

AN INVITATION TO TYNDARIS: HORACE, *ODE* I.17

FRANCIS M. DUNN
Northwestern University

Velox amoenum is a poem well-loved and misunderstood.¹ Scholars have drawn attention to the ode's many charms: the idyllic and symbolic landscape, the speaker's spiritual inclinations, and an implied contrast with the cruder themes of elegy.² Most interpretations emphasize the "self-referential" nature of the ode, arguing that the idyllic, safe and pleasant world it describes represents poetry and poetic values. Such emphasis, however, has tended to obscure or to deny the ostensible occasion of the ode as an invitation from a man to a woman; thus Syndikus claims that "a summary of the ode's content, which says that the first half describes the Sabine estate and the second invites a woman there, is a simplification which borders on distortion."³ On this view, the address to Tyndaris would seem to be little more than a peg upon which the poet hangs reflections about the nature of poetry. In what follows, I shall argue instead that a proper understanding of the ode requires an appreciation of the invitation to Tyndaris, and of the sophisticated irony which attends this invitation.

Perhaps some readers show little interest in the address to Tyndaris because inviting a woman to one's house for a drink seems a banal occasion for an ode, and because the invitation is couched in the predictable language of seduction: the man describes the idyllic beauty of his retreat, swears that his motives are pious, offers wine which he vouches is harmless, and promises escape from an unpleasant rival. Rather than ignoring this apparently banal situation, I suggest that we look more closely at the sophisticated and ironic manner in which Horace employs the rhetoric of seduction, gradually revealing the speaker's unstated motives and undermining his solicitous stance. My approach thus differs from those of Holleman and Pucci, with which it shares some features. Holleman asserts the importance of reading the ode as an invitation to Tyndaris,

¹ I shall cite the text of Wickham and Garrod's *OCT* (Oxford 1912), except for *hinc* in line 14 (see below, note 6). This paper has benefitted from the comments of several readers, especially Daniel Garrison and Ruth Scodel.

² On landscape, see esp. I. Troxler-Keller, "Die sabinische Welt der Ode I.17," in *Die Dichterlandschaft des Horaz* (Heidelberg 1964) 108–18, and S. Commager, *The Odes of Horace* (New Haven 1962) 348–52. On spiritual concerns, see F. Klingner, "Horazerkklärungen," *Philologus* 90 (1935) 277–93, esp. 289–93; E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 206–7; and D. Gagliardi, "*Pietas et musa* in *Hor. carm.* I.17," *Vichiana* 11 (1982) 139–42. On the contrast with elegy, see H. P. Syndikus, *Die Lyrik des Horaz* (Darmstadt 1972) 196–97; and P. G. Toohey, "The structure and function of Horace, *Odes* I.17," *ICS* 7 (1982) 110–24, esp. 113–15. Minadeo argues more generally that the poem counsels retreat from sexuality, R. Minadeo, *The Golden Plectrum: Sexual symbolism in Horace's Odes* (Amsterdam 1982) 57–60. Compare note 10 below.

³ Syndikus (preceding note) 188, my translation. Cf. R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1* (Oxford 1970) 216–17.

but is chiefly concerned with the sexual connotations of the flute and of Faunus, and their reflection of the author's sexual frustration.⁴ Pucci draws attention to the poem's ambiguities, but regards these as evidence of the necessary contradictions in poetry and language, which prevent the ode from establishing a stable and privileged world.⁵ The interpretation offered here will suggest that the invitation to Tyndaris does not reveal the personal frustrations of Horace or the limitations of language as much as it explores the rhetorical games which lovers play. In particular, the pious protestations of the speaker gradually reveal that he resembles his rival both in his designs upon Tyndaris and in his threatening stance towards her.

The rhetoric of seduction is paradoxical. For fear of alienating the object of his desire, the pursuer must conceal his motives and profess only a Platonic affection; lest he never achieve his goal, the pursuer must gradually and tactfully reveal the motives he has kept hidden. Horace plays this game not only with Tyndaris but also with his reader: by postponing the name of Tyndaris and by delaying mention of wine and love, he creates for the reader an objective correlative to the gradual realization of a lover's motives. On the dramatic level, this involves concealing and revealing the speaker of the poem, his addressee and the situation. The speaker seems at first to be a goatherd (*defendit aestatem capellis / usque meis*, 3–4), and describes his surroundings for nine lines before naming the woman to whom he is speaking (*Tyndari*, 10). The bucolic setting of the opening stanzas, with the presence of Faunus and the music of the pipe, suggests the pastoral equation of the goatherd with the poet. This equation is confirmed in the central stanza (*dis pietas mea / et musa cordi est*, 13–14), which also promises a vaguely-worded benefit to the woman (*hinc tibi copia / manabit ad plenum...*, 14ff.),⁶ but not until the fifth and sixth stanzas do we realize that the poet is inviting Tyndaris to the country (*hic in reducta valle caniculae / vitabis aestus*, 17–18) to drink with him (*hic innocentis pocula Lesbii / duces sub umbra*, 21–22). Conspicuously absent are any other details about the poet, the woman, the relationship between them or the purpose of the invitation. Even the setting is unclear; the neighboring hills Lucretilis and Ustica are hitherto unknown, although it is generally assumed that the estate is Horace's, and that the hills are in the Sabine region.⁷ Only in the seventh and final stanza do we discover that the speaker is competing with another man for the affections of Tyndaris (*nec metues protervum / suspecta Cyrum*, 24–25), and that the invitation seeks to woo her away from a violent rival (*ne male dispari / inconinentis iniciat manus...*, 25ff.).

⁴ A. W. J. Holleman, "Horace (*Odes* I.17) and the 'Music of Love'," *Latomus* 29 (1970) 750–55, and "Horace and Faunus: Portrait of a 'Nympharum fugientum amator,'" *L'Antiquité Classique* 41 (1972) 563–72.

⁵ P. Pucci, "Horace's banquet in *Odes* I.17," *TAPA* 105 (1975) 259–81. Cf. P. Connor, *Horace's Lyric Poetry: The Force of Humour* (Berwick 1987) 26–31, who argues that the "eery magic" of the poetic world is unable to contain the loves and hates of the "real world."

⁶ The mss. reading *hinc* is often emended to *hic*, but is defended by Troxler-Keller (above, note 2) 114, and Toohey (above, note 2) 111–13.

⁷ Lucretilis and Ustica are unattested before Horace, although Porphyrio reasonably concludes that they are Sabine hills.

This gradual revelation of the dramatic situation is accompanied by a subtle anticipation of the lovers' triangle; as a result of this anticipation the reader, like Tyndaris, realizes that hints of the speaker's motives had been there all along. Most striking is the unusual story of Penelope and Circe as rivals for Odysseus' love (*dices laborantis in uno / Penelopen vitreamque Circen*, 19–20) which Horace invites Tyndaris to sing for him. Only the reversal of the sexes disguises this anticipation of the rivalry between the speaker and Cyrus. Earlier, the name Tyndaris (10), meaning "daughter of Tyndareus" (i.e. Helen), brings to mind the world's greatest quarrel for a woman, disguised here by the Greek patronymic. The poet's description of the goats as "wandering wives of a smelly husband" (*deviae / olentis uxores mariti*, 6–7) anticipates Tyndaris' unfaithfulness to the brutish Cyrus, under the guise of an Alexandrian circumlocution. Even the first lines of the ode, in which Faunus exchanges his Greek home (Mt. Lycaeus, meaning "wolflike") for an Italian one (*Lucretilem / mutat Lycaeο Faunus*, 1–2), suggest Tyndaris' exchange of Cyrus the wolflike easterner for the poet and his Italian estate. Thematic anticipation hints not only at the rivalry between the lovers but also at Horace's promise to protect Tyndaris from the brutish Cyrus. His offers of protection from the heat (*igneam...aestatem*, 2–3, *caniculae...aestus*, 17–18), from snakes and wolves (*viridis...colubras*, 8, *Martialis...lupos* 9) and from drunken violence (*nec Semeleius / cum Marte confundet Thyoneus / proelia*, 22–24), prefigure his promise of protection from the passion and violence of his rival. Finally, whereas the lovers' triangle is gradually revealed, the sexual designs of the speaker are suggested by ellipsis.⁸ He offers wine without drunken violence in one stanza (21–24), and in the next—no sexual violence (25–28), indirectly offering both harmless wine and gentle love. By the end of the ode, the reader understands the situation and the speaker's motives, and belatedly recognizes these earlier hints.⁹

This unfolding of the situation is not without irony, for the speaker who generously offers protection is pursuing the woman no less than his rival. But I shall argue that the irony goes deeper than this; not only do we discover that the speaker's erotic intentions are similar to those of his rival, but the threatening tone of his words comes to resemble the threat of force he attributes to Cyrus. The speaker seeks to win over Tyndaris with a variety of arguments both positive and negative, seducing her with the pleasures of the country and warning her of Cyrus' violence. By the end of the poem the emphasis has shifted from positive to negative arguments, culminating with the threat of violent assault in the final stanza. The first half of the ode describes a pleasant and enticing scene: the hillside is lovely (*amoenum...Lucretilem*, 1), the bucolic detail is charming (*inpune tutum per nemus arbutos / quaerunt latentis et thyma* ..., 5ff.), and the scene is filled with sweet music (*dulci...fistula / ...levia personuere saxa*, 10–

⁸ These designs are also anticipated by the figure of Faunus (discussion below) and by the unusual epithet in *Usticae cubantis* 11.

⁹ On the technique *e sequentibus praecedentia*, cf. G. Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry* (New Haven 1980) 102–22. Seager's suggestion that the poem first offers an invitation to Tyndaris and then acknowledges her acceptance squares neither with the gradual revelation of the situation, nor with the negative emphasis discussed below; see R. J. Seager, "Two notes: I. Horace, *Odes* 1.17: II. Statius, *Silvae* 5.2," *LCM* 8 (1983) 51–53.

12). But already these enticements are accompanied by a series of threats to be avoided: fiery heat (*igneam...aestatem*, 2–3), rainy winds (*pluviosque ventos* 4), other dangers (*inpune tutum*, 5), green snakes (*viridis... colubras*, 8) and warlike wolves (*Martialis...lupos*, 9), and the warning is reinforced by the repeated *nec...nec...* (8–9). The echoing pipe ends this section on a more positive note (10–12), and the central stanza sums up the enticements of the country in the image of an overflowing cornucopia (*copia / manabit ad plenum benigno / ruris honorum opulenta cornu*, 14–16). The balance between allurements and threats shifts in the second half of the ode. Tyndaris will play the lyre in a withdrawn valley (17–18) and will drink in the shade (21–22), but otherwise the invitation is couched in negative terms: she will avoid the heat of the dog star (17–18), the wine she drinks will not be harmful (*innocentis*, 21), the war-god (Mars) and the raging wine-god (Thyoneus, from *θύω* “to rage”) will not join battle (22–24), and she need not fear the violence of Cyrus (24–28). The negative emphasis is reinforced by repeated *nec... nec...* and *ne...* (22–25), and reaches a surprising climax at the end of the poem. From the allegorical description of Dionysus and Mars to specific mention of the hotheaded Cyrus (*protervum / ...Cyrum*, 24–25), the violence becomes more explicit, culminating with increasingly graphic details of the man’s hands, the woman’s hair and the tearing of her clothing (*ne.../ incontinentis inciat manus / et scindat haerentem coronam/ crinibus inmeritam vestem*, 25–28). It is not clear whether Cyrus is pictured beating Tyndaris or raping her; in either case the final stanza, which describes to Tyndaris her own abuse at the hands of Cyrus, makes a shocking conclusion to the ode and to the poet’s invitation.¹⁰ The balance between positive and negative rhetoric, between enticement and threat, has shifted by the end of the poem, which concludes with a dire threat of assault by a rival. The graphic description of violence which shocks the reader will also shock Tyndaris into making the desired choice. This argument, which threatens the woman with another man’s violence, has more in common with the violence of this rival than it does with the poet’s earlier solicitous attitude.

These two ironic reversals—revealing the speaker’s erotic intentions and his threatening attitude—are supported by his vague and ambiguous characterization. His own character and his relationship with Tyndaris are described in a vague or metaphorical manner which makes the ironic reversals possible; and he is represented by ambiguous mythical figures which support his claim to moral superiority while also suggesting his similarity to Cyrus. At first resembling a

¹⁰ The threatening tone is noted only by Holleman, “Horace and Faunus” (above, note 4) 569. Syndikus (above, note 2), citing Klingner, states that “the friendly image of the last two verses does not allow the poem to end in dissonance but returns it to the cheerful beginning” (197–98), while Connor (above, note 5) notes that the vividness of the stanza “puts us back into the real world” (31). Esser is concerned only with the formal aspects of the ending. D. Esser, *Untersuchungen zu den Odenschlüssen bei Horaz*, Beiträge zur klass. Philologie 77 (Meisenheim 1976) 86–88. The ending is sometimes considered a criticism of elegy’s preoccupation with lovers’ quarrels (Syndikus, Toohey, note 2 above), but few elegies compare with the graphic detail of Horace’s ode. Of those that do, Tibullus prefers the “battles” of love to those of war (I.10.53–66), Propertius promises not to do harm (II.5.21–24) and instead is harmed by his mistress (III.8.1–8), while Ovid regrets having used force (*Amores* I.7.45–50).

rustic goatherd (*defendit aestatem capellis / usque meis pluviosque ventos*, 3–4), the speaker later describes himself as a pious poet (*di me tuentur, dis pietas mea / et musa cordi est*, 13–14); but beyond this he tells us nothing of his identity or personality, and the protestation of piety is so general (“my piety and muse are dear to the gods”) that it contributes little to a concrete portrait. The characterization is largely negative, as when the speaker claims he is not prone to drunken violence (22–24), or implies more generally that he is unlike his rival. The poet also sheds little light on his relationship with Tyndaris, and he is absent from his addresses to her. His offer “hence an abundance will flow for you” (*hinc tibi copia / manabit*, 14–15) is deliberately vague, and in the following stanzas “here you will avoid the heat” (17–18) and “here you will drink” (21–22) avoid a personal appeal such as “I offer you refuge from the heat” or “please join me in drinking.” In the entire ode there are only two personal pronouns, both in the central stanza (*me* 13, *tibi*, 14) but each in a separate clause, the poet in the company of the gods who protect him and Tyndaris surrounded by country blessings. Their relationship remains unclear, and is not elucidated by Cyrus’ suspicions of her (*suspecta*, 25), which may imply that Tyndaris has been unfaithful to him, or may simply portray Cyrus as overly jealous. Although the negative foil of warlike wolves and a drunken rival casts the speaker in a favorable light, the absence of a clear portrait of himself or his relationship with Tyndaris makes possible the belated recognition of his resemblance to Cyrus.

Twice, comparison with a mythical figure seems to characterize the poet in greater detail, but in each case the comparison is ambiguous and implies a resemblance to his violent rival. One is brief but suggestive: the speaker imagines Tyndaris at his estate, singing about “Penelope and glassy Circe, both struggling for one man” (19–20). The lovers’ triangle of Penelope, Circe and Ulysses resembles that of the poet, Cyrus and Tyndaris, and the speaker clearly intends that we identify him with the faithful wife and Cyrus with the “glassy” witch who turned men into animals.¹¹ This identification is frustrated, however, both by the different sex of the mythical figures and by the similarity between Circe (who lives in a magical land where lions and wolves are friendly, and who detains Odysseus there) and the speaker (who wishes to detain Tyndaris in his magical valley, where snakes and wolves do not threaten).¹² The example of Penelope and Circe is thus ambiguous, suggesting both the faithful and the possibly dangerous character of the poet. The other comparison is central to the argument of the ode: the resemblance of Faunus, goats and wolves to the poet, Tyndaris and Cyrus respectively introduces the contrast between the speaker as protector and his rival as pursuer. Faunus, the god who protects the flock from

¹¹ The epithet “glassy” may mean “shining, splendid” (as a beautiful goddess), “sea-green” (as a sea goddess, or as a witch poisonous like the green snakes in line 8), “translucent” (as a mysterious seductress), “brittle” (as an unfaithful woman contrasted with Penelope), or some combination of the above. Circe, as Homer tells us, was sister to Aietes and therefore aunt to Medea, whose passion and violent jealousy were unsurpassed.

¹² The offer of harmless Lesbian wine in the following line (21) recalls the Pramnian wine with which Circe turned men into beasts; cf. Pucci (above, note 5) 269–70.

predators, in large measure represents the poet himself. Both are at home in the bucolic landscape, looking after the herds and making music or poetry, and as the hills re-echo with the flute we cannot tell whether Faunus or the poet is piping (*utcumque dulci, Tyndari, fistula / valles et Usticae cubantis / levia personuere saxa*, 10–12). As Faunus protects the goats from heat and the “wives” from wild beasts, the speaker will likewise protect Tyndaris from the passion of the wolflike Cyrus. But Faunus, protector of the flock, has another side.¹³ He also pursues fleeing nymphs, as Horace says elsewhere (*Nympharum fugientum amator*, III.18.1), and as the emphatically placed epithet “swift” (*Velox*, 1) reminds us. Faunus is a god of fertility, identified both with the Greek god Pan and with the demon Incubo,¹⁴ who rapes women in their dreams; the protector of the flock is himself something of a wolf.¹⁵ The ambiguous nature of Faunus thus anticipates the ambiguous nature of the speaker, who pursues the woman he would protect, and who turns from kind reassurance to verbal threats.

Although the speaker establishes a rhetorical contrast between himself as protector and his rival as pursuer, by the end of the poem this contrast is no longer so clear. We find that the poet and his rival are both pursuing the same prey; and we discover that, although one pursues with words and the other with force, they can be equally heavy-handed. As the speaker's emphasis shifts from alluring promises to dire warnings, his argument compels with the threat of violence from Cyrus, just as Cyrus would compel with physical force. The rhetorical ploys of the poet, which attempt to establish his difference from and superiority to his rival, finally reveal the similarities between them. The invitation to Tyndaris with subtle irony deflates the conventional rhetoric of seduction, revealing the motives behind the speaker's arguments and undermining the rhetorical contrast between the lover and his rival. Insofar as the poem is self-referential, alluding to the nature and power of poetry, it shares this ironic movement. The speaker offers the protection of his peaceful poetic world, but the song will be one of lovers' jealousies (19–20) and the calm is shattered by the rival's brutality (26–28). Poetry fails to offer refuge from the rivalry of lovers, and the invitation which promises to do so gradually reveals the motives of a jealous rival.

¹³ Cf. Holleman, “Horace and Faunus” (above, note 4) 563–64.

¹⁴ For Pan's rape of nymphs, cf. Euripides, *Helen* 187–90; for the identification of Faunus with Incubo, see Servius on *Aeneid* 6.775.

¹⁵ Cf. G. Williams, *The Third Book of Horace's Odes* (Oxford 1969) 106.