

Carried Away by Bacchus:  
The Power and Politics of Bacchic Inspiration in the Augustan Poets

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
(Classics)

at the  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
2013

Date of final oral examination: 1/22/2013

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For Karl and Julia  
and Ubu

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## INTRODUCTION

In Horace's *Epistles* 1.19, the poet proclaims the notion that poetry and wine are intrinsically linked. The success and longevity of the poet's songs rely on the intoxicating influence of drinking wine. The significance of wine's influence is also asserted in the fact that the Muses themselves, who embody the poet's source of divine inspiration, are drunk.<sup>1</sup>

prisco si credis, Maecenas docte, Cratino,  
 nulla placere diu nec vivere carmina possunt  
 quae scribuntur aquae potoribus. ut male sanos  
 adscripsit Liber Satyris Faunisque poetas,  
 vina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae.  
 laudibus arguitur vini vinosus Homerus;  
 Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma  
 prosiluit dicenda. "Forum putealque Libonis  
 mandabo siccis, adimam cantare severis":  
 hoc simul edixi, non cessavere poetae  
 nocturno certare mero, putere diurno. (1-11)

If you believe old Cratinas, learned Maecenas, that no songs can please us or last for very long, which are written by water-drinkers; since Liber counted insane poets among the satyrs and fauns, the usually sweet Roman Muses reek of wine in the morning. Praise of wine is attributed to Homer the wino; Father Ennius himself never rushed forth to telling of arms unless he was drunk. "I will entrust the Forum and the well of Libo in the Comitium to the sober, I will prevent the strict from singing." As soon as I made this declaration, the poets have not ceased to compete in drinking at night, stinking by day.<sup>2</sup>

According to Horace, wine aids in poetic composition by encouraging madness and, as the name Liber suggests, a release from one's inhibitions. However, this freedom granted by Bacchus, for the poet an important aspect of divine inspiration, also threatens transgression through the madness and intoxication that it inspires. Since the exertion of self-control is associated with

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<sup>1</sup> See Commager on the reference to Cratinus (2009: 43n17).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Propertius 4.6.85-86: *sic noctem patera, sic ducam carmine, donec / iniciat radios in mea uina dies!* ("So I will pass the night in drinking and in song, until daylight casts its rays into my wine!").

masculinity and power, it is a primary concern for the ruling elite of Rome, and so Horace's celebration of Bacchic liberation seems to be problematic. The figure of Bacchus, however, is characterized in Augustan poetry by the paradoxes that he exemplifies; as Schiesaro puts it, "[Bacchus] stands as the guarantor of a freedom which is both thematic and stylistic because he can make opposites co-exist."<sup>3</sup> Metaphorically, the god Bacchus stands both for freedom and control, barbarity and civilization, Callimachean and Pindaric aesthetics. Horace's reference to "water-drinkers" (3) implies a contrast between the learned Hellenistic poets, such as Callimachus and their divinely inspired archaic predecessors, such as Homer (or, more appropriately for Horace, Pindar).<sup>4</sup> Even in *Ep.* 1.19, where Horace praises the wine-drinkers, he hints at his own Callimachean aesthetics – a paradox that I will argue "Bacchic poetics" make possible.<sup>5</sup> "Bacchic poetics" provide the Augustan poets with a means to negotiate issues of power and authority as the god represents the struggle to balance personal autonomy, in poetry, with sociopolitical participation under the Principate.<sup>6</sup>

In *Epistles* 1.19, for example, the poet is preoccupied both with his poetic independence and originality and with being accepted by the elite: *iuuat immemorata ferentem / ingenuis oculisque legi manibusque teneri* ("It is pleasing for me to convey original things to be read and held by the eyes and hands of the elite," 33-34). For Horace and Ovid in particular, the god Bacchus typifies this struggle for control as he empowers the poet through poetic inspiration and initiation into his rites, but he also poses a threat to the traditional ideals of Roman masculinity,

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<sup>3</sup> 2009: 72

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Antipater of Thessalonica, a contemporary of Horace, who is critical of Callimachus and also makes the distinction between two kinds of poet: σήμερον Ἀρχιλόχοιο καὶ ἄρσενος ἥμαρ Ὀμήρου σπένδομεν· ὁ κρητὴρ οὐ δέχεται ὕδροπότας ("Today we make a libation to Archilochus and manly Homer: the mixing bowl does not welcome water-drinkers," *AP* 11.20).

<sup>5</sup> See MacLeod 1977: 364.

<sup>6</sup> "Bacchic poetics," a phrase I will discuss at length below, is Schiesaro's.

decorum, and self-control. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the Augustan poets use Bacchus and related figures to explore their relationship to the emperor and to address issues of inclusion and exclusion in the emergent sociopolitical order of Augustan Rome.

The study consists of four main chapters. The first chapter treats the power dynamics of poetic inspiration in Greek lyric poetry from the perspective of Horace's *Odes*, which will prove the most influential factor in the dissemination of Bacchic themes in Augustan poetry. The second chapter explores the social and political ramifications of Bacchus' cult at Rome during the Republic, looking at Livy's account of the Bacchanalia in conjunction with the Pentheus episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The third chapter, examines how the "Bacchic poetics" of Horace's *Odes* involve initiation into the god's rites, which impart an exclusive status to the poet, which in turn enables him to successfully balance his poetic and political lives. The fourth chapter discusses Ovid's *Tristia*, in which the poet reflects on an unsuccessful attempt to maneuver the dynamics of sociopolitical engagement at Rome, but then calls on Bacchus to help him persuade the emperor to recall him from exile.

In chapter one, I review the evidence of divine inspiration and its relationship to the composition of poetry in archaic and early classical Greece as a background to my discussion of Bacchic inspiration in Republican and Augustan Rome. This study will demonstrate the salient features that the Roman poets share with their Greek predecessors, particularly the notion that poetic inspiration constitutes a power struggle in which the inspired poet paradoxically strives for poetic autonomy from the very gods on whom he relies for assistance. Given that the aim for this project is to shed light on the Augustan poets' conception of poetic inspiration, I read the archaic and classical Greek poets through Horace's eyes and survey the field of Greek lyric



poetry as a Roman would have known it, focusing on the sociopolitical aspects of inspiration that set the stage for the Augustan poets for whom poetic inspiration becomes a metaphor for balancing their own identity with that of their patron or the emperor.<sup>7</sup>

Pindar, for example, represents his relationship with the Muse as a collaboration between the poet and the divine, and in his poetics, there is equal emphasis on the poet's craft and the inspiration provided by the Muses.

καὶ ἐγὼ νέκταρ χυτόν, Μοισᾶν δόσιν, ἀεθλοφόροις  
 ἀνδράσιν πέμπων, γλυκὺν καρπὸν φρενός,  
 ἰλάσκομαι.  
 Ὀλυμπίᾳ Πυθοῖ τε νικῶν-  
 τεσσιν . . . (*Ol.* 7.7-9)

I too, sending poured nectar, the gift of the Muses, to prize-winning men,  
 the sweet fruit of my mind, win favor for those men who were victors at  
 Olympia and at Pytho.

Here Pindar's song is both the "gift of the Muses" and a product of his own poetic genius as the poet describes his creative power coming from the depths of his own φρένες and not an external source. I suggest that the paradoxical relationship between poet and Muse – poetic craft is simultaneously inspired by the gods and a product of the poet's talent – also resonates with the poet's struggle to maintain autonomy in his subordinate relationship to his patron. No Greek poet is ever entirely independent of external forces, but he does not allow himself to be completely subservient to these forces either. In the context of the Greek symposium, Dionysus and wine provide inspiration for the poet, representing another form of external compulsion which the poet must negotiate.

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<sup>7</sup> See Feeney 2009: 209: "During the Hellenistic period the "serious-political" had been displaced from personal poetry (Giangrande 1968: 119), but archaic lyric offered Horace a way of recapturing it."

The influence of Dionysus serves to liberate the poet and grant him the license to compose poetry freely, and yet this poetic freedom contrasts emphatically with the self-control and restraint necessary in dealing with those more powerful than the poet. Anacreon demonstrates the idea that there is a delicate balance between the license that Dionysus provides symposiasts and the assertion of moderation and restraint.

ἄγε δὴ φέρ' ἡμῖν ὦ παῖ  
 κελέβην, ὅκως ἄμυστιν  
 προπίω, τὰ μὲν δέκ' ἐγχεάς  
 ὕδατος, τὰ πέντε δ' οἴνου  
 κυάθους ὡς ἄνυβριστιῶς  
 ἀνὰ δηῦτε βασσαρήσω. (Anacreon 11a)

Come, boy, bring me a bowl so that I may drink a long draft. Pour ten cups of water and five of wine so that I may once again, not violently, become a Bacchant.

As Anacreon suggests, with verb and adverb balanced at the end of the lines, symposiasts were expected to get drunk (βασσαρήσω, 6), but not act violently (ἄνυβριστιῶς, 5). Excessive freedom results in a lack of self-control, something that is only acceptable within the limits set by the symposium. For both the lyric poets and their successor Horace, the mixture and limiting of wine serves as a metaphor for appropriate behavior in society. In sympotic and even choral poetry, there are persistent exhortations to drink – Archilochus even suggests that drunkenness is necessary condition for singing dithyrambs – alongside constant warnings for moderation.<sup>8</sup> Dionysus and the communal drinking practices of the symposium as depicted in lyric poetry provide the Roman poet such as Horace with a fitting analogy for representing contemporary issues with sociopolitical engagement and decorum under the Principate. Even among the

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<sup>8</sup> ὡς Διωνύσου ἀνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος / οἶδα διθύραμβον οἶνῳ συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας (“I know how to lead the lovely dithyrambic song of lord Dionysus, my wits thunderstruck with wine,” fr. 120)

Greeks, however, the god Dionysus embodies a more complex network of paradoxes than moderation and drunkenness, however, and the concept of control and freedom extends beyond the realm of the symposium.

The influence of Dionysus also encompasses the god's mystery cult and his role as the god of the theater. Although the scope of this project does not allow for a discussion of Dionysus in tragedy, it is important to note that here, too, the god's significance includes both the religious and the political. For the Augustan authors whom I will consider, the illustrative patterns and themes of Euripides' *Bacchae* are pertinent to the transition of the Greek Dionysus to the Roman Bacchus because they demonstrate the paradoxes employed in the "new" Roman version of the god: Roman and barbarian, tradition and innovation, and masculine virtue and effeminate corruption. I follow Hunter who argues that this pattern, along with the language of *orgia* "is highly suggestive. . .for the Roman adoption of Greek poetry as a whole, a poetry which is always foreign and always new, but also always the model for imitation, rooted in tradition and sanctioned by the great stretch of time."<sup>9</sup> In chapter two, the significance of these Bacchic themes and patterns in a Roman context will become clear as I discuss how Livy's account of the Bacchanalian "conspiracy" and Ovid's version of the Pentheus episode import into a Roman context the tensions and paradoxes that I have just outlined.<sup>10</sup>

In Book 39 of his history, Livy narrates the events of 186 B.C.E. when Bacchus' mystery cult supposedly arrived at Rome much to the consternation of the Roman authorities. The historian relates the details of the incident that has become known as the "Bacchanalian

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<sup>9</sup> 2006: 8-9

<sup>10</sup> As I discuss in chapter 1, the Greek Dionysus also embodies paradox, but the Bacchic narrative becomes particularly important in a Roman context as Augustan authors employ the figure of Bacchus to negotiate a new set of sociopolitical concerns, unique to their own time and political climate.

conspiracy,” including the Senate’s response to the event and its perceived threat to their power and authority. The only contemporary textual evidence for the conspiracy comes from a bronze tablet, found in southern Italy, which preserves the Senate’s decree as it was promulgated throughout Italy.<sup>11</sup> While the historical decree does not directly contradict Livy’s account of the affair, it paints a picture slightly different from what Livy, writing nearly two centuries later, would have us believe. The actions taken by the Senate and the regulations and procedures put in place for the cult, which the decree records, are more concerned with the administration and structure of the Bacchanalia than the cult’s ritual practices and behaviors as Livy would depict them. I will examine the speech that the consuls give to the Roman people in Book 39, arguing that although they portray the Bacchanalia as a dangerous foreign institution that threatens traditional Roman religion and morals, the consuls and Senate are, as Livy depicts them, more concerned that the sociopolitical organization and growing power of the “conspiracy” present a political threat to the established authority.

The same issues are at stake for Pentheus as he gives a similar speech to the Theban people in Book 3 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. I argue that this speech closely resembles the consuls’ decree forbidding the Bacchanalia at Rome, as narrated by Livy, a connection that has previously gone unnoticed. Like the Senate, Pentheus expresses anxiety about the threat of moral decline posed by Bacchus’ cult, but unlike the Senate, his attempts to appeal to Thebes’ founding and *mos maiorum* as a source of pride for his citizens are unsuccessful. The parallels between the two speeches demonstrates that Livy’s representation of the Bacchanalia is more topical than historical, that is, more stereotypical than accurate, and that the Senate’s preoccupations in Book

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<sup>11</sup> *CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 581 = *ILS* 18

39 with issues of power and authority reflect concerns that are more prevalent in the first century when the history was composed and when Ovid was also working on his *Metamorphoses*.

Just as the Roman Senate fears that the Roman men who had been initiated into the cult would become too effeminate to defend their city (Livy 39.15.13), Pentheus claims that Bacchus' worshippers who were once soldiers are now overcome by "feminine" voices, wine, and drums (*Met.* 3.532-7). The power of the god seems to take control of its followers and dull their senses, suggesting the cult's direct influence over the individual and his or her lack of self-restraint (Livy, 39.15.2-3 and *Met.* 3.532). Bacchic worship operates in the same way in Ovid's account of Bacchus at Thebes: not only does the Bacchanalia overcome these individuals, who are characterized by their wine-induced madness, but Pentheus also declares that rage has struck their minds (*Met.* 3.531-32). Both Pentheus and the Senators are concerned that citizens who participate in the rites which encourage lack of self-control and madness will be less likely to submit to their authority as a result of their new found freedom from sociopolitical constraints.

Although, as I suggest, the Roman Senate may not have taken issue with the Bacchic cult in such a way as portrayed by Livy, the account, in conjunction with Ovid's Theban episode, demonstrates prevailing concerns over power and control in the Augustan period. That both authors convey these issues as reflected through a Bacchic narrative – both mythological and "historical" – reinforces the idea that the god Bacchus provides an appropriate means for representing the sociopolitical climate of the time. For this reason, it is the god Bacchus who the poet Horace invokes for inspiration in the *Odes* as he considers political matters and addresses issues of sociopolitical engagement and decorum. Both Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair

and Ovid's Theban episode reflect the themes of exclusion that are central to Horace's elitist aesthetics. Having established both the Greek and Roman "backgrounds" for Horace's *Odes*, I will argue in chapter three that Horace employs Bacchus metaphorically to convey the complex power dynamic at work in the early empire as he struggles to express his poetic authority while confronted with issues of patronage and political autonomy.<sup>12</sup>

Bacchus, who both embodies and enables paradox, is especially appropriate for the Latin poet reinventing lyric poetry for a Roman context; the god allows for the seemingly contradictory aspects subsumed by Horace's lyric poetry: in the forms of the private and political, performance and writing, immediacy and immortality.<sup>13</sup> In the *Odes*, the Greek symposium has been replaced by a Roman one and so the main issue that has plagued scholars for decades is the question of performance. Murray suggests that, "The question of actual performance is subordinate to the deliberate intent to evoke the image of sympotic performance," and that, "for the sympotic image to work, it is only necessary to believe in the possibility of performance."<sup>14</sup> Horace's concern in the *Odes*, however, is not the believability of performance. Rather, he draws attention to this tension, for example, in C. 2.19 where the poet narrates an "epiphany" of the god Bacchus, and while doing so, addresses "posterity," explicitly acknowledging the apparent gap between the ritual occasion and its reenactment. Following Michèle Lowrie, who asserts that Horace, "by virtue of his literarity, writes social poetry, one

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<sup>12</sup> I say "backgrounds" because Ovid's *Metamorphoses* succeeded Horace's *Odes*. The date of Livy, Book 39 is uncertain, but whether we place it before or after publication of *Odes* 1-3, my point stands that for all three authors, Bacchus represents a means of addressing power relations in Augustan Rome.

<sup>13</sup> See Feeney who sees a similar contradiction in Horace's view of his readership: "Horace's construction of a small familiar group of properly appreciative readers is always in tension with his apprehension of another, far larger, group of readers who are strangers" (2009b: 17). Cf. Oliensis who frames the paradox as "Horace's conflicting impulses toward elitism and popularization" (1998: 174-5).

<sup>14</sup> 1993: 94-95

that corresponds to his age and bears the important burden of communicating that age to posterity,” I argue that Horace’s conspicuous derivativeness and reluctance to embrace the occasional moment is the point.<sup>15</sup> That the poet recognizes the immortality of his poetry through *writing* does not alienate him from the notion of performance because the *Odes*, retaining the original social function of Greek lyric poetry – both sympotic and choral, as I will argue in chapter 1 – nevertheless maintain a lyric space that allows the poet to negotiate contemporary sociopolitical issues, including praise of the emperor.<sup>16</sup>

Even Don Fowler, who argues in his article, “Horace and the Aesthetics of Politics,” that panegyric is an impossibility for the poet, concedes that, “It is possible if one chooses to trace in Horace, as in other Augustans, what Alessandro Schiesaro has termed “Bacchic Poetics” in which sublimity and inspired excess transfigure the tropes of Callimacheanism and the *furor* of the inspired poet is a guilty will to power.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Bacchic inspiration and the initiation that it entails does transform the poet. Although Horace is still wary to engage directly with political concerns, as demonstrated by various *recusationes*, his avowed discretion becomes a part of the religious aesthetic. I argue that throughout the *Odes* Horace presents himself as an initiate and follower of Bacchus, in order to establish his authority and status.

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<sup>15</sup> 2002: 143. Cf. Commager who seems to anticipate Lowrie’s point in arguing that Horace’s endeavor to immortalize both the poet and his subject “has no real precedent in extant Greek literature” where the subject of the poetry alone could be immortalized (2009: 74n24).

<sup>16</sup> Feeney 2009, following Murray 1993, argues that in the *Odes*, Horace makes a distinction between public and private and in doing so must reinterpret Alcaeus, for whom the drinking group was a simultaneously public and private sphere. I disagree. Even Horace’s “private” poetry is public and political because his poetic aspirations are intrinsically tied up with praise of Augustus. I concede, though, Lowrie’s 1997 point that Horace’s decision about his genre give him an excuse for not delving too deeply into the contemporary political narrative, mainly civil war and Augustus’ rise to power.

<sup>17</sup> Fowler 2009: 269-70 anticipates Schiesaro 2009. Cf. Feeney: “Horace had huge ambitions in his *Odes*, of which many could be accommodated to the aesthetics of Alexandria, but among his ambitions were – to be blunt – sublimity and the right to speak to his contemporaries about their public lives. This he would not get from Callimachus” (2009: 209).

In C. 2.19, the poet uses poetry to reflect his participation in a religious ritual act that is analogous to his concerns about sociopolitical engagement. In this “hymn to Bacchus,” the poet is initiated into the god’s rites and therefore authorized to sing what is forbidden – *nefas* – to the uninitiated. Initiation imparts an elite status to the poet, which we see manifested in the exclusivity expressed throughout the *Odes* (e.g. *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, C. 3.1.1). Endowed with this privileged status, the poet may proceed where it was previously forbidden to him and is permitted to praise Bacchus (*fas est mihi . . . cantare*, 9-11), an act which expresses the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion and is analogous with praising the emperor. My reading of this “hymn” is central to the argument I make about Horace’s political engagement in the *Odes*; I argue that this poem, ostensibly about religion, constitutes a poetic enactment of the politics of inclusion and exclusion. Lowrie argues that Horace “desires to reconstitute for his own poetry a social function he perceives as lost.”<sup>18</sup> She sees the poet’s preoccupation with performance in the *Epistle to Augustus* as indicative of the conflicting aspects in the *Odes* of writing and performance and suggests that he defines his role in society through this relationship by imaging himself as a teacher of youth (as in 3.1.1-4). I agree, adding that Bacchus reinforces the connection of performance to elite social culture by providing a means to enact ritual. In making this argument, I follow Habinek who argues that elite ritualized festivity both defined the upper classes and reinforced social order and civic harmony. He also insists that writing can effect ritualization in song, that the difference between kinds of speech, “special and everyday,” is more important than the difference between performance and writing.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 2002: 141-42

<sup>19</sup> 2005: 36-44 and 1-2



Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus  
 vidi docentem – credite posteri –  
 Nymphasque discentis et auris  
 capripedum Satyrorum acutas. (1-4)

I saw Bacchus – believe me, posterity – on remote cliffs, teaching songs  
 and the Nymphs learning them and the pointed ears of goat-footed Satyrs.

Here Bacchus, too, allows for the possibility that performance and poetic immortality are not mutually exclusive; as a *teacher* of a choir of Nymphs and Satyrs, the *carmina* that Bacchus teaches imply ritual performance. The question of whether Horace's representation of his lyric poetry represents performed song is not the point, as Oliensis states, "Horace's poems are not detached representations of society but consequential acts within society."<sup>20</sup> Of course for Horace, performance and performativity overlap as he defines his constative role as Roman lyric poet in the *Odes*, but also composes the *Carmen Saeculare* for Augustus in the *ludi saeculares* in 17 B.C.E.<sup>21</sup> Before the games, though, Horace had already imagined himself as the trainer of a choir of young boys and girls in C. 3.1 which, as we have seen, he anticipates with his representation of Bacchus in C. 2.19.

odi profanum volgus et arceo.  
 favete linguis: carmina non prius  
 audita Musarum sacerdos  
 virginibus puerisque canto. (3.1.1-4)

I hate the vulgar crowd and I shun it. Keep silent: I, a priest of the  
 Muses sing songs never heard before for maidens and young boys.

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<sup>20</sup> 1998: 2-3. Cf. Habinek who says that literature is not only "a representation of society, but . . . an intervention in it as well" (1998: 3).

<sup>21</sup> See Barchiesi 2002 on "The Uniqueness of the *Carmen Saeculare* and its Tradition." On evidence for performance of the song, see Rossi 1998: 176, who argues that the lack of references to performance in the song itself supports the idea that it was performed.

This stanza, that introduces the Roman odes, demonstrates the intersection between poetry, politics and religion in the *Odes*. Horace embraces his elite status by representing his privileged position through his carefully chosen aesthetics, namely his aversion to what is popular and, more importantly, the profane or uninitiated. The image recurs in Book 4, where the poet looks ahead to an idealized future in which the evocation of traditional Roman songs indicate an end to civil war and restoration of civil order.

nupta iam dices: ‘ego dis amicum,  
saeculo festas referente luces,  
reddidi carmen docilis modorum  
vatis Horati.’ (4.6.41-44)

When you are married you will say: “I sang the song, loved by the gods, when our age brought back festival days, taught the measures of the bard Horace.”

I conclude chapter three with the idea that Horace equates Rome’s civil order and moral discipline with Augustus and the civilizing effect of wine. In C. 4.5, for example, the poet addresses the emperor upon his return from foreign campaigns and paints the picture of Roman citizens, free from war and tending their vine, as they prepare a ritual libation for Augustus himself.

“longas o utinam, dux bone, ferias  
praestes Hesperiae!” dicimus integro  
sicci mane die, dicimus uvidi,  
cum sol Oceano subest. (25-40)

“O blessed leader, bring Italy endless peace!” That is what we say, mouths parched, at the start of the day, that is what we say, lips wetted with wine, when the sun sinks to rest under the Ocean.

Just as the poet is afforded divine protection and authorized by Bacchus to sing what is *nefas* to others, Augustus is also favored by the gods with the result that divinely sanctioned expansion of

his empire becomes a morally good act and a necessity for restoring peace and order in Rome after civil war. Bacchic poetics, in addition to representing the poet's elite status through initiation, make the transgression of boundaries acceptable for both the poet and the emperor. The poetic and political become interchangeable, as the man characterized by *virtus* – whether poet or emperor – is granted divine privilege. Bacchus, poetry, and imperialism together represent forces capable of controlling nature and establishing its limits. In chapter four, I examine Ovid's use of the language of poetry and religion in the *Tristia* as means of engagement in politics in much the same way as his near contemporary, Horace. However, as Ovid explores his relationship to Augustus and his personal experience as a player in the sociopolitical dynamics at Rome from exile at the edge of the Roman world, the poet offers a different perspective on the emperor's rule at Rome and throughout the empire.

Like Horace, Ovid presents himself as a holy bard who is favored by the gods, but unlike Horace, Ovid has been punished for his transgressions and violations of boundaries by Augustus, the greatest god in the Roman pantheon. Whereas Horace equates immortality and fame obtained around the world with the expansion of the Roman empire and restoration of peace after civil war, Ovid consistently portrays his place of exile as unstable and warlike, thus undermining the *pax Augusta* and negating Augustus' claims to have established peace.<sup>22</sup> In this chapter, I discuss the way in which Ovid describes his *crimen* and subsequent punishment in terms of a religious transgression. We have seen how, in the *Odes*, the poetics of initiation are analogous to the exclusionary practices of the sociopolitical milieu at Augustan Rome. Ovid, on the other hand, though he employs similar poetics, does so to a different end, demonstrating that he, despite his

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<sup>22</sup> Claassen 2008: 33. Cf. Barchiesi 1997: 15-43 on the presence of *arma virumque* in the *Tristia*.

status as a poet, has found himself outside of the exclusive rites to which he might have had access. The initiation of and subsequent exclusion from religious rites provide a telling analogy for Ovid's career as an Augustan poet. Rather than empower the poet to write panegyric, as is the case with Horace, Bacchus provides Ovid with a means of expressing his position of inferiority in his relationship with Augustus. In the *Tristia*, the poet combines the ritual and mythological aspects of his poetics in order to address his sociopolitical blunder and subsequent exclusion.

By constructing a mythology of exile in order to express his experience with the emperor's increasing authority and control at Rome, the poet treats Augustus as a god on analogy to Jupiter. In this "exilic mythology," Ovid identifies himself with Icarus and Actaeon, two figures known for pushing the limits of acceptable behavior while transgressing literal boundaries.<sup>23</sup> Icarus also appears in Horace's *Odes* where the poet equates the boy's fatal attempt to fly with the risk associated with praising the emperor and striving for sublimity (C. 2.20 and 4.2). Horace is reluctant to engage in Augustan praise or politics and does so hesitantly for fear of risking offense. In the *Odes*, the exemplum of Icarus represents the precarious nature of sociopolitical engagement and serves as a warning against transgression; in the *Tristia*, the same figure represents the crime already committed. I make a similar case for the way the poet employs the exemplum of Actaeon, who is associated closely with the concept of *error*, one part of the transgression that Ovid famously claims caused his exile: *perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error, / alterius facti culpa silenda mihi* ("Two crimes, a poem and an error, ruined me, I must be silent about the second fault," 2.1.207-8). Like Horace who happens to stumble accidentally upon Bacchus' rites in the woods (C. 2.19), Ovid likens the *error* to an unintentional

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<sup>23</sup> "Exilic mythology" is McGowan's term 2009: 10. Likewise, Claassen identifies this as the "myth of exile" (2008: 39).

violation of a god's religious ritual. In this scenario, Ovid is an uninitiate who is not allowed to observe or otherwise participate in the rites and punished for approaching too closely. Ovid must be silent about the *error* because to speak of it would be to divulge the secrets of the mysteries, so instead he resorts to a defense concerning the second part of his crime, the *carmen*.

While the earlier part of this study shows that Bacchic poetics make transgression at the service of imperial expansion possible, Ovid's poetics in the *Tristia* demonstrate that transgressive violations against Augustus are also possible. By making the *Ars Amatoria* solely responsible for his offense, Ovid evens the playing field a bit in *Tristia* 2, addressed to the emperor; without offending Augustus any further, he can use poetics to discuss the politics and power dynamics behind his punishment and sociopolitical exclusion by the emperor. Augustus may have supreme authority and political control at Rome, but the poet controls both the emperor's and his own immortality, that is the representations of the poet and princeps that will be handed down to posterity, through Ovid's poetry. Ovid's letter to Augustus serves less as an actual defense of the charges against him than as a justification of his actions and explanation of the punishment against him. From his position of exile, the poet is afforded the opportunity to expose the imbalance of power at Rome and the unlimited authority in the hands of the emperor. He says that, "I still retain and delight in my genius: Caesar could have no power over that" (*ingenio tamen ipse meo comitorque fruorque: / Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil*, 3.7.47-48). These lines suggest the underlying sentiment throughout the *Tristia*, that although Augustus gives the final verdict on Ovid's life, he cannot control what Ovid portrays of him in his poetry. In conclusion, I examine how the poet employs the figure of Bacchus in his *Tristia* 5.3 as he attempts to negotiate issues of power, control, and authority in his relationship with

Augustus.

In the final book of the *Tristia*, Ovid calls on the god Bacchus, who has favored him in the past, to help him persuade the emperor Augustus to lessen his punishment: *sunt dis inter se commercia. flectere tempta / Caesareum numen numine, Bacche, tuo* (“The gods have business among themselves. Try to influence Caesar’s divinity with your own, Bacchus,” 5.3.45-6). The god empowers Horace in the *Odes* and helps him to navigate the sociopolitical power dynamics of Augustan Rome; likewise, Ovid hopes that Bacchus will mediate on his behalf. While it is fitting that the poet invokes Bacchus to negotiate the terms of Ovid’s punishment, he also suggests that Bacchus did little to keep Ovid out of trouble in the first place, suggesting that even he cannot move the unrelenting god Augustus: *tu tamen e sacris hederæ cultoribus unum / numine debueras sustinuisse tuo* (“You [Bacchus], at least, ought to have supported one of the worshippers of your sacred ivy with your divine power,” 5.3.15-16). Bacchus, who embodies paradox, both authorizes the poet and challenges authority through poetic madness, highlighting the poet’s struggle to compose poetry freely without risking transgression against the established power. It is the poet’s responsibility, however, to strike a balance between the uncontrolled aspects of poetic inspiration and the principles of decorum to which every Roman man was bound. Horace’s poetic persona is able to manage the overwhelming force of Bacchic inspiration in the *Odes*: he allows the god to possess him, but asserts self-control. Ovid also engages in Bacchic poetics in the *Tristia* to illustrate the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion and exclusion, but represents himself as having lost the struggle for power and control.

The question of sociopolitical engagement and poetic production under the Principate has been reconsidered in recent decades. Thomas Habinek’s book, *The Politics of Latin Literature*,

which takes a cultural-materialist approach to reading Latin literature, advances the idea that Latin texts do not, as traditionally thought, merely reflect their social, political, and economic contexts, but that they also intervene and partly determine those contexts.<sup>24</sup> Along these same lines, Latin literature is not only a product of aesthetic concerns, but an active intervention in society that serves to further the interests and values of Rome's elite as it employs and advances social authority in the form of patriarchy, religious ritual, and cultural identity. In Roman society, literature is constitutive of social order; it is a "crucial site of contest over the distribution of power in the Roman world as well as a social practice with real historical consequences of its own."<sup>25</sup> In this approach, which seeks to politicize the aesthetic, Habinek sees Roman literature and its authors as more embedded and actively engaged in sociopolitical activity than as a passive reflection of it.

In her book, *Writing, Performance and Authority in Augustan Rome*, Michèle Lowrie examines the connection between literary performance and elite social culture through the relation of representation to power. She follows Habinek and Oliensis in arguing that literature intervenes in the world, but also maintains that although poetry acknowledges the gap between poetic and political power, poets counter this apparent powerlessness with "poetry's longer-lasting control of representation."<sup>26</sup> While consulting a large range of authors and texts, she specifically argues that Horace's representations intervene in the world through the social role as lyricist that he defines for himself and through his use of lyric as a means to address ideological

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<sup>24</sup> 2005: 3

<sup>25</sup> 2005: 8

<sup>26</sup> 2009a: xii; see Oliensis: "Horace's poems are not detached representations of society but consequential acts within society" (1998: 203).

concerns.<sup>27</sup> The poet asserts authority through his control of representational media; he does not necessarily endorse or refute a message from Augustus, but communicates his own ideas about Augustan culture and power structure. As she suggests elsewhere, following Gregson Davis, “Self-definition in Horace is strategic rather than narcissistic: he explores the role of the poet in a changing society and makes his own place in the world exemplary for larger questions of social power – or lack thereof.”<sup>28</sup> In her earlier book, *Horace’s Narrative Odes*, Lowrie examined the way that Horace’s decisions about lyric genre allow him to keep his distance from issues surrounding civil war and Augustus’ rise to power. Similarly, Fowler argues that the tension arising from this distance in Horatian poetics makes successful panegyric of Augustus impossible.<sup>29</sup>

Following Fowler, I choose to read the tension in Horatian politics as lying somewhere between the “sincerity” that Doblhofer espouses and the ironic, insincere attitude advanced by Lyne.<sup>30</sup> My argument moves beyond the historicist approach of Habinek and Oliensis, while supporting Lowrie’s ideas about the power of representation in Augustan poetry, and expanding the framework of scholars such as Don Fowler and Alessandro Schiesaro. I argue, as both Fowler and Schiesaro have, that Bacchus serves to relieve some of these political tensions in the *Odes*. Although the god in some ways creates tension through paradoxes he represents, Bacchic imagery in the *Odes* also empowers the poet, and as Schiesaro puts it, “Bacchic energy can help him in this major enterprise. Yet it would be rash to assume that such a powerful and limitless

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<sup>27</sup> Lowrie sees the scholarly divide over the question of performance for Horatian lyric as paradigmatic for modern concerns about determining poetic language as literal or metaphoric. Nevertheless, “Horatian lyric does not have to be either literally performed (on a lyre or recited) or literally performative (in the sense of inviting the addressee to dinner) to participate in society” (2009a: 65).

<sup>28</sup> 2009b: 4; see Davis 1991.

<sup>29</sup> 2009

<sup>30</sup> Doblhofer 1966 and Lyne 1995



energy can also be tapped into without dangers and risks.”<sup>31</sup> After establishing Bacchus’ metaphorical significance in the political discourse of the *Odes*, I propose that, “Bacchic poetics” extend beyond the *Odes* and the issue of panegyric; the “dangers and risks” that Schiesaro associates with Bacchic energy refer not only to monumental praise poetry, but also to sociopolitical engagement and inclusion in Augustus’ inner circle. For the Augustan authors that I will discuss, Livy, Ovid, and Horace, Bacchus symbolizes issues of power and control in Augustan society. The metaphor of Bacchic initiation represents participation in elite society, for although initiation imparts an elite status on the initiate, he must also show discretion and appropriate decorum in order to maintain this privileged position. For Horace and Ovid, Augustan politics and ideology are intrinsically bound to poetics, as all of these scholars have acknowledged, but their poetics also reflect the issues of control and autonomy that are central to political life under Augustus. Bacchic inspiration is as much about empowering the poet to praise the emperor as it is a means to assert authority and negotiate power struggles in Augustan society.

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<sup>31</sup> 2009: 64

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Role of Wine and Poetic Inspiration in Archaic Greek Poetry**

The concept of poetic inspiration in Greek and Roman poetry can easily be taken for granted. The way that inspiration operates, whether it represents the sudden impulse to compose poetry or a talent inherent in the poet, and the way that the poets express their ideas about inspiration vary from one poet to the next. Nevertheless, poetic inspiration is central to ancient Greek poetry from the very beginning and seems basic enough: fundamentally inspiration explains the seemingly external force at work when a creative thought suddenly enters the poet's mind or allows a bard to recall hundreds of lines of verse at a time; its function is nevertheless often both misunderstood and hackneyed. Most of the Greek poets of the archaic period acknowledge some sort of divine inspiration in their poetry, whether the Muses, Apollo, Eros, or Dionysus. Paradoxically, these divinities both empower and authorize the poet and at the same time come to represent the poet's struggle with external forces and the internal compulsion to compose poetry.

In this chapter, I review the evidence of inspiration and its relationship to poetry in archaic and early classical Greece as a background to my discussion of the representation of inspiration and its eventual reception – and modification – in republican and imperial Rome. Doing so will indicate the background against which Roman poets innovated as well as the salient features that their ideas of inspiration share with the Greek forerunners. These shared features include the notion that poetic inspiration constitutes a cognitive and discursive power struggle between the inspired poet and his or her divine source of inspiration, in which the poet

paradoxically achieves poetic autonomy by allowing himself or herself to depend on the gods; the idea that a poetic act reflects the balance of power between poet and Muse through their collaboration; and the poet's struggle for self-identity in the face of external forces acting on him.

In epic poetry, both Hesiod and Homer represent their poetic talent as a gift from the Muses. In return for this gift, the goddesses command Hesiod to sing of them first and last always (σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν ἀείδειν, *Th.* 34), establishing a relationship to the poet that is neither one-sided or entirely balanced; for in his invocation to the Muses, Hesiod also names himself (αἶ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν αἰοιδίην, "They once taught *Hesiod* beautiful song," 22) and so acknowledges some agency and independence in the composition of his song. This early concept of the relationship between poet and divine anticipates the way in which later lyric poets would reflect the notion of inspiration in their poetry; although most poets portray divine inspiration as a collaboration or exchange between poet and Muse, this portrayal also betrays a degree of reliance on the divine. In the early classical period, Pindar in particular employs the conception of the reciprocity of poet and Muse in order to reflect the changing nature of choral lyric poetry as he struggles to maintain his poetic autonomy while composing epinicia commissioned by a patron. This idea is developed further by the Roman poets, particularly Horace in his *Odes*, for whom poetic inspiration becomes a metaphor for balancing their own identity with that of their patron, or in the case of the Augustan poets, the emperor. By placing emphasis on the role in poetic composition of his own poetic genius, Pindar strives to negate the inherent subordination in his relationship to his patron. In doing so, I will argue that Pindar, despite the changed social and political context, conceives of poetic inspiration in much the same way as his archaic lyric predecessors had all along.

In the second half of the chapter, I will discuss the role of inspiration in the context of the symposium, where other external pressures, such as wine and Eros, augment the influence of the Muses. In the symposium, Dionysus offers freedom to the poet through the liberating effects of intoxication, but also compels him to sing, thereby threatening his self-control. As a result, archaic lyric poets of the symposium assert their freedom, but within the constraints of inspiration and the limits that sympotic etiquette requires. Dionysus and the paradox of drunkenness and moderation will provide the Roman poet Horace with a means to express his own concerns about appropriate behavior and decorum in the lyric poetry he composes in the first century B.C.E. While the historical and occasional context of the *Odes* may lack the performance space of archaic lyric poetry, Horace's poetry retains the thematic associations with the symposium that I will discuss at length below. In the archaic period, the symposium was an institution that reinforced social cohesion among the privileged elite.<sup>32</sup> Although exhortations to drink encouraged communal bonds between companions at the symposium, participants were expected to behave according to the social code that the institution dictated: the purpose of the symposium is drunkenness, not shamelessness. For Horace, this may be the most salient feature of archaic lyric poetry, as he employs the figure of Bacchus in the *Odes* to address political issues concerning the power dynamic at Rome: the poet enjoys an elite position under Augustus so long as he shows discretion and acts prudently when included.

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<sup>32</sup> See Donlan 1985 and Levine 1985 on the role of the symposium in reinforcing the aristocracy as leaders in the community.

### The Poet's Struggle with the God for Poetic Autonomy

One aspect of poetic inspiration that many early Greek poets have in common is the notion that poetic talent is granted by the Muses to whomever they favor. There are several ways in which this talent, or “gift,” is bestowed upon the poet: either the Muses instruct the poet, or they give him beautiful song. Whether the Muses teach the poet how to sing or grant him a gift, the outcome is the same, and both instances serve to explain the way in which the poet was endowed with his poetic ability. Hesiod's *Theogony* goes further than any other early Greek work in identifying the Muses and detailing their significant role in providing the poet with inspiration. Hesiod's own portrayal of his interaction with these goddesses provides an extended example of how a poet might conceive of his poetic talent.

αἱ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν ἀοιδήν,  
 ἄρνας ποιμαίνονθ' Ἑλικῶνος ὑπο ζαθέοιο.  
 τόνδε δέ με πρότιστα θεαὶ πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπον,  
 Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο·  
 “ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,  
 ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,  
 ἴδμεν δ' εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.”  
 ὥς ἔφασαν κοῦραι μεγάλου Διὸς ἀρτιέπειαι,  
 καὶ μοι σκῆπτρον ἔδον δάφνης ἐριθιλέος ὄζον  
 δρέψασαι, θηητόν· ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν  
 θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,  
 καὶ μ' ἐκέλονθ' ὕμνεϊν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἐόντων,  
 σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν ἀεΐδειν. (*Th.* 22-34)

They once taught Hesiod beautiful song as he was tending his sheep under holy Helicon. And this word they told me first of all, the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus: “Field-dwelling shepherds, evil disgraces, bellies alone, we know how to speak many false things resembling the truth, and we know how, when we wish, to sing of true things.” So the clear-speaking daughters of great Zeus spoke and they gave me a staff, having plucked a branch of blooming laurel, a marvelous thing; they breathed into me a divine voice so that I might sing the

things that will be and were before, and they commanded me to hymn the race of blessed gods who always are, and to sing of they themselves always first and last.

Although Hesiod gives us the most extensive representation of these goddesses, he still characterizes the Muses mainly by their mysterious and elusive nature. Their direct interaction with the poet is twofold: they give him the symbolic laurel branch in addition to breathing into him a divine voice.<sup>33</sup> If any poet claims to be a mouthpiece for the gods, it is Hesiod, who is not only ordered by the Muses to sing of the gods but also given instructions for doing so. The staff, which both accounts for and represents his poetic authority, legitimizes his role in hymning the gods. Paradoxically, Hesiod takes full responsibility for his song despite being granted this gift by the Muses. Since he credits the Muses with his teaching, he is able to justify his song after his encounter in the mountains, and so, this encounter endows him with poetic authority. Although Hesiod is limited in the *Theogony* to hymning the gods, as the Muses instruct, he is able to do so in whatever way he sees fit. He does not have to attribute his song to any (human) teacher, and his story is not one that has been passed down by bards before him.<sup>34</sup> He is able to take full credit and does so clearly in this very scene by naming himself: αἱ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν ᾠοιδίην (“They once taught *Hesiod* beautiful song,” 22). The poet is entitled to a certain amount of poetic autonomy, as guaranteed by the Muses, but only insofar as he acknowledges himself as poet. Coincidentally, the poet’s recognition also displays his subordination to the Muses who

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<sup>33</sup> According to Kambylis, the laurel staff symbolizes the ritual act of initiation through which the poet receives divine authorization for his poetic function (1965: 7). For a discussion of Archilochus’ own similar encounter with the Muses see Miralles and Portulas 1983, Brillante 2003, and Clay 2004. The tradition of the encounter, recorded in the Mnesiepes inscription states that the young poet was bringing a cow to the market, at the command of his father, but that he meets a group of women who suddenly disappear with the cow, leaving him a lyre.

<sup>34</sup> Finkelberg contrasts the concept of inspiration in the Greek tradition with the Yugoslav oral poets’ practice of singing what they have learned from their predecessors. A tradition based on inspiration, she argues “would not only not restrain the poet’s individual creativity but, in a sense, would even encourage it” because the poet would not have to credit his skill to a teacher (1990: 302).

take the active role in their interaction with the poet. Claude Calame frames his discussion of this scene in terms of the ambiguous function of the poet, as Hesiod relies on the Muses for song, but at the same time, subordinates them to himself as he expresses his identity by naming himself.<sup>35</sup> The bard Phemius in the *Odyssey* expresses a similar notion, that his poetic talent is both self-taught and a divine gift: αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἶμας / παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν (“I am self-taught, and the god put all kinds of songs in my heart,” 22.347-8).<sup>36</sup>

Hesiod is vindicated further by the fact that it is the Muses, bearers of divine knowledge, who teach Hesiod. Although the Muses claim the ability to sing the truth or lies resembling the truth, the point is that they have knowledge of all things, past and present.<sup>37</sup> Whether they provide the poet with accurate or fictitious information is their prerogative, and they do not expect the poet or his audience to judge what is true or not.<sup>38</sup> As the poet associates himself with the Muses and their power to deceive, he also relinquishes responsibility for his poem’s truthfulness, for it is under the authority of the divine. This is the nature of divinely inspired song, the mystery of the Muses, and inspiration itself. The poet cannot fully explain what drives him to sing and from what source he receives his poetic knowledge, except to say that it has

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<sup>35</sup> 1995: 69

<sup>36</sup> Tigerstedt comments that, “There is no contradiction in this utterance, for to Homer and his contemporaries, divine activity did not exclude human activity. Αὐτοδίδακτος here means the same as θεοδίδακτος” (1970: 168).

<sup>37</sup> There has been extensive scholarship on these few perplexing lines. Ferrari 1988 evaluates the work of Pucci 1977 and Arthur 1983 and although there are differences in their interpretations of these lines, they agree that the Muses are making a statement about the nature of language, which Pucci argues, whether an accurate or inaccurate representation, cannot be entirely transparent because it inevitably becomes distorted. Ledbetter argues instead that the Muses’ statement is more about the Muses’ ability to manipulate language than about language itself (2003: 45ff.).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Walsh who argues that the audience is not capable of judgment: “far from justifying Hesiod and themselves, the Muses locate their art beyond public judgment, for they suggest that human audiences will never be able to distinguish or appreciate either their truthfulness or their deceptive skill” (1984: 33) and Ledbetter: “the rhetorical power of the Muses’ words relies on the inexplicability (from the human perspective) of their means of deception and the precise nature of their deceptions” (2003: 45).

come from the Muses. Then, once having claimed inspiration by the Muses, he has the authority to relay this knowledge to his audience through song.

The idea has long been abandoned that the poet is a passive mouthpiece for the gods, that he unconsciously utters the words provided by Apollo or the Muses.<sup>39</sup> Scholars now recognize that the relationship between the poet and the Muses deserves a more nuanced understanding: although the poet confesses to rely on his Muse, his call to her for aid is formulaic, representing and explaining his poetic talent.<sup>40</sup> The Muses grant the permanent “gift” of poetic ability to the poet, as we have seen, but they also offer assistance as the poet performs his song. This role in performance makes sense since the Muses are the daughters of Memory, but the fact that they *assist* the poet, rather than sing through him, also indicates that the poet is an active participant in the performance of his own song. Even as Homer invokes the Muse to “sing in me” (μοι ἔννεπε, 1) at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, he dictates what the goddess should sing (the man, Odysseus) and summarizes the plot of the poem before calling on her again to sing (εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν, 10). Furthermore, the archaic poet’s talent lies not only in the composition of song, but more importantly, in its recitation. The poet’s inborn talent, his “gift” from the Muses, is what prompts him to sing beautifully, but beyond this initial inspiration, the poet is generally on his own to perform the songs he has learned from the Muses. That is not to say that the poet’s relationship to the Muses does not reflect a compulsion exercised by an external source; indeed the poet’s recurrent invocation of the Muse demonstrates that he is never totally independent of her

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Sikes 1931, Havelock 1963, Barmeyer 1968, and Fuhrmann 1973 who equate poetic inspiration with the concept of *enthusiasmos* and express the idea that the poet is merely the passive channel of a divine message; Murray gives a good overview of scholarship on the topic (1981: 89f.).

<sup>40</sup> See Murray: “The relationship here envisaged between the poet and the Muse is an intellectual one – the Muse is asked to communicate with the bard, not to send him into a state of ecstasy – and it would be a mistake to interpret these invocations as evidence for the view that the bard takes no part in composition” (1981: 96).



influence. Even when the poet asserts his poetic authority or takes credit for his genius, the poetic act is conceptualized in terms of the poetic inspiration from the Muse. This idea is expressed by the bard Demodocus who has been given the gift of song, but sings in whatever way his *thumos* desires:

. . . καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,  
 Δημόδοκον· τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδίην  
 τέρπειν, ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν αἰεῖδεν.” (*Od.* 8.43-5)

Call the divine singer, Demodocus; for to him the  
 god has given song to delight in whatever way his *thumos* urges him.

Here divine inspiration has a lasting effect on the poet: he is not possessed by the god whenever he composes or recites song (as Plato would later have it); rather, a god-given talent is always with him, but it is his own *thumos* that prompts him to sing. With this being said, however, poetic convention compels the epic poet to call on the Muses to begin his song, both to honor the goddesses of divine inspiration and to elevate the status of the song.<sup>41</sup> Hesiod explains the tradition of this formulaic invocation when he says that the Muses command him to “always sing of themselves first and last.”<sup>42</sup> The Muses, who preside over the realm of poetry, require acknowledgment and appreciation for conferring the gift of poetic talent. Wheeler argues that, “introits” are conventional and set the tone for the poet’s main composition, but also lend weight to the praise of his patron and extend authority to his song for competitive purposes.<sup>43</sup> The poet’s invocation of the Muse, therefore, represents the poet’s struggle for poetic autonomy and self-

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<sup>41</sup> Ledbetter posits that the poet’s invocation to the Muses does not reinforce his limitations as a human being, but rather suggests that he can provide his audience with access to divine knowledge through the medium of poetry (2003: 17). Contra Ford, who argues that the poet can only offer his audience *kleos* (1992: 86).

<sup>42</sup> Wheeler 2002 provides a survey of the form, function and development of epic introits in particular.

<sup>43</sup> Like the Olympians gods, who can both give gifts to mortals and take them away, the Muses may choose to withdraw a bard’s talent if he is insolent and does not honor them. Thamyras, for example, challenged the Muses and was consequently maimed by them (*Il.* 2.594-600).

identity; the act recognizes the symbolic influence of the divine as well as the external pressures imposed on the poet. Again, the paradox of poetic inspiration is that the poet relies on these external forces to lend weight to his poetic endeavor that he could not effect on his own.

In addition to this formulaic invocation, the poet may also ask the Muse for specific aid in recalling a particularly difficult portion of his song. The best example of this can be seen in the *Iliad*, where the poet calls on the Muse for assistance in singing the “catalogue of ships”:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι·  
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·  
 οἳ τινες ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν·  
 πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,  
 οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,  
 φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη,  
 εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο  
 θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον. (*Il.* 2.484-92)

Tell me now, Muses, who live on Olympus, for you are goddesses and are present and know everything, but we hear only rumor and know nothing: who were the commanders of the Danaans and their rulers. I could not speak nor name the crowd, not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, an unbroken voice and my heart was made of bronze, if the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, did not remind me who came under Ilion.

This invocation sums up the archaic notion of poetic inspiration quite clearly. As we have seen, the Muses know everything and, for this reason, the poet relies on them for their divine knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Despite this need for aid, however, the poet is a fully conscious and active participant in the poetic process.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the poet includes the invocation to the Muse at this

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<sup>44</sup> Several scholars have made a distinction between invocations that request information and those that represent a plea for inspiration, e.g. Havelock 1963: 177 and Minton 1962: 190. Contra Murray 1981: 91 who argues that in Homer itself inspiration consists of information. Cf. Allen 1949.

<sup>45</sup> See Tigerstedt: “However [Homeric invocations] may be worded, they never imply the poet’s passivity. He is helped, taught, “inspired” by the deity, but never so as to lose his freedom and consciousness” (1970: 168). See also Finkelberg who says that the concept of divine inspiration provides the poet with an “excellent alibi for creative intervention” (1990: 296).

point because it is formulaic and in some way legitimizes his endeavor, but also because it is a signpost for the audience that they should be impressed by the sheer number of names and places he has memorized for the performance.<sup>46</sup> In this invocation, the relationship between poet and Muse represents a sort of collaboration between the two. The balance between poetic autonomy on the one hand and divine inspiration on the other represents an exchange in which the Muse receives praise and the poet receives poetic authority. The poet does not receive the names from the Muse as a passive instrument, but rather he recalls them himself and acknowledges the Muse's "assistance."<sup>47</sup> Their interaction is like a three-way conversation in which the poet tells a story to his audience, but stops from time to time for verification from his Muse.

The notion that poetic inspiration is the result of a collaboration between poet and Muse is developed even further in lyric poetry, where inspiration is a more fluid concept: as with Homer and Hesiod, the lyric poet describes poetic talent as a "gift" or instruction from the Muses, for example:

Μουσέων ἐρατὸν δῶρον ἐπιστάμενος (Archilochus, fr. 1)

I understand the lovely gift of the Muses.

Ὀλυμπιάδων Μουσέων πάρα δῶρα διδαχθεῖς (Solon, fr. 13.51)

I have been taught gifts from the Olympian Muses.

However, in general, the archaic lyric poet's "relationship" with the Muse is more informal and less formulaic. In addition to the sort of inspiration, or poetic talent, of the type that Hesiod

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<sup>46</sup> See Havelock: "[the invocation in the 'catalogue of ships'] shows how true it is that the Muses symbolize the minstrel's need of memory and his power to preserve memory, not a spiritual inspiration" (1963: 177). Cf. Murray who argues that inspiration is not only tied up with memory, but is "inextricably connected with performance" (1981: 95).

<sup>47</sup> In response to scholars who have interpreted epic invocations as a sign of the poet's passivity, e.g. Grube 1965, Murray suggests that the request for *specific* information implies a more active participation on the poet's part (1981: 96).

receives from the Muse, the poet participates more actively in the sort of “three-way conversation” that I have suggested above and, in some instances, the poet calls on the Muse to join him in singing not so much as his superior guiding him, but as a partner or “ally.” In one such instance, Stesichorus asks the Muse to sing *with him* of festive themes:

Μοῖσα σὺ μὲν πολέμους ἀπωσαμένα πεδ’ ἐμοῦ  
κλείοισα θεῶν τε γάμους ἀνδρῶν τε δαίτας  
καὶ θαλίας μακάρων (Stesichorus, fr. 33.1-3)

Muse, cast aside wars and sing with me of the marriages of  
gods and feasts of men and celebrations of the blessed ones.

Unlike Hesiod’s Muses, the solemn goddesses who haunt Mount Helicon and appear suddenly and mysteriously to instruct the poet, Stesichorus’ Muses participate, or at least there is a chance that they might participate, in the act of singing itself. Stesichorus’ Muses are still very elusive figures and receive no more characterization than those of Hesiod, but it is clear that their role in inspiring the poet has been modified slightly to suit the needs and generic contexts of the lyric poet.

Theognis, for example, suggests a cooperative relationship with the divine in which the poet serves as a messenger for the Muses.<sup>48</sup>

Χρῆ Μουσῶν θεράποντα καὶ ἄγγελον, εἴ τι περισσόν  
εἰδείη, σοφίης μὴ φθονερὸν τελέθειν,  
ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν μῶσθαι, τὰ δὲ δεικνύνειν, ἄλλα δὲ ποιεῖν·  
τί σφιν χρήσεται μούνοιο ἐπιστάμενος; (Theognis, 1.768-71)

A servant and messenger of the Muses, if he knows anything extraordinary,  
must not begrudge his wisdom, but rather, seek out some things, reveal

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<sup>48</sup> Pindar elsewhere calls himself a “messenger”: ἐμὲ δ’ ἐξαίρετον / κάρυκα σοφῶν ἐπέων / Μοῖσ’ ἀνέστασ’ Ἑλλάδι κα[λ]λ[ι]χόρῳ (“The Muse raised me up, chosen as a messenger of wise words, on the beautiful dancing-lands of Hellas,” fr. 70b 23-25). See Bowra who makes a great deal of the fact that Pindar uses σοφία of his poetry rather than τέχνη (1964: 4-5).

others, create still others. What use are they to him alone knowing of them?

Here, the poet is the Muses' servant in addition to being their messenger, a responsibility which entails receiving divine knowledge from the Muses and passing it on to his audience, who do not enjoy so privileged a relationship with the divine.<sup>49</sup> Although the terms *θεράπων* and *ἄγγελος* (768) do not necessarily connote an evenly matched partnership, this passage also suggests that the poet should invent knowledge to share with his audience (*ἄλλα δὲ ποιεῖν*, 770), which implies that the poet has some amount of autonomy and creative power in the poetic process.<sup>50</sup> The wisdom granted to the poet must be shared with others because divine knowledge that remains unrevealed serves no significant purpose. The performance of lyric poetry, especially in the archaic period during the rise and development of the *polis*, constituted a means of socialization and cultural education in which individuals were constructed as "social subjects."<sup>51</sup> This passage in particular emphasizes the role that embedded song served in the community and highlights the importance of the poet in the process of relying information to their community.

It is in this context that the poet could question his dependence on the Muse and express his own identity so that he presents his musical performance as a balance of power between poet and divine, but with the possibility of concord. Inspiration continues to be expressed as a balance

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<sup>49</sup> See Murray on the conventional phrase, *Μουσῶν θεράπων*, used to describe the poet: "It does not imply that the poet is passive or servile but rather suggests a close relationship between the Muse and the poet who attends her" (1981: 97).

<sup>50</sup> See Bowra who asserts that the line, *μαντεύο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ' ἐγώ* (Pindar, fr. 150), refers to inspiration itself, "the active impulse to creation," in which the poet relies on the Muse for a stimulus to begin composing poetry, but makes use of his own inborn skill in its actual composition (1964: 8). Calame goes so far as to say that, "When Pindar proclaims himself the "prophet of the Muses" (fr. 52f), it is to affirm at length his *I* and to subordinate to it the inspiration conferred by the Muses" (1995: 67).

<sup>51</sup> Kurke 2000: 42

of power, as indicated by a much later example from a highly fragmentary passage of Simonides, in which the poet requests that the Muse stand by as his ally.<sup>52</sup>

κυκλήισκω] σ' ἐπίκουρον ἐμοί, π[ολυώνυμ]ε Μοῦσα (Simonides, fr. 11.21)

I summon you, much-hymned Muse, as my ally.

Despite its fragmentary nature, this passage is significant because the poet calls on the Muse as his ἐπίκουρον, or ally, which regardless of its exact purpose here, suggests a sort of partnership between peers.<sup>53</sup> Pindar discusses the inspiration for and composition of his poetry in very similar terms, for example, when he explains that he cooperates with the Muse by interpreting what the goddess prophesies:

μαντεύο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ' ἐγώ (Pindar, fr. 150)<sup>54</sup>

Muse, you give prophesy, but I will interpret.

As we've seen with the Muses of Homer and Hesiod, the goddesses possess divine knowledge that they impart to the poet through the act of inspiration. Here, the poet does not claim to have that sort of knowledge, but instead describes himself as one who interprets, or relays, the knowledge through song.<sup>55</sup> The poet clearly depends on the Muse, for he could not have access

<sup>52</sup> Sappho 1.25-28, in which the poet calls on Aphrodite as her “ally,” provides an interesting parallel: ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν . . . σὺ δ' αὐτὰ / σύμμαχος ἔσσο (“come to me even now . . . you yourself be my “ally”).

<sup>53</sup> See O'Hara 1998 whose argument that Lucretius' term for Venus, *socia*, is influenced by Simonides invocation of the Muse as an ἐπίκουρος (fr. 11.21) extends beyond the scope of the present study, but is nonetheless helpful for its discussion of this recent fragment.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Bacchylides, who calls himself “the inspired prophet of the violet-eyed Muses” (Μουσᾶν . . . ἰοβλεφάρων θεῖος προφάτας, 9.3).

<sup>55</sup> See Tigerstedt 1970: 174. A seer (μάντις) has access to prophesy or divine knowledge, while the proclaimer (προφήτης) interprets the message. The distinction is made in Plato's *Timaeus* (71 E-72 B) where those who confuse μάντις for prophets (ὑποκριταί) are considered ignorant. See also the etymology of mantis from mania in Plato's *Phaedrus*: τόδε μὲν ἄξιον ἐπιμαρτύρασθαι, ὅτι καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ τὰ ὀνόματα τιθέμενοι οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγοῦντο οὐδὲ ὄνειδος μανίαν: οὐ γὰρ ἂν τῇ καλλίστῃ τέχνῃ, ἣ τὸ μέλλον κρίνεται, αὐτὸ τοῦτο τοῦνομα ἐμπλέκοντες μανικὴν ἐκάλεσαν (“It is worthwhile to cite that the men of old who invented names did not consider “mania” a shameful or reproachable thing; for they would not have connected this very name with the most beautiful of arts, which distinguishes the future, and called it ‘manic’,” 244 B-C).

to this knowledge without the goddess, but he also assigns himself a significant role as intermediary between gods and men.<sup>56</sup>

Pindar is careful to include the Muse as providing a source of inspiration and assistance in composition, but in the same breath also speaks of his own personal poetic genius. Pindar places even greater emphasis on his poetic craft than earlier lyric poets: the Muse stands by his side, presumably guiding him or at least looking over his shoulder as he composes poetry, while at the same time he gives himself credit for his talent in composition.

Μοῖσα δ' οὕτω ποι παρέστα μοι νεοσίγαλον εὐρόντι τρόπον  
Δωρίῳ φωνὰν ἐναρμόξαι πεδίλῳ  
ἀγλαόκωμον. (*Ol.* 3.4-6)

Thus the Muse stood beside me as I found a shining new manner  
of fitting a voice of triumphant celebration to Dorian measure.

In Pindar's description of his new poetic endeavor, the exact role of the Muse is ambiguous. We might infer that the Muse inspires the poet by showing her support for his work or in some way favoring him (for example, providing her gift – the poetic talent that is already inherent in the poet), but the phrase “stood beside me” does not indicate an active role on the part of the Muse in the process of poetic composition. Indeed, this is a far cry from the sort of inspiration that Hesiod's Muses provided their poet when they “breathed into him a divine voice.” Pindar has not been commanded to sing or instructed how to do so; he emphasizes the innovative nature of his poetic endeavor and displays his identity in a way that anticipates Hellenistic poetics: the shining

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<sup>56</sup> See Ledbetter 2003: 64f.: “In likening the poet to the specially skilled interpreter of an oracle, then, Pindar claims that he is able to give the correct interpretation, one that discovers (does not construct) its true meaning. . . that the true poet has both access to the Muses' oracular message and the poetic wisdom to understand and communicate its meaning.” This is supported by *Ol.* 2.86-88: σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾶ· / μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι / παγγλωσσίᾳ κόρακες ὥς ἄκραντα γαρνέτων / Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον· (“The wise man knows many things by nature, but those who have learned [song], who are boisterous and long-winded, are like a pair of crows that cry in vain against the divine bird of Zeus”).

new manner (νεοσίγαλον τρόπον, 4) of his poetry suggests that he has composed song that is entirely original and unlike that of his predecessors, but the act of “discovery” (εὕρισκω, 3) implies that he has found manner of poetic composition that already exists – not necessarily something that he has created independently.<sup>57</sup> Murray takes εὕρισκω to mean that the poet has an active role in poetic creation, whereas Ledbetter argues that Pindar here refers to finding an interpretation of a divine message supplied by the Muse.<sup>58</sup> Either way, the ambiguous meaning of εὕρισκω in this passage is the point, as the poet presents the composition of his poetry as independent and yet cannot fully escape the influence of the ever present Muses.

Pindar’s poetics reveal a refinement of the representation of poetic inspiration in the late archaic and early classical period: the early poets conceived of their interaction with the Muse as a sort of exchange between poet and the divine, but subordinated their role in the relationship. I will argue below that the changing nature of poetic production corresponds to Pindar’s conception of divine inspiration as the poet strives to maintain poetic autonomy and recognition for his craft while composing epinicia commissioned by a patron. Pindar’s depiction of this relationship revises the earlier reciprocity of poet and Muse, in which the poet received divine aid and the Muse received honor and recognition, so that the poet now acknowledges more explicitly his own contribution in composing his poetry while understating that of the Muse. The ambiguity surrounding the poet and his access to divine knowledge is characteristic of Pindar’s poetics where there is equal emphasis on the poet’s craft and the inspiration, whether talent or

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<sup>57</sup> LSJ s.v. εὕρισκω.

<sup>58</sup> Murray 1981: 97; Ledbetter 2003: 66, whose view is supported by Pindar’s use of the word elsewhere in reference to one’s search for wisdom: τ]υφλα[ι γὰρ ἀνδρῶν φρένες, / ὅ]στις ἄνευθ’ Ἑλικωνιάδων / βαθεῖαν ἐ[...].ων ἐρευνᾷ σοφίας ὁδόν (For the hearts of men are blind, whoever searches out the deep path of wisdom without the maidens of Helicon,” fr. 52h.18-20).



temporary aid, provided by the Muses.<sup>59</sup> Pindar's song is both the "gift of the Muses" and a product of his poetic genius:<sup>60</sup>

καὶ ἐγὼ νέκταρ χυτόν, Μοισᾶν δόσιν, ἀεθλοφόροις  
 ἀνδράσιν πέμπων, γλυκὺν καρπὸν φρενός,  
 ἰλάσκομαι.  
 Ὀλυμπία Πυθοῖ τε νικῶν-  
 τεσσιν . . . (*Ol.* 7.7-9)

I too, sending poured nectar, the gift of the Muses, to prize-winning men, the sweet fruit of my mind, I win favor for those men who were victors at Olympia and at Pytho.

In the same vein, poets at this time, namely Pindar and Bacchylides, describe their creative power as coming from the depths of their own mind and not some external source. They do not discredit the Muses entirely, but they speak of their relationship with the goddesses as an intellectual one, that is, the Muse is acknowledged, but not credited with the kind of divine inspiration we see represented in epic poetry. The poet takes full responsibility for the composition of his poetry, which comes from the depths of his own mind. Although he, like Homer and Hesiod, refers to his poetic talent as "the gift of the Muses," the poetry itself is a

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<sup>59</sup> See Murray's discussion of the poet as craftsman (1981: 98ff.). She argues that the concept of poetic technique or training and natural poetic genius are not mutually exclusive. Pindar, for example, frequently uses craft metaphors of his poetry, but also contrasts one who is a "true poet" by nature (φυῆ) and the poet who has been taught (*Ol.* 2.83-88, see above n. 20). Contra Grube who claims that, "Everything in poetry is natural talent" (1965: 9), and Svenbro who sees Pindar's craft metaphors as a reference to his economic dependence on his patrons (1976: 78f.). Cf. Downie, who argues that Aelius Aristides borrows the motif of poet as charioteer from Pindar to invoke "a web of associations: divine inspiration, skilled craft, and also a suggestion of hierarchical distance between the two" (2009: 263).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Longinus *On the Sublime* 33.4-5, where he pits the poets of *ars* against the poets of *ingenium*. Although Pindar is represented as a poet of inspired sublimity, he seems to embody the traits of both types of poet and implicitly expresses the paradox that would not be discussed until Plato and Democritus (Cf. Democritus B17, 18, 21 DK; Plato *Ion* 533E and *Phaedrus* 265B especially; Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.194). Cf. Bowra: "Pindar stood midway between two extremes, both of which were familiar in Greece. On the one hand poetry was thought to be a matter of inspiration and nothing else, and the poet to be a possessed being, a kind of medium, through whom inspiring words passed from a god to men . . . On the other hand Pindar would not agree with a second view that poetry is just a τέχνη to be mastered, like other crafts, by instruction and study" (1965: 13). See also Fowler's wide-ranging chapter that explores the role of inspiration in Latin poetry and traces the opposition between poetry as craft and poetry as divinely inspired (2002).

product of his own genius. The Muse does not sing to the poet or even command him what to sing; rather, she represents inspiration insofar as she embodies the inexplicable concept of natural poetic talent.

Pindar says that songs and their accompanying praise are like medicine for the toils of everyday life. This is a common enough notion about song and festivity, but what is significant is the source of Pindar's song:

ἄριστος εὐφροσύνα πόνων κεκριμένων  
 ἱατρός· αἱ δὲ σοφαὶ  
 Μοισᾶν θύγατρες ἀοιδαὶ θέλξαν νιν ἀπτόμεναι. . .  
 ῥῆμα δ' ἐργμάτων χρονιώτερον βιοτεύει,  
 ὅ τι κε σὺν Χαρίτων τύχα  
 γλῶσσα φρενὸς ἐξέλοι βαθείας. (*Nem.* 4.1-8)

When toils have been put aside, festivity is the best healer and songs,  
 the skilled daughters of the Muses, enchant by touching him. . .  
 Speech lives longer than deeds, whatever the tongue, with the favor of  
 the Graces, draws deep from the mind.

Words that are lasting are those that have the Graces' favor, but even so, they come directly from the poet's own φρένες.<sup>61</sup> Again, Pindar's creative process includes some level of collaboration with the divine: the poet is intellectually involved in the poetic process, while the divine provide the words with something he cannot acquire from the depth of his own mind, a touch of grace (Χαρίτων τύχα). Like the mysterious concept of inborn talent, the poet attributes to the divine what he cannot, or will not, explain himself. Moreover, this lends some authority to his poetic endeavor, which is justification enough for Greek and Roman poets of every period to recognize the divine in their poetry to some extent. Similarly, Bacchylides frames his poetic composition in

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<sup>61</sup> Both Carson 1986: 48 and Padel 1992: 27ff. maintain that φρένες are the organs of the mind.

terms of his own thoughts and as a product of his own mind and, like Pindar, he also relies on the goddesses to ensure the success of his poetic project:

ὥσεί κυβερνήτας σοφός, ὕμνοάνασ-  
 σ' εὖθυνε Κλειοῖ  
 νῦν φρένας ἀμετέρας,  
 εἰ δὴ ποτε καὶ πάρος. (12.1-4)

Like a skilled helmsman, Clio, queen of song, set my thoughts  
 on a straight path now, if ever you have before.

The poet's request for guidance from the Muse dates back to the *Iliad*, where the poet invokes the Muse before reciting the catalogue of ships. Here, though, the emphasis is more on the poet and his own process of poetic composition. The Muse does not dictate what he composes, but oversees it. As we have seen, the poet is responsible intellectually for what he composes while the Muses and their companions, the Graces, contribute that which the poet cannot: divine knowledge and grace. Although lyric poets, more so than epic poets, tend to represent divine inspiration as a collaboration or exchange between poet and divine, the professionalization of poets in the late archaic and early classical period added a new dimension to the poet's already existing struggle to find a balance between inspiration and poetic autonomy. Specifically, the issue of patronage affects the way in which poets such as Ibycus and Pindar portray their poetic art in relation to the Muses and to what purpose they employ the representation of this relationship.

Scholars have shown that early classical praise poetry is shaped by the emphasis placed on the exchange between poet and patron and the increasing commodification of poetry.<sup>62</sup> Gentili suggests that this development in the poetic activity of the period led poets to praise their poetic

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<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Detienne 1967, Gzella 1971, Svenbro 1976, and von Reden 1995.

talent and achievements in order to lend credibility to an occupation that, “put his *sophia* at the disposal of the highest bidder.”<sup>63</sup> Kurke, on the other hand, argues that Pindar responds to the commodification of his praise poetry by assimilating the expenditure of money for poetry to the ritual gift exchange symbolic of aristocratic society.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the changing political and social climate of the late archaic period led poets to establish new and innovative ways to represent their poetic composition and the context in which it was commissioned. Following Kurke, I suggest that Pindar attempts to represent his relationship to his patrons as a social tie, rather than an economic one. He portrays this relationship as friendship, so that the poet and patron are on equal terms, as a means to negate the implication of subordination apparent in a poet’s arrangement with a patron.

εἶην εὐρησιεπὴς ἀναγεῖσθαι  
 πρόσφορος ἐν Μοισᾶν δίφρῳ·  
 τόλμα δὲ καὶ ἀμφιλαφὴς δύναμις  
 ἔσποιτο. προξενία δ’ ἀρετᾷ τ’ ἦλθον  
 τιμάορος Ἰσθμίοισι Λαμπρομάχου  
 μίτραις, ὅτ’ ἀμφότεροι κράτησαν  
 μίαν ἔργον ἀν’ ἀμέραν. (*Ol.* 81-86)

May I be a suitable finder (inventor) of words as I advance in the  
 Muses' chariot; may courage and wide-spreading power accompany me.  
 On account of his friendship and his excellence, I came to honor the  
 Isthmian crowning of Lampromachos, when both men (he and Epharmostos)  
 won the contest on a single day.

In the same way that Pindar presents a balance of power between poet and Muse, despite the power struggle inherent in their relationship, here too, the poet presents the patron as his equal: Pindar suggests that he has come to praise the victor as a favor between friends, not a business

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<sup>63</sup> 1988: 166

<sup>64</sup> Kurke 1991. Nicholson also suggests that Pindar represents the transaction between poet and patron as a kind of social exchange, but argues that, “One of Pindar's poetic responses to the commodification of his praise poems was to present them as the gifts of a pederast to his charge” (2000: 235).

transaction. In doing so, Pindar elevates his own status as poet and asserts his autonomy and identity. Just as the poet portrays the Muse as standing off to the side as he himself performs the creative work of poetic composition, here the role of patronage is assimilated to one of “friendship” so that the poet can retain his creative independence. Pindar is not composing songs at the whim of an aristocratic superior, but presenting a friend with praise of his own accord.

Related to this is the idea that the poet, while praising the victor, can take credit for his poetic talent and achievement. In the passage above, the poet prays for his own poetic success, without which he could not adequately praise his patron. Pindar’s wish to be a suitable poet, both courageous and powerful, presumably is realized concurrently with effective praise of the victor. An ode to Polycrates, usually attributed to Ibycus (PMG 282) seems to anticipate the idea conveyed by Pindar that successful praise and fame of the victor is contingent on the poet’s own fame and honor.

τοῖς μὲν πέδα κάλλεος αἰέν  
καὶ σύ, Πολύκρατες, κλέος ἄφθιτον ἐξεῖς  
ὥς κατ' αἰδᾶν καὶ ἐμὸν κλέος. (282.46-48)

Among them you too, Polycrates, will always have immortal fame for beauty,  
even as is my fame always in my song.

Whereas earlier poets exchange praise or recognition of the Muses for their own poetic autonomy, “professional” poets, of which Ibycus is an intermediate figure, do so with a new source of inspiration, their patron.

As I have shown, the poet’s relationship with the Muses at every point in the archaic period – from Homer and Hesiod to Pindar – represents a struggle for recognition and poetic authority. At the very least, the lyric poet and his Muse cooperate on the composition of poetry, as the poet requests guidance and the Muse grants him her favor. At the opposite end of the

spectrum, though the difference is not so vast, the Muse endows the poet, as in the case of Hesiod, with a beautiful voice and poetic talent. As I have hoped to show, this is a much different picture of inspiration in early Greek poetry than some scholars have painted. The idea that the poet is a passive instrument, or mouthpiece, for the gods is not at all how the archaic poets conceived of their poetry; this notion, of course, comes from Plato's theory of poetic inspiration and is absent from Greek literature until then.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout his works Plato describes the poet as equivalent to a prophet who is divinely influenced: he is only able to compose poetry that the Muse has stirred in him. While he is possessed by the god, he is out of his senses and the god is able to speak through him.<sup>66</sup> For example, in the *Ion*, when Socrates says:

διὰ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἐξαιρούμενος τούτων τὸν νοῦν τούτοις χρήται ὑπηρέταις καὶ τοῖς χρησμοδοῖς καὶ τοῖς μάντεσι τοῖς θείοις, ἵνα ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες εἰδῶμεν ὅτι οὐχ οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες οὕτω πολλοῦ ἄξια, οἷς νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν, ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ λέγων, διὰ τούτων δὲ φθέγγεται πρὸς ἡμᾶς. (534c-d)

For these reasons, the god takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his attendants, just as soothsayers and prophets, so that we who hear them may know that it is not they who speak these words, worthy of so much, who are out of their minds, but the god himself, speaking through them, addresses us.

Although Greek poets may describe moments of poetic creativity as divinely inspired or speak of their talent as a gift from the gods, none claim to be possessed or in a state of ecstasy when they compose poetry, as Plato describes in the *Phaedrus*:

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. e.g. Sikes 1931, Vicaire 1963, Barmeyer 1968 and Fuhrmann 1973 who equate poetic inspiration with the concept of divine possession and express the idea that the poet is merely the passive channel of a divine message; Kranz 1924 makes an interesting and more nuanced, if dated, argument that the process of poetic inspiration evolved over time: in the earliest stages, the god spoke through the poet (hence invocations to the Muse at the beginning of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) and overtime the relationship developed into a collaboration, which then led to an absence of any divine inspiration and an emphasis on the poet himself as creator. See Havelock 1963: 156, Tigerstedt 1970: 166ff., and Murray 1981: 89f. for a good overview of scholarship on the topic.

<sup>66</sup> The relevant Platonic works are: *Ion*; *Apology* 22A-C; *Phaedrus* 245; *Meno* 99C-E; *Laws* 719C-D.

. . . ὅτι ποιητής, ὁπότεν ἐν τῷ τρίποδι τῆς Μούσης καθίζηται, τότε οὐκ ἔμφρων ἐστίν, οἷον δὲ κρήνη τις τὸ ἐπιὸν ῥεῖν ἐτοίμως ἔῃ, καὶ τῆς τέχνης οὔσης μιμήσεως ἀναγκάζεται, ἐναντίως ἀλλήλοις ἀνθρώπους ποιῶν διατιθεμένους, ἐναντία λέγειν αὐτῷ πολλάκις, οἶδεν δὲ οὔτ' εἰ ταῦτα οὔτ' εἰ θάτερα ἀληθῆ τῶν λεγομένων. (719C-D)

. . . that a poet, whenever he sits on the Muse's tripod, is not in his senses, but like a fountain that readily allows water to flow, and is often compelled since his art is imitation, while making people contradictory to one another, to speak in contradiction of himself, and he does not know whether these things are true or the others.

It is easy enough to see how some scholars have come to the conclusion that the archaic Greek poets viewed poetic inspiration in the same way as Plato describes in these works, especially when one considers the importance of Dionysus and the intoxicating effects of wine at the symposium and the role that this plays in archaic lyric poetry. The problem that Plato discerns in poetic inspiration is one of self-control. For Plato, the notion of ἐγκράτεια, or self-control, is central to his value system, particularly as a means to check ἀκρασία, or lack of control or weakness that allows one to be overcome by external forces.<sup>67</sup> When the poet is in the midst of producing or spewing forth the words of the god, as Plato sees it, he gives himself over to the Muse or god and relinquishes his autonomy entirely. As I have demonstrated, the power dynamic between poet and the divine is one that the poets themselves struggle with from the very beginning and while it is religious in part and represents a poetic convention, this power dynamic also has sociopolitical significance. In the archaic and early classical period, lyric poets strive to portray a balance of power between the composition of their poetry on the one hand, and the influence of external compulsion, whether Muse or patron, on the other. This issue of negotiating autonomy and control is inevitable and so all poets in this period engage in this power dynamic

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<sup>67</sup> See e.g. Ferrari 2006 and Dorion 2007 who discusses the absence of the word ἐγκράτεια in Plato's early dialogues and its subsequent rehabilitation.

to some extent. No Greek poet is ever entirely independent of external forces, nor does he allow himself to be completely subservient to these forces either. This is the paradox inherent in poetic inspiration: that the poet's authority and poetic autonomy are dependent on some outside influence.

In the world of the symposium, wine, sexual desire, and song combine to provide a different concept of poetic inspiration and occasion for performance. In this context, Dionysus and wine provide inspiration for the poet, constituting yet another type of external compulsion with which the poet must grapple. Symptotic poets, from Archilochus to Anacreon, assert the idea time and again that poetry is best composed under the influence of wine, even while one's senses are "thunderstruck," although even drunkenness does not equate total possession by a god.<sup>68</sup> The influence of Dionysus on the poet serves to liberate the poet and grant him the license to compose poetry freely; and yet, this poetic freedom is contrasted emphatically with the self-control and restraint necessary in dealing with those more powerful than the poet.

### **"Thunderstruck with wine": The Poet and the Symposium**

We have examined the Muses' involvement in the act of inspiring the early Greek poet throughout the archaic and early classical period: while the poet's recurrent invocation of the Muse demonstrates that he is never entirely free of her influence, he continues to struggle to strike a balance between the external compulsion of divine inspiration and his own poetic autonomy. The epic poet's representation of his relationship with his Muse is somewhat modified

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<sup>68</sup> See Tigerstedt 1970: 175-76 and Dodds 1951: 72: "The notion of the 'frenzied poet' composing in a state of ecstasy appears not to be traceable further back than the fifth century." See also Velardi 1989 who argues that Plato's notion of *enthousiasmos* is original and focuses more on the transmission of poetry than the relationship between poet and divine, as with earlier theories of inspiration.



by the lyric poets of the archaic period, who depict a more balanced and less subordinate relationship between poet and divine. With the onset of the classical period, professional poets like Pindar, who were now faced with other external societal pressures, namely that of their patrons and the commodification of poetry, began to express their own identity as a reflection of their representation of divine inspiration and their relationship to the Muses. I will now turn to another source of poetic inspiration, Dionysus, who provides both theme and context for a different kind of lyric poetry, that of the symposium.

The symposium, which provided both occasion and purpose for much of lyric and elegiac poetry, developed in the changing world of the archaic Greek *polis*. Although an aristocratic social institution, the “*symposion* was essentially a meeting of equals in which social gradations were ignored.”<sup>69</sup> The nature of the symposium fostered camaraderie among the elite and offered a social setting for the poet in which he and his poetic talent were valued and praised. Both Kurke and Morris emphasize that the symposium promotes exclusion, cohesion, and distinction by the elite, a notion that was perhaps prompted by Murray’s suggestion that “The *symposion* became in many respects a place apart from the normal rules of society, with its own strict code of honour in the *pistis* created, and its own willingness to establish conventions fundamentally opposed to the those within the *polis* as a whole.”<sup>70</sup> Symptotic ideology is reflected in lyric poetry, as Hammer argues that, “the language of the symposium, including the poetic discourse, emphasized the “cohesion” of the group through the intimacy of the physical setting, through the notion of being joined together in trust (*pistis*) and friendship, and through allusions in language

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<sup>69</sup> Murray 1985: 40

<sup>70</sup> Kurke 1997 and 1999; Morris 1996 and 2000; Murray 1990: 7; Hammer 2004 argues that the exclusivity of the symposium does not necessarily convey an expression of anti-*polis* ideology, as Kurke and Morris suggest, but agrees that it encourages social cohesion among participants.

that might be meaningful at one level by non-participants and at a different and perhaps deeper level by participants.”<sup>71</sup> The sympotic poet’s relationship with the Muse is reimagined in the archaic period along with the social context and occasion for his poetry, so that even though the poet may characterize his interaction with the Muse as a power struggle, he is also encouraged by the nature of his surroundings to express his interaction with the divine on more equal terms than did earlier epic poets, such as Hesiod. Dionysus also represents the power dynamics of poetic composition as he offers freedom to the poet through the liberating effects of intoxication, but also compels him to sing and threatens his self-control.

This discussion of sympotic lyric poetry is not meant to be comprehensive, nor does it take a historical approach; rather, it is concerned with the themes and ideology of the symposium and Greek drinking culture as it relates to poetic inspiration from the perspective of Horace’s *Odes*. Intoxication and the pleasure that it provides symposiasts must always operate within the prescribed limits of the symposium. Even though the symposium offers liberation from the rules and restrictions of normal society, participants either abided by the accepted social code or were considered shameless by their drinking companions. As Whitmarsh notes, “It is a curiously mixed message at one level: how can one simultaneously be liberated and constrained? But this ambiguity made for a highly effective tool of social disciplining, for it allowed the question of civilized limits to remain urgent and alive.”<sup>72</sup> This is the most salient feature of sympotic lyric poetry for Augustan poetry: that despite the exclusive nature of the symposium, those included to participate in the institution were expected to exhibit acceptable behavior. For Horace, this concept will serve as an analogy for negotiating sociopolitical power dynamics under the

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<sup>71</sup> 2004: 492

<sup>72</sup> 2004: 54-55

Principate. Horace's "Bacchic poetics" both liberate the poet and require him to show discretion when included in the god's inner circle. Horace's experience with Greek lyric poetry would have been similar to our own; although he had much more of it at his disposal, he had access to the canon of great lyric poets at a library, much as we do today.<sup>73</sup> When Horace requests that Maecenas consider him one of the lyric bards, he most likely had the nine canonical lyric poets in mind, who span from Alcman (in 7th century) to Simonides (in the 5th): *quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres / sublimi feriam sidera vertice* ("But if you insert me among the lyric bards, I will strike the stars with my sublime head, C. 1.1.35-36). For that reason, this discussion is more concerned with the representation of Dionysus and wine than with the chronology or specific historical context of the lyric poets.

Like the Muses, the god Dionysus is also closely associated with poetry and the composition and performance of song. His role as poetic inspirer is more pronounced in the genres of lyric poetry, undoubtedly because of his importance in the context of the symposium. As the god of wine, he bears strong associations with love and poetry as well. In the symposium, love, wine, and poetry were strongly intertwined, as is clearly conveyed by Anacreon (second half of the 6th century) when he expresses the well-established idea that drinking should be mingled with the gifts of the Muses and of Aphrodite:<sup>74</sup>

οὐ φιλέω, ὃς κρητῆρι παρὰ πλέωι οἰνοποτάζων  
 νείκεα καὶ πόλεμον δακρυόεντα λέγει,  
 ἀλλ' ὅστις Μουσέων τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης  
 συμμίσγων ἐρατῆς μνήσκεται εὐφροσύνης. (fr. 2.1-4)

<sup>73</sup> Either in Pollio's library in the temple of Libertas, or after 20 B.C.E., in the porticoes of Augustus' Apollo Palatinus, according to Feeney 2009: 204.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Anitpater (*AP* 7.27.9-10) who recognizes the poet's tendency to associate the three: τρισσοῖς γάρ, Μούσαισι, Διωνύσῳ, καὶ Ἔρωτι, πρέσβυ, κατεσπείσθη πᾶς ὁ τεὸς Βίοςτος ("Your whole life was poured as a libation, old man, to these three: the Muses, Dionysus, and Eros"). See Rosenmeyer 1992: 38-39.

I do not love the man who while drinking wine alongside the full mixing bowl,  
speaks of strife and tearful war, but whoever mingling the splendid gifts of the  
Muses and Aphrodite calls to mind lovely merriment.

The poet suggests that epic themes, strife and wars, should not be paired with wine because wine is better suited for poetry that brings good cheer. The poet also demonstrates that the social context for the symposium – a gathering of like-minded, if privileged, elite – encourages the poet to express new ideas about traditional values and conventions. The poet interweaves the three themes again – love, poetry, and drinking – when he calls on Dionysus, rather than Aphrodite or Eros, to persuade Kleoboulos to accept his love:

ὦναξ, ὦι δαμάλης Ἔρως  
καὶ Νύμφαι κυανώπιδες  
πορφυρῇ τ' Ἀφροδίτῃ  
συμπαίζουσιν, ἐπιστρέφει  
δ' ὑψηλὰς ὀρέων κορυφάς·  
γουννοῦμαί σε, σὺ δ' εὐμενῆς  
ἔλθ' ἡμῖν, κεχαρισμένης  
δ' εὐχολῆς ἐπακούειν·  
Κλεοβούλῳ δ' ἀγαθὸς γένηο  
σύμβουλος, τὸν ἐμόν γ' ἔρω-  
τ', ὦ Δεόνυσε, δέχεσθαι.  
(fr. 12.1-11)

O lord, with whom Eros and the dark-eyed nymphs and rosy Aphrodite play,  
as you wander the peaks of lofty hills, I implore you that you come kindly to  
me and listen with a favorable ear, and be a good advisor for Cleoboulos, O  
Dionysus, so that he accept my love.

Here, in an unexpected twist at the end of the poem, Anacreon asks the god of wine to assist him in matters that are within the sphere of Aphrodite's influence.<sup>75</sup> Anacreon suggests that desire

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<sup>75</sup> On this poem, see Dodds 1944: 402-16, Fraenkel 1975: 292, Campbell 1983: 24, who finds the prayer to Dionysus odd (suggesting that, "Anacreon may have sung his song with a wine cup in front of him"), and Kirkwood 1974: 166-67, who notes the clearly marked cletic formulas: "To invoke Dionysus in an amatory cause is not really surprising in a poet who repeatedly makes close connection between the theme of conviviality and the theme of love. Like Sappho (fr. 1), Anacreon uses the traditional cletic form for a personal and nonreligious theme."

and drinking are closely connected, the idea being that the boy will be more receptive to Anacreon's advances if he is drunk.<sup>76</sup> The poet suggests that Dionysus has the ability to guide one who asks for his assistance and in a way, this idea is related to the sort of relationship that the archaic poet develops with his Muse;<sup>77</sup> he does not rely on the goddess entirely, but calls on her to stand beside him. The poem also demonstrates the god's ability to threaten one's self-control as the poet here displaces his own failure at maintaining restraint onto the boy, using the Muses as leverage on his side against drunkenness on the boy's. Anacreon does not confess to a lack of self-control on his part, but hopes that Dionysus will aid him by removing the boy's. Furthermore, the role of Aphrodite and Eros and that of Dionysus are often blurred in the sympotic setting and archaic poets continually engage with this idea.<sup>78</sup> For instance, Solon, who (in as early as the 7th century) says that the works of Aphrodite, Dionysus and the Muses all bring merriment to men:

ἔργα δὲ Κυπρογενοῦς νῦν μοι φίλα καὶ Διονύσου  
καὶ Μουσέων, ἃ τίθησ' ἀνδράσιν εὐφροσύνας (fr. 26)

The works of the Cyprian-born and of Dionysus and of the Muses are dear to me, which give merriment to men.

For the elegiac poet, the Muses, Aphrodite, and Dionysus, and that which they embody provide both the inspiration for and content of their songs.

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<sup>76</sup> Goldhill 1987: 12ff. discusses the playful irony in the poem and argues that the prayer suggests more than "conviviality" particularly because of the sexual connotations apparent in the verb συμπαίζειν, in addition to other erotic associations. Rosenmeyer 1992: 42-44 argues that Anacreon's "playfulness" should not be overemphasized, especially given the potentially violent implications of the presence of Dionysus. See also Rosenmeyer 2004 on the erotic ambiguities in the use of the verb παίζειν, "linked to the liminality of the stage of life to which it commonly refers."

<sup>77</sup> Goldhill 1987 and others have noted the clever pun with σύμβολος/Κλεοβούλω in the word play between "advisor" (which Goldhill suggests may hearken back to the erotic συμπαίζειν above) and the boy's name.

<sup>78</sup> Fraenkel, for example, sees in Anacreon (fr. 12) an even stronger connection between the gods, arguing that the prayer refers not only to Dionysus, but also to the other gods who are invoked (1975: 292).

The inspiration that Dionysus provides for the lyric poet operates on several levels: first, the god is invoked for his association with lyric poetry, both choral and sympotic, but particularly dithyramb.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, as the god of wine, he provides both the cheer and lack of inhibition that motivate a person to begin singing. Along with this idea is the notion that wine, much like its close companion poetry, is a sort of medicine for one's troubles. The poets encourage drinking to forget one's cares, to celebrate a victory or happy occasion, or to accompany song. In instances of both types of Dionysiac inspiration, the poet often expresses the idea that poetry, or song, is best composed under the influence. Archilochus (7th century), for example, says that he knows how to lead the lovely song of Dionysus, with his wits thunderstruck with wine:<sup>80</sup>

ὥς Διωνύσου ἄνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος  
οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνῳ συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας. (fr. 120)

I know how to lead the lovely dithyrambic song of lord Dionysus, my wits  
thunderstruck with wine.

The poet speaks very matter-of-factly so that drunkenness becomes a requisite for singing dithyrambic songs, as if it were not possible – or at least not ideal – for one to sing dithyrambs while sober. Anacreon also expresses the notion that wine should serve as an aid for poetic composition when he exhorts his companions to drink while singing:

ἄγε δηῦτε μηκέτ' οὔτῳ  
πατάγωι τε κάλαλητῶι  
Σκυθικὴν πόσιν παρ' οἴνῳ  
μελετῶμεν, ἀλλὰ καλοῖς  
ὑποπίνοντες ἐν ὕμνοις. (fr. 11b)

<sup>79</sup> As a god of Delphi, Dionysus was associated with Apollo and with the Muses as a god of the mountains. Some of his titles included Μουσαγέτης (*IG* 12.5.46, *RE* 5.1031) and Μελπόμενος (*RE* 15.589f.).

<sup>80</sup> Although dithyrambic poetry was composed primarily for choral performance in a public context, rather than the symposium, the association between performance and intoxication remains.

Come let us no longer practice Scythian-style drinking with the shouting and uproar alongside wine, but drinking moderately between beautiful hymns.

The poet makes it clear that the sort of drinking he encourages is not raucous or debauched, but moderate and kept under control. Of course, there is a fine line between what is considered moderate drinking and what is excessive. Both passages cited above convey the idea that wine relaxes the poet and lifts his spirits enough to inspire him to sing, but while Anacreon is clear about the fact that this should be done in moderation, Archilochus' declaration is more ambiguous. To have one's "wits thunderstruck with wine"<sup>81</sup> sounds like the result of more than a moderate amount of drinking, although Archilochus presents himself as being skilled in singing the dithyramb, a song whose connection to Dionysus and his cult practices lends itself to performance while intoxicated with wine.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of the amount of wine consumed, the point is that the poet is willing and able to sing while he feels the effect of the wine. Likewise, for Anacreon, although it is not entirely clear what is meant by "drinking moderately" – consuming an amount of wine that neither keeps one sober nor leads him to shout uproariously – the important thing is that singing and drinking go hand in hand, so long as the singing does not degenerate to boisterous clamor. This notion, that in a sympotic context, one is granted a certain amount of freedom, but must maintain his self-control and adhere to a social code is central to the ideology of the symposium. Although the symposium created a setting

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<sup>81</sup> The verb συγκεραυνώω appears only three times in the classical Greek corpus, including Archilochus (fr. 120), Cratinus (fr. 187.4) and Euripides (*Bacchae* 1103). Since the violent meaning of the word, to strike with a thunderbolt, is a bit of a stretch for describing inebriation, Mendelsohn 1992: 110 sees this as reason to argue for religious, rather than purely poetic origins.

<sup>82</sup> See Mendelsohn 1992 who argues convincingly that the verb συγκεραυνώω is strongly linked to dithyramb as a literary form, as well as with Dionysiac cult practices; Seaford posits that the origins of dithyramb can be traced back to Dionysiac cult and says that, "It is clear from the remains of dithyrambic language as a whole that its characteristic features were associated with the traditional (Dionysiac) dithyrambic abandon: wine and musical instruments" (1981: 89).

outside of the purview of normal society, this world was not without its own limits, constraints, and conventions. The poet is afforded freedom in that he and his drinking companions are equals, but the symposium imposed restrictions on this freedom as well through the social code enforced by participants of the symposium. Dionysus represents this idea very clearly through the threat that intoxication poses to one's self-restraint and the limits imposed on consumption of wine in the symposium.

Anacreon expresses a similar sentiment elsewhere as he calls for wine and a mixing bowl. He instructs a slave boy to mix the wine and water, as is customary, but he seems to send a mixed message: his intention is to drink a long draft and though he says he will not do so “violently,” he desires also to act as a Bacchant, the final word of the poem:<sup>83</sup>

ἄγε δὴ φέρ' ἡμῖν ὦ παῖ  
 κελέβην, ὅκως ἄμυστιν  
 προπίω, τὰ μὲν δέκ' ἐγχείας  
 ὕδατος, τὰ πέντε δ' οἴνου  
 κυάθους ὡς ἄνυβριστιῶς  
 ἀνὰ δηῦτε βασσαρήσω. (Anacreon 11a)

Come, boy, bring me a bowl so that I may drink a long draft. Pour ten cups of water and five of wine so that I may once again, not violently, become a Bacchant.

While it seems paradoxical to request a tall drink and be a Bacchant moderately, the idea reflects a common concern among the archaic lyric poets that one should drink, but not too much. The word ἄνυβριστιῶς suggests that “becoming a Bacchant” does have potentially violent implications and reminds the audience that excessive indulgence may lead to a lack of self-

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<sup>83</sup> As Professor P. A. Rosenmeyer points out, Anacreon is especially fond of this kind of juxtaposition or paradox at the end of his lines.



control. Archilochus describes what happens when a person drinks more unmixed wine than he should, the epitome of uncouthness:

πολλὸν δὲ πίνων καὶ χαλίκρητον μέθυ . . .  
ἀλλὰ σεο γαστήρ νόον τε καὶ φρένας παρήγαγεν  
εἰς ἀναιδείην. (124b.1-5)

Drinking much and unmixed wine . . .  
you led astray your wits and your mind to shamelessness.

The lyric poets thus send an ambiguous message when discussing how much wine it is appropriate to drink at the symposium and how much one should ideally consume (in order to sing or forget one's cares, etc.). There is persistent urging to drink alongside constant warnings for moderation: one must drink, but not act noticeably drunk. Although Archilochus describes the condition under which he is best suited for singing dithyramb, with his "wits thunderstruck with wine" (οἴνῳι συγκεραυνωθεὶς φρένας, fr. 120), here he portrays in very similar terms the shamelessness that can result when one consumes too much unmixed wine and cannot maintain his self-control.<sup>84</sup> Alcaeus gives further details in explaining what this "shamelessness" might entail:

. . . πε[δ]άσει] φρένας οἴνος οὐ ἴδιωτεος.  
κάτω γὰρ κεφάλαν κατίσχε[ι] τὸν σὸν θάμα θῦμον αἰτιάμενος,  
πεδαλευόμενος τά κ' εἶπη. . . (358.2-4)

If wine binds his mind, he is not to be pursued. For he holds his head down,  
blaming his own soul, shunning the things that he said. . .

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<sup>84</sup> Homer also speaks of a person strongly affected by wine in their φρένες (*Od.* 9.454 and 21.301). It is often one's φρένες that feel the wine's affect, the same organ that is touched by love. See Calame's discussion on the physiology of erotic desire (1999: 19). Cf. Carson 1986: 48, Sullivan 1988, and Padel 1992: 27ff. In addition, φρένες are also the organ in which Pindar's poetic genius resides (see *Ol.* 7.8 and *Nem.* 4.8 discussed above).

The symposiast who has had too much wine to drink regrets the things that he said while in such a state because most likely they were things he would not have said if he were sober.<sup>85</sup> The same liberating quality of wine that releases a poet from his inhibitions enough to sing can also intoxicate him so much that he is led to say things he will be ashamed of later. In the symposium, the license that Dionysus provides the symposiasts is contrasted emphatically with self-control. In these instances, excessive freedom results in a lack of decorum, something that is only appropriate within the limits set by the symposium.

Dionysus, then, as the embodiment of wine, has a dual nature: his presence is required at the symposium to prompt the poet to sing, and yet drinking in excess may encourage shameful behavior; the god can very easily cause trouble, but at the same time the poets exhort their companions to turn to him as a release them from their cares and concerns. Here is an early sampling of such sentiment expressed by Alcaeus (late 7th - early 6th century):

οὐ χρῆ κάκοισι θυμὸν ἐπιτρέπην,  
 προκόψομεν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἀσάμενοι,  
 ὦ Βύκχι, φαρμάκων δ' ἄριστον  
 οἶνον ἐνειαμένους μεθύσθην. (335)

There is no need to leave the soul to bad things, for we will make no progress while we are vexed. O Bacchus, the best of drugs is for those bringing wine to get drunk.

πώνωμεν. . .  
 οἶνον γὰρ Σεμέλας καὶ Δίος υἱὸς λαθικάδεον  
 ἀνθρώποισιν ἔδωκ'. (346.1-4)

Let us drink. . .  
 for the son of Semele and Zeus gave care-banishing wine to men.

τέγγε πλεύμονας οἴνῳ, τὸ γὰρ ἄστρον περιτέλλεται,  
 ἃ δ' ὦρα χαλέπα, πάντα δὲ δίψαις ὑπὰ καύματος. . . (347a)

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<sup>85</sup> Which is why Alcaeus says that, "Wine is a way to see into men" (οἶνος γὰρ ἀνθρώπῳ δίοπτρον, 333).

Wet your throats with wine, for the star is coming around, the season is difficult,  
everything thirsts because of the heat. . .

When called upon in his capacity to ease one's suffering, there is no exhortation to show moderation. It seems that the more one drinks, the easier it becomes to forget one's concerns, for that is what Dionysus provides: an escape. Wine does not provide its drinker with a solution to his problems: rather, it causes him to forget that such problems exist. In the context of the symposium, which was itself a sort of escape from the "real" outside world, wine was a diversion from the difficulties of everyday life and problems for which there was no solution – death, unrequited love, war and political struggles – and offered pleasure to the drinker.

There is a similar emphasis in the archaic period on the ability of poetry to give pleasure and cause a person to forget his troubles. Like Dionysus, the Muses are a diversion from the reality and difficulty of everyday life. As Hesiod says, they provide "oblivion of ills and respite from cares" (λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων, *Th.* 55), and he goes on to say that singers who are blessed with the gift of the Muses are able to sooth grief with song:

εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ  
ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς  
Μουσάων θεράπων κλέεα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων  
ὑμνήσῃ μάκαράς τε θεοὺς, οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,  
αἶψ' ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων  
μέμνηται: ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων. (98-103)

For if someone, though having sorrow and mourning in his heart, cries with his grieved soul, nevertheless, a singer, attendant of the Muses, sings the deeds of former men and the blessed gods who hold Olympus, at once he forgets his cares and remembers none of his troubles: quickly the gifts of the goddesses divert him.

Like wine, the function of poetry in a sympotic or festive context is to delight the audience.<sup>86</sup>

Poets, granted with a poetic gift are characterized as having the ability to make others happy: as Odysseus claims, Demodocus' gift lies as much in giving delight as it does in his talent for reciting song: for to him the god has given song to delight in whatever way his *thumos* urges him (τῷ γάρ ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδὴν / τέρπειν, ὅππῃ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνῃσιν ἀεΐδειν, *Od.* 8.43-5).<sup>87</sup>

When Achilles, deeply insulted by Agamemnon, retreats to his hut, he finds solace in song and delights himself with his lyre (τῇ ὃ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἀεΐδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν, *Il.* 9.189), much like a participant in the symposium might find comfort in his cup of wine. Likewise, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the poet encourages his audience of young maidens to judge his performance, if a stranger should ask them, based on the sweetness of the song and the pleasure it gives others:

ὦ κοῦραι, τίς δ' ὕμιν ἀνὴρ ἡδιστος ἀοιδῶν  
ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέφ' τέρπεσθε μάλιστα (3.169-70)

Girls, in your opinion what man comes here is the sweetest of the singers,  
and in whom do you especially delight?

Dionysus obviously has a very important role in the composition and performance of song in the symposium through his function as god of wine. However, he is also associated in the archaic period more directly with song, in addition to dithyramb, through his role as god of poetry. In fact, there are several instances in which he is invoked as such with little mention of his role as god of wine. The earliest mention of Dionysus in connection to his place in the sphere of poetry is in the two Homeric hymns composed in his honor:

<sup>86</sup> Similarly, song is avoided that does not give its audience pleasure as in *Odyssey* 8 when Alcinuous tells Demodocus to stop singing because his song has made Odysseus weep.

<sup>87</sup> This is evident by the fact that in Homer poetry is often associated with pleasure (τέρπειν): e.g. "The nobles of the Phaeacians urged him to sing because they took pleasure in his words" (ὀτρύνειαν ἀεΐδειν / Φαιήκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ' ἐπέεσσιν, *Od.* 8.90-91). Cf. also *Od.* 1.347, 421-23, 367-68, 429.

Ἰληθ' εἰραφιῶτα γυναιμανές· οἱ δέ σ' αἰδοὶ  
 ἄδομεν ἀρχόμενοι λήγοντές τ', οὐδέ πη ἔστι  
 σεῖ' ἐπιληθομένῳ ἱερῆς μεμνήσθαι αἰοιδῆς. (1.17-20)

Be favorable, insewn one, who makes women mad! We singers sing of you as we begin and as we end a strain, and none forgetting you may call holy song to mind.

Χαῖρε τέκος Σεμέλης εὐώπιδος· οὐδέ πη ἔστι  
 σεῖό γε ληθόμενον γλυκερὴν κοσμήσαι αἰοιδήν. (7.58-9)

Hail, child of fair-faced Semele! He who forgets you can in no wise order sweet song.

Although the god is not invoked in the corpus beyond those hymns that honor him, it is significant that he is called upon in a manner similar to that of the Muses. It is ironic though that the same god who, in his capacity as god of wine, helps a man forget his troubles also helps the poet remember his song. Like Homer, in book two of the *Iliad*, who says that he could not name all of the commanders of the Greeks unless the Muses remind him (εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο / θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον, *Il.* 2.484-92), a poet cannot successfully perform a song in honor of Dionysus without the god's assistance.

Although Dionysus is not associated with any particular genre of poetry in the hymns, elsewhere he presides over dithyramb, as we saw in Archilochus' fragment 120 above.<sup>88</sup> Pindar also associates the god directly with dithyramb in one of his *Olympian* odes:

ταὶ Διωνύσου πόθεν ἐξέφανε  
 σὺν βοηλάτῃ χάριτες διθυράμβῳ; (13.18-19)

Whence was it that the graces of Dionysus first came to light,  
 with the ox-driving dithyramb?

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<sup>88</sup> Plato says that the class of music called “dithyramb” was named after Dionysus (καὶ ἄλλο, Διονύσου γένεσις οἶμαι, διθύραμβος λεγόμενος, *Laws* 3.700B).

Then again in fragment 139, where he is mentioned alongside Apollo in a sort of priamel. Both gods preside over the composition and performance of poetry, but govern different genres:<sup>89</sup>

ἔντι μὲν χρυσαλακάτου τεκέων Λατοῦς ἀοιδαί  
 ὥριαι παιανίδες· ἔντι <δὲ καὶ> θάλλοντος ἐκ κισσοῦ στεφάνων Διονύσου  
 <διθύραμβον μ>αϊόμεναι

There are lays of paeans, coming in due season, which belong to the children of Leto of the golden distaff. There are other lays, which, from amid the crowns of flourishing ivy, long for the dithyramb of Dionysus . . . (fr. 139)

The performance of paeans began as a way to honor the healing god, usually associated with Apollo.<sup>90</sup> The song-dance, which seems to have had an important initiatory function in the *polis* as well, is characterized by its order and regularity of movement. This stands in stark contrast to the Dionysus' song, the dithyramb, which although difficult to pin down, is associated with worship of the god, who is, of course, characterized by wine and revelry and threatens the order of the *polis*.<sup>91</sup> This seems to be the ancient consensus, at least, as summed up by Plutarch:

καὶ ᾄδουσι τῷ μὲν διθυραμβικὰ μέλη παθῶν μεστὰ καὶ μεταβολῆς  
 πλάνην τινὰ καὶ διαφόρησιν ἐχούσης· μιξοβόαν γὰρ Αἰσχύλος φησὶ  
 πρέπει διθύραμβον ὁμαρτεῖν σύγκωμον Διονύσῳ; τῷ δὲ παιᾶνα,  
 τεταγμένην καὶ σώφρονα μοῦσαν. (*de E ap. Delphos, Mor.* 3891-b)

To the one they sing dithyrambic songs full of emotions and meandering variation – with mixed shouts, as Aeschylus says (*TrGF* 3.355), the dithyramb

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Pindar (fr. 128 c)

<sup>90</sup> Although Apollo is associated with healing and is given the epithet “Paeon,” the god “Paion” seems to have been the name of an earlier independent god. The Greeks sing paeans to appease Apollo in the *Iliad* (οἱ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῇ θεὸν ἱλάσκοντο /καλὸν ἀεῖδοντες παιήονα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν /μέλποντες ἐκάεργον: ὁ δὲ φρένα τέρπετ' ἀκούων, 472-4). See Fairbanks 1990 and Rutherford 1994: 112-116 for an overview of the development of the genre. Paeans were sung, usually by a chorus of young men, on a number of different occasions: celebrations, to accompany libations and for apotropaic purposes, among others. On the genres of lyric, see also Harvey 1955; for approaches to the study of genre, see Cairns 1972; for genre and performance, see Calame 1996.

<sup>91</sup> Contra Stehle: “Men’s dithyrambic dancing must have been impressively athletic and coordinated, since dancers were excused from military service in order to rehearse” (1997:13).

with the revel should accompany Dionysus – while to the other they sing the paeon, ordered and temperate.<sup>92</sup>

Although seemingly at odds, Dionysus and Apollo complement one another and have some things in common.<sup>93</sup> While they are affiliated with different types of poetry, both genres have a place in a ritual, sympotic setting,<sup>94</sup> and as gods of poetry, both Dionysus and Apollo have strong relationships with the Muses.<sup>95</sup>

Dionysus, as we have already discussed, is indirectly connected to the Muses through his role in the symposium as god of wine and his capacity to aid the poet in the composition or performance of his song. Apollo also has a strong association with the Muses, though his connection is more solemn and religious. Hesiod says that Apollo and the Muses are the source of singers on earth:

ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος  
ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί

For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo  
that there are singers and harpers upon the earth . . . (*Th.* 94-95)

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<sup>92</sup> Translation is from Rutherford 1994: n30.

<sup>93</sup> For example, tradition holds that Dionysus occupied Delphi in the winter months while Apollo was absent. Bacchylides plays on the incongruity of the two gods and their two genres of poetry in one of his dithyrambs in which he ironically incorporates elements of a paeon: δ' ἵκη παηόνων / ἄνθεα πεδοιχνεῖν / Πύθι' Ἀπόλλων / τόσα χοροὶ Δελφῶν / σὸν κελάδησαν παρ' / ἀγακλέα νάον ("So come, Pythian Apollo, to seek the blossoms of paeans which the dancers at Delphi sing (in praise of) you alongside the glorious temple," *Dith.* 2. 8-12)

<sup>94</sup> Alcman says that it is fitting to sing paeans at a feast: θοίναις δὲ καὶ ἐν θιάσοισιν / ἀνδρείων παρὰ δαιτυμόνεσσι πρόπει παιᾶνα κατάρχην ("At banquets and in the companies of men's feasts alongside the guests it is fitting to begin the paeon," fr. 98).

<sup>95</sup> Plato mentions the gods together, along with the Muses, as providing people with an escape from their troubles through the festivity of song: θεοὶ δὲ οἰκτίραντες τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίπονον πεφυκὸς γένος, ἀναπαύλας τε αὐτοῖς τῶν πόνων ἐτάξαντο τὰς τῶν ἑορτῶν ἀμοιβὰς τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ μούσας Ἀπόλλωνά τε μουσηγέτην καὶ Διόνυσον συνεορταστὰς ἔδωσαν, ἵν' ἐπανορθῶνται, τὰς τε τροφὰς γενομένας ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς μετὰ θεῶν . . . ("So the gods, because they pitied the human race born to misery, ordained for them respite from their troubles in return for the festivals for the gods, and they gave the Muses and Apollo, the leader of the Muses, and Dionysus as companions, so that they might restore their existing way of life in festivals with the gods," *Laws* 653D).

Apollo is often called the “leader of the Muses” and though he does not participate in the dance himself, he oversees it.<sup>96</sup> According to Himerius, a 4th century CE orator, Simonides says that the Muses perform better when Apollo is there to lead them:

ἀεὶ μὲν αἱ Μοῦσαι χορεύουσι καὶ φίλον ἐστὶ ταῖς θεαῖς ἐν ᾠδαῖς τε  
εἶναι καὶ κρούμασιν· ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἴδωσι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα τῆς χορείας  
ἡγεῖσθαι ἀρχόμενον, τότε πλέον ἢ πρότερον τὸ μέλος ἐκτεῖναισιν ἢχόν  
τινα παναρμόνιον καθ’ Ἑλικῶνος ἐκπέμπουσιν. (*PMG* 578 = *Himer. Or.* 62.54)

The Muses are always dancing, and the goddesses love to be among songs and strings. But when they see Apollo begin to lead the dance, they put forth their song even more than before and send down from Helicon all-harmonious sound.

Although traditionally Apollo is associated with poetry, he does not directly inspire the poet in the same way the Muses or Dionysus do. As god of prophecy, his authority in the realm of poetry is related to the sphere of divine knowledge. In the same way that the archaic poet acts as an intermediary between the Muses and his audience, the Muses relay knowledge from Apollo to the poet. Dionysus offers the archaic lyric poet an entirely different kind of inspiration. Here, in the sphere of sympotic poetry, the poet does not seek to interpret or pass on a message from the gods for his audience, but sings of sympotic themes that concern human life, such as drinking, desire, pleasure, and grief. The poet is inspired by Dionysus in his capacity as god of wine and festivity, where his role is often blurred with that of Aphrodite and Eros. The lyric poets speak of Dionysus lightheartedly as the god of wine who eases one’s troubles; however, the intoxication that the god provides can also be uncontrolled and unpredictable. The god may aid the poet in composition and the lover in his exploits within the realm of the symposium, but the constant threat that he poses to a man’s self-control is always in the forefront. Modern scholars have noted his dual nature, as he seems to embody opposite characteristics: madness and calm, wildness and

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<sup>96</sup> See e.g. n47. Dionysus is also given this title, though not so frequently (see n34 above).



civilization, destruction and creativity. Dionysus provides the poet with potentially troubling paradox: his inspiration grants the license to compose poetry, but uncontrolled freedom leads to the loss of one's self-control, something that the social code of the symposium proscribes.

In the Roman period, Bacchus will continue to inspire the poet and represents, more than Apollo or the Muses, the uncontrolled and imaginative quality of truly inspired poetry. Bacchic inspiration, however, will continue to represent the power dynamic at play between the poet and external influences as he struggles to maintain his own identity in the face of sociopolitical pressures not of the private symposium, but of the Augustan principate. In the next chapter, an examination of Livy's account of the "Bacchanalian conspiracy" alongside the Pentheus episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, will demonstrate that the god Bacchus provides an appropriate means for conveying the sociopolitical climate of the time. The paradox of Dionysiac inspiration in the symposium is employed by these Roman authors on a larger scale as Bacchus comes to represent the kind of freedom and lack of self-restraint on the part of Roman citizens that might threaten the Roman Senate's control over them. Horace re-imagines the role of Dionysus in the symposium in a Roman context, the topic of chapter three, in which I argue that both drinking and participation in the Bacchic rites serve as an analogy for operating in Augustus' inner circle. Both ritual initiation and the symposium constitute exclusive institutions which, for Horace, have serious sociopolitical implications: upon entrance or initiation into the group, one obtains an elite status, however, the participant must exhibit proper etiquette and decorum or face the threat of exclusion. The rules and stakes for the Greek symposium are the same for the Horace's Augustan "symposium," as represented in the *Odes*. Stehle posits that, "A group defined by exchange of speech must be open to all within it and closed to those outside, traits that characterize the

symposium. . .Moreover, exchanges within the symposium must often have been kept from wider circulation.”<sup>97</sup> This notion about the Greek symposium highlights the issues surrounding sociopolitical engagement under the Principate. In Horace’s *Odes*, Bacchus represents these paradoxical issues, for the Roman “symposium” is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, private and public, personal and political.

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<sup>97</sup> 1997: 217-18; cf. Nagy 1985: 24 who speaks of the coded language of the symposium, which “entails one code with at least two messages – the true one for the intended audience and the false or garbled ones for all others.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### Livy's Account of the Bacchanalian Conspiracy and Ovid's Roman Pentheus

In 186 B.C.E. Rome was struck by the scandal that has become known as the Bacchanalian conspiracy. Upon learning about the various crimes associated with the cult, most significantly the accusation of conspiracy (*coniuratio*), the Senate took drastic and violent action against the followers of Bacchus both in Rome and throughout Italy. Scholars have suggested various arguments for the Senate's intentions and motivations for doing so, but what is most apparent, both from Livy's account and the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*, is that the Senate believed that this "new" and foreign cult posed a threat to the Roman state. The reputation of Bacchus, the god of wine and ecstasy, had preceded him. In the symposium the drunken god of poetry offers just the right amount of madness, if consumed in moderation, required to compose inspired song; taken away from the Archaic Greek symposium, however, and placed in the political and historical context of republican Rome, the god Dionysus-Bacchus becomes an entirely different figure. The lack of control and inhibition that characterizes Bacchic inspiration becomes rather problematic for the masculine and political values of the Roman ruling elite.

A Roman citizen's reputation and esteem was greatly determined by his exertion of self-control in every aspect of his life.<sup>98</sup> Of course, power and other manly virtues were important as well, but these qualities alone would not earn a man respect if he showed lack of restraint and

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<sup>98</sup> See Fowler who declares that, "Entry into the Roman elite involved an unrelenting care of the self with regard to every word and gesture, while emotional outbursts led to disaster" (2002: 148). Cf. Narducci: "Si impone una prudenza costante, una precisa ponderazione di ogni parola e ogni gesto; il dominio di sé, la regolazione della propria emotività, la conoscenza dei propri simili divengono requisiti indispensabili a condurre con successo la vita sociale" (1984: 207).

composure in his lifestyle.<sup>99</sup> As Edwards puts it, “A display of self-control enabled the wealthy and powerful to justify their position by pointing to their moral superiority and natural distinction.”<sup>100</sup> The arrival of the cult of Bacchus at Rome threatened to compromise this essential Roman virtue as its rituals were perceived as debauched, uncontrolled, and effeminate. Dionysus-Bacchus had his place in the symposium and theater, but according to Livy’s account of the events of 186 B.C.E., the Senate felt strongly that the god had no place in religious or cultural practices of Rome without the control and oversight of the state. While the consuls’ speech depicts the Bacchanalia as a dangerous foreign threat to traditional Roman religion and morals, the Senate’s historical decree,<sup>101</sup> preserved in a bronze tablet found in southern Italy demonstrates that Roman authorities were more concerned that the growing cult might present a challenge to the established power and influence of the state.

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the historical and political circumstances in which the cult of Bacchus arrived at Rome during the Republic. From there, we will consider Livy’s narrative of the Bacchanalian conspiracy and examine closely his account of the speech given by the consuls to the people of Rome in which they announce the decree that puts extensive limits and regulations on the Bacchic worship in Rome and throughout Italy. I will argue that this speech reveals the issues of control and authority that concerned the Roman ruling class. Worship of the god Bacchus posed a real threat to the status quo of the Roman ruling class, for the aristocracy feared that its ecstatic and unrestrained nature meant that worshippers would become too difficult to police and effectively control. The social and political power dynamic in

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<sup>99</sup> See Edwards 1993 for issues of self-control among the Roman male elite. For issues of Roman masculinity in general see: Foxhall and Salmon 1998; Gleason 1995; Hallett and Skinner 1997; Richlin 1992; Williams 1999; Wray 2001.

<sup>100</sup> 1993: 195

<sup>101</sup> *CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 581 = *ILS* 18, discussed in more detail below.

republican Rome was such that the ruling classes asserted their authority over the citizens by controlling every aspect of the city's public life, religion included. This power dynamic only benefited the Roman elite so long as the lower classes submitted themselves to those in a position of authority. The consuls' speech portrays the concerns of the Roman Senate as if they are the concerns of the Roman people, but in reality it is the ruling class who fears foreign influence, the breakdown of social and gender boundaries, and the decline of the *mos maiorum*, as represented by Livy in the speech; these are all issues that threaten to undermine their political power over others.

It will become clear that the Senate's preoccupations with issues of power and authority during the republic, as narrated by Livy, reflect prevailing concerns over power and control in the first century when the history was composed. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that Ovid has Pentheus grapple with the same issues surrounding the cult of Bacchus in book three of the *Metamorphoses*. Although Pentheus embodies the ideology of the Roman aristocracy in his power struggle with the followers of Bacchus, he comes to represent political power gone too far. He proves unable to control Bacchus' cult and his people effectively because he lacks the moderation and self-control that he expects of them.

### **The Arrival of Bacchus at Rome**

Let us begin with Bacchus' first appearance in Rome. Dionysus of Halicarnassus, a contemporary of Livy, says that in the beginning of their city, before their customs became corrupted, the Romans did not practice any kind of ecstatic religious rituals. Now, however, they have been corrupted and, presumably, participate in the sort "tricks" that their ancestors did not.

. . . οὐδ' ἂν ἴδοι τις παρ' αὐτοῖς, καίτοι διεφθαρμένων ἤδη τῶν ἐθῶν, οὐ θεοφορήσεις, οὐ κορυβαντισμούς, οὐκ ἀγυρμούς, οὐ βακχείας καὶ τελετὰς ἀπορρήτους, οὐ διαπανυχισμούς ἐν ἱεροῖς ἀνδρῶν σὺν γυναιξίν, οὐκ ἄλλο τῶν παραπλησίων τούτοις τερατευμάτων οὐδέν . . . (*Antiquitates Romanae*, 2.19.2)

And one would not see among them, although their customs are now entirely corrupted, any divine possession, nor Corybantic frenzies, nor gatherings, nor Bacchic revelries or secret mysteries, nor all-night vigils of men in the temples with women, nor any other tricks resemebling these . . .

We cannot know for certain when the worship of Bacchus-Dionysus was brought to Rome, though the god was associated with the native god Liber, who was a part of the Roman pantheon from at least the start of the fifth century when a temple to the trinity, Ceres, Liber and Libera, was dedicated on the Aventine:<sup>102</sup>

Κάσσιος δ' ὁ ἕτερος τῶν ὑπάτων ὁ καταλειφθεὶς ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τὸν νεὼν τῆς τε Δήμητρος καὶ Διονύσου καὶ Κόρης ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ χρόνῳ καθιέρωσεν, ὃς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τοῖς τέρμασι τοῦ μεγίστου τῶν ἵπποδρόμων ὑπὲρ αὐτὰς ἰδρυμένος τὰς ἀφέσεις . . . (6.94.3)

Cassius, the other consul, who had been left at Rome, in the mean time dedicated the temple of Demeter, Dionysus and Kore, which is at the end of the Circus Maximus, set up above the starting-posts themselves.

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<sup>102</sup> Altheim 1938, Rose 1959, and Wissowa 1912 all take the position that Liber was already identified with Dionysus when the triad was dedicated in 496 B.C.E.

Liber, a god who would become conflated with Bacchus-Dionysus over time,<sup>103</sup> was originally a god of fertility whose worship by the Romans was not associated with any of the ecstatic, orgiastic elements characteristic of Bacchic worship.<sup>104</sup>

Livy tells us that the Bacchic rites of this sort were transported to Rome from Etruria by a Greek priest. Although he does not say when this priest, *sacrificulus et vates*, first brought the rites to Rome, he implies, by the immediate reaction and legal action taken by the Senate, that they had not been known in Rome long before the conspiracy of 186 B.C.E.<sup>105</sup>

Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum, quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens invexit, sacrificulus et vates; nec is qui aperta religione, propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo, animos errore imbueret, sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum. initia erant, quae primo paucis tradita sunt, deinde vulgari coepta sunt per viros mulieresque. additae uoluptates religioni vini et epularum, quo plurium animi illicerentur. cum vinum animos <incendissent>, et nox et mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae maioribus, discrimen omne pudoris exstinxissent, corruptelae primum omnis generis fieri coeptae, cum ad id quisque, quo natura pronioris libidinis esset, paratam voluptatem haberet. nec unum genus noxae, stupra promiscua ingenuorum feminarumque erant, sed falsi testes, falsa signa testamentaque et indicia ex eadem officina exhibant: venena indidem intestinaeque caedes, ita ut ne corpora quidem interdum ad sepulturam exstarent. multa dolo, pleraque per uim audebantur. occulebat vim quod prae ululatibus tympanorumque

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<sup>103</sup> When Plutarch postulates the etymology of the name “Bacchus Liber Pater,” he takes for granted that Bacchus and Dionysus are the same divinity (in fact, he even uses the word “Dionysus” to mean “Bacchus”): διὰ τί τὸν Διόνυσον ‘Λίβερουμ Πάτρεμ καλοῦσι; πότερον ὡς ἐλευθερίας πατέρα τοῖς πιούσι γινόμενον; γίνονται γὰρ οἱ πολλοὶ θρασεῖς καὶ παρρησίας ὑποπιμπλῶνται περὶ τὰς μέθας; ἢ ὅτι τὴν λοιβὴν παρέσχεν; ἢ, ὡς Ἀλέξανδρός φησιν, ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ Ἐλευθερίας τῆς Βοιωτίας Ἐλευθερέως Διονύσου προσαγορευομένου (“Why do they call Bacchus Liber Pater? Is it because he is the father of freedom to drinkers? For most people become bold and are abounding in frank speech when they in their cups. Or is it because he has provided the means for libations? Or is it derived, as Alexander asserts, from Dionysus Eleuthereus, so named from Eleutherae in Boeotia?,” *Quaestiones Romanae* 288F-289A.).

<sup>104</sup> See Rousselle 1987 who makes the strong claim that Liber and Dionysus were considered identical from early on (based on evidence from Roman drama) and that the cult of Liber was not affected by the persecution of the Bacchic cult because the Senate feared that the former would be replaced by the new and innovative foreign one.

<sup>105</sup> See North 1979 who argues that the Roman authorities must have been aware of the cult activity before 186 B.C.E. based on references in Plautus, evidence of Bacchanalian worship in Etruria at the time, and because the senatorial decree implies the existence of a well-organized and far-reaching cult that could not have gone unnoticed for very long.

et cymbalorum strepitu nulla vox quiritantium inter stupra et caedes exaudiri poterat. (Livy 39.8.3-8)

An unknown Greek came first to Etruria, with none of those many arts which that most learned race brought to us for the cultivation of mind and body, but a performer of sacrifices and a soothsayer; nor was this man one who, with his religion disclosed and by openly professing both his occupation and his instruction filled minds with error, but a priest of secret nocturnal rites. There were initiation rites which at first were entrusted to a few, then began to be made known generally among men and women. The pleasures of wine and feasts were added to the rites, so that the minds of more people might be enticed. When the wine had inflamed their minds, and the night, and the mix of men with women and youth with their elders had destroyed every distinction of modesty, corruption of every kind first began to occur, since each individual had at hand the pleasure for which his nature was more inclined. There was not one kind of crime, the promiscuous sexual violations of freeborn men and women, but false witnesses, forged seals and wills and evidence were coming from the same office: from the same source there were poisonings and internal murders so that sometimes not even the bodies were available for burial. Many things were undertaken by deceit and many more by force. It concealed the violence because with the shrieking and crash of drums and cymbals no voice of the sufferers could be heard among the sexual violence and murders.

The worship of Dionysus certainly existed in Italy in some form much earlier than the second century.<sup>106</sup> According to Livy, what was new and apparently terrifying to the Senate was the introduction to Rome of the *mystery cult* of Bacchus. However, it is possible that even this aspect of Bacchic worship was not entirely new, as some scholars cite as evidence for an earlier cult Livy's description of an action taken by the Senate against a group of women performing foreign rites in the public places of the city during the second Punic War.<sup>107</sup> He gives no specific details surrounding the nature of the practice, but it is likely – especially because he mentions women

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Bruhl 1953: 82-116 for a good survey. See also Walsh who suggests that part of the reason that the Bacchanalia went unnoticed by the authorities was that citizens had begun to associate it with their native Liberalia, which he says was increasingly associated with Dionysiac ritual (1994: 124).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. e.g. Gruen who argues that despite the difference in the severity of the actions taken by the Senate, "On the face of it, the action taken here supplies a parallel or serves as a precursor for the suppression of Bacchants" (1990: 40).



exclusively – that the rites to which he refers are those observed in the worship of Bacchus. This scandal, he suggests, was the result of superstitious fears that infiltrated the city during the war:

nec iam in secreto modo atque intra parietes abolebantur Romani ritus, sed in publico etiam ac foro Capitolioque mulierum turba erat nec sacrificantium nec precantium deos patrio more. sacrificuli ac vates ceperant hominum mentes quorum numerum auxit rustica plebs, ex incultis diutino bello infestisque agris egestate et metu in urbem compulsa. (25.1.7-8)

And now not only in secret and within the walls at home were Roman rites forgotten, but also in public and in the forum and on the Capitoline there was a mob of women neither sacrificing nor praying to the gods in the manner of their ancestors. Sacrificing priests and prophets had seized the minds of those people whose number the rustic plebs increased as they were forced by necessity and fear into the city from their fields, neglected and unsafe because of the long war.

On the basis of this passage, Toynbee argues that the growing movement toward Bacchic worship at Rome was a result of the lingering effects of the Hannibalic War. He suggests that the Roman people turned to Bacchus' cult for the "personal support and consolation" it offered its followers that could not be found in traditional Roman religion.<sup>108</sup> He cites a general trend since the Hellenistic period of the movement of worshippers from official religious cults to that of private associations. This movement was compounded by the influx of refugees and civilians from southern Italy during the war who were already practicing worshippers of Bacchus. While Toynbee seems to take Livy's lead in his suggestion that in the wake of second Punic War, the Bacchic cult attracted worshippers who were troubled, we cannot be sure that events that Livy describes in Book 25 refer to the Bacchanalia. Furthermore, as Gruen points out, the Second Punic War had ended 15 years before the Bacchanalian conspiracy so citizens would not have been searching desperately for new religious outlets to ease their frustrations and anxieties over

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<sup>108</sup> 1965: 390

the war.<sup>109</sup> Others have provided varied and often speculative alternative explanations for the seemingly sudden increase in the number of Bacchic worshippers. Bömer argues that initiates to the cult were not the oppressed and uprooted immigrants that Toynbee has suggested, but members of the upper class.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, McDonald posits that the cult's membership must have consisted mainly of those from the lower classes which, he argues, would explain why the cult was so suspicious in the eyes of the Senate.<sup>111</sup> Gallini offers a more nuanced approach and shows that the followers, though of varying backgrounds socially and geographically, were all members of "marginal" groups.<sup>112</sup> Toynbee had touched on this idea earlier, but to support the notion that despite social distinctions, adherents to the cult were all looking to retaliate against Roman society and the injustice of the established social order.<sup>113</sup>

While Livy's account of the mysteries cannot be wholly reliable as an accurate description of actual cult practice, the elements of the Bacchic rites that he describes can be useful in bringing to light some of the contemporary perceptions of the cult in the first century B.C.E. Livy gives a scathing description of the cult, which he characterizes by its violence, corruption, and sexual licentiousness. Though some scholars assert that Livy's depiction of the Bacchic cult was influenced by literary works, Rousselle has suggested that Livy's account reflects the rumors and fears surrounding actual cult practice in 186.<sup>114</sup> Misconceptions about the cult, he argues, were perpetuated by the references to cult in contemporary Roman dramas which

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<sup>109</sup> 1990: 37-38

<sup>110</sup> 1961: 132-34

<sup>111</sup> 1944: 33; cf. Frank 1927: 128 who argues the same.

<sup>112</sup> 1970: 3-44

<sup>113</sup> 1965: 392

<sup>114</sup> 1987: 193-98; cf. e.g. Bruhl 1953: 95-96, Scafuro 2009, and Briscoe who says, "The core of Livy's account can be read as authentic," but because the romance of Aebutius and Hispala closely resembles that of Roman comedy, "one might, then, be tempted to think that L. or his source has combined a kernel of historical truth with a totally fictional episode" (2008: 234).

portrayed the rites as violent and debauched, despite the fact that the allusions to the Bacchic cult come from Plautus' Greek models rather than from contemporary events.<sup>115</sup> Walsh, on the other hand, suggests that it was Livy's sources, early annalists writing in the generation following the conspiracy, who were themselves influenced by the conventions of New Comedy.<sup>116</sup> Whether we choose to follow Rouselle or Walsh, the fact remains that it is difficult to separate historical fact from dramatic fiction in Livy's depiction of the events of 186 B.C. E. With the exception of the steps taken by the Senate to restrict and regulate the Bacchanalia that adhere to the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* preserved in the tablet found at Tiriolo in Bruttium, we cannot be certain whether Livy's account of the affair is historically accurate or not. Although, as Nilsson says, "it is influenced by the traditional picture of the Bacchic *orgia* and cannot be trusted for the details," it may still tell us something about the historical and political context in which Livy felt compelled to portray such a popular cult in such a terrifying light.<sup>117</sup>

### **Livy's Account of the Bacchanalian Conspiracy**

Livy gives a detailed narrative about a young man, Publius Aebutius, whose mother and stepfather contrive a scheme for his corruption by requiring that he be initiated into the Bacchic mysteries, but who is discouraged by his lover, a prostitute named Hispala who, as a slave, participated in the rites with her mistress (39.9-13). Hispala, concerned for Aebutius, paints a horrifying picture for him of cult worship that involves various forms of corruption and, in

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<sup>115</sup> 1987: 195

<sup>116</sup> 1996; cf. Wiseman 1994 who argues that early Roman historians used material derived from dramatic performances to enhance the accounts.

<sup>117</sup> 1957: 14

particular, the sacrifice by the priests of new initiates whose screams would be drowned out by howling and the beating of cymbals and drums. This rumor spreads to the consul, Postumius, who summons Hispala and asks for a full account of her firsthand knowledge of the mysteries. She tells the consul that the cult had originally been open only to women, but because of changes put in place by one priestess, Paculla Annia, it now admitted men as well. The same priestess, she goes on to say, also changed the time of day and frequency with which initiations into the cult were held: they now took place at night, five times a month instead of three times a year during the day. She suggests that these “modifications” to the cult lend themselves to corruption and wrongdoing.

et nocturnum sacrum ex diurno, et pro tribus in anno diebus quinos singulis mensibus dies initiorum fecisse. ex quo in promiscuo sacra sint et permixti viri feminis, et noctis licentia accesserit, nihil ibi facinoris, nihil flagitii praetermissum. (39.13.10)

Men and women are now able to give in to every kind of lust and sexually deviant behavior, which is concealed by the darkness. Men, overcome with convulsions, utter prophecies and disheveled women carry burning torches which they plunge into the Tiber and then bring out still burning.

viros, velut mente capta, cum iactatione fanatica corporis vaticinari; matronas Baccharum habitu crinibus sparsis cum ardentibus facibus decurrere ad Tiberim, demissasque in aquam faces, quia vivum sulphur cum calce insit, integra flamma efferre. (39.13.11-12)

Those who are reluctant to succumb to such behaviors are sacrificed as victims and tied to machines to be carried off by the gods into hidden caves.

raptos a diis homines dici, quos machinae illigatos ex conspectu in abditos specus abripiant: eos esse, qui aut coniurare aut sociari facinoribus aut stuprum pati noluerint. (39.13.13)

She says that in the last two years, it has been ordained that only those who are less than twenty years of age may be initiated into the rites since they are the most impressionable. Hispala herself postulates that the growing number of initiates is very great and even includes certain men and women of high rank.

multitudinem ingentem, alterum iam prope populum esse; in his nobiles quosdam viros feminasque. (39.13.14)

Independent evidence has shown that many of Hispala's accusations are inaccurate, or at least misconceived. For example, it was most likely not a new development that men were admitted into the cult.<sup>118</sup> Of course, although it is impossible to say what sort of activities took place during the rites, as they were part of a mystery cult, there is no evidence to suggest that initiates into the cult of Bacchus participated in ritual murder or human sacrifice. Toynbee believes that the practice described by Hispala of tying victims to a machine to be carried off by the gods (*raptos a diis*) was in fact part of the initiation; it was not murder, however, but part of a rite described by Pausanias in which one (καταβάτης) descended into the Underworld (κατάβασις εἰς Ἅϊδοῦ) only to come out again unharmed.<sup>119</sup> Hispala also makes the accusation that initiation activities included conspiracy, for she says that those who refused to conspire (*coniurare*) were those who became the victims of the ritual sacrifice or other abuse (including "joining in crimes or enduring sexual abuse," *aut sociari facinoribus aut stuprum pati*, 39.13.13). Nevertheless it is this allegation of conspiracy which apparently causes a commotion in the Senate and compels the authorities to take such drastic actions to stop, or at least regulate, the religious activities surrounding the Bacchic cult. The etymology of *coniurare* both implies the

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<sup>118</sup> See Nilsson 1957: 8, Festugière 1954: 92, and Bruhl 1953: 93.

<sup>119</sup> Toynbee 1965: 395) cites a passage in Pausanias in which he claims to have performed this very rite in the cave of Trophonius in Boeotia (9.39.10-14).

communal aspects of the act and suggests that participants adhere to a separate set of *ius*.

Although *coniuratio* was not considered a crime per se until much later (specific accusations begin in 63 B.C.E.), the fact that Bacchic worship involved swearing an oath together in secret led the Senate to view the followers suspiciously.<sup>120</sup>

The reaction of the Senate, according to Livy, when the consul Postumius brings news of the Bacchic cult before them, is interesting to note:

patres pavor ingens cepit, cum publico nomine, ne quid eae coniurationes  
coetusque nocturni fraudis occultae aut periculi importarent, tum privatim suorum  
cuiusque vicem, ne quis adfinis ei noxae esset. (39.14.4)

Great panic seized the senators, not only in the name of the public, that these conspiracies and nocturnal meetings might bring about some hidden crime or danger, but also privately, each for himself and his own people, that some family member be a cause of crime.

The senators immediately assume the worse (that is, in their own opinion), that the worshippers of Bacchus meet at night to conspire and plot against them, the Roman authorities. It seems to be inconsequential to them that Hispala has accused the cult of murder and other crimes. They are concerned, however, about the stability of their office and speculate that their fellow senators themselves may be involved in this so-called conspiracy. Scholars have argued that in 186 B.C.E., the Senate was not threatened by the emergence of a foreign mystery cult at Rome or the group's religious activities as they would portray them in their public decree; rather they took issue with the political ramifications that the organization of the group and its growing power presented.<sup>121</sup> After Postumius presented his evidence to the Senate, it was decided that the matter

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<sup>120</sup> Pagán (2004: 54). On accusations of conspiracy under the *lex Pautia de vi*, see Lintott (1968: 107-24) and Gruen (1974: 224-27).

<sup>121</sup> See e.g. Toynbee 1965: 400, North 1979: 90-98, and Beard et al. who says, "It must have been the power over individuals obtained by the group's leaders that would have seemed so radically new and dangerous to the Roman elite" (1998: 95-96). Contra Gruen 1990: 65-78, who argues that the Senate's legislation reveals an action taken against Hellenism.

should be referred to the consuls, who should then make an inquiry to seek out all priests and priestesses of the cult for examination (*quaestio extra ordinem*) and make the decree both in Rome and throughout Italy that no one initiated into the Bacchic rites should be allowed to assemble for the purpose of performing such rituals. Furthermore, they proposed to conduct an investigation to discover those members who had come together and conspired to commit any crime or immorality. The decree is the only textual evidence, in addition to Livy's historical account, of the Bacchanalian conspiracy.<sup>122</sup> The decree itself does not forbid the worship of Bacchus entirely, but rather lays out the regulations and procedures that must be followed in order to do so. These regulations are concerned mainly with the administration and structure of the cult, but they do not at all deal with cult's rituals and behaviors as one might think, considering the consuls' speech in Livy concerning the Bacchanalia.

First, a worshipper must receive permission from the *praetor urbanus* in Rome with the compliance of the Senate if he or she wishes to conduct Bacchic rites. Then, the group is limited to no more than five people at once and must not be led by any high priest or priestess or be allowed to possess a treasury in common. Also, no one is allowed to conspire or make any vow, and the rites must be performed in public. This decree supports the argument I am about to make that the Roman authorities were not concerned so much with the acts of immorality that they attribute to the cult and its followers as they were with the potential threat to political power that it poses to the Senate. Every one of the prohibitions put in place by the Senate seeks to limit the cult's ability to assemble and undermines the power that they could acquire as a group. Although the decree certainly made it more difficult to carry out the rites, North points out that it was still

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<sup>122</sup> It is preserved in an inscription on a bronze tablet from the Ager Teuranus in Bruttium in southern Italy (*CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 581 = *ILS* 18).

possible; Senators did not object to individual participation, but they did object to the cult's organization on a large scale.<sup>123</sup> Pagán argues that the Senate's main preoccupation was preventing conspiracy, which they felt posed the greatest threat to their authority.<sup>124</sup> In the same vein, Takács, following Gruen, argues that the Senate's seemingly abrupt measures to regulate the cult must be seen as a demonstration of senatorial authority and a shift in foreign policy.<sup>125</sup> Regardless of the exact motivation behind the Senate's actions, I agree that they were compelled to act for political reasons. As I argue below, the Roman Senate will portray the Bacchanalia as a threat to Roman traditional religion and morals and use scare tactics to convince the people of this, but what is really at stake for the Senate is the power and sway they hold over the Roman people.

### **The Consuls' Speech to the People concerning the Bacchanalia**

When the consuls stand on the rostra before the Roman public to deliver their speech, they emphasize the same immorality and sexual depravity that had always been associated with Bacchus' cult in literature from its very beginning. In a speech reminiscent of that of Pentheus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, they proclaim that the city is unsafe while this cult goes unchecked and that Roman values and customs are threatened by the actions of its members. Specifically, the cult puts the city at risk because it makes its male adherents effeminate and transforms them into ineffective soldiers unable to defend their family and city. Although the threat of moral decline posed by the Bacchanalia is a pervasive theme throughout the consuls' speech, I argue that the

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<sup>123</sup> 1979: 90-91

<sup>124</sup> 2004: 54

<sup>125</sup> Takács 2000 and Gruen 1990: 72f.



speech also reveals the Senate's struggle for power over a cult that had begun to gain strength without its knowledge and supervision. The power dynamic at play that threatens to undermine the Senate's authority operates on two levels: on a larger scale, the organization and growing size of the cult that has evaded governmental supervision up to this point puts the Senate in a vulnerable position because they had always taken a role in regulating state religion; on an individual basis, the very tenets of Bacchic worship encourage lack of self-control and madness in its followers. The Roman authorities fear that if the people lose control of themselves, they cannot effectively *be controlled*. If any of the Senators themselves are involved in the cult and lose self-control, the respect and fear they command over the people may be threatened.

The real underlying concerns in the speech that follows are the lack of power on the part of the Senate and the lack of control and restraint on the part of its male citizens. Regardless of the historical accuracy of Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair, this speech highlights real concerns that plagued the male Roman elite: the unease about foreign influence and fear of compromising the *mos maiorum*, anxiety over the breakdown of social and gender boundaries, and the fear of losing their political and military dominance over others. These are fears and anxieties that Roman men grappled with throughout the republic and empire. I argue that the issues at stake for the Senate in 186 B.C.E. were still relevant when Livy dramatized the consul's speech in the first century. What is more, I will show that Ovid places the same concerns and anxieties on a remarkably Roman Pentheus who clearly expresses these issues in his speech to Thebes in book three of the *Metamorphoses*.

Throughout the consuls' speech, Livy emphasizes the threat that the cult poses to the security and stability of the Roman State. The cult is portrayed as jeopardizing Rome's

traditional religious practices by attracting new worshippers who might abandon the city's old gods. While this argument seems straightforward enough, the truth is that throughout its history, Roman religion was known to be innovative and accepting of new cults and rituals.<sup>126</sup> It is also true, however, that one of the more important aspects of Roman religion is its adherence to tradition and prescribed ritual. For the Senate, the problem lies not so much in the addition of new cult worship, but in the abandoning of established religious practices. Furthermore, the consuls will depict the Bacchanalia as a form of religion that is unacceptable to perform at Rome by calling it “perverse and strange worship” (*pravae et extrinae religiones*) and an “obscene sanctuary” (*obscenum sacrarium*). So that they may draw a stark contrast between the Bacchanalia and traditional Roman religion, the consuls preface their address to the people gathered in the forum with a customary prayer formula and then acknowledge that they have done so in order to reinforce this idea:

nulli umquam contioni, Quirites, tam non solum apta sed etiam necessaria haec sollemnis deorum comprecatio fuit, quae vos admoneret hos esse deos, quos colere venerari precarique maiores vestri instituissent non illos, qui pravis et externis religionibus captas mentes velut furialibus stimulis ad omne scelus et ad omnem libidinem agerent. (39.15.2-3)

Citizens, for no assembly has this customary prayer to the gods ever been not only fitting but also necessary, which reminds you all that these are the gods which your ancestors determined should be worshipped, honored, and supplicated, not those who would drive our minds, seized by corrupt and foreign rites, as if the Furies' goads, to every crime and every lust.

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. North: “Almost the best-attested of facts about Roman religious life over a long period is their preparedness to admit the new and foreign—new cults, gods and goddesses, new rituals and practices, even new ideas and conceptions of deity. The process is obviously at its height in the third century B.C., which sees amongst others the admission of Asclepius from Epidaurus; Venus Erycina from Sicily; the Magna Mater from Asia Minor; the first Secular Games for Dis Pater and Proserpina, the King and Queen of the Underworld; the Greek cult of Ceres . . .” (1976: 8).

This is the first of several references in the speech to the Romans' ancestors, *maiores*, as the people are exhorted to worship the very same gods whom their forefathers had urged them to worship. The *maiores*, even generations later, are still able to exercise power over the people through the traditions they have instituted. The Senate views the worship of Bacchus not so much as an act of sacrilege (though they certainly portray it as such), but more significantly as a subversion of the established respect for and, consequently, authority of the *maiores*.

When the consul invokes their ancestors again, it is also concerning the control that those men once exerted over the people, both in religious and political terms:

maiores vestri ne vos quidem, nisi cum aut vexillo in arce posito comitiorum  
causa exercitus eductus esset, aut plebi concilium tribuni edixissent, aut aliquis ex  
magistratibus ad contionem vocasset, forte temere coire voluerunt; et ubicumque  
multitudo esset, ibi et legitimum rectorem multitudinis censebant esse debere.  
(39.15.11)

Your ancestors did not wish that even you gather unintentionally and without reason, except when either the army was called for the sake of assembly because the standard had been placed on the citadel, or the tribunes proclaimed a meeting of the plebeians, or someone of the magistrates called you to a meeting; and wherever there was a crowd of people, they determined that there should be a legal leader of the crowd there.

The *maiores* had ordered that the Roman people should not gather unofficially as a group unless for military purposes or for a political assembly. Whatever the occasion for assembly, some official magistrate or leader, *legitimus rector*, must be present to keep the crowd in check. The *maiores* foresaw the sort of problem that could arise if the ruling elite should fail to retain their authority over the *multitudo*. The idea that the general public might gather in a manner described as inadvertent and rash, *forte temere*, suggests that these people (who presumably are *not* members of the ruling elite) themselves lack control and restraint and must be managed by their superiors. In a city where there was no organized police force, the magistrates in Republican

Rome were responsible for maintaining and enforcing public order in the city. It is difficult to assess exactly to what extent law enforcement in the Republican period was effective; responsibilities were delegated to aediles and minor magistrates without a clear sense of hierarchy or specific function. Of the various magistrates, those who held *imperium* did so through the practical and symbolic use of lictors, without whom they were never seen in public. The public display of lictors by a magistrate served the purpose of keeping crowds in check more so by intimidation and the threat of punishment than by actual physical violence; a magistrate could assert control over a rowdy mass of people by taking a single scapegoat from the crowd to be beaten by a lictor with his fasces. Of course, a large crowd of people would normally outnumber the magistrate and his lictors, so in a way Roman authorities relied on the citizens themselves for policing and hoped that a display of force, more than force itself, would be enough to suppress the people. Although lictors did have a practical role, they were effective more because they represented a physical embodiment of a magistrate's power and claim to authority and his demand for the obedience of the people.<sup>127</sup> That being said, it is easy to see why unexpected public gatherings caused such great concern among Roman authorities. If a mob grew so large that a magistrate's lictors did not have a strong presence or if a crowd gathered in private or at night so without the authorities' knowledge, they could not be managed or even supervised, which the Roman government believed left them vulnerable to conspiracy.

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<sup>127</sup> See Nippel for a discussion of magisterial authority and public order in the Republic (1995: 4-60).

The final instance in which the consul invokes Rome's ancestors is again in a religious context. Just as the *maiores* had prescribed for the Romans which gods they should worship, so too they had the responsibility of censoring foreign cults and religious practices.<sup>128</sup>

quotiens hoc patrum avorumque aetate negotium est magistratibus datum, uti sacra externa fieri vetarent, sacrificulos vatesque foro circo urbe prohiberent, vaticinos libros conquirerent comburerentque, omnem disciplinam sacrificandi praeterquam more Romano abolerent. (39.16.8)

How many times, in the age of our fathers and grandfathers has this duty been given to the magistrates, that they forbid the occurrence of foreign rites, prohibit the sacrificers and prophets from the forum, the circus, and the city, collect and burn books of prophecies, and abolish every method of sacrificing except that in the Roman custom.

Yet again, mention of the *maiores* demonstrates that what is truly at the heart of the issue surrounding the Bacchanalian conspiracy is not moral in nature; it has to do with the Senate's lack of control over the cult. The Senate cites *mos maiorum* to support their decree and legitimize their authority and political agenda. Roman constitutional tradition, *mos*, was notoriously ambiguous and included a wide range of precedents during the Republic. As a result of its ambiguous nature and the fact that unwritten *mos* was continually in development and incorporating new precedents, the aristocracy could manipulate "tradition" or in the very least employ it to their own advantage.<sup>129</sup> Edwards observes that, "In a sense, the rhetoric of moralizing did play a key role in marking off the Roman elite (or at least male members of the elite) from the rest of society."<sup>130</sup> During the republic, before the days of civil turmoil when the

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. Toynbee who says, "The Roman People were constantly craving for new forms of religion in the hope of obtaining spiritual bread in place in place of the stone with which the 'Establishment' supplied them; but every time the 'Establishment' gave admittance to a new cult, it sterilised it by changing the bread to stone as a condition for sanctioning its entry" (1965: 378).

<sup>129</sup> See Lowrie 2007 on use of *exemplum* in stories about foundation and state violence during the collapse of the republic.

<sup>130</sup> 1993: 25

ruling upperclass were at odds, the Roman elite could reinforce and validate their *auctoritas* by appealing to *mos* as a way to maintain their position in a society by keeping the status quo; *mos maiorum* was synonymous with conservatism, for as Lintott points out, “[*mos*] came to be regarded as preponderantly ancient tradition, idealized by conservatives as a counterpoise to new developments which, in their view, were rooted in corrupt statutes.”<sup>131</sup> The ruling class was reluctant to change and sought to keep a firm hold on all aspects of public Roman life; they did so by selectively endorsing as truly “Roman” the customs that put themselves in a position of power and put the people in a position of subordination. Moreover, their “authority was reinforced by its management of public religion, whose rituals shaped the calendar and the conduct of public life in general.”<sup>132</sup>

In the past, any religious practice or sacrifice that was not performed in the “Roman way,” *more Romano*, was forbidden. However, *mos* is an ambiguous concept up for negotiation and shaped to fit the circumstances and needs of the state. In fact, although the Roman authorities were undoubtedly suspicious of foreign influence at Rome, this by itself was not enough to prohibit a foreign cult from entering the city in the past, for instance, the cult of Cybele from Phrygia.<sup>133</sup> At the end of the Second Punic War, a vow was made that brought the cult of Cybele, whom the Romans called Magna Mater, to Rome. Upon its arrival, it was subject to extensive governmental controls. At first glance, it seems strange that one foreign cult (which in some ways bears a strong resemblance to the cult of Bacchus) was welcomed into the city with a temple dedicated prominently on the Palatine hill, while the other was expelled and its

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<sup>131</sup> 1999: 7

<sup>132</sup> Lintott 1999: 198

<sup>133</sup> See North 1976.

followers persecuted. However, there are several important differences: first, the cult of Cybele was *invited* into the city and officially recognized by the State; second, the restraints and controls that were placed on the cult meant that the Roman authorities could supervise and, if necessary, regulate all aspects of the cult practices. Most importantly, it seems that legislation concerning the cult severely restricted the participation of Romans.<sup>134</sup> Roman citizens could not become priests; the Phrygian priests and priestesses were segregated, and their cultic activities were confined to the temple with the exception of a single procession from which Romans were excluded.<sup>135</sup> It is clear, according to Livy's account, that the Bacchanalia differed in one very important regard: it had permeated the city without the supervision and regulation of the state.

According to Livy, the Senate fears that a cult that had gained strength in numbers without its knowledge may become too powerful to keep in check.<sup>136</sup> In order to gain the people's support, the consuls attempt to arouse the same sort of alarm in the Roman people that they, the authorities, have experienced. To do so, they describe the effect of the cult on its followers as a force that, once it has overcome an individual, cannot be controlled.

. . .[deos] qui pravis et externis religionibus captas mentes velut furialibus stimulis  
ad omne scelus et ad omnem libidinem agerent. (39.15.3)

. . . [gods] who would drive our minds, seized by corrupt and foreign rites, as if  
the Furies' goads, to every crime and every lust.

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<sup>134</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus says that, "No native-born Roman walks through the city dressed in bright cloths, begging for alms or accompanied by flute-players, nor worships the goddess with wild Phrygian ceremonies." (*Roman Antiquities* II.19)

<sup>135</sup> See Gruen 1990: 5-33. Beard et al. 1998: 97 suggests that the Romans may have introduced the cult to the city before realizing what its worship entailed (self-castrating priests, wild music and dancing, etc.) and so were forced to allow its existence – but not without strict regulations.

<sup>136</sup> See 39.13.14 and 39.15.10, discussed below.

This force is capable of capturing one's mind and compelling him to commit crimes and act on his passions.<sup>137</sup> The Senate's fear of what they do not have total control over is played out on a smaller scale for its individual citizens: *capta mens* and *agere* convey the image of a passive and yielding worshipper who has no command of his faculties and is lead unconsciously to participate in the cult. Compare Horace's depiction of Bacchic possession in the *Odes*, where he claims to be driven by the god into some grove, while his mind has been transformed into a new state: *quae nemora aut quos agor in specus / uelox mente noua?* ("Into which groves or which cave am I being driven swiftly, with new mind?," 3.25.2f.). Here also, the effect of the god Bacchus is portrayed as taking possession of one's mind and driving him, not necessarily unwillingly, but as a passive "participant."

Later in their speech, the consuls describe the overwhelming influence the Bacchanalia may assert over an individual who concedes his self-control as the cult "carries him away into a whirlpool."

optare igitur unusquisque vestrum debet, ut bona mens suis omnibus fuerit. si quem libido, si furor in illum gurgitem abripuit, illorum eum, cum quibus in omne flagitium et facinus coniuravit, non suum iudicet esse. ne quis etiam errore labatur vestrum, Quirites, non sum securus. (39.16.4-5)

There each one of you should pray that everyone have a sound mind. If lust, if madness has carried anyone away into that whirlpool, he should be considered to be not his own person, but of those people with whom he had conspired to every shame and crime. Citizens, I am not free from concern that even someone of you should totter in error.

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. 6.36.8 *capti et stupentes animi* ("puzzled and confounded"); 8.8.11f. *prodigii ea res loco habita captisque magis mentibus quam consceleratis similis uisa* ("The whole incident was regarded as a portent, and seemed to be an act of madness rather than deliberate wickedness"); and 39.13.12 *uiros, uelut mente capta, cum iactatione fanatica corporis uaticinari* ("men, as if with captured minds, would utter prophecies, with fanatical tossing of their bodies").



One who has allowed himself to get caught up in the Bacchic rites is said to “slip and fall in error.” The verb *labi* again suggests that participants in the Bacchanalia lack control over their actions: one slips and slides by accident, *errore*, and does not choose to do so of their own volition. Furthermore, the consuls urge that these conspirators be judged to be in the possession of others, not themselves (*illorum eum . . . suum iudicet esse*). This must certainly be the biggest threat to Roman masculinity, that a man, as if a slave, be subservient to another and lack total authority in the form of ownership over his own person, for as Williams puts it, “The tenuous nature of the achieved status of masculinity accounts for the importance placed on the notion of control in Roman ideologies of masculinity.”<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, this poses a real threat to the Senate whose authority may be undermined if they cannot control those people, of all social statuses, who cannot control themselves. This issue is compounded by the fear that madness might also gain control over one’s own mind just as *capta mens* indicates above.

In both passages cited above, the effect on an individual’s mind of participating in the Bacchic cult is like being tormented by the Furies and driven mad. This idea is consistent with depictions of Bacchic worship throughout Latin literature: the maenads of Catullus 64 “eagerly raved in every direction with frenzied mind” (*quae tum alacres passim lymphata mente furebant*, 254); Amata in the *Aeneid* is driven mad by Allecto and compared to a bacchant who “maddened, rages unrestrainedly throughout the vast city” (*immensam sine more furit lymphata per urbem*, 377) and whom “Allecto drives in all directions with the goads of Bacchus” (*reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi*, 405). What is more, civil strife is often equated with *furor* and Bacchic *furor* in particular is a force that disrupts the stability of the state and threatens its

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<sup>138</sup> 1999: 142

destruction.<sup>139</sup> In the *Aeneid* this occurs in two important episodes in which a queen, having lost control of herself in a Bacchic frenzy, poses a real threat to her city's safety and security, leaving it vulnerable to attack. Amata's *furor* is the same force that drives Turnus to wage war with the Trojans that he cannot win. Similarly, Dido rages with Bacchic *furor* when she learns that Aeneas is leaving for Italy and abandoning her in Carthage.

eadem impia Fama furenti  
detulit armari classem cursumque parari.  
saevit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem  
bacchatur, qualis commotis excita sacris  
Thyias, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho  
orgia nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithaeron. (4.298-303)

That same impious Rumor brought news to her, raging, that the fleet is being equipped and a journey prepared. Weak-minded, she raves and, inflamed, she runs wild through the whole city, like a Maenad, thrilled by the stirred rites, when the triennial mysteries rouse her and, hearing the Bacchic cry, Mount Cithaeron summons her at night with its cry.

She had already left her city vulnerable when she fell in love with Aeneas because she ceased to govern and oversee its progress. Now, having lost control of her senses, *inops animi*, Dido rashly decides to kill herself, leaving her city without a ruler and entirely vulnerable to destruction. Dido's example is particularly significant for our discussion of the Roman Senate's perception of Bacchic worship because it shows that one who is not in control of him or herself cannot effectively control others nor do they easily submit to others' authority.

As we have seen, the consuls' description of the cult's practices resembles contemporary literary depictions of the cult in the first century. We might consider then, whether Livy, in his account of the consuls' speech, is imitating contemporary or earlier Roman poets in describing the Bacchanalia. Alternately, is it possible that the Senators were influenced by contemporary

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<sup>139</sup> Cf. Vergil, *Aen.* 1.294; Horace, *Epodes* 7.13, *Odes* 4.15.17.

Roman drama, the plays of Naevius, Ennius, Plautus and others who make numerous references to Bacchic worship? On the other hand, could contemporary literary allusions to Bacchic ritual practices, as the ones cited above, be influenced by Livy's account of the Bacchanalia? Of course, these questions are not so easily answered, especially because it is nearly impossible to pinpoint exactly how and when Bacchic religion arrived at Rome and given the fact that by Livy's time, it was well-known and pervasive in Roman culture. Scholars are divided as to whether the allusions to Bacchic cult in early Roman drama of the second century refer to specific events in Rome, obviously the most important being the scandal of 186 B.C.E., or whether these allusions stem from their Greek models.<sup>140</sup> Rousselle makes an interesting argument, though I am not entirely convinced, that these allusions in Plautus do, in fact, come from the Greek models rather than contemporary events. He argues that, "the negative model of ecstatic Dionysiac worship," that is the violent, effeminate, and immoral characteristics of the god and his worship, helped to form a negative public opinion of Bacchic cult even before its persecution in 186 and although the Bacchic cult posed no such threat in 186, the rumors, adopted from the cult's portrayal in Roman drama, led to the persecution.<sup>141</sup> The weakness in his argument lies in the fact that we cannot be certain that the poets' representation of the Bacchanalia informed public opinion and not the other way around. Material evidence shows that the cult existed in Italy at this time and was commonly recognized;<sup>142</sup> it seems to me that the

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<sup>140</sup> Bruhl 1953: 11-14 see allusions to Bacchants in the *Bacchides*, *Aulularia*, and *Amphitruo* as evidence that the Romans knew of the Bacchanalia's existence in Rome before the conspiracy in 186 and claims that *Casina* refers explicitly to the *senatus consultum* itself (*nugator sciens, nam ecastor nunc Bacchae nullae ludent*, 978-9). Cf. North 1979: 88.

<sup>141</sup> 1987: 195-198

<sup>142</sup> For a full discussion of the popularity of Dionysus' cult in southern Italy, see Bruhl 1953: 58-69; see Cole 1981 on evidence for the private cult of Dionysus that existed alongside a public one; North 1979 shows convincingly that the Roman authorities were well aware of the cult's existence before 186 B.C.E.

general public could have easily formed an opinion about the cult based on their own first or secondhand experience with it. Rumors of the cult's ritual violence and immoral behavior could have spread easily enough on their own and speculation about what actually happened to Bacchus' followers was endless given the fact that only the initiates knew the reality of it. The truth is that references to the Bacchanalia in Roman comedy would only make sense to the audience if they knew something about it; the poets were not introducing the cult to them for the first time. I would argue that the allusions to Bacchic cult in Plautus and other poets assume the audience's familiarity with the cult.

Whatever one's opinion about specific references to Bacchic cult in early Roman drama, we must concede that an average audience would have at least some vague ideas about the Bacchanalia; those who were uninitiated would have been more susceptible to negative portrayals of the cult, a fact which Livy has the Roman Senate use to their advantage as they try to arouse the fear that the cult posed a real threat to their safety. Although Livy's account of the consuls' portrayal of the Bacchanalia is informed secondhand by a freedwoman who only claims to have been initiated herself and has her own reasons for incriminating the cult, it gives us a few details about what sort of rituals were performed at the Bacchanalia and, what is more important for our purposes, reveals something about how the cult was perceived.

Livy's Bacchanalia is like something out of a horror film. It seems that all that the (uninitiated) people know of the cult is that there are cries and screams at night.

Bacchanalia tota iam pridem Italia et nunc per urbem etiam multis locis esse, non fama solum accepisse vos sed crepitibus etiam ululatibusque nocturnis, qui personant tota urbe . . . (39.15.6)

I am certain that you have learned that the Bacchanalia exists, previously in all of Italy and now even in many places throughout the city, not by rumor alone, but

also by the shouting and howling at night, which resound throughout the whole city, and I am certain that you do not know what this matter is.

The description is, I believe, intentionally vague. The consul has been told by Hispala, the freedwoman informant, the sorts of things that happen at the Bacchanalia. Although she recounts a number of disturbing things about the cult, the consul does not name them here, for perhaps the people may be more frightened by it if the details are left to their own imaginations. The common thread in Livy's various portrayals of the Bacchanalia seems to be the screaming and howls at night; this is, of course, naturally terrifying and could suggest any number of horrific actions or crimes, and as Hispala had told Aebutius earlier, it is these screams that drown out and thus cover up the violent attacks that she asserts take place during the ritual.<sup>143</sup>

What the consul does announce to his audience, however, is the demographic of the cult's followers, those whom he claims are the ones responsible for the chaos and lawlessness that has taken over the city at night.

primum igitur mulierum magna pars est, et is fons mali huiusce fuit; deinde simillimi feminis mares, stuprati et constupratores, fanatici, vigiliis, vino, strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis attoniti. (39.15.9)

First, then, a great part of them are women, and this was the source of this very evil; then, there are men most similar to women, debauched and debauchers, frantic and thunderstruck with wine and wakefulness and shouting at night.

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. Hispala to Aebutius: "As each was introduced, he became a sort of victim for the priests. They, she continued, would lead him to a place which would ring with howls and the song of a choir and the beating of cymbals and drums, that the voice of the sufferer, when his virtue was violently attacked, might not be heard" (*ut quisque introductus sit, uelut uictimam tradi sacerdotibus. eos deducere in locum, qui circumsonet ululatus cantuque symphoniae et cymbalorum et tympanorum pulsu, ne uox quiritantis, cum per uim stuprum inferatur, exaudiri possit*, 39.10.7). Livy also mentions this fact as he introduces his account of the Bacchanalia: "This violence was concealed because amid the howlings and the crash of drums and cymbals no cry of the sufferers could be heard as the debauchery and murders proceeded." (*occulebat uim quod prae ululatus tympanorumque et cymbalorum strepitu nulla uox quiritantium inter stupra et caedes exaudiri poterat*, 39.8.8).

Foremost, the consuls says that women make up the majority of Bacchus' worshippers and are the cause of "this evil" (*malum hoc*). The remaining initiates are male, but hardly so in the eyes of the Senate, composed entirely of elite Roman men. These male bacchants are portrayed as second-class even to the women who are so disparaged in this passage, for the women are given the credit for causing all the ruckus surrounding the Bacchanalia. The men on the other hand, are so passive that they are not even considered to have a lead role in the cult's debauchery. These "men" are degraded on two counts: they are very much like women (*simillimi feminis*) and their senses have been struck by wine and shouting (*vigiliis, vino, strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis attoniti*). Much like the meaning conveyed in the phrase *capta mens* discussed above, those who are *attoniti* have been influenced by an outside force and are not in control of their own mind and faculties. The participle *attonitus* has a violent connotation ("thunderstruck, stunned, terrified") and usually describes one's mental state, suggesting not only that these are men unable to control themselves and their actions, but that this is the case because they are too weak to prevent being subjected to external forces. Horace uses the word in the *Odes* to refer to Bacchic inspiration: *qui Musas amat imparis, / ternos ter cyathos attonitus petet / uates* ("The poet, inspired, who's in love with the odd-numbered Muses, will ask for three times three [measures of wine]," C. 3.19.13-15).<sup>144</sup> Here, as I will discuss in chapter three, the poet must relinquish self-control in order to become divinely inspired even if it means that this inspiration "places [the poet] in the female subject position, penetrated and overborne."<sup>145</sup> In discussing Roman virtue, Cicero

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. also Archilochus (fr. 120), who says that he is 'thunderstruck', συγκεραυνωθείς, when he performs dithyrambs: ὥς Διωνύσου ἄνακτος καλὸν ἐξάρξαι μέλος / οἶδα διθύραμβον οἴνῳι συγκεραυνωθείς φρένας ("I know how to lead the lovely dithyrambic song of lord Dionysus, my wits thunderstruck with wine").

<sup>145</sup> Fowler 2002: 159 treats this idea at length in the appropriately titled "Masculinity under Threat?"

emphasizes that of self-control, *ordo et moderatio*, which he defines as a quality that leads one to resist acting or speaking rashly and above all doing or saying anything that may seem unmanly.

inest ordo et moderatio . . . temeritatem reformidat et non audet cuiquam aut dicto protervo aut facto nocere vereturque quicquam aut facere aut eloqui, quod parum virile videatur. (*De fin.* 2.47)

This is the principle of order and restraint . . . it shrinks from rashness; it does not dare do harm to anyone by reckless word or deed; and it fears to do or say anything that may appear to be unmanly.

Roman masculinity is concerned most of all with one's conduct and composure. An ideal Roman man maintained his self-control or faced being viewed as "not manly enough." Livy's description of the Bacchanalia demonstrates that Bacchic worship embodies characteristics at odds with the Roman preoccupation with restraint and moderation. Furthermore, the men are called *stuprati et constupratores*, very loaded language indeed.

The word *stuprum* appears eleven times throughout Livy's account of the Bacchanalia.<sup>146</sup> While it denotes shameful sexual behavior in every context, its exact meaning and the way in which it is translated can be quite varied: from "defilement" or "disgrace" to "debauchery" or "(sexual) violation." Festus, writing in the second century CE, tells us that originally in the early Republican period, *stuprum* meant simply "shame" without necessarily implying a sexual meaning.<sup>147</sup> Over time, the word came to refer specifically to sexual behavior, but retained its strong moral connotations. In his discussion of the concept of *stuprum*, Williams says that the word has more to do with an individual's freeborn status than the victim's sex: "The rhetoric of *stuprum* is often deployed in descriptions of wartime rape or forcible prostitution of the freeborn,

<sup>146</sup> Cf. 39.8.7-8; 10.7; 13.10; 13.13-14; 14.8; 15.14; 18.3.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Festus (418.8), *stuprum pro turpitudine antiquos dixisse apparet . . . Naevius: 'sesequie i perire mavolunt ibidem quam cum stupro redire ad suos polularis* ("It is apparet that the ancients used the word *stuprum* for *turpitudine* . . . Naevius [says]: 'They prefer to die there on the spot than to return to their people with *stuprum*').

two contexts that highlight the shaming nature of the violation of the *pudicitia* of the freeborn.”<sup>148</sup> As Williams and others have argued, issues of Roman masculinity and sexuality are more concerned with the active and passive roles of participants in sexual acts: a man involved in a male-male relationship is disgraced only if he is the penetrated partner in the sex act, in which case he is understood to take on the feminized, submissive role. Of course, this applies also to women, though only the freeborn, as slaves or prostitutes can never be the victims of *stuprum*. In any of these cases, the Roman man who is the active penetrator, although he may be charged with having committed acts of *stupra*, retains his masculinity. In fact, as Williams points out, the language of *stuprum* is often used to describe the rape of conquered peoples by a victorious armies.<sup>149</sup>

It is certainly significant then that Livy uses *stuprum* to such an extent in his discussion of the Bacchanalian conspiracy. The Senate emphasizes the fact that its freeborn citizens involved in the cult have subjected themselves to horrific sexual violence and submission. There are several instances in which Livy points to the atrocity of *stuprum* in connection with the social position of those involved:

. . . *stupra promiscua ingenuorum feminarumque* erant . . . (39.8.7)

. . . the promiscuous sexual violence of free men and women . . .

raptos a diis homines dici, quos machinae illigatos ex conspectu in abditos specus abripiant: eos esse, qui aut coniurare aut sociari facinoribus aut *stuprum* pati noluerint. multitudinem ingentem, alterum iam prope populum esse; in his **nobiles quosdam viros feminasque**. (39.13.13-14)

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<sup>148</sup> 1999: 103

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Sall. *Cat.* 51.9; Cic. *Phil.* 3.31; *Rhet. Herenn.* 4.12; Tac. *Hist.* 3.33; Livy 26.13.15: *nec dirui incendiue patriam uidebo, nec rapi ad stuprum matres Campanas uirginesque et ingenuos pueros* (“nor will I look upon my country being destroyed and burned, Campanian mothers, maidens, and freeborn boys being seized for *stuprum*.”)



[Hispala said that] men were said to have been snatched away by the gods whom, after they were tired up, machines carried away out of sight and into hidden caves: for these men were those who did not want either to conspire or join in the crimes or suffer sexual violence. Their number is huge, already nearly a second population; among these were certain well born men and women.

These charges are especially troublesome for those who are *ingenuus* and *nobilis*, for their involvement in acts of *stupra* endangers the integrity of the state by threatening the social status of its upperclass, freeborn participants; female initiates become the victims of violent sexual crimes and, what is worse for the state, male initiates are forced into effeminate roles. In fact, the Roman authorities take the charges of *stuprum* so seriously that those who have committed the crime, on par with murder, are sentenced to death:

qui *stupris* aut caedibus violati erant . . . eos capitali poena adficiabant. (39.18.3)

Upon those who had been dishonored by the acts of *stuprum* or murder . . . on those men they inflicted capital punishment.

Again, what the Senate fears most is that these worshippers, under the influence of Bacchus, have been forced into a subordinate position, in terms of both their social status and gender, and as a result are subject to their cult instead of to the Roman state.

The consul goes on to appeal to the people's sense of pride in military valor: how could these men, whom he just described as "most similar to women" and "covered up by their own *stupra*" possibly defend their country?

hoc sacramento initiatos iuvenes milites faciendos censetis, Quirites? his ex obsceno sacrario eductis arma committenda? hi cooperti stupris suis alienisque pro pudicitia coniugum ac liberorum vestrorum ferro decernent? (39.15.13-14).

Citizens, do you think that young men initiated by this rite should be made soldiers? That weapons should be entrusted to these men brought out from this obscene shrine? Will these men, buried in their own sexual violence and that of others, fight in war on behalf of the chastity of your wives and children?

As I have discussed above, *stuprum* is often used to describe the rape of a subjugated people by their conquerors after they have been defeated.<sup>150</sup> The act of rape itself is, of course, the most extreme way in which a man may exert his male dominance over another and express his “masculinity.” The consuls then wonder how men who have been denigrated and forced into the most subordinate of positions might go to war for their country; for these “men” are more like the peoples whom the Roman army hopes to defeat than the conquerors themselves. The issue is complicated, however, by the fact that although the cult of Bacchus includes men who have been made effeminate, it must, on the other hand, also include those who have forced them into such a subordinate role.

The consul expresses concern for the state for two reasons: first of all, because its citizens have been made weak and effeminate by their involvement in the Bacchanalia, they cannot possibly defend their country; secondly, the cult itself, which had grown immensely since its establishment in Rome threatens the stability of the state and its institutions with the sheer number of its members and by the fact that the cult has gone unnoticed and unsupervised by the authorities for some time.

nullas adhuc vires coniuratio, ceterum incrementum ingens virium habet, quod in dies plures fiunt. (39.15.10)

Up to this point, the conspiracy has no strength, but it has a huge amount of strength in the fact that their number grows every day.

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<sup>150</sup> Although *stuprum* (even in Livy’s account of the Bacchanalia) is not *always* necessarily associated with rape, the two are often conflated, e.g. *nulla vox quiritantium inter stupra et caedes exaudiri poterat* (“no cry of the sufferers could be heard as the debauchery and murders proceeded,” 39.8.8) and *ne uox quiritantis, cum per vim stuprum inferatur, exaudiri possit* (“so that the voice of the sufferer, when his virtue was violently attacked, might not be heard,” 39.10.7). In both instances the individual upon whom *stuprum* is committed “cries out,” indicating that he is an unwilling participant in the act.

Furthermore, as I have discussed above, according to Hispala, who informs the consul, this group even includes noble, upperclass citizens.

multitudinem ingentem, alterum iam prope populum esse; in his nobiles quosdam viros feminasque (39.13.14)

Their number is huge, already nearly a second population; among these are certain well born men and women.

Whether this claim is true or not – scholars have made various arguments about the social composition of the Bacchic cult in 186 B.C.E. – the consul means to instill fear in his audience by insinuating that the cult has infiltrated all social groups at Rome.<sup>151</sup> At the heart of this issue is the fact that the Senators cannot possibly police the public if members of their own aristocracy are not under their control. As I have discussed above, *mos maiorum*, unwritten constitutional precedent in the Roman republic, was a tool used by the conservative ruling class to assert their authority and maintain their high social standing. The issue of autonomy and control goes beyond the upperclass controlling the lower classes; the Roman aristocracy relied on their peers to monitor and control their own behavior, both to maintain the status quo and to set an example for the lower classes over which they were trying to assert their power. As Edwards aptly puts it, “The republican elite was self-regulating, not so much in that individuals were guided by their private consciences but because they were concerned not to imperil the *dignitas* (“social standing”) which they enjoyed in the eyes of their peers.”<sup>152</sup> The censors put in place to enforce *mos maiorum* were not concerned with punishing mass citizens in order to keep public order;

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<sup>151</sup> See discussion above for overview of the scholarship on this topic (5f.).

<sup>152</sup> 1993: 32

rather they censored only senators and members of the equestrian class.<sup>153</sup> Those who failed to uphold the integrity of their high social class and to behave appropriately according to *mos maiorum* faced the possibility of being expelled from the Senate.<sup>154</sup>

As the speech continues, the consuls' assertions about the cult become increasingly vague and simultaneously more alarming.

necdum omnia, in quae coniurarunt, edita facinora habent. adhuc priuatis noxiis, quia nondum ad rem publicam opprimendam satis virium est, coniuratio sese impia tenet. crescit et serpit quotidie malum. iam maius est, quam ut capere id privata fortuna possit: ad summam rem publicam spectat. (39.16.3)

They have not yet disclosed all the crimes for which they have conspired. Thus far their impious conspiracy contains itself in private crimes, since there is not yet enough strength for crushing the republic. Evil grows and creeps along every day. Already it is a greater matter than that which private fortune could seize: it intends to control the State.

It is the consuls' aim to frighten the people, but not too much so: the ever prevalent, yet ambiguous, charge of "conspiracy" (*coniuratio*) is mentioned twice here, and again, emphasis is placed on the growing size of the cult. At first, the consul says that the cult has no strength (*nullas adhuc vires coniuratio* and *nondum ad rem publicam opprimendam satis virium est*), but insinuates that, because it continues to grow, it will soon be strong enough to pose a real and substantial threat to the city. In the end, the consul pulls out all the stops in his attempt to stir up fear in his audience by directing the cult's assault at them.

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Leg.* 3.28-29.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Livy 4.8.2: *idem hic annus censurae initium fuit, rei a parua origine ortae, quae deinde tanto incremento aucta est, ut morum disciplinaeque Romanae penes eam regimen, senatui equitumque centuriis decoris dedecorisque discrimen sub dicione eius magistratus* ("This year was also the beginning of the censorship, an office which, having arisen from a small beginning, then grew with such great development that the power over the conduct and morals of Rome was in their hands, the distinction of honor and dishonor of the Senate and the equestrian order was in the authority of this magistrate").

iam ubi vos dilapsi domos et in rura vestra eritis, illi coierint, consultabunt de sua salute simul ac vestra pernicie: tum singulis vobis universi timendi erunt.  
(39.16.4)

Now when you all have dispersed and gone to your homes and farms, they will gather and at the same time make plans for their own safety and your destruction: then they, all together, must be feared by you as individuals.

In case the people are not frightened enough by the prospect of the state's destruction, he asserts that the cult, for some reason or another, is also out to destroy all the individuals gathered in the forum to hear the consuls' speech. Of course, this claim is even more ambiguous and unfounded than the previous accusations, as are all the consuls' claims that the Bacchanalia poses a serious threat to the city, and they offer no evidence to support this assertion or explain what sort of measures the cult might take to cause the destruction of the Roman people or their motivation for doing so. In the end, the fear that the Bacchic cult might threaten the power and authority of the Roman Senate is reflected in the terror and panic the consuls try to evoke in the citizens as they displace their own concerns and anxieties about self-control onto their Roman audience.

The same sort of intimidation and fear tactics are at work in the speech that Pentheus gives to the Theban people in Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*. He too attempts to rally his people against a force that threatens to undermine his political authority and control over his citizens. Like the Roman consuls, in his speech to the Theban people, Pentheus asserts that the cult of Bacchus threatens the security of the city and its people. He fears that those who worship the god will be made effeminate and ineffective soldiers because of the effect that the rites have on one's mind and on his ability to control his actions. I will show that Pentheus is characteristically Roman in the way that he appeals to his people's sense of national identity and implores them to look to their ancestors and origins as models for masculinity and patriotism. He is, however,

ultimately unsuccessful because he misinterprets Roman masculinity and lacks control in his actions as a result of his anger and overly aggressive tendencies.

### **Ovid's Pentheus: On how to be a (Roman) Man**

Although Ovid's Pentheus, distinguished by his anger and arrogance, is characteristically similar to that of Euripides' *Bacchae*, he is also consumed by traditionally Roman moral concerns: as Anderson says, "Pentheus speaks for native Roman values of manliness and martial preparedness against the alien vices of effeminacy and religious fakery that he attributes to Bacchus and his corrupt followers."<sup>155</sup> Upon discovering that Bacchus and his cult have arrived at Thebes, Pentheus delivers a scornful, emotionally charged speech in which he rejects the god and his rites and calls on his people to take up arms against him. Just as in the consuls' decree forbidding the Bacchanalia at Rome, Pentheus is remarkably vague in his description of the cult and explains the threat posed by it in ambiguous, yet still alarming, terms. At first, the king is not clear about how the new divinity will prove to be the destruction of Thebes; he simply wishes that his city be defeated by iron and fire instead of an unknown and disgraceful enemy.

si fata vetabant  
stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique  
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!  
essemus miseri sine crimine, sorsque querenda,  
non celand a foret, lacrimaeque pudore carerent. (*Met.* 3.548-50)

If the fates forbade that Thebes stand for a long time, I wish that siege engines and men destroyed the city's walls, and that iron and fire resound! We would be wretched, but without crime, our fate would have to be lamented, not hidden, and our tears would lack shame.

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<sup>155</sup> 1997: 389

Pentheus identifies himself as the virile war hero who would rather die defending his country than yield to a foreign enemy, and he imagines Bacchus and his followers as a military threat to Thebes itself. As Anderson points out, it is ironic that Thebes will survive, but Pentheus will not.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, he imagines himself dying bravely to save Thebes at the hands of hostile men, not an effeminate god and his mother who worships him. The king wants his struggle with this foreign deity and his cult to be a violent and military one, so he paints it as such: if it is Thebes' fate to fall, let its walls be destroyed by *men*, war machines, fire, and iron. He is horrified by the alternative, that an effeminate boy be the cause of its destruction:

at nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi,  
quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum,  
sed madidus murra crinis mollesque coronae  
purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum . . . (553-56)

But now Thebes will be captured by an unarmed boy, who enjoys neither wars, nor weapons, nor the use of horses, but hair dripping with myrrh, soft garlands, and gold interwoven with purple and embroidered robes.

Pentheus makes basic assumptions about masculinity as if a Roman man. He characterizes Bacchus by all of the stereotypical eastern and effeminate attributes that a Roman man might scorn: disinterest in war and weapons, hair soaked in perfume, *soft* garlands, and purple embroidered clothing. Pentheus shows such great disdain for a man who does not meet his standards for masculinity that he emphatically refers to him as *puer*, for to call him *vir* would be to assign him more power than Pentheus believes he deserves.<sup>157</sup> Pentheus describes Bacchus as the antithesis of Theban manliness and appeals to the Theban men's sense of masculinity and

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<sup>156</sup> 1996: 393

<sup>157</sup> As Alston has argued in his article on the relationship between Roman soldiers and masculinity, the word *vir* (which shares a root with *virtus*) means more than just "man" and is quite distinct from *homo*: "*vir* appears to have been used for more aristocratic men, or men worthy of praise . . . the *vir* is of higher status than the *homo* and it is the *vir* with whom we should identify the ideal man" (1998: 206).

military strength in order to highlight this contrast. Feldherr has pointed out that in some ways Pentheus' speech even resembles that of a Roman commander to his army as depicted by Livy.<sup>158</sup>

non enim cristas volnera facere; et per picta atque aurata scuta transire  
Romanum pilum et candore tunicarum fulgentem aciem ubi res ferro geratur  
cruentari. (10.39.12)

For [he said] crests do not give wounds; and a Roman spear pierces through painted and gilded shields and their battle line, shinning with the splendor of their tunics, become bloody when with swords the battle would be waged.

The painted and gilded shields (*picta atque aurata scuta*) recalls Bacchus' woven robes, embroidered with purple and gold (*purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibibus aurum*, 556). Just as the Roman commander boasts that, "crests do not give wounds" (*non enim cristas volnera facere*), Pentheus scoffs that an "unarmed boy" (*puer inermis*, 553) might capture Thebes. Not only does it disgust Pentheus that an unarmed and unwarlike boy, identified by his foreign finery, might pose a threat to the city, but he is greatly concerned that the young Theban men might shun their weapons, and, like Bacchus, cease to "enjoy war, weapons, and horses" (*neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum*, 554).

Like the consuls who feared that the Roman men who had been initiated into the cult would become too effeminate to defend their city, Pentheus claims that Bacchus' worshippers who were once soldiers are now overcome by "feminine" voices, wine, and drums:

hoc sacramento initiatos iuvenes milites faciendos censetis, Quirites? his ex obsceno sacrario eductis arma committenda? hi cooperti stupris suis alienisque pro pudicitia coniugum ac liberorum uestrorum ferro decernent? (Livy, 39.15.13-14).

Citizens, do you think that young men initiated by this rite should be made soldiers? That weapons should be entrusted to these men brought out from this obscene shrine? Will these men, buried in their own sexual violence and that of

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<sup>158</sup> 1997: 45f.



others, fight in war on behalf of the chastity of your wives and children?

aerane tantum  
aere repulsa valent et adunco tibia cornu  
et magicae fraudes, ut, quos non bellicus ensis,  
non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis,  
femineae voces et mota insania vino  
obsценique greges et inania tympana vincant? (532-37)

Are bronze cymbals, crashed in the air, and the flute with curved horn, and magic tricks so strong that those men whom neither war-time swords, nor the war trumpet, nor ranks with drawn spears terrified, feminine voices, and madness stirred up with wine, and obscene mobs, and empty drumming might conquer them?

Pentheus's description of the Bacchanalia contains many of the same characteristics and elements that define the Roman Bacchanalia of 186 B.C.E.: cymbals, horns, and drumming (*circumsonet ululatibus cantuque symphoniae et cymbalorum et tympanorum pulsu*, Livy 39.10.7); shrieking and madness caused by excessive amounts of wine (*vino, strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis attoniti*, 39.15.9); and obscene acts (*stuprati et constupratores*, 39.15.9). It seems that although Pentheus belittles the power of Bacchus – an unarmed boy who dislikes war could not possibly capture Thebes – the god has overcome the Theban soldiers, who, having previously resisted their enemies in war, have now been conquered by Bacchic madness. Although Pentheus claims to be concerned about the moral implications of the cult, I argue that what really troubles him and associates him more strongly with his Roman counterparts is the issue of power and control. Like the Senate, Pentheus' struggle with Bacchus for dominance is twofold: there is the issue of controlling his citizens, who have been carried away by the new religion and made ineffective soldiers, and there is the threat of the god himself, who Pentheus fears will take over his city.

Pentheus' first concern, emphasized by its prominent position at the beginning of the episode, is that men and women of both upper and lower classes rush together indiscriminately in a mob and are all swept up toward the rites:

turba ruit, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque  
vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur. (529-30)

The mob rushes on, mothers and daughters mixed up with men, and common people, and nobles are carried away to the unknown rites.

The worshippers are all mingled, regardless of gender or social position, and are “carried away” toward the Bacchanalia.<sup>159</sup> The imagery also recalls that used of the consuls to describe the intoxicating effect and overpowering force with which the worship of Bacchus compels an individual. Livy's portrayal of Bacchic worship shows it affecting the mind and taking over one's faculties. In his account, verbs such as *agere* and *abripere* and the phrase *capta mens* suggest the cult's direct influence over the individual and his or her resulting lack of self-control as the power of the god seems to take control of its followers by dulling their senses and inhibitions.<sup>160</sup> Bacchic worship operates in the same way in Ovid's account of Bacchus at Thebes: not only does the Bacchanalia conquer the individual worshipers (*vincant*, 537), who are characterized by their wine-induced madness (*mota insania vino*, 536), but as Pentheus declares, madness (*furor*) has also struck (*attonere*) their minds: *quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras / attonuit mentes?* (“What madness has stupefied your minds, people born of the serpent, offspring of

<sup>159</sup> Although Pentheus does not seem particularly concerned that the rites have attracted men and women of various social groups, these lines are placed emphatically at the beginning of this episode, immediately preceding Pentheus' speech. Ovid has put a contemporary Roman twist on the Greek myth by alluding to the events of 186 B.C.E., for as we have seen, the consuls feared that the Bacchanalia would threaten the social standing of its freeborn citizens by degrading them. Furthermore, the episode becomes more Roman by the fact that in Euripides' *Bacchae*, it is only the women who worship the god (excepting Cadmus and Teiresias who must dress as women to participate). See n. 19 above.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. especially Livy 39.15.3 ( . . .[*deos*] *qui prauis et externis religionibus captas mentes uelut furialibus stimulis ad omne scelus et ad omnem libidinem agerent.*) and 15.4 (*si furor in illum gurgitem abripuit*).

Mars?,” 531-32).<sup>161</sup> Again, the poet emphasizes the mental state of Bacchus’ followers, who cannot possibly understand their actions or take responsibility for them while under such an influence; it also suggests that these people may be worshipping the god unwillingly, or at least unwittingly, because they are not in control of their own minds. Ironically, even Pentheus himself cannot prevent being “moved” by the Bacchic rites while he watches them secretly before he is killed at the end of the episode: *Pentheus sic ictus longis ululatibus aether movit, et audito clamore recanduit ira* (“So heaven, struck by the long-drawn-out cries, moved Pentheus and his anger was rekindled when he heard the clamor,” 706-707). Thinking that he is impervious to Bacchus’ influence and that he can prevent the god from taking control of him, Pentheus’ strategy to counter this force is what you might expect from the aggressive, war-hungry king: he calls his people to arms.

We have already seen how Pentheus portrays the arrival of Bacchus’s cult as an attack on the city and how he fears that the Theban men will be made too effeminate by the cult to defend themselves and their city. So the arrogant and bellicose king’s next move is to invoke two generations of men and attempt to appeal to their sense of masculinity: those who, like himself, are young and should be fit for war, and the generation of men before them who are responsible for the city’s founding, but are now past their prime.

vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti  
 hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede penates,  
 nunc sinitis sine Marte capi? vosne, acrior aetas,  
 o iuvenes, propiorque meae, quos arma tenere,  
 non thyrsos, galeaque tegi, non fronde decebat? (540-42)

Should I admire you, old men, who having sailed on the deep seas, established  
 your Tyre here in this place and your exiled Penates, and now allow them to be

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. Livy 39.15.9 ( . . . uino, strepitibus clamoribusque nocturnis *attoniti*).

taken without a war? Or should I admire you young men, a sharper generation, closer to my own age, for whom it was appropriate to hold weapons, not the thyrsus, and to have your heads covered with helmets, not ivy?

Here Pentheus attempts to establish what would be traditional Roman values: familial respect and piety, patriotic loyalty, and martial valor. Appropriately, there are several allusions to the *Aeneid* in this passage: the Theban elders are like the exiled Trojans who sailed to Italy, carrying their Penates with them on the journey.<sup>162</sup> However, Pentheus is not a Roman and his attempt to establish a Theban identity analogous to Rome's is unsuccessful. Of course, the problem for Pentheus, in every version of the myth, is his hubris and failure to recognize the god Bacchus-Dionysus. Here, he strives to foster national pride for Thebes via a characteristically Roman ideology, but instead perverts the city's true foundation story and makes himself their enemy. The allusion to the *Aeneid* in Pentheus' speech is ironic, for the Tyrian elders did not travel to Thebes with Penates, nor is Pentheus a Trojan-Roman hero, for as Anderson says, "Impious Pentheus poses as a super-patriot and abuses the true values of Vergil's poem. He is a Mezentius, not an Aeneas."<sup>163</sup>

I argue that Pentheus is unsuccessful because he embodies an excessively aggressive form of Roman masculinity and does so to the detriment of other important qualities such as religious piety and respect for the *mos maiorum*. We saw in the consuls' speech the importance for a Roman audience of holding their elders in high regard and the strong influence that these *maiores* held over their descendants, even generations later. Pentheus, on the other hand, seems to mock his elders with his deliberative *mīrer* (540), which comes off as biting sarcasm. The

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. *Aeneid* 1.375 (*diversa per aequora vectos*); 3.325 (*diuersa per aequora uectae*); 6.355 (*immensa per aequora noctes / uexit me*). Notice in particular the metrical position of *per aequora* (See Anderson 1997: 392).

<sup>163</sup> 1997: 392

Romans had a strong sense of pride in their origins and in the founding of their city, even for the story of Aeneas, placed firmly in the realm of myth and literature, for it was part of Rome's tradition and national identity. Pentheus tries to recreate this for Thebes, but instead he “patently abuses current Augustan rhetoric.”<sup>164</sup>

Next, as Pentheus resorts to fabricating a founding myth for the Thebans that will encourage them to fight to the death for their city, he drives a greater and greater wedge between himself and his people.

este, precor, memores, qua sitis stirpe creati,  
 illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit unus,  
 sumite serpentis! pro fontibus ille lacuque  
 interiit: at vos pro fama vincite vestra!  
 ille dedit leto fortes: vos pellite molles  
 et patrium retinete decus! (543-48)

I beg you, remember from what roots you all were created, and assume the spirit of that serpent, who although just one destroyed many men! He died on behalf of his spring and pool: but you, conquer for your own glory! He gave brave men to death: drive out soft men and maintain the honor of your ancestors!

Pentheus tries to construct a national identity for the Thebans by putting a patriotic spin on their origins. He asks them to remember their lineage and take on the spirit of the serpent. The hyperbaton *illiusque . . . serpentis* (544-5) seems to emphasize the absurdity of his statement.

Earlier, Pentheus had also addressed the Theban audience as “born of the serpent, descendants of Mars” (*anguigenae, proles Mavortia*, 531). The archaic and grand adjective *Mavortia* is significant for its connection to Rome's own founding myth; it occurs early on in the *Aeneid* in reference to the walls that Aeneas and his descendants will build in Latium.

inde lupae fulvo nutricis tegmine laetus  
 Romulus excipiet gentem, et Mavortia condet

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<sup>164</sup> 1997: 393

moenia, Romanosque suo de nomine dicet (1.275-77)

Then Romulus, glad in the tawny coat of his nurse the she-wolf will receive the race, and found the walls of Mars, and call them Romans from his own name.

Specifically, the use of the word *Mavortia* in Pentheus' speech brings to mind the she-wolf responsible for raising the offspring of Mars on the shores of the Tiber, leading to the founding of Rome. Of this connection between serpent and she-wolf, Anderson says that Ovid has Pentheus abusing Augustan rhetoric and, "It is as if a Roman orator should hail as a foundation-symbol the wolf that raised Romulus and Remus."<sup>165</sup> I agree that, in a way, Pentheus is subverting Roman tradition, but do not find it troublesome in the way that Anderson suggests, for the wolf is indeed a symbol of Rome's founding. The image of Romulus and Remus suckling their "mother" the she-wolf is the first to be described on Aeneas' shield in *Aeneid* 8: *geminos huic ubera circum / ludere pendentis pueros et lambere matrem* ("Here the twin boys play, hanging at her teats, and their mother suckles them," 631-32). It is not absurd that the Romans should make a connection between their city's beginnings and the wolf who, according to Roman tradition, raised Rome's founder, but that Pentheus should correlate his city's origin with the serpent that his founder destroyed in order to settle there.

Philip Hardie has also noted the constant references to the *Aeneid* in Ovid's Theban episode, which he calls the first "anti-*Aeneid*."<sup>166</sup> He argues that the Vergilian version of history begins with the destruction of one city (Troy) and the exaltation of another (Rome), at which point history halts as Rome becomes the changeless and perfect *urbs aeterna*.<sup>167</sup> There is no limit to the power that Rome and her rulers may possess, as Jupiter prophesies in book 1: *His ego nec*

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<sup>165</sup> 1997: 393

<sup>166</sup> 1990: 224-235

<sup>167</sup> Hardie develops the argument further in "Augustan Poets and the Mutability of Rome" (1992).

*metas rerum nec tempora pono / imperium sine fine dedi* (“I have placed no limits or duration to their possessions and I have given an empire without end,” 278-79). If Thebes is the “anti-Rome,” then there must be a limit to its power and authority, and as with any powerful city, its greatness will one day come to an end, a fact that Pythagoras’ discourse of mutability in book 15 points out: *vile solum Sparte est, altae cecidere Mycenae, / Oedipodioniae quid sunt, nisi nomina, Thebae?* (“Sparta is worthless land, tall Mycenae has fallen, what is Oedipus’ Thebes except a name?,” 428-29). The one exception, of course, is Rome and as Pythagoras speaks of the city’s future greatness, he says nothing of its decline. The difference between the story of Thebes’ founding and that of Rome is that, although both are founded in fratricide and bound to be plagued by civil war, Rome, according to the ideology of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, can look forward to a powerful leader who will bring great peace and prosperity when they are needed most. Whereas Pentheus promotes instability in Thebes, Rome’s founder Aeneas and his descendant, Augustus, restore peace and order for their people. Furthermore, as *imperium* is “handed over” to the new princeps, he can appeal to notions of continuity and stability through this ideology.<sup>168</sup>

Pentheus’ failure to establish a successful Theban founding story lies not in the fact alone that he has hailed a serpent as its symbol, but in the fact that this monster nearly prevented Cadmus from founding the city in the first place, putting the new city on rocky footing even before it was founded.<sup>169</sup> Praising the serpent is fundamentally misguided; it is more like praise of the monster Cacus, who Hercules slays at the future site of Rome in book 8 of the *Aeneid*, than of the wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus. If the Thebans are to follow the serpent as a model for heroism, they will put up a hard fight, but will ultimately be overcome by an enemy

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<sup>168</sup> Hardie 1992: 61

<sup>169</sup> See Janan 2004 and 2009.

who threatens to capture and occupy their homeland, the very thing that Pentheus fears in Bacchus. Consequently, Pentheus comes to resemble the serpent himself, as he is characterized by his rage and incessant but misguided aggression, as James puts it, “Lashing out blindly at all opponents and thrusting aside all obstacles in his rage.”<sup>170</sup> So in this scenario, Pentheus becomes the city’s enemy and Bacchus, who hails from Thebes – a fact that Pentheus has unfortunately failed to recognize – becomes Cadmus, the new founder of Thebes.

Pentheus is destined to be destroyed, as Tiresias forewarns in lines 3.511-27, because he fails to respect his elders and the *mos maiorum* and although he attempts to invent a legendary founding for his city so as to foster national pride, he does so unsuccessfully as he subverts the city’s true foundation story and makes himself their enemy. What is more, by altering the city’s history, he also fails to recognize the powerful god who has returned to his birthplace. Pentheus is horrified by the same elements of the Bacchic cult that horrified the Roman Senate in 186 B.C.E. By making its participants effeminate and un-Roman, the Bacchanalia threatens to undermine the political and social fabric of the city and jeopardize the power and influence that the male Roman elite wield over the people. Pentheus is also in the midst of a power struggle; although he places himself in the position of a Roman man, exerting his masculinity and authority, he is an ineffective ruler. He lacks self-control in his manner and approach in dealing with a looming enemy, the very thing that defines Roman masculinity and, as Edwards has suggested, a virtue which Roman men used to justify their power over others: “The elite justified their privileged position by pointing to their superior morals. Their capacity for self-control legitimated the control they exercised over others who were, it was implied, unable to control

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<sup>170</sup> 1991-93: 87



themselves.”<sup>171</sup> He is brave and powerful, but excessively so, and he does not heed the advice and warnings of his elders, another essential Roman quality. In fact, his grandfather Cadmus, the one and only founder of the city, works in vain to restrain him.

hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum  
corripiunt dictis frustra inhiere laborant.  
acrior admonitu est inritaturque retenta  
et crescit rabies remoraminaque ipsa nocebant. (564-567)

His grandfather, and Athamas, and the rest of the crowd of his own men reproach him for his words and work in vain to restrain him. He is more fierce because of their warning and his checked madness is exasperated and grows and the delays do harm.

Pentheus has no respect or *pietas* for the authority of his *maiores*. His grandfather, uncle, and other men try to offer advice, but he cannot be restrained by them, an idea that is emphasized by the repetition of “controlling” words, such as *inhibere*, *admonitus*, *retentus*, and *remoraminum*. He is characterized by his own rage, a quality that always makes for an unsuccessful leader, and something that he feared in his citizens: *quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras / attonuit mentes?* (“What madness has stupefied your minds, people born of the serpent, offspring of Mars?,” 531-32). Of these lines, Hardie says, “His misjudgment of the true state of affairs is further hinted at in the first words that he hurls at his citizens, “*quis furor. . . ?*” – a question that he might with more propriety address to himself.”<sup>172</sup> As we have seen, *furor* is characteristic of portrayals of Bacchic worship and describes the uncontrolled, ecstatic mental state of the worshippers; we have also seen that *furor* is often equated with civil strife. Pentheus, like Dido in *Aeneid* 4, will leave his city vulnerable to destruction because he cannot control his madness and

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<sup>171</sup> 1993: 25

<sup>172</sup> 1990: 225

fails to be an effective ruler. Again, Pentheus has become exactly what he fears in others, and reveals yet another reason for his demise.

The moral at the end of the Pentheus episode is that the Thebans, warned by their king's example, should not deny the god Bacchus, and as a result they flock to his altars.

*talibus exemplis monitae nova sacra frequentant  
turaque dant sanctasque colunt Ismenides aras. (732-33)*

Warned by such an example, the Theban women throng to the new rites, give incense, and worship at the sacred altars.

While the Romans' own experience with the Bacchanalia ended quite differently – according to Livy, worshippers in the city and throughout Italy were persecuted and many of the so-called “conspirators” were put to death – Pentheus still provides a valid example of what not to do, according to Ovid, when faced with a new and uncertain threat. The Roman Senate asserted their authority and decrees were delivered throughout Italy forbidding the celebration of the Bacchanalia. Rather than exercising absolute power and failing to concede even a little, however, these decrees reveal that the Senate allowed the Bacchanalia to continue to be worshipped under certain circumstances. In general, the inscription lines up with Livy's account of the decree, but gives us further details concerning the exceptions under which Bacchic worship could continue to be practiced if one brought their case before the city praetor and earned the consent of the Senate. No man was allowed to be priest and there could be no head priest or officials whatsoever, the group could hold no common funds, and members were forbidden to take any vows. These all are actions that limit the power and authority of the cult, the very things that the Senate felt were under threat. Pentheus, unfortunately, lacks moderation and restraint in his

actions and, because of his overly aggressive sense of masculinity, he is destroyed at the hands of a woman, who worships a soft and effeminate god.

While we cannot know for certain whether Livy wrote Book 39 before Ovid wrote the *Metamorphoses*, I hope that this close reading of the Theban episode has demonstrated that it is possible that Ovid has Pentheus comment on the earlier narrative. The intertextual relationship between the two works is apparent in the two descriptions of the cult practices and the accusations of immorality, but even more so in the parallel reactions of the Senate and Pentheus. Both the Roman authorities and the Theban king give speeches to the citizens that strive to elicit fear and disgust in Bacchus' cult. Pentheus resembles his Roman counterparts in his appeal for Theban patriotism and call to defend the city against a foreign enemy, but his excessive pride and aggressive masculinity prove to be his undoing. As I will argue in chapter four, Ovid often "plays it both ways" in the *Tristia*, and I believe that the Theban episode requires a similar reading.<sup>173</sup> One could choose to read in this episode a critique of the Senate of 186 B.C.E. or contemporary governmental authority, in which case Pentheus' tyrannical tendencies could be said to reflect those of Augustus. On the other hand, Ovid's narrative may not be so subversive. Pentheus' downfall is his unremitting fury and lack of restraint, which is why I argue that he is unsuccessful in putting down the Bacchanalia while the Romans are not. Pentheus differs from the Romans in some very significant respects, particularly his lack of self-control and disrespect for the *mos maiorum* and his city's founding. Rather than criticize the Roman elite, Pentheus' faults may highlight their good Roman virtue. While Livy's influence on Ovid is an attractive option, either reading of the Theban narrative – subversive or otherwise – stands. Both Livy and

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<sup>173</sup> The phrase is Stahl's 2002.

Ovid use their Bacchanalia narratives to reflect contemporary issues of power and control and to examine power dynamics in Augustan Rome. The next chapter will consider how Bacchus represents similar themes and concerns in Horace's *Odes*. There I will explore the idea that initiation in Bacchus' cult conveys issues of sociopolitical engagement as well. Bacchus encourages madness and liberation, which threaten one's self-control, as both Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair and Ovid's Theban episode demonstrate, but also imparts an elite status to the poet. This exclusivity enables the transgression of boundaries and praise of the emperor, but requires that the poet continue to show discretion and decorum.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **Bacchic Inspiration and Poetic Authority in Horace's *Odes***

In Horace's "hymn to Bacchus," C. 2.19, the god provides a source of poetic inspiration, not immediately for the poet, but for mountain nymphs and goat-footed satyrs. The poet has experienced an epiphany of the god in a remote location and looked on as Bacchus taught songs to these mythological figures. This encounter with the god seemed to be accidental and Horace, trembling with fear and possessed by the god, begs for mercy. He goes on to praise Bacchus and lists, in hymnic fashion, the god's attributes and significant deeds. After emphasizing the unbridled power and savage force of the god, Horace ends the poem with mention of Bacchus' ability to pacify as he tamed the monster Cerberus in the underworld.

Like C. 3.4, in which the poet describes a personal experience with the divine which accounts for his privileged status as a poet, in 2.19 Horace also portrays himself as favored by the gods. The poet's encounter represents a metaphorical initiation into Bacchus' inner circle. Upon his initiation, Horace is given the authority to sing his hymn of the god. At the same time, the poet fears Bacchus' wrath for catching an unexpected glimpse of the god with his troop and even begs for his life, which demonstrates the exclusivity of the group, while the mention of Pentheus (14-15) reminds us that the god is not always so lenient to outsiders who infiltrate the god's rites.

The poem is divided into four main parts: in the first stanza, detached from the rest of the poem, the poet states in a matter-of-fact way that he witnessed Bacchus with Nymphs and Satyrs in a remote location. The poet seems aloof about the occurrence that he is about to relate, and even anticipates that the audience may not believe his account (*credite posteri*, 2), which makes

the cry, *euhoē*, that begins the second stanza all the more shocking.<sup>174</sup> This second stanza represents the ritual worship of Bacchus: the stage has already been set, as the secluded mountain landscape and Nymphs and Satyrs suggest the god's domain, and the poet incorporates the quintessential *thyrsus*, an object associated not only with the ritual worship of Bacchus, but also with poetic inspiration. In the third and fourth stanzas the poet, whose prayer for mercy has been answered and who has experienced a ritual initiation, is given the authority to sing of the god. He first invokes Bacchus through mention of the most well known figures associated with him from mythology and then, in the final four stanzas, he proceeds to the hymn proper of the god. Here he praises Bacchus for his more impressive exploits: his capacity to control nature, his role in the Gigantomachy, and his ability to pacify the monster Cerberus.

Horace's poetic authority in this poem operates on three levels: religious, aesthetic, and political. First, there is the authority he receives directly from the god as a result of his ritual initiation and divine possession by the god; next, he shows his autonomy and elite status by representing his privileged position through his carefully chosen aesthetics; finally, Horace, as a consequence of poetic initiation, is authorized by Bacchus himself to sing the political issues that concern the god and that I have discussed at length in the previous chapters. I argue that these "political" issues for Bacchus refer more specifically to contemporary political affairs at Rome, namely the memory of civil war and the ongoing experience of Roman imperialism. Throughout the *Odes*, Horace equates poetic immortality with fame obtained around the world. As a poet of elite status and authority, favored by Bacchus and the Muses, he claims to have access to the ends of the earth that are inaccessible to others. I argue that Horace's poetic aspirations are

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<sup>174</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard point out that 3.4 begins in a similar fashion, "A classically serene invocation is followed by a mysterious vision" (1978: 315). See also Syndikus 1972.

intrinsically tied to praise of Augustus: the poet will be known in the places around the world that have become subject to the emperor's ever expanding empire. Furthermore, the poet's divine favor and *virtus*, which makes the transgression of boundaries acceptable, is also associated with that of the emperor. The moral goodness that permits Augustus to conquer the world is the same quality that has enabled him to bring an end to Rome's civil wars and institute moral legislation that might curb the sort of depravity that put Rome in a precarious position to begin with. Finally, I will demonstrate that Bacchus is, all the while, central to Horatian poetics as he empowers the transgression of boundaries making both immortality and imperialism possible, and, as the god of wine, acts as a civilizing force and takes part in the rehabilitation after civil war as Rome begins the process of healing and Augustus again restores order and moral restraint in his empire.

### Poetic Inspiration and the Initiation of the Poet

The poem begins with a description of the scene that Horace has stumbled upon unexpectedly. It is a remote mountain location inaccessible to passersby. Because of its isolation, the spot is appropriate for the ritual worship of Bacchus and as a scene for poetic inspiration, both scenarios in which the poet emphasizes his elite status as a result of his participation in activity that excludes those who are not as privileged as he.

Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus  
 vidi docentem – credite posteri –  
 Nymphasque discentis et auris  
 capripedum Satyrorum acutas. (1-4)

I saw Bacchus – believe me, posterity – on remote cliffs, teaching songs and the

Nymphs learning them and the pointed ears of goat-footed Satyrs.

Although the phrase *remotis . . . rupibus* is the extent of the description of the landscape in this poem, it suggests the mountains with which Bacchus was traditionally associated. The quintessential example of this is, of course, Euripides' *Bacchae*, where the ritual worship of the god takes place outside of the city walls and in the wilderness of Mount Cithaeron. Here, the danger of what happens outside the limits and boundaries set by civilization, poses a threat to the king Pentheus who, "tends to define his identity in terms of boundaries, exclusion, and the public fortifications of the city."<sup>175</sup> He does all that he can to forbid worship of the god so that he can bring his female worshippers back to their homes and within the city walls, where they may be safe and, more importantly, they no longer endanger the stability of the city.<sup>176</sup>

We have already seen that the Pentheus of the Theban episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is obsessed with maintaining boundaries for his citizens and asserting power over them. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the Theban king shares many of the same concerns with his Roman counterparts, that is the Senators whom Livy represents face to face with the "Bacchanalian conspiracy" of 186 B.C.E. The main issue at stake in both cases is the fact that the ruling class is unable to control those under the influence of Bacchus. The followers of the god pose a threat to political authority and undermine the established social order, for the political power with which the city controls its citizens is only effective if the people submit to it. The symbolic act of going beyond the limits of the city, outside of the city's jurisdiction,

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<sup>175</sup> Segal 1982: 90

<sup>176</sup> See Segal: "The root *herk-*, "enclose," "constrain," recurs throughout the play, not only for Pentheus' enclosing of others, but also for his enclosure within himself and his tightly bounded space of walled city and palace. The opposite of the *herk-* compounds are the various forms of *lyein*, "to loosen," to release." Unable to acknowledge and let loose the Dionysiac in himself, Pentheus must insist on ever more massive forms of enclosure and containment" (1982: 91).



demonstrates that the Bacchic rites liberate their worshippers by freeing them from the constraints of sociopolitical distinctions, not the least those of gender. Not only does the Senate fear that the Bacchanalia allows men and women to participate in rituals that are sexually immoral, but also that it allows people of every social class to mingle and worship together, a fact that the senators worried would blur class distinction and threaten the power held by the aristocratic elite. Pentheus and the Senators are concerned that their citizens who participate in the rites which encourage lack of self-control and madness will be less likely to submit to their authority as a result of their new found freedom from sociopolitical constraints.

How is it, then, that Horace appropriates the figure of Bacchus in his *Odes* and goes so far as to reenact his religious rites? In C. 2.19 he presents himself as being in the god's possession as he proceeds to sing his hymn. He is also in a state of Bacchic frenzy in C. 3.25 as he prepares to praise Augustus. If the Republican elite, in one contemporary Augustan representation, feared the Bacchanalia because it threatened their power and control over the lower classes, what does it mean for Augustus to be associated with Bacchus in the *Odes*? I will argue that Horace employs the figure of Bacchus and his rites metaphorically to convey the complex balance of power at work as he struggles to express his poetic authority while confronted with issues of patronage and political autonomy in the early empire. Schiesaro has argued that Horace's "Bacchic poetics" both liberate and authorize the poet to explore topics that he would not otherwise broach, empowering the lyric poet to compose panegyric.<sup>177</sup> I will demonstrate that "Bacchic poetics" are not only about enabling poetry through inspiration as Schiesaro suggests, but also about sociopolitical inclusion and the ability to show discretion when

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<sup>177</sup> 2009: 66-67

included in the god's inner circle. By sociopolitical inclusion, I mean the poet's participation in and representation of elite society through his poetics. For Horace, Bacchic inspiration involves initiation into the god's rites so that the poet may sing what is forbidden – *nefas* – to the uninitiated. Initiation imparts an elite status to the poet, which we see manifested in the exclusivity expressed throughout the *Odes* (e.g. *odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, C. 3.1.1). Endowed with this privileged status, the poet may proceed where it was previously forbidden to him (*fas . . . est mihi . . . cantare*, C. 2.19.9-11) and as an acolyte of the god Bacchus, who breaks rules and transgresses boundaries, Horace can push the limits as an Augustan poet. However, the follower of Bacchus is never entirely free from the fear of retribution, as the example of Pentheus demonstrates the potential consequences of transgression.

Ovid's treatment of the story of Pentheus in the *Metamorphoses* incorporates many of these same issues surrounding the worship of the god Bacchus. Because Pentheus refuses to be initiated into the rites, he is an outsider and any attempt to see what is forbidden to him is a transgressive violation against the god. Although Ovid wrote his epic poem after the *Odes* were published, the Theban episode reflects the themes of exclusion that are central to Horace's elite aesthetics. Pentheus is unwilling to accept Bacchic ideology and so in an attempt to curb the liberation that it offers and bring his people back under his control, he goes to witness the events himself. Unfortunately for Pentheus, he has no intention of participating in the rites.<sup>178</sup> Whether his purpose is merely voyeuristic, as many have argued,<sup>179</sup> or whether he is genuinely concerned

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<sup>178</sup> See Gregory who argues that in the *Bacchae*, Pentheus' desire to see the Bacchic rites stems not from sexual curiosity but from his, "fundamental *hamartia*: the applying of secular criteria to religious phenomenon" (1985: 29).

<sup>179</sup> See Dodds who says that (Euripides') Pentheus has the, "sexual curiosity of a peeping Tom" (1944: xliii); Sale: "Dionysiac longing is sexual . . . and is bursting forth in the form of voyeurism" (1972: 71); and Segal who connects voyeurism with a failed coming of age for Pentheus (1982: 204-5).

for the welfare of his family and city or simply wants to regain his authority over them, he is not a true follower of the god and does not believe in his divinity. He decides that he will go to the mountains where the rites are taking place and when he approaches the site and hears the chants and cries of the worshippers, he is full of purpose and compared to a war horse clamoring for battle. The mood of the scene changes rapidly once he arrives, however, and catches sight of the rites. The description of the place seems to emphasize its visibility, as if inviting an outside spectator: *purus ab arboribus, spectabilis undique, campus* (“a plain free of trees and visible on all sides,” 3.709). Although at first Pentheus was full of anger and ready to charge into the rites as if into battle, he stops instead to watch them when he arrives and is immediately punished for his transgression.

hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis  
 prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu,  
 prima suum misso violavit Penthea thyrsos  
 mater . . . (3.710-13)

Here the first to see him, examining the rites with profane  
 eyes, the first stirred up in a frenzied charge, the first to  
 wound her own Pentheus with a hurled thyrsus was his mother.

Pentheus’ punishment then, is a result of his attempt to watch that which is forbidden to those who are uninitiated, or *profanus*, the outsiders.

“Seeing” a god and the emblems of his mysteries is a privilege for those who have been initiated into the rites; it is restricted for those who have not. If the rites at Eleusis are a parallel for the Bacchic rites as some have argued, the process of religious initiation and the names given to the initiates in both cults are derived from the idea of visual restrictions.<sup>180</sup> Those taking part

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<sup>180</sup> See Seaford 1981 who assumes an essential similarity between the two cults based on the terminology used of them (μυστήρια, ὄργια, etc.), function (εὐδαιμονία of the initiate), secrecy (ἱεροὶ λόγοι, *cista mystica*), and revelation of sacred objects.

in the rites for the first time were called *mustai*, “those who close their eyes,” because they were not allowed to witness the entire ritual unlike the *epoptai* or “viewers” who had already been initiated and were participating for a second time. The privilege of viewing the rites, and consequently the benefits associated with full initiation (in this case a blessed afterlife), were only granted to those who had shown themselves to be worshippers of the god. On the other hand, someone like Pentheus, whose intention is not to partake in the rites but simply observe, poses a threat to the cult because he has taken no vow and has no reason *not* to reveal the secret mysteries to other uninitiates. This fact brings us back to Horace, whose poetic persona, although unintentionally, happens to witness Bacchus and his acolytes in the wilderness. The first line of the poem and the enjambed *vidi* in the next line emphasize the poet’s act of ‘looking’ onto the rites.

Bacchum in remotis carmina rupibus  
*vidi* docentem – credite posteri . . . (2.19.1-2)

I saw Bacchus teaching songs on remote cliffs, believe me, posterity . . .

Nisbet and Hubbard call what Horace relates a “mountain epiphany” and say that epiphanies were described by ancients in a matter-of-fact way of “seeing a god.”<sup>181</sup> The description of the event is indeed straightforward which makes the cry of *euhoē* (5) all the more startling as it draws us in and depicts a more vivid, if disorienting, narrative.

It is apparent in the second stanza that Horace fears the sort of retribution from Bacchus that Pentheus received for catching a glimpse of something he should not be seeing.

euhoē, recenti mens trepidat metu  
 plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum

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<sup>181</sup> 1978: 318

laetatur: euhoe, parce Liber,  
parce, gravi metuende thyrsos! (5-8)

*Euhoe!* My mind trembles with new fear and rejoices wildly as my chest is filled with Bacchus. *Euhoe!* Spare me, Liber, feared because of your weighty thyrsus, spare me.

The poet begs the god to spare him and the repetition of *parce* (7, 8) suggests, as NH point out, that the plea for mercy is part of the ritual initiation, especially given that the entreaties appear alongside anaphora of the ritualistic cry, *euhoe* (5, 8).<sup>182</sup> This is not to say that Bacchus does not instill a real fear in his followers. Literary depictions of Bacchic worship traditionally include an element of fear or pain, as in C. 3.25: *dulce periculum est, / o Lenaeae, sequi deum* (“it is a sweet danger, Lenaean, to follow the god,” 18-19). We assume that Horace’s appeal for pardon is granted because in the following stanza he is granted permission to sing about the god (*fas est . . . cantare*, 9-11). Pentheus, on the other hand, also begs for mercy after infringing on Bacchus’ rites, but is denied his request.

saucius ille tamen 'fer opem, matertera' dixit  
'Autonoe! moveant animos Actaeonis umbrae!' (3.719-20)

He, wounded, still said, “Help me, aunt Autonoë! May Actaeon’s shade move your spirit!”

If the call for mercy is indeed a part of the ritual, then the story of Pentheus reminds the worshipper of the potential danger involved in being close to the god and shows that transgressions against him are not taken lightly. Pentheus’ invocation of Actaeon is also a reminder that the gods punish all violations, whether intentional or accidental. We are left to wonder, then, why it is that Horace is given pardon in light of the fact that he came to witness

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<sup>182</sup> 1978: 320; Cf. Appel 1909: 120 and Fraenkel 1957: 411 n.1.

Bacchus unwillingly, or at least unexpectedly, since we know from various mythological examples that witnessing a god or goddess, inadvertently or not, has serious consequences.

According to Callimachus, Actaeon and Teiresias, accidentally stumbling upon the baths of Artemis and Athena respectively, were repaid with blindness and mutilation for their transgression. In these examples it does not matter that they saw these goddesses unintentionally, only that the transgression occurred against the gods' will.

Κρόνιοι δ' ὧδε λέγοντι νόμοι·  
ὅς κε τιν' ἀθανάτων, ὅκα μὴ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἔλῃται,  
ἀθρήσῃ, μισθῶ τοῦτον ἰδεῖν μέγ' αὖτις. (*Hymn* 5.100-3)

The laws of Cronos say the following: whoever sees anyone of the immortals, when the god himself does not wish it, pays a great price to see this.

Furthermore, a god's epiphany can be dangerous to a mortal even when intended by the god. Take Pentheus' mother, Semele, for example, who asked her lover Zeus to reveal himself to her. Bound by his promise to her, he did so at the cost of her life. The family of Cadmus (including Actaeon as well as Semele and Pentheus) has the misfortune of being punished for their accidental transgressions against the gods, that is, for seeing unwillingly something that is meant to be forbidden or restricted to them. The fact that Horace stumbles upon Bacchus in the woods without retribution, then, leads one to conclude that the poet has not been prohibited from observing the scene. To take this idea one step further, I argue that Horace, because "seeing" the mysteries is a fundamental part of the rites, is participating in his own sort of initiation.

The idea of poetic initiation is strongly tied to the concept of poetic inspiration. In his monograph on the topic, Kambylis refers to the act of initiation as a "divine legitimization of the poetic function."<sup>183</sup> He argues that poetic inspiration is conferred on the poet through symbols:

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<sup>183</sup> "Die göttliche Legitimation der dichterischen Tätigkeit" (1965:17)

for example, laurel for Hesiod or water for Callimachus. These symbols represent the ritual of initiation itself and act as a sort of coronation for the poet who has been chosen by the god and is now affirmed as a poet. In 2.19 Horace cleverly combines two seemingly unrelated acts of initiation, that of his mystery cult and that which endows the poet with poetic authority, the *Dichterweihe*. Bacchus' dreaded thyrsus, an element essential to the Bacchic rites, reinforces the connection.<sup>184</sup>

C. 2.19 thus highlights many of the issues surrounding poetic inspiration and what it means for the poet. Fowler argues that the process of poetic inspiration, which entails a mingling of “internal revolt and external influence,” is inherently sexual and therefore problematic for the Augustan poets in particular. Although inspiration functions as a source of power for the poet, Fowler argues that it is also emasculating.

They lose control of the self which is essential to ancient masculinity and the same empowering flow of force places them in the female position, penetrated and overborne. Set free to wander over untrodden wastes that lesser men avoid, they gain access to the wild power of a satyr, but are simultaneously themselves pursued and enraptured like Bacchantes or nymphs.<sup>185</sup>

The figure of Bacchus personifies this threat for Horace: liberation and empowerment come at the cost of one's self-control; the follower of Bacchus is freed from societal limits and constraints, but must, paradoxically, submit himself entirely to the god.

Schiesaro calls what I have just described “Bacchic poetics” and says that, “The displacement of the self which follows the violence of Bacchic penetration is the price the poet pays for making his voice bigger and stronger.”<sup>186</sup> Like Fowler, he argues that poetic inspiration

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<sup>184</sup> In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the ivy-tipped wand induces frenzied madness in those followers who are stung by it. The thyrsus also appears in Lucretius' scene of poetic inspiration, discussed below.

<sup>185</sup> 2002: 159

<sup>186</sup> 2009: 67

from Bacchus is violent and requires total possession by the god, but if the poet is willing to surrender himself entirely, as a worshipper in the Bacchic rites, he will be rewarded with poetic greatness. The paradox of “Bacchic poetics” lies in the fact that the poet must give up his autonomy in order to gain the authority to compose poetry; he must be overpowered first before he can be empowered as a poet. In sum, Bacchus permits the poet to proceed where it was previously forbidden to him: “In 2.19, Bacchus plays his usual role of breaker of rules and boundaries, acting as the guarantor of forms of poetic expression that, for whatever reason, would find it difficult to overcome censorship.”<sup>187</sup> Schiesaro puts this in the context of praising Caesar, for “Bacchic poetics” both liberate and empower the poet to explore topics that he would not otherwise approach, transforming the lyric poet into one equipped to compose panegyric. The paradox of Bacchic inspiration then provides the poet with a way of dealing both with the novel sociopolitical situation of the principate and with the complex and contradictory demands of the Roman ideology of masculinity.

### ***Credite posteri: The Poetics of Elitism***

The Bacchic thyrsus represents violent inspiration from the god and appears as an instrument of divine influence in several of the Roman poets, including Lucretius, who, like Horace, also seems to grapple with the issue of retaining one’s poetic autonomy while submitting to divine possession.

. . . sed acri  
percussit thyrsos laudis spes magna meum cor  
et simul incussit suavem mi in pectus amorem

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<sup>187</sup> 2009: 66



Musarum, quo nunc instinctus mente vigenti  
 avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante  
 trita solo. (*De Rerum Natura*, 1.922-27)

But hope of great praise has struck my heart with a sharp *thyrsus* and at the same time instilled in my chest a sweet love of the Muses, so that now, inspired with a thriving mind, I alone wander the pathless places of the Pierides, trodden by none before.

In the example of Lucretius, the violence of the thyrsus is emphasized as compounds of the verb “strike” (*percutere* and *incutere*) describe the manner in which it confers inspiration on the poet. Lucretius is physically and mentally affected in the same way as Horace in 2.19. In both cases, the thyrsus is the powerful instrument responsible for generating inspiration. Lucretius calls it sharp (*acris*, 922), and Horace says that this weighty object is the reason that Bacchus should be feared (*gravi metuende thyrsos*, 8).<sup>188</sup> A love of the Muses is established in Lucretius’ chest, just as Horace’s chest is possessed by Bacchus (*plenoque Bacchi pectore*, 6). Both poets are roused by mental vigor: Lucretius has been stirred up with an active mind, and Horace’s own mind trembles and rejoices at the same time (*mens trepidat . . . laetatur*, 5-7). Furthermore, the surrounding landscape in Lucretius’ scene of inspiration is that which we have discussed: so remote (*avia . . . loca*, 926) that no one has ever walked there before (*nullius ante / trita*, 926-27).

In his chapter, “Instructions for a Sublime Reader,” Conte sees this passage as a scene of initiation in which the poet, who figures himself as a poet-philosopher inspired by eternal truths, is given the authority to reveal the secrets of the universe to those who are privileged enough to

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<sup>188</sup> Ovid also calls the thyrsus *gravis* and associates it even more closely to poetic composition itself: *tempus erat, thyrsos pulsum graviore moveri* (“It was time that the beat be moved with a heavier thyrsus,” *Am.* 3.1.23) and *corniger increpuit thyrsos graviore Lyaeus* (“Horned Bacchus rebuked me with a heavier thyrsus,” *Am.* 3.15.17). Cf. also Propertius: *et medius docta cuspide Bacchus erit* (“and Bacchus will be in the middle with his learned spear,” 2.30.38).

participate in this revelation.<sup>189</sup> In this scenario, Lucretius assumes the role of “useful” poet or *vates*, “the inspirer of the community, the possessor of a secret truth to be communicated solemnly.”<sup>190</sup> The revelation of “secrets” is precisely what constitutes initiation into a mystery cult. Just as an initiate into the rites is allowed to “see” the sacred emblems, initiates of Epicureanism are able to “see” the philosophical tenets that Lucretius has made clear for them.

nunc age, quod super est, cognosce et clarius audi.  
nec me animi fallit quam sint obscura (1.921-22)

. . .

primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis  
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,  
deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango  
carmina musaeo contingens cuncta lepore (931-34)

Now, come learn what remains and hear more clearly. I am not deceived in my mind about how obscure these things are . . .  
First, because I teach about great things and proceed to release the mind from the tight bonds of religion, then because I compose such clear songs about an obscure matter, coloring everything with the Muses’ charm.

As I discussed above, “seeing” is a crucial component in the performance of initiation rites. Lucretius here emphasizes the fact that what he is about to “reveal” or demonstrate to his audience is obscure without his treatment, that is, before the audience has been initiated. The knowledge he imparts on his audience is *obscura*, dark and difficult to see, and so he composes *lucida carmina*, bright songs, as a way to enlighten them. Consequently, initiation into these “rites” is exclusive because Lucretius will reveal privileged knowledge only to those who participate. Mitsis suggests that the poet takes advantage of this concept, called the “morality of elitism,” with the idea being that Lucretius’ audience would presumably prefer to align themselves with the privileged elite, namely the initiates who subscribe to the poet’s

<sup>189</sup> It is narrated twice in *De Rerum Natura* (1.921ff. = 4.1ff.).

<sup>190</sup> 1993: 5

philosophical doctrine, rather than identify with the ignorant *vulgus* who, being underprivileged and uncouth, shies away from Epicurean teachings.<sup>191</sup>

sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur  
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque  
vulgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti  
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram . . . (1.943-46)

So now, since this reasoning seems to be for the most part rather grievous to those who have not experienced it, and the crowd shrinks back from it, I have wanted to put forth my reasoning to you in the sweet-spoken song of the Muses.

According to Mitsis then, Lucretius' method for converting his audience to Epicureanism is to invite them to join him in scorning the uninitiated mob. Memmius, the poem's addressee and recipient of Lucretius' instruction, whose superstitious fears and limited intellect represent those of the "mob," is an example of one who is slow to subscribe to Epicureanism. Unlike Epicurus himself, who Nussbaum has argued employed a strict authoritarian role in his teaching by requiring his pupils to submit to his instruction entirely in order to get well, Lucretius requires his students take a more active role in their instruction by choosing to subscribe to his teaching rather than be coerced.<sup>192</sup> If the "morality of elitism" is at work in *De Rerum Natura*, then anyone in the audience is invited to join Lucretius and become his follower. Epicureans may be an elite group, but they are not necessarily *exclusive*. Although membership may be widespread, it is elite because secrets are revealed only those who have *chosen* to be initiated. The example of Memmius encourages the followers to join so that they not be left out and associated with the wrong crowd.

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<sup>191</sup> 1993: 126

<sup>192</sup> 1986: 31-74

Scholars have made similar arguments concerning the elitist aesthetic of poets such as Callimachus. Although Callimachus presents himself as a poet in a privileged position, one who has been favored by the gods and initiated through direct instruction from Apollo (cf. the prologue to the *Aetia* and *Hymn to Apollo*), and although he despises common things and well-worn paths (cf. e.g. *Ep.* 28), that is not to say that he necessarily excludes his audience from joining his inner circle and actively engaging in his poetry. Schmitz suggests that, “When Callimachus emphasizes the learned and recondite nature of his poetry, he does not claim to be writing for a small elite of courtiers and fellow poets. Rather, his strategy is to flatter his readers by letting them know how clever they are.”<sup>193</sup> As with Lucretius, Callimachus’ group is exclusive only insofar as it rejects those who do not subscribe to his established principles. The followers of Epicurus are part of an elite group because they have been initiated through philosophical instruction and now understand privileged information. In a similar vein, the “follower” of Callimachus understands and aligns himself with Callimachean poetics in a way that an “uninitiate,” does not.

Much ink has been spilled discussing Callimachus’ so-called mimetic hymns which enact ritual scenes. While it is not possible to address all of the complicated issues surrounding these hymns, most would agree that Callimachus employs both mimetic and narrative modes and thus engages in both the performance and reenactment of religious ritual, in a way which Hopkinson calls, “an amalgam of elements which combines the literary and the “religious” inextricably and in equal measure.”<sup>194</sup> I believe that in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo*, the poet’s mimetic technique allows him to invite the audience to participate in his ritual initiation as a poet. The

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<sup>193</sup> 1999: 156-57

<sup>194</sup> 1984: 12

audience's role in the ritual initiation is complicated: I do not purport to argue that they are "initiated" themselves; of course, the fact that the "initiation" is reenacted does not allow for that possibility. However, the representation of an elite ritual, to which only the privileged few are privy, contributes Callimachus' "poetics of exclusivity."

... ἐκὰς ἐκὰς ὅστις ἀλιτρός.  
καὶ δὴ που τὰ θύρετρα καλῶ ποδὶ Φοῖβος ἀράσσει·  
οὐχ ὁράας; (2-4)

...  
ὥπόλλων οὐ παντὶ φαίνεται, ἀλλ' ὅτις ἐσθλός·  
ὅς μιν ἴδῃ, μέγας οὗτος, ὃς οὐκ ἴδε, λιτὸς ἐκεῖνος.  
ὁψόμεθ', ὦ Ἐκάεργε, καὶ ἐσσόμεθ' οὔποτε λιτοί. (9-11)

Away, away, whoever is sinful. Surely Phoebus is knocking on the door with his beautiful foot. Do you not see? . . .

Apollo does not appear to everyone, but he who is good; he who has seen him is great, he who has not – that one is lowly. We will see you, O Archer, and we will never be lowly.

The audience, playing the role of the god's priests preparing for his expected arrival, is permitted to "witness" the poet's initiation with their own eyes. That they are able to do so indicates their privileged status, for the poet-narrator ordered the profane to leave and says that Apollo only appears to those "who are good."<sup>195</sup>

The expectation of the god's arrival is a part of Callimachus' mimetic technique: "Apollo is knocking at the door, don't you see?" (3-4). The question, οὐχ ὁράας, seeks to engage the audience in the anticipation of Apollo's epiphany and suggests that they are included among the ἐσθλοί. We can recognize the irony in this technique, however, as Hunter has pointed out: "These hymns as a whole seek to "envision" narrative through a powerful mode of *enargeia*, but not in any simple way. οὐχ ὁράας; "do you (sing.) not see?" asks the poetic voice, and we are

<sup>195</sup> See Wehrli who argues that, "What can be considered Callimachean is an exclusivity which is clothed in the cultic image of the exclusion of the profane" (1944: 377).

compelled to answer “well, no.” . . . and the reading (or performance) of a written text makes any such epiphany even more problematic.”<sup>196</sup> So, we are left to wonder whether we, the audience, are part of the chosen few (ἐσθλοί) as I have suggested, or whether we are not because, as Hunter says, “well, no [we don’t see Apollo].” I argue that we do “witness” the god’s epiphany, insofar as Callimachus allows us to eavesdrop on Apollo’s instructions for composing poetry at the end of the hymn (105ff.). We know, of course, that we are not the priests of Apollo, but we are given the opportunity to play that role. The fact that Apollo does not explicitly address Callimachus suggests that the poet experiences the phenomenon from the same vantage point as we and therefore we participate in the ritual initiation to the same extent as the poet. Although it is Callimachus who ultimately gains poetic authority through initiation, we the audience, feel privileged to have witnessed it. In this way, Callimachus employs mimesis and feigns the religious seriousness of initiation as a way to reflect on the sociopolitical dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that comprise his “elitist aesthetics.” I argue that Horace employs similar mimetic techniques in order to engage his audience in his scene of poetic initiation in C. 2.19.

Horace begins this “hymn to Bacchus” with the narrative of an event from his personal experience. *Bacchum* . . . *vidi* he says in the first two lines as he relates his own observation of the god in the wilderness. I have already discussed this accidental “epiphany” and the dangerous consequences associated with its transgression, arguing that Horace is granted the privilege of witnessing the god as a part of his initiation as a poet. Just as Callimachus overhears Apollo giving instructions for composing poetry, Horace happens to catch a glimpse of Bacchus’ own poetic instruction as he teaches songs to Nymphs and Satyrs (1-4). Horace engages his audience

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<sup>196</sup> Hunter 1992:12-13

in the experience as well, by requesting that we believe his story, *credite posteri* (2). However, whereas Callimachus' questions and commands place his audience in the context of the religious ritual the hymn represents, Horace's address to "posterity" more explicitly acknowledges the apparent gap between the ritual occasion and its reenactment. The effect is that Horace's "hymn to Bacchus" becomes less vivid as a constative reflection of a real scene of religious ritual, but more so as a performative poetic act that the "right reader" will be able to recognize. The poem establishes that it is not about a serious religious ritual, but uses this fact to demonstrate that it is about society and politics instead.

In her discussion of writing and performance and the issue of the power and authority of language in Horace's *Odes*, Lowrie says that, "Horace invariably sidesteps immediacy. This feature gives his poetry aesthetic independence and keeps it from embracing fully the occasional moment."<sup>197</sup> Horace begins C. 2.19 with a narrative of his own personal religious experience and (at first) does not represent it as unfolding before our eyes. The apostrophe to future generations means that there will always be an audience to engage in his narrative, whether by reading or listening. Grounded in narrative, without the limits or constraints of the setting for an anachronistic religious ritual, the poet's enactment can be reenacted time and again to the same effect. The fact that Horace begins his "hymn" with a narrative and pulls his audience in, whom he correctly anticipated would be engaging in his poem well into the future, makes it timeless, as Lowrie has suggested. Without any very specific context for his account it continues to be relevant: what greater authority can be bestowed on the poet than to reach a readership that spans thousands of years? Lowrie says that to those who argue that, "The divorce from a particular

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<sup>197</sup> Lowrie 2009: 92

context unhinges poetry from an organic relation to society. This is false. Occasional poetry lives after its occasion has passed, Horace certainly anticipated and composed for poetic immortality.”<sup>198</sup> What is more, I think that Horace takes the game that Callimachus liked to play with performative and narrative modes to a higher level. He feigns to be relating narrative and acknowledges the fabrication of this “occasional moment” and then suddenly and unexpectedly shifts modes (in line 5, with the ritual cry and shift to the present tense) so that we are thrust into the middle of his scene of inspiration-initiation *as poetry*. This abrupt transition between the two seemingly divergent halves of the poem – biography and epiphany – is the key to their poetic effectiveness. The reader who recognizes that this potential incoherence is the point and is aware of the initiation being performed, is in the know and is thus given the opportunity to become an “initiate” himself. Horace, by canceling ostensible religious seriousness, then shows that poems ostensibly about religious initiation are only ever about sociopolitical inclusion. In addition, as a reading of Callimachus, it suggests that poems ostensibly about religious initiation were only ever about sociopolitical inclusion.

In conventional scenes of poetic initiation, the poet describes his experience with the divine and narrates what has already happened, usually in a programmatic opening to a work, such as Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Callimachus’ *Aetia*, or Lucretius’ *DRN*. In these instances the poet recounts the manner in which he received his poetic authority, but does not address or otherwise involve the audience in the narrative. Horace’s sudden cry of *euhoē* and his address of Bacchus connect us, who have also been addressed in the second person, to the scene and invite us to observe firsthand what we had previously only heard retold. Just as Callimachus includes the

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<sup>198</sup> 2009: 74



“priests of Apollo” among the elite allowed to witness the god’s epiphany, Horace gives his audience an exclusive view of his initiation into Bacchus’ rites. The poet is favored by the god and privileged enough as a result to participate in the initiation ceremony which will give him the poetic authority to praise the god. This means that we, as the audience observing the rites, are also in a privileged position, for as I have shown above, “viewing” the ritual was an important part of initiation. Although anyone at all reading or hearing this poem is included in this elite group, that need not diminish the poet’s authority or exclusive status in any way, for as others have argued with Lucretius and Callimachus, the “poetics of elitism” rely on the audience’s participation. We want to join the poet’s inner circle *because* it is elite and as a result we reinforce the notion that it is so.<sup>199</sup>

### Poetic Authority and the Poet’s Privileged Status

In C. 1.18 Horace seems to anticipate an encounter with Bacchus when he promises, as if swearing a sacred oath, that he will never offend the god or reveal the emblems of his mysteries.

. . . cum fas atque nefas exiguo fine libidinum  
discernunt avidi. non ego te, candide Bassareu,  
inuitum quatiam, nec variis obsita frondibus  
sub divum rapiam. (10-13)

. . . when they, eager for sex, discerned right and wrong by a fine line. I will not  
stir you against your will, fair Bassareus, nor will I take things hidden with  
colored foliage out into the daylight.

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<sup>199</sup> This idea is related to the concept in Greek lyric that Scodel discusses: “. . .one of the particular effects of [Greek lyric] is precisely the eavesdropping, of admission to a small, enclosed world. I call this *pseudo-intimacy*, and if it is possible in monodies whose original performance context was genuinely intimate, it can be very striking in poetry whose claims to a broader context are explicit” (1996: 50-79).

In this poem, Horace expounds the virtues of wine, drunk in moderation. There is a lesson to be learned from those who abuse the god of wine by drinking in excess to the point that they cannot distinguish between what is right and what is wrong (*fas atque nefas*, 10). More specifically, it is *nefas* to reveal the mysteries of Bacchus. But, given the proper circumstances and having undergone the appropriate initiation, it is *fas* – right, allowed, according to divine law – for Horace to do so. Following the frenzied, ecstatic confusion of the second stanza of C. 2.19 in which Horace calls on Bacchus with his ritual cry of *euhoē!* and begs for mercy from the god with his dreaded thyrsus, the poet declares that he has been granted permission to sing a hymn in praise of the god.

fas pervicaces est mihi Thyiadas  
 vinique fontem lactis et uberes  
     cantare rivos atque truncis  
     lapsa cavis iterare mella:  
 fas et beatae coniugis additum  
 stellis honorem tectaque Penthei  
     disiecta non leni ruina,  
     Thracis et exitium Lycurgi. (9-16)

I am allowed to sing of tireless Bacchants and a fountain of wine and rich rivers of milk and to tell again of honey oozing from hollow tree trunks. I am allowed to tell of your blessed wife's honor, added to the stars, and Pentheus' palace, demolished by heavy destruction, and the obliteration of Thracian Lycurgus.

The meaning of *fas* in these lines is twofold: as Nisbet and Hubbard suggest, *fas . . . mihi est* shows that Horace's prayer for mercy has been answered.<sup>200</sup> In addition, *fas*, according to a well-known etymology in Varro, is connected with *fari*, to speak.

dies fasti per quos praetoribus omnia verba sine piaculo licet fari . . .  
 dies nefasti, per quos dies nefas fari praetorem: do dico addico. (LL 6.29-30)

On *dies fasti* praetors are permitted to say all words without sin . . .

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<sup>200</sup> 1978: 321

on *dies nefasti* it is not right for a praetor to say the formula (*do dico addico*).”

The fact that the poet is “allowed” to sing and that *fas* is connected to *cantare* and *iterare*, reinforces the association between *fas* and speaking. Here he is granted permission to sing of Bacchus, but of course, it is only *fas* to sing the god’s better known attributes and distinctions because to relate the details of his cult’s secret mysteries is *nefas*. Not only has the poet been spared from destruction, but he has also been given a prominent position as the god’s poet laureate. Of course, he is permitted only to sing of Bacchus’ better known attributes and distinctions because to relate the details of his cult’s secret mysteries is *nefas*, but, the fact that he has been granted permission to sing of Bacchus at all, given that danger of encountering the god is so great, indicates that he has been privileged in some way: Horace has been initiated both as a follower of Bacchus and as a poet and the significant etymological background of *fas* and *nefas* indicates that these are one and the same. This privilege is not afforded to just anyone, however; although the poet is a willing follower of Bacchus, we have seen that even accidental transgressions have dangerous repercussions. On the basis of poems such as *Odes* 1.18, Horace demonstrates he has been selected to be initiated into the rites and authorized as a great lyric poet because of his integrity: he can distinguish between right and wrong, what can be spoken and what cannot be spoken. The connection between these poems through the recurrent images of wine and Bacchus suggest that the sociopolitical dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in C. 1.18 are the dynamics also at play in C. 2.19. Horace’s “Bacchic poetics” is not only about self-control, as Schiesaro suggests, but also about sociopolitical decorum and the ability to act prudently, including knowing what to say and what not to say, when included. For, as Hinds has argued: “History suggests that the closer the conversational access one has to a (Julio-Claudian)

emperor, the more vulnerable one is to a fall from grace.”<sup>201</sup> This is certainly the case for Augustan poets as well. Horace, I think, never falls from grace in part because he openly acknowledges this vulnerability and represents himself as a reluctant poet, but one that merits his poetic authority.

Horace’s poetic persona as one who has been chosen for his affirmed discretion and consequently initiated as a poet is not an incidental feature of one or two poems in the *Odes*; it also characterizes his entire poetic identity as he presents it in the poetic autobiography of C. 3.4.<sup>202</sup> Here, Horace recalls an incident that happened while he was a small child, wandering through a sacred grove with streams and breezes:

auditis an me ludit amabilis  
insania? audire et uideor pios  
errare per lucos, amoenae  
quos et aquae subeunt et aurae. (6-9)

. . .  
ut tuto ab atris corpore viperis  
dormirem et ursis, ut premerer sacra  
lauroque collataque myrto,  
non sine dis animosus infans. (17-20)

Do you hear or does a lovely madness deceive me? I seem to hear and to wander  
through a sacred grove, through which pleasant streams and breezes pass . . .  
how I slept with my body safe from black snakes and bears, how I was covered  
by sacred laurel and gathered myrtle, a courageous child because of the gods.

The poet claims that he was protected from bears and snakes as he slept because he is favored by the gods, in particular the Muses (*vester, Camenae, vester*, 21). That Horace has been protected

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<sup>201</sup> 2007: 211-12

<sup>202</sup> Lowrie suggests that, “The struggle between lyric and narrative authority [in the Roman odes, C. 3.3, 4, and 5] fragments the coherence of any possible praise-making” and that the specifically lyric elements in which Horace casts his mythological and historical exempla prevent praise from lapsing into panegyric (1997: 224). In a similar vein, Lyne describes Horace’s method of praise in C. 3.4 as “indirect,” coinciding with a Pindaric use of myth as substitute for over praise (1995: 54-55). I argue, however, that Horace’s “indirect” praise of Augustus and the fact that he emphasizes his poetic autobiography and simultaneously praises the emperor does not subvert this praise, but elevates the status of the poet.

from harm shows that he has clearly been chosen by the gods, especially the Muses, as does the fact that he receives from them a symbol of inspiration – laurel and myrtle – and a sign of his initiation and future as an inspired poet.

In C. 3.25 the religious, poetic, and political converge as the poet grapples with the pressure and difficulty of composing poetry in the emerging age of Augustus. This ode provides another example of the poet's personal encounter with a god. In this scene of poetic initiation, Bacchus carries him off into the woods in order to practice singing poems in praise of Augustus.

quo me, Bacche, rapis tui  
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in specus  
velox mente nova? quibus  
antris egregii Caesaris audiar  
aeternum meditans decus  
stellis inserere et consilio Iovis? (1-6)

. . .

nil paruum aut humili modo,  
nil mortale loquar. Dulce periculum est,  
o Lenaeae, sequi deum  
cingentem uiridi tempora pampino. (17-20)

Where are you taking me full as I am of you, Bacchus? Into what groves or what caves am I being driven quickly in a new state of mind? In what caverns shall I be heard as I practice setting the eternal glory of extraordinary Caesar among the stars and the council of Jupiter. . .

I shall sing nothing trivial or in a humble manner, nothing mortal. It is a sweet danger to follow the god, Lenaeus, wreathing my temples with green vines.

Of course the landscape is what we should expect, with its groves tucked away from the city, as

well as the grottoes and caves associated with Bacchus and his entourage.<sup>203</sup> As in 2.19, there is an element of fear, but more prominent is the sense of urgency and anticipation. There is a moment when the poet and his audience are uncertain of what the outcome of this encounter will mean for the poet. The mix of danger and pleasure (*dulce periculum est, / o Lenaeae, sequi deum*, 3.25.18-19) is apparent in all three of the *Odes* we have examined so far. In 2.19 the poet, “rejoices wildly with a new fear,” (*recenti mens trepidat metu . . . laetatur*, 5-7) and in 3.4 he wonders whether he is deluded by a pleasant madness (*an me ludit amabilis / insania?*, 5-6). This dichotomy highlights the emotional experience of an encounter with Bacchus: it is terrifying to submit oneself to the god entirely as his worship requires, but the rewards – a blessed afterlife for an initiate and poetic greatness and immortality for the poet – are worthwhile for those who are favored by the god. As we have seen in 2.19, where the poet uses “Bacchic poetics” to reflect on society and politics, here too the poet uses what is ostensibly an occasion for religious ritual to examine the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion. The same risks that are associated with singing of Bacchus are now at stake as the poet prepares to praise Augustus. The position of *loquar*, immediately preceding *dulce periculum* (18), emphasizes further how bittersweet the prospect is of speaking about Augustus. Again, the fact that the poem represents a poetic act indicates that the ostensible religious ritual is really an initiation for Horace not only as a poet, but also as a member of Augustus’ inner circle.

Just as worshipping Bacchus mingles pleasure with pain, there is danger in composing

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Propertius: *Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae, / in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus*. (“Shades of Callimachus and rites of Coan Philetas, I beg that you allow me to enter your grove,” 3.1.1-2); and 3.3, in which Apollo directs the poet to a cave and instructs him to abandon epic for light themes: *cum me Castalia speculans ex arbore Phoebus / sic ait aurata nixus ad antra lyra . . . hic erat affixis viridis spelunca lapillis, / pendebantque cavis tympana pumicibus, / orgia Musarum et Sileni patris imago* (When Phoebus, watching me from his Castalian wood spoke thus, leaning on his golden lyre before the cave . . . here was a fresh green cave, adorned with pebbles, and a hollow drum was hanging from the rocks, the rites of the Muses and the image of Father Silenus.” 13-29).

political poetry: the greater the risk in taking on a poetic project, the greater the reward (or failure). The conventional way for a poet to turn down a too ambitious (i.e. risky) project is by *recusatio*, of which Horace offers his fair share. In his analysis of the odes in which Horace addresses Maecenas, Santirocco has argued that the poet's *recusationes*, which represent not only a refusal to compose epic, but more importantly, "manifestos of Callimachean aesthetics," are used primarily to poetic effect.<sup>204</sup> In turning down a potentially dangerous poetic project, Horace claims that he is not the poet for the job, that his talent is too slender to sing of grand themes (*tenues grandia*, 1.6.9). In C. 4.2 the poet equates praise of Augustus with panegyric composed by Pindar, who boils and surges like a river down a mountainside and soars like a swan in the clouds. However, anyone who strives to compose praise poetry such as he is destined to fail if he is not up to the task.

Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari,  
 Iule, ceratis ope Daedalea  
 nititur pinnis vitreo daturus  
     nomina ponto.  
 monte decurrens velut amnis, imbres  
 quem super notas aluere ripas,  
 fervet immensusque ruit profundo  
     Pindarus ore (1-8)  
 . . .  
 multa Dircaeum levat aura cycnum,  
 tendit, Antoni, quotiens in altos  
 nubium tractus: ego apis Matinae  
     more modoque  
 grata carpentis thyma per laborem  
 plurimum circa nemus uvidique  
 Tiburis ripas operosa parvus  
     carmina fingo. (25-32)  
 . . .  
 tum meae, si quid loquar audiendum,  
 uocis accedet bona pars, et, 'o Sol

<sup>204</sup> 1984; for studies in Horace's *recusationes* see Wimmel 1960; Clausen 1964; Smith 1968.

pulcher! o laudande!' canam, recepto  
Caesare felix. (45-48)

Iullus, whoever tries to rival Pindar, flies on waxen wings, with Daedalean art, and is doomed, like Icarus, to give a name to glassy waters. Like a river, rushing down from the mountains, that the rain has filled above its usual banks, so Pindar's deep voice seethes, immeasurably, and goes on flowing . . .  
Son of Antony, a great breeze raises the Dircean swan, whenever it strives on, carried to the clouds' heights. While I, a humble man, compose laborious songs, in the manner of a Matinian bee, that gathers pleasant thyme among the groves and the banks of flowing Tiber . . .  
Then, if what I speak should be heard, the best part of my voice, blessed by Caesar's return, will rise, and I will sing: 'O lovely sun, O worthy to be praised!'

In this *recusatio* the poet claims that his addressee, Iullus, is better suited to praising the emperor than he. He compares the risk associated with doing so to flying on Daedalean wings that are likely to malfunction and send the poet to his death. In this instance, at least, Horace would prefer to stay closer to the ground, flitting around and toiling over his carefully wrought poetry in the manner of a bee. If poetry and politics are strongly interconnected, as I am arguing, then the poet's representation of himself as a humble bee indicates his uncertainty in his social position and hesitance to overstep his bounds.<sup>205</sup> When it comes to acknowledging Augustus, it is better to step lightly and go unnoticed than to roar boisterously and risk offense. Yet, even as he defers the composition of panegyric to Iullus, he does not refuse outright and suggests that he will do so himself in the future.

Praise of Augustus is simultaneously impossible, as Fowler would have it,<sup>206</sup> and essential to being an Augustan poet: one cannot refuse to praise the emperor without implicitly doing so. According to Galinsky, Augustus employed a similar strategy in false modesty; he

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<sup>205</sup> See McNeill: "We grasp the self-consciousness of [Horace's] compelling picture of a man of genius who rose from obscure origins into glorious fame and the highest circles of Roman society and in so doing faced a plethora of complex challenges and troubling pressures" (2001: 138).

<sup>206</sup> 2009: 248-66



argues that Horatian *recusatio* is parallel to Augustus' own refusal to accept the offices of consul and censor because the status of his *auctoritas* was enough.<sup>207</sup> To say that one's talents are ill-equipped to extol the emperor's greatness is to extol his greatness anyway. Furthermore, for a poet such as Horace writing in the late first century B.C.E., it is necessary to compose praise poetry in order to receive praise himself. The poet must take a risk to be rewarded; there is a chance that aspiring to be like Pindar will result in failure but, on the other hand, if the poet is successful, it will result in his immortality.

non usitata nec tenui ferar  
 penna biformis per liquidum aethera  
     vates, neque in terris morabor  
     longius, invidiaque maior  
 urbis relinquam. non ego pauperum  
 sanguis parentum, non ego quem vocas,  
     dilecte Maecenas, obibo  
     nec Stygia cohibebor unda. (2.20.1-8)

...  
 iam Daedaleo notior Icaro  
 visam gementis litora Bosphori  
     Syrtisque Gaetulas canorus  
     ales Hyperboreosque campos.  
 me Colchus et qui dissimulat metum  
 Marsae cohortis Dacus et ultimi  
     noscent Geloni, me peritus  
     discet Hiber Rhodanique potor. (13-20)

A poet of dual form, I will be borne on through the clear air on no ordinary or slender wing nor will I remain on earth any longer, but I, greater than envy will leave the cities behind. It's not I, born of poor parents, it's not I, whom you call, beloved Maecenas, who will die, or be encircled by Stygian waters. . . .  
 Soon, a melodious bird, and more famous than Icarus, Daedalus' son, I'll visit Bosphorus' loud shores, Gaetulian Syrtes, and the Hyperborean plains. Colchis will know me and the Dacians, who conceal their fear of the Latin cohort, and the Geloni, and learned Spain and the drinker of the Rhone will come to know me.

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<sup>207</sup> 1996: 257

Horace uses the exemplum of Icarus in both 4.2 and 2.20 to express the danger for the poet in aspiring to greatness. Although he seems to have put aside his fear of failure and is confident about his future fame in 2.20, there is a sense that he is still self-conscious of his humble parentage and social standing. Even in mid-flight the poet considers the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion. Nisbet and Hubbard note that the poet is still aware of “the hazard of his ambition” and point out that Icarus is more famous for his fall than for his flight.<sup>208</sup>

Despite the implication that this analogy entails, however, Horace associates himself with Icarus as a metaphor for aspiring to sublime aesthetics and obtaining the kind of immortal fame that will extend to the furthest reaches of the known world. The poet’s address to Maecenas is two-sided: Horace simultaneously announces his future immortality and evokes his relationship to his patron, who still calls on the poet and to whom the poet is still tied.<sup>209</sup> Although there is no mention of Augustus, he is hiding beneath the surface. As his relationship to Maecenas suggests, the poet aspires to sublimity and poetic greatness, but not without conceding to his political superiors. Horace’s poetic aspirations are intrinsically tied up with praise of Augustus: the *biformis vates* (1-2) will conquer the world just as the emperor expands his empire. The two rely on one another: the poet will visit the very ends of the world which the emperor has imposed. Schiesaro argues that there is a similar association between poet and emperor in the proem to *Georgics* 1 where “Octavian’s boundless expansion over land, sea and sky . . . is coextensive

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<sup>208</sup> 1978: 337

<sup>209</sup> For the historical and social context of literary patronage in Rome, see White 1993: 29 who argues that, “From a Roman perspective . . . the relationship between poets and their prominent friends looked no different from a mass of other relationship in upper-class society which presented subtly compounded elements of parity and inequality,” and objects to the earlier accepted position, advanced by Griffin 1984: n43 that, “An ordinary client could not offer you immortal glory, nor would posterity have its eye on the nature of your relationship with him.” Cf. Zetzel 1982 and Gold 1987.

with the poet's own poetic audacity, and that political expansion is implicitly making poetic audacity possible."<sup>210</sup> Likewise Lowrie sees in C. 2.20 (and 3.30) a parallel with *Metamorphoses* 15.875-9.<sup>211</sup>

parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis  
 astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,  
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,  
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,  
 siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

Yet I, immortal, will be borne, with the better part of me, above the distant stars,  
 and my name will not die, and wherever Roman power extends over conquered  
 lands, I will be spoken on the people's lips, and with fame through all the ages,  
 if the priests' prophecies hold any truth, I shall live.

Again, the poet's immortality relies on Roman conquest; the poet will only be famous in those parts of the world that are under Rome's control, and the poet's name will only live on so long as Rome survives. Likewise, the emperor's immortality is contingent on the praise he receives through poetry. So, although Horace at times is reluctant to aspire for poetic immortality, the risk is simultaneously more dangerous and worthwhile because his future renown throughout the world is associated with Augustus.

Although Fowler argued that Horace's preference for Callimachean poetics alongside his declarations of sublimity make successful panegyric of the emperor an impossibility, he acknowledged the potential for "Bacchic poetics," the "enemy of *recusatio*" as Schiesaro defines them, which "can make opposites co-exist: pleasure and pain, *tenuitas* and *grandia*, the labors of *meditari* with the emotions of sudden inspiration, the paradox that prescribes the poet to be at one and the same time both himself and someone else in the struggle to combine originality and

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<sup>210</sup> 1993: 140

<sup>211</sup> 2009: 260

tradition.”<sup>212</sup> Horace’s struggle to find his place, as far as society, politics, and poetics are concerned, is ongoing and never quite resolved. Even as he proclaims his future fame and immortality as a poet, he contemplates his social position, while simultaneously equating poetics to politics in the recurrent image of Rome’s expanding empire. Horace surely presents himself as confident in his poetic ability and rise to greatness, but this does not change the fact that being in a position of power – an initiate chosen to praise Augustus – comes with great responsibility, which is why Horace reminds us in 4.2 that striving toward poetic sublimity is a precarious endeavor.

Throughout the *Odes* Horace presents himself as chosen by the gods and privileged as a result. In 1.22, he says that anyone who is “pure of heart” (literally “wholesome in life”) will be protected from danger. And in fact, Horace himself is such a man, for as he was walking through the woods a wolf fled from him although he was unarmed (cf. 3.4).

integer vitae scelerisque purus  
non eget Mauris iaculis neque arcu  
nec venenatis gravida sagittis,  
Fusce, pharetra (1.22.1-4)

...  
namque me silva lupus in Sabina,  
dum meam canto Lalagen et ultra  
terminum curis vagor expeditis,  
fugit inermem. (9-12)

The man pure of heart and innocent of crime does not need Moorish  
javelins or a bow or a quiver heavy with poisoned arrows, Fuscus . . .  
for a wolf in a Sabine wood fled me, though I was unarmed, while  
I was singing of my Lalage and wandering carefree beyond my boundaries.

In this instance, it is not only the potential wrath of the gods from which Horace has been saved,

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<sup>212</sup> 2009: 72

but as with 3.4, he is protected from other possible dangers as a result of his privileged status as a poet, which becomes synonymous with being a man of good character.

Horace connects moral integrity with preferential treatment from the gods in C. 3.2 as well. Here again, the man is rewarded who has *virtus*, a notion which entails both military manliness and the more abstract concept of ‘moral’ excellence or “the superhuman” quality “of the great man,” as NR puts it.<sup>213</sup>

Virtus, repulsae nescia sordidae,  
intaminatis fulget honoribus,  
nec sumit aut ponit securis  
arbitrio popularis aerae.  
Virtus, recludens immeritis mori  
caelum, negata temptat iter via,  
coetusque vulgaris et udam  
spernit humum fugiente penna. (17-24)

*virtus*, unaware of vile defeat, shines with its honor untainted and does not take up of put down the axes (of authority) by the judgement of the people’s whim. *virtus*, laying open heaven to those unworthy of death, ventures a journey on a denied (to others) path and spurns common crowds and the wet earth on fleeing wing.

This virtuous “superhuman” man is not affected by setbacks at the elections and is not influenced by popular opinion because he rises above the turns of fortune that would distress an ordinary man. He enjoys an elite life that is not accessible to others who are less privileged than he. The suggestion of immortality in *immeritis mori* (21) and the *fugiente penna* (24) recalls C. 2.20, where the poet proclaims that he shall not die, but will enjoy poetic immortality and spread his fame throughout the world upon his metamorphosis into a swan.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> 2004: 22

<sup>214</sup> Cf. 4.9.29-30 *paulum sepultae distat inertiae / celata uirtus* (hidden *virtus* is little different to weakness after it is buried), suggesting that *virtus* cannot earn immortality with praise by the poet. See Lyne who argues that C. 4.9 “cynically saps” 3.2 (1995: 214).

non usitata nec tenui ferar  
 penna biformis per liquidum aethera  
     uates neque in terris morabor  
     longius inuidiaque maior  
 urbis relinquam. . . (2.20.1-5)

I will be carried on neither a common or slender wing, a bard of double form,  
 through the clear air and I will remain on earth no longer and I will, greater  
 than envy, will leave behind the cities.

Along with the exclusive, immortal status of the *vates* comes the ability to travel beyond the limits of the world imposed on others who are inferior to him. As we have just seen in C. 3.2, a man of *virtus* takes the path that is denied to others and accessible to him alone by flying. In both passages, the image of a privileged individual flying above the world where no other man could possibly rival him, is related to scorn for what is ordinary and pedestrian.

The image of the poet who associates himself with the divine and considers himself superior to the common, unprivileged masses also calls to mind the scenes of poetic initiation we examined in the previous section; in fact, Horace links the *virtus* favored by the gods to an initiate's promise to keep his silence concerning the rites in C. 3.2.

est et fideli tuta silentio  
 merces: vetabo, qui Cereris sacrum  
     uulgarit arcanæ, sub isdem  
     sit trabibus fragilemque mecum  
 solvat phaselon . . . (25-29)

There is also a reward for loyal silence: I will forbid the one who divulges  
 the rites of secret Ceres to be under the same roof or to set out fragile boat  
 with me . . .

In the references to ritual initiation that we have examined thus far, the mysteries may only be revealed to those for whom it is allowed, *fas*. It is forbidden, *nefas*, to allow uninitiates to participate in the rites. No god will show himself to these uninitiates, who are described as

profane, sinful, and lowly, because they cannot be trusted to keep the god's mysteries a secret. Just as in C. 1.18 where Horace associates keeping Bacchus' rites concealed with discerning *fas atque nefas*, good character (*virtus*) is here associated with keeping the secrets of Ceres (i.e. her mystery cult). The elite status of a man of *virtus* is equated with ritual initiation and sworn discretion; there is a reward for silence because revealing the secrets, *vulgare*, is to make them common and well-known, the very thing that the privileged initiate scorns. Knowing privileged information can be a dangerous prospect, but there are rewards for those who are willing to take the risk.<sup>215</sup> Although the poet refers explicitly to the Eleusinian mysteries, there are correlations between the rites of Ceres and that of Bacchus, and we have seen that worshipping Bacchus can be a dangerous prospect. In this analogy then, being in close proximity to the emperor also puts one in a precarious situation.<sup>216</sup> With the position of high status and esteem comes great responsibility; perhaps this is why Horace is so reluctant to praise Augustus in the first place, for example in C. 1.6 where the poet claims that he cannot do so for fear of lessening his greatness.

. . . . dum pudor  
 imbellisque lyrae Musa potens vetat  
 laudes egregii Caesaris et tuas  
 culpa deterere ingeni. (9-12)

. . . so long as *pudor* and the powerful Muse of the unwarlike lyre forbids me to diminish your [Maenecas] praise and that of extraordinary Caesar by fault of my (inadequate) talent.

The poet understands that taking on such a great project is potentially disastrous. If it fails to praise Caesar adequately, as he fears, he may threaten to degrade the emperor rather than elevate

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<sup>215</sup> Nisbet and Rudd see here an implicit analogy for keeping state secrets, but this one-to-one interpretation is not necessary (2004: 32).

<sup>216</sup> See McNeill: "We catch tantalizing glimpses of a world of social and political transformation, one in which tremendous risks and rewards awaited those who were willing and able to try new ways, and in which control of one's image and the reactions of others counted for everything" (2001: 138).

his status as a man worthy of great praise. The verb *deterere*, “to wear down” or “rub away,” not only suggests that a poor poem in praise of the emperor might detract from his greatness, but also that it might make him appear “common” and “everyday.” I think that this idea strengthens the connection between ritual initiation and inclusion into Augustus’ inner circle. If there is a reward for keeping state secrets, then there could be punishment for revealing them and making them well-known, i.e. *vulgare* and *deterere*. Horace is afraid of violating the emperor’s trust, even unwittingly, just as one might threaten transgression of the god’s rites. Once initiated, however, the poet is proven to be a man of *virtus* and *integer vitae*, so that viewing the rites, i.e. the secrets of state, is no longer an act of transgression, but inclusion in an elite circle.

A common thread in these poems as well as in 2.19 and 3.25 is the fact that the poet has been wandering beyond his limits. This highlights his elite status by virtue of the fact that transgressing one’s boundaries should have serious consequences.

*ultra / terminum curis uagor expeditis* (1.22.10-11)  
I was *wandering* carefree *beyond my boundaries*.

Bacchum in *remotis* carmina rupibus / vidi docentem (2.19.1-2)  
I saw Bacchus teaching songs on *remote* cliffs.

audire et videor pios / errare per lucos . . . nutricis *extra limen* (3.4.6-10)  
I seem to hear and to *wander* through sacred groves . . . *beyond* my nurse’s *threshold*.

. . . mihi *devio* / ripas et vacuum nemus / mirari libet. (3.25.12-14)  
It pleases me, *in a remote place*, to admire the banks and empty grove.

Lowrie identifies odes such as 1.22 and 3.4 as a part of Horace’s personal narrative. She says that they share conventional elements, such as the threat of danger, implied divine protection, and wandering out of bounds: “Together they constitute a mythology of the lyric poet. This mythology is not one of identity but of function. It tells us not who the poet is, or what it takes to



write this kind of poetry, but rather authenticates this poetry before us by claiming divine favor.”<sup>217</sup> Just as the image of the immortal poet visiting the ends of the world in 2.20 is associated with the emperor’s expanding empire, I will argue in the next section that the poet’s divine favor and moral goodness, which makes the transgression of boundaries acceptable, is also associated with that of the emperor. The poetic and political become interchangeable, as the man characterized by *virtus*—whether poet or emperor—is granted divine privilege. Bacchus, poetry, and imperialism together represent forces capable of controlling nature and establishing its limits. What is more, there is a further connection between these forces as the poet relies on poetry and Bacchic poetics in particular for his immortality, while the emperor in turn depends on the poet for his own legacy.

### **The Poetics and Ethics of Imperialism in the *Odes***

In the tumultuous time before Augustus when Rome was plagued by civil strife and turmoil, Roman imperialism was often represented as sexual assault on the peoples whose lands the Romans were conquering and expansion was linked to the loose moral behavior of the Roman upper class. In his study, “Self, Sex, and Empire in Catullus,” Konstan argues that, Catullus represents the expansion of land as the prime expression of aristocratic wealth (as in C. 29) and associates Roman expansion with excessive male sexuality (as in C. 11).<sup>218</sup> Both of these poems will provide a contrast for Horace’s own treatment and portrayal of imperial expansion in the *Odes*. In C. 11, Catullus’ farewell to Lesbia, he believes that the poet’s self-representation is

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<sup>217</sup> 1997: 193

<sup>218</sup> 2000: 220-21

equated to that of distant peoples subjected to Rome's expansion, as he places himself in a position of marginalization like a flower at the edge of a field which Lesbia has allowed to be lopped off by a passing plough.

Furi et Aureli comites Catulli,  
 siue in extremos penetrabit Indos,  
 litus ut longe resonante Eoa  
     tunditur unda.  
 siue in Hyrcanos Arabesue molles,  
 seu Sagas sagittiferosue Parthos,  
 siue quae septemgeminus colorat  
     aequora Nilus,  
 siue trans altas gradietur Alpes,  
 Caesaris uisens monimenta magni,  
 Gallicum Rhenum horribile aequor ulti-  
     mosque Britannos,  
 omnia haec, quaecumque feret uoluntas  
 caelitum, temptare simul parati,  
 pauca nuntiate meae puellae  
     non bona dicta.  
 cum suis uiuat ualeatque moechis,  
 quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,  
 nullum amans uere, sed identidem omnium  
     ilia rumpens;  
 nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,  
 qui illius culpa cecidit uelut prati  
 ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam  
     tactus aratro est.

Furius and Aurelius, comrades of Catullus, whether he will penetrate to the furthest Indians, where the shore is pounded by the far-resounding eastern wave. whether he penetrates into the Hyrcanos or the gentle Arabs, or the arrow-carrying Parthians, or the seven fold Nile which colors the plains, whether he will go across the great Alps, intending to see the great monument to Caesar, or the Gallic Rhine or the horribly distant Britain, you who are prepared to try all these things, and whatever else the will of the gods will bring, announce to my girl a few nasty words. Let her live and be happy with her lovers, three-hundred of whom at once she holds in her embraces, loving none truly but again and again rupturing the loins of them all; and let her not count on my love, as in the past, for through her fault it has fallen like a flower

at the meadow's edge, after being lopped off by the passing plow.

In this analogy, Lesbia, a sexual predator with an insatiable appetite, is like Rome's conquering armies, who expand Rome's territory further and further, devastating peoples and laying waste to their land as they go. On the other hand, the poet has not arrived as a member of the dominant nobility, like Furius and Aurelius, who have come as conquerers; he stands, like the peoples who have been subjugated by Rome's armies, at the boundary where Lesbia has destroyed him.

It is ironic that at the beginning of the poem Catullus announces that Furius and Aurelius will accompany him to the ends of the world: Konstan argues that this pair, elsewhere objects of Catullus' scorn, help the poet to represent his own position in a world of erotic aggression and imperialism.<sup>219</sup> The act of traveling to the far reaches of the known world, described by the verbs *penetrare* (2) and *temptare* (14), has obvious sexual undertones and Furius and Aurelius are linked to the licentious Lesbia because they are asked to bring the poet's message to her. In other poems, it is clear that these two men pose a sexual threat to Catullus: in C. 16, for example, they are both recipients of the poet's rather violent invective as he defends himself against their charges of effeminacy and immodesty. He accosts them individually as well: Aurelius in particular is singled out for his sexual aggression and advances on the boy with whom Catullus is romantically involved.

uerum a te metuo tuoque pene  
infesto pueris bonis malisque. (15.9-10)

But truly I fear you and your penis, dangerous to both good and bad boys.

Aureli, pater esuritionum,  
non harum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt  
aut sunt aut aliis erunt in annis,

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<sup>219</sup> 2000: 227

pedicare cupis meos amores. (21. 1-4)

Aurelius, father of hungers, you desire to fuck not just these, but whoever my loves were or are or will be throughout the years.

The fact that Aurelius and Furius are associated with sexual violence and are known for their strong sexual appetite brings new meaning to C. 11. These men, prepared to attempt all these things (*omnia haec . . . temptare simul parati*, 13-14) and travel anywhere in the world, are characterized by their sexual depravity and are not seen as more brave or virtuous for their willingness to go to the ends of the earth. They are not considered more manly, but are hypermasculine as the limitless extent of their travels is equated with their insatiable erotic desires. In contrast to the picture that Catullus paints of Roman expansion and imperialism, Horace's *Odes* tell a rather different story. While the conquered peoples at the limits of Rome's ever-expanding territory continue to be literally and figuratively marginalized, under Augustus their oppression came to represent the emperor's superior *virtus* rather than Rome's depraved morality and sexually violent behavior.

In C. 1.22, we saw that the wholesome and sinless poet, because of his good character, is immune to dangers of all kinds, even as he roams beyond the boundary stone (*ultra terminum*, 10-11). As I argued above, the poet is afforded protection for his moral goodness *as a poet* for being *interger vitae scelerisque purus* is synonymous with being a poet. This is exemplified by the fact that a monstrous wolf fled from the poet as he was singing of his Lalage, whose name in Greek, "Babbler," provides a metaphor for poetry itself. In Davis' discussion of this poem, which is just one variant of the motif of the poet kept safe from harm, he says that, "it is

*qua* love-poet, not simply *amator*, that the singer is magically protected.”<sup>220</sup> In a similar vein, Oliensis also sees a connection to poetry in 1.22.<sup>221</sup> She argues that *dulce ridentem* in the penultimate line echoes Sappho 31 and Catullus 51, but whereas Horace’s lyric predecessors are confounded by their desire and rendered unable to speak, the speaker in 1.22 is strengthened and protected by his lover who represents poetry itself: “‘to sing my Lalage’ is to chant the very syllables of musicality. If Horace wanders beyond the boundary-stone, and indeed to the ends of the earth, he is constantly reconstructing his own boundaries, designing his own traveling *fines*, in the articulations of his meter.”<sup>222</sup> She points out that the position of *ultra / terminum* (10-11), which passes beyond the terminus of the line-ending, paves the way for the hyperbolic travels imagined at the end of the poem as Horace performs the act of territorial transgression within his own lyric space. As a result, Horace emphasizes the fact that not only is the virtuous poet protected from wild beasts in his own Sabine woods, but is able to travel *anywhere* in the world without threat of danger.

pone me pigris ubi nulla campis  
 arbor aestiva recreatur aura,  
 quod latus mundi nebulae malusque  
     Iuppiter urget;  
 pone sub curru nimium propinqui  
 solis in terra domibus negata:  
 dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,

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<sup>220</sup> Davis 1999 argues more specifically that Lalage symbolizes love poetry and the wolf iambic invective, so that Horace is aligning himself generically with Lalage and making a “disavowal” of iambic as he fends off the *lupus*. See also Hubbard’s discussion of C. 1.22 and the influence of Catullus (2000: 34-50). He argues that Horace “corrects” Catullus’ version of the Atys myth by alluding to the well-attested version in Hellenistic epigram in which the eunuch devotee of Cybele frightens off a lion with the music of his tambourine; cf. Prescott 1925: 76-77, Jossierand 1935: 363, and MacFarlane 1981: 25-26 who also note the parallel between C. 1.22 and these epigrams.

<sup>221</sup> Likewise Hubbard: “Lalage should not be seen as a real woman at all, but as a metonymy for Horace’s own poetry, especially in the form of love poetry” (2000: 35).

<sup>222</sup> 1998: 110

dulce loquentem. (17-24)

Set me down on the lifeless plains, where no trees spring to life in the burning midsummer wind, that wide stretch of the world that's burdened by mists and a gloomy sky: set me down in a land denied habitation, where the sun's chariot rumbles too near the earth: I'll still be in love with my sweetly laughing, sweet talking Lalage.

Wherever the poet goes, he will be safe in any part of the world because of his love for Lalage, that is, because he is a good man and a poet. So whereas Horace equates the ability to travel to the ends of the world safely to those who are privileged and favored by the gods so that they may do so unharmed, Catullus relates territorial expansion with limitless sexual desires, as in C. 11 and greed, as in C. 29.

quis hoc potest uidere, quis potest pati,  
nisi impudicus et uorax et aleo,  
Mamurram habere quod Comata Gallia  
habebat uncti et ultima Britannia?  
cinaede Romule haec uidebis et feres?  
et ille nunc superbus et superfluens  
perambulabit omnium cubilia,  
ut albulus columbus aut Adoneus? (29.1-8)

Who could see it, who could endure it, unless he were shameless, greedy, a gambler? Mamurra owns riches that Transalpine Gaul and furthest Britain once owned. Sodomite Romulus, do you see this and bear it? And now shall the man, arrogant, overbearing, flit through all of the beds like a whitish dove or an Adonis?

Catullus was clearly disillusioned by the political climate of his day and critical of an elite society in which key players competed for political and sexual domination and personal political

gain left no room for moral values.<sup>223</sup> With these sorts of implications for Roman expansion and imperialism, at least according to Catullus at the end of the republic, how were the poets of the next generation, in the age of Augustus, going to present Rome's ever-growing empire under the new emperor?<sup>224</sup> For Horace, in the *Odes*, it meant associating territorial expansion with Roman virtue of the sort that only the truly privileged, divinely sanctioned man could possess (in this case, either the *princeps* or his poet laureate). Augustus is represented as responsible for bringing an end to Rome's civil wars and a champion for moral legislation that might curb the sort of depravity that put Rome in a precarious position to begin with.

The connection between being virtuous and traveling to the ends of the earth recurs throughout the *Odes*, even – or especially – when the ends of the earth are those places conquered by Rome and subjected to her rule. In C. 2.2 and 3.3, Horace presents an image of Roman expansion that is discordant with that of Catullus: whereas Mamurra's main incentive for expanding the empire is greed and monetary gain (Catullus 29), Horace makes it clear that this may *never* be Rome's motivation for doing so:

latius regnes avidum domando  
spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis  
Gadibus iungas et uterque Poenus  
serviat uni . (2.2.9-12)

...  
redditum Cyri solio Phraaten  
dissidens plebi numero beatorum

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<sup>223</sup> A prevalent notion was that Rome had slipped into a state of moral decline (cf. e.g. Livy's preface) in the aftermath of the defeat of Carthage and other eastern conquests, as exemplified by Sallust, *Cat.* 10: *Carthago, aemula imperi Romani, ab stirpe interiit, cuncta maria terraeque patebant, saevire fortuna ac miscere omnia coepit . . . igitur primo pecuniae, deinde imperi cupido crevit: ea quasi materies omnium malorum fuere.* ("When Carthage, the rival of Rome's power, was utterly destroyed and all of the lands and seas became accessible, fortuna raged and started to confound everything . . . so that first the desire for money and then for power grew and these things became the source of every evil.")

<sup>224</sup> Syme sees Catullus and Horace's differing approaches to political issues both as the result of their temperaments: Horace's quietism and subservience to the regime versus Catullus' "free and passionate" individualism (1939: 461).

eximit **Virtus** populumque falsis  
 dedocet uti  
 vocibus, regnum et diadema tutum  
 deferens uni propriamque laurum,  
 quisquis ingentis oculo irretorto  
 spectat acervos. (17-24)

You may rule a wider kingdom by taming a greedy spirit, than by joining Spain  
 to far-off Libya, while Carthaginians on both sides, serve one . . .

Though Phraates is back on the Armenian throne, Virtue, differing from the  
 rabble, excludes him from the blessed, and instructs the people not to misuse  
 words, instead conferring power, and security of rule, and lasting laurels, on  
 him alone who can pass by enormous piles of treasure without looking back.

horrenda late nomen in ultimas  
 extendat oras, qua medius liquor  
 secernit Europen ab Afro,  
 qua tumidus rigat arua Nilus,  
 aurum irreperitum et sic melius situm,  
 cum terra celat, spernere fortior  
 quam cogere humanos in usus  
 omne sacrum rapiente dextra.  
 quicumque mundo terminus obstitit,  
 hunc tanget armis, visere gestiens,  
 qua parte debacchentur ignes,  
 qua nebulae pluviiue rores. (3.3.44-55)

Let her extend her dreaded name to farthest shores, there where the straits  
 separate Africa and Europe, there where the swollen Nile irrigates the lands  
 beside the river, firm in ignoring gold still undiscovered, that's better where it is  
 while earth conceals it, than mining it for our human use, with hands that grasp  
 everything that's sacred. Whatever marks the boundaries of the world, let Rome's  
 might reach it, eager to see regions where solar fires perform their revels, or  
 places where the mists and rain pour down.

In both poems there is the idea that Rome's territorial expansion and subsequent rule will be  
 successful if she does not do so because of greed. In 2.2, the poet says that one might rule *more*  
*widely* if he controls his greed (*latius regnes avidum domando / spiritum*, 1-2) and in 3.3, Juno  
 herself says that there will be *no limit* to the extent of Rome's boundaries (*quicumque mundo*



*terminus obstitit, / hunc tanget armis*, 52-3), if only she bravely refuses the temptation of greed and leaves gold buried underground (*aurum inrepertum et sic melius situm, / cum terra celat, spernere fortior*, 48-9). If imperial expansion had previously been motivated by avarice, indulgence and immoral behavior during the republic, according to Horace's *Odes* the principate had a different aim.

C. 2.2 suggests that *virtus* curbs greedy desires and confers a secure kingdom and crown on one man alone who is unmoved by the lure of material wealth. There are moral philosophical undertones: particularly Stoic is the view that passions should be subdued and that the wise man is king because of his self-control and inner security.<sup>225</sup> In 3.3, the same moral principles are espoused for Rome specifically in Juno's speech to the council of the gods on the occasion of Romulus' apotheosis. She announces that dreaded Rome may extend her name to the furthest shores of the world (*horrenda late nomen in ultimas / extendat oras*, 45-6) and that Rome by force of arms might reach whatever *terminus* limits the world (*quicumque mundo terminus obstitit, / hunc tanget armis*, 53-4). However, this will only be possible on the condition that Rome leave gold buried in the earth and reject material wealth (*aurum inrepertum et sic melius situm, / cum terra celat, spernere fortior*, 48-9). This sort of discipline and self-control is depicted as characteristically Roman; Juno makes this speech to the gods at the origins of Rome's founding and so it becomes a part of early Roman history. Her speech also deals with the paradox of imperialism that we have briefly explored: how can imperial expansion simultaneously promote and counteract greed and immorality? For the principate, the solution to this dilemma is to confront the issue head on. Rather than being the cause of Rome's moral

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<sup>225</sup> See Nisbet and Hubbard 1978: 34. I would add that here *virtus* provides the alternative to civil strife as it removes the greedy, immoral man from the throne and replaces him with virtuous one (e.g. Augustus) who brings forth a more stable and lasting kingdom.

decline, imperial expansion will provide the remedy; materialism, gluttony, and extravagance are replaced by moral restraint and self-control.<sup>226</sup>

Oliensis has argued that Rome's imperial expansion is bound up with the proper regard for territorial boundaries.<sup>227</sup> The *terminus*, or boundary stone, embodies the principles described above of restraint, frugality, and discipline and kept greed in check. One depended on the *terminus* to maintain his personal property and keep his neighbor within bounds. The man who moves the boundary-stones marking his neighbors' land is greedy and lacks restraint, as in 2.18.

quid quod usque proximos  
revellis agri terminos et ultra  
limites clientium  
salis avarus? . . . (23-6)

What of the fact that you continually tear away the boundary-stones of your  
neighbor's land and greedily jump over the limits of your tenants?

The Roman empire, however, is a special case. When she expands her territories, she is not overstepping her bounds or putting out her neighbor because as Oliensis puts it: "the ideal of terminal stability enabled the outward displacement of the *termini* of both city and empire. By as it were swallowing the primordial boundary-stone, Rome incorporated boundlessness within her own bounds."<sup>228</sup> Rome never transgresses or violates territorial bounds because the limits with which she is endowed are the very ends of the earth. There is more to this than the fact that Rome

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<sup>226</sup> Oliensis 1998: 109: "If Rome has the self-discipline to turn away from gold, to hide it away again in the earth (for example, by consecrating it, anticipating the example of Augustus, in the temple Terminus will one day share with Jupiter on the Capitoline hill), then no *terminus* in the world will stand in her way."

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Barchiesi who makes a similar claim: "[the god] Terminus thus proclaims order and continuity, but does not come into conflict with Roman expansionism." (1997: 215-6). Cf. Ov. *Fast.* 2.683-4: *gentibus est aliis tellus data limite certo: / Romanae spatium est urbis et ordbis idem* ("other peoples are given land with a fixed boundary; the territory of Rome and of the earth are the same.")

<sup>228</sup> 1998: 108

is destined to rule the world, though that is not insignificant.<sup>229</sup> Not only is the Roman empire fated to be a world power, it is morally obliged to do so. Fowler asks “should not we see the Roman expansion as a civilizing and *taming* action, which restores boundaries rather than removing them. . . [In 2.9, for instance,] Augustus will make good Callimacheans of the Geloni if it kills them.”<sup>230</sup>

. . . desine mollium  
tandem querelarum, et potius nova  
cantemus Augusti tropaea  
Caesaris et rigidum Niphaten,  
Medumque flumen gentibus additum  
victis minores voluere vertices,  
intraque praescriptum Gelonos  
exiguus equitare campis. (17-24)

Stop your unmanly grieving now, and let's sing about Augustus Caesar's new trophies instead, the ice-bound Mount Niphates, and the Persian waters, with its flow reduced, now the Medes are added to the subject nations, and then the Geloni, riding over their meagre landscape, within the bounds that we've now set for them.

Although in “Horace and the Aesthetics of Politics” Fowler argues that the lyric poet who subscribes to Callimachean aesthetics is ill-suited for composing imperial encomia, he also acknowledges the presence of paradoxes at work in the *Odes*: while panegyric is ultimately impossible, the incorporation of Callimachean and Epicurean ethics (i.e. to honor small things and respect the boundaries of the simple life) in the discourse of Augustan imperialism is possible.<sup>231</sup> And, as Oliensis suggests, “it is just this emphasis [as in 2.9] on limit that lends

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<sup>229</sup> Cf. e.g. Jupiter's prophecy in *Aeneid* 1: *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; / imperium sine fine dedi* (“I've fixed no limits or duration to their possessions: I've given them empire without end,” 278-9); and specifically with regard to Augustus: *nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar; / imperium oceano, famam qui terminet astris, / Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo* (“From this glorious source a Trojan Caesar will be born, who will bound the empire with Ocean, his fame with the stars, Augustus, a Julius, his name descended from the great Iulus,” 286-8).

<sup>230</sup> 2009: 257

<sup>231</sup> 2009: 256-8

Horatian lyric an ‘imperial’ character.”<sup>232</sup> Even if we concede that praise of the emperor is impossible, deference to Rome and her imperial conquests is not. Rome, whose strength and power is attributed to the virtues of discipline and self-control, imposes the same moral principles of restraint on the peoples she conquers, such as the Geloni who now gallop within fixed limits (*intraque praescriptum Gelonos / exiguis equitare campis*, 23-4) or, closer to home, the *municipia* that might only end civil strife when Augustus, *pater urbis*, enforces on them a program of moral legislation.

o quisquis volet impias  
caedis et rabiem tollere civicam,  
si quaeret Pater Urbium  
suscribi statuis, indomitam audeat  
refrenare licentiam,  
clarus postgenitis: quatenus – heu nefas! (3.24.25-30)

O whoever would end impious killing, and civil disorder, and would desire to have ‘City Father’ inscribed on their statues, let them be braver, and rein in unbridled license, and win fame among posterity.

To sum up, Rome validates its imperial expansion on moral grounds. She is not the greedy man who moves his neighbor’s *terminus* in order to take more land, but rather the privileged man characterized by his *virtus* who is entitled to expand the limit of his territory. Like the poet in C. 1.22 and 3.4 who is able to wander anywhere in the world because he is protected by the gods or the virtuous man in 3.2 who is allowed to take a path denied to other because of his moral goodness, a similar justification is made for Rome and indeed Augustus himself.

In C. 3.3 we saw that Juno foretold the limitless expansion of the Roman empire on the condition that it not be motivated by greed. This poem opens with a gnomic statement about

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<sup>232</sup> 1998: 107

what it means to be a just and steadfast man and lists those men or gods who exhibit these qualities: Pollux, Hercules, Augustus, Bacchus, and Romulus, whose deification is the occasion for Juno's speech.

iustum et tenacem propositi virum  
 non civium ardor prava iubentium,  
     non vultus instantis tyranni  
     mente quatit solida neque Auster,  
 dux inquieti turbidus Hadriae,  
 nec fulminantis magna manus Iovis:  
     si fractus illabatur orbis,  
     inpavidum ferient ruinae.  
 hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules  
 enisus arces attigit igneas,  
     quos inter Augustus recumbens  
     purpureo bibit ore nectar.  
 hac te merentem, Bacche pater, tuae  
 vexere tigres indocili iugum  
     collo trahentes; hac Quirinus  
 Martis equis Acheronta fugit . . . (3.3.1-16)

The passion of the public, demanding what is wrong, never shakes the man of just and firm intention, from his settled purpose, nor the tyrant's threatening face, nor the winds the stormy masters of the troubled Adriatic, nor Jupiter's mighty hand with its lightning: if the heavens fractured in their fall, still their ruin would strike him, unafraid. By these means Pollux, and wandering Hercules, in their effort, reached the fiery citadels, where Augustus shall recline one day, drinking nectar to stain his rosy lips. Bacchus, for such virtues your tigers drew you, pulling at the yoke holding their untamed necks: for these virtues, Romulus escaped with horses that were Mars' from Acheron . . .

The gods mentioned here alongside Augustus, Pollux, Hercules and Romulus, were all immortalized for being *iustus* and *tenax propositi*;<sup>233</sup> the image of Augustus reclining in their company clearly suggests that he will become immortal through the same virtues upon his death. These gods also exemplify the virtues we have seen associated with imperial expansion because

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<sup>233</sup> Cicero also lists these demigods together as men who were immortalized for their virtuous deeds on earth (cf. *Nat. de.* 2.62, 3.45; *Leg.* 2.19; *Tusc.* 1.28)

they are known for own their extensive and far-reaching travels throughout the world. Hercules is described as *vagus* and emphasis is placed on striving (*eniti*), reaching (*attigere*), driving (*vexere*), and escaping (*fugere*). Upon completing their struggles and journeys on earth, all of these demigods made a final journey to Olympus, where Augustus is imagined to recline with them upon completion of *his* journey. It is no coincidence that the ends of the earth to which Juno pronounced Rome would extend her name (*medius liquor / secernit Europen ab Afro, / qua tumidus rigat arua Nilus*, 46-8) are the boundaries of Rome's territories established under Augustus' reign (the Pillars of Hercules and the Nile). The suggestion of future immortality and Augustus' initiation into an elite group of demigods that includes Bacchus also recalls the scenes of poetic inspiration we examined in the previous section. Just as the poet is afforded divine protection and authorized, via Bacchic poetics, to sing what is *nefas* to others, Augustus is also favored by the gods with the result that divinely sanctioned expansion of his empire becomes a morally good, rather than morally depraved act.

C. 3.4 offers a good example of the way in which the poetic and political intersect: we have already seen how the socio-political dynamics of inclusion are at play in this scene of poetic initiation in which the poet is chosen for his avowed discretion and allowed to wander beyond his *terminus* unharmed. Because he is loved by the Muses, he is also protected wherever he travels throughout the world:

utcumque mecum vos eritis, libens  
 insanientem navita Bosporum  
     temptabo et urentis harenas  
     litoris Assyrii viator,  
 visam Britannos hospitibus feros  
 et laetum equino sanguine Concanum,  
     visam pharetratos Gelonos  
     et Scythicum inviolatus amnem. (29-36)

Whenever you are with me, as a sailor I'll attempt the raging Bosphorus, or be a traveller in the burning sands of the Syrian shore: as a stranger I'll see the fierce inhospitable Britons, the Spaniards that love drinking horses' blood, I'll see the quiver-bearing Thracians, and, unharmed, visit the Scythian stream.

This passage, closely resembling those referring to Roman imperial expansion under Augustus, strengthens the connection between poet and *princeps*, as does the fact that both are favored by the *Muses*.

vos Caesarem altum, militia simul  
fessas cohortis abdidit oppidis,  
finire quaerentem labores  
Pierio recreatis antro.  
vos lene consilium et datis et dato  
gaudetis almae. scimus ut impios  
Titanas immanemque turbam  
fulmine sustulerit caduco,  
qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat  
ventosum, et urbes regnaque tristia  
divosque mortalisque turmas  
imperio regit unus aequo. (37-48)

It's you then who refresh our noble Caesar, in your Pierian caves, when he's settled his weary troops in all the cities, and he's ready to complete his labors. You give calm advice, and you delight in that giving, kindly ones. We know how the evil Titans, how their savage mob was struck down by the lightning from above, by him who rules the silent earth, the stormy sea, the cities, and the kingdoms of darkness, alone, in imperial justice, commanding the gods and the mortal crowd.

Just as the Muses of Hesiod's *Theogony* who attend the young kings that are favored by Zeus and endow them with eloquence, the Muses here also take an interest in Augustus and give him

gentle advice.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, as Babcock has argued, this scene is perhaps more about poetry than it is about teaching the emperor a lesson in justice.<sup>235</sup> Besides the obvious connection with poetry and the Muses, the Pierian cave is also significant as it calls to mind C. 3.25 where Horace says that has been carried away by Bacchus to practice his praise of Augustus.<sup>236</sup>

quo me, Bacche, rapis tui  
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in specus  
velox mente nova? quibus  
antrum egregii Caesaris audiar  
aeternum meditans decus  
stellis inserere et consilio Iovis? (1-6)

Where are you taking me full as I am of you, Bacchus? Into what groves or what caves am I being driven quickly in a new state of mind? In what caverns shall I be heard as I practice setting the eternal glory of extraordinary Caesar among the stars and the council of Jupiter.

There are further parallels to 3.4: in both scenes the poet or Augustus is in a cave in the company of gods and the emperor is given *consilium*. In our previous discussion, we examined the idea that C. 3.25, which represents a poetic act, indicates that the ostensible religious ritual is really an initiation for Horace not only as a poet, but also as a member of Augustus' inner circle. Here this idea is be extended to C. 3.4 to include Augustus himself so that the "poetic act" of the Muses refreshing him in the cave serves as a kind of ritual initiation for the Augustus as an emperor inaugurated to Jupiter's council. Furthermore, it is necessary to provide the emperor *recreatio* – he has finally settled all of his troops and completed his labors – because he is exhausted from

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<sup>234</sup> Καλλιόπη θ' ἡ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἀπασέων. / ἡ γὰρ καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἅμ' αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ. / ὅν τινα τιμήσωσι Διὸς κοῦραι μέγαλοιο / γεινόμενόν τε ἴδωσι διοτρεφέων βασιλῆων, / τῷ μὲν ἐπὶ γλώσση γλυκερὴν χεῖουσιν ἔερσην, / τοῦ δ' ἔπε' ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μείλιχα . . . ("And Calliope who is foremost of them all; for she attends revered kings. Whomever of Zeus-cherished kings the daughters of great Zeus honor and behold at his birth, they pour sweet dew on his tongue and then sweet words flow from his mouth," 79-84)

<sup>235</sup> 1979: 3-4

<sup>236</sup> See Fraenkel 1957: 257-60 on the relationship between C. 3.25 and the Roman odes.



waging civil war; *recreatio*, or poetry in this instance, offers refreshment and restoration after such a sinful, but necessary, undertaking. Poetry, alongside wine, has always been a cure for anxieties and a way to alleviate grief and forget painful memories: “oblivion of ills and respite from cares” (λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων, Hesiod, *Th.* 55). Just as the Muses refresh Augustus with poetry after civil war, singing of Roman expansion and Caesar’s *foreign* conquests also provides a respite from grief.

. . . desine mollium  
tandem querelarum et potius nova  
cantemus Augusti tropaea  
Caesaris . . . (2.9.17-20)

Stop your unmanly grieving now, and let’s sing about Augustus Caesar’s new trophies instead.

One way in which Horace refocuses attention on Augustus’ good deeds rather than civil war is by presenting imperial expansion, as we have seen, as an act of valor, something accomplished by the man of *virtus* rather than as an act of war or oppression.

For the emperor Augustus, poetry will not only provide renewal, but, more importantly, a way to forget the devastating war by focusing on the good that has come of it. Augustus is not portrayed in the *Odes* as the conquering hero returning from civil war, but as a restorer of peace, who has returned Rome to the republic and instilled again the good moral values that she had been neglecting. Civil war is portrayed as a necessity to combat a force of evil that would have brought Rome’s decline had not Augustus stopped it. By analogy with the gigantomachy which represents a conflict between order and anarchy, Augustus is responsible for returning moral and civil order to Rome (3.4.42-68).

vis consili expers mole ruit sua:  
vim temperatam di quoque provehunt

in maius; idem odere viris  
omne nefas animo moventis. (65-68)

Power without wisdom falls by its own weight: The gods themselves advance temperate power: and likewise hate force that, with its whole consciousness, is intent on wickedness.

Mindless power without *consilium* of the sort that Augustus has received from Jupiter and the Muses is self-destructive.<sup>237</sup> Likewise, the gods despise power that devises every kind of *nefas*. The civil war that Augustus has waged against Antony and Cleopatra, then, is represented as a war of good over evil. Augustus only uses force with good judgement (*vis consili*) when necessary and so long as he shows restraint in doing so (*vim temperatam*). As we saw in the discussion of Roman expansion in the *Odes*, the idea of self-control and the exercise of restraint in asserting one's power over others – a particularly Augustan ideal – accounts for Rome's greatness. The regard for boundaries in maintaining one's dominion both explains and justifies Rome's expanding empire.

Furthermore, the notion of imperial conquests is appealing simply because it presents an alternative to civil strife and allows the Roman people to rally for the same cause rather than take sides against one another.

ehue, cicatricum et sceleris pudet  
fratrumque. quid nos dura refugimus  
aetas? quid intactum nefasti  
liquimus? unde manum iuventus  
metu deorum continuit? quibus  
pepercit aris? o utinam nova  
incude diffingas retusum in  
Massagetis Arabasque ferrum! (1.35.33-40)

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<sup>237</sup> Nisbet and Rudd see in *consilium* a reference to Augustus' policy of clemency to the defeated Antonians: "if this is right, the rest of the poem emphasizes that before peace could come the enemies of legitimate *vis* had to be crushed in a terrible war" (2004: 69).

Alas, the shame of our scars and wickedness, and our dead brothers. What has our harsh age spared? What sinfulness have we left untried? What have the young men held their hands back from, in fear of the gods? Where are the altars they've left alone? O may you remake our blunt weapons on fresh anvils so we can turn them against the Scythians and the Arabs.

Roman civil war is usually associated with sinful moral decay and here the solution to such a problem is for the Roman army to direct their violent aggression against the Scythians and Arabs instead. The poem is addressed to the goddess Fortuna, who is attended by Necessity, Hope, and Loyalty, so that although immorality is the root of civil war, fighting this war is a necessary evil and Rome may only return to her position of moral superiority when civil strife is ended and foreign wars have been taken up instead. So, if civil war is the result of immorality and corruption at home, then imperial expansion – in many ways the solution to civil war – must be the result of *virtus* and civil order.

### ***Nunc est bibendum: Bacchus and Civil Order in Rome***

Augustus, portrayed as Rome's savior, is associated with peace and prosperity and represented as bringing discipline and order to the empire. If the *recreatio* that Augustus receives from the Muses in the Pierian cave in C. 3.4 is indeed a poetic act related to that of C. 3.25, in which Horace is initiated as a poet prepared to compose panegyric, then there is further connection between poetry and the emperor's ability to restore order after civil war in C. 2.19. Here, as in 3.25, we saw that the poet's accidental transgression of the Bacchic rites was allowed because he is an initiate himself. As a result, Horace is permitted to praise Bacchus (*fas est mihi . . . cantare*, 9-11), an act that expresses the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion and is analogous with praising the emperor. There is emphasis in the poet's "hymn to Bacchus" on the

god's ability to control nature and, though a peace-loving god, his contribution during the gigantomachy.

tu flectis amnis, tu mare barbarum,  
 tu separatis uvidus in iugis  
     nodo coerces viperino  
     Bistonidum sine fraude crinis:  
 tu, cum parentis regna per arduum  
 cohors Gigantum scanderet impia,  
     Rhoetum retorsisti leonis  
     unguibus horribilique mala;  
 quamquam choreis aptior et iocis  
 ludoque dictus non sat idoneus  
     pugnae ferebaris: sed idem  
     pacis eras mediusque belli. (17-28)

You direct the streams, and the barbarous sea, and on distant summits, you drunkenly tie the hair of the Bistonian women, with harmless knots made of venomous snakes. When the impious army of Giants tried to climb through the sky to Jupiter's kingdom, you hurled back Rhoetus, with the claws and teeth of the terrifying lion. Though you're said to be more suited to dancing, laughter, and games, and not equipped to suffer the fighting, nevertheless you shared the thick of battle as well as the peace.

I argue that this "hymn" strengthens the idea of this poem, ostensibly about religion, as representation of a poetic act that really deals with the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Horace, newly initiated as a poet, sings praise of Bacchus that in many ways reflect the accomplishments of the emperor. As in C. 3.4, the gigantomachy is a metaphor for civil war; the Giants are treacherous and impious and must be put down by the Olympian gods (i.e. Augustus). Moreover, Bacchus has the power to control nature by directing foreign rivers and tying poisonous snakes without harm, which as Nisbet and Hubbard suggest, implies the rivers that Bacchus crossed on his journey in the East, and which I argue hints at Roman imperial

expansion.<sup>238</sup> Not only is expanding Rome's borders an alternative to civil war, but the notion of controlling nature also suggests the return to civil order and moral restraint following the war. "Bacchic poetics" then have implications not only for the poet, but also the emperor as Bacchus makes the transgression and imposition of boundaries or limits of any kind possible for both.

Although Bacchus traditionally induces madness and threatens the Roman ideal of masculinity, as we have seen, he also authorizes and empowers his followers. Just as the paradox of imperialism – at once source and solution to greed and moral depravity – Bacchus both possesses and liberates, threatens and acts as a civilizing force. The god is associated with civil war in the *Odes*, in part because he offers a way in which to treat the paradox of warring against one's own brothers. In the same way that poetry, which refreshes and alleviates grief, helps Augustus to restore order at Rome after civil war, wine too is a sign that civil madness has come to an end, thanks to the emperor.<sup>239</sup>

nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero  
pulsanda tellus, nunc Saliaribus  
ornare pulvinar deorum  
tempus erat dapibus, sodales.  
antehac nefas depromere Caecubum  
cellis avitis, dum Capitolio  
regina dementis ruinas  
funus et imperio parabat (1.37.1-8)

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<sup>238</sup> Just as the journeys of the immortal Pollux, Hercules, and Bacchus suggested Roman expansion under the reign of Augustus in C. 3.3.9-15. Cf. Ver. *Aen.* 6.792-805: *Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet / saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arua / Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos / proferet imperium . . . nec uero Alcides tantum telluris obiuit . . . nec qui pampineis uictor iuga flectit habenis / Liber, agens celso Nysae de uertice tigris.* ("Augustus Caesar, son of the deified, who will make a Golden Age again in the fields where Saturn once reigned, and extend the empire beyond the Libyans and the Indians . . . Truly, Hercules never crossed so much of the earth . . . nor did Bacchus, who steers his chariot, in triumph, with reins made of vines, guiding his tigers down from Nysa's high peak.")

<sup>239</sup> See Hardie 1977 who sees this poem, not as a monodic personal statement responding to the death of a significant figure in the manner of Alcaeus (fr. 332 LP), but as a choral dithyramb indebted to Pindar, inspired by the occasion of Octavian's triple triumph, not the death of Cleopatra, as it is traditionally read.

Now is the time for drinking deep, and now is the time to beat the earth with unfettered feet, the time to set out the gods' sacred couches, my friends, and prepare a Salian feast. It would have been wrong, before today, to broach the Caecuban wines from out the ancient bins, while a maddened queen was still plotting the Capitol's and the empire's ruin.

Now that civil war is finally finished, it is the time for drinking, dancing, festivities; wine is a part of Rome's rehabilitation after civil war as she begins the process of healing and Augustus again restores order and moral restraint in his empire. As Oliensis points out, the celebration, though devoid of particular social context or associations, is characteristically Roman: anonymous comrades (*sodales*, 4) have gathered for a *Salian* feast, but not until it was appropriate to do so and not without demonstrating their piety by recognizing the gods.<sup>240</sup> The contrast with a foreign queen highlights this characterization: in a true Bacchic paradox, while the poet sets the stage for a celebratory feast, Cleopatra herself is "drunk with sweet fortune" (*quidlibet impotens / sperare fortunaque dulce / ebria*, 10-12) as she prepares to wage war against Rome. Martindale sees further opposition in 1.37 as well:<sup>241</sup>

The ode attempts to fix the meaning of Actium in the West in terms of social, racial and sexual ideologies. *Libertas* resides with the victory of Caesar. The omission of other leading participants foregrounds the opposition between woman and man, the queen of Egypt and Rome's leader, the latter an embodiment of *virtus* (the quality of being *vir*). Cleopatra thus becomes the 'Other' in terms of both race and sex.<sup>242</sup>

As Martindale points out, Antony is conspicuously absent from the ode. Lowrie sees this as a part of Horace's tendency to "mythologize the representation of contemporary events, especially

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<sup>240</sup> 1998: 137-38

<sup>241</sup> Lowrie, however, makes the case that although Cleopatra makes a transformation at the end of the ode into a noble Roman through her stoic suicide, the civil war is transferred onto her (rather than Antony, which would be inappropriate to contemplate): "She kills herself in a classic gesture of civil war, in the place of Romans killing Romans" (1997: 160). Cf. Pöschl 1991: 113-16.

<sup>242</sup> 1993: 12

those revolving around Augustus.”<sup>243</sup> She argues that in removing Antony from the narrative, the poet transforms the battle of Actium from a civil to a foreign war.<sup>244</sup> Though scholars are divided in their readings of this poem, particularly concerning the question of whether it effectively praises the emperor, there is no doubt that it associates peace and order with drinking and celebration.<sup>245</sup> As Oliensis puts it, “The disrupted symposium encapsulates the chaos of Rome’s civil wars.”<sup>246</sup> If this is the case, then the resumption of the symposium indicates a return to peace and restoration of the control and discipline that had been lacking in the past century of civil warfare.

In C 4.5, with the threat of civil war far behind them, Horace more strongly equates Rome’s civil order and moral discipline with Augustus and the civilizing effect of wine. Feeney points out that this is the first time that Horace presumes to address Augustus, but then he does so at a time when the emperor is away from Rome.<sup>247</sup> Even in *Odes* 4, a book traditionally characterized by its political themes and praise of Augustus, the poet is reluctant to address the emperor directly.<sup>248</sup> In C. 4.5, as with earlier *Odes* that I have discussed at length, wine and Bacchus serve as a mediator between the poet and the emperor, aiding the poet in overcoming his

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<sup>243</sup> 1997: 142; Cf. Pöschl 1991: 8).

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Nussbaum 1971: 92; Though, historically speaking, the Senate declared war on Cleopatra and not Antony (according to Plutarch, *Antony* 60.1 and Dio 50.4.4), on which see Ahl 1984: 44n7 and Eder 1990: 100. Lowrie points out that despite this fact, Vergil mentions Antony by name (*Aen.* 8.685), which indicates that it was the poet’s choice to make (1997: 145).

<sup>245</sup> e.g. Putnam 1990: 234 who offers a pessimistic reading in that Cleopatra’s refusal to be conveyed in a triumph suggests that an individual might stand up against Rome and still be glorified through lyric poetry; on the other hand, Fraenkel 1957: 160 and Davis 1991: 233-42 both suggest that Cleopatra’s glorification makes her a worthy opponent.

<sup>246</sup> 1998: 139

<sup>247</sup> 1993: 54

<sup>248</sup> See Lowrie: “The hymning of Augustus as a virtual god in C. 4.5 similarly departs from *Odes* 1-3, where hymn comes close to Augustus without, however, the directness found here” (1997: 335); cf. Putnam 1986: 103, Johnson 2004: 122, McNeill 2001: 132-33, and Lyne 1995: 193-96, who doubts “Horace’s general enthusiasm for the new dispensation” because this direct address is inconsistent with his earlier mode of panegyric.

professed reluctance to praise him. Here, though, praise of Augustus extends beyond the poet's singular voice, as emphasis is placed on the role of wine in a communal festival which depends on the peace and stability of the state, which only Augustus has been able to provide.<sup>249</sup>

divis orte bonis, optime Romulae  
 custos gentis, abes iam nimium diu;  
 maturum reditum pollicitus patrum  
     sancto consilio, redi. (4.5-1-4)  
 . . .  
 quis Parthum paveat, quis gelidum Scythen,  
 quis Germania quos horrida parturit  
 fetus, incolumi Caesare? quis ferae  
     bellum curet Hiberiae?  
 condit quisque diem collibus in suis  
 et vitem viduas ducit ad arbores;  
 hinc ad vina redit laetus et alteris  
     te mensis adhibet deum;  
 te multa prece, te prosequitur mero  
 defuso pateris et Laribus tuum  
 miscet numen, uti Graecia Castoris  
     et magni memor Herculis.  
 'longas o utinam, dux bone, ferias  
 praestes Hesperiae!' dicimus integro  
 sicci mane die, dicimus uvidi,  
     cum sol Oceano subest. (25-40)

Born of the good gods, greatest guardian of the Roman race, you have been absent now for too long; Since you promised a timely return to the sacred council of fathers, return. . .

Who'll fear the Parthians, or the cold Scythians, and who'll fear the offspring savage Germany breeds, if Caesar's unharmed? Who'll worry about battles in the wilds of Iberia? Every man passes the day among his own hills, as he fastens his vines to the waiting branches: from there he gladly returns to his wine, calls on you, as god, at the second course: He worships you with many a prayer, with wine poured out, joins your name to those of his household gods, as the Greeks were accustomed to remembering Castor and mighty Hercules. 'O blessed

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<sup>249</sup> See Johnson: "When he [the vinedresser, 29] comes out of his field after spending his day mending the vines, he reconstitutes community through the power of the wine in ritual libation. When the vine dresser pours the libation and invokes the god Augustus, through his prayer Augustus unbounded by any distance or manner of separation, even death, does return (*praesens*), and the celebration spreads from the rustic's private house to the public banquet" (2004: 132).



leader, bring Italy endless peace!’ That’s what we say, mouths parched, at the start of the day, that’s what we say, lips wetted with wine, when the sun sinks to rest under the Ocean.

Many of the ideas that I have discussed intersect in this poem: imperial expansion is linked to the end of civil wars and the health and prosperity of Rome’s citizens; wine and the cultivation of the vine is associated with the restoration of morality and religious piety; the image of the farmer tending his vines suggests a Golden age in which Augustus has provided a solution for Rome’s avarice and moral deterioration; finally, in the company of the immortalized Castor and Hercules, Augustus is worshipped with libations of wine by his citizens. In his discussion of the function of wine in Horace’s *Odes*, Commager argues that, “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), Bacchus approximates the role of the poet himself, made eternal by his art.”<sup>250</sup> Likewise, the emperor is closely associated with the poet because he can only gain immortality through the poet’s own greatness and immortality. “Bacchic poetics” then have implications not only for the poet, but also for the emperor as Bacchus embodies and authorizes the paradoxes that we have examined; therefore, the poetic representation of Bacchus in the *Odes* allows Augustus to both impose and transgress boundaries, displace civil war with foreign war, and conquer the world while restoring peace in Rome. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Bacchic paradoxes are not always reconciled in Augustan literature, and Bacchic liberation can also pose a threat to Roman virtues, such as self-control and restraint. In the following chapter, I will examine the role that Bacchus plays in Ovid’s *Tristia*. In many ways the god functions in the exile poetry as he does in

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<sup>250</sup> 2009: 47

the *Odes*, representing the poet's concerns with authority and control; but for Ovid, the god also represents the lack of control and decorum that so strongly pervade Horace's *Odes*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ovid's *Tristia* and the Poetics of Exclusion

In the previous chapter we examined Horace's use of Bacchus in the *Odes* to address political issues concerning the power dynamic at Rome and the poet's struggle to balance poetic autonomy with sociopolitical engagement and decorum. The figure of Bacchus empowers the poet, not only by providing a source of poetic inspiration, but by initiating him into his religious rites and authorizing him as poet laureate. In C. 2.19 and 3.25, Horace presents scenes of religious ritual in which he, the poet, is a privileged participant and willing follower of the god Bacchus. The poet, however, shows these poems to be less about serious religious ritual and more about the sociopolitical dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Initiation into the god's inner circle is analogous to that of Augustus: the poet enjoys an elite position so long as he shows discretion and acts prudently when included. Transgressions, even those that are accidental, that violate the god's rites or offend the emperor have serious repercussions. For this reason, Horace shows himself to have been chosen for his virtue and integrity: because he is favored by Bacchus and other gods he cannot be harmed, although when it comes to praising Augustus he is still careful to step lightly so as to avoid offense. In this chapter, I will change the direction of our discussion and examine Ovid's use of the language of poetry and religion in the *Tristia* as a means of engagement in politics in much the same way as his contemporary, Horace. In many ways, Ovid acts as a counterpoint to the poet of the *Odes*: having committed an offense against the emperor and failing to show discretion when included in politically sensitive social circles, Ovid represents the sort of transgression as a poet that Horace feared all along in the *Odes*.

In the exile poetry, Ovid characterizes his relationship to Augustus as a struggle for control and authority. Oliensis, following Barchiesi, Hardie, and others, focuses on the “competing representational projects of poet and emperor,” rather than fueling the debate over Ovid’s (anti)Augustanism.<sup>251</sup> She argues that Ovid does not so much stand in opposition to Augustus, but offers a more nuanced interpretation and argues that we should rather view their relationship as a rivalry or competition. I agree that the power dynamic between the two, poet and emperor, is more subtle than a dissenting poet openly showing resistance to his political oppressor.<sup>252</sup> Although the circumstances may have changed, Ovid faces the same challenges as his predecessor, Horace, in managing his relationship to the emperor: the reality of the political climate under the principate was that the poet must strive to balance his art with his sociopolitical position at Rome. Horace was successful in maintaining this balance; Ovid was not. The paradox that we explored in the previous chapter, that poetic inspiration – particularly the sudden and unruly violence of Bacchic inspiration – is inherently at odds with Roman masculinity and decorum, highlights the poet’s struggle both to compose poetry freely and remain in Augustus’ good graces. Although once in exile the poet has presumably already fallen from grace, the struggle for control permeates the *Tristia* even as Ovid continues to grapple with the emperor’s overwhelming power and tries to make a case for himself returning to Rome.

This chapter is divided into four parts: the first part will examine the way in which Ovid describes his *crimen* and subsequent punishment in terms of religious transgression. Although the self-proclaimed holy bard may be favored by other gods, such as Bacchus, it is Augustus who

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<sup>251</sup> Oliensis 2004, following Barchiesi 1997, Hardie 2002, and O’Gorman 1997. See also Nugent 1990, Bretzigheimer 1991, Williams 1994, and Claassen 1999.

<sup>252</sup> On the terms “pro-” and “anti-Augustan,” see Kennedy 1992, whose influential article has received much attention, and Davis 2006 who reevaluates these terms and what is meant by the term “Augustan ideology.”

has the final say and whom Ovid likens to Jupiter, the supreme arbiter and angry god who need not justify his actions to anyone. By constructing what McGowan terms an “exilic mythology,” with Augustus as Jupiter at its center, Ovid creates a unique means of expressing his personal experience both as a player in the sociopolitical dynamics at Rome and as a outsider relegated to the edge of the world, which is the topic of the second section.<sup>253</sup> There, I will consider Ovid’s treatment of the mythological figures Icarus and Actaeon, famous for their individual transgressions and violations of boundaries. In these scenarios, Ovid is both the brazen and impudent thrill-seeker who has overstepped his bounds and the innocent and unknowing intruder who has made an *error* and been punished unjustly for his mistake. I argue that Ovid figures himself in the exilic mythology he has constructed in such a way as to portray his personal struggle with the emperor and justify his actions because he cannot do so explicitly. Of the two reasons for his exile, *carmen et error* (2.1.207), he can only address the former as he makes clear that he must be silent about the latter. The third section of this chapter considers the defense that Ovid provides for himself. With the figures of Actaeon and Icarus demonstrating that it is imprudent to treat politically sensitive matters openly and without proper discretion, the poet must turn to poetry to make his case. I argue that, in this way, Ovid evens the playing field: Augustus may have supreme authority and political control at Rome, but the poet controls both the emperor’s and his own immortality, that is the representations of the poet and princeps that will be handed down to posterity, through Ovid’s poetry. In the chapter’s final section, I will return to Bacchus and the politics of Bacchic inspiration with a reading of *Tristia* 5.3 in which the poet addresses the god and asks that he persuade Augustus to allow him to return to Rome.

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<sup>253</sup> 2009: 10. Likewise, Claassen identifies this as the “myth of exile” (2008: 39).

While the poet is ultimately denied his request, the poem supports the arguments I make in the previous sections. Ovid's poetic persona turns to Bacchus because he provides the poet with a way in which he might appropriately influence the emperor. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bacchus, embodying many paradoxes himself, both authorizes the poet and challenges authority through his unruliness. It is the poet's responsibility to strike a balance between the uncontrolled aspects of poetic inspiration and the principles of decorum to which every Roman man was bound. Although Ovid is never recalled from exile, it is telling that he employs the figure of Bacchus in his *Tristia* as he attempts to negotiate issues of power, control, and authority in his relationship with Augustus.

### **Violating the God: The Exclusion of the Uninitiated Poet**

In the *Tristia*, Ovid often refers to the composition of his poetry as a form of participation in religious rites. In his autobiography, he says that he was drawn secretly to the Muses' rites as a young boy despite his father's wishes.

at mihi iam puero caelestia sacra placebant,  
inque suum furtim Musa trahebat opus. (4.10.19-20)

But already as a boy the heavenly rites pleased me  
and the Muse drew me secretly to her work.

As we have seen with Horace, it is not uncommon for the Roman poets to associate poetry with religion and both Horace and Propertius call themselves priests of the Muses (not to mention the significant use elsewhere of the word *vates* in these and other poets).<sup>254</sup>

odi profanum volgus et arceo.  
favete linguis: carmina non prius  
audita Musarum sacerdos  
virginibus puerisque canto. (C. 3.1.1-4)

I hate the uninitiated crowd and I shun them. Hold your tongues: I, a priest of the Muses, sing songs not heard before to maidens and boys.

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,  
in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.  
primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
Italia per Graios orgia ferre choros. (Propertius, 3.1.1-4)

Shades of Callimachus and rites of Coan Philitas, I beg, allow me to enter your grove. I am the first to enter, a priest from a pure spring, to bring Italian rites through Greek dances.

Here both poets use the language of religious rites to portray issues of sociopolitical inclusion and exclusion. They emphasize the fact that they, the chosen elite, enjoy privileged social status because they have undergone religious initiation as poets. Horace highlights his *inclusion* and elevated status by *excluding* the common and vulgar crowd, who has not been so fortunate to be initiated themselves. Both Horace and Propertius show that they are exceptional in that they are the first of their kind of poet, that their poetry is pure and entirely original, having never been heard before, and what is more, their poetry itself has religious importance as it will be a part of the ritual they are describing. Ovid, in his *Tristia*, uses similar language to describe his

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<sup>254</sup> For poets as priests of the Muses, see P. Hardie 1986: 11-22; A. Hardie 2004; Hunter 2006. See Dickie 1998 for Hellenistic poets as initiates into the mysteries. See Newman 1967 on the term *vates* in the Augustan poets, who argues that the reclamation of the previously disdained word and its heightened religious significance coincided with the poets' heightened political importance and the role that they played at Rome. McGowan 2009: 151-64 argues that in the *Tristia* Ovid, identifying himself as both *exul* and *vates*, establishes a religious and poetic context outside of the emperor's authority at Rome.

indoctrination as a poet. In his autobiography, he claims, as Horace suggests in the *Odes*, to have been chosen for his artistic talents, but unlike Horace, for whom being a good poet is synonymous with being a good person, Ovid cannot successfully balance his poetic and political lives, for while few would deny that he is a good poet, he himself asserts in *Tristia* 2 that his poetry – at least that charged with immorality – does not reflect his character. In fact, Ovid's contribution to poetics plays a different role in the poet's life at Rome than they do for Horace. For the latter, the use of ritual in the poetics of the *Odes* becomes analogous with the exclusionary practices of the sociopolitical milieu at Augustan Rome; it is by means of these poetics that Horace affirms his admission to the in-crowd, for ritual only includes those who have been initiated. Ovid, on the other hand, though he employs similar poetics, does so to a different end, demonstrating that he, despite his status as a poet, has found himself outside of the exclusive rites to which he might have had access. The poet describes his *crimen* and subsequent punishment in terms of religious transgression, a violation that cannot be forgiven by Augustus, whom, as we will see, Ovid represents as an angry Jupiter.

While initiation into the poetic-religious rites provides the poet with a means for sociopolitical inclusion, Ovid indicates that if one is not discreet, it may also contribute to his exclusion. In fact, it is these same rites that he blames for his misfortunes later in life: punishment as the result of poetic-religious transgressions that the Muse led him to commit.

non equidem vellem, quoniam nocitura fuerunt,  
 Pieridum sacris inposuisse manum.  
 sed nunc quid faciam? vis me tenet ipsa sacrorum,  
 et carmen demens carmine laesus amo.  
 sic nova Dulichio lotos gustata palato  
 illo, quo nocuit, grata sapore fuit.  
 sentit amans sua damna fere, tamen haeret in illis,  
 materiam culpae persequiturque suae.



nos quoque delectant, quamvis nocuere, libelli,  
 quodque mihi telum vulnera fecit, amo.  
 forsitan hoc studium possit furor esse videri,  
 sed quiddam furor hic utilitatis habet.  
 semper in obtutu mentem vetat esse malorum,  
 praesentis casus immemoremque facit.  
 utque suum Bacche non sentit saucia vulnus,  
 dum stupet Idaeis exululata iugis,  
 sic ubi mota calent viridi mea pectora thyrsos,  
 altior humano spiritus ille malo est.  
 ille nec exilium, Scythici nec litora ponti,  
 ille nec iratos sentit habere deos. (4.1.27-46)

Since they were going to be harmful, I wish for my part that I had not set a hand on the Pierian rites. But what should I do now? The very force of the rites holds me and, maddened, I love song although I was wounded by song. So the strange lotus, tasted by Ulysses' palate, was pleasant with that flavor that harmed him. A lover often perceives his own demise, still he clings onto it and pursues the substance of his fault. Books also delight me, although they did me harm, and I love the weapon that dealt my wounds. Perhaps this pursuit might seem like madness, but this madness has a certain advantage: it prevents the mind from always contemplating bad things and makes it unmindful of the present misfortune. Just as a wounded Bacchant does not perceive the injury while she, howling, stands amazed on the Idaean ridges, so when my heart, stirred up by the green thyrsus, is inspired, my spirit is raised above human evil. It does not feel exile, nor the shores of the Scythian sea, nor is it aware that the gods are angered.

Ovid equates his becoming a poet to being initiated into the rites and yet the verb *inposuisse* (28) suggests that there is an act of transgression discernible in his participation in the ritual thereafter. The comparison of the poet to a Bacchant, in addition to highlighting the poetic-religious act of the poet, brings into focus the paradoxes of Bacchic inspiration that we explored in the previous chapter: Bacchus both possesses and liberates, threatens danger and acts as a civilizing force. The poet employs the image of Bacchic worship because it exemplifies his struggle as a poet and as a Roman man. Ovid likens himself, specifically as he is writing poetry, to a Bacchant who is possessed and in the control of the god and while this is the state of mind in

which he becomes inspired to write, it is also this unruly and uncontrolled condition that perhaps led to the act of transgression that had him exiled. The poet makes the paradox clear enough: madness is both the reason for his punishment and a source of comfort for him while being punished; it helps him forget about the “angry gods” who have caused his pain even though it was his disregard for these gods that put him in this position in the first place.

In the previous chapter we examined how Horace employs Bacchic poetics to express his poetic authority while struggling with issues of patronage and political autonomy under the new principate. Bacchic initiation not only provides the poet with inspiration, but also empowers him to take up politically sensitive subjects, such as praise of the emperor. Bacchus enables the poet to broach delicate subjects and push his limits as an Augustan poet. Although the god embodies the same principles in both the *Odes* and the *Tristia*, he also represents the contrast in the poets’ contributions to poetics: Horace’s obscurantist aesthetic focuses on the secretive nature of the god’s mystery rites (*est et fidei tuta silentio / merces*: “There is also a reward for loyal silence,” C. 3.2.25-6), while Ovid identifies his crime as one of disclosure, which, after being exiled, he promises never to reveal again (. . . *carmen et error, / alterius facti culpa silenda mihi*: “. . . a poem and an error, I must be silent about the second fault,” 2.1.201-8). I argue that there are two reasons for Ovid’s transgression and punishment: first, although he is a sacred poet favored by gods such as Bacchus, he pushes the limit of what is acceptable and fails to successfully balance his role as inspired poet and self-controlled Roman man; second, as Johnson and others have argued, Ovid’s punishment and relegation to Tomis may reflect Augustus’ increasing autocratic

tendencies.<sup>255</sup> Throughout the *Tristia*, the poet treats Augustus as a god by analogy to Jupiter and constructs a mythology of exile in order to express his experience with the emperor's increasing authority and control at Rome.

The figure of Bacchus plays a similar role in both Ovid's *Tristia* and Horace's *Odes* and yet, as we have seen, the outcome is very different for each poet. In C. 2.19 and 3.25, Horace, uncertain of his position and social standing as a poet equates his fear of initiation into Bacchus' cult with his hesitation to become involved in Augustan politics; the passage quoted above from *Tristia* 4.1 echoes Horace's two poems dealing with Bacchic inspiration. While it is true that any one description of Bacchic worship may share similarities with another, comparing the representations of these two poets is especially worthwhile because both have their depictions reflect the dynamics of Augustan politics. Of course, the main difference between the passages which I have already hinted at is the fact that, while they all represent a religious-poetic ritual, Horace has been granted permission to participate in the rites, but Ovid, despite his participation and initiation as a poet, has committed some violation against the god, which *in this analogy* means a violation against the emperor. In all three passages describing Bacchic inspiration, the poets say that they are possessed by the god and that their minds inspired by his thyrsus.

sic ubi **mota calent** viridi mea **pectora thyrsos**,  
altior humano spiritus ille malo est. (*Tr.* 4.1.43-44)

As when my chest, stirred up by the leafy thyrsus, is inspired,  
the spirit is lifted higher than human evil.

euhoie, recenti **mens trepidat** metu

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<sup>255</sup> 2008: 4; cf. Little 1982: 346 and McGowan: “. . . it could never have occurred to the *princeps* then to ban a book of Horace or Vergil. This is not necessarily because of what they wrote, but rather because of when they were writing” (2009: 18). Contra Nisbet, who argues that, “[Ovid] gives an insight into the nature of power under the Principate which in spite of his necessary discretion is more revealing than anything in Virgil or Horace” (1982: 56).

**plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum**

laetatur. Euhoe, parce Liber,  
parce, graui metuende **thyrsos**. (C. 2.19.6-8)

*Euhoe!* My mind trembles with new fear and rejoices  
wildly as my chest is filled with Bacchus. *Euhoe!* Spare me,  
Liber, feared because of your weighty thyrsus, spare me.

Quo me, Bacche, **rapis** tui  
**plenum**? Quae nemora aut quos **agor** in specus  
uelox **mente noua**? (C. 3.25.1-3)

Where are you taking me full as I am of you, Bacchus?  
Into what groves or what caves am I being driven  
quickly in a new state of mind?

Furthermore, the poets specifically compare themselves while they are in this state to Bacchants  
who stand stupefied in the mountains:

. . . non secus in iugis  
exsomnia **stupet** Euhias . . . (C. 3.25.8-9)

Just as the sleepless Bacchant on the mountain ridge is amazed. . .

utque suum Bacche non sentit saucia vulnus,  
dum **stupet** Idaeis exululata iugis . . . (*Tr.* 4.1.41-42)

Just as a wounded Bacchant does not perceive the injury while she, howling,  
stands amazed on the Idaean ridges. . .

Despite these similarities, there is one significant difference between the descriptions in the *Odes*  
and that of the *Tristia*: while all of these passages depict the confused, crazed frenzy induced by  
Bacchic inspiration, only Ovid refers to what he describes as *furor*. On the other hand, only  
Horace describes what he experiences as fearful or dangerous, which suggests that Horace  
displays a more fearful respect for Bacchus – and so also for Augustus – in his reverence of the  
god and reluctance to approach him for fear of offending him in some way. Ovid, however,

emphasizes the numbing effect of the god on his followers which causes them to forget pain and suffering – pain and suffering that the poet has brought upon himself for his transgressions; for rather than show fear and reverence for the god, Ovid describes himself as mad and as out of his mind and therefore wounded as a result.

et carmen **demens** carmine **laesus** amo . . .  
 quodque mihi telum **vulnera** fecit, amo.  
 forsitan hoc studium possit **furor** esse videri,  
 sed quiddam **furor** hic utilitatis habet:  
 semper in obtutu mentem vetat esse malorum,  
 praesentis casus immemoremque facit. (4.1.30-40)

And I, **out of my mind**, love song although I was **injured** by song . . .  
 and I love the weapon which made my wounds. Perhaps this study may seem to **be madness**, but **this madness** has a certain benefit: it prevents the mind from always reflecting on evils, and makes it forgetful of present misfortunes.

Rather than empower the poet to write panegyric, as is the case with Horace, Bacchus provides Ovid with a means of expressing his position of inferiority in his relationship with Augustus. The madness provoked by Bacchus is a fitting parallel for the poet's experience with the emperor: poetry may be (part of) the reason for his exile, but Ovid persists in writing it because it is one thing that he may control while many other aspects of his life are in the control of Augustus. Once again, Bacchus presents a paradox that is problematic for the ideal of Roman masculinity, which is concerned most of all with one's conduct and composure. If one does not exhibit self-control to balance this madness, it may lead him to act or speak rashly, as Cicero points out in his discussion of Roman virtue.

inest ordo et moderatio . . . temeritatem reformidat et non audet cuiquam aut dicto protervo aut facto nocere vereturque quicquam aut facere aut eloqui, quod parum virile videatur. (*De fin.* 2.47)

This is the principle of order and restraint . . .

it shrinks from rashness; it does not dare do harm to anyone by reckless word or deed; and it fears to do or say anything that may appear to be unmanly.

Bacchic worship, in particular the madness that it induces, embodies characteristics at odds with Roman preoccupation with restraint and moderation. Ovid, it seems, does not resist this Bacchic madness and lets it get the best of him.

Throughout the *Tristia*, Ovid presents himself as both the victim and the offender, a method that Stahl calls “playing it both ways”: he acknowledges his guilt, but also makes it clear that he has been punished unjustly.<sup>256</sup> McGowan makes a similar argument in which he claims that this disjunction is a result of the imbalance in the poet’s representation of his relationship to the emperor: “. . . on the surface Ovid has to admit abject inferiority, even as he allows to linger between the lines an image of Augustus that puts the emperor’s unchecked authority in a dubious light.”<sup>257</sup> The image of the poet as crazed Bacchant who cannot feel pain and is unaware of his exile and of the angry gods is a good example. Of course, Ovid is aware of the “angry gods” responsible for this punishment and although he does not plead innocence, the poet who simply made a mistake is a more sympathetic figure than the ruthless gods who are merciless in their punishment. The disjunction between what the text says and what the poet’s representations suggest is especially powerful when he uses religious metaphor to describe his position and how he came to be exiled. In this scenario, it is difficult to comprehend how the poet, a divine figure who is favored by the gods – at least Bacchus, Apollo, and the Muses – might experience such great wrath from the “angry gods” such as Jupiter. The initiation of and subsequent exclusion from religious rites provide a telling analogy for Ovid’s career as an Augustan poet. Even more

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<sup>256</sup> 2002; for similar readings of Ovid’s exile poetry, cf. Hardie 2002, Williams 1994, and Claassen 1999.

<sup>257</sup> 2009: 3-4

so, though, Ovid combines the ritual aspects of his poetics with mythology in order to demonstrate his sociopolitical blunder and subsequent exclusion.

Just as Horace creates a “mythology of the lyric poet” through the narrative that he provides for his poetic persona in the *Odes*, so Ovid also constructs a mythology for himself.<sup>258</sup> Of course, for Ovid in the *Tristia*, this mythology is concerned with the experience of his exile. His personal narrative includes his election by the Muses to become a poet and his initiation in the poetic rites (particularly the poet’s “autobiography” in *Tr.* 4.10). Despite his favored status with these goddesses, he does on occasion blame them for his punishment since a *carmen* was one reason for his exile. Even so, he says that the Muses have stood by his side throughout his journey to Tomis and urge him to keep writing although it is painful; the poet’s relationship with the Muses is complicated, but it is not so tortured as his relationship with Augustus as he presents it in the *Tristia*. This relationship is also a part of the mythology of exile that Ovid has established and is expressed most vividly through the analogy of Jupiter.<sup>259</sup> The subversive nature of the *Tristia*, the disjunction of the surface and the subtext, lends itself to a “rhetoric of ambiguity and innuendo,” and so the reader, though left to his or her own devices, tends to take a stance in the political interpretation of the poem.<sup>260</sup> Fantham argues that this is especially true of *Tristia* 2, a text that, even more so than other Ovidian texts, seems to make it impossible to maintain neutrality in interpreting its political stance, and Ingleheart adds that readings of the poem that are receptive to its subversion are more illuminating.<sup>261</sup> She argues that the ambiguous

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<sup>258</sup> See Lowrie 1997:93.

<sup>259</sup> For Augustus as an angry god in the exile poetry, see Syme 1978: 123-24. Cf. also Gold 2004, Heckel 2003, Hill 2002, and Davis 1999a.

<sup>260</sup> Hinds 1987: 25; See Ahl 1984 for “figured speech” and Williams 1994: 158-61 specifically in the *Tristia*.

<sup>261</sup> Fantham 2002: 408; cf. Gibson 1999: 21 for Ovid and Augustus in *Tristia* 2.

nature of *Tristia* 2 means that any interpretation of its politics must take into account both obvious and underlying meaning in a text “which can be read as the product of an “outraged loyalist,” who is well-informed about the evolving ideology of the Augustan regime, has supported it in the past, and is still capable of doing much for it in the future.”<sup>262</sup>

From his place of exile, Ovid seems to respond to Augustus’ unchecked authority by both questioning it and praising it. He likens the emperor to Jupiter in a way that is simultaneously flattering (his power and authority have no limits) and critical (doesn’t Augustus take pride in his clemency?).

si, quotiens peccant homines, sua fulmina mittat  
Iuppiter, exiguo tempore inermis erit;  
nunc ubi detonuit strepituque exterruit orbem,  
purum discussis aera reddit aquis.  
iure igitur genitorque deum rectorque vocatur,  
iure capax mundus nil Iove maius habet.  
tu quoque, cum patriae rector dicare paterque,  
utere more dei nomen habentis idem.

If Jupiter hurled his lightning, every time men sinned, it wouldn’t be long before he was weapon-less. When he’s thundered, and scared the world with noise, he scatters the rain-clouds and clears the air. So it’s right to call him the father and ruler of the gods, it’s right the wide world owns nothing greater than Jove. You also, since you’re called father and ruler of the land, should follow the ways of the god with the same title. (2.33-40)

Augustus’ analogy to Jupiter is twofold both here and throughout the *Tristia*. The emperor is like Jupiter in position, as king of the gods, and in his attributes: as Jupiter Tonans, the god of thunder and lightning, he is all-powerful and capable of destruction as he sees fit.<sup>263</sup> Just as Jupiter is the father of the gods, Augustus is Rome’s father. After illuminating the comparison, Ovid adds a bit

<sup>262</sup> Ingleheart 2010: 25-26; “outraged loyalist” is Millar’s term (1993:1).

<sup>263</sup> For other examples of Augustus as Jupiter Tonans in the *Tristia*, cf. 1.1.73-75, 82-83; 1.3.11-12; 2.179-86; 4.3.79-70; 5.2.45-54.



of his own advice, which on the surface enhances Augustus' similarities to the Jupiter, but also undermines his authority by suggesting that the emperor may not be following in the footsteps of his divine role model. In addition, the humorous image of a weaponless Jupiter – and so an equally unarmed Augustus – encourages a subversive reading here, as does the idea that Ovid, condemned for his own *mores*, advises Augustus on which *mos* he should take up.<sup>264</sup> Ovid belittles Augustus' supremacy elsewhere in *Tristia* 2 as well.

altera pars superest, qua turpi carmine factus  
 arguor obsceni doctor adulterii.  
 fas ergo est aliqua caelestia pectora falli,  
 et sunt notitia multa minora tua;  
 utque deos caelumque simul sublime tuenti  
 non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Iovi,  
 de te pendentem sic dum circumspicis orbem,  
 effugiunt curas inferiora tuas. (2.211-18)

The first, then: that I'm accused of being a teacher of obscene adultery, by means of a vile poem. So, it's possible somehow for divine minds to be wrong, indeed there are many things beneath their notice. As Jove, who watches over the gods, as well as the high heavens, hasn't time to notice lesser things, so as you gaze round the world that depends on you, inferior matters escape your care.

Again, the poet pays Augustus a backhanded compliment by comparing him to Jupiter. The emperor could not possibly have time to bother with such a trivial matter such as Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, and, yet, this is the basis of the charges that put the poet in exile (at least as they are presented here in the *Tristia*). Nugent says that Ovid puts Augustus in a “non-win” situation for he is either an emperor who wastes his time reading frivolous poetry or he has unjustly banished the poet for a poem he has never read.<sup>265</sup> Either way, Augustus in his identification with Jupiter is more the unjust tyrant characterized by his anger and unlimited power than a fair and virtuous

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<sup>264</sup> Cf. Ingleheart 2010: 86-7

<sup>265</sup> 1990: 251-2

emperor.<sup>266</sup> In the mythology of Ovid's exile, Augustus is the divine authority to whom all must answer. In this particular mythological world, Augustus, rather than Jupiter, carries the force of fate:

nil adeo validum est, adamas licet alliget illud,  
 ut maneat rapido firmitus igne Iovis;  
 nil ita sublime est supraque pericula tendit,  
 non sit ut inferius suppositumque deo.  
 nam quamquam vitio pars est contracta malorum,  
 plus tamen exitii numinis ira dedit.  
 at vos admoniti nostris quoque casibus este,  
 aequantem superos emeruisse virum. (4.8.45-52)

Nothing is strong enough, though bound with steel, to stand firm against  
 Jove's swift lightning: nothing's so high and reaches so far beyond danger,  
 that it's not inferior, and subject, to a god. And though I brought a part of my  
 trouble on myself, by my sin, I suffered more from the divine power's wrath.  
 Be warned by my fate, too, to make yourselves worthy of that man who  
 deserves to be equal to the gods.

When Ovid presents Augustus as an all-powerful god, McGowan suggests that the poet puts him in a position in which he appears to occupy space between human and divine right in the sphere of Roman justice, for as he puts it, "Ovid appears to challenge the princeps' control over the religious and literary discourse of the city by exalting him to an unprecedented and probably unwelcome position of supreme power within the *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*."<sup>267</sup> I would add that as a result, Ovid becomes the ultimate victim: the poet could never possibly take a stand against Augustus and so he is punished, no matter how unjustly. Yet, at the same time that Ovid confers all of the power to Augustus, he undermines it from his position of exile at the very margin of the Roman empire. Augustus may have full jurisdiction at Rome and possess the power to relegate

<sup>266</sup> Cf. *Tr.* 1.5.84 (*laesi...ira dei*) and 2.124-24 (*laesi / ... Caesaris ira*).

<sup>267</sup> 2009: 102

him to Tomis, but the poet subverts that power through the image he presents of the emperor in his exile poetry.

Although Ovid proved unsuccessful in his struggle for sociopolitical acceptance at Rome, he continues to address the power dynamics at Rome through the mythology he constructs from exile. Augustus, as we have seen, controls Ovid's fate at the center of this mythological world, and punishes the poet for his inability to balance Bacchic-inspired poetic madness with sociopolitical engagement. Other figures, in addition to Bacchus, also serve to illustrate the poet's violation against the emperor and his transgression of Roman decorum. Icarus and Actaeon, two figures known for their transgression of boundaries and for pushing the limits of acceptable behavior, also play a role in the mythology that Ovid constructs in the *Tristia*.

### **Icarus and Actaeon: Transgressing Poetic and Political Boundaries**

As we saw in the previous chapter, the figures of Icarus and Actaeon are also important for our discussion of the use of a religious-poetics to illustrate the dynamics of sociopolitical inclusion and exclusion. Actaeon serves as a reminder of the potential danger in following a god and allowing oneself to be included in his inner circle, which exemplifies the manner in which Horace approaches Bacchus and therefore Augustus (e.g. *dulce periculum est, / o Lenaeae, sequi deum*, C. 3.25.18-19). There are numerous instances in the *Odes* in which Horace's persona encounters a god in the wilderness and is protected by him; the poet uses these instances to show that he is one of the elite selected for his integrity and affirmed discretion. Rather than being harmed or punished for his transgression in seeing what he should not, he is received by the god and included in his coterie. One of these encounters with Bacchus in C. 2.19 is particularly

important in making this point because it recalls the episode in the *Metamorphoses* in which Pentheus attempts to observe Bacchus' rites and is punished for his transgression. There is a strong parallel between Pentheus and his relative Actaeon in that both violate a divinity by entering a space that is off limits to them and seeing what is forbidden; as Pentheus realizes that his life is in danger, he calls on Actaeon's shade as if recognizing the correlation between their deaths.<sup>268</sup> The difference between the two is that Pentheus' act is intentional while Actaeon's is not (which naturally explains Ovid's choice in comparing his own situation to that of the latter).<sup>269</sup> Horace's experience in C. 2.19 provides a strong contrast to Actaeon's because, even though he too encounters a god accidentally and happens to witness his rites, he is not punished, a fact that reflects the themes of inclusion that we have discussed and that are central to Horace's elitist aesthetics.

The same aesthetics are at work in Ovid's *Tristia*; by equating his crime to a violation against a god's religious rites, he suggests that even accidental transgressions have grave consequences.

cur aliquid vidi? cur noxia lumina feci?  
 cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?  
 inscius Actaeon vidit sine veste Dianam:  
 praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis.  
 scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,  
 nec veniam laeso numine casus habet. (2.103-8)

Why did I see anything? Why did I make my eyes guilty? Why was an offense to known to me who was ignorant? Actaeon unknowingly saw Diana without clothing: nevertheless he became prey for his own hunting dogs. Of course even

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<sup>268</sup> See Hinds 1985: 20 for the importance of *inscius* in *Tristia* 1. Hinds 2007 also sees a correlation in the myths of dismemberment in the *Tristia*. His study focuses on "conspiracy theory" in *Tr*: 3.8-9 in which Medea, who is not *not* Augustus, becomes the butcher of Ovid's poetic self.

<sup>269</sup> See Rosiello 2002: 446-52 and McGowan who argues that, "For illustrating the unbounded wrath of the gods and the excessive punishment they are prone to exact, however, the figure of Actaeon offers the most suggestive mythical parallel" (2009: 195-96).

fortune must be atoned for, among the gods, and to a harmed god there is no pardon for misfortune.

I argued in the previous chapter that, because there is such strong emphasis on vision in initiation into a mystery cult, the idea of the poet witnessing a god suggests his participation in, or in Ovid's case violation of, a god's rites. Throughout the *Tristia*, Ovid refers to his offense, *carmen et error*, as something he has witnessed and must be silent about.<sup>270</sup>

perdiderint cum me **duo crimina, carmen et error,**  
**alterius facti culpa silenda mihi:**  
 nam non sum tanti, renovem ut tua vulnera, Caesar,  
 quem nimio plus est indoluisse semel. (2.207-10)

Two crimes, a poem and an error, ruined me, I must be silent about  
 the second fault: for I'm not so great that I should renew your  
 wound, Caesar, whom having harmed once is more than enough.

Ovid, in the poetic construction of his exile, has been punished, just as Actaeon and Pentheus, for witnessing a sacred religious ritual with profane eyes. I do not mean to say that Ovid attributes his condemnation to actual religious transgression or even that he saw something sacred that was forbidden to him, though some scholars in the past have taken this to be historical fact.<sup>271</sup> Rather, Ovid associates himself with the image of Actaeon, and other figures afflicted with a similar downfall, as a way to draw an analogy between his own tragic situation and that of the characters he has already treated at length.<sup>272</sup> The poet need not have known about his imminent exile as he wrote the *Metamorphoses*; rather, it is possible that as he wrote the *Tristia*, he turned to his

<sup>270</sup> Cf. 3.5.45-52 and 3.6.9-32. On the motif of silence in the exile poetry, see Ingleheart 2006: 63 n.2.

<sup>271</sup> Theories range from Ovid's seeing Livia naked while bathing to seeing Julia in the midst of an adulterous act (cf. Pichon 1902: 118). Thibault dismisses theories that Ovid saw something treasonous 1964: 75-88 and also catalogues the scholarship attempting to determine the exact nature of Ovid's *error* (see 125ff. for a list of theories up to 1963), although more recent scholarship suggests that Julia, who was banished in the same year as Ovid may have been involved in a political conspiracy, cf. e.g. Rauflaab and Samons 1990: 430ff.

<sup>272</sup> For Ovid's use in the exile poetry of the mythical characters whom he had treated in the *Metamorphoses* see Ingleheart 2006: 72 n.4.

mythological epic for inspiration as he attempted to illustrate the experience of his exile. Actaeon offers an especially fitting parallel for the poet's personal situation: he commits an error unintentionally that results in an unjust punishment by an angry deity.<sup>273</sup> The poet significantly chose the analogy of "seeing" a forbidden thing to describe his transgression and Ingleheart warns against discrediting completely the idea that Ovid witnessed something he should not have: "Ovid here explicitly states that his *error* was something that he saw and this testimony should not be disregarded; if it is, the parallel with Actaeon makes no sense."<sup>274</sup> On the other hand, I think that there need not be a literal parallel to understand the significance of the violation. Moreover, this analogy works in conjunction with that of Augustus as the angry, unjust god, who punishes an innocent intruder on a whim, that we examined in the previous section. Again, the poet could not have known of his exile as he wrote the *Metamorphoses*, but simply returned to the same characters and themes as he began to describe his punishment. Ovid depicts Diana, in the Actaeon episode of the *Metamorphoses*, as acting in "a fit of pique, a willful and spontaneous response to her sense of personal outrage," according to Williams.<sup>275</sup> The poet even gives criticism of the goddess' harsh reaction to Actaeon's intrusion (. . . *aliis violentior aequo / visa dea est*: ". . . to some the goddess seemed more cruel than was just," 3.254-55), a message that serves Ovid's purpose in the *Tristia* rather well – so well in fact that Pohlenz believed that the Actaeon passage in the *Metamorphoses* was reworked after Ovid had been exiled.<sup>276</sup> While I suppose this is possible, it is not necessary, for as McGowan argues it is more likely that, "While in exile Ovid recalled this passage from the *Metamorphoses* and was thus reminded of the

<sup>273</sup> For Actaeon in the *Tristia*, cf. Rosiello 2002, Berrino 2007, Gagua 2003, and Tola 2008.

<sup>274</sup> 2006: 71. Goold 1983: 100, on the other hand, argues that Ovid's claim to have seen something is implausible, contra Owen who argues that, "The illustration is effective" (1924: 142).

<sup>275</sup> 1994: 172

<sup>276</sup> 1913: 10-11

possibilities that the Actaeon story offered for interpreting his own immediate experience with an innocent mistake and excessive punishment.”<sup>277</sup>

Ovid’s promise to be silent about what he saw is not good enough for the emperor, whether this is because the matter at hand is simply too sensitive to entrust to Ovid’s discretion or because he was imprudent with delicate information in the past.<sup>278</sup> In the Actaeon episode in the *Metamorphoses*, Diana does not trust him with keeping what he has seen a secret either and gives her reason for punishing him as such, as she sarcastically declares upon turning him into a stag: “Now you may tell, if you are able to tell, of having seen me without clothing” (*nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres, / sit poteris narrare, licet!*, 3.192-93). Furthermore, it seems that there is never any opportunity for pardon even when one has harmed a god unwittingly, which is yet another reason that Actaeon plays a significant role in the mythology of Ovid’s exile.

inscius Actaeon vidit sine veste Dianam:  
 praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis.  
 scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,  
 nec **veniam** laeso numine casus habet. (*Tr.* 2.105-8)

Actaeon unknowingly saw Diana without clothing: nevertheless he was prey for his own dogs. Certainly even fate must be atoned for among the gods and when a divinity is offended, misfortune does not have pardon.

Here, Ovid acknowledges that the gods – and, by analogy, Augustus – are incapable of mercy, something on which Augustus would like to pride himself.<sup>279</sup> The poet even reminds the emperor that he has often pardoned his enemies even though he will not show mercy to him: “You have

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<sup>277</sup> 2009: 195-96

<sup>278</sup> For the poet’s confessed silence on the topic of *error*, cf. e.g. *Tr.* 1.1.21-26 and 1.2.95-96.

<sup>279</sup> Although Octavian was known for the cruelty of the conscriptions in the aftermath of Julius Caesar’s death, his role as avenger was transformed over time so that he was able to advertise his *clementia* in the *Res Gestae*. See Dowling 2006: 29-75.

often given mercy to a conquered people that they would not have conceded to you had they been victorious” (*tu veniam parti superatae saepe dedisti / non concessurus quam tibi victor erat*, 2.43-4). Later in the *Tristia*, he speaks of the future *venia* of Augustus, which serves to undermine any claim for his clemency since he never does recall Ovid from exile.<sup>280</sup>

Ovid, despite his promises to be silent about his *error*, is never given a second chance or opportunity for forgiveness, a fact that is a significant part of the poet’s representation of his relationship with the emperor: this highlights the poet’s self-conscious inferiority in comparison to Augustus and casts the emperor as a severe and unyielding tyrant. This representation also shows Ovid to be singled out unfairly for his “transgression,” whether this is evidence of a real transformation in the emperor’s policy or simply reflects Ovid’s perspective on the power dynamics at Rome, especially those between *poet* and *princeps*, which McGowan argues is possible because of Ovid’s exile: “Ovid claims to be writing for posterity (e.g. *Tr.* 4.10.2), and it may be that his isolation in exile raised profound doubts about the overall well-being of the art of poetry within the relatively new and rapidly developing institution of the Roman principate.”<sup>281</sup>

Horace also addresses issues of power and authority in the *Odes* and uses mythology and religion to demonstrate his relationship to the emperor. Horace, on the other hand, the ever pious poet, vows in several instances that he will never offend the god or lack discretion in dealing with confidential information. Yet again, associating his involvement in political matters to those of religious significance, he promises in C. 1.18 that he will never offend Bacchus or reveal his mysteries, and says in C. 3.2 that he will not associate with anyone who divulges Ceres’ rites.

However, it is not simply because he *promises* to be discreet that Horace is included in elite

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<sup>280</sup> *Scilicet ut non est per uim superabilis ulli, / molle cor ad timidas sic habet ille preces, / exemploque deum, quibus accessurus et ipse est, / cum poenae uenia plura roganda dabit* (5.8.27-30).

<sup>281</sup> 2009: 40



social and political circles, but as I argued in the previous chapter, it is because, as his poetic persona portrays, Horace has been chosen to be favored by the gods – and so by Augustus – for his integrity and good character. Unfortunately for Ovid, this is not the case and the poet himself would not deny that, despite his best efforts at being a good poet and a good person, the cards are just stacked against him. Although there is much debate among scholars concerning the nature and legitimacy of Ovid’s trial and banishment, many concur that the proceeding reflects a personal matter between the poet and the emperor, which is why Ovid never had any hope of defending the charges or ever returning from exile.<sup>282</sup>

As Ovid says again and again, his offense against Augustus was merely a mistake, an *error*.<sup>283</sup> He names it such in each of the passages given above and generally refers to the crime as an *error* whenever it is mentioned in the *Tristia*. While *error* means just that in English, a mistake, it also has the connotation of its original meaning from the verb to wander. Ovid plays up this idea by saying that he was “misled” or “carried away” by this *error*:

immo ita, si scitis, si me meus **abstulit error**,  
stultaque mens nobis non scelerata fuit . . . (1.2.99-100)

Thus indeed, if you know it, if my error has misled me and my mind was foolish  
but not wicked.

caelestique viro, quis me **deceperit error**,  
dicite, pro culpa ne scelus esse putet. (1.3.37-38)

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<sup>282</sup> See McGowan: “This in turn corresponds to a larger historical development that takes place during the Augustan period of the principate whereby the status of the *princeps* as a private citizen in Rome begins to fade behind the very public position he comes to hold throughout the empire” (2009: 39). Raaflaub and Samons argue that the circumstances of Ovid’s exile were unique: “Ovid’s banishment could scarcely have been indicative of concerted policy on the part of Augustus to repress freedom of speech . . . we can only infer that the exile of Ovid was a singular event” (1990: 445-46). See Jones 1960: 88 who argues that there was a trial before the senate; Goold 1983: 99 and Owen 1924: 42 posit that there was a private trial; Grasmück 1978: 136 asserts that there was no trial at all. Of course, these are all conjectures and it is impossible to know for certain what the exact nature was of Ovid’s trial if there was one.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Green 1982, Claassen 1987, Rosiello 2002, and White 2005.

Tell the heavenly man what error misled me so that he not think that my fault is a crime instead.

Wandering, while unintentional, may still be the cause of a violation against a god or emperor if the transgressor sees something that he is not permitted to see, and so becomes a metaphor for the poet to explain his unfortunate position. In the Bacchus odes, when Horace's poetic persona accidentally stumbles upon the god in the woods, he is not punished because Bacchus welcomes him and includes him among his followers. When Actaeon happens upon Diana in her bath in the *Metamorphoses*, his appearance is unwanted and therefore blameworthy. Ovid emphasizes the fact that Actaeon has strayed into Diana's grove to show that wandering can have serious consequences.

dumque ibi perluitur solita Titania lympa,  
 ecce nepos Cadmi dilata parte laborum  
 per nemus **ignotum non certis** passibus **errans**  
 pervenit in lucum: sic illum fata ferebant. (3.173-76)

While Diana bathes there in her accustomed spring, look the grandson of Cadmus having put aside his share of the labor, wandering through the unknown grove with aimless steps, enters the grove: so the fates would have it.

Actaeon is not an active participant in his crime: the place is unknown to him as he wanders from the path with no purpose. Actaeon's haphazard stroll and unexpected encounter reflect Ovid's modus operandi as a poet writing under Augustus. The witty and lighthearted poet, as he portrays himself particularly in *Tristia* 2, pushed the limit of what constituted acceptable behavior and wandered too far off course. Of course, despite years of scholarship devoted to the subject, we will never know what exactly Ovid saw, if anything, as a result of his wandering that led to his exile, but the image of one straying off course corresponds with the theme of inclusion and

exclusion in Horace and Ovid's aesthetics that I have discussed..<sup>284</sup> Horace's poetic persona in the *Odes* is never harmed and never offends any god as he roams through the wilderness, not only because he is favored by the gods, but because he is capable of moral restraint and discretion. Ovid, on the other hand, demonstrates that his persona in the *Tristia* is unable to balance his personal and poetic lives with unbounded poetic inspiration and Roman decorum. Actaeon reflects the poet's experience with committing an accidental transgression against the wrathful god-emperor, but the poet also acknowledges a more active role in his offense through the figure of Icarus.

Ovid, the bold and impudent poet, reflects on his actions in the *Tristia* and regrets that he was not more cautious. For both Ovid and Horace, the figure of Icarus provides a good model for this idea; in the *Odes*, Icarus represents the poet's fear of taking on too ambitious a poetic project and overstepping his bounds. Horace, uncertain of his social position and hesitant to take a political misstep, struggles to find a safe middle ground for praising the emperor. Ovid, though addressing an offense that he has already committed, uses the image of Icarus to the same extent; rather than serve as a warning for Ovid, Icarus explains the manner of his crime after the fact.

vitaret caelum Phaethon, si viveret, et quos  
 optarat stulte, tangere nollet equos.  
 me quoque, quae sensi, fateor Iovis arma timere:  
 me reor infesto, cum tonat, igne peti.  
 quicumque Argolica de classe Capherea fugit,  
 semper ab Euboicis uela retorquet aquis.  
 et mea cumba semel vasta percussa procella  
 illum, quo laesa est, horret adire locum.  
 ergo cave, liber, et timida circumspice mente,  
 ut satis a media sit tibi plebe legi.  
 dum petit infirmis nimium sublimia pennis

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<sup>284</sup> Thibault 1964 catalogues the scholarship attempting to determine the exact nature of Ovid's *error* (see 125ff. for a list of theories up to 1963). See the scholarly debate devoted to the matter in nn. 27-29.

Icarus, aequoreis nomina fecit aquis. (1.1.79-90)

If Phaethon were alive he would avoid the sky, and refuse to touch the horses that he chose foolishly. I confess that I also fear the weapons of Jupiter that I have felt. I think that hostile lightning seeks me when it thunders. Anyone who flees the Capherean cliffs on the Greek fleet always turns their sails from Euboean waters; and my small boat beaten by a vast storm, dreads approaching that place where it was struck. So take care, book, and look around with timid mind so that it be enough to for you to be read by the middle class. While he sought too lofty things on fragile wings, Icarus gave his name to the sea.

quid fuit, ut tutas agitaret Daedalus alas,  
 Icarus immensas nomine signet aquas?  
 nempe quod hic alte, demissius ille volabat:  
 nam pennas ambo non habuere suas.  
 crede mihi, bene qui latuit bene vixit, et intra  
 fortunam debet quisque manere suam. (3.4.21-26)

Why was it that Daedalus beat safe wings, but Icarus stamped the vast sea with his name? Certainly because the one flew high up and the other at a lower altitude: for both had wings that were not their own. Believe me, he who is good at escaping notice lives well and everyone should stay within his own fate.

Horace understood the importance of keeping within one's limits and not venturing too far from his humble but comfortable position as a poet. While he uses the figure of Icarus in C. 4.2 as a *recusatio* for composing praise poetry of Augustus (his voice cannot possibly thunder like Pindar's, rushing and seething down the mountain), we have seen that Horace uses poetics to address political issues in the *Odes*. Refusing to praise the emperor is synonymous with refusing to become involved in his political affairs; although composing successful panegyric of Augustus may bring the poet great reward, it means stepping into the limelight and risking displeasing the emperor. If flying too high is a metaphor for writing risky poetry, which is in turn a metaphor for offending the emperor, then Ovid, like Horace, also uses poetry as code to talk about politics. As he says in several places in the *Tristia*, Ovid is unable to discuss the nature of his crime or the

politics behind his exile, but he can defend his poetry. The *Ars Amatoria* is likely not the reason for his relegation to Tomis, but the work provides the poet with something he can make a case for without risking further offense and a means of discussing his punishment.

### ***Quem sua perdiderit Musa: A Poet Destroyed by the Muses***

Ovid explains that there are two reasons for his exile, and although he does acknowledge them both, the often quoted *carmen et error*, it is the charges dealing with the *carmen* that he chooses to defend himself against.<sup>285</sup> He likens the *error*, as I discussed in the previous section, to a violation of a god's religious ritual. In this scenario, Ovid is an uninitiate who is not allowed to observe or otherwise participate in the rites and punished for approaching too closely. Despite the poet's wish to be included and initiated into the rites and his promise to be silent about whatever he witnessed, the emperor-god must punish him to ensure that he does not divulge the secrets of the mysteries. His exile represents the extreme nature of his exclusion, both figurative and literal. While in exile, Ovid, hoping to exonerate himself, devotes much of his poetry to pleading his innocence. Of course, he cannot discuss the fatal *error*, about which he must be silent; he has already done too much, to the extent that mentioning it again would be adding insult to injury: "I must be silent about the other fault: for I'm not so great that I should renew your wound, Caesar." (*alterius facti culpa silenda mihi: / nam non sum tanti, renovem ut tua vulnera, Caesar*, 2.1.208-9). Furthermore, he must show Augustus that he can be discreet and prudent in keeping quiet about sensitive information. So, he is unable to directly address the

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<sup>285</sup> For confusion between *carmen* and *crimen* in the first two books of the *Tristia* in the manuscript tradition, see Tarrant 1983: 282-84, Hall 1995: xii-xv, and Richmond 2002: 475-477.

offense that is most likely the true cause of his sentence; instead, the poet must resign himself to discussing the other charges against him, the *carmen*. He puts so much energy into defending his poetry that he seems to hope that proving his poem's innocence will demonstrate his own, as if overlooking his *error* will make it disappear.<sup>286</sup>

carmina fecerunt, ut me moresque notaret  
iam demi iussa Caesar ab Arte meos.  
deme mihi studium, vitae quoque crimina demes;  
acceptum refero versibus esse nocens. (2.5-10)

My poems, now ordered to be taken away, made it so that Caesar indict me and my character on account of the *Ars*. Take away my work, and you will also take away my life's crimes; I refer the charge of guilt to my verses.

By making the *Ars Amatoria* solely responsible for his offense, he provides himself with a tangible, legitimate case to plead. Without offending Augustus any further, he can use poetics to discuss the politics and power dynamics behind his punishment and sociopolitical exclusion by the emperor.

Throughout the *Tristia*, Ovid presents a poetic persona that has had a thorny relationship with the Muses and other gods who preside over poetry, Bacchus and Apollo. His poetic identity, as he portrays it in the autobiography which he provides for himself, is characterized by his poetic talent and compulsion to compose poetry. As we have already seen, he was attracted to the Pierian rites from the time he was a young boy when the Muse drew him to her work: *suum furtim Musa trahebat opus* (4.10.20). While he says that the rites were pleasing to him, the *furtim* implies that his activity was surreptitious and perhaps it was, as his father expected him to pursue

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<sup>286</sup> Cf. Lowrie 2005, Barchiesi 1993, and Nugent 1990. Ovid shows the imbalance of power between Augustus and himself in showing that although the poet is being punished for his "immoral" poetry, the emperor cannot control his immoral household (cf. Oliensis 2004: 304).

a political career instead. The poet claims, however, that he could not help but compose poetry, that the Muse compelled him to do so.

et petere Aoniae suadebant tuta sorores  
otia, iudicio semper amata meo. (4.10.39-40)

And the Aonian sisters urged me to seek the safe leisure which my  
taste always loved.

As most poets do when they describe how they came to become a poet, Ovid explains that the Muses approached him, that he was chosen by them for his aptitude and inborn talent. Just as Hesiod was selected by the Muses on Helicon, Callimachus was addressed by Apollo, and Horace protected from danger by the gods as a child, so Ovid claims that he was chosen as a poet at a young age and implies that he could do little to avoid his calling. He seems to be setting himself up for failure: if he was chosen by the Muses to be a poet, then why do they fail him and allow his poetry to be the cause of his punishment later?<sup>287</sup> Part of the reason is an issue that I will address below – that whereas Horace shows the poet and good man to be one and the same, Ovid argues that his poetry and his life are miles apart; how can he claim to be a virtuous man who deserves to be included in the god-emperor’s inner circle, if he does not write virtuous poetry?

Whatever the reason may be for the Muses abandoning the poet, Ovid presents his relationship with the divine, including Augustus, as tortured and complicated. Moreover, I think that Ovid describes his poetic biography as such in an attempt to foster sympathy from his audience, especially Augustus, as if to say, “I didn’t compose offensive poetry of my own accord, the Muses made me do it.” In book two of the *Tristia*, Ovid addresses Augustus himself to give a

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<sup>287</sup> Oliensis 1998: 193 argues that in his epistle Horace had come close to identifying the favor of the emperor as a prerequisite for entrance to Helicon. Cf. her comments on Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.214–18.

detailed defense of his poetry.<sup>288</sup> He compares his work with that of other poets, both past and contemporary, and argues that even the great classic poets represented immoral deeds and behavior in their poetry. If Augustus believes that the *Ars* might teach or condone illicit conduct, then why is this not the case, he asks, for the adulterous affairs portrayed in Homer's *Odyssey* or Vergil's *Aeneid*, which led the poet to believe that these were acceptable topics for his poetry.

his ego deceptus non tristia carmina feci,  
sed tristis nostros poena secuta iocos.  
denique nec video tot de scribentibus unum,  
quem sua perdiderit Musa, repertus ego. (2.493-6)

Deceived by these [other poems] I made not weighty poems but a weighty punishment has followed my jests. In the end I do not see one of all those many writers whom the Muse has destroyed, they happened upon me.

While Ovid goes on to list all of the possibly reproachable elements in the poetry of his Greek and Roman predecessors whose work is not despised, but praised, he weakens his argument by conceding that his own personal character is very far from the wantonness of his work. The poet seems to be trying to cover all of his bases with his defense: first, he says that only the immoral could read immorality in his poetry and that anyone who was corrupted by it has only herself to blame.

omnia perversas possunt corrumpere mentes:  
stant tamen illa suis omnia tuta locis.  
et procul a scripta solis meretricibus Arte  
summomet ingenuas pagina prima manus. (2.301-4)

Anything is able to corrupt perverse minds, yet all things are safe in their own place. And the first page of my *Ars*, written for courtesans alone, warns noble women keep their hands far off at a distance.

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<sup>288</sup> For *Tristia* 2 and Horace, *Epistle* 2, see Barchiesi 1993.



Second, that if his poetry is responsible for immorality and corruption, it should not reflect on the poet because he lives his life very differently from that presented in the *Ars*. Although Ovid does not claim innocence in his exile poetry, he does insist that his violation against Augustus was accidental and entirely unintentional. He pushed the envelope and crossed the line of what is appropriate both in his poetry and, presumably, in his personal life, as in his representation of the emperor, whom Ovid acknowledges to be judge over both his life and his poetry, *Tristia* 1.2.64: *culpa mea est ipso iudice* [sc. Caesare] *morte minor* (“According to the judge himself, my fault is undeserving of death.” In *Tristia* 2, the poet asserts that if Augustus would only put aside his anger and read his works that he would see the value in them and be persuaded to lessen Ovid’s punishment. Despite this connection between his life and his poetry, however, Ovid claims in his epistle to Augustus that his life and his poetry are vastly different: *crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri: / vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea* (“Believe me, my morals are different from my poem: my life is restrained, by Muse is playful,” 2.353-4). Besides the obvious contradiction in this statement (i.e. he claims in his poetry that what he writes in his poetry does not reflect reality and cannot be trusted),<sup>289</sup> he violates an important principle in Augustan poetry that helped to keep Horace in Augustus’ good graces: he attempts to separate his personal character from his poetic identity.<sup>290</sup> Of course, the historical Ovid and the poet are not identical, but as I showed in chapter 3, Horace is successful and allowed to continue his art under an increasingly high-handed regime by demonstrating that a good poet and a good man are one and

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<sup>289</sup> Cf. Lowrie who identifies this an inside/outside paradox: even if the poet is successful in persuading Augustus that this poetry is ineffective at encouraging adultery, *Tr.* 2 will still be ineffective because the emperor will have the right to condemn him (2005: 41).

<sup>290</sup> However, this is not the strategy for his defense in *Tr.* 4.10. See Oliensis: “Framed as a case for the defense, this famous autobiography puts Ovid’s late-in-life *error*, the mistake that aroused the emperor’s *ira*, in the context of a blameless and mostly literary life” (2004: 304-5). She cites Fairweather 1987, who sees the details of this version of Ovid’s life as closely related to that of Augustus.

the same. Horace seems better able to direct the overpowering force of Bacchic inspiration in his *Odes*; he allows the god to possess him, but asserts self-control and retains a sense of decorum in his poetic and private life (insofar as it is reflected in the poetry). Claassen sees this distinction expressed most clearly in Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

The exilic works appear almost consistently to offer a conscious reversal of Horatian literary standards. It has been postulated that *Tr.* 2 embodies polemical stance against Horace's view of the ethical role of Roman poetry (*A.P.* 132-8). *Tr.* 2 supports the standpoint of absolute poetic autonomy and the irrelevance of ethical criteria in poetry, stressing the distinction between life and art, and emphasizing that poetry is not an embodiment of supreme experience. In this, too, Ovid counters the Horatian view that poetry must reflect experience (*A.P.* 102-3).<sup>291</sup>

Horace is able to balance poetic inspiration, which is by definition uncontrolled, with sociopolitical engagement, which is unavoidable for a Roman man, but apparently antithetical to Bacchic liberation. Bacchic inspiration encourages Horace to compose praise poetry for Augustus, but compels Ovid to criticize his authority, something that is most clear in his representation of his relationship to the emperor as discussed above.<sup>292</sup>

Finally, Ovid states that his poetry is no worse than that of the great poets of the past and present. This final argument is consistent with the passages quoted above that describe the poet's relationship with the Muses.<sup>293</sup> Ovid believes that Augustus has singled him out from all the other poets, just as the Muses have done, even though his poetry is no more harmful than the others. If Ovid were trying to make a strong case for himself, one would think that he would try to keep his argument on track and not contradict himself. However, he does just that when he

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<sup>291</sup> 2008: 79

<sup>292</sup> I would amend this statement by saying that Ovid does so only implicitly (as a part of his "exile of mythology" which I have already addressed) and then only from far away in his position of exile. Even so, I think doing so takes Bacchus-inspired daring.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. 21.567-68: *inter tot populi, tot scriptis, milia nostri, / quem mea Calliope laeserit, unus ero* ("Among so many thousands of our people, so much writing, I'm the one my Calliope wounds").

tries to argue simultaneously that his work is both very different from his own character and should be deemed acceptable by the standards of other great poets. By admitting that his poetry is more morally reprehensible than himself, he concedes that *it is* morally reprehensible, a fact that makes it difficult to maintain that his work is no different than the other classic poems. Ovid also contradicts himself when he blames the Muses for his downfall. Throughout the *Tristia*, he presents a poetic persona that is favored by the Muses and forced to compose poetry for them, and yet he consistently claims that it was they who harmed him or failed to protect him from harm; he makes the same claim for Apollo and Bacchus.

ergo erat in fatis Scythiam quoque visere nostris,  
 quaeque Lycaonio terra sub axe iacet:  
 nec vos, Pierides, nec stirps Letoia, vestro  
 docta sacerdoti turba tulistis opem. (3.2.1-4)

So it was my fate to visit Scythia and the land that lies under the Lycaonian pole: neither you, Muses, the learned mob, nor you, son of Leto, brought aid to your priest.

sive mihi casus sive hoc dedit ira deorum,  
 nubila nascenti seu mihi Parca fuit,  
 tu tamen e sacris hederae cultoribus unum  
 numine debueras sustinuisse tuo. (5.3.13-16)

Whether chance or the anger of the gods gave this to me, whether a cloudy Fate was at my birth, you [Bacchus], at least, ought to have supported one of the worshippers of your sacred ivy with your divine power.

Ovid's confused persona, although wanting to be included and counted among the gods' followers, relies on the gods' exclusion to explain why he has failed as a poet and why he cannot please the emperor. The poet is excluded, as I have argued, from the religious and poetic spheres and therefore from political circles as well. Ovid's letter to Augustus serves less as an actual defense of the charges against him than as a justification of his actions and explanation of the

punishment against him. Not that Ovid accepts the emperor's sentence, but he seeks to expound the reasons behind his exile so that posterity will not believe that the charges against him were accurate. Ovid presents an image of an emperor who is so powerful and who asserts such control over the poet that he is forced to admit his guilt despite believing that he is innocent. Ovid defends his poetry and compares himself to poets whose works are no different from his own as a way to demonstrate that Augustus has singled him out for punishment. Besides, even if Ovid's poem is truly more offensive than that of the other poets, he cannot possibly defend himself to the divine man who controls every aspect of political, religious, and cultural life at Rome.<sup>294</sup> In Ovid's version of things, Augustus' punishment becomes synonymous with being excluded from the gods' religious rites, and because religious, poetry, and politics are so closely intertwined in the *Tristia*, being excluded from one sphere necessitates exclusion from the others. It is for this reason that, based on the poetics and poetic personas constructed in their respective works, Ovid is the most excluded of all the Augustan poets, while Horace, arguably, is the most included. Not only has his poetic persona been excluded from poetic and religious rites, but Ovid, the historical figure, was literally sent to the furthest reaches of the known Roman world. His exile is presented in his poetry, of course, as both literal and figurative separation from Rome: he is weeks' journey from his home at the edges of the Roman empire and limits of Augustus' domain; as a result, the poet claims that his life is constantly in danger, and yet it is this position, so far from Rome, that allows Ovid the opportunity to expose the imbalance of power at Rome and the unlimited authority in the hands of the emperor. Poetry is the one medium by which the poet may address Augustus – though whether Ovid actually intended for the emperor to read *Tristia* 2 or

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<sup>294</sup> Cf. Claassen 1999: 257 and McGowan 2009: 62.

not is a point of contention among scholars – because it is the only means of expression over which Augustus does not have total control. He may have the power to banish Ovid to exile as a consequence of his poetry, but once there, the poet continues to practice his art, perhaps even as a means of protest.

en ego, cum caream patria vobisque domoque,  
 raptaque sint, adimi quae potuere mihi,  
 ingenio tamen ipse meo comitorque fruorque:  
 Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil.  
 quilibet hanc saevo vitam mihi finiat ense,  
 me tamen extincto fama superstes erit,  
 dumque suis victrix omnem de montibus orbem  
 prospiciet domitum Martia Roma, legar. (3.7.45-52)

Look at me, although I lack my country, and you, and my home, and the things which could have been taken away from me were seized, I still retain and delight in my genius: Caesar could have no power over that. Let whoever might end this life with a cruel blade, nevertheless, my fame will survive when I have passed, and so long as warlike Rome looks down victorious from the hills on the whole world she has conquered, I will be read.

Augustus gives the final verdict on Ovid's life, but he cannot control what Ovid portrays of him in his poetry. Whatever historical record the emperor leaves behind when he dies will have to be judged by posterity up and against the competing representations of himself.<sup>295</sup> This is again an instance of Ovid "playing it both ways": the image that he depicts of his position in relation to Augustus is one of abject inferiority and yet he does not submit entirely to the emperor's

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. Lowrie 2005: 41. As Stevens 2009: 167 n25 points out, the fact that Ovid had an audience at Rome and that his exile poetry survived is evidenced by its survival and by internal evidence.

authority; he continues to struggle with the unfair power dynamic and leaves that message for posterity.<sup>296</sup>

### **Conclusion: Bacchic Authority and Bacchic Persuasion<sup>297</sup>**

Although it seems that all of the gods, particularly those who preside over poetry, have abandoned the poet, Ovid makes a final plea to Bacchus in the last book of the *Tristia*. This prayer to Bacchus on the occasion of his feast day, the Liberalia, in *Tristia* 5.3 is significant as it is an appeal to a god other than the divine emperor. The poet, lamenting that Bacchus has not come to his aid, asks that he try to persuade Augustus to lessen his punishment: *sunt dis inter se commercia. flectere tempta / Caesareum numen numine, Bacche, tuo* (“The gods have business among themselves. Try to influence Caesar’s divinity with your own, Bacchus,” 5.3.45-6). Here, although Augustus is the most powerful deity in the *Tristia*, Ovid hopes that Bacchus, the god of poetry and drunken madness, who empowers the poet and challenges authority, may be able to sway him. Although Ovid’s banishment, as he portrays it through the mythology of his exile, is the result of his inability to maintain his composure and discretion while in the grip of divine inspiration, he turns to Bacchus to authorize him as a divine poet.

ut tamen audisti percussum fulmine vatem,  
admonitu matris condoluisse potes,

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<sup>296</sup> Cf. 4.9.23-26: *trans ego tellurem, trans altas audiar undas, / et gemitus vox est magna futura mei; / nec tua te sontem tantummodo saecula norint, / perpetuae crimen posteritatis eris* (“I will be heard across the earth, across the deep seas and my lament will have a great voice; not will your age alone know that you are guilty, you will be a criminal for everlasting posterity”). Although does not address these words to Augustus—he has consigned the name of his enemy to Lethe’s waters – the idea that his representation of an enemy will outlive him is relevant.

<sup>297</sup> The phrase is Reeber’s 2010, who sees a precedent to *Tr.* 5.3 in Anacreon 357 PMG, also a prayer to Dionysus (“Tempting Augustus? Bacchic Persuasion in *Tristia* 5.3,” *CAMWS* Annual Meeting).

et potes aspiciens circum tua sacra poetas  
 “nescioquis nostri” dicere “cultor abest.” (31-34)

Still, when you heard that a bard had been struck by lightning you could have grieved at the reminder of your mother and looking around at the poets in your rites, you could have said “someone of my worshippers is absent.”

This is the first time in the *Tristia* that Ovid refers to himself as *vates*, the revered term for poet that before this the poet had only used of his esteemed predecessors, including Homer and Sappho. Ovid, particularly in the final books of the *Tristia*, is preoccupied with the demise of his career as a Roman poet and dwells on the futility of language; he claims that he is beginning to forget how to write and speak Latin, but struggles like a child to learn the Getic language.<sup>298</sup> This seems a fitting way for a poet to describe his sense of isolation and detachment from his home and the society to which he is accustomed. However, this dissociation from Rome, its culture, and politics also provides the poet with a position of security from which he might express discontent. By identifying himself as *vates*, the poet also establishes a religious and poetic context outside of the emperor’s authority at Rome which “provides him with a sacred right to speak that does not depend on his relationship to the *princeps* and lies outside the purview – both actual and imagined – of Roman imperial jurisdiction.”<sup>299</sup> Bacchus plays a role in this as well; as the god of poetic inspiration, he aids Ovid in poetic composition even when he claims to have forgotten the language.

Ovid hopes that the god Bacchus, concerned with poets and their participation in his rites, might validate his status as a divine poet, and yet at the same time, he expresses disappointment that Bacchus did nothing to prevent his exile in the first place, a fact which anticipates the god’s

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<sup>298</sup> For Ovid’s use of language in the exile poetry, cf. Stevens 2009.

<sup>299</sup> McGowan 2009: 11

probable powerlessness against the emperor in requesting the poet's return. In fact, this poem is as much a prayer to Bacchus for help as it is a lament that nothing will bring the poet back to Rome:

tu tamen e sacris hederæ cultoribus unum  
numine debueras sustinuisse tuo. (5.3.15-16)

You [Bacchus], at least, ought to have supported one of the worshippers of your sacred ivy with your divine power.

Although the self-proclaimed holy bard may be favored by Bacchus, it is Augustus who has the final say and whom Ovid likens to Jupiter, the supreme arbiter and angry god who need not justify his actions to anyone. We have seen that the poet's depiction of his initiation and subsequent exclusion from religious rites provide a telling analogy for his career as an Augustan poet. Here, the poet recalls the times when he was included in the god's circle and participated in the rites with the other poets.

illa dies hæc est, qua te celebrare poetæ,  
si modo non fallunt tempora, Bacche, solent,  
fæstaque odoratis innectunt tempora sertis,  
et dicunt laudes ad tua vina tuas.  
inter quos, memini, dum me mea fata sinebant,  
non invisæ tibi pars ego sæpe fui,  
quem nunc suppositum stellis Cynosuridos Ursæ  
iuncta tenet crudis Sarmatis ora Getis. (5.3.1-8)

This is the day on which the poets are accustomed to celebrate you, Bacchus, if only the date is not wrong, they wreath their joyous temples with scented garlands, and sing your praises to your wine. I remember how, while my fate allowed it, I often took part, among them, and didn't displease you, I who am now positioned beneath to the stars of the Little Bear, joined to the Sarmatian shore of the savage Getae.

The poet, despite his previous participation in Bacchus' rites, is now denied access, not because Bacchus is displeased with his involvement, but because Augustus has dismissed him. Although



Bacchus may not be able to influence Augustus in the end, he is an appropriate god for Ovid to invoke for the same reasons that the poet may turn to Bacchus for poetic inspiration. Bacchus, as always, embodies many paradoxes, both authorizing the poet and challenging authority through his unruliness. Ironically, Bacchus may have had a part in the poet's downfall as he represents it in the *Tristia* because the poet was unable to maintain his self-control and restraint in the face of Bacchic-poetic madness. Now, in the final book of the *Tristia*, it may be that Ovid has nothing to lose since it is unlikely that Augustus will have him recalled, or what is more likely, that his prayer does not reflect an actual plea for reprieve, but serves as further representation of the issues of power, control, and authority in the poet's relationship with Augustus.

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