

APPEARANCE AND REALITY IN HORACE'S ODES 3.7-12¹

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The artistic principle of contrast is seldom pushed to its limit to the same extent as is done in the first section of Horace's *Odes* Book 3. Six sonorous poems in the Alcaic metre are followed by a second group of poems reflecting such diversity of metre that they remind the reader of the initial nine Parade Odes.² Six poems on the "state of the nation" are followed by a group of poems exclusively concerned with a seemingly idiosyncratic perspective on individual experience.³ Six Roman odes are followed by a group of poems described by Syndikus as "sehr leichte, scheinbar gewichtlose Gedichte" (1990:98).

By looking at some details from individual poems in this group (*Odes* 3.7-12), it becomes clear that these poems, although so substantially different in content to the Roman odes, share a remarkable similarity of approach.⁴ I have argued elsewhere (1998:52-66) for the need to read the Roman odes as lyric poetry reflecting original lyric perspectives in material traditionally associated with epic.⁵ In *Odes* 3.7-12 Horace approached traditional lyric subject matter much as he approached themes traditionally associated with epic in the Roman odes.⁶ Understanding the changing perspective reflected in a poem becomes necessary for a reading of these odes as much as it becomes necessary for the Roman Odes.

In *Odes* 3.7-12 sense is made by a fundamental change in individual perspective. In each poem the protagonist somehow has to change his/her original perspective on a situation to enable him/her to understand the real issue at stake in the first place.⁷ In other words, for the poem to make sense the protagonist in the poem

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- 1 I would prefer not to become involved in an argument about whether *Odes* 3.7-12 or *Odes* 3.7-15 form a group. Both groupings have wide support, which seems to me to indicate that both alternatives are possible depending on the criteria applied for whatever grouping of the poems is preferred.
 - 2 The metres represented by *Odes* 3.7-12 are the following: *Odes* 3.7: Fourth Asclepiad; *Odes* 3.8: Sapphic; *Odes* 3.9: Second Asclepiad; *Odes* 3.10: Third Asclepiad; *Odes* 3.11: Sapphic; *Odes* 3.12: Ionic *a minore*. The poem following the group, *Odes* 3.13, uses the same metre as *Odes* 3.7: the Fourth Asclepiad.
 - 3 Or, as Porter (1987:171-172) sees it, "an initial concern with large issues is replaced by a concentration on more circumscribed topics", or further, "there remains, however, a persistent emphasis on facing real problems and real situations".
 - 4 Contra Santirocco (1986:126) who argues for *Odes* 3.7-15 as a group, admitting that *Odes* 3.13 does not fit the scheme.
 - 5 Cf. Witke (1983:2): "The idea of civic poetry in lyric form is foreign if not repugnant to a modern Western audience".
 - 6 Santirocco (1986:125) follows Klingner and Mutschler in arguing that "the placement of these amatory poems next to the Roman Odes effectively combines public and private modes of existence".
 - 7 The shift in perspective on a single poem which I have tried to elucidate is fundamental in each poem but to a large extent also depends on the perspective and understanding of the reader. Cf.

must make sense of the poetic situation. In each case sense is made by a fundamental change in perspective representing a choice for reality as opposed to clinging to the appearances of the situation.

After the Roman odes Horace introduces this next group of poems with a question: *quid fles Asterie?* (*Odes* 3.7.1).⁸ On the one hand this is a final question embodying a comment on the state of the Roman world as expressed in the preceding odes.⁹ On the other hand this is a new question focusing attention on a specific person, Asterie, and her specific situation as depicted in this poem.¹⁰

In a truly masterful short sketch in the first two stanzas of *Odes* 3.7, Horace evokes some traditional aspects of love elegy: the two lovers, their separation and possible loss, the inconstancy of the weather, their doubts, sleeplessness, emotionalism.¹¹ In fact the sketch starts and ends with tears (*quid fles, Asterie?* [v.1] and *ille (Gyges)...noctes non sine multis insomnis lacrimis agit* [vv.5,7-8]). At the same time Horace realistically undercuts every single aspect he has just listed, indicating that there is no need for all these tears.¹² It is the beginning of spring. Summer and good weather lie ahead. There are no clouds in the sky and Gyges has not even suffered financial loss! There can be no question of Gyges's fidelity up to now: he is a paragon (*constantis iuvenem fide*, v.4).¹³ In these first two stanzas Horace seems to suggest that although his poem apparently covers a theme traditionally associated with love elegy, the issue at stake in reality is not the conventional possible infidelity of the absent beloved.¹⁴ The answer to *quid fles, Asterie* in this case, must clearly be: "you have no reason to cry, Asterie!"¹⁵

In the next three stanzas (stanzas 3-5), the poem continues in the traditional elegiac vein and the reason for Asterie's crying, Gyges's possible infidelity, is given much more substance. That embodiment of temptation, Chloe, is passionate (*sollicitae*, v.9),¹⁶ her messenger sly (*vafēr*, v.12) and the mythological examples to

for instance, Dunn (1995:165-176) who focuses on a rhetorical perspective as an alternative approach to Horace's lyric poems.

8 Cf. Harrison (1988:186-192) who points out that the ode does more than merely counterbalance the preceding six Roman odes.

9 I.e., that the state of the Roman world is something to cry about. Cf. Collinge 1961:51; Commager 1962:16.

10 For an overview of scholarly opinion on this poem, see Cairns (1995:66-99) who points out that there is no consensus about the poem's interpretation.

11 Cf. Cairns (1995:65-99) who calls this poem "anti-elegiac" (95) but lists a whole range of elegiac characteristics included in the poem (69).

12 Contra Cairns (1995:67) who states that "explicit linguistic evidence of irony or an unmistakably ironic context" are absent from *Odes* 3.7. See also Cairns 1995:85 for a summary of possible mythical nomenclature for the protagonists in the poem, one of the most relevant being that Enipeus and Hebrus (in *Odes* 3.12) both share their names with river gods.

13 Cf. Davis (1991:47) who rightly points to the "latent analogy in the two situations of temptations and the erotic vulnerability of both characters". Without this parallel, the shift from Chloe as temptress to Enipeus as temptor, would lose much of its impact.

14 Cf. Davis (1991:45) who refers to the "worn threads of erotic-elegiac stereotypes".

15 Davis (1991:47) refers to Horace's "facetiousness at Asterie's expense".

16 For this reading of *sollicitae* see Lewis & Short.

encourage infidelity (Bellerophon and Peleus) can only be described as persuasive.¹⁷ At this stage the poem reflects a possible elegiac love triangle: the lover, Asterie, the distant beloved Gyges, in close proximity to the tempting rival, Chloe.¹⁸ Appearances, however, might not coincide with reality.

In the very next stanza (stanza 6) the dramatic climax of the poem shatters the conventional elegiac love triangle. The literary convention (in an exotic world) feeds on the appearance of possible faithlessness of the absent beloved. The Horatian perspective, firmly rooted in the mundane world, focuses on the real temptation of the next-door neighbour which often is not even recognised as a temptation. In this real world there is no messenger to keep reality at bay by complicating or facilitating the relationship. No mythological examples lend dignity to and perspective on complex individual choices. Enipeus is part of Asterie's everyday world. His appeal is obvious and physical—not via a messenger and not mythological. In short his appeal is real, not literary—and as such so much more difficult to withstand. In this sense then the literary choices associated with the elegiac world are confronted head-on by the moral choices demanded by the real world.

In the final stanza the poem seems to step back into the original literary convention from which it sprung. However, instead of the plea for admittance, as expressed by the *exclusus amator* convention, there is a plea for exclusion and resistance to the appeal made by the elegiac flute. *Difficilis mane* (v.32) is put forward as the final response to Asterie's tears. It seems clear that Asterie has two choices.¹⁹ She can remain part of the elegiac convention of love entanglements.²⁰ Or she can resist the spell of the plaintive flute (*querulae despice tibiae*, v.30) and by her own action claim an unexpected, and morally sound ending to her situation.²¹ It is in Asterie's own power to either cry for herself or not to have to cry at all, to put her belief in appearances or to opt for a little realism.

In short, what we have in the first poem which follows the Roman odes is, in effect a deconstruction of the so-called elegiac convention. Horace has cut through the elegiac love triangle by a series of masterful shifts. Only one point of the love triangle has shifted. Enipeus has replaced Chloe. The implication of this shift, however, causes the opening question of the poem to be answered in a completely different way. Asterie's tears can no longer claim elegiac justification, presupposing as convention does, that the absent beloved is the one subjected to temptation. The characters in Horace's poem may start out as "typical" of a certain convention, but at

17 See the excellent analysis by Davis (1991:48-49) of this "duplicitous appropriation" of the temptation of heroic figures in "the interest of an immoral liaison".

18 See Cairns (1995:83) for references to possible early Greek predecessors for this poem. It should also be noted that the classic elegiac lament usually represents a man's perspective on the faithlessness of a woman, not vice-versa as in *Odes* 3.7.

19 It is interesting to note the moral dilemma implicit in Asterie's choice. According to Cairns (1995:76) "the 'Near' is invariably morally acceptable while the 'Far' is not".

20 At this stage the references to Bellerophon (v.15) and Peleus (v.17) as examples of fidelity become rather loaded, since in both cases the woman gives way to temptation, not the man. Bradshaw expands on this reference to the *mulier perfida* (1978:159).

21 Cairns refers to the "anti-elegiac nature of Horace's advice to Asterie" (1995:71).

the end of the poem the focus shifts and they are forced to act as real individuals. Deconstruction of the expectations associated with the conventional elegiac epigram paves the way for a complete and realistic reassessment of the whole situation. Appearances retreat before reality. Convention is replaced by a moral realism which speaks to all times.

Reality may be brought firmly to the reader's attention in *Odes* 3.7, but the very next ode (*Odes* 3.8) takes great pleasure in supposedly confusing appearances and reality. On the surface this ode is a simple invitation to Maecenas to lay down the burden of his public responsibilities and enjoy some quality time with a friend, who has had a miraculous escape from death some time before. On closer inspection, however, the poem proves to be a tightly structured argument against appearances and for an alternative perspective on reality. In fact the poem indicates its preoccupation with the confusion between appearance and reality in its very first line: "What am I, a bachelor, doing celebrating a feast by married women for Juno?" (*Martiis caelebs quid agam Kalendis*, v.1). The poem goes on to indicate that not even learning (*docte*, v.5) can help understand this apparent anomaly. In spite of being an expert in the folk-lore of two cultures Maecenas will not understand Horace's celebrations on the *Matronalia*.²² What is needed is not to be confused by the appearances of the situation, but instead to keep a firm grasp on its reality. It might appear as if Horace is celebrating the *Matronalia*.²³ The reality of the matter is that he is in fact celebrating something completely different.²⁴ The elaborate play between appearances and reality sets the scene for Horace's persuasion of Maecenas to distinguish between what is inappropriate and what is, in fact, perfectly suitable, depending on a person's point of view.

Odes 3.8 fits into the larger group of lyric poems discussed in this article exactly because of the necessity to distinguish between appearances and reality to make sense of sections of the poem and indeed of the whole.²⁵ Maecenas does not have to stop being a state official to accept Horace's invitation. He just needs to see his own situation from the perspective of a different reality. The poem seems to function like a type of Socratic argument where one participant is logically backed into a corner until he has no further option but to agree with his opponent.

The poem depicts causes and preparations for a party (stanza 1-3), the invitation to the party (stanza 4) and the party itself (stanza 5-7).²⁶ In the first three stanzas Horace points out how the appearance of his actions could be misinterpreted as inappropriate by someone lacking an informed perspective on the reality of the whole. In the middle stanza the poem focuses on Horace's specific invitation to Maecenas. In the last three stanzas Horace anticipates and dismisses any objections to

22 Since learning will not enable Maecenas to understand this perspective, an alternative intuitive approach is needed.

23 Cf. Griffin 1997:54-69.

24 Horace celebrates a private festival in honour of Bacchus because of a very personal escape from death (*voveram dulces epulas et album Libero caprum prope funeratus arboris ictu*, vv.6-8)

25 Against Santirocco (1986:125) who maintains that the "intrusion of C.3.8 into an otherwise erotic sequence is not satisfactorily explained".

26 See Syndikus 1990:107 for other possible structural subdivisions.

his invitation. He undercuts Maecenas's possible refusal implying that Maecenas's perspective of the appearances of pressure associated with state business might be just as faulty (and uninformed) as Maecenas's perspective of Horace's apparent celebrations of the *Matronalia*.

It is obvious that Horace reduces state business to events such as foreign wars of which the reality would be easy to grasp for the ordinary citizen. Maecenas's business is described from the perspective on the ground of Rome's political situation at the time.²⁷ And since the ordinary citizen feels no present threat to Rome's position, Maecenas too, should share the perspective of the ordinary citizen and make the most of the moment. After all, in the first three stanzas Horace proved that Maecenas had to change perspective in order to understand the reality of Horace's situation. Why should Maecenas not have to change perspective in order to distinguish between the appearances and reality of his own position?²⁸ As a *privatus* Maecenas will of course accept Horace's invitation and enjoy some wine and some time with his friend (*sume, Maecenas, cyathos ...centum et vigiles lucernas perfer in lucem*, vv.13-15).

If *Odes* 3.7 and 3.8 promoted subtle shifts in perspective to distinguish between appearances and reality, *Odes* 3.9 is a celebration of shifting perspectives on the appearances reflected by a single reality.²⁹ On a basic level this is to be expected from an amoebean song where verses are sung alternately by two participants. Three sets of two stanzas each represent a dialogue between two lovers.³⁰ The man states his position in stanzas one, three and five and Lydia tries to cap him in each stanza which follows. The three pairs of stanzas cover the past (stanza 1-2), the present (stanza 3-4) and the future (stanza 5-6).

The most interesting shifts of perspective, however, are reflected in the detail of the poem.³¹ In the first pair of stanzas the man dwells on his experience of their previous relationship. He expresses this positively: *donec gratus eram tibi* (v.1). Lydia, unexpectedly, describes her experience by implication only. She focuses on the negative: what the man did not do in their previous relationship: *donec non alia magis arsisisti* (vv.5-6). While the man expresses his experience of the relationship in terms of the reality shared by the two people concerned ("as long as I was dear to you"), Lydia brings the presence of a third party into play and concentrates on how that relationship appeared from the outside "as long as you did not burn for someone else". In this way she very neatly side-steps responsibility for the dissolution of the relationship in the first place.

27 Seager 1993:23-40, esp. 33.

28 Once Maecenas accepts that in one and the same day he himself can confuse appearances and reality, that as state official he is also an ordinary citizen, he has to accept that the appearances of state business can become negligible viewed from the perspective of the ordinary citizen and that logically he no longer has any excuse to refuse Horace's invitation.

29 Cf. Tarrant (1995:48-9) and Williams (1969:76) who states: "There is nothing like it in extant Greek poetry."

30 Cf. Syndikus 1990:111 for argument that Horace is the man in the poem.

31 The language of this poem is close to normal speech patterns (cf. Syndikus 1990:112) making the diversity in detail even more striking.

In the same set of stanzas the man dwells on the details of Lydia's possible lover. He is young and virile (*potior...iuvenis*, vv.2-3). The reality, the physical details of this young man's relationship with Lydia ("his arms around her white neck", *braccia candidae cervice dabat*, vv. 2-3) obviously bother the man. Lydia's response on the other hand avoids all details.³² She strips the situation to its bare essentials, "when Lydia did not come after Chloe" (*neque erat Lydia post Chloen*, v.6). In his choice of comparative adjective the man reveals a certain ambiguity. *Beatior* (v.4) can point to wealth or happiness, but being wealthy does not necessarily mean being happy. Furthermore, any associations the Romans might have had with Persian kings were with wealth, not personal happiness. In her description Lydia does not reveal her own assessment of her previous position at all. She describes her situation in terms of fame and fame depends on appearances and on other people's perspectives. Instead of vague Roman associations with alien wealth as evoked by the man, Lydia's comparison has immediate appeal since it depends on Roman associations with a specific and cherished Roman ancestor, Rhea Silvia.³³

At the end of the first pair of stanzas clear differences in tone and perspective have been established. The man dwells on the reality and details of the relationship. Lydia concentrates on how the relationship appeared from the outside. The man gives a subjective assessment of the relationship. Lydia gives an objective one. The man chooses to evaluate the relationship in terms of the foreign and the exotic. Lydia chooses a Roman comparison, close to home.

The second pair of stanzas focuses on the new relationships with new partners involved. The man mentions a list of Chloe's attributes: she is from Thrace, she governs him (like a king a subject), she is learned, talented and a part of his soul.³⁴ Not a single physical characteristic of Chloe is mentioned to flesh out this description or to give it some basis in a physical reality. Lydia's "revenge" seems to follow in her description of her relationship with Calais. The man's passive "Chloe governs me" (*me... Chloe regit*, v.9) is replaced by Lydia's reciprocal: "he burns me with a mutual passion" (*me torret face mutua*, v.13). Chloe's vague origins are in far-off Thrace. Calais is a specific son of a specific father, Ornytus, from a specific town Thuri, right here in Italy.³⁵ The most charming shift in perspective in this particular pair of stanzas, however, occurs when Lydia caps the man's hesitant but realistic negative: "for her I will not fear to die" (*pro qua non metuum mori*, v.11) by a positive but completely impossible exaggeration: "for him I shall suffer death twice" (*pro quo bis patiar mori*, v.15). The crucial point of Lydia's response, however, is slipped in, as it were, in her reference to Calais as *puero* (v.16). Lydia's *puero* is supposed to cap *animae* (v.12) the man's description of Chloe. In every other respect Lydia's response seems to

32 Contra Lyne (1980:224) who states that Horace "is preoccupied with externals... Lydia on the other hand talks more of feelings, of states of mind and emotion".

33 Cf. Putnam (1977:140) who sums up the situation as follows: "She finds a likeness for herself not in some anonymous exotic king, devoted no doubt to a life of delicate abundance. Instead she opts for more immediate Roman Ilia whom all would know."

34 The soul is the only element of man eligible to achieve immortality (Williams 1969:76).

35 Cf. West 1995:102 for a discussion on the extent to which Calais surpasses Chloe.

suggest that her connection with Calais is real as opposed to the man's apparently rather cerebral relationship with Chloe. But in *puero* (v.16) she offers the man an alternative perspective on the situation, if he is prepared to understand the implication inherent in her describing her lover as a very young man.³⁶

The man responds immediately, albeit cautiously, to Lydia's hint at an unequal relationship. By asking about and not assuming its reality, the man only hints at the possibility of a future relationship. His question is phrased in completely neutral terms leaving the initiative to Venus to yoke the former lovers together again. Chloe is written out of the picture not by action but passively (*excutitur*, v.19) and the door which separates lovers in the elegiac convention is opened without any further to-do. Lydia who was rejected (*reiectae...Lydiae*, v.20) in the former relationship is offered the final decision to reject or to reinstate that relationship.

Lydia's response in the final stanza gives perfect closure to this rather extraordinary love poem. In her previous responses to the man, hers has been the less flamboyant, more sober perspective. She focused on the essentials of the situation, not the tangential details. In this final stanza, however, the shift in perspective reflected in her response is illuminating. She includes no fewer than three comparisons: one extravagant and unrealistic but conventional comparison to describe Calais ("even though he is more beautiful than a star", *quamquam sidere pulchrior*, v.21),³⁷ but two very personal, realistic and original comparisons to describe the man: "more unstable than a cork and more quick-tempered than the violent Adriatic" (*levior cortice et improbo iracundior Hadria*, vv.22-23). Both these latter descriptions have nothing to do with conventional elegiac expectations of a lover. They have everything to do, however, with reality. And in spite of her very realistic assessment of the man's personality as fickle and quick-tempered, she still chooses him.

The final line of the poem implies a reference to the final lines of each of the previous pairs of stanzas. In the initial relationship (stanza 1-2) both parties flourished, but in terms rather larger-than-life: happier than the king of Persia (v.4) or more famous than Rhea Silvia (v.8). In their period of separation (stanzas 3-4) they dramatically (or rather theatrically) vowed to die for their new partners. At the end of the poem, a note of completely believable realism has crept in. Not only living and dying are put in perspective, but also their resumed relationship, which now seems to have a more realistic basis for and chance at success.³⁸

A final shift in perspective on the poem, occurs, however, when the reader is reminded by the tightly knit structure of the poem, of the poet as single origin for such a multiplicity of perspectives, playing with a number of appearances all hiding a single reality.

36 Cf. *Odes* 1.9 where the same discrepancy in years (and experience) is suggested in the description of the young man as *gracilis puer* and Pyrrha as *simplex munditiis*.

37 Cf. Cairns (1995:76) who refers to the widespread comparison "of a beautiful or distinguished person to a star or to the sun".

38 Contra Arkins (1993:117) who maintains that "when Lydia says to the man 'I'd love to live with you, I'd gladly die with you', we do not believe her".

After *Odes* 3.9, *Odes* 3.10 gives a dramatically different perspective on the possible relationship between a man and a woman. If *Odes* 3.9 seems to reflect a relationship based in reality, *Odes* 3.10 firmly concentrates on convention. In this ode all the characteristics of the *exclusus amator* occur.³⁹ There is the mistress whose heartlessness is reflected even in her name, Lyce (the feminine of the Greek word for “wolf”). The prostrate rejected lover before her cruel door has to suffer the onslaught of unbridled elements. These characteristics of the convention are all portrayed as extremes. Lyce’s savage cruelty would not be expected even from a barbarian woman, married to a harsh husband at the end of the earth. The weather conditions suffered by the excluded lover are life-threatening. In short, this setting is as bad as it gets in this particular convention.⁴⁰

However, throughout the poem there is tension between appearances and reality. The setting may be the worst of its kind, but it is still anchored in reality by specifics: the Don, the North winds associated with this area, a Macedonian mistress, Moorish snakes. In this way the poet seems to keep reminding his audience of the reality against which the appearances of this convention operates.⁴¹

In the middle stanza of the poem (vv.9-12) the *exclusus amator* convention is harshly put into a more realistic perspective. The poet uses a simple metaphor from the physical world to characterize the situation. This metaphor points out the logical outcome of the *exclusus amator* convention at the same time giving an objective assessment of the whole. The rope which can give way and run back as the wheel revolves (*ne currente retro funis eat rota*, v.10) captures the essence of the excluded lover’s threat: “If you push me too far, you will lose your power over me.” In the same stanza the poet goes even beyond this example from the physical world. He turns to mythology. In the middle of a poem exploiting convention, Lyce is told to her face that she is no conventional heroine, like Penelope.

The last two stanzas of the poem again focus on the details of the *exclusus amator* convention. In this stanza (vv.13-15a) the poet points out how the *exclusus amator* situation could resolve itself. Normally the mistress could be expected to succumb (eventually) because of gifts (*munere*, v.13), or supplication (*preces*, v.13) or even because of sympathy for the excluded lover(s) when it becomes clear how the situation affects them (*tinctus viola pallor amantium*, v.14). Or she might succumb because of personal reasons such as an unfaithful husband. In this specific case, however, Lyce remains not gentle (*nec...mollior*, v.17) and not kind (*nec...mitior*, v.18). By implication she remains trapped in that moment in time which has become the very focus of the *exclusus amator* convention: a woman refusing admittance to her excluded lover. To the bitter end she chooses appearances and refuses reality.

In the last two lines of the poem the poet gives a scathing summary of what it is that Lyce has chosen. The most impersonal, uncharacteristic part of the lover,

39 Cf. Syndikus 1990:117 for a classic list of poems exhibiting these conventional details.

40 Cf. for instance *Odes* 1.25 where Horace, by projecting a “logical” and frighteningly realistic ending to the situation, also exploits the convention of the *exclusus amator*.

41 Cf. Syndikus 1990:118: “Horaz blickt auf die ganze Situation, auf sich und die Geliebte, mit einer der Elegie fremden Objektivität.”

hoc...latus (vv.19-20), is all that remains to fulfil the role of the excluded lover. That which separates the lovers—in this case their radically opposed views of their relationship—is represented by an impersonal, inanimate object, the doorstep (*liminis*, v.19). The suffering of the excluded lover is transformed into patience with the weather. In fact in *non...liminis aut aquae caelestis patiens* (vv.19-20) the poet reduces the entire *exclusus amator* convention to its absurd essence. When there is no relationship to flesh out the convention, the external signs, the appearances of the convention (the door, atrocious weather) become mere details.

Ironically, by pointing out how absurd the convention becomes in reality when it is removed from its literary basis, the poet by his original handling of the theme infuses new life into the convention. After all, the literary convention demands a piece of persuasive writing to lay at the feet of a possible but recalcitrant mistress. And what could be more compelling than an original perspective from which to approach the convention?⁴²

On the face of it, the first three stanzas of the next ode, *Odes 3.11* also depict a rather typical situation in lyric poetry. On behalf of the supplicant a god is called upon to persuade an unwilling lover to relent.⁴³

Against this background the achievements of the god through Orpheus's lyre are extolled in the next three stanzas (4-6).⁴⁴ These achievements indicate power over the fauna and flora of the natural world (*tu potes tigres comitesque silvas ducere et rivos celeres morari*, vv.13-14), as well as power over the underworld (*cessit...tibi...ianitor aulae, Cerberus*, vv.15-17) and over the creatures from Mythology who dwell *sub Orco* (v. 29).

The middle section of the poem (stanza 7, vv. 25-29) focuses on Lyde who should be made to hear, not the persuasive song of the lyre played by Orpheus, but a song threatening retribution sung by the supplicant (*audiat Lyde scelus atque notas virginum poenas...seraque fata quae manent culpas etiam sub Orco*, vv.25-29). This section represents one of the most interesting shifts in perspective reflected in the poem. The normal prayer poem or hymn focuses on persuading the god, who is praised, to listen to (and by implication to grant) the supplicant's request. Here the lyre must persuade, not the god, but Lyde.

The final section of the poem (stanzas 8-13) tells the story of the daughters of Danaus who murdered their husbands on their wedding night—all except

42 The structure of this poem reflects a well-known and accepted rhetorical device. The first two stanzas (A1) and the last two stanzas (A2) both support the middle stanza (B) where convention is subjected to the glare of reality and Lyce is forcibly reminded of the salient details of her own position. The first (A1) and the last (A2) section of the poem might represent the epitome of the elegiac convention, but they are both subservient to the perspective reflected in the middle section (B) which is firmly based in reality.

43 Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite (Sappho fr. 1) is a good example. To reinforce this association the metre of *Odes 3.11* is Sapphic. Cf. Cairns (1975:129-139) who points out the variety of genres represented in the ode.

44 For Horace's poetic association with Mercury, see Bond 1986:68-86.

Hypermnestra who saved her husband at great cost to herself, according to Horace's version of the myth.⁴⁵

One of the most striking aspects of this entire poem in hymn form is the complete absence of any direct reference to the supplicant who addresses Mercury and the lyre.⁴⁶ The supplicant is not characterized in any direct way nor does he ask for any special favour except that *Lyde* should listen to the song of his *lyra*. Furthermore, what the supplicant asks for is also not specified but left to the imagination of the reader. In terms of the conventional use of a hymn poem or formal prayer to a god, the reader would expect a plea to help persuade an unwilling lover to relent—very much like the conventional plea associated with the *exclusus amator* to his mistress for admittance to her presence. The reader of the Horace poem has to read between the lines and interpret a myth held up as example to Lyde, to deduce what the supplicant wants from the god (and by implication from Lyde).

In the last four stanzas the myth becomes personal. The crucial moment when myth becomes reality is dramatically encapsulated. The *virgo nobilis* starts speaking as an individual in these four stanzas and in her words she clearly characterizes herself. She speaks the words the supplicant wants Lyde to hear.

In terms of the impact made by a shifting perspective on the understanding of the poem, it seems then as if *Odes* 3.11 represents a prayer style poem which is organised in the same typical rhetorical fashion as *Odes* 3.10: A1:B:A2 where in *Odes* 3.11, A1 (stanzas 1-6) sets the scene as it were, B (stanza 7-8a) represents the crux of the poem and A2 (stanzas 8b-13) returns to an aspect mentioned in A1 but in greater detail.

The same poem could also be structured differently.⁴⁷ In this alternative structure stanzas 1-3 would represent the formal prayer. Stanzas 4-6 would reflect examples from nature and mythology to illustrate the power of the god/lyre (in the past) as extolled in the first three stanzas. The following three stanzas, 7-9, would focus on the object to be persuaded by the lyre, namely Lyde. This section would end with the famous oxymoron *splendide mendax et in omne virgo nobilis aevum* (vv.35-36). This climax could very easily represent a persuasive end to a formal prayer poem. The poem of convention, however, dramatically changes into a poem of individuality in the last four stanzas. Mythology comes alive. Appearances give way to reality. The general principle of people and things forced to listen to the compelling song of the lyre (stanza 4-6) is illustrated by an individual example of someone listening. The interesting point, however, is that the implied listener is Lyde (and the reader of the poem) in the real world, not Hypermnestra's young husband from

45 Cf. Syndikus 1990:123: "Bei Horaz hat der Mythos bei weitem nicht die Bedeutung wie in der griechischen Lyrik."

46 Bradshaw (1978:156) points out that there is no justification for critics to claim Horace as the lover in this poem.

47 Cf. Syndikus (1990:123) for a simple binary structure of the poem where stanzas 1-6 depict the real situation while the remaining stanzas (7-13) focus on the mythical examples. Cf. also Bradshaw (1978:163) who sees the whole poem as oscillating between *molle* and *durum*.

mythology. The last four stanzas become, as it were, an example of the persuasive power of the lyre in action.

Both the above structures sit easily, albeit loosely, on the poem. These perspectives seem to function like the options open to a listener of a complex piece of counterpoint where the listener's concentration on a specific voice can change his experience of the music, but not the music itself.

The final point of the poem must surely be that Lyde is only asked to listen. As prayer poems go, this one seems rather vague on spelling out what it hopes to achieve. The god and the lyre are not asked to persuade Lyde to some specific course of action, but only to listen. Anything else will depend on what she (and the reader with her) is willing to hear. And it is exactly at this point that the poet has again surpassed convention. Convention might be able to reduce a situation to asking an omnipotent being for aid in a personal matter. The poet of *Odes* 3.11 has not for a single moment forgotten the real object of his song, Lyde. By asking her only to listen he takes her immaturity fully into account. He may be casting his plea to her in the form of a recognisable prayer to a god, but at the same time he indicates that he is firmly aware of reality and is not seeking a *deus ex machina* solution to a problematic situation. The solution, after all, depends on her listening not as a stubborn girl but with the realistic perspective of an adult woman.

After the indication of the poet's perceptive awareness of an alternative perspective on any given situation in *Odes* 3.11, the *tour de force* of *Odes* 3.12 is probably only to be expected. Not only does this poem use a metre (the Ionic *a minore*) which is not found anywhere else in Latin literature,⁴⁸ it also reflects, yet again, a completely different perspective on the woes of love to the one normally found in a conventional elegiac lament.⁴⁹

The poem obviously takes as backdrop an Alcaeus poem of the same metre on the same subject (Alc. fr. 10 LP). The Alcaeus type poem is an expression of the profound pain associated with unrequited love. Horace describes the same situation but from a startlingly different perspective.⁵⁰ In the typical lament for unrequited love, the protagonist suffers profound agonies as a direct result of the goddess of love's actions. The love object is generally oblivious to the whole drama. In *Odes* 3.12 the girl, Neobule, reacts to each of the conventional situations associated with the traditional lament, in a surprisingly individual way.

The opening stanza sets the extremely realistic scene for the poem. However, Neobule immediately identifies herself in terms of the elegiac convention. There is no doubt about it: she is one of the "lovesick" (*miserarum*, v.1). Instead of the expected emotional description of either the causes for her present plight or the feelings associated with her situation, she does what rejected or ignored lovers appear never to

48 Cf. Syndikus 1990:131: "Das Versmaß des Gedichtes...ist nicht nur in Horazens Werk, sonder in der ganzen lateinischen Literature ein Unikum." See also Walter Kissel 1980:125-132.

49 Cf. Syndikus 1990:133: "Erst wenn man darauf achtet, wie Alkaios' Situation bei Horaz ironisch gebrochen ist, wird das eigentliche Leben unseres Gedichtes offenbar."

50 Contra Porter (1987:177) who sees Neobule as a "passive victim unable either to take the initiative or to give play to her feelings".

be able to do. She dispassionately looks at her situation and lists her options. She can either indulge in love or drown her sorrows in drink. She even takes the consequences of either option into account by very realistically referring to an uncle's probable harsh response to either of those actions.

At the end of the first stanza it is clear to the perceptive reader that Neobule might be an elegiac heroine in terms of her situation. Her reactions to her situation, however, are refreshingly unusual. In a conventional lament for love the profound agonies suffered by the girl are manifested by her inability to concentrate on her work. In Neobule's case, no mention is made of her feelings and her inability to work is because of her lack of tools. Instead of a cruel goddess of love blighting a poor girl with unrequited love, a fun-loving side-kick, Cupid, steals Neobule's basket and loom. Mention of the list of activities stolen away by Cupid has the same effect on the reader as the listing of Neobule's options for responding to her situation in the first stanza. Neobule seems to be saying that as one of the love-sick, she cannot be expected to work, implying that in the real world a lament for unrequited love manifests itself not primarily in feelings but by a shirking of one's daily duties.

Normally the oblivious lover gets short shrift in conventional laments for love. Horace's poem asks (and answers) the very realistic question why the love object should always remain so oblivious. According to Horace's Neobule Hebrus could not possibly fit attention to a girl into his demanding schedule. More than half the Horace poem is devoted to describing Hebrus's activities. He swims in the Tiber, he outrides Bellerophon, he fights, he runs and ironically, he has enough time to hunt deer over the open planes and stalk wild-boar in the thickets. It is an added ironic touch that Neobule, whose work has been curtailed, can imagine Hebrus's activities in such detail.⁵¹ At one and the same time the Horace poem puts not only the oblivious love object into a realistic perspective but also the apparently love-lorn protagonist. The so-called love-sick heroine in this poem has shown her insight into her own options (the future, vv.1-3), her understanding of her own situation and her inability to work (the present, vv.4-5) as well as her realistic grasp of the original cause for the situation (the past, vv.6-12) where Hebrus's lack of interest could quite easily be explained in terms of his lack of time. This is not the stuff elegiac laments are made of. This perspective indicates a firm grasp on reality.

Conclusion

In *Odes* 3.7-12 Horace takes six personal relationships which could be seen to represent the subject matter associated with lyric-elegiac poetry in general. In each ode he manages to hold up the conventional portrayal or the appearances of that specific relationship whilst at the same time indicating the underlying reality encapsulated by the situation. In short the lyric poems discussed above took a situation or an elegiac convention apart in favour of an individual understanding of the reality behind the appearances implied by that situation or the convention.⁵²

51 Cf. Leach 1994:338 on such manly activities.

52 Cf. for instance Hexter (1987:139) who puts it as follows: "Poetry transmutes individuality and immortalizes impermanent life."

In *Odes* 3.7 Asterie is crying because of the appearances of an unfaithful lover, only to be shown up for her own possible real unfaithfulness. In *Odes* 3.8 Horace, a bachelor, seems to participate in a feast for married women. As it turns out this mistaken understanding of the situation is needed to make a point and persuade a friend to share the reality of some time out. *Odes* 3.9 is one of those rare love poems which has a happy ending. The competitive element contained in the form of the poem would suggest the exact opposite. However, Horace comes up with a convincing love song, because the lovers break out of the competitive mould of the song and the world of appearances and insist on viewing their situation from a more realistic and sophisticated perspective. In *Odes* 3.10 the appearances of the *exclusus amator* tradition are pulled to pieces by taking the convention to the realistic extremes implied by the logic inherent in its components. At the same time the *exclusus amator* convention as a rhetorical device succeeds in this poem, exactly because of this original and realistic use of the convention. As a prayer to a god for aid in a personal matter *Odes* 3.11 may appear not to stipulate its goals forcefully enough. However, it achieves its objective by the very realistic understatement of its aims. *Odes* 3.12 may take the form of a lover's lament, but its inexorable rhythm and Neobule's realistic analysis of the situation transcends the appearances of the merely conventional in a triumphant example of true lyric originality.

Just as the Roman *Odes* offered a different perspective on the epic convention supported by the Roman world, the six lyric poems under discussion reflected an unexpected perspective on the lyric-elegiac convention accepted in Rome.⁵³ It was Horace's aim to bring the reader to a new, even unexpected grasp of the matter in hand, at the same time confirming the very essence of lyric poetry, namely, its individual perspective. He chose to bring his reader to this understanding by playing with the contrast between the appearance embedded in the lyric convention and the reality behind it on which the convention is based. Because of Horace's song, the individuals and the relationships depicted in the previous six poems survive as a sparkling tribute to the playful interweaving of appearances and reality.

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53 From a modern point of view one could say the six Roman *Odes* represented a deconstruction of themes associated with epic poetry. In much the same way the six lyric poems discussed here represent a deconstruction of elegiac convention. In the latter case, however, it is as playful deconstruction, which at the same time illustrates the essence of what lyric poetry represents: the unexpected, creative, individual perspective on a human situation.

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