was for most people a luxury. The effort to persuade men of its availability dictated some of his finest verse, and in the banquet he found an image to command our imaginative allegiance.

* * *

“Did Horace Woo the Muse with Wine?”¹⁶ Although the love affair — that with the Latin language itself — is the only one we can be sure

¹⁴ Cf. *Epp.* 1.5.12 ff.; 2.2.191-92; C. 4.7.19-20. *Epp.* 2.2.134 uses as an example of healthy wisdom a man who does not become frantic if the seal of a flask is broken.

¹⁵ We should preserve the horticultural metaphor in C. 1.11.7-8: “prune down long hope . . . pluck the day.” The overtones of inevitable natural decay add weight to the injunction. Cf. C. 2.11.9.

¹⁶ Such is the sub-title of an article by A. P. McKinlay, “The Wine Element in Horace,” *CJ* 42 (1946) 161-68, 229-36. See this article for an exhaustive treatment of the subject, and for references to works on specialized topics.

was real, Horace seems to have neglected the poet's traditional enticement to his heavenly mistress. As confidence in a definable source of poetic genius had faded, intoxication had become an increasingly acceptable substitute for inspiration, until it was finally institutionalized by the so-called "wine drinkers" (*oinopotai*).¹⁷ Horace did not combat their belief professionally, as did the "water drinkers" (*hydropotai*), who seem to have maintained that mounting the Muses' chariot was only a more august confession of being on the wagon.¹⁸ Yet Horace's fondness for contemporary *oinopotai* is not marked, nor is his sympathy for *male sanos poetas* pronounced.¹⁹ *Adde poemata . . . quae si quis sanus fecit, sanus facis et tu* (S. 2.3.321-22). Damasippus' ironic reproach reminds us of the critical stance Horace maintained. It was his triumph to banish the *demens poeta* to some other Elysium, and to establish bitten fingernails rather than a rolling eyeball as poetic credentials.²⁰ The two Odes professing themselves written in a Dionysiac frenzy (C. 2.19 and 3.25) are remarkably calculated compositions, and no one to my knowledge has seriously suggested that Horace was ever incapable of treading a perfect line on poetic feet.

¹⁷ Cratinus was apparently the first to be known for his tipling; see Aristophanes' *Pax* 700 ff.; *Anth. Pal.* 13.29. Homer, Archilochus, Alcaeus, and Aristophanes were later compelled into the same category (Athenaeus 428F, 628A), and Sophocles' puzzled admiration of Aeschylus' unaccountable genius degenerated into a belief that he composed his tragedies when drunk (Ath. 428F). Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 7.432-33; Propertius 4.6.75. Representative *oinopotai* would be poets like Antipater of Thessalonica, Nicaenetus, and Antigonus. See H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik* (Giessen 1929) 46 ff.

¹⁸ Callimachus contemptuously termed Cratinus *μεθυπλήξ* (fr. 544, Pfeiffer), and was attacked in turn by the *oinopotai* for his prohibitionist instincts. See *Anth. Pal.* 9.406; 11.20; 11.31; 11.322; 13.29, and A. Sperduti, "The Divine Nature of Poetry in Antiquity," *TAPA* 81 (1950) 222 ff.

¹⁹ *Epp.* 1.19.3-4. In this Epistle Horace does not, as B. Otis ("Horace and the Elegists," *TAPA* 76 [1945] 179, note 8) seems to imply, endorse a contemporary emulation of ancient poets' fabled drinking. Cato's virtue is not available to those who ape his costume (12 ff.), nor is poetic skill attained by imitating a probably fabulous element in the poet's social life. Compare Horace's scorn for those trying to become poets by conforming to a popular tradition of the poet's madness and uncouthness (*A. P.* 295 ff.).

²⁰ Though Horace accepts the traditional balance of *ars* and *ingenium*, it is the former which he goes on to emphasize (*A. P.* 408-18): the very fact that he wrote the Epistle to the Pisos indicates his conviction that poetry involved an *ars* which could and should be taught. For his insistence on conscious and careful writing see *Sat.* 1.4.9 ff.; 1.10.1; 1.10.50 ff.; *Epp.* 2.1.165-67; 2.2.122-25; *A. P.* 289-94; 379 ff. Cf. W. Kröll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart 1924) 38 ff.; E. Howald, *Das Wesen der lateinischen Dichtung* (Zurich 1948) 83 ff.

It is nevertheless Horace himself who draws an analogy between poet and Bacchant, and since the relation is not the traditionally ecstatic one, his association of the two figures becomes the more important. The poet is termed a *cliens Bacchi* (*Epp.* 2.2.78), and in the opening Ode Horace invokes the Bacchic emblems as best able to convey his private sense of the poet's calling:

me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium
dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus
nympharumque leves cum Satyris chori
secernunt populo . . .

(C. 1.1.29–32)

Bacchus was a god of fertility (*fertili Baccho*, C. 2.6.19), and by invoking him Horace conveys primarily a sense of the poet's own mysterious creativity. Yet he conceives of Bacchus in a more specialized way. What are the attributes he emphasizes? How are they realized in the work of Bacchus' client, the poet? And finally, what have they in common with the significance Horace attributes to wine?

As wine proved more often a blessing than an evil, the wine god represents a civilizing rather than a destructive force. Like Castor and Pollux, Hercules, Romulus, and Augustus himself, Bacchus is honored as divine for his services to mankind (C. 3.3.13). He aligns himself with the forces of order by joining in the defeat of the rebellious giants (C. 2.19.21 ff.). The tigers he has tamed and yoked to his chariot (C. 3.3.13–15) demonstrate his civilizing influence: Horace does not permit us to doubt that this is the meaning of Orpheus' similar accomplishment (*A.P.* 391 ff.). Bacchus also shows his power by mastering Cerberus (C. 2.19.29–32).²¹ In subduing the underworld monster, the patron of poetry might almost suggest an emblem of the creative process itself, an imposing of form upon chaos, of — in the terms of Coleridge's famous definition — order upon emotion. But the scene issues a more immediate appeal. It suggests a kind of Gigantomachia in miniature, civilization's conquest of a brute world without purpose or hope.

In an invocation to the lyre, Horace attributes to it the very powers which he associates with Bacchus:

²¹ Horace may imagine Bacchus as conquering Cerberus by means of a horn of wine. This is the meaning given to *aureo cornu decorum* (C. 2.19.29–30) in the editions of P. Shorey (Boston 1898), C. H. Moore (New York 1902), C. L. Smith (Boston 1903), and Villeneuve (Paris 1927), though see Kiessling-Heinze, *Horaz, Oden und Epoden* (Berlin 1955), *ad loc.*

tu potes tigris comitesque silvas
 ducere et rivos celeres morari;
 cessit inmanis tibi blandienti
 ianitor aulae,

Cerberus, quamvis furiale centum
 muniant angues caput eius atque
 spiritus taeter saniesque manet
 ore trilingui.

(C. 3.11.13–20)

Orpheus by his poetry imposes calm upon violence. Horace imagines Sappho and Alcaeus as similarly dispensing peace upon the underworld. At their songs Prometheus and Tantalus have a respite from suffering, while Cerberus, and the snakes in the Furies' hair, are momentarily frozen into stillness (C. 2.13.29 ff.). The Odes breathe a conviction of the poet's ability to command harmony about him, in the manner of Bacchus himself. Where Bacchus actually fought beneath Jove's aegis (C. 2.19.21 ff.), Horace at least celebrates the victory, and the fourth Roman Ode records the downfall of the Giants: *vis consili expers mole ruit sua* (C. 3.4.65). Poetry unites with politics in a hymn to *consilium*, which the Muses are thought of as bestowing upon Caesar: *vos lene consilium et datis et dato gaudetis almae* (41–42). The introductory stanzas (1–36), in which Horace dons the robes of a traditional *vates*, declare his right to speak in the Muses' name, and thus encourage us to realize that the poem itself embodies the *lene consilium* which the Muses recommend to Caesar.²² Again, an important poem to Octavian, placed second in the collection, implores a return to political serenity: *Iam satis terris niviis atque dirae* (C. 1.2.1). Mercury (*almae filius Maiae*, 42–43) is proposed as an avatar of Octavian (41 ff.). He embodies the wise restraint which the poem urges. A patron of poetry, like the Muses of the fourth Roman Ode, he too suggests a covenant between poetry and political harmony — a belief in the possible union of the two must have been a tacit prerequisite for the very conception of such national Odes. Faunus, often associated with Dionysus, seems to endorse Horace's conviction that the poet is mediator of violence. When Faunus visits the Sabine farm, pan-pipes signal a suspension of normal nature. Kids lose their fear of snakes and wolves, while the ground bears in abundance (C. 1.17.5 ff.). Tyndaris, if she join Horace in playing upon the lyre

²² Wilkinson (above, note 7) 69 ff. rightly observes the note of sympathy for the fallen *monstra* on which the Ode ends. Paeon for the victor unites with elegy for the fallen. The poet acts as a mediator, and the *lene consilium* he recommends includes mercy. Most editors see a reference to Actium in the Gigantomachia.

and drinking Lesbian wine, need fear no harm from the incontinent Cyrus (17 ff.). In the poetic estate peacefulness merges with creativity, as it does in the figures of the *almae Musae* (C. 3.4.42) and the *almae filius Maiae* (C. 1.2.42-43).

The social harmony which wine occasioned was but a small part of its significance, and Bacchus' civilizing influence does not exhaust his meaning for the poet. As a mortal made immortal by poetry (C. 4.8. 33-34), Bacchus approximates the role of the poet himself, made eternal by his art.²³ The analogy need not be precise to be effective, for Horace felt that the author as well as the subject of verse was caught in its immortalizing amber: *non ego . . . obibo nec Stygia cohibebor unda* (C. 2.20.6 ff.).²⁴ Bacchus' conquest of Cerberus, and the underworld he epitomizes, ends the previous poem (C. 2.19.29 ff.). By that act the poet's inspiring deity seems to present credentials for his immortality as well as for his civilizing influence. The frozen stillness of Hades beneath the songs of Orpheus (C. 3.11.15 ff.) or of Sappho and Alcaeus (C. 2.13.29 ff.) guarantees the eternal validity poetry bestows upon the occasional, and reminds us of the poet's own triumph over death. When Faunus crosses the bounds of Horace's farm the supernal peace testifies not merely to the poet's ability to legislate harmony, but to his ambiguous mortality as well:

nec Martialis haediliae lupos,
utcumque dulci, Tyndari, fistula
valles et Usticae cubantis
levia personuere saxa.

di me tuentur, dis pietas mea
et musa cordi est.

(C. 1.17.9-14)

Poetry and piety unite to insure the poet's divinity. Horace's protection in this life warrants his life hereafter. *Non omnis moriar* (C. 3.30.6): only the poet stands immune to the threat of years, and remains invulnerably of the present.

Immortality is the dimension of an eternal present. Wine represents

²³ We should remember that the gods were divine preeminently by virtue of their immunity to death. Thus *ἀθάνατοι* when used as a noun means "gods." See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (London 1950) 115 ff.

²⁴ The boast has no real precedent in extant Greek literature. The fragment of Theognis on which it appears to be modelled (273 ff.) treats the same flight and immortal name, but significantly assigns them to the poem's subject, Cyrnus, and not to the poet himself. Cf. C. 3.30.6 ff. For the more traditional idea of the poet's ability to immortalize others see C. 3.13; 4.8; 4.9.

a seizing of the present, a freedom from contingencies of past and future alike. Bacchus adumbrates the poet's hold upon an eternal moment, and his apotheosis into the ultimate freedom of immortality. Meditating the *aeternum decus* with which he will decorate Caesar (C. 3.25.5), Horace appeals to Bacchus and to nature itself in the effort to define his feelings:

non secus in iugis
 exsomnia stupet Euhias,
 Hebrum prospiciens et nive candidam
 Thracen ac pede barbaro
 lustratam Rhodopen, ut mihi devio
 ripas et vacuum nemus
 mirari libet. (C. 3.25.8-14)

The crystal stillness of nature recalls that of the underworld, frozen by the voices of Orpheus and Alcaeus, or that of the Sabine farm, touched by the pan-pipes of Faunus. Like the Bacchant, in nature but preternaturally aware, the poet, while of this world, is yet allied to another. As the Bacchant becomes one with the god, the poet becomes identified with his poetry: "how can we know the dancer from the dance?" A mortal, he creates *aeternum decus*, freeing his subjects, and ultimately himself, from the equivocations of existence. To describe the human state is in some sense to transcend it, and if poetry is by definition an artifice, it is yet, as Yeats has reminded us, an "artifice of eternity."

The relation of a critic to a poet tends to be that of some uneasy Procrustes, confronted by a Proteus. Yet if Horace's imagination defies any rigorous arrangement, we may at least define the shapes it seems to assume. Wine, a *verecundus Bacchus* (C. 1.27.3), promotes harmonious interchange among men: Bacchus, as god of poetry, symbolically enacts the poet's civilizing influence. Wine also represents a commitment to present life, a freedom from temporal delays: Bacchus suggests the poet's freedom from the temporal world itself, and his commitment to eternal life. The relations between these aspects of wine and the wine god are felt rather than formulated, obscure rather than precise. Horace appears to be seeking a vocabulary to express feelings not susceptible to ordinary discourse. Wine, the banquet, the various gods, and the country itself, seem invoked in order to conceptualize something for which there was no ready language, and which in any case is perhaps best conveyed in semi-metaphorical terms. The various notions move in the solvent of a poetic consciousness, and we need not insist that they crystallize into a hard core of doctrine.