Pimentel / Lóio / Rodrigues / Furtado (Eds.)

Augustan Papers

184.1

SPUDASMATA

BAND 184.1

The present volume marks the bimillennium of the death of the *princeps* with a selection of essays that offer new approaches to the Emperor Augustus and his reign. The essays cover a variety of subjects related to Augustan scholarship from a twenty-first century perspective. The studies brought together in this volume are based on papers delivered and discussed by archaeologists, philologists, and historians of ancient Rome at the conference on 'XIV A.D. SAECVLVM AVGVSTVM. The Age of Augustus' held in Lisbon (the Roman *Olisipo*) in September 2014. The title, *Augustan Papers*, is intended to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the publication of Ronald Syme's *Roman Papers* (1939).

Der vorliegende Band markiert den zweitausendsten Todestag des *princeps* mit einer Reihe von Studien, die neue Zugänge zum römischen Herrscher Augustus und seiner Regentschaft bieten. Die thematisch weit gefächerten Beiträge fokussieren zentrale Themen der Augustusforschung aus der Sicht des 21. Jahrhunderts. Der Band bietet Studien aus archäologischer, philologischer und althistorischer Perspektive, die auf der Tagung ‚XIV A.D. SAECVLVM AVGVSTVM. The Age of Augustus' im September 2014 in Lissabon präsentiert und diskutiert wurden. Mit dem Titel, *Augustan Papers*, wird an das 80. Jubiläum der Publikation *Roman Papers* (1939) von Ronald Syme erinnert.

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Maria Cristina Pimentel, Ana Maria Lóio,
Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Rodrigo Furtado (Eds.)

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New Approaches to the Age of Augustus on the Bimillennium of his Death

Volume 1

OLMS

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Studien zur Klassischen Philologie und ihren Grenzgebieten
Begründet von Hildebrecht Hommel und Ernst Zinn

Band 184.1

AUGUSTAN PAPERS
NEW APPROACHES TO THE AGE OF AUGUSTUS ON THE BIMILLENNIUM OF HIS DEATH

2020

GEORG OLMS VERLAG HILDESHEIM · ZÜRICH · NEW YORK

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IV. *Imperium sine fine dedi* (Verg. *Aen*. 1.279)

Abbreviations

Ancient authors and works are abbreviated according to the norm of the OCD.

CA	Powell, J.U. (1925), *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Oxford.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863-), Berlin.
CLE	Bücheler, F., Lommatzsch, E., edd. (1895-1926), *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Leipzig.
DEL	Ernout, A., Meillet, A., edd., (1932), *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, Paris.
EO	Mariotti, S., ed. (1996-1998), *Orazio: Enciclopedia Oraziana*, Roma.
EV	della Corte, F. (1984-1991), *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, Roma.
FGrH	Jacoby, F., ed. (1923-), *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Leiden.
ILLRP	Degrassi, A. (1965^2), *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Republicae*, Firenze.
ILS	Dessau, H. (1892-1916), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, Berlin.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1981-), Zurich.
OCD	Hornblower, S., Spawforth, A., Eidinow, E., edd. (2012^4), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford.
OLD	Glare, P.G.W., ed. (1968-1982), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford.
RE	Pauly, A., Wissowa, G., Kroll, W. (1894-1980), *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart / München.
SLG	Page, D.L. (1974), *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*, Oxford.
ThlL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (1900-), Leipzig.

Horace's Religion: a True Experience or an Augustan Artifice? The Ritual Dimension

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1. Defining 'religion' in the context of Horace's work: some preliminary remarks

The question that we first wish to ask is as seemingly simple as it is academically relevant: how can we interpret the numerous religious references present throughout the work of Horace? In the context of this volume, we are particularly interested in looking at the relationship between Augustan power (and its many religious undertones) and Horatian poetry. In this perspective, does the poet's literary work fulfil a clear agenda, finding in poetry a means to amplify Augustus' religious propaganda? Or is there more to this author's relationship to religion?

We know that in Augustus' principate religion played a very special role. Even a hasty reading of his *Res gestae* yields countless religious references: rituals scrupulously observed by the *princeps* (4.1, 11.1), the complete and comprehensive catalogue of the many religious offices he held, including a detailed account of how he was designated *pontifex maximus*, and the enormous popular demonstration that celebrated the nomination. Also significant is the massive and nearly endless list of temples that Augustus erected or restored. It would then be tremendously naïve or even anachronistic to think that religion does not have a political role in the Augustan principate; perhaps it is harder to pinpoint the actual role religion played in his agenda.[1] In the light of modern experience, we could assume a radical point of view, like the one heralded by Karl Marx, and consider religion 'the opiate of

[1] For a fairly recent survey on the subject cf. Scheid (2005) 175 ff. A good starting point is also Beard, North, Price (1998[a]) 182 ff.

the masses', underlining its power to subdue and to serve as a form of social and political legitimation of established power. However, as relevant as the institutional and social dimension may be, it represents just one of the many characteristics of religion, and does not define it exclusively. But we should not be too amazed if Augustus, a very perceptive politician, realized the enormous potential a *cultus deorum* could have on his political career. Especially when we consider that he permitted himself to be appointed *Augustus*, and deliberately oversaw the beginning of what was later called the 'imperial cult'.

If, very briefly, these are the premises that make us regard religion as a predominantly political experience when it comes to Augustus' principate – even though not exclusively political – that is not the main concern of this text. We are trying here to find clues to how Horace, or more precisely the *persona* of Horace presented through his work, saw religion. This task is not as straightforward as it seems. 'Religion' or 'religious' are not unequivocal terms whose meanings have remained stagnant throughout the ages. On the contrary, the question of Horace's religiosity should not be answered based on our modern sense of these terms, but rather on a wider understanding of their meaning in his time, what did it meant to be religious then. What were the main aspects of the religious experience and which of these, if any, were an integral part of Horace's life?

Jasper Griffin's excellent synthesis paper 'Gods and religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*,[2] gives us a fairly recent state of scholarship on the subject.[3] Towards the end there is one sentence that, while making sense to a learned reader of Horace, raises some very important questions: 'he [Horace] was hardly what we think of as a religious man' (194). It is not by chance that Griffin adds to his claim the expression 'what we think of as', admitting that one's perspective on the subject is inexorably drawn to one's own conception of religion. So, is Horace a 'religious man', or not? Can we even ask that question?

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[2] Griffin (2007) 181-194.

[3] No systematic and exhaustive approach to the subject of Horace's theology or religiosity has been made. Mythology, for instance, has been well studied in the context of the *Carmina*: cf. Breuer (2008) or Labate (2013) 205-227. The relationship between mythology and religion, however, is both subtle and complex, and it was not the main goal of the many studies of the use of myths in Horace's lyrical work, or even the main perspective of the commentaries.

Our main purpose is not to establish if Horace was in fact a 'religious man', at least in the modern sense: that would be an unattainable goal, but Griffin's claim made us curious about the methodologies that have been used to address the religious issues that surrounded Horace. The subject has been approached through the literary, historical and even social perspectives. In one of the possible analyses the fact that the *Odes* are based on the Greek lyrical patrimony, where hymns and religious compositions were endemic, explained why so many of Horace's *Odes* were of this type: a sort of 'conventional literary forms', as Wilkinson[4] already defended. By another reading, assuming a Horatian metalanguage, the constant reference to the muses and to the Delphic inspiration has the sole purpose of endearing his literary career. In the article dedicated to religion, by Teivas Oksala in the *Enciclopedia Oraziana*,[5] the question is put in the following terms: 1) what was Horace's religiosity?; 2) how does Horace see religion? Although premises are clear and well concatenated, the truth is that all arguments advanced are from specific criteria of literary studies, and within the context of the Horatian exegesis.

For our part, we think the question of Horace's religion has never been raised in the field that seems to be the most appropriate: religious studies or the history of religion. In this broad field, let us put to examination Griffin's claim that: 'he was hardly what we think of as a religious man.' First of all, what exactly is a 'religious man'?

Maybe it is helpful, as a starting point and as a warning of the apparently insurmountable difficulties this question raises, to consider a passage from Horace's *Satires* (1.9.70-71). Taken out of its context, the sentence would be a clear answer to our questions: *nulla mihi (...) religio est*. If we literally translate *religio* to 'religion' – as in 'I have no religion' – we are perpetuating a misunderstanding that is not only common among classicists, but also in society in general: that 'religion' is an unequivocal concept. This is not true at all. In this passage, Horace tries desperately to get rid of an inopportune acquaintance. Much to his delight, he finds a friend, Aristius Fuscus, who could rescue him from such unpleasant company. Fuscus senses the poet's

[4] Wilkinson (1945) 27, apud Griffin (2007) 188. Cf. also Barchiesi (2000) 167-182.
[5] Oksala (1997) 2.285-288.

despair, but he decides to have some fun and makes up a flimsy excuse not to pay attention to his friend's needs. On that day some Jewish festivity is taking place,[6] and he does not want to hurt the feelings of his circumcised friends. It is in this moment that Horace desperately replies that he has no *religio* whatsoever.

The term *religio*, from where the word 'religion' takes its origin, has a great number of ambiguous meanings. For instance, according to the *OLD*, the word can refer not only to 'a supernatural feeling of constraint' but also to 'a consideration enforcing conformity to a religious or moral principle.' If we notice some of the *OLD*'s examples, we are bound to think how distant *religio* is from our modern 'religion'. In Rome, an historian of religion would risk hearing sentences such as 'it is unlawful (*religio*) for the priest of Jupiter to ride upon a horse,' *equo Dialem flaminem uehi religio est* (Gell. 10.15.3), 'C. Marius had no scruples (*religio*) about killing the praetor Caius Glaucius,' *religio C. Mario ... non fuerat, quo minus C. Glauciam praetorem occideret* (Cic. *Cat.* 3.15), 'one thinks that those unproductive trees are damned due to a religious non-observance (*religio*),' *infelices existimantur arbores damnataeque religione* (Plin. *HN* 16.108), 'favourable manifestation of the divine (*religio*) has shown me the way,' *cursum mihi prospera dixit religio* (Verg. *Aen.* 3.363), or even 'it is desire to love a wife when alive, religion when she is dead,' *uxorem enim uiuam amare uoluptas est, defunctam religio* (Stat. *Silu.* 5 pr.). That is why Horace says to his friend that he has no 'religion': no supernatural feeling of constraint can make him observe any ritual, much less a Jewish one, which to him sounds remendously obscure.

This is just one example, given within the context of Horace's work, of how hard it is to define a 'religious man', especially if we bear in mind the extreme difficulty of finding a consensual and satisfactory definition of what religion is. Nevertheless, from the example given above, we can surely try to find in Horace's texts references to religion and use them to investigate the relation that the author had with this particular aspect of his society. Of course we are well aware that we will probably never find out what Horace, the man, actually thought

[6] Maybe the *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles), or more plausibly (Fedeli [1994] 505) a double reference to the Sabbath observance and to the celebration of the New Moon.

about religion; even if we could ask him, it would be very hard to ask the right question. We are neither trying to demonstrate or rebuke Jasper Griffin's claim that Horace is not 'a religious man'. Our aim is to study the religious elements present in Horace's work in order to draw a clearer picture of how the author of the *Odes* experienced his religion and interacted with it. In doing so we will try to take this subject from the exclusive realm of Horatian studies and open our discussion to other fields.

2. The ritual dimension according to Ninian Smart. Making Horace's work a case-study

Among the many attempts to define religion, maybe the one that most interests us is the one given, for example, by Ninian Smart, which wisely circumvents the question by describing the many dimensions that exist within almost all world religions. He thus avoids the pitfall of not embracing the spectacular variety of this complex sphere of human activity and provides us with a very helpful methodology to study it. Although other and more recent writers have adopted the same strategy, and his proposal has been considered somewhat old-fashioned, Ninian Smart's 1970s reasoning is still appealing not only because of its simplicity, but also because of its versatility. It is highly improbable to find a religion that does not have almost all of the dimensions the author presents in *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (1971), namely the ritual, mythological, doctrinal, ethical, social and experiential.[7]

The question, 'What is the place religion occupies in Horace's work?' must therefore be answered in the context of his own particular religious experience; by not assessing the context, we run the risk of judging him according to the same principles that would be used to ascertain whether Luís de Camões or William Shakespeare were truly religious men. That answer would be founded on a modern religious perspective, based on a Christian theological matrix.

[7] To these dimensions he added a last one, the 'material dimension' in the later *Dimensions of the Sacred. An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (1998).

If it is true that in both *Epistles* and *Satires* the religious question seems to be irrelevant,[8] *Epodes* and *Odes* offer us opposite examples. This may be or may not be an important clue, as we can interpret this fact in many possible ways. For instance, we can argue that Horace did not give much importance to religion, since it does not play any significant role in more 'personal' or 'intimate' texts (even though, as we know, the epistles are far from being 'letters' in the ordinary sense of the word). The same argument, however, can be used to demonstrate precisely the opposite: perhaps Horace is giving the gods their proper place, more befitting of their majesty, i.e., the lyric poetry. In whatever way we interpret this fact, it is undeniable that we must start our analysis from his lyric oeuvre.

To learn if Horace, or at least his literary *persona*, was just using religion to amplify Augustus' religious policy, we ought to understand first which role religion played in his lyric work. We cannot discuss here the presence in Horace's work of all of the dimensions presented by Ninian Smart; this is just the first from a series of studies exclusively dedicated to this theme and methodology. But let us begin precisely with the paramount dimension in defining classic religiosity: the ritual dimension. As Ninian Smart puts it, religion tends to express itself through ritual – cult, prayers, offerings, for example.[9] There are many passages in Horace's *Odes* in which precise rituals are referred to, performed either by the poet himself, or by someone else. If religion is opportunistically used by Horace to spread Augustan propaganda, then we would expect that in the ritual dimension some particular rituals directly connected to Augustus' principate ought to be put in evidence, as they are described in his *Res gestae*, or at least be the most common. But that is simply not true.

---

[8] As Griffin puts it, '[in Horace's *Satires*] Gods are remarkable for their absence. Moral standards come, not from religion, but either from a popular version of contemporary philosophical preaching, or from native common sense, while examples and illustrations are drawn from literature' (Griffin [2007] 186).

[9] Smart (1971) 15 ff.

3. The ritual dimension in Horace's *Carmina*

On the many instances Horace describes religious rituals performed by himself, there are some than can be given a metapoetical reading, especially in the context of Venus' cult. *Ode* 1.5 is an example; the final strophe refers to the ritual of affixing a table to a temple wall to commemorate an escape from danger[10] or a retirement from public life (cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.5):

(…) Me tabula sacer
uotiua paries indicat uuida
suspendisse potenti
uestimenta maris deae.

Carm. 1.5.13-16

In Venus' universe, the ritual implies that the poet survived love, and thanks the Goddess for it. Also in 1.19 we have the description of a ritual: fresh turf, green sprigs and incense with a cup of unmixed two-years old wine. The objective: to make the poet overcome is passion for Glycera:

Hic uiuum mihi caespitem, hic
uerbenas, pueri, ponite turaque
bimi cum patera meri:
mactata ueniet lenior hostia.

Carm. 1.19.13-16

Obviously these kinds of rituals can have a metonymical reading. Nevertheless, the degree of reality used in their description implies they are not just a simple literary *mise-en-scène* as we will find in some Renaissance references to Venus' cult. They echo a common religious practice, observed and experienced *in loco*.[11] *Carm.* 3.27 (1-16) is a

[10] Nisbet, Hubbard (1970) 78.

[11] We should at least refer *Epist.* 5 and 17, a puzzling description of magic love rituals, although in this context is very hard to make them examples of religious rituals, since they seem to be largely symbolic (cf. Mankin [1995] 299-301), as we can read in this example: e*ffare: iussas cum fide poenas luam,/ paratus expiare, seu poposceris/ centum iuuencos, siue mendaci lyra/ uoles sonare* (*Epist.* 17.37-40). A hyperbolic expression, *centum iuuencos*, describes a hypothetical sacrifice designed to deliver Horace from the black magic of Canidia, the

clearer example. It reveals an informed knowledge of auguries, and many in a specifically Roman context: an owl, a pregnant bitch, a she-wolf, a gravid vixen, a serpent, a woodpecker or a wandering crow are reckoned amongst bad omens, as the poet, serving as an augur, casts them off, wishing a prosperous journey to Galatea. Though one can admit, with Nisbet and Rudd, that 'Horace of course is not taking augural lore seriously,'[12] it is still true that the poet uses ritual language – the augural one in particular, which was of great importance in the Romans' idiosyncratic religiosity – to wish a pleasant journey, and its usage has nothing to do with a more political agenda. This reflects in fact a ritual experience.

A more blatant example is *Carm.* 3.8, in which the poet describes a ritual presided over by himself, on the first day of March, a date when the *Matronalia* were celebrated:

> Martiis caelebs quid agam Kalendis,
> quid uelint flores et acerra turis
> plena miraris positusque carbo in
> caespite uiuo,
>
> docte sermones utriusque linguae?
> Voueram dulcis epulas et album
> Libero caprum prope funeratus
> arboris ictu.
> Hic dies anno redeunte festus
> corticem adstrictum pice dimouebit
> amphorae fumum bibere institutae
> consule Tullo.
>
> *Carm.* 3.8.1-12

sorceress, in a ritual known as *expiatio*. In *Epist.* 5 the recipient of the magic seems not to be the poet, but 'a boy' whose identity is uncertain, which makes the ritual references different from those centred in Horace's poetical *persona*. The relationship between *superstitio* and *religio* in Rome is a matter of debate, and maybe it is more prudent only to refer to these two examples of rituals as 'magic love rituals' and stress that they have no obvious relation to politics. The importance of magic in religious ritual, though, as we shall see when dealing with *Carmen saeculare*, should not be neglected, but we are reluctant to make *Epist.* 5 and *Epist.* 17 examples of religious rituals. The same can be said about a reference to a sacrifice made in *Epist.* 10.21-24 (*opima quodsi praeda curuo litore/ porrecta mergos iuuerit,/ libidinosus immolabitur caper/ et agna Tempestatibus*), a 'rovesciamento parodico del sacrificio che si fa in onore dei venti per ottenere un viaggio tranquillo' in the words of Romano (1991) 987.

[12] Nisbet, Rudd (2004) 324.

Maecenas, the recipient of this composition, is supposedly surprised as he finds his friend making a sacrifice – on the *Matronalia* married men prayed for their wives, but confirmed bachelors such as Horace did not. The festival was actually a celebration of marriage. Horace clears up the misunderstanding: he celebrates having survived a falling tree on his Sabine estate. He made a vow to Bacchus on that occasion: every year we would sacrifice a white goat – a ritual that he scrupulously kept. The vow was not made to Apollo – perhaps a more 'Augustan' god – but to Liber, the god of poets and wine. We do not see why we should doubt his words – at least we should believe him as much as we would believe a Christian poet writing that he promised God to undertake a pilgrimage to Santiago, should he escape a particular disease. We have here a common religious practice in the ancient world: someone escapes danger and performs a thanksgiving ritual to the gods (a ritual known as *supplicatio*).[13] As tradition demanded, since the honoured god was male,[14] Liber is offered a he-goat, a *caper*, which after the sacrifice is used in a ritual banquet (*epulae*, v. 6).[15]

We can say the same about *Carm.* 3.13: a sacrifice of a kid in the spring of Bandusia, maybe on the *Neptunalia*:

> O fons Bandusiae splendidior uitro
> dulci digne mero non sine floribus,
> cras donaberis haedo,
> cui frons turgida cornibus
> primis et uenerem et proelia destinat;
> frustra: nam gelidos inficiet tibi
> rubro sanguine riuos
> lasciui suboles gregis.
>
> *Carm.* 3.13.1-8

The animal is vividly described, to the point of letting the listener imagine the carmine blood of the beast colouring the icy flow of the spring. We can read this ode merely as a literary exercise, or we can

[13] On the subject, cf. Freyburger (1977) 283-315. For an interpretation of the *supplicatio*, cf. Scheid (2011) 269-270.
[14] Cf. Scheid (2011) 264.
[15] We can find a ritual banquet also in *Epist.* 2. 59, *agna festis caesa Terminalibus*. The context is however too broad to make this an example of rituality in Horace's work.

face it, in the light of the history of religions, precisely as it is – an account of a ritual, described by a poet. And we can say even more: as Nisbet and Rudd underlined,[16] this ode is indeed representative of an ancient religious tradition that saw water springs as a hierophany, to use Mircea Eliade's categories. The depiction of a ritual sacrifice of a *haedus* poetically emphasises the importance of water and the religious significance of the aquatic element: *nullus enim fons non sacer* (Serv. *Aen.* 7.84). And exactly which political motivation would lead Horace, in his hymn to Faunus (3.18), to pray to the god for his protection over his cattle, describing the sacrifice of a tender kid? Why should we consider fiction his own words: *si tener pleno cadit haedus anno* (*Carm.* 3.18.5), 'if a tender kid is offered at year's end'? We are not short of examples in antiquity where a *uotum* is made to a god, in a public or a private context.[17] And why should we mistrust Horace when he claims that every year he offers Diana a young boar, if he says so in *Carm.* 3.22? In the same way should we doubt any Hindu poem where the author claims that he carefully followed every ritual due to Shiva. Of course we will never know whether Horace actually performed the rituals he says he did, but given the Roman religious and ritualistic context, one should assume he did, as it would be difficult to justify why he would be lying about it. In fact it would be very difficult to find a Roman that had never performed any kind of sacrifice, and Horace is probably no exception.

Carm. 1.31 is another example of rituality:

> Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
> uates? Quid orat de patera nouum
> fundens liquorem?
>
> *Carm.* 1.31.1-3

The celebrated act is the consecration of the new Temple of Apollo on the Palatine on 28 BC. If the connection between Apollo and Augustus

[16] Nisbet, Rudd (2004) 172.
[17] Cf. Beard, Price (1998[a]) 32 ff.

is indisputable,[18] we should focus our attention on the fact that in this poem, as Nisbet and Hubbard[19] pointed out, the purported occasion is in fact the festival of the *Meditrinalia*, when libations of new and old wine took place, as described by the poem. Once again, they echo a religious practice and a religious experience that we expect to be the author's own religious experience – let us not forget that the main goal of the *libatio* comes only at end of the ode:

> Frui paratis et ualido mihi,
> Latoe, dones, at, precor, integra
> cum mente, nec turpem senectam
> degere nec cithara carentem
>
> *Carm.* 1.31.17-20

The two ritual references to what was later called the 'imperial cult', not by coincidence present in the Venusian poet's last book of odes, must therefore be read within this broad context, and not considered in isolation:

> Condit quisque diem collibus in suis,
> et uitem uiduas ducit ad arbores;
> hinc ad uina redit laetus et alteris
> te mensis adhibet deum;
> te multa prece, te prosequitur mero
> defuso pateris et Laribus tuum
> miscet numen, uti Graecia Castoris
> et magni memor Herculis.
>
> 'Longas o utinam, dux bone, ferias
> praestes Hesperiae!' dicimus integro
> sicci mane die, dicimus uuidi,
> cum sol Oceano subest.
>
> *Carm.* 4.5.29-40

A *paterfamilias* is pictured here pouring wine in honour of the divinity (*numen*) of his Lares in conjunction with Augustus, who is

[18] The reasons of this identification, motivated perhaps by the fact that Antony deliberately likened himself to Dionysus (Plut. *Vit. Ant*. 24.26.60), are extensively studied by authors such as Miller (2009) or Loupiac (1999).
[19] Nisbet, Hubbard (1970) 347.

literally considered *deus* (32), and compared with Castor and Hercules, in an unheard-of apotheosis, since the *princeps* was still alive. Also in 4.15 there is a prayer concluding the poem (25-32). Although Augustus is not named, he is embraced in a *progenies Veneris*, which included Aeneas or Julius Caesar:

> Nosque et profestis lucibus et sacris
> inter iocosi munera Liberi
> cum prole matronisque nostris,
> rite deos prius apprecati,
>
> uirtute functos more patrum duces
> Lydis remixto carmine tibiis
> Troiamque et Anchisen et almae
> progeniem Veneris canemus.
>
> *Carm.* 4.15.25-32

From the ritual point of view, however, one must underline the fact that the poet is mentioning a libation (4.5)[20] and a prayer (4.15).[21] As Beard and Price[22] underline 'animal sacrifice, the ritual killing of an animal and the offering to the gods of parts of its body, burnt on the altar, was a (perhaps the) central element of Roman ritual.' So it seems that the rituals directed to an Augustan divinity are not as explicit and widespread as one might have thought, and are in fact just a small part of the many rituals referred to in the *Odes* that include several cults and divinities that were not part of Augustus' 'political' agenda. Furthermore, we can read certain rites that translate personal experiences, not only in the poet's artistic and literary life, but also in his own quotidian existence.

Returning to our initial question and in the light of the above, we must conclude that the large majority of the many ritual references Horace makes do not have any political content, especially considering Augustus' religious propaganda. On the contrary: they reveal an author

[20] In the religious Roman sphere, Libation is a 'rather general formula for ritual action', as Moede (2011) 168 puts it.
[21] For an introduction to Roman *precatio*, cf. Hahn (2011) 239 ff.
[22] Beard, Price (1998[b]) 148.

who, well aware of his own ritualistic society,[23] performs the same rites and sacrifices, but with very different purposes, at least according to his account. By this references we can assume that the author of the *Odes* is a man of his age: a *homo ritualis*.[24] In Rome that is almost the same as saying that he was, in fact, a *homo religiosus*.

4. The *Carmen saeculare* and its own place in the discussion about the ritual dimension

Last but not least we must mention a lyric work that is peculiar in any way we view it: the *Carmen saeculare*. From the ritual point of view, there is an obvious and mandatory relationship with the eminently religious rite of the *Ludi Saeculares*. This occasion was unquestionably one of the most flagrant moments of the Augustan principate, appropriating the religious ritual to serve his ultimate political aspiration: the celebration of a new age. Zanker summarizes this idea best:[25] 'after ten years of religious and moral renewal, the festivals and sacrifices, buildings and images, now visible everywhere in Rome, began to take effect. Confidence in the ability of the restored Republic to stand firm and faith in its ruler grew apace. (…) The successes of the new regime had had an impact on every individual. It was now time to give permanent expression to his mood of optimism, to create a new imagery that would transcend reality and eternalize the happiness of the present moment. The state needed a myth and here again Augustus was able to latch onto something that was already in the air before he came along. (…) From May 30 to June 3 the great Secular Games took place, heralding the beginning of the new age.'

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[23] We should not have a prejudiced view of 'ritualism' in Roman Religion; as Nicole Belayche puts it, 'ritualism does not go necessarily with a utilitarian, cynical relationship, as the comic author Plautus depicted that of some devotees in order to make the audience laugh. Nor does it imply a 'cold' or 'blasé' relationship, as dominant historiography portrayed it for long, because it was influenced by a spiritualistic experience. Ritualism is the relational procedure that goes coherently with the way Romans conceived the respective places of men and gods within the world' (Belayche [2011] 291).

[24] There are many disciplines that have focused on the *homo ritualis*: psychology, anthropology, religious studies, history, sociology, etc. For an introduction to the subject, see Bell (2009[a]) 397-411, also the author of the influential *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (2009[b]).

[25] Zanker (1988) 167.

Horace was the chosen poet to compose the chant that concluded a ceremony central to Augustus' principate, a fact that by itself testifies the religious idoneity of the lyricist. The rituals that *Carmen saeculare* alludes to are a direct reflection of what happened in the *Ludi*, as documented in the Acts of the Games that were found at the end of the nineteenth century. The aspects that the *carmen* highlights or neglects, as we have had the opportunity to discuss in other circumstances,[26] are revealing of the way the poet interpreted his poem in the context of the ritual it was part of. For example, the darker and chthonic divinities, worshiped during the nights of the Games, acquire their own luminosity in the poem, through carefully selected adjectives. The opposition between Olympic and Chthonic gods, manifest in the Acts, is blurred as is the opposition between day and night. We do not wish to delve excessively into the textual coincidences between the *carmen* and the Acts of the *Ludi*, but we do wish to underline an aspect Michael Putnam already emphasized in his book *Horace's Carmen saeculare: ritual magic and the poet's art*:[27] Horace's poem is a ritual by itself, performed at a specific moment that was also central to the history of Roman Religion.

The fact that these games were fundamental to the Augustan ideology becomes, when we examine Horace's idiosyncratic religiosity, a difficult paradox. On the one hand, Horace, being the minstrel 'on duty', incarnates in his text the religious and political principles of the *princeps* – the devotion to Apollo and Diana, the moral legislation, the idea that Augustus had a divine filiation from Venus and Anchises – even though we cannot find traces in this poem of the so-called 'imperial cult'. On the other hand, the fact that the poem is by itself a chanted ritual makes us think that the poet thought of his verses as part of a public religious ceremony – a liturgy, in the etymological sense of the word. It is at least questionable to refuse Horace's religiosity, to consider him 'faintly religious' just because he decided the poem should be a faithful expression of what happened during those three days and nights. Yes, we can suppose it was his non-cloaked pride that led him to accept the invitation. Yes, we can even suppose his verses

[26] Falcão (2010) 187-205.
[27] Putnam (2000).

are subservient to and lean on Augustan propaganda. But how can we ascertain the 'degree of religiosity' of a poet that serves the *kairos* of his people? How can we guarantee that, for example, Henry Purcell was a very religious man when he put to music Psalm 122 ('I was glad when they said unto me'), on the occasion of King James II's coronation?

But as we already suggested, better than to speak according to ambiguous criteria such as 'very' or 'little' religious, a scheme of values that is scientifically irrelevant, we can opt for more precise terms, such as 'rituality' or 'religious experience', that are drawn from the methodologies of the history of religions. In this context, it is undeniable that *Carmen saeculare* represented a ritual and a religious experience, which is indeed well documented, perhaps better than any other in antiquity. This experience was lived not only in community, but also in the intimacy of its composer: Quintus Horatius Flaccus. From the ritual point of view, maybe it has not been properly stressed that the textual and numerological organization of the poem reveals a profound commitment by the poet to the religious moment he experiences. Special importance is given to the number three, a key element in the ceremony that is skillfully engrained in the structure of the text.

According to the Acts,[28] we know that the games were divided among three days and three nights. During these three days three sacrifices were made, in honor of Jupiter, Juno, and the twins Apollo and Diana and during the three nights three other sacrifices, in honor of the *Moirai*, the *Ilithyai* and *Terra Mater*. During the first night nine ewes and nine goats are sacrificed. Number three again present as 9 = 3 x 3 and as 18 (the total number of sacrifices) divided by three equals six, the number of moments the ceremony had, corresponding to three days and three nights. In the second night and in the third day, 27 (9 + 9 + 9) sacred cakes are consecrated, another multiple of 3, and we must not forget that there were three types of cake. The rituals without blood sacrifices occur in identical positions based on cycles of three: respectively concluding every three ceremonies. As for the number of boys and girls in the chorus, 27 + 27, they are the same number of sacred cakes, 54, equally a multiple of 3.

[28] *CIL* 6.3237 n. 32323.

This numerological restraint that can nowadays be easily discarded as 'superstition' and not taken seriously – despite the 'magical' essence present in many traditional religions (not to mention several 'civilized' religions)[29] – is very present in the Horatian text, but purposely in a covert way. In the *Carmen*'s division, each part is composed by three sets of three strophes each (triads), as we can observe in the following scheme:[30]

A(Prayer)
I (1-12) – Initial invocation of Apollo and Diana
II (13-24) – Wishes for fertility and renewal
III (25-36) – Summoning of the *Parchae* and *Tellus*, Apollo and Diana
B (Confirmation)
I (37-48) – Little *Aeneid*. Invocation of all the gods
II (49-60) –Augustus arises. Expression of trust
III (61-72) – Final invocation of Apollo e Diana
CODA(73-76) – Epilogue.

Number three is also present in the metrical setting of the ode. The Sapphic stanza presents three hendecasyllables, and in the end of each triad we have three chanted Adonics. There are even subtler relations: 3 hendecasyllables x 19 strophes equals 57, and 57 divided by 3 equals 19, precisely the number of Adonic verses. We have 54 hendecasyllables, the exact number of boys (27 = 3 x 3 x 3) and girls (27 = 3 x 3 x 3) of the chorus. Number three actually appears in verse 23, and nine in verse 62. Each strophe summons three divinities (or divine epithets) or sets of three:

A
I – Phoebus, Diana, Sol;
II – Ilithyia, Lucina, Genitalis;
III – Parcae, Tellus, Ceres; Iuppiter, Apollo, Luna;

[29] For the importance of numerology in Augustine and its relation to his religious context, cf. Ackroyd, Evans (1970) 559 ff. It is also a main feature in Sefer Yetsirah, an ancient Hebrew treatise on cosmogony and cosmology (cf. Dan [1997] 618), the source of many kabbalistic commentaries. Cuomo (2001) 249 ff. offers a good introduction to the subject in late ancient mathematics.

[30] This is the division already proposed by Fränkel (1957) 370 ff. and Kiessling, Heinze (1958) 471.

B
I – (no gods are invoked)
II – Venus, Fides, Pax; Honos, Pudor, Copia;
III – Phoebus, Camenae, Diana;
CODA – Iuppiter, Phoebus, Diana.

Focusing on the ritual dimension of Roman religion, and in view of these considerations, we can believe that the composer of the *Carmen saeculare* had a clear religious intention in his hymn. He ingrained in the structure of the text a number linked to Rome's majesty and the inner organization of rituals. This was achieved on a mystical or even magical level, since no one, just by hearing the *carmen* in its original performance, could immediately perceive the number 3 in the actual structure and organization of the text. How can we say that the poet's intention was just to amplify the religious agenda of the *princeps*, due to personal interest or ambition? When *Carmen saeculare* is in fact a genuine compositional and ritual experience, with 'supernatural' intentions? A song that aims to imperceptibly give power to the chanted word, imploring for the eternity not of Rome's rulers, but of the *Vrbs* herself? As Habinek[31] puts it, 'much as the *Carmen Saliare* celebrates the role of music in modulating the Roman state to the rhythms of the cosmos, the *Carmen Saeculare* concerns itself with the role of song in securing the reproduction of the state over time.'

5. A possible conclusion

If we judge him according to Christian theology, from a Hindu or even a Buddhist viewpoint, obviously Horace is not a religious man. Thus, the main reason he talks about religion must be to amplify Augustus' own religious policy, or perhaps his attitude is simply a literary fiction, a blasé account of superfluous rituals. However, when we examine his work in the light of history of religion, we become more alert to the religion and religions with which Horace was imbued, in which the ritual dimension played a much more important than the doctrinal one. We are then bound to think of Horace as someone

[31] Habinek (2005) 151.

who lived and participated in the *cultus deorum*, so much so, or even more than any man of his age, and moreover as someone who had an active role in religion. If western theology (or even modern atheism) normally relies on a typical *credo*, that is simply not the case with many traditional and classical religions, like the Roman. Even so, Horace is one of the few classical writers that offers us a sort of 'testimony to the faith': *caelo tonantem credidimus Iouem regnare* (3.5) are his exact words. In this poem we may find ground for the future exploration of that other aspect of the religious phenomenon, the doctrinal dimension as Ninian Smart puts it, an idea to which we would like to come back on a later occasion. But it is important to clarify that in the Roman religious realm, there was no incoherence whatsoever in observing the ritual and at the same time scorning its utility, for instance, when it comes to death:

> non si trecenis quotquot eunt dies,
> amice, places illacrimabilem
> Plutona tauris, qui ter amplum
> Geryonen Tityonque tristi
>
> compescit unda, scilicet omnibus,
> quicumque terrae munere uescimur,
> enauiganda, siue reges
> siue inopes erimus coloni.
>
> *Carm.* 2.14.5-12

Many religions based on an *orthopraxis* share this feature. The Jewish 'Trial of God', during the Holocaust, as witnessed by Eliezer Wiesel, is an excellent example of this: 'one evening, amid all the squalor and horror of the concentration camps, a group of pious Jews gathered together. They were going to put God on trial. How could an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing God tolerate what was happening to His Chosen People? All night the debate raged back and forth. In the end there could be only one possible conclusion. There is no God. The Heavens are empty. The evil of the concentration camps could exist because there was no one to stop it. The Jewish religion was based on a fallacy. When the discussion was finished the dawn was breaking. Another day of brutal, hack-breaking work lay ahead. All the participants stood up and they all prayed the traditional morning service

together.'[32] Therefore, one ought not try to study Horace's religion based on the assumption that one *has to believe* to *be religious*. Even though our main discussion here is not to demonstrate that Horace, the author, was a 'religious man', we can argue in the light of the above that he was in fact 'religious' in the Roman sense, as he respected Roman *orthopraxis*, and performed the rituals demanded by the *mos maiorum*, even if their utility was open to discussion. In terms of Roman religion, the *augur* was not expected to 'believe' in his *auguria*: he only had to watch two things: the skies and tradition. Anything more was of no consequence.

More important to us, though, is to conclude that based on textual evidence one is inclined to think that the rituals depicted in Horace's work reflect, at least statistically speaking, more of a personal religious experience than a political or social one. Almost all of the rituals referred to in the *Odes* are of 'personal interest' – the author performs rituals for the sake of his own erotic happiness (1.5.13-16, 1.19.13-16, 3.27.1-16), health (3.8.1-12, perhaps 3.13.1-8,[33] 1.31.1-3) and wealth (3.18.6-8, 3.22.1-8). On the other hand, we have only two examples of 'political' rituals, even though these were not actual blood sacrifices (4.5, 4.15), the presence of which in the last book of *Odes* attests to the growing influence of Augustus in the Roman religious climate. But that is a matter for another kind of discussion. *Carmen saeculare* plays its own special role: a sense of communitarian religiosity that is felt within the intimacy of the composition and in the religious, mystical and numerological signature of its composer.

From this we may conclude that: a) it is important to look at Horace's references to religion through different perspectives, and not exclusively through philological studies. The fields of history of religion and religious studies, which categorize and treat separately the different aspects of what can many times vaguely be referred to as 'religion', allow for some degree of objectivity; b) in a Roman religion often depicted as socially, politically and institutionally motivated, we find an example of a *corpus* of texts in which almost all of the described rites have none of these intentions: they rather reflect a

[32] Cohn-Sherbok (1997) 19-20.

[33] In a very loose and general sense, we must admit, but we definitely cannot see in this ode any political motivation.

personal experience or motivation. That can only make us more curious to investigate the other dimensions that we did not have the chance to explore here: mythological, doctrinal, ethical, social and experiential. This last category naturally involves a holistic reading of the other five, as Ninian Smart suggests, and will offer itself as a conclusion to these reflections.

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