

Epic and Epinician in Horace's *Odes* 3.3

Horace's *Odes* 3.3 appears to be a contest between two views of virtue. The first view, presented by the poet in his own persona, equates virtue with obstinate perseverance and agonistic triumph. The second, which is implicit throughout the embedded speech of Juno, makes virtue a balance between perseverance, on the one hand, and resignation and reconciliation, on the other. Juno, addressing the gods as they debate Romulus' divination, demonstrates this balance in her own conduct: she renounces her hatred of Romulus and the Trojan race but refuses to reconsider the destruction of Troy. Moreover, she demands this balance from the Romans, promising that if they renounce any intention of rebuilding Troy, they will be allowed to extend their empire to the edges of the earth.

Bakhtin's notion of a "hybrid text" can be usefully applied to this ode. The utterance that begins the poem draws on the language of the Pindaric victory ode for its celebration of Augustus (for Pindaric presence in Horace, cf. Fraenkel 1957; Lowrie 1995; Harrison 1995, 1998; Hardie 2003). But Juno's speech—composed of epic speech genres such as the boast, the threat, the promise, and the epitaph—is in the language of epic poetry. Horace's reason for embedding an epic utterance within a lyric one may well be that the difference between worldviews that they invoke emphasizes the liminality of his historical moment. The triumviral world was a hotly contested realm where justice called for an agonistic persistence. Augustus' behavior in this world, Horace implies, conformed to the justice that the world demanded, and he is still to be celebrated for this victory, in the terms that suit the tenor of the time. But just as the epic portion of Horace's ode springs from the epinician, so out of Augustus' triumph, a new world has arisen, with new axiological dimensions. In the new world, *nostos* and *kleos* are incompatible: imperial success depends on at least a partial abandonment of the Republican past. (Troy, as Rome's inaccessible past, is a powerful symbol for the lost Republic.) Moreover, cooperation, conciliation, and suppression of individual grievances for the greater good will be of the utmost importance. This shows an understanding of the new era that works in concert with the conception of empire seen e.g. in Augustus' policy of clemency and his *Res Gestae*. Numerous scholars, notably Santirocco 1995 and Bowditch 2001, have stressed Augustus' role not in the acceptance or rejection, per se, of Augustan ideology, but in the *creation* of ideology. *Odes* 3.3 represents a powerful contribution to this multi-lateral project.

Bibliography

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