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**The Alcaic Kid (Horace, *Odes* 3.13)**

*Odes* 3.13, the vow of a *haedus*, a kid, to the *fons Bandusiae*, remains enigmatic. Nauseatingly realistic to one early 20th century critic (Campbell 1924:1f.), the poem has since been rehabilitated as Horace's commentary on the power of his own poetry: the spring will be immortalize--*me dicente* (14)--by his lyrics (Commager 1962:322ff.). More recent metapoetic readings deny any connection with reality: the *fons* and the offering are pure fiction, created by the ode and to be understood exclusively within its parameters (Smith 1975, Jameson 1997).

In this paper I propose to swing the pendulum back toward the middle, away from "zero-referentiality" to a more realistic, but not necessarily mimetic, interpretation. We may read 3.13 as a hymn by Horace the Sabine farmer, who repays the spring for nourishing his flocks, so long as we are also prepared to read it as a manifesto by Horace the poet. In fact, instructive parallels can be drawn between reality and poetry, especially as regards the kid itself, which is both a "first-fruit" offering (Cairns 1977:531) and a manifestation of the lyric program of *Odes* 1-3.

In particular, I read *et Venerem et proelia* (5) not as hendiadys, but as contrasting milestones in what would have been the kid's life: "*both love and battles.*" Such a contrast lies at the heart of the collection, in which the poet attempts again and again to reconcile the private and the public with little success--at least in the beginning. The Roman Odes (3.1-3.6) are a decisive departure from the tranquillity of Horace's Sabine estate into a bolder world of lyric; in programmatic terms, "battles" finally take their place beside "love."

The primary model for this paradox of song in the collection is Alcaeus, who sings of love during wartime (1.32.5ff) and defeats the erotic strains of Sappho with his martial poems (2.13.24ff.). Alcaeus is the first in a series of paradoxical poets in the Odes, the second being Bacchus, who as a rational instructor of poetry is declared an arbiter of peace and war (2.19.1f., 27f.). Third is Horace, a *vates biformis* at the close of the second book (2.20.2f), whose duality is manifest at the start of the third in the Roman Odes (Feeney 1993:46ff.).

So in 3.13 the kid, which perhaps at first glance looks Callimachean, stands *biformis* as a representation of the Alcaic aesthetic. Its blood transforms Horace's *fons*, and hence his own poetry, into something more apt for an Augustan age.

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