CAMWS 2015 Boulder, CO March 27

# Stoic Paradox and Metapoetics in Horace's Odes 2.2 and 3.3

## Points of departure

- 1. interconnection of ethics and poetics in the *Odes* (Mette 1961, Davis 1991, Fowler 1995, Lowrie 1997)
- 2. wealth and rule as metaphors for Horace's poetic category of the *grande* ("high style") 3. the "high style" for Horace comprises epic, tragedy, history, and politics and is particularly associated with the narration of the civil wars (Lowrie 1997)

## A. Odes 2.1: Horace warns Pollio about the literary dangers of writing about civil war

The political commotion from the time of Metellus' consulship, the causes, the blunders, and the means of war, and the play of Fortune, and the dire alliances of the leaders, and the arms smeared with not yet expiated gore—a work full of dangerous risk—this you take on, and you walk across fires that underlie treacherous ash. May your Muse of harsh tragedy not be absent for long from the theater: soon, when you have put public matters in order, you will resume your sublime role with the Attic buskin, [you who are also] disguished in your support of sad defendants and of the senate when it has consulted you, Pollio, you to whom the laurel gave eternal honors in your Dalmatian triumph. Already now you grate on my ears with the threatening roar of horns, already the trumpets blare, already the gleam of weapons and the expressions of the horsemen terrify the skittish horses. Already I seem to see the great leaders, dirty with not unbecoming dust, and everything in the world overturned except for the severe soul of Cato. Juno – along with the other gods who were more partial to the Africans but had withdrawn powerless, leaving their land unavenged – now offers as a death sacrifice to Jugurtha the grandsons of his conquerors. What field has not been fertilized by Latin blood? What sea has the slaughter of Apulians not stained? What shore is free of our blood? Hey, my impudent Muse: don't abandon lighthearted play and go back over the stuff of Simonidean dirge! Come with me to Venus' cave and seek out tunes for a lighter plectrum.

#### B. Odes 2.2

Nullus argento color est avaris
abdito terris, inimice lamnae
Crispe Sallusti, nisi temperato
splendeat usu.
Vivet extento Proculeius aevo,
notus in fratres animi paterni;
illum aget penna metuente solvi
Fama superstes.
Latius regnes avidum domando
spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis
Gadibus iungas et uterque Poenus

serviat uni.

Crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops, nec sitim pellas, nisi causa morbi fugerit venis et aquosus albo corpore languor.

redditum Cyri solio Phraaten dissidens plebi numero beatorum

eximit Virtus, populumque falsis dedocet uti

vocibus, regnum et diadema tutum deferens uni propriamque laurum, quisquis ingentis oculo irretorto

spectat acervos.

Silver has no color if it is hidden away in the greedy ground—if it does not shine in moderate use – Sallustius Crispus, enemy of money. Proculeius will live for an extended age, known for his paternal spirit toward his brothers; long-surviving Fama will carry him with a wing that is unwilling to fall. You would rule more widely by subduing your greedy spirit than if you should join Libya to distant Gades and both Punic peoples should serve you alone. Terrible edema grows by indulging itself, and you cannot repress your thirst unless the cause of death flees your veins and the watery lethargy flees your whitened body. Though Phraates has been restored to Cyrus' throne, Virtus, disagreeing with the *plebs*, removes him from the ranks of the blessed and retrains the people not to use false terms, conferring a kingdom and a secure crown and a true laurel on that man alone who looks at huge heaps of treasure and then does not look back.

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# C. Semantic Reassignment of Stoic Paradox

## Traditional meanings

signifier	denotation	connotation
wealth	\$	satisfaction/prestige
rule	political control over territory	satisfaction/prestige
crown/laurel	a fancy hat	rule* ∴ political control/satisfaction/prestige

# Reassigned meanings

signifier	denotation	connotation
wealth	satisfaction/prestige	
rule	satisfaction/prestige	
crown/laurel	rule* ∴ satisfaction/prestige	

<sup>\*</sup> connotes the whole sign "rule" by metonymy

## D. Odes 3.3: Summary

- Praise of the virtue of tenacity
- Catalog of heroes who have been divinized because of this virtue, including Romulus (and, one day, Augustus)
- Juno's speech on the occasion of Romulus' divinization
  - agrees to abandon anger against Romans as long as they refuse to rebuild Troy
  - describes the renewed Trojan War she'll force any new Troy to endure
- poet criticizes his Muse for violating generic decorum

#### E. Odes 3.3.69-72

Non hoc iocosae conveniet lyrae; quo, Musa, tendis? Desine pervicax referre sermones deorum et magna modis tenuare parvis

This will not suit a playful lyre. Where are you heading, Muse?! Stop stubbornly relating the speeches of gods and reducing great things to small measures.

### F. Odes 3.3.37-56

Dum longus inter saeviat Ilion Romamque pontus, qualibet exsules in parte regnanto beati;

dum Priami Paridisque busto

insultet armentum et catulos ferae celent inultae, stet Capitolium

fulgens triumphatisque possit

Roma ferox dare iura Medis.

Horrenda late nomen in ultimas

extendat oras, qua medius liquor secernit Europen ab Afro,

qua tumidus rigat arva Nilus.

Aurum irrepertum et sic melius situm,

cum terra celat, spernere fortior

quam cogere humanos in usus

omne sacrum rapiente dextra.

Quicumque mundo terminus obstitit,

hunc tangat armis, visere gestiens,

qua parte debacchentur ignes,

qua nebulae pluviique rores.

As long as the wide sea rages between Troy and Rome, let the exiles rule happily in whatever region they wish. As long as a herd tramples on the tomb of Priam and Paris and wild animals hide their cubs there unpunished, let the Capitol stand shining and let savage Rome have the power to give laws to the conquered Medes. May it spread its

fear-inspiring name to the farthest shores, where the sea divides Europe from Africa, where the swollen Nile waters the fields. It is better to spurn the gold that is undiscovered and best left where the earth hides it than to force it into human circulation—the right hand grabbing at every sacred thing! Whatever limit contains the world, may Rome touch this limit with her arms, eager to see the region where fires rage madly—along with clouds, dew, and rain.

### **Works Cited**

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