

Horace the Warhawk? : Military ambition and echoes of the Civil War in *Odes* 1

Traditional Praise and Geography

1. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.1789¹

his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;
imperium sine fine dedi.

I set no limits to their fortunes and
and no period of time; I give them empire without end.²

2. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.683-4³

gentibus est aliis tellus data limite certo:
Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem

To other peoples land was given with fixed boundaries:
the extent of the city of Rome is that of the world.

Violent Geography

3. *Odes* 1.12.51-5⁴

ille seu Parthos Latio imminenti
egerit iusto domitos triumpho
sive subiectos Orientis orae
Seras et Indos...

Whether [Caesar] drives off the Parthians threatening
Latium, or the Chinese and Indians, near the mouth of the
Orient, all subdued in a deserved triumph.

4. *Odes* 1.2.21-24

audiet civis acuisse ferrum
quo graves Persae melius perirent,
audiet pugnās vitio parentum
rara iuventus

The rare youth will hear how citizens sharpened swords
by which Persians would better have died. He will hear
of the fights on account of the vices of his parents.

5. *Odes* 1.2.51-52

neu sinas Medos equitare inultos
te duce, Caesar

...and do not allow the Medes to ride unavenged while
you, Caesar, are our leader

Geography and the Civil Wars

6. *Odes* 1.21.13-16

hic bellum lacrimosum, hic mersam famem
pestemque a populo et principe Caesare in
Persas atque Britannos
vestra motus aget prece.

[Apollo] will drive off tragic war and overwhelming
famine and pestilence from the people and from Caesar
the princeps, to the Persians and Britons, moved by your
prayer.

7. *Odes* 1.35.28-40

serves itirum Caesarem in ultimos
orbis Britannos et iuvenum recens
examen Eois timendum
partibus Oceanoque rubro.
eheu, cicatruum et sceleris pudet
fratrumque. Quid nos dura refugimus
aetas? Quid intactum nefasti
linquimus? Unde manum iuventus
metu deorum continuit? Quibus
pepercit aris? O utinam nova
incude diffingas retusum in
Massagetis Arabasque ferrum!

May you preserve Caesar about to journey to Britain, the
most remote portion of the world, and preserve the new
expedition of youths inciting fear in parts of the East and
the Red Sea. Alas! The scars and crimes of our brothers
shame us. From what have we fled in these harsh times?
What manner of forbidden deed have we left undone?
When has a young man stayed his hand for fear of the
gods? Toward which alters has he been sparing? If only
you would reforge our blunted blades and turn the against
the Massagetes and Arabs!

¹ The Latin text is Mynor's: R.A.B. Mynors, ed. 1977: *Vergili Maronis Opera*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² Unless otherwise specified, all English translations are my own.

³ The Latin text is Frazer's: J.G. Frazer, ed. 1976: *Ovid V: Fasti*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁴ The Latin text is West's: David West, 2007: *Horace Odes 1: Carpe Diem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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8. *Odes* 1.35.9-16

te Dacus asper, te profugi Scythae
urbesque gentesque et Latium ferox
regumque matres barbarorum et
purpurei metuunt tyranni,
iniurioso ne pede proruas
stantem columnam, neu populus frequens
ad arma cessantis, ad arma
concitet imperiumque frangat

The rough Dacian and Scythians, famous in retreat, the cities and peoples and fierce Latium, the mothers of barbarian kings, and tyrants clad in purple all fear you – lest the column be upturned by your spiteful foot, lest the mob incite the unmotivated to take up arms and shatter all authority.

The Problem of Motivation

9. *Odes* 1.29.1-5

Icci, beatis nunc Arabum invides
gazis, et acrem militiam paras
non ante deuictis Sabaeae
regibus, horribilique Medo
necti catenas?...

Iccius, are you now envying the riches of Arabia? Are you preparing a ruthless campaign against the previously unconquered kings of the Sabaeans and weaving chains for the fearsome Mede?

Or is the World at Peace?

10. *Fasti* 4.923-28

nec teneras segetes, sed durum amplectere ferrum,
quodque potest alios perdere perde prior.
utilius gladios et tela nocentia carpes:
nil opus est illis; otia mundus agit.
sarcula nunc durusque bidens et vomer aduncus,
ruris opes, niteant...

May you not touch the tender crops, but first embrace the harsh iron, and destroy whatever is able to harm others. It is more useful for you to seize blades and wounding spears – there is no need for these, for the world is at peace. Now may the hoes, solid mattocks, curved plows, and all other tools of the fields shine.

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