

POLITICAL DISSENT IN GROVES, CAVES, AND GROTTOS

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In Ode 3.25 Horace invokes Bacchus for divine inspiration while he is composing a poem that will honor the living deification of Augustus. As such, this poem is typically viewed as pro-Augustan propaganda. However, contextualization of Horace's Odes demonstrates their multifaceted nature revealing small rebellions against Augustus. The goal of this project is to demonstrate the underlying subversive nature of Ode 3.25 through contextualization by examining Antony's link to Bacchus, the invocation of Bacchus for poetic inspiration, and the contemporary perceptions of deification.

Patron Gods and Political Propaganda

Antony created a divine lineage for himself from Bacchus going so far as to "look like him in both physical appearance and clothing" (Freyburger-Garland 24). This Bacchic branding was amplified by Antony's time ruling in Egypt where he was deified as the syncretic Dionysus-Osiris. This is demonstrated by the arrival of Antony at Ephesus in a Bacchic procession. Antony's public reincarnation as Bacchus was paramount in cementing his political power in the East. Antony's adversaries also used his Bacchic branding to shame him for being degenerate, bloodthirsty, and 'abandoning' Roman values. This is most clearly demonstrated by Cicero's *Phillippics*.

Augustus was claiming Apollo as his patron god. This association goes as far back as Augustus' birth, with some sources suggesting that Augustus was descended from Apollo. The Apollo-Augustus link was undeniable by 36 BC with beginning of the construction of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus. Furthermore, "Octavian's victory [at the Battle of Actium] was naturally attributed to [Apollo's] protection" (Freyburger-Garland 22). Similarly, Antony, this mythology becomes a well-known part of Augustus's public image.

Thus, the connections between both men and their patrons were common knowledge that Horace most certainly would have known.

Invocation

Ode 3.25's first stanza does more than just recall the Bacchic trope of possession. Horace's use of *nemora*, *specus*, and *antriis* immediately pulls readers into the wild, Bacchic setting. That is then immediately countered by the following:

quibus antris egregii Caesaris audiat aeternum meditans decus stellis inserere et consilio Iovis	In which cave shall I be heard musing to induct distinguished Caesar's glory to the stars and the counsel of Jove
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jolting the audience back into a strong political context. This harsh dichotomy declares that this work is political in meaning. Thus, Horace's invocation of Bacchus to inspire him to sing the praises of Augustus takes on deeper meaning. Bacchus is not the foremost god of poetry in either the Greek or Roman pantheon. In the Augustan era, Apollo's connection to the Muses remains much stronger than Bacchus's and "Apollo was the premier god, who, ... controlled technical skill, *ars*" (Batinski 361). Thus "Bacchus ... has encroached on Apollo's domain" in Horace's poetry (Batinski 373). Given the history of Roman uncomfortability with the licentiousness of Bacchus and Augustus's moral legislation, Horace creates undeniable tension by his claim that he is "tui plenum" "full of [Bacchus's] inspiration when he writes about Augustus.



Bronze Coin of Octavian, c. 38 BC.
Head of Octavian with star (Left). DIVOS [F]IVLIVS within laurel wreath (Right).

Sources

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Deification

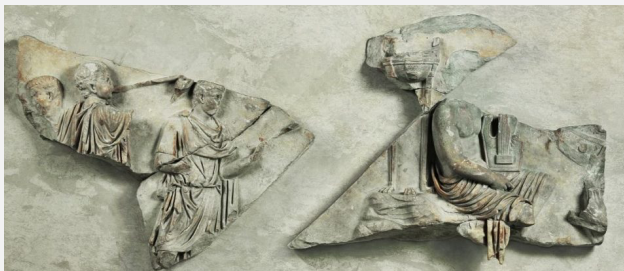
The most contemporarily recent, posthumous deification was that of Julius Caesar. The arrival of a comet, often termed the *sidus Iulium*, during the funerary games held for Caesar was celebrated as evidence for Julius Caesar's entrance to *consilium Iovis*. The *sidus Iulium* imagery was often used to legitimize Augustus's claim to power. Furthermore, Augustan propaganda also used the posthumous deification of Julius Caesar to lay the groundwork for his own eventual living deification.

The deification of Antony in Egypt also occurred in this period. Antony's deification as Osiris-Dionysus was received incredibly poorly in Rome with Antony being ridiculed as Cleopatra's lackey rather than a new, young god. Antony was further admonished for abandoning the Roman tradition by assuming godhood while still alive. Yet, Augustus gave himself a living deification with what appeared to be minimal repercussions in Rome.

By invoking Bacchus to discuss Augustus' deification, Horace appears to emphasize the hypocrisy of the public for shaming Antony's living deification while praising Augustus for doing the same. This is further corroborated with the use of *stellis* and as opposed to *sidus* in line 6. Just as *stellis* and *sidus* differ by their ability to fit within the rules of the poem's second Asclepiadean meter, the induction of Augustus and Caesar should also be treated with different rules given that Augustus is alive. As such Horace seems to deliberately call attention to this hypocrisy.

Conclusion

Ode 3.25 is composed in such a way that it puts the deification of Augustus in the foreground while simultaneously alluding to Antony and his deification as Bacchus. This link between Antony and Bacchus was well known as was Augustus's link with Apollo who has a much clearer connection with poetry. By highlighting Bacchus, Horace pivots away from Augustus's attempts to impose order and morality on the Roman republic to uncharted, unruly territories. The moment Horace enters these spaces he is taken over and, forgetting about the task at hand, he focuses on the destructive and awesome power of Bacchus. In this way, Ode 3.25 subverts Augustan ideals of order and morality. Thus, contextualization of the invocation, demonstrates Ode 3.25's anti-Augustan nature.



Historical Relief: Battle of Actium, Procession, c. 1st Century AD.
This marble relief features Apollo as the central figure and decorated a monument commemorating Augustus's victory in the Battle of Actium.