

## Duality and the Ending of Horace *Odes* 1. 18

David West (1995, 88), in his discussion of *Odes* 1. 18, borrowing a term from Dieter Esser, (1976), notes the presence of an Ich-Schluss. Horace has just advised against abusing the gifts of Bacchus and moves to the first person: “non ego te, candide Bassareu,/ invitum quatiā nec . . . sub divum rapiam.” (11-13). Horace then calls for an end to the ecstatic and dangerous celebration of Bacchus, “saeva tene cum Berecyntio/ cornu tympana” (13-14).

The situation here is similar to the ending of Poem 63 where Catullus prays that he not succumb to the madness of those who worship Cybele, “dea, magna, dea Cybebe, dea domina Dindymi,/ procul a mea tuus sit furor omnis, era domo:/ alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos (91-93).” But unlike Catullus, Horace doesn’t end here; he follows with a relative clause, “quae subsequitur caecus amor sui/ et tollens vacuum plus nimio gloria verticem/ arcanique fides prodiga, perlucidior vitro” (14-16). Horace’s Ich-Schluss emerges as a kind of false or extended closure (cf. Fowler, 1989, 97-98), and the striking lines that actually end the poem invite us to reconsider what came before. Critics generally agree that the poem presents the Horatian ideal of moderation (Nisbet and Hubbard, 1970, 228-229) and focus on line seven where Horace warns not to transgress the “gifts of moderate Liber.” But if this were the case, the imperative “tene . . . saeva tympana” and the lines immediately preceding should have ended the poem (Schrijvers, 2009, 58), giving us a kind of moralizing epilogue that we see in Catullus 63 (Thomson, 1998, 385). Horace’s failure to end where one would expect suggests that the poem is about more than moderation. Going back we can see that on another level it is a study of opposing tensions embodied in the dual nature of Bacchus, tensions that suggest that the ideal of balance carries with it an inescapable danger of crossing the narrow line that separates extremes.

Horace sets this up in the first line when he alters his opening motto from Alcaeus, "μηδὲν ἄλλο φυτεύσης πρότερον δένδρον ἀμπέλῳ" (342 LP) by inserting the adjective *sacra*: "Nullam, Vare, *sacra* vite prius severis arborem." Orelli (1892, ad loc.) may have been the first to note that Horace alludes to Ennius, "Lyaeus vitis inventor *sacrae*" (123 Vahlen = 129 Warmington). Pasquali (1920, 9-10), Fraenkel (1957, 177), and others repeat this observation, but fail to consider the context, which is a scene from Ennius' *Athamas* that presents celebrants overcome by bacchic madness.

The influence of Ennius is important, for it colors the Alcaean motto. Athenaeus (10.430c) reports that Alcaeus was giving general advice repeating the positive views of wine in his other poems; nothing negative or ambiguous is suggested. But *sacra* moves things in a different direction. For Horace the vine is both sacred and cursed. Like Bacchus himself, wine has a double nature; it mitigates the hardships of life (line 3-4), but also leads to self-destruction (lines 7-9).

It is important to note that this ambiguity also appears in line seven. Nisbet and Hubbard comment on the difficulty posed by *transiliat munera*, but Quinn (1980, 160) suggestively points to an amphibole inherent in *munera*. Like *sacra*, *munera*, is double edged; it is a gift that brings respite from care, but it is also a duty that must be discharged in honor of Bacchus. Those who would pass it over (I believe this overtone is present in *nequis transiliat*), like the Centaurs and Sithonians, risk bringing suffering on themselves. When Horace calls for an end to the worship of Bacchus, he uses the false closure to throw emphasis on the final lines and on the fundamental contradictions of the good and bad in human nature that remain unresolved and that are figured in the *sacra vitis*.

- Esser, Dieter. 1976. Untersuchungen zu den Odenschlüssen bei Horaz. Meisenheim am Glan.
- Fowler, D. 1989. "First Thoughts on Closure: Problems and Prospects." MD 22: 75-122.
- Fraenkel, Eduard. 1957. Horace. Oxford.
- Nisbet, R. G. M., and Hubbard, M. 1970. A Commentary On Horace: Odes I. Oxford.
- Orelli, I. G. 1892. Q. Horatius Flaccus I.<sup>4</sup> Berlin.
- Pasquali, Giorgio. 1920. Orazio Lirico. Florence.
- Quinn, Kenneth. 1980. Horace: The Odes. Walton-on-Thames Surrey.
- Schrijvers, H. (2009). "How to End an Ode? Closure in Horace's Short Poems". In Michèle Lowrie (Ed.), Horace: Odes and Epodes. (p 56-71). Oxford.
- Thomson, D. F. S. 1998. Catullus. Edited with a Textual and Interpretative Commentary. Toronto.
- West, David. 1995. Horace Odes I: Carpe Diem. Oxford.