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## Civil war pollution in the *Epodes* and the *Odes* of Horace\*

*Abstract:* This paper will examine the use of the vocabulary of religious pollution in Horace's *Epodes* and *Odes* and its connection to the causes of the civil war and the potential role of Augustus as expiator. First, I will discuss the Roman notions of pollution, especially as they relate to bloodshed. I will then provide a sequential overview vocabulary used in the *Epodes* (7 and 16) and the *Odes* (1.2, 35; 2.1; 3.1–6, 24), which demonstrate a gradual movement from pessimism to guarded optimism. The main trends that can be observed are the shifting of the blame for the cause of the civil war from the ancestral guilt originating with Romulus' murder of Remus to the overall degradation of morals, and fashioning Augustus as the potential, and eventually real, expiator of the civil war pollution and restorer of order. I will conclude with a reading of *Odes* 4.5 and 15, which depict the age of Augustus as purified.

*Keywords:* Horace, Latin poetry, civil war, pollution, purification, Augustus.

In Latin literature, the language of pollution is often summoned up in times of crisis, especially an internal crisis that shakes the foundations of the Roman state. It permeates Cicero's Catilinarian orations and *post reditum* speeches, where Cicero relies on the lived religious experience of his audience and lingers for a long time in the literary realm, as can be seen from the discourse about pollution prominent in the poetry written during and after the civil war. Horace discusses the civil war more than any other Augustan poet, especially in the *Epodes* and the *Odes*. The continuity in his treatment of this topic has been noticed by scholars but has not been fully explored.<sup>1</sup> Attitude towards civil unrest in Horace's works can be divided into three phases: the *Epodes*, which still carry republican sentiments and are largely pessimistic about the possibility of an end to the violence; *Odes* 1–3, which are mediating between the republican and the imperial, looking cautiously at an uncertain future; and *Odes* 4, which have internalized Augustan ideology.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will argue that the vocabulary of pollution and purification in the

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<sup>1</sup> VIZZOTTI 2012, NASTA 2001, WALLACE-HADRILL 1982, 25–26, GRIMAL 1975.

<sup>2</sup> MUTSCHLER 1989.

Horatian corpus can be used to trace the evolution of attitudes towards the cause of the civil war and the possibility of its return.

Before turning to Horace, however, I will briefly outline Roman notions of pollution. A polluting act is one that transgresses boundaries and threatens the *pax deorum*, the delicate balance that preserves the good will of the gods towards the Roman state.<sup>3</sup> Pollution involved the mixing of sacred and profane, as well as the transgression of bodily integrity, the most extreme of which was violent murder. On the other hand, purification is an act that attempts to mend the *pax deorum* and restore social order. It should be noted that this also makes pollution a social and political category in Rome, which will be important for the way Horace handles this concept. Unlike the Greeks, who had specific terms for pollution (μίασμα and ἄγος), Romans preferred no particular term and used more concrete words for physical staining and touching, such as *tangere*, *inquinare*, *polluere* and their derivatives.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, purification is denoted by the vocabulary of physical cleansing, typically by means of water (*abluerē*, *purgare*).<sup>5</sup> Much of this vocabulary is not inherently religious, although it can have religious connotations depending on context. Some words, however, enter the territory of more metaphorical concepts of pollution and purification, and the most important for this study are *scelus* and *expiare*. I will discuss other words as they appear during the analysis of particular texts. *Scelus* does not refer to any kind of physical pollution and usually means crime or wickedness.<sup>6</sup> In a religious sense, actions categorized under this word greatly offended the gods and required purification. In the vocabulary of purification, the verb *expiare* similarly has little to do with physical cleansing but is often associated with the removal of a stain or punishment.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in Cicero sometimes *scelus* and *expiare* are found together when expiation of serious crimes is discussed.<sup>8</sup> The coupling of these two words will also be present in Horace's poetry about the civil war, which was seen as the ultimate *scelus*, and the possibility of its expiation is brought into question in the *Epodes*, to which I will move next.

*Epodes* 7 and 16, probably written in the early 30s after the escalation of tensions between Octavian and Antony, exemplify the use of some key vocabulary of pollu-

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<sup>3</sup> LENNON 2014, 53.

<sup>4</sup> The classic study of pollution in the Greek world is PARKER 1983. More recent studies include VIDOVIĆ 2021, PETROVIC / PETROVIC 2016 and BENDLIN 2007. The main book-length study of pollution in the Roman world is LENNON 2014, as well as a lexical study by THOME 1992. There is also some minor treatment of the topic in earlier works on Roman religion, such as LATTE 1960, 47–50; WISSOWA 1912, 416 and WARDE-FOWLER 1911, 68–69. Lennon and Parker both owe a great deal to the work of DOUGLAS 1966.

<sup>5</sup> FANTHAM 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Etymologically *scelus* means “bent” or “crooked” and is related to the Greek σκέλος and σκολιός. See discussions in LENNON 2014, 39–41; THOME 1992; 77–78 and DE VAAN 2008 s.v. *scelus*.

<sup>7</sup> LENNON 2014, 35–36.

<sup>8</sup> Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 4.11, *Phil.* 1.30, *Pis.* 85.

tion in a civil war context.<sup>9</sup> In *Epodes* 7, the speaker addresses the *scelesti*, wicked Romans engaging in internecine warfare, deploring the fact that Roman blood is not being spilled in order to conquer enemies, but to destroy the city itself. The reason for this madness is found in an ancestral curse and the guilt for the civil war is framed in religious terminology (Hor. *Epod.* 7.1–4, 13–20):

Quo, quo scelesti ruitis? aut cur dexteris  
aptantur enses conditi?  
parumne campis atque Neptuno super  
fusum est Latini sanguinis

...

furorne caecus an rapit vis acrior  
an culpa? responsum date.  
tacent et albus ora pallor inficit  
mentesque percussae stupent.  
sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt  
scelusque fraternae necis,  
ut inmerentis fluxit in terram Remi  
sacer nepotibus cruor.

Where, oh where do you rush, you wicked men? Why are you drawing swords already sheathed? Has not enough Latin blood been shed on land and sea...? Is it blind madness, a very violent force or guilt? Give an answer! They are quiet and a ghastly paleness colors their faces while their minds are shocked and stunned. So it is: a cruel fate and the crime of a brother's murder are driving the Romans ever since innocent Remus' blood, bringing a curse upon his descendents, spilled on the ground.<sup>10</sup>

Words of interest here are *scelesti*, *scelus* and *sacer*. *Scelesti* and *scelus* belong to the same family and their varied repetition in the beginning and the end creates a ring composition which reinforces the pessimistic atmosphere of the inescapability of the crime of the civil war. In Horace's construction of Roman history, he avoids discussing socio-political causes of events as a historiographer would, choosing to rely on aetiology. In the case of this poem, the cause of the civil war is to be found in Rome's mythic past with Romulus' murder of Remus.<sup>11</sup>

The poem ends with the image of *sacer nepotibus cruor*, Remus' spilled blood that started the ancestral curse that continuously haunts Rome. The adjective *sacer* itself is ambiguous, as it can mean both "consecrated" and "accursed". The person qualified by this adjective is considered to be off-limits to humans, consecrated to

<sup>9</sup> I follow Watson's dating of *Epodes* 7 and 16 around 39–38 BCE (WATSON 2003, 487–488).

<sup>10</sup> The text of Horace is from SHACKLETON BAILEY 2008. All translations are my own.

<sup>11</sup> NASTA 2001, 71–72.

the gods for good or bad reasons.<sup>12</sup> In this *Epode*, Horace combines individual guilt, exemplified through the notion of having a guilty conscience that was emerging in the Late Republic, and collective guilt that comes from ancestral curses in Greek tragedy.<sup>13</sup> He thus explains the cause of the civil wars through a combination of Roman religious experience and motifs from Greek tragedy, tracing the origin of the conflict down to Romulus. Just like in the house of Tantalus, once blood has been spilled and hubris has been committed, the following generations are compelled to keep perpetuating the curse. Blood spilled in murder is also the greatest source of pollution in Greek and Roman religion, and this fact was an important topic in literature from the *Oresteia* onward.

In *Epodes* 16, towards the end of the collection, Horace returns to the topic of the civil war, but this time offering a possible way out through an escapist fantasy. The poem starts with a lament of the state of Rome, which sees another generation lost to civil war, and a prediction that Romans will bring ruin upon themselves, not some foreign enemy (Hor. *Epod.* 16.1–2, 9–10):

Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas,  
suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit...  
impia perdemus devoti sanguinis aetas  
ferisque rursus occupabitur solum.

Another generation is being wasted through civil wars and Rome is rushing into ruin by its own power... We will destroy Rome, an immoral generation bearing a curse in our blood; the land will once again be occupied by beasts.

The mention of cursed blood evokes the closing image of *Epodes* 7, where the murder of Remus is considered to be the main source of pollution.<sup>14</sup> The blood of this generation is qualified with the adjective *devotus* used in the particular meaning “made over to the *di inferi*”, and is used again by Horace in this meaning to describe the tree that almost fell on him.<sup>15</sup> Horace then proposes that the few good people still left in Rome should flee and start a new life in the far West, on the co-called Isles of the Blessed. The only conditions under which they should return are a list of adynata ending with paradoxical animal couplings.<sup>16</sup> These

<sup>12</sup> LENNON 2014, 43–44; AGAMBEN 1998: 75–80; BENVENISTE 1969, 187–192.

<sup>13</sup> THOME 1992: 89–90. For ancestral fault in Greek literature see GAGNÉ 2013.

<sup>14</sup> For structural and thematic parallels between *Epodes* 7 and 16 see CARRUBBA 1969: 38–40.

<sup>15</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.27: *devota...arbor*. In this particular instance, *devotus* preserves the original force of the downward trajectory of the preposition *de* (NISBET / RUDD 2004, 65; BOWDITCH 2001, 87–89).

<sup>16</sup> Horace's image of cattle having no fear of lions (*Epod.* 16.33 *credula nec rivos timeant armenta leones*) is reminiscent of the description of the same image in Vergil (*Ecl.* 4.22 *nec magnos metuent*

islands are described using imagery that is reminiscent of the Golden Age, with the earth producing crops of its own accord and humans and animals being safe from predators, severe weather and disease. It is notable that in the statement that “no diseases will harm the cattle” (61 *nulla nocent pecori contagia*) Horace chooses the word *contagium* since words that denote touching often also carry the connotation of infecting with pollution through a physical touch.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that the cattle would not only be safe from disease, but also that they are located far away from any kind of pollution. The islands are also untouched by any previous explorers or wanderers, such as Odysseus or the Argonauts. This piece of land is said to have been preserved in time and set aside by Jupiter for a dutiful nation “when he debased the golden age with bronze” (64 *ut inquinavit aere tempus aureum*). The verb *inquinare* is very commonly used for pollution, which might imply that the overall degradation of humanity with each passing age also gave humans a propensity towards wicked deeds that harm their relationship with the gods. Nevertheless, the speculation about a mythical land free from any kind of pollution suggests the existence of a faint optimism about a better future, even if it can only be found outside of Italy.

The *Epodes* establish a bleak image of the future of Rome, and in spite of the Augustan settlement and the establishment of peace, anxiety over the consequences of the civil war persists in the first three books of the *Odes*. They were published in 23 BCE, a decade scarred with internal instability since Augustus was in poor health and the question of who was going to inherit the throne was still not entirely solved. This crisis of the Principate can be felt in Horace’s hesitation to fully embrace the idea that this new era is a blissful golden age.<sup>18</sup> One we do find in the *Odes*, however, is the idea of Augustus as a potential purifier of civil war pollution. This is initiated at the very outset in *Odes* 1.2, which begins with a description of a cataclysmic flooding of the Tiber. In the second half of the poem, the narrative switches to discussing this event as a prodigy, a sign that the *pax deorum* has been compromised and must be restored through proper religious rites.<sup>19</sup> When this kind of disturbance happens, the gods would send portents which would be brought to the attention of the Senate, and proper expiation rites would be performed to appease the gods. The practice of expiation, however, fell out of practice in the Late Republic and in

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*armenta leones*). These two poems are considered to be roughly contemporary, and the contrast between Horace’s pessimistic outlook and escapist tendencies and Vergil’s optimism has sparked much scholarly debate on the relative chronology of these poems (for a discussion of the relative chronology see WATSON 2003, 489, who ultimately leans towards Vergilian primacy). The debate over chronology is, however, not relevant to my discussion since it would not contribute much to the topic of the overall development of the description of the civil wars.

<sup>17</sup> LENNON 2014, 31.

<sup>18</sup> For the use of Horace’s poetry as a historical document see KIENAST 1971.

<sup>19</sup> WALLACE-HADRILL 1982, 24.

the Early Principate became uncommon and mostly connected with the Imperial family.<sup>20</sup> As we can see in Horace, however, the religious discourse about expiation was still being used to articulate a major breach of the contract with the divine.<sup>21</sup> This breach was caused by a major *scelus*, namely the civil war, and the question is raised about the possibility of expiation (Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.21–30):

audiet civis acuisse ferrum,  
quo graves Persae melius perirent,  
audiet pugnas vitio parentum  
rara iuventus.  
  
quem vocet divum populus ruentis  
imperi rebus? prece qua fatigent  
virgines sanctae minus audientem  
carmina Vestam?  
  
cui dabit partis scelus expiandi  
Iuppiter?

The citizen will hear about iron being sharpened, which should have rather been used to kill Persians; the youth, decimated by their parents' crimes, will hear about battles. Which god will the people call for the sake of their crumbling power? With what prayer will the holy virgins vex Vesta who no longer listens? To whom will Jupiter give the role of expiating the crime?

The narrator seems to express concern that the future generations of Romans will repeat the crimes of their parents, which is evocative of the sentiment in the *Epodes*. The Roman state is still seen as rushing into disaster, and the use of *ruentis* specifically evokes the beginnings of *Epod.* 7 and 16. The question of expiation is followed by a list of possible deities; Apollo, Venus and Mars are dismissed, and the narrator finally urges Mercury to come down and take on the form of Caesar's avenger. The idea of a god performing expiation is curious, but the figure of Augustus identified with a divinity is not without precedent in Hellenistic ruler cults and contemporary developments in the eastern parts of the empire.<sup>22</sup> With Augustus as the divine expiator, Rome can begin its return to order after a period of crisis in which all boundaries were transgressed. The great transgression of the civil war is the direction of Roman violence towards its own people, which should be redirected towards external enemies. The boundaries of Rome are redrawn and in the very last two verses of the poem (51–52 *neu sinas Medos equitare inultos | te duce, Caesar*)

<sup>20</sup> For prodigies in Roman religion see RASMUSSEN 2003, ROSENBERGER 1998 and LIEBESCHUETZ 1979, 7–29. For a reassessment of prodigies in the Early Principate see SANTANGELO 2019.

<sup>21</sup> BOWDITCH 2001, 68.

<sup>22</sup> For a more extensive discussion see SLOAN 2019 and NISBET / HUBBARD 1970, 34–36.

Augustus is juxtaposed to the Parthians, an external enemy pushed to the margins of both the text and the Roman *imperium*.<sup>23</sup> In the final two stanzas, Augustus is asked not to abandon his earthly rule any time soon, but to stay and enjoy triumphs, which signify the defeat over external enemies, and titles such as *pater* and *princeps*, which signify that he saved the country.<sup>24</sup> The title of *pater patriae* was also closely associated with Augustus' self-fashioning as a new Romulus, and this should not surprise us, since this can be seen even in the case of Cicero identifying himself with Romulus during the Catilinarian conspiracy.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that Augustus identified himself with Romulus must inevitably come to odds with Horace's statement from the *Epodes* that the pollution Romulus incurred after killing his brother has been spread over the Roman people like an ancestral curse. Because of this apparent contradiction, in the *Odes* there is a movement towards a new understanding of the causes of the civil war, while the character of Romulus is realigned with Augustus.<sup>26</sup> Already in *Carm.* 1.2 Augustus is shown as potentially fleeing earth in disgust over the vices of the Romans (47 *vitiis iniquum*), and it is this general moral decay that will become the focus of Horace's civil war poems. Already in the next poem, which is dedicated to Vergil, the verb *ruere*, markedly connected to the Romans in the civil war, comes to signify a universal tendency: "daring enough to endure anything, humanity rushes into ruin through forbidden wickedness" (1.3.25–26 *audax omnia perpeti | gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas*). This tendency is most prominent in *Carm.* 1.35, a hymn to Fortuna. The final three stanzas present a prayer for the goddess to be favorable to Augustus in his expeditions in the farthest regions of the West and East. The mention of war, however, immediately reminds Horace of the civil war and an unexpected addition in the form of a lament is found in the conclusion of the poem (Hor. *Carm.* 1.35:33–40):

heu heu, cicatricum et sceleris pudet  
fratrumque. quid nos dura refugimus  
aetas? quid intactum nefasti  
liquimus? unde manum iuventus  
metu deorum continuit? quibus  
pepercit aris? o utinam nova  
incude diffingas retusum in  
Massagetis Arabasque ferrum.

<sup>23</sup> OLIENSIS 1998, 105–106.

<sup>24</sup> Even though Augustus was officially awarded the title of *pater patriae* in 2 BCE, the idea was present beforehand (NISBET / HUBBARD 1970, 38–39).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Cic. *Cat.* 3.2. For Augustus' identification with Romulus see ZANKER 1988, 192–215; GAGÉ 1930 and SCOTT 1925.

<sup>26</sup> BARCARO 2007, 39–40; NASTA 2001, 73–79.

Ah, the scars and crimes of brothers are shameful! What acts have we, such a harsh generation, shied away from? What have we left untouched in our wickedness? From what has the youth restrained its hand out of fear of the gods? What altars have they spared? O may you reforge the blunted weapons on a new anvil to use against the Massagetae and the Arabs!

Lament was not a common part of ancient prayers, and this Horatian innovation seems to mimic an emotional outburst.<sup>27</sup> The verse composition imitates the disorder of civil war, since the clauses are crossing the boundaries of the lines, until they are subdued by the mention of external enemies in the final verse, marking the boundary of the poem.<sup>28</sup> In this account, the personal guilt of those who took part in the war is what is being emphasized. We may see vocabulary reminiscent of the *scelus fraternae necis* and the ancestral curse that it implies, but the overall atmosphere of the passage draws us more to the immediate events of the war and instances of actual fratricide that occurred in it.<sup>29</sup> Besides *scelus*, the vocabulary of pollution as disease is present again through *intactum*, and this time the polluted touching is committed directly by the sinful generation of the Late Republic.

Before moving to the Roman Odes, it is necessary to mention *Carm.* 2.1, since this poem establishes a generic paradigm that explains the religious discourse used in the Roman Odes.<sup>30</sup> As we have seen in the *Epodes*, Horace establishes a tragic pattern in the form of a family curse which is the main cause of the civil war. In the *Odes*, the tragic foundations on which Horace builds the story of the civil war are more profound. He creates an amalgam between Roman religious experience and Greek literary tradition by fashioning himself as a *sacerdos*, an official state priest, and by rewriting Roman history as a tragedy. As a priest, he then dedicates his poetry as a propitiatory offering meant to expiate the Roman audience. It is no coincidence, then, that the addressee of 2.1 is Asinius Pollio, celebrated both as a historiographer who wrote about the civil war and as a tragedian. In the beginning, Pollio is characterized as a historiographer writing about the civil wars and one part of his subject matter are “the bloody arms that have not yet been expiated” (4–5 *arma | nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus*). After listing Pollio’s virtues, Horace moves on to praising the vividness and content of his historical writings, with special emphasis on the character of Cato.<sup>31</sup> There is much Roman blood towards the end of this poem (*Latino sanguine, Daunia...caedes, cruore nostro*), which frames

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of parallels with examples from Judaism and Christianity see PÖSCHL 1991, 62–63.

<sup>28</sup> OLIENSIS 1998, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Some examples of poems about fratricide are attested in the *Latin Anthology* (*Anth. Lat.* 642, 643).

<sup>30</sup> BOWDITCH 2001, 65–72.

<sup>31</sup> VIZZOTTI 2012 studies the reception of Cato’s character in Lucan and argues that Lucan uses Horatian language to fashion Cato into the figure of an expiator.

the poem in vocabulary of pollution. This makes it similar to the end of 1.35, but Horace finds himself a way out of this bleak scenario by urging his Muse to move away from dirges to poetry on a lighter note.

The Roman Odes provide the most extensive treatment of the causes of the civil war and, many themes from 1.35 and 2.1 are expanded here.<sup>32</sup> In *Odes* 3.1, the first stanza is significant because Horace refers to himself as a priest (*sacerdos*), which gives him an official state function and a public voice (Hor. *Carm.* 3.1.1–4):

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo;  
favete linguis: carmina non prius  
audita Musarum sacerdos  
virginibus puerisque canto.

I despise the uninitiated crowd and keep away from it. Be silent! As priest of the muses, I sing the songs no one listened to before to girls and boys.

If we assume that this stanza serves as an introduction to the entirety of the Roman Odes, the youths he is singing to might be the new generation of Romans, unspoiled by the pollution of the civil war, which must be properly educated to avoid the fate of their predecessors, the *profanum vulgus*. The boys and girls would then be the same as the *rara iuventus* in *Carm.* 1.2.24, although there was anxiety that this youth would repeat the mistakes of their parents. The *carmina non prius audita*, besides being a statement on poetic originality, could be read as “poems no one paid attention to before”, referring to similar messages about the civil war found in the *Epodes*.<sup>33</sup> If Horace is a priest, then his poetry must serve as an offering meant to expiate the pollution brought on by the civil war. He “purifies” his audience by telling them about the causes of the civil war using moralizing and religious language which claims that the war was caused by vices and moral decay.

In *Carm.* 3.2, we see a further development of the military theme from previously discussed poems. Just like Roman weapons are meant to be reforged on a new anvil and directed towards enemies, so will a new hardened Roman soldier strike fear in the hearts of the Parthians. This new soldier is not tarnished by greed, a vice responsible for plunging the republic into civil strife but has instead learned to suffer through hardship and poverty, thus continuing the theme of rejecting wealth from the end of the previous poem. What must be strived for is true virtue, which is described in a Lucretian manner as something that lies beyond the Sisyphean

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<sup>32</sup> GRIMAL 1975 argues that expounding the causes of the civil war is the unifying theme of the Roman Odes, along with Epicureanism.

<sup>33</sup> SILK 1973, 132–138; GRIMAL 1975, 140; WOODMAN 2021, 80.

labors of the competition for political office, “shining in untainted honors” (18 *intaminatis fulget honoribus*).<sup>34</sup> The use of the adjective *intaminatus*, opposite of *contaminatus*, makes us think of the discourse of purity and pollution again, this time in a moralizing context. The true *honores* are not political office, but the attainment of *virtus*, a proper way of life that is free from all polluting factors that would be considered detrimental to the Roman state. *Ode* 3.5 has further comments on the importance of moral purity of soldiers. The Roman soldiers captured after Crassus’ catastrophic defeat at Carrhae now live far away from their homes with foreign wives, which the narrator sees as a disgraceful abandonment of Roman values.<sup>35</sup> These marriages are comparable to Antony’s relationship with Cleopatra, which Horace represented in *Epod.* 9 and *Carm.* 1.37 as shameful servitude of a Roman soldier to Eastern degeneracy. What follows is a speech by Regulus, a Roman general from the First Punic war, in which he argues against ransoming imprisoned Roman soldiers from Carthage, claims in an ironic statement that a soldier bought back by ransom would not be as eager to fight. We can interpret these lines as an extreme application of the idea that gold corrupts, since these soldiers would have technically been bought back and therefore had some kind of contact with gold. Furthermore, just like Crassus’ soldiers, the Roman soldiers captured by Carthaginians are now *de facto* corrupted, since they are technically foreign slaves deprived of *virtus*, which they will never be able to take back. This permanent stain is compared to wool never going back to its original color once it has been stained with dye (28 *lana...medicata fuco*). Although *medicari* has no attested use as a verb of pollution, the staining metaphor within a moralizing context may evoke the idea that gold is a polluting substance analogous to dye. The new generation of soldiers, however, appears to be free from the polluting stain of the civil war and not as likely to be corrupted by gold.

*Carm.* 3.3 and 3.4 are more concerned with the causes of the civil war than with its consequences. *Carm.* 3.3 begins with a statement that the man who is just and steadfast should not be moved by any disturbances in the human and natural world and should face destructive blows without fear (7–8 *impavidum ferient ruinae*). The use of *ruinae* can be read as a continuous reference to the language used to describe the civil war since the beginning of *Epodes* 7. The ode proceeds with a catalog of brave heroes and gods which ends with the entrance of Quirinus, the divinized Romulus, and the anticipation of Augustus joining their ranks. As mentioned earlier, due to Augustus fashioning himself as a new Romulus, the image of Romulus as a polluted killer had to be changed to be more in line with the image of Augustus, so Horace chose to anticipate Augustus’ divinization through the apotheosis of

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Lucr.* 3.995–1002.

<sup>35</sup> *OLIENSIS* 1998, 125.

Romulus. Before Romulus is divinized, however, Juno, a traditional enemy of Troy and Rome, holds a speech in which she first lays out the causes of Troy's destruction (Hor. *Carm.* 3.3.18–22):

...Ilion, Ilion  
fatalis incestusque iudex  
et mulier peregrina vertit  
in pulverem, ex quo destituit deos  
mercede pacta Laomedon...

Troy, Troy was turned to dust by the deadly unchaste judge and the foreign woman, after Laomedon cheated the gods even though the pay was settled...

The *iudex* is Paris and the modifier *incestus* suggests that his act of adultery is polluting, especially since it involves Helen, a foreign woman. The connection between corruption of morals and foreign women is also present in 3.5 with the wives of captive Roman soldiers. Paris and Helen can also be compared to Anthony and Cleopatra, which is part of a larger parallel between the Trojan war and the civil war.<sup>36</sup> Laomedon's refusal to give Apollo and Poseidon proper compensation for building the walls of Troy is claimed to be the cause of divine anger.<sup>37</sup> If we compare this with Horace's construction of Rome's history, it becomes evident that Rome's misfortune is also caused by disrespect of a contract with the gods. Juno allows the apotheosis of Romulus-Quirinus and the territorial expansion of Rome, but warns against the allure of gold which, as we have seen from previous poems, has the ability to generate avarice and corrupt Roman soldiers. This blessed future will, however, be possible under one condition: Romans are never to rebuild Troy. As Juno puts it, the future generations of Rome might be tempted to do this in an act of excessive *pietas*, a problem completely opposite to that of the impious generation of the civil wars. In the final stanza, like in 2.1, Horace addresses his Muse and asks her to change the tune away from such serious topics to a lighter note. *Odes* 3.4 is an overall praise of good judgement and prudence, and in the second half the civil wars may be seen in the description of the Gigantomachy. These mythological exempla of wild hubristic Giants attacking the Olympian gods can be read as Octavian's enemies in the civil war and as vices attacking the foundation of the Roman state.<sup>38</sup> The cause of the civil war may be laid out in one line: "power without prudence crumbles under its own weight" (65 *vis consili expers mole ruit sua*). The Giants are doomed to fail in their advances upon the order of Jupiter since they are tinged by *nefas* and have no reason or moral boundaries which could make them pure.

<sup>36</sup> NASTA 2001, 77–78.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Verg. *G.* 1.150–151; *Aen.* 1.292.

<sup>38</sup> GRIMAL 1975, 150–152.

The Roman Odes end on a pessimistic note that continues the sentiment from the *Epodes*.

*Carm.* 3.6 offers the same anxious atmosphere as 2.1, but there is no resolution in the end in the form of a intrusion of Horace's more private poetic persona. Schenker argues that in the Roman Odes we can see the interplay between Horace's public and private voice, except in 3.6, which is completely immersed in the public.<sup>39</sup> This poem looks to the future and contains more vocabulary of pollution than any other Roman Ode. Its addressee is an unnamed Roman (Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.1–4):

Delicta maiorum inmeritus lues,  
Romane, donec templa refeceris  
aedisque labentis deorum et  
foeda nigro simulacra fumo.

You will pay for the crimes of your ancestors, Roman, although blameless, until you rebuild the temples, the crumbling homes of the gods and the statues stained with black smoke.

The identity of this Roman is disputed, although I agree with the proposition that it is Augustus.<sup>40</sup> In that case, Augustus now holds no personal blame (*inmeritus*) for the civil war since he has been disassociated from the polluted image of Romulus and realigned with the divinized Quirinus. The choice of the verb *luere* implies religious purification through washing used to absolve religious offences and restore order.<sup>41</sup> This verb is perfectly appropriate, given that in the rest of the stanza the addressee will have to repair temples and statues which have been made abhorrent to look at (*foeda*).<sup>42</sup> The adjective *foedus* and related words are also a part of polluting vocabulary and create a pair with *luere*. As the narrative progresses to the causes of this polluted state, the first element said to be affected was the family: “generations abounding in vice first defiled marriage, family and the home” (17–18 *fecunda culpae saecula nuptias | primum inquinavere et genus et domos*). We have already seen the verb *inquinare* in *Epod.* 16 to describe the debasement of humanity in the Bronze Age, and the meaning here is more explicitly connected to the degradation of Roman morality. The pollution comes from an immoral woman who was taught to corrupt Roman men from an early age by Greek arts, which is similar

<sup>39</sup> SCHENKER 1993, 163–166. Unlike in 2.1 or 3.3, the response to the pessimistic end of the Roman Odes may be found in the next group of poems in Book 3 (7–15), which are of a more private character.

<sup>40</sup> WOODMAN 2021, 161–163.

<sup>41</sup> LENNON 2014, 35.

<sup>42</sup> For historical sources on Augustus' rebuilding projects see NISBET / RUDD 2004, 97.

to the stereotypes against foreign women as corrupting in previous odes.<sup>43</sup> This woman is opposed to the strict Sabine mother, a relic from an idealized rustic era, untouched by corruption attained through territorial expansion. The poem ends with a pessimistic outlook on future generational decline (Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.45–48):

damnosa quid non inminuit dies?  
aetas parentum peior avis tulit  
nos nequiores, mox daturos  
progeniem vitiosiore.

What does the destructive passage of time not diminish? The generation of our parents, worse than our grandparents, has brought forth us wretches, who will soon give an even more despicable progeny.

If we consider the proposition that this is the earliest Roman Ode, written after Actium, the anxiety and pessimism could be easily explained.<sup>44</sup> We can see that as Horace moves chronologically, major changes are visible in comparison to the *Epodes*. The use of tragedy as a model for Roman history remains, but the pattern of a family curse originating from Romulus has been replaced with a more general divine punishment for hubristic behavior. The new role of Romulus is as a model for Augustus, a divinized ruler and father of the fatherland. This switch meant that the cause of the civil war now rests solely on moral degradation which causes pollution.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the task falls upon Augustus to act as expiator of the civil war pollution and restorer of old Roman morality, two roles Horace conflates into one.<sup>46</sup>

In 3.24, Horace mentions more explicitly the involvement of Augustus himself as an expiator. Since the theme is a diatribe, the poem is sometimes considered to be an early composition, but it nevertheless contains important themes that were developed in the Roman Odes.<sup>47</sup> It begins as a diatribe against wealth, looking favorably at the simplicity of life and moral superiority of the Scythians and Getae, who serve as a negative foil for Rome's moral degradation. Augustus is introduced indirectly as someone who should want to "do away with the wretched slaughter and civil madness" (25–26 *impias | caedis et rabiem tollere civicam*). This figure will also be awarded the title *pater*, which is a clear reference to Augustus, as

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<sup>43</sup> For a study of Horace's use of gender binaries through the lens of nationalist ideology see SHUMATE 2005.

<sup>44</sup> FRAENKEL 1957, 285; GRIMAL 1975, 154.

<sup>45</sup> GRIMAL 1975, 154–155.

<sup>46</sup> LIEBESCHUETZ 1979, 56.

<sup>47</sup> FRAENKEL 1957, 240–242.

was seen already in *Carm.* 1.2.<sup>48</sup> The remarkable element, however, is the direct connection between removing the stain of the civil war with moral reforms.<sup>49</sup> The murder of Remus is no longer considered as a cause of the civil war; instead, moral degradation is the only factor that must be treated in earnest in order to purify the Roman state. Legal reforms are not enough, unless they are supported by a change in the mindset of the Romans, who have, according to the narrator, learned to despise virtue, presumably during the civil war. Proposed ways for Romans to rid themselves of corrupting treasure are either depositing it in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus or disposing it in the Tyrrhenian Sea (*Hor. Carm.* 3.24.45–50):

vel nos in Capitolium,  
quo clamor vocat et turba faventium,  
vel nos in mare proximum  
gemmas et lapides aurum et inutile,  
summi materiem mali,  
mittamus, scelerum si bene paenitet.

If we truly regret our crimes, let us send our jewels, precious stones and woeful gold, the cause of our greatest trouble, to the Capitol, to which the shouts of approving citizens summon us, or throw them into the nearest sea.

The *scelera* that Romans are expected to atone for are the civil wars, and this process is framed as purification. Commentators do not seem to mention reading these proposals through the lens of purification rituals, since impure matter needed to be safely contained or completely removed. This kind of interpretation seems appropriate in this case, since riches are a source of greed, one of the factors that pollute the Roman people. Horace may be proposing throwing the gold and jewelry into the Tiber, from where it would be taken to the sea, which was considered a place of no return. This procedure was commonly used for dirt originating from sacred spaces or objects and living creatures considered impure.<sup>50</sup> All of this must happen under the condition that the people have truly repented for the crimes of the civil war (*scelerum si bene paenitet*). Furthermore, the reform of the *mores*, which is more important than the legislation, is twofold. First, the roots of avarice must be purged from the Roman mind, which must then be made stronger through effort. Augustus' purification project is therefore shown to be much deeper and more ambitious than just passing new laws. The historical reality, however, was riddled with crises and left place for anxiety, since this major task fell upon one man who was also the sole ruler and whose death might be a signal for disorder

<sup>48</sup> For discussions of Augustus as *pater* see WOODMAN 2021, 313–314 and NISBET / RUDD 2004, 283.

<sup>49</sup> LIEBESCHUETZ 1979, 91.

<sup>50</sup> LENNON 2014, 47.

and internal strife to return again. It is because of these instabilities that the Roman Odes end with pessimism and Horace's work does not depict a purified present and an idealized future.

As a conclusion, I will analyze two poems in the fourth book of the *Odes* in which Horace revisits the themes of pollution and Augustus' role as expiator. *Odes* 4 was most likely published in 13 BCE, after Augustus had achieved some important historical milestones: he passed new moral legislation, received the captured standards from the Parthians, and held the Secular Games in 17 BCE, for which Horace composed the *Carmen Saeculare*.<sup>51</sup> This was an Augustan age different from the one in the first three books of the *Odes*, since the transition from Republic to Empire was complete. There is little room for doubt in this new world, and Horace appears to embrace the propaganda about the stability and grandeur of Rome.<sup>52</sup> One example of this is *Carm.* 4.5. which anticipates Augustus' return from military campaigns in Gaul. Horace begins with an imprecation to the emperor himself, addressed as "the child of good gods, best guardian of the people of Romulus" (1–2 *divis orte bonis, optime Romulae | custos gentis*). This characterization of the Roman people through an adjective derived from Romulus shows that the narrative of Romulus as the progenitor of Roman pollution is not active anymore in an Augustan context. To return to the theme of borders and marginalization, the empire is now perceived as a safe and pure space, and the *patria* is compared to a mother waiting for her child, signifying both territorial and moral integrity.<sup>53</sup> The poem then moves into the idealized vision of Italy as a place similar the Golden Age with land producing its own crops, animals roaming completely safe (*Hor. Carm.* 4.5.17–24):

tutus bos etenim rura perambulat,  
nutrit rura Ceres almaque Faustitas,  
pacatum volitant per mare navitae,  
culpari metuit fides,  
  
nullis polluitur casta domus stupris,  
mos et lex maculosum edomuit nefas,  
laudantur simili prole puerperae,  
culpam poena premit comes.

For the ox roams the countryside in safety, Ceres and kindly Prosperity nourish the land, sailors course over the safe seas, faith shrinks from blame, the pure household is not polluted by any disgrace, custom and law have subdued the defiled crimes, mothers are praised for having children similar to their fathers, punishment presses upon guilt, which is never far behind.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion on the date of the publication of Book 4 and the relative chronology of individual poems see THOMAS 2011, 5–7.

<sup>52</sup> FRAENKEL 1957, 440; see also THOMAS 2011; 12.

<sup>53</sup> OLIENSIS 1998, 216.

These lines are important because they provide a conclusion to Horace's construction of a mythologized and moralized Roman history that he has been building since the *Epodes*. The Golden Age imagery in the first stanza is evocative of the fantastic island in *Epod.* 16. The cattle on the island are free from diseases, just like the Italian ox is safe. The second stanza serves as an answer to the anxiety and hesitation which Horace has felt over addressing the expiation of the crimes of the civil war. Every household is *casta*, a word generally used for sexual purity, but also as an opposite of *scelus*.<sup>54</sup> Both meanings are applicable here, since the immediate context of the stanza calls for the connotation of marital fidelity, but in the wider civil war discourse the current *castitas* of Rome is meant to oppose its earlier *scelus*. In the next verse, the unwritten and the written law have both triumphed over any sort of activity that might disturb the *pax deorum*, Rome's official contract with the divine that guarantees her lasting glory. In 3.24, it was established that *mores* and *leges* must exist together to assure a proper reform of the Roman people, and in 4.5 we see that Augustus' mission is apparently successful, as exemplified by the use of the perfect tense. The concern over the corruption of women that was so prominent in 3.6 has also been alleviated, since Roman wives are now proven to be faithful. The guilt referred to in the end is that of extramarital affairs, now regulated by *leges* and discouraged by *mores*. In the rest of the poem, Augustus' divinity is confirmed by his inclusion into the household Lares and through a parallel with the hero cults of Heracles and Castor in Greece, which is another continuation of the fashioning of Augustus as a divinized Romulus.

In 4.15, all the questions and anxieties raised in *Odes* 1–3 are revisited one last time. In this *recusatio* of epic themes, in a typical Callimachean manner, Apollo admonishes Horace for attempting to write about grand epic themes connected with war. In the following three stanzas, Horace lays out all the benefits of Augustan peace, using the perfect tense throughout to signify the finality and completeness of the expiation project that has been laid out in 1.2. The age of Augustus is again like a Golden age in which fruits and grain are abundant, which is followed by the imposing of restraint on wild licentiousness (10–11 *evaganti frena licentiae | iniecit*) and the removal of guilt. This is a fulfilment of another condition set upon Augustus in 3.24, namely putting a bridle on unchecked licentiousness (28–29: *indomitam...refrenare licentiam*).<sup>55</sup> The second half of the poem begins with what looks like a final denunciation of the civil wars: (Hor. *Carm.* 4.15.17–20)

custode rerum Caesare non furor  
civilis aut vis exiget otium,

<sup>54</sup> LENNON 2014, 41. See THOMAS 2011, 158 for other uses of *casta domus* in a moralizing context.

<sup>55</sup> THOMAS 2014, 264–265.

non ira, quae procudit ensis  
et miseram inimicat urbem.

With Caesar as guardian of affairs, neither will civic madness or force drive out peace, nor will rage, which beats out swords and makes miserable cities turn against each other.

Horace has now come back to *Epod.* 7 to finish the circle, the first poem that dealt explicitly with the civil wars. The repetition of key phrases like *furor* and *vis* makes it clear that he is ready to put a final seal on the question of whether expiation is possible. The madness which permeated the civil war, caused by pollution generated from moral degradation, is now far away from Rome. The alignment of Augustus with Romulus has stabilized Augustus as the figure of a divine purifier which he was endowed with back in 1.2 when he was identified with Mercury. Since the guilt for the civil war fell on to corrupted morals, expiation in practice meant reforming the state and providing Romans again with a sense of morality that would stop them from plunging into new conflicts. One way of following this trajectory was looking at Horace's use of religious discourse to articulate the anxieties that might exist about Augustus' role as the expiator of a crime as great as the civil war. As I hope to have shown, the vocabulary of pollution and purity is used consistently in the *Epodes* and in the *Odes*, following a trajectory from pessimism to increased optimism about the stability of Augustus' rule and the validity of his settlement.

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## Нечистота грађанског рата у Хорацијевим *Ејодама* и *Одама*

*Ајсџиракџи:* Овај рад истражује употребу вокабулара религијске нечистоте у Хорацију и његову повезаност са узроцима грађанског рата и улогом Августа као очиститеља. Прво ће се разматрати римско разумевање нечистоте, поготово у вези са крвопролићем. Затим ће бити прегледан вокабулар у *Ејодама* (7 и 16) и *Одама* (1.2, 35; 2.1; 3.1–6, 24; 4.5, 15) како би се показала постепена промена од песимизма до оптимизма. Први закључак је да је дошло до промене у схватању узрока грађанског рата. Наиме, узрок више није клетва због Ремовог убиства, већ морална криза. Други закључак је да Август успева да очисти нечистоте грађанског рата и да поново успостави ред кроз верске и моралне реформе.

*Кључне речи:* Хорације, римска поезија, загађење, очишћење, грађански рат, Август.

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