HORACE *ODES* 1. 5. 16: GOD OR GODDESS?

Horace's "Pyrrha" poem is one of the most enduring little favorites in world poetry. This can be seen from the recent publication of Ronald Storrs's *Ad Pyrrham* (London, 1959), a collection of 144 translations of the poem into twenty-five languages; and we are told in the *Foreword* (p. vii) that this represents a mere selection from Storrs's total collection of 451. Seventy years ago, H. Zielinski published a note entitled "Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen"[1] (*Philologus*, LX [1901]), in which he proposed the substitution, in the last line, of *deae* for the MSS *deo*, on the ground that *deae* neatly combines, as *deo* does not, the allegorical and literal levels of the poem: Venus, the goddess of the sea and of love.

As one should expect, the emendation was not accepted. The exceptions, so far as I know, are A. Y. Campbell, who printed it in the text of his two editions of the *Odes* (*Carmina cum epodis* [London, 1945]; *Odes and Epodes* [Liverpool, 1953]), and R. G. M. Nisbet, who printed it in a recent essay on the *Odes* ("*Romanae fidicen lyrae:* The *Odes* of Horace," in *Critical Essays on Roman Literature*, ed. J. P. Sullivan [Cambridge, Mass., 1962], p. 183). Both men briefly stated their reasons (Campbell in his second edition). In a close reading of the poem in this journal I have objected *en passant* to the emendation as unjustified (*CP*, LX [1965], 185, n. 9). Now there has appeared R. G. M. Nisbet's and Margaret Hubbard's *Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book 1* (Oxford, 1970), in which Nisbet again prints *deae* and offers a long note (*ad loc.*) to defend it.[2] Since this commentary is the most extensive ever published on these Odes and doubtless will be influential, I wish to state my objection to the emendation in some detail.

First there is the fact, acknowledged by Nisbet, that the manuscripts, Porphyrion, and a quotation by Eutyches all read *deo*. One might see then a touch of arrogance in presuming to improve on the poet. Cf. Zielinski: "[One need not hesitate by a small change] dem Gedicht zu seiner poetischen Vollendung zu verhelfen." Nisbet (*Comm.*): "One would like to believe that this stroke of wit could have occurred to Horace as well as to Zielinski."

Let us, however, consider the merits of *deae*. Both Campbell and Nisbet (*Comm.*) cite evidence for the double function of Venus (Aphrodite) as the goddess of the sea and of love. But this is well known and no one has questioned it. Next, both Campbell and Nisbet cite Ovid *Her.* 16. 23 ff. as evidence for Venus not merely as sea-born and goddess of the sea, but as ruling, having power over, the sea (*potenti maris*): "illa dedit faciles auras ventosque secundos; / in mare nimirum ius habet orta mari. / perstet et ut pelagi, sic pectoris adiuvet aestum, / deferat in portus et mea vota suos." Nisbet cites, in addition, Musaeus 249 f.: ἀγνώσσεις ὅτι Κύπρις ἀπόσπορός ἐστι θαλάσσης; / καὶ κρατέει πόντοιο καὶ ἡμετέρων ὀδυνάων.[3] These two passages show that Venus could be seen in this capacity. Nevertheless, normally and proverbially it was Neptune who ruled the sea (cf. Pind. *Ol.* 6. 103 ποντόμεδον; Plaut. *Trin.* 820 *salsipotenti*).

Further, Nisbet cites evidence for (three) dedications to the maritime Venus: *ILS* 3179, "Veneri Pelagiae"; *IPE*, II. 25, Ποσιδῶνι σωσινέῳ καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ ναναρχίδι; and Athenaeus 676A–C. But these are dedications not from metaphorical sailors (lovers), as would be the case in our poem, but from real voyagers at sea. Campbell refers to "dedications from lovers, often renouncing their pasts, . . . made in [Venus'] temple," cited by him in *PCPS* (1933), 12–13. They are *Anth. Pal.* 6. 206–11; 6. 59; 6. 290; 6. 340; 10. 21. Only one of these poems is addressed to the maritime Venus (10. 21, Κύπρι γαληναίη), and in none of them, *pace* Campbell, do lovers "renounce" their

1. Zielinski apparently owes this charming phrase to the Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer who wrote a play entitled *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen*. It deals with the ancient story of Hero and Leander and was first staged in Vienna in 1831.

2. Because of the essay, I assume that the Commentary's position on *deae* represents the view of Nisbet, with Hubbard concurring.

3. In the essay Nisbet took *maris* with *deae* rather than with *potenti*, "the potent goddess of the sea." But this is surely incorrect, and he has changed his mind.

past. They all either give thanks for past success or pray for future success in love. Finally, both Nisbet and Campbell refer to Horace *Odes* 3. 26. But, again, the situation in this poem is different, since the poet begins with a thankoffering to *Venus* (*marina*) for successful love in the past and ends with a prayer for successful love in the future.[4]

Thus none of the passages cited by Campbell and Nisbet lends any real support to their choice. For in none of them, nor anywhere else (so far as I know) in Greek and Latin literature, is there a parallel to the situation envisioned by them in 1. 5: Venus has rescued a man from the shipwreck of love, not in the sense of granting him success (by reaching the κόλπος of the beloved) but in the sense of securing his disengagement from love. It is easy to see why there is no parallel. Such an act would be a contradiction of the very nature of Venus. Furthermore, not only has Venus (if we read *deae*) asserted her power (*potenti*) over Pyrrha to rescue the poet from his love entanglement with her, but now her temple displays the evidence of his continued disengagement. For the last stanza emphasizes not the past incident of the poet's shipwreck and rescue but his present state and attitude: "As for me, the sacred wall [of Venus' temple] with its votive tablet declares (*indicat*) that I have hung up [once and for all; note the force of *suspendisse*] my dripping clothes to the goddess who has power over the sea." We might say, therefore, that not only has Venus, against her nature, secured the poet's disengagement from love but now, just as unlikely, presides symbolically over his continued independence.[5]

A further look at the poem suggests that the poet indeed attributes this situation to something other than the most improbable behavior of Venus. Of the three major images of the poem, the central storm scene is a projection of the future, while both the grotto and the temple scenes apply to the present. This arrangement invites a comparison of the first and last stanzas. The decorum of the temple scene, underlined by the metrically massive effect of *suspendisse potenti vestimenta*, and the stateliness and symmetry of the sentence, lend to the statement of the poet an air of detached dignity. To this the frivolous atmosphere of the erotic scene in the grotto stands in marked contrast. The parallel positions of *te* in line one and *me* in line thirteen, both words receiving emphasis from the caesura, place Pyrrha and the poet in juxtaposition. It appears that the poet suggests a contrast between himself and her, that over against the the destructive lure of Pyrrha's amoral charm he places his gratitude for having escaped her and the ethos of his personal independence.[6] The patronage of Venus is incompatible with this spirit.

The main contrast in the poem is between the poet and the *puer gracilis*. The poet expresses his superiority over him vis-à-vis Pyrrha. The youth as her victim will bewail his fate to "the gods" (*deos*), a vague and undifferentiated appeal; the poet knows the identity of the god (*deo*) who has power over her, and through his dedication he is now associated with him as his devotee. The youth is doomed to misery and probably will never be able to free himself from her (as is suggested by *quotiens . . . emirabitur insolens*); the poet is now independent of her. The poet has learned from his experience; the youth probably never will. The poet understands what the youth cannot see, not merely that the behavior of Pyrrha is comparable to that of the sea with its temper and inconstancy, but that, metaphorically, she *is* the sea, a natural force blind to morality.[7] Her very name recalls the myth of the flood and with it the connotation of Pyrrha as the "first woman."[8] It appears that the poet sees her as an archetype, the

4. The (*Venus*) *marina* in 3. 26 is puzzling. Could it be that the poet wished to remind his readers of the predominantly sexual function of Aphrodite associated with her origin from the sea and the severed sexual members of Uranos? Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 185 ff.

5. This nuance is not appreciated by Nisbet when he says (*Comm.*) that the poet "seems . . . *to be giving* a thankoffering for rescue" [italics mine]. Note that the reference of the stanza is not limited to the affair with Pyrrha and therefore can be applied, by extension, to any woman and to love in general.

6. This is not to ignore the fact that the poet also pays homage to the power of Pyrrha's charm and beauty.

7. Note the parallel positions of *Pyrrha* (3) and *aequora* (7). Cf. *te* (1) and *maris* (16).

8. On the mythological Pyrrha see Preller-Robert, *Griechische Mythologie*, I⁴ (Berlin, 1894), 80, 84–87, and Geisau, *s.v. Pyrrha*, *RE*, XXIV (1963), 77–78, with references.

natural phenomenon "woman" in its essence, the principle of the "eternal feminine." There is then as little control over Pyrrha when viewed in her archetypal import as "woman" as there is over the sea. The youth is both put to scorn and pitied because he does not understand Pyrrha. He sees only the girl, not the sea,[9] and when, in the future, he encounters "the sea," he will be utterly confused (*emirabitur*). Though he will experience its storms many times (*quotiens*), he will still be "unaccustomed" (*insolens*). He will not understand "the sea," he does not, that is, understand the essential, archetypal nature and meaning of "Pyrrha." And not only the youth but all men are miserable who are exposed to Pyrrha's charm without really knowing her (*intemptata*). But we note that the youth is envisioned as *miser* as well as *insolens* and *nescius*, even after Pyrrha has been quite thoroughly and repeatedly *temptata* by him in her moodiness and inconstancy. Evidently, the experience has to be understood to be salutary. When the poet says *miseri quibus intemptata nites*, therefore, he is suggesting that all men are bound for misery who do not apprehend her essential nature as "woman," as an elemental, natural force, to whom moral standards, as those of constancy and faith, simply are not applicable. The poet has come to understand Pyrrha. He is now a free man and grateful for it.[10]

I conclude therefore that the poet attributes his rescue and present independence not to Venus but to his own intellectual insight and moral *virtus*. An appropriate symbol for this in the poem is the *deus*. As on the metaphorical level Neptune has power over the sea, so on the literal level the man of right understanding and proper values has the personal autonomy which gives him superiority over the female.[11]

Nisbet says (*Comm.*), "The Pyrrha ode is not sentimental, heartfelt, or particularly pretty. It may be admired for rarer virtues, which have eluded the myriad translators, wit, urbanity, and astringent charm." One can agree with this assessment but, as I hope to have shown, a careful reading indicates beneath the brilliant surface a deeper and more serious import, and this is lost or dissipated if we read *deae* for *deo*. *Deae* effects a "prettier" but also, I believe, a different and inferior poem. A. E. Housman criticized the change as "shallow."[12] Nisbet (*Comm.*) believes that "the vast majority of readers will greatly prefer to follow the manuscripts." I hope he is right.

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9. Note the parallel positions of *Pyrrha* (3), *aequora* (7), and *nescius* (11).

10. Nisbet (*Comm.*) describes Pyrrha as "the wayward beauty of fiction." She is that and more. Literary historians can be so preoccupied with literary parallels and influences that they do not appreciate their function in the particular context and thus fail to appreciate the uniqueness of the individual poem, seeing only artifice where there is art.

11. It may be of interest here to recall Milton's apt phrase "the stern God of Sea" (Storrs, p. 35), and to note the rendition of the poem's conclusion by John Boyle, fifth Earl of Ortery: "Passion no more, with all its glitt'ring Train / Of frantick Joys, shall tempt me out again; / But noble Reason shall the Tide controul, / And virtue fix her Empire in my Soul." Swift wrote to Boyle in 1735: "I think the whole conveys the very ideas of Horace" (Storrs, p. 46). Finally, it is perhaps not too farfetched to compare Neptune in *Aen.* 1. 124–56.

12. In his lectures. This is mentioned, to their credit, by both Campbell and Nisbet (*Comm.*).

THE TRIAL OF C. JUNIUS SILANUS[1]

"The care taken to prevent a serious defense would suggest that the motive of the prosecution was not justice, but the ruin of Silanus." F. B. Marsh[2] here argues that this was Tacitus' view of the case, and that his source for this view was the family tradition of the Junii Silani. That the family peddled this view is said by Marsh to have been due (1) to a desire to excuse themselves for deserting Silanus "in the hour of danger"; and (2) to a desire to extenuate his offences, because his guilt on the extortion charge was undeniable.

1. Tac. *Ann.* 3. 66–69. For discussions, see R. S. Rogers, *Criminal Trials and Criminal Legislation under Tiberius* (Middletown, 1935), pp. 66–70; B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Manchester, 1952), pp. 98–99; F. B. Marsh, "Tacitus and Aristocratic Tradition," *CP*, XXI (1926), 305 ff.; E. Koestermann, "Die Majestätsprozesse unter Tiberius," *Historia*, IV (1955), 104–5.

2. Marsh, *op. cit.*, p. 306.