

## SENECA AND HORACE: ALLEGORICAL TECHNIQUE IN TWO ODES TO BACCHUS (HOR. *CARM.* 2.19 AND SEN. *OED.* 403–508)

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THE CHORAL ODES OF Senecan tragedy are falsely regarded as barely relevant interludes.<sup>1</sup> They are in fact mythical allegories of the dramatic situation, such as one finds in Pindar and Aeschylus (for example, the first ode of *Agamemnon*). But it is difficult to prove that Seneca imitated the Greeks directly. Among the Augustan poets, who Tarrant has argued are the most direct influences on Seneca (1978: 261–263), the lyrics of Horace most closely resemble Seneca's odes. Horace uses imagery so subtly that it is sometimes hard to decide whether an ode is best interpreted as praise of the *princeps*. The political thread of his mythical theme insinuates itself, hidden beneath the Alexandrian fiction that the poet is writing only about a personal experience. This kind of technique also suits the needs of tragedy, where dramatic irony depends upon imagery that conveys many layers of meaning. I think a strong case can be made that Seneca imitated the allegorical technique he found in Horatian lyric.

To demonstrate the point, I take up the Senecan ode most universally maligned as ἐμβόλιμα-like (Aristotle's word for the "interludes" of Agathon: see *Poet.* 1456a29–32; cf. Hor. *Ars P.* 194–195): the ode to Bacchus in *Oedipus* (403–508). Tarrant says of it (1978: 227–228):

The ode in the *Oedipus* . . . is an extended specimen of a ὕμνος κλητικός, a recital of the *laudes Bacchi* in which only three rather colorless lines refer to the present situation of Thebes . . . The ode makes no allusion to the descent of Creon and Tiresias in search of Laius; it is not introduced to support that enterprise, but to supply a colorful poetic interlude before the action resumes in the next act.

This opinion is shared by Pratt (1983: 99): "most of it (403–503) is a conventional encomium of Bacchus using the familiar myths. Bacchus' association with Thebes may have prompted the theme"; D. and E. Henry (1985: 28; cf. 1983: 129): "the Ode seems to have no reference to anything that has happened so far or that seems likely to follow"; and Herrmann (1924–26: 376): "les louanges de Bacchus ne sont qu'un gracieux intermède destiné à détendre l'esprit des spectateurs entre deux scènes de prodiges et d'épouvante." Motto and Clark see the bare outlines of its real purpose (1974: 86):

This last scene (403–508) has been most often understood as digressive or disruptive, an interlude—or, what is worse, as a mere detour into expressions of "fecundity" and

<sup>1</sup> Tarrant 1976: 323; cf. 1978: 221–228. It is an old argument: see Lindskog 1897: 2.33; Leo 1897: 511–512, and 1912: 86, where he calls them *Zwischenactslieder*; Cunliffe 1907: 34; Herrmann 1924–26: 376; Canter 1925: 31–36; Runchina 1960: 234; Calder 1976–77: 6.

"joy." On the contrary, since the Cadmean line has been regularly hunted and pursued by Apollo and Bacchus, this choral ode once again stresses the unnatural fates of many in the family and re-emphasizes the unnatural conduct that haunts Oedipus' Boeotian line. Thus references to Pentheus' death at the hands of his mother Agave (436), to Ino (445), and to Lycurgus (471), never permit us to forget the unnatural fate traditionally incurred and now once again impending. Even the famous story of the pirates conquered by lion and transformed to dolphins (449–466) suggests defeat of man at the hands of the unspeakable and intransigent god. There is, then, something of irony in that such a god is being called upon by Thebes to bring good fortune.

They seem to see that when the chorus calls upon Bacchus to rescue Thebes from the plague, the god does not come directly, but Bacchic self-revelation does come to Oedipus and the choral prayer is paradoxically fulfilled; that is, the chorus is a force of dramatic irony. The most perceptive critic on the subject of irony and paradox in Seneca's choral odes is P. J. Davis, but his comments tend to be *ad hoc*, rather than suggesting a systematic approach by Seneca.<sup>2</sup> Concerning this ode, he observes irony in certain portions: the invocation to Bacchus includes elements that could describe Oedipus; and the stories of Agave and Pentheus, Lycurgus, and Ino and Melicertes seem to suggest the current situation of Oedipus and Jocasta.<sup>3</sup>

I would go well beyond these positions to argue that the entire ode actually pertains to Oedipus while ostensibly speaking only of the deeds of Bacchus. Pratt showed that Seneca does indeed use an "allegorical" mode. The *extispicium* in *Oedipus* (293–402), a long and gruesome deviation into the details of a corrupted sacrifice, is actually all about the characters of the play:

Wordplay becomes fully developed allegory in the following scene. Tiresias is led in by his daughter Manto, who describes the sacrifice of a bull and a heifer performed to divine the meaning of the oracle. The movement of the fire on the altar, the death of the animals, and the appearance of the heifer's entrails—all the devices of soothsaying are used in this gruesomely spectacular scene to represent the past and future of Oedipus and his family: the enmity of Eteocles and Polynices, their mutual murder, incestuous birth, Oedipus' self-inflicted blindness, the suicide of Jocasta, her two marriages, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

This is an *ecphrasis* where allegory is to be expected, but like the *extispicium*, every line of the choral ode "represents the past and future of Oedipus and his family." The chorus is entirely ignorant of the implications of what it is saying, though an audience that could see the *extispicium* as allegory would perceive what the chorus does not. This dramatic technique makes the chorus an ignorant and unwitting interpreter of the action, even a malevolent force in a certain symbolic way. After considering Seneca's ode, I conclude with a few remarks about the Senecan chorus. But first, in order to appreciate better the mode of allegorical

<sup>2</sup> See Davis 1984, 1989, 1991, 1993; cf. Bishop 1964; Dewey 1968; Stevens 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Davis 1991: 152–154; 1993: 202–207.

<sup>4</sup> Pratt 1983: 99, summarized from Pratt 1939: 93–98; cf. Mastronarde 1970: 294, 301 with n. 17.

lyric available to Seneca, let us begin with Horace's own ode to Bacchus, which had a subtle but direct influence upon Seneca's.

# I. HORACE *CARMEN* 2.19: *BACCHUM IN REMOTIS*

Although there are many Horatian odes that mention Bacchus, and there is another (*Carm.* 3.25) devoted exclusively to him, *Carm.* 2.19 is likely to have inspired Seneca directly for its method. One can find many similarities of subject between Seneca's ode and Propertius 3.17, and all of its mythic elements are to be found in Ovid. But in *Carm.* 2.19, Horace has created a display piece that shows the importance of illusion and allegory in his poetics. In using the word "allegory," I do not mean that the ancient technique is the same as Hawthorne's or Melville's. Ancient allegory was achieved most of all through an interplay of words and stems that lead the reader to perceive greater significance. It made greater demands upon memory and assumed a more detailed familiarity with the precise words of other poems than a modern audience would be expected to bring to bear.

If it seems strange to speak of Horatian allegory,<sup>5</sup> one need only consider the new demands of imperial poetry: Horace begins *Carm.* 3.1 with a comparison of Jupiter and Augustus; in 3.3 the deification of Romulus and the events of the Trojan war become a background against which to depict the new Augustan order; and in 3.1.7 and 3.4.42–68, the Gigantomachy points to the great battle at Actium that brought Octavian to single rule.<sup>6</sup> In odes such as 1.5 and 1.14, Horace reveals openly that he is imitating Greek lyrics that are themselves allegorical.<sup>7</sup> It was an allegorical era, as one can see plainly in the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. The *Aeneid* is much less a foundation myth than an allegory of Rome's century of civil war, its causes, cost, and the final battle that ended it. For the Augustan poets, Actium must have seemed entirely worthy of allegory: at that moment, the wars end; history and fate turn down a different path; and the unstable Rome of a self-indulgent oligarchy metamorphoses into a stable empire under a servant *princeps* (at least in panegyric and autobiography). Aeneas wears the battle on his shield (*Aen.* 8.675–728), a symbol to him of a painful future he must embrace if he is to found Rome and to the reader an indication that the final battle with Turnus is, at the political level, the confrontation of Octavian and Antony. If one sees allegory in Augustan poetry, particularly allusions to Actium (as we shall see in *Carm.* 2.19), one can at least be confident that it was foremost in the minds of the poets.

<sup>5</sup> Commager allows the term (1962: 208), citing *Carm.* 1.2, 1.14, 3.4, and *Epod.* 13.

<sup>6</sup> Commager points out (1962: 200) that when Horace juxtaposes it with the resettlement of Caesar's weary veterans (*Carm.* 3.4.37–38), he explicitly links the Gigantomachy with the victory at Actium. Augustus decorated one of his villas with huge fossils called *gigantum ossa* (Suet. *Aug.* 72.3).

<sup>7</sup> On 1.5, see Commager 1962: 66, and Semonides 7.37–41; on 1.14, see Commager 1962: 163–169, with his citations in nn. 3–5, 15.

Before turning to *Carm.* 2.19, it is worth noting that Horace's other ode to Bacchus (3.25), is expressly intended as political poetry (3–6: *quibus / antris egregii Caesaris audiar / aeternum meditans decus / stellis inserere et consilio Iovis*). To suggest the praise of Augustus by singing about Bacchus, Horace implies a comparison of his allegiance to Caesar to that of an initiate in Dionysian mysteries (18–20: *dulce periculum est, / o Lenaeae, sequi deum cingentem viridi tempora pampino*). The point of similarity between Augustus and Bacchus lies in the tremendous "metamorphosis" that Augustus is bringing upon the Roman empire. Bacchus, the "twice-born" god, is remembered especially for bringing down mighty kings (for example, Pentheus in the *Bacchae*); he changes freely into a bull or a lion (Eur. *Bacch.* 1018; *Hom. Hymn Bacch.* 44–53), and wine is associated with political change (or song)—and the best wine with Actium—in Horatian poetry (for example, *Epod.* 9, *Carm.* 1.37). Thus one might speak of Bacchus as a god who comes to change society. To those who resist like Pentheus, he appears as a destroyer. Horace makes Augustus appear identical to the god, as if he were the bearer of Bacchic transformation. The other significant imagery in *Carm.* 3.25 is Bacchus' role as god of poetry. In the Roman tradition, he becomes not merely the god of tragedy but also of what Nisbet and Hubbard call "the lighter genres" of poetry.<sup>8</sup> In these contexts, the opening line (*quo me, Bacche rapis tui / plenum?*) operates on at least two figurative levels, the poetic: "Where will you direct me now, my lyric muse? To immortalize Augustus"; and the political, "Where are you leading me, the Roman Republic, Augustus?"<sup>9</sup> The last line of the poem joins the two strands neatly. Horace consistently uses the contrast between "sweet" and "danger" (*dulce periculum*, 3.25.18) to suggest Augustus' advancement of civilization by force of arms and the poet's role in celebrating it (*Epod.* 1.3, 8; 9.37–38). When he says here that it is a sweet danger to follow the god, "as he binds his temples with living ivy," *cingentem viridi tempora pampino* (*Carm.* 3.25.20), the ivy is the symbol of the political change that the god brings (*periculum*); but also, as a garland, it is the poet's song (*dulce*; cf. *Carm.* 1.38) that celebrates the god (*princeps*). The use

<sup>8</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 13; Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.29–32, *Epist.* 2.2.77–78; Prop. 3.1.4, 4.1.61–64; Maass 1896; Batinsky 1990–91.

<sup>9</sup> It is a mistake to construe *periculum* (18) narrowly as the danger or unfamiliarity of writing political poetry (Batinsky 1990–91: 373; Williams 1968: 70; 1969: 128–131; cf. *Carm.* 2.1.6). This poem is not merely a *recusatio* about writing political poetry, it is political poetry. Horace's great achievement is that his narrative voice becomes the voice of Rome: literary conceit and political allegory become one. It is sweet not only to follow Bacchus (the inspiration to write political poetry), but also Augustus (as Bacchus, agent of change). The lack of referent in *tui / plenum* (1–2) allows it to be construed not only as "filled with your divine madness / wine" (ἐνθεος; Fraenkel 1957: 199, n. 1) but also "I, the Republic, full of your followers." Bacchus is ruler of a society of Naiads and Bacchantes (sea and land) who are prepared to overturn huge ash trees at any moment: *o Naiadum potens / Baccharumque valentium proceras manibus vertere fraxinos* (14–16, i.e., lay low mighty kingdoms; cf. *vertere*, *Carm.* 1.35.4). The poet expressly compares himself to one of its members, a Bacchant (9). Thus one can take *vacuum nemus* as the power-vacuum at the ends of the empire (e.g., India, Parthia, *Carm.* 1.12.53–56) to be filled by the civilizing force of Roman imperialism. See also below, n. 35.

of imagery that refers to the writer's task while simultaneously accomplishing the praise that is its immediate purpose can be found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* and in Pindaric epinician. It is vital to an appreciation of *Carm.* 2.19 to recognize that the two modes are at work at the same time.

If there were any doubt of the imperial connotations of Bacchus, *Carm.* 3.3.13–15 removes it, as Bacchus, for his merits to civilization (*hac te merentem, Bacche pater, tuae / vexere tigres indocili iugum / collo trahentes*), finds a place between Augustus and Quirinus in heaven. It is important to bring this background to *Carm.* 2.19, *prima facie* a conventional ode to Bacchus. Its most striking feature is the assertion that Bacchus triumphed in the Gigantomachy (20–23), for which there seems to be no model in Latin literature.<sup>10</sup> By this innovation, Horace insists that we consider the poem's political connotations: in *Carm.* 3.4, Augustus is so clearly to be equated with a god and the Gigantomachy with Actium (above, note 6) that it would seem odd to do otherwise here. It is worth noting that the theme of *Book 2* of the *Odes* is civil wars, their causes, the ruin of society, and unexpiated blood (2.1.1–8).<sup>11</sup> It is necessary for the coherence of *Book 2* that this final ode before the “swan song” (2.20) bring to a satisfying climax both this theme and the relation of the poet to it. Actium stands at the end of the long line of Roman civil wars. Thus the reader should be expecting not only a treatment of this final war, but also some brilliant display by the poet. The opportunity for poetic display is provided by the fact that while the Gigantomachy suggests Actium, it is not at all clear at this great event in Roman history that Bacchus should suggest Octavian.

It was Antony who, conforming to recent Ptolemaic tradition, called himself “the new Dionysos,” who had entered Ephesus (41 B.C.) at the head of a great *thiasos* dressed as the god, and who patronized the powerful guilds of actors and celebrated lavish Dionysia in Athens.<sup>12</sup> Most interestingly, on the eve of Actium, an Attalid sculpture of Dionysos in the Gigantomachy crashed down from the Athenian acropolis into the theatre below.<sup>13</sup> To contemporary observers it must have seemed that the god was switching sides. Indeed Plutarch relates how, on the eve of Antony's death, a Bacchic *thiasos* was heard leaving Alexandria (*Ant.* 75). This is the drama of *Carm.* 2.19: the audience brings to the poem an association between Antony and Bacchus. Horace means to suggest that the role of “agent of Bacchus” is determined at Actium and belongs exclusively to

<sup>10</sup> Fraenkel calls it “a surprising feat for this particular god” (1957: 200); Commager “almost without precedent” (1962: 339). One must go back to Greek tragedy to find references to it: Eur. *Ion* 216–218, *Cyc.* 5. The most famous depictions were in art, at Athens (below, n. 13) and on the frieze of the Pergamum altar.

<sup>11</sup> Fraenkel 1957: 234–239; Ross 1975: 141–142.

<sup>12</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 24, 56–57, 60; Cass. Dio 48.39.2; Socrates of Rhodes, *FGrH* 192 fr. 2; Vell. 2.82.4; Taylor 1931: 108–110, 121–122, 129, 138.

<sup>13</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 60; Cass. Dio 50.15.2–3; Paus. 1.25.2; Pelling 1988: 265–266; Habicht 1990: 572. The varying accounts of Plutarch and Dio are taken up in Hölscher 1985: 124–128.

Octavian; Antony, while seeming at first to be the god himself, is gradually perceived as the god's enemy.<sup>14</sup> At stake is the mantle of Alexander the Great (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 18, 94). The similarity of Alexander's exploits to the Eastern conquest of Dionysos motivated the Ptolemies to take up the association in the first place, and two generations of Romans to dream of Parthian conquests.<sup>15</sup> Whoever bears the title "agent of Bacchus" becomes heir to the name of Alexander, ruler of the Mediterranean world. There is no explicit mention of Antony or Octavian in the poem, but the parallel from *Carm.* 3.4 tells us that the Gigantomachy alludes to Actium. Ultimately the merit of taking this ode as political allegory lies in whether such a strategy makes sense of what is unclear in the text.

Horace begins by claiming that he saw Bacchus teaching *carmina* to Nymphs and Satyrs (*Carm.* 2.19.1–4). This should not strike us as unusual since Horace names him as his patron deity of lyric: *me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium / dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus / nympharumque leves cum Satyris chori / secernunt populo* (*Carm.* 1.1.29–32). The role of Satyrs and Nymphs thus established, there is nothing odd about the statement in 2.19 that he saw them listening as Bacchus taught poetry. The literary conceit suggests itself foremost, all the more since *docentem* (2.19.2) / *doctarum* (1.1.29) alludes to the Callimachean demand for τέχνη in poetry.<sup>16</sup> But Horace insists that there is something odd about the scene: *credite posteri* (2). He uses *posteri* only one other time (*posteri negabitis*), in the great *Epode* on Actium (*Io Triumphæ*), to suggest something unbelievable: that a free-born Roman (Antony?) would become a servant of Cleopatra and her eunuchs (*Epod.* 9.11–15).<sup>17</sup> In both poems, the unbelievable is yet to be stated. In *Carm.* 2.19, the startling thing is not that Horace "saw" the god Bacchus, or that Bacchus was teaching, but that satyrs and nymphs were listening attentively. In this context, *credite posteri* is amusing and serves to remind us that these are creatures accustomed to more physical pursuits. The parallel from *Epod.* 9 tends to suggest that Bacchus is Antony, and the nymphs and satyrs Cleopatra's infamous coterie (*contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo virorum*, *Carm.* 1.37.9–10). The first stanza prepares the reader for the drama of the poem: the pointed allusion of *credite posteri* introduces the theme of Actium, and raises the question of how Antony and Octavian relate to Bacchus. It gently suggests the sexual licentiousness of Antony's world through the nymphs and satyrs, and

<sup>14</sup>In my characterizations of Antony, I make no pretense to historical objectivity. On the contrary, since I am taking the poem as praise of the *princeps*, I try to present the (clearly biased) impression of Antony created by Octavian's propaganda. For a more balanced view of what is propaganda and what is not, see Scott 1929 and 1933.

<sup>15</sup>Antony and Cleopatra called their son "Alexander Helios"; Pelling 1988: 179–180, 220; Taylor 1931: 74–77, 110, 123–125.

<sup>16</sup>Callim. *Aet.* 17; Batinsky 1990–91: 370, following Kroll 1973 [1924]: 37.

<sup>17</sup>Though Mankin (1995: *ad loc.*) rightly observes that the "free-born Roman" (*emancipatus*) should properly refer to a soldier of Antony's legions, rather than to Antony himself (who is mentioned later, *hostis*, 27), this is simply a poetic technique of moving from the general to the specific. Moreover Kraggerud points out the that significance of *fert vallum et arma miles* (*Epod.* 9.13) is that "Er führt mit anderen Worten *ihren* Krieg" (1984: 83), i.e., the precise position of Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 62).

also the seeds of its destruction: Bacchus, the lover of *orgia*, comes as a teacher to change that licentiousness (who would believe it?), as we perceive in the moral overtones of *carmina . . . docentem* (1–2). The association of Bacchus and Antony is false; Bacchus comes as a destroyer of Antony's world.

The theme elaborated in the second stanza as the "fresh fear," *recenti metu* (5), points to Actium (cf. *veros timores*, *Carm.* 1.37.15; *metum rerum*, *Epod.* 9.37). And *plenoque Bacchi pectore* (6) can suggest, in addition to the poet's inspiration, Antony's notorious dipsomania, a point accented by *turbidum*, an internal accusative standing not so much for "high Greek poetry" (Nisbet and Hubbard *ad loc.*), as for Hellenism and drunkenness. Balanced against this drunkenness is the image of the *thyrsus*, and the poet's fear of it (7–8). It is possible that Horace is expressing the poet's fear of his own Muse (as Hesiod does in *Theogony*). But the object of the fear, the *thyrsus*, more likely points to the citizen's fear of his ruler's *imperium*. One is left to consider whether Horace fears the thought of Antony in power, or draws back in awe at Octavian's might. The following lines suggest the latter. In the next two stanzas, the *pervicaces Thyiades*, the streams of wine and milk, and the honey dripping from the tree (9–12) all suggest Euripides' *Bacchae*, in which after enjoying the utopian pleasures of the initiated (706–711), the mother and aunts of Pentheus tear him limb from limb. Horace names both Pentheus and Lycurgus, whose fates were similar (14–16). Between these seemingly connected allusions, there is an interruption by the deification of Ariadne (13–14). Up to a point, the affair of Antony and Cleopatra resembled the romance of Bacchus and Ariadne. She had loved the heroic Caesar who left her pregnant with a dangerous heir (Plut. *Ant.* 54), alone, and vulnerable. Antony came onto the scene, renewed her hopes of an Eastern empire, and they had more children. The Nile delta is a land of milk and honey and theirs was a romantic love. Moreover, Horace thought of their lives as something of a "drunken" paradise (though speaking only of her): *quidlibet impotens / sperare fortunaque dulci / ebria* (*Carm.* 1.37.101–112). As for a point of similarity with the "deification" of Ariadne, it is perhaps relevant that the *additum / stellis honorem* (*Carm.* 2.19.13–14), was her bridal "crown," the constellation Corona. In the so-called "Donations of Alexandria" (34 B.C.), as they appeared on golden thrones, Antony "crowned" Cleopatra queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria, and named Caesarion and their own children kings of other nations without consulting the Roman senate (Plut. *Ant.* 54). This action suggested to Rome the establishment of an hereditary divine kingship (Cleopatra already called herself θεᾶ νεωτέρα on coins), a point which Octavian used to his advantage.<sup>18</sup>

At the mention of Pentheus, we sense that Bacchus is no longer on Antony's side, if he ever was. We think of the downfall of a king. As a Pentheus figure, Antony becomes in our eyes an unworthy ruler, even a tyrant, who, in hybriatic blindness, refuses to recognize the holy and to accept change willed by god. The position of Pentheus and Lycurgus at the end of the first half of the ode is

<sup>18</sup>Cass. Dio 50.25.2–4; Suet. *Aug.* 17; Taylor 1931: 126–129, 137.

significant, since in Horatian ring structure this position may refer back to the opening line.<sup>19</sup> Our initial impression of *carmina* (1) might have suggested simply lyric poetry, but now we are to recognize that Bacchus is teaching the *Bacchae*. It is not that he is teaching tragedy; rather he is singing the theme of Pentheus, the overthrow of ungodly kings. Horace uses the word *carmina* only one other time in Book 2, of the song of Alcaeus in the underworld (further see below, 291), the theme of which is *pugnās et exactos tyrannos* (2.13.31).

That we are to think of Actium is secured, happily, by a difficult reference in the central line of the poem (17): *tu flectis amnis, tu mare barbarum*. The central line is always crucial in Horatian odes, and of itself, there is no significance or even precise referent for this mythical detail. That Bacchus alters the courses of large rivers is attested (Nonnus *Dion.* 12.124–128, 23.126–127); but for the second reference, that he “alters the foreign / eastern sea,” commentators can find no direct precedent.<sup>20</sup> As an allusion to Actium, however, it not only gives good sense (the sea was thrown into confusion by the battle and stained with Roman blood; cf. *Carm.* 2.1.33–36), but also plays upon the other sense of *flectis*, “turn from, change direction.” At Actium, Bacchus “turns from” Antony, as Antony himself “turns from” the battle, abandoning nineteen legions and 12,000 cavalry with which he might well have prevailed in a land-campaign (Plut. *Ant.* 68). The oddness of this central line is masking an etymological wordplay established by Apollonius and Callimachus and employed by Vergil: Actium was derived from ἀκτή, “shore,” and indeed it is the shore which “reflects the sea.”<sup>21</sup> Horace confirms in the next line that his theme is “Actian Bacchus” with an allusion to the physical terrain of the battle: promontories overlooking a strait, *tu separatis uvidus in iugis* (18).

There are further resonances in *tu flectis amnis, tu mare barbarum* that show the figurative battle of the poet. Bacchus is the god of wine; the god that Horace associates with water (in contexts of poetic inspiration) is Apollo.<sup>22</sup> Octavian had openly embraced Apollo as his patron-deity;<sup>23</sup> thus one is tempted to see this confrontation of Bacchus with water as a battle between Bacchus-wine-Antony and Apollo-water-Octavian.<sup>24</sup> That this confrontation is illusory (Bacchus is on

<sup>19</sup> Ross makes this observation about the role of the last stanza of *Carm.* 3.3 and its relation to the opening stanza of 3.1 (1975: 140).

<sup>20</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard (1977: *ad loc.*) cite the Pamphylian Sea retreating before Alexander. But for Dionysos himself they have only references that he “dived into” the sea (their translation “by a parting of the waves” is too strong for δύνω and ὑποδύνω, Hom. *Il.* 6.135; Nonnus *Dion.* 20.353), and from Seneca (*HF* 903: *adsit Lycurgi domitor et rubri maris*), which was probably inspired by this poem.

<sup>21</sup> See O’Hara 1996: *ad Verg. Aen.* 3.280, comparing Prop. 2.34.61–62; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.402–405; and Callim. fr. 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Carm.* 3.4.61–62; 4.2.5–9; Callim. *Hymn to Apollo* 105–112; Knox 1985: 117–119.

<sup>23</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 75; Suet. *Aug.* 70; Taylor 1931: 119–120, 153–155.

<sup>24</sup> Actium was conventionally seen as a battle between Bacchus-Antony and Apollo-Octavian (Taylor 1931: 139–140). With *tu (sc. flectis) mare barbarum*, Horace also plays upon the saying that “a drop of wine alters the sea” (Plut. *De comm. not.* 1078e = *SVF* 2.480). The proverb applies even more enigmatically to blood (cf. *Carm.* 2.1.33–36).



the side of Octavian) is the point of the poem, which is shown by its placement in the central line. The illusory struggle also frames the poem. The first stanza refers to the wine-water contrast by making Bacchus' followers not maenads, but "nymphs," i.e., deities of water; the ode ends with Cerberus "licking" (water) Bacchus (wine). The most obvious model for the ode is not a previous ode to Bacchus, but Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*.<sup>25</sup> The formal similarity of these poems marks *Carm.* 2.19 as a transition to the Roman Odes which reacted to Callimachus' *Hymn*.<sup>26</sup> In *Carm.* 3.1–6, Horace deviates intentionally from Callimachus: he claims the mantle of Apollo not for himself, but for Augustus. Horace's interpretation of the Callimachean injunction against writing epics about "kings and heroes" (i.e., political poetry, *Aet.* 3–5; cf. *Verg. Ecl.* 6.3–5 *vs. Aen.* 7.37–45) is the paradoxical whimsy that one should praise great men only in small meters (*Carm.* 2.1.37–40; 3.3.69–72). As a result, *Carm.* 2.19 resounds falsely with Apollo (Callimachean poetics), while glorifying Bacchus (Horace's own poetics). In the central line of this poem, Horace's Bacchus "alters the course" (*flectis*) of Callimachus' Apolline stream, to treat a serious political theme. Horace takes up the anti-Callimachean theme again in his vindication of Bacchus: though supposedly suited only to lighter themes (*iocis / ludoque*, 25–26), the Bacchic muse is equally suited to the battlefield (*pugnae . . . belli*, 27–28), i.e., to songs of "kings and heroes." Vergil had used *ludere* to suggest how he would join his serious themes to the lighter meters of the Neoterics.<sup>27</sup> In the literary world, as well as the world of the *princeps*, all is illusion. The literary goals of this ode share no more with Callimachean poetics than Antony shares with Bacchus. The poet is involved in his own great struggle, his Actium: as he attempts to bring Bacchus (god of wine) over to the camp of Octavian in imperial iconography, he simultaneously tries to bring Callimachean aesthetics (inspired by Apollo-water) over to the camp of Bacchus. The complementary missions of poet and *princeps* are reflected in the two bodies of water: *amnis*, the "streams" of poetic inspiration where the poet wages his lesser battles; and *mare*, the ocean, where the *princeps* wages universal war.

The rest of the fifth stanza is taken up with the image of Bacchus binding the hair of his *Bistonides* with serpents. It is common for maenads to wear snakes in their hair (Eur. *Bacch.* 101–104, 698, 768; Naev. *Lyc.* fr. 2; Catull. 64.258), but

<sup>25</sup> In it, as in our poem, the poet meets the god face to face, expresses awe (ἑσείσατο . . . οἷα δ' ὄλον τὸ μέλαθρον, 1–2; cf. *parce gravi metuende thyrsos*, 2.19.8), gives the cry of the god's devotee (ἦ ἦ παιήον, 97, 103; cf. *Euboe . . . Euboe*, 2.19.5, 7), and celebrates the god's triumph over a monster (αἰνὸς ὄφις, 101; cf. *cohors Gigantum*, 2.19.21–24).

<sup>26</sup> *Carm.* 3.1 begins with two important Callimachean maxims: that the uninitiate are unwelcome (ἐκάς, ἐκάς ὅστις ἀλιτρός, 2; cf. *odi profanum vulgus*, 3.1.1) and that the poet is addressing himself to the young (οἱ δὲ νέοι, 8; cf. *virginibus puerisque canto*, 3.1.4). But even more important is Callimachus' praise of the civilizing force of Apollo (esp. 55–59). Horace does not claim to be the priest of Apollo, but of the Muses whom Apollo governs (3.1.3). The allegory of Callimachus' ode, that poetry is the true civilizing force, becomes panegyric in Horace's ode which identifies Augustus with Apollo (3.4.60–64).

<sup>27</sup> *Ecl.* 6.28; Ross 1975: 25 and n. 3.

not for Bacchus to arrange it so. The phrase *sine fraude* (20), an otherwise empty detail, alludes to the purpose of the figure. Nisbet and Hubbard take it to mean "without harm (to the *Bistonides*)," as indeed it can be taken. But *fraude* carries stronger connotations than mere physical harm. Horace uses it of Prometheus' theft of fire (*Carm.* 1.3), of the Rape of Europa (*Carm.* 3.27.27), and, most tellingly, of the founding of Troy (*Carm.* 3.3.24). Its customary significance is not the passive suffering of harm, but the active intent to deceive. It is true that in the *Carmen Saeculare* he says that Aeneas was able to bring the remnants of his people out of Troy "unharméd," *per ardentem sine fraude Troiam* (41), but even there, Horace is making a pointed contrast with his earlier depiction of Laomædon, the *dux fraudulentus* who founded Troy (*Carm.* 3.3.24). The point in the *Carmen Saeculare* is that unlike the ancestral founder of the city, Aeneas is a virtuous leader (*castus*, 42) whose concern is the welfare of his people. The significance of *sine fraude* in *Carm.* 2.19.20 is not so much that the maenads are "unharméd," or that Bacchus intends them no harm, as that he is a noble leader. The image suggests a leader of a people or army (cf. maenads as Bacchus' army, Eur. *Bacch.* 50–52) whose concern is for the just use of force (*coerces . . . sine fraude*, 19–20), i.e., law. That is, we are to think of Octavian at Actium as "the just man" (cf. *Carm.* 3.3.1–8).

The image of Bacchus-Octavian conquering Antony (false Bacchus) comes to a head with the Gigantomachy. Two elements reinforce the connection: the first is *parentis regna* (21). It is true, but uninteresting, to say that Bacchus was fighting on behalf of his father, Jupiter. But as an allusion to Octavian, *parentis regna* neatly suggests not only "the empire of Caesar" for which Octavian is indeed fighting, but also "Egypt and Cleopatra" which had also been Caesar's.<sup>28</sup> The second is the claim that he "repulsed Rhoetus with the claws and terrible jaw of a lion" (reading *horribilique*). Rhoetus is named only one other time, in the Gigantomachy of *Carm.* 3.4.55, a certain allegory of Actium. The debate over whether Bacchus metamorphoses into a lion or uses one instrumentally (cf. Nisbet and Hubbard *ad loc.*) is wrong-headed; since *aureo cornu* (29–30) shows that he has become a bull, his metamorphosis into a lion here is logical (cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 1018; *Hom. Hymn Bacch.* 44–53). The allusion is political: Octavian is usurping the rest of Antony's iconography (Plut. *Ant.* 4, 36, 60) to become like Hercules, who also fights in the Gigantomachy and always wears the "claws and terrible jaw of a lion." Vergil compares Octavian in his approach to Egypt to both Hercules and Bacchus.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Augustus dedicated the Temple of the Deified Julius four days after his triumph for Actium (in imitation of what Caesar himself had done in 46) and adorned its Rostra with the prows from the ships of Antony and Cleopatra; see Cass. Dio 51.19.2, 21.5; Taylor 1931: 153, 175; Weinstock 1971: 76, 82, 399–400.

<sup>29</sup> *Aen.* 6.800–805; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.3.9–15, 4.5.31–36; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.187–190; Batinsky 1990–91: 374; Taylor 1931: 163, 175–176, 259–261 with n. 15, arguing that the imitation of Bacchus and Hercules shows the *princeps* as the heir of Alexander.

The seventh stanza is remarkable for seeming to indict Bacchus. His reputation for being more suited to the chorus line than the battle line (25–27; cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 302, 419–420; Plut. *Dem.* 2) recalls the claims of effeminacy made against Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 28, 37, 56, 60, 62, 66). And the last clause of the stanza that Bacchus “was the same in peace or war,” *idem / pacis eras mediusque belli* (27–28), is ambiguous. It appears to say that he is suited to both equally, but pertaining to Antony, it could mean that he is equally besotted in either sphere. On the other hand, it was Octavian, not Antony, who had the reputation of being too sickly for battle (Plut. *Ant.* 22–23, 62, 75). In *aptior et iocis / ludoque dictus* (25–26), one might detect a similar ambiguity: *iocis* may recall the description of Venus in the dedicatory ode to Octavian, *sive tu mavis, Erycina ridens, / quam Iocus circum volat et Cupido* (*Carm.* 1.2.33–34). In the apparent mocking of Bacchus (2.19.25–27), one might see a jest on the descent of the Julian *gens* from Venus (whose laughable reputation in war is famous from the *Iliad*). But with the sense “more suited to Venus,” the line also applies to Antony, since Cleopatra presented herself as “the new Aphrodite” (Plut. *Ant.* 26). Most of all Bacchus “turns away” from Antony’s world (*iocis ludoque*) to become a martial god appropriate for imperial iconography.

The poem concludes with a portrait of Bacchus’ descent into the underworld where Cerberus fawns over him. It is an image which held considerable meaning for Horace. He portrays Cerberus as equally calm before Sappho and Alcaeus (*Carm.* 2.13.33–40) and Mercury (*Carm.* 3.11.15–24). All are bards whose song attracts the impious in the midst of their torments (2.13.37–40: Prometheus, Tantalus, Orion; 3.11.21–24: Ixion, Tityos, Danaids). There are verbal associations linking the passages: *aureo cornu* (2.19.29–30); cf. *aureo plectro* (2.13.26–27); *ore trilingui* (2.19.31–32, 3.11.20). But the subjects on which Sappho and Alcaeus sing are of special relevance. Sappho sings a lament *puellis de popularibus* (2.13.25), i.e., on the infidelity of women. Alcaeus sings of martial themes: *dura navis / dura fugae mala, dura belli . . . pugnas et exactos tyrannos* (2.13.27–31). Cerberus fawns over Bacchus not only for the expected reasons, that he is a god of poetry and fertility, but also because he is a hero who has taken vengeance upon the faithless woman (Sappho) in a great naval battle (Alcaeus).

But Bacchus does not charm Cerberus with song, perhaps because the real subject is Octavian as triumphator. The fawning of Cerberus suggests that immortality awaits the hero-patriot (cf. *Carm.* 3.3.9–16). But it is also noteworthy that there is no list of others who are charmed by the approach of Bacchus. Rather we have a one-on-one meeting of god (as bull) and dog. Vergil uses the dog-god, Anubis (god of the dead, often associated with Cerberus, Diod. Sic. 1.96), as the symbol of Egypt at the battle of Actium (*Aen.* 8.698). One might take Cerberus as Egypt here as well, to continue the political theme. Bacchus appears as a bull (*aureo / cornu*, 29–30), just as he did before Pentheus in the *Bacchae* (618, 922). Moreover the Julian *gens* claimed Bovillae as one of its ancestral homes, in memory of which they took the bull as a family emblem. And before the battle

of Pharsalus, Caesar saw a favorable portent of a bull and had it affixed to the standards of his legions.<sup>30</sup> The bull may suggest the inviolability or immortality of the *gens Julia*.

But what Cerberus is doing to Bacchus is also intriguing. He is not merely "wagging his tail"; he is "rubbing it gently" (*leniter atterens / caudam*, 2.19.30–31). In Horace, *cauda* seems to take on phallic symbolism,<sup>31</sup> and in Ovid, the whole dog, "tri-form" or "three-headed" Cerberus, can imply the male genitalia.<sup>32</sup> Cerberus licks not merely Bacchus' feet, but his "legs" (*et recedentis trilingui / ore pedes tetigitque crura*, 2.19.31–32). If Cerberus is carrying on as it appears, we see a meeting of Octavian and a sexually submissive Egypt, a fitting end to the theme of licentiousness associated with Antony and Cleopatra. As Anubis, Cerberus ought to represent Egypt and thus Cleopatra, but the symbolism more properly suggests a male, and thus Antony. Caesar is credited with a similar homoerotic triumph (Suet. *Jul.* 22).

The dominant suggestions of the final stanza, however, are not sexual, but sacred. The cause that took Bacchus to the underworld was the rescue of Semele.<sup>33</sup> In this act of filial *pietas* we see the virtue associated with Aeneas and Augustus, but also a ring with the first stanza.<sup>34</sup> Just as the fawning Cerberus suggests both the sacred and the profane, *credite posteri* (2) suggests both the licentiousness of satyrs and nymphs and their civilized, even holy, function of "learning from" Bacchus. Oddly, it is not Bacchus who usually teaches song in the wilderness and charms denizens of the underworld, but Orpheus.<sup>35</sup> Bacchus' instruction of his

<sup>30</sup> Cass. Dio 41.39.2; Weinstock 1971: 5–7, 118–121.

<sup>31</sup> Adams 1982: 36–37, 221; Hor. *Serm.* 1.2.45, 2.7.49. Adams is rightly cautious in assigning terms a "regular" sexual significance and suggests that *cauda* may be an *ad hoc* metaphor. This word alone may not denote a sexual context, but in the environment of "licking legs" (31–32), some speculation is justified. Adams points out that the original meaning of the Latin *penis* was "tail" (35; Cic. *Fam.* 9.22.2), from which we can see that if *penis* came to mean *mentula*, Horace's use of *cauda* in the same sense is not illogical. See also the use of *attero* in sexual contexts, 183–185. Playful sexual symbolism runs throughout the ode: if Octavian is Bacchus, one might ask what it means for Horace to be inspired by his *thyrsus*; and *aptior et iocis / ludoque* (25–26) suggests an amatory context.

<sup>32</sup> *Am.* 3.12.26, *Ars am.* 3.321–322; on the sexual use of *caput*, see Adams 1982: 72.

<sup>33</sup> Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.5 and Frazer 1921: *ad loc.*; Diod. Sic. 4.25.4; Plut. *Mor.* 566a; Schol. *Ar. Ran.* 330; Paus. 2.31.2, 2.37.5.

<sup>34</sup> Ring composition determines the thematic structure of the ode. The poet's possession by Bacchus in the second stanza (5–8) is echoed in the seventh by a description of the kind of poetry the Bacchic muse sings (25–28). The Gigantomachy of the sixth stanza (21–24) is paired with the *Thyiades* of the third (9–12), confirming that the theme is the overthrow of tyrants; and the fourth stanza, which begins with the constellation "Corona" and ends with the deaths of Pentheus and Lycurgus (13–16), is echoed chiastically by the fifth, which begins with the allusion to Actium (*tu flectis amnis, tu mare barbarum*) and ends with a reference to "the binding of hair" (17–20).

<sup>35</sup> *Carm.* 1.24.13–18; Verg. *G.* 4.469–84; Ov. *Met.* 10.40–49, 11.1–2; Diod. Sic. 4.25.4; Sen. *HF* 569–591, *HO* 1031–1102; Nisbet and Hubbard 1977: *ad.* Hor. *Carm.* 2.13. Orpheus figured largely in the poetic genealogy of Vergil (*Ecl.* 6.27–30, 67–71; cf. Prop. 2.13.3–8) for his "power to charm nature." Ross understands his presence to signify a complex nexus of cosmological (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.496–502; Verg. *Ecl.* 6.31–40, *Aen.* 1.742–746) and ethical knowledge for which the Augustan poets claimed the didactic mantle of Hesiod (1975: 25–31, 93–95, esp. 23 with Verg. *Ecl.* 6.69–71; Elder

lusty nymphs and satyrs is a nod to Orphism, which was seen as a reform of the Dionysian mysteries. In fact, the entire structure of the ode suggests initiation into Bacchic/Orphic mysteries.<sup>36</sup>

The unusual description of Cerberus as *insons*, "guiltless, innocent" (29) recalls the most fundamental doctrine of Orphism, to abstain from killing any living thing: φόνων ἀπέχεσθαι.<sup>37</sup> A "guiltless Cerberus" is a deliberate oxymoron, since his name implies "slaughter": κρεο-βορός, "meat-eater."<sup>38</sup> It is not that Cerberus "did not harm" or "could not harm" Bacchus (so Porphyrio *ad loc.*), but (humorously) that he has become an Orphic and greets his mystic master. Bacchus' "golden horn" (*aureo cornu*, 29–30) recalls the Vergilian theme of the restoration of the (Orphic) golden age, a pre-Titanic world in which there was no killing, a time "before altars were wet with the slaughter of bulls" and before "pollution," μύσος, came upon men (Emp. fr. 128 *apud* Porph. *abst.* 2.20; Verg. *G.* 2.536–538). It is for this reason especially that Bacchus appears "with gilded horn" (i.e., like a sacrificial bullock) before a guiltless Cerberus.<sup>39</sup> Ross observed that

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1961: 114–115). Horace uses established references to "Thracian" Orpheus to suggest that he too is writing this kind of poetry (Ross 1975: 93–94, 152): *gelidum nemus* (*Carm.* 1.1.30; Verg. *G.* 2.484, 4.517); *gelidove in Haemo* (*Carm.* 1.12.6); *nive candidam / Thracen* (*Carm.* 3.25.10–11). In *Carm.* 2.19, the remote settings (*in remotis . . . rupibus*, 1; *separatis . . . in iugis*, 18) also suggest the haunts of Orpheus (Verg. *Ecl.* 8.55–56, 6.30). The point of *ut mihi devio / ripas et vacuum nemus / mirari libet* (*Carm.* 3.25.12–14, the Callimachean principle of "avoiding the beaten path," *Aet.* 25–29) is not to suggest that writing on political themes is "unfamiliar" or "perilous terrain" (above, n. 9), but that Horace is writing in the tradition of Orpheus, as Vergil defined it, and which Horace identifies with his Bacchic muse. The association of Horace with Orpheus is most evident in *Carm.* 3.4.1–4 when he invites Calliope, the mother of Orpheus (Verg. *Ecl.* 4.55–57), to play the *fidibus*, which are Orpheus' (1.12.11; Ross 1975: 138). Ross describes the position of the poet in *Carm.* 3.4 as follows, "(like) the similar position of the poet elaborated by Gallus and Virgil: the poet who had been received and ritually instructed by Apollo and the Muses possessed knowledge and understanding, like Orpheus, of the universe and had the ability, or the magic, to control the universe . . . Horace, by associating himself with this initiation and instruction, claims a second right to address Caesar" (1975: 152).

<sup>36</sup> *fas* (9, 13) suggests that the god's teaching is intended only for the initiated; cf. *Carm.* 3.2.26–27; Pöschl 1986: 196–198. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the forbidden mystery that Pentheus oversees is the women wrapping ivy around the tip of Dionysos' *thyrsus* (1054–55). This is also what Horace sees, but though terrified of the *thyrsus*, he says that it is *fas* to reveal what the women do and to sing of the fate of Pentheus. In Theocritus *Idyll* 26, some have seen the rending of Pentheus as part of a mock rite of initiation of a young boy into Bacchic mysteries. (The crucial lines, 27–32, are hopelessly uncertain; see Gow 1952: 2.475–484.) Orpheus is also said to divert rivers. And the Gigantomachy was important to Orphics who allegorized the body as man's "titanic" element over which the soul, likened to Dionysos, triumphs (Olymp. in *Pl. Phaed.* 8.7). The conclusion in the underworld especially suggests a mystery religion, which all contained a chthonic element. For Orphism as a reform of Dionysian mysteries, see Guthrie 1935: 41, 251.

<sup>37</sup> Ar. *Ran.* 1032; Pl. *Leg.* 782c; Eur. *Hipp.* 952–953; Guthrie 1935: 196–198. Solmsen takes the claim that Orpheus "deters men from slaughter" (Hor. *Ars P.* 391–393: *silvestris homines sacer interpresque deorum / caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus, / dictus ob hoc lenire tigris rabidosque leones*) as Horace's defense of poetry (1932: 151–154).

<sup>38</sup> Serv. *ad Aen.* 8.296–297; Hes. *Th.* 311; and O'Hara 1996: 12.

<sup>39</sup> Guthrie argues (1935: 110–116) that the Orphics based their symbolism around the Cretan cult of Dionysos Zagreus / Idaean Zeus which featured omophagy of a bull. He quotes (111, 199) a

Vergil alters a Callimachean maxim to make precisely this point (and in so doing, defines Augustan poetry): Callimachus' Apollo had said "breed the sacrificial victim to be as fat as possible, but keep the Muse slender"; but Vergil's Apollo alters "sacrificial victim" (θύος) to read simply "sheep / flocks" (*ovis*).<sup>40</sup> The end to killing is the defining mark of Augustan poetry and this allusion to it makes a bold end to the Horatian ode, expressing both the weighty subject and the achievement of the poet in the context of his literary heritage (cf. above, note 35). Bacchic imagery and suggestions of Actium blend seamlessly with the Orphic doctrine of an end to killing. Euripides' Dionysos comes to Thebes to destroy the infidel king Pentheus, and proclaims that this is "an initiation into his mysteries" (*Bacch.* 39–40). Horace reforms the theme with Orphic symbolism to suggest that the initiation of the Romans into his cult (this is the true significance of the nymphs and satyrs listening to a teaching Bacchus) will not lead to their destruction, but to a new golden age. Lowrie points out that *docentem* (2.19.2) "looks forward to the poet's assumption of a didactic stance in the Roman Odes" and, observing that the word *carmina* (2.19.1, 3.1.2) marks a transition to the Roman Odes, asks, "Was it the Roman Odes the poet witnessed Bacchus teaching?" (1997: 207). It was: the Roman Odes are the poet's initiation of the city into the mysteries of Orpheus which show the path to peace and high civilization. A final association of Bacchus in the underworld may add to Lowrie's suggestion: in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Dionysos descends to bring back Euripides. One might also see this final stanza as Bacchus' heroic *katabasis* to rescue the poet, who rises (2.20.8) like Orpheus, to undertake a priestly mission (3.1.3).

Horace cloaks the many intentions of *Carm.* 2.19 under the illusion of a topical ode to Bacchus. Illusion is a fundamental feature of his paradoxical poetry in which personal meters treat political themes, and allegory is the vehicle that leads the reader from the private to the political. *Carm.* 2.19 is a show-piece of illusion: at the political level, the false association of Bacchus and Antony gives way to a true alliance with Octavian; at the poetic level Horace seeming to imitate Callimachus but actually fights against him. Seneca imitates this shift of imagery in his ode. Bacchus, *prima facie* the patron deity of Thebes and Oedipus, turns out to be a god of metamorphosis. He comes not only to cure Thebes of her plague, but of her king. Every image that alludes to a familiar Bacchic myth can be read with considerably more meaning to refer to Oedipus. In the first half of

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fragment from Euripides' *Cretans* (*TGF* 472, *apud* Porph. *abst.* 4.19; cf. Austin, *Fragmenta papyracea* 79) which shows both the pre-Orphic omophagy, and Orphic prohibitions against it. It suggests the "ritual purity" of initiates which may lie behind *insons Cerberus*: ἀγνὸν δὲ βίον τείνων ἐξ οὗ / Διὸς Ἰδαίου μύστης γένομην, / καὶ νυκτιπόλου Ζαγρέως βροντὰς / τὰς τ' ὠμοφάγους δαίτας τελέσας.

<sup>40</sup> Callim. *Aet.* 1, fr. 1, 23–24: τὸ μὲν θύος ὅτι πάχιστον / [θρέψαι, τή]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην; Verg. *Ecl.* 6.4–5: *pastorem*, *Tityre*, *pinguis* / *pascere oportet ovis*; Ross 1975: 19. The centrality of the image of "pasturing flocks" to Augustan poetry can be seen in the paronomasia on the πα- root of *pastor*, *pasco*, "Palatine" in Verg. *G.* 3.1–3, *Aen.* 8.51; Tib. 2.5.25–30; Ross 1975: 155–157. The imperial connotations of the word-play were not lost on the author of the inscription in the apse of St Peter's Basilica: *O Pastor Ecclesiae, tu omnes Christi pascis agnos et oves.* / σὺ βόσκεις τὰ ἀρνία, σὺ ποιμαίνεις τὰ προβάτια Χριστοῦ.

the ode, Oedipus seems to be identified with Bacchus, but in the middle stanza we perceive that Bacchus will destroy Oedipus. Seneca had special reason to be aware of the Horatian ode if it was commonly taken to refer to Antony: Claudius, Caligula, and Nero all descend from Antony through his daughters by Octavia, a point which Seneca has his Nero recall in *Consolatio ad Polybium* (16.1). If Tarrant is correct in saying that the Augustan poets were Seneca's primary source of inspiration (1978: 261–263), we cannot be surprised if he found in their works something more than bare *sententiae*. Their legacy was also a lyric mode that is best described as allegorical.

## II. SENECA OED. 403–508: *EFFUSAM REDIMITE COMAM*

Just as the Horatian ode is set against a complicated background of literary and political associations, Seneca's ode has a dramatic context that should direct our interpretation. As the play opens, Oedipus broods about the burden of kingship, about the Delphic Oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother, and about his status as a foreigner on the Theban throne. The city's plague seems to him a dire omen: while his citizens die, he alone is left alive for some worse fate (*cui reservamur malo?* 31). The death around him pervades the natural world: the winds will not blow; the sun is scorching; the rivers have run dry; the temples are engulfed in a foul fog; the crops are dying (37–70). As Oedipus muses, ominously, *profuge . . . vel ad parentes* (80–81), Jocasta enters. She tries to comfort him, but Oedipus, fearing the future, dwells upon the battle with the Sphinx that brought him to power—her bloody maw, her talons, her lashing tail waiting to devour his entrails (92–102)—all while Jocasta stands before him, as though she brought such things to mind (cf. *Phoen.* 422).

The first choral ode is a sort of dirge—a meditation upon the death all around (110–205). It begins with a reminder that Bacchus is the patron deity of a dead or dying people. The funerals are so numerous that crowds form at the temples where all go to pray for death; and there they die, like human sacrifices for the gods (*iuvat ipsos satiare deos* 201). Creon enters to report his embassy to Delphi: the priestess proclaims that a fugitive foreigner, who spilled the blood of a King, “a foul man returned to his maternal origins” (*turpis maternos iterum revolutus in ortus*) must leave to end the plague (233–238). Tiresias and daughter Manto are asked to perform an *extispicium*. The flames flee the sacrifices; the bull will not die and staggers about; the lobes of its liver foretell rival twins; the heifer, though never mated, is pregnant and the fetus lies in an unnatural place, covered with gore (303–383)—the passage taken as allegory for Oedipus (above, note 4). After the “dead” victims move and the altar fires groan, Tiresias suggests that they try to summon Laius from the dead to identify his murderer (390–402).

This is the point at which the chorus sings its hymn to Bacchus. In isolation, the ode seems hopeful, even escapist.<sup>41</sup> It features all the pleasant cult stories of

<sup>41</sup> Poe 1983: 142.

the god. But knowing that Laius is about to be summoned from the dead, that death is all around in Thebes, and that, as the Pytho proclaims, the evil causing the plague is related to guests, murder, marriage, and progeny, the audience is prepared to interpret the hymn in its proper (and disturbing) context. Other than Davis and Motto and Clark, the only critics to claim any function for the ode say that it relieves the unbearable tension of the *extispicium* before and the necromancy which follows.<sup>42</sup> On the contrary, the ode creates important connections among the images of the play, and when the ironies are properly discerned, the chorus seems to be calling for Oedipus' destruction.

The most frequent objection is that Bacchus seems to have nothing to do with the Oedipus cycle. One thinks only of Apollo in the version of Sophocles. This is not entirely true: Bacchus is invoked as the patron deity of Thebes in the final ode of *Antigone* (1115–52), which also included the fate of Pentheus in the previous ode (955–965). But what is not commonly appreciated is that Delphi was sacred to Dionysos as well as Apollo,<sup>43</sup> and Delphi is indeed the issue of the Oedipus cycle. The tomb of Dionysos Zagreus is a significant feature of the oracle. Dionysos had dominion over the site during the three months of winter when his ritual rebirth was celebrated and Apollo was gone. Through his connection with Delphi, he was even reputed to have oracular powers like Apollo. By the fourth century B.C., they were depicted together on the temple at Delphi, and on vases, and they shared other cult sites.<sup>44</sup>

Seneca seems to have conceived of the two gods as something of a doublet when he says, *sed ignes auget aestiferi canis / Titan* (39–40). Apollo was recognized as the sun (*Titan*) as early as Aeschylus (for example, fr. 83a); and Dionysos was associated with the "Dog-star," Sirius, as early as Hesiod, since its rising coincides with the beginning of the wine harvest.<sup>45</sup> (The association may also be phonological: Dionysos is identified with Osiris which is only "a breath" away from ὁ Σείριος.)<sup>46</sup> The "heat" of Sirius might mark the time of the play as late summer, but it also further alludes to the doublet of Dionysos and Apollo: Sirius was regarded as a sort of second sun, and Dionysos was identified with the sun

<sup>42</sup> Mastronarde 1970: 306–310; Müller 1953: 450–451; Paratore 1956: 125–126; Runchina 1960: 249–253; Dewey 1968: 194–200. On this ode, see also Motto and Clark 1974; Pratt 1983: 99; Henry and Henry 1983: 137–138; 1985: 28–29; Poe 1983: 142 and *passim*; Davis 1991: 152–154, 160–161 and 1993: 202–207; Häuptli 1983: 2.34–38.

<sup>43</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 24–26; Soph. *Ant.* 1127–30, 1144–45; Eur. *Bacch.* 298–309, 556–559 and Dodds 1944: *ad loc.*; Paus. 10.4.3, 32.1; Catull. 64.390–393; Prop. 4.6.76; Accius *Bacch.* fr. 10 Ribbeck; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 365a; Macr. *Sat.* 1.18.6; Dietrich 1992; Kerényi 1976: 48–49, 232–233, 261; Guthrie 1935: 43–46.

<sup>44</sup> Dietrich 1992: 50; Paus. 10.19.4.

<sup>45</sup> Hes. *Op.* 609–614, *Sc.* 397–400. This tradition is well attested: Pind. fr. 153; Pl. *Leg.* 844d; Ar. *Ran.* 340–342; Accius *Bacch.* fr. 12 Ribbeck; Ov. *Met.* 4.18–19; Tib. 1.1.27, 1.7, 2.1.43–48; Sen. *Oed.* 405, 409; Diod. Sic. 1.11.3; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 359e, 365f, 376a; Dar.-Sag. 1.606–607; Kerényi 1976: 74–78.

<sup>46</sup> Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 372d; Tib. 1.7; Diod. Sic. 1.11.3.



by the Stoic Cleanthes and by Orphic Theogonies.<sup>47</sup> For all of these reasons, it is logical for Bacchus to appear in a play about Oedipus' downfall at the hands of the "Delphic" god. But the real reason for the ὕμνος κλητικός is that Bacchus is a god of metamorphosis: just as in the *Bacchae*, the Horatian ode, and the last ode of *Antigone* (which signals her death and Creon's self-realization), the summoning of Bacchus will augur a crushing encounter with reality, and the downfall of a king.

Seneca's chorus calls upon Bacchus to reveal himself and be present. It appears that Thebes is merely calling upon a patron deity for relief. But the chorus of young women<sup>48</sup> asks Bacchus to come bearing the *thyrsus*. This is the single most important detail of the ode, because through it we see that the author intends an allegorical interpretation: Laius will later cry out to the Thebans for vengeance with the words *vibrate thyrsos* (629; cf. 441). Laius is calling for the vengeance of Bacchus upon Pentheus to be repeated, and for the Theban women to take on Bacchic madness once more. The chorus calls upon Bacchus, "turn hither your virgin head with favor," *huc adverte favens virgineum caput* (408), which has vaguely sexual connotations. They call themselves *Thebae, Bacche, tuae* (407).<sup>49</sup> The chorus asks him to "dispel the clouds from his starry face" (409) and to deck his hair with flowers, oriental headdress, and garlands of ivy (412–415). The "brooding" Bacchus and cheery chorus recall the opening of the play where Jocasta tries to brighten Oedipus' mood (81–86).

Just as Jocasta feels that something stands between her and her lover, the chorus feels that something obscures their relationship with the god (*vultu sidereo discute nubila*, 409). This obstacle between man and god takes on literally astronomical proportions as *sidereo* alludes to Bacchus' identification with Sirius. His late summer rising is unnaturally baneful.<sup>50</sup> Like Bacchus here, Oedipus has been identified with disorder in the heavens: as the play opens, the sun, like Oedipus, hesitates, *Titan dubius* (1); Oedipus has caused the heavenly disorder, *fecimus caelum nocens* (36); he is the living plague which the heavens reflect, *tabifica caeli vitia quae tecum invehis* (79).

<sup>47</sup> Macr. *Sat.* 1.18.4 (= *SVF* 1.546); Guthrie 1935: 43 with Kern, *Orph. frag.* 172, 212, 236, 239. Ovid describes Bacchus as *tu formosissimus alto / conspiceris caelo* (*Met.* 4.18–19), perhaps best explained by the fact that Sirius is the "brightest" star (ἀρίζηλος, *Hom. Il.* 22.27). Aristophanes calls him νυκτέρου τελετῆς φωσφόρος ἄστὴρ (*Ran.* 342–343), suggesting that Sirius was regarded as a sort of sun of the night (see Allen 1963: 117–129).

<sup>48</sup> I follow Zwierlein's text with a minor exception in the first line. The only way to preserve the tension with *armatus* (singular; Gronovius suggested amendment to *armatae*) is for *redimite* to be a vocative participle (as Brian Hook suggests to me). But it gives better sense as the plural imperative, and I punctuate with a period after *corymbo*. In this way, the subject changes from women (plural) in *effusam redimite comam* (403) to Bacchus (singular) in *mollia Nysaeis armatus brachia thyrsis* (404). The chorus gives itself such a one-line imperative at *Ag.* 310. Seneca may be imitating an ode from Accius' *Bacchae*; cf. fr. 4 Ribbeck.

<sup>49</sup> If *armatus* (probably a Greek middle) is the correct reading of 404, the plurals *mollia* . . . *brachia*, and *Nysaeis* . . . *thyrsis* suggest that the Theban women are his maenads.

<sup>50</sup> Manilius' description of the rising of Sirius in *Astronomica* (5.213–217) is very similar to the description of Thebes in the opening of the play (*Oed.* 1–5, 37–70, 110–205).

The chorus alludes to the significance of Bacchus' obscured face through its use of imagery concerning hair. The chorus says that Bacchus usually lets his flowing hair do what it will, *spargere effusus sine lege crines* (416), which is an interesting inversion of the Horatian Bacchus (*coerces . . . sine fraude crines*, *Carm.* 2.19.19–20). There the binding of hair *sine fraude* may have suggested the idealized leadership of Octavian. The opening of the Senecan ode seems obsessed with the binding and unbinding of hair (403, 412–417, 420). Phaedra's desire to let down her hair (*Pha.* 393–396) is a yearning for freedom from the constraints of *pudor*, against which Oedipus has also sinned. A more obvious constraint upon Oedipus is the nexus of fate, but his fate is to violate the most sacred laws of *pudor* (cf. *Oed.* 1008–10). In his state of shame, Oedipus is figuratively “unbound” like Phaedra. When the chorus calls upon itself (403), and upon Bacchus to “bind” flowing hair with Bacchic ivy (414–415), it creates an expectation that Bacchus will come and rebind what has been loosed (417), i.e., to fulfill the fate that Oedipus has avoided and restore the *pudor* that he has disgraced. In this way, the chorus seems to call for the Bacchic revelation that will destroy Oedipus.

The association of Bacchus with Oedipus is further strengthened as the chorus recalls how, in fear of Juno, the young Bacchus grew up disguised as a girl (418–423).<sup>51</sup> Seneca makes a strong point of “deception”: *falsos . . . imitatus . . . simulata* (419–420). The chorus implies that Bacchus has grown to maturity and formed his character (422–423) out of a denial of his nature, just as Oedipus fears and flees his own nature / fate. Bacchus went on to take dominion over the entire eastern world, spreading viniculture from his enthroned chariot (424–428; cf. *Ov. Met.* 4.20–21, *Fast.* 3.729). Verbal links connect the description to events in the life of Oedipus: Bacchus traveled abroad in long robes by golden chariot, *curru* (424); Oedipus killed Laius, a haughty king traveling in such a car, *cum prior iuvenem senex / curru superbus pelleret* (770–771, 779); Bacchus spreads his civilization by “driving his lions,” *regere . . . leones*, i.e., “conquering and subduing” them (425; cf. *Hor. Carm.* 2.19.23–24, 3.3.13–15); Oedipus won the right to “rule” Thebes by conquering the sphinx, the “lion-woman” (97); Bacchus came to Thebes from the east as a foreigner, a *hospes*, like Oedipus (234; cf. *Phoen.* 510–515).

To this point, the imagery of the ode has traced how Oedipus denied his nature and traveled abroad, met with the chariot of the king, and battled the sphinx. Now the imagery suggests his marriage to Jocasta and his self-deception. We are told first of drunken Silenus on his “shameful” ass, *turpi* (429–430; cf. *Ov. Met.* 4.25–27). The Pytho uses this word to define Oedipus, *turpis maternos iterum revolutus in ortus* (238). Moreover, references to the drunken Silenus usually describe how his ass disrupts Priapus' attempted rapes, or show him attempting to molest unsuspecting nymphs and maenads (cf. *Ov. Fast.* 1.399–440, 6.319–348;

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ov. Met.* 3.313–317, 4.416–542, *Fast.* 6.485–494; Davis 1993: 202–203.

*Ars am.* 1.543–548). These lines are in dactylic hexameter, by which Seneca divides the ode into discrete parts. As transitional devices, they guide the interpretation of the next stanza: in 403–404, the subject is “binding hair” and an invocation of Bacchus to come with his *thyrsus*. In 429–431, we see first an image of the drunken Silenus that suggests licentiousness; then in 431 the image clarifies as “wanton initiates conduct the established *orgia*,” *condita lascivi deducunt orgia mystae*. The ambiguity of *orgia* as both “a rite of Bacchus” (sacred) and “unrestrained sexual behavior” (profane) creates the impression that Oedipus’ sexual relationship with his mother is part of some Bacchic rite. It is as if Oedipus’ life has been an initiation into Bacchus’ mysteries (cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 39–40).

The dual sense of *orgia* is indeed the theme of the rest of this stanza (432–444), beginning with the westward progression of maenads (432–435) and ending with the death of Pentheus at the hands of his mother (436–444). This climax is prepared by the image that “mothers (brandishing a *thyrsus*) let their hair flow” (439–441), which suggests an equation of mothers with licentious maenads (the singular, *maenas*, points to “one” woman, 436a). The mothers are also “disturbed in their breasts” (*commotae pectora*, 439), which may apply to amatory as well as frenzied states. The image of a “mother lacking sexual restraint” suggests Jocasta, which gives connotations to “brandishing the *thyrsus*” (also expressed in the singular, *thyrsūque levem vibrante manu*, 441), either political: “bearing the rod of queenly authority”; or sexual “wielding the feeble phallus.” The latter seems more likely since in 443–444 the *thyades* are said to have “released their limbs from frenzy” (*oestro membra remissae*) and “to look upon the *nefas* as if they did not recognize it” (*velut ignotum videre nefas*).

The mention of *Bassaridum* (434) may allude to the lost play of Aeschylus in which Dionysos’ frenzied maenads tear Orpheus limb from limb for being a follower of Apollo,<sup>52</sup> especially since “rending” is also the image with which the stanza ends. The progression from sex to death is emphatic and stunning, and bears obvious relevance upon Oedipus and Jocasta.<sup>53</sup> Seneca creates drama and suspense by his use of lyric cues, *te* (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.19), and *nunc*. The audience senses that the mythic elements apply to Oedipus, as if a Bacchic *thiasos* were pursuing him like the fate he cannot escape. Silenus follows him, interrupting his foul marriage; a maenad follows, perhaps contemplating omophagy. Now they dance on Mt Pangaueus (433–434, where Lycurgus was torn apart by horses); now on Thracian Pindus (435); at last in Thebes itself “among its mothers” (*nunc Cadmeas inter matres*, 436). Finally we see the death of Pentheus at the hands of his mother (442–444; cf. *Phoen.* 15–18, 363–367). But Oedipus is Silenus, the man whose entire life is lived, figuratively, “in Bacchus.” And Jocasta, who tried

<sup>52</sup> Guthrie 1935: 32, 232–233; Kern, *Orph. frag.* 113; Verg. *G.* 4.521–522. Silenus is also the singer of Vergil’s *Cosmogony* in *Ecl.* 6 (cf. above, n. 35).

<sup>53</sup> See Davis 1993: 203–205, citing 933, *nunc redde Agaven*, and 1004–7.

to kill Oedipus at birth, is the *maenas* who will now succeed. The sexualized description of Agave's rending of Pentheus foretells how Jocasta will (figuratively) rend Oedipus through mating.

The next hexameter break (445–448) relates the story of Palaemon and his mother Ino (Ov. *Met.* 3.313–315, *Fast.* 6.485–550). Ino is introduced as the “aunt” of Bacchus, *matertera Bacchi* (445), who raised him from birth, after Zeus' thunderbolt killed her sister, Semele. The abandoned child raised by a foster-parent is a pattern directly appropriate to Oedipus and Jocasta. Palaemon is next described as “sprung from the same blood as Bacchus” (*cognatus Bacchi*, 448), by which is meant that the former cousins became step-brothers. The complicated family relationships allude to Oedipus, who is son to his wife, husband to his mother, and half-brother to his children (*fratres sibi ipse genuit* 640; cf. *Phoen.* 134–137). The ode then alludes to the government of Oedipus and Jocasta: Ino as Leucothea and Melicertes as Palaemon, the mother and son, rule jointly over the kingdom of the sea (447). This hexameter break prepares the audience to hear the nautical tale that explains what their corrupt rule has done to Thebes.

The chorus describes how Bacchus, kidnapped by pirates, engulfs the ship with ivy and transforms the pirates into dolphins—the famous scene on the black figure kylix of Exekias (449–466; cf. *Hom. Hymn Bacch.*; Ov. *Met.* 3.582–691). The passage shows that the source of much of Seneca's Bacchic imagery is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: we see a metamorphosis not only of the ship and the sea, but of the pirates themselves; it is brought to life by present tense verbs throughout; and Seneca concludes in Ovidian manner with the new name of the metamorphosed pirates, *delphin* (466a).<sup>54</sup> This stanza occupies the middle of the ode and contains for that reason its controlling image: the ship consumed with Bacchic ivy is Thebes, Oedipus' ship of state.<sup>55</sup>

At first one may think of Oedipus as a victim and identify him with the innocent Bacchus. Like the young god compelled against his will, Oedipus is beset by Apollo's plague and his throne seems threatened unjustly. But the imagery will not support such a reading. Inspired perhaps by the Horatian model, Seneca uses the central stanza to show that the apparent association of Bacchus and Oedipus is illusory and that they are in fact enemies. As Laius later asserts (626–658), Oedipus is a usurper. Like a pirate, he has murdered to take another man's throne and wife: *pretia qui saevae necis / sceptrum et nefandos occupat thalamos patris* (634–635). It is Oedipus, who is attempting to take the ship, Thebes, and with it her gods, where they are not destined to go. The ship, like Thebes, is jointly attacked by Apollo and Bacchus: the ship is gripped with Apolline laurel (453) just as the city is beset by his plague (recalled by a funereal screech-owl, 454); Bacchic ivy grips the oars and the mast, then he threatens at the prow first as a lion

<sup>54</sup> See Davis 1993: 207; Runchina 1960: 252–253.

<sup>55</sup> An old metaphor: Pl. *Resp.* 488; *Alc.* 46a; Heraclitus *Rhet. All.* 5; Hor. *Carm.* 1.14, 2.10; Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.44; Commager 1962: 163–164. The ultimate model for this stanza is not Ovid, but the *Homeric Hymn*, which may also be an allegory for the ship of state.

(above, *ad* 425), then as a tiger (455–458); finally the pirates become dolphins, recalling the etymology of Apollo *Delphinios* (*Hom. Hymn. Ap.* 494–495; O'Hara 1996: 12, 32). Seneca confirms by a Sophoclean stroke that we are to think of the pirates as Oedipus: he speaks of a single pirate, *pirata pavidus* (459). The story is always told with a ship full of pirates, and indeed the plural returns in the next two lines (*demersos . . . praedonibus* 460–461). Just as the Sophoclean Oedipus is told that only one thing is known—that there were many robbers who beset Laius (Soph. *OT* 122–123)—and Oedipus asks about “the man” and “the murderer,” singular (Soph. *OT* 124, 224–225, 231, 236, 245; cf. Sen. *Oed.* 286, 292), here while the story concerns a ship of pirates, the imagery points to one man. This is anticipated by the use of the singular in 436a–437, 441 to suggest Jocasta.

The metamorphosis of the pirates into dolphins (461–466a) anticipates Oedipus' own metamorphosis from a seeing man into a blind one (942–945). The pirates first receive a new “appearance,” *nova facies* (460); Oedipus will also change “appearance.” Their arms fall off, then “the breast is dashed against and joined to the womb,” *inlisumque utero pectus coit* (462). The unnatural image of the breast joined to the womb is not found in the Ovidian model that Seneca follows (unless vaguely *repandus*, *Met.* 3.680). The unique image is reminiscent of the Pytho's description of Oedipus, *turpis maternos iterum revolutus in ortus* (238): in taking Jocasta as his mate (*coit*, 462), Oedipus has tried to rejoin his mother's womb (cf. 638–641).

The opening lines of the next hexameter break (467–471) are a common reference to the epiphany of Dionysos in Euripides' *Bacchae* (13–23; cf. Str. 15.1.7). There the god announces that having conquered the entire world and spread his mysteries to the ends of the earth, he comes to Thebes to reveal himself a divinity, ἵν' εἴην ἐμφανῆς δαίμων βροτοῖς (23). The stanza opens with a reference to Lydian Pactolos with its “rich wave,” and “golden streams” (*divite . . . unda / aurea . . . flumina*, 467–468). Bacchus had given Midas the golden touch out of gratitude for his kindly reception of Silenus; and when this proved a curse rather than a blessing, he told the king to cleanse himself of his terrible power in the river (Ov. *Met.* 11.85–145). There are three elements of this story with special applicability to Oedipus. The first is that it suggests the Stoic doctrine of *sympatheia* at work in most Senecan plays: rather than the pathetic fallacy where nature grieves with man, human evil spreads out to infect the natural world (Rosenmeyer 1989: 107–112). Just as Midas' touch affected everything in nature, Oedipus' crime has engulfed his family, the city, and the natural world where now the sun will not shine and the rivers will not flow. The “Pactolus with its golden stream” completes a ring begun by Silenus in the second stanza (429–431): just as Midas received the “curse” of the golden touch from Bacchus for his kindly reception of Silenus, Oedipus received the “curse” of Jocasta for his conquest over the Sphinx. And as the gold flows out into the sea, we perceive how Oedipus, like Midas, is polluting everything around him. The last is that Midas' strength, given by the god, is his own downfall. Just as Midas rejoices in turning things to gold, Oedipus rejoices

in solving riddles, applying his reason to everything but himself. At last he must solve the riddle of his name, whereupon the gift of revelation, activated through his own knowledge, destroys him (cf. *Phoen.* 138–139). These are all conveyed in *Pactolos vexit te*, where *te* is both Oedipal pollution and Bacchic doom.

The remaining images in this stanza reinforce the tensions between man and god raised in the Pactolos episode. Häuptli takes the reference to the Massagetan disarming before Dionysos (469–470) as a reference to Cyrus and Tomyris.<sup>56</sup> If he is right, the important point of the story is that in his attempt to outwit the Massagetan army, Cyrus destroyed himself inadvertently through a gift, wine. Herodotus' account makes no mention of Dionysos, however, and Seneca may be alluding to the Amazons (neighbors of the Massagetae) laying down their bows to become Bacchantes (480–483, see further below). The reference to Lycurgus (471) is of obvious importance to Oedipus: for opposing Dionysos, Lycurgus was driven mad, and, thinking his son a vine, killed him and continued to hack off extremities until he regained his senses. Rhea made the land barren until Lycurgus should be driven out; and so his own people tore him to pieces on Mt Pangaeum (Hom. *Il.* 6.130–140). Oedipus has killed not his son, but his father and brought a plague upon Thebes which will continue until he is driven out.

The introductory hexameters treating Midas, Cyrus, and Lycurgus (467–471) emphasize how Bacchus has subdued kings, but also how his eastern conquests affect the entire world. A survey of geographical *eschata* (described by winds and stars, 472–477) emphasizes that the effect of Bacchus, and thus Oedipus, is to be felt throughout the universe. The section ends with Bacchus' transformations of women: the Amazons (480–483) become his Bacchantes. With allusions to Cithaeron (where Agave and Ino rend Pentheus, 484–485; cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.701–733) and Argos (where the daughters of Proetus kill their own children, 486–487) we see that conquest of the universe belongs jointly to Bacchus and his maenads, male and female, just as Oedipus and Jocasta will jointly affect the world. The earthly geography ends with an allusion to their ambiguous shared rule: "Argos worshipped Bacchus with his stepmother present" (*Argos / praesente Bacchum coluit noverca*, 486–487). But just as Hera wanted to kill the infant Dionysos (Eur. *Bacch.* 98), the image of the *Proetides* recalls that Jocasta tried to kill Oedipus as a child. This section begins with allusions to Oedipus as king and ends with allusions to Jocasta as infanticide / husband-slayer. Bacchus is the force that will destroy them both. By their lives of ignorance, they have imitated Pentheus and Lycurgus, who refuse to acknowledge the god and who must be "initiated" into the cult of Bacchus, *coluit Bacchum* (487).

The marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne (488–502) must be seen against this background. Its primary purpose is to conclude the geographical survey by extending the effect of Bacchus (Oedipus) into the heavens: the wedding crown of Ariadne will become the constellation Corona. But there is also profound irony

<sup>56</sup> Hdt. 1.205–216; Häuptli 1983: 2.37 *ad* 469–470.

in the implication that the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta is a *ἱερὸς γάμος*. The chorus seems to envision a Bacchic paradise, escapist or utopian in tone. Bacchus arrives on Naxos to rescue the widowed Ariadne (just as Oedipus appeared in Thebes). But the phrase, *meliore pensans damna marito* (490; cf. *Ov. Fast.* 3.461), “compensating her loss” with a better husband, also carries its literal meaning for Jocasta, “weighing out harm.” The symbol of Bacchic paradise, the fountain of wine and milk (491–496), conveys an inverted significance for Oedipus. Like the Horatian model (*Carm.* 2.19.9–12), it signifies illusion and augurs the destruction of the king. But more importantly, like the infernal fountain of the house of the *Atreidai* (*Thy.* 665–690), the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta is the source of a corrupt *gens* which flows out to infect the city, the natural world, and now heaven (497; cf. 658). The layers of the ode blend together and complement one another: just as the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta is a fountain of corruption, the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne is a fountain of doom for Oedipus. Its *Nyctelius latex* is the wine of truth, i.e., self-revelation. Parallels of language and sense with Horace (*Carm.* 2.19.10–12; Spika 1890: 27) show that the fountain can be conceived as a “source” of Bacchic *carmen* (499), the word used of the riddle of the Sphinx (98, 246) with which Oedipus is still “warring” (106–109), and of the invocation of Laius (561), who proclaims the truth about Oedipus (626–658).

Seneca uses ambiguous descriptions of the wedding to suggest the malevolence of the other gods. Phoebus attends with his hair hanging loose (see above, 298) and “sings a song fit for the sacred rites” or “serenades with a dirge” (*sollemne carmen cantat*, 498–500). Cupid comes “brandishing” wedding torches (*concutit taedas*, 500a): the marriage-torch is an ill-omen throughout the play (21, 55, 272; cf. *Phoen.* 262–263). Lastly Jupiter comes having “laid aside his fiery bolt, and put away his lightning” or having “deposited” the one (*deposuit*), and “sunk deep” the other (*condit*, 501–502; cf. *Verg. Aen.* 12.950). Seneca’s creative ambiguity allows the two layers of the ode to operate independently and with opposite significations. At the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne the gods attend peacefully and bring fair omens. To the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta, all have conspired: Phoebus, having authored the plague that wrecks Thebes, now will see the fulfillment of his oracles; Cupid brings together the pious and impious lovers; at the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne, Jupiter “lays aside” or “puts away” his thunderbolt, but at the wedding of Oedipus and Jocasta, he “strikes it home,” restoring final justice through the agency of Bacchic self-revelation.

The final hexameters (503–508) allude to the astronomical consequences of the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta as well as foretelling their certain doom: as long as the stars shine, and the oceans flow, and the moon lights the night, and the morning star announces the day, and Ursa Major does not plunge into the sea, i.e., as long as the gods are in their heavens, we shall worship Bacchus. The motif has its usual ironic force in Senecan tragedy.<sup>57</sup> The truth is that the stars do not shine

<sup>57</sup> Rosenmeyer 1989: 143; Davis 1989: 428–429.

(46–49, 233), the waters of the earth have run dry (41–43), the moon is nowhere in evidence (44–45), the morning star does not announce the dawn—the sun rises ferociously (1–5), and the orderly movements of the stars are disturbed (40, 233, 409). These things will only be restored, as the Delphic oracle pronounces (234–235), when the murderer of Laius is driven from Thebes. The chorus will celebrate Bacchus after he has brought destruction down upon their king.

But the inspiration for these lines adds another layer of irony. The echo of *Aeneid* 1.607–610 has long been recognized:<sup>58</sup>

*in freta dum fluvii current, dum montibus umbrae  
lustrabunt convexa, polus dum sidera pascet,  
semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt,  
quae me cumque vocant terrae . . .*

So long as the waters flow in the sea, and shadows curve over the mountain-peaks, and the stars circle the pole, your honor, and name, and praises shall remain on my lips, whatever lands may call me . . .

Aeneas speaks these words to Dido when he first meets her. His hyperbolic promise, spoken out of instant infatuation, is directed at the woman who will later pray for his destruction (*Aen.* 4.381–387). The same is true of the Senecan chorus: it speaks to Bacchus like a lover (see above, 298, *ad* 412–415), not realizing the destruction he will bring to their king. Aeneas promises extravagantly because he thinks that Dido has taken pity on his men and their sufferings (*Aen.* 1.597), though the *tmesis* of the last line suggests how he will abandon her. The choral promise to worship Bacchus (*venerabimur ora Lyaei*, 508) alludes to the same false loyalty. When a chorus of women sings the eternal praises of Bacchus, one might rightly presume them to be *bacchantes*, i.e., *demiurges* who share in the work of the god. This the chorus seems unwittingly to do as it invites the god to rid the city of its plague which turns out to be its king.

#### CONCLUSION

One may justifiably ask whether a Roman audience could be expected to perceive the kinds of allusions discussed above. In favor of this thesis, every aspect of the Bacchus-myth that Seneca treats has a precedent in Ovid, as the citations show; so, the many facets of the myth were part of the Roman literary tradition. Tarrant argues that Senecan imagery is chiefly inspired by resonances from Augustan poetry; this thesis is in conformity with his argument. As such, the mention of, for example, the Pactolus with its golden streams (see above, 301, *ad* 467), is capable of recalling Ovid's treatment of Midas. The next question is whether an audience could be expected to make the further association between

<sup>58</sup> Leo 1878–79: 1.111.



Midas and the situation of Oedipus. I hope to have shown through the analysis of Horace's ode that Seneca's literary heritage from the Augustan poets did not consist merely of story-elements or threadbare *sententiae*. Rather, with their poetry was passed on a tradition of sophisticated interpretation and of the associative property of myth. A Roman audience was capable of observing word-play between Horatian odes as well as between odes and episodes of a Senecan tragedy. It was able to "read into" a depiction of Cerberus fawning over Bacchus many layers of signification including the political, the sacred, the profane, and the poetic. With such a heritage, it seems certain that a Roman audience could hear of the golden stream of the Pactolos and treat it as a figure in need of analysis. No audience could catch all such allusions at a live hearing, but there is no reason that a Senecan ode should not have been intended, like an Horatian ode, to repay frequent re-reading.

The Senecan chorus performs a quite unexpected function in his plays. Their odes are not irrelevant; indeed they are wholly relevant. But they also seem to have a "causative" force, like a demiurge introducing doom into the action. Bishop tried to describe that causal force as the play's "odic line," by which he meant that the chorus somehow directs the events of the drama on a "poetic level."<sup>59</sup> The comparison with Horace offers a more concrete way of talking about the two levels of a Senecan ode. Just as Horace's narrative voice claims that the subject is a personal experience of the poet, Seneca's choral voice claims that the ode is merely about Bacchus. But there is a parallel to Horace's political or allegorical voice in which the true theme of Actium emerges: through Seneca's political or allegorical voice, thematic details foretell the doom of Oedipus and give the ode an unsuspected relevance. This interesting role for the chorus, as well as Seneca's use of irony and his debt to the Augustan poets are all topics that merit further exploration, which I hope to have encouraged.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Of the role of the chorus, he says, "... they are not merely connected to the action but interwoven into it; not merely neatly topical but deeply engrossed in producing and creating the tragedy. That is, the odes have a directive function: they set the tragedy in order and cause it to move to its end. Within the pattern of directive function the odes construct a logical sequence parallel to but not necessarily in step with the dramatic action. The sequence of events is the dramatic line; the sequence of thought construed by the odes, the odic line" (Bishop 1964: 43).

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