



Horace and the Ancient Grotesque

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Horace and the Ancient Grotesque

A dissertation presented
by
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to
The Department of the Classics

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
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in the subject of
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the grotesque as both a concept and a phenomenon in the work of the poet Horace. Horace is a key figure in the development of theories of the grotesque, but this aspect of his work has not been studied in detail by either theorists of the grotesque or classical scholars. Proper appreciation of Horace's treatment of the grotesque enriches both our understanding of the grotesque as an abiding feature of western European aesthetics and our knowledge of the aesthetic and intellectual milieu of the Augustan age.

After a theoretical introduction surveying modern concepts of the grotesque, Chapter 1 offers a reading of the *Ars Poetica* where Horace articulates and defends the grotesque as an aesthetic idea. In the poem, he demonstrates how the grotesque fuses together categorically distinct elements into a single whole. He also indicates that these unities should provoke from their audience an ambivalent reaction mixing fear or disgust with humour. Horace's argument in this poem is consistent with the aesthetic principles expressed in the rest of his poetry. The subsequent chapters survey Horace's use of the grotesque in the rest of his poetry, with the exception of the *Carmen Saeculare*. Chapter 2 explores the *Satires* and particularly the way the grotesque fits with Horace's own conception of the genre as a designed mishmash that blends the serious and the playful. Chapter 3 treats the *Epodes*, the iambic character of which generates expectations of a kind of aggressive humour closely associated with the grotesque. The grotesque

is also brought into play by the lingering threat of civil war. In Chapter 4 I discuss the *Odes*, where the grotesque repeatedly intrudes into Horace's lyrical world, especially in his presentation of lovers and poets. Chapter 5 examines the *Epistles*. Horace makes particular use of beast-fables as a device to generate the grotesque. He also uses the grotesque to establish thematic links between the *Epistles* and the *Odes*.

This dissertation demonstrates the versatility and validity of the grotesque in Horace's poetry and constitutes the first step towards understanding an ancient theory of the grotesque.

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Introduction*

In his 1993 doctoral dissertation “Shame and negativity: Critical prolegomena to the study of the ugly in Antiquity,” Richard Armstrong began by outlining his original inquiry: What is the ugly in Antiquity? He noted that before he could answer that question, he would have to examine the ancient vocabulary of the ugly. On this point, he remarked by way of example that “if one begins to look for what we know as the grotesque, one runs the risk of looking for snow in Bermuda. There are some grotesque things in antiquity, like Hellenistic miniatures and statues or certain passages of Statius, but *there is not a viable concept of the grotesque*.”¹ He later adds: “there is no ancient word or concept that can be said to approach the modern category of ‘grotesque’.”² This raises the question: how can there be “grotesque things” in antiquity without “a viable concept of the grotesque”? There are two possible answers.

The first is that although the grotesque is only conceptualized in the modern period, it can nevertheless be retrospectively identified in ancient art and literature. Scholars of the ancient world have frequently done just this by applying modern conceptions of the grotesque to their subject. But as I will discuss below, while there is agreement about key aspects of the grotesque as an aesthetic, modern theories of the grotesque nevertheless differ on important points of emphasis. The result is that according to one modern theory an ancient work may be grotesque, but viewed through the lens of another theory, the same work may *merely* be, for example, comic or horrifying. That word “merely” is important, as I will show. The key point here is that the application of modern theories of the grotesque to the ancient world is problematic. They do not necessarily

* In what follows, abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*; modern periodicals follow *L'Année philologique*. All translations are my own.

¹ R. Armstrong (1993: 2), my italics.

² R. Armstrong (1993: 35).

produce consistent results, and at the same time they risk introducing anachronism: if there is no viable concept of the grotesque in antiquity how can we be sure that what *we* identify as grotesque (with all the concomitant aesthetic ramifications) was grotesque (and grotesque *in the same way*) to the ancient audience as well? This first solution, then, may offer some interesting insights into ancient works, but it will not provide a satisfactorily comprehensive explanation of the grotesque in antiquity.

The second possible answer requires first correcting a misapprehension hidden in Armstrong's dismissal of an ancient concept of the grotesque, namely, that if the word does not exist to label a concept, that concept cannot exist. The word "grotesque" is modern: the term is not recorded before the very end of the fifteenth century. This creates a terminological difficulty. Did the Greeks and Romans have a word for the "grotesque"? The short answer is "no," but that does not necessarily prevent further inquiry. Aesthetic theory, though at times it may pretend to be prescriptive, is ultimately descriptive: it must describe what is beautiful or grotesque before it can prescribe (or, indeed, proscribe) it. The label comes later and serves as convenient shorthand for the constituent criteria. Therefore, regardless of the existence of a specific term, where we can locate the description of a phenomenon and thus identify its constituent elements, the inquiry will be fruitful. This is where modern theories of the grotesque *can* help: they can provide some guidance as to what these constituent elements may be. Needless to say, I am more optimistic about this very project than Armstrong. This study explores precisely the grotesque *as an aesthetic concept in antiquity*, and specifically in the work of the Augustan poet Horace. I seek to answer the question: How did Horace conceive of the grotesque? Even if there is no individual word that for Horace encapsulates the grotesque, he is nevertheless capable of describing it—of showing both its forms and its effects. Once this Horatian concept of the grotesque has been identified, it is

possible to approach the rest of the poet's work with greater confidence, knowing that when he deploys the grotesque in his poetry, it has a specific value for the poet.

Why Horace? Of all ancient authors, he may not be the most obvious candidate to carry the grotesque standard for antiquity—nor would I make that claim for him. Yet Horace offers a unique test case. First, he writes in a range of genres. This allows us to see whether he feels that the grotesque is limited in its aesthetic range or whether its effects can be put to use in a variety of different contexts. Second and more importantly, Horace provides an extended and explicit statement about his aesthetic preferences in the *Ars Poetica*. Modern theories of the grotesque have tended to ignore ancient writings, but one text which has been cited with some frequency is the *Ars Poetica*: it has been felt that if any ancient text does have something to say about the grotesque, it is Horace's *Ars Poetica*, a poem whose influence on European literary criticism and aesthetics has been immense.³ Despite this, however, Horace has not been the subject of detailed study as an authority on the grotesque.⁴

But lest I put the cart before the horse, it will be of value here to discuss what I mean by the grotesque and how it has been conceptualized by modern scholars.

1. Modern Theories of the Grotesque

Commonly noted in discussions of the grotesque is the phenomenon's resistance to definition.⁵ As already noted, the word itself does not exist until the very end of the fifteenth

³ On the reception and lasting influence of the *Ars P.* see Golden (2010); Russell (2006: 339–345).

⁴ An exception is Connelly (2012: 26–31), who reads the *Ars P.* as a rejection of the grotesque “driven by a powerful aversion to mixtures” and because grotesque imagery “confounds language” and should be limited to “the subservient role of ornament.”

⁵ Thomson (1972: 20); Rosen (1991: 5–6); Yates (1997: 2); Connelly (2012: 2).

century. It is customary in analyses of the grotesque to provide a history of the word, often working on the assumption that such lexicographical study will provide insights into the concept that lies behind the label.⁶ Most interesting for the purpose of this study is that what prompts the development of the word and thus facilitates contemplation of the concept is precisely an act of reception of the ancient world. At the end of the fifteenth century the Domus Aurea of Nero was unearthed beneath the Baths of Titus and the Baths of Trajan.⁷ Decorating the newly discovered Domus were frescoes that included central mythological scenes framed with ornamental images blending human, animal, plant, and architectural elements such as columns and candelabra.⁸ These fantastic paintings—that is, the framing devices rather than the central panels—inspired the artists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century who imitated the style in their own work: for example, between 1485 and 1490 Ghirlandaio used these designs to decorate the architectural elements of his “Nativity of Mary” in the Tornabuoni Chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and around 1519 Raphael and his apprentice Giovanni da Udine decorated the Vatican Loggia with the images.⁹ This style of decorative art took its name from the site of the original ancient frescoes: the excavations of the Domus created a cave-like area, or *grotto*, in which these ancient paintings were viewed, and so their imitations were known as *grottesche*, or “paintings in the grotto-style.”¹⁰

⁶ On the development of the word, see Barasch (1971, esp. 17–31); more briefly, Thomson (1972: 12–13); Waburek (2006: 8–11); Connelly (2012: 3–4 and 18), noting that reliance on such a “creation story” risks tying the concept too closely to a particular time and place without explaining the underlying nature of the grotesque.

⁷ On the discovery of the Domus and its influence on Renaissance artists, see Dacos (1969: 3–54); Zamperini (2008: 91–195); Squire (2013).

⁸ See figg. 2–69 in Dacos (1969).

⁹ It may be that the discovery of the Domus’ frescoes merely accelerated an already existing trend among artists of the period: Dacos (1969: 57–61). See also Barasch (1971: 21–25); Connelly (2012: 31–35); Squire (2013: 450–458); Huber (2006), whose article focuses narrowly on the decorative art form and its reception.

¹⁰ The etymology is attested by Benvenuto Cellini in Chapter 31 of his autobiography and in Giorgio Vasari’s life of Giovanni da Udine, both from the late 1560s: the earliest attested instance with this meaning is in fact applied to the Domus paintings themselves and is found in stanza 127 of the *Antiquarie Prospettiche Romane*, a terza rima poem by an anonymous Milanese painter dated 1495–1500: see Dacos (1969: 3–4, 9–10); Squire (2013:

This designation soon grew to encompass not just the style, which utilized mixed-forms, but a new genre since these *grottesche* were set in opposition to other parts of the same painting—the ridiculous and fanciful in contrast to the serious. These images challenged the canon and soon established their own repertoire.

Painters in the Renaissance appropriate an ancient style of wall painting.¹¹ The terminology for this appropriation is in turn taken up and applied by Giorgio Vasari to Michelangelo's architectural and sculptural style for its violation of Vitruvian canons of order.¹² Perhaps the first application of the term to a literary work comes at the beginning of Michel de Montaigne's essay *De l'Amitié*, published in 1580, where he describes how he derived his process of composing the *Essais* from observing a painter's task: "Considérant la conduite de la besogne d'un peintre que j'ai, il m'a pris envie de l'ensuivre. Il choisit le plus bel endroit et milieu de chaque paroi, pour y loger un tableau élaboré de toute sa suffisance" (Montaigne *Essais* 1.28). Having depicted the main subject, the painter fills in the negative space: "Et le vide tout autour, il le remplit de crottesques, qui sont peintures fantasques, n'ayant grace qu'en la variété et étrangeté" (*Essais* 1.28). Montaigne here uses *crottesques* in the original technical sense of the decorative painting described above. These paintings, he asserts, derive their grace only from the variety and strangeness of what they depict. And these fantastic paintings, says Montaigne, are a metaphor for his own compositions: "Que sont-ce ici aussi, à la vérité, que crottesques et corps monstrueux, rapiécés de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayants ordre, suite ni proportion que fortuite?"

446–449); cf. Zamperini (2008: 9), who suggests that in the poem the term has an adjectival and atmospheric valence. Another early use of the word with this technical sense is in a contract for the decoration by Pinturicchio of the Piccolomini Library in the duomo at Siena in 1502: Barasch (1971: 20–21).

¹¹ Though the function and context of the ancient and Renaissance paintings may be quite different from each other.

¹² See Barasch (1971: 30–31); Connelly (2012: 35–38).

(*Essais* 1.28). Monstrous bodies of diverse parts, without a definite shape, without order or proportion except by accident: that is how Montaigne sees his own essays, and he caps the description with a Latin tag, the (adapted) fourth line of Horace's *Ars Poetica*: *Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne* "A woman, attractive in her top half, gives way below to a fish." Montaigne's reference to Horace closes the circle, for this literary mermaid is not simply a monstrous body pieced together from various bits, but a painting—albeit one only imagined by the poet and his readers:

humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam
iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne (*Ars P.* 1–4)

If a painter should wish to join a horse's neck to a human head and to add a variety of feathers everywhere with the limbs gathered together, so that an attractive woman up the top tapers disgustingly away into a black fish...

Montaigne may well have expected his readers to recognize this—and to recognize in his use of painting as metaphor for writing the application of Horace's dictum from later in the same poem: *ut pictura poesis* (*Ars P.* 361). Indeed, Horace's painting had been drawn into the debate about the new 'grotesque' style of decorative art in the sixteenth century.¹³

So, from initially being a technical term for a decorative art very specifically inspired by certain works from antiquity, the grotesque as an aesthetic concept has grown in the modern period into something much bigger. Discussion of the grotesque as an aesthetic concept begins in earnest

¹³ Citroni (2009: 21–22).

in the nineteenth century with a resurgence after the Second World War.¹⁴ In the following sections I provide a brief overview of the major theories of the grotesque that have currency today.

a) Wolfgang Kayser and his followers

Wolfgang Kayser's 1957 book *Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* relaunched grotesque studies in the twentieth century, and although it is not regularly cited by scholars of the ancient world, it serves as the basis for a number of subsequent developments in the theory of the grotesque.¹⁵ Kayser offers an historical survey of the meaning of the word "grotesque" from its origins in the early sixteenth century, tracing its development from a specialist adjective and technical term of art describing a particular kind of ornamental wall painting to a broader aesthetic concept manifested in literature and visual art; little is said of the ancient world.¹⁶ To be clear, Kayser provides an account of the development of the *word* grotesque and of its different (modern) instantiations, but he argues that the *concept* of the grotesque is stable and unified:

The grotesque is a structure. Its nature could be summed up in a phrase that has repeatedly suggested itself to us: THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD. But some additional explanation is required. ... It is our world which has to be transformed. Suddenness and surprise are essential elements of the grotesque. ... The grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death. Structurally, it presupposes that the categories which apply to our world view become inapplicable. ... the fusion of realms which we know to be separated, the abolition of the law of statics, the loss of identity, the distortion of "natural" size and shape, the suspension

¹⁴ See Thomson (1972: 13–19) and Yates (1997: 1 and 14), though this nineteenth-century interest has its beginnings in the late eighteenth century: see Bakhtin (1984: 35–36). Rosen (1991) traces the history of theorizing the grotesque from the Renaissance to Kayser and Bakhtin.

¹⁵ On the importance of Kayser in the history of theories of the grotesque, see also Rosen (1991: 111–112).

¹⁶ Kayser (1963: 20–21) cites Vitruvius *De arch.* 7.5, but only as quoted by Vasari and adopted by other sixteenth-century critics of the "new" ornamental style.

of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of the historical order.¹⁷

The grotesque is marked by the destruction of boundaries between things otherwise conceptually distinct, by the distortion of natural size and shape, by the loss of personality and the fragmentation of history. For Kayser, the structure of the grotesque applies at three different points: “the creative process, the work of art itself, and its reception.”¹⁸ The grotesque is present in the mind of the artist when s/he creates the work; it inheres in the work as it fuses together different elements; and it is experienced by the audience without whose emotional response the grotesque cannot exist.¹⁹ Indeed, it is this third element—the psychological shock—that truly marks the grotesque. Kayser is however careful to note that despite the importance of the audience’s reception, it is not necessarily conclusive: a person unfamiliar with the art of the Inca Empire may interpret it as grotesque, but this may result from cultural difference rather than true grotesquerie.²⁰ This threefold aspect of the grotesque makes Kayser’s theory a fully aesthetic one, accounting for all parts of the artistic experience.²¹

Kayser’s theory of the grotesque develops from the writings of the eighteenth-century author Christoph Martin Wieland.²² It is tied very closely to the material he analyzes, namely, post-Renaissance German and French art and literature in particular, and he connects the rise of the

¹⁷ Kayser (1963: 184–185), original capitalization.

¹⁸ Kayser (1963: 180).

¹⁹ See also Yates (1997: 16–17); Russo (1994: 9).

²⁰ Kayser (1963: 181); cf. Connelly (2012: 14) on the European reception of West African sculpture.

²¹ See also Rosen (1991: 115).

²² Specifically, Wieland’s *Unterredungen mit dem Pfarrer von **** (1775), which distinguishes three kinds of caricature: the true caricature wherein the artist reproduces the natural distortions of the subject; “exaggerated caricature” wherein the outline of the subject is maintained but the distortions are enhanced; and purely fantastic caricatures—that is, grotesques—where the resemblance to reality is abandoned “with the sole intention of provoking laughter, disgust, and surprise”: Kayser (1963: 30–37); see also Yates (1997: 15).

grotesque with a fall away from the belief in a preceding age of a proper divine/natural order.²³ He therefore identifies three periods of greatest grotesque production—the sixteenth century (esp. Brueghel and Bosch), from *Sturm und Drang* to Romanticism, and the twentieth century—and argues that they were all manifestations of a decline from the preceding ages’ belief in a perfect and protective natural order.²⁴ Kayser leans heavily into the dark, terrifying grotesque and speaks often of the humorous element as “bitter” or “satanic” laughter. For example: “Laughter originates on the comic and caricatural fringe of the grotesque. *Filled with bitterness*, it takes on characteristics of the mocking, cynical, and *ultimately satanic laughter* while turning into the grotesque.”²⁵ He goes on: “THE GROTESQUE IS A PLAY WITH THE ABSURD. It may begin in a gay and carefree manner ... But it may also carry the player away, deprive him of his freedom, and make him afraid of the ghosts which he so frivolously invoked.”²⁶ Kayser feels that many grotesques have little lightness to them, but “where the artistic creation has succeeded, a faint smile seems to pass rapidly across the scene or picture, and slight traces of the playful frivolity of the *capriccio* appear to be present.”²⁷ Kayser therefore sees the grotesque as “an attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world”.²⁸ it takes the terrifying and ominous powers of chaos that estrange us from the world by making it alien, and it adds a layer of humour and absurdity. Yet the nod to humour here feels a little like lip service: the smile is “faint,” the playful frivolity

²³ See also Bakhtin (1984: 46–47), arguing that Kayser thereby separates the grotesque from the carnival spirit.

²⁴ Kayser (1963: 188).

²⁵ Kayser (1963: 187), my italics.

²⁶ Kayser (1963: 187), original capitalization.

²⁷ Kayser (1963: 188).

²⁸ Kayser (1963: 188).

present merely in “slight traces.”²⁹ And ultimately it is only an *attempt* to subdue those demonic powers.³⁰ Where the grotesque differs, for example, from tragedy, is that the grotesque is not concerned with individual actions and how they violate the established natural or moral order. In tragedy, deeper meaning is revealed through tragic suffering, but the grotesque must not and cannot hint at any deeper significance beyond the estrangement of the world: all that matters is our inability to orientate ourselves in this world.³¹ This leaves Kayser’s grotesque as a fundamentally negative experience.³²

Lee Byron Jennings offers an analysis that seeks to correct the imbalance towards the negative in Kayser’s theory and to resolve what he sees as the divergence in previous theories towards, on the one hand, something that is frivolous or, on the other, something horrifying. As is clear from the subtitle to Jennings’ 1963 study (*The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose*), he has little to say of ancient grotesques. He has nevertheless on occasion been cited by scholars of the ancient world, especially in discussions of Seneca’s tragedies and Lucan.³³ For Jennings the “grotesque is *the demonic made trivial*.”³⁴ It “presents the terrible in harmless guise, and its playfulness is constantly on the verge of collapsing and giving way to the concealed horror.”³⁵ The grotesque thus consists of an admixture in roughly equal degree of the fearsome and the ludicrous: it simultaneously arouses both fear and amusement,

²⁹ So too Jennings (1963: 6).

³⁰ See also Thomson (1972: 18–19), who suggests that Kayser’s focus on the demonic “removes the fearsome aspect of the grotesque to the realm of the irrational.”

³¹ Kayser (1963: 185–186).

³² See also Bakhtin (1984: 47–49); Harpham (2006: 99); Yates (1997: 19–20).

³³ See e.g., Motto-Clark (1977–78); Sell (1984); Maes (2008).

³⁴ Jennings (1963: 17), original italics.

³⁵ Jennings (1963: 16).

principally through the distortion of the human figure towards—without ever quite reaching—formlessness, a distortion which masks the humanity of the subject.³⁶ Such distortion can be the result of decay, growth, or hybridization, but it always introduces the specific qualities of the ludicrous and fearsome. Jennings identifies grotesque objects and grotesque situations, the latter where the “customary order of things must seem to give way to a kind of deranged intent on the part of nature itself.”³⁷ Finally, Jennings notes that the grotesque is not generally “self-justifying,” but is regularly opposed to prevailing aesthetic standards: it is either harmonized with those standards through explicit formal mechanisms that mark it off, or it may mark a decline from those standards: “The grotesque thrives in an atmosphere of disorder and is inhibited by any period characterized by a pronounced sense of dignity, an emphasis on the harmony and order of life, an affinity for the typical and normal, and a prosaically realistic approach to the arts.”³⁸

This distortion and its interpretation are psychological activities: the grotesque is a product of our imaginations, even when what we perceive as “grotesque” occurs in or by nature.³⁹ And though “the grotesque object is made up of parts that our intellect knows are disparate, it must appear integrated to some lower faculty.”⁴⁰ Indeed, a “true feeling of impossibility” negates the grotesque by suspending our capacity to imagine a figure as real.⁴¹ The fearsome, which manifests as chaos or absurdity, issues forth from the primordial recesses of the mind: it provokes an

³⁶ Jennings (1963: 8–10).

³⁷ Jennings (1963: 18) with examples given on 18–21.

³⁸ Jennings (1963: 26–27).

³⁹ Jennings (1963: 9).

⁴⁰ Jennings (1963: 10).

⁴¹ Jennings (1963: 10).

instinctive, irrational fear like that experienced in a nightmare.⁴² The ludicrous element disarms, without completely removing, the fearsome.⁴³ Jennings asserts that upon seeing the deformed or distorted object we may feel amusement, not as the result of any wit—that is, “humour that rests upon subtle intellectual relationships”—but something baser, more bestial and cruel: “a sense of sovereignty over the object” which we regard “from a superior position and with an amused contempt at its ridiculousness.”⁴⁴ The viewer thus reaches a state of equilibrium: “The fear of the nightmare monster diminishes in proportion as the attitude of amused detachment gains prominence.”⁴⁵ There is, I suggest, a contradiction here. Although Jennings argues that the grotesque object should *simultaneously* provoke fear and amusement, the disarming function of the laughter necessarily must follow the initial fearsome shock, especially if, as Jennings seems to intimate, the amusement is the result of a shift in perspective.⁴⁶ Moreover, despite his emphatic requirement that the ludicrous be present in equal measure to the fearsome, Jennings is less clear about what actually constitutes “the ludicrous” or why an object or situation which is inherently frightening can also prompt in the viewer a sense of superiority.⁴⁷ This is important since for Jennings the grotesque exists precisely in this process of trivializing the fearsome (not the other

⁴² Jennings (1963: 11); cf. Steig (1970: 257–258), who argues by analogy with the uncanny that “the grotesque involves the arousing of anxiety by giving expression to infantile fears, fantasies and impulses.”

⁴³ Jennings (1963: 14–15); but see Steig (1970: 259), who notes that the comic element “may enhance anxiety through their aggressive implications and through the strangeness they lend to the threatening figure.” Nervous laughter, an involuntary physical response to stress or anxiety, often heightens those feelings.

⁴⁴ Jennings (1963: 11).

⁴⁵ Jennings (1963: 12).

⁴⁶ Jennings (1963: 14).

⁴⁷ So too Steig (1970: 255–256), who suggests in contrast that the grotesque distorts the frightening material “in the direction of harmlessness without completely attaining it” since such complete defense results in comedy (258).

way).⁴⁸ No attempt is made to define the process or mechanism by which the fearsome edges are softened beyond reference to a “faculty of the mind.” The absence of any real discussion of formal properties in the object—of what it is in the *object* that would trigger the disarming mechanism—indicates that Jennings’ grotesque is perhaps less an aesthetic concept than a psychological one.⁴⁹ In fact, if the laughter prompted by the grotesque object is truly a manifestation of a primitive defense mechanism, then it is *not* prompted by anything comic or humorous in the work itself.⁵⁰ Jennings himself states that the grotesque is a “pre-aesthetic form of expression.”⁵¹ Thus, for Jennings, “the true grotesque is not ‘used’; it simply appears. The conscious use, while often present, is secondary.”⁵²

b) Mikhail Bakhtin: Grotesque Realism and the Carnival

In *Rabelais and his World*, Mikhail Bakhtin offers a much more positive account of the grotesque than Kayser or Jennings. Bakhtin’s theory is rooted in his idea of the medieval and Renaissance carnival as a social practice that subverts, even if only momentarily, the hierarchies of high and low.⁵³ The grotesque body is most at home in the carnival where laughter liberates the people from fear and levels the (oppressive) hierarchies in order to make the people whole.⁵⁴ But when the carnival gives way to the more private, subjective character of the Romantic period, the

⁴⁸ Cf. Thomson (1972: 59).

⁴⁹ A fact developed in particular by Steig (1970), who pursues the implications of Jennings’ theory through a specifically Freudian lens.

⁵⁰ So too Thomson (1972: 54).

⁵¹ Jennings (1963: 18).

⁵² Jennings (1963: 128).

⁵³ See also Rosen (1991: 122–124); Yates (1997: 22–23); Edwards-Graulund (2013: 25).

⁵⁴ See also Connelly (2012: 17–18); Edwards-Graulund (2013: 104).

element of laughter loses both its concreteness and its regenerative force and becomes “cold humor, irony, sarcasm.”⁵⁵ Bakhtin believes that prior to the Romantic period (Kayser’s focus), “gloom is completely alien to the entire development” of the grotesque world.⁵⁶ For Bakhtin, the grotesque degrades, distorts, and upends the “proper” order.⁵⁷ This degradation is a downwards motion that brings us into contact with the earth. The grotesque, therefore, is inextricably tied to the earth and to the body, particularly the lower stratum: belly, genitals, anus.⁵⁸ The body is—like the earth itself—open, excreting and receiving, ever in a state of becoming and creating.⁵⁹ This degradation affirms the principle of rebirth and rejuvenation: “Born of folk humor, it always represents in one form or another, through these or other means, the return of Saturn’s golden age to earth ... The world is destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying it gives birth.”⁶⁰ This duality is key: ambivalence is an “indispensable trait” of the grotesque.⁶¹

For Bakhtin, the aesthetic of the grotesque exists before the word.⁶² The frescoes to which the word is at first applied “revealed an extreme lightness and freedom of artistic fantasy” that participated in (Bakhtin’s notion of) the grotesque since they eschewed “the usual picture of the world ... the usual static presentation of reality” and present the “inner movement of being itself

⁵⁵ Bakhtin (1984: 37–38); see also Rosen (1991: 127); Russo (1994: 7–8).

⁵⁶ Bakhtin (1984: 47).

⁵⁷ Bakhtin (1984: 19–21).

⁵⁸ Bakhtin (1984: 21 and 26); see also Connelly (2012: 2), with added emphasis on the feminine.

⁵⁹ Bakhtin (1984: 26 and 317).

⁶⁰ Bakhtin (1984: 48).

⁶¹ Bakhtin (1984: 24).

⁶² See also Rosen (1991: 125–126).

... in the passing of one form into the other.”⁶³ Still, these manifestations are “but a fragment of the immense world of grotesque imagery.”⁶⁴ Exaggeration, hyperbolism, and excess are all key to the grotesque as an object explodes its quantitative and qualitative boundaries.⁶⁵ Bakhtin contrasts the grotesque’s openness with the closed system of the classical which is complete and self-sufficient.⁶⁶ He himself claims that although his concept of the body in grotesque realism is “in flagrant contradiction with the literary and artistic canon of antiquity,” certain ancient works (including Aristophanes) do utilize this aesthetic.⁶⁷ He has little to say about these works, however, since his focus is squarely on the Renaissance and Rabelais.⁶⁸

Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque, then, centers on the body or world in the process of change—often change that is pulling the object in two different directions simultaneously, for example, birth AND death. Although he emphasizes the necessary place of humour in the grotesque—whether his (preferred) life-affirming laughter of the carnival or the more cynical smirk of the study—he does not account for the other side of the coin.⁶⁹ There is in Bakhtin’s

⁶³ Bakhtin (1984: 32).

⁶⁴ Bakhtin (1984: 32).

⁶⁵ Bakhtin (1984: 303 and 308).

⁶⁶ Bakhtin (1984: 25 and 29); see also Rosen (1991: 124–125); Russo (1994: 62–63), who suggests that Bakhtin takes insufficient note of the social roles of gender.

⁶⁷ Bakhtin (1984: 28 with n. 10 and 30–31), though he makes a point of noting the “expulsion” of the grotesque from the sphere of “official art” during the “classic period.” It is not until late antiquity that “grotesque imagery attained its flowering and renewal.” Like Kayser, Bakhtin cites Vitruvius via Vasari as condemning this style of painting “as a gross violation of natural forms and proportions” (33).

⁶⁸ Bakhtin’s theory of grotesque realism and its relationship to the carnival has found particular favour with scholars of the ancient world, especially those who study Aristophanes and satire: see e.g., Edwards (1993) and Platter (2007) on Aristophanes; Miller (1998) on Roman Satire and Winkler (1991) on Juvenal; Christenson (2000–2001) on Plautus’ *Amphitryon*; Reiser (2007) on Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*; Maes (2008) on Petronius; Walsh (2009) on the presentation of (theatrical) mythological burlesque on Greek vases; Callebat (1998) is an interesting case: in discussion of both the Latin satirists and novelists, although Bakhtin is named towards the end of the article, the theory applied is closer to Kayser’s.

⁶⁹ On the importance of laughter to Bakhtin’s theory, see Edwards-Graulund (2013: 100–101).

theory no real sense of dread or foreboding.⁷⁰ This comes out most clearly in his discussion of the Romantic grotesque and its emphasis on the terrifying alien world, but only (it seems) to contrast it with the loss of the carnival gaiety.⁷¹ Indeed, the “images of the Romantic grotesque usually express fear of the world and seek to inspire their reader with this fear. On the contrary, the images of folk culture are absolutely fearless and communicate this fearlessness to all.”⁷² Even in his criticism that Kayser’s account is too gloomy, Bakhtin sees the alien world not as frightening but as something that “discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world” and thus essentially positive.⁷³ Despite the distortion and degradation, despite the movement towards death and burial, he offers no account of the *interplay* of the comic and the terrifying.⁷⁴

c) Geoffrey Galt Harpham: The Grotesque as Ambivalent Anomaly

Bakhtin and Kayser represent respectively the poles of the positive and negative aspects of the grotesque.⁷⁵ This suggests that the grotesque is a continuum. According to Geoffrey Galt Harpham, “grotesque” is a term that denotes that which defies description because it does not fit neatly into established categories. The grotesque exists at and in the margins: it is both ambivalent (occupying more than one category at once) and anomalous (occupying the space between categories) as it pulls the margins into the centre.⁷⁶ The grotesque is therefore identifiable through

⁷⁰ So too Harpham (2006: 99).

⁷¹ Bakhtin (1984: 37–43).

⁷² Bakhtin (1984: 39).

⁷³ Bakhtin (1984: 48).

⁷⁴ See also Harpham (2006: 100).

⁷⁵ See also Yates (1997: 26); cf. Russo (1994: 10).

⁷⁶ Harpham (2006: 4); see also Connelly (2012: 5–6 and 8), who emphasizes the movement—the “flux”—between categories.

its very lack of identifiability, but in confronting it we are “affronted” and experience ambivalent emotional reactions. Hybridity is therefore essential to Harpham’s concept of the grotesque.⁷⁷

Despite this strong structural impulse, Harpham acknowledges that audience reception is key to the grotesque, a reception that is marked by an interval of ambivalence in which the audience cannot interpret what is before it.⁷⁸ The grotesque is, therefore, more than mere formalism: it is the reception of the form that matters, “the perception that something is illegitimately present in something else.”⁷⁹ This reception is a process of interpretation, an attempted progress out of confusion.⁸⁰ This need for interpretation makes the grotesque a repository of hidden meaning.⁸¹ Like Jennings and Michael Steig, Harpham sees the grotesque as an ancient way of thinking tied very closely both to myth, with its embrace of contradictions and metamorphoses, and to primitivism which the childhood anxiety identified by Steig mirrors.⁸² One final thing about Harpham’s analysis is worth recording. For Harpham, the grotesque disintegrates in the very act of interpretation since the viewer no longer sees the object as a confounding whole.⁸³ To that extent, the grotesque is in fact emblematic of art itself: it is “the presentation or realization of a contradiction central to art itself.”⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Harpham (2006: 11–13).

⁷⁸ Harpham (2006: 17–18); Connelly (2012: 12).

⁷⁹ Harpham (2006: 13); cf. Connelly (2012: 8).

⁸⁰ Harpham (2006: 14–19).

⁸¹ Harpham (2006: 46–47); see also Edwards-Graulund (2013: 3).

⁸² Harpham (2006: 76–97).

⁸³ Harpham (2006: 5).

⁸⁴ Harpham (2006) 217–218.

Unlike others who have attempted to define the grotesque, Harpham avoids naming the specific categories which the grotesque embraces.⁸⁵ Arguably, Harpham's grotesque therefore loses its *aesthetic* force, becoming rather an almost purely cognitive idea.⁸⁶ His is a more purely structural approach which locates the grotesque in the margins, in the in-between space where form is dynamic and changeable, especially between high and low.⁸⁷ Harpham's grotesque is therefore historically and culturally contingent.⁸⁸ The (dominant) culture establishes principles of coherence and order, "especially by determining which categories are logically or generically incompatible," and the grotesque violates these principles.⁸⁹ The difficulty here is that it leaves the actual content of the grotesque undefined. Indeed, without defined categories Harpham's grotesque comes close to losing any meaning more specific than incongruity, ambivalence, or paradox.⁹⁰ If the grotesque is a "species of confusion," as Harpham puts it,⁹¹ there must be *other* kinds of confusion that are *not* grotesque. Still, there is great value in the stress he places on both the importance of unity—that despite participating in or falling between multiple categories, the grotesque object is itself singular—and the moment of confusion experienced by the viewer.⁹²

⁸⁵ So too Connelly (2012), whose study explicitly owes much to Harpham, though she sees some role for laughter as a "symptom" of the grotesque (15–16).

⁸⁶ Harpham (2006: xix–xx) seems close to acknowledging this himself.

⁸⁷ Harpham (2006: 10–12, 101–102).

⁸⁸ So too Yates (1997: 30); Connelly (2012: 2, 11, 14); Edwards-Graulund (2013: 11–12).

⁸⁹ Harpham (2006: xxvi).

⁹⁰ See also Thomson (1972: 21 and 51), who remarks that "paradox may be felt in many, perhaps all, instances of the grotesque, but as a defining factor it is surely inadequate."

⁹¹ Harpham (2006: xxi).

⁹² Pietrapaolo (2013) uses Harpham in conjunction with Bakhtin in her discussion of the grotesque in Roman Elegy.

d) Philip Thomson: Fear and Humour in Irresolvable Tension

Philip Thomson also sees the grotesque as embodying an irresolvable tension created by the juxtaposition or intermingling of disparate elements, but he takes the further step of specifying the nature of this tension: between the terrifying (or disgusting) and the comic, thus returning to the specific opposition advocated by Kayser, Jennings, and Bakhtin.⁹³ This tension is both embodied in the work and felt by its audience, thus making the grotesque a truly aesthetic concept. Formally, the grotesque embraces extravagance and exaggeration and it participates in the abnormal, though it remains tied firmly to our world.⁹⁴ Because of this effect, the grotesque can be used as a weapon of the artist to alienate or disorient the audience through confrontation with a radically different worldview.⁹⁵ More precisely, that worldview is one that sees the fearsome and comic in unresolved tension.⁹⁶

Thomson takes care to distinguish the grotesque from other, related phenomena. The absurd—strictly defined as what is “opposed to reason”—“will not always fit the grotesque,” for the absurd has “no formal pattern, no structural characteristics” peculiar to it.⁹⁷ The bizarre and the grotesque are separated by degree rather than quality: the dividing line can be difficult to draw, but the grotesque is “more radical and usually more aggressive” than the bizarre.⁹⁸ The macabre

⁹³ Thomson (1972: 20–21); cf. Edwards-Graulund (2013: 3), who quote Thomson but omit the specific negative and positive elements named by Thomson.

⁹⁴ Thomson (1972: 22–27); see also Edwards-Graulund (2013: 8–10 and 137–138).

⁹⁵ Thomson (1972: 58–59).

⁹⁶ Thomson (1972: 60–63). Thomson also acknowledges that the grotesque can result from artistic miscalculation, with the important caveat that cultural and historical distance may result in an outsider viewing an object as grotesque (65–70).

⁹⁷ Thomson (1972: 29 and 32). This is borne out by the fact that Kayser pairs it with the comic as a counter to the fearsome and demonic, but Jennings sees absurdity and chaos as manifestations of the fearsome.

⁹⁸ Thomson (1972: 32–35).

and the grotesque overlap: the macabre might be viewed as a subspecies of the grotesque that is connected with death, but because the gruesome element “considerably outweighs the comic,” it lacks the balanced tension characteristic of the grotesque.⁹⁹ Caricature tends to amusement through distortion or exaggeration: only when the “norm of abnormality” is exceeded does a sinister element intrude and thus push the object into the grotesque.¹⁰⁰ It might also be added that unlike the grotesque, caricature may be better classified as a technique than an aesthetic since it is a means of presenting a subject. Parody and satire can both make use of the grotesque, especially if the object of parody or satire is treated with aggression.¹⁰¹ The principal distinction between satire and the grotesque is that satire aims at correction, at marking right and wrong, and thus at drawing distinctions; the grotesque confounds such distinctions. So while satire may produce multiple *successive* responses in the audience, the grotesque produces a single confused response.¹⁰² This single response is primarily emotional-aesthetic, and this also distinguishes the grotesque from irony, which provokes a primarily intellectual response where the viewer can “work out” the distinctions and connections.¹⁰³

Works from the Renaissance to today are regularly labelled “grotesque” and are felt to participate in a complex aesthetic, the fact that this aesthetic has proven difficult to define notwithstanding. Yet it is important to remember that the modern grotesque begins with an act of reception. Modern scholarship on the grotesque is sometimes quick to attribute to the ancient art

⁹⁹ Thomson (1972: 36–37).

¹⁰⁰ Thomson (1972: 38–39); see also Connelly (2012: 10).

¹⁰¹ Thomson (1972: 40–42); see also Connelly (2012: 10).

¹⁰² Thomson (1972: 42). He further notes that the satirist who employs the grotesque must be careful lest the grotesque overwhelm the satiric point being made (44–45).

¹⁰³ Thomson (1972: 47 and 50).

itself what may belong more correctly to its reception: John Clark, for example, refers to the frescoes of the Domus as “eerie and nightmarish,” but what makes them so?¹⁰⁴ Their inherent qualities—that is, the content of the images—or the artificially generated underground setting in which they were viewed? The same can be said for other works of art and literature to which the label has been applied. It is necessary therefore to interrogate the very idea of an ancient grotesque. The theories discussed above will provide some guidance as to what sorts of things may be labelled “grotesque” and why, but none will be taken as a definitive statement of what the grotesque is.

If the grotesque is an aesthetic concept, it must exist in two respects. First, it should manifest as properties of the work of art itself. Second, the artwork should provoke in the audience a particular response. One may quibble that “aesthetics” should be strictly concerned with the audience’s perception—its αἴσθησις—whereas issues of production belong to a theory of art. Yet this artificially separates product and perception: the artwork is made to be perceived (and may in turn produce a particular effect in the audience); the effect is produced, at least in part, by a peculiar property of the artwork (though, admittedly, it may not be the effect intended). The three elements—product, property, and effect—are indissolubly bound.¹⁰⁵ The grotesque work of art will produce a confused, ambivalent response in its audience. But it must be a specific kind of ambivalence, one that pulls the audience on the one hand towards a strongly negative emotion—fear or disgust—and on the other hand towards the positive emotion of amusement and laughter. This ambivalence is a response to the way in which the artwork unites in itself disparate, contrary elements: human and animal; male and female; animate and inanimate. If there is no unity to the

¹⁰⁴ Clark (1991: 18).

¹⁰⁵ See Levinson (2003: 3–4).

work—that is, if the disparate elements in fact remain separate or even separable—the work will not be grotesque.

If we can find in Horace’s work an articulation of a version of these elements, then we can fairly say that Horace has articulated a concept of the grotesque.

2. Outline of the dissertation

In the first chapter, I offer a reading of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, a poem which, since the inception of the word itself, has been drawn into critical thinking about what the grotesque is. I argue that readings of the poem that have privileged the seeming rejection and mockery of the painting with which the *Ars* opens mischaracterize Horace’s arguments. For while it is certainly true that the poem is an extended meditation on the importance of unity in art, Horace does not in fact reject the grotesque on the grounds that it introduces disunity to the work. Rather, he demonstrates through argument and example how the grotesque *creates unity* from disparate elements—elements that are categorically distinct from each other and yet brought together into a single whole. At the same time, he indicates (suggestively, if not explicitly) what sort of reaction these unities should provoke from their audience, namely, an ambivalent reaction mixing fear or disgust with humour. Moreover, Horace’s argument in this poem is consistent with his aesthetic principles espoused or adumbrated in the rest of his poetry. The *Ars Poetica*, therefore, offers an articulation of what can be called an Horatian theory of the grotesque.

In the subsequent chapters, I survey the rest of Horace’s poetry in order to examine how he puts this theory into action. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the poems where one might expect the grotesque most naturally to occur: the *Satires* and the *Epodes*, respectively. In the ancient world, the genres of both of these poems are associated with a kind of aggressive humour that offers fertile

soil for the grotesque to flourish. In the case of the *Satires*, special attention is paid to Horace's own conception of the genre as a designed mishmash that blends precisely the serious and the playful. One kind of unity imposed on the material of the *Satires* is metrical: all the poems are in dactylic hexameters. The *Epodes*, on the other hand, are metrically diverse. So too is their subject matter. The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the *Odes* and *Epistles*, respectively. The *Odes* in particular may not seem the most likely place for the grotesque. They are often viewed as classicizing imitations of archaic Greek lyric, Alcaeus in particular, even where Horace's debt to Hellenistic literature is conceded. Yet the grotesque repeatedly intrudes into Horace's lyrical world, complicating the pleasant atmosphere of the symposium or the quiet moment between two lovers. The place of the *Epistles* is complicated: they take up again the hexameter mode of the *Satires*, but (at least in the case of the first book) sit between the composition and publication of the original three-book collection of the *Odes* and Horace's return to lyric. This makes perilous any aesthetic presumptions in approaching the poems. The apparently "serious" ethical concerns of the *Epistles* might not at first glance be an appropriate home for the grotesque, but a serious point may be made in an otherwise than entirely serious manner so that Horace can again put his grotesque aesthetic to work. In concluding this study, I offer some thoughts on the place of the Horatian grotesque both within the specific cultural context of the Augustan world and diachronically within the history of the grotesque in the ancient world.

The one work of Horace that I do not discuss is the *Carmen Saeculare*. This poem, "commissioned" by Augustus for the *Ludi Saeculares* in 17 BCE, "was to contribute to the celebration of a Roman citizen who had through a series of civil wars established himself as the ruler of Rome."¹⁰⁶ Originally, these games featured sacrifices to the underworld gods Dis and

¹⁰⁶ Thomas (2011: 10).

Proserpina and as much concerned with marking the passing of the old as the coming of the new.¹⁰⁷ This interplay of death and rebirth might have proved suitable, fertile soil for the grotesque, but the games of 17 BCE were markedly different. As Richard Thomas has remarked, “the Augustan event was to have none of the old, dark associations, as the Secular Games came to celebrate not the doubling of old and new, but, more straightforwardly and triumphantly, the establishment of the New Order.”¹⁰⁸ This, then, was no place for ambivalence or distortion, no occasion for invoking an alienated world that would leave the audience in aesthetic aporia.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas (2011: 271–273).

¹⁰⁸ Thomas (2011: 55).

Chapter 1: Horace's *Ars Poetica* and a Theory of the Grotesque

As I noted in the introduction, although it soon transcended its original application to visual art and embraced literature as well, “grotesque” was initially a term of art from painting. Horace begins the *Ars Poetica* with an imagined painting.

humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam
iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici? (Ars P. 1–5)

If a painter should wish to join a horse's neck to a human head and to add a variety of feathers everywhere with the limbs gathered together, so that an attractive woman up the top tapers disgustingly away into a black fish, and if you were allowed to look, would you stifle your laughter, my friends?

This image—the mermaid with a horse's neck and feathers—has been connected with the grotesque in two ways. On the one hand, despite the chronological impossibility of any such direct connection, it has been taken as a poetic description of a painting in the style found in the Domus Aurea and imitated in the Renaissance.¹⁰⁹ It certainly shares its hybridity with those frescoes and to that extent might qualify in the sixteenth century as a *grottesca*, as Montaigne treated it. It has also been identified as “grotesque” more generally.¹¹⁰ I will address this second point in greater detail below, but first, even if we were to conclude that Horace was imagining specifically such a fresco, the anachronistic application of the technical label *grottesca* would not take us very far towards identifying and appreciating an ancient, or particularly Horatian, aesthetic of the grotesque.

¹⁰⁹ e.g., Harpham (2006: 30).

¹¹⁰ e.g., Brink (1971: 85); Clark (1991: 19); Lowe (2015: 18).

Before we can draw any conclusion about the aesthetics of Horace's painting, we need to know more than merely what is represented. We also need to know what response Horace expects it to produce. In this regard, it is useful to note that the description of the painting is contained in the protasis of a future-less-vivid condition. Importantly for this study's broader purpose, the apodosis contains the anticipated reaction of the putative viewers: *spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici?* (*Ars P.* 5). Horace doubts that his readers—whether we think of them at this point specifically as his immediately subsequent addressees, the Pisones, or more generally including us¹¹¹—could stifle their laughter if they were allowed to see such a painting. With this, Horace implies judgment, and in the combination of that judgment with its object we may hope to find an aesthetic concept. What is that judgment and what actually provokes it? In answering these questions, it is vital to remember that the painting is part of a larger work and cannot be treated in isolation. Its place within the *Ars* must be established before we determine what this laughter means and therefore the extent to which the painting can be treated as representative of any particular aesthetic principle.

1. A Preliminary Matter: The *Ars Poetica* as Parody?

Preliminary even to this stage, however, must be discussion of the theory posited by Bernard Frischer that the poem is a parody: Horace assumes a persona “whose pretentious claims to expertise on the arts are undermined by his eccentric taste, his inept way of expressing himself, and his ignorance of the subject” so that the poem becomes “the inept ramble of an unreliable narrator.”¹¹² Frischer bases his conclusion that the poem is parodic on two pieces of evidence: one,

¹¹¹ See Brink (1971: 88 and 470); Johnson (2012: 242, with n 17), who argues for a strong, albeit momentary, distinction between the *amici* and the Pisones.

¹¹² Frischer (1991: 85).

the presentation of other critical figures in the poem undermines the authority of the persona,¹¹³ and two, the opening description of the painting and its relationship to contemporary art reveals the narrator as out of touch.¹¹⁴ I will deal with the first part of this argument independently in what follows, at the same time outlining certain aspects of Horace's aesthetic preferences. My discussion of the second element will be folded into my more general discussion of the painting. To be clear: I do not deny that Horace may at times be ironizing, but identifying such ironic touches does not invalidate or subvert the overall argument of the poem in the same way as if it were a fully developed parody.

a) Bad Advice in the *Ars Poetica*

Frischer goes through each of the critic-figures in the poem—Maecius, Piso *pater*, and Quintilius—and argues that the grouping with the first two (*Ars P.* 387–388) and the implicit contrast with the third (*Ars P.* 438–444) reflect poorly on the poem's persona. Before doing so, however, he prefaces his comments on Maecius and Piso *pater* by remarking that Horace's advice in lines 388–390 to put aside any writings for nine years “is absurd” and the “fatuousness of the speaker's advice ought to have alerted readers that our critical trio habitually plays out of tune.”¹¹⁵ The advice:

si quid tamen olim
scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis auris
et patris et nostras nonumque prematur in annum
membranis intus positis. delere licebit
quod non edideris; nescit uox missa reuerti (*Ars P.* 386–390)

¹¹³ Frischer (1991: 61–68).

¹¹⁴ Frischer (1991: 68–85).

¹¹⁵ Frischer (1991: 61–62).

Still, if you ever write anything, let it make its way down to the ears of Maecius or your father or me to judge, and let it be held back until the ninth year with the pages tucked away inside. It will be possible to destroy what you haven't published, but a word, once uttered, cannot be brought back.

Frischer is right that "Poetry does not improve simply by aging," as Horace himself points out elsewhere: *si meliora dies, ut uina, poemata reddit, | scire uelim chartis pretium quotus arroget annus* "If time makes poems better, like wine, I should like to know what number of years confers value on manuscripts" (*Epist.* 2.1.34–35). But Horace here does not tell the elder Piso *filius* to write a poem, put it in a drawer for nine years, then publish it because it will be better by that point. Indeed, Horace does not explicitly advocate publication; and even if the advice were as bald as I have just stated (and it is not), it does not necessarily follow that Horace anticipates publication *tout court* at the nine year mark. Rather, he is raising the issue of exercising critical judgment, hence the instruction to show the work to one's elders (and critical betters) to get their opinions. This comes out in lines 389–390, where *delere quod* may mean "destroy the poem" in its entirety,¹¹⁶ but may less drastically denote the process of editing specific elements:¹¹⁷ *uox missa* is a phrase elastic enough to capture individual words and whole poems. When one puts a work aside for nine years, one gets the benefit of looking at it again with older (and, we may suppose, wiser) eyes *before* publication.

As suggested, there is a more nuanced way to read these lines. This depends on the allusion of *nonumque ... in annum* to Catullus *Carm.* 95 which Frischer seems to have missed:¹¹⁸

Zmyrna mei Cinnae *nonam* post denique *messem*
quam coepta est *nonamque* edita post *hiemem*,
milia cum interea quingenta Hortensius uno (Cat. *Carm.* 95.1–3)

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Ars P.* 439–449 where the poet is ordered to *delere* the poem that cannot be improved after three attempts.

¹¹⁷ Brink (1971: 384); cf. *Sat.* 1.10.51: *plura tollenda* of things in Lucilius' muddy poetry.

¹¹⁸ Brink (1971: 383); Rudd (1989: 213).

The *Zmyrna* of my friend Cinna has finally been published nine harvests and nine winters after it was started, while in the meantime Hortensius has done 500,000 in a single year!

Cinna's poem has had a long gestation, but it is a small gem (*parua monumenta*) in stark contrast to Hortensius' 500,000 verses, as well as the *Annals* of Volusius (elsewhere called *cacata charta*, Cat. *Carm.* 36.1, 20) and overblown Antimachus (*tumido Antimacho*) (Cat. *Carm.* 95.7–10).¹¹⁹ Cinna was a Neoteric and, following the deaths of Catullus and Calvus, likely the leading poetic figure in Rome until his death in 44 BCE.¹²⁰ He appears to have been held in high regard by his contemporaries and the following generation of poets.¹²¹ Horace himself says nothing directly about Cinna, but we may extrapolate a favourable opinion from two pieces of evidence. The first is a fragment of Valgius Rufus in which he compares the poetry of Codrus to Cinna's:

Codrusque ille canit quali tu uoce solebas,
atque solet numeros dicere, Cinna, tuos,
dulcior ut numquam Pyllo profluxerit ore
Nestoris aut docto pectore Demodoci
(Valgius Rufus fr. 166.1–4 Hollis)¹²²

That fellow Codrus sings with a voice like you used to, Cinna, and usually composes in your meters, so that a sweeter voice never flowed forth from the Pylion mouth of Nestor or from the learned breast of Demodocus.

The comparison with Nestor and Demodocus suggests poetry both highly pleasing and very learned as befits a Neoteric. Valgius' opinion is important for he is cited by Horace as one of his ideal critics at *Sat.* 1.10.82. We may therefore infer that if in Valgius's opinion, which Horace

¹¹⁹ If the couplet on Antimachus (Cat. *Carm.* 95b) belongs to this poem: on Antimachus' *Lyde*, see also Callim. fr. 389: Λύδη καὶ παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τορόν.

¹²⁰ Hollis (2007: 19).

¹²¹ See testimonia 1a-f in Hollis (2007).

¹²² See also Courtney (1993: 288–289).

values, Cinna is an excellent poet, so too will he be in Horace's eyes. The *Zmyrna* seems to have been an epyllion (Servius on Virgil *Ecl.* 9.35 refers to it as a *libellum*) and highly wrought. Nine years may be an exaggeration in Catullus;¹²³ it is certainly so in Horace since he hardly followed his own advice to the letter,¹²⁴ but that does not make the advice *per se* absurd. Nor does it remove the allusion to Catullus, or perhaps directly to Cinna's *Zmyrna*, and the allusion makes the point: do not publish rashly, but take the time to polish your work and get it right. That is how Quintilian understood it:

usus deinde Horatii consilio, qui in arte poetica suadet, ne
praecipitetur editio nonumque prematur in annum, dabam iis otium,
ut, refrigerato inuentionis amore, diligentius repetitos tanquam
lector perenderem. (Quint. *Ep. ad Tryph.* 2)¹²⁵

Then, following the advice of Horace who in his *Ars Poetica* advises that publication ought not be too quick and "should be held back until the ninth year," I granted leisure to my writings so that, with my love of creativity put on ice, I might consider more carefully what I was revising as a reader.

Horace, in fact, makes this very point in the *Ars* when he explains why Roman literature is not as renowned as its Greek counterpart and calls for the rejection of hastily composed poetry that has not been finely wrought:

nec uirtute foret clarisque potentius armis
quam lingua Latium, si non offenderet unum
quemque poetarum limae labor et mora uos, o
Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite quod non
multa dies et multa litura coercuit atque
praeseptum deciens non castigauit ad unguem (Ars P. 289–294)

¹²³ Though the period is confirmed by Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 10.4.4, Servius on *Ecl.* 9.35, and without a specific length of time by Ovid *Ibis* 537–538 who calls the poem *tarda*.

¹²⁴ Brink (1971: 383); Rudd (1989: 213).

¹²⁵ Cf. Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.4.4, where he notes that there are limits to how long an orator should spend polishing (*ut opus poliat lima, non exerat*) if he is to be any use to his client.

Nor would Latium be more powerful in its courage and shining weapons than in its language, if the effort and delay of the pumice were not offensive to every single poet. O bloodline of Numa! Spurn the poem which many days and many blots have not checked and corrected ten times so that, pared down, it would pass the fingernail test.

b) Critical Figures within the *Ars Poetica*: Maecius and Aesthetic Conservatism

The fact that the advice is sound weakens Frischer's assertion of parody. Nor do his claims that the named critics themselves undermine the speaker's position hold up. As critic and potential sounding-board for his younger addressees, Horace associates himself closely with Maecius and Piso *pater*. Maecius here is identified as Sp. Maecius Tarpa, who had been appointed by Pompey to select the plays performed at his theatre in 55 BCE. His taste—at least on that occasion—seems to have been at odds with Cicero's: *nobis autem erant ea perpetienda, quae Sp. Maecius probauisset* "But we had to endure those things which Spurius Maecius had approved" (*Fam.* 7.1.1).¹²⁶ He also appears at *Sat.* 1.10.38, where—according to Frischer—Horace contrasts his own preference for writing *sermones* with Maecius' preference for drama: given this preference, Maecius here represents an old-fashioned aesthetic for which the speaker of the *Ars* advocates.¹²⁷ Horace published *Satires* 1 around 35 BCE, twenty years after Maecius' official duties. If we accept for the moment Frischer's dating of the *Ars* to 24–20 BCE, another 10–15 years have elapsed. Charles Brink rejects Bentley's suggestion that Maecius here stands for the type of "renowned critic," and Niall Rudd argues that the close triad of Maecius, Piso *pater*, and Horace

¹²⁶ Cicero's letter indicates that at least two plays were performed: a *Clytaemestra* and an *Equus Troianus* (*Cic. Fam.* 7.1.2). The commentators, e.g., Shackleton Bailey (1980: 148), Horsfall (1976: 83), suggest that the former is Accius' *Clytaemestra*, of which we have some fragments, while the latter is a play of either Livius Andronicus or Naevius. It should be noted, however, that there is nothing that confirms that these were revivals rather than new plays.

¹²⁷ Frischer (1991: 62–63).

suggests that Maecius is still alive.¹²⁸ If this is the case, Maecius must be relatively old (about 65 according to conservative estimates), so Frischer’s argument that Maecius therefore represents “old-fashioned” criticism has, *prima facie*, some merit. Two points, however, present themselves. First, there is no reason why we should necessarily accept that Cicero’s opinion about Maecius—which, as Frischer himself concedes, is expressed in private correspondence—represents either Horace’s opinion or a “reflection of what literati of Cicero’s calibre thought of the man and his taste.”¹²⁹ Second, Maecius is associated particularly with dramatic literature, which is a focus of the *Ars*. He is therefore an apt critic for the genres of poetry at the heart of the work. That said, Frischer contends that dramatic literature’s day had been and gone.¹³⁰ If, however, alternative reasons for encouraging the younger Pisones to write drama can be identified, this removes the objection that the persona’s advice is out of step with current literary fashions.¹³¹

Horace and Cicero on Ennius

Given that Cicero and Maecius are contemporaries (and Maecius likely younger by as many as 15 years), whereas Horace belongs to the next generation, for the persona of the poem to share Cicero’s judgment would be no less old fashioned than sharing Maecius’—arguably more so since Cicero’s own taste runs to the archaic. He appreciates the *Bellum Punicum* of Naevius, though he concedes Ennius was a more finished poet: *tamen illius (sc. Naeui), quem in uatibus et Faunis adnumerat Ennius, bellum Punicum quasi Myronis opus delectat. sit Ennius sane, ut est*

¹²⁸ Brink (1971: 383); Rudd (1989: 213).

¹²⁹ Frischer (1991: 62); Sacks (1992: 115) dismisses Frischer’s point without discussion.

¹³⁰ Frischer (1991: 63).

¹³¹ See e.g., Oliensis (2009: 456–460), who sees the focus on drama, and tragedy particularly, as motivated by the social function of the poem to instruct the Pisones how properly to “perform.”

certe, perfectior “Still, the *Punic War* of that man, whom Ennius included in the number of ‘bards and seers’, delights us like the work of Myron. Of course, as is certainly the case, Ennius may be more refined” (*Brut.* 75–76). His preference for older poetry is clear also in the *Tusculan Disputations*, where Cicero quotes the heroine’s lament from Ennius’ *Andromacha* as an exemplary expression of grief (*Tusc.* 3.44 = Enn. *Trag.* fr. XXVII.87–91 Jocelyn) before noting the distaste of contemporary poets for this type of poetry: *o poetam egregium! quamquam ab his cantoribus Euphorionis contemnitur* “O an excellent poet, though he is spurned by these ‘singers of Euphorion’” (*Tusc.* 3.45). These *cantores* disdain Ennius’ grandeur for Euphorion’s preciousness, and this is a fault in Cicero’s eyes.¹³² Cicero, then, is an aficionado of Ennius, but no fan of the Neoterics.

Horace’s opinion of Ennius is ambivalent.¹³³ Ennius appears in a number of places in the Horatian corpus, including the *Ars* itself. In the fourth book of *Odes*, Horace favourably compares Ennius’ poetry to statues depicting the defeat of Carthage (*Carm.* 4.8.13–20), though in this case it is important to remember that Horace is advocating for the value of poetry instead of physical objects as a means of bestowing glory and perpetuating the memory of achievement (*Carm.* 4.8.1–12).¹³⁴ Horace quotes Ennius’ verses with approval as an example of true poetry: *postquam Discordia taetra | Belli ferratos postes portasque refregit* “after monstrous Discord broke open the iron-fettered doors and gates of War” (Enn. *Ann.* 225–226 Sk. = *Sat.* 1.4.60–61). Unlike

¹³² Courtney (1993: 213) identifies Helvius Cinna as a prime target; see also Hollis (2007: 19). For Cicero, Euphorion’s preciousness makes it difficult for the reader to understand his poetry. In the *de Divinatione*, Marcus questions why the gods would send prophetic dreams if they need someone to interpret them; he imagines an objection that poets and philosophers can be difficult to understand, and he readily concedes that this is true of Euphorion, but not Homer, and asks which is the better poet (*ille vero nimis etiam obscurus Euphorion; at non Homerus; uter igitur melior? Div.* 2.133).

¹³³ So too Brink (1982: 92).

¹³⁴ See Thomas (2011: 185) on how despite *Carm.* 4.8’s Pindaric nature, the poem in fact demonstrates the power of poetry to deny precisely the sort of praise Horace claims in these lines it can bestow.

Lucilius' or Horace's own verses which will turn into prose if the meter is removed, Ennius' poetry would remain recognisable as poetry due to his diction and content (*Sat.* 1.4.56–62). Yet this concession reveals something deeper: the “poetry” of Ennius is innate to his subject, whereas Horace achieves his through careful artistry.¹³⁵ The notion of a lack of artistry will recur in Horace's critique of Ennius. The poet concedes Lucilius' criticism that Ennius' verses at times lack grandeur (*non ridet uersus Enni grauitate minores*, *Sat.* 1.10.54), a statement quite at odds with Cicero's position at *Tusc.* 3.45 (cited above). Gowers takes *grauitate* as an ablative of respect (“verses that fell short of [epic] dignity”)¹³⁶ and suggests that *uersus*, a satirical catachresis for the poems as a whole, points specifically to Ennius' metrical practices, namely, too many spondees that result in a certain frigidity.¹³⁷ If we accept the metrical point of *uersus*, we may also see *grauitate* as an ablative of cause, i.e., “verses deficient *because of* their weightiness,” especially since Ennius' overuse of the spondee is a point to which Horace will return.

In the *Epistle to Augustus*, Horace questions the Roman obsession with the imprimatur of time:

sed tuus hic populous sapiens et iustus in uno,
te nostris ducibus, te Graeis antefendo,
cetera nequaquam simili ratione modoque
aestimat et, nisi quae terris semota suisque
temporibus defuncta uidet, fastidit et odit (*Epist.* 2.1.20–22)

But this people of yours, wise and proper in preferring one man,
namely you, to both our own and Greek leaders, in respect of
everything else it determines value by a reckoning and in a manner

¹³⁵ Gowers (2012: 167) notes the disingenuousness of Horace's claim at *Sat.* 1.4.56–62 given that his own sentence exhibits very careful *compositio*, whereas the Ennian line demonstrates remarkably straightforward word order; see also Oberhelman-Armstrong (1995: 242–244), who more generally relate these lines to Philodemus' theory of metathesis (244–247).

¹³⁶ We might also add “or tragic” to the brackets.

¹³⁷ Gowers (2012: 329), citing Lucilius fr. 430W = 1190M.

not at all the same and it loathes and despises everything except the things it sees removed from the earth and done with their time.

This extends to literature, and Horace jokingly wonders how old a poem has to be before it is considered “among the perfect and ancient” (*inter perfectos ueteresque*) rather than “among the cheap and new” (*inter uiles atque nouos*) (*Epist.* 2.1.34–49). This brings him to Ennius and Naevius:

Ennius, et sapiens et fortis et alter Homerus,
ut critici dicunt, leuiter curare uidetur
quo promissa cadant et somnia Pythagorea.
Naeuius in manibus non est et mentibus haeret
paene recens? adeo sanctum est uetus omne poema
(*Epist.* 2.1.50–54)

Ennius, wise and brave and another Homer, as the critics say, seems not to care too much where his promised dreams of Pythagoras fall. Is not Naevius in our hands and clinging to our minds almost as if newly written? So sacred is every ancient poem!

Ennius’ reputation is strong and people are still reading Naevius: that is how revered old poems are. The lines on Naevius are straightforward, but those concerning Ennius, and in particular the phrase *leuiter curare uidetur*, have been the subject of scholarly debate originating in the scholia of Porphyrio and Ps.-Acro. Porphyrio suggests that Ennius is not concerned about the fate of his reputation (*securus iam de prouentu suae laudis*). Rudd argues that Porphyrio’s interpretation fits the context, but cannot be construed from Horace’s Latin; on the other hand Ps.-Acro’s interpretation—that Horace suggests Ennius is not worthy of his reputation and is not concerned about how he satisfies the promises he makes in his poetry (*uilius est, quam putabatur, nec <curat quomodo> promissis suis satisfaciat*)—fits the Latin, but not the general point.¹³⁸ Rudd, ultimately obelizing *leuiter*, also rejects the reading of Peter White, who turns the pseudoacronian reading on

¹³⁸ Rudd (1989: 82).

its head. He suggests that *leuiter curare uidetur* means that it is plain that “Ennius was pursuing an idle concern with his manifesto about lifting the standards of Roman poetry” since the public embraces Naeuius’ inferior poetry as well as Ennius’; in these lines, then, “Horace sarcastically aligns himself with the contemporary perspective on archaic poetry.”¹³⁹ White’s rejection of the pseudoacronian reading depends on his refusal to see in *Epistle* 2.1 any direct criticism of the old poets before line 63: in the opening lines Horace merely represents (albeit mockingly) the obsession with what is old.¹⁴⁰ I am not convinced by this. Horace is not so much describing the poets’ reputations as he is undermining them: it should not be enough for poetry to be old, it should be good as well. I agree, therefore, with Brink, who, following the interpretation of Ps.-Acro, believes that Horace is precisely critiquing Ennius’ lack of stylistic care, despite any other qualities the critics may identify.¹⁴¹

Why should Horace explicitly criticize Ennius? Horace mentions Ennius’ specific fault because of his supreme reputation: Horace has to justify including Ennius with the other archaic poets. He names no equivalent fault for Naeuius because he does not need to: if Ennius lacks polish, how much less polish does the older poet exhibit?¹⁴² Having identified the problem with Ennius’ poetry, it is enough simply to wonder at the fact that Naeuius is still read at all. All this is consistent with Horace’s comments about Ennius in the *Ars* itself, a specific criticism of his heavy use of spondees in iambic trimeters:

tardior ut paulo grauiorque ueniret ad aures,
[sc. iambus] spondeos stabiles in iura paterna recepit

¹³⁹ White (1987: 233).

¹⁴⁰ White (1987: 229–230).

¹⁴¹ Brink (1982: 98–99); despite his explicit *aporia* concerning *leuiter*, Rudd (1989: 82) agrees that Horace finds Ennius stylistically lacking.

¹⁴² As Cicero acknowledged: *Brut.* 75–76, quoted above. Ennius himself attacks Naeuius for his old-fashioned verses (*Ann.* 7.206–208Sk).

commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
cederet aut quarta socialiter. hic et in Acci
nobilibus trimetris apparet rarus, et Enni
in scaenam missos cum magno pondere uersus
aut operae celeris nimium curaue carentis
aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi (Ars P. 255–262)

So that it would come more slowly and a little more sedately to the ears, the iambus, easy-going and tolerant, granted even-footed spondees its ancestral rights, although in its intimacy it did not give up the second or fourth position. This foot appears rarely in the noble trimeters of Accius, and against the verses of Ennius which are fired onto the stage with great weight they bring a shameful charge of either workmanship that is too quick and lacking care or craft that is unknown to the author.

In order to make the trimeter come a little more slowly and weightily to the ears, the iambus allowed the introduction of spondees, though not in the second foot of the first two metra—a rule observed in Horace’s own trimeters. Early authors, however, took this too far: Accius uses the iambus rarely, while it appears so infrequently in Ennius’ tragic trimeters that his verses are likely to be found wanting in compositional care. Given this lack of craftsmanship, Ennius is at best an ambivalent figure for Horace and does not enjoy the same reputation as he does with Cicero.

Horace and the Neoterics

I have remarked already on Cicero’s disdain for the *cantores Euphorionis*—that is, the Neoterics.¹⁴³ As others have noted, Horace’s poetry is steeped in the principles of the Neoterics who took Hellenistic poetry—especially Callimachus—as their model.¹⁴⁴ In the *Epistle to Augustus*, for example, Horace describes his own poetry in Callimachean terms as he observes that

¹⁴³ On the identification of the *cantores Euphorionis* with οἱ νεώτεροι of Cic. *Att.* 7.2.1, see Lyne (1978, esp. 185–186).

¹⁴⁴ See e.g., Zetzel (2002: 40–45) on the *Satires*; Ross (1975: 131–152) on *Odes* 1–3; more generally Thomas (2007) and Tarrant (2007: 69–71, on the relationship with Catullus). Scodel (1987: esp. 213–215) argues that Horace rejects slavish imitation of Callimachus in favour of broader Callimachean principles.

poets do themselves no favours when they complain that people do not “get” them:¹⁴⁵ *cum lamentamur non apparere labores | nostros et tenui deducta poemata filo* “when we bemoan the fact that our efforts are not visible, nor our poems spun from a delicate thread” (*Epist.* 2.1.224–225). Poems spun with a fine thread—where the delicateness goes back to Hellenistic λεπτότης expressed most famously by Callimachus at *Aet.* 1.24Pf. (Μοῦσαν λεπταλέην) and *Epigr.* 56.3–4G-P = *Anth. Pal.* 9.507.3–4 (Aratus’ λεπταὶ ῥήσιες).¹⁴⁶ As I have discussed above, Horace’s major criticism of Ennius rests on the earlier poet’s lack of stylistic precision, including in matters of meter. This criticism rests on neoteric principles which, drawing especially on Callim. *Hymn* 2.105–112 and the prologue of the *Aetia*, advocate for smaller, delicately wrought and highly polished works of deep learning and wit.¹⁴⁷

These principles also lie behind his criticism of Lucilius.¹⁴⁸ In *Satire* 1.4 he remarks on that poet’s rough composition (*durus componere uersus*, *Sat.* 1.4.8).¹⁴⁹ At the beginning of *Satire* 1.10, Horace also reasserts Lucilius’ compositional deficiency:

nempe incomposito dixi pede currere uersus
Lucili. quis tam Lucili fautor inepte est,
ut non hoc fateatur? (*Sat.* 1.10.1–3)¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Thomas (2007: 51).

¹⁴⁶ On this passage, see also Brink (1982: 242); Rudd (1989: 113). The term λεπτή appears tantalizingly in the fragmentary opening poem of the New Posidippus papyrus (P.Mil.Vogl.VIII 309), and Bing (2005: 120) observes that a “section leading off with gems provides an ideal platform to highlight this refined aesthetic, for again and again Posidippus calls attention to the delicacy of the engraver’s art.” λεπτότης seems also to have been a characteristic literary feature of Philitas of Cos (esp. *Musam leuiorem Philitae*, Prop. 2.34.31, if one accepts Santen’s emendation of a notorious crux: see Heyworth [2007: 269])—so characteristic that it becomes a physical trait (see Ath. *Deipn.* 12.552b; Ael. *VH* 9.14).

¹⁴⁷ Lyne (1978: 172–174) argues that the epyllion was the signature neoteric genre.

¹⁴⁸ So too DuQuesnay (1984: 28).

¹⁴⁹ See also Rutherford (2007: 256), though he does not connect Horace’s “perfectionism” with neoteric principles. Freudenburg (1993: 157) notes that the phrase is positive according to Stoic and Atticist theories.

¹⁵⁰ See also *Sat.* 1.10.56–61, where Horace returns to the idea of Lucilius’ composing 200 verses at a time and wonders what prevents him from asking whether it was the “rough nature” (*dura natura*) of the man himself or simply of his material that prevented him from achieving a higher level of polish beyond putting his words into

For sure, I said that Lucilius' verses run with a poorly composed foot. Who is so foolishly a fan of Lucilius that he does not confess this?

Horace also criticizes Lucilius for preferring quantity over quality so that his poetry is fluent—he could compose 200 verses in an hour standing on one foot (*Sat.* 1.4.9–10)—but muddy and in need of editing: *cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere uelles* “Because he flowed all muddy, there was stuff that you would want to take out” (*Sat.* 1.4.11).¹⁵¹ Here *flueret lutulentus* recalls closely Apollo's rebuke to Envy at the end of Callimachus' second hymn:¹⁵² Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ | λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει “The Assyrian river's flow is great, but it draws in its water a lot of filth from the earth and a lot of trash” (Callim. *Hymn* 2.108–109). Horace reminds his readers of this criticism in *Satires* 1.10, reiterating both the muddiness and the need for editing:¹⁵³ *at dixi fluere hunc lutulentum, saepe ferentem | plura quidem tollenda relinquendis* “But I said he flowed all muddy, often indeed bringing more things that should be taken out than left behind” (*Sat.* 1.10.50–51). Lucilius' poetry, then, lacks polish.

Horace further argues in *Satire* 1.10 that to write good satire you need more than great wit: terseness, variety of diction and posture, and restraint are all necessary (*Sat.* 1.10.7–14)—and all elements of neoteric style.¹⁵⁴ Horace then cites the Old Attic Comics as masters of using

hexameters: cf. Oberhelman-Armstrong (1995: 253), who argue that Horace's answer is obvious: Lucilius lacked *ingenium* and therefore *ars*.

¹⁵¹ On *Sat.* 1.4.11, see also Scodel (1987: 200), who goes on to remark that neoteric principles are otherwise not prominent in the poem.

¹⁵² So too Freudenburg (1993: 158–162) and Gowers (2012: 157), though both note that Horace's use of the river metaphor involves more than reference to Callimachus, including allusion to debates about word arrangement.

¹⁵³ Scodel (1987: 203–204) also connects this passage with Callimachus.

¹⁵⁴ So too Thomas (2007: 52), also making the connection with *Satire* 1.4. Scodel (1987: 199) notes that Lucilius could be defended on the criterion of variety.

comedy to make important points and argues that they should be imitated,¹⁵⁵ but there are those today who (wrongly) ignore them:

illi, scripta quibus comoedia prisca uiris est,
hoc stabant, hoc sunt imitandi; quos neque pulcher
Hermogenes umquam legit neque simius iste
nil praeter Caluum et doctus cantare Catullum (Sat. 1.10.16–19)

Those men who wrote Old Comedy, they held their own in this, they should be imitated in this; they whom pretty Hermogenes never reads, nor that ape who knows nothing except how to recite Calvus and Catullus.

This is the only time in the entire Horatian corpus where either Calvus or Catullus is named, but they embody the neoteric poetic movement. Horace ironically gives the ape the characteristic epithet of the Neoterics, *doctus*,¹⁵⁶ though all he can do is recite (*cantare*) the works of the masters.¹⁵⁷ It is important to note that primates are by-words for imitators in Greek and Roman literature, and that is appropriate in this context.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, Mary Beard has pointed to Galen’s discussion in *De Usu Partium* of the way apes actually *fail* as imitators.¹⁵⁹ The recitations of this *simius*—whether they are performances of Catullus’ and Calvus’ poems or his own works in imitation—are recognizably “neoteric,” but there is something not quite right about them and so they fall short of the model set by Catullus and Calvus. Part of that must be the failure to utilize

¹⁵⁵ See also Sat. 1.4.1–7: Scodel (1987: 199); Gowers (2012: 316).

¹⁵⁶ For *doctus*, see Cat. *Carm.* 1.7, 35.17, 65.2; Prop. 2.34.89 (of Calvus); Tib. 1.4.61; [Tib.] 3.6.41 (of Catullus): Crowther (1978: 40 and 43 n 58); Quinn (1973: xxx); Cairns (1979: 11–12); Brink (1982: 106); Gowers (2012: 316–317); *doctus* renders σοφός in Latin and connects through *doctrina* to ἡ σοφία in Callim. *Aet.* 1.18Pf.

¹⁵⁷ See also Gowers (2012: 317), who argues that with *cantare* and the *simius* Horace reduces the institutionalized recitations to “meaningless regurgitation.”

¹⁵⁸ See Connors (2004: 181–182) and Beard (2014: 161–162) on simian imitation; Gowers (2012: 316–317); Brown (1993: 185); McDermott (1936: 164–165) argues that the imitative connotation of *simius* rules out “recite” as a translation of *cantare*, but this does not necessarily follow since recitation would be one way of “imitating” the poets.

¹⁵⁹ Beard (2014: 165–166).

the Old Comic poets.¹⁶⁰ The criticism may not reach Calvus and Catullus, but it does not reflect well on their neoteric disciples.¹⁶¹

This passage marks the transition from Horace's recapitulation of the criticism of Lucilius according to neoteric principles to the criticism of the neoteric defenders of Lucilius with whom he is about to engage in dialogue: note how *simius iste* suggests "that ape of yours," i.e., the one belonging to your school. Here his criticism focuses on the mix of Greek and Latin, which was a neoteric practice, especially to create euphony,¹⁶² and which an imagined interlocutor offers as evidence of Lucilius' achievement: *at magnum fecit, quod uerbis Graeca Latinis | miscuit* "But he did a great thing: he mixed Greek with Latin words" (*Sat.* 1.10.20–21). Horace denies this is anything special (*quine putetis difficile et mirum*) since Rhodian Pitholeon has managed it (*Sat.* 1.10.21–23).¹⁶³ This Pitholeon has been identified with M'. Otacilius Pitholaus, Pitholeon being a convenient metrical alternative for Pitholaus, who—like Catullus and Calvus (*Suet. Iul.* 73.1)—wrote scurrilous verses against Julius Caesar (*Suet. Iul.* 75.5), and he may be the *simius* of line 18 since *πίθων* is Greek for "ape," perhaps punning on "monkey-stench" (*πίθων* + *olere*).¹⁶⁴ If the identification and etymology are correct, their combination suggests that Pitholeon should be identified as a Neoteric, though not necessarily a good one if the defining feature of his poetry is

¹⁶⁰ Ferriss-Hill (2014: 344–346) suggests further that the insult *simius* is derived itself from Old Attic Comedy and that the target therefore would miss the full force of the insult.

¹⁶¹ See e.g., Skinner (2013: 35–36) and especially Tarrant (2007: 69 and 71): "Catullus is the poet who most clearly foreshadows aspects of Horace's literary persona and writing. Horace shares Catullus' high regard for charm and polish, and his disgust at poetic crudeness." And: "Horace's deep knowledge of Catullus and frequent allusion to his poetry show that his sneering reference in *Satires* 1.10.18–19 ... is directed not at the poets themselves but at their unoriginal epigones." Cf. DuQuesnay (1984: 28), suggesting that Catullus and Calvus are invoked not as Neoterics, but as writers of invective.

¹⁶² Scodel (1987: 205–206); Freudenburg (1993: 166–168); Gowers (2012: 317–318).

¹⁶³ Scodel (1987: 201) remarks that *difficile et mirum* must signal desirable qualities.

¹⁶⁴ Gowers (2012: 319); Freudenburg (1993: 169 n 101).

the way he mixes Latin and Greek. This is a very specific criticism of a very specific neoteric practice and ultimately brief, for Horace quickly returns to distancing himself from poetry composed contrary to neoteric principles (e.g., *Sat.* 1.10.36–37 and 50–51). It becomes clear, then, that contrary to impressions a reader may get from Horace’s generic choices, Cicero and Horace do not share literary tastes:¹⁶⁵ their opinions of Ennius—and other archaic poets—do not align, nor do their views on the Neoterics. There is, therefore, no reason to accept that Cicero’s personal view of Maecius was shared by Horace, especially if—and there is admittedly no way to prove this—Cicero’s antipathy for Maecius results from the latter’s neoteric sensibilities.¹⁶⁶

Horace and Maecius

As noted above, Frischer states that Maecius’ status as a critic of dramatic works marks him as out of fashion. His role as a drama critic is confirmed by Cicero’s letter and by the passage from *Satire* 1.10.¹⁶⁷ This latter warrants some consideration since Maecius’ reputation there has also been impugned:

turgidus Alpinus iugulat dum Memnona dumque
diffindit Rheni luteum caput, haec ego ludo,
quae neque in aede sonent certantia iudice Tarpa
nec redeant iterum atque iterum spectanda theatri.
(*Sat.* 1.10.36–39)

While swollen Alpinus strangles Memnon and while he splits the
muddy head of the Rhine, I trifle at these things which may neither

¹⁶⁵ Thomas (2007: 50–51).

¹⁶⁶ See Frank (1925: 74, esp. n 6), who argues that Maecius was the chief critical champion of the neoteric *collegium poetarum* which was hostile to Julius Caesar and sympathetic to Pompey: these political leanings led to the antipathy felt by the Augustan poets towards their late Republican predecessors. Rudd (1981: 120) agrees, at least as far as Maecius is concerned; there is, however, no evidence to tie the *collegium* to the Neoterics. On Maecius’ possible ties to the *collegium*, see also Crowther (1973: 577–578).

¹⁶⁷ See also Crowther (1973: 580) and Horsfall (1976: 84) for the possible association of specifically dramatic poetry with the *collegium poetarum*.

echo in a shrine while in competition before the judge Tarpa nor
return again and again to be viewed in the theatres.

These lines follow immediately after the poet's rejection of a poetical style that blends Greek and Latin words—that is, a neoteric style that strove for extreme euphony. Yet lines 36–37 contain terms (namely, *turgidus* and *luteum*) that point away from the Neoterics. Much scholarly debate has focused on the identity of the *Alpinus* of line 36,¹⁶⁸ but regardless of who this poet is, Horace is drawing a stark contrast between his own verses and this poet's swollen (*turgidus*) and unpolished (*luteum*) style—a style he has previously censured. This is brought out in Horace's own “playing around” (*haec ego ludo*) since the characterization of one's poetry as *ludus* is a feature of the Neoterics.¹⁶⁹ Given this treatment of *Alpinus*' epic, it might be reasonable to detect a similarly rough treatment of the next named figure, Maecius Tarpa. But Horace does not treat Maecius this way. While it is possible to read lines 38–39 pejoratively, unlike *Alpinus*, Maecius himself has no qualitative epithet: he is merely the “judge” (*iudice*). If Horace is attacking anything, it is the poetry itself and not Maecius, who is merely the intended audience. For it is in that capacity *as audience* that Maecius is used to identify another sort of poetry that Horace is *not* writing, inasmuch as Maecius is explicitly *not* the intended audience for Horace's verses. This is not the same as Frischer's suggestion that Maecius “is clearly mentioned as the kind of critic who is not sympathetic to Horace's poetry.”¹⁷⁰ The most that can be said is, in fact, the reverse: it is Horace who is not sympathetic to the type of poetry associated with Maecius (and implicitly,

¹⁶⁸ See Gowers (2012: 323) for a brief *précis* of the issue.

¹⁶⁹ Zetzel (2002: 41).

¹⁷⁰ Frischer (1991: 62 n 35).

perhaps, his stylistic preferences).¹⁷¹ Horace refuses to write drama for competition or repeated performance.¹⁷² Here the poet reiterates the position he takes at *Satire* 1.4.21–23 and 71–74: he does not seek wide publicity and writes for a very select audience.¹⁷³ Horace is not rejecting all epic or dramatic literature. Rather, he is distinguishing his verses—his private trifles—from a certain kind of *bad* epic and *very public* drama. This is made clear in the immediately following lines where the poet singles out an outstanding writer in comedy (Fundanius), tragedy (Pollio), and epic (Varius) (*Sat.* 1.10.40–44), two of whom recur at the end of the poem in the list of Horace’s ideal critics (*Sat.* 1.10.81–90). Moreover, in the *Epistle to Augustus*, Horace takes pains to express his admiration for the dramatic poet, though he himself refuses to write such works (*Epist.* 2.1.208–213).¹⁷⁴ Scodel even suggests that what in *Satire* 1.10 appears to be a statement of poetic principle is actually a practical strategy since drama and epic have masters already.¹⁷⁵ Frischer, then, is wrong to point to this reference to Maecius as evidence his views were inherently inconsistent with Horace’s own, specifically on drama.

Frischer’s parodic interpretation of the reference to Maecius in the *Ars* is tied closely to his assertion that the persona’s literary tastes are conservative, as seen in “his ignorance of the contemporary scene in poetry,” specifically his focus on drama and epic—“departments of literature most important in Roman literature fifty to one hundred years before the Augustan

¹⁷¹ Too much bombast for Horace, perhaps: see Gowers (2012: 324), citing also *Sat.* 1.4.43–44 and 1.6.43 for “Horace’s abhorrence of loud noise.”

¹⁷² So too Crowther (1973: 578) who reads these lines in light of *Ars P.* 386–368 as potentially “expressing respect” for Maecius.

¹⁷³ For Horace’s continued rejection of the readership of both the general public and the school teachers, see also *Epist.* 1.19.37–40 and *Carm.* 3.1.1.

¹⁷⁴ Sacks (1992: 115).

¹⁷⁵ Scodel (1987: 202–203); see also DuQuesnay (1984: 27).

age”—combined with his failure to mention those few contemporary poets practising in exactly those genres and, perhaps more egregiously, “his neglect of love elegy in lines 75–76, where the speaker mentions only funerary and votive uses.”¹⁷⁶ Horace’s relationship to elegy is a vexed issue. Frischer’s reading of the lines on elegy reflects Brink’s interpretation, though he does not cite him.¹⁷⁷ He does refer to Mark Clark’s discussion of *Ars P.* 75–78, but misrepresents it somewhat.¹⁷⁸ Clark argues that these “origins” of elegy reflect precisely on contemporary practice since they summarize Horace’s opinions on elegy from elsewhere in his poetry. The evidence—both direct and allusive—indicates that Horace clearly knows the work of the elegists, but his general remarks about their poetry are at best ambivalent.¹⁷⁹ That he has little to say about it here does not necessarily indicate the assumption of an out-of-touch persona: indeed, it may more accurately reflect the feelings of the poet himself who—his appreciation for their artistry notwithstanding—may not have been able to ‘get on board’ with the (depicted) lifestyle and attitude. Arguably this is confirmed by the poet’s assertion in the following lines that the Muse authorized lyric poetry to relate the cares of youths: *Musa dedit fidibus ... iuuenum curas ... referre* (*Ars P.* 83–85).¹⁸⁰

Little needs to be said to defend Horace’s focus on epic as ‘contemporary’: I have mentioned Horace’s acknowledgement of Varius’ excellence in that genre (*Sat.* 1.10.43–44), and

¹⁷⁶ Frischer (1991: 63).

¹⁷⁷ Brink (1971: 165–166).

¹⁷⁸ Clark (1983); cf. Freis (1993), who also argues that lines 75–78 include contemporary love elegy without any criticism.

¹⁷⁹ See e.g., Rudd (1989: 7–8); Barchiesi (1997) provides a useful and succinct account of Horace’s relationship to elegy; Tarrant (2007: 74–76). For further discussion of Horace and elegy, see Chapter 3, section 5.

¹⁸⁰ But see Freis (1993: 367), who argues that the three lines on lyric simply list its content from most to least dignified (hymn, epinician, erotic, sympotic) with no special emphasis on the notion of erotic *lyric* instead of erotic *elegy*.

even in the late 20s (accepting Frischer's date for the sake of argument), Horace will have known that Virgil was working on the *Aeneid*. To these we may add from the preceding 30 years, for example, the *Bellum Sequanicum* of Varro Atacinus and the *Annales Belli Gallici* attributed to Furius Bibaculus. So epic was still alive through the late Republic and early Principate. The picture is a little more complicated in the case of drama.

There is no question that dramatic works were still being performed in this period: Horace himself complains about the rowdiness of audiences who prefer the spectacle to the poets' words (*Epist.* 2.1.182–207). The issue is whether these are new works or simply revivals. We can read *neque ... nec* at *Sat.* 1.10.38–39 disjunctively: the poetry “competing” before Maecius is not the same as that which returns again and again to the stage, suggesting that new work may be written for recital or reading only.¹⁸¹ This is consistent too with Horace's critique in the *Epistle to Augustus* of the Romans' worship of the old, as discussed above, and the debates raging about the qualities of second-century poets (Pacuvius and Accius,¹⁸² Afranius and Plautus, Caecilius and Terence) to the neglect of contemporary work (*Epist.* 2.1.55–62). The composition of new comedies does seem to have fallen away, though Horace cites the work of Fundanius (*Sat.* 1.10.40–42) and Ovid later names Melissus as a writer of comedy (*Pont.* 4.16.30). Suetonius adds about the latter that he was Maecenas' freedman and the inventor of a new kind of *fabula togata* which he called *trabeata* (Suet. *Gram.* 21). Yet we should not overstate the extent to which the *Ars* is advocating for comedy.¹⁸³ Although Horace's account of proper character depiction may seem more appropriate

¹⁸¹ But see Horsfall (1976: 83) who argues that these are “complementary parts of one process” and that the recital in the *aedes* functions as a kind of προαγών.

¹⁸² Accius lived into the early first century BCE, but is still deceased a full generation before Horace is born.

¹⁸³ See also Oliensis (2009: 458–459), who argues that one of the apparent objectives of the *Ars* is to help the Pisones avoid provoking laughter, as much in social as artistic terms.

for new comedy than tragedy (*Ars P.* 153–178), it is not explicitly framed that way. Instead, it is constructed around the conceit of the four ages of man, expanded from Aristotle’s three.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, the following sections on the presentation of appropriate action focus on tragic figures (Medea, Atreus, Procne, Cadmus), the *deus ex machina*, and the role of the chorus which has no place in Roman comedy (*Ars P.* 179–201).

Granted that Roman tragedy had its heyday with Accius at the beginning of the first century BCE, it is nevertheless also clear that poets were still writing tragedies through the end of the Republic and into the Augustan period, even if only for recitation rather than performance and often, it seems, as an exercise in aristocratic dilettantism.¹⁸⁵ Quintus Cicero wrote four tragedies (in sixteen days! Cic. *Qfr.* 3.5.7). Horace twice cites Pollio’s tragic work (*Sat.* 1.10.42–43; *Carm.* 2.1.9–12), as well as the *lacrimosa poemata* of Pupius (*Epist.* 1.1.67).¹⁸⁶ We know that Augustus commissioned a *Thyestes* from Varius Rufus for the games celebrating the victory at Actium in 29 BCE, and in fact as a youth himself tried his hand at tragedy, though he gave it up.¹⁸⁷ It seems that a Turranius and a Gracchus also wrote tragedies known to Ovid (*Pont.* 4.16.29–31).¹⁸⁸ Ovid himself famously wrote a *Medea*.¹⁸⁹ There is, therefore, no particular reason why Horace should not advise young noblemen about writing tragedy. Moreover, if Frischer were right that by the time of the *Ars*—whether that be 24–20 or closer to 10 BCE—dramatic works were no longer being produced, this would indicate a “gap in the market,” so to speak, which could be filled by

¹⁸⁴ Arist. *Rh.* 2.1389a–90b: Brink (1971: 228–229); Russell (2006: 332–333); Rutherford (2007: 248).

¹⁸⁵ On performance, see Tarrant (1978: 260).

¹⁸⁶ For Pollio, see also Virg. *Ecl.* 8.9–10.

¹⁸⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 85.2; Macr. *Sat.* 2.4.2.

¹⁸⁸ See Hollis (2007: 334–337).

¹⁸⁹ Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.1.98.

the Pisones in much the same way that Horace earlier in his career had identified scope for writing satire (*Sat.* 1.10.46–49). Again, though, the focus on dramatic poetry within the *Ars* may result less from its appeal as an appropriate genre for young men to write in than from its exemplary value, especially for the proper fitting together of content, diction, and style.¹⁹⁰ So, neither Maecius nor the poetry with which he is most closely associated undermines the authority of the speaker of the *Ars*.

c) Critical Figures within the *Ars Poetica*: *Piso pater*

The second critical figure with whom the speaker associates himself is *Piso pater*. Frischer identifies him as L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, cos. 58 BCE.¹⁹¹ There are practical problems here. Even on Frischer's dating Caesoninus would be nearly 80 years old when the *Ars* is written, which is all the more unlikely since he disappears from the historical record after 43 BCE. Frischer cites three inscriptions from Pola to prove that Caesoninus was still alive as late as 33 BCE (*CIL* 5 54 = *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.81; *CIL* 1² 2.2512 = *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.65; *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.708). Edward Sacks has addressed some of the problems with this evidence.¹⁹² *CIL* 5 54 was inscribed on the Porta Herculis, the gate in the first permanent wall of the new *colonia* at Pola ordered by Octavian likely between the battles of Philippi and Actium. It reads:

L·CASSIUS·C·F·LONGIN
L·CALPURNIUS·L·F·PISO
IIVIR !!!!!!!¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ So too Innes (1989: 259); again, see Oliensis (2009: 456–460) on the exemplary value of drama as a metaphor for social behaviour.

¹⁹¹ Frischer (1991: 52–59) offers full argumentation, relying on Frischer's preceding conclusion that the poem dates to 24–20 BCE.

¹⁹² Sacks (1992: 113–114).

¹⁹³ Degrassi (*ILLRP* 640 n 3) suggests that the erasure originally said *quinq(ennales)*.

Mommsen here identifies Cassius as the consul of 30 CE and Piso as the Lucius Piso who as praetor was killed in Hispania Citerior in 25 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 4.45.1, wrongly cited as 2.45) and, interestingly, as one of the addressees of the *Ars*.¹⁹⁴ Sticotti, however, argues that the lettering puts the date of the inscription probably two generations earlier; moreover Cassius cannot be the consul of 30 CE since his father was Lucius, not Gaius. He suggests instead the plebeian tribune of 44 BCE who reconciled with Antony in 41 BCE (App. *B Civ.* 5.7.1); he was a son of Gaius Cassius Longinus, cos. 73 BCE, and therefore the brother of the tyrannicide.¹⁹⁵ Following Sticotti, both Forlati Tamaro and Degrassi suggest that this Piso is Piso Caesoninus, cos. 58 BCE.¹⁹⁶ Yet this creates a disparity between the *duouiri*: Piso is of consular rank and has even been censor (50 BCE); the highest office Longinus has held is the tribunate. Given their unequal positions, it is particularly striking that Longinus—in every way the junior party—is named first.¹⁹⁷ Finally, the inscription does not actually include the name Caesoninus.¹⁹⁸ Sacks suggests instead the otherwise unidentified Lucius Piso who is named as *legatus Antoni* by Cicero at *Phil.* 10.13.¹⁹⁹ This inscription, then, does not provide proof that Caesoninus is still alive even in the 30s BCE, let alone the late 20s.

Frischer is on more promising ground with the remaining two inscriptions. *CIL* 1² 2.2512 (= *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.65; *ILLRP* 423) reads:

¹⁹⁴ On this Piso, see also Syme (1980: 334).

¹⁹⁵ Sticotti (1914: 113–114); followed by Forlati Tamaro (*Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.81). So too Degrassi: *ILLRP* 640.

¹⁹⁶ Sticotti (1914: 114–115) does not provide any reason for the identification of Piso as the consul of 58 BCE. However, he remarks that *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.65 names Caesoninus and the shape and size of the letters on indicate that it is contemporary with *CIL* 5 54.

¹⁹⁷ Nisbet (1961: 165); Sacks (1992: 113).

¹⁹⁸ Sacks (1992: 113).

¹⁹⁹ Sacks (1992: 113–114); Syme (1960: 14) suggests with much equivocation that he may be either the son of L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, pr. 74 BCE, or C. Calpurnius Piso, cos. 67 BCE.

L·CAL[PURNIUS·L·F
PISO·CA[ESONINUS
CO[S

Again, both Degrassi and Forlati Tamaro (adopting the restoration of Gnirs) agree that the consul of 58 BCE is here meant, though the latter adds that she does not know why he settled in Pola.²⁰⁰ The same is true of *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.708 (= *ILLRP* 424), which both Forlati Tamaro and Degrassi restore as:

L·CAL]PURN[IUS·L·F
CAE]SON[INUS·COS (or IIVIR)

The restoration, however, is not certain and an alternate reading of *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.708 (= *ILLRP* 424) has been proposed by Mirabella Roberti:

L·CAL]PURN[IO
L·F·PI]SON[I²⁰¹

Even if these inscriptions do refer to a Caesoninus, Sacks has argued that this does not automatically mean the consul and censor: his son, who is known to us as Piso Pontifex (Tac. *Ann.* 6.10.3; *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* 2.7, 14, and 23 Scheid), will have been ‘Caesoninus’ before assuming his priesthood, probably not before 20 BCE at the earliest.²⁰² Given the apparent connection of the Calpurnii to the area and the continued building projects in Pola following the establishment of the *colonia*, we cannot exclude Piso Pontifex.²⁰³ He thus provides another

²⁰⁰ Nisbet (1961: 53 and 165) suggests that the Caesoninus may have inherited land in the area from his father-in-law Calventius.

²⁰¹ Mirabella Roberti (1943: 31 n 1); see also Nisbet (1961: 165).

²⁰² Sacks (1992: 114). The assumption of his priesthood may have been relatively early, cf. e.g., M. Aemilius Lepidus, the triumvir, who became a pontifex at the age of 25: Syme (1939: 382).

²⁰³ We do not have definitive *termini post quem* for the three Calpurnian inscriptions. However, it is clear that building occurred through at least the end of the first century BCE. The Arch of the Sergii (*CIL* 5 50 = *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.7) must date to after 31 BCE since it commemorates L. Sergius Lepidus, tribune of the 29th legion which was disbanded after Actium, while the inscription on the temple to Rome and Augustus (*CIL* 5 18 = *Inscr. Ital.* 10.1.21) features the phrase *patri patriae*, which dates the temple to around 2 BCE: Taylor (1920: 119 n 8).

potential candidate for the inscription, especially since *CIL* 1² 2512 is unlikely to be from an elogium; “COS” should therefore refer to the office held at the time of the inscription’s provenance and so is more likely to refer to 15 BCE than 58 BCE.²⁰⁴ Consequently, these inscriptions have no probative value for Frischer’s argument, especially since none of them has been securely dated as late as 24 BCE.

We must, therefore, accept without corroboration the assertion that Caesoninus was still alive at the time Horace composed the *Ars* or find another candidate. Yet even allowing that Caesoninus may be both alive and the addressee does not require us to accept Frischer’s contention that Horace is using him for parody. Cicero attacked Caesoninus’ critical acumen for his assaults on Cicero’s own work: *uerum tamen, quoniam te non Aristarchum, sed Phalarin grammaticum habemus, qui non notam apponas ad malum uersum, sed poetam armis persequare, scire cupio quid tandem in isto uersu reprehendas: “cedant arma togae.”* “But still, since we do not consider you an Aristarchus, but a Phalaris the schoolteacher since you do not makes notes on a bad verse, but attack the poet with weapons, I want to know what, in the end, you find to censure in that verse: ‘let arms give way to the toga’?” (*Pis.* 73).²⁰⁵ Piso Caesoninus had also been a patron of Philodemus, and for Frischer, this is evidence that he “prided himself on being something of a literary critic,” thereby giving Cicero’s attack added sting.²⁰⁶ Frischer suggests that Cicero’s attack contributed to Piso’s “notorious reputation as a critic”—if we can take Cicero’s own word for it, all the school boys were reading his speech barely a year after he had delivered it (*Cic. Qfr.*

²⁰⁴ cf. Nisbet (1961: 164–165), who concludes that COS dates the inscription to 58 BCE.

²⁰⁵ Piso was likely not alone: Cicero elsewhere speaks of plural *improbi* and *inuidi* who attack him for this line (*Off.* 1.77).

²⁰⁶ Frischer (1991: 64); for Piso’s connection to Philodemus, see *Cic. Pis.* 68–71; Philodemus addresses to Piso an epigram (*AP* 11.44 = 23 Gow-Page) and his treatise *Περὶ τοῦ καθ’ Ὁμερον ἀγαθοῦ βασιλέως*.

3.1.11)—and Horace exploits this reputation for his “send-up of academic criticism.”²⁰⁷ But as Sacks observes, Frischer does not demonstrate that the position adopted by the allegedly parodic persona of the *Ars* is consistent with Ciceronian aesthetics.²⁰⁸ As I have shown, even on the relatively narrow point of critical judgment, Cicero and the persona disagree about Maecius, and as demonstrated above, they are not consistent regarding Ennius. Furthermore, although it is reasonable to accept that the *In Pisonem* had a wide readership and may have impacted generally on Piso’s reputation (albeit not enough to keep him from the censorship in 50 BCE), that is a long way from establishing that Piso Caesoninus’ literary tastes were widely held to be suspect. Indeed, Piso would not be the last to fault Cicero’s attempts to versify his *annus mirabilis* (e.g., Juv. *Sat.* 10.122–126) and *cedant arma togae* in particular (e.g., [Sallust] *Cic.* 6; Quint. *Inst. Or.* 11.1.24).

Finally, if Horace is impugning Piso Caesoninus’ critical ability, this creates further problems; for Caesoninus, as already noted, was the patron of Philodemus whose circle included Virgil, Varius Rufus, Quintilius, and Plotius Tucca, all of whom Philodemus addressed in the conclusion of his treatises *Περὶ κολακείας* and *Περὶ φιλαργυρίας* (PHerc. 1082 col. xi 1–2 and PHerc. 253 fr. xii 4–5) and an otherwise unassigned work (PHerc. Paris 2 fr. 279a).²⁰⁹ With the exception of Quintilius, to whom I will return below, these are the same figures for whose praise Horace hopes in *Satire* 1.10, and Horace’s connection to this circle seems assured by the meeting at Sinuessa at *Sat.* 1.5.39–42 (note especially *neque quis me sit deuinctior alter* “nor could any other person be more bound to them than I”), and the lament for Quintilius at *Carm.* 1.24 addressed

²⁰⁷ Frischer (1991: 66).

²⁰⁸ Sacks (1992: 115).

²⁰⁹ See Tait (1941: 110–118); Oberhlemann-Armstrong (1995: 236).

to Virgil.²¹⁰ The matter is further complicated by Frischer's assumption that Horace versifies in the *Ars* the poetic theories of the Hellenistic writer Neoptolemus of Parium. This idea is first found in Porphyrio's note on *Ars P.* 6: *in quem librum congegit praecepta Neoptolemi τοῦ Παριανοῦ de arte poetica, non quidem omnia, sed eminentissima* "He gathered into that book the teachings of Neoptolemus of Parium about poetic technique—not, mind you, all of them, but the most important" (Porph. ad *Ars P.* 6). What we know of Neoptolemus comes in the main from fragments of book 5 of Philodemus' *Περὶ Ποιημάτων* in which the Epicurean philosopher critiques Neoptolemus (*On Poems* 5 cols. xiii–xvi Mangoni). Individual ideas have been identified as common to both Neoptolemus and the *Ars*, but not uniquely so.²¹¹ Porphyrio is explicit, though: not everything from Neoptolemus, only the most important. The inference has been drawn that this means Neoptolemus' tripartite division of poetry into *poiēma*, *poiēsis*, and *poiētēs*—precisely the thing criticized by Philodemus. For Frischer, this is a key piece of evidence that the *Ars* is parody. Horace cannot seriously be expounding a theory of poetry thoroughly dismissed by Philodemus (and therefore also unacceptable to Piso Caesoninus), and this alerts the reader to the fact that the whole thing is done with a knowing wink. Consequently, the 'send-up' of Piso Caesoninus is not to be taken too seriously by the man himself.²¹²

If the *Ars* is not parody, Frischer argues that we must postulate a break between Horace and the Pisonian-Philodemean circle since the material presented in the *Ars* is antithetical to that school. I disagree. As I have suggested, there is nothing in particular that requires the reader to

²¹⁰ See also Oberhlemann-Armstrong (1995: 236). This is not necessarily to say that Horace was a student of Philodemus in quite the same way as the others: the omission of his name from the dedications in Philodemus' works counsels against this. See also Tsakirópoulou-Summers (1998) for a strong rejection of the idea of Horace as Philodemus' student.

²¹¹ See Laird (2007: 134–135).

²¹² Frischer (1991: 65–66).

view the critical prowess of Piso *pater* with any suspicion. Second, although Porphyrio's comment has led many scholars to attempt a similar schema for Horace's poem, with mixed results,²¹³ we should be wary of accepting the ancient scholiast's rather elliptical remarks too readily, particularly because we may be dealing not with Neoptolemus himself so much as Philodemus' summary of Neoptolemus.²¹⁴ David Armstrong suggests that Horace is precisely espousing Philodemian principles: Horace adopts in particular the posture of the parrhesiastic teacher, frankly instructing the Pisones on poetic composition, all the while embodying Philodemus' criticisms of Neoptolemus so that, for example, just as Philodemus himself rejects the separability of style and subject, so too in the *Ars* is there a constant bleeding of the treatment these elements into one another.²¹⁵ To be clear, Horace has not adopted a purely Philodemian position or else he could not compose the *Ars* at all, since Philodemus holds that poetry is not the proper means for instruction because it is less clear than prose (*On Poems* 5 cols. i–iv Mangoni).²¹⁶ At any rate, theoretical purity is not the hallmark of Horatian poetics.²¹⁷

d) Critical Figures within the *Ars Poetica*: Quintilius

This brings us finally to Quintilius, who appears toward the end of the poem (*Ars P.* 438–444) and who, Frischer argues, highlights through contrast with his own critical excellence the persona's ineptitude. Quintilius offers a model of the proper Epicurean critic who will on the basis

²¹³ See Rudd (1989: 24–25); Russell (2006: 327); Laird (2007: 135).

²¹⁴ D. Armstrong (1993: 190–191), citing Brink (1963).

²¹⁵ D. Armstrong (1993); for the inseparability of style and content, see 220–223.

²¹⁶ Asmis (1995: 27–28). Philodemus does not deny that poetry *can* instruct, he simply thinks prose does it better; there is, therefore, nothing especially inconsistent with Horace's claim at *Ars P.* 333–334 that poetry can be of value, delight, or both: see D. Armstrong (1993: 209).

²¹⁷ See Grimal (1988).

of taste offer an opinion of a poem, but who will not debate its merits with the poet since Epicurean teaching held that poetics were not a rational, teachable art.²¹⁸ Quintilius' brief remarks contrast starkly with the poem's elaborate "advice and rules as useless as they are dull and jejune," especially given the apparent misunderstanding of Quintilius' critical principles.²¹⁹ Frischer is certainly correct that the *Ars* is Horace's longest poem, but its 476 lines fall far short of conventional treatises on poetics, including, for example, Philodemus' *On Poems* which ran to five books. The criticism also rather misses that Quintilius appears at the end of the poem, after all the rules have been laid out, to critique something that has *already been written*. The *Ars* establishes *beforehand* and *in anticipation* of such a poetic endeavour how to go about producing poetry. Quintilius, as a member of Philodemus' circle, likely shared that philosopher's interest in stylistics, somewhat unusually for an Epicurean.²²⁰ Important in this regard is the speaker's report that if the poet failed on the third attempt to improve the poem, Quintilius would instruct him to destroy it and return the poorly turned verses to the anvil:

melius te posse negares,
bis terque expertum frustra, delere iubebat
et male tornatos incudi reddere uersus. (Ars P. 439–441)

Were you to say that you cannot do better after trying in vain two or three times, he used to order you to destroy the poorly fashioned verses and return them to the anvil.

The phrase *male tornatos* suggests defects in composition, and this is where Philodemus feels the excellence of poetry lies (*On Poems* 5 cols. x–xii and xxi Mangoni).²²¹ Moreover, Philodemus

²¹⁸ Frischer (1991: 66–68).

²¹⁹ Frischer (1991: 68).

²²⁰ See Tait (1941: 89–90), who suggests that Philodemus followed Zeno in this respect.

²²¹ Tait (1941: 104).

requires form and content to correlate since they are inextricably bound together (*On Poems* 5 cols. xxiii, xxviii–xxix Mangoni).²²² This is precisely the point made by the speaker of the *Ars* at lines 38–45 and 73–98. Quintilius’ judgment may not be “scientific,” to use Frischer’s term, but it must be rational since Philodemus attributes the appreciation of poetry to reason (λόγος) (*On Poems* 5 cols. xxiii–xxiv Mangoni). There is, therefore, nothing inherently contradictory about the depictions of the poem’s persona and Quintilius, and consequently Frischer’s argument that the critic-figures in the poem undermine the persona’s authority falls away.

Frischer’s attempt to establish the parodic nature of the speaker’s status as a “tiresome and old-fashioned pedant” culminates with the opening lines of the poem, where, he suggests, the critique of the painting is so out of step with current fashion that the speaker cannot even conceive of such a thing, whereas from Vitruvius (in whose censure he joins) and the archaeological record it is clear that such paintings were in vogue.²²³ Frischer also reads these lines as an abuse of poetic licence—specifically metaphor—which the speaker counsels against in lines 12–13, citing the inability of interpreters from Quintilian to Brink to work out (that is, come to any agreement on) what it means.²²⁴ Given the preceding discussion, it should be clear that I do not subscribe to Frischer’s parodic interpretation of the *Ars*. In the interests of moving forward, therefore, I will now turn to the poem’s opening painting and will incorporate my observations on Frischer’s theories into the general discussion.

²²² Tait (1941: 106); D. Armstrong (1993: 226–229).

²²³ Frischer (1991: 74–85). It should perhaps be noted that Frischer (80–84) here points to the paintings and mosaics from “Horace’s Villa” near Licenza and suggests the possibility that if Horace did in fact own the villa, the art reveals a sharp distinction between the aesthetics of Horace and those of the speaker of the *Ars*. As Frischer himself has more recently noted, further examination has revealed that the artwork in question belongs to the Flavian period: Frischer (2010: 75).

²²⁴ Frischer (1991: 68–74).

2. Grotesque and Empty Dreams in the *Ars Poetica*

The poem begins straightforwardly, if obliquely, with a human head and a neck. The introduction of the *pictor* indicates that we may be looking at an artwork, and this is confirmed by the rest of the enjambed clause, particularly *equinam* which complicates the previously simple image of a human bust and takes us away into the realm of the imaginary. The delay of *si uelit* is extreme and echoes the disorienting conjunction of human head and horse's neck.²²⁵ This disorientation continues as the clause adds further disparate elements—feathers and otherwise unspecified limbs—and culminates in a black fish-tail and the revelation that the top half is a beautiful woman. If you were allowed to see this, the poet asks, would you be able to stifle your laughter?²²⁶

The absence of any context or prefatory remarks makes the painting ripe for interpretation. Yet despite the prominence of the painting, it becomes apparent that Horace's point is not about visual art: the painting is simply a convenient image for any artistic product. Horace's focus is literature:

credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum
persimilem, cuius, uelut aegri somnia, uanae
finguntur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
reddatur formae. (*Ars P.* 6–9)

Trust me, you Pisones, that just like that painting would be a book
whose features are rendered fantastic, like the dreams of a sick man,
so that neither foot nor head can be assigned back to a single form.

²²⁵ See also Brink (1971: 86); Johnson (2012: 245–246).

²²⁶ As I will discuss below in section 3, there is in fact no painting: not only is it a figment of Horace's poetic imagination, the phrase *iungere si uelit* indicates that even within the interior world of the poem, the painter has not yet actually painted the figure.

Both Niall Rudd and Andrew Laird render *cuius uanae fingentur species* as “whose features are conceived fantastically.”²²⁷ “Fantastic” is not a standard meaning of the adjective *uanus*,²²⁸ but in English it captures that which lacks substance and exists only in the realm of imagination. Moreover, “fantastic” has often been used synonymously with “grotesque” when describing precisely the sorts of images depicted in the painting that opens the poem. It therefore offers here a potentially useful translation for *uanus*, though it does not take us very far in understanding what Horace is getting at. Charles Brink explains that *species* works in a number of ways in this context: it belongs, as does *formae*, to the vocabulary of criticism in the sense of “subdivisions” or “constituent parts” and so embraces the constituent elements of both the book and the hybrid painting; it also refers to the visionary aspect of the dreams.²²⁹ In connection with the first sense of *species*, he glosses *uanae* as “incomplete, indeterminate, ineffectual”:²³⁰ a book put together in this way will be an artistic failure. At the same time and with reference to the second sense of *species*, he connects *uanae* with the insubstantial and false nature of the dreams in the brief simile.²³¹ Instances of *uanae species* can be multiplied, but in connection with dreams specifically, Brink himself draws attention to *Carm.* 3.27, where Europa wonders whether she is awake or deceived by an empty image (*uana imago* rather than *species*) which brings a dream from the ivory gate:

uigilansne ploro
turpe commissum an uitiiis carentem
ludit **imago**

²²⁷ Rudd (1989: 151); Laird (2007: 137).

²²⁸ Neither the *OLD* nor *Lewis & Short* offer such a meaning; unfortunately, the *ThLL* is yet to make it to v.

²²⁹ Brink (1971: 89).

²³⁰ See also *OLD* s.v. *uanus* §5, though this instance is not cited there; cf. Johnson (2012: 236) “if its concepts were formed without point.”

²³¹ Brink (1971: 90).

uana quae porta fugiens eburna
somnia ducit?

(*Carm.* 3.27.38–42)

Do I weep for a shameful crime while still awake, or does an empty
image deceive me, though I am free from fault, an image that in
flight from the ivory gate brings a dream?

Brink also cites Seneca *Constant.* 11.1, where great-mindedness overcomes insults: *illa* (sc. *magnanimitas*) *quidquid eiusmodi est transcurrit ut uanas species somniorum uisusque nocturnos nihil habentis solidi atque ueri* “Greatness of soul passes over any sort of insult just as if it were the empty images of dreams and nighttime visions with no substance or truth.” We can add as well the response of the crowd at the Isthmian games to the announcement that Philip and the Macedonians had been defeated by the Romans and that the Greeks were now free: *uix satis credere se quisque audisse, et alii alios intueri mirabundi uelut ad somni uanam speciem* “Each person scarcely enough believed that he had heard and they were looking at each other in amazement as if at the empty image of a dream” (Livy 33.32.7). In all these cases, the dream images lack substance, but more importantly they are false so that they somehow deceive the dreamer.²³² It is true, as will be discussed below, that according to some ancient authorities dreams are a product of the imagination and do not participate in reality—and thus in a sense are ‘false’. Yet deceptiveness *per se* is not really at issue for Horace. Nothing suggests that the viewer is led astray by the opening painting or the book, and Horace’s point is not that the work of art is deceptive, but that its pieces do not cohere as a whole: such is the force of the result clause in lines 8–9 which returns to corporeal imagery to stress explicitly a lack of unity. Just as the painting’s body is composed of bits from the diverse parts of the animal kingdom, so too will the parts of a

²³² We may also add another, arguably more famous, instance of the same idea—deceptive dream visions from the ivory gate—found at the end of book six of the *Aeneid*: *altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto, | sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes* “the other gate is shining and finished with white ivory, but the Manes send false dreams to the world above” (*Aen.* 6.895–896).

book whose *species* are *uanae* belong—from head to toe—to no single form. We should, therefore, be wary of introducing a secondary sense of *uanus* that belongs more properly to dreams than to art. And while I would not deny that the dreams at *Ars P.* 7 may be empty and false, Horace gives so little information about them that we should rather understand that the dream-simile, brief as it is, reflects the predominant idea in the passage, namely the need for unity.²³³

How, then, does the comparison with dreams work? The key detail here is the identification of the dreamer: the sick man. These are not just any old dreams, but fever dreams.²³⁴ The brevity of the simile suggests that “dreams of the sick” may have an almost proverbial force.²³⁵ The idea is found in a fragment of Varro’s *Eumenides*, from his *Menippean Satires*, preserved by Nonius Marcellus: *postremo nemo aegrotus quicquam somniat | tam infandum, quod non aliquis dicat philosophus* “Finally no sick man ever dreams anything so unspeakable that some philosopher wouldn’t say it” (Varro *Men.* 122[Astbury]).²³⁶ The barb is aimed at philosophers and the nonsense they speak, and a similar sentiment occurs in Cicero: *sed nescio quo modo nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum* “But somehow nothing can be said that is so irrational which would not be said by some philosopher” (Cic. *Div.* 2.119).²³⁷ Fever dreams, then, are incoherent nonsense. Yet Varro’s *infandum* may reveal something more about them: they may be, by nature, difficult (if not impossible) to express. Nonius Marcellus preserves

²³³ *contra* Frischer (1991: 69 and 73), who argues that the comparison with dreams indicates the need for verisimilitude in the artwork.

²³⁴ As Brink (1971: 90) and Rudd (1989: 151) both recognize.

²³⁵ Perraud (1978: 384).

²³⁶ A sentiment later reused by Persius (3.83): Reckford (1962: 496–497); Perraud (1978: 383–384).

²³⁷ See Cèbe (1977: 705), who cites the Ciceronian parallel and argues that the Varronian fragment belongs to the peroration of a cynic diatribe directed against contemporary philosophers for the benefit of the protagonist of the *Eumenides*.

this fragment in his section on *infans* (Non. 55.26–56.21), a word which, he explains, derives from *non fando* (55.26) and denotes that which either ought not or cannot be uttered (56.2). The Varronian fragment nicely captures this ambivalence: it implies that the sick man’s dream is so senseless that it cannot and should not be uttered aloud.

Varro does not explain the reason for this inexpressible absurdity. Aristotle’s *On Dreams* provides greater detail about the content of fever dreams. According to Aristotle, dreams are always “false” for they are not real perceptions but merely images (τὰ φαντάσματα) of perceptions. Imagination (ἡ φαντασία) and sense-perception (ἡ αἴσθησις), though distinct in function, belong to the same faculty; imagination is “the movement that happens when sense-perception is active” (ἡ ὑπὸ τῆς κατ’ ἐνέργειαν αἰσθήσεως γινομένη κίνησις), and dreaming seems to be an instance of such image-making (τὸ δ’ ἐνύπνιον φάντασμά τι φαίνεται εἶναι) (*Parv. nat.* 459a15–19). Dreaming, then, belongs to the imaginative function of the faculty of sense-perception (φανερὸν ὅτι τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐνυπνιάζειν, τούτου δ’ ἡ φανταστικόν, *Parv. nat.* 459a21–22). This is possible because sense-perception continues to produce sensation even once its object has gone (*Parv. nat.* 459a24–28), and the perceptions that remain are themselves perceptible (*Parv. nat.* 460b2–3). Moreover, in heightened emotional states (ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ὄντες) we are more likely to be deceived about our perceptions; as a result, on the basis of small likenesses to things previously perceived (and the greater the emotion, the less the required similarity), we will believe that we see the previously perceived but currently absent object of our emotion, e.g., a coward affected by fear will see his enemies or a lover in love will see his beloved (*Parv. nat.* 460b3–11). Just so does illness affect us: a sick man will imagine that the markings on his bedroom wall are living creatures—that is, the faint resemblance of the patterns on the wall will prompt him to imagine them as creatures he has previously seen—and if he is not especially ill, he may realize that this is

an illusion (ψεῦδος); if his illness is severe, however, the images may even seem to move (*Parv. nat.* 460b11–16). Aristotle explains that this happens because the faculty of judgment is not the same as that to which images present themselves (*Parv. nat.* 460b16–18). This amplifies his earlier observation that dreaming and sickness are connected, for “it is clear that the same thing by which during illness we are deceived when we are awake causes this very experience during sleep” (δῆλον δὲ ... ὅτι τὸ αὐτὸ ᾧ καὶ ἐγρηγορότερος ἐν ταῖς νόσοις ἀπατώμεθα, τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ποιεῖ τὸ πάθος, *Parv. nat.* 458b25–28). This affection is imagination (ἡ φαντασία) which is allowed to function unimpaired when the rational part of the mind—and our ability to judge—is out of action, as it is during sleep, illness, and heightened emotional states.²³⁸ During sleep, then, the lingering impressions of actual perceptions are even more vivid, for at that time the senses are inactive and cause no movements of their own by which the movements of these residual impressions may be obscured; furthermore the body’s heat converges in the seat of sense-perception bringing these impressions with it (*Parv. nat.* 460b28–461a7). However, as the level of heat in the body increases, so too does the internal movement, and the greater the internal movement, the more these impressions become distorted, just like reflections on the surface of water; this can lead to no dreams at all because the images are completely destroyed, but oftentimes the images appear confused and monstrous (ὅτε δὲ τετραγμένα φαίνονται αἱ ὄψεις καὶ τερατώδεις) and just so are the dreams of persons suffering fevers (πυρέττουσι), as are those of the atrabilious and drunk (*Parv. nat.* 461a11–25).

The dreams of sick men, then, are images that have been distorted and have become monstrous. Aristotle does not comment explicitly on so-called “dream logic”—the rapid and seemingly illogical shifts of circumstance that dreams sometimes exhibit and that make them

²³⁸ See Wijsenbeek-Wijler (1978: 222–223).

structurally or compositionally ‘unsound’. We may, however, conjecture that he would assign this phenomenon precisely to the collision of images during sleep: as the images move and come into contact with each other, and as they are then received by the faculty of perception, the mind puts them together.²³⁹ Dream logic of this sort is often cited as the basis for Horace’s comparison with the book.²⁴⁰ If we presume that the comparison pertains to the book’s structure, then this must be correct, for the simile is contained within the relative clause describing the book, and the parts of a book may transition with little connection or logic. At the same time, however, Horace goes on to argue that a poem must also cohere in its content, such as diction and character. In this regard, dream logic does not provide as satisfactory an explanation for the comparison of the book to dreams. Importantly, though, the simile forms part of a double comparison: if the painting equals the book, and the book equals the dreams, *ipso facto* the painting equals the dreams. That being so, I suggest that we are right to identify in the painting the kind of confused and inexpressible monstrosity characteristic of the *aegri somnia*. Conversely, there is something monstrous about the book whose parts—elements both of structure and of content—are so confusedly put together and thus produce something meaningless. In thus connecting this sort of hybrid, fantastic image to dreams, Horace anticipates the Renaissance artists and theorists who saw in the fantastic images of their own *grottesche* the *sogni dei pittori*: the dreams of painters.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Cf. Lucretius *DRN* 4.768–776, 788–801, and 818–821, where the poet explains movement in dreams as the rapid succession of *simulacra* that creates the appearance of gesture (precisely in the manner of a flipbook or, indeed, a movie). The succession of *simulacra* which are unrelated but which memory (because it is asleep) does not recognize as being unrelated would generate “dream logic.”

²⁴⁰ See e.g., Brink (1971: 90).

²⁴¹ Kayser (1963: 21–22 and 180); Rosen (1991: 14–15); Harpham (2006: xxiv).

3. Imaginary and Impossible Hybridity in the *Ars*

I have touched on the inexpressibility of *aegri somnia* specifically. More generally, dreams are notoriously difficult to narrate: what was so vivid at the time regularly becomes a hazy shadow in wakefulness. The painting has also proven difficult to describe.²⁴² Are the feathers—*uarias plumas*—multi-coloured or from different birds, and do they cover all the limbs or just the body and wings, if there are wings? Is the torso, like the neck, equine or does *superne* indicate that the creature is a woman ‘from the waist up’?²⁴³ At first glance, this looks to be a classic case of the ecphrastic dilemma: whereas visual art can depict a figure or moment frozen in time for the viewer to take in as a unified whole, literature is by nature sequential and so can only reveal to the reader individual elements at a time so that the whole is never perceived *as a whole*. But the dilemma is easily solved. I have remarked already that the painting occupies the protasis of a future-less-vivid condition, a construction that keeps open the possibility of fulfilment, but ultimately holds it in suspense. This means that Horace does not describe a finished product. Just like dreams, which are φαντάσματα and so exist only in the mind, the painting does not actually exist.²⁴⁴ Horace emphasizes this lack of realisation through his verb choice in the protasis. Horace describes the painter, like the reader, only imagining how he will put together this monster: *pictor ... iungere si uelit*. This is in keeping with a point I made above in section 1d that the *Ars* is written as if in advance of any actual artistic production, i.e., when the enterprise remains simply an idea.

²⁴² Cf. Johnson (2012: 242–246), who argues that Horace’s description, particularly his use of the particles *si* and *ut*, makes the passage as difficult to construe as the painting is to imagine.

²⁴³ Or from the neck up: Oliensis (2009: 453), citing Brink (1971: 86) and Rudd (1989: 150), who both suggest that *mulier* explains or reveals that the head is female.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Johnson (2012: 239–240), who essentially argues that this is a “notional” ecphrasis since “[a]s a painting in hard form it never existed,” a fact which collapses the role of poet into painter, reader into viewer. Elsewhere (245) he notes that the conditional construction renders both the “painter and painting nothing more than [Horace’s] fantasy projected before his audience.”

Just as the young Pisones have not yet started to write (perhaps, we may imagine, have only indicated what they may want to write about or in what genre), so too has the painter not yet actually painted anything. This would also help explain the potential shift from what appears at first to be some sort of (more often male) centaur into a pegasus (also male) and then into an explicitly female mermaid/scylla-type figure.²⁴⁵ It is as if the painter is reconfiguring the image in his mind as he goes.²⁴⁶ Horace is not describing something real but rather a sequence of images that the painter wants to put together but which have not previously been and, for Horace, *cannot* be put together.²⁴⁷ The evanescence of the image and its confused form map directly onto the fleeting, distorted, and monstrous fever dreams. Both are ultimately a confused sort of nothing and therefore connect to the putative book whose parts are rendered little more than messy ideas—so messy in fact that just like the painting its head and foot (that is, its beginning and end) do not belong to a single entity: *ut nec pes nec caput uni | reddatur formae* (*Ars P.* 8–9). There is no unified reality to which the parts can be restored.

In connection with this imaginary quality, it is worth noting Lucretius’ discussion of hybrid creatures. Lucretius explains that such monsters are impossible both physically and biologically: physically, because atoms only fit together certain ways (*DRN* 2.700–709), and

²⁴⁵ I say “more often” male for the centaur since Lucian tells of a painting by Zeuxis of a centaur “family” which included a female and two infants (*Zeux.* 3–4), though Lucian includes this among Zeuxis’ “daring” paintings (ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις τολμήμασι, *Zeux.* 3.7); cf. Johnson (2012: 238–239), who argues that the centaur is “a symbol of masculine virility and eroticism.”

²⁴⁶ Cf. Oliensis (2009: 453): “Rhetorically if not syntactically, Horace’s pictured mermaid displaces the centaur-like figure of the opening lines.” Johnson (2012: 238): “He chooses a mythological theme and paints two very common and intelligible characters: a modified centaur and nymph. ... The result, however, prompts more than just a few poorly suppressed sniggers ... because the artist has not painted two separate characters, but somehow combined them into one.”

²⁴⁷ I am put in mind of a talk by Verity Platt, “Writing Between ‘The Lines’: Narratives of Making in Pliny’s *Natural History*” April 2, 2014, Harvard University, in which she argued that the Elder Pliny’s account of the painting of lines drawn in succession by Apelles and Protogenes so fine that they escaped vision and which was later destroyed by fire was written deliberately in such a way that the description of the lines, which themselves escaped vision (*lineas visum effugientes*), itself prevents the reader from visualizing the now gone painting.

biologically, because the constituent elements, e.g., horse and man, develop and mature at different rates (*DRN* 5.878–924).²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, we imagine such creatures. This is due to fine likenesses (*tenuia simulacra*) that move everywhere through the air and then enter the body through the pores and rouse the mind (*DRN* 4.724–731). In some cases, these *simulacra* of otherwise unreal things are produced *sua sponte* in the air itself (*DRN* 4.734). In the case of hybrid creatures, such as centaurs and Scylla, although such monsters have never existed (*nam certe ex uiuo Centauri non fit imago*, *DRN* 4.739), the likenesses of the individual elements of each creature (e.g., of a man and of a horse in the case of a centaur) encounter each other in the air and fuse easily due to their fine texture (*DRN* 4.732–744). Lucretius’ discussion certainly focuses on established types—centaurs, chimaeras, scyllas—but is general enough to allow other monsters of this sort, i.e., hybrid (*cetera de genere hoc eadem ratione creantur*, *DRN* 4.744). Lucretius, then, does not rule such monsters out of bounds as objects of thought and perception: despite their inability to exist as real entities, he does not reject *the idea* of hybrid creatures on any particular aesthetic basis, including disorderliness or lack of unity. In fact, it is precisely *as thoughts* that they not only *can* exist, but do so naturally since their substance as *tenuia simulacra* lends itself to such amalgams. Horace seems to have no issue with the established monsters.²⁴⁹ Scylla is

²⁴⁸ Cf. *DRN* 5.837–848 where the poet explains that Earth tried to create all sorts of monstrous creatures (*portenta, monstra*), but they could not feed or reproduce and so died.

²⁴⁹ This undermines the suggestion of a number of scholars that verisimilitude is also key to understanding Horace’s opening painting. Citroni (2009: 19–20) states that the “portentous figure is rejected more on account of its inconsistency than its lack of reality,” but goes on to suggest that “the reference point, and the norm for the unity and consistency of a work of art is nature” and “it follows that in a work of art, the inconsistency among the parts tends to coincide with its distance from natural reality.” See also Frischer (1991: 69 and 85). Here I suspect that some have been led astray by the superficial similarities of Horace’s feathery mermaid to the late Second-Style wall paintings condemned by Vitruvius. Vitruvius’ censure is explicitly grounded in a firmly held belief that decorative painting should represent what is real or at least possible (*De arch.* 7.5.3–4), though this seems to include mythological scenes (*De arch.* 7.5.2). Although animal-human hybridity is common to both wall painting and Horace’s image, the latter lacks the architectural and vegetal elements found in both the archaeological record and Vitruvius. Indeed, so far as I am aware, no image quite like Horace’s has been found. (So too the results of Frischer’s survey [1991: 85], though Frischer rejects the lack of correspondence on the basis that none should be expected, since there is little overlap in the details of these paintings.)

mentioned in line 145 of the *Ars* among other monsters from the *Odyssey*; the Harpies are taken as a type for gluttony without further detail (*Harpyiis gula digna rapacibus*, *Sat.* 2.2.40); and centaurs occur without description on three other occasions in Horace's poetry: the battle with the Lapiths is *Centaurea rixa* (*Carm.* 1.18.8), the heroes who take part in that battle are those "at whose hands the Centaurs fell by a righteous death" (*per quos cecidere iusta | morte Centauri*, *Carm.* 4.2.14–15),²⁵⁰ and Chiron is *nobilis Centaurus* (*Epod.* 13.11). Although Horace's painting has been connected with such established hybrid creatures from art and literature, especially scyllas, Horace's description is precisely not any of these creatures because they are unified wholes.²⁵¹ Because of their well-established pedigree in mythical narratives, by the Augustan period these monsters have sufficiently settled identities that their names produce a single image and Horace can invoke them without any categorical confusion. In other words, despite their hybridity these monsters are not actually grotesque. Horace's painting, on the other hand, has no such settled identity. In its combination of hybridity, dreams, sickness, the transgression of gender boundaries, we can see elements that are often identified as participating in the grotesque. Yet Horace here seems to reject such new combinations as amounting to nothing.²⁵²

It is precisely at this point that Horace imagines an objection: *pictoribus atque poetis | quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas* "painters and poets have always had equal licence to

²⁵⁰ Thomas (2011: 109) suggests also a reference to Heracles' conflicts with centaurs, for which see e.g., Theoc. *Id.* 17.20: Ἡρακλῆος ἔδρα κενταυροφόνου.

²⁵¹ Brink (1971: 85); Oliensis (2009: 453); Johnson (2012: 238–239) all suggest Scylla, though see Frischer (1991: 84–85), who concludes that the painting is not a Scylla on the formal grounds that it lacks canine protomes around the waist.

²⁵² See Frischer (1991: 85), arguing that this is evidence of the persona's lack of connection with contemporary taste since just this sort of new *Mischwesen* were in vogue in decorative art at the time.

dare whatever they like” (*Ars P.* 9–10). Horace readily concedes this point as both poet and critic, but he urges restraint:

scimus, et hanc ueniam petimusque damusque uicissim
sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
serpentes auibus gementur, tigribus agni. (*Ars P.* 11–13)²⁵³

We know, and we both seek this licence and grant it in turn but not
so that ungentle things come together with peaceful things, not so
that snakes are paired with birds, lambs with tigers.

This translation reflects *coire* in its most basic sense. At the same time, the subject *immitia* may hint at the more aggressive sense of the verb and thereby suggest the violence of the (attempted) composition.²⁵⁴ Rudd also detects in the verb a sexual metaphor which, with the inter-species pairings that follow, points to a violation of nature.²⁵⁵ Such violation is clear from Horace’s use of very similar examples in *Epode* 16 in which the speaker lists as examples of ἀδύνατα unnatural events—including rocks floating to the surface of the sea, the Po flowing uphill, the Apennines rushing to the sea—that must occur before a return to Rome is no longer a *nefas*:

sed iuremus in haec: simul imis saxa renarint
uadis leuata, ne redire sit nefas;
neu conuersa domum pigeat dare lintea, quando
Padus Matina lauerit cacumina,
in mare seu celsus procurrerit Appenninus
nouaque monstra iunxerit libidine
mirus amor, iuuat ut tigris subsidere ceruis,
adulteretur et columba miluo,
credula nec rauos timeant armenta leones
ametque salsa leuis hircus aequora. (*Epod.* 16.25–34)

But let us swear to this: that it not be a crime to return as soon as
rocks floating up from the deepest ocean swim on the surface; nor
should it irk us to turn our sails homeward and set out, once the Po
washes the Apulian peaks, or the Apennines rush from on high into

²⁵³ Ps.-Acro suggests that *petimus* denotes the poets, *damus* the critics.

²⁵⁴ See e.g., *OLD* s.v. *coeo* §1c, normally construed with *in* + accusative.

²⁵⁵ Rudd (1989: 152).

the sea and an unnatural love has joined monsters together with a strange lust, so that it is pleasing for tigers to settle down with deer, and the dove commits adultery with the kite, and the trusting herds do not fear the tawny lions and the goat, now smooth, desires the briny seas.

Tigers and birds are common to both passages, cited as examples of the *immitia* and *placida* of the *Ars*. In *Epode* 16, however, the coupling of animals is in explicitly sexual terms: a marvellous love (*amor*) joins together *monstra* by means of a strange passion (*libido*). The specific examples—tigers and deer, doves and kites—follow this lead: *iuuet* suggests sexual gratification and *adulteretur* denotes sexual transgression. Interestingly, the final ἁδύνατον in which a smooth goat ‘loves’ the briny sea resembles the prodigiously varied art of *Ars P.* 29–30 where a dolphin is depicted in the forest and a boar in the waves (discussed further below in section 4). The similarity of the ἁδύνατα from *Epode* 16 to the examples of flawed artworks in the *Ars* marks just how interrelated content and composition are and how the attempt to force incompatible elements together is bound to result in failure.

The designation of these animal ἁδύνατα in *Epode* 16 as *monstra* is important.²⁵⁶ Besides these, there are few *monstra* in Horace.²⁵⁷ Non-descript sea monsters are a potential source of terror at *Carm.* 1.3.18, and Cleopatra is *fatale monstrum* at *Carm.* 1.37.21. The term is used at *Carm.* 3.4.73 of Earth’s children, the Giants, but again Horace provides no physical descriptions. A distraught Europa refers to the bull as a *monstrum* at *Carm.* 3.27.48 as she imagines breaking off its horns. Horace imagines the dying Hasdrubal remarking that Rome is a greater force than the Hydra or any *monstrum* produced by Colchis or Thebes (*Carm.* 4.4.61–64). While these

²⁵⁶ The word *monstrum* was etymologically linked by the Romans themselves with both *monere* “to warn” and *monstrare* “to point out”; for a recent discussion of *monstrum* and its meanings, see Lowe (2015: 8–14).

²⁵⁷ There are no *prodigia* and three *portenta*: a wolf (*Carm.* 1.22.13), the creatures killed by Hercules (*Epist.* 2.1.11), and odd Thessalian phenomena (*Epist.* 2.2.209).

examples from the *Odes* tend simply to cash in on the underlying ominousness or terror of the word *monstrum* without further discussion of what—including their physiognomies—exactly makes them monstrous, of greatest interest for this study are the *monstra* characteristic of the flood survived by Pyrrha (*Carm.* 1.2.6). The poet enumerates these *monstra*, and as with both *Epode* 16 and the *Ars*, one subset involves the location of animals outside their native habitat: Proteus’ *pecus* on lofty mountains, fish stuck in the tops of elm trees, deer swimming in the sea (*Carm.* 1.2.7–12). I will discuss this poem—the way the tonal dissonance generated by the explicit fear (*terrui*) of potential cataclysm and the comic absurdity of the details are fused into a single unity to generate the grotesque—at greater length in Chapter 4, section 1. At this point it is enough to note that for Horace events or phenomena contrary to nature deserve the label *monstra*. The resemblance of these ‘real-world’ *monstra* to certain examples of artistic failure found in the *Ars* suggests that this term might be applied to those examples, including the opening painting. Indeed, the application of the term *monstrum* would neatly confirm the connection between the painting and Aristotle’s account of fever dreams as “confused and monstrous visions” (τεταραγμέναι ... αἱ ὄψεις καὶ τερατώδεις, *Parv. Nat.* 461a21–22). Horace, however, does not use the term in the *Ars* itself, and the anticipated response to the painting—laughter—does not quite match the expected response to a *monstrum*. Indeed, with regard to laughing at *monstra* we can compare the poet’s inquiry, after a long discussion of avarice, whether Florus is free from all other vices, including superstitious fears of things that might otherwise be termed *monstra*: *somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,* | *nocturnos lemures portentaque Thessala rides* “Do you laugh at dreams, magical terrors, marvels, witches, nighttime boogeymen, and Thessalian portents?” (*Epist.* 2.2.208–209). The point here is that the wise man understands the emptiness of such fears and so transcends them and laughs at

these things (which he knows are not real).²⁵⁸ Laughing, then, is evidence that one recognizes the hollowness, the nothingness of the object. In the case of the artworks, that nothingness belongs not to what is represented, but to the representation itself and its lack of internal coherence. As the examples from *Epode* 16 and *Ode* 1.2 make clear, if the representations were real and not just figments of an artistic imagination, that would signal a fundamental breach of the natural order. But in art it merely indicates the artist's failure. As an attempted violation of the limited artistic licence Horace grants to poets and painters, the painting is just such an artistic failure. The laughter, as Horace will make clear and as I will discuss in the next section, though provoked by the failed artwork, is in fact directed at the artist himself.²⁵⁹

4. Unity of Content and Form

Horace's limitation of artistic licence recapitulates the need signalled by *una forma* in lines 8–9. According to Horace, in order to be successful a piece of poetry—and, we can infer, any work of art—must be unified: *denique sit quiduis, simplex dumtaxat et unum* “In sum, whatever it may be, let it at least be simple and unified” (*Ars P.* 23). This is significant since, as I outlined in the introduction, the true grotesque should also be a unity: if its disparate elements are separable, the aesthetic dissonance the work generates will resolve. Horace demonstrates this need for unity both in relation to literature and also by returning to the analogy with visual art. A so-called purple passage or two is stitched onto ambitious (probably epic) verses:

inceptis grauibz plerumque et magna professis
 purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter
 adsuitur pannus

(*Ars P.* 14–16)

²⁵⁸ See also Brink (1982: 404); cf. Lucretius' explanation of why monsters cannot exist (discussed above in section 3). He even notes that people in underpopulated regions invent *monstra* for attention (*DRN* 4.590–594).

²⁵⁹ Oliensis (2009: 454–455), uniquely, suggests that the giggles are prompted not only by the incoherence of the painting “but also by the sight of the genital fishtail it exposes to view.”

Onto works which, for the most part, are weighty and expound great things is stitched one purple patch and another, in order to shine forth far and wide.

Such passages would include an elaborate *topothesia* (*Ars P.* 16–18), but for Horace these are (punningly) out of place: *sed nunc non erat his locus* (*Ars P.* 19).²⁶⁰ Horace—or more accurately the persona—has been accused of his own inconsistency in this section since he “condemns” *descriptiones* in other works but opens his own poem with one.²⁶¹ But this criticism misses the point of Horace’s censure here: the objection is that such passages are merely “stitched on” (*adsuitur*) rather than integrated properly into the work,²⁶² and they seem not thematically germane to the works into which they are inserted.²⁶³ This is borne out in the subsequent examples: it is no good being able to paint a cypress if someone wants a scene of a sailor swimming for his life after a shipwreck (*Ars P.* 19–21), and why, the poet asks, does pottery that began as an amphora come off the wheel as a pitcher (*Ars P.* 21–22)? As Rudd notes, “an incompetent craftsman lacks control of form. But when an object’s form changes, its name and function may change too.”²⁶⁴ In other words, it stops being what it was supposed to be. This is true of artworks into which extraneous elements are deliberately inserted for the sake of variety: *qui uariare cupit rem prodigialiter unam, | delphinum siluis adpingit, fluctibus aprum* “One who wants to introduce prodigious variety into a unified work paints a dolphin into a woodland scene or a boar in the waves” (*Ars P.* 29–30). Introducing variety does not necessarily spoil the work; Horace includes this among potential artistic virtues while in pursuit of which poets often go wrong: *maxima pars uatum ... decipimur*

²⁶⁰ See also Laird (2007: 139). There is arguably a different pun in the Latin on *lucus-locus*.

²⁶¹ Frischer (1991: 73).

²⁶² D. Armstrong (1993: 227).

²⁶³ Brink (1971: 93–95).

²⁶⁴ Rudd (1989: 153); see also Brink (1971: 101–102).

specie recti “the majority of us poets are led astray by the appearance of what is proper” (*Ars P.* 24–25). The key term here is *prodigialiter*. Brink detects an ambivalence in the word, accepting both the pseudoacronian gloss *admirabiliter* and the more negative sense of ‘monstrously’.²⁶⁵ The ambivalence can be resolved, however, if the reader assigns the positive implications to the artist and the negative implications to Horace. For as Horace notes, just as striving to get the work right can go wrong, so too can the attempt to avoid mistakes lead to a flawed piece of work if the artist lacks *ars*: *in uitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte* “the avoidance of fault leads to flaws if one lacks skill” (*Ars P.* 31).²⁶⁶ The flaw here is a lack of unity within the artwork.

This lack of *ars* leads Horace to cite an example, again from the visual arts:

Aemilium circa ludum faber unus et unguis
 exprimet et mollis imitabitur aere capillos,
 infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum
 nesciet. hunc ego me, si quid componere curem,
 non magis esse uelim quam naso uiuere prauo
 spectandum nigris oculis nigroque capillo. (*Ars P.* 32–37)

A particular craftsman,²⁶⁷ based near the gladiatorial school of Aemilius, will mould fingernails and will imitate soft hair in bronze, but because he does not know how to put a whole figure together, the overall effect of the work is unsuccessful. I would no more want to be like this man than I would want to live as a spectacle with a crooked nose, and black eyes and hair.

The body parts here are exclusively human, but nevertheless return the reader to the corporal imagery of the opening painting. Moreover, as with the painting, the reader is here left with a vivid view of certain elements of the sculpture—namely, the hair and nails—but an otherwise murky impression of the overall work, emphasizing the artist’s failure. Finally, Horace equates the

²⁶⁵ Brink (1971: 114): “likely to be right.”

²⁶⁶ See also Russell (2006: 329).

²⁶⁷ Accepting the arguments of Brink (1971: 118) for Bentley’s reading of *unus* for *imus*; for arguments to the contrary, see Rudd (1989: 155).

sculptor—that is, a failed artist—with a man with a crooked nose. Such facial deformity was ripe for ridicule in the ancient world and is cited as a prime example of what could be ‘funny’:²⁶⁸ Aristotle remarks that the laughable (γελοῖον) is part of the shameful/ugly (αἰσχρόν), though without the element of pain (*Poet.* 1449a32–37), and Cicero states that the *ridiculum* is bounded by a kind of unseemliness and ugliness (*turpitudine et deformitate quadam continetur*) and we laugh when this is pointed out in a seemly way (*De Or.* 2.236). So if Horace were to have a crooked nose, he would be an object of others’ ridicule, and his equation of the sculptor with just such an object indicates that the former’s artistic failure implicitly produces the same reaction explicitly anticipated as a response to the poem’s opening painting: derisive laughter.²⁶⁹ Moreover, this example makes it clear that the laughter provoked by the painting is directed at the painter. This is confirmed later by those who make the same mistake over and over:²⁷⁰

ut scriptor si peccat idem librarius usque,
 quamvis est monitus, uenia caret; ut citharoedus
 ridetur chorda qui semper oberrat eadem;
 sic mihi qui multum cessat fit Choerilus ille,
 quem bis terue bonum cum risu miror (Ars P. 354–358)

Just as a copyist, if he makes the same mistake, despite being warned, is without excuse; just as a cithara player who always messes up the same chord is laughed at; so too, in my view, does the type who blunders a lot become a Choerilus whom I marvel at with a laugh on the two or three occasions he is any good.

²⁶⁸ Garland (2010: 74); see also Clarke (2007: 17–19, 44–49).

²⁶⁹ Johnson (2012: 240–241) sees a more fundamental conflation of artist-artwork-poet as, in essence, a single object of laughter.

²⁷⁰ See also *Epist.* 2.2.106, where those who compose *mala carmina* are the butt of laughter.

The cithara player is laughed at; conversely, the poet who repeatedly blunders becomes another Choerilus who provokes a laugh when he unexpectedly does something good.²⁷¹

Technical proficiency, then, is important, but so too is *ingenium*, for the need for an internally unified and complete work of art means the artist must be up to the whole task that has been undertaken.²⁷² Horace summarizes:

sumite materiam uestris, qui scribitis, aequam
uiribus et uersate diu quid ferre recusent,
quid ualeant umeri. cui lecta potenter erit res,
nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo. (Ars P. 38–41)

Take up subject matter that is equal to your abilities, when you write, and consider for a long time the sort of thing your shoulders may refuse to bear and what they can. The one whose subject has been chosen effectively will want for neither fluency nor clarity of organization.

This is a version of the Elder Cato's *rem tene, uerba sequentur*, but Horace is more circumspect and the reference to *ordo* is in keeping with his emphasis on proper composition and its relationship to content. Indeed, *ordo* helps explain the deficiency shared by the sculpture and the earlier, monstrous works: while content is important and some things should not be put together, unity—and therefore artistic success—depends as much on how the elements are put together. This focus on joining together begins with the painting itself and the verb *iungere* in line 2.²⁷³ I noted above that the painting remains unrealized: it is just the painter's wish. This suggests that there is no way to join these particular elements together in an artistically satisfying way: the various limbs are simply gathered together (*collatis membris*, Ars P. 3). Furthermore, Horace explicitly ties

²⁷¹ On Choerilus, cf. *Epist.* 2.1.232–244, where Alexander the Great's literary judgment is brought into question due to his preference for Choerilus' verses which are *inculti* and *male nati*. As Rudd notes (1989: 208), *Choerilus ille* suggests a certain notoriety.

²⁷² See also Oberhelman-Armstrong (1995: 250–251).

²⁷³ D. Armstrong (1993: 227).

composition to content when he claims that *ordo* is most successful when the poet says only what is necessary at the given moment and leaves out what is extraneous:

ordinis haec uirtus erit et uenus, aut ego fallor,
ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici,
pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat,
hoc amet, hoc spernat promissi carminis auctor. (*Ars P.* 42–45)²⁷⁴

This will be the excellence and charm of organization, unless I am wrong, that an author of the promised poem at the very moment says what needs to be said at that very moment, setting aside and leaving out most in the present moment, loving this and rejecting that.

This focus on the right word at the right moment leads smoothly into Horace's next point about diction, a point which returns the reader to the artist's licence to invent. One way to "invent" on the level of diction is the *callida iunctura* that renders an otherwise familiar word *nouum*:

in uerbis etiam tenuis cautusque serendis
dixeris egregie, notum si callida uerbum
reddiderit iunctura nouum. (*Ars P.* 46–48)

By being delicate and careful about the way you sow your words, you should speak excellently, if a clever collocation renders a familiar word novel.

One can, therefore, use established words together to say something new. When, however, it is necessary to reveal hidden matters with new terms (*indiciis recentibus*, *Ars P.* 49), there will be opportunity to fashion words previously unheard (*fingere non exaudita*, *Ars P.* 50) and such licence will be granted so long as it is exercised modestly: *dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter* (*Ars P.* 51). He suggests that these new words will gain acceptance if they derive—again, sparingly—from Greek: *et noua fictaque nuper habebunt uerba fidem, si | Graeco fonte cadent parce detorta* (*Ars P.* 52–53). Horace explicitly endorses this licence in the following lines, wondering why Caecilius and Plautus, Cato and Ennius were allowed to enrich Latin with new words, but not Varius, Virgil,

²⁷⁴ Following Rudd, who retains the mss' order of lines 45 and 46.

and himself (*Ars P.* 53–58).²⁷⁵ Just as everything changes and dies, so too do words (*Ars P.* 60–73). Horace states the principle thus: *licuit semperque licebit | signatum praesente nota producere nomen* “It has always been and will always be possible to bring forth a word sealed with today’s stamp” (*Ars P.* 58–59). The recurrence of *finger* ties this section closely to the poem’s opening. Whereas there the parts of a book were rendered meaningless by improper composition, here the artistic effect is not only permitted, but actually achieved (*ficta*). So, even on the level of diction Horace allows for new creations, but only within prescribed limits and he ties this invention closely to the proper conjunction of elements.

Such proper conjunction includes that between (metrical) form and content, as Horace goes on to outline (*Ars P.* 73–92), and failure to maintain such generic distinctions throws into question a person’s claim to being a poet: *descriptas seruire uices operumque colores | cur ego si nequeo ignoroque poeta salutor?* “If I cannot or don’t know how to adhere to the differences and styles of works as set out, why am I greeted as a poet?” (*Ars P.* 86–87). Appropriateness is key: *singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem* “let each individual element hold its **fitting** position as assigned by lot” (*Ars P.* 92). Nevertheless, each genre will from time to time borrow from another: the comic father Chremes will express his anger *tumido ore* (*Ars P.* 94), while the tragic figures Telephus or Peleus will grieve in prosaic language (*dolet sermone pedestri*) once they have fallen into poverty and exile (*Ars P.* 95–98). Horace returns to Telephus and Peleus in demonstrating the result of poorly chosen words:

si uis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi: tum tua me infortunia laedent,
Telephe uel Peleu; male si mandata loqueris,
aut dormitabo aut ridebo (Ars P. 102–105)

²⁷⁵ Cf. the opening section of *Epist.* 2.1 and Horace’s critique of Rome’s veneration for what is old, discussed above; see Oliensis (2009: 468–469) on the social implications of these lines.

If you want me to weep, you yourself must first suffer something lamentable: then your misfortunes will hurt me, Telephus or Peleus; if you speak words that are poorly chosen, I will either fall asleep or laugh.

If tragic characters do not speak appropriately, the audience will fall asleep or laugh. Horace repeats this sentiment not ten lines later: *si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta, | Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum* “if the words of the speaker are out of sorts with his fortunes, the Romans, rich and poor alike, will raise a laugh” (*Ars P.* 112–113). The artistic failure consequent to the use of diction that is out of keeping is marked by the same reaction as that prompted by the opening painting: laughter. In both cases, the laughter is prompted by the lack of fit, by the way the pieces of the whole do not cohere properly.

As noted already, for Horace, the key to avoiding such artistic missteps is to find what is appropriate to the moment, an articulation of the principle of τὸ πρέπον or *decorum*.²⁷⁶ Horace explores this more fully in the middle section of the poem which deals with drama, where he encourages his addressees to take time matching traits to the characters:

ne forte seniles
mandentur iuueni partes pueroque uirile,
semper in adiunctis aeuoque moraberis aptis (*Ars P.* 176–178)²⁷⁷

To avoid giving to young men the characteristics of old men or to a boy those of a grown up, you will always linger on traits properly suited to the character’s age.

From general elements of character, Horace moves to other considerations in the construction of drama, including his discussion of diction. He states that satyr plays evolved from tragedy when the playwright tried a joke without sacrificing his tragic dignity (*Ars P.* 221–222). In the case of

²⁷⁶ On the shifting idea of *decorum* for Horace, see Brink (1971: 463–464).

²⁷⁷ Following Rudd rather than Brink, who reads *morabimur*, and suspects the line.

satyrs, he goes on, it is better to change serious language into joking (*uertere seria ludo*, *Ars P.* 226),²⁷⁸ whereas no god or hero recently seen in purple and gold should make his way to a dimly lit hut with lowly speech (*humili sermone*, *Ars P.* 229). Tragedy does not deserve to “prattle” (*effutire*) throwaway verses—that is, descend to the realm of comedy—but it may interact a little (*intererit paulum*) with satyr drama (*Ars P.* 231–233). Satyr plays should cleave to a middle way between unadorned and established terms and tragic quality:²⁷⁹

non ego inornata et dominantia nomina solum
uerbaque, Pisones, satyrorum scriptor amabo
nec sic enitar tragico differre colori (Ars P. 234–236)

Pisones, as a writer of Satyr plays I will not use plain and established terms and words exclusively, nor will I strive so to depart from tragic style.

Although it is created from familiar material, Horace’s poem cannot be replicated, such is the power of his ordering and combination, i.e., his style:²⁸⁰

ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quiuis
speret idem, sudet multum frustraue laboret
ausus idem; tantum series iuncturaque pollet
tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris (Ars P. 240–243)

I will pursue a poem composed from the familiar, so that anyone may hope for his own part to do the same, may sweat a lot and toil in vain in daring the same; ordering and combination have that much power, that much value accrues to things taken from the middle.

Horace, then, is making a similar assertion on the level of style to the one he makes earlier on the level of diction: just as new meanings can be created from familiar words through a *callida*

²⁷⁸ As Oliensis (2009: 459) notes, this is the one aesthetically sanctioned instance of laughter in the *Ars*.

²⁷⁹ See also Russell (2006: 334–335).

²⁸⁰ Brink (1971: 288); Rudd (1989: 190).

iunctura, so too can a new poem be fashioned from previous material through arrangement—and we may note also the repetition of the participle *fictum* to indicate the success.

As Brink remarks, Ps.-Acro's note that *ex noto* indicates Horace is discussing subject matter has led others to miss that the point here is in fact about style.²⁸¹ This is true, and it is certainly the case that *ex noto* here picks up *notum uerbum* in line 47. At the same time, however, the reference to "the familiar" glances back to lines 119–120 where Horace instructs the prospective poet to fashion (*fingere*, again) new stories that are internally consistent or to follow the established tradition: *aut famam sequere aut sibi conuenientia finge | scriptor* "as a writer either follow a traditional story or fashion elements that fit together" (*Ars P.* 119–120).²⁸² Later he advises adopting Greek models on stylistic grounds (*Ars P.* 268–269)²⁸³ because Roman ones exhibit insufficient workmanship, especially metrically—a point he returns to when he remarks that Rome's lack of literary success is due to Roman poets' dislike for polishing their poems (*Ars P.* 289–291). Again, although Horace does not say so expressly, these Greek models will also furnish the traditional material (*fama*) for young poets to follow and upon which they can exert their stylistic creativity. For it is impossible to divorce the content of a story from its specific treatment. Moreover, in an environment that has embraced Alexandrian scholarly polemic in poetry, the choice of which tradition to follow becomes all the more important so that Horace's *famam sequere* is more loaded than it may at first appear. Finally, it is important to observe that the alternative to the *fama* is to create new poems whose parts all fit together (*sibi conuenientia*)

²⁸¹ Brink (1971: 288), citing Ps.-Acro on *Ars P.* 240: *id est fingam carmen quod ex nota possit esse materia* "that is, 'I will compose a poem which can exist from familiar material'."

²⁸² Brink (1971: 197–198); Rudd (1989: 169); Laird (2007: 141) connects these lines with lines 147–152, where Horace recounts Homer's technique, including telling lies that thus mix together with the truth to ensure all the parts of the story cohere.

²⁸³ Though not slavishly imitating them: Russell (1979: 1), citing *Ars P.* 132–134; cf. Scodel (1987: esp. 213–215).

in just the way that the works at the beginning of the poem fail to do. We find, therefore, a system of intersections between proper workmanship, the development of new material (from Greek originals in particular), and the avoidance of artistic failure.

Horace, then, repeatedly ties artistic failure very closely to a lack of *ars* which manifests as an inability to recognize what elements can and should be fitted together, regularly resulting in derisive laughter. It is in that context that we must understand the opening painting. Horace seems to reject out of hand any potential value of the aesthetic dissonance inherent in works that strive to yoke together incompatible elements, the dissonance that most theorists agree is the hallmark of the grotesque. Any such work that exhibits this dissonance is, according to Horace, simply an artistic failure to be dismissed with a mocking scoff.²⁸⁴ The *Ars Poetica* is, up to this point and *prima facie* at least, the avoidance of this dissonance and so, it seems, the avoidance of what might be termed the ‘grotesque’. Certainly that is how the poem has often been interpreted. Yet Horace has also asserted that different, disparate elements *can* be brought together in a single work, so long as they are properly integrated with each other. We are, it must be remembered, not quite two thirds of the way through the poem, and the final section, which deals with the poet himself, must be considered.

5. The *Poeta Insanus*

After deploring earlier Roman poets’ failures to polish their work to a high enough standard (*Ars P.* 289–294), Horace laments that because Democritus believes *ingenium* is of

²⁸⁴ I have characterized the laughter as “derisive,” but there may be more to it than that. Given Horace’s insistence that artistic failure results from the wrong thing in the wrong place, incongruity may play into this: the artwork becomes a joke because the elements are incongruous, and being a joke it is also a failure and makes the artist into a failure and joke. On the superiority and incongruity theories of laughter, see briefly Beard (2014: 37–42).

greater worth than “wretched” *ars* and therefore excludes from Helicon poets of sound mind, the majority feign insanity by ignoring their personal hygiene. Horace thus returns to the hair-and-nails imagery first encountered in connection with the failed sculptor of lines 32–37:

ingenium misera quia fortunatius arte
 credit et excludit sanos Helicone poetas
 Democritus, bona pars non unguis ponere curat,
 non barbam, secreta petit loca, balnea uitat (Ars P. 295–298)

Because Democritus believes that talent is a greater blessing than wretched technique and so excludes sound-minded poets from Helicon, a goodly number of poets take no care to trim their nails or beards, look for out of the way spots, and avoid bathing.

As Ellen Oliensis remarks, these would-be geniuses reject art—and the application of a file to produce the requisite level of polish—not just in their poetry, but even in their own appearances.²⁸⁵

This sort of person does this because:

nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,²⁸⁶
 si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile numquam
 tonsori Licino commiserit (Ars P. 299–301)

He will obtain the standing²⁸⁷ and reputation of a poet if he never entrusts to the barber Licinus his head which “cannot” be cured by three Anticyras.²⁸⁸

I have put “cannot” in scare quotes to emphasize Horace’s point that such men as these are *not* inspired poets: poor grooming does not equal *insania*, and even if it did, *insania* does not lead to

²⁸⁵ Oliensis (2009: 464–465).

²⁸⁶ Accepting Rudd’s reading rather than Brink’s emended *poeta*.

²⁸⁷ Thus Brink (1971: 331) and Rudd (1989: 200) take *pretium*, but it may be more banal than that: wages—these “poets” can actually make money.

²⁸⁸ Rudd (1989: 201) and Brink (1971: 332–333) both note that there were three Anticyras—in Phocis, in Malis, and in Locris—but the third is not attested as a producer of hellebore. Anticyra (in Phocis) was synonymous with hellebore, used for the treatment of madness, as Horace himself makes clear elsewhere (*Sat.* 2.3.82–83), so that *tribus Anticyris* means “with a lot of hellebore.”

good poetry.²⁸⁹ Horace confirms this by ironically bemoaning that his own foolish attempts to stay healthy have hampered his artistic output:

o ego laeuus
qui purgor bilem sub uerni temporis horam;
non alius faceret meliora poemata (Ars P. 301–303)

What a fool am I who purge my bile when spring comes round; no
one else would make better poems.

Horace here makes an explicit connection between art and well-being. This connection is signalled implicitly at the start of the poem, for although we are not told anything about the notional painter's health, the comparison of his work to the *aegri somnia* raises the issue of a relationship between the two.

Horace ends both this section on the poet (lines 295–476) and the poem as a whole by returning to the image of the insane poet (Ars P. 453–476). The insane poet is not harmless and he is less than human. Those with any sense avoid him, but incautious boys harass and pursue him: *uesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam | qui sapiunt, agitant pueri incautique sequuntur* “Those in the know are scared to touch the crazy poet and avoid him, but youngsters and those unaware harry and chase him” (Ars P. 455–456). When, as he wanders about belching out his verses with his head in the air, he falls down a well or ditch,²⁹⁰ no one would help him out (Ars P. 457–460), implicitly because they are afraid of him. Horace advises any potential good Samaritan to leave the man in the well, for he may be there deliberately (*prudens*, Ars P. 462), like Empedocles in the volcano, and if he is pulled out he will not become human or set aside his fatal

²⁸⁹ Cf. Oliensis (2009: 465): “the redundancy of the parallel phrases ‘three townfuls of hellebore’ and ‘Licinus the barber’ ... suggests that what ails his ‘incurable head’ is, after all, nothing that a visit to the barber couldn’t cure.”

²⁹⁰ Note how in the case of the man who imagines theatrical performances, one of the markers that he is otherwise sane is his ability to avoid falling in wells: *posset qui rupem et puteum uitare patentem* (Epist. 2.2.135).

desire for a famous death (*Ars P.* 461–469). The phrase *nec ... fiet homo* is charged. For both Brink and Rudd, the point is that being in the well will bring the man back down to earth from his (pretensions of) quasi-divinity achieved by means of his notable death.²⁹¹ I agree. Yet the implication also works the other way: if being in the well returns him to his senses, it thereby elevates him back to the level of humanity from his current abasement.²⁹² This lack of humanity is confirmed in the following lines as Horace wonders why this man constantly composes verses: did he piss on his father’s ashes or violate the site of a lightning strike (*Ars P.* 470–472)? The suggestion is that he has been cursed for some act of gross impiety (note also *incestus* in line 472), a willful failure to observe the proper boundaries. The urination (or, more accurately, pissing)²⁹³ like the belching, belongs to Bakhtin’s grotesque body—that is, to the lower, non-rational part of the body.²⁹⁴ This lack of rationality continues into the following verses, where the poet raves, just like a bear:

certe furit, ac uelut ursus,
 obiectos caueae ualuit si frangere clatros,
 indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus (*Ars P.* 472–474)

For sure he raves, and just like a bear if it has been able to break the
 bars of the cage set in its way, both unlearned and learned does the
 fierce reciter put to flight

Horace here turns an image from the *Epistle to Augustus* on its head:

saepe etiam audacem fugat hoc terretque poetam,
 quod numero plures, uirtute et honore minores,
 indocti stolidique et depugnare parati,

²⁹¹ Brink (1971: 428); Rudd (1989: 228).

²⁹² So too Oliensis (2009: 472).

²⁹³ Both Brink (1971: 429) and Rudd (1989: 471) note the “lowness” of *minxerit*; cf Adams (1982: 246).

²⁹⁴ Oliensis (2009: 472) comments on the belching but not the urination.

si discordet eques, media inter carmina poscunt
aut ursum aut pugiles; his nam plebecula gaudet.
(*Epist.* 2.1.183–187)

Often this puts to flight and terrifies even a bold poet, namely that the rabble, who are greater in number, albeit of less excellence and lower standing, and are uneducated and senseless and ready to fight it out, if one of their social betters happens to disagree, in the middle of the poems they demand a bear or a boxing match; for the rabble rejoices in these things.

Horace complains that poets are often put to flight by a crowd that calls in the middle of a performance for precisely a bear or some boxers. In the *Ars*, however, the crowd (along with the highbrow *docti*) gets its comeuppance as the poet becomes the very bear they demanded.²⁹⁵ The placement of *uelut ursus* outside the protasis blurs the boundary between the bear and the poet so that either the *recitator* has escaped his cage or the bear is assailing the listeners with his roaring verses.²⁹⁶ Indeed, the adjective *acerbus*, though not found anywhere else in connection with bears, conveys well the bear's ferocity. Rudd suggests "pitiless," but the adjective also captures the roughness of a bear's roar, which is unintelligible, as are the poet's verses.²⁹⁷ One may even be tempted to find this unintelligibility underlined by the slight echo in *recitator* of *ructatur* in line 457: on the one hand the mad poet's verses are nothing but belches, on the other hand they are senseless roaring. And given Horace's account of how others feign madness by refusing to trim their nails, hair, and beards (*Ars P.* 297–298), we may also imagine this *uesanus poeta* as hairy and with claws.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ See also Savage (1968: 415–416).

²⁹⁶ Cf. Brink (1971: 430): "the effect is a poetic mixture of images; it seems almost as if the *recitator acerbus* has broken out of the cage with the *ursus*."

²⁹⁷ Rudd (1989: 228–229); on the unintelligibility of the bear's roar, cf. Ovid *Met.* 2.482–484 and *Fast.* 2.185–188 (Callisto's voice).

²⁹⁸ See also Oliensis (2009: 472–473).

The collapse of the boundary between human and animal is concretized in the image of the cage and its destruction by the bear. Though the breakdown of this boundary is achieved through the mechanism of the simile and is therefore not complete, it nevertheless evokes the hybrid of the opening painting.²⁹⁹ The boundary further breaks down in the final two lines of the poem: *quem uero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo, | non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo* “But the one whom he has snatched up he grips and kills with his readings, nor will the leech let go the skin unless it is full of blood” (*Ars P.* 475–476). Once the poet has latched on to someone, he holds on tight and slays with his reading—a leech that will not let go until it is full of blood.³⁰⁰ Although *hirudo* is appositive to the subject, the effect is an abrupt diminishment of the poet, and the leech recalls the mermaid’s tail, resulting in a similar human-mammal-fish hybrid.³⁰¹ Furthermore, the leech changes the gender of the poet from masculine to feminine, just as the painting’s gender changes, and combines this shift in gender with a sinister image of blood sucking.³⁰²

Like that, the poem ends—no envoi or conclusion—just as it had so abruptly begun with a human head. How should we respond to this vignette?³⁰³ It is a little amusing,³⁰⁴ especially if we recognize the intertext with the *Epistle to Augustus*. At the same time, there is something disconcerting about it. The insane poet, it turns out, is not harmless, and it is worth recalling

²⁹⁹ See also Laird (2007: 137); Oliensis (2009: 470–472); Lowe (2015: 19).

³⁰⁰ Rudd (1989: 229) refers *tenet* back to *ursus*, invoking the bear-hug.

³⁰¹ Cf. Russell (2006: 339), who sees the final vignette less as a mirror of the opening painting than a portrait of the disturbed mind which produces it.

³⁰² Oliensis (2009: 472), suggesting also “a graphic or pornographic image of the female sex”; Rudd (1989: 229): a “disconcerting change of image”; Brink (1971: 431) speaks of the “startling suddenness” of the change of image.

³⁰³ Cf. Oliensis (2009: 471): “We are left to make of this monstrous design what we can, without the assistance of the author, who drops off just when we may feel we need him most.”

³⁰⁴ Kilpatrick (1990: 52); cf. Russell (2006: 339): “pure caricature”; Laird (2007: 137): “derisive caricature.”

Horace's advice in lines 461–467 to leave the man to die; not only may it be the only way to cure him, it may save us as well. Furthermore, in this portrait of the mad poet Horace draws together the threads first spun in the poem's opening: hybridity, sickness, gender ambiguity, and artistic failure.³⁰⁵ He creates a second 'grotesque' to balance the first, signalled perhaps by the near rhyme of the first and last words of the poem, *humano* and *hirudo*.³⁰⁶ There is, however, no censure of this second set-piece, for although Horace has included it in his own poem as a negative *exemplum* of a poet, that is not the same thing as damning the episode on artistic grounds. The end of the poem seems to offer itself as an example of how to bring together these disparate elements and exploit their dissonance. How, then, does it differ from the opening painting? The painting is set up to fail. The nature of the ecphrasis means that the elements imagined by the painter cannot be perceived by the reader as a single, unified whole. Horace spends much of the poem telling the Pisones that the various elements in an artwork have to work together. Variety is not in and of itself bad, it just has to be fitting. The problem with the painting is that we are not told what the intended effect is and there is no way to conceptualize how the pieces fit together and thus to see it all at once: the dissonance of its parts serves no function so the viewers are left simply to roll their eyes.³⁰⁷ Consequently, the painting is not truly grotesque: if the reader only perceives individual elements, there is no true breakdown of boundaries—no ambivalence or anomaly—and so no confused aesthetic response. Instead, there is only laughter, and not even comic laughter

³⁰⁵ So too Laird (2007: 137); Oliensis (2009: 471–472); Barchiesi (2002: 51); Russell (2006: 327) speaks simply of "balance;" Johnson (2012: 236–237) notes that it is reasonable to expect the opening and closing of Horace's poem to cohere given his emphasis on unity.

³⁰⁶ Oliensis (2009: 471).

³⁰⁷ It should be added that if Horace is imagining the painting as the kind of hybrid figure found in second- and fourth-style wall paintings, the image would be contextualized as one part of the decorative border around a central image. This is arguably a further reason why Horace's painting should not be so readily identified with such wall paintings.

generated by humour in the work itself, but derisive laughter aimed at the failed artist. The grotesque exists precisely in “something,” albeit something beyond immediate domestication through labelling. And while that something may be apt for deconstruction, this painting is, as I have noted, nothing inasmuch as it is already deconstructed—and has never actually been constructed in the first place. The insane poet, on the contrary, is something. He collapses categorical boundaries within himself, though because both the bear and leech are aggressively violent, he also embodies Horace’s injunction not to mix *immitia* with *placida*.

With this all in mind, we should be wary of taking the opening painting and the laughter provoked by it as an articulation and out-and-out rejection of the grotesque. This is a poem that freely blends poetic flourish, conversational tone, and technical precepts, a poem that defies precise structural analysis and returns to topics and themes whenever the opportunity arises.³⁰⁸ As I said above, Horace *seems* to reject out of hand any potential value of the aesthetic dissonance inherent in artworks, but Horace is a very careful, meticulous poet: everything in its proper place for maximum effect. Sometimes, that will mean improper things in improper places. But, as mathematicians tell us, the product of two negatives is a positive so that paradoxically the improper becomes τὸ πρέπον. And that, I would like to suggest, is Horace’s “theory” of the grotesque. Horace does not provide a “definition” inasmuch as there is no single word that encapsulates this idea for him. Nor does he lay out a logically ordered system or checklist. The poem works by

³⁰⁸ See Brink (1963: 3–14), who begins his *Prolegomena* with the question “Has the ‘Ars Poetica’ a structure?” and ultimately identifies a tripartite structure where the transitions are disguised through poetic rather than pedestrian arrangement; Rudd (1989: 21–25) begins by simply listing topics under a separate tripartite scheme; Frischer (1991: 74), noting the lack of proper beginning and end; Russell (2006: 325–326) remarks that “Transitions and movements of thought depend on verbal association and emotional tone rather than on logical or rhetorical arrangement”; Laird (2007: 135–138) calls the poem “unco-operative” and a “sort of chimaera,” deemphasizing the tripartite scheme in favour of flow through association.

precept by example:³⁰⁹ in the process of “telling” the Pisones about poetry, he “shows” the reader how the reader how the grotesque works. He shows us how elements that do not otherwise belong together are made by the artist to work in tandem to produce a unified, yet complex whole which produces in the audience an accordingly complex aesthetic response. That is how Horace articulates the grotesque.

In the chapters that follow I will look at how Horace deploys his idea of the grotesque in his other poems. Although modern articulations of the grotesque have been applied to (some of) Horace’s poetry with positive results, I believe that applying Horace’s own conception of the grotesque will give us greater insight into his aesthetic practices.

³⁰⁹ See also Russell (2006: 329–330), who detects also in this pattern an alternation of fullness and brevity.

Chapter 2: The *Satires*

I start with the *Satires* and, particularly, with the word *satura*. Although he does not use it anywhere in book one, this is precisely the word Horace uses at *Sat.* 2.1.1 to refer to his first book of poems. Much has been said about the etymology of this term, and it seems most likely that it is related to culinary mixtures—whether the *lanx satura* or the overstuffed sausage.¹ It is apparent that by the end of the first century CE *satura* denotes the type of literary *mélange* that embraces a variety of topics and styles.² Horace famously leaves satire out of the *Ars Poetica*. He does, however, spend a great deal of time discussing Satyr-drama. Though it is unnecessary to accept an etymological connection between *satura* and σάτυρος (or even the notion that Horace accepted a connection of this sort), we should be wary of rejecting the possibility that Horace is playing with such an idea in the *Ars*. Carl Classen is certainly correct in his observation that Horace makes no explicit connection between satire and Satyr-drama, nor can one be found in other satirists.³ But Emily Gowers is surely right to note that “it would be naïve to think that, to a bilingual Roman, the word *satura* did not also conjure up satyrs.”⁴ Such bilingual punning is certainly well within Horace’s wheelhouse.⁵ And despite the lack of any direct generative link between Satyr-drama and Roman satire, it is also true that the two genres share much in common and that Satyric figures—

¹ Brown (1993: 5–6); Muecke (1993: 2–3); Freudenburg (1993: 181–182); Gowers (1993: 109–111) and (2012: 8).

² See Classen (1988: 97): “Loyal to the chief law of the genre or rather exemplifying it—*uarietas*—which the reader is gradually made to accept, if not to appreciate, [Horace] throws out a number of disconnected hints and remarks which reveal what he considers the essential features of (his) satire(s) to be: a variety of topics in each poem, a variety of styles in each poem, a variety of literary forms such as monologue, dialogue, episode, anecdote, fable, etc., a variety of stylistic devices (which cannot be enumerated here), and a variety of purposes.” See also Freudenburg (1993: 181–184); Gowers (2012: 6–7).

³ Classen (1988: 103–104).

⁴ Gowers (1993: 116).

⁵ See e.g., Gowers (2012: 24 and index s.v. “puns”).

Priapus in *Satire* 1.8, Horace himself in *Satire* 2.1—are quite at home in satire.⁶ The evidence for the production and performance of Satyr-drama at Rome, especially at the end of the first century BCE, is meagre.⁷ I suggest Horace’s focus on Satyr-drama is a punning allusion to satire, borne out in the apparent stylistic similarities. When one recalls Horace’s own strictures for the composition of Satyr-drama (*Ars P.* 234–236, discussed in the previous chapter), one sees that these find an analogy in *Satire* 1.10:

et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocosus,
 defendente uicem modo rhetoris atque poetae,
 interdum urbani, parcentis uiribus atque
 extenuantis eas consulto. (*Sat.* 1.10.11–14)

And you need a style now serious, sometimes jokey, now taking in
 turn the part of an orator and poet, occasionally witty, reserving your
 strength and underplaying it by design.

This alternation describes the same principle enacted at the beginning of the collection when the poet states that the spoonful of *ludus* helps the *seria* go down (*Sat.* 1.1.23–27).⁸ As described by Horace, both Satyr-drama and satire participate in the mingling of existential categories, literary registers, and tone. In the case of satire, this mixture results in no small part from the satirist’s ostensible goal to improve the reading public by identifying undesirable elements that should be excluded from decent society. Yet in the very act of identification, the satirist must include those same elements: he must present the diseased body (often his own) in order to name the sickness and show how it can be cured.⁹ The grotesque, then, is perfectly at home within Horatian satire.

⁶ Gowers (1993: 116–117) and (2012: 11).

⁷ Collected by Wiseman (1988).

⁸ Gowers (2012: 13); see also Freudenburg (1993: 181).

⁹ Gowers (2012: 11–12, 18).

The dissolution of human and animal categories into each other—seen so strikingly at the end of the *Ars Poetica*—occurs throughout the *Satires*. Such animal-human hybridity can occur in a relatively gentle way that falls short of a fully blown grotesque. Poets in particular come in for such treatment. A poet such as Horace who targets flawed individuals with aggressive verses is a dangerous bull with hay tied to his horns (*faenum habet in cornu*, *Sat.* 1.4.34); he gnaws at an absent friend (*absentem qui rodit amicum*, *Sat.* 1.4.81) and elsewhere barks at his victims (*latrauerit*, *Sat.* 2.1.85).¹⁰ The disciple of the Neoterics who simply recites Calvus and Catullus is *simius* (*Sat.* 1.10.18–19). I have already discussed this passage from the perspective of Horace’s attitude to the Neoterics. Here I address the aesthetics of *simius*.

As noted in the previous chapter, monkeys and apes are by-words for imitators in Greek and Roman literature, and that is appropriate in this context. Commentators have also detected in *simius* an allusion to the ugliness of the otherwise unidentified poet, particularly in contrast to *pulcher* Hermogenes (*Sat.* 1.10.17–18).¹¹ This is true, but at the same time misses something about the nature of such simian ugliness. As Catherine Connors has remarked, “Monkeys look like us, act like us, and can even choose to imitate us. Our human shape is replicated in them but also (from one point of view) distorted: wild, hairy, they meet our gaze across an unbridgeable divide between human and animal, culture and nature.”¹² More than any other creature, the ape embodies the blurring of animal and human categories; they are the grotesque animal *par excellence*. This image of the ape as a distortion of the human form also forces the reader to consider more deeply the

¹⁰ The metaphor of barking is used also of the Stoic “king” provoked by *lasciui pueri* (*Satire* 1.3.133–136) and of a hungry belly (*Sat.* 2.2.18).

¹¹ Brown (1993: 185); Gowers (2012: 316–317); *contra* McDermott (1936: 165), who rules out physical deformity as a possible connotation of *simius*.

¹² Connors (2004: 179); see also Beard (2014: 164–165).

nature of this simian Neotericism. If the ape is wild and hairy—in a word, unrefined—how can he produce the kind of polished artefact most closely associated with the Neoterics? All that being said, the fleeting reference of the insult—just one word—prevents the imagery from developing fully into the grotesque.

1. *Satire 1.3*

In *Satire 1.3*, however, Horace fully realizes this grotesque aesthetic. There the poet opens his critique of the Stoic assertion that all transgressions are the same with a brief summary of humankind's evolution from its beginnings following Epicurean-*cum*-Cynic teaching.¹³ At the earliest stage, humanity is no more than animals creeping forth from the ground, a dumb and foul herd of brutes: *prorepserunt primis animalia terris, | mutum et turpe pecus* (*Sat.* 1.3.99–100). From the start, then, Horace erases the line separating humans from animals, and the fact that early humans are without speech marks them as particularly uncivilized. Humanity's evolution is marked precisely by the movement from violent dispute resolution—which itself evolves from pure physicality (*unguibus et pugnīs*, *Sat.* 1.3.101) to the use of weapons (*fustibus*, then *armis*, *Sat.* 1.3.101–102)—to the development of language and ultimately preventative laws that forbid theft and adultery (*Sat.* 1.3.100–106). The final word of line 106, *adulter*, introduces a specific example that demonstrates the need for such laws:

nam fuit ante Helenam cunnus taeterrima belli
causa, sed ignotis perierunt mortibus illi,
quos Venerem incertam rapientis more ferarum
uiribus editior caedebat ut in grege taurus (*Sat.* 1.3.108–110)

For before Helen a cunt was the foulest reason for war, but those
men died in unmarked deaths, whom, while they snatched at an

¹³ On the especially Lucretian parallels, see Brown (1993: 124); Rochette (2001: 18); Gowers (2012: 138, with citations).

uncertain love in the manner of wild beasts, a stronger man, like a
bull in the herd, cut down.

Men fought for love—or more accurately, given the anatomical force of *cunnus*, for sex. Two details stand out. The first is how these early men go after sex: *rapientis more ferarum*. This recalls the violence of the bear-poet of the *Ars Poetica* and manifests primitive man’s animal nature. The second detail is the closing simile of the bull in the herd. The simile not only reconnects humans and animals in a general way, the use of *grex* in line 110 echoes *pecus* in line 100 and thus reminds the reader that early humankind, just like these animals, is without language (*mutum*).¹⁴ The passage’s mingling of human with animal and its emphasis on violence and sex, including the “basic obscenity for the female pudenda,”¹⁵ conforms closely to the model of the grotesque articulated in the *Ars Poetica*. Indeed, the use of *cunnus* itself contributes to this blurring of categories. Its juxtaposition with *Helenam* brings to mind by means of a bilingual pun Helen’s own insulting reference to herself as a “bitch” (ἐμεῖο κύνος, *Il.* 6.344 and 356), thus fusing the canine with (feminine) sexuality.¹⁶ Moreover, while the Horatian passage focuses on primitive men—they predate the Trojan War (*ante Helenam*) and their deaths are not recorded (*ignotis mortibus*)¹⁷—the reference to Helen, especially in light of the *cunnus*-κύνος connection, indicates that even after humanity is civilized, as evidenced by the use of language to record their stories, people retain this animal capacity.

¹⁴ So too Gowers (2012: 142) on the *pecus-grex* connection.

¹⁵ Adams (1982: 80).

¹⁶ Gowers (2012: 141) identifies the pun, citing Kemp (2006: 124, *non uidi*) and (2009: 102).

¹⁷ i.e., by Homeric poetry: Gowers (2012: 141); Brown (1993: 124).

Gowers has seen the evolution of humanity in *Satire* 1.3 as a representation of Horace's own evolution as a satirist from wordlessness to civilization.¹⁸ If we accept this reading, we may see also an aesthetic statement. For the blended imagery is reflected in the blending of registers. As already noted, the passage reworks in much abbreviated form subject matter from the second half of book five of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, especially lines 925–1457. Gowers rightly notes that Horace “gives little scope” to Lucretius' golden age material, emphasizing instead the “nasty brutishness of primeval life.”¹⁹ This philosophical discussion, into which Horace infuses Homeric elements, should require a more elevated tone, but the use of *cunnius* in particular undercuts any potential gravity.²⁰ One may object that the intrusion of such a word into an otherwise serious or elevated passage is not only bathetic, but is even ἀπρεπές—or it would be, if Horace were actually writing philosophy.²¹ But he is not; he is writing satire, and the sort of alternation of register and the consequent tonal shift found in *Satire* 1.3 is suited to, even required by, the genre.

2. *Satire* 1.8

Such grotesque blending and blurring feature prominently in *Satire* 1.8, a poem spoken in the voice of a wooden statue of Priapus. The statue itself transcends categorical boundaries: Priapus is a god (and emphatically so: *maluit esse deum, deus inde ego* “he preferred that I be a god, so I’m a god,” *Sat.* 1.8.3), and yet he first introduces himself as having once been the trunk of a figwood tree, a hunk of useless wood: *olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum* (*Sat.* 1.8.1).

¹⁸ Gowers (2003: 75).

¹⁹ Gowers (2012: 138).

²⁰ But see Adams (1982: 81): “The tone of *cunnius* ... was not uniform.”

²¹ For bathos, see Freudenburg (1993: 26–27), who reads the passage as a parody of Epicureanism.

He returns to this blurry alive-lifeless duality at the end of the poem when he scares the two witches away by farting: *displosa sonat quantum uesica pepedi | diffissa nate ficus: at illae currere in urbem* “With a sound as loud as a burst balloon I farted, splitting my figwood buttocks: but those women ran off into the city” (*Sat.* 1.8.46–47).²² The scatological element (*pepedi*) reinforces Priapus’ status as a living being, not least because as a statue he should produce neither gas nor noise: Horace vividly compares the sound to an exploding balloon.²³ The adjective *ficus*, however, reminds the reader that Priapus is wooden and vegetal, and its juxtaposition with the anatomical *nate* further blends human and plant.²⁴ This blurring of alive and lifeless, human and vegetal, is overlaid with the sexual element found in *Satire* 1.3. Early in the poem Priapus draws attention to his genitals and how they scare thieves away: *nam fures dextra coercet | obscenoque ruber porrectus ab inguine palus* “For my right hand as well as the red stake stretching from my offensive groin drives the thieves off” (*Sat.* 1.8.4–5). Given the focus on the Priapic phallus at the beginning of the poem, the reader may expect the statue to use this instrument to scare away the witches as well. Emily Gowers has identified in *pepedi* “I farted” a potential play on *pedicaui* “I buggered,” but ironically reversed as the aggressive buggery is replaced by frightened flatulence.²⁵ The image of “split buttocks” suggests anal penetration, a suggestion confirmed by the fact that these buttocks are figwood. Evidence from Martial indicates that *ficus* and related words are metaphors for haemorrhoids and other anal injuries resulting from penetration, precisely the usual Priapean

²² Freudenburg (1993: 230) speaks of the fart as grotesque in a purely Bakhtinian sense.

²³ Pagán (2006: 50) detects an element of onomatopoeia in *pepedi*.

²⁴ Gowers (2012: 279); see also Hallett (1981: 341), who notes the metrically emphatic placement of *ficus* which creates a “rather uncommon” feminine caesura in the third foot.

²⁵ Gowers (2012: 278–279); see also Anderson (1982: 76–77).

method of punishing wrongdoers.²⁶ There is, therefore, a pun on *ficus* which denotes both the material from which Priapus' buttocks are made and the nature and manner of damage suffered by those buttocks. This pun further erases the categorical boundary between human and plant that is already blurred by the juxtaposition of *nate* and *ficus*.

Priapus' reversal from sexual aggressor to passive victim is in fact hinted at earlier. The statue swears to the veracity of his story:

mentior at siquid, merdis caput inquiner albis
coruorum atque in me ueniat mictum atque cacatum
Iulius et fragilis Pediatia furque Voranus (Sat. 1.8.37–39)

But if I'm lying at all, may my head be defiled with the white
droppings of ravens and let Julius and delicate Pediatia and the thief
Voranus come to piss and shit on me.

The oath would undo the entire purpose of the statue: ill-omened birds are normally scared away by the reeds on his head and thieves, as already noted, by his phallus (Sat. 1.8.4–7). As well as the obvious scatological aspects, the imagery suggests sexual violation. The verbs of urination, *meio* and *mingo* along with their compounds, can also denote ejaculation.²⁷ Catullus uses *mingo* with just this meaning in poem 67. Caecilius' door relates that the wife of the previous occupant was not a virgin when she entered the house: although her prior husband was impotent, it is said that her father-in-law "violated his son's bed and outraged the wretched household" (*pater illius gnati violasse cubile | dicitur et miseram conscelerasse domum*, Cat. Carm. 67.23–24). Catullus reflects on this: *egregium narras mira pietate parentem, | qui ipse sui gnati minxerit in gremium* "You tell the tale of a father outstanding in his wondrous sense of duty, who himself pissed in his own son's

²⁶ Gowers (2012: 279); see also Hallett (1981, esp. 343–344 with citations); Hallett is perhaps too certain that this is deliberate on the part of the statue; in asserting that "nothing in the poem suggests that Priapus ever fears the witches; *ut non testis inultus* in 44 would even imply that Priapus emits his anal explosion intentionally" she downplays the force of *horruerim* in line 45 and sees no evidence of intimidation (342 with note 7).

²⁷ See Adams (1982: 142 and 245) on urination as ejaculation.

lap” (Cat. *Carm.* 67.29–30).²⁸ The incestuous context strongly colours the sense here, so that the outrage of “urination” becomes sexualized as ejaculation. Horace follows this lead in *Satire* 1.2 when he lists the various things adulterers suffer in pursuit of pleasure by “reducing them to passive sexual roles.”²⁹ One of these adulterers is “pissed” on by stable-boys (*hunc perminxerunt calones*, *Sat.* 1.2.44), but again the strong undertones of *sexual* outrage point to ejaculation.³⁰ Thus when Priapus imagines Julius, Pediatia, and Voranus come to “piss” on him (*mictum*), the verb also brings implications of sexual violation. At the same time, the supine *cacatum* has been interpreted not simply as defecation, but the result of using the statue’s phallus for anal stimulation.³¹ Priapus’ phallus is a threat, specifically the threat of sexual violation. In *Carmen Priapeum* 69, for example, the god issues a warning to the potential thief, enticed by the delight of the fig: *ad me respice, fur, et aestimato | quot pondo est tibi mentulam cacandum* “Look back at me, thief, and consider how much shit you’ll have to leave on my prick” (69.3–4 Vollmer). In *Satire* 1.8, however, if Priapus’ story proves untrue, the threat posed by his phallus will be actively sought out and so will no longer be threatening. Priapus will become a passive victim and, despite being a god, a mere object to be polluted. The statue therefore is sacred and profane, alive and lifeless, anthropomorphic and vegetal, aggressive and passive, and so provides an ideal narrator for a poem that revels in Horace’s grotesque aesthetic.

²⁸ Quinn (1973: 371) says of *minxerit* “no doubt a colloquial euphemism.”

²⁹ Gowers (2012: 101); see also Adams (1982: 142).

³⁰ Gowers (2012: 101); Adams (1982: 142).

³¹ Gowers (2012: 276–277); see Adams (1982: 171–172) for the associations of *cacare* with anal sex.

The poem also deploys the same mingling of animal and human found in *Satire* 1.3. Here it is used in combination with the blurring of life and death. For the statue, as he tells us himself, overlooks what are now gardens (*Sat.* 1.8.7), but which have a darker history:

huc prius angustis eiecta cadauera cellis
conseruus uili portanda locabat in arca;
hoc miserae plebi stabat commune sepulcrum. (*Sat.* 1.8.8–10)

To this place previously would a fellow slave make arrangements
for corpses tossed from cramped quarters to be carried in a cheap
casket; this place stood as a shared grave for the wretched plebs.

Horace emphasizes this blending of life and death a few lines later:

nunc licet Esquiliis habitare salubribus atque
aggere in aprico spatari, quo modo tristes
albis informem spectabant ossibus agrum (*Sat.* 1.8.14–16)

Now it's possible to live in a healthy Esquiline and to wander on a
sunny embankment where recently gloomy people would look on a
field disfigured with white bones.³²

The use of both *apricus* (sunny) and *tristis* (gloomy) in line 15 accentuates the contrast between the current and previous uses of the land. Yet certain elements hint at continuity: both lines 15 and 16 begin with the same vowel and contain a syllable beginning *sp-* in the same *sedes*.³³ Moreover, the brightness implicit in *apricus* is ironically reflected in the whiteness of the bones.³⁴

This previous use of the gardens is apparently what attracts the witches Canidia and Sagana to this place. The statue delivers its own eye-witness testimony of their activities:

scalpere terram
unguibus et pullam diuellere mordicus agnam
coeperunt; cruor in fossam confusus, ut inde
manibus elicerent animas responsa daturas. (*Sat.* 1.8.26–29)

³² See also Pagán (2006: 43), who notes the contrast between Priapus' overdetermined fertility and the inherent sterility of the bones.

³³ Gowers (2012: 272) also notes the alliterative contrast of *spatiari* and *spectabant*.

³⁴ At *Sat.* 2.6.32–33, the Esquiline remains “black” (*atras Esquiliis*): so too Gowers (2012: 271).

They began to scratch at the earth with their nails and to tear apart a
dark coloured lamb with their teeth; blood was poured into a ditch,
so that they might there entice spirits from the dead to give answers.

The use of nails and teeth is bestial and recalls the behaviour of primitive man described at *Sat.* 1.3.100–101.³⁵ The fact that Canidia’s teeth fall out as she runs away (*Sat.* 1.8.48–49) may leave her defanged and thus no longer to be feared; but the reference to her teeth also serves to remind the reader what she was doing with them in the first place and thus underlines her animal nature. We may also note some canine word-play similar to that found in the third satire at work in Canidia’s name and the hellhounds one would have seen wandering about: *uideres* | *infernus errare canis* (*Sat.* 1.8.34–35).³⁶ This fits with Canidia’s first appearance in the poem, where her wild appearance is matched by her howling (*ululantem*, *Sat.* 1.8.25).

As in *Sat.* 1.3, the way the imagery blends these categories is reflected in the way this relatively short poem mixes tone to heighten the grotesque effect. Indeed, Niall Rudd has observed that Priapic poetry itself adopts a range of tones: sometimes splenetic, sometimes elegant, occasionally benevolent, most often clownish.³⁷ Consequently, we should not be surprised to find

³⁵ So too Gowers (2012: 274).

³⁶ Gowers (2012: 275–276); more generally on Canidia and dogs, Oliensis (1998: 68–73).

³⁷ Rudd (1981: 68). The benevolent Priapus perhaps owes most to Hellenistic epigram, where he appears (usually as a statue) as both a pastoral deity and a god of the harbour, often as the recipient of dedications. Priapus as pastoral deity: Theocritus *Id.* 1.81–91, *Epigr.* 19G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 9.338), where he is also exhibits some sexual aggression, and *Epigr.* 20G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 9.437), noting his erection (φάλητι παιδογόνῳ); Priapus as harbour-god: Leonidas of Tarentum 85G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.1), Antipater of Sidon 41G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.2); from the *Garland of Philip* Argentarius 28G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.4); other later epigrams include Thyillus (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.5), Satyrus (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.6), Archias 10 (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.192, dedicatory), 27 and 28G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 10.7 and 8), Agathias *Anth. Pal.* 10.14, Paulus Silentiarius *Anth. Pal.* 10.15, Theaetetus Scholasticus *Anth. Pal.* 10.16; Priapus as recipient of dedications: Hedylus 1G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.292); an unattributed epigram describes an offering to Priapus of saffron with a girl’s garlands and girdle (*Anth. Pal.* 5.200); from the *Garland of Philip*, Myrinus 2G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.254), Philip 17G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.102), Zonas 1G-P (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.22). The *Garland of Philip* also preserves a couplet of Antipater of Thessalonica, perhaps influenced by the Roman tradition, in which Priapus complains that Cimon’s erection is more impressive than his own (Antip. Thess. 99G-P = *Anth. Pal.* 11.224), and an epigram of Crinagoras which refers to Priapus as “well-branched” (εὐστόρθυγγι, Crinag. 42.7G-P = *Anth. Pal.* 6.232.6).

Horace exploiting this potential for tonal variety in a single poem. As others have noted, the necromantic activities of Canidia and Sagana recall Odysseus' summoning of the dead (*Od.* 11.36–50), while their sympathetic magic recalls Theocritus *Idyll* 2.³⁸ The horror of the witches' actions is built up visually and sonically. I have already mentioned their howling; their paleness also makes them terrifying in appearance: *pallor utrasque | fecerat horrendas aspectu* (*Sat.* 1.8.25–26). The invocation of Hecate and especially Tisiphone, who is *saeua*, buttresses the horror (*Sat.* 1.8.33–34). Indeed, Tisiphone's status as a Fury is recalled later when Priapus refers to the witches' activities as *uoces Furiarum et facta duarum* (*Sat.* 1.8.45). These activities even prompt the moon to blush and hide her face behind large tombstones to avoid witnessing them: *Lunamque rubentem | ne foret his testis post magna latere sepulcra* (*Sat.* 1.8.35–36). The witches converse with ghosts whose voices reflect the grim circumstances (*loquentes | umbrae cum Sagana resonarent triste et acutum*, *Sat.* 1.8.40–41) and bury sinister items—a wolf's beard, a serpent's tooth—in the earth (*Sat.* 1.8.42–43). Yet Horace divides this menacing material with Priapus' oath as to its veracity (*Sat.* 1.8.37–39, discussed above). The scatological and potentially sexual elements of the oath lower the tone and undermine the escalating horror of the scene by generating a stark contrast between the witches' supernatural invocations and interactions and the very natural, very tangible consequences set out in the oath. The tonal descent from Hecate, Tisiphone, and the blushing moon is as rapid as that of the bird droppings that will land on Priapus' head. Finally, Priapus' fart literally deflates the mounting terror: on the one hand, it seems to result from his inability to control and contain his fear (note *horruerim* in line 45 immediately preceding); on the other hand, the witches' retreat—with wigs and teeth, herbs and garlands flying—is laughable: *cum magno risuque iocoque uideres* (*Sat.* 1.8.50).

³⁸ Brown (1993: 172); Rudd (1981: 71); Pagán (2006: 44).

Satire 1.8 raises a further aesthetic consideration. The gardens of the Esquiline were a particular project of Maecenas. It is possible to read Priapus' victory over the witches politically as an affirmation of Octavian's defeat of his enemies, particularly the Pompeians.³⁹ Another possibility is to read the poem as a literary allegory. William Anderson sees the witches—with their curses and poisons (*carminibus ... atque uenenis*, *Sat.* 1.8.19) and their attempts to create something from the dead—embodying the old satirical invective of Lucilius, while Priapus represents Maecenas' circle and his triumph enacts the transformation of satire from Lucilian viciousness to Horatian jocularly (*risuque iocoque*, *Sat.* 1.8.50).⁴⁰ Tara Welch, on the other hand, argues that Priapus' invective voice is stifled in the gardens just as Horace's satiric voice is stifled by Maecenas' presence: Priapus becomes a “verbal eunuch” incapable of using the invective speech normally associated with him, and this reflects the inherent incongruity between satire and Maecenas' aesthetic program.⁴¹ These readings point in opposite directions, neither of which is quite satisfactory. Priapus' fart, as a manifestation of Horatian jocularly, may preserve “the creative, idyllic world of Maecenas' garden” as Anderson suggests, but it is difficult to see how it can represent the more refined and elegant style of the circle of Maecenas. It is, after all, a *failure* of both words and the care and control so characteristic of Horatian poetry. On the other hand, it is misleading to suggest that it is Maecenas' gardens—that is, the context of Maecenas and his circle—that inhibits Priapus' speech. It is only in the presence of the witches that he fails in his usual aggression: he explicitly has no problem with the beasts or thieves (*Sat.* 1.8.17–18). The poem itself is an instance of Priapus' speech. It is a different kind of speech from the purely sexual

³⁹ See DuQuesnay (1984: 38–39), emphasizing the connection between witchcraft, Pythagoreanism, and Sextus Pompey; Brown (1993: 170).

⁴⁰ Anderson (1982: 78–81); see also Habash (1999: 291).

⁴¹ Welch (2001: 167, 184–189).

invective of some (but certainly not all) other Priapean poems. But it is important to note that just as Priapus here speaks in a less invective manner than other non-Horatian versions of himself, so too is Horatian satire different from and less aggressive than its predecessors. The gardens do not prevent Priapus from speaking. Nor should they, for Priapus belongs to the gardens. The *olim ... inde ... nunc* contrast shows that just as the gardens were once a graveyard, so was Priapus once a piece of wood:⁴² because he exists to guard these new gardens, his existence is bound to theirs. Importantly, the gardens are a space in transition: the transformation from graveyard to garden is incomplete.⁴³ They represent, therefore, not so much a middle ground as a blended one, and it is in that context that the action of the poem must be interpreted.

The poem initially focuses on Priapus' phallus, with which he scares away thieves. Such a focus generates an expectation that this Priapus, like those found elsewhere in the *Priapea*, will offer the reader an example of his phallic invective. This expectation is then frustrated, for not only does this seem not to be a poem about punishing violators, the statue himself states that what bothers him more are the witches whom he has no power to stop (*Sat.* 1.8.17–21). The emphasis on the area's previous use prepares the reader for the otherwise unexpected arrival of these new adversaries. The witches are fearsome. Furthermore, they usurp the sexual aggression normally associated with Priapus. Welch asserts that Priapus' "invective phallus is ineffectual against the threat Canidia's overheated, dried-up femininity poses to the god's masculinity."⁴⁴ They are a very different adversary than the thieves and birds; is it any wonder that Priapus' usual means of attack are ineffective? And yet Priapus prevails, albeit in a radically different manner. What makes the

⁴² Anderson (1982: 76).

⁴³ Pagán (2006: 51–53).

⁴⁴ Welch (2001: 185).

poem's dénouement so surprising is not just the fart, but the very fact of the statue's triumph. Horace once again explodes the readers' expectations, this time turning the apparent weakness of Priapus into his ultimate victory. Significantly, at the moment of his triumph Priapus also reduces the two furies to toothless, balding laughing-stocks. As I will explore below, these insults belong precisely to the sexually aggressive invective of iambic poetry which seeks to humiliate a (potential) sexual partner in retaliation for a preceding humiliation. Certainly these lines make up a small fraction of the poem and they are tempered by the self-mockery inherent in an account of flatulence, but they are there. Maecenas' gardens have not stifled the invective impulse, nor does the expulsion of the witches remove it. Just as the bones remain amongst the flowers, so does the verbal violence remain: it is merely redirected. Martha Habash proposes that the gardens can be interpreted as "satire" itself: the original graveyard represents satire's Old Comedy origins (see *Sat.* 1.4.1–7; 1.10.16–17)—note how the figures who used the cemetery are parasites and prodigal young men (*Pantolabo scurrae Nomentanoque nepoti*, *Sat.* 1.8.11)—and as Maecenas is doing with the land, Horace subjects satire to rigorous standards of workmanship and beautification (discussed in some detail in Chapter 1, section 1b).⁴⁵ This means that the raw material of the older tradition remains; it has merely been repackaged.

Such repackaging also applies to Priapus. Welch notes that this lowly figwood statue is out of place in this upscale locale, and James Uden has remarked that the luxury gardens of Maecenas are a new sort of home for Priapus who is found more usually in smaller gardens.⁴⁶ For

⁴⁵ Habash (1999: 289–290), though there is a case to be made that the parasite and prodigal young man perhaps belong more properly to New Comedy than Old. See also Freudenburg (1993: 229), who suggests that Canidia and Sagana as "lustful hags" also belong to Old Comedy, while Priapus himself resembles an Old Comic protagonist. On Pantolabus and Nomentanus, see Gowers (2012: 270).

⁴⁶ Welch (2001: 187); Uden (2010: 198–199), citing Edmunds (2009), who suggests that the statue should be imagined as standing over a pre-existing tomb-garden subsequently incorporated into Maecenas' garden.

example, in a *Priapeum* found in the *Appendix Vergiliana* (3 Vollmer-Morel = 86 Bücheler), the statue belongs to a “poor hut” (*pauperis tuguri*, line 6) and encourages potential thieves to try their luck at the estate of the wealthy neighbour who neglects his own Priapus (lines 19–21). This repackaging is metrical as well: the *carmina Priapea* do not use satire’s hexameter.⁴⁷ The metrical mismatch is part of a larger blending of genres. Priapus’ opening description of his origins and functions looks like a common motif of Hellenistic epigram and *Priapea* more specifically.⁴⁸ Yet the poem turns into something slightly different, including a topographical history and—if one accepts the notion that Horace’s Priapus may have been inspired by a real statue—an aetiology of the crack in the woodwork. In terms of genre, tone, and imagery, the poem therefore constitutes a sustained treatment of the Horatian grotesque, blending together disparate features into a single whole.

3. The Second Book of *Satires*

The second book of *Satires*, although it limits the scope of its themes and narratological poses and so becomes less aggressive and outspoken than the first book, nevertheless contains developed grotesques. In *Satire* 2.2 during his discussion of Ofellus’ distinction between the “simple” diet and the “stingy” or “vile” diet (*sordidus a tenui uictu distabit Ofello | iudice, Sat.* 2.2.53–54), Horace introduces Avidienus, to whom the nickname “Dog” has attached as result of his behaviour: *Auidienus | cui Canis ex uero ductum cognomen adhaeret (Sat.* 2.2.55–56). Rudd remarks that the name suggests Cynic asceticism (appropriately given the diet Horace describes), and this is reinforced a few lines later when Horace wonders which diet the wise man would

⁴⁷ See also Oliensis (1998: 73–74 and 95–96) on the transformation of Priapus into a satirist.

⁴⁸ Rudd (1981: 68); Edmunds (2009: 125); Gowers (2012: 264).

choose: *quali igitur uictu sapiens utetur et horum | utrum imitabitur? hac urget lupus, hac canis, aiunt* “So what sort of diet will the wise man follow and which of these will he copy? A wolf presses on this side, a hound on this, as they say” (*Sat.* 2.2.63–64).⁴⁹ The proverb—“a wolf on this side, a dog on this side”—is at least as old as Plautus (*Cas.* 971) and suggests that neither option is to be preferred.⁵⁰ The imagery, however, is particularly apt in Horace’s poem: the wolf, which here stands for the gluttonous diet, embodies rapacity, while the dog can be an image of squalor.⁵¹ Yet both the cognomen *Canis* and its echo in the proverb metaphorically turn Avidienus into a dog. Horace repeats this metamorphosis in Avidienus’ diet (*Sat.* 2.2.57–62). The olives, though five years old, are human food. The cornel-berries, on the other hand, belong to the wild (*siluestria corna*), where they are eaten by both animals and people who live outside the boundaries of civilization.⁵² Indeed, cornel-berries (καρπὸν τε κρανείης, *Od.* 10.242) are part of the swill served by Circe to the Odyssean pig-men. Finally, Avidienus is sparing with his wine unless it is has metamorphosed (*mutatum*, *Sat.* 2.2.58)—that is, turned sour. Horace presents, therefore, a man who is also an animal and who eats food that belongs both within and without the human world.

Horace also deploys the grotesque in *Satire* 2.7. Horace invites the slave Davus to take advantage of the Saturnalia to speak his mind (*Sat.* 2.7.1–5), and the slave proceeds to lambaste his master’s inconsistent morals. In the course of his censure, Davus touches upon sexual relationships:

⁴⁹ Rudd (1981: 143), who further suggests that the subsequent pun on *canis* in line 64 gains added point if *Canis* is the name of a real person.

⁵⁰ Muecke (1993: 124); Houghton (2004: 300).

⁵¹ Houghton (2004: 300, with n 2).

⁵² Muecke (1993: 123); men outside of civilization: *Aen.* 3.649 (Achaemenides, marooned on the island of the Cyclopes); *Met.* 1.105 (golden age men foraging); *Met.* 8.665 (part of the meal served by Baucis and Philemon); *Met.* 13.816 (one of Polyphemus’ gifts for Galatea).

acris ubi me
 natura intendit, sub clara nuda lucerna
 quaecumque excepit turgentis uerbera caudae
 clunibus aut agitauit equum lasciua supinum,
 dimittit neque famosum neque sollicitum, ne
 ditior aut formae melioris meiat eodem. (Sat. 2.7.47–52)

When fierce nature urges me on, whoever in the nude beneath the
 bright lamplight has received the lashes of my swollen tail on her
 buttocks or has lustfully assailed me like a horse on its back, she
 sends me away without a reputation and without a worry that a richer
 or better looking man may come in the same place.

Once again Horace blurs human and animal together in a sexual context with undertones of violence. Adams suggests that Horace may be the first to use *cauda* as a metaphor for the penis (also at *Sat.* 1.2.45), further remarking that in this instance “*cauda* is overtly figurative: it is appropriate on the literal level to the horse, and on the figurative to the man.”⁵³ This is true, but understates the effect of the metaphor: Davus here becomes the horse. The result goes beyond simple hybridity: the boundary separating animal and human is doubly transgressed since Davus becomes the horse precisely during sex. This transgression is marked particularly by the fact that *natura* provides the impetus for the sexual activity and, therefore, for the animal transformation.

Horace returns to this equine imagery later in the poem, again in an erotic context. Davus contrasts the wise man, who is truly free, with Horace, whom a woman strings along:

quinque talenta
 poscit te mulier, uexat foribusque repulsum
 perfundit gelida, rursus uocat: eripe turpi
 colla iugo liber, “liber sum” dic age. non quis.
 urget enim dominus mentem non lenis et acris
 subiectat lasso stimulos uersatque negantem. (Sat. 2.7.89–94)

A woman demands five talents from you, harries you, drives you
 from the door and pours cold water on you: snatch your neck from
 the shameful yoke and as a free man, come on and say “I am free.”
 You can’t. For an ungentle master drives your mind and applies

⁵³ Adams (1982: 36–37).

sharp spurs to you when you're weary and turns you when you say
no.

Whereas Davus becomes a horse during the physical act of sex, Horace's transformation is achieved on an emotional-psychological level. In Horace's case, the "master" is not the woman herself, but his desire.⁵⁴ This difference is reflected also in the style of "riding." The mistress rides Davus bareback. Physicality is inherent in the scene and Horace underlines it with anatomical references. Horace, on the contrary, is a chariot horse, as the reference to the yoke indicates. There is, therefore, a greater degree of separation between charioteer and horse. Furthermore, Horace stresses the control of his will (note both *mentem* and *negantem*). The negative, psychological elements of this passage are appropriate: Davus is demonstrating Horace's lack of freedom, emphatically realized in the yoke. Importantly, though, Horace has prepared the reader for this transformation. In the earlier passage, when Davus compares his own situation with the *meretricula* to that of Horace with another man's wife, he notes that among the other steps Horace takes to disguise himself, he throws away his "equestrian ring" (*anulo equestri*, *Sat.* 2.7.53).⁵⁵ Socio-economic implications aside, this literally means that Horace cannot be the rider and thus prepares him to be the horse. The repetition of the equine imagery recalls the earlier passage and this recollection not only serves to highlight the contrast between the relative playfulness and enjoyment of Davus' experience and Horace's troubles, it imports the former into the latter and so the reader's response to Horace's situation is tinged with humour.

Satire as a genre is a mishmash, but a mishmash by design. It depends for its success on the tensions generated by its twin goals of entertaining the readers through humour and edifying

⁵⁴ Rudd (1981: 193) identifies "lust."

⁵⁵ See Freudenburg (1993: 225–226) on Horace's transformation into a New Comedy slave.

them through the condemnation of ethical failings. The result is a blend of tone, of *seria* and *ludus*. This tonal blend necessarily colours other aspects of the poetry, especially its imagery, and appropriately so: such mixtures are part and parcel of the decorum of satire. As such, the grotesque is well suited to the genre.

Chapter 3: The *Epodes*

From the *Satires* I turn to the *Epodes*. Horace himself refers to the *Epodes* as his *iambi* (*Epod.* 14.7, *Epist.* 1.19.23 and 2.2.59, *Carm.* 1.16.25).¹ Iambic poetry offered a poetic means to name and shame individuals who violated social mores, framed often as retaliation to some attack.² There is, therefore, an affinity between the invective of iambic poetry and satire. As Ellen Oliensis notes, however, where the *Satires* tend to be mediated (the target of the attack is never the addressee of the poem), the *Epodes* are more direct and, therefore, aggressive.³ It is true that by the late republic the defining feature of iambic poetry—or perhaps more accurately of the term *iambi* as a generic signifier—seems to have been its invective character. Catullus notes how his girl has vowed a sacrifice to Venus and her Cupids should he be reconciled with her and “quit brandishing his savage *iambi*” (*desissemque truces uibrare iambos*, *Cat. Carm.* 36.4).⁴ Elsewhere he wonders what madness drives Ravidus headlong into his *iambi* (*Cat. Carm.* 40.1–2).⁵ Both passages indicate that being the target of iambic poetry is best avoided, while a third confirms that *iambi* may provoke anger in the target: *irascere iterum meis iambis immerentibus* “you will again grow angry at my undeserving *iambi*” (*Cat. Carm.* 54.6).⁶ Horace himself speaks of how “mad

¹ On the question of title, see Watson (2007: 94); Mankin (1995: 12) and (2010: 98).

² Gowers (1993: 282–285).

³ Oliensis (1998: 64–65); see also Clayman (1980: 74).

⁴ See also Wray (2001: 182–183), who suggests that the poem invites the reader to go looking for an invective attack on Lesbia, and that the reader will thus look to poem 11 which “owes rather more of its rhetorical and ‘lyrical’ power to archaic Greek modes of invective than is commonly recognized.”

⁵ Wray (2001: 178–179), who notes the intertext with Archil. 172W which underscores the “iambic” nature of poem 40.

⁶ See also the fragment of Catullus preserved by Porph. ad *Carm.* 1.16.22: *at non effigies meos iambos* “but you will not escape my *iambi*” (*Cat. frag.* 3 Mynors). Clayman (1980: 74) notes that the three Catullan instances cited in the text are all in hendecasyllables, suggesting that the term *iambi* is therefore less bound to meter than to content and style. So too Wray (2001: 177), who additionally notes that the “you” of *irascere*, the *unice imperator*, is almost certainly Julius Caesar, who is addressed with these words at *Cat. Carm.* 29.11, and since

passion armed Archilochus with the suitable iambus” (*Archilochum proprio rabies armauit iambo*, *Ars P.* 79). Within the *Epodes* themselves, Horace compares his own poetical ferocity to that of Archilochus and Hipponax, thereby obliquely acknowledging them as *iambic* models (*Epod.* 6.13–14). He elsewhere takes credit for being the first Roman poet to adapt Archilochian *iambi* into Latin:

... Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
Archilochi, non res et agentia uerba Lycamben. (*Epist.* 1.19.23–25)

I first displayed Parian iambics to Latium, following the meter and spirit of Archilochus, though not the subjects and words that assailed Lycambes.

Although Horace has jettisoned the specific content of Archilochus’ poems, namely, the attacks on Lycambes and his daughters, he claims to have preserved the Parian’s meters and aggressive pose.⁷ While Horace here wears his archaic debt on his sleeve, scholars have identified something else underneath that sleeve occupying the space between Horace and the archaic poets: Callimachus.⁸ Even Horace’s claim to have been the first to adapt Archilochian iambics is prefaced in Callimachean terms: *libera per uacuum posui uestigia princeps*, | *non aliena meo pressi pede* “I, leading the way, placed free footsteps through unoccupied territory; with my foot I trod on no one else’s land” (*Epist.* 1.19.21–22). This virgin territory echoes Apollo’s advice at the start of the

that poem *is* in iambic meter, it is reasonable to see in *iambis* at 54.6 an instance where meter and content combine in the word.

⁷ In this passage, since Horace’s point starts with meter, it makes sense that he names only Archilochus as he did not use Hipponax’s metrical schemes in the *Epodes*. See also Johnson (2012: 40–43), who argues that the aggressiveness of Horace’s defense of his iambic poetry as mimicking the aggression of the *Epodes* themselves and underlining that collection’s iambic “spirit.”

⁸ See e.g., Clayman (1980: 75–81) and Watson (2003: 4–6) with citations and references. A major exception is Mankin (1995: 6 n 28), who expresses grave doubts that Horace even knew Callimachus’ *Ἰαμβοί* or *Ibis*: this seems very unlikely, given the absolute avoidance of Callimachean and Hipponactean meters in the *Epodes*.

Aetia to keep to untrodden paths (Callim. *Aet.* 1.26–27Pf).⁹ The fragmentary state of Callimachus’ Ἰαμβοὶ makes it difficult to gauge the full extent of any intertextual connections. Both archaic and Callimachean *iambi* adopt a range of metrical forms, subject matter, and narrative poses.¹⁰ It is clear, however, that Horace has, if nothing else, married Archilochean form to Callimachean technique.¹¹

1. The Political Disorder: *Epodes* 1, 7, 9 and 16

These poems were composed in a period of political instability—the years following the Battle of Philippi, including the final confrontation with Sextus Pompeius, up to the battle of Actium and its immediate aftermath.¹² This political instability is reflected in the political *Epodes* 1, 7, 9, and 16. I discuss these poems less with an eye to Horace’s use of the grotesque in each (though he certainly makes use of it), but rather more for their cumulative picture of a world in disorder and the confused, aporetic response it produces. The first poem is a meditation on the nature of Horace’s friendship with Maecenas (*amice*, *Epod.* 1.2) and thus offers a glimpse into an inherently private world. At the same time, however, it is set against a very public background.¹³ The poem is a sort of *propempticon* in which Horace debates joining Maecenas on his mission; it

⁹ Mayer (1994: 263); Johnson (2012: 39–40).

¹⁰ West (1974: 22), citing Catullus 36.5, 40.2, 54.6; see also Clayman (1980: 61–63, 72); Watson (2003: 11–12); Rosen (2007: 191–192), who argues that Callimachean iambic *polyeideia* was not an innovation but an essentially Hipponactean characteristic of his *iamboi*. Johnson (2012: 40–41) argues strongly that the idea of Callimachus’ iambic gentleness relative to Archilochus is misplaced, and that it has (wrongly) been used to “tame” Horace’s *Epodes*.

¹¹ Harrison (2007a: 135).

¹² On the date of the *Epodes*, see Günther (2013b: 169–171).

¹³ So too Günther (2013b: 193–194); Watson (2003: 55); DuQuesnay (2002); cf. Carrubba (1995: 37–38).

overtly demonstrates Horace's allegiance to Maecenas and thus the Caesarian cause.¹⁴ The scholarly consensus is that Maecenas is here setting sail for Actium, the final act in Rome's generations-long civil strife and one which will ultimately bring (or impose) order on the world.¹⁵ Horace weighs the option of staying behind (apparently Maecenas' preference), but ultimately decides to join the mission:

quid nos, quibus te uita si superstite
iucunda, si contra, grauis?
utrumne iussi persequemur otium
non dulce, ni tecum simul,
an hunc laborem, mente laturo decet
qua ferre non mollis uiros?
feremus ... (*Epod.* 1.5–11)

What of me, for whom life will be a delight if you survive but a heavy burden if the opposite happens. Shall I, as ordered, pursue the leisure that has no sweetness except when with you, or rather this toil of yours, intending to endure it with the determination with which it befits men of no delicacy to endure? I will endure ...

Horace later disavows material motives for his support (*Epod.* 1.25–30), but here he nevertheless links his success to Maecenas': he cannot enjoy his leisure unless Maecenas is with him. He expands on this with an imagined question from Maecenas and an elaborate simile in which he vividly inverts the power dynamic between patron and poet:

roges, tuum labore quid iuven meo,
imbellis ac firmus parum:
comes minore sum futurus in metu,
qui maior absentis habet;
ut adsidens implumibus pullis auis
serpentium allapsus timet,
magis relictis, non, ut adsit, auxili
latura plus praesentibus. (*Epod.* 1.15–22)

¹⁴ See e.g., Watson (2003: 56) and Babcock (1974: 28–31), though the latter sees no reason to tie the poem to Actium specifically; cf. Mankin (1995: 50 and 143), who argues that Horace's friendship with Maecenas does not necessarily extend to support for Caesar.

¹⁵ See e.g., Mankin (1995: 49); Watson (2003: 51).

You may ask what help I will bring with my efforts to yours, unwarlike and insufficiently strong as I am: as your companion I will be in a state of reduced fear which holds those who are absent more strongly; just as the bird tending to her unfledged chicks fears the slithering approach of serpents more when she has left them behind, though were she there, she would not bring more help to those in the nest.

Horace will worry either way, but the greater the distance between him and Maecenas, the greater his fear will be. As a literary device the simile prevents a complete breakdown of categorical boundaries because the explicitness of the comparison keeps the tenor and the vehicle conceptually distinct: if A is *like* B, then A cannot *be* B. It nevertheless suggests sufficiently strong analogies between the two things being compared that they begin to blur into each other precisely at the point of their shared characteristic(s). It is therefore worth observing how Horace here simultaneously introduces animal imagery and switches genders as he becomes a female bird—an apt transformation given the suggestion of Horace’s *mollities* in lines 10 and 16.¹⁶ Horace further enacts the ambivalences inherent in the grotesque by linking the birds and snakes through word and sound play: both the bird and her snakey fears are characterized by compounds in *ad-* (*adsidens* and *allapsus*), while the unfledged chicks and the slithering snakes heavily feature the interplay of *p*, *l*, and *s* sounds. A similar ambivalence is produced by Horace’s use of pairs of opposites applied to the same noun: *minor* and *maior* with *metus* lines 17 and 18, *relictis* and *praesentibus* with *pullis* in lines 21 and 22.¹⁷ This all contributes to a sense of disorder and uncertainty which reflects the poem’s political setting. Horace has already expressed this uncertainty in line 6, a line framed by the contrary emotional (and, I would add, aesthetic) responses to the possible outcomes of the

¹⁶ DuQuesnay (2002: 24); Watson (2003: 64–65, 67). Some, e.g., Mankin (1995: 56), have even detected a veiled charge of *mollities* against Maecenas himself in the comparison to an unfledged chick.

¹⁷ One might also add *imbellis ac firmus parum* in line 16, noting that the litotes with *parum* allows Horace to pair the two contrary adjectives, even if only for a moment.

battle: *iucunda, si contra, grauis*.¹⁸ Importantly, within the universe of the poem, the Battle of Actium has not yet taken place. Just as Maecenas sets out to help end the disorder militarily, so does Horace seek to do so poetically, and we may see in *iussi* of line 7 an indication that this is Horace's mission.¹⁹ But as of the end of the *Epode* 1, neither Maecenas nor Horace has achieved this goal, and this leaves the reader in a state of apprehension: hopeful, but worried.²⁰ Although Horace has not deployed the full force of the grotesque in this poem, he lays the groundwork for its more elaborate use later in the collection.

To call *Epode* 1 “optimistic” may be too much. It is, however, partisan and so exposes a particular view about the desired outcome of Rome's internal strife, about what sort of “order” Horace would like for the world. *Epode* 7, the next explicitly political poem in the collection, lacks this partisan quality and instead simply expresses the poet's anger and dismay at the disorder of the world. This disorder and uncertainty is apparent from the very first words of the poem. Unlike in *Epode* 1 where Maecenas' (and Horace's own) mission is clearly outlined, here Horace begins by asking with emphatic anaphora where everyone is rushing in their criminal wickedness: *quo, quo scelesti ruitis* (*Epod.* 7.1). Horace follows this with another question: *aut cur dexteris | aptantur enses conditi*? “Or why are swords recently sheathed being taken in hand?” (*Epod.* 7.1–2). This opening couplet is then capped by a third question, the length of which (eight lines) is matched by its geographic spread and from Britain to Parthia:

parumne campis atque Neptuno super
 fusum est Latini sanguinis,
 non ut superbas invidae Carthaginis
 Romanus arces ureret,

¹⁸ The antithesis of *iucunda* and *gravis* is underlined by *si contra*.

¹⁹ See also Babcock (1974: 26–28); Fitzgerald (1988); Harrison (2007a: 110).

²⁰ See also Mankin (2010: 102), who suggests the whole book may constitute a kind of *annus horribilis* with the Battle of Actium at its centre; Fitzgerald (1988: 179): “the mood is one of danger.”

intactus aut Britannus ut descenderet
 Sacra catenatus Via,
 sed ut secundum uota Parthorum sua
 urbs haec periret dextera? (Epod. 7.3–10)

Has too little Latin blood been poured out in the fields and on the sea, not so that a Roman might burn the haughty heights of hateful Carthage, or so that the previously untouched Briton might make his way in chains down the Sacred Way, but so that according to the prayers of the Parthians this city might perish by its own right hand?

Horace ironically wonders whether enough Latin blood has been spilled as a perverted and grisly sacrifice to fulfil the prayers of Rome’s enemies that she destroy herself. These lines expand on the poem’s short opening question: the geographical markers look to answer *quo*, while the idea of a perverted sacrifice picks up *scelesti*. Horace underlines this perversion with an unfavourable comparison to wolves and lions: *neque hic lupis mos nec fuit leonibus | numquam nisi in dispar feris* “neither wolves nor lions act this way, never except against beasts of different species” (Epod. 7.11–12). There is a natural order to things, and the Romans are violating it.

The animal imagery serves as transition into the second half of the poem.²¹ The poet returns briefly to rhetorical questions in order to discover the root of this perversion (Epod. 7.13–14). At this point Horace demands an answer to his questions (*responsum date*, Epod. 7.14). None, however, is forthcoming, for the poet’s addressees are thrown into fear and confusion: *tacent et albus ora pallor inficit | mentesque percussae stupent* “they are silent and a white paleness stains their faces, their overwhelmed minds are amazed” (Epod. 7.15–16). Their blanching indicates a strong emotional response of both fear and guilt.²² The emphatic whiteness of *albus pallor* stands in stark contrast to the blood spilled in line 4. This contrast is underlined by the verb *inficit*. The

²¹ The closure of the first half of the poem is marked by the use of *dextera* at the end of line 10, echoing *dexteris* at the end of line 1.

²² Mankin (1995: 149); cf. Watson (2003: 281–222), who detects only guilt.

idea of “staining” accentuates the corruption of the Romans’ guilt; at the same time, because the blood is the source of the corruption, a reader might more naturally expect it to be the stain as well. This generates a moment of aesthetic dissonance which is reflected in *mentesque percussae stupent*. These words not only express the Romans’ sense of helplessness as Horace’s questions force them to confront their own circumstances and actions, they also capture the condition of one contemplating the grotesque. As Horace’s readers register the Romans’ fear and guilt, they may also detect in Horace’s description a subtle note of mocking superiority as he observes their helplessness: the poet understands the situation better than the Romans do, hence his ability to articulate it in the face of their inability, to which he draws emphatic attention.²³ Horace’s readers, being Romans themselves, feel the fear and guilt, but as Horace’s confidants they also share in his wry laughter, and so experience a complex aesthetic response.

Horace concludes that Romulus’ murder of his brother must have cursed the Romans:

sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
 scelusque fraternae necis,
 ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi
 sacer nepotibus cruor. (Epod. 7.17–20)

This is it: bitter destiny drives the Romans and the crime of brotherly slaughter, since the blood of the undeserving Remus flowed into the earth bringing a curse to his descendants.

These final lines circle back to the first half of the poem: *scelus* echoes *scelesti* (line 1),²⁴ *cruor* picks up *sanguinis* (line 4), and *sacer* repeats *Sacra* (line 8). We may also see a parallel to the pouring of Latin blood in the fields (*campis*, line 3) in the flow of Remus’ blood *in terram*. By naming Remus, Horace also looks to *lupis* in line 11, for Remus and his brother were famously

²³ See also Watson (2003: 281), who suggests that the *tricolon crescens* of lines 15–16 “creates an effect of climax.”

²⁴ See also Watson (2003: 283).

reared by a she-wolf. Yet Remus dies in a way, according to Horace, that is uncharacteristic of wolves but which then becomes characteristic of Romans. The very foundation of Rome is predicated on an act of violence committed by one brother against another, both of whom blur the boundary between human and animal. Furthermore, the act itself is outside the boundaries of human *and* animal behaviour. This should be grim—and it is—but the conclusion is introduced with a colloquial frankness (*sic est*) that is at odds with this grim content, thus complicating the tone and rendering the story of Rome’s foundation grotesque.²⁵

Rome’s perverse internecine strife—too perverse even for wolves and lions—is the result of a curse, and Horace offers no possibility of expiation. Furthermore, no Roman seems immune. This creates a certain dissonance with *Epode* 1, where Maecenas, at least, appears beyond the reach of Horace’s criticism. It also sets the seventh poem at odds with *Epode* 9, which pairs as the “after” to *Epode* 1’s “before” and celebrates the Caesarian victory at Actium (as well as, in passing, the victory over Sextus Pompeius, *Epod.* 9.7–10).²⁶ It should, therefore, celebrate the end of civil strife. And yet a certain anxiety remains. The poem begins by asking when Horace and Maecenas will drink to Caesar’s victory at home (*Epod.* 9.1–5), indicating that they have not yet returned from the campaign.²⁷ Although he has apparently been defeated (see e.g., *uictore ... Caesare*, *Epod.* 9.2; *Io Triumphe*, *Epod.* 9.21 and 23; cf. *terra marique uictus hostis*, *Epod.* 9.27), Antony is still at large (*Epod.* 9.29–32). In the final lines of the poem, Horace returns to the motif of celebrating with wine:

capaciores adfer huc, puer, scyphos
et Chia uina aut Lesbia:
uel quod fluentem nauseam coerceat

²⁵ On the colloquialism of *sic est*, see Lindsay (2002: 79–80).

²⁶ On the relationship between *Epodes* 1 and 9, see also Carrubba (1969: 33–38).

²⁷ See also *fluentem nauseam* (*Epod.* 9.35), suggesting they are still on board a ship.

metire nobis Caecubum:
 curam metumque Caesaris rerum iuuat
 dulci Lyaeo soluere. (Epod. 9.33–38)

Boy, bring over here cups that hold more and Chian or Lesbian wine:
 or, because it may rein in our flowing sea-sickness, measure out
 Caecuban wine for us: it is a pleasure to let go the worry and fear
 for Caesar's affairs with sweet wine.

The Caecuban wine returns the reader to the celebrations longed for at the beginning of the poem and therefore reinforces the lack of finality in the victory—a lack arguably underlined by Horace's inability to pick a particular wine and by the nausea, which itself results from the same *mare incertum* on which Antony is currently carried (Epod. 9.32). The final couplet confirms the continued existence of fear and anxiety, even if the wine god can make us forget.

Even if one accepts this residual uncertainty at the end of *Epode* 9, there is no denying the superficial triumphalism of the poem and the denigration of the defeated Antony and his followers. The tone is overall upbeat, and inasmuch as the poem clearly adopts a partisan point of view, it is a far cry from the position adopted by Horace in *Epode* 7. It is not, however, the poet's last word on Rome's disordered affairs, and in *Epode* 16 Horace returns to the desperate pessimism of the seventh poem.²⁸ Here, he urges that in the face of continued civil discord everyone should abandon Rome. If *Epode* 9 marks what should be the end of civil strife and thus a new beginning and turning point in the middle of the collection, how is the reader to interpret the opening lines of the sixteenth poem: *altera iam teritur bellis ciuilibus aetas | suis et ipsa Roma uiribus ruit* "Another generation is now worn down by civil wars and Rome is destroying herself with her own strength" (Epod. 16.1–2)? After a list of foreign enemies, including Hannibal, who failed to destroy Rome, Horace

²⁸ It is perhaps worth noting that *Epodes* 7 and 16 are the penultimate poems of the first and second half of the book, respectively, if we treat poem 9 as the central poem and thus not belonging to either half: cf. Porter (1995: 107–108).

reiterates that the Romans are destroying themselves by picking up the idea of a blood-sacrifice from *Epode 7*: *impia perdemus deuoti sanguinis aetas, | ferisque rursus occupabitur solum* “we, an impious generation of blood vowed to the gods, we are lost and the soil will again be possessed by wild beasts” (*Epod.* 16.9–10).²⁹ This repossession of the land by animals is added as the final nail in Rome’s coffin. Yet it is also the implied consequence of Horace’s own plan, namely, to follow the example of the Phocaeans and leave the city:³⁰

nulla sit hac potior sententia, Phocaeorum
 uelut profugit exsecrata ciuitas
 agros atque Lares patrios, habitandaque fana
 apris relinquit et rapacibus lupis (Epod. 16.17–20)

Let there be no more convincing proposal than this, just as the
 citizens of the Phocaeans cursed and fled from its fields and native
 gods, and left its shrines to be inhabited by boar and ravenous
 wolves ...

If the reader is to imagine the same fate for Rome, the presence of wolves is striking since in *Epode 7* the poet had unfavourably compared Romans to these animals. Moreover, given Rome’s ancestral ties to wolves—ties that are perhaps activated when Horace imagines the desecration of Romulus’ grave (*Epod.* 16.11–14)—this would amount to a kind of reversion to a wildness paradoxically more primitive yet more civilized than the current circumstances.

Horace does not at first have a specific destination in mind for the fleeing Romans, and in their proposed flight they begin to look like the defeated Antony from *Epode 9*: just as he is borne this way and that on the unsteady sea, so too the Romans will go “wherever” (*quocumque*, *Epod.* 16.21).³¹ Horace specifies that everyone should swear not to return to Rome until a number of

²⁹ Cf. Carrubba (1969: 39).

³⁰ See also Watson (2003: 479).

³¹ Tellingly, the south wind, *Notus*, appears in the travels of both Antony and the Romans (*Epod.* 9.31 and 16.22).

ἁδύνατα have come about (*Epod.* 16. 25–36). I have discussed this list in Chapter 1, section 3, noting particularly the way it maps on to Horace’s aesthetic ideas of how the elements of an artistic work should fit together. In the context of this poem, the unnatural pairings and habitats of animals introduce an element of the grotesque that is at one with the poem’s transgressive stance:

nouaque monstra iunxerit libidine
 mirus amor, iuuat ut tigris subsidere ceruis,
 adulteretur et columba miluo,
 credula nec rauos timeant armenta leones
 ametque salsa leuis hircus aequora. (*Epod.* 16.30–34)

And [when] an unnatural love has joined monsters together with a strange lust, so that it is pleasing for tigers to settle down with deer, and the dove commits adultery with the kite, and the trusting herds do not fear the tawny lions and the goat, now smooth, desires the briny seas.

The last item in this list—the smooth goat—merits more detailed consideration.³² The smoothness itself introduces an element of incongruity since *hircus* may have been etymologically associated with *hirsutus*, thus producing an oxymoron.³³ A further incongruity is the goat’s affection for the sea, which, in closing the oath, connects back to the beginning: *sed iuremus in haec: simul imis saxa renarint | uadis leuata, ne redire sit nefas* “But let us swear to this: that it not be a crime to return as soon as rocks floating up from the deepest ocean swim on the surface” (*Epod.* 16. 25–26). Horace links the Romans’ return to Rome with these unnaturally floating rocks. Indeed, if the rocks float, that indicates a suspension of proper order in the world. Consequently the Romans’ return will itself not be contrary to divine law (*ne sit nefas*). As the first and last ἁδύνατα in the list, the rocks and the goat carry special emphasis. Significantly, both happen at sea contrary to nature and expectations. This emphasis on the sea ties these impossibilities closely to the Romans,

³² See also Hollis (1998: 311–312), who suggests that Horace derives the goat from the foundation oracle of Tarentum (see Diod. Sic. 8.21) and may gesture to the fact that the oracle’s “goat” is actually a tree.

³³ Hollis (1998: 312); on the etymology, see Maltby (1991: 271), citing Cassiod. *in psalm.* 65.15, line 315.

since immediately before the oath of impossibilities, Horace encourages the Romans to “get on board” (*ratem occupare quid moramur*, *Epod.* 16.24) and sail away from Rome. Likewise at the end of the oath, he repeats the exhortation:

uos quibus est uirtus, muliebrem tollite luctum,
 Etrusca praeter et uolate litora.
 nos manet Oceanus circumuagus... (*Epod.* 16.39–41)

You who have courage, let go your womanly grieving and fly
 beyond the Etruscan shores. The ocean which flows around awaits
 us.

This emphasis on the Romans’ sea voyaging creates an associative link between the Romans, the rocks, and the goat. This link suggests that despite Horace’s encouragement, the Romans perhaps do not belong at sea—that their flight would be somehow unnatural in the same way as floating rocks and swimming goats. Horace draws a further connection between the Romans and the goat by describing the general populace as “the unteachable herd” (*indocili grege*, *Epod.* 16.37).³⁴ This “herd” is that portion of the *populus Romanus* which, due to fear and despondency, are unwilling to follow Horace’s advice and take flight, and the poet condemns them to remain and perish: *mollis et exspes | inominata perprimat cubilia* “let [the herd], cowardly and without hope, keep lying in their ill-omened beds” (*Epod.* 16.37–38). The characterization of these Romans not only as herd animals, but “soft” or “cowardly” (*mollis*), marks them as the ideal prey for the wild beasts that will reoccupy Rome (line 10). Yet in taking to the sea, the other Romans—the “better part” (*melior pars*, lines 15 and 37)—mimic the smooth goat and so are subtly imbued with its incongruity. This all contributes to the breakdown of categorical boundaries in the poem, a breakdown seen also in the juxtaposition of *uirtus* and *muliebrem* in line 39. The Romans are, it seems, an accursed, grotesque race with bestial traits and an improper mix of masculine and feminine qualities.

³⁴ Watson (2003: 511) notes the derogatory tone of *grex*.

As the poem continues, a specific destination for the Roman evacuees becomes clear: *arua, beata* | *petamus arua, diuites et insulas* “Let’s seek the fields, the blessed fields and the islands of wealth” (*Epod.* 16.41–42). In the Blest Isles, the land, plants, and animals produce without the need for human toil, and there are no predatory bears or snakes to fear (*Epod.* 16.43–52). The weather is temperate, the livestock do not suffer from disease, and sea-faring is unknown (*Epod.* 16.53–62). Horace makes the Golden Age implications explicit and underscores the contemporary post-lapserian state with a rapid account of humanity’s decline through the ages:³⁵

Iuppiter illa piae secrevit litora genti,
ut inquinavit aere tempus aureum;
aere, dehinc ferro duravit saecula, quorum
piis secunda uate me datur fuga. (*Epod.* 16.63–66)

Jupiter set apart those shores for the righteous race when he stained
with bronze the golden age; with bronze, then with iron did he
harden the ages, to the righteous of which a favourable escape is
granted with me as their prophet.

Righteousness (*pietas*), then, is the required characteristic for entry to the Isles of the Blest. But there is a problem, and it is not merely that some members of the community are too incorrigible to take the hint and get out of Rome while they can (*Epod.* 16.35–38). This is not the first time someone has suggested abandoning the city. Most famously in 390 BCE following the sack of Rome by the Gauls, the tribunes of the plebs proposed an evacuation to Veii, but this was vehemently opposed by M. Furius Camillus on predominantly religious grounds (Livy 5.50.8–54.7).³⁶ That is, abandoning Rome and its gods is, historically, evidence of a *lack* of piety and would thus disqualify the evacuees from entry into the Isles of the Blest. And abandonment of the

³⁵ On the rapidity of humanity’s decline, including the omission of the silver age, see also Mankin (1995: 170): “a conception even more pessimistic than that of Hesiod, since the decline of humanity seems uninterrupted and, perhaps, irreversible.”

³⁶ See also Watson (2003: 484).

gods is specifically contemplated by Horace's Phocaeen example, where the *Lares* are left behind with their native fields (*Epod.* 16.19). More than that, the logic of the poem precludes this destination. The repetition in lines 63 and 66 of the adjective *pius*, especially in the phrase *piae genti*, recalls the poet's earlier assertion that the Romans are *impia aetas*. No member of the current generation—and, given the force of the *altera...aetas* in the first line, no one from the previous generation, either—qualifies.³⁷ Horace's whole escape plan is as doomed as the city: no one will survive because no one deserves to.³⁸ And even if they did, Horace's plan to sail to the Islands poses a further problem, for they have never been reached by seafarers (*Epod.* 16.57–60).

Horace's proposal, at least as he presents it, is internally inconsistent, and scholars have disagreed about what the point is.³⁹ At any rate, *Epode* 16's internal inconsistency reflects precisely the disorder of the world from which Horace advocates escaping and to which the Romans should only return after the establishment of a new order that will manifest ironically as unnatural ἀδύνατα. The world is now topsy-turvy, but even if things get better, they will remain topsy-turvy. This is not the last poem in the collection: *Epode* 17 and Canidia (on which, see below) claim that distinction. But if I am right to identify in *Epode* 1 a statement of Horace's poetic mission that is parallel to the military mission of Maecenas, *Epode* 16 is the embodiment of Horace's failure to complete that mission successfully, to impose order on the world poetically; it is not for nothing, I suggest, that he refers to himself as a *uates* in the final line of the poem.⁴⁰ Here at the end of the collection is the end of the world, dissolving into chaos and disorder. The disorder

³⁷ See also Mankin (1995: 270); Watson (2003: 528).

³⁸ A further irony: the weather in the Isles is ideal for flocks (*nullius astri | gregem aestuosa torret impotentia*, *Epod.* 16. 61–62), yet Horace advocates leaving the Roman *grex* behind.

³⁹ See the useful summary of Watson (2003: 485).

⁴⁰ On the religious and political significance of the term, see briefly Newman (1967: 23–24).

of the world should be kept in mind as one considers the instability of the metrical forms, narrative poses, and subject matter (from garlic to civil war!) used in the collection. It should not surprise us to find a similar use of disordered aesthetics:⁴¹ before the poet can attempt to correct the world, first he must reflect it.

2. *Epode 3*

The *Epodes* take a moment to get into a fully invective swing. *Epode 1* remains in an almost entirely eulogistic mode.⁴² Similarly the second poem's extended praise of country-living is undercut only by the last-minute revelation that the speaker is not the poet but the usurer Alfius, who is about to head for the countryside now that he has called in all his debts (*Epod. 2.67–70*). In the third poem of the collection, however, Horace's invective voice emerges.⁴³ The opening couplet may suggest that the poem will focus its attention on parricides (*parentis olim siquis in pia manu | senile guttur fregerit* "If ever someone with an impious hand should break the aged neck of his father," *Epod. 3.1–2*), but the punishment for such a person bathetically identifies the real target of Horace's attack: *edit cicutis alium nocentius* "Let him eat garlic, which is more harmful than hemlock" (*Epod. 3.3*). Garlic is a "poison" that "rages" inside the poet (*quid hoc ueneni saeuit in praecordiis*, *Epod. 3.4*), and he wonders—with a touch of grotesque imagery—whether his salad was dressed with snake's blood or prepared by Horace's *bête noire* Canidia:

⁴¹ See also Fitzgerald (1988: 183 and 185), especially on animal imagery.

⁴² See also Günther (2013b: 193): "perhaps the composition that strays furthest from the iambic genre, but still we find two generic markers: 'self-irony' and, the counterpart of blame, 'praise'."

⁴³ See also Watson (2003: 174), who remarks that one element of this poem is "an interest in the abhorrent and grotesque inherited from the Hellenistic poets." Cf. Fitzgerald (1988: 182), who argues that *Epode 4* is "the first of the properly iambic, or invective, poems of the collection."

num uiperinus his cruor
incoctus herbis me fefellit, an malas
Canidia tractauit dapes?

(*Epod.* 3.4–6)

Surely snake's blood dressing on these vegetables has done me in,
or Canidia has prepared this evil feast?

The juxtaposition of the serpent's blood and Canidia may recall her nighttime activities in *Satire* 1.8: there she pours blood (*cruor*) into a ditch (*Sat.* 1.8.28) and an observer might see snakes (*serpentes*, *Sat.* 1.8.34). Furthermore, at the very end of *Satire* 2.8 Fundanius recounts avoiding eating Nasidienus' food "as if Canidia had breathed on it, she who is worse than African snakes" (*uelut illis | Canidia adflasset peior serpentibus Afris*, *Sat.* 2.8.94–95).⁴⁴ Certainly a blood-based vinaigrette on salad and its resultant dyspepsia point to an improper and grotesque mix of elements appropriate to Canidia's involvement (see also below on *Epodes* 5 and 17).⁴⁵ Yet despite his complaints against the alliaceous bulb, it is ironically the venom of the ingested garlic which generates the venom of the invective poet. As Gowers notes, garlic is a "uniquely appropriate 'food' for iambic anger, as well as a complex metaphor for the peculiarly symmetrical conflict between the iambist and his victims."⁴⁶ Moreover, the grotesqueness of the description therefore sets a pattern for grotesque invective.

The nod to Canidia allows Horace to compare further the effects of the garlic with other instances of witchcraft. It may be the concoction with which Medea anointed Jason when he yoked the fire-breathing bulls (*ignota tauris illigaturum iuga | perunxit hoc Iasonem*, *Epod.* 3.11–12), or it may be the potion with which she killed Jason's new fiancée: *hoc delibutis ulta donis paelicem*

⁴⁴ See also Carrubba (1969: 42).

⁴⁵ Fraenkel (1957: 69) believes that Canidia is mentioned only in passing in order to link this poem with *Epodes* 5 and 17 and thus "strengthen the coherence of the book."

⁴⁶ Gowers (1993: 280–281).

| *serpente fugit alite* “she took vengeance on the concubine with gifts smeared with this and then fled on a winged snake” (*Epod.* 3.13–14). Commentators have noted the alternation here between an ointment to protect the beloved and one to destroy a rival. What is less remarked upon is the confusion of internal and external.⁴⁷ In neither of the cases concerning Medea is the potion meant to be consumed, but is applied externally to the skin. There is a further confusion: the first example is meant to *protect* from the heat, not burn itself. Horace then follows these mythical comparanda with two more: one from nature, another from myth:

nec tantus umquam siderum insedit uapor
 siticulosae Apuliae
 nec munus umeris efficacis Herculis
 inarsit aestuosius. (*Epod.* 3.15–18)

No heat so great ever settled on parched Apulia from the stars nor
 did that gift on the shoulders of powerful Hercules burn with more
 heat.

The gift of Hercules falls somewhere between the two parts of Medea’s story. On the one hand, it is a token of love, like the ointment for Jason. On the other hand, it is (unwittingly) an instrument of revenge. This ambivalence is echoed in the poem’s conclusion. It is often presumed that Horace has eaten garlic at a dinner hosted by Maecenas, apparently as some kind of joke, and is now warning Maecenas, unusually “full of jokes” (*iocose*), not to pull such a prank ever again lest his girlfriend reject his advances:⁴⁸

at si quid umquam tale concupiueris,
 iocose Maecenas, precor
 manum puella sauio opponat tuo,
 extrema et in sponda cubet. (*Epod.* 3.19–22)

⁴⁷ Fitzgerald (1988: 182) has argued that Horace’s “intestinal problem” reflects Rome’s greater political strife.

⁴⁸ Watson (2003: 125 and 142); Mankin (1995: 88 and 97); Fitzgerald (1988: 181–182). There is another possibility: if Maecenas should ever desire garlic, Horace hopes that his girlfriend will reject his advances. This seems less likely as it requires the frustration of Maecenas’ sexual desires to be, in essence, understood as a positive (perhaps to protect girl from suffering the same burning effects as the mythical figures in the poem).

But if you should ever desire any such thing, my merry Maecenas, I
pray that your girl will block your kisses with her hand and sleep on
the very edge of the bed.

Maecenas' desire (*concupiueris*) to use garlic maps onto that felt by Medea and Deianeira in the mythical examples to use their burning substances. The consequence, however, will be the destruction of love: the girl will refuse to kiss him. This suggests that Maecenas himself may have suffer the effects of garlic breath without actually eating the garlic—resulting in an ironically cold reception.⁴⁹

3. *Epode 5*

The passing reference to Canidia in *Epode 3* prepares the reader for a larger role in the fifth poem of the *Epodes*, where the witch returns with a friend familiar from the first book of *Satires*: Sagana. On this occasion, however, they appear as part of a larger coven. In the *Satires*, the witches participate fully in Horace's grotesque aesthetic, and we find the same treatment in the *Epodes*. The poem begins with a "cold open": an unnamed figure—the reader soon discovers that he is a young man who has yet to don the *toga uirilis* (note *purpurae decus* in line 7)⁵⁰—begs a group of fierce-looking women for an explanation of their treatment of him (*Epod.* 5.1–10). The reader does not yet know what he has suffered or is going to suffer or who these women are, but the youth closes by comparing their collective glare to that of a stepmother or an injured beast: *quid ut nouerca me intueris aut uti | petita ferro belua* (*Epod.* 5.9–10). "Stepmother" is a byword in classical literature from Greek tragedy on for wicked and murderous women.⁵¹ The potential

⁴⁹ On the garlic-breath, see also Watson (2003: 143); Mankin (1995: 97–98).

⁵⁰ He is also *puer* in line 12 and his body *impube* in line 13.

⁵¹ Watson (2003: 194–195), with citations and further scholarship.

savagery of *nouerca* is confirmed by the pairing here with *belua*. While the comparison with stepmothers vilifies the women, *belua* dehumanizes them. It therefore provides the first instance in the poem where the poet breaks down the boundary between human and animal, and more follow.

These breakdowns work on both the literal and metaphorical levels. One very basic instance is Folia who possesses “masculine lust” (*masculae libidinis ... Foliam, Epod. 5.41–42*) and thus confuses genders. Canidia herself embodies the transgression of the human-animal boundary since her hair is braided with short snakes (*Canidia, breuibis implicata uiperis | crinis, Epod. 5.15–16*),⁵² making literal the connection between snakes and Canidia hinted at in *Epode 3*. Moreover, the ingredients for her potion are a gruesome mix of flora and fauna:

iubet sepulcris caprificos erutas,
iubet cupressos funebris
et uncta turpis oua ranae sanguine
plumamque nocturnae strigis
herbasque quas Iolcos atque Hiberia
mittit uenenorum ferax,
et ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis
flammis aduri Colchicis. (*Epod. 5.17–24*)

She orders wild fig trees torn from graves, she orders funereal cypresses and eggs anointed with the blood of a foul toad, the plumage of a nocturnal screech owl and herbs which Iolcos and Hiberia, fertile in poisons, export, and bones snatched from the jaw of a starving bitch—all to be burned in Colchis’ flames.

This blending of components materializes in the toad’s blood smeared on the eggs and the representational word order where *oua* is placed between *turpis* and *ranae*. Overall, Canidia in effect orders a ritual enactment of the grotesque aesthetic: vegetal, avian, amphibian, and potentially mammalian elements are all brought together for a single purpose and become one in

⁵² See Watson (2003: 198–199) on the chthonic and witch-related associations of the snakes.

the fire.⁵³ Death permeates through macabre touches—sepulchral fig frees, deathly cypresses, bones. The blood, the ugliness of the toad, the owl, and the poisons all add to the sense of menace and help explain the young man’s panicked pleas. This aesthetic consistency tends to point away from a true grotesque which should prompt a more confused response. Yet careful readers of Horace, alerted by Canidia’s name in line 15, will think of the first time they met the witch, namely in *Satire* 1.8. As I have discussed, that poem produces precisely the complex aesthetic response intrinsic to the grotesque, in no small part due to the depiction of Canidia herself. In his role as the tutelary deity of the Esquiline gardens, Priapus prevents the witches from carrying out their activities and scares them away by farting. The recollection of *Satire* 1.8 and its conclusion in the context of *Epode* 5 might be enough to undermine the menace of the latter scene, since the reader knows that Canidia’s previous ritual was comically interrupted by an attack of flatulence.⁵⁴ One small detail, however, actually imports Priapus into *Epode* 5 and thereby complicates the scene. As noted in the preceding section, *Satire* 1.8 is narrated by a statue of Priapus carved from a piece of figwood (see *Sat.* 1.8.1 and 47). Moreover, its events take place in the Esquiline gardens which were previously a communal paupers’ graveyard. The combination in *Epode* 5 of figs and graveyards confirms the link with *Satire* 1.8. On a very strong reading, Canidia’s calls for “wild figs torn from graves” may enact a kind of literary revenge on the figure who foiled her previous plans by consigning him to the fire.⁵⁵ At the very least, recognition of the connection between

⁵³ I say “potentially mammalian” in reference to the bone taken from the dog.

⁵⁴ But see Pagán (2006: 56), who suggests that the sinister nature of Canidia in the *Epodes* means that the witch cannot be “wholly innocent” in the *Satires*.

⁵⁵ Pagán (2006: 48–49) also connects the figwood of *Epode* 5 with Priapus, suggesting that the statue’s fear of the witches in *Satire* 1.4 may be justified.

Canidia's graveyard fig trees and Priapus incorporates the aesthetic complication of *Satire* 1.8 into *Epode* 5.

A particularly developed instance of such grotesque categorical transgression follows immediately in the simile describing Sagana's hair: *horret capillis ut marinus asperis | echinus aut currens aper* "her hair stands on end like a sea urchin with rough spines or a charging boar" (*Epode* 5.27–28). In this case, the imagery confounds more than just human-animal distinctions. Sagana's double simile also ignores proper geographical limits: the urchin and the boar, like the dolphin and boar of *Ars P.* 29–30, belong separately to the sea and forest. A further incongruence emerges inasmuch as urchins tend to be stationary (or very slow moving), but the boar is running. Both images are apt in their own way: the static and marine urchin captures the particular shape of Sagana's head as well as her task of sprinkling water (*spargens Auernalis aquas*, *Epod.* 5.26), while the charging boar indicates the rapid movement implicit in her ranging through the whole house (*per totam domum*, *Epod.* 5.25) and the fact that she has tucked her clothing out of the way (*expedita*, *Epod.* 5.25). Moreover, the simile blends literary registers, since the boar—particularly an aggressive, charging one—is more usually associated with heroic poetry,⁵⁶ whereas the urchin belongs in lists of seafood common to natural histories or the dinner parties of satire.⁵⁷ Finally, the

⁵⁶ In epic, the boar is apt both as object of the hunt and as a comparandum for a warrior in a simile: see e.g., Homer *Il.* 9.538–549, the "fierce boar" (σὺν ἄγριον) sent by Artemis and slain by Meleager; *Il.* 16.818–828, where the contest between Hector and Patroclus is compared to the battle between a lion and an "untiring boar" (σὺν ἀκάμαντα); *Il.* 17.18–23, where Menelaus compares Patroclus' spirit to that of a leopard, a lion, and a "baleful boar" (σὺς κάπρου ὀλοόφρονος); *Od.* 19.428–466, where during the hunt Odysseus is wounded by the boar before he kills it; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.122–129, where Herakles puts the Erymanthian boar aside to join the Argonauts; *Argon.* 2.815–835, where a boar, "a deadly monster" (ὀλοὸν τέρας), attacks and kills Idmon and is slain by Peleus and Idas; *Argon.* 3.1350–1353, where Jason rages like a boar (μαϊμώων σὺν εἵκελος) sharpening its tusks to use against hunters; Virg. *Aen.* 1.321–324, where the disguised Venus asks Aeneas if he has seen one of her sisters in pursuit of a "foaming boar" (*spumantis apri*); *Aen.* 4.156–159, where Ascanius hopes to cross paths with a boar or lion while hunting.

⁵⁷ Urchins are included in seafood lists as early as Plautus (*Rudens* 297–298) and Ennius' translation of the *Hedyphagetica* (Enn. fr. 44 Vahlen = 28.11 Courtney); see also Watson (2003: 209), who sees this pairing of "humble" urchin and boar as "amusingly grotesque."

simile blurs gender boundaries. Sagana is a woman, but both the *echinus* and the *aper* are masculine. Even this female-human / male-animal dichotomy may be less than clear cut. For the sea urchin is used in Greek literature—including most importantly the iambic tradition and Old Attic Comedy—as a metaphor for the female pudenda.⁵⁸ Thus we find it in a fragment of Hipponax: τὸν θεοῖς[ι]ν ἐχθρὸν τοῦτον, ὃς κατευδούσης | τῆς μητρ[ὸς] ἐσκύλευε τὸν βρύσσον “that man, hateful to the gods, who despoiled his mother’s urchin while she was sleeping” (Hipponax fr. 70.7–8). The metaphor sexualizes Sagana, and thus aptly foreshadows the erotic nature of the witches’ ritual. In doing so, however, it muddles human anatomy, since the urchin represents Sagana’s head. The simile, therefore, amounts to a conflation of seemingly inconsistent elements—human, animal, male, female, terrestrial, marine, aggressive, passive—that pull the reader in different directions simultaneously. At the same time, the imagery finds unity in the simile’s tenor: the incongruity is explained when we acknowledge that we are seeing the same thing from different angles. The tension that exists between that unity and the disparateness of the imagery, a tension that can only be released by an interpretive act on the reader’s part, is at the core of Horace’s grotesque aesthetic.

Following the description of the witches’ activities, Horace gives Canidia a speech which begins with an invocation of Night and Diana (*Epod.* 5.49–54). The reader discovers that she has been spurned by her lover, Varus, and has attempted revenge by smearing him and his bed with some unguent worthy of Medea that should have made him forget all other mistresses (*paelices*), but it has not worked (*Epod.* 5.55–70). Varus, it seems is still visiting women in the night. Interestingly, Canidia articulates the time by reference to animals: wild beasts are asleep in the forests, but the dogs of the Subura (*Suburanae canes*) are awake and, like their near namesake

⁵⁸ Henderson (1991: 22 and 142); Shaw (2014: 557–558).

Canidia, they bark at Varus (*Epod.* 5.55–58).⁵⁹ Canidia deduces that Varus is under the spell of a more knowledgeable witch (*Epod.* 5. 71–72), so she will perform a love spell that will bind Varus to her so strongly that the world will collapse before he escapes her:

maius parabo, maius infundam tibi
fastidienti poculum,
priusque caelum sidet inferius mari
tellure porrecta super,
quam non amore sic meo flagres uti
bitumen atris ignibus. (*Epod.* 5.77–82)

I will prepare something stronger, I will pour some stronger draught
for you in your disgust, and heaven will sink beneath the sea with
the earth stretched over the top before you do not burn with my love
the way pitch does with black flames.

The fundamental divisions of the cosmos are here endangered by Canidia. She threatens the ultimate collapse of categories, a return to a primordial grotesque. At this point the boy breaks in, cursing the witches and promising his own grotesque revenge (*Epod.* 5.83–90). He will pursue them as a Fury in the night, attacking their faces with hooked talons and perching on their breasts to disrupt their sleep with terror (*Epod.* 5.91–96). The verb I have rendered as “perch” here is *adsidens*, which may contain a bilingual pun on the Greek ἐφιάλτης, the supernatural embodiment of nightmare.⁶⁰ In antiquity ἐφιάλτης was associated with the verb ἐφάλλομαι “to leap upon.”⁶¹ The analogous structure of *adsidens*, especially its prepositional prefix, may pick up on this etymology. Moreover, ἐφιάλτης was conceived as a choking demon who prevented its victims

⁵⁹ On the connection of Canidia with the city, see Welch (2001: 189).

⁶⁰ In the *Oneirocritica*, Artemidorus notes that Ephialtes has been identified with Pan, himself a good of “panic,” though they mean different things (2.37).

⁶¹ See *LSJ* s.v. ἐφιάλτης.

from breathing properly.⁶² In this respect, it is noteworthy that the boy-Fury will perch on the witches' chests (*inquietis adsidens praecordiis*). The boy, in essence, will become the nightmares haunting the witches. This is doubly the case when it is remembered (as discussed in Chapter 1, section 2) that dreams, and nightmares especially, have long been associated with the grotesque because of the confused and monstrous images they contain.⁶³ In becoming a Fury, the boy becomes just such a confused and monstrous nightmare image.

The boy's ultimate revenge will be inflicted by dogs and vultures from the Esquiline, who will rend and scatter the witches' unburied limbs (*Epod.* 5.99–100). Such an end amounts to an ironic reversal of *Satire* 1.8 where Canidia and Sagana in essence performed this function. Yet just as the witches transgress categorical boundaries, so too here at the end of the poem does the boy. Prompted by the witches' behaviour, he channels his physical powerlessness into verbal violence and thus becomes a figure of invective. In so doing, he himself begins to collapse categorical boundaries and, like the witches, participate in the grotesque. For in death, he will become both god and animal. As a fury he will manifest the power of the divine shades (*quae uis **deorum** est Manium*, *Epod.* 5.94). Yet he also will be a bird with talons (*curuis unguibus*, *Epod.* 5.93), and this avian quality is emphasized by *adsidens* in line 95, a verb particularly associated with birds.⁶⁴ His status as fury in fact transforms the boy into Canidia and Sagana, whom Priapus calls furies at *Sat.* 1.8.45. This, then, exemplifies a phenomenon described by Oliensis in which the invective poet ends up looking like his target.⁶⁵

⁶² In the tenth of his letters, Themison, a doctor of the late second/early first century BCE, also gives it the name πνιγλίων “choker” (Paul. Aeg. 3.15); see also Artem. 2.37, where Ephialtes presses down and constricts the sleeper.

⁶³ See e.g., my discussion of Jennings (1963) in section 1a of the introduction.

⁶⁴ So too Mankin (1995: 135); Watson (2003: 247–248).

⁶⁵ Oliensis (1998: 64–68).

4. *Epode 6*

Although it does not rise to the full grotesque found in *Epode 5*, the short sixth *Epode* makes extensive use of animal metaphors to characterize both the poet and his unnamed target. This person, who harasses undeserving guests, turns cowardly dog when faced by wolves: *quid immerentis hospites uexas canis | ignauus aduersum lupos* (*Epod.* 6.1–2). The wolf in this case is Horace himself, and he claims he will bite back if attacked: *me remorsurum petis* (*Epod.* 6.4). If not necessarily a wolf, Horace compares himself to loyal working dogs while his opponent is an ill-disciplined scavenger:

nam qualis aut Molossus aut fuluos Lacon,
amica uis pastoribus,
agam per altas aure sublata niuis,
quaecumque praecedet fera:
tu, cum timenda uoce complesti nemus,
proiectum odoraris cibum. (*Epod.* 6.5–10)

For just like either a Molossan or tawny Spartan hound, friendly strength to farmers, through deep snow with pricked ears I will drive whatever wild beast is out in front: but you, when you have filled the grove with fearful barking, you sniff out discarded food.

As a final warning, Horace declares that he is very harsh on the wicked and raises his horns at the ready: *caue, caue: namque in malos asperrimus | parata tollo cornua* (*Epod.* 6.11–12). This recalls the image of the poet as a dangerous bull from *Satire* 1.4.34.⁶⁶ Finally, the poet returns to the canine imagery as he considers his proper response to being bitten: *an si quis atro dente me petiuerit, | inultus ut flebo puer?* “Or if someone attacks me with a black tooth, will I weep unavenged like a child?” (*Epod.* 6.15–16).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ So too Watson (2003: 263).

⁶⁷ Watson (2003: 265) explains that the adjective *ater* here conveys the malice of the addressee’s attack; also Fitzgerald (1988: 186), who suggests that by comparing his own position to that of a *puer*, Horace reactivates the image of the boy in *Epode 5* who is about to suffer at the hands of the witches and this resonance destabilizes the iambic poet’s claims to power.

The overall effect of this imagery—canine, lupine, and bovine—is to dehumanize both parties, especially since each in his animal guise maintains a relationship with humanity: Horace as disciplined working dog helping the shepherds, his opponent as scavenging nuisance-barker and assailant of the undeserving. Superficially, Horace’s depiction of himself is positive and in stark contrast to his adversary.⁶⁸ Yet the inclusion of the horn-imagery from *Satire* 1.4 complicates the positive implications since the aggressive bull is there by default a negative image, at least in the eyes of potential victims (*Sat.* 1.4.34–38). In that poem, just as here, Horace attempts to rehabilitate the image by asserting that when he attacks, only the deserving are targeted (e.g., *Sat.* 1.4.65–70). The horns also confuse bovine with canine imagery. Watson even notes that the “abrupt change of metaphor has attracted much criticism” along with attempts to interpret *cornua* as something other than the horns of a bull, before defending the aptness of imagery on literary and lexical grounds.⁶⁹ Despite the imagic shift, Watson finds unity instead in verbal and syntactical parallels, noting *nam* and *namque* (lines 5 and 11), *qualis* with *aut* (lines 5 and 13–14), and forms of *petere* (lines 4 and 15).⁷⁰ This is true, but we should not quickly dispense with the confusion of metaphors: why not a horned dog, a beast that bites and gores? This blend is hinted at by Horace in the lines immediately between the bull metaphor and the “black tooth.” In these lines the poet likens himself to Archilochus and Hipponax: *qualis Lycambae spretus infido gener | aut acer hostis Bupalus* “[I raise my horns] just like spurned the son-in-law did to faithless Lycambes or the fierce enemy of Bupalus” (*Epod.* 6.13–14). The names of the two targets contain Greek roots connected to the

⁶⁸ See also Oliensis (1998: 76).

⁶⁹ Watson (2003: 263); see e.g., Franekel (1957: 57), who condemns the bull imagery precisely for its inconsistency with the canine imagery.

⁷⁰ Watson (2003: 263).

imagery of *Epode* 6: *Lyc-* from λύκος “wolf,” and *Bu-* from βοῦς “ox.”⁷¹ Just as Horace combines in his person the respective enemies of the “wolf-stepper” and “bull-dick,”⁷² so too does he combine that same imagery in his persecution of the wicked. This blending of animal imagery and of aggressive with domesticated traits, particularly in the scope of such a brief poem, effects another Horatian grotesque.

5. *Epodes* 8 and 12

Epode 8 pairs an explicitly sexual situation with a vivid and unflattering description of an aging woman’s body, and Horace exploits an aesthetic incongruence between the voyeuristic titillation of his readers and the potential revulsion at what is actually presented. The poem’s unnamed male persona ostensibly responds to his partner’s complaint about his inability to perform sexually by itemizing her physical flaws. She is decrepit (*longo putidam te saeculo*, *Epod.* 8.1), her teeth are rotten and old age has wrinkled her forehead (*tibi dens ater et rugis uetus | frontem senectus exaret*, *Epod.* 8.3–4). The next item adds both a scatological element and animal imagery: *hietque turpis inter aridas natis | podex uelut crudae bouis* “Your foul anus gapes between your withered buttocks like that of a cow with the runs” (*Epod.* 8.5–6).⁷³ This pairing of human and animal continues as he sarcastically concedes that the woman’s breasts, abdomen, and thighs arouse him:

sed incitat me pectus et mammae putres,
equina quales ubera,
uenterque mollis et femur tumentibus
exile suris additum. (*Epod.* 8.7–10)

⁷¹ So too Watson (2003: 264).

⁷² On the meaning of Bupalus’ name, see Rosen (1988: 32).

⁷³ Watson (2003: 297–298) suggests that *crudae bouis* also indicates that the cow itself is emaciated as a result of its inability to digest food properly.

But your bosom arouses me and your rotting breasts, like the udders
of a horse, your spongy belly, and your scrawny thighs atop swollen
ankles.

The speaker goes on to explain that no matter how wealthy, well-born, or well-educated the woman may be, none of that will give him an erection (*Epod.* 8.11–18). He closes by asserting that her only option is to stimulate him orally (*Epod.* 8.19–20). Both the cow and the horse similes inject an element of hybridity into the description of the woman, once again blurring those categorical boundaries. Moreover, the combination of withering and swelling creates an image of distortion: the woman is literally out of shape. The humiliation of a sexual partner is a feature of the iambic poetry of Archilochus and Hipponax, but the compactness and realism of the poem owes more to Hellenistic epigram.⁷⁴ How should the reader respond? For an ancient audience, this level of humiliation will have introduced an element of humour.⁷⁵ Yet a certain confusion develops. If nothing else, the sketch is meant to explain to the reader why the speaker is not aroused, but there is a tension between the erotic context and 18 lines of not merely unerotic but actively de-eroticizing details.⁷⁶ As a result, the reader is left to wonder how the speaker ended up here in the first place.⁷⁷ This is a question to which I will return below.

The twelfth *Epode* deals with a subject very similar to the eighth, and may very well pick up where the latter left off.⁷⁸ It consists of a heated exchange between a man and an older woman—perhaps the same woman—during a sexual encounter after the man once again leaves the woman

⁷⁴ Watson (2003: 289–292); Fraenkel (1957: 58–59); on archaic iambic, see e.g., West (1974: 25–28).

⁷⁵ Watson (2003: 308) notes that the final demand for oral sex is also meant to degrade and humiliate.

⁷⁶ So too Richlin (1992: 113).

⁷⁷ See also Watson (2003: 287–288), who argues that the man’s sexual dysfunction is not impotence since he is not sexually attracted to the woman.

⁷⁸ Ps.-Acro ad *Epod.* 12.1; Mankin (1995: 205–206); Watson (2003: 382): “Both poems are presumably concerned with the same individual.”

unsatisfied. And just as the dramatic scene is similar, so too is its aesthetic presentation, as the poet blends the same kinds of imagery to prompt the same kind of responses from his readers. In the opening line, an unnamed figure asks what an unnamed partner wants, addressing her as a “woman most worthy of a black elephant” (*quid tibi uis, mulier nigris dignissima barris?* *Epod.* 12.1). The implication seems to be that the woman’s sexual appetite is elephant-sized—whether metaphorically or, given the dimensions of an elephant’s organ, literally.⁷⁹ The suggestion of bestiality is certainly transgressive, but Horace goes further and subtly gives the woman elephant traits: she is “most worthy” of an elephant because she herself is elephantine. As common characteristics Watson lists the smell emitted by both woman and elephant and their shared wrinkly skin.⁸⁰ The woman’s wrinkles are presented straightforwardly (*uietis ... membris* “wrinkly limbs,” *Epod.* 12.7). Her stink is first hinted at obliquely: *munera quid mihi quidue tabellas | mittis nec firmo iuueni neque naris obesae?* “Why do you send gifts and *billets-doux* to me, given that I am not a strong young man nor do I have an insensitive nose?” (*Epod.* 12.2–3). Following this initial hint, the speaker expands on his own olfactory abilities and vividly conveys how much the woman smells through imagery that further connects with the animal world:

namque sagacius unus odoror,
 polypus an grauis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis,
 quam canis acer ubi lateat sus. (*Epod.* 12.4–6)

For I uniquely sniff out whether an octopus or a strong-smelling goat
 lurks in your hairy armpits more keenly than a fierce dog does where
 a sow is hiding.

Watson takes *polypus* as a nasal polyp, as in *Sat.* 1.3.40, supplying *in naribus* in parallel to *in alis*, despite any explicit testimony that such polyps smell, instead importing the notion of stink through

⁷⁹ Watson (2003: 391–392); Mankin (1995: 206).

⁸⁰ Watson (2003: 392); see Mankin (1995: 206), who suggests that *nigris* indicates the woman herself is “swarthy.”

a connection with marine polyps.⁸¹ But this seems an unnecessary step: not only is it more straightforward to start with the octopus which stinks in and of itself and could be hiding in the woman's armpit, the suggestion of a *nasal* polyp potentially confuses the issue of noses since the man has been discussing his own in the previous two lines.⁸² The notion that a goat causes the stench from the armpits and this repulses potential sexual partners is found famously in poem 69 of Catullus (see esp. lines 5–6). Horace, however, doubly inverts the Catullan situation: on the one hand, it is a woman rather than a man who smells; on the other hand, Catullus appears to offer advice rather than abuse. Indeed, whereas Catullus seeks to correct the improper fusion of human and animal by having Rufus exterminate the unwelcome inhabitant of his armpit (Cat. *Carm.* 69.9), the man in *Epode* 12 doubles down on the confusion by adding the *polypus*. This creates an amalgm of marine and land-based, as seen also in the simile of Sagana's hair in *Epode* 5 (discussed above). The woman, then, is an elephant-octopus-goat, and the poet fuses these masculine creatures with her female humanity.

The speaker compares his own sense of smell with that of a dog tracking a sow. As seen in *Epode* 6, a comparison with a dog can be either favourable or derogatory depending on the point of comparison. While complimentary here, it nevertheless plays into the poem's interplay of human and animal traits. What is not complimentary, however, is the implicit comparison of the woman with a sow. It is worth noting that the use of *sus* rather than *aper* (arguably more appropriate in a hunting/tracking context) adds an extra layer of contempt and may play with the Greek use of ὄζυς as an equivalent for Latin *porcus*, a word used as slang for female genitalia.⁸³

⁸¹ Watson (2003: 396–397); so too Porphyrio: *Polypus non in alis, sed in naribus intellegendus* (Porph. ad *Epod.* 12.5).

⁸² Mankin (1995: 207) understands “octopus.”

⁸³ Mankin (1995: 207–208); Adams (1982: 82) citing Varro *Rust.* 2.4.10.

Watson also observes that such a hunting scene is better suited to more elevated poetry such as epic and tragedy, creating a “piece of humorous incongruity.”⁸⁴ Such stylistic incongruity is in keeping with the blended animal imagery.

In *Epode* 12, the speaker makes no suggestion as to how the woman might stop smelling so bad. In fact, he goes on to describe just what causes the odour:

qui sudor uietis et quam malus undique membris
 crescit odor, cum pene soluto
 indomitam properat rabiem sedare neque illi
 iam manet umida creta colorque
 stercore fucatus crocodili iamque subando
 tenta cubilia tectaque rumpit. (Epod. 12.7–12)

What sweat and how bad a stink grows everywhere from her wrinkly limbs when, because my penis is limp, she tries energetically to appease her untamed madness, and the moistened chalk-powder and her crocodile-dung rouge no longer stay in place, and now—acting like a sow in heat—she breaks the bed straps and canopy!⁸⁵

Once again, the woman is dehumanized through the blurring of human and animal categories. This blurring happens on a superficial level as her make-up consists of crocodile waste, adding a scatological element similar to *Epode* 8.5–6. Moreover, as the make-up runs, it will generate a blurry effect on her face, further erasing the image of her humanity. Finally, the verb *subare* is used of female animals rather than humans, and may even have a technical application to sows.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Watson (2003: 398).

⁸⁵ Watson (2003: 401–405) supposes that the smell results from the cosmetics, arguing that chalk-powder apparently stank (citing Martial 6.93.9, though this passage does not necessarily indicate an unpleasant odour since Thais is there using chalk and vinegar to disguise her own smell: see also Olson [2009: 304]), and assuming that Horace (wrongly) supposed crocodile dung to smell bad. Better, perhaps, to understand the smell as a result of the sweat itself.

⁸⁶ *OLD* s.v. *subo*; for an attribution to sows in particular, see *Lewis & Short* s.v. *subo* §I, citing Pliny the Elder’s discussion of animal reproduction at *NH* 10.83.181; so too Porphyrio: *subare proprie sues dicuntur cum libidinantur* (ad *Epod.* 12.11).

Such a technical usage is especially attractive since earlier in the poem the male speaker compared his keen-scentedness with that of a dog sniffing out a *sus*.

As she indulges her *rabies*, the woman behaves like an animal. This combination of madness and aggressive animal behaviour recalls the mad poet at the end of the *Ars Poetica*, and this connection is reinforced by their shared destructive natures: just as the poet-bear breaks the cage in which he is held (*Ars. P.* 473), so does the woman-sow break the bed. And just like the poet-bear, the woman assails her victim with words: *uel mea cum saeuīs agitāt fastidia uerbis* “or again when she attacks my aversion with savage words” (*Epod.* 12.13). At this point in the poem, the picture of the woman is severely distorted, just like that of the woman in *Epode* 8. Here, however, the reader is allowed to hear her complaints.⁸⁷ Interestingly, she maintains the blurred line between humans and animals established by her antagonist. After complaining that the man has no problems performing sexually with another woman named Inachia, she curses the person who suggested him to her: *pereat male quae te | Lesbīa quaerenti taurum monstrauit inertem* “May Lesbīa die horribly who, when I was looking for a bull, pointed out you, who barely get going” (*Epod.* 12.16–17). As the man does at the beginning of the poem, the woman intimates at her own sexual appetite through an animal metaphor with the concomitant suggestion of bestiality. The bull imagery is perhaps prompted by the name of the rival, Inachia, which recalls the daughter of Inachus, Io, who was precisely transformed into a heifer: the man can be a “bull” with her three times a night (*Epod.* 12.14–15)!⁸⁸ As a final coda to the poem, the woman laments her condition and the fact that the unnamed man flees from her: *o ego non felix, quam tu fugis ut pauet acris | agna lupos capreaeque leones* “O unhappy am I whom you flee just as the lamb panics before

⁸⁷ Watson (2003: 382–383) argues that her speech reveals the old woman “in a supremely unattractive light” and that she has an “unlovely personality.”

⁸⁸ See also Watson (2003: 408); Mankin (1995: 210).

fierce wolves and roes before lions” (*Epod.* 12.25–26). Once again the woman is presented as aggressive, masculine animals. Her erstwhile lover, on the contrary, becomes passive, feminine animals. Both Mankin and Watson note the role-reversal from the usual “erotic hunt” in which the man is cast as a predator in pursuit of a frightened (younger) woman.⁸⁹ Watson calls this “witty,” but I suggest that the Horace is doing more than making a clever joke. For the woman’s lament is not quite apt: while it is true that the poem’s male figure lacks Amyntas’ staying power, he has not in fact fled from her and, dismissive as it was, the reader has been exposed to an account of (attempted) sexual congress between the two.⁹⁰ There is, therefore, a slight incongruity between the poem’s setting and this final image. This is the same incongruity found in *Epode* 8.

The old woman bemoans the fact that she could have had Amyntas of Cos⁹¹ as a lover “in whose untamed crotch stands a member more firmly than a young tree clings to a hill” (*cuius in indomito constantior inguine neruus | quam noua collibus arbor inhaeret*, *Epod.* 12.19–20). The choice of *indomitus* to describe Amyntas’ groin aptly matches the man’s use of the same adjective for the woman’s *rabies* in line 9. The comparison with the well-rooted tree belongs more properly to epic register.⁹² One may note in particular the Homeric simile comparing Polypoetes and Leonteus to twin oaks with deep roots on a mountain top withstanding the elements (Hom. *Il.* 12.131–137), a simile reused by Virgil at *Aen.* 4.441–446.⁹³ This epic intrusion generates the same generic incongruity as the dog-and-sow comparison in line 6. That generic incongruity is matched

⁸⁹ Mankin (1995: 213); Watston (2003: 415–416).

⁹⁰ Admittedly, she may be addressing the man’s penis directly, doubling down on the gender confusion of the animal similes. Even if this more specific reading is in play, it does not negate his more general physical presence.

⁹¹ Watson (2003: 411) detects a pun on *Cous* and *coire*, citing Quint. *Inst. Or.* 8.6.53.

⁹² So too Watson (2003: 411–412); Mankin (1995: 211–212).

⁹³ See also Thomas (1988: 1.209), who notes that Virgil uses the imagery of the trees directly at *Geo.* 2.291–297 and then in his epic restores the imagery to its original Homeric context, namely, to a simile.

by the added confusion of the imagery: the woman's ideal lover, just identified as a bull, now is also vegetal. And since the tree appears in an explicitly anatomical context, the blurring of human and plant is pushed to the foreground. As the woman herself is presented as an embodiment of Horace's grotesque, so does her ideal lover participate in the same aesthetic.

As with *Satire* 1.8, it is possible to read the grotesques of *Epodes* 8 and 12 as broader literary commentaries. Dee Lesser Clayman argues that the old woman in each poem represents poetry in the archaic style, and that the sexual rejection and humiliation of the women is a coded critique of that poetic style and its practitioners in the manner of Callimachus' iambics.⁹⁴ Citing Cicero *Orator* 78–79 for the woman in make-up and adorned with pearls as a symbol of overwrought style of speaking, she notes that the women, when taken together, likewise wear pearls (*Epod.* 8.13–14) and make-up (*Epod.* 12.9–11). Other terms with negative literary connotations are also applied to the woman in *Epode* 8: *turpis* and *crudus*, *aridus* and *exilis*, and *tumens*—these last two in conjunction with each other so that she combines “everything Horace thinks is wrong with literature,” both the overblown and the undercooked.⁹⁵ The woman is an “anti-muse” who leaves him without sexual or poetic *uires*, unappealing even to *inlitterati nerui*.⁹⁶

If *Epode* 8 shows what Horace finds distasteful, *Epode* 12 hints at his preferences. In that poem the reader learns that while he can barely manage one encounter with the old woman, he can satisfy Inachia three times in a night (*Epod.* 12.14–16). I have noted above that this name suggests Io, daughter of Inachus. By the end of the first century CE, a reference to Io would inevitably draw

⁹⁴ Clayman (1975); see also Clayman (1980: 78–80).

⁹⁵ Clayman (1975: 59–60), suggesting that Stoic diction (as represented by the books at *Epod.* 8.15) is *aridus* and *exilis*, in stark contrast to the ornamental Asiatic style (as represented by the Chinese cushions on which the books rest).

⁹⁶ Clayman (1975: 60–61).

the reader to Calvus' poem *Io*, one of the landmark productions of the Neoterics.⁹⁷ As the man prefers Inachia to the old woman, so does Horace prefer neoteric poetry. This reference to Calvus' *Io* is, I suggest, confirmed by the final lament of the old woman: *o ego non felix* (*Epod.* 12.25). This is an ironic reworking of Io's *a uirgo infelix* (fr. 9 Morel = 20 Hollis). Both exclamations begin with a cry, and we should note the hiatus after Horace's *o* that preserves the syllable –go in the third *sedes*, with the necessary substitution of *ego* for the contextually inappropriate *uirgo*. Moreover, if as is regularly maintained, the old woman in *Epode* 12 is the same as in *Epode* 8, her appropriation of Io's lament is apt since her lover has earlier transformed her (or at least her hindquarters) into those of a cow (*Epod.* 8.5–6).⁹⁸

This is not Inachia's first appearance in the *Epodes*. She has featured in the immediately preceding poem. In *Epode* 11, Inachia is an object of Horace's passion, and he describes how madly and badly he behaved while in love, emphasizing the shame of it (*nam pudet tanti mali*, *Epod.* 11.7). Furthermore, there is a strong suggestion in *Epode* 11 that, contrary to what the old woman asserts in *Epode* 12, Horace was unable to consummate his passion for Inachia (who prefers wealthier men, *Epod.* 11.11–12), though not for lack of trying:

ubi haec seuerus te palam laudaueram,
iussus abire domum ferebar incerto pede
ad non amicos heu mihi postis et heu
limina dura, quibus lumbos et infregi latus. (*Epod.* 11.19–22)

When I with stern heart had openly praised this advice of yours [*sc.* to forget about Inachia], though instructed to go home I took myself on unsteady foot to doorposts that were (alas!) unfriendly to me and an unfeeling threshold (alas!), against which I bruised my groin and pelvis.

⁹⁷ Calvus was also a noted Atticist and so opposed to excessive stylistic ornamentation: Courtney (1993: 201).

⁹⁸ Cf. Cowan (2012: 756–757), who suggests that *heu* (*Epod.* 11.7) puns on *íō* as “alas” as well as “Io.”

This is the elegiac *paraclausithyron* in iambs,⁹⁹ and Horace presents himself in the guise of an elegiac lover. More specifically, Horace may here be responding to Propertius. Peter Heslin has argued that in elegy 1.4, Propertius reprimands an iambographer, Bassus, for telling him to give up on Cynthia and to pursue other girls; Bassus—the “Low(ly)” —is a pseudonym for the self-described short and low-born Horace who metapoetically advocates for many girls/genres instead of just Cynthia/elegy.¹⁰⁰ According to Heslin, *Epode* 11 is Horace’s response in which he uses his addressee’s name, Pettius, to signal his adoption of the Bassus-persona; this persona looks at first to be straightforwardly elegiac, but turns out to follow Bassus’ original program from Propertius 1.4, since he has not only moved on from his original obsession, but also reveals in the last two lines of the poem that he is happy to move from lover to lover.¹⁰¹ In this vein, the Inachia of *Epode* 11 finds her Propertian counterpart in elegy 1.13 where she is but one of fifty Danaids.¹⁰² Such an identification here does not negate an identification with Io in *Epode* 12. Rather, the names create an axis of reference within Horace’s collection, and consequently we can relate the neoteric Inachia of 12 to the elegiac Inachia of 11. That relationship is made easier by Propertius’ use of neoteric models for his elegy: Calvus is named twice with Catullus (Prop. 2.25.4 and 2.34b.87–90).¹⁰³ Either way, Inachia—especially as a sign with multiple referants—embodies a neoteric aesthetic.

⁹⁹ There is a double metrical pun on *incerto pede*: in the first instance, *incerto pede* suggests the uneven meter of the elegiac couplet, where the pentameter does not match the hexameter; second, it suggests that Horace is himself not sure of his meter—that even though he is (or was) composing an “elegiac” piece, his meter is somehow off because it is both elegiac (note the hemiepes with which the even-numbered lines begin) and iambic: Barchiesi (1994: 129–132); Heyworth (1993: 88); Harrison (2001: 181).

¹⁰⁰ Heslin (2011: 55–60).

¹⁰¹ Heslin (2011: 60–63), who argues that the *Epode*’s bisexuality stands in opposition not to any general elegiac conventions, but specifically Propertian heterosexuality (64–65).

¹⁰² Heslin (2011: 65–66).

¹⁰³ See also Knox (2006), esp. 130 on the *Io* and elegy 1.3.19–20, and 133–137.

One slight wrinkle complicates the simple binary opposition between the old woman's archaism and Inachia's new poetry. For in *Epode* 11 Horace states that it has been three years since he was in love with Inachia: *hic tertius December, ex quo destiti | Inachia furere, siluis honorem decutit* (*Epod.* 11.5–6). He is now in love with the boy Lyciscus, and this love prevents him from taking any pleasure in writing little verses as he did before: *Petti, nihil me sicut antea iuuat | scribere uersiculos amore percussum graui* (*Epod.* 11.1–2). The key term here is *uersiculi*. Watson supposes it is poetry in general, rejecting the idea that it applies only to *iambi*.¹⁰⁴ The word may, however, suggest the *nugae* of the Neoterics (see esp. Catullus *Carm.* 16). Just as Horace-Bassus has given up Inachia, so too has he given up a fully fledged neoteric style of writing. In fact, despite the explicit disgust felt towards the old woman of both *Epodes* 8 and 12, Horace keeps coming back: we have not one, but two poems in which he attempts and fails to make things work with the old woman. Clayman may be right that the old woman represents elements of literary style rejected elsewhere, but it does not answer the question already asked: why is Horace here in the first place? Whether or not Horace's failure to perform sexually is a result of the woman's physical repulsiveness,¹⁰⁵ the account of her repulsiveness is constructed precisely as a response to her complaint about his failure to perform: he compensates for his sexual impotence with verbal violence.¹⁰⁶ Without the woman, there would be no iambic poetry. These grotesque women with their decrepit bodies that blur the lines between animal and human and their aggressive sexuality do not simply represent stylistic elements, they embody iambic invective.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Watson (2003: 363–364).

¹⁰⁵ So Watson (2003: 287–288, 382), somewhat unconvincingly.

¹⁰⁶ Oliensis (1998: 75).

¹⁰⁷ Gowers (1993: 288), endorsed by Oliensis (1998: 75–76).

6. *Epode 17: Canidia's Return*

The *Epodes* conclude with the triumphant return of Canidia. Horace concedes the power of her magic and begs for her to relent (*Epod.* 17.1–7). He then offers a series of mythical *exempla* of moments of mercy, two of which involve Achilles (lines 8–14). The third, however, is Circe:

saetosa duris exuere pellibus
laboriosi remiges Ulixei
uolente Circa membra; tunc mens et sonus
relapsus atque notus in uultus honor. (*Epod.* 17.15–18)

The oarsmen of long-toiling Ulysses stripped their bristly limbs from the tough hide when Circe allowed it; at that time their minds and voices and the familiar dignity slid back into their appearance.

Horace does not present Ulysses' men in their fully transformed state. Instead, he shows the process of transformation. This idea of process is brought out by the hyperbaton of *saetosa* and *membra*.¹⁰⁸ It is reflected also in the opposition of the *saetosa*, first word of this vignette, and the final *honor*. The men, therefore, literally occupy a space between animal and human, moving from one to the other. None of this happens, however, without Circe's consent: she controls the grotesque.

Horace himself is suffering at the hands of Canidia: *dedi satis superque poenarum tibi* "I have paid sufficient and more than sufficient penalty to you" (*Epod.* 17.19). He then addresses her caustically as "much loved by sailors and hucksters" (*amata nautis multum et institoribus*, *Epod.* 17.20). The commentators rightly note that sailors and salesmen were frequent clients of prostitutes, so this is meant to denigrate Canidia.¹⁰⁹ They miss, however, the link which this insult forges between Circe (famously the lover of at least one sailor) and Canidia. This link is further

¹⁰⁸ Mankin (1995: 277).

¹⁰⁹ Watson (2003: 552–553); Mankin (1995: 278).

reflected in Horace's suffering, which, like that of Ulysses' men, consists of a physical transformation:

fugit iuuentas et uerecundus color
reliquit ossa pelle amicta lurida;
tuis capillus albus est odoribus. (Epod. 17.21–23)

My youth and modest complexion have fled my bones, now
wrapped in a yellow pelt; my hair is white from your perfumes.

Points of contact include the focus on complexion and particularly the use of *pellis*.¹¹⁰ Less directly, Horace complains that he finds no respite from his suffering (*nullum ab labore me reclinat otium*, Epod. 17.24), where *labor* connects him with the long-suffering Ulysses.

Horace also connects his suffering with Hercules, revisiting an *exemplum* used at Epod.

3.17–18:

... o mare et terra, ardeo
quantum neque atro delibutus Hercules
Nessi cruore nec Sicana feruida
uirens in Aetna flamma: tu, donec cinis
iniuriosis aridus uentis ferar,
cales uenenis officina Colchicis. (Epod. 17.30–35)

O sea and earth! I burn more than Hercules when he was smeared
with the black blood of Nessus, and more than the Sicilian flame
blooming in burning Aetna; you, until I am borne as dry ash on the
harmful winds, glow hot as a workshop with your Colchian poisons.

Hercules traditionally wears a garment that has been dipped in a Nessus' blood. Horace, however, dispenses with any such device and applies the blood directly to the hero. The vividness achieved by this change magnifies aesthetic unease. There is some value in recalling that Nessus' blood is itself tainted with the Hydra's poison from Hercules' own arrow which accounts for its

¹¹⁰ Watson (2003: 551 and 555): "the *vox propria* for an animal's hide" and, quoting Wickham (1896: *ad Epod.* 17.22), "not used of the human skin in life and health."

blackness.¹¹¹ There may also be some interplay of colours, for against the black blood and the red and yellow flames, *uirens* may introduce a touch of green.¹¹² The sticky moisture of *delibutus cruore* is balanced by Aetna's fires, and this balance is matched by the dry ash and Canidia's poisons—from Colchis and thus linking her to Medea, who also destroyed a rival with a poisoned garment (*Epod.* 5.11–14). At the same time, the image of the workshop closely links Canidia to Aetna where, according to some traditions, the Cyclopes had their workshop.¹¹³ Thus, Canidia stands as the point of intersection for Medea and the Cyclopes.

Horace confuses the imagery further with another example of poetic forgiveness. He offers to pay whatever she asks. This includes sacrificing 100 bullocks (lines 38–39) and composing a poem on his “deceiving lyre” (*mendaci lyra*, *Epod.* 17.39) that Canidia, “chaste and good, will wander as a golden star among the constellations”: *tu pudica, tu proba | perambulabis astra sidus aureum* (*Epod.* 17.40–41). He may be lying and wheedling, but Horace here elevates Canidia to the divine level.¹¹⁴ He then recalls that although they were outraged by the slanders against Helen, Castor and Pollux restored Stesichorus' sight after he offered prayers (*Epod.* 17.42–44). Canidia, who at the end of *Satire* 1.8 is toothless and her hair a mess, who in *Epode* 5 is a Fury with snakes in her hair and rotting teeth, who fewer than ten lines earlier was a kind of Cyclops, is now a match for the most beautiful woman in the world. She is also a match for her divine brothers, for like them, she has the power to release Horace from his suffering (*Epod.* 17.45). But this elevation is shortlived:

¹¹¹ Mankin (1995: 281).

¹¹² *pace* Watson (2003: 559); see also Mankin (1995: 281).

¹¹³ Watson (2003: 559).

¹¹⁴ Watson (2003: 560–561); Mankin (1995: 282–283).

o nec paternis obsoleta sordibus,
neque in sepulcris pauperum prudens anus
nouendialis dissipare pulueres. (Epod. 17.46–48)

O you, not tarnished by parental filth, nor some old woman who
knowingly scatters the recent ashes in the graves of the poor.

Horace here reminds the reader of Canidia's role in *Satire* 1.8. Within the span of eight lines, Canidia has gone from a place among the stars to scratching around in the graveyard dirt. He concludes his appeal by claiming (with deep irony) that Canidia has a generous heart and clean hands and that Pactumeius is her legitimate child (Epod. 17.49–52). Although these lines are directed at Canidia's character, they also concern her aesthetics. Her hands are "*purae*" (line 49), an adjective antithetical to the grotesque. Of course, Horace's irony allows the reader to draw precisely the opposite conclusion. Even the sheets offered as proof of the fact that Canidia actually gave birth to Pactumeius are stained with blood (*cruore rubros ... pannos*, Epod. 17.51). Lindsay Watson remarks that *ruber* is a vivid adjective and *cruor* has "unsalubrious associations."¹¹⁵ There is more, for *cruor* also recalls the poisoned blood responsible for Hercules' death. Even as he supplicates her, Horace presents Canidia in grotesque terms.

At this point, Canidia cuts Horace off. She in fact does nothing to correct the picture Horace has painted. Her speech rather inveighs against Horace's disclosures of her rites (lines 56–61), before outlining the further suffering Horace will endure (lines 62–75). Finally, she reaffirms her powers (lines 76–80). Canidia's speech does not employ the grotesque in the same way as Horace's supplication. She does, however, tie herself to the aesthetics of the grotesque throughout by repeated references to poisons and potions. For these require mixing. She refers to the Esquiline as *ueneficus* (line 58) and to "mixing faster-acting potions" (*uelociusue miscuisse toxicum*, Epod.

¹¹⁵ Watson (2003: 569).

17.61). The Esquiline, as I have shown, is the setting both in the *Epodes* and the *Satires* for other grotesque moments facilitated by its status as a former graveyard. Canidia's penultimate lines reinforce this: *possim crematos excitare mortuos | desiderique temperare pocula* "I am able to rouse the cremated dead and mix in proper portion potions of desire" (*Epod.* 17.79–80). Canidia leaves Horace and the reader with a question: *plorem artis in te nil agentis exitus?* "Am I to lament the outcomes of my art because it has no effect on you?" (*Epod.* 17.81). Her "art" is magic. It is also the grotesque. Canidia embraces the grotesque in both her person and her practice. Her final question goes unanswered, and readers are left to conclude for themselves just how great an impact Canidia's "art" has had on Horace. It is, I suggest, somewhat more than *nil*.

The final word, *exitus*, takes us out of the *Epodes*, so I now turn to the *Odes*.

Chapter 4: The *Odes*

The *Odes* do not offer the same density of grotesque material to be found in the *Satires* and *Epodes*. This is, perhaps, only to be expected: the nature of the genre, the different Greek models, and Horace's apparent purpose would seem to leave little place for an aesthetic that forces its audience into a state of unresolved confusion. Little place, but not none. For as Robin Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard astutely note in the opening paragraph to the introduction of their commentary on the first book "it is dangerous to generalize about a hundred self-contained and remarkably varied entities."¹ In what follows, I offer an account of those places in the *Odes* where Horace does in fact present his readers with the aesthetic aporia of the grotesque.

1. *Odes* Book 1

Where the final two *Epodes* in many respects assert the chaos and disorder of the Roman world in the final days of the struggle between Octavian and Antony, the opening poem of the *Odes*—an extended priamel addressed to Maecenas in which the poet lists and rejects all the other pursuits besides poetry—keeps the elements of the world distinct from each other even as Horace turns away from them. So, for example, the farmer who delights in tilling the fields cannot even be tempted to contemplate the life of a sailor (*Carm.* 1.1.11–14). And though the merchant may, in a storm, praise the farmer's life near his hometown, once the storm has subsided, he returns to sea (*Carm.* 1.1.15–18). This proper separation of elements produces an echo in the following poem.

¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: xi).

Ode 1.2 begins with an outburst of exasperation: *iam satis* (*Carm.* 1.2.1).² Horace has had enough of the fear (*terrui*, lines 5 and 6) that Jupiter has inflicted on humanity through rain, hail, and lightning. This prodigious weather has sparked a fear of a second apocalyptic flood, just like that witnessed by Pyrrha when humanity was all but wiped out. This flood is notable for its *noua monstra* (*Carm.* 1.2.6):

omne cum Proteus pecus egit altos
uisere montis,
piscium et summa genus haesit ulmo
nota quae sedes fuerat columbis,
et superiecto pauidae natarunt
aequore dammae. (Carm. 1.2.7–12)

When Proteus drove his whole herd to see the the high mountains,
and race of fishes clung to the tops of the elm trees, which had been
the well known perches of doves, and terrified does swam in a sea
that had been cast over the plains.

The confusion of elements and the unnatural locations of animals are familiar from both the *Epodes*, where they are stark images of a world in chaos, and the *Ars Poetica*, where they represent breaches of artistic unity.³ Nisbet and Hubbard in noting that Horace’s introduction of the fish in the trees begins a typical ἀδύνατον, point *inter alia* to lines 59–60 of *Eclogue* 1 as an example:⁴

ante leues ergo pascentur in aethere cerui,
et freta destituent nudos in litore pisces,
ante pererratis amborum finibus exsul
aut Ararim Parthus bibet aut Germania Tigrim,
quam nostro illius labatur pectore uultus. (Virg. *Ecl.* 1.59–63)

The flighty deer will graze in the air and the straits bare the fish
naked on the shore, wandering as an exile across the boundaries of
both territories, the Parthian will drink the Ara and Germany drink
the Tigris, before the face of that man slips from my breast.

² See Fraenkel (1957: 243); Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 21).

³ See also West (1995: 10), who suggests that in these lines “Horace indulges his taste for the surreal.” Mayer (2012: 64) observes that these lines have “drawn critical fire since antiquity” precisely on these grounds.

⁴ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 23).

I suggest that Horace's lines are more than just another example of an impossibility. Despite some differences, both passages feature deer and fish. The location of Horace's fish among the elm trees and the identification of those trees as the "familiar" (*nota*) home of doves points directly to this Virgilian poem, and specifically to the two lines just before those cited by Nisbet and Hubbard. For the connection between elms and doves comes from Virgil: *nec tamen interea raucae, tua cura, palumbes | nec gemere aerea cessabit turtur ab ulmo* "Nor meanwhile will the talkative doves, your care, nor the turtle dove stop cooing from the airy elm" (Virg. *Ecl.* 1.57–58).⁵ Horace's description of the elm tree as the doves' *nota sedes* functions as an "Alexandrian footnote" signalling the poet's source: the *sedes* is familiar from Virgil. Finally, Horace prepares the reader for this specific Virgilian intertext with the introduction of Proteus and his "herd." This brings a concomitant introduction of bucolic into Horace's lyric composition, and this allows the reader to accept a reference to the *Eclogues* more easily.⁶ At the same time, this bucolic intrusion mimics on the generic level the blurring of the natural world described in the poem.⁷ This generic blurring is amplified when one acknowledges the poem's general debt to the prodigies and prayer at Virg. *Geo.* 1.466–514, a passage that is intensely concerned with the disruption of natural order that is associated with civil war.⁸ Horatian lyric in a sense repurposes Virgilian didactic hexameters while

⁵ The commentators seem to miss the reference to Virg. *Ecl.* 1.57–58.

⁶ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 23) and West (1995: 10), who note the analogy of Proteus to a drover, but do not otherwise remark on the bucolic intrusion into lyric.

⁷ The Virgilian debt may reach the thematic level as well. Despite the different dramatic dates for each poem (*Eclogue* 1 in the early years of the second triumvirate, *Ode* 1.2 in the aftermath of Actium), both poems are concerned with "cleaning up the mess" of civil war.

⁸ See e.g., Fraenkel (1957: 243–244); Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 16–17); Mayer (2012: 73); cf. Parker (1992: 302), who argues that Horace evokes Virgil's omens in order to mark them as already past.

adding grace notes of Virgilian bucolic. Thus the poet employs a kind of meta-aesthetics of the grotesque.

The imagery of flood as breach of proper order continues in the following lines:

uidimus flauum Tiberim retortis
litore Etrusco uiolenter undis
ire deiectum monumenta regis
 templaque Vestae,
Iliae dum se nimium querenti
iactat ultorem, uagus et sinistra
labitur ripa Ioue non probante u-
 xorius amnis. (*Carm.* 1.2.13–20)

We saw the yellow Tiber, with its waves thrown back from the Etruscan shore, violently proceed to hurl down the monuments of the king and the temple of Vesta, all while boasting that he was the avenger of the excessively lamenting Ilia, and the husbandly river wandered and glided over his left bank without Jupiter's approval.

Here Horace recalls the Tiber violently bursting its banks, an image mirrored in the run-over of *uxorius* from line 19 to 20.⁹ Lines 18–20 also reveal an inversion of control that emphasizes the cosmic chaos inflicted upon Rome. At the beginning of the poem, it is Jupiter who terrifies the Romans; here at the end, it is the Tiber who acts outside the scope of any Jovian command—a slight inconsistency since the flooding can be easily linked to Jupiter's excess of rain and hail.¹⁰ Jupiter's name in line 19 then closes the circle started with *pater* in line 2. In closing the circle, Horace also brings to an end the period of active disorder. This end is underlined in the following stanza by the shift in verb tenses from the past to the future, and by a movement from direct narration of events to the secondary account of poetic descriptions of those events (*Carm.* 1.2.21–

⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 27); we may also note the presentational word order separating *retoris* from *undis* and keeping the latter at the far end of the line from *litore*.

¹⁰ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 26) who note the inconsistent motivation for the flooding (civil wars in the case of Jupiter's contribution, vengeance on Ilia's behalf for the Tiber).

24). This transition does not, however, signal the restoration of order. The remainder of the poem addresses itself to the question of which god will be responsible for cleaning up the mess, of producing (or restoring) order from chaos, and it is possible to read Horace's poetic program in the *Odes* as his own attempt to restore order.

Just how seriously is the reader to take all of this? The poem's opening words, *iam satis*, have been linked with prayer language because they recall Virgil's use of *satis iam* at *Geo.* 1.501 precisely in the context of a prayer.¹¹ Accordingly, it has been suggested that this generates in Horace's ode a certain seriousness or solemnity of tone.¹² I am not so sure. Although it will become one at the end, Horace's poem does not begin as a prayer, so readers may respond to the colloquialism of *iam satis* rather than any sacral or hymnic undertones. This creates some dissonance between the tone and the apparent seriousness of the threat. The anaphora of *terruit* may emphasize the fear, but it also reinforces the "too muchness" of it all.¹³ The terror evoked by the verb should be reflected in the *noua monstra*. Yet scholars have repeatedly identified comic touches: Pyrrha seems less frightened than peeved (*questae*, line 6), and *uisere* (line 8) suggests that Proteus is on a kind of sightseeing trip.¹⁴ Only the deer are frightened (*pauidae*), but that is conventional for them.¹⁵ Even the events that Horace has himself witnessed are undercut by an

¹¹ Fraenkel (1957: 243); Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 21); Parker (1992: 296).

¹² Fraenkel (1957: 243–244); Parker (1992: 296).

¹³ Mayer (2012: 64) remarks that the anaphora of *terruit* is "emotional," but does not specify the emotion; Parker (1992: 297) sees solemnity.

¹⁴ Parker (1992: 298–299)

¹⁵ Mayer (2012: 65).

injection of domestic realness. Horace's use of *uidimus* in conjunction with the Tiber's "waves" (*undis*) recalls Virgil's account of the eruptions of Etna following Caesar's assassination.¹⁶

quotiens Cyclopum efferuere in agros
uidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Aetnam,
flammarumque globos liquefactaque uoluere saxa!
(Virg. *Geo.* 1.471–473)

How often **we saw billowing** Etna boil over in the fields of the
Cyclopes, her furnaces busted, and roll spheres of flames and
liquefied rocks!

Virgil's lines offer a powerful image of the eruption and the cosmic force that unites fire and liquid into a single destructive substance. Horace's flood, on the other hand, turns out to be an act of personal vengeance (*ultorem*) carried out by a husband (*uxorius*) to appease his complaining wife (*nimum querenti*). The sublime power of nature is reduced to a domestic errand. We should not laugh too hard, however. Regardless of the Tiber's motives, the river violently (*uiolenter*) destroyed the Regia and the temple of Vesta. No matter how frequently the Tiber may flood, the destruction of a temple is a markedly dire portent. Nisbet and Hubbard dismiss the prodigies as "just exceptionally bad weather," while Pyrrha's monsters and the Tiber and Ilia are "frivolous Alexandrian miniatures."¹⁷ They go further: citing Porphyrio's note that although Horace's treatment of the flood is *leuis*, it is within the concessions granted to lyric poetry,¹⁸ they conclude that "such descriptions are a frivolous way of describing chaos, and do not suit a political poem."¹⁹

¹⁶ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 24); Parker (1992: 298–299).

¹⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 21).

¹⁸ *leuiter in re tam atroci et piscium et palumborum meminit, nisi quod hi excessus lyricis concessi sunt* (Porph. ad *Carm.* 1.2.9).

¹⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 23).

This is a condemnation of Horace's art as a failure to meet the standards of *decorum*.²⁰ Yet is that not precisely the point? Although the imagery of *Ode* 1.2 shares much in common with *Epode* 16 in particular, Horace's attitude has changed. This is not a poem of vain escapism from the paralysing desperation of Rome's seemingly endless internal strife. He has had enough and now just wants it to stop. The disorder of the world has, according to Horace, reached a tipping point: the horror and the chaos and the fear—all of it has become faintly ridiculous. Or, in a word, grotesque.

The situation is a mess and it is time for someone to sort it all out. Just who that someone should be is the focus of the second half of the poem, but its concluding panegyric of Octavian in lines 41–52 has struck some commentators as also going beyond the bounds of good taste.²¹ It may be true that Horace is still trying to find an appropriately panegyric voice.²² The excess of it, though, is in keeping with the imagery of surfeit and overflow with which the poem began. It may also be in keeping with the poetics of the grotesque and the ambivalent, uncertain response the grotesque produces in its audience. While there is no question that the peace which accompanied Octavian's final triumph must have been a welcome relief after generations of fighting, some uncertainty must have remained (at least among the upper echelons of Roman society) about how this new "Caesar" would consolidate his power.²³ This uncertainty is echoed in Horace's blurry line between Octavian and Mercury. The poem's concluding twelve lines are all addressed, seemingly, to Mercury in the guise of a young man (*mutata iuuenem figura ... imitatis, Carm.*

²⁰ Cf. Parker (1992: 299–302), who seeks to explain the "surrealism" and the concomitant shift in tone as purposeful: they are a distancing device.

²¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 20) "an offence against the Horatian qualities of moderation and rationality"; West (1995: 13): "we may still wonder if this is contemptible sycophancy on the part of Horace."

²² West (1995: 15).

²³ On the date of this poem, see Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 17–19).

1.2.41–42) who is, hopefully, willing to be called the “avenger of Caesar” (*Caesaris ultor*, *Carm.* 1.2.44). Yet in the final line of the poem, Horace addresses “Caesar.” Is this still Mercury or is this actually Octavian? The boundary between the divine and the human has become uncomfortably permeable—all the more so since the person who is at first *Caesaris ultor* is now himself *Caesar*. Does this, then, make him his own avenger, and if so, over whom? When Horace asserts that “Caesar” may enjoy great triumphs “here” (*hic magnos ... triumphos ... ames*, *Carm.* 1.2.49–50), he is perhaps looking to Octavian’s triple triumph of August 29 BCE or to prospective triumphs to be celebrated after a successful Parthian campaign (see line 51).²⁴ But that *hic* is potentially troubling: *triumphus* is the procession through Rome in celebration of a great victory, but it may also denote the victory itself. And despite Octavian’s attempts to whitewash his rise to power as a succession of victories against non-Roman enemies, everyone will have known just who had been defeated—not least because Horace himself has mentioned the civil wars in this poem (lines 21–24). The poem’s complex, blended tone and its embrace of the grotesque reflect the uncertainty of the times.

The dramatic date of *Ode* 1.2, though somewhat uncertain, addresses itself to the political situation after Actium. The more immediate aftermath of this pivotal battle—the suicide of Cleopatra eleven months later—is celebrated in the penultimate poem of the book, *Ode* 1.37. The tone of triumph and celebration and the mention of Caecuban wine in line 5 connect this poem with *Epode* 9, but without that poem’s lingering sense of uncertainty. Whereas in *Epode* 9 Antony was still loose on the uncertain sea, here he is already dead and passes without mention. In this respect, *Ode* 1.37 is a more “Augustan” poem than 1.2 since it focuses squarely on Cleopatra as

²⁴ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 40) rightly contrast *Medos inultos* with *Caesaris ultor*, noting that the “task of avenging Caesar has at last been completed; now Rome can turn her energies against the Parthians.”

Rome's enemy and makes no gesture towards the internal conflict to which she contributed. Even the wine with which she is intoxicated is Egyptian (*Mareotico*, *Carm.* 1.37.14) in clear contrast to the Caecuban vintage, which will be drawn from ancestral cellars (*Carm.* 1.37.5–6). Cleopatra is, in this poem, a principal source of disorder in the Roman world. She is thus a suitable vehicle for the grotesque. This is reflected in her retinue. Horace describes her plotting destruction for Rome “along with her herd of foul men polluted by disease” (*contaminato cum grege turpium | morbo uirorum*, *Carm.* 1.37.9–10). The moral condemnation is expressed through the grotesque: the men are an animal group, a *grex*, and the participle *contaminatus* indicates an improper mixture of elements. One may even be tempted to think of Egypt's hybrid gods, who are in other accounts famously present at Actium (Virg. *Aen.* 8.698; Prop. 3.11.41). And if these “men” are eunuchs and the “disease” is sexual perversion, Horace layers the animal-human mixture with gender confusion.²⁵ From a position of victorious superiority, the reader is invited to laugh at and be revolted by Cleopatra and her Egyptians.

Horace maintains this connection between Egyptians and animals in his similes describing Octavian's pursuit of Cleopatra:

mentemque lymphatam Mareotico
 redegit in ueros timores
 Caesar ab Italia uolantem
 remis adurgens, accipiter uelut
 mollis columbas aut leporem citus
 uenator in campis niualis
 Haemoniae, dare ut catenis
 fatale monstrum. (*Carm.* 1.37.14–21)

Caesar, pressing hard on the oars, drove her mind, frenzied by Mareotic wine, back to legitimate terrors as she flew from Italy, just as a hawk after gentle doves or a swift hunter after a hare in the fields of snowy Thessaly, so that he might put in chains the deadly monster.

²⁵ On the eunuchs and perversion, see Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 413–414); West (1995: 185).

The mechanism of the simile prevents a complete breakdown of the boundary between animal and human. This is important as it prevents Octavian from becoming grotesque, a fact Horace seems to acknowledge by making him a (human) hunter in the second simile. Cleopatra, on the contrary, is pushed into the animal category by the participle *uolantem*. The first simile, in effect, literalizes the metaphor of flight and transforms Cleopatra into a bird. A potential difficulty here is that in the similes the vehicles for Cleopatra are prey, not predators, and this reflects her current mental state: well-grounded fear. Is the reader meant to sympathize? Unlikely. Nisbet and Hubbard suggest that doves were, before Christianity's influence, an image of cowardice.²⁶ Horace, at any rate, does not allow the reader much opportunity: the woman who in line 7 is a queen has now become a monster, putting her on the same level as those *noua monstra* witnessed by Pyrrha during the flood (*Carm.* 1.2.6).²⁷

Even in her death Cleopatra passes into the grotesque. In choosing to die by snake-bite, and especially in her decision to handle the snakes herself (*fortis et asperas | tractare serpentis*, *Carm.* 1.37.26–27), Cleopatra joins the ranks of Canidia and her witches, women who, as I have argued above, are deeply intertwined with Horace's grotesque aesthetics. The queen seeks a "more noble death" (*generosius perire*) in lines 21–22. Generally, Horace's Cleopatra is understood to be avoiding execution in Rome after being paraded in Octavian's triumph, to be seeking a death in keeping with her royal status.²⁸ This is undoubtedly true, as the poem's final three lines indicate:

... inuidens
priuata deduci superbo
non humilis mulier triumpho (*Carm.* 1.37.30–32)

²⁶ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 416).

²⁷ Even the geography of the second simile contributes to the grotesqueness: the hunter pursues the hare through the snow. At the same time the etymology of *Haemoniae* suggests that the fields are also "bloody" so that the reader may momentarily pause to consider whether this is white blood or red snow.

²⁸ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 417–418); West (1995: 187).

Refusing as one stripped of office to be led to a proud triumph, no
lowly woman.

I wish to suggest an additional, complementary interpretation. It has been posited that *monstrum* in line 21 may point to Cleopatra's incestuous parentage.²⁹ I suggest that *generosius*, with its etymological connections to birth and family, amplifies this biological nuance of *monstrum* and thus could denote an attempt by the queen to transcend her genetic shortcomings.³⁰ Consequently while the adverb serves primarily and superficially to heroize Cleopatra, *generosius* also subtly underscores her monstrosity by prompting the readers to think about her family lineage.³¹ Horace gestures further to her anomalousness by explaining that as she led the defense of Alexandria, she showed no "womanly" fear of the sword (*nec muliebriter | expauit ensem*, *Carm.* 1.37.22–23). Her response is unnatural. On this point it is worthwhile to remember that fewer than ten lines above, her fear of Octavian had not only been "real," it had snapped her out of a drunken frenzy and so constituted a moment of clarity (*Carm.* 1.37.14–15). Fear, then, is the proper response. Consequently, whether she is enduring or brave (*ausa, fortis*, lines 25–26), Cleopatra demonstrates masculine qualities. Part witch, part animal, part man, and surrounded by a coterie that reflects this mixture of parts, Horace's Cleopatra is a grotesque enemy: the fear and loathing provoked by her life leavened by the joy at her death.

In between these two poems of political significance, Horace deploys the grotesque particularly in poems that address erotic and literary themes. The grotesque arguably makes its next appearance at the beginning of *Carm.* 1.5, where Horace wonders what boy presses upon

²⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 417).

³⁰ Cf. Mayer (2012: 221), who notes that the use of the feminine relative *quae* by agreement *ad sensum* instead of a neuter with *monstrum* "serves to return her humanity to Cleopatra."

³¹ *contra* West (1995: 187–189) who argues that while the first half of the poem vilifies her, the second half of the poem rehabilitates her; see also Mayer (2012: 221–222).

Pyrrha “under a pleasing grotto” (*grato, Pyrrha, sub antro, Carm.* 1.5.3). The boy is *gracilis* in line 1, which is generally rendered “slender” and taken to capture the physique of an adolescent, with positive sexual connotations. Yet the adjective’s application to male figures is problematic and may feminize Pyrrha’s lover as much as *puer* minimizes him.³² This effeminacy is amplified by the boy’s grooming: he has drenched himself in cologne (*perfusus liquidis ... odoribus, Carm.* 1.5.2).³³ This slight gender confusion is compounded by the delayed identification of “you” until line 3. The reader is left to wonder just whose affections the boy is pressing. Instead, Horace provides details about the location of this affair. Although I have so far said little about the place of the cave in the aesthetics of the grotesque, the one is necessarily bound together with the other given the origins of the word. More than this, however, caves are ambivalent spaces. Roman literature is peppered with pleasant grottoes,³⁴ including this one. The difficulty is that *antrum* is a new word: there are no extant instances before Virgil’s *Eclogues*,³⁵ and the history of its Greek progenitor—ἄντρον—and its subsequent career in Latin make it clear that as much as an *antrum* can provide an attractive location for an erotic assignation, it may also hide monsters.³⁶ The *antra* of the *Eclogues* exhibit such ambivalence. In the first *Eclogue*, Meliboeus’ reference to the mossy cave is tinged with melancholy since he will no longer be able recline there as he watches his flocks (*Ecl.* 1.75–76). John Henderson notes that in *Eclogue* 5 although Mopsus and Menalcas

³² See Vessey (1984: 459–460).

³³ Vessey (1984:460).

³⁴ So, for example, Virg. *Ecl.* 1.75, 5.6, 6.13, *Geo.* 4.509, Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.40, 3.25.4.

³⁵ Editors have restored one example to a fragment of Varro Atacinus’ *Argonautae* quoted by Servius (*ad Ecl.* 1.65 = fr. 5.3 Courtney = fr. 125.3 Hollis) on the basis of the passage’s parallel to Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.1129–1131, though that passage uses σπέος rather than ἄντρον.

³⁶ Of the twelve instances in Homer (all in the *Odyssey*), eight refer to Polyphemus’ cave, three to the cave on Ithaca where Odysseus shelters when he first returns, and the last occurs in the simile of the bats at the beginning of book 24 (*Od.* 24.6–9); in Theocritus, the cave can be a purely erotic location (e.g., *Id.* 3.6 and 13) or the home of the cyclops (*Id.* 6.28) or the centaur Pholus (*Id.* 7.149).

retire to an *antrum* to sing their songs, they begin precisely with a dirge (the death of Daphnis).³⁷ *Eclogue* 6 uses the *antrum* as the setting for Silenus' song, but is therefore also a scene of violence both realized (Chromis' and Mnasyllus' capture of Silenus, *Ecl.* 6.18–19) and threatened (Silenus' words to Aegle, *Ecl.* 6.24–26). So is Pyrrha's *antrum* ambivalent?

Horace calls the cave *gratum*. David Vessey has suggested that the adjective is more nuanced than simply "pleasant": it rather contains "a suggestion of permanent pleasure and convey[s] the notion 'habitually welcome to her' or 'her frequent resort for sexual enjoyment'."³⁸ It is possible to take the sexuality further. As James Adams has noted, the identification of the cave with female genitalia is straightforward, citing especially instances of *specus* in a *carmen Priapeum* included in the *Appendix Vergiliana* (83.28 and 35 Bücheler).³⁹ Although *antrum* is not otherwise attested explicitly as a metaphor for the vagina, I suggest that the overtly sexual nature of the encounter between Pyrrha and her paramour—signalled by the verb *urget*—leads the reader to interpret Pyrrha's cave precisely in this way.⁴⁰ This analogy between Pyrrha and her setting is reflected also in the simplicity of their respective adornment. The woman—her golden hair tied back—is "simply, elegantly made up" (*simplex munditiis*, *Carm.* 1.5.5),⁴¹ while the cave itself is given only one element of decoration: the bed of roses on which the two lovers engage (*multa ... in rosa*, *Carm.* 1.5.1).⁴² Moreover, the roses share Pyrrha's simplicity inasmuch as they retain their

³⁷ Henderson (1996: 125).

³⁸ Vessey (1984: 461).

³⁹ Adams (1982: 85).

⁴⁰ On the sexual force of *urget*, see Vessey (1984: 459); Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 74): "the lovers are not merely talking."

⁴¹ See also Vessey (1984: 462–463), who argues that "Pyrrha has dressed her hair not *ad ostentationem* but *ad lasciviam*." Mayer (2012: 87) notes that "she has the art which conceals art."

⁴² Pyrrha's apparent aesthetic restraint is presented in clear contrast to her lover, who (like so many stereotypical young men) has applied the cologne with a heavy hand (*Carm.* 1.5.2): see also Mayer (2012: 86–87).

naturalness.⁴³ Yet there is ambivalence even in the roses since, simple as they may be, they exist in sufficient quantity to function as a bed and thus present an image of luxuriance.⁴⁴ Pyrrha and her cave are simultaneously simple and luxurious.

This ambivalence of character is expressed also in the dichotomy between Pyrrha's external simplicity and her duplicity, which manifests as fickleness.⁴⁵ Horace wryly laments the tears Pyrrha's young lover will weep over her vows after they prove false: *heu quotiens fidem | mutatosque deos flebit* (*Carm.* 1.5.5–6). Here too Pyrrha's location reflects her character: roses are a symbol of the impermanence of life.⁴⁶ Likewise the cave may offer respite from the sea and storm, but it may conceal worse. In fact, this cave itself contains the sea and storm as Horace transforms Pyrrha metaphorically into nature's most treacherous element:

... aspera
nigris aequora uentis
emirabitur insolens,
qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea,
qui semper uacuam, semper amabilem
sperat, nescius aurae
fallacis ...

(*Carm.* 1.5.6–12)

Naively will he look out on seas rough with black winds, he who
with too much trust now enjoys your golden gleam, who hopes you
will always be available, always ready for love, unaware of the
treacherous breeze.

It is their inexperience and ignorance that will do in these young men: *miseri, quibus | intemptata nites* “Poor wretches, to whom you, as yet untried, seem to shine” (*Carm.* 1.5.12–13). Horace, of course, knows better: the poem, often summarized as a “farewell to love” (albeit with characteristic

⁴³ Gold (1993: 17).

⁴⁴ Gold (1993: 19).

⁴⁵ Even more so if her hair is actually dyed: see Vessey (1984: 461–462).

⁴⁶ Gold (1993: 16–17 and 20).

Horatian irony),⁴⁷ is retroactively cast as a dedicatory epigram when the poet claims to have set up a votive tablet and dedicated his sea-drenched clothes to the god of the sea (*Carm.* 1.5.13–16).⁴⁸ It is certainly a farewell to Pyrrha’s love.⁴⁹ But implicit in this is the fact that Horace *has* experienced this and recognizes the attraction.⁵⁰ In this respect, although she is presented in less straightforwardly disparaging terms, Pyrrha belongs to the same class as the old women of the *Epodes*.⁵¹ As I have discussed, those women not only participate in but embody the poetics of the Horatian grotesque. So too does Pyrrha, albeit in a more subdued, subtle way. This subtlety is the result both of the generic differences between the *Epodes* and *Odes* and of their slightly different outlooks. The *Epodes* belong to the civil wars and their overt grotesqueness reflects the confusion and disorder of the times. The *Odes*, on the other hand, as becomes clear from the second poem of the collection, seek to move beyond those troubles and to restore some order to world. Pyrrha—like Cleopatra—is a source of disorder, presented in the confused emotions of her lovers as much as the turbulent waves. The difference now is that Horace can and does extricate himself from that disorder: just as Odysseus escapes the cyclops’ cave and the treachery of the sea, so too has Horace escaped Pyrrha.

Pyrrha is a version of the epodic woman, but she is not the only such woman in the *Odes*. In *Ode* 1.25, Horace (presumably recently rejected) pointedly observes that Lydia is losing her appeal and imagines how, as she grows older, she will lament the way young men prefer younger

⁴⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 72–73).

⁴⁸ See Hoppin (1984) for a discussion of some implications of reading the poem as a dedicatory epigram.

⁴⁹ West (1995: 24); Mayer (2012: 90).

⁵⁰ So too Mayer (2012: 90).

⁵¹ Although Pyrrha is not presented as “old” in the same direct manner as the women in *Epodes* 8 and 12, the designation of her current lover as *puer* and their disparity in experience mark her as more mature.

lovers. Lydia's relationship with, or development into, the old women of the *Epodes* is marked by their shared confusion of imagery. Lydia will be afflicted by an animal passion:

cum tibi flagrans amor et libido
quae solet matres furiare equorum
saeuiet circa iecur ulcerosum. (*Carm.* 1.25.13–15)

...when the burning passion and lust which usually drives the
mothers of horses mad will rage around your ulcerated heart.

The old woman of *Epode* 8 had a bosom like “horse udders”; Lydia is less directly equine, but again this reflects the transition from iambic to lyric.⁵² That this passion afflicts “the mothers of horses” is important: this is not simply a “mannered circumlocution” for “mares,”⁵³ but a subtle dig at Lydia's age and the unnaturalness of her desire. A *mater* should not seek to engage in such affairs. Horace emphatically tops this with the vivid *iecur ulcerosum*. Wounded feelings, certainly; but it is important to recognize the physicality of the image. On the one hand, it gestures at the possibility of venereal disease.⁵⁴ On the other hand, this is a *malum portentum*: the liver (*iecur*) is the principal organ inspected during extispicy, and such damage suggests a fundamental unnaturalness—a breach of the *pax deorum*.

The connection with the old women of the *Epodes* continues in the final stanza of *Ode* 1.25 as Horace transitions from animal to vegetal imagery. In *Epode* 12, the woman, disappointed sexually by Horace, complains that she could have been with Amyntas, the firmness of whose erection she compares to a tree clinging to a hillside (*Epod.* 12.18–20). In *Ode* 1.25, Horace turns the imagery around, for the women are now plants:

⁵² See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 291).

⁵³ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 297).

⁵⁴ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 298).

non sine quaestu
laeta quod pubes hedera uirenti
gaudeat pulla magis atque myrto
aridas frondis hiemis sodali
dedicet Euro.

(*Carm.* 1.25.16–20)

Not without your lamenting the fact that young men happily take
delight in the green ivy more than the dingy myrtle and dedicate the
dry leaves to Winter's intimate companion, the East Wind.

The final image—leaves consigned to the East Wind—reworks the Thracian wind that raves bacchant-like around Lydia as she weeps alone in a deserted street (*Carm.* 1.25.10–12). The interplay of human, animal, and vegetable for the purpose of denigrating a (former) lover is the same grotesque found in the *Epodes*. Here, though, as in *Ode* 1.5, Horace is making a break. He turns away from the epodic lover, even as he gives her grotesque expression.

The distance between the epodic Horace and the Horace of the *Odes* is underscored in the sixteenth poem. If *Odes* 1.5 and 1.25 are a rejection of the epodic lover, *Ode* 1.16 is a rejection of the epodic mindset: anger. But in rejecting that mindset, Horace gives it a small space to express itself. Perhaps the first key to this rejection is the poem's addressee: *o matre pulchra filia pulchrior* “O daughter more beautiful than her beautiful mother” (*Carm.* 1.16.1). The identity of this woman and her relationship to Horace are left undefined. One thing is clear, however: unless the reader is to take this as high sarcasm (and there is little to prompt such a reading), this is not a woman from the *Epodes*. This is confirmed in the following two lines: *quem crimosus cumque uoles modum | pones iambis* “you will put an end to these slanderous *iambi* however you like” (*Carm.* 1.16.2–3). Whether the verses in question are by Horace or by the woman herself,⁵⁵ this constitutes an attempt

⁵⁵ See Mackay (1962: 298–299) for the argument in favour of the woman as author; Mackay's argument does not, however, consider the potential intertext with Catullus 36 and Lesbia's vows to consign to the flames the “choicest writings of the worst poet” should Catullus give up his *iambi* and reconcile with her: Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 204–205).

at a decisive break with invective poetry. For these verses will be consigned to the fire or the Adriatic Sea, depending on the woman's preference (*Carm.* 1.16.3–4).

The remainder of the poem meditates on the nature of “grim anger” (*tristes irae*, *Carm.* 1.16.9), which the poet ties explicitly to iambic verse:

... me quoque pectoris
temptauit in dulci iuuenta
feruor et in celeris iambos
misit furentem (Carm. 1.16.22–25)

In my sweet youth the seething of my breast tested me and propelled
me in my rage to swift invectives.

Anger is more maddening than ecstatic religious rituals and it cannot be checked by sword, sea, fire, or Jupiter himself (*Carm.* 1.16.5–12). Horace introduces a difficulty here: he grants that the woman may destroy the *iambi* in fire or the waters of the Adriatic, but neither the fire nor the sea have any power over anger. It may, therefore, be more difficult to break from the poetry of the *Epodes* than it at first seems. Indeed, the anger that provokes such poetry is, according the poet, intrinsic to the human condition:

fertur Prometheus addere principi
limo coactus particulam undique
desectam et insani leonis
uim stomacho apposuisse nostro. (Carm. 1.16.13–16)

Prometheus is said to have been forced to add to the original mud a grain cut from everywhere and to have set in our bellies the force of a monstrous lion.

The root of the iambic anger is a fundamentally grotesque element of human nature—a blending of animal and human in the primordial sludge. Further, the fact that the lion is *insanus* connects this with Horace's description of himself in line 25 as *furens* when writing iambic poetry and with the *poeta insanus* of the *Ars Poetica*. Horace claims that these angry verses were a product of his

youth, but now he hopes to exchange grim things for gentle: *nunc ego mitibus | mutare quaero tristia* (*Carm.* 1.16.25–26).

The attempted substitution of *mitia* for *tristia* mirrors Horace’s injunction not to mix the fierce with the peaceful (*Ars P.* 12): one or the other, but not both. As I have demonstrated in my discussion of the *Ars*, however, this proves to be easier said than done. That may be the case here as well. Horace exhorts the addressee of *Ode* 1.16 to “check her emotions” (*compesce mentem*, *Carm.* 1.16.22). The anger is not extinguished, merely restrained. Horace has already indicated that anger respects no restraints, and even if it did, restraints can fail, as the bear-poet of the *Ars* makes clear. Anger may and probably will erupt again. The poem, in fact, ends hinting precisely at that possibility. Horace hopes to write gentle poems instead of *iambi*, so long as the woman reconciles with him (*Carm.* 1.16.25–28). Horace’s shift away from iambic poetry is provisional, not absolute. The poet underscores just how tenuous this shift is with an ablative absolute: *recantatis opprobriis*. The participle—an apparent calque on *παλινᾶδεῖν*⁵⁶—is usually glossed as “unsung” or “called back.” I do not wish to deny that this is the primary meaning here. I suggest, however, that there is a secondary meaning lurking below the surface: “sung *again*.” Since this is the first instance of *recantare* in Latin, it is open for readers to interpret the force of the prefix. It suggests that the grain of leonine ferocity that lurks in every person may erupt. The poem may want to be a palinode. It may want to be a philosophical argument against anger. Yet it cannot quite be either.

Horace continues to flirt with blurring the categorical boundaries between human and animal in his depictions of erotic relationships. In *Ode* 1.23 he employs extended animal similes to depict the way Chloe avoids him: she is like a fawn (*inuleo similis*) who follows her frightened

⁵⁶ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 216).

mother through the pathless mountains and is needlessly scared by the breezes and woods (*Carm.* 1.23.1–4). The mother’s trepidation (*pauida mater*) remains unexplained, but Chloe evinces an “empty fear” (*uanus metus*):⁵⁷

nam seu mobilibus ueris inhorruit
aduentus foliis seu uirides rubum
dimouere lacertae,
et corde et genibus tremit. (*Carm.* 1.23.5–8)

For if the arrival of Spring shivers on stirring leaves or green lizards
part a bramble, it trembles in both heart and knees.

These are hardly terrifying phenomena and they provide a delicate humour to Horace’s picture. Horace attempts to allay Chloe’s concerns by claiming that he pursues her not as some cruel tiger or Gaetolian lion in order to grind her up: *atqui non ego te tigris ut aspera | Gaetuluse leo frangere persequor* (*Carm.* 1.23.9–10). In addition to eroding the boundary between animal and human, the similes also confuse the sexes. As a fawn, Chloe is masculine; Horace is a feminine tiger and a masculine lion. As Nisbet and Hubbard note, Horace’s sentiment here may be the mundane “I’m not going to eat you,” but the expression is elevated.⁵⁸ This creates a tonal incongruity which, for Nisbet and Hubbard, is humorous. I grant the humour, but suggest that the imagery and diction validate Chloe’s fears. The beginning of the poem is focalized through Horace, so the reader sees the jittery fawn spooked by the littlest thing. With the second simile, however, the reader now understands what Chloe imagines when she sees Horace, despite his protestations to the contrary.⁵⁹ The ferocity of the tiger and the lion paired with the graphic *frangere* reifies Chloe’s anxiety,⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 275) argue that the mother is concerned for her young.

⁵⁸ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 278).

⁵⁹ Interestingly, she sees Horace in much the same way as Horace sees the old woman of *Epode* 12 (see *Epod.* 12.25–26).

⁶⁰ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 278) on *frangere*: “the word suggests the crunch of bones.”

thus tempering the humour and complicating the aesthetic. Simply put, Horace here generates the grotesque.

Horace ties this aesthetic closely to elegiac poetry in *Ode* 1.33. In this poem, he counsels Albius to let go of his grief over Glycera and to stop singing lamentable elegies demanding explanations about a younger rival (*Carm.* 1.33.1–4). Glycera is here *immitis*, an oxymoronic epithet for a woman whose name is “Sweetie” in Greek since the word can denote both a fierce temperament and a sour or acrid flavour.⁶¹ This immediately invests Glycera with an aesthetic dissonance. It is worth recalling that on the first occasion when Horace uses the name Glycera, the poem begins by naming Venus as the “cruel mother of desires” (*mater saeua Cupidinum*, *Carm.* 1.19.1): the goddess, along with Bacchus and Licentia, orders Horace to turn his attentions back to affairs that had been finished (*Carm.* 1.19.1–4), and now he burns:

urit me Glycerae nitor
splendentis Pario marmore purius:
urit grata proteruitas
et uultus nimium lubricus aspici. (*Carm.* 1.19.5–8)

The splendour of Glycera, who shines more cleanly than Parian
Marble, burns me; her pleasing boldness burns me and her face that
is too slippery to be looked at.

Glycera simultaneously produces in Horace two very different responses. She both pleases (*grata*) and burns (*urit*). Such aesthetic dissonance is a hallmark of the grotesque which, as I have shown, provokes a positive and negative response in the viewer at the same time, leading to a kind of aporia in which the viewer cannot fully grasp what is in view. Indeed, the phrase *nimum lubricus aspici* may suggest not only that it is hard to look at Glycera, but that it is impossible to aesthetically comprehend her since the slipperiness implicit in *lubricus* indicates a treacherous

⁶¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 371); Mayer (2012: 202).

surface.⁶² The destructive potential of Glycera is matched by the violence of the goddess who rushes upon the poet at full force (*in me tota ruens Venus*, *Carm.* 1.19.9) and who must ultimately be mollified by an offering: *mactata ueniet lenior hostia* “she will come more gently after a victim has been sacrificed” (*Carm.* 1.19.16).⁶³ The close connection of Venus and Glycera is confirmed in *Ode* 1.30, where the woman summons the goddess to her shrine (*Carm.* 1.30.1–4).⁶⁴ The reader may rightly expect, therefore, the character of the acolyte to match that of the deity.

After exhorting Albius to give up on Glycera, Horace then gives a short list of lovers ignored by the objects of their affections who in turn themselves pursue and are ignored by others (*Carm.* 1.33.5–9): Lycoris, who has a pretty face (specifically, an attractively narrow forehead), burns with love for Cyrus, but he is after fierce Pholoe (*aspera Pholoe*). Pholoe, however, has no interest:

... sed prius Apulis
iungentur capreae lupis,
quam turpi Pholoe peccet adultero. (*Carm.* 1.33.7–9)

But roes will sooner be coupled with Apulian wolves than Pholoe
will dally with an ugly paramour.

According to the syntax here, the roes, since they are feminine, (theoretically) the object of pursuit, and the subject of their verb, should map onto Pholoe, while the “ugly paramour”—that is, Cyrus, who is masculine and dative—parallels the wolves. And yet, *aspera* Pholoe is temperamentally closer to the wolves, adding a further level of confusion and hinting that Cyrus may possess a temperament closer to the deer. This pairing of roes and wolves is the same kind of unnatural union as found at *Epod.* 16.30–32, where Horace also uses *iungere* and *adulterare*. Here, the poet

⁶² See Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 241); Mayer (2012: 157).

⁶³ See also Mayer (2012: 159), noting that *saeva* is “hardly a bantering epithet.”

⁶⁴ Cf. Mayer (2012: 194), who raises the question of the identity of the two Glyceras.

amplifies the “wrongness” of such a coupling by characterizing it as a mistake or transgression (*peccet*). Horace summarizes thus:

sic uisum Veneri, cui placet imparis
formas atque animos sub iuga aenea
saeuo mittere cum ioco. (*Carm.* 1.33.10–12)

Thus it seems good to Venus who takes pleasure with savage mirth
in setting beneath a bronze yoke shapes and temperaments that do
not match.

Love actively, deliberately produces the grotesque. The oxymoronic *saeuus iocus* provoked by joining these unequal forms and temperaments, the blending of the *immitia* and the *placida*, captures the essence of the grotesque, because it creates a unified whole. The connection to elegiac poetry comes through as well. As already noted, Glycera is described as *immitis*, and this equates her with Pholoe. Inasmuch as he is rejected by Glycera, Albius therefore becomes another Cyrus. Albius and Glycera are, thus, *impares*, and Venus has yoked them together for her own amusement. But the concrete product of this yoking is not a relationship, but elegiac poetry—specifically, “lamentable elegies” (*miserabilis elegos*). One defining feature of an elegiac poem is the yoking together of “unequal shapes”: the pairing of the hexameter and pentameter. Horace thus turns the unequal lovers cruelly and laughingly yoked together by Venus into the verse forms they inspire. It is possible, therefore, to read this ode as a comment on elegy’s grotesque nature, both in terms of the way it turns the poet and his beloved into ambivalent creatures and also, perhaps, in its metrical unevenness.

2. *Odes Book 2*

The second book of the *Odes* begins with civil war, seemingly plunging the reader back into the political chaos of the *Epodes* and away from the triumph over Cleopatra:

motum ex Metello consule ciuicum
 bellicae causas et uitia et modos
 ludumque Fortunae grauisque
 principum amicitias et arma
 nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus

(Carm. 2.1.1–5)

The civil upheaval from when Metellus was consul and the causes
 of war and the faults and the manner and Fortune's game and the
 grave friendships of the leading players and the weapons smeared
 with gore not yet atoned for ...

Since Horace has established civil war and its evils as the subject in the first two lines, *ludum* in line 3 appears at first sight somewhat incongruous. That *ludum* is balanced at the end of the line by *grauis* adds to the tension, which only heightens once the reader encounters its noun: *amicitias*. Friendships and sport—two things that should not normally be associated with war. But that is the nature of *civil* war: to throw into disorder and enmity what should normally be in harmony and concord. The readers' fears that the horrors of the civil wars still haunt them are reinforced by the *as yet* unexpiated blood that anoints the weapons.⁶⁵ It is only in the enjambed second line of the second stanza that Horace reveals that his poem is not about civil war, but is instead a poem addressed to someone else who is writing about the recent wars:⁶⁶

periculosae plenum opus aleae
 tractas, et incedis per ignis
 suppositos cineri doloso.

(Carm. 2.1.6–8)

a work full of dangerous chance, that's what you are handling, and
 you're treading through fires set beneath treacherous ash.

⁶⁵ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 14): “*uncta* hints at something unpleasant and messy.” Harrison (2007: 49): “bitterly ironic.”

⁶⁶ So too Harrison (2017: 44). Even this may be too strong an interpretation: *opus tractas* may denote the act of writing a literary work, but can as easily refer to the reader's handling of the book of poetry Horace has written; thus also Henderson (1996: 73), who remarks that the poem's movement through the events of the civil war is a story “not yet concluded.” For Henderson, it is only when Pollio is named that readers fully realize that they are reading Horace's version of Pollio's history (80–81).

The realization of being at one remove from the chaos of war somewhat tempers the initial horror that confronts the reader, but the aesthetic experience is as precarious as the addressee's own undertaking.⁶⁷

That addressee is finally identified in line 14: C. Asinius Pollio. Pollio's own talents as a tragedian, orator, and general in foreign wars are cited with approval (*Carm.* 2.1.9–16), before Horace returns to the fear his histories generate:

iam nunc minaci murmure cornuum
perstringis auris, iam litui strepunt,
iam fulgor armorum fugacis
terret equos equitumque uultus. (*Carm.* 2.1.17–20)

Already now you grate upon our ears with the threatening blare of trumpets, already the horns screech, already the flash of weapons terrifies the fleet horses and the horsemen's faces.

Horace even seems to see⁶⁸ the generals themselves who are, notably, filthy with becoming dust (*non indecoro puluere sordidos*, *Carm.* 2.1.22). David West has remarked that “the battle starts with the glitter of armour and ends with leaders begrimed with dust.”⁶⁹ This is true, but it misses the fact that this is the second instance of *arma* in the poem and, just like the first, it is marked by a temporal adverb indicating a current state (*iam* and *nondum*). I suggest that just as the readers *now* see the flash of weapons in line 19, so too will they recall the still bloody weapons of lines 4–5 and remember that these are, in fact, the *same* weapons. Horace is certainly celebrating the *enargeia* of Pollio's account, but in doing so he subtly reiterates that these weapons are being

⁶⁷ Cf. Henderson (1996: 70–71 and 75–76), who concludes a discussion of the way Horace turns history into lyric and challenges the reader to continue with “Scared? You should be.” (76).

⁶⁸ Following the conjecture of *uidere* for *audire* by Beroaldus and Bentley, approved by Shackleton Bailey in his Teubner and Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 22–23); but see Fraenkel (1957: 236), Henderson (1996: 101), West (1998: 8–9), Harrison (2017: 53), who would retain *audire*, though each on different grounds.

⁶⁹ West (1998: 7–8).

directed against *Romans* and are still stained with their blood.⁷⁰ The reader is therefore pulled in two different directions: on the one hand, we are exhilarated by the account and, given that Pollio writes as a member of the victorious party, may even associate with the source of the *fulgor*; on the other hand, we react also with the fear (*terret*) of the horses and their riders.⁷¹ This incongruity of reaction finds an immediate reflection in the presentation of the generals as *non indecoro puluere sordidos*. Nisbet and Hubbard note the oxymoronic phrasing, remarking of *sordidos* that “in other contexts [it] might suggest not just dirt but disgrace.”⁷² Why only in “other contexts”? For David West, the line likely captures the moment—recorded no doubt by Pollio himself—when the Caesarean officers came together immediately after Thapsus “begrimed with dust and sweat, but victorious.”⁷³ That is, victory makes seemly what is otherwise disgraceful. I am not so convinced. I would argue that the tension generated by the oxymoron is precisely the point and cannot—should not—be waved away. Even if these are victorious generals, the nagging thought remains: over whom are they victorious? Nor does Horace let the reader dismiss the question. For in addition to the dirty generals, Horace seems also to see all the world subjugated, with the exception of the fierce mind of Cato whose name sits prominently as the last word of the stanza (*praeter atrocem animum Catonis*, *Carm.* 2.1.24).⁷⁴

⁷⁰ On the praise of *enargeia*, see Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 21); Henderson (1996: 96–97); West (1998: 7); Harrison (2017: 51–52).

⁷¹ This, of course, is not meant to deny that Pollio himself may have used his *Histories* to denounce the evils of civil war: see e.g. West (1998: 10).

⁷² Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 23); also Harrison (2017: 53); cf. Henderson (1996: 102), who speaks of “the gap which yawns between / *non* and *indecoro*.”

⁷³ West (1998: 8), though it is perhaps unwise to try to associate a particular battle to these lines: see Henderson (1996: 98–99).

⁷⁴ The subjugated world is potentially an allusion to a statue voted to Caesar depicting him with a globe at his feet: Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 24); West (1998: 8); Harrison (2017: 53–54). The statue itself is discussed by Weinstock (1971: 41–53).

Horace here uses Cato as a means of focusing specifically on the African theatre of the recent wars in the next stanza (*Carm.* 2.1.25–28), a stanza that begins with Juno and ends with Jugurtha.⁷⁵ Specifically, it begins with the withdrawal of Juno and other pro-African deities—deities who are otherwise powerless (*impotens*, *Carm.* 2.1.26) in the face of Roman might and whose withdrawal leaves the land “unavenged” (*inulta...tellure*, *Carm.* 2.1.26–27).⁷⁶ But it pivots in the second half to invert that power dynamic: *uictorum nepotes | rettulit inferias Iugurthae* “[Juno] has returned the conquerors’ descendents as sacrificial victims to Jugurtha” (*Carm.* 2.1.27–28). The word *nepotes*, I suggest, signals this inversion by a kind of linguistic pun. As the last word of its line, *nepotes* occupies a similar position to *impotens*. This parallel, as well as the shared medial syllable, invites the reader to consider the two words together. In doing so, it is possible to unpack *nepotes* as *ne-potes*, that is, as “not powerful”—a play made more striking by its juxtaposition with *uictorum*.⁷⁷ For *nepotes* is used here not just figuratively, but literally.⁷⁸ The reference to Cato and the shift to the African theater will have reminded readers that Cato did not lead the Republican forces at the battle of Thapsus: they were led by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio (cos. 52 BCE).⁷⁹ The use of Juno’s name in connection with Africa cannot but have called

⁷⁵ For Cato as facilitating the transition to Africa, see also Harrison (2017: 54).

⁷⁶ Fraenkel (1957: 237–239) and West (1998: 9) see an allusion to the *euocatio* of Juno from Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War (146 BCE); but see Rawson (1973: 168–173) for a thorough survey of the evidence for its historicity; Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 25), citing Rawson, question the historicity of the *euocatio* story and conclude that “Horace’s words cannot be used to support it, as they imply that Juno remained hostile a century later.”

⁷⁷ Cf. Henderson (1996: 105): “*im-potens* / is re-formed in *nepotes* /.”

⁷⁸ So also Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 25–26); Harrison (2017: 55).

⁷⁹ This recollection is facilitated by the reference to *Metello consule* in line 1 and, potentially, by the characterisation of Pollio’s triumphs as “Dalmatian”: Henderson (1996: 60–62 and 87)

to mind Rome's historical enmity with Carthage.⁸⁰ Scipio was, as his cognomen indicates, by birth one of the Corneli Scipiones, the family to which belonged both the conqueror of Hannibal (P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, cos. 205 BCE) and the destroyer of Carthage (P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, cos. 147 BCE). Yet it is the reference to Jugurtha—the last word of the stanza—that provides even greater sting and point to *nepotes*. For Scipio, as his praenomen and nomen show, was in name the grandson of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, cos. 109 BCE, who led the campaign against Jugurtha before being recalled and replaced by C. Marius.⁸¹ The grandfather's "victory"—at least as officially recorded in his use of the cognomen *Numidicus* and his celebration of a triumph (*Inscr. Ital.* 13.1.84–85; *Vell. Pat.* 2.11.2)—is overturned by the sacrifice of the grandson.⁸²

This suggestion of human sacrifice is unsettling, not least because the subject of the verb remains Juno: the goddess herself perpetrates the inversion of not only the power dynamic between Rome and Africa, but also the proper order of the world, becoming analogous to Canidia.⁸³ The notion of impiety continues in the next two stanzas:

quis non Latino sanguine pinguior
campus sepulcris in pia proelia
testatur auditumque Medis
Hesperiae sonitum ruinae?

⁸⁰ Juno's connection to Carthage and her identification with the Carthaginian deity Tanit have been well established since Pease (1935: 162–163); it is unclear whether the association was made in the Roman mind as early as Naevius, but certainly by Ennius: see Feeney (1991: 116–117 and 127); Harrison (2017: 54).

⁸¹ So too Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 25–26), who refer to Scipio as the adopted grandson of Numidicus; there is, however, strong evidence that although he was the heir of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius *pont. max.* (cos. 80 BCE), Scipio did not undergo "testamentary adoption," but only assumed the name: see Linderski (2007: 133–140).

⁸² See also Henderson (1996: 105–106); Harrison (2017: 55). There may be greater point in the juxtaposition of *uictorum nepotes*. As Linderski (2007: 131) notes, after a military victory in the Amanus mountains during his proconsulship in Syria in 49 BCE, Scipio's soldiers hailed him as *imperator*: "[Scipio] was proud of his title of *imperator* ... and he advertised it ceaselessly." By placing *nepotes* immediately after *uictorum*, Horace may be reminding the reader of Scipio's preferred nomenclature.

⁸³ This is especially so if, as is usually supposed, *cesserat* in line 26 refers to the (story of the) *euocatio* of 146 BCE, since Juno should have transferred her allegiance to the Romans: West (1998: 9).

qui gurgēs aut quae flumina lugubris
ignara belli? quod mare Daunia
non decolorauere caedes?
quae caret ora cruore nostro? (Carm. 2.1.29–36)

What plain, richer with Latin blood, does not bear witness by its
tombs to the unholy battles and the sound of Hesperia's ruin heard
by the Medes? What swell or what rivers are ignorant of our
mournful war? What sea have the Daunian slaughters not
discoloured? What shore is in want of our blood?

Horace mimics the geographical spread of Roman bloodshed with his word order (*sanguine* in line 29 is answered by *cruore* in line 36), and the combination of tombs and battles in line 30 are echoed by the mournful war in lines 33–34. But the imagery of bloodstains creates unity beyond these two stanzas: just as the weapons of lines 4–5 remain coated in unexpiated blood, so has the stain of civil war spread across the land and sea.⁸⁴ Similarly, the idea of *ruinae* could look back to the *ignis suppositos cineri doloso* of lines 7–8, making concrete Horace's earlier metaphor:⁸⁵ in writing his history, Pollio is not only undertaking a perilous task, it turns out that he is literally treading over the smoldering ruins of Hesperia.

If the previous stanza concludes with Juno's perverted sacrifice, *Latino sanguine pinguior campus* is the awful result, with the perversion accentuated by *impia*.⁸⁶ Nisbet and Hubbard suggest that Horace may here be imitating Virgil: *nec fuit indignum superis bis sanguine nostro | Emathiam et latos Haemi pinguescere campos* “nor was it unworthy for the gods that twice with

⁸⁴ See also Harrison (2017: 55); Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 29) on *decolorauere*: “a true perfect ... the stains are still there.”

⁸⁵ West (1998: 6) clearly connects lines 7–8 with a burned down building, but does not link the lines to *ruinae*. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 16 and 28) are less certain of lines 7–8, though they presume some kind of conflagration, but remark on *sonitum ruinae*, “the image is of a falling building, a common misfortune in Rome.”

⁸⁶ See also Henderson (1996: 109), who suggests that sound effects in lines 29–32 literally echo Juno's “curse.”

our blood did Emathia and the broad fields of Haemus grow rich” (*Geo.* 1.491–492).⁸⁷ I agree, but Horace has layered on top the idea of sacrifice to create a peculiar triangulation of concepts. Fields can be *pinguis* and ideally should be.⁸⁸ Likewise *pinguis* can describe both the sacrificial victim and, because of the residue of those victims, the altar at which sacrifices are performed.⁸⁹ On their own, each use is appropriate and connotatively positive, but in combination they sit uneasily and affirm the force of *impia*. And as conventional as the image of discoloured waters may be,⁹⁰ it is important to remember that *decolorare* is a verb of deterioration and distortion and not of simple change.⁹¹ It is not that the civil wars “the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red”; rather the sea has become a distorted version of itself. The disaster of the civil wars has touched everything and left its mark.

The commentators are agreed on the rhetorical and emotional power of lines 29–36 and that they amount to a “passionate denunciation of civil war.”⁹² True, but this is not the end of the poem. Four lines remain:

sed ne relictis, Musa procax, iocis
 Ceae retractes munera neniae,
 mecum Dionaëo sub antro
 quaere modos leuiore plectro. (*Carm.* 2.1.37–40)

⁸⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 27); see also Harrison (2017: 56); Henderson (1996: 110–111), noting that *testatur* in line 31 “advertises” the intertextuality; Thomas (1988: 1.150), who calls Virgil’s use of *pinguescere* “grimly ironic.”

⁸⁸ See e.g., Lucr. *DRN* 5.1248; Virg. *Geo.* 2.92, 139, 184, 203, 248, 274; Prop. 3.5.5.

⁸⁹ See e.g., Virg. *Ecl.* 6.4–5, *Aen.* 11.740, Sen. *Her. F.* 878 for the victim; *Aen.* 4.62, 7.764 for the altars.

⁹⁰ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 29).

⁹¹ So Seneca in his discussion of types of lightning: *decoloratur id cuius color utiatur, non mutatur; coloratur id cuius alia fit quam fuit facies, tamquam caerulea uel nigra uel pallida* “something the colour of which is spoiled, not changed, is ‘discoloured’; but something the colour of which takes on an appearance other than what it was (e.g., blue or black or pale) is ‘coloured’” (Sen. *QNat.* 2.40.6).

⁹² Fraenkel (1957: 239); Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 26–29); West (1998: 10–11), to whom the quote belongs; Harrison (2017: 55); Henderson (1996: 109 n 101, 112–113), who also points, rightly, to certain echoes of *Epod.* 7.

But, saucy Muse, do not abandon delights and take up again the duties of the Cean dirge, but seek with me within a cave of Dione strains for a lighter plectrum.

For Eduard Fraenkel, the “horrors of the past seem to have faded away; in the gentle finale we are watching a scene of sheltered peace,” and Nisbet and Hubbard speak of a “quiet ending” after the “impassioned dirge” of the preceding eight lines.⁹³ Neither of these descriptions seems quite to capture the tonal whiplash of these lines. Fraenkel’s notion of “fading away” is misplaced: fading is a gradual process, but the horrors now are simply gone on Fraenkel’s reading. Certainly the turn away from the harrowing material is abrupt, but that does not make the material any less “there.”⁹⁴ Horace does not say, “That is all over now.” Rather he says, “Let’s not talk about that anymore/again.” The stark contrast between the *Musa procax* of line 37 and the *seuerae Musa tragoediae* of line 9 amplifies the continued presence of the darker subject matter and its incongruity with what Horace wants/plans to write, as does the relative position in their lines of *iocis* and *neniae*. Furthermore, the final stanza actively gestures back to the opening of the poem: *iocis* reflects the much more treacherous *ludum Fortunae* of line 3, and while Horace may encourage this Muse to join him in the pursuit of “strains with a lighter plectrum,” *modos* was previously used in line 2 for civil war and *leuiore* gestures by contrast to *grauis* in line 3.⁹⁵ Indeed, the relative “quiet” of this final stanza facilitates the continued resonance of the civil wars in the background even though the poet turns away from them, just as *antro* and *plectro* echo *nostro*. And a cave—the *antro* of line 39—can function precisely as an echo chamber. Nisbet and Hubbard

⁹³ Fraenkel (1957: 239); Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 29), who follow Fraenkel in citing Pindar as model and also point to other “quiet endings” in *Carm.* 3.5 and 4.2.

⁹⁴ Cf. Henderson (1996: 115–116): “the rhetorical gesture of *turning away* signifies no less than a «reengagement».”

⁹⁵ Henderson (1996: 121); cf. Harrison (2017: 580, who sees these references back to the beginning of the poem as “inversions.”

suggest that “grottoes were associated with the Muses and poetry.”⁹⁶ True, but this somewhat presupposes that an *antrum* is always a grotto—green and cool, a quiet retreat from the hurly-burly of the world—and I have already discussed why this is not necessarily the case. The cave is an ambivalent space: both a pleasant retreat and a lair for monsters. This is no less true when instead of ‘light’ verse, the *antrum* rings back the sound of “our blood” being spilled. By rejecting the dirge explicitly, Horace names and juxtaposes it with its opposite, thereby holding the cheerful and the terrifying in unresolved tension. Despite the invitation to enjoy the implicitly erotic delights of lyric poetry, Horace does not in fact allow the reader to forget the tragic history he has outlined.⁹⁷

The fifth and eighth poems of Book Two both address the erotic themes adumbrated at the close of the Pollio Ode. Both poems also participate in Horace’s aesthetics of the grotesque, albeit gently, through the use of bovine imagery. In the fifth ode, the beloved is a heifer not yet ready for the yoke or strong enough to withstand a rutting bull:

nondum subacta ferre iugum ualet
 ceruice, nondum munia comparis
 aequare nec tauri ruentis
 in uenerem tolerare pondus.
 circa uirentis est animus tuae
 campos iuuencae. (*Carm.* 2.5.1–6)

She is not yet able to bear the yoke on her submissive neck, not yet able to share equally the duties with her companion nor withstand the weight of a bull rushing to love. The mind of your heifer is around the green fields.

She is still thinking of grassy meadows and cool streams or willow-groves in which to sport with calves (*Carm.* 2.5.5–8). Horace stretches the metaphor through half of the poem (12 of 24 lines,

⁹⁶ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 31) with citations; so too Harrison (2017: 59).

⁹⁷ Cf. Henderson (1996: 117, 122).

though with a noticeable break in the third stanza to viticulture). The totality of the metaphor to this point—*taurus*, *iuvencu*, *uituli*, the yoke—defers engagement with the grotesque simply because Horace has not mentioned a person. However, after a brief injunction to avoid the not-yet-but-soon-to-be-ripe grape (*Carm.* 2.5.9–12), Horace takes up again the cow imagery:

iam te sequetur: currit enim ferox
aetas et illi quos tibi dempserit
 apponet annos; iam proterua
 fronte petet Lalage maritum. (Carm. 2.5.13–16)

Soon she will follow you: for time runs wild and will set on her the years which it will have taken from you; soon Lalage will make for her mate with a wanton forehead.

Here Horace crosses into the grotesque. For by naming Lalage, he “at last makes explicit what has been clear all along, that he is talking about a girl.”⁹⁸ The reference to Lalage’s forehead fits the earlier bovine imagery, while *proterua* may suggest a somewhat masculine sexual aggression.⁹⁹ Horace then caps the grotesqueness of the poem with a final and explicit blurring of gender boundaries: he suggests that Lalage will be loved more than Pholoe, Chloris, or Cnidian Gyges (*Carm.* 2.5.17–20). Of this last he adds:

quem si puellarum insereres choro,
mire sagacis falleret hospites
 discrimen obscurum solutis
 crinibus ambiguoque vultu. (Carm. 2.5.21–24)

if you were to interweave him into a chorus of girls, he would wondrously deceive the perceptive guests, the distinction blurred by the flowing hair and ambiguous expression.

⁹⁸ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 88).

⁹⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 88); cf. Harrison (2017: 89–90), who speaks of friskiness and brazenness. An analogous idea is found in *Ode* 3.13, where the kid to be sacrificed at the Bandusian Spring has a “forehead swelling with budding horns which marks him out for love and battles” (*frons turgida cornibus | primis et uenerem et proelia destinat*, lines 4–5).

These lines allude to the discovery by Odysseus and Diomedes of Achilles when he was disguised as a woman on Scyros.¹⁰⁰ Here, however, the confusion of male and female is so complete that even Odysseus would fail to pick Gyges out. The poem thus ends with a moment of aesthetic confusion, the inability of even the most discerning and perceptive audience to describe properly what they see.

The same bovine metaphor for lovers as seen in *Ode* 2.5 appears as well in the eighth poem, albeit with a switch in gender.¹⁰¹ *Ode* 2.8 provides a gentle indictment of Barine, whose repeated infidelities have not only gone unpunished, but have seemingly been rewarded with growing popularity and attractiveness. In the final stanza, Horace remarks that “for the safety of their young bullocks mothers are fearful of you” (*te suis matres metuunt iuencis*, *Carm.* 2.8.21). Stephen Harrison notes the etymological link between *iuuenis* and *iuencus*.¹⁰² The etymological play contributes to the blurring together of human and animal. Horace’s use of *iuencis* prepares the reader for the somewhat extended sense of *aura* as “scent” in line 23:¹⁰³

... miseraeque nuper
uirgines nuptae, tua ne retardet
aura maritos (Carm. 2.8.22–24)

and wretched virgins recently married—they’re afraid that your
scent will make their new husbands tarry.

¹⁰⁰ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 91–92); Harrison (2017: 91).

¹⁰¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 132); West (1998: 58); Harrison (2017: 117).

¹⁰² Harrison (2017: 116).

¹⁰³ For *aura* as “scent,” see Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 133–134); West (1998: 58–59); Harrison (2017: 117). All three commentaries cite Virg. *Geo.* 3.250–251 for the image of a bull “catching the scent” of cows.

Nisbet and Hubbard note that *maritos* not only connotes the newly married, but is regularly used of non-human “mates,” pointing again to *Carm.* 2.5.16.¹⁰⁴ The connections with the earlier ode are strong, but there are also echoes of the *Epodes* which introduce other traces of the grotesque.

If *Ode* 2.1 transports the reader back to the *Epodes* through the civil wars, the eighth poem—in keeping with Horace’s stated goal from the end of the Pollio Ode to pursue erotic themes—may suggest the earlier collection’s abortive love affairs and the consequent imprecations and lamentations. Commentators have in particular pointed to *Epode* 15 and Horace’s difficulties with Neaera’s infidelity after she too has sworn an oath.¹⁰⁵ I certainly agree, but would note that *Epode* 15 lacks the subtle mixture of human and animal imagery of the ode. I suggest that *Epode* 8 also casts its disfigured shadow over the ode. For the black tooth which Horace imagines as potential evidence of Barine’s faithlessness (*Carm.* 2.8.3) is the same black tooth which disfigures the old woman at *Epode* 8.3—the first of the old woman’s features that “unnerve” Horace.¹⁰⁶ While the tooth is the first, the third feature (as discussed above in Chapter 3, section 5) dehumanizes the old woman by transforming her hindquarters into those of a cow with diarrhea (*Epod.* 8.5–6). Bovine imagery, therefore, connects the two poems. And given the concerns that mothers have for their *iuuenci*, it is worth recalling that the old woman of *Epode* 12 longed for a bull, but got Horace instead (*Epod.* 12.17).

The first half of the poem concerns itself with Barine’s inconstancy and the lack of consequences for her. The second half begins with a demonstration of how the gods really feel:

¹⁰⁴ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 134).

¹⁰⁵ Commager (1995: 150 n 70); Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 123).

¹⁰⁶ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 125) and Harrison (2017: 113) do note that “bad teeth were a literary hall-mark of decayed courtesans,” citing *Epod.* 8.3, but do not draw further connections between the two poems.

ridet hoc, inquam, Venus ipsa, rident
simplices Nymphae, ferus et Cupido
semper ardentis acuens sagittas
cote cruenta.

(*Carm.* 2.8.13–16)

I tell you, Venus herself laughs at this, the guileless nymphs laugh,
savage Cupid too, who is always sharpening his burning arrows on
a bloody whetstone.

For Nisbet and Hubbard, *simplices* and *ferus* suggest that the laughter is out of character for the nymphs and for Cupid.¹⁰⁷ I am not convinced. The nymphs have no need of or use for Barine's duplicity, so it is perhaps as easy to see their laughter here as a version of Puck's "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" They rather share in Venus' cruel joke. The depiction of Cupid highlights the cruelty: his wildness and the burning arrows may be conventional, but the blood on the whetstone makes concrete the otherwise metaphorical wounds of love¹⁰⁸. This may be fun and games, but people are getting hurt. It all adds a sinister undertone of violence to the laughter. The laughter here echoes the amusement Venus derives from her unequal pairings in *Ode* 1.33. It is a cruel laughter since the gods, as guarantors of Barine's oaths (*Carm.* 2.8.11–12), are rendered knowingly complicit in her faithlessness. The grotesque mixture of laughter and violence reiterates love as a *saeuus iocus*.

Horace brings the grim and the humorous together again in *Odes* 2.13, where he rails against a tree on his own property with which he has had a close call. The day the tree was planted was "inauspicious" (*nefasto die*, *Carm.* 2.13.1), and the hand that grew it "sacrilegious" (*sacrilega manu*, *Carm.* 2.13.2). Indeed, Horace believes that the tree-planter has not only plotted ruin for his descendents (*in nepotum | perniciem*, *Carm.* 2.13.3–4), but is a paradigm of criminality:

¹⁰⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 129); see also Harrison (2017: 115).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Harrison (2017: 115), who asserts that the blood is only metaphorical.

illum et parentis crediderim sui
 fregisse ceruicem et penetralia
 sparsisse nocturno cruore
 hospitis; ille uenena Colcha
 et quidquid usquam concipitur nefas
 tractauit, agro qui statuit meo
 te triste lignum, te caducum
 in domini caput immerentis. (Carm. 2.13.5–12)

And I would believe that that man broke his own father's neck and
 spattered the inmost hearths with the nighttime blood of his guest;
 that man handled Colchian poisons and whatever unspeakable thing
 has anywhere been thought up, he who set you up in my field, you
 grim hunk of wood, to fall on the head of your undeserving owner.

Parricide is a violation of the natural order. The murder of a guest is similarly a fundamental transgression of divine law. The spattering of blood imagistically conveys this transgression: the blood which belongs inside the guest's body now stains the innermost parts of the house, the shrine of the Penates.¹⁰⁹ Poisons are a quintessentially feminine device, so this crime too is transgressive, albeit in a slightly different way: by handling the poisons, the ancestral wrongdoer crosses the boundary between male and female. That the poisons are Colchian links this man specifically to both Medea and Canidia.¹¹⁰ This amplifies his transgressive nature, for these women, as I have shown, are themselves transgressive and grotesque figures. So, the villainy of this man would be outrageous if Horace's outrage were not predicated on an absurd charge, i.e., plotting to kill his descendents by planting a tree that would eventually fall on them, and if he were addressing the wrongdoer.¹¹¹ But he is not: he is addressing the tree. When he calls the tree *triste lignum*, the reader may be tempted to think of another personified piece of wood, the statue of Priapus from

¹⁰⁹ On the *penetralia* as the Penates' shrine, see Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 208); West (1998: 90); Harrison (2017: 159). An etymological connection was drawn between *penetralia* and *Penates* in antiquity: Maltby (1991: 463).

¹¹⁰ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 209); West (1998: 90); Harrison (2017: 160).

¹¹¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 202) call the denunciation of the plater "humorous exaggeration," drawing parallels particularly with *Epode* 3; so too Davis (1991: 82–83) on *Epode* 3.

Satire 1.8, discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.¹¹² This recollection must also inform the connection with Canidia since she appears in the same poem. Importantly, her attempted outrages are frustrated (by a fart!), and she flees bald and toothless. The resonances of the satire magnify the incongruity and confirm the grotesqueness of Horace's imprecations.

Horace's run-in with the tree prompts a meditation on the perils of the unexpected death (*Carm.* 2.13.13–20). This is followed by his vision of the “kingdom of Proserpina” (*regna Proserpinae*, *Carm.* 2.13.21), and this occupies the remainder of the poem. He begins, it seems, in Elysium (*sedes piorum*, *Carm.* 2.13.23) where, fittingly for a lyric poet, he sees Sappho and Alcaeus, who are still performing their poetry.¹¹³ Despite their apparently paradisaal setting, Sappho is still complaining about the girls of her hometown (*querentem* | *Sappho puellis de popularibus*, *Carm.* 2.13.24–25), while Alcaeus sings of the hardships of sailing, of exile, and of war (*Carm.* 2.13.26–28).¹¹⁴ The dead marvel at the songs of both, though the crowd (*uulgus*) seems to prefer

¹¹² Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 210) note that the placement of the pronoun *te* emphatically before *triste lignum* “gives a mock-inflated effect.” See also Harrison (2017: 160).

¹¹³ See Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 204–205) for poets and music in the Underworld; Davis (1991: 80) argues that the prominence of Sappho and Alcaeus entails “the far from modest claim that the poet of the *Odes* ought to be venerated” as they are.

¹¹⁴ On the reductive content of each poet's songs, see Feeney (1993: 49) and Davis (1991: 85–86), who argues that they thus represent the extremes of the range of material and styles available to the lyric poet; cf. Lowrie (1997: 204–205), who argues that the poem traces a progression in Horace's generic development from iambic to personal lyric (Sappho) to political lyric (Alcaeus).

Alcaeus' tales of battle and exiled tyrants (*Carm.* 2.13.29–32).¹¹⁵ It is not just the shades who are impressed by the poetry:¹¹⁶

quid mirum, ubi illis carminibus stupens
demittit atras belua centiceps
auris et intorti capillis
Eumenidum recreantur angues?
quin et Prometheus et Pelopis parens
dulci laborem decipitur sono,
nec curat Orion leones
aut timidos agitare lyncas. (Carm. 2.13.33–40)

What wonder when the hundred-headed beast, struck dumb by those poems, lowers his black ears and the snakes twisted in the hair of the Eumenides feel new life? Why, both Prometheus and Pelops' father beguile their struggles with the sweet sound, nor does Orion care to harass lions or fearful lynxes.

The participle *stupens* conveys the power of the poetry on the internal audience, but it also mirrors the aesthetic effect of the scene on the reader: *quid mirum*. Just as the shades are enthralled (*mirantur*) by Sappho and Alcaeus, so will Horace's reader be amazed by his account of the music's effect on the mythical figures. These denizens of the Underworld should be fearsome, but the verses have relaxed and exaggerated them in humorous ways. The addition of *centiceps* multiplies the image of Cerberus' gaping maw to a ludicrous extent. It also multiplies the number

¹¹⁵ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 217–219) argue that Horace shares this judgment: certainly he addresses Alcaeus directly and *sonantem plenius aureo plectro* looks more laudatory than Sappho's complaints (*Carm.* 2.13.26–27): see also Harrison (2017: 163–164); Feeney (1993: 49) argues that Sappho is reduced to a wholly private poet and “laden with the shortcomings of the slighter form of neoteric attainment,” as Horace “hom[es] in on Alcaeus” as his model; but see Woodman (2002: 55), who argues that elsewhere Horace distances himself from the judgment of the *uulgus* and since they prefer Alcaeus, this suggests that Horace himself does not necessarily prefer Alcaeus; Fraenkel (1957: 167); Strauss Clay (2010: 136), arguing also that in the previous poem (*Ode* 2.12) Horace rejects the suitability of war to lyric. Davis (1991: 86), having argued that the two poets represent poles of the lyric spectrum, asserts that Horace does not in fact provide a judgment in favour of one or the other.

¹¹⁶ Strauss Clay (2010: 136) argues that *dulci sono* indicates that these mythical figures of the Underworld are affected in particular by Sappho's song since Alcaeus' music is *dura*. See also Davis (1991: 86), who suggests that the Alcaean poetry's appeal to the *uulgus* implies that the Sapphic mode appeals to a more elite audience. Cf. Feeney (1993: 50), who suggests that it is Alcaeus' poetry that affects the mythical figures without mention of Sappho; so too Harrison (2017: 166).

of ears the reader imagines. These ears are black, and Nisbet and Hubbard argue that the emphatic placement of the adjective away from the noun stresses the hellhound's sinister appearance.¹¹⁷ Yet the reader is to imagine that as a consequence of listening to the poetry, Cerberus has relaxed his ears. Normally, the ears of attentive listeners are "pricked," so *demitit* generates a slight incongruity. In listening to the poetry, Cerberus in fact ceases to listen (presumably for potential intruders to the Underworld, including perhaps Horace). The poetry has the opposite effect on the Furies' snakes: Alcaeus' songs of war and strife have, appropriately, roused them.¹¹⁸ More than this, Horace's use of *recreantur* is oxymoronic. Although these snakes belong to the Underworld, the verb suggests that they have been refreshed or given new life and so no longer belong among the dead.

The punishments of Prometheus and Tantalus are alleviated by the poetry. The heavy alliteration of *p* draws attention to the pairing. The shared point here is food: Prometheus' liver is consumed by the vulture and Tantalus is prevented from consuming any food or drink, while the periphrasis accentuates his crime—namely, feeding Pelops to the gods.¹¹⁹ Such meals are contrary to nature and so contribute to the overall grotesqueness of the scene. So too does the fact that Prometheus and Tantalus are also found together in the middle of Canidia's final triumphant speech (*Epod.* 17.65–67).¹²⁰ Canidia is already in the reader's mind from earlier in the poem, so it is a reasonable next step to think of her account of the Underworld as Horace gives his. Furthermore, the reader who recalls Canidia's description of the Underworld will remember that

¹¹⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 220).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 220–221), rejecting suggestions that the verb means "are lulled to rest." Cf. Harrison (2017: 165–166).

¹¹⁹ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 221) on *Pelopis parens* as alluding to Tantalus' crime.

¹²⁰ Also at *Carm.* 2.18.35–38.

she promises Horace a long, miserable life (*ingrata uita ducenda*, *Epod.* 17.63) full of suffering such as the mythical sinners in Hades endure and just as ineluctable. This complicates the otherwise gentle humour of Horace's presentation by reminding the reader that however pleasant this scene seems, it is but a brief respite.¹²¹

The poem's tonal and even generic shifts mark it as a grotesque composition. The violent outrage of the first twelve lines give way to calm philosophical meditations.¹²² This is followed by a *katabasis* that dwells on the power of poetry and moves from real(istic) figures to mythical ones. But the peace that the Underworld figures find in the poetry they hear is a far cry from where Horace started.¹²³ Gregson Davis has argued that this incongruity of tone and mood is held together through formal and thematic symmetry that makes the second half of the poem answer the first.¹²⁴ I agree: Horace constructs unity through balance. And while I also agree that the primary movement of the poem is from iambic to lyric, the echo of Canidia's epodic Underworld maintains the iambic presence, even if Horace suppresses it.¹²⁵ Thus the overall construction of the poem matches its grotesque imagery.

The final two poems of the second book of *Odes* function as a pair. *Ode* 2.20, to which I will return, is principally concerned with Horace's poetic legacy. But this is explicitly in his mind in *Ode* 2.19 as well, for that poem, which begins with Bacchus teaching poetry, is addressed to his

¹²¹ The inevitability and grimness of death is treated more fully in the subsequent poem *Ode* 2.14, especially lines 17–24.

¹²² Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 203).

¹²³ See too Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 222).

¹²⁴ Davis (1991: 80–82).

¹²⁵ See Davis (1991: 82–84), who argues that the shift from invective to philosophizing is part of the promotion of lyric mode and outlook over the epodic, further emphasized by the prominence of the Lesbian poets. The lyric "I" is thus distinct from the epodic "I" and transcends it. See also Lowrie (1997: 201–202).

future readers (*posterī*, *Carm.* 2.19.2). The nineteenth poem also prepares for the twentieth aesthetically with the grotesque. The satyrs, with their goats' feet and pointy ears (*auris | capripedum Satyrorum acutas*, *Carm.* 2.19.3–4), straddle the boundary between animal, human, and divine. Further, the Bacchic rites produce a complex emotional reaction: they confuse the poet's mind with fear (*recenti mens trepidat metu*, *Carm.* 2.19.5) and simultaneously gladden him in his confusion (*turbidum laetatur*, *Carm.* 2.19.6–7). Horace reiterates the fearfulness when he calls Bacchus *Liber metuende* (*Carm.* 2.19.7–8). The next two stanzas (lines 9–16) recount the wonders of Bacchus—both his power to generate life and his destructive force. Bacchus himself collapses the divine into the animal and the vegetal. While steeped in wine (*uvidus*), he binds the hair of his female followers harmlessly with a knot of snakes (*Carm.* 2.19.18–20). During the Gigantomachy, he transforms into a lion: *Rhoetum retorsisti leonis | unguibus horribilisque mala*, “you hurled away Rhoetus, you frightful with a lion's claws and maw” (*Carm.* 2.19.23–24).¹²⁶ Horace even mentions the presumed incongruity of Bacchus in battle:¹²⁷

quamquam choreis aptior et iocis
ludoque dictus non sat idoneus
pugnae ferebaris; sed idem
pacis eras mediusque belli. (Carm. 2.19.25–28)

Although you were said to be better suited for dances and jokes and
playing around and you were considered not sufficiently fit for
battle; but you were the likewise in the midst during peace and war.

¹²⁶ See also Harrison (2017: 232).

¹²⁷ Harrison (2017: 225–226 and 232–233) suggests that in his fitness for both peace and war, Bacchus resembles Horace himself, citing *Epist.* 1.20.23.

The poem then ends with the image of Cerberus brushing a golden-horned Bacchus with his tail and then licking the god's legs and feet with his three tongues (*Carm.* 2.19.29–32).¹²⁸ As in *Ode* 2.13, the monstrous hellhound is rendered humorously docile. The god, with his golden horn, is beautiful: *te ... aureo | cornu decorum*. It is important to note, however, that the adjective *decorum* suggests “seemly” or “fitting”: hybridity is proper to Bacchus. This is a god who delights and frightens his worshippers, who is at home in battle and at play, and who is most suitable when in some hybrid form. He unites in himself categorically distinct elements (divine, human, animal) and produces a complex response that mixes fear and joy. He thus meets the criteria for the grotesque that emerged from my reading of the *Ars Poetica* in Chapter 1. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that Bacchus is the god of the grotesque.

The hybridity of *Ode* 2.19 carries over into the final poem of the book, at the centre of which is found Horace's notorious transformation into a bird.¹²⁹ The grotesqueness of this poem, and of the metamorphosis in particular, has long been debated, often in an attempt to “save” it from the lapse in taste implicated in the use of such an aesthetic.¹³⁰ It has not, however, been measured against Horace's own aesthetic of the grotesque, and as I have shown, for Horace the grotesque is not by default an artistic failure. On the contrary, to create a true grotesque meets the criterion of artistic unity set down in the *Ars Poetica*. So if the transformation and, indeed, the poem are grotesque—and I believe they are—it does not follow that is a “bad” poem or that the

¹²⁸ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 331) confidently assert that “Cerberus had usually three heads, and therefore three mouths, three tongues, and three barks.” Harrison (2017: 234–235) suggests that the emphasis on tongues underlines the transformation of Cerberus from fierce biter to docile.

¹²⁹ Scholars have often tried to explain 2.20 as a manifestation of the Bacchic frenzy signalled in 2.19: see e.g., Silk (1956: 261–263); Tatum (1973: 21); Feeney (1993: 52).

¹³⁰ See Kidd (1971: 8) for why “taste” is the wrong yardstick; see also Thévenaz (2002: 862, with n. 4) and Hornbeck (2013: 153 and 157 with n. 39), for surveys of critical views. Perhaps most notorious is Fraenkel (1957: 301): “repulsive or ridiculous, or both.”

grotesqueness needs to be explained away. The central debate about the poem has concerned its tone: critics cannot decide whether Horace is serious or flippant or ironic. And this debate is only intensified by the fact that the poem closes the second book of the *Odes*—a freighted position within the collection—and seemingly acts as both a *sphragis* and a transition to the third book.¹³¹ I suggest that the aesthetic difficulty of the poem does not rest in its blurring of human and animal *per se*, for this is fairly frequent. The difficulty lies in both the concreteness of the metamorphosis, which resists simply being explained away as metaphor, and the poem’s refusal to direct the reader’s response in the manner of other instances of the grotesque discussed above. That is, the poem is difficult precisely because it is grotesque and refuses to release its readers from their aesthetic *aporia*.¹³²

The poem brings to a close Horace’s *Todesbuch* and fittingly meditates on the poet’s death.¹³³ Earlier in the collection, Horace promises that he and Maecenas will die on the same day (*Carm.* 2.17.8–9). Here, however, he confidently rejects the prospect of death:

non usitata nec tenui ferar
 penna biformis per liquidum aethera
 uates, neque in terris morabor
 longius, invidiaque maior
 urbis relinquam. non ego pauperum
 sanguis parentum, non ego quem uocas,
 dilecte Maecenas, obibo
 nec Stygia cohibebor unda. (*Carm.* 2.20.1–8)

I will be borne on no common nor slender wing through the clear
 upper air as a double bard, nor will I linger longer on earth, and

¹³¹ See esp. Silk (1956) for the poem as forward-looking prologue to Book 3; cf. Sutherland (2002: 132–133); Harrison (2017: 235 and 238).

¹³² Cf. Thévenaz (2002: 863): “Faut-il dès lors s’avouer que, comme le cygne s’envole loin du tombeau, le ton du poème nous glisse entre les doigts? Faut-il même y voir un trait du génie d’Horace, le signe distinctif d’une poétique du paradoxe?”

¹³³ See Wili (1948: 232): “das eigentliche Todesbuch der römischen lyrik”; the heavy presence of death in Book Two of the *Odes* has been often noted: for a brief summary, Bonfante (1992: 28–29).

greater than envy I will leave the cities behind. Not I, scion of poor parents, not I whom you summon, dear Maecenas, I will not die, nor will I been constrained by the Stygian water.

Despite their superficial directness, these lines generate an aesthetic tension that reflects the poem's grotesqueness. The opening words, *non usitata*, suggest a Callimachean concern for not telling the same familiar stories, notably contained in Apollo's advice at the start of the *Aetia*:¹³⁴

πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ' ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἅμαξαι
τὰ στεῖβε]ιν, ἐτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά
δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν μηδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους
ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στε[ι]γυτέρην ἐλάσεις. (Callim. *Aet.* 1.25–28Pf)

And I also give you this command, to tread wherever heavy wagons do not frequent, not to drive your chariot not in the same tracks as others nor on a wide road, but along untrodden paths, even if you will drive along a narrower one.

Yet the next two words, *nec tenui*, seem to reject the two lines of Apollo's advice which introduce those just cited: αἰοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅτι πάχιστον | θρέψαι, τῇ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην “singer, feed your sacrificial animal as fat as possible, but, my good man, keep your Muse slender” (Callim. *Aet.* 1.23–24Pf). This points away from a Callimachean concern with λεπτότης.¹³⁵ This tension continues in *per liquidum aethera*. The upper air gestures to the sublime of Pindar, Ennius, or Lucretius.¹³⁶ On the other hand, the adjective *liquidum* suggests a clarity or purity that belongs to Apollo's rebuke to Envy rejecting the great flow of the Assyrian river in favour of the “clean and undefiled water from a holy spring” (ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ... πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς) which bees carry to Deos in small drops (Callim. *Hymn* 2.108–112). This notion of clarity and pureness

¹³⁴ See also σικχαίνω πάντα τὰ δημόσια “I loathe everything common” (Callim. *Epigr.* 2.4G-P = *Anth. Pal.* 12.43.4) and compare the first line of Horace's next poem: *odi profanum uulgu et arceo* (*Carm.* 3.1.1). See also Harrison (2017: 238); cf. Silk (1956: 258), who suggests that *non usitata* denotes the avoidance of epic, while *nec tenui* is a deviation from Horace's own “minstrelsy.”

¹³⁵ See also Thévenaz (2002: 880–883), suggesting a specifically Pindaric contrast.

¹³⁶ Thévenaz (2002: 880–883) for Pindar; West (1998: 144) for Lucretius; Harrison (2017: 239) for Ennius.

contrasts starkly against the admixture implicit in *biformis*, the adjective Horace applies precisely to himself as *uates*. Others have rightly noted that *biformis* is used specifically of corporeal hybridity.¹³⁷ The juxtaposition with *penna* seems to confirm this, but at this point in the poem, there is no strong reason to see the feathers, and thus the hybridity, as anything more than metaphor.¹³⁸ As I have demonstrated above, however, metaphor is precisely one of the means by which Horace blurs the boundary between human and animal (unlike, for example, simile, where the explicitness of the comparison keeps tenor and vehicle distinct). The aesthetic tension between Callimachean and Pindaric modes may be encapsulated by *biformis*, but that does not prevent us reading the adjective in physical terms as well.

This tension between the sublime/Pindaric and the Callimachean extends into the second strophe. The enjambment across strophes is Pindaric: Horace's verses burst their boundaries just as he will escape the earthly realms of cities, the proper place for the human race. Horace's planned abandonment of earth is expressed in terms that hint at a kind of apotheosis.¹³⁹ At the same time, Horace's claims to be superior to Envy echo similar claims in the poetry of Callimachus, especially the putative epitaph of his father in which he describes himself as "the one who sang things

¹³⁷ Tatum (1973: 22); Thévenaz (2002: 869); Hornbeck (2013: 156); Harrison (2017: 238); cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 338), who note "hybrid" but then suggest that in this instance the word looks to two successive forms, human *then* bird.

¹³⁸ The term *biformis* can certainly apply metaphorically to any number of dualities present in Horace's poetry, an interpretive move that goes back at least to Porphyrio and Ps.-Acro; see Hornbeck (2013: 156 with n. 35); Syndikus (2001: 1.478–479); Thévenaz (2002: 869); Erasmo (2006: 374).

¹³⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 338–339) note that phrases such as *neque in terris morabor* are used both of "deities leaving mankind in disgust" and of "great and good men departing for a more celestial sphere." Although Hornbeck (2013: 156) is correct to note that there is no suggestion that this is "anything other than a programmatic metaphor," it is perhaps worth adding that in the imperial period, an emperor's apotheosis is often facilitated by an eagle: see e.g., the depiction of Titus riding an eagle on the vault of the Arch of Titus, and the release of an eagle once the funeral pyres of Augustus and of Pertinax are lit at Cass. Dio 56.42.3 and 75.5.5 respectively; Herodian 4.2 gives a similar, albeit more detailed account of the funeral of Septimius Severus, with the muted suggestion that this was a general funeral practice for deceased emperors (see section 11 for the eagle). According to Suetonius, the first omen of Augustus' death and deification is an eagle (*Aug.* 97.1). At this point in the poem, there is nothing to suggest that the *penna* belongs to Horace or a swan, so an eagle is a possibility.

superior to jealousy” (ὁ δ’ ἤεισεν κρέσσονα βασκανίης, Callim. *Epigr.* 29.4G-P).¹⁴⁰ It is important to note in this regard the different nuances of Callimachus’ κρέσσονα, which implies strength and superiority, and Horace’s *maior*, which as an adjective of size as well as quality is at odds with the Callimachean program. Thus Olivier Thévenaz has suggested that Horace’s use of *maior* has literary-critical connotations that transform the Callimachean sentiment into a statement of the sublime.¹⁴¹ Regardless, Callimachus’ poem *is* an epitaph: the poem speaks in the voice of his dead father (ὅστις ἐμὸν παρὰ σῆμα φέρεις πόδα, Callim. *Epigr.* 29.1G-P), and the use of the aorist ἤεισεν may indicate that Callimachus himself should be understood as deceased. Thus, while the epigram may hint at the poet’s transcendence of death through poetry, it necessarily concedes the physical fact of death. The echo of the Callimachean epitaph, therefore, subtly introduces a funereal element that is at odds with the notion of apotheosis. Indeed, as many have noted, the idea that the renown of poetry bestows a kind of transcendent capacity for flight and immortality is found in Theognis (frag. 237–254).¹⁴² Here, Theognis’ poetry gives his addressee, Cynrus, wings (πτέρ’ ἔδωκα, frag. 237) and his name will remain immortal among humanity (ἄφθιτον ἀνθρώποις αἰὲν ἔχων ὄνομα, frag. 246). Nevertheless, Theognis concedes the physical fact of death, just as Callimachus does:

... καὶ ὅταν δνοφερῆς ὑπὸ κεῦθεσι γαίης
 βῆς πολυκωκύτους εἰς Ἄϊδαο δόμους,
 οὐδέποτ’ οὐδὲ θανὼν ἀπολεῖς κλέος. (Thgn. frag. 243–245)

And whenever beneath the depths of the dark earth you go into the
 house of Hades so full of wailing, never will you lose your glory,
 though dead.

¹⁴⁰ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 339); West (1998: 147); Thévenaz (2002: 881); Harrison (2017: 239).

¹⁴¹ West (1998: 144); Thévenaz (2002: 882).

¹⁴² Kidd (1971: 9); Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 333); Thévenaz (2002: 878–880); Pascal (1980: 102); Hornbeck (2013: 155); Harrison (2017: 236); Tatum (1973: 8–10), highlighting differences.

The use of metapoetic imagery combined with Horace's self-identification as a *uates* suggest a metaphorical immortality through his poetry. But Horace is explicit: unlike Cynus and Callimachus, he will not die. Closer comparison with the Callimachean reference reveals a further difference: in describing their relative superiority to envy, Callimachus applies the adjective to his poems, Horace to himself. This focuses the reader less on Horace's poetic output and more on the poet.¹⁴³ This is important, as it prepares for the third strophe's insistent focus on the poet precisely *as a physical entity*.

Horace's metamorphosis moves the poem from the abstract to the concrete, and the poet presents it with immediacy:¹⁴⁴

iam iam residunt cruribus asperae
 pelles et album mutor in alitem
 superne nascunturque leues
 per digitos umerosque plumae. (*Carm.* 2.20.9–12)

Right now rough skin settles on my legs and I am changing into a
 white bird up top and light feathers are being born all over my
 fingers and shoulders.

Although the repeated *iam* vividly conveys the metamorphosis as it happens, Horace keeps the reader momentarily in suspense by delaying the subject of *residunt* to the second line. And even when it comes, *pelles* only suggests the transformation without making it explicit. The process of metamorphosis becomes explicit with *album mutor in alitem superne*, reifying the earlier and potentially metaphorical *penna*. The totality of the transformation is mimicked by the word order, as the changed subject (*mutor*) is enveloped by the white bird—both words beginning with the

¹⁴³ Cf. Sutherland (2002: 145), who sees in Horace's references to his birth and status as a client of Maecenas an affirmation of his humanness that prepares for the transition to bird.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Bonfante (1992: 34): "The metamorphosis is sudden, sibilant and scratchy, as if the sound of the verse allowed us to hear the transformation taking place." Also Thévenaz (2002: 862–863); Sutherland (2002: 146–147); Harrison (2017: 240); cf. Syndikus (2001: 1.481), who argues that Horace has prepared the readers not to accept the transformation as "real" by employing the metaphorical swan motif in the first strophe.

same *al-* syllable. Having started with his legs, Horace pans up the rest of his body and then out along his arms as they transform into wings, pointedly juxtaposing human and animal terms as the metamorphosis happens.¹⁴⁵ The use of the term *superne* connects the poet with the painted figure from the beginning of the *Ars*, especially in light of the feathers. A recent reading of these lines which is sympathetic to a non-conservative, self-mocking interpretation of *Ode* 2.20, links the hybridity here with the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*, but takes the latter passage at face value and assumes that *all* hybridity is absurd.¹⁴⁶ Unlike in the *Ars*, however, Horace does not signal for the reader what aesthetic response he expects to his transformation. Nor should we necessarily retroject the Pisones' anticipated laughter in the *Ars* back onto *Ode* 2.20. As I have argued, the image at the beginning of the *Ars* is a symbol of a lack of artistic unity because the painter is simply putting disparate bits together; Horace's metamorphosis is, by definition, unified. If Horace expects the reader to laugh, it is not for the same reason.¹⁴⁷

The "birth" of the feathers counterbalances the (rejected) death of the poet in the previous stanza. It is important, however, not to press this idea of rebirth too far—an attractive possibility given the poem's similarities to certain other texts that participate in a complicated (but incomplete) nexus of bird-soul-death-poet.¹⁴⁸ The concrete detail in Horace's transformation may owe something to Socrates' similarly vivid, albeit more extensive, description in the *Phaedrus* of

¹⁴⁵ Harrison (2017: 240–241), noting also the "dramatic surprise" of *plumae* at the end of the strophe; see also Bonfante (1992: 34–35).

¹⁴⁶ Hornbeck (2013: 156–157); cf. West (1998: 145).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Fraenkel (1957: 301), who suggests that the idea of "this plump and bald little man turning into a swan" would generate laughter; see also Connor (1987: 5), arguing that the reader's instinct is to laugh, but that Horace does not provide space for that: "The unpleasant details make us wince as we smile." Connor asserts the humour of the third strophe without demonstrating it. But see Pascal (1980: 104) insists that Horace signals clearly when he is joking and there are no signals here.

¹⁴⁸ See Thévenaz (2002: esp. 865–870)

the way the initiated soul will grow wings in the presence of beauty as an explanation of the “madness” people call “love.”¹⁴⁹ Even so, the details are quite different: there is no transformation in Plato, for the soul in its perfect state is winged and only upon losing its feathers (περὸρρυήσασα) does it descend into a mortal body (Pl. *Phdr.* 246b–c). The mortal body prevents the regrowth of the feathers, but the initiated soul, when it looks upon an image of beauty, is affected by the influence of beauty which generates a physical reaction—warmth and moisture—that allows the unsprouted, but nevertheless present feathers to grow (Pl. *Phdr.* 251a–d). This Platonic soul, then, may be *like* a bird, but is *not* a bird.¹⁵⁰ Horace, on the other hand, is quite explicitly a bird, and the very physicality of the transformation argues against the idea that Horace is describing the transformation only of his soul: this is a full-bodied metamorphosis, and to suggest that it is rather an elaborate metaphor for the release of the soul from its corporeal prison is to bleach the poem of its colour.¹⁵¹

If this physical concreteness of the transformation points away from the notion of the soul’s release, it also tells against another potential explanation: metempsychosis. The movement of a poet’s soul into the body of a bird can also be found in Plato: in Book 10 of the *Republic*, Er watches the souls of the dead choose new lives—an experience that could itself be called grotesque since it is “pitiable and laughable and wondrous to see” (ἐλαινὴν τε γὰρ ἰδεῖν εἶναι καὶ γελοίαν καὶ θαυμασίαν, Pl. *Resp.* 620a). One of the souls is Orpheus, and he chooses to be reborn as a swan

¹⁴⁹ See Feeney (1993: 52–53); Tatum (1973: 17–19).

¹⁵⁰ See Pl. *Phdr.* 249d: ὅταν τὸ τῆδέ τις ὁρῶν κάλλος, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀναμνησκόμενος, πτερῶταί τε καὶ ἀναπτερούμενος προθυμούμενος ἀναπτέσθαι, ἀδυνατῶν δέ, ὄρνιθος δίκην βλέπων ἄνω, τῶν κάτω δὲ ἀμελῶν “whenever someone looking in this way upon earthly beauty and remembering true beauty sprouts wings and raises those wings in eagerness to fly upwards, but is unable, *looking up in the manner of a bird*, and with no care for things below.”

¹⁵¹ *contra* Jacobson (1995: 573), who argues that “Horace’s transformation into a swan is not so much a metamorphosis as a release of the bird-soul from its confining human container.”

(ιδεῖν μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴν ἔφη τήν ποτε Ὀρφέως γενομένην κύκνου βίον αἰρουμένην), though not for poetic reasons: because women killed him, he refuses to be conceived in and born from a woman due to his hatred for the gender (Pl. *Resp.* 620a).¹⁵² Thamyris, too, chooses to be a singing bird, the nightingale, while the swan itself and other “musical animals” (ἄλλα ζῷα μουσικά) choose human lives. In Latin literature, we find Ennius’ encounter with the soul of Homer in a dream, in which the Greek poet seems to describe his metempsychosis into a peacock and thence to Ennius himself (Enn. *Ann.* 1.iii–ix Sk.).¹⁵³ One fragment preserves the change explicitly: *memini me fieri pauom* “I remember that I became a peacock” (Enn. *Ann.* 1.ix Sk.).¹⁵⁴ Such a transformation is close to Horace’s *mutor in alitem*. There are pointed differences, however. In contrast to the strong materiality of Horace’s transformation, Ennius’ scene is necessarily coated in a patina of unreality: it is a dream. Ennius is bound fast with soft, gentle sleep (*somno leni placidoque reuinctus*) and Homer “seems” to appear (*uisus Homerus adesse poeta*, Enn. *Ann.* 1.ii–iii Sk.).¹⁵⁵ In *Ode* 2.20, on the other hand, Horace describes—and we see—his transformation as it happens: there is no dream state to mitigate the reality. More importantly, the Ennian scene is unequivocally a case of *transmigration of soul*, not *transformation of body*, since birds are not born with a soul:

oua parere solet genus pennis condecoratum,
non animam. [et] post inde uenit diuinitus pullis
ipsa anima. (Enn. *Ann.* 1.viii Sk.)

¹⁵² Orpheus’ reasons explain why he chooses to be *not* a person, not why he chooses to be a swan. It is open for us, therefore, to interpret his choice on metapoetic grounds: see also Erasmo (2006: 372–373).

¹⁵³ For the Ennian scene, see Skutsch (1985: 147–150).

¹⁵⁴ Since at least Tertullian, it has been observed that the peacock is not the most obvious choice of bird for the soul of a poet: colourful as its plumage is, it produces an unpleasant squawk (Tert. *de anima* 33.8). Skutsch (1985: 164–165) has suggested that the peacock is a symbol of immortality and may have appeared in the line of reincarnation between Euphorbus and Pythagoras; Erasmo (2006: 370–371); cf. Brink (1972: 563 n. 57), who notes that the evidence for the peacock as symbol of immortality is iconographic.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. the Lucretian reference (*DRN* 1.120–126 = Enn. *Ann.* 1.iv Sk.), which speaks of *Homeri species*. Skutsch (1985: 155) suggests the phrase may be Ennian: see also my discussion at section 2 of the previous chapter.

The race adorned with feathers usually gives birth to eggs, not souls.
Then later the soul itself comes divinely into the young fowls.

This means that the disembodied soul of Homer was infused into the body of peacock—and that only as an intermediate stage before Ennius.¹⁵⁶ There is none of this in Horace: he simply and very physically transforms.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, Horace describes the process in terms that are quite contrary to the *entry* of a soul into a new body. Rather, the avian characteristics apply themselves to his otherwise human body.

I stated above that the word *pelles* suggests without making explicit Horace's transformation. This is because while the word normally denotes animal, not human, skin, Horace's use of the term elsewhere is consistently ambiguous, blurring the line between human and animal.¹⁵⁸ This animal-human ambivalence comes out in *Epode* 17 where *pellis* denotes the boar skin of both Ulysses' transformed companions (line 15) and Horace's own skin under the influence of Canidia's magic (line 22, discussed above). Yet there are further implications when a person chooses for her or himself to don another "skin." At *Sat.* 1.6.21–22, Horace concedes that a censor would be right to mark his name with the *nota censoria* "since I had not remained quiet in my proper skin" (*quoniam in propria non pelle quiessem*). Scholars have seen here a passing allusion, triggered by *pellis*, to the fable of the ass in the lion's pelt.¹⁵⁹ I do not dispute this. Yet recognizing the allusion does not negate the ambivalence of Horace's "pelt-skin." It rather

¹⁵⁶ So too Erasmo (2006: 373): I cannot, however, agree with his further assertion, following West (1998: 145), that Horace's swan form "draws on the well-known literary tradition of Pindar's poetic identity as a swan" and that by narrating the transformation as it happens he mitigates the comparison/rivalry with the Greek poet: there is, in fact, no extant evidence that associates Pindar with swans before Horace *Ode* 4.2 (discussed below).

¹⁵⁷ See also Thévenaz (2002: 874), though on the basis that the swan allegorically represents Horace's poetry rather than his soul.

¹⁵⁸ West (1998: 144) is too categorical about the animal application of *pellis*; see also Harrison (2017: 240).

¹⁵⁹ Gowers (2012: 227).

reinforces his grotesque position: he is man *and* ass *and* lion. The poet explicitly connects this idea (i.e., that a *pellis aliena* signals untoward ambition) to a Roman political context a few lines later:

nam ut quisque insanus nigris medium impediit crus
pellibus et latum demisit pectore clauum,
audit continuo: “quis homo hic est?” “quo patre natus?”
(*Sat.* 1.6.27–29)

For whenever some fellow who’s not quite right in the head has bound up his legs to the middle with the black leather and has dropped the stripe across his breast, he continuously hears: “Who is this guy?” “Who is his father?”

Here *pellibus* refers to the high-fastening leather straps of a senator’s shoes, but given the close proximity to the previous instance of the word in *Satire* 1.6 it is difficult not to associate the two. As Emily Gowers remarks, “the candidate effectively dons a false skin.”¹⁶⁰ This idea that the outward skin conceals the true inner nature also lies behind Horace’s use of the word as he describes Lucilius’ satirical practice of “stripping away the skin” (*detrahere pellem*, *Sat.* 2.1.64) from those whose shining outsides do not match their foul insides, a contradiction he returns to at *Epist.* 1.16.45 (discussed below in Chapter 5).

Gowers contrasts this notion of the magnificent “pelt” with the *asperae pelles* of *Ode* 2.20, implying perhaps that rough skin is in keeping with Horace’s lowly origins.¹⁶¹ I am not convinced. A closer look at *Sat.* 1.6.27–29 reveals two striking things. The first is the question of this man’s ancestry. He is a *nouus homo*. In *Ode* 2.20 Horace mentions his own humble origins: *ego pauperum | sanguis parentum* “I, the scion of poor parents” (*Carm.* 2.20.5–6). The second is the combination of *pelles* and *crura* which these lines share with *Ode* 2.20. In *Satire* 1.6, the application of *pelles* to one’s legs is a mark of social-climbing and vaulting ambition, and Horace

¹⁶⁰ Gowers (2012: 228).

¹⁶¹ Gowers (2012: 227).

in fact confesses to just this at *Sat.* 1.6.22. In that poem Horace further remarks that “everyone gnaws” (*rodunt omnes*) at him for being a freedman’s son, for now associating with Maecenas, and for previously being a tribune in Brutus’ army (*Sat.* 1.6.45–48). The fact that Horace addresses *Ode* 2.20 to “dear Maecenas” immediately after noting his lowly birth only underlines Horace’s upward mobility.¹⁶² Unlike, e.g., *Epode* 17, where the *pelles* of both Ulysses’ men and Horace are imposed upon them by outside forces, the appearance of *pelles* on Horace’s legs in *Ode* 2.20 must be seen as a conscious choice on the part of the poet: no other person is transforming him, he is transforming himself.¹⁶³ This is reinforced by a subtle grammatical transformation in the first two strophes. As the poem begins, Horace is the passive subject (*ferar*), but in line 3 he is the subject of a deponent verb (*morabor*), while in line 5 he is the subject of an active verb (*relinquam*). It is therefore as a fully engaged subject and agent that Horace announces that he will not die and describes his transformation. Horace’s metamorphosis in *Ode* 2.20 is consequently analogous to the donning of senatorial sandals by the *nouus homo* and so adds another valence to the potential metaphorical force of the imagery: the bird may stand not only for Horace’s poetic achievement, but also for his social elevation. The resemblance of *Ode* 2.20 to the situation in *Satire* 1.6 subtly calls into question Horace’s claims to glory. When Horace asserts that he, superior to envy, will abandon the cities, the reader may be inclined to wonder whether this is to prevent the urban elite from asking “Who is this guy?” “Who is his father?” It is worth noting here Larissa Bonfante’s observation that the *urbs* which Horace will leave behind is the home of *invidia*.¹⁶⁴ This is perhaps

¹⁶² See also Fraenkel (1957: 299–300); cf. *Sat.* 2.1.71–77, where Horace remarks that even Envy (*invidia*) will admit that although the poet is somewhat below Lucilius (who associated with Scipio Aemilianus and Laelius) in both social standing and talent (*censum ingeniumque*), he nevertheless has lived with great men.

¹⁶³ So too Stewart (1967: 358).

¹⁶⁴ Bonfante (1992: 32–33).

less triumphant departure than ignominious escape—a suggestion arguably reinforced by the subsequent line and its reference to two notable airborne refugees, Daedalus and Icarus.¹⁶⁵

After his immediate, present physical transformation, Horace returns to the future tense as he imagines his life as a bird and sketches for the reader the journey foreshadowed by his planned abandonment of the cities in line 5:

iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
uisam gementis litora Bosphori
Syrtsique Gaetulas canorus
ales Hyperboreosque campos.
me Colchus et qui dissimulat metum
Marsae cohortis Dacus et ultimi
noscent Geloni, me peritus
discet Hiber Rhodanique potor. (Carm. 2.20.13–20)

Now, more famous than Daedalean Icarus, I will visit the shores of the groaning Bosphorus and the Gaetulan Syrtes, a songful bird, and the Hyperborean fields. The Colchian and the Dacian who pretends not to be afraid of the Marsian troop and the farthest Geloni will know me, and the skilled Iberian and the drinker of the Rhone will learn me.

Icarus was famous precisely because his attempted flight failed—that is, because he died. He plunged into the sea and drowned. But Horace has been very clear with the reader: he will not die. No waters will enclose him, not even those of the underworld: *nec Stygia cohibebor unda* (Carm. 2.20.8).¹⁶⁶ Horace will not be another Icarus. His flight will be successful, he will transcend the limits of space and time, and thus he will gain greater renown than Icarus, not least because he will reach parts of the world that Icarus never did.¹⁶⁷ There is a second element to the comparison: naturalness. Icarus is given a patronymic, *Daedaleo*, and this reminds the reader that his wings

¹⁶⁵ On the ode's connections with "escape prayers," see Tatum (1973: 15–17); also Connor (1987: 6).

¹⁶⁶ See also Sutherland (2002: 149) on Horace's use of named bodies of water here.

¹⁶⁷ See also Pascal (1980: 101); Harrison (2017: 241).

were unnatural. Icarus did not become a bird the same way that Horace does.¹⁶⁸ The patronymic even suggests that he was bound to fail: Icarus makes use of *someone else's* art in his attempt to transform and fly. Horace's transformation, as I have argued, has no external source: it is a manifestation of his own *ars* and *ingenium*.¹⁶⁹ Only those who are fully in control of their *ars* (like Horace and, one might add, Daedalus) can survive this kind of transformation. To put it another way, because he lacks both *ars* and *ingenium* Icarus fails to incorporate the animal fully into his human form—he does not create a unity—and so he fails as a grotesque. Horace's transformation is a unified grotesque: employing his own innate talent, Horace assumes a new avian form but retains human consciousness and, in his immortality, achieves a kind of divinity.¹⁷⁰

And yet, there is something in the comparison with Icarus that has suggested to a number of commentators that Horace wants his boasts to be taken with a grain of salt.¹⁷¹ Just as the rough skin of the swan's legs allude to the poet's assumption of a position he may not be entirely entitled to, so does Icarus' name introduce the idea that this flight may fail. I agree, but would resist the strong claim that this “gives the lie to [Horace's] flight of fancy.”¹⁷² Icarus represents the dangers of overreaching, of pushing beyond the limits of one's talents. That is clearly his function in *Ode* 4.2 (discussed more fully below), which many scholars point to as an analogue: there, Horace suggests that anyone who strives to vie with Pindar supports himself on Daedalean wings of wax

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Thévenaz (2002: 879); Hornbeck (2013: 160).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 343).

¹⁷⁰ So too Stewart (1967: 358).

¹⁷¹ See e.g., Tatum (1973: 23); Connor (1987: 6); Bonfante (1992: 35–37); West (1998: 145); Hornbeck (2013: 158–159), arguing that Horace the *poet* is undermining the “brazenly overconfident” *persona's* boast. Not everyone detects irony in the comparison: see Silk (1951: 260), who calls it “almost like documentary proof that Horace in II, 20 is turning the *recusatio* formula inside out”; Pascal (1980: 101). Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 344) hedge somewhat.

¹⁷² Tatum (1973: 23); also Hornbeck (2013: 158–159).

and will give his name to a sea (*Carm.* 4.2.1–4). There is no comparably explicit statement of consequences in *Ode* 2.20.¹⁷³ Icarus’ name therefore introduces an element of menace into Horace’s self-glorification in *Ode* 2.20, but that menace is not realized in the poem itself. Instead, it remains hanging over Horace’s otherwise triumphant flight, complicating the aesthetics of the poem.¹⁷⁴

The menace implicit in Icarus’ name also haunts the locations and peoples the Horatian bird will visit, especially if Horace is a refugee (albeit one who remains alive).¹⁷⁵ The “groaning” of the shores of the Bosphorus hints at lamentation.¹⁷⁶ Elsewhere the place itself is “raving” (*insanientem*, *Carm.* 3.4.30) and requires the Muse’s protection to visit.¹⁷⁷ Similarly the Syrtes is “uncivilized” (*barbaras*, *Carm.* 2.6.3), and a man will require weapons to travel there unless he lives a morally upright life (*Carm.* 1.22.1–5).¹⁷⁸ Even the fields of the Hyperboreans have some associations with death as a final destination for souls.¹⁷⁹ Yet the menace of these locations is secondary to their spatial implications: these are the ends of the earth. They illustrate Horace’s transcendence of geography and answer spatially his transcendence of temporal boundaries at the

¹⁷³ Cf. Silk (1956: 259–260) and Pascal (1980: 101), who both pay attention to *Ode* 4.2’s function as a *recusatio*. See also Sutherland (2002: 148–149), noting other differences between 2.20 and 4.2.

¹⁷⁴ See also Lowrie (1997: 212–213); Thévenaz (2002: 879).

¹⁷⁵ Tatum (1973: 23–24).

¹⁷⁶ See also Thévenaz (2002: 869); Bonfante (1992: 35); cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 345) and Harrison (2017: 241), who see an allusion to the etymology of *Bosphorus* and the lowing of cattle, for which see Maltby (1991: 83–84).

¹⁷⁷ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 344).

¹⁷⁸ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 345).

¹⁷⁹ See esp. Bacchyl. 3.56–62, where Apollo transports Croesus from the pyre to the Hyperboreans; see also Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 346); Thévenaz (2002: 868).

start of the poem.¹⁸⁰ The *Hyperborei campi* are particularly inaccessible: Pindar suggests that they cannot be reached by foot or ship (*Pyth.* 10.29–30).¹⁸¹ This geographical extremity carries through to the next strophe: the Colchian in line 17 takes the poem back to the east, expanding the horizon beyond the Bosphorus to the farther edge of the Black Sea and outside the official control of Rome.¹⁸² The connection of Colchis with Medea and her magic (see e.g., *Epod.* 5.23–24) adds a sinister layer.¹⁸³ Horace’s Dacian may pretend not to be afraid, but the area had not by the time of this poem’s composition been brought under Rome’s control.¹⁸⁴ In 44 BCE before his assassination Caesar had planned a campaign to check the Dacian invasion of Pontus and Thrace (*Suet. Iul.* 44.3), and after his subjugation of Illyria Octavian did not push into Dacia (35–33 BCE, *App. Ill.* 16–28). Horace himself suggests that Dacian matters were on people’s minds in the 30s:

frigidus a Rostris manat per compita rumor:
quicumque obuius est me consulit: “o bone, nam te
scire, deos quoniam propius contingis, oportet,
numquid de Dacis audisti?” (Sat. 2.6.50–53)

A chilling rumour pours from the rostra through the crossroads:
whoever bumps into me asks presses me for information: “My good
sir, for you ought to know since you rub elbows with gods, you
haven’t heard anything about the Dacians?”

Virgil also alludes to the Dacians’ activities when he suggests that the man who knows the bucolic deities (and, by extension, that way of life) is not swayed by the people’s rods of office, the purple of kings, the discord that drives brothers to betrayal, or “the Dacian who makes his way down from

¹⁸⁰ Kidd (1971: 15); Syndikus (2001: 1.481); cf. Thévenaz (2002: 867–868 with n. 15), who speaks of “vertical” and “horizontal” movement.

¹⁸¹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 345); Thévenaz (2002: 868).

¹⁸² Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 346).

¹⁸³ See also Harrison (2017: 242), who suggests that readers would think of the Argonauts.

¹⁸⁴ See also Syndikus (2001: 1.483); Harrison (2017: 242).

the conspiring Danube” (*coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro*, Virg. *Geo.* 2.497). Horace elsewhere suggests that a Dacian and an Ethiopian almost destroyed Rome while the city was preoccupied with civil war: *paene occupatam seditionibus | deleuit urbem Dacus et Aethiops* (*Carm.* 3.6.13–14). The Ethiopian, coming from Africa, represents the forces of Cleopatra, while the Dacians had supported Antony when Octavian would not meet their requests (Cass. Dio 51.22.8).¹⁸⁵ There is a suggestion that a Dacian army under the command of Cotiso was defeated sometime between 29 and 26 BCE (*Carm.* 3.8.18), though this may have been another incursion into Roman territory.¹⁸⁶ The Dacians would remain a thorn in Rome’s (and Augustus’) side: at the end of 11 BCE, it was decreed that the Gates of Janus should be closed until the Dacians crossed the Danube and plundered Pannonia (Cass. Dio 54.36.2).¹⁸⁷ Therefore, despite the boastful tone of *dissimulat metum*, the presence of the Dacian may hint at contemporary Roman fears.

Like the Dacians, the “farthest Geloni” (*ultimi Geloni*) stand on the edges of Roman *imperium*, and though their territory has been reduced by Augustus’ victories (*Carm.* 2.9.19–24), they and their quivers (*pharetratos Gelonos*) are found with the Bosphorus among the dangerous locales that can be visited with the Muses’ protection (*Carm.* 3.4.35).¹⁸⁸ So too the Iberian. Nisbet

¹⁸⁵ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 104).

¹⁸⁶ Probably in 29/28 BCE by the army of M. Licinius Crassus, cos. 30 BCE and grandson of the triumvir who died at Carrhae; he was proconsul in Macedonia for 29/28 BCE and campaigned successfully in the area after the the Dacians and Bastarnae crossed the Danube into Moesia. Cassius Dio (51.23.2–24.7), however, makes no reference to Cotiso, so it is possible that Horace here commemorates a later engagement: Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: xxxiii).

¹⁸⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 21.1 suggests repeated border incursions by the Dacians; cf. *Res Gestae* 30, where Augustus ultimately boasts that “he compelled the peoples of the Dacians to endure the sovereignty of the Roman people” (*Dacorum gentes imperia populi Romani perferre coegit*). Cooley (2009: 248) notes that the wording here is telling: “Augustus does not claim to have conquered the Dacians” and the Greek version uses προστάγματα for the Latin *imperia*, suggesting a less comprehensive form of control.

¹⁸⁸ See also Lowrie (1997: 212). I have limited myself to the *Geloni* specifically; since they are Scythians, characteristics could be further enumerated. For the Geloni as fierce, see also Virg. *Geo.* 3.461 (*acerque Gelonus*), and as archers, Virg. *Aen.* 8.725 (*sagittiferosque Gelonos*).

and Hubbard detect in the designation *Hiber* an allusion to the river Ebro.¹⁸⁹ I agree. It is important to note, moreover, that the river extended northwest into Cantabrian territory, an area that saw constant campaigning through the 20s BCE and that Augustus and Agrippa would not finally subjugate until 19 BCE.¹⁹⁰ And while *Hiber* is too general to draw a definite parallel, it is worth noting that in *Ode* 3.4, the Geloni are listed immediately following the Concani, a Cantabrian tribe, whom Horace describes as delighting in horse blood (*Carm.* 3.4.34).¹⁹¹ Only with the “drinker of the Rhodanus” does Horace bring his world tour clearly back within the boundaries of the Roman world.

Horace’s world tour lasts for two strophes. From the fourth to the fifth strophes the subject changes, and Horace moves from being the agent of perception (*uisam*, line 14) to its object. In the fourth strophe, Horace is still explicitly a bird. In the fifth, however, there is a subtle shift as Horace becomes simply a pronoun (*me*). This indicates that the bird imagery may function metaphorically.¹⁹² The verbs *noscent* and *discet* suggest “learning” and thus “reading,” making it possible to see the flight of the bird as a metaphor for the fame and circulation of Horace’s poetry throughout and beyond the empire.¹⁹³ I agree, but would add an important caveat. As just noted, the peoples and places mentioned by Horace are almost exclusively on the very edges of the Roman

¹⁸⁹ Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 347).

¹⁹⁰ See also Harrison (2017: 243), who suggests that the allusion to the Cantabrians may suggest a date after 26/25 BCE.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Griffiths (1956: 174); Pascal (1980: 106).

¹⁹² Many have noted (to various effect) how the anaphora of *me* answers the anaphora of *non ego* in the second strophe: Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 346), suggesting also that *discent* “confirms that *me* refers to the poet rather than the bird”; Thévenaz (2002: 873).

¹⁹³ See e.g. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 332–333 and 346–347); Syndikus (2001: 1.483); Thévenaz (2002: 868); cf. Pascal (1980: 107), who distinguishes “becoming acquainted” (*noscent*) with “learning” (*discet*).

world. More importantly, they are not Latin-speaking peoples.¹⁹⁴ To read Horace's poetry will require them to learn Latin first.¹⁹⁵ For James Tatum, this is further evidence that the poem is a dithyrambic fantasy and not to be taken seriously.¹⁹⁶ Horace's boast is meaningless because his poetry cannot be understood in these places. It is certainly possible to interpret this language barrier as undermining Horace's claims. It is, however, equally possible to see this as a third level of transcendence: of time, of space, and of culture and language.¹⁹⁷ Just as Horace is no longer bound by human mortality or geography, so too can he freely make himself known to those who would not ordinarily understand him. These two interpretations are seemingly irreconcilable. I suggest, however, that they coexist in unresolved tension in Horace's verses, for the poet does not tip his hand to the reader.

The question of whether these peoples can and will understand and appreciate Horace's poetry presumes—even prioritizes—the metaphorical understanding of Horace's flight. Commentators, uncomfortable with the inescapable reality of Horace's metamorphosis, tend at this point to speak not of the embodied poet, but of the disembodied “text” or “voice” or “renown.” Even Olivier Thévenaz, whose reading of the poem is otherwise persuasive and emphasizes the corporeality of the transformation, uses allegory to make the transformed poet disappear: the poem

¹⁹⁴ Syndikus (2001: 1.483–484). Even the “Rhodanus drinker” had been under Roman control for barely a hundred years.

¹⁹⁵ The description of the Spaniard as *peritus* has generated some scholarly debate, including emendation: see e.g., Shackleton Bailey's Teubner, where he obelizes the word (*vix sanum*) and in his apparatus he notes other suggested emendations before offering *remotus*. I am inclined to take it proleptically with Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 347), who also see it as humorous; so too West (1998: 145–146); Syndikus (2001: 1.483 n 40). Pascal (1980: 106–108) defends the word and detects neither prolepsis nor irony.

¹⁹⁶ Tatum (1973: 23–25).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Pascal (1980: 100 and 106–108), who notes that in other instances where the poet finds himself among inhospitable peoples, “his point is that the poet's person remains inviolate and his song undiminished” and also argues that the use of *peritus* indicates that second group of peoples—the subjects of *noscent* and *discet*—are not necessarily completely without Roman culture.

presents a double metamorphosis, first of the poet into a swan, but then because the swan is closely associated with the Apollonian power of the poet's voice, and the use of *canorus* in line 15 stresses the element of song rather than the physicality of the bird, into the poetic text itself, so that the "I" which extends as bird throughout the world is his poetry, not the poet.¹⁹⁸ This is ingenious, but just another way around the "realness" of the transformation.¹⁹⁹ I cannot, however, go so far as to wave away the bird. The "shock" of the metamorphosis is not and should not be so easily brushed off.²⁰⁰ While I have already conceded the potential metaphorical force of the two verbs, I also suggest that *noscent* and *discet* may capture the process of learning to recognize this new bird *as a bird*. I say "new bird" because although Horace suggests in very strong terms that he is a swan, he never actually calls himself that.²⁰¹ This has two consequences. First, it leaves the reader in a state of epistemological uncertainty that mirrors the aesthetic uncertainty generated by the transformation. Without pushing too hard, I might even propose that the consensus identification of the bird as a swan is a scholarly mechanism for resolving such uncertainty. Second, it helps to emphasize the novelty of Horace's creation. Metamorphoses (and bird-metamorphoses in particular) were not new to poetry and seem to have especially appealed to Hellenistic poets.²⁰² The neoteric poets had incorporated transformations into their poems (notably Calvus' *Io* and Cinna's *Zmyrna*), a trend probably influenced by Parthenius of Nicaea, whose own *Metamorphoses* contained *inter alia* the

¹⁹⁸ Thévenaz (2002); cf. Lowrie (1997: 211): "The transformation of the poet into text takes place at the time of writing (now) and again at the time of reading. ... Horace's metamorphosis ... is reenacted with every reading."

¹⁹⁹ So too Hornbeck (2013: 157 n. 39).

²⁰⁰ "Shock" is Thévenaz's word, (2002: 867); cf. Johnson (1966: 273): "to say that the poet becomes, so to speak, his poetry and endures, so to speak, while it endures is conventional enough; but Horace evades all 'so to speaks' and all transitions—what was simile in Theognis, Ennius and Vergil is here stark metaphor."

²⁰¹ For the details suggesting a swan, see Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 333–334), Bonfante (1992: 35), Syndikus (2001: 1.476), Thévenaz (2002: 865); cf. Davis (1991: 135): "presumably a swan"; Harrison (2017: 235): "surely a swan."

²⁰² See Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 334); Kidd (1971: 10); Harrison (2017: 237).

story of the transformation of Scylla, daughter of Nisus (fr. 24a–b Lightfoot).²⁰³ Cicero—no neoteric, to be sure—composed an *Alcyones* (Cic. fr. 1 Courtney), likely deriving from a Hellenistic source (perhaps Nicander), which may have recounted the transformation of the eponymous heroine.²⁰⁴ Aemilius Macer even composed an *Ornithogonia*, which Ovid recalls the elderly poet reading to him in his youth (Ov. *Tr.* 4.10.43–44).²⁰⁵ This poem included an account of the swan (fr. 53 Hollis = 4 Courtney). So there was likely precedent for including a metamorphosis, and such a neoteric flourish would be suitable in a poem addressed to Maecenas, whose own tastes ran that way.²⁰⁶ These transformation stories often explain the origins of new species. As far as can be ascertained, however, Horace is the first author to transform *himself*.²⁰⁷ In this respect he is a “new bird,” his plumage certainly *non usitata*.²⁰⁸ More importantly, Horace boasts that his lyric program is something as yet unattempted in Latin verse. We may note the end of the *Ode* 1.1, where Horace will be counted among the chorus of satyrs and nymphs:

... si neque tibus
Euterpe cohibet nec Polyhymnia
Lesboum refugit tendere barbiton.

²⁰³ See also Kidd (1971: 10–11).

²⁰⁴ See Courtney (1993: 152–153); cf. Knox (2011: 195–196), who expresses strong skepticism about whether this poem was a “Callimachean epyllion” and contained a metamorphosis, suggesting that it may rather be a catalogue poem about various women named Alcyone.

²⁰⁵ Macer’s poem was likely an imitation of a Greek poem attributed to a Boeus or Boeo: see Courtney (1993: 292–294); Hollis (2007: 100–107); for Macer and *Ode* 2.20, see Kidd (1971: 11–13).

²⁰⁶ See also Kidd (1971: 9); Bonfante (1992: 42–43) suggests that in this poem’s content and style, Horace “brings us close to Maecenas’s poetry,” the style of which, according to ancient consensus, reflected the style of the man himself. For Maecenas’ affection for neoteric poetry, see Mattiacci (1995) and more briefly Hollis (2007: 318) and Watson (2003: 18–19).

²⁰⁷ So too Sutherland (2002: 145). Commentators have pointed to other examples of first-person transformations (Alcm. fr. 26 PMG; Eur. *Hipp.* 732–734; Ar. *Av.* 1373–1409), but in each case the transformation is only *desired*, not achieved or depicted.

²⁰⁸ On Horatian mythmaking in this poem, see Stewart (1967: 360–361) “an adventure in *mythopoeia*”; Lowrie (1997: 187–188 and 210–211); Thévenaz (2002: 868 with n. 16 and 879–880); cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 337), who suggest that Horace likely saw some “oddity in its application to himself” and this oddity indicates a certain ironic distance between the poet and his claims of immortality.

quodsi me lyricis uatibus inseres,
sublimi feriam sidera uertice. (Carm. 1.1.32–36)

If neither Euterpe does not keep the pipes away nor Polyhymnia
shudder to tune the Lesbian harp. But if you will count me among
the lyric bards, I will strike the stars with a lofty head.

In his flight *per liquidum aethera* Horace will strike the stars.²⁰⁹ Perhaps of greater importance is the opening of the poem that immediately follows *Ode* 2.20. The opening strophe of *Ode* 3.1, as I have already noted, begins with a claim to hate and shun the uninitiated crowd (*odi profanum uulgus et arceo*, Carm. 3.1.1), and this echoes the Callimacheanism suggested by *non usitata*. Horace's poems are something different:²¹⁰

... carmina non prius
audita Musarum sacerdos
uirginibus puerisque canto. (Carm. 3.1.2–4)

I, priest of the Muses, sing to maidens and boys songs not previously
heard.

Horace's status as a *Latin* lyric poet marks him as a new species: he may be *like* a swan but not a swan the way he is *like* but not in fact a Greek lyric poet.²¹¹

The final stanza returns forcefully to the question of the poet's death by meditating on his funeral in very real terms:²¹²

absint inani funere neniae
luctusque turpes et querimoniae;
compesce clamorem ac sepulcri
mitte superuacuos honores. (Carm. 2.10.21–24)

²⁰⁹ See also Tatum (1973: 5).

²¹⁰ See also West (1998: 146).

²¹¹ Cf. Feeney (1993: 41) on Carm. 1.1.35–36: "The audacity is marvellous. Greek works and Latin works may be catalogued separately in every library in the Roman world, but Horace will vault across that divide to become number ten in a Greek list of poets."

²¹² On the "reality" of the imagined funeral, see Bonfante (1991: 39); Syndikus (2001: 1.483–484); Harrison (2012: 243).

From my empty funeral let dirges and foul grieving and laments be
absent; suppress crying and send away superfluous honours of a
tomb.

Despite Horace's claims that he will not die, he anticipates that others (and specifically Maecenas) will react as if he has. The funereal context of these lines should establish a mournful tone, but Horace emphatically rejects any such lamentation.²¹³ As has been noted often, Horace here adapts an idea taken from Ennius' epitaph, as quoted by Cicero at *Tusc.* 1.34:²¹⁴

aspicite, o ciues, senis Enni imaginis formam:
hic uestrum panxit maxuma facta patrum.
nemo me lacrimis decoret nec funera fletu
faxit. cur? uolito uiuus per ora uirum.
(Enn. var. 15–18 Vahlen)

Look, citizens, upon the shape of the funeral mask of old Ennius: he
set down the greatest deeds of your ancestors. Let no one adorn me
with tears nor carry out my funeral with weeping. Why? I flit still
living on the lips of men.

Stephen Harrison remarks wryly that “we might see the conceit of the swan-metamorphosis as an unpacking of the Ennian verb *uolito*.”²¹⁵ Perhaps, though this is likely secondary since other sources and precedents for the transformation have been noted. More important is the Ennian context of the funeral. In addition to the idea that there should be no weeping, Horace has taken from Ennius the combination of jussive subjunctives and imperatives.²¹⁶ But he has expanded and ironized. The triplet *neniae-luctus-querimoniae* is heavy handed, particularly with the rhyming line-ends, and it pushes the sentiment beyond the realm of sincerity.²¹⁷ This irony is underscored

²¹³ But see Bonfante (1992: 38): “The last strophe of *Ode* 2.20 ... ends on a much less optimistic note.”

²¹⁴ Cf. Tatum (1973: 7): “Perhaps Horace's dependence on Ennius has been exaggerated.”

²¹⁵ Harrison (2017: 236–237).

²¹⁶ Thévenaz (2002: 877).

²¹⁷ Cf. Kidd (1971: 15); Connor (1987: 6); Thévenaz (2002: 877), who suggests that the rhyme provides an intentionally plaintive tone.

by *inani funere*, where the adjective indicates not only that the rites are meaningless but also that the tomb will be literally empty.²¹⁸ For Olivier Thévenaz, this is Horace's greatest innovation from the account of the swan's dying song given by Socrates at *Phaedo* 84e–85b. The Platonic passage is about the swan's prophetic power, its ability to recognize that in the moments before it dies, it will join Apollo. That is why it sings: it is not a lament, but a celebration. Birds do not sing from distress, not even the nightingale, swallow, or hoopoe; therefore swans must sing in anticipation of the good things in Hades. So too does Socrates. Socrates' argument seeks to cast the question of what will happen to his corpse as unimportant: only the soul is truly Socrates and that is immortal. Horace's swansong also seems to be a song of joy rather than a funeral dirge, so the poet alludes to but also adapts the Platonic model since he adds the metamorphosis. But that introduces a fundamental change from the Platonic model. Now there is *no* body to bury.²¹⁹ Critics who complain that to interpret the tomb as empty is to read the phrase too literally are guilty of the same thing as those who would explain away the bird: the emptiness of the tomb answers in its vivid concreteness the same quality seen so clearly in the metamorphosis.²²⁰

In rejecting mourning, Horace returns to the end of the opening poem of the book (also in Alcaic meter), where he bids the Muse not to abandon fun in favour of Cean dirges: *sed ne relictis, Musa procax, iocis | Caeae retractes munera neniae* (*Carm.* 2.1.37–38).²²¹ I have discussed these lines above, noting both the tonal whiplash and the way the echoes of the beginning of the poem

²¹⁸ Connor (1987: 6); West (1998: 146); cf. Bonfante (1992: 39), who sees the rites as meaningless precisely because the tomb is empty.

²¹⁹ Thévenaz (2002: 870–872).

²²⁰ Such critics include Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 347); Jacobson (1995: 574), who relies too heavily on the identification of the soul with a bird to avoid an actual metamorphosis; Harrison (2017: 243); cf. Syndikus (2001: 1.483–484).

²²¹ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 347); Tatum (1973: 24–25).

mean that even in pleading for light-hearted material, the grimness of the civil wars lingers. In the closing *Ode* 2.20, Horace likewise blurs the distinction between *ioca* and *tristia*. And yet this poem is not really an ending. The poem itself rejects the notion of ending. Edmund Silk is right: “All in all II, 20 contains too much struggle and movement for an epilogue, which one expects to possess a tone of abiding peace.”²²² This is a transition.²²³ The transformation at the centre of the poem embodies the transformation about to happen in Horace’s poetry: an amalgam of Callimachean innovation (*non usitata*) with Pindaric grandeur (*nec tenui*). The Alcaic stanza that Horace has used for more than half the poems of the second book will transform into the meter of the Roman Odes (*Odes* 3.1–6). Horace’s reader may react with delight, with despair, with disgust to the idea that the poet will or will not die, will or will not transform bodily. The ambivalences here are pointed and deliberate. The reader is left not quite knowing what to make of it all, only that something is coming.²²⁴

3. *Odes* Book 3

After the immortalizing grotesquerie of *Ode* 2.20, the poet takes a step back as he opens the third book and the cycle of “Roman Odes.” Horace begins *Ode* 3.1 by rejecting the crowd itself; he ends the poem by reaffirming his aversion to the trendy and popular, to the transgressive excesses of his day,²²⁵ since they offer no defence against the inevitability of mortality. Better to

²²² Silk (1956: 257); see also Sutherland (2002: 142); cf. Kidd (1971: 15), who also sees the poem as forward looking, but only in respect of the poet’s reputation based on the preceding poems, not the poems to come. Connor (1987: 7): “an aggressive sense of the poet’s aims or desires and a sourness is hinted at by the wryness of the humour.”

²²³ Silk (1956: 262–263); Lowrie (1997: 211); Sutherland (2002: 150–151).

²²⁴ See also Lowrie (1997: 211); Sutherland (2002: 150–151), who sees Horace “preparing” the readers for the “transcendent speakers of the Roman Odes.”

²²⁵ See especially lines 33–40, where the wealthy land owner builds out into the sea, displacing the fish.

keep within moderate bounds. The following poem (*Ode* 3.2) meditates on the *uirtus* proper to military and civic life, and the grotesque makes a striking reappearance. The young Roman soldier becomes, in the eyes of the enemies' women, "a lion which bloody rage sweeps along through the midst of the slaughter" (*leonem, quem cruenta | per medias rapit ira caedis*, *Carm.* 3.2.11–12). Focalized as it is through the mother and adult daughter of the enemy king (*Carm.* 3.2.7–9), the image is understandably ferocious.²²⁶ This ferocity dehumanizes the young soldier who now outdoes in savagery the "fierce Parthians" (*Parthos feroces*, *Carm.* 3.2.3). At the same time, the Roman reader should understand the image as a positive reflection on the soldier's valour. Thus the blurring of human and animal categories produces a conflicted aesthetic response generated by the tension between the internal and external perspectives: seeing the image through the eyes of both the victim and victor at once, the reader necessarily has a complex reaction. Even the man of civic *uirtus*, ignorant of foul rejection (*repulsae nescia sordidae*, *Carm.* 3.2.17) and thus seemingly untainted, shares partly in the animal world: such *uirtus* makes its way to heaven and spurns the common assemblies and damp ground on "a soaring wing" (*fugiente penna*, *Carm.* 3.2.24). After extolling the virtues of bravery in battle and Stoic imperviousness to the vicissitudes of the politics of the mob, Horace posits a reward for maintaining religious silence, but punishment for those who disclose the rites of Ceres (*Carm.* 3.2.25–26, 31–32). And yet between the respective reward and punishment, the poet inserts his refusal to board the same boat as one who has revealed the rites, because Jupiter often draws no distinction between the righteous and the impious: *saepe Diespiter | neglectus incesto addidit integrum* (*Carm.* 3.2.29–30). The phrasing here deserves closer attention. In striking down both the polluted and the pure, Jupiter in fact *adds* the latter to the former: the god does not simply fail to keep separate those who do and do not deserve punishment,

²²⁶ So Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 26).

he actively combines them. This combination of opposites does not, strictly speaking, produce the grotesque, for Jupiter's indifference entails no particular *aesthetic* judgment. It does, however, obliquely suggest that such distinctions are less categorical than they might be and can be erased.

The third poem of the book takes up from the previous ode the Stoic man of *uirtus*, who now withstands angry citizens, threatening tyrants, the south wind, and even the blasts of Jupiter (*Carm.* 3.3.1–6); even if the world should collapse around him, he would not panic (*Carm.* 3.3.7–8). Such a man, Horace claims, will ascend to heaven: precedents include Pollux, Hercules, and Bacchus, and one day Augustus will join them (*Carm.* 3.3.9–15). Horace's final example is Quirinus, who is granted his divinity after Juno speaks in the council of the gods (*Carm.* 3.3.15–18). Her speech, which constitutes most of the remainder of the poem (*Carm.* 3.3.18–68), sets out her terms for Quirinus' deification and Rome's continued success: Troy must not rise again. These lines are filled with epic resonance, especially of Ennius.²²⁷ Yet Horace senses that this weighty content and style is out of place:

non hoc iocosae conueniet lyrae;
quo, Musa, tendis? desine peruicax
referre sermones deorum et
magna modis tenuare paruis. (*Carm.* 3.3.69–72)

This will not suit my jovial lyre; what are you aiming at, Muse? Stop stubbornly recalling the speeches of the gods and diminishing great matters with small meters.

Stephen Harrison has noted Horace's "metagenetic comment" here and the closing use of Callimachean aesthetic terminology.²²⁸ This rebuke of the Muse also echoes the plea at *Carm.* 2.1.37–40 not to abandon *ioca* in favour of dirges (discussed above in section 2 of this chapter).

²²⁷ See Lowrie (1997: 247–248); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 36 and 43); Harrison (2007a: 187–188).

²²⁸ Harrison (2007a: 188).

But the rejection is, of course, a pose: such elevated material has found a place in lyric since Pindar.²²⁹ It is furthermore disingenuous to tell the Muse to stop after 50 lines. By that point, the reader has seen precisely these “great matters” thinned out in these small meters. I wish to note particularly the use of *iocosa* to describe the lyre and therefore, by metonymy, Horace’s genre. I have shown that the “jokes” found in the *Odes*, particularly those associated with Venus, often go hand in hand with suffering and ferocity. Consequently, the violence of Juno’s speech is not necessarily out of sorts with the “light-hearted lyre.” More than this, two lines later Horace uses *sermones* for the gods’ speech. While on the surface the poet is drawing a contrast between the weighty seriousness of these divine “conversations” and his own “fun-filled” lyric, I suggest that the close proximity of *sermones* and *iocosa* points in the opposite direction. As I observed in the opening of Chapter 2, the blending of serious and light-hearted speech is for Horace the desideratum of satiric composition (*sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocoso*, *Sat.* 1.10.11), and it goes to the heart of the grotesque as an aesthetic. By placing *sermones* and *iocosa* near each other, Horace activates this aesthetic idea and imports notions of satire into the ode; *sermones* is, after all, the word that denotes Horace’s own *Satires* (*Epist.* 1.4.1 and 2.2.60). The end of the poem, therefore, hints at a more complex interplay of genre than merely epic and lyric: satire appears to be in play as well. This might destabilize everything in the poem which has preceded this final stanza, including Augustus’ anticipated apotheosis. But it would also help explain Juno’s hyperbolic insistence that Troy not be rebuilt, that its tombs continue to be trampled by cattle and provide dens for wild beasts (*Carm.* 3.3.40–42), especially if there were no real plans of the sort.²³⁰ Her fanatical opposition is not only *epically* motivated, but *satirically* misplaced. The

²²⁹ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 52–53).

²³⁰ On Troy’s potential reestablishment, see Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 36–38); “hyperbolic” is also their word, remarking on the triple *ter* in lines 65–67 (2004: 52).

goddess thus poses a terrible threat, but the element of caricature leavens (*tenuare*) that threat. To be sure, Juno is not grotesque: she does not unite in her figure the disparate elements that are a necessary, if not sufficient, component of the grotesque. But the interplay of serious and light allows us to see the potential for the grotesque.

At the end of *Ode* 3.3, the poet offers a fleeting acknowledgement of generic blending and the suggestion of a place for the grotesque in lyric. This primes the reader for the next poem. *Ode* 3.4 begins with an invocation of Calliope, requesting from the goddess a long poem (*longum melos*) to be accompanied by the *tibia*, the *cithara*, or a *capella* (*Carm.* 3.4.1–4). There is some confusion here as to exactly what sort of poem Calliope will provide: the instruments listed suggest lyric poetry, as does *melos*; but the poem’s designation as *longum* and Calliope’s more elevated associations point to epic, and this confusion thus connects Calliope with the Muse of *Ode* 3.3.²³¹ The poem therefore proceeds from a place of generic uncertainty. Horace then asks his readers whether they also hear the muse’s song or whether “a lovely madness is playing with me” (*auditis an me ludit amabilis insania*, *Carm.* 3.4.5–6). The gesture towards madness is pointed. It is easy to conclude that this is *θεία μανία*, and so belongs to a tradition of divine inspiration.²³² I am less sure. It is not unthinkable that Horace *qua* lyric poet adopts a position on poetic madness that is different from the one he adopts in the *Ars Poetica* (discussed in Chapter 1, section 5).²³³ But Horace in fact establishes a dichotomy here between actual poetry and potential, albeit pleasing, *insania*. And although his readers do hear a poem, Horace throughout the ode speaks in his own

²³¹ See also Lowrie (1997: 220–221), who notes additionally that Calliope must “descend from heaven” where the *sermones deorum* of *Carm.* 3.3.71 take place.

²³² Fraenkel (1957: 274); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 59); West (2002: 47).

²³³ See also *Sat.* 2.3.4 and 32 where Horace cannot produce good poetry and Damasippus diagnoses his madness (though madness in that poem is analogized to vice).

voice and therefore never clarifies the underlying uncertainty about whether this is Calliope's song or his own. Rather, he doubles down on this uncertainty by describing what he "seems to hear" (*audire et videor*, *Carm.* 3.4.6) as he walks with the goddess. The poem thus establishes an atmosphere of uncertainty around its contents as well as its genre.

This atmosphere is heightened by the dream-like quality of the subsequent vignette in which Horace describes how, as a child on the mountainside of Vulture, he fell asleep:

me fabulosae Vulture in Apulo
 nutricis extra limina pergulae
 ludo fatigatumque somno
 fronde noua puerum palumbes
 texere, mirum quod foret omnibus,
 quicumque celsae nidum Acherontiae
 saltusque Bantinos et aruum
 pingue tenent humilis Forenti,
 ut tuto ab atris corpore uiperis
 dormire et ursis, ut premerer sacra
 lauroque collataque myrto,
 non sine dis animosus infans. (Carm. 3.4.9–20)

When on Apulian Vulture beyond the threshold of my nurse's cottage,²³⁴ the doves of fable covered me, a boy worn out by play and sleep, with fresh leaves—what a marvel it would have been for everyone occupying the nest of lofty Acherontia and the woodlands of Bantia and the rich plain of low-lying Forentum, how I slept, my body safe from black snakes and bears, how I was covered with sacred laurel and gathered myrtle, thank heavens a spirited child.

The scholarship on this passage tends to connect it with stories of divine nourishment for a child who will enjoy an important, often literary, future.²³⁵ This is slightly different, however: Horace is not nursed by bees or any other animal.²³⁶ This is a claim of divine protection—a claim that the

²³⁴ Following the reading *limina pergulae* proposed by Baehrens.

²³⁵ Fraenkel (1957: 275); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 54 and 61); but see West (2002: 46–47).

²³⁶ Fraenkel (1957: 275 n. 1) wonders why Heinze in his edition of 1930 removed Kiessling's reference to Pindar *Ol.* 6.45–47; in fact, the parallel with Horace is tenuous at best. In Pindar's poem, Iamos is nurtured with honey

poet will develop in lines 25–36, first as he remembers himself surviving at Philippi, surviving the tree of *Ode* 2.13, surviving the waters around Sicily, and then as he imagines travelling from the empire’s eastern to western edges and visiting their savage peoples. Furthermore, the poet makes the claim on his own behalf. No one else can actually vouch for the truth of what Horace asserts. It is important to note that when Horace describes the reaction of the local inhabitants, his use of *foret* in line 13 moves the scene out of the reality of direct narration and into virtual indirect discourse. The reader may even be tempted to wonder how Horace knows any of this: he was asleep, after all. The scene is a fantasy, but Horace never quite bursts the fantastical bubble. Instead, he maintains the same uncertainty expressed by his earlier question: do you hear, or does a delightful madness toy with me?

The protection Horace receives from the Muses is matched by their care for Augustus:

uos Caesarem altum, militia simul
fessas cohortis abdidit oppidis,
finire quaerentem labores
Pierio recreatis antro;
uos lene consilium et datis et dato
gaudetis almae. (Carm. 3.4.37–42)

Lofty Caesar, as soon as he has hidden away in towns his divisions,
weary from campaigning, and while he seeks to bring an end to his
toils, him you refresh in the Pierian cave; you nourishers both
provide gentle counsel and rejoice in what is provided.

Caesar’s convalescence with the Muses in the cave may recall the infant Zeus in the Cretan cave—a resemblance potentially confirmed by the immediate reference to Jupiter’s defeat of the Titans in lines 42–44.²³⁷ But as already noted, the cave is an ambivalent space. It can represent the

by the snakes (ἐθρέψαντο δράκοντες ἀμεμφεῖ ἰῶ μελισσῶν), whereas Horace is protected against snakes and there is no reference to nourishment at all.

²³⁷ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 53–54) connect Zeus with Horace’s story about himself in lines 9–20 rather than with Augustus.

darkness below the earth's surface and thus it is the source of precisely the monsters who feature in the Gigantomachic imagery which fills the remainder of the ode. As it happens, *antro* sits in the very centre of the poem. The cave is both the place in which Caesar seeks respite from his battles by listening to the Muses and the place from where emerge the forces that would tear the cosmos apart.

The close association of the cave with poetry occurs again in *Ode* 3.25. This poem, like *Ode* 2.19, focuses on Bacchus, and like that poem it connects the Bacchic frenzy with poetry. As the poem begins, Horace is being transported:

quo me, Bacche, rapis tui
plenum? quae nemora aut quos agor in specus
uelox mente noua? quibus
antris egregii Caesaris audiar
aeternum meditans decus
stellis inserere et consilio Iouis? (*Carm.* 3.25.1–6)

Whither, Bacchus, do you snatch me who am filled with you? To what groves or into which caves am I swiftly driven in this strange state of mind? In what caves will I be heard as I practise grafting the everlasting glory of peerless Caesar to the stars and the counsel of Jupiter?

To be “full” of Bacchus is to be in the grip of the Bacchic frenzy, and *noua mens* reiterates that state. Horace makes explicit his loss of control: *rapis* is a verb of violence, and the passive form *agor* indicates the poet's loss of agency. Horace affirms his possession when he subsequently compares himself to a Thracian Maenad (*Carm.* 3.25.8–14).²³⁸ This is different from the *insania* of *Ode* 3.4 which is set in contrast to poetic production. This *noua mens* is rather the same state of mind as found in *Ode* 2.19 (discussed in section 2 of this chapter): a mixture of fear and

²³⁸ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 304) note that the Maenad is literally in a remote place, while Horace is only imaginatively transported; cf. West (2004: 209–210), who suggests that the differences between the Maenad's expansive ecstasy and Horace's experience of the god show that “[n]either Horace nor his verse can match the sublimity of the frenzy of Bacchic ecstasy.”

exhilaration. The poet explains that to follow the god in his rites “is sweet peril” (*dulce periculum est*, *Carm.* 3.25.18). Yet just as in *Ode* 2.19 where Bacchus had been teaching poetry, Horace’s frenzy will, it seems, also be poetically productive. In addition to wondering in which caves his praise of Augustus will be heard, the poet states twice in this relatively brief ode that he will compose poetry on lofty themes: first, immediately after invoking Caesar’s name (*dicam insigne recens adhuc | indictum ore alio* “I will sing something illustrious, fresh, till now unsung by another mouth,” *Carm.* 3.25.7–8); then again ten lines later (*nil paruum aut humili modo, | nil mortale loquar* “Nothing trivial or in a low meter, nothing mortal will I speak,” *Carm.* 3.25.17–18).²³⁹ The emphasis here is on the grand and lofty, and this matches how Caesar’s glory will be set among the stars. The content and setting of these poems—panegyrics of Augustus rehearsed in caves—link them with the rejuvenating counsel of the Muses in *Ode* 3.4. The enclosed space of the cave should preclude reaching the heights of heaven. Moreover, the metaphor of grafting (*inserere*) subtly hints that Augustus does not actually belong among the stars or in the council of Jupiter. Bacchus himself made the ascent (*Carm.* 3.3.13–15), and as the god who dissolves boundaries, he makes such transgression possible: Bacchus unifies the disparate elements, grafts them together.

As may be expected in the “Roman Odes,” Horace deploys the grotesque with restraint.²⁴⁰ Where he does, he links it particularly with poetic production. In the later poems of Book Three,

²³⁹ West (2002: 208–209) argues that both *dicam* and *loquar* should be construed as subjunctives, since an invocation should properly be followed by a prayer. The problem with this reading is the poem does not open with an invocation: Horace is not summoning the god because the god is already present.

²⁴⁰ The Roman Odes display a striking homogeneity of characteristics: all in Alcaic meter, all quite long, all in a serious style, all addressing matters of public and moral importance (even if they also touch on the private); all without named addressees: see e.g., Fraenkel (1957: 260); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: xx); Syndikus (2010: 193).

he applies this grotesque aesthetic once again to lovers. In *Ode* 3.11, Horace asks for the help of Mercury and his tortoise-shell lyre in catching the attention of Lyde:

quae uelut latis equa trima campis
ludit exsultim metuitque tangi,
nuptiarum expers et adhuc proteruo
cruda marito. (*Carm.* 3.11.9–12)

[Lyde], who, just like a three-year old filly plays and frisks in the broad plains and fears being touched, has no share in marriage rites and is still not ripe for a wanton husband.

Lyde here is presented as young horse, and she stands in stark contrast to her near-namesake Lydia, who as she ages in *Ode* 1.25 is increasingly spurned by her lovers and afflicted with equine passion (*Carm.* 1.25.13–15, discussed above). Lyde’s reluctance to engage sexually—or, perhaps better, *maritally*—in conjunction with her frolicking (*ludit exsultim*) make her similar to Lalage in *Ode* 2.5, who is still young and prefers to play (*ludere*) with calves, but will soon become sexually forward and thus more beloved than Pholoe, Chloris, and Gyges (discussed above).²⁴¹ Pholoe and Chloris are also connected with Lyde since all three “play.” In *Ode* 3.15, Horace tells Chloris, Ibycus’ aging wife, to stop “playing around” (*ludere*) among the virgin maids since she is close to a timely death (*maturo proprior funeri*, *Carm.* 3.15.4). He continues: *non, siquid Pholoen satis, | et te, Chlори, decet* “if anything suits Pholoe sufficiently, it does not suit you, Chloris” (*Carm.* 3.15.7–8). Pholoe has previously been associated with roes (*Carm.* 1.33.7–9), so it is no surprise when Horace reuses the image: *illam cogit amor Nothi | lasciuae similem ludere capreae* “her love for Nothus compels her to play just like the frisky roes” (*Carm.* 3.15.11–12).²⁴² Lyde,

²⁴¹ But see Bradshaw (1978: 161), who suggests that while Lalage is, in fact, physically immature, Lyde is merely temperamentally unwilling. He also compares Lyde to Chloe in *Ode* 1.23 whom I have omitted since the parallels are less strong (Chloe is compared to a fawn who sticks fast to her mother and does not play).

²⁴² Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 194) note that the first instance of *ludere* in line 5 suggests dancing, while the second instance in line 12 denotes sexual activity.

therefore, is one node in a complex network in which animal (equine-bovine-cervine) imagery interacts with play, especially with reference to a woman's age, to characterize her willingness to engage with love and the appropriateness of that engagement.

Following the comparison of Lyde to the filly in *Ode* 3.11, Horace makes further use of the grotesque. The verb shifts to second person singular (*potes*, line 13), and the reader may be forgiven for thinking that Horace is once again addressing Mercury. As he continues, however, it becomes clear that he is in fact speaking to the tortoise shell, for the achievements listed belong to tales of Orpheus, not Mercury, but Orpheus is not one of the poem's addressees.²⁴³

tu potes tigris comitesque siluas
ducere et riuos celeres morari;
cessit immanis tibi blandienti
ianitor aulae;
Cerberus, quamuis furiale centum
muniant angues caput †eius atque†
spiritus taeter saniesque manet
ore trilingui;
quin et Ixion Tityosque uultu
risit inuito; stetit urna paulum
sicca, dum grato Danai puellas
carmine mulces. (*Carm.* 3.11.13–24)

You are able to lead tigers and forests as your companions and to hold back swift rivers; the doorkeeper of the vast hall yielded to you and your flattery; Cerberus, although a hundred snakes defend his Fury-like head and his repulsive breath and ooze drip from his three-tongued mouth; nay, even Ixion and Tityus, though their faces were unwilling, laughed; and each urn stood momentarily dry as you soothed the daughters of Danaus with your pleasing song.

I concede that the tortoise-shell lyre is used metonymically for the power of lyric poetry itself, but that does not negate the visual impact of the concrete image. Nisbet and Rudd note that “there may

²⁴³ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 148–149); West (2002: 107); for Orpheus' achievements, see esp. Virg. *Geo.* 4.481–484 and 510.

be a humorous suggestion that savage tigers are led by the slow and lowly tortoise.”²⁴⁴ I agree, but would add that the miraculousness of these phenomena notwithstanding, slowness is the point: trees do not, as a rule, move quickly, and the rivers, which are explicitly “swift,” are slowed down.²⁴⁵ That goes, Horace hopes, for Lyde too. Everything moves at the tortoise’s pace (note *comites*). This tinge of humour colours what follows: a literary catabasis which begins with Cerberus. His monstrosity may be hinted at with *immanis*;²⁴⁶ it is made explicit in lines 17–20. I suggest that Horace is pulling the reader in two directions at once: the ridiculousness of the hellhound’s submissiveness to the *testudo* is in tension with the monstrosity.²⁴⁷ To be sure, the beast has yielded (*cessit*) to the tortoise/lyre, but this is certainly *not* the fawning pet depicted at the end of *Ode* 2.19 (discussed above). Horace focuses the reader’s attention on the fearsome visage—the snakes around the head which recalls the Furies, the foul breath, and the poisonous saliva dripping from his mouth.²⁴⁸ To use a cinematic metaphor, Horace tightens the frame around Cerberus and this explains why in this poem he has only one head and one mouth, albeit with a triple tongue.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 156); cf. West (2002: 107–108), who argues that Horace introduces the pathos of Orpheus’ story.

²⁴⁵ Oddly, Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 156) note the contrast of *morari* with *celeres* and *ducere*, but fail to connect the slowness to the tortoise, suggesting only that the lyre holds the rivers’ attentions.

²⁴⁶ I have translated it above with *aulae*: Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 156) are divided on whether the adjective should be taken with *ianitor* or *aulae*. Although it is necessary for a translator to choose, I am not convinced that it is necessary for Horace’s reader.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Bradshaw (1978: 162–163).

²⁴⁸ Here, Horace has conflated into a single figure Cerberus and the Furies whom elsewhere, as they listen to Alcaeus and Sappho, he keeps separate (*Carm.* 2.13.33–36).

²⁴⁹ See also West (2002: 108). At *Carm.* 2.13.34, Cerberus has 100 heads, each with its own set of ears so the reader can visualize the powerfully relaxing effect of Alcaeus’ and Sappho’s poetry: cf. Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: 220), though they are perhaps too confident in the assertion that “three is the normal number” of heads.

This final close-up on the mouth prepares us for Ixion and Tityus. As Porphyrio noted, *uultu risit inuito* indicates that they smile at the beauty of the music despite themselves and their situation.²⁵⁰ David West, however, suggests that they laugh at the ridiculousness of Cerberus.²⁵¹ This seems unlikely to me: it would be a departure for these underworld figures to react not to the music but to the reactions of other underworld figures. Yet I propose that laughter *is* in play, but on a secondary level. The stanza on Cerberus momentarily obscures who, or more accurately, what is having this effect. The verb *mulces* in line 24 brings “you” back into focus, and this “you” is the *testudo*. I suggest that when the reader remembers this, the smiles of Ixion and Tityos become laughter as they (along with the reader) see a musical tortoise slowly making its way through the underworld. Their laughter cuts across the grimness of the underworld setting and so complicates the aesthetics.

Tityos and Ixion are both punished for crimes of sexual violence—the former against Leto, the latter against Hera.²⁵² This provides a segue to the story of the Danaids, which occupies the second half of the poem. The Danaids are introduced as a potential *exemplum* for Lyde (*Carm.* 3.11.25–29). Horace introduces the emphatically “unholy” women (*impiae* at the beginning of consecutive lines) and then singles out for praise Hypermestra for deceiving her father and warning her young husband (*Carm.* 3.11.30–36). As she warns Lynceus, she dehumanizes her sisters:

quae uelut nactae uitulos leaenae
singulos eheu lacerant: ego illis
mollior nec te feriam neque intra
claustra tenebo.

(*Carm.* 3.11.41–44)

²⁵⁰ See also Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 159).

²⁵¹ West (2002: 108).

²⁵² West (2002: 108); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 158).

[My sisters] who just like lionesses, when they have come upon calves, alas, tear at them individually: I, more gentle than they, will neither stike you nor keep you behind bars.

The image of the lionesses attacking the calves reinforces the violent and predatory act.²⁵³ It also gestures to a strong contrast with Lyde, since as already noted, in her play (*ludit exsultim*) she looks like Lalage, who at *Carm.* 2.5.8 also “plays.” More specifically, Lalage plays with *uituli*. But Lalage, Horace asserts, will soon “seek her husband with her wanton forehead” (*iam proterua* | *fronte petet Lalage maritum*, *Carm.* 2.5.15–16). The verb *petere* may simply mean “look for,” but it can as easily mean “attack.” In transitioning from sexual immaturity to maturity, Lalage moves from being like Lyde to being like the forty-nine “unholy” daughters of Danaus. Indeed, the contrast of the “before” and “after” is heightened by the switch in the application of the adjective *proteruus*: from Lyde’s (immature) perspective—and thus also from Lalage’s—a potential husband is *proteruus*; but once the woman reaches sexual maturity, *she* becomes *proterua*. Which raises the questions of what will happen to Lyde and the extent to which Hypermestra serves as a model. For although Hypermestra saves Lynceus, he is pointedly not named: he is simply identified as her “young husband” (*iuueni marito*, *Carm.* 3.11.36). The designation of Lynceus simply as a “young husband” helps distinguish Hypermestra from other young women by idealizing her view of the marital relationship in contradistinction to that of Lyde. But if Horace’s aim is to convince Lyde to accept marriage, he has constructed a flawed argument in two respects. If Lyde draws the conclusion that the Danaids are punished for murdering their fiancés (*sponsos*, line 32) without ever consummating the marriages (*uirginum poenas*, line 26), she might reasonably take Hypermestra as her model.²⁵⁴ But that does not necessarily mean a good

²⁵³ Lowrie (1997: 287); Harrison (2007a: 191–192) connects the imagery with tragedy in particular.

²⁵⁴ On the virginity of the Danaids, see Lowrie (1997: 287); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 159).

outcome, for Hypermestra ends the poem imagining her own epitaph: *nostrī memorem sepulcro | scalpe querelam* “carve a plaintive memorial of us on our tomb” (*Carm.* 3.11.51–52). In fact, this is the *best* outcome since even this presumes the gods’ support for Lynceus’ escape: *dum fauet Nox et Venus, i secundo | omine* “while Night and Venus are well disposed, go with a favourable omen” (*Carm.* 3.11.50–51).²⁵⁵ On the other hand, the reader who recognizes the echoes of Lalage in Lyde will also recognize that if Lyde takes a “husband” as Hypermestra does, she is likely to treat him in the same way as Lalage does (which, as I have noted, is not necessarily positive). The result, I suggest, is confusing, but deliberately so. Just as the opening hymn provides the occasion for the mythic narration, the knotty logic of the *exemplum* matches the grotesque aesthetic of the first part of the poem.²⁵⁶ The poem is built on contrast and incongruity, and so its grotesqueness aesthetically is of a piece.²⁵⁷

The Danaids of *Ode* 3.11 are lionesses in the eyes of their sister for their ferocious treatment of their bridegrooms. In *Ode* 3.20 Horace redeploys this same image to express a different kind of sexual ferocity. Pyrrhus is warned against pursuing Nearchus because this will bring him into conflict with a rival:

non uides, quanto moueas periclo,
 Pyrrhe, Gaetulae catulos leaenae?
 dura post paulo fugies inaudax
 proelia raptor,
 cum per obstantis iuuenum cateruas
 ibit insignem repetens Nearchum,
 grande certamen, tibi praeda cedat
 maior an illi.

(*Carm.* 3.20.1–8)

²⁵⁵ See also West (2002: 110), who suggests that even if the reader recalls the version of the story in which the young couple actually live happily ever after, Horace opts for a tragic version; Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 163–164)

²⁵⁶ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 149–150); for the complex generic interplay of lyric, tragedy, and elegy, see Harrison (2007a: 189–193).

²⁵⁷ See Bradshaw (1978: 164–165), who argues that the point of the Danaid story is to teach Lyde proper marital *fides*.

Don't you see, Pyrrhus, with what great danger you disturb the cubs
of a Gaetolian lioness? A little later you, a robber lacking daring,
will take flight from harsh battles, when she makes her way through
the throngs of young men standing in the way and seeks again
outstanding Nearchus—a mighty contest, whether the greater prize
will go to you or to her.

These first two stanzas suggest a hunting party and are punctuated with Homeric imagery.²⁵⁸ But the heroic beginnings are undermined by Pyrrhus' anticipated cowardice.²⁵⁹ They are further undermined when Horace reveals in line 6 that this is an erotic poem by providing Nearchus' name.²⁶⁰ Thus the "great contest" anticipated in line 7 becomes less and less *grande*. David West has argued that the "misfit" between the plural cubs and the individual Nearchus helps explain the idea of "greater booty," for although Nearchus cannot be divided in smaller and larger parts the way that a litter of cubs may be.²⁶¹ But Nearchus' correspondence to the cubs also complicates the relationship between him and the woman. Nearchus' name and position as the object of rival male and female affections indicate that he is an adolescent.²⁶² The woman is older, and this fact combined with her aggressive and animal sexuality brings her into line with the old women of the *Epodes*. As discussed already, the passion such women feel is presented in negative terms. The mother-child relationship of the lioness and her cubs in *Ode* 3.20 must further stain this woman's love with unnaturalness. This unnaturalness is reinforced by Horace's overall depiction of the woman. Nearchus may begin the poem as cubs, but he is ultimately presented as human. Not only does the woman go unnamed throughout the poem, she is never described in human terms. In the

²⁵⁸ See West (2002: 176–177); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 240).

²⁵⁹ Oliensis (2002: 101); West (2002: 175–176); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 241–242).

²⁶⁰ See also Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 242).

²⁶¹ West (2002: 176–177).

²⁶² On Nearchus' age and name, see Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 240 and 242) and West (2002: 174–176).

third stanza, as she and Pyrrhus prepare for their *grande certamen*, he draws swift arrows and “she sharpens teeth which you should be scared of” (*haec dentis acuit timendos*, *Carm.* 3.20.10). Sharpening the teeth derives ultimately from Homer, though it is an action usually applied to boars’ tusks.²⁶³ The woman may, therefore, become a kind of boar-lion hybrid in the mind of readers who recall this. The focus on her teeth connects the lion-woman to the *uetula* of *Epode* 8, whose black tooth features prominently. It also links her with Canidia and Sagana at *Sat.* 1.8.27, who use their teeth to tear apart a lamb. I agree with David West that the whole scene—preparations for a battle that never actually eventuates²⁶⁴—is humorous: the epic style and diction do not match the context or stakes of everyday amorous rivalry.²⁶⁵ I propose, however, that there is some point to *timendos*: the woman, just like a lioness, may in fact use her teeth. Once again, the mature woman is simulatenously an object of mockery and an object of fear—a transgressive figure whose passion is dehumanized and dehumanizing as she participates in Horace’s aesthetics of the grotesque.

Transgressive love features also in the story of Europa as told in *Ode* 3.27, a poem I briefly referenced in Chapter 1, section 2.²⁶⁶ The ode begins as a propemptikon for Galatea whose journey provides the catalyst for the story of Europa and the bull, perhaps as a warning about travelling overseas with a lover.²⁶⁷ Horace distinguishes a range of bad omens that may accompany “unholy men” (*impios*, line 1) on their journeys from the good omens he hopes to summon for one he is

²⁶³ West (2002: 176); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 243).

²⁶⁴ Oliensis (2002: 101).

²⁶⁵ West (2002: 176); see also Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 242–244) “mock-heroic.”

²⁶⁶ Given the comparable structures of 3.11 and 3.27 (the poem opens and then transitions to a mythic narrative), they are regularly treated as a pair: see Fraenkel (1957: 196); Lowrie (1997: 266); Commager (1995: 172); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 151 and 320); West (2002: 111 and 234); Harrison (2007a: 189).

²⁶⁷ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 319–320); Harrison (2007a: 194); West (2002: 226); Bradshaw (1978: 168–169) sees only comfort for Galatea before her journey.

concerned about (*Carm.* 3.27.1–12). He then turns to Galatea specifically. He wishes her good luck and that she remember him (*memor nostri, Galatea, uiuas, Carm.* 3.27.14). He finally hopes that no bad omen prevent her departure (*Carm.* 3.27.15–16). Then comes an addendum: although he has essentially said his goodbyes as Galatea sets out from the city, Horace now talks about the rough conditions on the Adriatic and prays that the wives and children of their enemies suffer them (*Carm.* 3.27.17–24).

The idea of travel at sea prompts Horace to tell the story of Europa and, in this version, her abduction by the bull. Yet the abduction is facilitated by Europa’s initial attraction, for “she entrusted her snowy body to the deceitful bull” (*niueum doloso | credidit tauro latus, Carm.* 3.27.25–26). The very nature of Europa’s attraction to the bull puts her in a similar category to other women discussed already, especially the old woman at *Epode* 12.17 who specifically looks for a *taurum* as a lover. Horace leaves open the question of whether Europa’s attraction results in more than merely crossing the sea. The use of the genitive plural in the phrase *uirginum culpae* (*Carm.* 3.27.38) indicates a generalization, and *culpa* could cover a range of “indiscretions”; *turpe commissum* in line 39 applies only to Europa and, given the strength of the expression, may point to loss of virginity.²⁶⁸ Europa is left to wonder:

uigilansne ploro
turpe commissum an uitiis carentem
ludit imago
uana quae porta fugiens eburna
somnia ducit? (*Carm.* 3.27.38–42)

Do I weep for a shameful crime while still awake, or does an empty
image deceive me, though I am free from fault, an image that in
flight from the ivory gate brings a dream?

²⁶⁸ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 330).

The rhetorical force of these questions amplifies Europa's distressed state. But this vacillation between reality and dream establishes a kind of aesthetic uncertainty. If things do not seem real, how should we react to them? This comes out in the following lines:

meliusne fluctus
ire per longos fuit an recentis
carpere flores?
si quis infamem mihi nunc iuuencum
dedat iratae, lacerare ferro et
frangere enitar modo multum amati
cornua monstri. (*Carm.* 3.27.42–48)

Was it better to travel through the remote waves or to pluck fresh
flowers? If anyone should now present that notorious bullock to me
in my angry state, I would strive to tear at it with iron and break the
horns of that monster I loved so much just now.

Europa, conceding that what she has experienced is real, wonders whether she should have stayed picking flowers. If the reader fully empathizes with Europa at this moment in the poem, then flowers may seem like the better option.²⁶⁹ We, however, have a broader perspective than Europa, for we know that this was no ordinary bull. For the reader, then, the question is difficult to answer. It is not made easier by the juxtaposition of Europa's current and former feelings towards the bull. The violence of her anger is balanced by her acknowledgement of her passion. The bull is paradoxically a "beloved monster" (*amati monstri*). One might attempt to resolve the paradox by observing that *amatum*, as a perfect participle with *modo*, refers to Europa's prior emotional state whereas *monstrum* captures her current feelings. The collocation of the two terms nevertheless produces a kind of cognitive dissonance: it is the same being, after all, that provokes these contradictory emotions. And yet *amati* suggests a lingering sexual desire, and this further contributes to the dissolution of categorical boundaries between human and animal by gesturing

²⁶⁹ Cf. Bradshaw (1978: 169–170).

towards the active violation of those boundaries. By calling the bull a *monstrum*, Europa draws attention to its unnaturalness. This bull took to the sea where it did not belong, just like the boar at *Ars P.* 29–30 and the smooth goat at *Epod.* 16.34. Furthermore, the reader recalls that the bull is *not* a bull but actually Jupiter in disguise, thus collapsing the boundary between animal and divine. Knowing that the bull is actually Jupiter also complicates the reader’s response to Europa’s desire to physically assault the bull, since she would be assaulting the god: this may deepen our sympathy for her since we can appreciate the full depth of the deception, or it may provoke amusement since despite their apparent ferocity, her assaults would be pointless.²⁷⁰ As it happens, the poem enacts both these responses at its close.

Her anger and despair push Europa to thoughts of death, and she equates the shame of abandoning her father’s household gods with the shame of delaying death (*Carm.* 3.27.49–50).²⁷¹

She prays:

o deorum
 si quis haec audis, utinam inter errem
 nuda leones!
 antequam turpis macies decentis
 occupet malas teneraeque sucus
 defluat praedae, speciosa quaero
 pascere tigris. (*Carm.* 3.27.50–56)

O, if any of you gods hear these things, let me wander naked among lions! Before ugly thinness takes hold of my comely cheeks and the juice drains from their tender prey, I ask, while I am still attractive, to be a meal for tigers.

The desperation inherent in a wish to be eaten alive is, I suggest, complicated by the strong emphasis on remaining attractive. Nisbet and Rudd suggest that *nuda* may contain “a hint of sexual

²⁷⁰ Cf. Bradshaw (1978: 170), who argues that there is no room for empathy: this is comic mockery.

²⁷¹ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 332), who argue that Europa’s language, particularly the repeated *impudens*, reflect her heightened emotional state and do not accurately reflect her own actions.

titillation.”²⁷² I agree, but would add that this titillation functions internally as well as externally: not only the readers, but the lions and tigers themselves are to feel the thrill of sexual arousal. Europa wants to be a good meal—plump and juicy and still attractive. Horace here very subtly reminds the reader how Europa came to be where she is by having her unconsciously reveal more erotic feelings about animals: she may have been deceived and abducted by the bull, but she did approach it herself. She then imagines her father calling for her suicide. Again, though, certain details undermine the pathos. She could hang herself by her “girdle which luckily came with you” (*zona bene te secuta*, *Carm.* 3.27.59), or she could jump “if the rocks and cliffs sharp enough for death entice you” (*siue te rupes et acuta leto | saxa delectant*, *Carm.* 3.27.61–62). The *zona* was a symbol of virginity, and *bene secuta* may suggest that Europa’s no longer performs this function and should not have been brought. That Europa still has it proves a “happy” accident.²⁷³ The verb *delectant* implicates the rocks, like the lions and tigers, in Europa’s increasingly unnatural sexual proclivities, thus adding a further layer of confusion to the categorical blurriness. These lines thus pull the reader in several directions at once—Europa’s despair, the ferocity of lions and tigers, the sexual excitement, the sly humour—and so contribute to the poem’s complex aesthetics.²⁷⁴

This complexity culminates in Venus, who functions as a *dea ex machina* to pull Europa out of her desperate spiral. The goddess simply appears next to Europa (*aderat querenti*, *Carm.* 3.27.66), though the imperfect suggests that she may have been there the whole time.²⁷⁵ Venus is

²⁷² Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 333).

²⁷³ Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 334).

²⁷⁴ See also Bradshaw (1978: 170–171); Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 320), who suggest that “the melodrama is calculated to entertain rather than move the reader.” Harrison (2007a: 195–196), who sees Horace’s version of the story as “more realistic and cynical as well as bizarre” than Moschus’ account, suggests that the tragic colouring of the subsequent lines about Europa’s father is turned into black comedy by Venus’ revelations.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 335): “*aderat* expresses the suddenness of the epiphany.”

further qualified as “smiling (or laughing) treacherously” (*perfidum ridens Venus*, *Carm.* 3.27.67).²⁷⁶ She intervenes not to comfort Europa—her speech is brusque, punctuated by imperatives and short sentences, dismisses Europa’s threats of violence against the bull, and offers consolation only by virtue of future renown (*Carm.* 3.27.69–76).²⁷⁷ She has simply had enough and only addresses Europa “when she has sufficiently amused herself” (*ubi lusit satis*, *Carm.* 3.27.69). This is the Venus who with fierce mirth” (*saeuo cum ioco*, *Carm.* 1.33.12) delights in yoking unequal bodies and minds together, the Venus who laughs as Cupid sharpens his bloody arrows (*Carm.* 2.8.13–16).²⁷⁸ Europa’s suffering has been for Venus’ entertainment. And for ours. At least as far as line 69, the reader occupies the same position as the goddess, and I suggest that the complex aesthetics of the poem—the cues for seemingly contradictory reactions—reflect that shared perspective. The analogy between reader and goddess is not complete: Venus lacks human empathy and so cannot be affected by Europa’s desperation in the same way as the readers are. But the goddess’ presence does explain the brief thrills of sexuality and amusement that cut through Europa’s apparent hopelessness. Venus’ presence in essence ensures that Europa’s circumstances are imbued with the aesthetics of the grotesque.

4. *Odes* Book 4

The fourth book of *Odes* stands a little apart from the original three-book collection both in time and in content. Between the publication of the first three books and this one, Horace

²⁷⁶ See also Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 336).

²⁷⁷ There may be some sexual innuendo (appropriately given the speaker) in *tibi ... redet cornua taurus*: so too Nisbet-Rudd (2004: 336).

²⁷⁸ Cf. Harrison (2007a: 197).

produced his first book of *Epistles* (discussed in Chapter 5).²⁷⁹ He also became more closely and directly enmeshed in the Augustan regime, for on commission from the *princeps* himself he composed the *Carmen Saeculare*.²⁸⁰ The fourth book is more openly encomiastic, but the public praise is balanced by personal lyric. Not surprisingly, then, Horace returns on occasion to the grotesque that appears in the earlier poems. Indeed, the collection opens with an appeal to Venus, the savage mother of sweet desires (*dulcium mater saeua Cupidinum*, *Carm.* 4.1.4–5), who is stirring up wars (*bella moues*, *Carm.* 4.1.2). This is the Venus Horace walked away from in *Ode* 3.26:²⁸¹ the Venus whose grotesque admixture of savagery and delight punctuates the first three books of *Odes*.²⁸² The use of the phrase *mater saeua Cupidinum* underlines this: Horace uses the same epithet for Venus at *Carm.* 1.19.1, where she also is compelling the poet to engage with erotic matters that he was otherwise done with (discussed above in section 1 of this chapter).²⁸³ Horace claims to be too old for her and suggests Paullus Maximus as an apt substitute. Horace uses this to segue into praise of Paullus.²⁸⁴ The poet claims that the lifestyle associated with personal lyric—sympotic and erotic—holds nothing for him, that he finds no delight in any woman or youth (*Carm.* 4.1.29–32). But by the end of the poem, Horace makes clear the effect of the

²⁷⁹ For the dates of Horace's *Epistles*, see the text and references at n 1, Chapter 5 below.

²⁸⁰ See Thomas (2011: 10–20).

²⁸¹ Davis (1991: 65–66), emphasizing martial language; Thomas (2011: 85).

²⁸² That she is the “savage” mother of “sweet” desires and assails Horace with “soft commands” (*mollibus imperiis*, lines 6–7) only underlines her grotesqueness: see also Davis (1991: 66–67), who speaks of a “harsh oxymoron”; Putnam (1986: 35–36) sees oxymoron as the rhetorical figure that helps determine Horace's self-definition in the poem.

²⁸³ See also Davis (1991: 65); Thomas (2011: 90); Putnam (1986: 42).

²⁸⁴ But see also Thomas (2011: 85–87), who notes the similarities with erotic epigram and Paullus' status, in essence, as Horace's rival.

grotesque goddess as he thinks of Ligurinus (*Carm.* 4.1.33–40). Venus will continue to exert her influence over the poet’s work.²⁸⁵

Even the more explicitly encomiastic pieces toy with the grotesque. *Ode* 4.4—an ode which, along with 4.14, serves as basis for Suetonius’ claim that Augustus compelled Horace to write not only the *Carmen Saeculare*, but also poems celebrating Drusus’ and Tiberius’ victories over the Vindelici (and thus a fourth book of lyric)²⁸⁶—opens with elaborate animal similes:

qualem ministrum fulminis alitem,
cui rex deorum regnum in auis uagas
permisit expertus fidelem
Iuppiter in Ganymede flauo... (*Carm.* 4.4.1–4)

Just as the winged attendant of the thunderbolt, to whom the king of the gods entrusted dominion over the wandering birds, Jupiter who proved him faithful with yellow-haired Ganymede ...

The next eight lines describe the eagle’s youth and development: his being forced from the nest, learning to fly, preying on sheep and attacking snakes. The poet then changes tack and introduces a deer and lion:

qualemue laetis caprea pascuis
intenta fuluae matris ab ubere
lactante depulsum leonem
dente nouo peritura uidit, (*Carm.* 4.4.13–16)²⁸⁷

Or just as a deer when focused on happy pastures has seen a lion driven already from the nourishing milk of its tawny mother—a deer about to perish from an unfamiliar tooth.

²⁸⁵ See also Davis (1991: 68), who suggests that the specific rejection of the symposium “tax[es] the audience’s gullibility,” but the poet’s confessed feelings for Ligurinus indicate that while this collection will head in “new directions” Horace “will not entirely abandon his preferred subgenre of erotic-sympotic lyric.”

²⁸⁶ See Thomas (2011: 5).

²⁸⁷ Following the text in Thomas (2011) to read *lactante* in line 14.

To this point, Horace still has not indicated what the tenors for these similes are. Only now does he reveal the object of his comparison: Drusus.²⁸⁸ As a means of comparison, the simile maintains a token distance between the vehicle and tenor thus preventing a complete categorical breakdown. Nevertheless, the comparison to both the eagle and the lion generates a kind of chimerical image.

In both cases, Horace stresses the youthful development of the animal's strength, appropriately so given Drusus' own relative youth—he was only 23 and thus still a *iuuenis* when he triumphed over the Vindelici. But whereas the eagle's strength is presented in relatively positive terms (it does not violate Ganymede, and though it attacks sheep, it also battles snakes), the lion is more ominously threatening. Michael Putnam has observed the closeness of Horace's simile to the Virgilian comparison of Mezentius to a ravaging lion (*Aen.* 10.723–729), rightly noting that Virgil emphasizes the lion's state of mind, whereas Horace focuses on and focalizes through the deer.²⁸⁹ A reader who connects the Horatian and Virgilian similes will see the violent potential in the young lion. In this regard, the detail of the tooth is pointed: as I have shown above teeth are frequently the marker of an aggressive attitude, and this one is no different. Richard Thomas has suggested that *dente nouo* refers to the recently grown adult tooth following the loss of a baby tooth.²⁹⁰ I agree, but would add that the tooth is not only new and therefore unfamiliar to the lion, it is also unfamiliar to the deer, and the reader is meant, I argue, to see this tooth precisely as the deer does. Not only does the second simile introduce a grammatical subject, otherwise absent from the first simile, that subject governs a verb of sight, thus reinforcing the focalization of the action

²⁸⁸ Cf. Putnam (1986: 86), who sees a “scarcely disguised compliment to Augustus” in the eagle simile, without acknowledging the long delay in the identification.

²⁸⁹ Putnam (1986: 87), though his further remark that Horace's lion is “well fed and has no need to eat” is misplaced.

²⁹⁰ Thomas (2011: 134).

through the deer's eyes.²⁹¹ Importantly, the subject is a victim (*peritura*) and this makes the reader a victim too. Horace ends the simile with the verb *uidit*, then transitions back into the narrative by repeating the verb, albeit in a different form (*uidere*), so that the relationship between the simile's tenor and the vehicle is emphatically clear (*Carm.* 4.4.17–18).²⁹² The deer stands for the Vindelici; in both similes, Drusus is the predatory animal. I suggest that this creates a moment of aesthetic *aporia* for the reader. A Roman can appreciate the noble courage and ferocity of an eagle or lion and can certainly approve of Drusus' campaign against the Vindelici. Yet if the reader has identified with or focalized through the deer in the lines immediately preceding, then the reader also becomes Drusus' victim.²⁹³ The semi-anadiplosis of *uidit uidere* underlines the parallelism between deer and Vindelici: it reinforces the reader's perspective through the victim's gaze. The reader's shared sense of triumph in Drusus' victory is tempered and complicated by the discomfort of sharing the victims' point of view.

Horace returns to both the deer imagery and the victim-as-focalizer in the second half of the poem. In conquering the Vindelici, Drusus has demonstrated both his true descent from the war hero C. Claudius Nero (cos. 207 BCE), victor with his consular colleague, M. Livius Salinator, over Hasdrubal at the Metaurus, and the value of his family to Rome (*Carm.* 4.4.29–48). The reference to the Metaurus prompts Horace to imagine Hannibal's response to the defeat. Just as the Vindelici were a deer to Drusus' lion, so according to Hannibal are the Carthaginians deer, prey to ravenous wolves (*cerui, luporum praeda rapacium*, *Carm.* 4.4.50). The wolves are the

²⁹¹ Thomas (2011: 132) also notes the shift in focalization, though he does not remark on its implications for the tooth specifically.

²⁹² So too Putnam (1986: 87–88).

²⁹³ So too Putnam (1986: 87); Thomas (2011: 132) speaks of “an intensity and shift of empathy.”

Romans—aptly so for the people of Romulus.²⁹⁴ The prey-predator dichotomy remains the same, but this time Horace avoids any potential confusion of the reader’s sympathies because he identifies the parties before the metaphor is put into play.²⁹⁵ These are Hannibal’s words, and he is explicitly *perfidus* (*Carm.* 4.4.49).²⁹⁶ A Roman reader will have found no difficulty resisting the focalization and so will have easily avoided sympathizing with Rome’s great enemy. The same thing occurs when Hannibal compares the Romans to the Hydra and other monsters:

non hydra secto corpore firmior
uinci dolentem creuit in Herculem,
monstrumue submisere Colchi
maius Echioniaeue Thebae. (*Carm.* 4.4.61–64)

No stronger, when its body was cut through, did the hydra grow
against Hercules as he grieved being bested, nor have the Colchians
or Echion’s Thebes produced a greater monster.

The attribution of this imagery to Hannibal maintains a degree of distance for the Roman reader between the monsters and the Romans. There is, therefore, no collapse of the boundary between the human and the monstrous so that no grotesque occurs.

In a poem celebrating the achievements of the emperor’s stepson (and indirectly the emperor himself), one might question the appropriateness of the grotesque—especially if applied to said stepson. Outside of the encomiastic mode, however, Horace can make full use of the aesthetic. In the second poem of the collection, Horace begins with an assertion of the futility and danger of attempting to rival Pindar:

²⁹⁴ Thomas (2011: 144) sees a potential allusion in *rapacium* to the *Legio XXI Rapax* which may have taken part in Drusus’ campaign.

²⁹⁵ So too Thomas (2011: 144), though given the focalization of the earlier lion-simile, I would resist the suggestion about the shift to the “prey’s point of view.”

²⁹⁶ See Thomas (2011: 143–144) on the cliché of Punic Perfidy, though given *fallere* in line 52, he perhaps overstates things somewhat when he claims that “there is no treachery in his actual speech.”

Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari,
 Iulle, ceratis ope Daedalea
 nititur pinnis, uitreo daturus
 nomina ponto. (Carm. 4.2.1–4)

Whoever is keen to rival Pindar, Iullus, relies on wings waxed
 together with Daedalean skill and will give his name to a glassy sea.

Horace's phrase *studet aemulari* establishes a context of competitive striving—of attempting to transgress one's proper limits—and this informs his reference to the Daedalus-Icarus story. The poet who attempts to outdo Pindar is therefore not Daedalus, but Icarus, who employs his father's technical ingenuity improperly and suffers for it.²⁹⁷ At this early point in the poem, then, the waxy wings stand primarily as an image of transgression and failure: the reader is not prompted here to think of them as *wings*. Indeed, since this putative poet sets himself up as a competitor to Pindar, the potentially avian resonance of this imagery is drowned out by the subsequent account of Pindar's poetry as a rushing river in lines 5–8 and the précis of Pindar's various subjects in lines 9–24.²⁹⁸

Horace, however, reactivates the metaphor of wings when he refers to Pindar as the “swan of Dirce”:

multa Dircaeum leuat aura cycnum,
 tendit, Antoni, quotiens in altos
 nubium tractus. (Carm. 4.2.25–27)

A great breeze lifts the Dircean swan whenever, Antonius, he
 stretches into the high course of the clouds.

²⁹⁷ See also Putnam (1986: 51); Hornbeck (2013: 162–166), despite acknowledging the poem's nature as *recusatio*, treats Iullus Antonius as the *quisquis* who should avoid the attempt; this ignores the second half of the poem in which Horace in fact outlines for his addressee the sort of poem he, and not Horace, should compose.

²⁹⁸ On the ambivalence of the rushing river as both positive and negative (anti-Callimachean) image of poetic quality, see Harrison (1995b: 110–111).

Pindar not only as swan, but as swan soaring in flight, cannot but remind the reader of the poem's opening, especially since Horace refers again to the poem's addressee, just as he does in the first stanza. More than this, the image of the swan retroactively alters the earlier image of the wings of wax. The focus has now shifted from failed *aemulatio* to the contrast between nature and the counterfeit produced by technique.²⁹⁹ The sublime quality of Pindar's poetry, expressed in lines 5–12, cannot be surpassed: it is a natural gift that technical skill (*ops Daedalea*) will never match.³⁰⁰ The naturalness of Pindar's gift is emphatically expressed by the totality of the swan metaphor: there is no transformation, no in-between state. By presenting Pindar as the true swan, Horace compels the reader to confront the image of the doomed rival—to see him as an incomplete fusion of human and animal. This is not the first time Horace's reader has had to confront such an image. As discussed above, Horace presents himself in similar terms in the final poem of his second book of *Odes*. A reader, recalling that Horace will propel himself *non usitata penna*, finds a specific instance of such unusual wings in the doomed poet's *ceratae pennae*. The link from *Ode* 4.2 back to 2.20 is reinforced also by Horace's other claim that, as swan, he will be more famous than Daedalean Icarus (*Daedaleo notior Icaro*, *Carm.* 2.20.13), since both the patronymic and the notion of renown feature in the later poem. Horace, then, seems to share much in common with the doomed poet, and this commonality contributes to those readings which, as we have seen, attempt to use the Icarian imagery of *Ode* 4.2 to undermine the seriousness of *Ode* 2.20. There is a fundamental difference, though. As I have already demonstrated, Horace's transformation is presented as complete. The reader may see him momentarily in between states, but the poet is

²⁹⁹ So too Davis (1991: 136); Syndikus (2001: 2.288); Hornbeck (2013: 164–165), though wrongly emphasizing Iullus Antonius as the imitator.

³⁰⁰ See also Fraenkel (1957: 435); Putnam (1986: 52); Hornbeck (2013: 165); but see Thomas (2011: 105) and Sutherland (2002: 148), who suggest, respectively, that the fault lies in artificiality and deficient technique.

entirely a bird as he begins to soar from one end of the world to another. Ultimately, therefore, the Horace of *Ode* 2.20 shares more in common with Pindar than with his rival.

The doomed poet's waxy wings also connect him with another poem, for the image of a person covered with feathers—especially feathers that are an unnatural addition—combined with the idea of failure in an artistic context recalls the opening image of the *Ars Poetica*. Is this, therefore, a rejection of the grotesque? I do not think so. The tale of Daedalus and Icarus is, as far as the son goes and as it is presented in the opening stanza of *Ode* 4.2, a story of what happens when one pushes beyond one's proper limits. Overshadowed by that aspect of the story is the fact that *the wings actually work*, as Horace himself notes at *Carm.* 1.3.34–35.³⁰¹ To put it in aesthetic terms, technical ingenuity can take disparate elements and create a successful unity, so long as it is kept within proper bounds. That is the point of Horace's comparison of himself to the bee:

... ego apis Matinae
more modoque
grata carpentis thyma per laborem
plurimum circa nemus uvidique
Tiburis ripas operosa paruus
carmina fingo. (*Carm.* 4.2.27–32)

... I, in the manner and method of the Matine bee who gathers
delightful thyme through a great deal of toil around the groves and
banks of dewy Tibur, on a small scale fashion well-worked poems.

The Callimacheanism of this passage has been remarked upon in scholarship.³⁰² Stephen Harrison has observed that the bee flies much lower than the soaring swan, and in this way it matches Daedalus rather than Icarus, while Michael Putnam has noted in connection with these lines Virgil's description of bees "fashioning Daedalian houses" (*daedala fingere tecta*, Virg. *Geo.*

³⁰¹ Putnam (1986: 52).

³⁰² See e.g., Putnam (1986: 55); Connor (1987: 1); Davis (1991: 138); Harrison (1995b: 111); Thomas (2011: 113–114).

4.179).³⁰³ It has been suggested, however, that the image of the bee also refers to Pindar: ἐγκωμίων γὰρ ἄωτος ὕμνων | ἐπ’ ἄλλοι’ ἄλλον ὅτε μέλισσα θύνει λόγον “for the finest of hymns of praise flit from one subject to another just as the bee” (*Pyth.* 10.53–54).³⁰⁴ Harrison is correct that the Pindaric inflections in Horace’s apparent turn away from Pindaric style and diction indicate that Horace could compose in that mode.³⁰⁵ I suggest, however, that the point is not “I can, but I won’t,” which implies that Pindaric and Callimachean poetics are irreconcilable, but rather that the distance between the two is not as great as it may seem since both are poets of variety.³⁰⁶ It is instead a matter of scale. Gregson Davis has even drawn attention to the fact that in lines 33–48, Horace appropriates Iullus Antonius’ voice and offers a scaled-back version of precisely the grand-style encomium he claims to eschew.³⁰⁷ Moreover, the transgressive and abundant force of Pindar’s poetry—a rushing river that bursts its banks—is matched by the transgressive flight of the bee, who has left its native Matinus in Apulia for the groves and riverbanks of dewy Tibur,³⁰⁸ just as Horace’s description of Pindar’s varied subjects—an essentially Callimachean composition—overflows the bounds of his Sapphic stanzas.³⁰⁹ Variety itself belongs as much to the Callimachean aesthetic as to the Pindaric. But variety is not *per se* grotesque. As I have argued,

³⁰³ Harrison (1995b: 111); Putnam (1986: 56); Hornbeck (2013: 166).

³⁰⁴ Putnam (1986: 56); Harrison (1995b: 114).

³⁰⁵ Harrison (1995b: 115); Harrison’s further suggestion that Horace’s *recusatio* amounts to “an elaborate compliment” to Iullus Antonius, I leave aside as outside the scope of my inquiry. See also Davis (1991: 134).

³⁰⁶ Cf. Thomas (2011: 20–22) on the interplay of Pindaric and Callimachean in *Odes* 4 more generally.

³⁰⁷ Davis (1991: 140); Hornbeck (2013: 164); cf. Fraenkel (1957: 437–438), who acknowledges the expression of the epinician theme, but still in the smallness of Horatian style.

³⁰⁸ Putnam (1986: 55–56); see Commager (1995: 61–62) for the view that the landscape of Horace’s bee is “specific,” “local,” “sheltered,” and laboured over in contrast to the Pindaric landscape.

³⁰⁹ See e.g., Commager (1995: 60); Race (2010: 153); Thomas (2011: 20 and 106); on the Callimacheanism of the *précis*, Thomas (2011: 107).

for Horace the grotesque requires at the formal level the fusion of disparate elements into a single unity. It therefore gives rise to something whole but unnatural that provokes in the viewer simultaneous contradictory responses. Naturalness—even if transcendent or sublime—is, according to Horace’s account, a hallmark of Pindaric poetry. The Horatian birdman thus has no place in Pindar and it is there, perhaps, that it is possible to see a rejection of the Pindaric in favour of the Callimachean. The bee, on the other hand, represents the proper amalgamation of careful workmanship and natural talent.³¹⁰

The birdman makes a final, fleeting reappearance in *Ode* 4.10, if we accept the reading *pluma* in line 2.³¹¹ In this poem, Horace warns Ligurinus, whom he identified in the first poem of the collection as the object of his new lyric passion (*Carm.* 4.1.33–40), that in the future he will lose his youthful beauty. The first symptom of this will be the appearance of a beard: *insperata tuae cum ueniet pluma superbiae* “when unexpected down comes upon your arrogance” (*Carm.* 4.10.2).³¹² Richard Thomas has demonstrated that the motif of hair as feathery down is taken from Hellenistic epigram, though the hair in question need not always be a beard specifically; at the

³¹⁰ See also Hornbeck (2013: 266).

³¹¹ On the various alternative readings, see Asztalos (2008: 289–293).

³¹² Cf. Asztalos (2008), who argues that the addressee of the poem is Horace himself, not Ligurinus, and that the first two lines describe Horace becoming an old man, lines 3–5 describe Ligurinus’ entry into puberty, and lines 6–8 contain Horace’s response to his own reflection in the mirror. Thomas (2011: 212) is right to reject this “radical reinterpretation” because of the lack of any words to signal the switch between Horace and Ligurinus; I would further question Asztalos’ assertion that *crudelis* in line 1 is applicable to Horace inasmuch as it would recall his position in *Ode* 1.33, where a *melior Venus* seeks Horace’s affections, but he is infatuated with Myrtale, who herself is *fretis acrior Hadriae* “fiercer than the waters of the Adriatic” (*Carm.* 1.33.15). To call the characterization of Horace here *crudelis* is a stretch; cruelty in this context emanates from the beloved, and the point is that *Myrtale* is cruel and thus not a suitable object of Horace’s affections. Horace’s “cruelty” towards this *melior Venus* is barely hinted at, since the whole scene is focalized through Horace. As I have argued above, the true cruelty of *Ode* 1.33 lies in Venus herself. Better to see *crudelis* pick up the vocative *dure* used of Ligurinus at *Carm.* 4.1.40 (so Thomas [2011: 212]). Further, the echo of Virg. *Ecl.* 2.4 (*o crudelis Alexi*)—noted since Ps.-Acro—suggests an absent second person addressee.

same time he is right to emphasize the “striking and original” imagery of Horace’s feathers.³¹³ There is, however, something inherently avian about Ligurinus: his hair “flies” (*quae ... inuolitant ... comae*, *Carm.* 4.10.3), and the reader has in fact already seen him in bird-guise:³¹⁴

nocturnis ego somniis
iam captum teneo, iam uolucrem sequor
te ... (Carm. 4.1.37–39)

In nightly dreams I now hold you captured, now I pursue you, a bird
...

Michael Putnam remarks that “the new ‘plumage’ [Ligurinus] will soon sprout gives a bizarre twist to our expectations, keeping the [avian] image but reversing its thrust. No lover will track this mock-avian creature, once the airborne locks of youth have been displaced by the facial hair of manhood.”³¹⁵ I agree, but I suggest that the key is “*mock-avian*.” In Horace’s dreams, Ligurinus is completely a bird, in much the same way as Pindar is entirely a swan in *Ode* 4.2. As Ligurinus ages, however, he begins to look like Pindar’s rival with his waxy wings. And when he gains feathers where they do not belong, so too will his “now flying” hair “fall down” (*deciderint*, *Carm.* 4.10.3), just as Icarus falls.

Ligurinus’ movement across such categorical boundaries is underscored in his complexion which draws him simultaneously into the world of plants: *nunc et qui color est puniceae flore prior rosae, | mutatus, Ligurine, in faciem uerterit hispidam* “now too your complexion, which surpasses the bloom of the reddish rose, once changed, Ligurinus, will turn into a prickly appearance” (*Carm.* 4.10.5–6). The prickliness of *hispidam* certainly suggests the roughness of a beard, but the plant imagery should be kept in mind, since—as poets from Robert

³¹³ Thomas (2011: 211–213); Putnam (1986: 181) also notes the uniqueness of the metaphor.

³¹⁴ Putnam (1986: 181).

³¹⁵ Putnam (1986: 181).

Herrick to Bret Michaels are wont to remind us—roses come with thorns, and as the bloom fades only the thorns remain.³¹⁶ The blend of human, animal, and vegetable puts Ligurinus in company with other grotesque figures discussed above, not least because within the scope of the poem the readers (as well as the poet and Ligurinus himself) are both attracted and repelled by his appearance.

Timothy Johnson suggests that *Ode* 4.10 amounts to an invective and “the poet is not gentle.”³¹⁷ This is true to a certain extent: although the poem is a far cry from the fully, gleefully grotesque dehumanization of *Epodes* 8 and 12, Ligurinus is transformed into something other than human in the same way that the aging Lydia is transformed in *Ode* 1.25. Likewise in *Ode* 4.13, Lyce undergoes a similar process.³¹⁸ As she ages, Lyce loses her attractiveness, but not her own sexual desire. Her ugliness is presented straightforwardly:

importunus enim transuolat aridas
quercus et refugit te, quia luridi
dentes, te quia rugae
turpant et capitis niues. (*Carm.* 4.13.10–12)

[Cupid] churlishly flits past the dry oak and flees from you, since
discoloured teeth, since wrinkles and the snows of your head
disfigure you.

Where Ligurinus becomes a thorny rose with no bloom, Lyce has become a dried out tree trunk.³¹⁹ Importantly, the reader expects this transformation: when Lyce is at the peak of her attractiveness in *Ode* 3.10, Horace complains that she is “no more yielding than the inflexible oak tree” (*nec*

³¹⁶ Indeed, there is much in favour of Thomas’ suggestion of *fruticem* “briar” instead of the manuscripts’ *faciem* (2011: 214–215); Nisbet (1986: 615), likewise underwhelmed by *faciem*, has suggested “the more pejorative” *filicem* “fern.”

³¹⁷ Johnson (2004: 142).

³¹⁸ So too Putnam (1986: 228).

³¹⁹ So too Thomas (2011: 238).

rigida mollior aesculo, *Carm.* 3.10.16). In that poem, she is also serpentine (*nec Mauris animum mitior anguibus* “nor do you have gentler spirit than Mauritanian snake,” *Carm.* 3.10.17), so the reader knows that the potential for the grotesque exists in Lyce. And like Ligurinus, as she ages Lyce cannot avoid an avian transformation. Horace notes that his love for her followed his passion for Cinara (*Carm.* 4.13.21–22). This prompts the further observation that Cinara died young, but “the Fates will keep Lyce alive for a long time, making her equal to the seasons of the elderly crow” (*seruatura diu parem | cornicis uetulae temporibus Lycen*, *Carm.* 4.13.24–25). The characterization of the crow as an old woman (*uetula*) further blurs the human and animal world. It connects Lyce indirectly with the old women of *Epodes* 8 and 12,³²⁰ but also directly to the only other *uetula* in the *Odes*, Ibycus’ wife Chloris, who (like Lyce) enjoys a drink even though it is unbecoming for one her age (*Carm.* 3.15.16 and 4.13.4).³²¹ The complex imagery is matched by the aesthetic sting at the end of the poem. The fates have kept Lyce alive (and made her birdlike)

possent ut iuuenes uisere feruidi
multo non sine risu
dilapsam in cineres facem (Carm. 4.13.26–28)

so that fiery youths can with no small amount of laughter look upon
a torch which has crumbled into ashes.

The laughter recalls that which the Pisones will struggle to stifle at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica* when they consider another birdwoman. Yet it is also tainted by the image of ashes which hints at Lyce’s eventual death.³²² This renders the laughter not just cruel but macabre.³²³ This cruelty links

³²⁰ See also Fraenkel (1957: 415); Thomas (2011: 238), who suggests that the poem’s abuse comes close to the *Epodes*.

³²¹ See also Thomas (2011: 243); Putnam (1986: 228).

³²² So too Putnam (1986: 227).

³²³ See also Thomas (2011: 243–244): “a brutal close to the poem, devoid of empathy.” Thomas also discusses the punning of Cinara and *cineres*—that Cinara is already dead and thus real ashes, yet still better than the metaphorical ashes that Lyce is becoming. But cf. Putnam (1986: 221–228), who suggests that although the poem begins with “a touch of *Schadenfreude*” (221), the tone of the poem alters from line 17 so that the poet

the youths' laughter to Venus and her entourage in *Ode* 2.8 (discussed above), not least because Lyce's transformation is the result of the gods' answering Horace's prayers (*Carm.* 4.13.1–2).³²⁴ More than this, however, Horace's readers are unlikely to have forgotten Ligurinus from *Ode* 4.10, a cruel young man just like those of *Ode* 4.13, and one who is destined to suffer a fate very similar to Lyce's.³²⁵ Consequently, when these readers participate in the mocking laughter of the youths, any enjoyment is complicated by the realization that they will join those young men lamenting their own transformation as they look in the mirror: the reader becomes a participant in the Horatian grotesque.

As a final coda to this discussion of the *Odes*, I wish to consider *Ode* 4.12, a poem that has been called “strange.”³²⁶ I suggest that part of this strangeness rests in the disparate elements that combine to create the poem's unity—that the poem is, in a way, grotesque. The poem is addressed, at its very center, to *Vergilius*. David Porter has put the case that this is the poet Virgil, dispensing with the objections that the bantering tone and commercial metaphors of the second half of the poem are in poor taste given Virgil's death.³²⁷ Porter sees the ode as Horace's memorial to his dead friend, a memorial which attempts to recapture the previous gaiety of their friendship,

“betrays his own participation in the exclamation of sadness they both should share” (225), until he finally distances himself from both Lyce and the mocking youths and reconciles himself to his own old age.

³²⁴ Though, as with Ligurinus, much of the groundwork is laid in her first appearance in *Ode* 3.10 where she is “no more yielding than the stiff Italian oak, no softer in spirit than Mauritanian snakes” (*nec rigida mollior aesculo | nec Mauris animum mitior anguibus*, lines 17–18).

³²⁵ See also Putnam (1986: 234); cf. Fraenkel (1957: 415–416), who sees both *Ode* 4.10 and 4.13 reflecting as much on Horace's own loss of youth.

³²⁶ Thomas (2011: 227).

³²⁷ Porter (1972); see also Strauss Clay (2002: 134), arguing that the commercial imagery is not disparaging and the bantering tone is a result of wine's liberating influence.

but which is tainted with mourning.³²⁸ After all, one of the themes of *Odes* 4 is the power of poetry to memorialize and immortalize both subject and poet.³²⁹

The poem begins with spring and its companion breezes. According to the precedent set by *Ode* 4.7 (which shares this subject matter) and the reference to Catullus 46, these breezes should be Zephyrs.³³⁰ Yet these are Thracian winds (*animae Thraciae*, *Carm.* 4.12.2), which Horace has elsewhere closely associated with winter, and thus they introduce a darker undertone.³³¹ Notably at *Carm.* 1.25.11–12, the Thracian wind raves as a bacchant (*Thracio bacchante ... uento*) while Lydia, now an old woman, is spurned by her lovers and weeps. Roland Mayer remarks that *bacchante* “is peculiarly appropriate to the Thracian wind Boreas, since Thrace was home to bacchants.”³³² This connection between Thrace and bacchants picks up the preceding poem’s reference to Thracian Orpheus (*Threicio Orpheo*, *Carm.* 1.24.13), a poet famously torn apart by Thracian women (*Ciconum matres*) while they celebrated the rites of Bacchus (*inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi*) in Virgil’s *Georgics* (4.520–522), and the reader is encouraged to recall this version of the story since *Ode* 1.24 is addressed to *Vergilius*.³³³ This nexus of Orpheus, Thrace,

³²⁸ Porter (1972: 76–77) compellingly makes much of the parallels between *Ode* 4.12 and 1.24, a memorial poem for Quintilius also addressed to Virgil; most notably, they are in the same meter and Virgil’s name is in the center of both poems (as Strauss Clay [2002: 133 n. 8] also observes).

³²⁹ Porter (1972: 87).

³³⁰ See e.g., Putnam (2006: 99); Thomas (2011: 228–229).

³³¹ Commager (1995: 275); Putnam (1986: 200) and (2006: 99); Thomas (2011: 228–229).

³³² Mayer (2012: 175).

³³³ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 287), who further suggest that Horace responds to and corrects Virgil’s account by denying the possibility that Quintilius will be returned to them, regardless of the beauty of any poetry; so too Mayer (2012: 173).

and winds means that in *Ode* 4.12 the designation of the winds as “Thracian” combined with the address to *Vergilius* may reasonably prompt readers to think of Orpheus and his tragic fate.³³⁴

This darker tone then manifests in Horace’s subsequent account of the bird building her nest:

nidum ponit Ityn flebiliter gemens
infelix auis et Cecropiae domus
aeternum opprobrium, quod male barbaras
regum est ultra libidines. (Carm. 4.12.5–8)

Groaning tearfully for Itys, the ill-omened bird establishes her nest
and eternal dishonor for the House of Cecrops, because she
wickedly took revenge on the uncivilized lusts of the king.

This allusion to the story of Tereus further illuminates the geography of Horace’s spring winds, for both belong to Thrace.³³⁵ As Michael Putnam notes, birth and death are tied closely together in this story:³³⁶ the bird is building its nest, indicating that it will soon lay eggs and create new life, but she does so while mourning her dead child.³³⁷ And though her presence may signal the beginning of spring, the bird is herself a bad omen (*infelix auis*).³³⁸ Furthermore, the use of Itys’ name in combination with the participle *gemens* recalls Catullus’ meditations on the death of his brother and his promise always to sing of him just like the Daulian bird.³³⁹

³³⁴ Putnam (1986: 201–202); Strauss Clay (2002: 132).

³³⁵ The story may also confirm the potential reference to Orpheus, who in mourning for Eurydice on the banks of the Strymon, a river in Thrace, is compared to the nightingale (Virg. *Geo.* 4.511–515); see also Strauss Clay (2002: 133).

³³⁶ Putnam (2006: 99) and (1986: 201); see also Strauss Clay (2002: 132–133), who further suggests that the identification of what should be westerly winds (Zephyrs) with Thracian winds provides an epic perspective by locating the action in the Asia Minor.

³³⁷ See also Thomas (2011: 229–230), who suggests that Horace does not name the bird as either Procne or Philomela as “an artful reference to Virgil’s treatment of the myth.”

³³⁸ Commager (1995: 276); see also Thomas (2011: 230–231), noting the Virgilian overtones of *infelix*.

³³⁹ Putnam (1986: 203) and (2006: 99–100).

... at certe semper amabo,
semper maesta tua carmina morte canam,
qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris
Daulias, absumpti fata gemens Ityli. (Cat. *Carm.* 65.11–14)

But of course I will always love you, always will I sing songs which
are sad because of your death, just as the Daulian bird beneath the
thick shade of the the branches sings out, grieving the fate of her
little Itys who was taken away.

The Catullan reference thus enshrouds the Horatian spring with a layer of perpetual mourning.

Mourning is also present—albeit more subtly—in the next stanza, as Horace describes the
shepherds with their flocks playing songs that delight Pan, “the god whom the herd and the black
hills of Arcadia please” (*deum cui pecus et nigri | colles Arcadiae placent*, *Carm.* 4.12.11–12).
This poem’s engagement with Virgil’s *Eclogues*, and the sixth poem in particular, has been
frequently noted, and lines 9–12 capture in miniature the content of that collection.³⁴⁰ The mention
of Pan points to *Ecl.* 10.26, where the god appears with the other figures of Arcadia to mourn
Gallus.³⁴¹ Jenny Strauss Clay has even suggested that the “black hills” of Arcadia look forward to
the “black fires” (*nigrorum ignium*) of the funeral pyre in line 26 so that the very landscape is
“tinged with melancholy.”³⁴² So despite the superficial promise of new spring, the opening three
stanzas of the poem are imbued with a sense of loss—loss that is associated particularly with poetic
production.³⁴³

It is at this point that Horace turns to his addressee, Virgil. The strong echoes of Virgil’s
poetry in the preceding verses and the allusive gestures towards other dead poets compel the reader

³⁴⁰ See Thomas (2011: 231–232); Putnam (1986: 202–205), suggesting that Horace dwells on the pleasure of these
songs rather than their sad content.

³⁴¹ Putnam (2006: 100).

³⁴² Strauss Clay (2002: 133).

³⁴³ Putnam (1986: 201) also notes that lines 1–12 focus on sound and song; on the poem’s tone, cf. Fraenkel (1957:
418), who sees in the poem nothing but an “easy playfulness.”

to think not only of Virgil but also of the fact of his death. The address in line 13 comes as Horace moves from the arrival of spring to a party to which he is inviting Virgil. This move also brings the reader out of the Greek literary landscape of the first three stanzas into the here and now of Augustan Rome, and this too may reinforce thoughts of Virgil's death since this movement not only inverts the journey of Virgil to Greece in *Ode* 1.3, but also mimics the return voyage which Virgil never completed.³⁴⁴ Indeed, the funereal undertones present in the first part of the poem continue here, despite the convivial, sympotic surface: both the *paruus onyx* of spikenard and the *cadus* of wine (*Carm.* 4.12.17) occur in funerary contexts in Propertius.³⁴⁵ These undertones come to the surface as Horace enjoins Virgil to "be mindful of the black fires, while you can" (*nigrorumque memor, dum licet, ignium*, *Carm.* 4.12.26).³⁴⁶ Jenny Strauss Clay is right to note that that *dum licet* can look both forward and backward and may thus recall Virgil's actual and recent funeral.³⁴⁷ And while it is not necessary to go so far as to accept that Virgil is here invited "from beyond the grave," I also suggest that it is not necessary to assume an early "dramatic date" for the poem.³⁴⁸ Rather, this is an invitation to an absent friend—an invitation that must go unaccepted, no matter how enticingly or pleasantly extended. The injunction at the end of the poem to "mix short-lived folly with serious thought" (*misce stultitiam consiliis breuem*, *Carm.* 4.12.27) applies as much to Horace as to Virgil and is, I propose, embodied in the poem itself, which mixes sadness with gaiety. In this way, the poem also conforms to Horace's rules for Satyr-drama (*Ars P.* 234–

³⁴⁴ Strauss Clay (2002: 133–134).

³⁴⁵ Strauss Clay (2002: 135–136): for the *onyx*, see Prop. 2.13.30; for *cadus* and *nardum*, see Prop. 4.7.31–34).

³⁴⁶ Strauss Clay (2002: 136) draws parallels with Virg. *Aen.* 4.384 and 11.186.

³⁴⁷ Strauss Clay (2002: 137).

³⁴⁸ Strauss Clay (2002: 136) for the invitation *ex sepulcro*; Porter (1972: 84) for the "dramatic date," approved by Thomas (2011: 227).

236) and satire: *sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocoso* “it needs a style that is now grim, often full of jest” (*Sat.* 1.10.11). This blend, I have argued, is at the heart of the grotesque. *Ode* 4.12 pulls the reader simultaneously towards the joy of the symposium and the grief of the funeral. It is a moment of foolishness: a brief but ultimately futile distraction from the anguish of Virgil’s death.

Chapter 5: The *Epistles*

Between the initial three-book collection of the *Odes* and the fourth book, Horace published his first book of *Epistles* (20/19 BCE); the *Epistles to Augustus* and *to Florus* followed not long after *Odes* 4 (probably 12 BCE).¹ In these poems Horace returns to the hexameter of the *Satires*. One might, therefore, anticipate a return to a similar use of the aesthetic of the grotesque found in those early works. At the same time, however, because the poems of the *Epistles* belong chronologically between the third and fourth books of *Odes*, readers may expect a degree of aesthetic continuity. Yet the *Epistles* are *sui generis*, so it is better to approach them without any aesthetic preconceptions. That said, one particular feature of these poems does facilitate the presence of the grotesque: the use of beast fables. The fable creates the potential for the transgression of categorical boundaries depending upon how closely Horace draws parallels, particularly physical parallels, between the animals and human figures. The more closely the circumstances of the animal and humans are analogized, the more blurry the distinction between the two becomes. When this categorical blurring is accompanied by a suggestion of aesthetic confusion, the grotesque ensues. Not every fable necessarily results in the grotesque. So, for example, in *Epistle* 1.10 Horace includes the fable of the stag and the horse: in a battle for grazing land, the stag has the upper hand until the horse obtains help from a human; unfortunately for the horse, once he has defeated the stag, he cannot lose the rider or the bridle (*Epist.* 1.10.34–38). Horace offers as a moral that a man more afraid of poverty than mines will lack liberty and will shamelessly carry (*uehet*) his master, forever a slave, since he does not know how to live on a little (*Epist.* 1.10.39–41). In this instance,

¹ On the date of *Epistles* Book 1, see Mayer (1994: 8–11); on the date of the *Epistles to Florus* and *to Augustus*, see Harrison (2008); cf. Brink (1982: 552–554) and Rudd (1989: 1–2 and 12–13), who date the *Epistle to Florus* to 19 BCE.

only the use of *uehere* creates a physical analogy between the fable and its moral, so there is no breakdown of the boundary between animal and human.

Horace demonstrates his awareness of the fable's potential to generate this permeability. In his brief letter to Vinnius (*Epist.* 1.13), he entrusts to his addressee delivery of documents to Augustus (but only if he asks for them!). Horace offers concern about Vinnius' well-being:

si te forte meae grauis uret sarcina chartae,
abicito potius quam quo perferre iuberis
clitellas ferus impingas, Asinaeque paternum
cognomen uertas in risum et fabula fias. (*Epist.* 1.13.6–9)

If by chance the heavy package of my book chafes you, throw it away rather than wildly driving your packsaddle wherever you are ordered to carry it and turning your father's name "Donkey-boy" into a joke and becoming a fable.

The poet does not employ a fable here, but instead in a metapoetic gesture warns against behaviour that would generate one. Such behaviour would constitute a collapse of the boundary between human and animal. This collapse is signalled by the adjective *ferus*, which implies a bestial lack of control. The sinister connotations of this "wildness" are, however, at odds with the humour suggested by *risum*, and this creates the aesthetic tension characteristic of the grotesque. That Vinnius is apt for such grotesque treatment is underscored by his liminal position: he is the son of a man with an animal cognomen (*Asina*) and so already has one foot on the boundary between animal and human. This liminality is confirmed by the fact that if he does what Horace warns against, he will become the fable. In becoming the fable he will become fully animal, since the fable will feature the donkey, not the man, and that makes his current position somewhere between animal and human.

The potential for the grotesque does not rest solely in Horace's use of fables. Sometimes the poet gestures towards this aesthetic while deliberately preventing its full realization. The

second *Epistle*, for example, contains an example of what might be termed the “avoided grotesque.” The poem begins with praise of the Homeric poems’ edifying quality. As Horace comes to the *Odyssey*, he remarks:

Sirenum uoces et Circae pocula nosti;
 quae si cum sociis stultus cupidusque bibisset,
 sub domina meretrice fuisset turpis et excors,
 uixisset canis immundus uel amica luto sus. (Epist. 1.2.23–26)

You know of the Sirens’ voices and Circe’s cups, which if along with his companions [Ulysses] had foolishly and eagerly drunk, he would have been shameful and senseless, subject to a whore mistress, and he would have lived as a squalid dog or sow in love with mud.

Circe’s transformation of Ulysses’ companions occurs also in *Epode* 17 (discussed above). There, the emphasis is on the process of transformation. Here, Horace dwells on the result Ulysses has avoided. The adjective *turpis*, juxtaposed with *domina meretrix*, suggests a moral component to the transformation, but it also captures the physical disgust that results.² In combination with *excors*, one can perhaps again see dim reflections of the *poeta uesanus*, or even Horace himself. The simultaneously moral and physical foulness of *turpis* is reiterated by *immundus*, which suggests a lack of elegance and refinement (*munditiae*). The description of the sow “in love with mud” particularizes the image of filth and potentially adds a layer of quiet humour as the reader imagines a wallowing pig. Line 26 thus completes the transformation by naming the animals and thereby completes the transgression of the categorical boundary. Moreover, the transformation into a sow also results in the transgression of gender boundaries. Or it would have, had this story not been presented as a contrary-to-fact condition. The reader is, however, permitted—even

² Mayer (1994: 115–116), noting rightly that *excors* belongs not to Homer but the subsequent exegesis of the scene.

encouraged—by *sociis* to remember that Ulysses’ companions *did* drink from Circe’s cups and were therefore so transformed.

This potential for the grotesque or “avoided grotesque” occurs in the subsequent poem. As Horace writes to Julius Florus enquiring about the activities of various literary men (*studiosa cohors*, *Epist.* 1.3.6) attached to Tiberius’ eastern campaigns, Florus himself is praised in the poem for having “no small talent which is not uncultivated and shamefully shaggy” (*non tibi paruum | ingenium, non incultum est et turpiter hirtum*, *Epist.* 1.3.21–22). He thus stands in contrast to those poseurs of the *Ars Poetica* who advertise their “talent” through a hairy lack of cultivation. Horace wonders who is recording Augustus’ achievements in epic (lines 7–8) before moving to Titius who works in both the lyric mode of Pindar and tragedy (lines 9–14). In Titius’ pursuit of the former, Horace acknowledges his fearlessness: *Pindarici fontis qui non expalluit haustus, | fastidire lacus et riuos ausus apertos* “[Titius] who did not blanch at draining the Pindaric spring, and dared to disdain lakes and open streams” (*Epist.* 1.3.10–11). A reader returning to these lines after reading the (admittedly later) *Ode* 4.2 would be forgiven for detecting a note of irony.³ Roland Mayer suggests that *auspice Musa* rules out the chance of irony here.⁴ This presumes that *auspex* in this instance means “supporter” and not “omen-taker”; an ironic reading would allow the Muse to be present at the moment of composition with the understanding that she may, in the end, pronounce unfavourable omens and thus declare Titius’ attempt a failure.

Titius also writes tragedy: *an tragica desaeuit et ampullatur in arte?* (*Epist.* 1.3.14). Mayer remarks of *desaeuit* that “[b]y a common figure, the poet is said to do what he describes,”

³ Detected also by Porphyrio ad *Epist.* 1.3.9.

⁴ Mayer (1994: 126 and 132).

in this case venting his rage until it is exhausted.⁵ This must, therefore, apply also to *ampullatur*, which raises the question of what this verb, a *hapax*, means exactly. Both the *OLD* and *Lewis and Short* gloss the verb as “to use bombast,” though the latter add that it is equivalent to Greek ληκυθίζω.⁶ It derives from the diminutive of *amphora*, *ampulla*, which is itself elsewhere used by Horace to mean “bombast” in the context of tragic verses:

et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri
 Telephus et Peleus, cum pauper et exsul uterque
 proicit ampullas et sesquipedalia uerba,
 si curat cor spectantis tetigisse querela (Ars P. 95–98)

And a tragic figure—e.g., Telephus and Peleus—from time to time grieves in prosaic language, when poor and in exile each casts aside his bombast and overblown words, if he cares to touch the heart of the spectator with his lament.

Given the context, I am inclined to agree with Niall Rudd that while the force of the *ampulla* metaphor may relate to sound, it is more likely connected with shape and thus implies a swollen, overstuffed style.⁷ Horace is discussing composition, not performance, so the sound of the actor’s voice is irrelevant. What is relevant and emphasized by the juxtaposition with *sesquipedalia uerba* is the notion of words pushing the limits of the meter.

Both Rudd and Charles Brink cite Porphyrio’s comment on these lines of the *Ars* that Horace has taken the image of the *ampulla* from Callimachus, though the scholion is missing the actual quotation.⁸ Both commentators, however, cite an iambic fragment of Callimachus, in which that poet uses the verb ληκυθίζω: ἥτις τραγῳδὸς μοῦσα ληκυθίζουσα “the tragic muse booming

⁵ Mayer (1994: 127).

⁶ So too *ThLL* 1.2019.22–23(Burger), noting simply “ab *ampulla*. i. q. ληκυθίζω.”

⁷ Rudd (1989: 166); but see Brink (1971: 180), who sees no need to decide between sound and style.

⁸ Brink (1971: 180); Rudd (1989: 166).

away” (Callim. *Ia*. fr. 215 Pf.). The Greek verb is glossed as “declaim in a hollow voice, as though speaking into a λήκυθος” (*LSJ* s.v.). This gloss derives from the notes of Phrynichus Arabius (*PSP*. 86.9 B.) and Julius Pollux (*Onom.* 4.114). As it happens, the Callimachean fragment is the only extant instance of the verb predating Horace. The fragmentary nature of the Callimachean line makes it impossible to know whether it conforms to the meaning ascribed by the imperial lexicographers—that is, whether it denotes the type of sound produced.⁹ It also makes it impossible to be certain whether the participle’s connotations are positive or negative.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the use of the verb ληκυθίζω as an attribute of the tragic Muse offers a striking parallel for the Horatian *ampullatur*, since Titius’ booming in the “tragic art” is watched over by the Muse (*auspice Musa*, *Epist.* 1.3.13). Whatever Callimachus may have meant, I suggest that Horace has repurposed the line in *Epistle* 1.3.¹¹ It is no longer the Muse who is bombastic, but the author. This means that whereas for Callimachus tragedy as a genre (represented by the Muse) is bombastic, for Horace it is the author who makes it so. It is worth noting again Horace’s observation that even in tragedy such bombast is often set aside when contextually appropriate (*Ars P.* 95–98). Titius’ attempts at tragedy are exercises in frenzied rage and bombast, without any modulation: *an tragica desaeuit et ampullatur in arte?* “Or does he exhaust his rage and swell with bombast in the tragic art? (*Epist.* 1.3.14). If Titius’ composition of tragedy is figured as his own violent rage, so too is it figured as

⁹ Pfeiffer (1949: 211) initially assigned the fragment to *Ia*. 13.

¹⁰ Cusset (2011: 465) suggests it amounts to “a severe censure.”

¹¹ Although it strikes me as a real probability, I have not seen anyone argue that Callim. *Ia*. fr. 215 Pf. provides the basis for *Epist.* 1.3.13–14. Callimachus may have used the λήκυθος metaphor elsewhere in connection with both tragedy and the Muse, it may be just as likely that Horace has taken the line from the *Iamboi* and used it in *Epistle* 1.3, before adapting the metaphor at *Ars P.* 97 in order to render concrete the image of “throwing away jars/bombast.”

a kind of swelling or bloat. Indeed, if *ampullari* is an Horatian coinage, upon first encountering the word a reader may well imagine Titius becoming an *ampulla*—and one with some rage issues.

Having thus enquired about Titius, Horace asks about Celsus. If Titius is in danger of transforming into an angry jar, Celsus is striving to avoid becoming a bird without feathers. Horace remarks that Celsus needs constant reminding not to plagiarize others' works:

quid mihi Celsus agit, monitus multumque monendus
priuatas ut quaerat opes, et tangere uitet
scripta Palatinus quaecumque recepit Apollo (*Epist.* 1.3.15–17)

Tell me, what's Celsus up to—he who has been warned and needs
warning a lot to seek out his own resources and to avoid handling
whatever writings Palatine Apollo has received?

The reception of these writings by the god bestows a kind of sacrosanctity on them, and Mayer rightly suggests that *tangere* has undertones of profanation.¹² Celsus, it seems, has a tendency to make free use of others' verses, so he must take pains to avoid becoming like the crow of the fable:

ne, si forte suas repetitum uenerit olim
grex auium plumas, moueat cornicula risum
furtiuis nudata coloribus? (*Epist.* 1.3.18–20)

Lest the little crow, if perchance one day a flock of birds should
come to reclaim their own feathers, should stir up laughter since it
has been stripped of its stolen colours?

Celsus must follow Horace's advice if he wishes to avoid becoming a laughingstock. Should he fail and so become an object of laughter, Celsus will transgress both the boundary between human and animal and that between male and female, for the *cornicula* is feminine. Because the feathers have been stolen (*furtiuis*), Horace implies that they do not properly belong to the crow/Celsus, that they are somehow incongruous.¹³ Celsus is therefore similar to the painting which opens the

¹² Mayer (1994: 128).

¹³ Cf. Mayer (1994: 128–129), who suggests that the colourful feathers are “superficial dressing-up” and that “the bad imitator misses the essential character of the plundered work.”

Ars Poetica, also covered in incongruous feathers. At the same time, he inverts that image since he becomes subject to ridicule precisely when those improperly added feathers are removed. The very fact that they can be removed indicates that the crow/Celsus has not taken care to properly integrate them into a unified whole. Poet and painter alike are subject to the same rules.¹⁴

In *Epistle* 1.3, poets briefly become a flock of birds. Other poems in the collection demonstrate a similar metaphorical transformation of humans into animals, and such transformations are one means by which the poet can blur these categorical distinctions to create forms that provoke the confused aesthetic response which marks the grotesque. In *Epistle* 1.4, the followers of Epicurus, who include Horace, also become a herd, this time of pigs: *me pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute uises | cum ridere uoles Epicuri de grege porcum* “You will look upon me oily and shiny with my skin well looked after when you want laugh—me, a pig from Epicurus’ herd” (*Epist.* 1.4.15–16). To be (compared to) a pig is not complimentary in Horace’s poetry. The old woman of *Epode* 12 is unflatteringly compared to a sow and the transformation of Ulysses’ men into pigs is similarly demeaning. There may also be some interplay between the image of a sleek and shiny Horace and the pig, for at *Epist.* 1.2.26 the reader has been reminded that pigs love mud which, when still wet, may also create a sleek and shiny surface. That Horace *qua* pig will provoke laughter is consistent with this, so the image constitutes a gentle joke at the poet’s expense.

If Horace is a pig, his dinner-guests (especially the uninvited) are goats: *locus est et pluribus umbris, | sed nimis arta premunt olidae conuiuia caprae* “there is space too for several ‘ghosts,’ but parties that are too tight on space are overwhelmed by stinky goats” (*Epist.* 1.5.28–29). Again, this is not a flattering image. Horace adapts the conceit of “stench = goat” from *Epode* 12, where the old woman’s odorous armpits (like those of Rufus in Catullus 69) concealed a goat.

¹⁴ Cf. also *Epist.* 2.2.106: “Those who compose bad verses are laughed at” (*ridentur mala qui componunt carmina*).

Here, however, he has actually transformed the diners themselves and added a layer of gender confusion by making them nanny goats. The humour of the image is perhaps tempered by the reader's revulsion at the smell.

An unwelcome dinner guest features also in *Epist.* 1.15, and he too is treated with the grotesque aesthetic. In this letter to Vala, requesting a reply about Southern Italian towns, Horace offers an anecdote about Maenius. Maenius appears also at *Sat.* 1.3.21–24 as a figure fully aware of and ready to criticize others' faults, but quite forgiving of his own. In his note on those lines, Porphyrio relates that Maenius was notorious in Rome for his offensive humour and profligacy (*aiunt Maenium et scurrilitate et nepotatu notissimum Romae fuisse, Porph. ad Sat.* 1.3.21).¹⁵ Porphyrio's note reflects less the Maenius of *Satire* 1.3 than that of *Epistle* 1.15. For in this poem Maenius "bravely" (*fortiter*) used up his inheritance and "began to be considered a smart, wandering hanger-on" (*urbanus coepit haberi, | scurra uagus, Epist.* 1.15.27–28). Maenius adopted the life of a parasite and would win his dinners through savage abuse (*Epist.* 1.15.29–31). His reputation for savagery (*saeuus*, line 30) is matched by his destructive, all-consuming nature: he is the ruin of the markets (*perniciēs et tempestas barathrumque macelli, Epist.* 1.15.31). When he could not cadge a meal from someone else, he would dine on plates of tripe or cheap lamb—enough, says Horace, for three bears (*tribus ursis quod satis esset, Epist.* 1.15.35). The quantity consumed is consistent with Maenius' nature, but the dishes themselves are at odds with Maenius' old lifestyle. In consuming the tripe and cheap cuts, he exhibited the usual convert's zeal: *scilicet ut uentres lamna candente nepotum | diceret urendos, correctus Bestius* "so that, of course, he would say that the stomachs of spendthrifts should be burned with glowing iron strips—a reformed

¹⁵ See Gowers (2012: 125) on Maenius, who was even subjected to Lucilius' satire (Lucil. fr. 1136–7W = 1203–4M).

Bestius” (*Epist.* 1.15.36–37). Nothing is known of this Bestius.¹⁶ It may be that Bestius was as famous for his profligacy as Maenius, but I would argue that the name itself is suggestive.¹⁷ This a masculine form of *bestia* “beast.” Maenius’s appetite has just been compared to that of a bear—or more correctly, three bears. There is, therefore, something animal about him, even in his new-found parsimony, so that the name “Beastly” is fitting.¹⁸ And yet, not entirely animal, for he has been “corrected.” When this is combined with Maenius’ reputation for both wit (*urbanus*, *scurra*) and savagery (*saeuus*), the result is a complicated figure. Horace has even noted that Maenius himself, when hungry, did not distinguish friend from foe (*impransus non qui ciuem dinosceret hoste*, *Epist.* 1.15.29) and produced mixed emotions in those from whom he would cadge a meal: some liked his brand of roguishness, others were afraid of it (*nequitiae fautoribus et timidis*, *Epist.* 1.15.33). Fear and humour, animal and human combine in a single grotesque figure.

If the toadying *scurra* is grotesque, so too is his opposite. In *Epistle* 1.18, Horace acknowledges Lollius’ personal brand of outspokenness and his desire to avoid appearing like a parasite when he has professed his friendship, before noting that *scurra* and *amicus* are as different as a wife and a prostitute (*Epist.* 1.18.1–4). The fawning and flattery associated with the parasite may be a vice, but so is going too far the other way:

est huic diuersum uitio uitium prope maius,
asperitas agrestis et inconcinna graisque,
quae se commendat tonsa cute, dentibus atris,

¹⁶ Pers. *Sat.* 6 offers no real assistance, since that Bestius rails against “learned Greeks” (*doctores Graios*) for introducing imported tastes to Rome (lines 37–40); that is, if Persius’ reader is meant to recognize this Bestius from *Epist.* 1.15, he is now *correctus*, and there is no suggestion of any previous extravagance.

¹⁷ Cf. Mayer (1994: 217), who suggests that the “proper name stands for a class of person,” but this still requires the name to have some significance.

¹⁸ We may compare the punning, but nevertheless genuine, names of the interlocutors in Varro’s *De Re Rustica*, e.g., Fundanius “Mr Farm,” Agrius “Mr Field,” and Agrasius “Mr Countryside” discuss land (*Rust.* 1.2.1); Scrofa “Mr Sow” speaks on swine (*Rust.* 2.4.1) and Vaccius “Mr Cow” on cattle (*Rust.* 2.5.2); Pinnius “Mr Feathers” is the addressee of the discussion of birds (*Rust.* 3.1.1): see Rayment (1945: 350–351) and Linderski (1995: 53–55).

dum uult libertas dici mera ueraque uirtus.
uirtus est medium uitiorum et utrimque reductum. (*Epist.* 1.18.5–9)

There is a vice opposite to this vice—almost greater—a rustic roughness, inelegant and heavy, which commends itself with a shorn pate, black teeth, while it wants to be called “freedom” and “true, undiluted virtue.” Virtue is the middle way between vices, withdrawn from each side.

This truculence is the vice that Lollius, if he is not careful, may exhibit (*liberrime Lolli*, *Epist.* 1.18.1).¹⁹ The man who is overly forthright shares certain characteristics with other grotesque figures in Horace’s poetry, most notably his black teeth.²⁰ At *Epod.* 6.15–16 (discussed above), Horace portrays the verbal attacks of an aggressive dinner guest as being attacked by dog with “a black tooth.” The parallels between the epodic and epistolic figures are striking: both are dinner guests, both have black teeth, and both are presented in canine terms. Yet whereas Horace directly calls his antagonist in the *Epode* a dog, in the *Epistle* he employs a more subtle technique, having the man characterize his own speech as barking (*acriter elatrem*, *Epist.* 1.18.18). The boundary between animal and human is consequently blurry. Importantly, frank as he may be, Lollius has not yet reached this point. Horace, therefore, presents the potential for Lollius to become a grotesque figure, unless, like Celsus in *Epistle* 1.3, he follows Horace’s advice.

The transition from outspokenness to viciousness—and its connection with teeth—is borne out by literary history. Horace relates that the “Fescennine licence” (*Fescennina licentia*, *Epist.* 2.1.145) grew out of rural tradition and consisted initially of “unrefined insults in alternating verses” (*uersibus alternis opprobria rustica*, *Epist.* 2.1.147). It was all in good fun, until things got out of hand:

¹⁹ So too Mayer (1994: 244).

²⁰ The old woman of *Epode* 8 has black teeth, as would Barine if she had ever been punished for her faithlessness (*Carm.* 2.8.3).

libertasque recurrentis accepta per annos
 lusit amabiliter, donec iam saeuus apertam
 in rabiem coepit uerti iocus et per honestas
 ire domos impune minax. doluere cruento
 dente laccessiti; fuit intactis quoque cura
 condicione super communi; quin etiam lex
 poenaeque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quemquam
 describi. (Epist. 2.1.147–154)

This forthrightness, received as year ran into year, proved amiable fun, until now the fierce joke began to turn into straight out ferocity and made its threatening way through honourable homes with impunity. Some, harried by its bloody tooth, suffered; those too who were untouched were worried about the state of the community; finally a law and penalty were passed which forbade anyone from being described in a wicked poem.

The use of *libertas* confirms the connection with Lollius' character. That the joke (*iocus*) is *saeuus* recalls the laughter of Venus in *Odes* 1.33 and 2.8 (discussed above). Even the bloody tooth recalls Cupid's bloody whetstone (*Carm.* 2.8.16). Here, though, the violence seems to tip the scale: the humour gives way completely to aggression and this requires intervention. If there is too much violence, the leavening effect of the joke disappears: we are no longer in the grotesque. By extension, therefore, the grotesque is a socially acceptable aesthetic, so long as the proper balance between the fierce and the humorous remains.²¹

The forthright man may bark and bare his black teeth like a dog, but anger will turn a man into a wolf. In *Epode* 6, just mentioned, Horace becomes a wolf when provoked by his canine antagonist. Just so does a certain soldier of Lucullus transform after he loses all his money in the night while asleep (*Epist.* 2.2.26–28):

²¹ In some respects, the law adjusts things too far the other way, for “from fear of the cudgel, men changed their mode of expression and were forced back to speaking well and entertaining” (*uertere modum formidine fustis | ad bene dicendum delectandumque redacti*, *Epist.* 2.1.154–155).

... post hoc uehemens lupus, et sibi et hosti
iratus pariter, ieiunis dentibus acer,
praesidium regale loco deiecit, ut aiunt,
summe munito et multarum diuite rerum. (Epist. 2.2.28–31)

After this loss, a violent wolf, angry equally with himself and the enemy, fierce with famished teeth, he cast down a royal garrison from its station, so they say, which was especially fortified and rich with many possessions.

The ferocity of the wolf is stressed as the soldier's poverty is transformed into a ravenous hunger.²² Horace's use of the phrase *ut aiunt* suggests that this is a well-known anecdote.²³ It also suggests that this soldier has achieved what Horace warns Vinnius against in *Epistle* 1.13, namely, he has become a fable.

Despite the wolfish violence of the soldier's actions, certain details complicate this vignette. First, that this soldier is snoring when he loses his money (*stertit*, Epist. 2.2.27) adds a touch of humorous realism to the scene.²⁴ Second, the characterization of the soldier as *uehemens lupus* seems to combine epic imagery with the common slang of the camp.²⁵ That the soldier is "angry" with himself and the enemy may even gesture to Achilles' famous wrath.²⁶ Finally, Horace prompts the reader to remember the soldier's motives. To single-handedly take a fortified garrison is an impressive feat, and Lucullus, duly impressed, rewards the soldier handsomely and honourably (Epist. 2.2.32–33). But when the general tries to inspire the soldier to a subsequent feat of bravery "with words that would give resolution even to a coward" (*uerbis quae timido*

²² See also *Sat.* 2.2.63–64 (discussed above) for the wolf as an image of rapacity.

²³ See also Brink (1982: 281 and 283–284), who touches on Horace's source (possibly Sallust's *Histories*) and its likely making a different point.

²⁴ See also Brink (1982: 282): "an obvious vulgarism."

²⁵ Brink (1982: 282–283).

²⁶ Mentioned, in fact, at Epist. 2.2.42.

quoque possent addere mentem, *Epist.* 2.2.36), he does not rise to the challenge: *post haec ille catus, quantumuis rusticus*, “*ibit, | ibit eo quo uis qui zonam perdidit*” *inquit* “In response to this that clever man, for all his lack of refinement, said ‘He will go, he will go wherever you want, the man who has lost his money-belt’” (*Epist.* 2.2.39–40). Poverty is the great motivator. No matter the achievements of this soldier and his fierce anger, Horace infuses the heroic with the mean and with a knowing nudge (*catus quantumuis rusticus*) asks his reader to appreciate both aspects at once.

Given his tendency for self-ironizing and mockery, it is not surprising to find Horace subjecting himself to the grotesque aesthetic. The opening poem of the collection is addressed to Maecenas and offers excuses for not writing lyric: Horace’s (often thwarted) attempts at self-improvement. In describing such attempts, the poet provides a glimpse of the body distorted:

non possis oculo quantum contendere Lynceus,
 non tamen idcirco contemnas lippus inungi;
 nec quia desperes inuicti membra Glyconis,
 nodosa corpus nolis prohibere cheragra.
 est quadam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra. (*Epist.* 1.1.28–32)

Though you cannot stretch with your eyes as far as Lynceus, you would still not for that reason spurn to anoint your eyes when bleary; nor since you in no way expect to have the limbs of unconquered Glycon, would you refuse to keep your body free from knotty arthritis. It is possible to advance to a certain extent, if no more is granted.

The treatment of the eyes—the application of ointment (*inungi*)—is analogous to many disfiguring or burning poisons. In *Epode* 3, for example, Horace compares garlic to both the ointment with which Medea protects Jason from the fire-breathing bulls and that with which she kills Jason’s Corinthian fiancée (*Epod.* 3.11–14). There is, then, an ambivalence about such ointments. While the salve in this very particular instance must by medical logic be meant to soothe the eyes, the

poetical, connotative logic of combining red, burning ‘inflammation’ (*lippus*) with ointment may produce faint echoes of other, less salubrious unguents.

The inflamed eyes, which require treatment, technically stand in contrast to the arthritis (*nodosa cheragra*), which requires preventative measures (*prohibere*). Yet Horace’s arrangement of these lines stresses the formal parallelism. The names of the exemplars in the subordinate clauses, Lynceus and Glycon, are both placed at the end of the line; the first three lines all begin with a negative, and the fourth with the long *no-* sound that is evocative of *non* and is then echoed in the negative *nolis*. Most importantly, the reader can imagine the physical distortions of these two ailments: bloodshot eyes and gnarled hands. This combination produces a somewhat bestial image, though perhaps still falling short of a full grotesque, since there is no actual transgression of categorical boundaries. These physical ailments, however, then give way to diseases of the soul that may also manifest in distortions: the breast seethes (*feruet*) with greed and desire, and one swells (*tumes*) with love of praise (*Epist.* 1.1.33–36). There are, to be sure, cures for these ills as well, and Horace summarizes thus: *inuidus, iracundus, iners, uinosus, amator, | nemo adeo ferus est ut non mitescere possit* “the man who bears ill-will, who is quick to temper, who is lazy, who drinks too much, who loves, no one is so wild that he cannot grow gentle” (*Epist.* 1.1.38–39). As noted already on *Epist.* 1.13.8, the adjective *ferus* suggests a wild, animal quality to such persons. So, the symptoms of disease—whether of the body or of the mind/soul—dehumanize a person and thus render their victims grotesque, just like the *poeta insanus* from the *Ars Poetica*. Moreover, the contrast of *ferus* and *mitescere* recalls the injunction in the *Ars* not to mix the fierce with the gentle. Horace’s formulation here, however, reveals that these are not mutually exclusive; rather they each exist at either end of a continuum that is contained within a person. A given individual

may be more “wild” and less “gentle” or vice versa. Humanity, therefore, is inherently grotesque because it embodies that contradiction.

Indeed, humanity’s grotesqueness is further explored in *Epistle* 1.16 where Horace offers a meditation on the “good man.” He poses the question to his addressee, Quinctius, and imagines the response:

... uir bonus est quis?
“qui consulta patrum, qui leges iuraque seruat,
quo multae magnaeque secantur iudice lites,
quo res sponsore et quo causae teste tenentur.” (*Epist.* 1.16.40–43)

Who is the good man? “One who obeys the decrees of the senate, who obeys the laws and constitution, who as judge resolves many important disputes, who guarantees property or as helps win cases as a witness.”

This answer is fine, but superficial, as Horace goes on to explain:²⁷ *sed uidet hunc omnis domus et uicinia tota | introrsum turpem, speciosum pelle decora* “But the whole household, even the whole neighbourhood, sees this man and his shameful insides, though outwardly attractive with his seemly skin” (*Epist.* 1.16.44–45). The *pellis* is an adornment meant to hide the foulness within, and Horace emphasizes the incongruity by juxtaposing *turpem* and *speciosum*. The irony is further heightened by the *figura etymologica* of the adjective *decora*, which suggests not just “beauty,” but “seemliness” or “fittingness,” and yet it is inconsistent with the inner man. Moreover, there is the broader question of whether—for a *human*—a *pellis* can ever be “fitting.” I have discussed above the connotations of *pellis* in Horace, and I will accept a reference here to the fable of the ass in the lion’s skin.²⁸ This produces a dehumanizing effect because a *pellis* is at its root an animal pelt—doubly so if the reader also recognizes the reference to the fable and thus sees the figure here

²⁷ See also Mayer (1994: 224).

²⁸ See also Mayer (1994: 225).

as an ass. But in this very dehumanization, the pelt arguably becomes “fitting”: its subhuman status is in keeping with the man’s shameful insides—appropriateness, even unity, born from seeming incongruity.

A slave may protest that he has not run away or committed crimes; his reward is not being punished, for so too do wolves avoid traps, hawks snares, and gurnards fishhooks (*Epist.* 1.16.46–51). To avoid wrong in order to avoid pain or punishment is no sign of virtue, but an animal instinct, whereas “the good hate sinning because they love virtue” (*oderunt peccare boni uirtutis amore*, *Epist.* 1.16.52). If you think you can get away with something, then “you will mix the taboo with the polluted” (*miscebis sacra profanis*, *Epist.* 1.16.54). The proof, in lines 57–62, is the “good man” (*uir bonus*) who sacrifices to Janus and Apollo in a clear voice (*clare*, *clare cum dixit*), but adds a third deity, an Etruscan goddess of thieves, silently for fear of being heard (*labra mouet metuens audiri*). The prayer itself is less than virtuous:

... pulchra Lauerna,
da mihi fallere, da iusto sanctoque uideri,
noctem peccatis et fraudibus obice nubem. (*Epist.* 1.16.60–62)

Beautiful Laverna, allow me to deceive, allow me to seem righteous
and holy, and clothe my sins in night and my deceits in cloud.

Laverna does not belong in the same breath as Janus and Apollo. This is reflected aesthetically in the contrast between the “brightness” (the repeated *clare*) with which he prays to the two male gods and the murkiness of the night and cloud for which he asks Laverna. The prayer itself matches in ethical terms (*iusto sanctoque* versus *peccatis et fraudibus*) the aesthetic inconsistency of the inwardly *turpis*-outwardly *speciosus* man. The prayer enacts the mixture of opposites expressed by *miscebis sacra profanis* and so reflects the hypocrisy of the man with the shameful insides. Humanity’s animal instincts, according to Horace, produce an ethical result that matches

the blended contradictions of our constitution: just as our insides and outsides, though inconsistent, are joined in a single unity, so too will we bring good and bad together in a single action.

Individuals are therefore grotesque, or at least potentially so if they do not follow proper ethical practices. Such grotesqueness also manifests itself in the collective. To return to *Epistle* 1.1, in the second half of that poem Horace considers the pursuits and passions of contemporary Romans. He says that if the *populus Romanus* were to ask, he would explain his reluctance to follow these fads by adopting the words of a fox:

olim quod uulpes aegroto cauta leoni
respondit referam: “quia me uestigia terrent,
omnia te aduersum spectantia, nulla retrorsum.” (*Epist.* 1.1.73–75)

I would respond as once upon a time a cautious fox replied to a sick lion: “Because the footprints terrify me, all of them heading towards you, none of them back again.”

This brief allusion to the fable prepares the reader for a more complete transgression of the boundary between human and animal, especially in the case of the Roman people, which here is analogized to the lion. Where Horace merely speaks the fox’s words, the rest of Rome becomes fully animal: *belua multorum es capitum* “you are a beast of many heads” (*Epist.* 1.1.76). Horace elsewhere uses *belua* to underscore the monstrosity of Canidia and her coven (*Epod.* 5.10) and to denote Cerberus (*Carm.* 2.13.34).²⁹ Indeed the hellhound is also *centiceps* and thus a “beast of many heads.” The predator-prey dichotomy of the fox-and-lion fable is carried through in the subsequent examples where fortune-hunters pursue widows and old men:

... sunt qui
crustis et pomis uiduas uenentur auaras
excipiantque senes quos in uiuaria mittant.³⁰ (*Epist.* 1.1.77–79)

²⁹ Other instances include *Sat.* 2.3.316 (a cow from the perspective of a young frog); *Sat.* 2.7.70 (an animal that escapes and then returns to its pen); *Carm.* 1.12.23 (wild animals as the prey of Diana); *Carm.* 3.27.27 (sea creatures that terrify Europa).

³⁰ Reading *crustis* for *frustis* with Mayer (1994: 104).

There are those who with cakes and apples hunt stingy widows and
capture old men whom they send off to game preserves.

Thus, just as the “diseases” of the first part of the poem turn people into animals, so too do their various passions.

Horace concludes the poem by returning to his relationship with Maecenas, noting how the latter sometimes laughs at him:

si curatus inaequali tonsore capillos
occurri, rides; si forte subucula pexae
trita subest tunicae uel si toga dissidet impar,
rides. (Epist. 1.1.94–97)

If I run into you after having my hair seen to by an uneven barber,
you laugh; if by chance there is a worn out undershirt beneath a
newly brushed tunic or if my toga sits askew and unequal, you laugh.

The parts of Horace’s whole do not quite go together and their incongruity generates laughter from Maecenas. In this respect, Horace stands in for the painting at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*. Others have suggested that Horace depicts himself here as a bumpkin.³¹ Perhaps—especially given Maecenas’ reputation for sartorial polish and flair.³² But that is only half the story, for Horace further remarks that his insides are as equally upset as his outsides, but that this provokes no response from Maecenas:

... quid mea cum pugnat sententia secum,
quod petiit spernit, repetit quod nuper omisit,
aestuat et uitae disconuenit ordine toto,
diruit, aedificat, mutat quadrata rotundis?
insanire putas sollemnia me neque rides (Epist. 1.1.97–101)

But what about when my opinion fights with itself, shuns what it
just sought, seeks again what it just passed over, heaves and is at
odds with the whole arrangement of life, tears down, builds up, and

³¹ Freudenburg (1993: 28), arguing that Horace is attempting to recapture the persona of the diatribe *Satires*; Plaza (2006: 193).

³² Mayer (1994: 107), citing Vell. Pat. 2.88.2.

changes squares for circles? You think I'm crazy in the usual way and you don't laugh.

Maecenas laughs at Horace's "external discordances" but "is not troubled by [his] spiritual disharmony."³³ This lack of trouble must be explained by *sollemnia* in line 101, which commentators note is an adverbial accusative meaning "in the usual way." If Horace's *insania* is "usual," then it cannot produce the kind of discordance or incongruity that, like Horace's haircut or clothing, prompt Maecenas' laughter.

The commentators do not explain what constitutes "usual" here, but Cicero offers some helpful (Stoic inflected) observations in the *Tusculan Disputations*:

eos enim sanos quoniam intellegi necesse est, quorum mens motu quasi morbo perturbata nullo sit, qui contra adfecti sint, hos insanos appellari necesse est. (Tusc. 3.5.11)

For since those whose minds are unaffected by any disruption like a disease must be understood to be of sound mind, those who on the contrary are so affected must be called *insani*.

Horace does not have a "disease" (*morbus*), but his mind does seem *perturbata*, which would confirm Maecenas' general conclusion that the poet is *insanus*. Cicero goes on to distinguish *furor* and *insania*, asserting that the latter, because of its connection to foolishness (*stultitia*), has a broader meaning. He notes in particular how the Twelve Tables (Tab. 5.7a) specify that control of a man's person and property should be placed in the hands of an agnate or member of his *gens* if he is *furiosus*, not merely *insanus*. He explains:

stultitiam enim censuerunt, constantia id est sanitate uacantem, posse tamen tueri mediocritatem officiorum et uitae communem cultum atque usitatum; furorem autem esse rati sunt mentis ad omnia caecitatem. quod cum maius esse uideatur quam insania, tamen eius modi est, ut furor in sapientem cadere possit, non possit insania. (Tusc. 3.5.11)

³³ Mayer (1994: 107).

For they thought that foolishness, in as much as it is wanting in stability—that is, soundness—was nevertheless able to see to a moderate number of duties and the shared and habitual standard of living; but they thought that *furor* was blindness of the mind to all things. And although that seems worse than *insania*, still there is this point: that *furor* can afflict a wise man; *insania* cannot.

Whereas he previously stated that *insania* is connected with foolishness (*iuncta stultitiae*), here Cicero equates them outright. He also equates *constantia* with *sanitas*, which suggests that the fundamental symptom of *insania* is a lack of stability of mind. Again, by his own account, Horace exhibits this. Yet Cicero’s remarks about the Twelve Tables may also explain Maecenas’ apparent lack of concern about Horace. Maecenas takes no steps to call for a doctor or have a *curator* appointed over Horace’s estate, though he is responsible for the welfare of Horace’s affairs (*Epist.* 1.1.102–104).³⁴ Rather, he complains about the poet’s badly manicured hands: *prae sectum stomacheris ob unguem | de te pendentis, te respicientis amici* “you belly-ache on account of the defectively trimmed fingernail of a friend who depends on you, who looks to you” (*Epist.* 1.1.104–105). A court-appointed *curator* is unnecessary if Horace’s *insania* falls short of *furor*. His rapidly changing fronts suggest a lack of *constantia* (and, therefore, of *sanitas*), but not “blindness to all things.” Moreover, his *insania* is consistent with Horace’s not yet being a *sapiens*: as he states at the beginning of the poem, although he has begun to devote himself to what is “true and proper” (*uerum et decens*, *Epist.* 1.1.11), it is slow going (*mihi tarda fluunt ingrataque tempora*, *Epist.* 1.1.23). The *sapiens*, Horace concludes in language imitating the Stoics, is second only to Jupiter: rich, free, distinguished, handsome, and finally a king of kings (*Epist.* 1.1.106–107).³⁵ Most

³⁴ I here accept the interpretation of Mayer (1994: 108), who takes *cum sis* as concessive rather than causal.

³⁵ So too Mayer (1994: 109).

importantly, he is *sanus*—unless he has a cold: *praecipue sanus, nisi cum pituita molesta est* (*Epist.* 1.1.108).

The image of Horace has grown increasingly dishevelled. When his poorly pared fingernails are combined with the results of his visit to the unsteady barber, the poet begins to look a little like those literary poseurs he rails against at *Ars P.* 297–298 who assume the unkempt trappings of the *insani* (discussed in section 5 of the previous chapter). But there are important differences. They do not trim their beards or nails at all. Horace has tried but failed. In that respect, Horace’s dishevelment represents a natural rather than contrived state and thus the incongruity is natural. Further, Horace *wants* to be *sanus*. This too is consistent with his position at *Ars P.* 301–303, where he ironically suggests that he is foolish to purge himself of bile in the springtime, since otherwise no other person would write better poems. In Horace’s case, however, this is *not* an affectation: he really is distracted. This distraction pushes Horace further into the grotesque. In the lines preceding his reflections on Maecenas’ friendship, Horace has detailed the disparate—and contradictory—passions of the *populus Romanus*, characterizing it as a “beast of many heads” (*Epist.* 1.1.76) and a “Proteus changing its appearance” (*uultus mutantem Protea, Epist.* 1.1.90). He even wonders: *idem eadem possunt horam durare probantes?* “Can the same men last an hour approving of the same things?” (*Epist.* 1.1.82). The examples Horace provides indicate that these differences of opinion are based on differences of circumstance. Horace, on the other hand, experiences all this inconsistency in his own person. Horace is, therefore, grotesque: a unity of discordances, a “beast of many heads.”

Horace also touches on the connection between his health and his relationship with Maecenas in *Epistle* 1.7, where the poet defends remaining in the country for the whole of August rather than the promised few days on the grounds that there he can live in good health (*me uiuere*

sanum, *Epist.* 1.7.3), whereas in Rome he is afraid of getting sick (*aegrotare timenti*, *Epist.* 1.7.4).

He then paints a picture of the Roman early autumn and its attendant funerals:

... dum ficus prima calorque
dissignatorem decorat lictoribus atris,
dum pueris omnis pater et matercula pallet,
officiosaque sedulitas et opella forensis
adducit febris et testamenta resignat. (Epist. 1.7.5–9)

While the first fig and the heat trick out the emcee with black lictors,
while every father and mother-dearest is pale for their children, and
the dutiful attention of clients and tasks in the forum bring on fevers
and unseal wills.

Horace presents the urban, autumnal death in specific, even picturesque details. The first fig signals the beginning of the season—an image of bounty. At the same time, the fig has in Horace a funereal association. In *Satire* 1.8, the statue of Priapus that guards the Esquiline garden that once served as a plebeian graveyard is made of figwood, while in *Epode* 5, Canidia orders fig trees to be torn from tombs. The funereal undertones are strengthened by *dissignator* and confirmed by *atris*.³⁶ The “lictors clad in black” are somewhat unexpected as an adornment (*decorat*), and the colour of their attire, placed at the end of the line, stands in contrast to the white complexions of the worried parents. Lines eight and nine are crucial to Horace’s argument, since it is the client’s duty that will do him in and Horace is the client. First comes the fever, then the reading of the will: Horace elides the actual death. Roland Mayer reads *testamenta resignat* as humorous.³⁷ I tend to agree, but would add that it is not purely comic: this is gallows humour. The witty periphrasis may alleviate the oppressive atmosphere of funereal darkness and worry (*pallet*), but it cannot dispel it entirely. This

³⁶ There are two instances of *dissignator* from before Horace still extant. The first is Plaut. *Poen.* 19, where the word clearly means “usher”; the other is Cic. *Att.* 4.3.2, where it describes an associate of Clodius, a certain Decimus (though the name is uncertain) who may be an undertaker or an usher: see Shackelton Bailey (1980: 132).

³⁷ Mayer (1994: 158).

leaves an unresolved admixture of fear and amusement—the complex aesthetic response characteristic of the grotesque.

Horace attempts to pre-empt potential injunctions that he should not depart from Maecenas by asking for his youth back:

quodsi me noles usquam discedere, reddes
forte latus, nigros angusta fronte capillos,
reddes dulce loqui, reddes ridere decorum et
inter uina fugam Cinarae maerere proteruae. (Epist. 1.7.25–28)

But if you don't want me to go off anywhere, you will perhaps return
the seat of my vigour, the black hairs on my narrow forehead, you
will return sweet conversation, you will return the comely laughter
and the grieving amidst the wines at the flight of wanton Cinara.

Youthful Horace is not a complete whole. By identifying those parts of his body that have been most ravaged by age now that he is fat and balding, Horace in effect dismembers himself. He is physically reduced to a torso and the top of his head and face. We can understand *latus* as the part of the body which holds one's passion and strength and therefore as a metonymy for that strength itself.³⁸ We can similarly understand that the black hairs and narrow forehead gesture to Horace's current condition of balding greyness.³⁹ At the same time, this very concrete request for the return of body parts is in keeping with the macabre humour of the beginning of the poem. This sense of incompleteness is reflected in the next two lines just quoted, where the youthful poet is the disembodied capacity for vocalization: talking, laughing, mourning. If Maecenas wants Horace to return to lyric poetry—and that seems to be the suggestion in the first poem of the collection—he is out of luck. The substance of that poetry is no longer available to him and he lacks the physical ability to supply it.

³⁸ Whether or not specifically sexual stamina is meant: Mayer (1994:124).

³⁹ Horace may have gone grey early as he calls himself *praecanus* at Epist. 1.20.24.

In an effort to avoid seeming ungrateful, Horace offers a fable:

forte per angustam tenuis uulpecula rimam
repserat in cumeram frumenti, pastaque rursus
ire foras pleno tendebat corpore frustra.
cui mustela procul “si uis” ait “effugere istinc,
macra cauum repetes artum, quem macra subisti.”
(*Epist.* 1.7.29–33)

A slender fox perchance had crawled through a narrow crack into a grain basket, and having feasted she tried to pass outside again with her body full—in vain! From a safe distance a weasel said to her, “If you want to escape from there, you should when skinny seek the narrow hollow which you passed under when skinny.”

The fox should perhaps not have expected much help from the weasel. In Greek culture, the weasel was a bad omen.⁴⁰ This is translated into Rome in Plautus’ *Stichus* where the parasite Gelasimus exits the house after seeing a weasel:

auspicio hodie optumo exiui foras:
mustela murem apstulit praeter pedes;
quom strena opscaeuauit, spectatum hoc mihi.
nam ut illa uitam repperit hodie sibi,
item me spero facturum: augurium hac facit.
(Plaut. *Stich.* 459–463)

Today I have come outside with the best omen: a weasel carried off a mouse in front of my feet; when the good omen appeared, I decided on this. For as that weasel today found its daily bread, I hope that I will do likewise: the omen points that way.

Unfortunately for Gelasimus, he has no luck obtaining a dinner invitation from Epignomus and concludes: *certumst mustelae posthac numquam credere, | nam incertiozem nullam noui bestiam* “It’s for sure that henceforth I won’t ever trust a weasel, for I know no beast more unreliable” (Plaut. *Stich.* 499–500).⁴¹ Horace’s weasel proves as useful to the fox as to Gelasimus, offering a

⁴⁰ Bettini (2013: 157–158), with references.

⁴¹ The weasel’s unreliability is explained by its behaviour of moving its pups daily (Plaut. *Stich.* 501–502), on which see also Bettini (2013: 99–101 and 163).

witty but unhelpful observation from a wary distance.⁴² The repeated *macra* “thin” may even suggest a kind of taunt, emphasized by the rhythm of the verse since in both instances ictus and accent coincide.⁴³

In *Epistle* 1.1, a fox cleverly avoids approaching the sick lion; here in *Epistle* 1.7, the tables are turned on the fox by the weasel.⁴⁴ In both cases, however, Horace is the fox. In the first poem, he is wary of engaging with the multi-headed Rome. In the later poem, he is trapped by his own metaphorical gorging at Maecenas’ trough:

hac ego si compellor imagine, cuncta resigno
nec somnum plebis laudo satur altilium nec
otia diuitiis Arabum liberrima muto. (Epist. 1.7.34–36)

If I am confronted with this image [i.e., the fable], I forfeit everything, nor do I praise the common people’s sleep when I am stuffed full of fattened fowls nor do I exchange my truly free leisure for the riches of the Arabs.

Horace’s willingness to divest himself of Maecenas’ gifts and his refusal to give up his freedom in exchange for wealth mirror the fox’s need for “thinness” in order to escape. But in this respect, Horace and the fox are different, since unlike him she cannot divest and lacks the awareness necessary to avoid her self-made trap.⁴⁵ Indeed, the use of the verb *resignare* may belong to the language of bookkeeping, but the echo of line 9, where the same verb signals the potential death

⁴² I have rendered *procul* as “at a safe distance” since foxes are known predators of weasels. The suggestion of Mayer (1994: 163), “hard by,” misses the point.

⁴³ Ps.-Acro *ad Epist.* 1.7.32 remarks that Horace wondrously imitates the hissing of a weasel; such hissing is apparently produced by weasels in an agitated state, as appropriate in the presence of a fox: Bettini (2013: 93 and 96).

⁴⁴ A further parallel: both predatory animals (lion and fox, respectively) have, or seem to have, eaten before the smaller animal speaks.

⁴⁵ Cf. Oliensis (1998: 160–161), who asks, “But is Horace fat or thin, in or out of Horace’s granary?” She concludes that the issue is less one of Maecenas’ and Horace’s specific relationship, but rather belongs to “the safer realm of philosophical generalities.”

of the poet should he return to Rome, reminds the reader of the stakes and thus casts a pall over the superficially gentle humour of the fable.⁴⁶ The reader is encouraged to think what may happen to the fox if she does not escape. Horace underlines his analogous predicament through shared physicality:⁴⁷ the fox's "full body" (*pleno corpore*) is matched by Horace's description of himself as "stuffed" (*satur*), and may also gesture to the poet's growing waistline, especially since his torso has just been mentioned.⁴⁸ When Horace confronts "this image" in line 34, he sees himself. The reader, however, sees a grotesque distortion—animal and human, masculine and feminine—as the fox and Horace are laid on top of each other.

The notion of "fullness" in *corpore pleno* and *satur* repeats the exchange from earlier in the poem between the imagined Calabrian and his guest—a relationship which Horace is at pains to point out is *not* like his relationship with Maecenas (*Epist.* 1.7.14–16). The Calabrian attempts to force his guest to eat pears (*uescere sodes*) even though he is full (*iam satis est*). Furthermore, the pears in question will simply be fed to the pigs if the guest does not take them (*Epist.* 1.7.19), thus creating an unflattering parallel between person and hog. Maecenas, Horace suggests, understands that the good benefactor knows when to withhold beneficence, particularly when it is less gift and more burden.⁴⁹ The key is suitability: Maecenas has praised Horace for his sense of propriety (*saepe uerecundum laudasti*, *Epist.* 1.7.37). The poet then recalls how Telemachus declined Menelaus' gift of horses as unsuited to the Ithacan terrain (*Epist.* 1.7.40–43). Horace is

⁴⁶ See Mayer (1994: 163) for bookkeeping.

⁴⁷ Oliensis (1998: 159 n. 6) notes also a formal similarity between Horace's description of his young self (*forte ... angusta*) in line 26 and the fox (*forte per angustam*) in line 29.

⁴⁸ Suetonius states that Horace's own writings and a letter of Augustus describe him as "short and fat" (*brevis et obesus*, *Vita Hor.* 47).

⁴⁹ See also Oliensis (1998: 159).

no king, so Rome is not for him:⁵⁰ *paruum parua decent: mihi iam non regia Roma* “small things suit a small man: regal Rome is not for me now” (*Epist.* 1.7.44). This is reflected in the final moral of the poem—that each man measures himself by his own unit and foot (*metiri se quemque suo modulo ac pede uerum est*, *Epist.* 1.7.98). The proof of this is demonstrated by the anecdote about Volteius, whose urban life leaves him clean-cut and with time to look after his nails: *adrasum quendam uacua tonsoris in umbra | cultello proprios purgantem leniter unguis* “a certain close-shaven individual in the empty shade of a barber’s booth cleaning his own nails gently with a small blade” (*Epist.* 1.7.50–51). This is a man in command of himself. But when, as a result of his patron’s urging and generosity, he takes up the rustic life of a farmer, his world begins to fall apart, and he begs to be returned to his old life in the city (*Epist.* 1.7.92–95).⁵¹ Most importantly, the unsuitability of the change is signalled by a change in Volteius’ appearance: where once he was “shining” (*ex nitido fit rusticus*, *Epist.* 1.7.83), now he is “rough and unshaven” (*scabrum intonsumque*, *Epist.* 1.7.90). These are hallmarks of a man out of sorts.

In *Epistles* 1.1 and 1.7, Horace the *amicus* of Maecenas is subjected to the aesthetic of the grotesque. In *Epistle* 1.19, also addressed to Maecenas, Horace the poet comes to the fore. According to the Old Attic Comedy writer Cratinus, whom elsewhere Horace offers as a model for satirical composition (*Sat.* 1.4.1–5), one cannot write poetry that will please and survive unless one drinks wine (*Epist.* 1.19.1–3). Horace continues:

⁵⁰ Unlike Maecenas: *rexque paterque | audisti coram* (*Epist.* 1.7.37–38); cf. *Maecenas atavis edite regibus* (*Carm.* 1.1.1).

⁵¹ See Oliensis (1998: 163–164) on the parallels and differences between Philippus and Volteius and Maecenas and Horace.

... ut male sanos
adscriptis Liber Satyris Faunisque poetas,
uina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae (Epist. 1.19.3–5)

Since the Wine God enrolled mentally unsound poets with his satyrs and fauns, our sweet muses have pretty much given off a whiff of wine in the mornings.

Homer and Ennius are then added to the wine-drinkers (Epist. 1.19.6–8), and Horace claims to have written a verse-and-a-half entrusting serious business to the sober and taking singing away from those who abstain (Epist. 1.19.8–10). This places Horace on the side of the wine-drinkers. The problem, he suggests, is that since publishing those words, “poets have not held back from competing in nightly drinking and daily stinking” (*non cessauere poetae | nocturno certare mero, putere diurno*, Epist. 1.19.10–11).⁵² No poetry actually results from their imbibing.⁵³ As he does with those “poets” of the *Ars Poetica* who pretend to be mad, Horace here censures the imitation of outward characteristics in the belief that this will lead to a match in the internal character:

decipit exemplar uitii imitabile; quodsi
pallere casu, biberent exsangue cuminum.
o imitatores, seruum pecus, ut mihi saepe
bilem, saepe iocum uestri mouere tumultus! (Epist. 1.19.17–20)

The model that can be imitated in its flaws is misleading; but were I to grow pale by chance, they would drink bloodless cumin. O you mimics, slavish herd, how often your muddles stir up bile in me, how often a joke!

Poets of today, then, have taken Horace as a model in their wine-drinking, just as those in the *Ars Poetica* feign madness on the say-so of Democritus. They are, in their own way, grotesque, being at once human and animal and eliciting a complex reaction from their audience. For just as the poets who reclaim their verses from Celsus in *Epistle* 1.3 are a flock (*grex*), so are these poets a

⁵² To be clear, no such lines exist in Horace’s extant works except here.

⁵³ See also Mayer (1994: 261).

slavish herd (*seruum pecus*), suggesting a kind of unthinking animal quality. More strikingly, as result of their muddling (*tumultus*) they produce in their audience—in this case Horace—a mixed response: both anger (*bilem*) and laughter (*iocum*). The literary poseurs of the *Ars Poetica* are also, in a way, responsible for Horace’s bile (*Ars P.* 301–303).

It is, perhaps, permissible to suppose that these poets who drink in imitation of Horace belong to the same class as those who pretend to be mad, since both groups ape behaviour that they believe marks them as poets (even if they never produce any poetry). These imitators must also be among Horace’s readers who, the poet implies, fall into two classes: the “well-born” (*ingenui*), whose readership Horace delights in (*Epist.* 1.19.33–34), and those who enjoy his poems privately but pan them publicly (*ingratus opuscula lector | laudet ametque domi, premat extra limen iniquus*, *Epist.* 1.19.35–36). Mayer rightly notes that such duplicity connects this latter group with the *uir bonus* of *Epist.* 1.16.40–45 (discussed above).⁵⁴ Horace suggests this is because he does not court public favour (*Epist.* 1.19.37–38), a position consistent with that adopted at *Sat.* 1.4.21–23 and 71–74 and *Sat.* 1.10.37–39 (discussed in Chapter 1, section 1b). Nor does he defend other writers or seek the imprimatur of school teachers (*Epist.* 1.19.39–40). Horace then engages in an imagined dialogue with one of these readers: he says that he would be ashamed to recite his “unworthy scribblings” (*indigna scripta*) in the crowded theatres and suggests they are mere “trifles” (*nugis*) (*Epist.* 1.19.41–42); his interlocutor insinuates that not shame but arrogance on Horace’s part is at play, that he is saving his verses for “Jupiter,” i.e., Augustus, as if the honey of poetry (*poetica mella*) drips from him alone (*Epist.* 1.19.43–45). Horace has no good response:

... ad haec ego naribus uti
formido et, luctantis acuto ne secer ungui
“displicet iste locus” clamo et diludia posco. (*Epist.* 1.19.45–47)

⁵⁴ Mayer (1994: 266).

I am afraid to turn up my nose at this and, lest I be torn up by the sharp nail of the one I am fighting, I cry “This place is no good!” and demand an intermission.

The interlocutor has to this point gone unidentified. It may be one of the *grammatici*, but I suggest that the reference to the fingernail indicates that it is one of the *imitatores*.⁵⁵ The sort of poet who drinks for inspiration is also the sort of poet who would not go to the barber or cut his nails. Of course, if the date of the *Ars Poetica* is late (ca. 10 BCE), there can be no question that *acuto ungui* here constitutes a direct allusion to *Ars P.* 297–298.⁵⁶ It would not, however, prevent a reference the other way: Horace could be retrospectively providing an identity for *Epistle* 1.19 by means of the description in the *Ars Poetica*. If so, Horace is in fact exploiting a situation of his own making, since in *Epistle* 1.19 drunkenness among poets of today results from the presence of certain other poets in Bacchus’ entourage, and importantly those Bacchic poets—the models for all that follow—are *male sani*.⁵⁷ We can, therefore, draw a direct line between the behaviours in each poem.

Horace essentially asserts that writing poetry is a kind of madness. In his *Epistle to Augustus*, he suggests that a new fad has taken hold of Rome: writing poetry (*scribendi studio*, *Epist.* 2.1.109). This trend is an *error* and *insania* (*Epist.* 2.1.118), albeit a *levis* one since it does no truly great harm and even offers some benefits (*Epist.* 2.1.119–138).⁵⁸ Horace himself suffers from this *insania*:

⁵⁵ Mayer (1994: 266) notes the possibility.

⁵⁶ The date of the *Ars Poetica* is controversial. While a date around 10 BCE is generally accepted, the poem may belong to the same period as the first book of *Epistles*: see Rudd (1989: 19–21).

⁵⁷ Cf. *Epist.* 2.2.77–78, where the “chorus of poets” (*scriptorum chorus*) flees the city and follows Bacchus (*cliens Bacchi*).

⁵⁸ It is important to note that consistent with what Horace says in the *Ars Poetica*, this “madness” is not sufficient to produce *good* poetry: *ars* is required (*Epist.* 2.1.114–117).

ipse ego, qui nullos me adfirmo scribere uersus
inuenior Parthis mendacior, et prius orto
sole uigil calamum et chartas et scrinia posco. (*Epist.* 2.1.111–113)

I myself, who claim that I write no verses, I am proven more
mendacious than the Parthians, and before the sun has risen I am
awake and demanding pen and paper and bookholders.

Elsewhere he claims that he fell into the practice in order to recoup his lost estate after Philippi (*Epist.* 2.2.50–52). Now that he is comfortably off, however, he wonders “what doses of hemlock can ever sufficiently purge me of bile, if I should not think that sleep is better than writing verses?” (*quae poterunt umquam satis expurgare cicutae, | ni melius dormire putem quam scribere uersus?*, *Epist.* 2.2.53–54).

nimirum sapere est abiectis utile nugis
et tempestiuum pueris concedere ludum,
ac non uerba sequi fidibus modulanda Latinis,
sed uerae numerosque modosque ediscere uitae.
(*Epist.* 2.2.141–144)

Of course, it is beneficial to be wise when you have cast aside trifles
and to give up the sport age-appropriate for children, and not to
pursue words that are to be made to fit the Latin lyre, but to learn
thoroughly the rhythms and melodies of true life.

As a writer of poetry, therefore, Horace is afflicted by *insania*, even if he knows it and would prefer to be “sane.”⁵⁹

The presence of “not quite right” poets among Bacchus’ followers confirms their participation in the grotesque, for they are enrolled with the satyrs and fauns, grotesque figures *par excellence*.⁶⁰ Horace is himself one of those figures. That would explain his presence during the activities described in *Ode* 2.19—a poem the grotesqueness of which I have discussed in Chapter

⁵⁹ Cf. also *Epist.* 2.2.104–105, where he speaks of giving up his poetic ambitions and “recovering his senses” (*mente recepta*). The madness here is doubled, since the madness for writing poetry is compounded with the *furor* (*Epist.* 2.2.90) for excessive mutual appreciation.

⁶⁰ Mayer (1994: 259) notes one further “mixing”: that of Greek (satyrs) with Roman (fauns).

4, section 2. Indeed, in the very first *Ode*, Horace asserts that his poetic achievements put him in that company:

me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium
dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus
nympharumque leues cum Satyris chori
secernunt populo. (Carm. 1.1.29–32)

The ivy—prize of my learned brows—sets me among the gods
above, the cool grove and the light choruses of nymphs and satyrs
separate me from the people.

The language of mixing and separation is pointed: Horace transgresses the boundaries between human and divine. He confirms his position in the train of Bacchus at *Carm.* 3.25.18–20 (discussed in Chapter 4, section 3).⁶¹ This arguably adds further point to Horace’s focus on satyr drama in the *Ars Poetica*: his apparent expertise derives not from writing but from first-hand experience of the real thing! Horace’s status as a poet in Bacchus’ company suggests that he is *male sanus*, and as I have shown, when a poet is truly *insanus* he participates in the grotesque. And Horace wants the reader to remember his status as a lyric poet. The second half of *Epistle* 1.19 focuses squarely on Horace’s innovative achievements in iambic and lyric: how Horace was the first to adapt Archilochian rhythms and themes (if not the attacks on Lycambes) to Latin, just as “man-like” (*mascula*) Sappho and Alcaeus had adapted Archilochus’ meters to new matter (*Epist.* 1.19.23–31); how he as the “Latin lyricist” made Alcaeus well known, which no one had previously done (*Epist.* 1.19.32–34).⁶² Given Horace’s emphatic assertion of his status as *Latinus fidicen*, the reader is impelled to remember the similar boast from *Ode* 1.1 which in turn activates the other associations with Bacchus in the *Odes*. The lyric Horace, then, looks to be a grotesque figure.

⁶¹ See also Fraenkel (1957: 340).

⁶² See also *Epist.* 2.2.99–101, where a fellow poet hails Horace as “Alcaeus.”

If in *Epistle* 1.19 Horace gestures to his lyric grotesqueness through his connection to Bacchus, in the final poem of the collection, he repeats the gesture by recalling the grotesqueness of his transformation into a swan in *Ode* 2.20 (discussed in Chapter 4, section 2).⁶³ So, in *Epistle* 1.20 Horace addresses the book itself, warning it to beware of publication in terms reminiscent of sending a slave about to be sold in the city—possibly into prostitution.⁶⁴ He appends to the end of the poem a kind of *sphragis*, which begins “born of a freedman father and in slender circumstances I stretched forth wings greater than the nest” (*me libertino natum patre et in tenui re | maiores pennas nido extendisse, Epist.* 1.20.20–21).⁶⁵ Few have failed to see here a recollection of *Ode* 2.20.⁶⁶ I agree that the inclusion of wings, especially in the final (and twentieth) poem of the book, must remind the reader of that *Ode*. Specifically, the phrase *in tenui re maiores pennas* looks back to *nec tenui ferar penna* (*Carm.* 2.20.1–2), and the reminiscence brings with it the aesthetic implications of the poet’s transformation in the *Ode*. There are, however, certain differences. Whereas *Ode* 2.20 emphasizes Horace’s transcendence of the mortal world—of time, space, and death—in the *Epistle* he transcends only the circumstances of his birth, even if Horace claims that whatever he loses due to his lowly origins he gains back through his excellence (*ut quantum generi*

⁶³ It is perhaps worth noting that this twentieth and final poem in which the poet presents himself as a bird follows a nineteenth poem in which he touches on the relationship of poetry to Bacchus; the same sequence as found in the second book of the *Odes*.

⁶⁴ See Fraenkel (1957: 356–359); Harrison (1988: 473–474); Mayer (1994: 274), who notes that the book wants precisely what Horace claims to avoid.

⁶⁵ Fraenkel (1957: 362–363) argues that it cannot technically be a *sphragis* since it does not contain Horace’s name.

⁶⁶ E.g., Fraenkel (1957: 360); see also Harrison (1988: 474–475), who sees the reuse of the image as part of the *Epistle*’s “deflating” of the *Ode*, and thus of Horace’s lyric pretensions more generally; cf. Mayer (1994: 274–275), who argues that the difference of genre from *Odes* to *Epistles* explains the differences of tone, and that nothing in the *Epistle* alludes to his poetic activities outside this collection. Both Harrison and Mayer take for granted that the *Ode* 2.20 is necessarily elevated, but see my discussion above in Chapter 4, section 2.

demas uirtutibus addas, *Epist.* 1.20.22).⁶⁷ With characteristic Horatian irony, this is less of a boast than it may first seem. The assertion that his wings are too big for where he was born encourages the reader to reconsider his claim to have been born *in tenui re* in less financial and more literally physical terms.⁶⁸ After all, there is nothing inherently large about a bird's nest: "big" though they may have seemed in the nest, Horace ironically implies that his wings may not actually be that grand—not least because the poet elsewhere claims that as result of picking the wrong side at Philippi, they were "clipped" (*decisis pennis*, *Epist.* 2.2.50). The important point for this study is that Horace has wings and was born in a nest. He is, therefore, distinctly avian. Even if one were not to accept that recollection of *Ode* 2.20 necessarily imports the grotesque associations of the bird imagery found in that poem, the details here generate the grotesque on their own. The further details of Horace's (human) physicality are consistent with birdiness: *corporis exigui, praecanum* "of small body, prematurely white haired" (*Epist.* 1.20.24). It is worth noting that the swan of *Ode* 2.20 was also white (*album mutor in alitem*, *Carm.* 2.20.10). Unlike the *Ode*, however, Horace never actually states that he is a bird in *Epistle* 1.20. He rather leaves the image of himself somewhere between bird and human, participating in both categories at once. The poem thus acts as a brief *coda* confirming what is expressed in the preceding letter, namely, that the Horace of the *Epistles* and the Horace of the *Odes* are the same. And if the lyric Horace is grotesque, so too is the epistolic version.

Lyric Horace, epistolic Horace: individually they are both grotesque. Their combination is also grotesque. *Epistle* 1.19 constitutes epistolic Horace's defense of himself as a writer of lyric

⁶⁷ See also Harrison (1988: 476), who notes that the closing lines' emphasis on Horace's age contrasts with the claimed immortality (*non ... obibo*) of *Ode* 2.20.

⁶⁸ In *Ode* 2.20, the claim is explicitly financial: *ego pauperum* | *sanguis parentum* "I, scion of **poor** parents" (*Carm.* 2.20.5–6).

and iambic, thereby demonstrating his command of three separate genres. He does something similar in *Epist.* 2.2 when he notes that a fellow poet hails him as Alcaeus (*Epist.* 2.2.99), though he later despairs of writing lyric in the hustle and bustle of Rome: *fluctibus in mediis et tempestatibus urbis | uerba lyrae motura sonum conectere digner?* “In the midst of the waves and storms of the city am I to deign to weave words together that will stir the sound of the lyre?” (*Epist.* 2.2.85–86). As he points out in this same poem, however, these genres should not go together:

denique non omnes eadem mirantur amantque:
carmine tu gaudes, hic delectatur iambis,
ille Bioneis sermonibus et sale nigro. (*Epist.* 2.2.58–60)

In sum not everyone marvels at and loves the same things: you
rejoice in lyric poems, this guys delights in iambic poems, that guy
in the conversations and black wit of Bion.

These are the precisely the genres Horace works in. Of course, not everyone likes the same thing: if you were to invite three guests to dinner, they would all demand different dishes due to their distinct tastes (*poscentes uario multum diuersa palato*), and whatever you serve one will offend the other two (*Epist.* 2.2.61–64). This last point is key as it establishes that the same item can produce opposite aesthetic responses. Poetically speaking, Horace serves three different dishes. It follows, then, that the person who responds favourably to Horatian lyric may very well dislike his iambic poems or satires. One may even wonder what Florus’ response to this letter will be: he requested lyric poems, after all (*Epist.* 2.2.25). By possessing within himself three different genres, Horace also possesses the potential to provoke in any given reader a diverse, even contradictory, aesthetic response. In a very real sense, then, Horace is the grotesque poet.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have examined the work of the poet Horace. Specifically I have offered a reading of the *Ars Poetica* in which Horace both articulates and defends the grotesque as an aesthetic idea. One of the dominant themes of the *Ars Poetica* is that works of art which bring together utterly disparate or contradictory elements, but do not create from those elements a unity in the work, fail as art. Artistic unity is a *sine qua non* of artistic success. That fundamental principle has suggested to many of Horace's readers that the grotesque is necessarily an artistic failure in Horace's eyes. But this assumes that the grotesque can never be unified. In fact, the grotesque can *only* be unified. Horace demonstrates that if the thing in question cannot be perceived as *one* thing, it cannot be grotesque. The grotesque exists in a moment of aesthetic confusion prompted by an unresolvable tension between the parts of a work of art—parts that rationally, even instinctively, the viewer knows do not belong together and yet still sees as a unified whole. Horace further shows that when we meet such a work of art, we do not know whether to laugh or cry or tremble, and may in fact do all at once.

Horace does all this suggestively and obliquely by shading around the grotesque with examples. The grotesque, as I noted in my introduction, is notoriously difficult to define because definition requires us to draw clear lines, to establish distinct boundaries. The grotesque, however, has no clear lines and wilfully ignores boundaries. The grotesque resists rationalization: when we attempt to grasp the grotesque directly, it evanesces. I suggest that this makes Horace's approach to the grotesque apt. He does not confront it head on, despite the opening image of the *Ars Poetica*. Instead, he leaves it at the margins for his readers to perceive as they move through the poem. It is not by accident that the two most prominent "grotesque" set pieces of the *Ars Poetica*—the hybrid painting and the portrait of the *poeta insanus*—sit respectively at the poem's beginning without

any preamble and at its end without any envoi: they, and only they, frame the poem's argument. At the same time, the shock of the opening and closing images stimulates the reader into considering the applicability of the central argument to those images. It may be objected that this should not really be termed a "theory" of the grotesque—a clear, comprehensive statement of principle. Perhaps, but Horace is not really a theorist: he is a poet. And the *Ars Poetica*, as much as scholars may want it to be and have treated it as a versified rhetorical handbook, is nonetheless a poem. Poetic argumentation proceeds by suggestion and associative juxtaposition. It is on those terms—Horace's own—that we must appreciate his theory. And in appreciating his theory, we gain a valuable missing link in the history of the grotesque specifically and aesthetics more generally.

There is a second factor external to the *Ars Poetica* that demonstrates the problem with treating that poem as somehow a rejection of the grotesque: the presence of the grotesque in Horace's other poetry. That is the focus of Chapters 2 through 5 of this dissertation. As I just stated, we should treat Horace on his own terms, so I surveyed Horace's works to explore how the poet put the concept of the grotesque distilled from the *Ars Poetica* to use. The one omission from that survey was the *Carmen Saeculare*. It is worth reiterating that the circumstances of that poem's composition and performance as part of the *Ludi Saeculares* of 17 BCE preclude a place for the grotesque. The poem, like the games themselves, celebrates the new Augustan order and calls on the gods to confirm and maintain that order. The introduction of the grotesque with its inherent chaos would undermine that sense of order. The hint of fear or dismay that runs through the grotesque would puncture the bubble of jubilation the poem and the games seek to create.

The grotesque is truly at home in Horace's *Satires*. The poet himself stresses satire's own nature as a blend of tone and subject matter intermixing the serious and the trivial. The satiric

persona seeks to remedy the ills of society, to find the undesirable elements and exclude them. To do so, however, it must name and describe those undesirable elements. Satire, then, presumes a certain level of disorder, and Horace applies the grotesque to his satiric targets, including himself. Their various ethical or behavioural quirks manifest poetically as the confusion of categories such as animal and human, male and female, alive and inanimate. The same is true of the later *Epistles* where Horace makes particular use of the beast-fable as a device to generate the grotesque: the habits and characteristics of the animals are so closely analogized with those of Horace's human addressees and subjects that human and beast become indistinguishable. Although the *Epistles* are each addressed to individuals, the ethical guidance they offer is more generalized. As a result Horace reveals the grotesqueness of humanity itself and shows that while we may no longer creep dumbly along the ground (*Sat.* 1.3.99–100), we are not much different.

Because the grotesque is a complex aesthetic consisting of both the comic and the frightening or disgusting, Horace can and does adjust the ratio of each. The *Satires* tend more heavily towards the comic. In the *Epodes*, on the other hand, Horace leans into the negative aspects of the grotesque. In some cases this is determined by genre. Horace labels his *Epodes* as iambic poetry. At the end of the first century BCE this would have generated a generic expectation of aggression, especially sexual aggression such as seen in *Epodes* 8 and 12. Like the *Satires*, certain *Epodes* attack individuals, but they lack the remedial impulse of the hexameter poems. Horace accordingly plays up the element of disgust as he dehumanizes these targets (again, himself included). In other cases, this increased negative element is determined by the compositional date of the poems. Composed between the battle of Philippi (at which Horace was on the wrong side) and the aftermath of the battle of Actium, the poems belong to a period of tension and upheaval as

the comity between Octavian and Antony dissolves. The disorder of the world is reflected in the disorder of the grotesque. There are still glimmers of light, moments of levity, but anxiety reigns.

The *Satires* and the *Epodes* reflect a world still in flux, still processing the threat of civil war. The *Odes* and *Epistles*, however, are composed during a period of consolidation. There is no question that after Actium and the death of Antony, Octavian was left supreme in the Roman world. But that supremacy necessitated a process of negotiation in which the forms, if not the reality, of the new power structure were to be settled. Books 1–3 of the *Odes* are composed during that process, and as a close associate—even friend—of Maecenas, Horace was near the action. A certain level of uncertainty and anxiety will have remained during this period, and this comes out in grotesque moments of the *Odes*, not least when Horace contemplates the horror of the civil wars still fresh in his and everyone’s memory. Yet just as in the *Epodes* there was both a private, individual grotesque and an outward, societal grotesque, so too in the *Odes*, including the later fourth book, is there also a more private application of the grotesque. This manifests particularly in two forms: Horace’s depiction of love(rs) and his depiction of himself, principally as a poet. Indeed, these are often related inasmuch as “Horace the lyric poet” is also “Horace the (reluctant) lover.” Lovers in the *Odes* are grotesque figures: sources simultaneously of delight and apprehension, bestial and human all at once. Horace strongly suggests that this state of affairs is the work of the goddess herself: Venus, smiling and cruel. Love makes us grotesque.

It should not perhaps surprise us that Horace subjects himself and other poets to grotesque treatment. After all, it is a poet who ultimately embodies the grotesque in the *Ars Poetica*. That poet is mad, and the association of madness and poetry appears elsewhere in the *Epistles*, where mad poets are also part of the train of Bacchus—a train that includes hybrid satyrs and fauns, simultaneously animal, human, and divine. These categories collapse into the figure of Bacchus

himself, the god who both delights and terrifies, the god of tragedy and comedy and—perhaps most tellingly—satyr drama. Bacchus’ inherent grotesqueness fits his role as a source of poetic inspiration: he is the divine embodiment of the *callida iunctura*. His presence connects the *Epistles* and the *Odes*. Horace confirms the connection when in the *Epistles* he proclaims himself the first iambographer in Latium and the *Latinus fidicen* (*Epist.* 1.19.23–24 and 32–33). Horace thus elides the distance between his lyric and epistolic selves, and this elision is emblemized in avian imagery as the Horace of the *Odes* and the Horace of the *Epistles* both transform into birds. This is a metapoetic gesture: Horace’s own grotesqueness represents his ability to move between genres and unite in his own person the disparate qualities each requires.

Such is Horace’s grotesque, which manifests necessarily in a multiplicity of forms. As I noted in my introduction, Horace in one respect is unique: he offers both an extended meditation on aesthetic principles in his *Ars Poetica* and a substantial corpus which we can then examine in light of those principles in a similar way to how, for example, we can consult the rhetorical treatises of Cicero for insights into how the great orator constructs his speeches. It is precisely that method which this study has carried out for the grotesque. Horace’s work, of course, does not exist in a vacuum. The next step in the investigation of the grotesque as an aesthetic concept in antiquity is to broaden the field of inquiry and to contextualize Horace in both the aesthetic and intellectual milieu of his day and in a tradition of the grotesque. Horace’s poetry presents a man engaged (willingly or otherwise) with the world around him. That world includes other poets, some of whom he respects and admires, some of whom he does not. It also includes those who might more obviously be called “theorists,” those who write about art and literature—from the nuts and bolts of word forms to the proper features of different styles—in a more systematic, or at least prosaic, way. Moreover, although this feature of his work has not been a focus of my study, Horace is an

extraordinarily allusive poet. He engages constantly and productively with the works of his Greek and Roman predecessors and his contemporaries and with non-poetic material. Given this quality in his work, it would be unwise to assume that Horace's aesthetic preferences and ideas are entirely *sui generis*—that they neither reflect nor are reflected in the works of others. Ancient philosophical works and rhetorical treatises are routinely mined for insights into antique views on the Beautiful, and although these authors are less explicit about Beauty's opposite(s), I believe it is possible to discern their ideas about the grotesque.

Other poets do not provide us with such an opportunity. But that does not mean that they have nothing to say about their aesthetic preferences or ideas. Instead of outlining their poetic and aesthetic principles systematically in a treatise, the poets of the late Republic and early Empire reveal their preferences poetically: like Horace, they show rather than tell, just not in the same sustained manner as the *Ars Poetica*. This, perhaps, leaves these principles at the mercy of critical interpretation, but they are still there. This is most apparent in the well-documented adherence of these poets to certain ideas derived especially from the work of Callimachus, and I touched on Horace's own observance of these ideas in Chapter 1. The poets can concretize their aesthetic principles by presenting characters in their poetry in the act of perceiving and responding. One such technique is ecphrasis since as Michael Putnam has observed, in the case of ecphrasis “we attend not only to the work of art but to its maker and manufacturing, as well as to its role as something whose essence is absorbed visually.”¹ Simon Goldhill has emphasised how ecphrasis in the Hellenistic period participates in the development of a broader culture and discourse of viewing through the “self-conscious and self-reflexive dramatisation of viewing.”² Furthermore,

¹ Putnam (1998: 2).

² Goldhill (1994: 204–205).

the viewer interprets and makes judgements, whether implicit or explicit, about the aesthetic value (as well as other normative values) of what he or she sees, employing the burgeoning lexicon of art criticism.³ It should be noted that in addition to the internal viewer's judgment, the poet can provide his own whether as supplement or correction. Horace does a version of this at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*, even if that painting is never fully realized. But the principle can be applied more broadly than merely to representations of visual art. Where a poet depicts for the reader both an object (not limited to a work of visual art but including a poetic performance or even natural object) *and* a response to that object, it is possible to derive from that moment an aesthetic principle. How would this apply to the grotesque? Using Horace's version of the grotesque as a baseline, we can look for moments where categorical boundaries are blurred and disparate elements become fused together in a unified whole to see what, if any, aesthetic response is suggested by a text. This is not the same as identifying all those passages that may or may not be grotesque according to any individual reader. By looking for *both* the formal elements *and* the aesthetic response it is possible to identify and interpret passages where a poet seems to be sketching an outline of what the grotesque is.

Reading these texts alongside the rhetorical and philosophical works, we can thus attempt to trace a tradition back from Horace through Latin Literature to its Hellenistic and Classical Greek predecessors all the way to Homer. We may also move forwards through Neronian and Flavian literature into the middle ages until we meet the “modern” grotesque in the middle—that is, in the Renaissance. And so we set out in search of the ancient grotesque.

³ Goldhill (1994: 205–207); on the use of the technical terminology of art criticism in Hellenistic poetry, see also Zanker (2006: 371).

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