

CULT AND PERSONALITY IN HORACE*

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It was the main contention of a book published a few years ago that the material and the attitudes which we find in the works of the Augustan poets are intimately connected with the realities of Roman life. The poems are not to be amputated, as too often happens, from the society in which they were produced and enjoyed.¹ Literature is not a balloon floating in the air, but a plant with its roots firmly fixed in the earth. It was argued there that 'the same material can be observed at different levels of stylisation in different poetical contexts',² and that we can learn a great deal about the poems and their authors by following the ways in which they employ and vary the same subject matter. That was illustrated in connection with such elements of the life of pleasure as drinking and singing, bathing and nakedness; and also with the topic of death. Those ideas are carried further in this paper, which extends that approach to another area: that of religious cult. It concentrates on the poet Horace and aims to show how he uses and varies the theme of religious festivals and ceremonies, and what contrasts are offered by the work of Propertius and Ovid.

The starting point is the fact that Horace, at a certain point in his poetic output, set a number of poems on the occasion of specific festivals which occur on the Roman calendar. We may leave rather on one side the two Satires in which he takes advantage of the traditional *libertas Decembris*,³ the freedom of speech allowed at the Saturnalia. Those poems — *Sermones* 2.3 and 2.7 — allow the poet to let one of his servants, or an eccentric acquaintance, talk about his weaknesses from intimate observation. The festival gives him little more than a peg on which to hang a philosophical diatribe. To take an obvious point, Horace does not exploit, as he might have done, the custom of exchanging gifts at the Saturnalia. Catullus, by contrast, had in his fourteenth poem given that notion a lively and comical turn. Calvus has given Catullus a book of verse, 'on the Saturnalia, the best of all days', 'Saturnalibus, optimo dierum'; unfortunately the book is abominably bad, no doubt itself a present to Calvus from some grateful but tasteless client, and Catullus amuses himself and us by abusing the wretched poet and planning a suitably dreadful revenge. Horace does not choose to develop the idea of the special day so vividly. For one thing, Catullus had got in first and done it well. For another, the question of free speech, the licence allowed to the satirist himself, is prominent in the *Sermones*,⁴ and so the *libertas Decembris* and the question of its limits comes close to Horace's poetical interests at this time.

It is in the Third Book of the Odes that Horace really exploits the motif of the definite date. We find him conducting a private celebration, a decorous stag party, on the day of the married women's festival, the Matronalia, on the first of March (*C.* 3.8). He invites a pretty girl to a musical evening on the day of the Neptunalia, the twenty-third of July (3.28). His poem to the fountain of Bandusia promises a sacrifice the next day: presumably the Fontinalia of the thirteenth of October (3.13). He promises a sacrifice to Faunus every year, as often as the Nones of December come round (3.18). That is evidently a local festival. So many definite dates in one book; it is almost as if he wanted to give a hint to Augustus that for a state occasion he could write a good *Carmen Saeculare*. That possibility is even more suggestively adumbrated by 3.14, the imaginative creation of the day when Augustus will come home in triumph from Spain — 'hic dies vere mihi festus atras/ eximet curas', 'this day, truly a festival for me, will remove all my anxieties'; and the harvest festival to be held 'tomorrow', when his friend Aelius Lamia will make a fuss of his own Genius with neat wine and roast piglet,

* I am grateful to my colleague Dr Oliver Lyne for helpful criticism of this paper.

¹ J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (1985). The first two chapters appeared in *JRS* 66 (1976) and 67 (1977).

² *ibid.*, xi.

³ Horace, *Serm.* 2.7.4.

⁴ The theme is central to *Sermones* 1.4 and 2.1.

a feast shared by the servants on their holiday (3.17). This fullness of particular reference is part of the special character of Book Three, as exuberant metrical virtuosity is of Book One, and restrained moral reflection of Book Two.⁵

The Odes cannot be fully understood without paying some attention to the contrasts and changes which set off the separate Books. Here it is appropriate to think particularly of the poet's attitude to time.⁶ In Book Two we find many poems which deal with the transitoriness of life and pleasure, and the inevitable coming of age and death. 'You will die, Dellius, whatever you do: you must leave your hoarded wealth and your river-side villa; sooner or later we must all take the one way journey to eternal banishment' (2.3). 'Youth is flying away, the flowers of spring must wither: why not relax while you can?' (2.11). 'Alas, Postumus, the years are slipping away' (2.14). 'Day is shoved on by day, new moons grow old and die, yet you still pursue your avaricious path without a thought for the imminence and certainty of death' (2.18).

In Book Three, after those massive generalizations, time is characteristically handled in a different way.⁷ Here we see the poet going about his normal life, observing the dates marked on the calendar. We recall what he said in the Satires about his great predecessor, Lucilius: that he recorded his own doings with such fullness that 'the old boy's entire life is open to our gaze, as if written out in a votive inscription' (*Serm.* 2.1.33). In the first poem of the Second Book of the Satires Horace claimed to be emulating this self-revelation. The Odes are self-revealing, too, though in a different style and a different register. In his Third Book Horace gives us a series of apparently casual glimpses of himself living an ordinary Roman existence. That relates to a central concern of the poet in his lyric poetry: to present himself both as extraordinary, a great poet, divinely favoured and inspired, like Alcaeus; and also as a contemporary at ease in his own society.

Of course that ease, and that ordinarieness, must not be exaggerated. We shall see that Horace gives a special and individual turn to each of the poems which are set in this 'normal' style. But before considering that in detail it will be worth while to make some general points. First, there is the contrast with the manner of Propertius. Horace sets many of his other Odes, apart from the specifically datable ones of Book Three, in the context of religious celebration. 'Now is the time to make offerings to Faunus: life will not last for ever, nor will the joys of wine and love' (1.4). 'There is no need for expensive offerings to the gods from you, Phidyle, my dear rustic girl' (3.23). And so on. As so often, the two great poets, so opposed in technique and (it seems reasonable to guess) so unsympathetic in person,⁸ help to illuminate each other.

Propertius' First Book is marked by a virtually complete absence of anything related to cult; although witchcraft and magic do play a considerable role. In all his first three Books, such indications as do occur of time and date regularly take the simple form of 'last night' (2.14), or 'recently' (2.22), or 'now' (2.17.12; 18.23; 23.2). Festivals are

⁵ More might have been made of this contrast, clearly conscious and deliberate, from the metrical variety and more 'passionate' subject matter of *Odes* 1 to the graver and more moderate 2, in the Introduction to Nisbet and Hubbard, *Commentary on Odes* II. Book Two is also not hospitable to poems which are either very long, like 1.2; 1.12; 3.3; 4.5; 11; 24; 26, or very short, like 1.11; 30; 38; 3.22. No ode of Book Two has less than twenty or more than forty lines; most have twenty-four or twenty-eight. *Mediocritas* (2.10.5) is being exemplified in this area, too.

⁶ cf. L. Deschamps, 'Il tempo in Orazio', *Orpheus* 4 (1983), 195-214. D. Feeney has some suggestive remarks on the subject in N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace 2000: a Celebration* (1995), 57: 'The centuries between himself and his models were intimidating in many ways, but it must have been partly the very sense of that great distance that made Horace a great poet of time . . . [Horace's] poems on the passage of time are among his most cherished. . . .' The whole essay repays reading.

⁷ We find in Three such passing references to time as 3.8.27, 'Seize the gifts of the present hour'; 3.10.19, 'I shan't stay on your inhospitable door-step for ever'; 3.14.25-8, 'As one's hair grows white, one loses one's fighting spirit'; 3.17.9, 'Tomorrow the leaves will fall'; and, more weightily, 3.29.29, 'Wisely God conceals from us the future'. None of these has the massiveness of the passages in Book Two.

⁸ See F. Solmsen, 'Horace and Propertius', *CP* 43 (1948), 105-9 = *Kleine Schriften* II.316-23; R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets* (1980), 201ff. Horace, *Epistles* 2.2.99ff. is the (controversial) *locus classicus*: see the judicious note ad loc. of C. O. Brink. Paul Veyne comments, from a rather different point of view, 'Le poète Horace avait le même protecteur que Properce, mais son propre lyrisme était aux antipodes du maniérisme; de plus, une simplicité non conformiste et une honnêteté intellectuelle absolue faisaient que la mégalomanie et la complication de Properce avaient le don de l'agacer': *L'élégie érotique romaine* (1983), 27.

not used for dating purposes. Only in Book Four, in which life with Cynthia has ceased to be engrossing, do we find any serious interest in questions of cult or of calendar ('sacra diesque canam', 4.1.69).

That is not a random or insignificant difference. Horace sets his poems against the background of a life in which things are altered with time, one day being a special festival while others are not, and different days belonging to different deities and possessing different characters. Propertius, on the contrary, wants to show us a life which in itself is entirely uniform, the days varying only in the extent to which Cynthia, the all-absorbing beloved, is gracious or unkind. The variety of days in Horace, possessing their own characters, goes with the variety of girls who can share them — a different girl in every poem: Lyde would be a nice companion for the Neptunalia, Neaera for the day of Augustus' homecoming from Spain, and so on.⁹ Horace is interested in different types of wine and in the varieties of perfume which can add a keener relish to an evening of pleasure; Propertius emphatically is not. The world in which Propertius lives is one in which time, change, and variety, in their ordinary sense, are insignificant, and only one passion counts; that of Horace is the ordinary world, refined and elevated by beauty and pleasure, which can have many more sources than one, and which lend themselves to refinement and connoisseurship.

There is also a point within the Horatian lyric itself. The Second Book has a heavy emphasis on death and the landscape and population of the world of the dead: the urn which sooner or later will produce our fate, the boat on which we must cross the Styx (2.3.25–8), the still warm ashes of the dead poet (2.6.21 ff.), the dusky realm of Proserpina and Aeacus judging the shades (2.13.21 ff.), the sluggish stream of Cocytus the infernal river (2.14.17), the ineluctable end in greedy Orcus (2.18.30). The Book closes with a poem in which Horace insists that for him death shall not be the end: 'I shall not be confined by the waters of the Styx' (2.20.8): 'nec Stygia cohibebor unda'. In Book Two Horace presents the idea of death and its furniture in full detail, and himself in rather a generalized light: a mortal man facing the common lot, he is also a great poet.

In Book Three we see more of a different side of him, with glimpses of his individual character and life. In the middle of the cycle of the 'Roman Odes', amid the highest elevation of his style, he pauses to give us a scene from his infancy which includes the name of his nurse Pullia,¹⁰ outside whose door the poetic infant was sleeping when doves marked him as a future bard by covering him with leaves. Along with that go the names of humble local places, obscure and farouche, Bantia and Forentum; with no pretence to be anything but utterly and prosaically Italian, hitherto unheard of (surely) in high verse, but important to Horace as the places from which he actually comes. As part of his biography, the biography of a classic poet, they are to become worthy of the highest poetic company.

When Augustus returns home from the wars, Horace's idea of a celebration turns smoothly from a whole-hearted re-creation of the national ceremony in its formal splendour to a private party with Neaera the singing-girl (3.14).¹¹ The datable occasions, shared by definition with the rest of his society, but in his case revealing his own tastes and character by his special way of going about their celebration, also help him to appear as a particular human being. It is, surely, because Book Three contains his most ambitious and extended serious lyrics that Horace also includes in it these more personal glimpses of himself, to balance the picture and keep it from becoming one-sidedly formal. That was necessary for the maintenance of the poetical personality, complex and sophisticated, to which he attached so much importance.

Turning to these datable Odes in more detail, we find a half forerunner in Book One. It is a rather odd fact about 1.31 that the poet has not chosen to set his poem on the

⁹ C. 3.38; 3.14.

¹⁰ So, rightly, Shackleton Bailey's Teubner text: 'nutricis extra limina Pulliae', C. 3.4.10.

¹¹ I cannot share the view of R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry* (1995), 169–73, and other scholars there cited, that the reference to Livia as 'unico gaudens mulier marito' at l. 5 is 'a designed

ineptness' and 'barbed'. So gross an insult is, to me, incredible in a poem of this general tendency. With Horace's enthusiasm contrast the uncommitted attitude and frank hedonism of Propertius at the thought of watching Augustus' victory parade, his arm round his girl: Prop. 3.4.

day of the dedication of the temple of Palatine Apollo. The temple was dedicated on 9 October 28 B.C., and even Propertius seems to refer to that actual day, though in a most Propertian way: excusing himself for coming late (to his mistress, we assume) by saying that he has been viewing the decorations of the newly opened temple (Prop. 2.31). His interest is focused exclusively on the works of art with which the temple is decorated, and the significance of the day is not developed, any more than the moral or political content of the sculptures. Horace, however, chooses to allude to this spectacular affair¹² only with the single word 'dedicatum', and to go on to make a prayer to Apollo as he pours out the new wine. Neither ancient nor, till recently, modern scholars seem to have picked up the delicately touched allusion to the festival of the Meditrinalia, which was celebrated on 11 October, at which the very new wine made its first appearance (we read that it was 'tasted', 'degustari'; it can hardly have been fit to drink, at this extremely early date after the vintage).

We are told by the learned Varro that at the festival of the Meditrinalia libations of new and old wine were poured out, with the formula: 'Novum vetus vinum bibo, novo veteri morbo medeor', 'I drink wine new and old, I am cured of sickness new and old'. Horace offers a prayer for himself, of a less archaic and artless kind. Not, for him, the desire for wealth; what he asks the god for is contentment, health of mind, and poetry. There had been a time when he was ambitious and aspiring, back in the late forties; that had come to nothing, and he had returned to Rome after the Battle of Philippi with his wings and his aspirations clipped.¹³ Now he claims success in accepting and welcoming this new state of affairs, which will not after all include a showy career in the public sense. His 'old sickness', then, might be said to be on the mend. That is perhaps in the poet's mind, as he chooses the Meditrinalia rather than the actual day of the dedication for his poem: but, if so, he was careful not to make the allusion at all obtrusive. Many of his readers have missed it.¹⁴ The ode shows its tact by side-stepping the actual day of consecration and glancing at an ancient festival, two days later, and just hinting at a reading that would combine artistic with political moderation and withdrawal.

In Book Three Horace comes out of cover and makes unambiguous use of the calendar. In 3.8 we find him celebrating, or seeming to celebrate, the Matronalia. This was an important festival of women, and especially of married women, falling on the foundation day of the temple of Juno Lucina; the connection therefore is with the birth of legitimate children. On that day wives expected presents from their husbands. What is the bachelor Horace doing, setting out flowers and incense on such a day? It turns out that he is holding an annual celebration of quite a different kind. In Book Two we heard that the poet nearly lost his life when a tree fell and narrowly missed him (2.13). That enabled him, in the ethos of that Book, to give us a full and elaborate picture of the Underworld, with the link, 'How nearly did I see . . .', 'quam paene furvae regna Proserpinae . . . vidimus . . .'

In 2.17 the episode recurs. This time it allows him to find a parallel between himself and Maecenas: Maecenas was saved from dying of disease by the protection of Jupiter, Horace was delivered from a fatal blow on the head from that tree by the intervention of Faunus. Neither poem mentions a date for the lucky incident. Now we learn, perhaps with mild surprise, that it was precisely on the First of March, the date of the Matronalia, that Horace was nearly done for ('prope funeratus') by that wretched tree. Every year he makes offerings to Liber, to whom he owes his deliverance. Also, he opens

¹² 'It was the most splendid of Augustus' buildings: cp. Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii.6.1; Vell. ii.81: H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (1933), 247. For its special connection with and significance for Augustus, see P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Eng. trans., 1988), 49ff., 67ff.: 'The sanctuary of Apollo still managed to surpass the competition, thanks to its setting and the association with Octavian's residence' (67).

¹³ *Epistles* 2.1.47 ff.; cf. J. Griffin, 'Horace in the Thirties', in Rudd, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 1-3.

¹⁴ The Meditrinalia are mentioned in the comment-

aries of Kiessling-Heinze, Quinn, Nisbet-Hubbard. Quinn *ad loc.* conjures up a sentimental picture: 'the prayer Horace makes as paterfamilias on his Sabine farm at the Meditrinalia will serve as his prayer to Apollo . . . it is easy to imagine him presiding over some simple rustic ceremony . . .' The actual prayer which we see the poet make in this poem seems remote from what would have been called for on such an occasion and in such company. What we see is a much refined and distanced version, concerned with Horace's poetical personality and its (proudly proclaimed) limitations.

a jar of good wine on the occasion. After all, it was the god of wine (in this poem, at least) who saved his life. Will Maecenas not help him drink it? It will be a quiet evening, and there is no need to worry on the political level, either. All our enemies are defeated or out of action: let us enjoy the moment.

At *Odes* 3.4.27 it seems that it was the Muses who delivered Horace from the tree menace. In other poems his rescue is ascribed to Faunus (2.17.27) or, as here, to Liber. It would be absurd to accuse the poet of inaccuracy ('Hier irrt Goethe'), or to look for the 'true' version. He can on occasion omit any mention of any divine help from anybody (2.13). It is clear that the episode was remarkably versatile. Doubtless its date was floating, too. Why has Horace here plumped for the day of the Matronalia? He was to praise, in the *Carmen Saeculare*, the Augustan legislation which encouraged men to marry,¹⁵ but he had no intention of marrying himself. His friendship with Maecenas, it is delicately hinted, is to him what marriage might have been. With Maecenas he can enjoy an evening of civilized pleasure, far from all noise and anger ('procul omnis esto/ clamor et ira', 15–16). Ovid tells us that 'Rows are the dowry of a wife', 'dos est uxoria lites';¹⁶ and the reader is free to remember not only the unsatisfactory domesticity of Maecenas himself¹⁷ but also the assertive matrons of Roman Comedy, and the violent wife of Quintus Cicero, and the wife whom Augustus put away, 'disgusted with the perversity of her character', 'pertaesus morum perversitatem'.¹⁸ The absence of all that is among the blessings of the poet's bachelor existence. And as he is spared those private vexations, he is also free from the abrasions of political life: he goes on immediately to tell Maecenas, 'Mitte civilis super urbe curas', 'lay aside political worries about the city'; all our enemies are defeated. Maecenas' tendency to go on worrying about politics is seen as a mere personal eccentricity. That, too, is a political stance, and one that deftly supports the new order: serious concern for the end of the Republic, or for the state of Rome, is a whim, something to brush aside. We have no need to worry about politics, nowadays. That is all taken care of.¹⁹

Horace thinks of a moment when his life was saved, and reflection on its happiness naturally turns to thoughts of Maecenas' private friendship, and also, on the public level, to the benefits of the universal peace guaranteed by the new regime. As for matrimony: well, such good things will more than make up for it. No angry voices here! The originality of the poem, which exploits the established festival of the Matronalia to point up the poet's own avoidance of marriage — and we have not even asked the question of the implications of such a poem for Maecenas' own marriage: evidently Horace did not expect his friend to be spending a domestic evening with Terentia — the originality of the poem is underlined by comparison with two other poems set on that day of festival, both to be found in the Tibullan corpus. Tibullus 3.8 (= 4.2) shows Sulpicia adorned in her best for the holiday: 'Mars himself will find it worth his while to come and look at her. On the day when ladies expect to be given presents, she alone deserves any present, however expensive'. In 3.1 the dilettante poet Lygdamus considers what present to bring to his Neaera. 'Only greedy girls want expensive gifts; Neaera will prefer a poem from her lover, a small offering but precious. May she accept his love!' These two pretty but straight-forward poems, complimentary to the beloveds and quite free from irony or complexity, bring out the individuality of Horace's ode. He has used the regular customs of his society to a novel and startling effect, which fits well with the poetical personality, ironical and amused, which he is concerned to preserve.

Near the end of Book Three Horace places a poem set on the occasion of the Neptunalia (3.28). 'What better, on Neptune's day, than to drink with a pretty and musical girl? Lyde, hurry up with the wine!' The Neptunalia was an out-door festival celebrated in the hot weather of July. Holiday-makers put up temporary huts built out of branches for *al fresco* drinking and music. Ovid describes similar scenes at the festival

¹⁵ *Carm. Saec.* 17–20:

diva, producas subolem, patrumque
prosperes decreta super iugandis
feminis prolisque novae feraci
lege marita.

¹⁶ *Ars* 2.155.

¹⁷ R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (1939), 277 n. 2.

¹⁸ Suetonius, *D. Augustus* 62.

¹⁹ 'Custode rerum Caesare', 4.15.17; cf. 1.12, 1.35, 1.37, 2.1, 2.7, 2.11, 3.29, 4.2, 4.5.

of Anna Perenna — picnics, impromptu performances, drunkenness.²⁰ Horace, too, will have a party, and a musical one, with wine; but of course his party will be select, private, and elegant. Lyric poet and charming girl will take it in turns to sing appropriate songs, beginning with Neptune, whose day it is, and with the pretty Nereids who naturally accompany him, and passing by way of other gods to Venus.

The entertainment will conclude, says Horace, with a song to Night. After greeting Venus and Night, it is obvious what must follow for the poet and his girl; so obvious that the poet can elegantly omit to spell it out. The same understated hint is to be found in the suavity with which the poet supplies Neptune with a retinue of attractive girls — mermaids, naturally, with hair the colour of the sea, 'viridis Nereidum comas'. 'Odi profanum volgus', too, finds here a witty and charming expression. Naturally Horace avoids the noisy crowds on Hampstead Heath, and the elegance of his poetry is, by contrast, for the few; but what he produces is none the less still recognizably related to the interests and pleasures of his society. He celebrates on the same occasions, and in a way which resembles theirs; but in a style whose refinement transfigures the commonplace and makes it worthy of the Muses. Art conceals art, and the apparently casual question, 'What better can I do on Neptune's day?', 'Festo quid potius die/ Neptuni faciam?' gives the point of contrast with the cruder entertainments of the masses, which is vital to the poem.

This ode has suggestive resemblances to a poem of Propertius and another of Tibullus. In the tenth poem of his Third Book Propertius celebrates Cynthia's birthday. He invokes an auspicious attitude of reverence and silence: all nature is to observe the day, and even the halcyons and nightingales are to suppress for a day their plaintive cries, which recall the tragic events of mythology. Cynthia is to approach the altars in prayer. Naturally her prayers, since it is the poet who is composing them, will be that her beauty shall not fade, and that Propertius shall forever be her willing slave. Then there shall be a party, with plenty to drink, music, and dancing; the neighbours shall be kept awake by the noise. Finally Cynthia and the poet shall 'in the bed-room celebrate our annual rites'.²¹ Propertius is never much interested in the calendar or the accurate measurement of time, either for days or for years: scholars have laboured in vain to reconcile his occasional allusions to the years of his love. Only in connection with Augustus do we find him even hinting at definite datable days: the opening of the Palatine temple, the triple triumph of Octavian; in both cases without the mention of a specific calendar day, a practice never followed by Propertius.²²

The only thing which really marks a day as memorable is the favour or disfavour of Cynthia:

o me felicem! o nox mihi candida! et o tu
lectule deliciis facte beate meis! (Prop. 2.15.1-2)

'O my bliss! O night of my joy! and O bed, blessed by our love making!' So it is here too. The day is not a regular, popular festival of the calendar: it is something far more important — Cynthia's birthday. Cult procedures, the bathing, the prayers, the incense offered at altars, are of interest only because it is she who is performing them. As far as they go, they are described in quite normal and standard terms; with the very Propertian touch that she is to please him by dressing, not in her most fancy attire, but 'with flowers in your hair and wearing the dress you wore when you first made capture of my eyes':

dein, qua primum oculos cepisti veste Properti,
indue, nec vacuum flore relinque caput. (Prop. 3.10.15)

Girls dressed up on their birthday; we catch a glimpse of Sulpicia on hers, approaching the altar in her best clothes. She has adorned herself for Juno, and she is a figure to catch the eye:

tota tibi est hodie, tibi se laetissima compsit,
staret ut ante aras conspicienda tuas. ([Tibull.] 3.12.3-4 = 4.6.3-4)

²⁰ Ovid, *Fasti* 3.523ff. On the Neptunalia, see K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (1960), 131ff.

²¹ Prop. 3.10.31.

²² Prop. 2.31; 3.11.

'She is all yours today; for you she has delighted to adorn herself, so that she may be worth looking at, as she stands before your altar'. Sulpicia, we read, hopes to please the goddess with her smart appearance; but she also secretly hopes to please her young man. Cynthia is to please her more sentimental lover by the nostalgic simplicity of her toilette: no make-up, and Propertius indulges his fantasy by imagining her doing her hair herself, and with her fingers:

et nitidas presso pollice finge comas. (Prop. 3.10.14)²³

And, of course, above all she must put on that special dress which she was wearing on that supreme occasion, a day not recorded on any calendar save that of their love, when she flashed upon his sight, and at once his fate was sealed. He reminds us of the programmatic couplet:

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus. (Prop. 1.1.1)

'Cynthia was the first to capture and crush me with her eyes; until then no passion had touched me'. That is the Propertian note.

Tone and atmosphere of the Horatian ode are very different. It is not a special day for Horace because of anything about Lyde. No girl has her birthday mentioned by Horace, who significantly reserves that distinction for Maecenas.²⁴ That is the important relationship that endures through time and that can have its own chronology, while the girls come and go and can be fitted in with the public calendar shared by everybody. While Horace was concerned to show us the gulf between his own tastes and the crude amusements of the mob on holiday, Propertius plans a pretty rowdy evening. There will be a lot to drink. While Horace tells his Lyde to bring out the hoarded Caecuban, a choice vintage, Propertius is content to look forward to 'the night speeding along with drink' and 'many half-pint cups':

nox inter pocula currat . . . multis trientibus . . . (Prop. 3.10.21,29)

No call for *grands crus* here! Horace and Lyde will sing songs appropriate to a nominally religious occasion; Cynthia is urged to 'be free with sexy talk':

et sint nequitiae libera verba tuae.

She is promised that there will be music and dancing, which will go on until the musician is weary and it is long past the time for sleep, with the din clearly audible in the street outside:

dulciaque ingratos adimant convivia somnos;
publica vicinae perstrepat aura viae.

'Let the delightful party take away dull sleep, and the nearby highway resound to the din.' We are a long way from the exquisite and discreet duet of Horace and Lyde.

Horace prided himself on the delicacy with which he said that the last song would be in honour of Venus, with a coda to Night; that left no doubt in the mind of the reader about the end envisaged for the party. Propertius comes straight out with 'celebrating our annual rites in the bed-room'. As for 'freedom with sexy talk', 'nequitiae libera verba', such things were possible for Horace in the old days of Epodes and Satires, when he called a spade a spade, but they are in the past for the decorous poet of the Odes. Nowadays life and love are refined and beautiful. Such lack of restraint suits an elegiac poet better — though even he, of course, cannot actually include in his poem the coarse words themselves. These two poems present the essence of the two poets in their attitude to love and pleasure. For Horace, an elegant sensuality; for Propertius, a

²³ Propertius naturally prefers to think of his mistress doing her own hair, rather than having a maid or maids to do it for her: Prop. 1.15.5. Contrast the more 'realistic' Ovid, who allows his Corinna the normal basic staff: *Amores* 1.11, 1.14.13ff.; 2.7.17-24, 2.8.1ff. It is indeed a typical occasion for a woman to take out

her temper on her servant as she does her hair: Ovid, *Ars* 3.235ff.; Juvenal 6.487ff. Propertius, in this too more romantic, airbrushes such peripheral people out of the picture and imagines Cynthia alone in the world, apart, of course, from him.

²⁴ Horace, *C.* 4.11.

passionate obsession, which is more important to him than underlining his superior refinement.

We see what a third Augustan poet can make of some of the same elements when we turn to the opening poem of Tibullus' Second Book. The motif of cult is developed at greater length and with greater elaboration: the poet is celebrating a festival, the Ambarvalia, in which the farmer and his household went in procession (*lustratio*) round their land. The season is to be thought of as early summer, April–May. It is a holiday for men and beasts. A requirement of the festival is that the participants should have abstained from sexual intercourse on the previous night (Tibull. 2.1.11–12). There are prayers, and wine is produced: Falernian of a respectable age, because the poet is taking the opportunity to praise his great patron Messalla and to drink his health (28ff.). A long passage tells the praises of the deities of the countryside and what they have done for men. It turns to the work done in the country by girls, weaving and singing; and that naturally suggests a transition to Cupid the god of love. He was born in the country, and it was there that he first tried out his bow and arrows, but now he rules all men and women alike, making some happy but others miserable. May he come to our festival in kindly mood and be gentle to us! All the company are to invoke the god of love for the flocks and herds, to make them fruitful. In fact, each one should invoke the god for his own life, too; and they need not feel shy about doing it out loud, as the general noise will cover each separate prayer. It is time to play: Night is coming on, and the stars follow her chariot in amorous chorus. Soon Sleep and Dreams will be here.

Tibullus is seriously interested in the countryside and its gods, as Horace is not. We can compare the way Horace celebrates the rustic god Faunus, to whom he addresses *Odes* 3.18. What he gives us is a set of brief and brilliant vignettes, culminating in the fantasy picture of lambs roaming fearlessly among wolves, and the humorous touch of the ploughman taking pleasure in stamping his feet in heavy dance on the hateful earth he works. That is all seen with a cool and external eye, though not without a trace of ironical sympathy. Horace would not go on, like Tibullus, at a length of more than sixty lines about the gifts of the rustic gods and the excellence of country life.

Tibullus turns with address a corner which is always awkward for all these poets: the problem of making praise for one's patron seem to arise naturally from the poet's own poetical personality, and not stand out like an inorganic and embarrassing appendage.²⁵ Healths are being drunk at a rustic festival, where even drunkenness, the poet reminds us, is no disgrace. Included among the toasts is the name of Messalla, conqueror and patron. It passes, almost, as natural; though a gap still remains between the yokels at the festival and the high-born commander who has conquered a distant people. Tibullus goes on to hymn his rustic deities, artfully stressing the names of Bacchus and Cupid, and turning at the end to the theme of love. Like Horace, and unlike Propertius, he prefers to leave unstated the natural end of such a day of celebration, music, wine, and prayers to Cupid. Horace ends his ode with a song to Venus and another to Night; Tibullus with a song to Cupid and the coming of Night. The 'lascivus chorus' of stars which follow her help to underline the delicate hint; and the prohibition on sexual activity (ll. 9–10) is no longer in force. Who the poet's partner will be, we are not told. In Book One Delia was the girl, Nemesis has not yet been named in Book Two; sometimes he seems to prefer a boy. The point here is that the name which the poet mentioned in his prayer to Cupid is unheard by the reader, as it passes unheard by the company. The identity is immaterial: the gentle poet, in a setting so propitious, will find someone to share his sleep and his dreams.

Odes 3.8 and 3.28 thus draw part of their significance from the naming of Roman festivals, days mentioned on the official calendar. Two other odes from Book Three form a slightly different category. In the first, Horace makes play with a purely local

²⁵ I speak for simplicity's sake of 'patrons'. The position is not so straight-forward in reality with these sophisticated poets. See the essays in B. K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (1982); P. White, *Promised Verse* (1993); R. O. A. M.

Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry* (1995), esp. 150–7 and 191–2; M. Citroni, *Poesia e lettori in Roma antica* (1995). I have expressed some of my view of this matter in F. Millar and E. Segal (eds), *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* (1984), 189–218.

rustic holiday. In the second he makes use of a state festival, but without naming it: the allusion is clearer than that of 1.31.

In 3.18, ('Faune, Nympharum fugientum amator', 'Faunus, lover of the nymphs who run away from you'), Horace addresses the rustic god Faunus. This least urban of minor deities is named in three further odes,²⁶ always with affection, as a presence sometimes active on Horace's land. In 3.18 he is promised offerings and worship; his day, the Nones of December, is a holiday for all the country people. This exact date refers not to a metropolitan festival but to a local one. We have no other evidence for it, and few of Horace's Roman readers will have heard of it. He includes it, it seems reasonable to suppose, to give a touch of the local and specific. The fact that Faunus himself is presented, not as a dimly personified Italian *numen* but as the Greek god Pan, forms an artful contrast and perhaps suggests a reason for the poet's procedure: again, the balance is preserved between high literature and something closer to realism. The poem closes with those charming, slightly ironical vignettes which have been discussed above. Horace enjoys and very slightly patronizes his rustics, glimpsed as they relax in true rustic style. And Horace the international poet, who aspires to a place in the canon of the classics of lyric poetry,²⁷ makes his implicit claim to be also an Italian and in touch with his own world.

The famous 'O fons Bandusiae', *Odes* 3.13, also sets out to glorify a feature of the local countryside: a nearby spring. All springs, in that hot and dry climate, are as a matter of course sacred,²⁸ the fountain of Bandusia no less than others; like them, it should receive honours. Tomorrow, the poet tells the spring, you shall be given flowers and wine and the sacrifice of a young goat, whose red blood shall stain your icy stream. Why tomorrow, the reader is surely expected to ask, and not today? The point must be to remind the reader that in the calendar there was a day set aside for the springs: the Fontinalia of 13 October. On that day 'they throw flowers into the fountains and crown the wells with garlands'.²⁹ The Fontinalia was one of the old official festivals of Rome; Horace will celebrate it out in the country, on his estate. There he knows and is proud of a spring as little famous, no doubt, to Roman antiquarians as to Greek poetry. Bandusia, like Bantimum, with that unGreek initial B, (no Greek place begins with Band- or Bant-), is another name hitherto alien and indeed rebarbative to high literature; but now . . .

To a poem whose subject recalls the Hellenistic epigram,³⁰ Horace adds a Roman side by the allusion to a Roman occasion, not explicit, but easy to pick up, as the key word 'tomorrow' calls for an explanation. He strikes also a doubly individual note: first, this is *his* local spring, part of his *Sitz am Leben*, his solid Italian reality; and moreover he can and will, as an Augustan poet, confer on the most humdrum and obscure of Italian places and customs a splendour that will make them equal to the most historic names of Greece: 'fies nobilium tu quoque fontium', 'You too shall be one of the classic springs', along with Pieria and Hippocrene. Virgil can be seen doing the same thing constantly with the Italian names and places in the second half of the *Aeneid*. The poem is short, and having added so much to the Hellenistic starting point Horace has resisted the temptation to follow another Hellenistic path, that of relating or inventing the *aition* of his spring.³¹ Instead, he introduces the motif of sacrificing a kid, its blood flowing into the icy water. The image is distasteful to some sensibilities — Nisbet quotes with approval the question of Campbell, 'Who wants a drink out of the fountain of Bandusia

²⁶ C. 1.4; 1.17; 2.17.

²⁷ C. 1.1.29–36. The density of Greek names and words here is especially revealing: Satyri, Euterpe, Polyhymnia, Lesboum barbiton, lyricis. Such language and resonance was vital to the claim to classic status; but it was also important sometimes to get away from it and its associations, and to reclaim a more Italian, and more familiar, character.

²⁸ 'Nullus fons non sacer', says Servius, matter-of-factly (on *Aeneid* 7.84).

²⁹ Varro, *De lingua Latina* 6.22.

³⁰ *Anth. Pal.* 6.43, 189, 253, 334, 336; 9.257, 313–15, 326–30, 334, 336, 374, 668, 684, 699; 10.12, 13; 16.12, 13, 227, 228, 230, 291.

³¹ Alexandrian poets liked this motif. Cf. Callimachus, fragments 2, 42, 43.90, 65–6, 109, 546, 740, and the river created by Rhea in *Hymn* 1.28ff., *H.* 5.71; Theocr. 7.6ff., with Gow's note on Philetas and Andromachus; Ap. Rhod. 1.1065ff.; 1.1145ff.; 4.1441ff.; Antimachus, fr.84.3W; *A.P.* 9.255 (Honestus).

after that?³² But the reader must be prepared for a certain rather heartlessly aesthetic pleasure, given added spice by the way in which the kid's potential career is lingered upon in ll. 4–8, only to be swept away: 'frustra' — in vain his sexual budding, his fighting spirit: instead of that, his blood shall stain the running spring. The cold clear water contrasts in a piquant way with the hot red blood. It seems also to be true that this contrast, of blood in flowing water, seems to have made a special appeal to Roman poets, from *Aeneid* 6.87 to the grisly effects beloved of Lucan.³³ The whole short poem is packed with novelties and surprises, and the resonance of the Roman festival is one of them.

So far we have been dealing with poems that are set in the context of a particular, recognizable festival. Some more general questions are suggested by poems which touch on cult. Early Greek society possessed a wide range of religious events, and early lyric poetry was largely written to be performed on those occasions. Not only hymns but also many other forms: paeans, prosodia, maiden-songs (partheneia), dithyrambs, epithalamia, etc., all had this origin.³⁴ If Roman lyric was to emulate that of Greece, and to take Alcaeus and Pindar among its models, then gods of the Greek type would have to be present, along with the songs which served or evoked their cult. Horace was quick to take the hint, and poems which relate to cult make possible for his lyric poetry a wide range of situations and motifs.

Here are some of the antithetical pairs which could easily be developed in such poems. With the basic opposition of gods and men goes the hardly less fundamental one of the poetical and the prosaic. The presence of gods marks events as especially significant; the cult of the gods forms part of real life, but a special part, dedicated to unseen powers, involving language, movements, places, dress, which are set apart from the everyday and the humdrum. The limiting case is offered by Horace's Bacchus odes, in which he claims for himself the ecstasy and inspiration of a devotee of the god.³⁵ That image made it possible for him to emphasize the side of his persona which was not always on show, and which people found it hard to accept. The sleek and prosperous man about town, and a freedman's son at that, was also — he really was — a great lyric poet, the successor of Alcaeus, the recipient of direct inspiration from the divine. The classical imagery of Dionysiac possession gave the self-conscious Horace a way to express this passionately held belief, and the idea of ritual helped him to formulate it. Accompanying Bacchus in ecstasy over mountain peaks and caves: that was the opposite of the prosaic routine of urban life, money-making, meetings of the *collegium scribarum*, and generally of all that was over-familiar. The Muse, too, loves the countryside; it is in a cave that Horace will compose his best work; and, by a very bold stroke of self-identification, it is in just such a cave that Augustus, too, is refreshed by the Muses after his exertions.³⁶

The contrast of town and country was also, of course, important to the poetry of Horace, as it was to all the Augustan poets. Propertius characteristically expresses it either in terms of a myth, as when Milanion at length wins the cruel Atalanta in the harsh terrain of Arcadia, and when the Argonauts camp beside a stream and recline on beds of leaves; or in terms of desert and wilderness, as when he imagines himself shipwrecked on an unknown shore or wandering through strange forests.³⁷ Tibullus dwells upon the innocent and popular rustic cults, developing them with fullness of

³² In J. P. Sullivan (ed.), *Critical Essays in Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric* (1962), 198.

³³ e.g. Lucan 2.219–20; 2.713; 3.572, and J. Griffin in O. Murray and M. Tecuşan (eds), *In Vino Veritas* (1995), 292ff.

³⁴ On the Greek background, and Horace's uses of it, cf. Lyne, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 59–67 with refs.

³⁵ *C.* 2.19; 3.25.

³⁶ *C.* 1.26.6f.; 3.25.3; 3.4.37ff.:

vos Caesarem altum, militia simul
fessas cohortis abdidit oppidis,
finire quaerentem labores
Pierio recreatis antro.

settlement of disbanded soldiers after Actium. That was a business of which Augustus could speak with complacency in his *Res Gestae*, cap. 16, where he boasts that on that occasion the land given to the veterans was paid for. It is perhaps a question, whether there is a resonance to be caught, in the fourth of the Roman Odes, of that earlier and less urbanely managed settlement of soldiers, ten years earlier, in which so many poets were among the expropriated, with no compensation paid. Horace had been one of them (*Epistles* 2.2.49ff.).

³⁷ Prop. 1.1; 1.20; 1.17; 1.18.

Readers will have taken this passage to refer to the

detail.³⁸ Horace likes to tell us about his Sabine estate — ‘o rus! quando ego te aspiciam?’ (‘O my country place! When shall I ever see you?’ *Serm.* 2.6.60), which in some of his hexameter poems becomes a full-scale antithesis to the weariness and horrors of life in Rome.³⁹ But in the Odes he likes to use the trappings of rustic cult.

It is in fact noticeable that in the Satires and Epistles, while he often talks of the delights of country life (as opposed to life in Rome), the rustic cults are conspicuous by their absence. That suggests that they were rather a pleasure of theory than an important part of Horace’s actual life in the country. In the Odes he likes to tell us that the return of spring-time means that beautiful female deities are dancing unclothed in the woods and fields; it is time to garland one’s head and make offerings to Faunus (1.4). Faunus roams the poet’s estate, defends his live-stock, and receives cult; he is honoured by the peasantry, as we have seen, in December (1.17; 3.18). The local spring receives its sacrifice; Horace invokes Diana, goddess of hills and woods, and consecrates a pine tree to her (3.13; 3.22). He gives advice to rustic Phidyle about her offerings, and he tells his friend Aelius Lamia to tend his own Genius with wine and the sacrifice of a pig, giving his labourers a holiday (3.23; 3.17). He populates the countryside with picturesque minor deities, Faunus, the Graces, the Nymphs, the Satyrs. In the high poetic world of the Odes it is the presence of these glamorous figures that distinguishes country and city, rather than the familiar features of the hexameter poems, more ‘prosaic’ in level, such as freedom from business meetings and bureaucracy, social gatherings and law-suits.⁴⁰ And when Horace describes his estate at *Epistles* 1.16.1–16, he makes no mention of any rustic religious sites or observances; any more than such things receive a mention when he lists the possible unpleasantnesses of rustic life, at *Epistles* 1.7.83ff. Any notion of realism in allusions of this pious kind in the Odes must be seen in the cool light of that omission.

The poetic use of the festival served also to bridge the gap between the personal pleasures of the Epicurean poet and the public cares and emotions associated with the figure of Augustus. From this point of view, the poems on dated events are a sub-class of the large class of poems in which a religious element plays a part but is not the whole. A good example will be a poem like 3.14, in which Horace imagines the events of the day when Augustus will return from Spain. Public celebrations are succeeded by the poet’s turn to a private party of his own, with an erotic colouring appropriate to a lyric poet. The point is that the poet’s private pleasure is in perfect harmony with the official celebrations. The two motifs of cult and of drinking are Horace’s great resort in this vital area.⁴¹

Rome can be contrasted not only with the *rus*, the countryside, but also with the non-Roman, the exotic. Here too the gods and their cult can be helpful. Virgil draws the contrast at the Battle of Actium between Octavian, advancing ‘accompanied by Senate and people, the Penates and the mighty gods’,

cum patribus populoque penatibus et magnis dis,

supported by Neptune, Venus, and Minerva, and on the other side Cleopatra with her monstrous gods of every shape, including the barking hound Anubis.⁴² Horace avoids making such an explicit contrast on the divine level. We do, however, find him asking his friend Pompeius, allowed back from exile, ‘Who has restored you as a citizen *to your ancestral gods* and the sky of Italy?’ Augustus’ age, he says elsewhere, has ‘given back *to our Jupiter* the standards torn from the arrogant temples of the Parthians’. ‘Dis patriis’; ‘nostro Iovi’.⁴³ In the *Carmen Saeculare* he speaks of Apollo ‘gazing with favour on the

³⁸ Tibull. 1.7; 2.1.

³⁹ e.g. *Serm.* 2.6.16ff.; *Epp.* 1.10; 1.14.

⁴⁰ *Serm.* 2.6.16ff.; *Epp.* 1.14.17ff.; 1.10.1–25; *Epp.* 2.2.65ff. ‘Perditur haec inter misero lux . . .’, *Serm.* 2.6.59. H. P. Syndikus well says of Horace’s gods that they are ‘Vorstellungen, die den Menschen damals über den Alltag erheben, die das Leben geistiger und bedeutender zu machen vermochten’: *Die Lyrik des Horaz* (1972–3), 2.243.

⁴¹ See particularly A. La Penna, *Orazio e l’ideologia*

del principato (1963), 129ff. On the connection of 3.8 and 3.14 cf. M. Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace’s Odes* (1986), 129. On 3.14 see R. G. M. Nisbet, ‘Some problems of text and interpretation in Horace *Odes* 3, 14 (Herculis ritu)’, in *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983); 105–19.

⁴² *Aeneid* 8.698ff., cf. Propertius 3.11.41: Cleopatra’s presumption, ‘ausa Iovi nostro latrantem opponere Anubim’.

⁴³ 2.7.4; 4.15.6.

Palatine hill', and of Diana 'occupying the Aventine'. His own poetic immortality is secure, so long as the pontifex shall still climb the Capitol with the unspeaking Vestal Virgin.⁴⁴

All these important passages emphasize the specifically Roman character of the gods and their cult. Patriotism, and loyal support of the new order, can be expressed unobtrusively but to good effect by such religious touches. So can a proud boast of the poet's own poetic power. What at the opening of Book One had been expressed as apparently no more than the whim of the poet to attach himself to the exotic tradition of Greek lyric poetry, as others choose to be drinkers or hunters (1.1.28ff.), can at the close of the three book collection be firmly anchored to things reassuringly and permanently Roman.⁴⁵

Another Horatian contrast which can be given religious form is that between the good old days and the corrupt and ostentatious present. Thus: eye-catching marble buildings were not, and should not be, meant for merely human use, but for the gods; we ought to hand over our useless and dangerous wealth to the gods on the Capitol; the gods do not ask us for precious offerings but for the simple and inexpensive ones which any pure heart can produce.⁴⁶

That theme blends with another highly characteristic one: the rejection of the overblown, the exaggerated, the enormous. The literary influence of Callimachus can of course be seen here. As Horace can say to Maecenas, when inviting him to dinner, that at the poet's table he will find only an unpretentious home-grown wine, very different from the choice Caecuban he drinks at home; or that while Grosphus possesses vast herds of cattle, race horses, and garments of opulent crimson, he for his part has received from fate a modest livelihood and a Muse of small-scale verse;⁴⁷ so he can express the contrast in terms of cult. The great grandee Iullus Antonius, who in his verse aspires to the lofty manner of Pindar, can and doubtless will also mark the triumph of Augustus with the exorbitant sacrifice of ten bulls and ten cows; Horace, who prudently steers clear of the more ambitious poetic styles, will make the appropriately modest offering of one calf (4.2.25-60).

Callimachus gave the hint in the Prologue to the *Aetia*: the youthful aspirant is told by Apollo to make his sacrificial offerings fat, but to put his Muse on a diet. Horace develops the motif in his own way, fitting it into that seamless web of modesty, irony, and self-deprecating understatement which runs through his work and is central to his poetical personality, at once modest and proud. As his poems are short and indeed unambitious in theme and scope,⁴⁸ so too his prayers are moderate. 'Hoc erat in votis': 'This is what I used to pray for: a bit of land, not very big'; and now, thanks to Maecenas, I have got it (*Serm.* 2.6). So too *Odes* 2.18: My house is not ablaze with ivory and gold, but I am content with my modest position and the riches of my own mind; and I do not provoke the gods by asking greedily for more.

The expropriations which have impoverished the son of the wealthy freedman, it is interesting to note, are not mentioned in the dignified ethos of the *Odes*.⁴⁹ that is reserved for an *Epistle* (2.2.41-52). Tibullus, by contrast, uses the theme of the modest offering in just that way: 'I can *no longer* make the lavish offerings that I used to make, before I lost my land' (*Tibull.* 1.1.21). In the high style of his lyric verse Horace presents his poverty as a permanent state, not as a change, the result of bitterly resented political actions: he simply is modest, philosophical, Callimachean. As always with this poet, realism is multi-layered and far from simple. The connoisseur will observe, here too, the deft and seemly avoidance of any hint of the political. It will be observed also that the edifying motif of modesty in prayer, in the particular form 'the more you deny yourself in your prayers, the more you will get from the gods —'

⁴⁴ *CS* 65,68; *C.* 3.30.8.

⁴⁵ This purpose can be seen in many places in Horace's poetic output. For a few examples: *C.* 1.21, a lyric prayer ends up with Augustus and the Empire; 1.8, a flirtatious and arch poem to a *femme fatale* turns out to support the military and social programme of the Princes (and of olden Rome); 1.12, an echo of

Pindar leads into praise of Roman virtues, ancient and modern. And so on.

⁴⁶ 2.15.13-20; 3.24.45; 1.31.1-8; 3.23.9-20.

⁴⁷ 1.20, cf. *Epp.* 1.5; *C.* 2.16.33-40, cf. 3.16.18-44.

⁴⁸ e.g. 1.6; 2.12. Cf. *Sermones* 2.1.10ff.

⁴⁹ Except indeed in the very high-flying and unspecific passage 3.4.37-40: cf. n. 36 above.

quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit
a dis plura feret⁵⁰ —

can reappear in the cooler ethos of the Epistles with a cynical edge. To get the most out of (not a god but) a patron, he advises Scaeva at *Epistles* 1.17.43, it is best not to keep drawing attention to your poverty:

coram rege sua de paupertate tacentes
plus poscente ferent.

‘Those who say nothing about their needs in their patron’s hearing will get more than the man who asks’. To be always demanding is to be like a kept mistress (‘nota refert meretricis acumina’, l. 55). There is a beautiful economy about this technique, which in different contexts and for different purposes can so urbanely raise and lower the stylistic, the social, and even the moral level of the same material. As a way of writing, or of looking at the world, it is of course eminently unromantic.

Akin to the motif of the contrast between old-fashioned simplicity and modern extravagance is that between old-fashioned belief and modern scepticism. The Princeps was anxious, in this area as in others, to be seen to revive the good old traditional Roman ways. He claimed credit for restoring dilapidated shrines and neglected rituals.⁵¹ Horace is happy to echo him at the close of the Roman Odes: the Roman shall not cease to pay for the sins of his ancestors until he has repaired the temples (3.6.1ff.). ‘The gods have brought many disasters on suffering Italy for this neglect’:

di multa neglecti dederunt
Hesperiae mala luctuosae. (ll. 8–9)

This is a detail of the Augustan programme which related directly to the gods as persons and to a motif common in Greek poetry, ever since the First Book of the *Iliad*: the destructive anger of a slighted divinity. Consequently it lent itself readily to treatment in high verse. Virgil was currently putting this theme at the centre of his eagerly awaited epic, central to which is the anger of Juno. From it Horace slides into a topic less obviously poetical, but dear to the heart of Augustus, the denunciation of sexual licence as a great source of social disaster:

hoc fonte derivata clades
in patriam populumque fluxit. (ll. 19–20)

‘It is from this source that ruin has flowed on our country and people’. One suspects that the author of so many celebrations of love outside marriage was glad to have to hand, as the opening of his poem, a motif more obviously poetic, and less uncongenial, than that.

In a different mood, he can exploit the opposition of belief and scepticism in an urbane and straight-faced ode, 1.34. Here the inexplicable occurrence of thunder from a clear sky forces the poet to unsay his sophisticated nonsense and acknowledge Jupiter. Hitherto, he implies, he has been too mean to spend much on divine service — ‘parcus deorum cultor et infrequens’, ‘an economical and infrequent worshipper of the gods’ — an admission which might shed an ironical light, were one to press the connection between one Horatian poem and another, on the poems in which small offerings to the gods are said to reflect the poet’s chosen life-style and Callimachean principles.

Not for the only time, Horace is happy to undermine in one poem what he is happy to proclaim in others. Compare, for instance, 3.24 (‘Among the virtuous Scythians the penalty for adultery is death, and quite right, too’) with 3.10 (‘Even if your husband were a Scythian, you should still let me in’). The poet includes these two lyrics in the same Book. Compare also — again in the same Book; Horace almost seems to amuse himself with these provocative pieces of placement — 1.35, ‘May Fortuna reforge our swords and turn them against the Arabs and the Massagetae’, and 1.29, ‘Iccius, are you really going off to get rich in the Arabian campaign? We expected something better of

⁵⁰ 3.16.21f., cf. 2.18.10, ‘nil supra/ deos lacesso nec potentem amicum’.

⁵¹ *Res Gestae* 20.4; Livy 4.20.

you!' ('pollicitus meliora'). The life-long love promised to different girls in adjacent poems points in the same direction.⁵² The cult of the gods is one more weapon which can be exploited by this master of deceptive self-revelation, in his depiction of himself and his world. Like the rest, it could wear an almost devout look in one poem and a quite different air in another. The poet is seriously interested in consistency only in his technique and to some extent in his tone, not for what he uses them to say. The only subject matter which commands serious interest throughout his creative career is the creation and maintenance of his own poetic persona, so adaptable to everything from poetic theory and moral philosophy to autobiography, so smoothly armoured against dissection or criticism, so frank and yet so opaque.

A poet who set out to emulate Alcaeus, and who deliberately recalled the choral lyric of Pindar and Bacchylides,⁵³ but who also echoes the hedonist poems of Anacreon, the metres of Sappho, and the sympotic verse of the Alexandrians, faced the problem of the dissonance between personal and collective, private and public. Horace wanted to versify, in however stylized a form, his own emotional attachments, friendships, griefs. He also wanted to create a public lyric which could claim to speak for the community. The enlightened hedonist is to be also the keeper of the national conscience. That double aim is involved in the 'contradictory' poems, of which we have just seen some examples. It is not the least of the services that the gods perform for him that they help him to bridge the gap between the two.

As an individual, Horace defines himself for us by his choice of favourite deities. Naturally he has a cult of Apollo, god of the lyre. Naturally also he often invokes the Muses and calls himself their minister.⁵⁴ As a love poet he invokes Venus; Bacchus is, of course, a favourite god of the singer of wine and love. Mercury (eloquent, persuasive, tricky) is addressed with affection, and Faunus and the Nymphs make many appearances.⁵⁵ Certain great deities, on the other hand, are little seen, as Juno, Mars, Vulcan, Ceres; and Jupiter usually appears only in the context of the highest politics, and specifically as taking care of Augustus.⁵⁶ This selection is clearly motivated to pass over many important gods of cult and highlight those with whom the lyric poet could have a relationship which illuminates his character and his role. Most of them are comparatively minor divinities in terms of Roman state cult, the sort of gods whom he can address intimately, and who can serve his persona of pleasure, irony, wit, and the avoidance of the grandiose and the oppressive.

A poet so close to the gods can invoke their splendid presence to ennoble the passing events of his life. To celebrate the homecoming of a friend, Catullus composed an exuberant little poem (Catull. 9): he exults in the thought of seeing Veranius again, sharing his presence, embracing him, hearing his stories about Spain. So too when Catullus celebrates his own return from abroad (Catull. 31), he expresses his joy at returning to his beloved Sirmio, home, and rest. In neither case do gods or divine service find a mention. Horace, a lyric poet of a different and more consciously dignified kind, writes three odes to welcome homecomers. Two are addressed to personal friends. At Numida's return (1.36), incense and music and the sacrifice of a kid must mark the poet's thanks to his guardian deities. When Pompeius returns from exile (2.7), a votive meal to Jupiter is called for. Thus the whole celebration stands under a religious sign, for all the flirting and drinking, ('omnes in Damalin putres/ deponent oculos', 'All shall cast melting glances at Damalis', 1.36.16f.; 'oblivioso levia Massico/ ciboria exple', 'Fill up the beakers with the Massic wine that brings forgetfulness', 2.7.21f.); and the episode receives a dignity and a super-personal significance which Horace the Roman laureate

⁵² e.g. 1.13.17-20, to Lydia, followed by 1.17, to Tyndaris, and 1.19, to Glycera, and 1.23, to Chloe.

⁵³ For choral I think it generally was, with some exceptions prompted by the need for economy or other special circumstances: see C. Carey, 'Who sang Pindar's Victory Odes?' *AJP* 110 (1989), 545-65, against M. R. Lefkowitz, 'Who sang Pindar's Victory Odes?' *AJP* 109 (1988), 1-11 = *First-Person Fictions: Pindar's Poetic "I"* (1991), 191-202; and M. Heath,

'Receiving the Κῶμος: the context and performance of Epinician', *AJP* 109 (1988), 180-95.

⁵⁴ 'Spiritus Phoebus mihi, Phoebus artem/ carminis nomenque dedit poetae', 4.6.29. Cf. (Apollo) 1.31; 1.32; 4.15; (Muses) 1.26; 2.1.37; 3.4; 4.3. 'Musarum sacerdos': 3.1.3.

⁵⁵ Venus: 1.3; 1.18.6; 1.19; 1.30; 3.26; 4.1. Bacchus: especially 2.19, 3.25. Mercury: 1.10, 3.11.

⁵⁶ 1.2; 1.12.49ff.; 3.1-6.

values, but which Catullus disregards in his depiction of the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

The third of the homecoming poems (3.14) is concerned with Augustus, and it serves as a transition to the final topic of this paper. Augustus will soon be here, home from the Spanish wars. All Rome turns out to greet him, with one of those spontaneous demonstrations of universal enthusiasm familiar in countries blessed with autocratic rule. The occasion is a religious one: prayers, thanksgivings, reverent silence. At the centre of the poem Horace turns deftly to his own affairs. He has reason to rejoice — a more convincing reason than he sometimes produces for displays of loyal emotion — in the security which Augustus guarantees: 'I shall not be in fear of dying a violent death, as long as Caesar rules the world':

nec mori per vim metuam, tenente
Caesare terras.

His own celebration is to take the form of a private party for two, a jar of good wine, and the company of a pretty girl. The wine dates from the terrible Social Wars and has evaded the clutches of Spartacus: those delicately calculated touches remind us what life was like, how grim it was, before we had peace and the Princeps.⁵⁷ The role of the official cult ceremony is to enable the poet to combine public and private in a collective picture which would be incomplete without either of them. The city rejoices, and Horace celebrates in unison with his people, but in privacy. The return of the Emperor is like that of a personal friend; and if the state ritual to welcome him has rather a heavy feeling, judged against Catullus' response to a friend's homecoming, it is fair to point out that Horace is more formal, mobilizes the gods of cult, for the homecoming of ordinary friends, as well as for that of Augustus.⁵⁸ We note that in 3.14 the poet succeeds again in extracting the possible sting of real political struggle even from the Civil Wars (25–8). Now, he says, I am middle-aged and easy-going. I should not have accepted a No from a girl's door-keeper, in my hotter youth, in 42 B.C.: the year, that is, when he fought on the Republican side at the Battle of Philippi. His presence on the Republican side, then, was a mere matter of youthful ebullience, no more; and there is no hint that between Caesar's heir and the Liberators there were principles at stake.⁵⁹

In *Odes* One to Three Horace on occasion praises Augustus by associating him with figures of myth and with gods: he is Mercury in disguise, he will sip nectar among the Olympians, he is earning his immortality like Hercules and Liber, his victory over his enemies is like that of Jupiter over the Giants.⁶⁰ That involved a certain sense of strain. Such things had been said of Alexander: the men who said them were remembered as flatterers. In the Fourth Book Horace prefers to stick to the description of cult acts. That was prudent. Augustus might or might not be Mercury, he might or might not be on his way to immortality and posthumous nectar; earthly celebrations were a reality and beyond doubt or scepticism.

Thus we find the poet imagining, with full pomp, the triumph procession of Augustus after his German wars: Horace himself will join in the universal rejoicing and in the ceremonies in honour of the gods (4.2.33ff.). That setting is seemly and convincing, as the myths perhaps were not. He finds another successful image in 4.5. 'All Italy yearns for Augustus; it is time that he came home. We all enjoy security' (again that note, the convincingly genuine sigh of relief of the property-owning classes at the passing of violence, and indeed of politics, under the new regime); 'condit quisque diem

⁵⁷ 'Cum domino pax ista venit': Lucan 1.670. The whole passage reads like a bitter reply to what Horace says here.

⁵⁸ cf. Nisbet, *op. cit.* (n. 41).

⁵⁹ Compare his dexterous handling of the same material at *Epistles* 2.2.46ff.: the difficult times, and the flood tide (*aestus*) 'moved him from Athens' and 'carried him' into war against Augustus; without, apparently, any act of will or decision on his part. Again, no question of political considerations being important. The particular beauty of this passage is

that Horace shows his freedom of speech — 'I can of course mention the fact that I fought against Augustus at Philippi; we are not living in fear, or under a tyranny' — but at the same time deprives the matter of any political substance. No more effective way, perhaps, could be devised to put the Republic and its awkward questions finally to rest. All that not only is over: it never had any significance, in any case. See on the events Lyne, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 1–8.

⁶⁰ *C.* 1.2.41ff; 3.3.9ff; 3.4.41ff.

collibus in suis', 'each man sees the sun down on his own land, and in our prayers after dinner, along with our wine, we all include him among the gods we mention, praying him for a long holiday for Italy'.

Longas o utinam, dux bone, ferias
praestes Hesperiae. (4.5.37-8)

A long holiday from history, for a people once free and contumacious, but now only too happy to resign all responsibility, all interest in politics, to one man, in return for law and order and the security of property. And 'each man' means, if we have the bad taste to press it, not (of course) *everybody*, but a rather restricted set of people: those who possess 'colles suos', 'hills of their own': the proprietors of Italy.⁶¹

The very last ode⁶² hammers home the same lesson. 'While Caesar is in charge of the world (*custode rerum Caesare*) no violence is to be feared; we all', (again that specious inclusiveness), 'every day, after our prayers to the gods, remember as we drink our wine the good old Roman heroes, and Troy, and Anchises, and the off-spring of the goddess Venus'. That is a compliment to Virgil, Horace's dead friend, the author of the *Aeneid*, as well as to Augustus: the phrase 'the off-spring of Venus' is skillfully chosen to refer both to Augustus and to Aeneas. We are not encouraged to choose between the two possible claimants; after all, there is no difference between their claim, which is all the same story. Again the familiar Horatian connection: Augustus guarantees our security, and in gratitude for that we adore him along with the gods — and along with our wine. The theme of drinking, central to Horace's life of pleasure, and also, through the god Bacchus and the drinker Alcaeus, to his lyric inspiration too, fits with beautiful smoothness into this carefully wrought combination of private and public, hedonism and politics, enthusiastic loyalty and political apathy. Drinking now is an element in religious and loyal activity.

At last the tension between the two poles disappears. Indifference to public cares and worries ceases to be potentially subversive and becomes politically acceptable, even laudable, now that it is a way of expressing our implicit trust in our leader; while divine cult, political gesture, and private pleasure, merge indissolubly into one. It is one of the great triumphs of the Horatian style, which has finally succeeded in unifying everything — wine, song, politics, indifference to politics, prayers to the gods, scepticism about the gods, concentration on the pleasures of this life, calls for renunciation and austerity — into one flawlessly unified whole. Such could be the uses for Horace, at the highest level, of the motif of the cult of the gods.

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⁶¹ 'This season mink stoles are everywhere': the fashion writers can parallel this sort of expression. Not much sympathy here for that numerous class of Roman citizens to whom, a century earlier, Scipio Aemilianus shouted 'Vos, quorum noverca est Italia' (Velleius 2.4.4; Val. Max. 6.2.3); Catiline and the

Caesar of the early popular legislation had no successors in Augustan Rome.

⁶² I am not convinced by the argument that 4.5 was originally meant as the first poem of Book Four, as argued again recently by O. Murray in Rudd, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 92-3.