

Embracing a Ruler: The Example of Europa in Horace, *Odes* 3.27

Although Horace's Europa ode (3.27) is an erotic rather than a political poem, Venus' advice to Europa on how to handle the emotional aftermath of Jupiter's abduction strangely parallels Horace's attitude towards his republican past and his acceptance of Augustus in the *Odes*. After standing by while Europa gave vent to her feelings of guilt, anger, and fear, a laughing Venus gives her first command to the girl: "abstineto | ...irarum calidaeque rixae" ("refrain from anger and hot quarrels," 69-70), as if her understandable ire were merely the result of lovers' tiffs (cf. 1.13.11). Horace characterizes his past self as similarly hot-headed in erotic contexts. In 1.16.22-28 he tells an angry girl that in his "youth" (*iuventa*, 23) a *fervor* (24) drove him, "raging" (*furentem*, 25), to write the iambics she now finds so objectionable; now cool-headed, he wants to reconcile and advises her to restrain her emotions also (*compesce mentem*, 22). However, it is not only erotic contexts in which young Horace had a hot temper. In 3.14.25-28 he describes himself, now a middle-aged man, as no longer "eager for impulsive quarrels" (*rixae cupidos protervae*, 26). This is in contrast with his past self, a "hot-headed youth when Plancus was consul" (*calidus iuventa | consule Planco*, 27-28), the date of Plancus' consulship (42 BC) pointing to Horace's previous political allegiance to and, at Philippi, military efforts for Brutus (West 2002:129-130). The new order under Augustus, however, has no place for civil-war-causing *ira*, as Horace makes clear at 4.15.17-20. It is not only Augustus' subjects who will lack this anger; the *princeps* himself will defuse the possibility of a renewed civil war by showing his famous clemency: in 2.7 Horace's friend Pompeius has been restored to Rome despite his

fighting along with Horace on the wrong side at Philippi. Horace urges Pompeius to “return to Jupiter the feast owed to him” (“obligatam redde Iovi dapem,” 17)—Jupiter here being the divine stand-in for Augustus (Commager 1962:171; cf. 1.12.51-52).

For Horace, wine and its accompanying god Bacchus are instrumental in mellowing out a hot-headed, bellicose temperament: in 3.8.13-16 he tells Maecenas to drink up and “let all shouting and anger be far off” (*procul omnis esto / clamor ira*, 15-16), and at 1.18.5 he asks “after wine, who would keep talking about serious warfare?” (“quis post vina gravem militiam...crepat?”). Wine, when used appropriately, leads to relaxation and peace. Significantly, then, it is Bacchus who teaches Horace, who as a *callidus iuventa*, fought against Octavian, to sing in praise of Augustus. In 2.19 Horace says that he saw Bacchus “teaching songs” (*carmina...docentem*, 1-2) and the Nymphs “learning” (*discentis*, 3) them and that now he is possessed by Bacchus (6) and has divine permission to sing on various Bacchic themes including the catastrophe of Ariadne (9-16). There is nothing particularly political about these songs, but Horace goes on as part of *this* song to narrate the role of Bacchus in the Gigantomachy (21-24), which in 3.4 parallels the civil war. The connection between Bacchus’ inspiration and praise of Augustus is explicit in the second of the two Bacchus odes, 3.25, in which he describes Bacchus carrying him off into a cave in which he “will be heard practicing inserting the eternal glory of illustrious Caesar in the stars and in the council of Jupiter” (“egregii Caesaris audiar | aeternum meditans decus | stellis inserere et consilio Iovis,” 4-6). Taking these poems together, Horace depicts himself as “learning” from anger-soothing Bacchus to recognize and then immortalize the glories of the *princeps* in poetry.

Europa, too, must “learn” to see the advantages of a forceful takeover by a supreme ruler (cf. Mitchell 2012:174-175). Venus, having at last revealed that Europa’s abductor is the king of the gods (3.27.73), gives her second command: “mitte singultus, bene ferre magnam | disce fortunam” (“send away your sobbing, learn to bear your great fortune well,” 74-75). She then, in the final lines of the ode, gives Europa the comfort that she will have a continent named after her (75-76). One wonders, however, how comforting this dry geographical fact really is to a girl who has just been taken by force far away from her family and homeland and possibly raped. We are not given Europa’s response to Venus’ commands, and, considering Cupid’s “unstrung bow” (*remisso...arcu*, 67-68), we wonder if Europa’s *emotions* can be won over even if she *intellectually* understands the benefits of having Jupiter as a lover. One wonders if Bacchus’ conversion of Horace’s affections was more complete than Venus’ of Europa’s.

Bibliography

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