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Community and Ecstasy: (Re)defining the Ode

The ode is a poetic form that, when observed through its entire history, would confound even the most learned critics in the search for a comprehensive definition. Originating in ancient Greece with Pindar's epinician poems, the ode evolved through the didactic poems of Horace up to the meditations of the English Romantic poets, in particular for the present discussion, John Keats. The ode manifested multiple unique forms, and yet all seemed to share a specific quality, a quality that has remained nameless save for a few particular devices that appear frequently, yet inconstantly: hyperbolic language and metaphor, emotional rather than logical unity, quick changing imagery, variety of experience depicted, and references to mythology. The Prosody Handbook describes an ode by the following:

> It is difficult to say what an ode is. One is tempted to describe it as a poem of some length which does not follow any of the other conventional forms. Some poems which poets have titled odes follow a fixed or nearly fixed stanzaic pattern…Other odes, however, are extremely free, are unpredictable in everything--stanza length, line length, meter, and rhyme pattern. Most odes rhyme in some fashion, and nearly all of them are either highly formal or elaborate. Praise and commemoration are frequent motives; personification and direct address are characteristic of the rhetoric. (Beum and Shapiro 128)

The Oxford English Dictionary does not do much better: "In early use: a poem intended to be sung or one written in a form originally used for sung performance. Later: a lyric poem, typically

one in the form of an address to a particular subject, written in varied or irregular metre." To put it most deliberately, the ode maintains a formal definition equivalent to, 'I can't describe it, but I know it when I see it.' As is to be expected, this vague definition is liable to cause some problems when comparing poems that are identified as odes, yet which do not possess the same formal features.

By adapting Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of community and its dissolution, we can identify the ode not by its formal features, but by the function that it serves in the community. Functioning as an immediate appreciation of the possibility of community, the ode utilizes the idea of dislocation, excess and restraint, transcendence, and the recognition of the other in death, in order to present and communicate ecstasy, or ex-stasis, the outside of self. For Nancy, what appears to be a chaotic disruption in the social fabric instead becomes a focusing influence of community. By recreating ecstasy and presenting the possibility of community, the boundaries previously established between beings stand exposed, open to the other. The ode works as a poetic manifestation of Nancy's suggested relationship between the community and the singular being, and in this way it informs the poet and his audience of their own mortal truth: the essential incompleteness of their being, an incompleteness that may only be fulfilled by the other, by community.

In his treatise "The Inoperative Community" Jean-Luc Nancy defines community through dislocation, stating that the experience of community is "as space itself, and the spacing of the experience of the outside, of the outside-of-self" (19). For Nancy, community is an areality, a formed space, of ecstasy; this ecstasy, or ex-stasis, is what defines both the singular being, and community. In order for there to be a singular being, there must be community, for only "being-in-common can make possible a being-separated" (xxxvii). Nancy contends that the existence of community,

> inasmuch as it is *in* common, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance. Being *in* common has nothing to do with communion…a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in* common means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this* (narcissistic) *'lack of identity.'* (xxxviii)

Nancy states that finitude, the infinite lack of definitive identity, is what makes community. The singular being cannot be defined by or identify himself as an individual autonomous and separate from all others. He must instead look outward to his community in order to understand and identify his own being, a being that is rooted in the other. Community, for Nancy, is what retreats from, or is lacking from, immanence, the complete fusion of beings; it is an openness, an exposing to the other that is kept alive through the retreat. Nancy calls this the *clinamen*, the "inclination or inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other. Community is at least the *clinamen* of the individual" (3-4). The yearning in the singular being for the other is what makes community, is what exposes the singular being to that which constitutes himself, for, according to Nancy, he is in fact constituted by the other. And it is this exposition, this intimacy that is discovered at the very limit of the outside, that is communicated in the ode. Nancy writes:

> This consciousness--or this communication--is ecstasy: which is to say that such a consciousness is never *mine*, but to the contrary, I only have it in and through the community…But it is not an unconscious--that is to say it is not the reverse side of a subject, nor its splitting. It has nothing to do with the subject's structure as *self*: it is clear consciousness at the extremity of its clarity, where consciousness *of* self turns out to be outside the self of consciousness. (19)

In a seemingly ironic gesture, the ecstatic experience brings boundedness, because it exposes

boundaries, and therefore exposes singular beings in community. Through ecstasy, the boundaries which constitute us are recognized; the boundaries themselves are that which expose us as creatures that exist within and through community. Nancy asserts that there is no such thing as the individual, the autonomous being that Descartes and Rousseau extol and praise, and through their influence the ideal the Romantics would aspire to. The Romantics would look inside themselves, and outside to nature, in order to find the consciousness of self that Nancy describes. The Romantic obsession with turning the interiority into exteriority, a literal ex-stasis, was an attempt to reconcile their need for community and the assumption of individuality that troubled them. In the end, it would only be through communication with the other that ecstasy would be gained. This knowledge of the other, however, is not something that may be possessed, or manipulated, or controlled. It may only be known, and even then, the flashes of knowledge are fleeting, as lightning strikes the barren earth. To Pindar, this inspiration came from the gods, a brightness that exceeded man's strength and gave him the potential to be more than he was. For the Romantics, it was a flash of the sublime, a scalding clarity of the Imagination that struck the poet in a momentous and awe-inspiring fashion. All manifestations of this ecstasy is the consciousness of community that Nancy details.

The ode's manifestations through history require explication before the ode may be revised as a Nancian gesture of community rather than through the formal features by which it is currently misidentified. The most significant ode writer of the Greeks was Pindar, who wrote his epinikian odes, the only full poems of his left to us today, from 498-452 B.C.E. They were commissioned specifically as victory odes, written to celebrate the winnings of an athlete of the Olympic, Nemean, Isthmian, or Pythian games that were held throughout Greece. These athletic competitions were the center of Greek culture, combining the experiences of humans and the divine; they were so important that throughout all of Greece peace was held during the schedule

of the games. Pindar's odes have identifying markers in them to indicate the subject of the ode: the game, victory, and the victor's city and ancestors. However, in the actual poem, the specific name of the athlete is usually forgone. This might have been because it was an obvious conclusion, as the poems were performed publicly as the victor returned to his *polis*, with the entire community gathered to watch and praise. This gesture of dismissing the athlete's name indicates, however, the importance of the community over the individual, of a legacy of achievements over one moment of triumph. The victor is nothing without his community. The odes were recorded, so even after the performance with the victor present, some type of identification would be needed once time had past. But still, the identity of the victor would have to be inferred from the surrounding material. As Shaffer suggests, the individual would always be overshadowed by the importance of his community, the importance of his family, and the importance of the gods. The value of his victory belonged not to himself, but to his entire community: "The individual was not considered by the Greeks of Pindar's age, of course, to be a self-sufficient entity. On the contrary, they merged him and his victory into the larger unit of family, or clan, or city; and thus a victory become really the property of the latter, a common good to be rejoiced in by all who were connected in any way with the actual victor" (Shaffer 20). To put it in Nancian terms, the individual did not exist in Greek culture; there was only the singular being that was created and sustained by his community. The odes served as a communal force, encapsulating not only the poet and the subject of his ode, the victor, but also combining the heritage and surroundings that made up the victor. It was an experience evoked simultaneously by the words and performance of the ode, and by the ode's evocation of divine and human experience from the audience.

The Pindaric odes follow a triadic structure: strophe, antistrophe, and epode, which have since been loosely termed as turn, counter-turn, and stand. Song and dance accompanied the ode

as an integral part of its enactment, with the performers chanting and dancing in one direction across the stage during the strophe, reversing the movement for the antistrophe, and remaining motionless in their original position for the epode. The poet had complete freedom in choosing the meter and length of the strophe, but he was then bound to repeat the exact pattern in the antistrophe: the excessive freedom of the strophe was followed by the constraint of exact repetition in the antistrophe. Fitzgerald theorizes that this countermovement enacted the open pathways that must be traveled by poet, victor, and audience in order to experience the ode: "For Pindar the victory opens up a path or, rather, a whole network of paths, which must be traveled if its significance is to be realized. The victory reveals a chain of debt, from the victor's debt to his *phya* (nature) and ancestors to the poet's debt of song to the victor" (21). The victor won by the gods' favor, for their love of him and his city, not in him alone. Every praise that Pindar offers the victor is also weighted with the praise of those around him, and a warning not to forget the community that made him. As Nancy would say, there is no individual that is not founded by the other. In addition to genealogical information and aphorisms relevant to the circumstances of the victory, Pindar was extremely talented in expanding metaphor upon metaphor, allowing complicated leaps of imagery that depended on the emotional rather than intellectual content of the ode. His avoidance of exact repetition would produce new formulations of points: ever new variety and creativity to stimulate his audience to further frenzy and ecstasy. This ecstasy would place each singular being outside himself, making visible the bonds of being that create each singular being. In the ecstatic state, the singular being is free in the moment of his/her frenzy; there is no concept or awareness of time or space, only an awareness of the other that is presented fully to the singular being in the ex-static moment.

Pindar's odes are occasional poems that invoke the shared social values of ancient Greece, and offer men immortality in verse. Just as the stories of the heroes of Homer were

known to every Greek, so did the competitive games offer a type of glory that history would not be able to erase. Once a victor could claim an ode as his own, he knew that his achievements would be forever kept in his community, and his glory would live on for every generation that experienced his ode, and therefore, him. In this small way, he would experience a fragment of the divine; his efforts in life would live long past his physical death--he might even be considered to be placed outside of death: "At the same time as it is the most ancient myth of the Western world, community might well be the altogether modern thought of humanity's partaking of divine life: the thought of a human being penetrating into pure immanence" (Nancy 10). Because of this relation between the community and immortality in Greek culture, there was the constant presence of the duality of humans and the divine in the odes. The mythological narratives that Pindar presented in his poems were relevant to the victory he was extolling, and also provided another social framework for his audience to move in. Mythology is the psychological and communal values of a culture, presented in terms that they may understand, even if they cannot comprehend. Mythology belongs to the community and the writer borrows it in exchange for a new formulation of the morals and feelings behind the story, which he then gives to his community. Myths serve as a vocabulary, a poetic currency that runs back and forth between the poet and his community. His audience could recognize the myth described, and often see the new element that Pindar was highlighting with his use of their communal knowledge. This move presents consciousness of both mythology and self to the community: "In the beginning, the power of myth strikes consciousness with stupor and puts it "outside of itself" (that is, it makes it conscious)" (Nancy 55). Fitzgerald describes Pindar's mythic narrative as "structured by ring composition, so that we move along a path, opened up by the victory, into the mythical past…at which point the narrative swiftly turns back to the present in a sweeping movement of fulfillment set in motion by the divine favor accorded to the mythical prototype of

the victor" (74). Fitzgerald is essentially describing a temporal displacement that is present in Pindar's odes. The ode requires participation in both the mythic and the mortal, an awareness of both in order to create the ecstatic experience necessary to both poet and audience. In order to understand what Pindar was doing, his audience needed to be aware of every part of their heritage, of their community. By blurring the linear perceptions of temporality, Pindar presented his community with a cultural self-consciousness by giving them an outside perspective.

Though he wrote four hundred years after Pindar, the Roman poet Horace also involved his public odes with the triumphs of his community. Born in 65 B.C.E., Horace witnessed the changing of the Roman empire with the death of Caesar, the Battle of Actium against Marc Antony and Cleopatra, and the triumph of Octavian, who would then be crowned Augustus, first Emperor of Rome. Perhaps the best way to view the odes of Horace is through the political arena, where the value of his poetry was quite literal, as Horace depended on his patron for his livelihood and addressed his odes to the Patrician class. Unlike Pindar, who spoke to the entire community present at his performances, Horace's odes were written to be read and specifically addressed the aristocratic men who could hold office in Rome and influence others with their decisions and opinions. The religious significance that the ode sustained with Pindar had since departed in Horace's time; Romans were far more interested in political than divine power (Commager 11). Horace's poetic subject matter is extremely varied, with each poem concerning a different subject than the one before it; Shafer claims that "Horace had, himself, to adapt both the form and content of his odes to the life around him, and, as was natural in a person as self-conscious as he was, he gave himself considerably greater liberty in the matter of content than in that of form" (33). The life around him was one of a new political time, and as Horace's patron was Maecenas, an advisor to Augustus, some have inferred that much of what was published in the political odes was aimed to please his patron: "It had been Horace's function at the court of

Augustus to point out the advantages of the newly formed empire" (Goad 8). This is not to say, however, that Horace was a sycophantic supporter of the Roman aristocracy. Though the dominating principle of his odes was variation and tension with opposites, he captured the Hellenistic moral philosophy that a wise man achieves happiness through the limitation rather than the fulfillment of desire (Nisbet and Hubbard xiv).

While Pindar's legacy did influence subsequent poets, including Horace, the Roman did not follow the Pindaric structure of triadic stanzas. He instead mimicked the Alcaic and Sapphic forms of poems, adding his own flair with longer words and syllables. The Alcaic form, developed by Alcaeus, a Mytilene poet circa 600 B.C.E., was an unrhymed four-line stanza of varied metrical feet, with five long syllables in the first two lines, four long syllables in the latter, and an unaccented syllable in all but the last line. The Sapphic stanza, named after Sappho, also uses four lines, the first three of which follow the metrical pattern of two trochees, dactyl, and another two trochees. The last line is shorter, with only a dactyl followed by one trochee. Horace followed a regular stanza pattern, often a quatrain in which the first two lines are longer than the last two. The majority of his poems are in *propria persona* with an addressee, either specific or general in the Patrician class. His ceremonial addresses established a public role between the poet and audience. Horace's distinct voice is present in his odes: the dry humor, subtle charm, and both realistic and ironic human tones that shape and mold his poems into odes that depend on the tensions within them. (Nisbet and Hubbard xxv)

While the Pindaric odes created tension through the complicated metrical structure, Horace achieved his poetic goals through intricate syntactical structures: "He arranged words in patterns as elaborate as any by his Greek masters, and in the process showed that the juxtaposition of grammatically unrelated words would suggest new levels of meaning unknown to prose (and impossible in uninflected languages)" (Lee 4-5). Perhaps the most distinctive

element of Horace's verse is his movement between meanings: "Literal and figurative meanings range themselves as polarities, and upon the resulting tension Horace builds a moral dialectic" (Commager 74). The tensions and oppositions that are developed in each line spur forth the stanzaic structure as the design reaches out to envelop the entirety of the poem. Horace often presented one value, offered a counter, and then let his audience decide between the two. Though one might suppose that the underlying purpose of presenting and then dismissing extremes was to allude to the value of mediation, and of study, Commager claims that "the arrangement of words is as intricate and as puzzling as the event itself. Our very effort to overcome the difficulty of the lines involves us in them, and the text becomes a context of reality…verbal incongruities hurl us from one extreme to the other; the lines do not so much describe an experience as reproduce it" (54). There is both the intellectual and emotional content of the ode, but the emotional is what drives the experience forward, passing into a value that cannot be explained or controlled, but simply acknowledged: "His words and rhythms do no often imitate sounds, rather they express, time and again, the emotional content of the poems" (Lee 36). The importance of this thesis-antithesis-synthesis form, and the emotionality of the experience of the ode, would continue, taking particular hold in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's odes and poetry during the Romantic period.

Horace's most famous and consistent descriptions in his odes are of death and the tranquil countryside, particularly his home, the Sabine farm. These images of life and death, the ultimate antitheses that require balance and harmony while still maintaining their tension and absoluteness in order to preserve their forms, were his vocabulary in detailing human nature and human experience. As Commager states, "Together with myth, nature provided the classical world with a grammar in which it could construe any experience. One appealed to a common tradition, the other to common knowledge, or even common sense" (236). Human experience is

both contained within and distinguished from divinity and nature. The multiplicity of this experience is reflected in the Horatian ode, where tensions build from dueling contradictions and manifestations of sense. Horace's complex character and writings reflected the varied nature of the world, ever changing and ever expanding. His often ironic stance gave his audience a gap that they could measure between myth and normal life: "Myth and reality forever impinge upon one another, and frequently an ode's principal effect depends on our simultaneous awareness of each" (Commager 103). The value that each myth presented to an audience was inextricably bound with their mortal, human experience. Each element could only be recognized as polar by the presence of the divine, or other, and the form of the ode acts as a conduit with these interchanging values. "The poems themselves act as the earthly manifestation of the deities," Commager claims, giving the audience the value of the divine through human terms, just as Wordsworth would try to capture the sublime with the simplicity of rustic life (208). Like Pindar, Horace uses myth and elaborate form to construct his odes, creating an experience that is both overwhelming and necessary for his audience. The ode gives something overwhelming to the audience, but the poem is always kept slightly in check by the poet, ensuring that the experience is not so expansive that it becomes impossible to follow. The elaborate language of Pindar was also accompanied with cautionary thoughts; Horace's expressive and contradictory imagery was still focused and served to explicate on the main theme of the poem, which always contained multiple meanings; John Keats' points were still concentrated toward a specific endgame even as the metaphors changed rapidly, the endless permutations still focused on the subject and the desire exhibited by the author to communicate with his audience. The endless variety becomes necessary to the ode in order to encapsulate the experience of community that the poet is conjuring for his audience. The ode is dependent not on the singular, but the multiplicity of the whole.

Though the ode suffered a gap as a prominent poetic form between the writings of Pindar and Horace, the four hundred years would be more than tripled before the popularity of the ode resurfaced, this time in England. The ode came late to England, the Renaissance not hitting full swing until the Elizabethan era after the political upheaval of the War of the Roses was finally settled with Henry VII's ascension to the throne in 1485. Due to the tense political climate, much of the literary experimentation in Italy and France remained alien to England until the Elizabethan period, when the influence of the continent expanded and the ode was finally introduced into the English language with the same connotations that it holds today (which, as previously discussed, are a bit lackluster in definition). Before this, Horace had been a fixture in a proper English education, and perhaps it was because of this familiarity that Horatian odes never exploded as Pindaric ones did in 1656. It was then that Abraham Cowley took the ode and stripped away the formal features seen in Pindar and Horace, and added a freedom that had never before been seen in its form. Shaffer explicates Cowley's development of form:

> Cowley in his *Pindariques* frankly discarded the stanzaic structure of Pindar's odes, and adopted instead a free form of verse that gave him greater liberty, as he thought, for the imitation of the 'style and manner' alone of Pindar. This free verse had had its beginning in England as early as the last decade of the sixteenth century…So that when Cowley used it in his *Pindariques* he used a form of verse already well known in England, and one that English predecessors had developed and made ready for him. (7)

Cowley's popularity stemmed from the seeming novelty of his odes, but he added a superfluous value that had not yet been seen within the exchange of poet and audience concerning the ode. Shaffer insists that the free form that Cowley chose does nothing for the content of his poems, and instead distracts the audience rather than focusing them: "He seized on the Greek poet's

'enthusiastical manner,' and wholly failed to realise that this was the result--of certainly, great intensity of lyric emotion--but of such emotion controlled and *used* for the purpose of a complex, highly developed, and conscious art" (155). Shaffer states that Cowley relied solely on the emotional content of the poems without realizing that the formal features were what tied the imagery and spontaneity together. What was missing from Cowley's work was the balance and restraint shown by Pindar and Horace, and declared as a necessity by Nancy in presenting ecstasy. The inseparability of form and content as a foundation for literary theory is supported by Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, who demanded that a poem be an organic whole fused harmoniously with all of its parts. Curran summarizes that "true form is intellectually congruent with and empowering of its content. Not only does Coleridge emphasize a formal imperative in art, but his very metaphor assumes the centrality of genre, of genus and species within the multitudinous organization of the natural world. The organism that fulfills itself out of its own nature is an affirmation of the inherent individuation possible within its kind" (23-24). In reaction to the current philosophy that was emphasizing man's will and education, literature in the Romantic period "became radically subjective, spiraling inward to psychological dramas of the mind and memory, or projecting outward into prophecies and visions of new worlds formed by new values" (Damrosch 4). The advancement of science and experimentation spilled over into the literary world even as many of the great minds detailed disgust for the complicated and emotionless world of the laboratory, preferring instead the beauties of the natural world. This experimentation gave way to new forms and genres, hybrids of old forms and traditions. The ode produced by the Romantics would be a hybrid of Pindar, Horace, and Cowley, but would also be inspired from other sources as the Romantics experimented with transmuting other poetic forms into the form of the ode. In an attempt to shun the material world and focus instead on the beauties of nature, the Romantic poets would venture out in to nature and return with ideas that

they would discuss with their fellow poets. A new community of elite, literary intellectuals was formed: the poems would be published, but usually after they had been shared within the poetic circle. Theory, prose, and poetry were all exchanged and intertwined, and the different authors all influenced each others' works. The most prominent of the works published that would articulate and influence the theory of Romanticism were by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. For the ode, Keats would most clearly express the Romantic sentiment of both poetry and artist within a living community.

English Romanticism emerged with the help of William Wordsworth's *Preface to* Lyrical Ballads (1800, 1815), which extolled his theories on poetry and began the fervor that many associate with Romanticism and Romantic odes. Wordsworth professed that poetry should concern human experience, and not only that, but human experiences of simplicity, of the lower and middle classes who maintained a rustic life and unassuming language. He insisted that these traits would provide greater understanding and clearer communication, for the local was where language most thoroughly encountered nature. Each poem, according to Wordsworth, has a worthy purpose, and "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (15). Therefore, any adjustments to language should be done solely for pleasure, and sparingly at that. The object of poetry is universal truth and pleasure, and all things are related to pleasure, because all things are known and there is pleasure found in knowledge: "the most valuable object of all writing" is "to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery" (31). The contradiction that quickly becomes apparent is that the form of the ode, which Wordsworth and other Romantic poets employed to great effect, often depended on the highly artificial language that the poet used in its creation. Yet the artificiality of language and ornaments of design and diction that had so pleased poets of the past were now deemed superfluous and unnatural. Wordsworth's emphasis on the imagination included a new creation within the mind of the poet, that could then

be conveyed to his audience through the form of his poetry: "These processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence" (159).

Another key literary theorist of the Romantics, Coleridge had a similar view of the importance of the Imagination, insisting that there were two levels, the Primary and the secondary Imagination. The latter was an echo of the former, and it was the secondary Imagination that poets utilized when writing poetry, trying to capture the essence of the Primary, which was the pure, unattainable form. Unlike Wordsworth, though, Coleridge emphasized the education and study of any poet, declaring that to find man's language, one didn't need to travel to the countryside or solely use the language of peasants; the language of man was suited to his station, and changed upon the manner and situation of use. Coleridge states that the reader should not be charmed by the lack of polish in a poem (a credit that Wordsworth instructs but does not actually carry out), but by the pleasure inherent in it. Furthermore, he "should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of journey itself" (Vol. 2, 14). As the previous writers of the ode maintained, it was necessary for the audience to willfully engage and participate in the poem in order to correctly experience it. Poetry for Coleridge required the active illumination of community on the journey of experience, an experience held together by the form of the ode, both by its freedom and its restriction.

This freedom of form that the Romantics desired harkened back to their conceptions of the poet as a creative force. In his *Defense of Poetry*, Shelley wrote that "a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened,

yet know not whence or why" (129). This mystical description of a poet creating his art goes further in its relation to the ode, for it implies the necessary nature of sincerity and self-creation for the sake of itself. However, the ode is also an invocation of community, and an invocation requires and creates for itself a listener. The ode depends as heavily upon the audience as it does on the poet, because it calls upon sources of which the poet is ignorant; it at once both invokes and celebrates immutable power. The experience that is entailed in this poetic form envelopes the poet and his audience completely, and while the ode at once gives a new experience, it is also designed through its themes to be familiar and recognizable. Altogether, the Romantic objective is for poetry to be both friendly and entrancing. Shelley observes that:

> it makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. (156)

Shelley is alluding to the novel familiar, the experiencing of an old subject for the first time all over again. The form of the ode the Romantics adapted, with its tradition of vaulting and varied metaphors, and emotional leaps, provided this criteria in spades. The immediate experience with its communal nature was the most important aspect of the ode, which complimented the Romantic notion that poetry should produce immediate pleasure in its reader. Just as Pindar used the ode to describe the interactions of humans and gods, or Horace to explore nature and the political arena, the Romantics used the ode to explore otherworldly experiences, such as in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," or memories long past, as Wordsworth does in his Intimations Ode.

The paradox of the Romantics is that they claimed a theory of subjectivity and internal expression made external, the individual communing with nature, and yet they employed a form that was governed by the community before them, that depended on others, rather than the self; this expressed a paradigm that relied on the exact opposite of the individuality they extolled. A consideration that the ode is a manifestation of community invites the connection with another that the Romantics craved. By focusing on the importance of the subject, they also inadvertently acknowledged the existence of an other outside of the self. The Romantics wanted to understand their own internal nature, to be aware of themselves more fully than they believed any other beings had been before. The Romantics maintained a self-consciousness of both the tradition that the ode invoked, as well as the freedom that it asserted, whether with an experimental form or otherwise. To borrow a genre is to participate in community, because using an established poetic form, even when tailoring it to personal tastes, subsumes personal expression in a communal form. Individuation is paradigmatic; it becomes the whole community. Even though the Romantics' focus was on the inward, the further concern was making the inside become the outside. The Romantics recognized that to reach an audience, the poet must speak beyond individual concern, and aim for the higher achievement of having the community speak for the individual. The communication of communal consciousness in the ode follows Nancy's interpretation of ecstasy, the singular being, and community.

Dislocation, one of the more literal interpretations of ecstasy when considered as ex-stasis, may be seen in odes in both the temporal and physical realities of the poem. All odes begin with an invocation and address, which inherently implies a distance between the speaker and his audience, and also what he is invoking. The apostrophe present in odes literally means in the original Greek "a turning away." This space, or dislocality, between the speaker and his subject matter changes with each manifestation of the ode. Though Pindar's odes contain

references to himself as both poet and first person speaker, his odes were performed by a large chorus, which sung his words to the community that gathered to receive and pay tribute to the victorious athlete. The effect is a large number of people speaking in the voice of the singular, in the voice of the poet. Pindar was also at times present at the performances of his odes, and was in fact witness to the chorus speaking in his voice. This displacement or dislocation in the performance of the ode emphasizes the ambiguity in the boundaries between the self and the other. *Pythian 8* begins with an invocation of Peace, but also of community: "Kindly Peace, O maker of greatest cities/ and daughter of Justice,/ you who hold the supreme keys/ of counsels and wars,/ accept this honor for a Pythian victory for Aristomenes" (1-5). Like Pindar, Horace's odes were also written in the first person, though they were read aloud among the Roman aristocracy without the poet's presence. Horace did, however, address his odes to Caesar, his fellow countrymen, and to the city of Rome, even as he resided outside of the *polis* on his country estate. His odes begin in *propia persona*, and most often address a shared event of the Roman people, such as the defeat of Cleopatra and the supremacy of Augustus and the empire. Though Romantic odes were published for the masses, the English Romantic poets also gathered around their peers to recite recent work and discuss and dismantle current philosophical trends and political events, all in an effort to reach a utopian community of poets. Romantic poetry centered around the effort of invoking nature, inviting the spirit of the earth to commune with man, or simultaneously exploring memory or imagined exotic lands in order to excite the imagination. In doing this, Romantic poets were looking outside themselves in an effort to discover their own intimacies. They searched for the limitations of the outside, of the other, in order to recognize the intimacy of the interior.

The search for the other is seen in the dislocation presented in odes. Pindar's odes constantly echo back and forth between various localities in ancient Greece; the very

performance of the ode recreates dislocation, as it is executed upon the victor's return from athletic competition. The victor has left his community, and traveled and competed in a different locality, and has now returned, triumphant, to the community that he has been separated from. The community receives him with open arms in the form of the ode, which is sung, and possibly danced, within the presence of the entire *polis*. Pindar creates the vastness of this experience in his recounting of various myths, genealogies, and events that have occurred all over Greece. Commissioned for the victory of the aristocrat Aristomenes in a wrestling match at the Pythian games in 446 B.C.E., *Pythian 8* references the island where Aristomenes hailed from, Kirrha, Olympia, the Isthmos, Thebes and the hero Adrastos, Apollo and his oracle at Delphi, Zeus, Peleus, Telamon, and the great Achilles. Pindar also recounts Xenarkes, Aristomenes' father, and the lineage of their family. In doing so, Pindar invokes the past within the present, and brings the deeds and courage of other men in different times and places to the island of Kirrha, where the ode is being performed. The heroes of mythology are mixed with the men who achieve greatness in Pindar's present. Pindar also mingles man with the gods, presenting their existence as irrevocably entwined, as all that man achieves in life is a gift of the gods who favor him. Within this simultaneous delineation and amalgamation, Pindar evokes the *clinamen* that Nancy would later describe; this yearning or inclining is further emphasized by the dislocation that is present in the ode, and by the disparities that are drawn between men and the gods. In the writing and performing of the ode, Pindar recreates the experience of this inclining, of community.

The inclining of community through dislocation is also present in the 37th ode in Horace's first book of odes, wherein Horace writes on the infamous Egyptian queen Cleopatra. He begins his ode with an address to his countrymen, specifically the Patrician class, as he depicts an echoing rhythm of temporal dislocation: "Now is the time to drain the flowing bowl, now with unfettered foot to beat the ground with dancing, now with Salian feast to deck the

couches of the gods, my comrades!" (Loeb Ed., 1927 cis). The constant repetition of "now" emphasizes the appropriateness of the present moment, which has only just arrived. Temporal dislocality is evident in the very nature of the present moment; by the time we have become aware of what we perceive as the "present," it has in fact already become the past. Time exists outside of the realm of human consciousness, or rather, human awareness. The only sure awareness a person possesses is in the past, and even then, memory can be clouded and unfaithful. Horace also invokes physical dislocation by describing Cleopatra's flight, and hyperbolizing Caesar's pursuit of her in the elaborate metaphor that is often seen in odes: "chasing her with his galleys, as she sped away from Italy, even as the hawk pursues the gentle dove, or the swift hunter follows the hare over the plains of snow-clad Thessaly." This journey is one that many of the Roman people participated in, and yet it becomes even larger and more amazing with Horace's retelling. Horace recreates the experience of his people, exposing them to their own community. As they witness the destruction and havoc one woman could cause, they lean even further in their inclining toward one another, in strengthening the borders that tie them together, so that they may then be passed through and exposed.

Nearly two thousand years later, John Keats would use dislocation in the ode to describe his transcendent experience in listening to a nightingale sing. "Ode to a Nightingale" begins with Keats' speaker already dulled by a "drowsy numbness," and his dispossession of self continues as he exists in a constant movement of yearning to join the nightingale in the bird's realm of the unseen, even though he must remain in the mortal world. The deterioration of the senses has already begun, and Keats' speaker is already outside of himself, and affected by something other. Furthermore, there is an acknowledgment of transportation, of the bird calling him out of his stasis: "That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,/ And with thee fade far away into the forest dim:/ Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget/ What thou among the leaves hast never

known" (19-22). Keats expresses his desire to transcend with the nightingale and forget his knowledge of death, forget his anxiety over time. Keats wishes to exist in a plane outside of the normal mechanizations of time, for he knows that what waits at the end is death; and yet, death is the only place where he may exist outside of time. However, even as Keats reasserts his entreaty to "dissolve" with the nightingale, he also states,

> Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
> Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
> But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
> Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
> Already with thee! tender is the night,
> And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
> Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
> But here there is no light. (31-38)

The poem's vagueness concerns the speaker's physical locality: whether he remains in the world, or outside of it. He first bids the nightingale away, so that he may then cross the distance between them, then claims to already be with the bird, sharing in a scene of the night sky. But then the speaker proclaims "here there is no light," implying that he is in fact alone, separated from his winged companion and the realm he lives in. Damrosch comments that the Romantics "often reflect, and reflect on, the world seemingly escaped or effaced from consciousness" (7). There are three levels of consciousness, or localities, presented in this ode: a place of reality, of the world of mortal man, where time eventually runs out for all creatures; there is the locality of the immortal nightingale, where the bird exists outside of time, happy and easy in his full-throated song; and thirdly a place of possibility in between the previous two, where Keats' speaker is constantly moving back and forth in a desire to join the bird, but is held back by the

limitations of his mortality. The speaker is constantly echoing back and forth across these spaces, never static, always moving. Keats' ambiguity suggests his own lack of self-knowledge and self-awareness in the face of the other, in his exposure to the nightingale, and also in his attempts to encounter the other in order to fulfill a lack inside himself. The last stanza of the poem begins: "Forlorn! the very word is like a bell/To toll me back from thee to my sole self!/Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well/As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf" (71-74). The lines imply that in some way, Keats' speaker has managed to leave part of the mortal world behind in his communion with the nightingale. He has experienced something outside of himself, and must now return. Keats also references here the Romantic notion of "Fancy," which was thought to be a lesser and unrefined form of the Imagination. For some Romantics, including Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Imagination was the pinnacle of the poet's ability to synthesize and recreate experience through the influence of the sublime, or rather, through ecstasy.

The delineation of borders and localities is emphasized and put into opposition as Keats' speaker moves through all possible mediums within reality and non-reality, and in the end is still unsure of his place as a singular being within a community. The uncertainty, however, contributes to Nancy's description of community:

> But these singular beings are themselves constituted by sharing, they are distributed and placed, or rather *spaced*, by the sharing that makes them *others*: other for one another, and other, infinitely other for the subject of their fusion, which is engulfed in the sharing, in the ecstasy of the sharing: "communicating" by not "communing." These "places of communication" are no longer places of fusion, even though in them one *passes* from one to the other; they are defined and exposed by their dislocation. Thus, the communication of sharing would be this very dis-location. (25)

In order for there to be localities, borders must be established to delineate them. Community is not the breaking of these borders; if anything, community is the encouragement of borders. Nancy maintains that if all borders were to broken, then all absolutes would dissolve into infinitude. Structures would become undone, and all being would cease to exist. Borders must be maintained; they must be maintained so that they may be crossed, so that the singular being may pass from one to the other. The presence of the other is essential to the singular being, otherwise that singularity would not exist, for he shall have no way to delineate himself from anything else. This negative definition of self is created in the dislocation and subsequent awareness of the singular being in community. This communication and awareness, however, may never be complete; the knowledge of self is dependent on the other, and even then only to a certain extent.

The ode acknowledges the impossibility of knowledge, that the singular being's nature is limited in understanding and experiencing its own vitality. In this way the ode becomes an immediate appreciation of the incompleteness of nature, of the incompleteness of human experience. Perhaps it is for this reason that odes tend to focus on the subject of death, which for Nancy is the inciting catalyst for recognition of the other and community:

> Community is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others.…If community is revealed in the death of others it is because death itself is the true community of I's that are not egos…It is the community of *others*. The genuine community of mortal beings, or death as community, establishes their impossible communion. Community therefore occupies a singular place: it assumes the impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject. In a certain sense community acknowledges and inscribes--this is its peculiar gesture--the impossibility of community. (15)

Nancy asserts that one' s own death does nothing for the self, but rather reveals death to the community, just as the death of a loved one reveals to the singular being his acknowledgement of mortality. Death is the final dislocation, the final border that is passed and always remains on the outside of consciousness for all beings. Because death is outside of consciousness, no communication may be passed between those who are dead, nor between the dead and the living. Yet once a person has died, that is when they have finally become complete for Nancy; the moment of death is the moment of completion because there is simply nothing else that may be done, for consciousness of the self within the realm of mortality has halted. It is, essentially, a problem of metaphysics: the fully realized person is the dead person, therefore all states of being previous to death are incomplete. The 'I' cannot state its death because it is no longer a subject, no longer in possession of its consciousness. The 'I' may only state the death of the other, the death of another being within its community and within its consciousness. Nancy writes: "A community is the presentation to its members of their mortal truth…It is the presentation of the finitude and the irredeemable excess that make up finite being: its death, but also its birth, and only the community can present me my birth, and along with it the impossibility of my crossing over into my death" (15). According to Nancy, it is only through seeing the birth and death of the other that a conception of community is created in the singular being's mind. To understand death is to have witnessed it in the other.

The presentation of death in community is enunciated in Horace's Cleopatra ode, which ends:

> Yet she, seeking to die a nobler death, showed for the dagger's point no woman's fear, nor sought to win with her swift fleet some secret shore; she even dared to gaze with face serene upon her fallen palace; courageous, too, to handle poisonous asps, that she might draw black venom to her heart, waxing bolder as

> she resolved to die; scorning, in sooth, the thought of being borne a queen no longer, on hostile galleys to grace a glorious triumph--no craven woman she! (Loeb Ed., 1927 cis)

Where previously in the ode Horace had indicted Cleopatra's actions against the Roman empire, here he commends her comportment as she faces death. Knowing that she has lost the war against Augustus, watching Alexandria burn around her, having held her lover (and the commander of her fleet), Marc Antony, in her arms as he died, Cleopatra has seen the death of her community. Before she had been described as a maddened, foul creature, but now Horace paints her as "serene," and resolved to die a noble death, rather than be chained and borne as a prize of war back to Rome as Augustus returned triumphant to his city. But Cleopatra also scorns the thought of cowardice, of becoming a living emblem of the failure of her country, paraded through the streets of Rome, rather than dying and becoming an immortal symbol of a singular being accepting her fate in defiance of an oppressive force. With her suicide, Cleopatra presents death to her community. She leaves them in death, but with her final act she becomes a complete person, so even though her community must now endure her loss to the underworld, it is better than seeing their queen, who considered herself a goddess, the incarnation of Isis, dragged through the streets of conquered Alexandria. And by dying and moving to a place where they could not reach her, Cleopatra gives her community another thing to yearn for, another reason to take back their country from Rome. Cleopatra gives herself over to the ideal of a defiant and righteous singular being, and in her death, the bonds of her community are strengthened.

Death for the Greeks held different connotations than for Horace's Roman contemporaries. *Pythian 8* references the history of Greece and the heroes who fought during the war against Thebes, the dead that fell during athletic competition. The ode calls out its acknowledgement of the other in death, but also acknowledges that death for the Greeks was not

a static state of being. In ancient Greece, the actions of the son could redeem the father, as the lineage of a family was a living, thriving entity that was not stopped in death--the family would live on through sons whose deeds would shine with the favor of the gods. Pindar writes:

> For, following the trail of your maternal uncles in
>
> wrestling,
>
> you do not disgrace Theognetos at Olympia
>
> or Kleitomachos' bold-limbed victory at the Isthmos,
>
> but exalting the clan of the Meidylidia you earn the very
>
> words
>
> which Oïkles' son once spoke in riddles as he beheld
>
> the sons standing firm in battle at seven-gated Thebes,
>
> when the Epigonoi came from Argos
>
> on a second expedition.
>
> Thus he spoke as they fought:
>
> 'By nature the noble resolve from fathers
>
> shines forth in their sons. I clearly see
>
> Alkman wielding the dappled serpent on his flashing
>
> shield in the forefront at the gates of Kadmos.
>
> But he who suffered in a former defeat,
>
> the hero Adrastos,
>
> is now met with news
>
> of better omen, but in his own household

> he will fare otherwise: for he alone from the Danaan army
> will gather the bones of his dead son and with the favor
> of the gods will come with his host unharmed
>
> to the spacious streets of Abas.' (35-55)

Pindar states that Aristonemes, the winner in wrestling for which the ode is written, has not disgraced his family because he has achieved his goal of winning at the Pythian games. The phrase "You do not disgrace" is a double negative, a technique that Pindar often employs in his poems. The syntax points out the possibility of failure, implying that there was a danger that Aristonemes would disgrace his forefathers, but that he did not. He overcame the danger of disgracing the memory of those who fell before him, and instead created a positive ideal that will now be an inspiration to his own sons. The ode is a victory celebration and revel that presents to the Greeks an attitude of expenditure concerning their own being: I am not all there is, I am a passing through, great things stand before me and behind me, and I am a movement out of them. The lineage of the past to the present, with the gleaming presence of the current hero, ensures the possibility of a future by not disgracing, but by meeting and encountering the other, which shall ensure that "the noble resolve from fathers shines forth in their sons." Death does not matter, because the memory lives on. Pindar tells his community that past failures may be redeemed by the actions of sons, and that the singular being is never any one thing by itself forever. A person in ancient Greece is not to be a consciousness of awareness, but rather an entity of effective energies, that shall continue into a community of the dead and the other. Furthermore, all that has been given to that person is a gift from the gods, from the other, rather than something that has risen within the individual himself.

Though the Greek conception of being no longer held during the 19th century, the death

of the other remained a universal topic for the Romantic poets. Death for Keats was a very present and real subject, as at the time of writing "Ode to a Nightingale" in the summer of 1819, his younger brother was dead from consumption, and the beginnings of the disease were already haunting Keats. In delineating a mortal world separate from the nightingale, Keats describes it as place of:

> weariness, the fever, and the fret
> Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
> Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
> Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
> And leaden-eyed despairs,
> Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
> Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. (23-30)

Death indicates the passage of time, the haunting of the past and the anxiety of the future. The mortal world is one where persons may be snatched up at indeterminable points in their life, where the evidence of death may be seen in the aging of man. Keats' speaker has witnessed others' deaths, has heard men groan to each other, seen the love of beauty fade: all acts that are not experienced alone, but with another. The other provides the knowledge of mortality to the singular being, for death can only be presented to and communicated to an other. In the ode, Keats' speaker longs to escape the tedious waiting for death, for he wants to immediately join the nightingale, who resides outside of time and outside of death. "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!" he states, even as the recognition of the bird's immortality is only another reminder of his own mortal state (61). Keats' speaker longs for immanence, for communion with the other, not recognizing that it is the difference and distance between himself and the

nightingale that has created this longing in the first place.

This desire to leave behind the mortal realm and pour himself endlessly into the nightingale mimics Nancy's understanding of the essential incompleteness of the singular being. Just as the fully realized person only exists in death, at a time when he may not be conscious of his own existence, so does the singular being discover the distance between himself and the other in death, and thereby experiences himself: "I do not rediscover *myself*, nor do I recognize *myself* in the other: I experience alterity in the other together with the alteration that 'in me' sets my singularity outside me and infinitely delimits it" (Nancy 33). Nancy claims that community is the sacred stripped of the sacred, the other exposed to the other, but this sharing is always incomplete, or else it destroys what is shared. Even so, just as Horace painted a Cleopatra serene and near completion at the moment of death, so does Keats' speaker maintain a sense of fullness and ease with the contemplation of his own death:

> Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath;
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
> While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
> In such an ecstasy! (51-58)

While before the speaker had expressed misery in his mortal state, here he goes further and articulates the complete yearning within himself for the experience of the other, for joining with the nightingale. Death is the only thing that the singular being may not experience himself, but must experience through the other. Keats' speaker listens in darkness to the melodious sounds of

the nightingale, just as he describes calling out softly to Death himself across the spaces between them. He wishes to die bursting forth from himself into the nightingale, just as the bird gives its voice to its listener without hesitation or restraint. The pouring forth of the soul into the other is an ecstatic experience in both of its meanings, being both a joyful act, and also one that places the soul, the essence, the consciousness of the speaker outside of himself, and in the hands of the other. This transcendental act of passion and passivity must remain incomplete, however, in order for the emotions to sustain themselves, in order for the ex-stasis to continue. It is important to meet in the darkness, at the limit of death, but not to go further, where things may be subsumed into each other. Nancy writes:

> To reach one another--in passing to the limit--is not to commune, which is to accede to another total body where everyone melts together. But to reach one another, to touch one another, is to touch the limit where being itself, where being-in-common conceals us one from the other, and, in concealing us, in withdrawing us from the other before the other, exposes us to him or her. It is a birth: we never stop being born into community. It is death--but if one is permitted to say so, it is not a tragic death, it is not mythic death, or death followed by a resurrection, or the death that plunges into a pure abyss: it is death as sharing and as exposure. It is not murder--it is not death as extermination--and it is not death as work, no more that it is the nay-saying embellishment of death; rather, it is death as the unworking that unites us because it interrupts our communication and our communion. (66-67)

It is not that Keats' speaker wants to die, but that he wants to escape the pain of isolation, of uncertainty; he wants to meet the other at the limit that is most prevalent to him at the moment, which is death. Nancy states that death is in fact a form of ecstasy, of making the intimacies of

the interior become exterior as the soul is poured abroad into the other. This is a death that unworks the hesitation but still maintains the limitations that define the singular being; it defies the predisposition to withdraw from the other, and instead encourages the inclining of the singular being toward others, which is instigated by the interruption of such an inclining in the first place. The speaker will always yearn, but in this instance, the yearning is directed toward death and the limit that exposes life and the other to him. This *clinamen* only emerges at the limit, and it is at the limit that Keats ends the ode: "Was it a vision, or a waking dream?/ Fled is that music: -- Do I wake or sleep?" (79-80). Keats references his theory on negative capability, the idea that man need not have complete knowledge of everything, and yet still be comfortable in his uncertainty. The ode ends with a question, with a meeting of different experiences. This idea is also present in Pindar, as he concludes Pythian 8:

> Creatures of a day! What is someone? What is no one? A
>
> dream of a shadow
>
> is man. But whenever Zeus-given brightness comes,
>
> a shining light rests upon men, and a gentle life.
>
> Dear mother Aigina, one its voyage of freedom
>
> safeguard this city, together with Zeus and king Aiakos,
>
> Peleus and noble Telamon, and with Achilles. (95-100)

These are the conditions of being mortal, the conditions of finitude. We live in the passage between intents, creatures of a day, in the thick of the movement and restlessness of it. Once we think we have it, or never have it, we don't want to give anymore. The self is felt in a moment of instability and fragility. What is anyone not? There is no knowledge that one possesses in advance about oneself; no knowledge of self exists, reality is not guaranteed by anything. Pindar describes man as a dream of a shadow, a negation of a negation of a negation. Immediately

following this is the opening of the self out to others in a moment of social and convivial song, given by Zeus; the confrontation with the sacred makes life and energy possible. Pindar provides the sentiment that we are revived at any moment; that there is nothing definitive, not even death, so spend and give and let others break in upon you so that you may spend and give. Making Achilles the last word of the ode is a particularly pointed gesture, for he is the image of all flowering and fading simultaneously. The limit both energizes and ruins at the same time, and Achilles is the definitive Greek hero of this simultaneous excess and ruination.

The dual nature of excess and restraint is expressed in the form and functioning of the ode. The ode's content always includes heightened emotions pushed to the extremes, and yet the original form of the ode required restraint. In ancient Greece, the initial freedom that the poet had in choosing the meter and stresses of the strophe was then moderated by the exact replication of that form in the antistrophe. The epode would always remain the same. In addition, while Pindar would praise the excess and force of the victors and heroes he named in his poetry, he would also caution them against an excess that would constrain others. "Gain is most precious if one takes it from the home of a willing giver," he states in *Pythian 8* (13-14). Grace is constantly evoked in the Pindaric ode, and the poet speaks of both the giving and the receiving energies of the community. A conception of appropriateness also emerges, a balance that the gods have, and which man would be wise to follow: "For you know how to bestow gentleness and likewise to receive it with unerring appropriateness" (6-7). It is not enough to try and emulate the gods, however, for favor in life cannot be achieved by man alone, but must be given to man by the gods. Pindar writes:

> I request the gods'
> ungrudging favor, Xenarkes, upon your family's good
> fortune;

for if someone has gained success without long labor,
he seems to many to be a wise man among fools

and to arm his life with effective good planning.
But those things do not rest with men; a god grants them,
exalting now one man, but throwing another beneath the
hands.
Enter the contest in due measure. (71-78)

The request for favor ends with the warning for balance, for measure. Effective planning in ancient Greece is akin to taking other people's energy and manipulating it for oneself. It is this controlling aspect that cannot be allowed, for the gods give everything, and nothing one does is by oneself. The measure Pindar speaks of lets the other side break in, and in order for the passing of the other, there must first be that limitation. But planning takes the measure too far, and does not allow for the possibility of the gods' favor or disfavor, does not allow for one to access the other. The danger of athletics is that you might lose the due measure; you feel the heat of domination, feel temptation into mad hubristic conquering, and the delirium that will make you forget the measure, forget the other. We can achieve so much, but then we may still fail, because the gods will grant as they see fit, not according to man's whims. Therefore man must be both open and exposed to what the gods may give him, ready and willing to receive them, but must also restrain himself against taking that which belongs to others.

Horace continues the sense of balance and appropriateness in the ode, stating in 1.37 "Before this day it had been wrong" to celebrate the victory of Rome, while there was still a threat against the empire. There is at once a concern for correction of time and of conduct. An awareness of etiquette presents itself in the poem, and Horace's didactic nature emerges as he

both details the ruination that is a result of Cleopartra's excess, and how those same ruinations she encountered "sobered her fury." A balance must be engaged in order for the continuation of community, but this balance must be forever in tension with its poles, with what is on the other side. Nancy states that communication, which is the root of community,

> consists before all else in this sharing and in this compearance (*com-parution*) of finitude: that is, in the dislocation and in the interpellation that reveal themselves to be constitutive of being-in-common -- precisely inasmuch as being-in-common is not a common being…It [compearance] consists in the appearance of the *between* as such: you *and* I (between us) -- a formula in which the *and* does not imply juxtaposition, but exposition. (29)

The ode swings back and forth between the localities of the ancient world, and the representations of Cleopatra's excess, and the balance that Augustus brings when he overtakes her madness. Horace begins the poem, "Now is the time to drain the flowing bowl," a clear indication of previous overabundance that is now curtailed by moderation, in order to restore balance.

Cleopatra's excess is made explicit as Horace describes her as a "frenzied queen" with a "polluted crew of creatures foul with lust -- a woman mad enough to nurse the wildest hopes, and drunk with Fortune's favors." All these descriptions paint the woman as a maddened queen, set apart from reason and solidified in her attempt to destroy the Roman Empire with her exotic excesses. The effect is one of drunkenness, of being outside of self-control or self-consciousness. And in her excess, Cleopatra engages in overtaking and overstepping her limits; her ambitions rise beyond inspiration and become an oppressive force as she battles with Augustus, attempting to possess what is not hers. In doing this, she is not exposing herself to the other; she is not compearing at the limit, but instead is seizing control of the limit. Of course the limit is not

something that can be seized or controlled, and so she fails. Horace credits both the destruction of her fleet, the community that she is commanding, and also the efforts of Augustus, who stands on the other side in opposition to her, as the reasoning behind her sobering: "But the escape of scarce a single galley from the flames sobered her fury, And Caesar changed the wild delusions bred by Mareotic wine to the stern reality of terror." Cleopatra had become dangerous because she was reaching past her own limit and taking possession of others, but now her restraint has come forth, and she has returned to a balance between excess and restraint. Augustus has fought for the Romans "with purposed fixed to put in chains the accursed monster." Such is the only response to one who would overtake the other. There needs to be compearance in community, a balance between opposites that provides borders through which the singular being may pass in order to understand himself and his community. Yet the end of the poem shows Cleopatra evading Augustus' attempt to chain her; she remains a free woman when she takes her own life rather than let it be taken from her control.

Excess became a considerable identifying trait for the poetry of the Romantics. The Romantic poets were focused on expressing themselves, creating poetry that was the 'spontaneous overflow of feelings,' as Wordsworth would write in 1800. The Romantics proclaimed the importance of pure emotion and beauty, of making the internal become external. The odes of the Romantics frequently employed images of excess, whether it was drink, drug, or imagined exotic lands, and contrasted these with other forms of nature that were simpler, more restrained in character, always tying back to the mythology and culture of their community. They would also explore the duality of the mind and memory, of sleep and consciousness, furthering the individual and his dependence on himself and his community. In "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats expresses a desire for wine and its effects, a drunkenness that puts the speaker outside of himself: "O for a beaker full of the warm South,/Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,/ With

beaded bubbles winking at the brim,/ And purple-stained mouth" (15-18). The images he presents are of excess, of reaching the limit, coming to the exposure of another side, and waiting within the in-between. The speaker's mouth is stained from gluttonous excess, the bubbles of wine are at the point of bursting, of overflowing just as the fountain of Hippocrene, the fountain of the muses and of inspiration, is full and flowing to the poet now. The Romantic poet expresses the interior, the overflowing of the self made manifest through words, and through the other.

In recreating dislocation and ecstasy, or ex-stasis, the ode expresses a poetic manifestation of Nancy's theory of community. The gesture of the ode becomes an appreciation of Nancy's *clinamen*, the inclining of singular beings towards one another that constitutes being, which is always a being-in-community. This inclining happens at the limit, at the boundaries that sustain humans as singular beings. The exposure of beings at the limit reveals consciousness as not belonging to the singular being, but only as something that may be found in and through community. For Nancy, singular beings are spaces, and the consciousness as seen outside of the self is achieved through dislocation, the intimacy of the interior recognized through the outside. Death is the outside of self; to be complete is to be dead, which belies the essential incompleteness of the consciousness of being, as knowledge of mortality is given to the singular being by the other. The limitations of human mortality, addressed as either physical limitation of the body or ontological limitation due to the necessary unawareness and incompleteness of consciousness, compels singular beings to incline toward one another as essentially communal beings whose self is constituted by and dependent upon the other. Nancy declares that singularity is infinitely delimited by the alterity experienced in the other. This delimitation maintains the ex-stasis of the singular being, for there can be no exposure without limitation, nor singularity in completeness. Boundaries expose the between spaces that imply exposition and passage between the self and the other, and by presenting dislocation, ecstasy, death, and the balance of excess

and restraint, the ode exposes these boundaries to its audience. The ode has been traditionally defined by its formal features, features that may never be sustained as consistent in odes of each literary tradition. In this (re)defining, the function of the ode may be seen as essentially communitarian; by setting up a dichotomy of the self and the other, and by presenting the opposition of presence and absence found at the limit, the intimacy of the interior is made exterior, and we are exposed, laid open, and touched, aware of our yearning and desire for the infinite intimacy of the other. To borrow from Keats, we pour forth our souls in ecstasy, and cease upon the midnight with no pain, no agony, just the knowledge of our dissolution in the other, and the richness that comes from such exposure, from such desire, and from community.

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