

Ubertino Carrara's description of St. Peter's Square (1715) and Horace's *Ode* 3.3

In Ubertino Carrara's epic poem *Columbus* we find an ekphrasis of St. Peter's Square (3.280-419). Columbus discovers the square in heaven where he receives the prophesy of his discovery of the Americas from the mouth of Aretia. Carrara uses this description to contextualize the discovery of the Americas within the framework of God's plan of salvation. Carrara knew that St. Peter's square was built after Columbus reached the Bahamas. As Schaffenrath shows, the passage is full of verbal allusions to Vergil and other ancient authors. Probably the most important quote is *Aen.* 1.279 from Jupiter's speech: the *imperium sine fine* which Aretia says is now given to the *pater Romanus* (for this expression cf. *Aen.* 9.449, *Col.* 3.356) in *Col.* 3.357. Horace is missing from this list.

This paper would like to point out parallels between Horace's odes, 3.3 in particular, and Carrara's *Columbus*. Admittedly, the intertextual connection is not established by direct verbal echoes - for a reason.

Neither time nor Juno, Aretia says, can destroy this *imperium*. It will stand as long as the earth will exist and as long as decay will spare the stars. This indestructible empire would differ from the endless *imperium* that lying Jupiter promised the Romans. When that empire fell, Jupiter was buried under the ruins of his own *arx*, i.e. the Capitol, as a punishment (*Col.* 3.360-4). Jupiter suffered a fate comparable to what happened to the giants in *Ode* 3.1.7. St. Peter has now taken Jupiter's place and is described in a rather Homeric way as *pastor adoratus regibus* (*Col.* 3,337).

Horace claims in *Ode* 3.30 that he has completed a monument that an *innumerabilis / annorum series et fuga temporum* (3.30.4f.) cannot destroy. His glory would grow as long as the

pontifex would climb the Capitoline Hill. Capitoline Hill and its ancient *pontifex* are replaced by Carrara's *pater Romanus*, who is described as *summus ab alta / arce sedens* (*Col.* 3.355f.) on Vatican Hill (*Col.* 3.341f.). Why did Carrara not use the word *pontifex*? Maybe the Vergilian *pater Romanus* allowed him to play with the position of the pope as Vicar of Christ. In *Aen.* 9.446-9 Vergil claims that Nisus and Euryalus will not cease to be remembered as long as the house of Aeneas will live in the proximity of the immovable rock of the Capitol and the Roman father will hold the *imperium*. Did Vergil refer to Augustus or Jupiter?

The question remains why Carrara mentions Juno. In Horace's *Ode* 3.3, Juno allows Rome's empire to stand as long as Troy is not rebuilt. If the Romans should rebuild Troy out of too much piety towards their ancestors, then Juno will lead the renewed destruction of Troy herself (37-69). Here, too, the radiant Capitol (42f.) is among the symbols of Rome's future.

Two stanzas describe that Juno even allows the Romans to extend their reign to the ends of the earth (*in ultimas oras*, 45f.) which are exemplified by the Strait of Gibraltar and the Nile (46-9). Juno describes Rome as *horrenda* (45). It may carry its weapons even to every single boundary stone in the world, desiring to see the most divergent climates (53-56). Now Aretia prophesies that Columbus will extend the boundaries of the Roman realm even beyond the Atlas Mountains (*Col.* 3.364f.). The Romans, she says, wanted to get to know everything by the sword (*ferrum*, 365f.). They were denied to penetrate the boundaries of their world so that by the fact that the cross would come to areas where the Roman eagle did not fly before it would become obvious that the Roman tiara, the pope's traditional crown, is mightier than Roman Bellona was (366-369). Aretia stresses, however, that the cross does not need Mars to triumph (369-70).

Between Horace's two aforementioned stanzas Juno demands that the Romans leave gold unattended, do not force humans to use it and defile what is sacred (49-52). The riches of St.

Peter's Basilica are important in this respect. After all, some of them come from the New World. The Spanish kings did what Horace's Juno had forbidden. Columbus' questions about St. Peter's wealth do not explicitly mention Horace or his verses (377-82). They betray a certain surprise over the missing frugality of Aretia's home. According to Aretia, the Spanish kings were grateful and donated some of the gold that they found to the Vatican also as atonement for the sins they committed in the Americas (350-3). Realism shines through Carrara's idealism. Aretia gives a speech on using gold properly and declares (402): "*Non dominantur opes, dominamur in illas.*"

Horace's warnings about Rome's eternity cannot feature more prominently in Carrara's ekphrasis.

Works Cited

Schaffenrath, Florian (ed.) 2006: Ubertino Carrara SJ. *Columbus. carmen epicum* (1715). Berlin: Weidler.