

Horace *Odes* 4 and the *leges Juliae*

The reign of Augustus saw widespread reform of the legal system oriented towards improvement of the moral and social fabric of Rome (Galinsky, 1981; Grubbs, 2002). The desired objectives and success of Augustus' moral reforms present scholars with difficulties given the lack of sources writing contemporaneously to their establishment. While some scholars have noted Horace as one source for attempting to understand the significance and desired objective of the new Imperial social fabric, they limit themselves to certain *odes* which make direct mention of Augustus or the moral failures at Rome (Milnor, 2007). This paper examines Horace *Odes* Book 4 in the context of the *leges Juliae*, which were passed between the publication of Books 1-3 (23 BCE) and of Book 4 (13 or 11 BCE). I argue that Horace made a conscious effort in Book 4 to remove certain features which ran contrary to the new moral system that Augustus sought to institute. In Books 1-3 there are many mentions of acts of love and lust, some of them potentially prosecutable under the new laws; they include examples of the *komos / paraclausithyron*, the (predominantly) male lover's attempt, usually unsuccessful, to enter his beloved's home in order to consummate his love for her/him (Cairns, 1972). But the *komos / paraclausithyron* is absent from Book 4, even though in other respects Book 4 conforms to the norms of content established in Books 1-3.

My contention is that the absence of the *komos / paraclausithyron* from Book 4 results from Horace's hesitance to exalt such activities, which might involve adulterous relationships. This case is further supported by the removal of erotic elements within threat prophecy poems found in Book 4. Given that these standard erotic elements had been present in the previous three books, their exclusion further emphasizes the influence of the laws on Book 4. However much

Horace may protest that Augustus granted license to writers under his patronage to write without his input, his impact on them should not be underestimated (Wasył, 2003). This is especially the case when Augustus was the direct patron of a work, as he was of Book 4, written after the transfer of Horace's patronage from Maecenas to Augustus. Some scholars have remarked on the ways in which poetical works patronized by Maecenas project elements of the new "cultural" apparatus being established by Augustus, often placing these works in conversation with previous Latin literature as reflections of earlier works (Le Doze, 2019). While the necessity of reforming the declining morality of the Roman populace was a common trope found even at the height of the Republic, and although Horace echoes it in some parts of his earlier oeuvre, the exclusion of supposedly immoral sexual activities from Book 4 reveals the influence on Horace of Augustus' moral legislation. Thus, in Book 4, created directly under Augustus' patronage, the message Augustus desired to propagate among the Roman elite may be observed in both the inclusion and exclusion of certain generic elements.

Selected Bibliography

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