

C. 3.14: HOW 'PRIVATE' IS HORACE'S PARTY?

For reasons obvious on even a first reading, C.3.14, *Herculis ritu*, is one of the most intriguing and controversial of Horace's odes¹). The poem begins with Horace summoning the Roman people to celebrate the return of Caesar (Augustus) from near death in a successful campaign against Spanish tribes. The focus shifts to

1) The bibliography on C.3.14 is enormous; for summaries and discussions of the more important studies, see H. P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz II* (Darm-

a private party at Horace's house: his slave is to summon Neaera, but if the doorkeeper at her house detains her, Horace will leave the matter alone. He is no longer young, and can endure what he "would not have endured in the consulate of Plancus."

At first sight, the shift from public ceremony to private party, from thanksgiving for the present to memories of past disquiet seems abrupt. But as Klingner has demonstrated, Horace links the two parts of the poem through a series of subtle transitions beginning in the central stanza (13–16)²). Klingner's reading also reveals that in the final sentence, *non ego hoc ferrem calidus iuuenta / consule Planco, hoc* refers not only to the stubbornness of the doorkeeper, but to Caesar's triumphant parade. *Consule Planco* is both a date in the poet's youth and the year of the battle of Philippi, when Horace, on the side of Brutus, *celerem fugam / sensi relicta non bene parmula, / cum fracta uirtus* (C.2.7.9–11)³).

Few would now deny the unity of the ode. Yet a difficulty remains, best articulated by Fraenkel⁴): "For all of Horace's skill there remains here a faint disharmony . . . The transition from the thanksgiving and rejoicing of the Roman people to the private celebrating of the poet is not in itself objectionable. What does jar is the clash between the role played by Horace himself in the first part and the role played by him in the second part. In the first three (or four) stanzas the poet, whether we are to think of him as a kind of herald or as a member of the crowd, appears as a nondescript figure. What he says there could be said by any Roman. But at the end of the poem he induces us to think of the individual Q. Horatius Flaccus, a man who is now grey-haired and was young at the time when Plancus was consul. Perhaps we also dislike, after so majestic a beginning, the all-too-private style in which the description of Neaera, charming in itself, is presented."

If Horace does indeed shift to "the individual Q. Horatius Flaccus" and an "all-too-private style," then even fervent admirers of the poem must admit that Fraenkel's sense of a "faint disharmony" is justified. To put it more bluntly, C.3.14, like all of the odes, was composed for a wide audience; what right does this "individual" have to impose his private concerns on a grand occasion of state?

Yet there is a possibility that Horace's role in the second part of the poem is not simply that of "the individual Q. Horatius Flaccus," and that his party and reminiscences are not as private and personal as they appear. Certain details in the first part, in the description of the public ceremony, suggest that in his withdrawal and reflections on this ceremony Horace speaks not only for himself, but for a clearly definable group of Romans.

The identity of this group emerges from a review of the participants in the public ceremony. They include the *plebs* (1), treated as a mass and here, as elsewhere in Horace, signifying the "populace" as opposed to the upper class – eques-

stadt 1973) 142–153; E. Doblhofer, *Horaz und Augustus*, ANRW II.31.3 (Berlin 1981) 1922–1986 (1962–1975 on this poem); and V. Cremona, *La Poesia Civile di Orazio* (Milan 1982) 324–330.

2) F. Klingner, *Herculis Ritu*, in *Römische Geisteswelt* (4th ed. Hamburg 1961) 395–405. For other views on the structure, see Syndikus, (above n.1) 148–150; Doblhofer, (above n.) 1962–1964; and Cremona, (above n.1) 327 n.3.

3) Klingner, (above n.2) 403–404; see also Doblhofer, (above n.1) 1971–1973.

4) E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 291. A number of scholars have expressed similar views; see Doblhofer, (above n.1) 1962–1964, and Cremona, (above n.1) 327 n.3.

trian and senatorial – elements in society⁵). The focus of the celebration is, of course, the returning Caesar (1–4); members of his family, his wife (5–6) and sister (7) are summoned to perform the necessary rites. A list follows of other participants who, because they accompany the wife and sister, are probably to be identified as belonging to the upper classes⁶).

These consist, first, of “the mothers of virgins and of youths recently saved” (9–10), that is, of unmarried girls and of soldiers who, like Caesar, are returning safely from the war that has ended⁷). The mothers are followed by “boys” and “girls who have recently experienced a man” (10–12), boys younger than the soldiers and newly wedded brides older than the virgins. We can recognize a chiasmic link between these four groups: *uirginum* / *pueri* and *iuuenum* / *puellae*. Clearly the recent (*iam*) brides are the brides of the recently (*nuper*) saved youths, the virgins the potential brides of the boys⁸). As Klingner noted, “the young people here . . . are suffused with young marital bliss⁹.”

The emphasis on youth (*iuuenum* 9; *pueri* 10) and on marriage (*unico gaudens mulier marito* 5; *uirginum* 9; *puellae iam uirum expertae* 10–11) creates a sense that something is missing from the scene. Both male and female children and youths are mentioned but, aside from Caesar, only female adults (*mulier, soror, matres*). Caesar is paired with his wife, the youths with the brides, the boys with the virgins. But where are the husbands of Caesar’s sister and the *matres*, the fathers of the virgins, youths, boys, and girls, the mature adult males of the Roman upper class?

Once recognized, the absence of these men from the ceremony becomes conspicuous. In 24 BC, the dramatic date of the poem, the adult males of the equestrian and senatorial classes would have been the only people of consequence to remember both the Republic and its collapse. Many of them would have remembered at first hand, as participants in the struggles for political hegemony and in the civil wars themselves. Whatever side they were on, the struggle and the wars are likely to have been the formative events of their youths, not easily dismissed even after the political issues were settled and Rome’s energies properly directed against her foreign enemies¹⁰).

The names of some of these men come easily to mind: L. Sestius, L. Munatius Plancus (the consul of 42), C. Asinius Pollio, Q. Dellius, Pompeius, and M. Valerius Messala Corvinus. All had fought on the “wrong side” at Philippi or in

5) On the meaning of *plebs* here, see Doblhofer, (above n. 1) 1967, Cremona, (above n. 1) 327 n. 1, and G. Williams, *The Third Book of Horace’s Odes* (Oxford 1969) 92: “. . . these are the common people of Rome who will only be spectators of the ceremony.”

6) The detail in which they are described, in contrast to the undifferentiated *plebs* (see n. 5 above) also supports this view. Compare Horace’s “audience” for the Roman *Odes* (C.3.1.1–4) and the participants in the *Carmen Saeculare* (cf. C.4.6.31–44).

7) For this interpretation of *iuuenum nuper sospitum* and of *puellae iam uirum expertae*, see Klingner, (above n. 2) 399–400, Williams, (above n. 6) 93, and Syndikus, (above n. 1) 147 and n. 30.

8) See the studies cited in n. 7 above.

9) Klingner, (above n. 2) 400.

10) On the older equites and especially senators, see now Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford 1986) 322–49. His view of Horace’s relations with these men is, however, quite different from that suggested here; see *ibid.* 382–402.

the years following, and all had made peace with the victorious Octavian¹¹). All, moreover, are addresses of odes in the first three books (1.4, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7, 3.21)¹²). These poems, especially 1.7 and 2.7 (to Plancus and Pompeius) show that Horace, also a veteran of the wrong side, felt an affinity with these men¹³). In C.3.14, could he be speaking for them as well as for himself?

Having summoned the participants, the poet seems to speak for them in announcing the significance of the occasion (13–16)¹⁴). Yet in the next stanza (17–20), it becomes clear that Horace is not, in fact, a participant in the ceremony; he is at home, ordering the preparations for his private party. The description and orders for the public ceremony occurred in the poet's imagination as he remained aloof from the actual proceedings¹⁵).

We can envisage others of Horace's age and background thinking about Caesar's return, even sharing the poet's sense of relief, yet likewise remaining aloof from the public ceremony. Their private entertainments would not necessarily include wines whose vintages delicately recall the days of civil strife in Italy (17–20)¹⁶), and it is difficult to think of a Pollio sending for "sweet voiced Neaera." But the poem ends with a thought which the histories of such men show they would have understood: *non ego hoc ferrem calidus iuuenta / consule Planco*.

A final point: the civil wars exacted a fearful toll, and many people would have been absent from the ceremony because, as Vergil put it, their "blood was fattening Emathia and the wide fields of Haemus" (G.1.492) or, in Horace's own words, had been "poured over fields and Neptune" (Epo. 7.3–4)¹⁷). In C.3.14, Horace does not explicitly mention the dead, but he has not entirely forgotten them. Besides the *matres*, the only participant in the ceremony lacking a mate is the *soror clari ducis* (7), Octavia, the widow of M. Antonius¹⁸).

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11) On these men, see Syme, (above n. 10), and his index under their names. On Pompeius, see R. G. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes II* (Oxford 1978) 107.

12) For bibliography on these poems, see M. Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace's Odes* (Chapel Hill 1986).

13) See J. P. Elder, *Horace C.1.7*, CPh 48 (1953) 1–8.

14) See Fraenkel, (above n. 4) 291, and Syndikus, (above n. 1) 148–149.

15) See the studies cited in n. 2 above.

16) On the wines, see Klingner, (above n. 2) 401, and Fraenkel, (above n. 4) 290.

17) On the casualties of the civil wars, especially Philippi, see Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 205–206.

18) Syme, (above n. 10) 38, speculates that, if Octavian had died in 24, in discussing him "some might spare a word of regret for Lepidus circumvented and discarded, for the ruin of Marcus Antonius."