

## The Performative Rhetoric of Horace in the *Odes*

Horace defines lyric poetry as poetry about “love” and “drinking” (C.1.6.17: *convivia...proelia virginum*), a tradition he inherited from the Greek lyric poets (see, e.g., Feeney 1993). In recent decades, there has been much scholarship on the role that rhetoric plays in Horace’s poetry. For example, Davis (1991: *Polyhymnia: The Rhetoric of Horatian Lyric Discourse*), Lowrie (1997: *Horace’s Narrative Odes*), and Oliensis (1998: *Horace and Rhetoric of Authority*) are all occupied with analyzing how Horace makes use of persuasive language that serves to establish his own performative persona within his poetry. Oliensis in particular demonstrates how Horace uses rhetoric to establish, or undermine, the authority of his poetic persona, “Horace” (1-2). In her chapter on the *Odes*, Oliensis portrays Horace’s separation of himself from Augustus as an attempt both to show the appropriate deference to the *princeps* and to strengthen his own poetic authority.

My paper follows a similar line of inquiry, though it focuses more on the private spaces Horace creates for himself through his poetic personae. The *Odes*, a diverse body of poems encompassing a range of topics including the military, state, banquets, love, and mourning, is especially suitable for such an examination. While Horace’s poetic performances are social in nature, the *Odes* do not always work to develop Horace’s public self as a poet in relation to his patron, Maecenas, or the emperor, Augustus. Even in his most apparently public poems, Horace develops private selves as well; he expresses more private moments, such as love, mourning, and feelings of peace in quiet pastoral moments. Though Kennedy (1997: “‘Augustan’ and ‘Anti-Augustan’: Reflections on Terms of Reference”) rightfully notes that “reconciliation and integration are no less political processes in that they affect the distribution of power in specific

social contexts,” Horace still manages to carve such a poetic sphere for himself within these private moments, despite continuing to be considerate of Augustus as well as his patron, Maecenas (Kennedy 30). My paper begins with and primarily involves the exploration of these public and private boundaries in the famous *recusatio*, *Odes* 1.6. This ode simultaneously defers to Augustus and defines Horace’s private space, encapsulated by “*tenues grandia*”: “I am too slender [lyric] for such grand things [epic]” (C.1.6.9). Within the boundaries established in this ode, I then examine how Horace’s private voice develops throughout the rest of the *Odes*, with particular emphasis on private poems such as 1.17 and 1.22 as well as poems where he underscores his poetic authority such as 3.30. In his poetry, Horace finds a way to separate himself from Augustus’ political regime, even though “there was nowhere outside it for him to sit and think” (Oliensis 149).

#### Bibliography

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