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## HORACE *CARM.* 1. 14: WHAT KIND OF SHIP?

WILLIAM S. ANDERSON

THE controversy on *Carm.* 1. 14 of Horace has died down. Two recent studies, those of Fraenkel and Commager,<sup>1</sup> deal with the matter authoritatively and, it would seem, allow no room for doubt: the poem concerns the Ship of State, the Roman state as threatened by civil wars. Such, in fact, has been the prevailing interpretation since the end of the first century A.D. at the latest; for Quintilian spoke of this ode as an allegory on politics in such a casual manner that he obviously was repeating an accepted thesis. Muretus in the sixteenth century was the first scholar, it appears, to protest against the allegorical interpretation. He was followed by Faber, Dacier, the great Richard Bentley, and in this century by such eminent Germans as Knorr, Kukula, and Birt.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the challenge given by the followers of Muretus, scholars in a large majority remained convinced of the allegory. I, too, believe that this ode must be allegorical. However, the more I contemplate the accepted interpretation and compare it with the text of the poem, the more I am certain that Horace did not employ here an allegory on the Ship of State. I should like, therefore, to open a new controversy in the interest of reading 1. 14 more precisely.

Let us be clear about the situation depicted by the poet. The speaker here addresses a ship, using at the start an excited, staccato form of speech. The ship, it appears, is somewhere between the high seas and port; exactly where,

cannot be determined. A key word, *referent* (1), indicates by its prefix that the ship will change its present condition and presumably is now doing so. Possibly the vessel has already made port, then later weighed anchor; or it might have arrived in the calm waters outside the harbor, then been caught by a change of wind or tide or by some force to which the incompetence of its captain has exposed it. Whichever alternative seems preferable, at least the harbor and safety remain in sight and so can still be reached, though with effort (*fortiter* 2). That effort the speaker strongly urges on the ship.

I hardly need observe that the situation in which the vessel finds itself is no extraordinary one. From earliest literature, the last stages of making safe anchorage, with the swift tacks required, the sudden emergencies that arise, form a common element of nautical descriptions. Thus in *Odyssey* 10. 28ff. the hero Odysseus recounts his voyage to Ithaca, his virtual arrival in harbor, and the sudden winds (released from the bag given him by Aeolus) that swept him out to sea again. This Homeric episode illustrates the situation of Horace's boat, if we are to picture it as approaching harbor and threatened by counterwinds and -waves. If we prefer to imagine that the ship has set sail after some time in harbor, risking the danger of turbulent seas, then the well-known voyage of St. Paul in Acts 27: 7ff. provides a good analogue. When the ship made port with difficulty in Crete, Paul advised against launching forth

again during the stormy season. The centurion scorned his advice, compelled the shipmaster to continue the voyage, and of course disaster did occur. In Horace's poem, too, the speaker seems to give good advice.

Whereas Paul had nothing to go on but anticipated dangers to an otherwise seaworthy craft, the speaker here argues primarily from the already battered condition of this boat. To judge from his words, the boat has arrived at its present spot near port by sheer luck, and it requires major repairs. Most of the central portion of the poem consists of the poet's earnest exhortation to the ship to look at itself, and thereby he elaborately describes the unlovely craft for us. If a ship could be sensible and take sound advice, this one would have to respond to the poet's passionate appeal and get to port. Otherwise, he claims, it is bound to become the plaything of the winds.

The first four stanzas, then, sketch a reasonably common nautical situation, of a boat unwisely going to sea despite serious damages after an insufficient time in the port itself or off shore. The poet has adopted the pose of a man who addresses the ship as though, a living, intelligent being, it could determine its own course, whether to keep moving back to those dangerous waves or to return with effort to the safety of harbor. Of course, sailors man the ship, but the speaker mentions them incidentally with the collective *navita* (14), and only as part of his argument: even the sailor mistrusts the boat's condition. No ship sailed without a pilot and captain. Nevertheless, as Horace describes the situation, pilot and captain can be entirely ignored. For the purpose of this ode, the ship alone decides its fate. As he does regularly in other poems using this meter, the Asclepiadean

stanza, Horace interweaves his details and employs enjambment across the stanza limits to produce a composite picture of the nautical crisis.

The fourth stanza comes to a strong stop, and the fifth, an isolated unit, serves to interpret the chosen situation. It alone gives us the means to decide where the speaker is in relation to the ship. He is not aboard. Some scholars have been misled by recollections of other nautical scenes in which, as the ship sails into the teeth of a gale, the sailor aboard, all too aware of the danger, protests. However, one word, *desiderium* (18), renders such an impression wrong for this poem. When the Romans used *desiderium*, they denoted longing or desire for what one did not possess, what was not present; they also extended the usage to apply to the thing or person that one longed for or missed. Cicero provides a good example of the extended meaning: writing from exile back to his family in Italy, he calls them *mea desideria* (*Ad fam.* 14. 2. 4). If this speaker, then, can call the ship a *desiderium* now, he must be ashore somewhere watching anguishedly and pleading with it as it moves unheedingly away.

Fraenkel adopts an excellent doctrine by which to interpret this poem: "I write for those who are willing not to read into poems of Horace any facts of which the words of the text say nothing."<sup>3</sup> Let us review the facts of this text, then consider how carefully Fraenkel and those who agree with him have applied their dogma. The facts are these: (1) In the first four stanzas, a speaker talks to a ship that sails dangerously out into the open sea. (2) He treats the ship as an independent being, able to make its own decisions; hence, he mentions sailors only in passing and completely disregards pilot and captain.

(3) So human does the ship seem to him that, as Fraenkel rightly emphasizes, he employs consistent personification through these first four stanzas. (4) The final stanza, which is significantly isolated from the others, informs us that the speaker "misses" the boat now, therefore must be ashore, at a distance. (5) It also, as most commentators note, establishes the fact of the allegory; for no Roman could properly call a ship *taedium*, *desiderium*, or *cura*, not at least all in one sentence. (6) Throughout the poem, the speaker expresses himself with great passion, but particularly in the final stanza.

A paragraph from Fraenkel shows how he deals with these facts:

For Horace's own contemporaries it must have been perfectly natural to refer the ship to the *res publica*. In the Hellenic and the hellenized world it had long been a common habit to speak of a ship when in fact the *πόλις*, the *res publica*, the State, was meant. The commentaries on *O navis referent* provide some illustrations from Greek poetry, where the elaborate picture of a ship tossed by wild storms represents the distress of the community. Perhaps even more significant than such full-scale similes is the common habit of speaking of the ruler as the helmsman. This Greek conception was adopted in Rome, where Cicero and others used it freely; it is to this adoption that we owe the word "government." Cicero shows also that in his time the image had not yet faded into a mere metaphor: it was still possible to realize its original connotations. We may therefore safely conclude that Horace was in no danger of being misunderstood by his readers when he expressed his anxiety at the situation of the commonwealth by addressing himself to a ship in distress.<sup>4</sup>

I have not appended the four notes that Fraenkel permits himself, but they merely document some of his statements which can stand by themselves. In citing Fraenkel, I do not mean to treat

him as an exception; rather, he represents the prevailing interpretation of the ode, and his methods of criticism substantially reappear in most commentaries. When one pauses to analyze Fraenkel's argument, two matters immediately raise questions. First, the logic is disturbing. Summarized, the paragraph runs this way: (a) The Ship of State constituted a common allegorical theme in Greece and Rome. (b) Horace has written a ship allegory. (c) Therefore, Horace has written a Ship of State allegory. Fraenkel's conclusion holds only if he can assert that *all* ship allegories of antiquity refer to the Ship of State; and nobody would be so rash as to claim that, if he thought for a moment. Nevertheless, when scholars argue for the Ship of State, they rarely, if ever, consider the existence of several other ship allegories of equal popularity in Greece and Rome. The second question is raised by Fraenkel's last sentence, in which he says that Horace voiced "his anxiety at the situation of the commonwealth." It is true that the first-person speaker of the poem is unnamed and therefore might be identified with Horace. When one reads the *Odes*, however, one grows accustomed to a variety of personae, masks assumed by the poet; and it is clear that Horace deliberately placed in juxtaposition poems of the most diverse tone, merely to display the kaleidoscopic oscillations of his speakers. If we change Fraenkel's statement about Horace's anxiety for the state to read "the speaker's anxiety at the situation [as yet unspecified]," we leave our minds open to more precise, less biographical interpretation.

More precise interpretation must begin with a thorough discussion of the Ship of State. Even though I have questioned Fraenkel's logic, I have not,

of course, disproved the validity of his interpretation. But once we observe how the Ship of State appeared in ancient poetry and prose, we cannot, I believe, entertain any longer the notion that Horace used that particular allegory. In what follows, I owe much to an article published twenty-five years ago by C. W. Mendell.<sup>5</sup> It established the grounds for an effective attack on the Ship of State, and Fraenkel, though he had read it, ignored its ideas unwisely.

Our oldest extant examples of the allegory of the Ship of State date from early in the 6th century B.C. and appear in odes of Alcaeus (Diehl 30, 119-20).<sup>6</sup> By the time of Aristophanes, the allegory had become so conventional that he could familiarly refer to it in his *Wasps* (29). Therefore, I do not contest the fact that the Ship of State was a *topos* or that Horace's contemporaries were thoroughly familiar with its usage. What must be established is the limits of its usage. As Fraenkel's paragraph suggests, the most significant aspect of the allegory was its allusion to the ruler in terms of the helmsman, whom I have earlier called the pilot or captain. In a regular ship, any one of many factors might determine the success or failure of a voyage: the condition of the craft, supplies, discipline, the crew's ability, weather, the captain's skill, etc. Allegorized, all these factors can be employed, but the key element in the Ship of State is the captain-steersman. To describe the situation of Thebes in relation to that of Oedipus, Sophocles repeatedly resorts to the Ship of State; and it is clear that the Ship has no significance apart from its captain Oedipus.<sup>7</sup> Polybius produces a famous analysis of the Athenian constitution in comparison with that of Rome, and he adopts the conventional allegory to

make his ideas vivid. The opening sentence of the allegory illustrates proper usage: "The Athenian demos is always in the position of a ship *without a captain* (6. 44)." To put it another way, Greek and Latin writers, from Alcaeus down to Cicero (whom Fraenkel cites), all attributed no personality to the state, but used this allegory to show that the governing power, whatever it was, determined the fate of the inanimate craft.

We can also establish, I believe, the typical attitude of the speaker in this conventional allegory. On the one hand, the speaker might conceive of himself or be depicted as a member of the state; on the other hand, he might, like Polybius, use the allegory rhetorically to reinforce a technical discussion, and he would not be a part of the state. Polybius, therefore, speaks in a dispassionate manner about that historical Ship of State, Athens, with which he, a pro-Roman Achaean, feels no sympathy. The characters in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* are Thebans and, when they use the allegory, they explicitly or implicitly refer to "our ship." In other words, their emotional involvement with their state means that they imagine themselves aboard the Ship of State, sharing its perils, troubled by the difficulties of their captain Oedipus. Sometimes, the speaker could adopt the pose of the captain, as appears to be the case in the poems of Alcaeus. There, he addresses his fellow sailors concernedly, telling them of the desperate plight of their ship. Cicero, in *Att.* 2. 7. 4, a passage cited by Fraenkel, gives a variation on the captain-speaker. Disgruntled because with the establishment of the First Triumvirate he has no control any longer over the state, Cicero describes himself as a pilot who has had the helm wrenched from his grasp and been

forced to leave the ship. As he uses the allegory, then, he no longer considers himself a member of the government and he hopes fervently that he may see the present rulers shipwrecked. From this, I believe, it can legitimately be concluded that an anxious speaker who utilizes the allegory of the Ship of State refers to his own state and automatically places himself aboard the Ship; that a dispassionate historian like Polybius or a disenchanting politician like Cicero in 59 B.C. clearly removes himself from the imaginary ship and consequently can comment on it favorably or adversely, as the occasion demands, not, however, with anxiety.

Here, then, are two important facts about the conventional usage of the Ship of State: (1) It always emphasized the helmsman, the governing power, because the ship itself (i.e., the State) appeared to the ancients an inanimate thing, passively enduring the good or bad steering of a particular captain. (2) The person who utilized the allegory could either identify himself anxiously with the country's problems and so metaphorically regard himself as "sailor" or "helmsman" aboard the Ship (depending, of course, on his own station); or he could pointedly exclude himself from the drama with a historian's serenity or sometimes the kind of pique that Cicero momentarily evinces, in any case, adopting an observer's attitude as if ashore. The obvious question now arises: How do these facts about the Ship of State square with the facts of Horace's poem?

They do not at all. Horace presents a speaker who addresses a ship and treats it like a human being, entirely responsible for its own welfare; I know of no allegory of the Ship of State in pre-Horatian literature that treats the Ship as an independent person, nor do

the commentators seem to know of such a one. Horace makes no reference to the helmsman (i.e., the ruler), and his personification of the ship patently excludes a significant use of the captain; the Ship of State allegory always devotes attention to the helmsman, the governing power, since Greek and Roman writers alike agreed that the government determined the condition of the state. Horace's speaker anxiously addresses the ship from the shore; according to my understanding of the convention, either the speaker is anxious and aboard or he is ashore and sometimes disinterested, sometimes actively antagonistic. To pinpoint the difficulty of treating this ship as the Ship of State, consider the logical problem of *desiderium*. What does it mean when someone says to the State (*his* State, according to Fraenkel and the usual commentaries): I miss you? You might tell a displaced or dead ruler that you miss him; but then you would address the steersman, "O Captain, my Captain."<sup>8</sup> You cannot miss your own state, because you sail aboard it and you must sink with it; it is by definition part of you. The commentators, ignoring the objections of Mendell, agree with Fraenkel that Horace's own contemporaries quite naturally referred this ship to the *res publica*. However, knowing the facts of the poem and the facts of the convention for the Ship of State, I believe that it would have been most unnatural for Horace's contemporaries to read this poem as an allegory on the Ship of State.

Now, of course, anyone is free to object that the poet rules convention, that accordingly Horace might easily have stretched the conventional usage in the direction of the modern interpretation. I am quite aware that conventions were and are elastic. Neverthe-

less, the commentators start to argue as though Horace adhered to convention. It is only when someone like Mendell points out the distinctions between Horace's ship and the conventional ship that they raise a howl about poetic freedom. If the convention proves to be as amorphous as they claim—which I deny—then they have no right to talk about the "common habit" of Greeks and Romans in their argument nor about the "natural interpretation" by Horace's contemporaries. They have, it seems to me, lost all control over the poem and must fall back on that fine old doctrine: "de gustibus non disputandum est." Let us be clear about convention, though. It is not confining like a strait jacket, and it is not anarchic. If a poet uses it intelligently and poetically, convention works for him; if he deals with it incompetently, then it stands there as a silent mocker of his poetastrology. Elastic as convention may be, it sometimes can be stretched beyond its physical limits, and then it snaps, one piece, so to speak, flying back in the face of its unskilful user and hurting him.

By way of illustration, we might think of a convention that is perhaps the most familiar element of erotic poetry, the *exclusus amator*. Anyone who has considered the large number of Greek and Latin variants that have survived knows that "the excluded lover" was not a confining convention. Although the *topos* was so common that Lucretius could refer contemptuously to it around 55 B.C., our most versatile examples of the form appear in the next half century *after* Lucretius. Now, there were some stable elements in this convention, what I would call its limits. There had to be a lover, a door to exclude him, and a girl inside the house whom he wanted to reach. Usually, too, there is a standard dramatic atmosphere: it

is night, cruelly cold, often rainy, and therefore the lover feels extremely sorry for himself. Poets could add a character to guard the door (*ianitor*) and/or an old woman to give the girl shrewd advice against the lover. But the basic elements consisted of the lover, the girl, and the door between. No matter what he did, no man using the convention of the *exclusus amator* in his right mind would confuse these basic elements or patently omit one of them. We find that the *amator* in one poet will address the girl; in another, the old woman; in another, the doorkeeper; and Propertius will achieve the clever effect of personifying the door and letting the lover appeal to it (*Elegy* 1. 16). Nevertheless, in the perhaps most sophisticated variant of Propertius, the lover does not confuse the door for the girl; the door's personality merely emphasizes the pathetic fallacy of all lovers, who think that inanimate nature is either hostile or kindly to themselves. Beyond the door, if it opens, the lover still expects to find his *puella*; and he distinctly talks about her when appealing to the door.

Now, in the convention of the Ship of State, the stable elements are the ship and the helmsman and the nautical conditions. To these could be added at will sailors, masts, oars, and the like, but in all cases we meet ship, captain, and the troubles of wind and waves. Using the allegory, a Greek or Roman might have the sailor speak about the captain; the captain might express his despair (as in Alcaeus); Polybius and Cicero could describe the boat and captain from the outside; and presumably it would be permissible to let sailor or captain appeal to the ship or even the ship cry out to its captain. Actually, we do not know of any cases where the Ship of State was so personified, but I see no

reason why it might not have occurred to someone. Even if an ancient poet or rhetorician did dream up a personification of the Ship of State, though, he would have respected the limits of the convention: he could not ignore the helmsman nor treat the ship as though it were helmsman and vessel united. To do that would be as radical as treating the door, when using the *exclusus amator*, not merely as a personality able to open itself, but as the girl in all her sexual possibilities. The helmsman cannot be ignored even when the poet chooses to describe the Ship of State battling the waves of anarchy and civil war; even then the ancient writer would, like Polybius, explicitly or implicitly call the State a ship without a captain and deduce all its troubles from that crucially missing element.

If then we have any faith in Horace, we must not believe that he wrenched convention so vastly out of shape as to disfigure it beyond possibility of recognition. We must return to the logical problem raised by all such analyses as Fraenkel's and start again. Although the usual argument implies so, not all allegorical ships in antiquity were Ships of State. I have excluded, I hope, the Ship of State as the proper allegory for this poem. What other allegories remain? Mendell asked this question, discarded several possibilities, and fixed on what he considered the best alternative to the Ship of State. He did what seems to have occurred to no other scholar; he analyzed the interests of Horace. While it is very significant that Horace nowhere else uses the Ship of State, three other metaphorical "ships" form part of the poet's regular stock of ideas: the Ship of Life, the Poetic Ship, and the Ship of Love. For reasons which he felt cogent, Mendell opted for the Ship of Life.<sup>9</sup>

I do not favor interpreting Horace's *navis* as a Ship of Life, but Mendell's hypothesis should not be laughed out of court. After all, the Ship of Life was a common allegory, probably as old as the Ship of State, used regularly from the 5th century B.C. at latest, used several times by Horace himself, and therefore—to resort to the dubious logic of the commentators—a "natural" possibility for interpreting this poem.<sup>10</sup> There were three stable elements in this allegory: the ship, the seas, and the port of destination. The ship represented the individual experience of one man, his living person; the seas represented the span of time through which a man travels and all the trials that he faces; and the port might be a secure kind of existence such as was represented by philosophy or it might be the final destination of us all, death. Horace organizes *C.* 2. 10 on the theme of the Sea of Life, telling Licinius to steer his craft well whether the storms rage or the breezes waft him along easily. In *Epist.* 1. 18. 87–88 the poet gives advice to Lollius: "tu, dum tua navis in alto est, / hoc age, ne mutata retrorsum te ferat aura." The passage from the Epistle illustrates a reversal of nautical conditions something like what Horace describes in *C.* 1. 14, if in the opposite direction. It also illustrates the point, I fear, which renders Mendell's interpretation invalid for *C.* 1. 14; the ship and the individual were *one* or, to put it another way, the individual always sails aboard his Ship of Life. Thus, when Fraenkel rejects this theory, he cannot be faulted. But the irony of it is that *desiderium* (18) disproves Fraenkel's interpretation as well as Mendell's. As I showed, you cannot "miss" your own state in the allegory; nor can you "miss" your own life. In both cases, you must sink with that allegorical ship.



In itself, though, Mendell's interpretation is not absurd, and Hadrian's famous poem *animula vagula blandula* proves that, under certain circumstances, a Roman could quite "naturally" personify his life or soul.

Next, I consider the poem-ship. I have not been able to determine how far back beyond Pindar this *topos* goes;<sup>11</sup> in any case, the Roman poets and rhetoricians of Horace's time employed it constantly—Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, to name the most important. Again, in this allegory the stable elements are ship, nautical circumstances, and port of destination. The ship represents the poet and his poem, the sea and storms represent the troubles of composition, and the port is the ultimate stage of completion. Thus, Ovid, a master of convention, writes at the end of his *Remedia amoris*: "hoc opus exegi: fessae date sarta carinae;/ contigimus portus, quo mihi cursus erat" (811–12). The vessel, personified, can be called "tired," because the poet has been steering it through the stormy seas of composition. Now at last he has arrived in port, and he requests the garlands that people place on ships when welcoming them in harbor; that is, of course, he hopes for popular approval of his poem. To illustrate another way of handling this *topos*, we may take Horace himself:

Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui  
victas et urbis increpuit lyra,  
ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor  
vela darem [C. 4. 15. 1–4].

A poet may possess talents for epic, tragedy, and grand poetry in general; then he may be said to have a grand ship and large, strong sails, and he is entitled to venture forth upon the deep (*altum* in the convention). Or, as Horace usually presents himself, he may have slight abilities that fit him more for light love poetry; and in that case, it is

better for him not to risk his tiny craft and his little sails on the troublous sea of epic (here indicated by the martial topics). Apollo, god of the poet, knows each man's capacity and encourages him or rebukes him accordingly.

I have toyed seriously with the hypothesis that Horace here might be referring to the poem-ship and concluded once again that the convention will not permit such an interpretation. The next poem in Book 1, *C.* 1. 15, presents some puzzling aspects, among which is its tone of high seriousness. As Paris sails for Troy with Helen, Nereus rises from the sea and predicts to him the fatal consequences of his act, again and again referring to the epic feats recorded in the *Iliad*. Thus, I debated whether or not *C.* 1. 14 might be a half-rueful announcement by the normally light poet that somehow or other things had gotten out of hand and that he was embarking in the next piece on the high seas of grand poetry. What logically kills the hypothesis has ruined all other interpretations: the simple fact that Horace separates himself from his "ship," whereas poet and ship conventionally belonged together, quite as much as the man and his life or the anxious citizen and his state. Poets could, it appears, personify their "ship" or the *navis* of another poet: I agree with Professor Lionel Pearson that, when Horace in *C.* 1. 3 addresses Vergil's ship (5, the only other case where Horace does speak to a boat in the first person singular) he is primarily talking to Vergil the poet, who is hard at work "sailing on the high seas" and struggling to complete his *Aeneid*. Horace, using another metaphor, can personify his own works as something separate. When he completed Book 1 of the *Epistles*, he wrote a final poem, often described as an *envoi*, in which he rep-

resented the collection of poems about to be published as a handsome young slave putting himself up for sale, "prostituting himself" to the public. The completed collection can be regarded as distinct from the poet, but, to describe that fact allegorically, Horace could not use the ship allegory. Ship and poet sail together for port, the stage of completion; the allegory pursues the situation no farther.

Before I take up what I regard as the most probable allegory in l. 14, the Ship of Love, let me add a few words about the failure of all other hypotheses to account for the poetic facts that Horace has produced. So far, I have rested my case on the inconsistency between the situation described in Horace's ode and the situation always assumed in the three allegories under consideration. Horace separates ship and speaker, places the speaker unmistakably ashore appealing passionately to the ship not to forsake the safety of harbor and himself; the convention of the Ship of State, the Ship of Life, and the Ship of Poetry require that the deeply involved speaker, whether he be citizen, the man sailing through life, or the poet, be aboard the *navis*. Horace did not, however, merely write an allegory about a ship which was being addressed by someone on shore. As Fraenkel rightly warns us, Horace displayed a notable interest in describing the vessel and consistently personifying it. That extensive description through personification, which occupies part of the first stanza and all of stanzas two through four, needs to be accounted for in any adequate interpretation of the poem. In other words, whatever allegory readers choose, they must show how Horace has integrated with it his elaborate personification of the *navis*.

The ship is told to survey itself (*vides* 3). If so, it will observe that its side or flank is bare (*nudum . . . latus* 4), its mast "wounded" (*malus . . . saucius* 5), and that side, wounded mast, and rigging all "groan" (*gemant* 6) under the stress of the gale. Its linens are not in one piece (*lintea* 9);<sup>12</sup> and it has no gods left to "call upon" (*voce*s 10), should troubles assail it again. Horace calls it a Black Sea pine (11), which avoids all personification; then he deliberately adds a personifying apposition, which would be entirely needless if personification were as incidental as most commentators imply; this inanimate piece of timber is a "noble daughter of the forest" (*silvae filia nobilis* 12). Now, the ship possesses not only personality but sex. Proud of her origin, she boasts of her family and name, useless though they are in the present situation ("iactes et genus et nomen inutile" 13). Regardless of her boasts, the sailor does not trust her for all her paint (*pictis* 14).<sup>13</sup>

Everybody knows that ships are female, and Fraenkel demonstrates how far back into Greek thought the analogy between ships and woman can be traced.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Fraenkel treats the question backward. It really adds nothing to our understanding of this poem to be told that Greeks and Romans conventionally thought of the ship in the feminine gender, for we all know cases from any literature, ancient or modern, where the ship has no sex or personality. Look, for example, at the two poems of Alcaeus that most scholars would agree exhibit the allegory of the Ship of State; Alcaeus does not give his "ship" personality or sex, and rightly so, because the personification adds nothing, but detracts from the seriousness and clarity of the allegory. So the real question is: Why has Horace utilized the common conception

of the ship as a woman in this poem? Should the female ship embarrass us, as it does most commentators, who solemnly affirm that "we must not press the personification too far"?

The difficulties inherent in all three allegorical explanations that have been rejected on logical grounds appear again when we try to apply this personification. Think of a storm-beaten ship, a venerable state, and then of a rather battered female; the result, I submit, is hilarious. How could Horace, a poet of exquisite taste, have possibly descended to such bathos? Or try to make consistent sense of a grand poem, a storm-beaten ship, and a painted hussy. Or finally consider whether it is possible to integrate the associations of a storm-beaten ship, a difficult life, and a brazenly boastful, but unconvincing, woman. The three terms—ship, woman, and allegorical interpretation—will not go together. Now, suppose I simplify things and reduce the three terms to two; suppose I interpret the allegorical ship as in fact referring to a woman. Then, the personification supports the allegory, and we remain with ship and woman. I do not think that such simplification is legerdemain; it seems to me the only interpretation that will satisfactorily account for the facts of the poem and at the same time fit a well-known, but hitherto ignored, convention of erotic poetry.

Again I go back to the 6th century for the basic framework of the Ship of Love or what we may more accurately call the Lover-Ship.<sup>15</sup> A short epigram of Theognis (457 ff.) reads as follows:

οὐ τοι σύμφορόν ἐστι γυνὴ νέα ἀνδρὶ γέροντι·  
οὐ γὰρ πηδαλίῳ πείθεται ὡς ἄκατος  
οὐδ' ἄγκυραι ἔχουσιν· ἀπορρήξασα δὲ δεσμά  
πολλάκις ἐκ νυκτῶν ἄλλον ἔχει λιμένα.

Although this little poem seems to be the earliest elaboration of the erotic

*topos*, Theognis uses his comparison so casually that one would expect the Lover-Ship to have been a commonplace for centuries before him. The parallels established are as follows: a woman is a ship, but a very special, independent kind; she has a rudder, anchor, and mooring ropes, which one might perhaps construe as the various kinds of pressure, rational and moral, that favor loyalty and chastity within marriage, yet she disregards all such controls; she wilfully breaks away from anchorage in the harbor of matrimony and sails blithely off during the night to another port, another less regular relation with an adulterer.

By Horace's time, the connection of woman with ships and the sea had become complicated, and a poet had almost infinite possibilities for dealing with a highly elastic convention. Euripides in the *Hippolytus* describes the power that Aphrodite exerts over the sea; and the Hellenistic poets developed a number of witty epigrammatic variations upon Aphrodite or a particular woman and the sea. For the purposes of this metaphor, Poseidon or Neptune would be ignored; the lover sailing the sea of love, then, would pray anxiously to Aphrodite or Venus to grant him a safe voyage. Since the course of true love has always been a choppy one, lovers and erotic poets did nothing daring when they developed the comparison between love and the sea.

Horace talks of *Venus marina* (*C.* 3. 26. 5 and 4. 11. 15), goddess of the sea, and he obviously knows the clever Hellenistic *topos* of the Sea of Love. In *C.* 1. 5 the speaker describes himself as having been shipwrecked in love, and as a result of that sad experience he claims that he has given up sailing: he has dedicated his sailor's suit to the deity of the sea (*Venus*, it seems likely). In *C.* 3

26 the speaker prays before the shrine of Venus of the sea; he asserts that recently (*nuper* 1) he was a proficient lover, but now (*nunc* 3) he is giving up love and dedicating all the paraphernalia of that "occupation" to the goddess. Of course, the speaker's proud affirmations evaporate in irony at the end of the poem, for, after his dedicatory prayer, he asks Venus to give Chloe a flick of her whip just once. He is really piqued by the way Chloe rejects his advances. Horace likes to use the erotic convention of the Sea of Love and the Lover-Ship, then; and he enjoys picturing the self-contradicting lover with his talk of *nuper* and *nunc* (as here in 1. 14. 17-18), whether in the context of the nautical allegory or without allegory as in *C.* 1. 19.

Horace's lover in *C.* 1. 5, 1. 19, and 3. 26, indeed in most cases, is a man. Therefore, Horace describes him as a shipwrecked sailor in 1. 5; and it appears that the sea this time is the beautiful but fickle courtesan Pyrrha. Nowhere does Horace call a male lover a ship, and nowhere else but in *C.* 1. 14 (assuming that my interpretation is valid) does he call a female lover a ship. Confusing as all this may seem to be, the convention does make sense. The basic elements to keep in mind are ship, nautical conditions, and port. The ship is the lover, female or male; and since the ship in this convention includes sailors, pilot, and vessel, one could talk of the lover simply as the ship or one could more elaborately describe the lover sailing his ship. The sea is love in all its complexities; that is, it is Venus' domain. To *Venus marina* the male lover (regarded as a sailor) prayed for a safe voyage. He and his ship dreaded the "waves" (*fluctus*) which were the unpredictable, treacherous moods of the girl, and he hoped not to be shipwrecked

(*naufragus*, i.e., unsuccessful in his suit), but to reach port (i.e., the bed of the girl). Nevertheless, as Theognis illustrates and as common sense tells us, lovers were often female, and females could be fitted with minimum changes into this nautical framework. Then, the woman is a ship; the seas still are the troubles of love; she still fears the waves and shipwreck; she hopes to make port with her man. I know of no case where the woman appears as sailor, but the man may be either ship or sailor, at least in other Roman poets than Horace.

Catullus represents the girl Ariadne, passionately in love, as a ship tossing wildly on the waves:

sancte puer, curis hominum qui gaudia misces  
quaeque regis Golgos quaeque Idalium fron-  
dosum,  
qualibus incensam iactastis mente puellam  
fluctibus [64. 95-98].

In another poem, Catullus portrays his friend Allius as a shipwrecked sailor cast up on the sand by the foaming waves ("naufragum . . . eiectum spumantibus aequoris undis" 68. 3), and Allius' service to him he compares to a mild breeze appearing on the sea to storm-tossed sailors: "hic, velut in nigro iactatis turbine nautis/ lenius aspirans aura secunda venit" (68. 63-64). Ovid, some fifteen years after 1. 14, describes the male lover as a ship (*carina*):

ut subitus prope iam prensa tellure carinam  
tangente portus ventus in alta rapit,  
sic me saepe refert incerta Cupidinis aura  
notaque purpureus tela resumit Amor  
[*Amores* 2. 9. 31-34].

Ovid's poem not only illustrates the fact that a male lover could be represented as a storm-tossed ship or a shipwrecked sailor—the particular role depending, it would seem, on the particular stage of the love affair, "stormy"

or "wrecked"—but it also places the male lover in a nautical crisis remarkably similar to that faced by Horace's allegorical ship. As Ovid's ship-lover nears port, suddenly a new love interest like a breeze snatches him up and carries him off into the deep seas of passion. Horace's ship, I noted, was either nearing port or had just set out again from port, and the waves were carrying it back to sea. I suggest that we should interpret Horace's ship, on the basis of the personification, as a girl about to "embark" on a new love affair.<sup>11</sup>

I have attempted to demonstrate that a well-known convention existed from as early as the 6th century B.C., by which a woman (or a man) was compared to a ship of an utterly independent type. Such a ship had no captain or helmsman, for this ship steered itself. When this ship ventured forth on the waves of passion, it might be tossed about by storms and high seas; it might even be wrecked. But it was fighting its way to the Port of Fulfilled Love. The erotic impulse being what it is, a lover-ship might not remain in port long, might even turn back from harbor at the last moment. Ovid obviously thinks that the best part of love affairs is the exciting "sailing," the "pursuit," to use another metaphor. And Theognis long before Ovid commented on the woman who, because she was badly matched with an older man, left that "harbor" for another.

It is legitimate to say, then, that Horace and his contemporaries were familiar with the lover-ship, male and female, as an erotic convention. If I have satisfactorily argued my case, it is also necessary to discard three proposed allegories in interpreting this poem, both because they fail to account for the missing helmsman or the speaker's position ashore and because

they make no sense of the personification adopted by Horace. Can we claim now that the erotic allegory fits the facts of the poem?

(1) "A speaker talks to a ship that sails dangerously out into the open sea." The speaker, as I shall argue in connection with the fourth point, should be construed as an abandoned lover, a "port" to leave. The course of the ship indicates that the woman loved by the speaker has sailed forth on another affair, more than eager for the high seas of new passion. (2) "He [the speaker] treats the ship as an independent being, able to make its own decisions; hence, he mentions sailors only in passing and completely disregards pilot and captain." The erotic convention, to my knowledge, alone gives the ship a human nature, for of course it alone, of the four ship allegories under discussion, describes a human being as a ship. (3) "So human does the ship seem to him that... he employs constant personification through these first four stanzas." As Horace puts it, the "ship" is personified as a female, a girl somewhat the worse for wear but still putting on a brave show. This strong emphasis on the feminine aspects of the "ship," almost ludicrous when applied to other allegories, fits the erotic hypothesis admirably. Horace, in fact, does describe a courtesan who has "been around." (4) "The final stanza... informs us that the speaker 'misses' the boat now, therefore must be at a distance." The separation of speaker and boat, inexplicable on the basis of the other allegories, admits of easy explanation by the erotic: the speaker is an abandoned male or "harbor," and the boat is the girl who has cast off his anchors and left him to his longing, *desiderium*. (5) "It [the final stanza] also..."

establishes the fact of the allegory; for no Roman could properly call a ship *taedium*, *desiderium*, or *cura*, not at least all in one sentence." Of course, most commentators agree that the poem is allegorical. However, they do not see that these very words which prove the existence of allegory also indicate strongly the kind of allegory. Commager, for example, notes the entirely erotic qualities of 17-18, but adapts this erotic note to the political circumstances: "His [Horace's] former estrangement from political reality is revealed to be merely a lover's quarrel, not a permanent disaffection."<sup>17</sup> All this needlessly complicates what is a simple one-for-one relation, if I am right. The "lover's quarrel," or whatever the exact erotic situation suggested by the words of the final stanza, is indeed an erotic matter, nothing more. (6) "Throughout the poem, the speaker expresses himself with great passion, but particularly in the final stanza." The "passion," I believe, is quite simply a lover's passion.

Let me propose, then, an interpretation of l. 14 along the lines set by the details used by Horace and the erotic convention. The speaker has provided a safe harbor for a courtesan. (If it seems useful, the references to the Black Sea (11) and distinguished family and name (13) might indicate the woman's place of origin.) She has been rather demanding (*sollicitum* 17), and consequently he grew tired (*taedium* 17) of her. However, after a while she decided to take a chance on a new affair and so left the speaker, who, in the self-contradictory way of most Horatian lovers, suddenly finds himself passionately in love with her again. Now, he tries various arguments to dissuade her from leaving him. He claims that she has already suffered badly

from the seas of Love, in other words, that she is beginning to show some signs of age, and so she would be wise to return to port, his wide open arms. If she continues, he warns, she will merely make herself ridiculous (*ludibrium* 16).<sup>18</sup> However, despite all his efforts, the courtesan pays no attention; from which we are probably entitled to conclude that the speaker has overstated his case. Experienced woman she may be, but that does not necessarily mean that she has lost all her attractions for other men; after all, this speaker sees a great deal in her. What he has been suppressing, he at last openly admits: he desperately misses her now. And with a final forlorn appeal to the heedless girl, he begs her not to sail those seas of love.

I have not spent much time on the final two lines of the ode heretofore. Most commentators who accept the fact of the allegory either ignore them entirely or somewhat embarrassedly tell readers not to "press" the details too far. It seems strange, though, that Horace would, after revealing the allegory in 17-18, lapse into vague nautical directions, of no specific import, in 19-20. Is it not possible that in locating the seas (*aequora* 20) among the Cyclades he is defining the Sea of Love? I showed that the Greeks and Romans linked Venus with the sea and that Horace called her *Venus marina*. It seems that Venus presided over many islands and seaports, Cyprus, Cythera, and Cnidos being the best known; but Catullus 36. 12ff. adds a few names to the more regular list. The central island of the Cyclades, Delos, boasted an ancient temple of Aphrodite or Venus which, according to Plutarch, Theseus himself had founded on his way back to Athens from Crete.<sup>19</sup> In the only other place where Horace mentions the Cyc-

lades, he distinctly refers to Venus who presides over the islands, and he adopts a metrically appropriate synonym for *nitentis* (19): "quae Cnidon/fulgentisque tenet Cycladas" (*C.* 3. 28. 13-14). I take it, then, that these seas washing the various gleaming Cyclades refer to the Seas controlled by Venus, especially dangerous for this beloved ship.

Some people may protest that I have not referred much to Alcaeus, who provides those favoring the Ship of State with strong arguments. I grant this. Since I believe that Alcaeus did use the Ship of State on occasion (cf. Diehl 30 and 119-20), but Horace never, Alcaeus does not really help interpret *C.* 1. 14, except in a negative sense. I have, however, called attention to the fact that Alcaeus does emphasize the helmsman and does not personify the ship. But one special poem of Alcaeus (Diehl 46) has appeared in papyrus fragments, equipped with a fragmentary commentary; this poem personifies its ship as a woman, probably a courtesan. Denys Page, after carefully discussing the textual problems of the incomplete lines, writes: "This evidence suggests a conclusion which has at least the merit of leaving nothing unexplained: the ship, decayed and ancient, weary after many voyages, unfit for use, is described in terms applicable to a courtesan, grown old and diseased, at the end of a long and exacting career."<sup>20</sup> Although Page hesitates to decide whether the ship symbolizes a woman or the woman a ship, it is by no means difficult to see in what survives of the poem an erotic situation. Alcaeus might be saying: "That girl is an old hulk, weather-beaten and ready to go on the rocks. Who cares if she does not have any desires to match mine? I can forget her and want to enjoy myself with

Bycchis [a more willing courtesan?]." Probably, too little of the poem has survived to decide the exact allegory. However, there is a lurking irony in the situation if Alcaeus, who has been consistently appealed to as the father of the Ship of State and direct influence on Horace's *C.* 1. 14, should in fact also prove to be the originator of the Ship of Love. Nor is it impossible. Horace knew Alcaeus' poetry far better than we ever can, and in *C.* 1. 32. 9ff. he emphasizes love as a favorite topic of his predecessor.

I have attempted in this paper to reach more precise criteria for interpreting Horace's controversial 1. 14. It does not appear to me that critics have seriously looked at the poem as a piece of discourse, so intent have they been on deciding whether or not Horace produced an allegory. Once they have fought the old battles with those who mistakenly treat the situation described as a literal, historical event, they forget that most of the poem remains, still unexplained. If we are ever going to pin down Horace's meaning, we must analyze all possible ship allegories and see which, if any, really squares with the facts of the poem. To generate controversy, I have boldly attacked the prevailing allegorical interpretation and two others, all three of which I call impossible. To add insult to injury, I have even proposed in all solemnity that this ode, normally considered to be a heartfelt declaration of political loyalty by Horace, is nothing more than a clever erotic argument by a typical lover. I may be wrong—I hope not—but those who believe in the Ship of State have a lot of questions to answer.

## NOTES

1. See Ed. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 154ff., and S. Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* (New Haven, 1962), pp. 163ff.
2. For a summary of the various interpretations of this ode up to 1929, see S. Pilch, "Horatii C I 14 quomodo sit interpretandum," *Eos*, XXXII (1929), 449-72.
3. Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55.
5. "Horace i. 14," *CP*, XXXIII (1938), 145-56.
6. The development of this allegory is sketched by J. Kahlmeyer, *Seesturm und Schiffsbruch als Bild im antiken Schrifttum* (Hildesheim, 1934), pp. 39ff.
7. *OT* 22-23, 694-95, 922-23.
8. Walt Whitman in his poem "O Captain, my Captain," did not have his speaker say that he would miss the "captain"; that point is left to our imaginations. It seems ironic that, if Fraenkel is right, Whitman, that most unconventional of poets, treats the convention of the Ship of State more respectfully than Horace does. The speaker of Whitman's poem is plainly a sailor aboard the ship, trying to revive his captain (Lincoln) as the craft comes into harbor (peace) after a stormy voyage (the American Civil War).
9. Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, 155, n. 4, comments harshly on Mendell without naming him: "Excellent prophet though he [Horace] was (*Odes* 3. 30. 6ff.), he could not anticipate that in the twentieth century someone would endeavour to demonstrate that 'the *navis* is Horace and his own life.'" The quotation comes from p. 156 of Mendell's article.
10. See Kahlmeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 26ff.
11. E. g., Pindar *O.* 6. 103 and 13. 49; *P.* 2. 62, 3. 68, and 11. 39; *N.* 3. 26 and 5. 2.
12. Horace refers first to the linen sails, but clothes were also made of the same material; cf. Suet. *Calig.* 26.
13. The word *pietis* can apply both to the ship's paint and to cosmetics; cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 210ff.
14. *Op. cit.*, pp. 157-58.
15. See Kahlmeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 22ff.
16. Cf. Ovid *Met.* 9. 589ff.: Byblis "embarks" on a dangerous affair with Caunus without testing the winds (obstacles) and therefore is seized by a gale and borne toward the rocks (total failure).
17. *Op. cit.*, p. 167. Cf. Heinze's note in Kiessling-Heinze (Berlin, 1955): "Jetzt dagegen ist die Liebe zum Vaterland, die Sehnsucht nach seinem ruhigen Besitz und die Sorge um sein Ergehen wieder erwacht. *desiderium* und *cura* bezeichnen auch in der Sprache der Erotiker das Objekt dieser Empfindungen."
18. For Horace, *ludibrium* here is unique; it is, besides, an unpoetic word. For analogous argumentation with a courtesan—who has closed the door on the *amator*—cf. *C.* 1. 25 with its exaggerated description of present conditions and prediction of future humiliation.
19. *Theseus* 21.
20. *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford, 1955), p. 195. For a full discussion of this poem of Alcaeus and the others which utilize the allegory of the Ship of State, see pp. 178ff. of the same book.