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Horatian *recusatio* in the Shadow of Virgil

Abstract The trope of *recusatio* by its very nature invites readers to take a second look not only at intergeneric but also at a wide range of intertextual relations involving both Greek and Latin literature. After examining definitions and functions of *recusatio* the paper discusses the last instance of Horatian lyric *recusatio, Odes* 4, 15, the *sphragis* of the collection. Crucial interrelated issues are the distinction between epic poetry and lyric encomium as well as the evolution of the lyric poet's task from *Odes* 1, 6, Horace's programmatic lyric *recusatio.* The paper argues that the shadow of Virgil looms large over *Odes* 4, 15, but not in the broad sense of much discussed Virgilian reminiscences in the poem and the fourth book of Horace's *Odes.* It specifically contends that *Odes* 4, 15 sums up the Virgilian Progression, from the *Eclogues* to the *Georgics,* and eventually to the *Aeneid,* and furthermore explores Horace's innovative reuse of *Eclogue* 6 in shaping the structure of his last lyric poem.

1. Introduction

i. Definitions and functions of *recusatio*

According to the conventional definition, the Latin literary trope of *recusatio* in its fully developed, Augustan form consists in refusal by a pastoral, lyric, elegiac, satiric poet or writer of verse epistles to compose an epic requested by the *princeps,* a person of his circle or the poet's patron. The epic in question would be expected to provide an encomiastic narrative of the military exploits of the addressee; but the pastoral, lyric, elegiac, satiric poet or writer of verse epistles would reject the idea, because he professes to abhor warfare or because he does not feel capable of doing it or because the topic is grand

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or because an epic would be too long for his taste or for a combination of some of these reasons; he would opt instead for his own 'slender genre', one that is brief and especially unwarlike and of private character[1].

In 1991 Gregson Davis re-defined *recusatio* as 'generic disavowal'. He proposed a radical revision of the standard understanding of *recusatio* by inserting it in the rhetorical 'mode of assimilation', a device by which the speaker disingenuously seeks to *include* material and styles that he ostensibly *precludes.* Davis specifically argued that "an ancillary objective of many proclaimed 'refusals' is not to *exclude,* but, paradoxically, the opposite, to *include* generically disparate material while protesting vigorously against it"[2]. His argument added a valuable aspect to our conception of *recusatio,* one that the reader is obliged to take into consideration when approaching this trope. My only objection would be that he probably overstated the dimension of 'assimilation', in the sense that this notion should not ultimately lead to the elimination of any distinction between the *genus tenue* and *genus grande.* I think that Stephen Harrison offered a more balanced approach in this respect. He called this metageneric process 'generic enrichment', whereby the minor genre is 'enriched' (even if ironically) by features of the grand genre[3].

The conventional definition of *recusatio* and its modifications given above are complementary and testify to the variety and subtlety of its meaning and function without exhausting the subject. It will become clear below that the trope of *recusatio,* no matter how it is understood, invites readers by its very nature to take a second look not only at intergeneric but also at a wide range of intertextual relations involving both Greek and Latin literature. Before

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1 The basic account of *recusatio* in the poetry of the Augustan Age, with an appendix on Persius and Statius, remains Wimmel 1960; see further White 1993. For the Flavian Age see Nauta 2006. The term *recusatio* was introduced in 1900 by the German philologist Hans Lucas; on its further history see Nauta 2006, 21–22. Lucas defined *recusatio* as follows: "Die der Recusatio zu Grunde liegende Idee ist der Ausdruck grosser Bescheidenheit, das Eingeständnis der Unzulänglichkeit des dichterischen Vermögens. Wenn eine höher stehende Persönlichkeit, namentlich eine solche von Urteil, den Wunsch ausspricht, ein bestimmtes Gedicht zu erhalten, so antwortet der Poet: 'Was du verlangst, bin ich ausser stande zu leisten'. Da er aber doch etwas giebt, so kann man, wenn man will, weiter den Gedanken substituieren: 'Nimm aber dafür hier, was in meinen Kräften stand.'" (Lucas 1900, 321).

2 Davis 1991, 28. 'Generic disavowal' is a much broader term housing strategies which are not as a rule associated with *recusatio.*

3 Harrison 2007. The political interpretation of *recusatio* proposed by Freudenburg 2014 lies outside the scope of the present study.

I proceed, I would like to make four points clarifying my own view on the subject of *recusatio:*

a. Definition by generic contrast. In principle the poet uses the refusal to write epic as a *contrasting device* for defining his own domain. This would be a kind of 'definition by the direct opposite', and specifically of 'definition by generic contrast'. As a matter fact, this was the function of the trope in its original, Callimachean form (*Aetia* prologue 1, 1, 1–6), whatever name one may choose to give it:

> Often the Telchines mutter against me, against my poetry,
> who, ignorant of the Muse, were not born as her friend,
> *because I did not complete one single continuous song*
> (on the glory of?) *kings … in many thousand lines*
> *or on … heroes,* but turn around words a little in my mind
> like a child, although the decades of my years are not few[4].

When transferred to Rome, the trope was adapted to the Augustan cultural context, assuming the form best known from lines 3–8 of Virgil's 6th *Eclogue,* the earliest surviving clear instance of *recusatio:*

> cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
> uellit et admonuit: 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
> pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen.'
> nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt qui dicere laudes,
> Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella)
> agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam:
>
> When I was singing of kings and battles, Cynthius
> plucked my ear and admonished me. "Tityrus,
> a shepherd should pasture fat sheep but a slender song."
> Now will I (for there will be those, Varus, who long
> to sing your praises and celebrate your grim wars)
> practice songs of a country Muse with delicate reed[5].

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4 Translation by Harder 2012, 115–116.

5 Text by Mynors 1972; translation by Fowler 1997. In Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue the Lykian Apollo had instructed the poet, while still a child, to prefer 'slender' poetic forms *(Μοῦσαν λεπταλέην):* Kall. fr. 1, 1, 23–24: "… poet, feed the sacrificial animal so that it becomes as fat / as possible, but, my dear fellow, keep the Muse

In Alexandria a poem about 'kings and heroes' would probably have been a long mythological epic in the Homeric tradition. Virgil replaced 'kings and heroes' with 'kings and battles' and the mythological with a historical epic. Apollo stops Tityrus [Virgil] from writing an epos that would praise the military exploits of Alfenus Varus[6]; obeying the god he politely refuses to do so, expressing distaste for the grim bellicose theme *(tristia bella);* and announces that he will instead pursue his own pastoral program that is prominently mythological: the song of Silenus, an investigation into the origins of the bucolic landscape and a construction of bucolic mythology.

b. Callimachean poetics in Rome. Alan Cameron pointed out that "in its original form the *Aetia* prologue is not in itself a *recusatio* at all".[7] He went on to list four major differences between the Virgilian 'imitation' and the Callimachean 'model': (a) Apollo addresses the poet after he had begun writing about *reges et proelia* while in Callimachus the poet "is just sitting there with an empty tablet on his knees"; (b) Virgil replaced 'kings and heroes' with 'kings and wars' and mentions *tristia bella;* (c) unlike Callimachus, Virgil directly addresses the author of the deeds he is refusing to celebrate, thus complicating his refusal and creating a need for delicacy and tact rather than polemic; and (d) while declining to write a particular epic, Virgil does not denounce epic in and for itself (there is no more than a hint in Virgil of Callimachus' polemic) nor does he extol the virtues of his own alternative. Cameron added that "The *recusationes* of the other Augustans go further still, often implying or even proclaiming the superiority of epic to their own humble efforts".

Based on these observations Cameron went on to question the Callimachean inspiration of the Virgilian *recusatio:* "Why then adapt so much of the *Aetia* prologue and yet drop what no reader can fail to identify as its central feature?", he argued. He therefore proceeded to suggest that the basic form of *recusatio* is post-Callimachean, quoting passages from the bucolic

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slender" (Harder 2012, 112). In rendering Callimachus' *Μοῦσα λεπταλέη,* Virgil used analogous Latin expressions: *deductum carmen* and *tenui harundine.*

6 On the identification with Alfenus Varus and the implications of the reference to him see Cucchiarelli 2023, 298 f. His military activities are not otherwise known.

7 On Cameron's views presented here and in the following sentences see Cameron 1995, 454–487.

poet Bion of Smyrna, fr. 9, 8–11[8] and *Anacreontea* 23[9]. He offered no evidence, however, that these presumed precedents had influenced the Augustan *recusatio* and hence his theory met with limited approval

Cameron failed to recognize and take into consideration an obvious aspect of the question, the transformation which Callimachean poetics underwent in Roman poetry. In 1975 David Ross, commenting on the Callimachean *recusatio* at the end of Horace's *Odes* 3, 3, had criticized scholars who took it "at face value" believing that "Horace excuses himself for his intrusion into subjects not appropriate to his chosen genre". Ross proceeded to correct as follows the dominant understanding of *recusatio:*

> But the primary purpose of the *recusatio* was very different – a positive statement, not a negative (and basically rather empty) excuse: the poet, when first turning to themes that appear to violate Callimachean poetics, must make it clear that he does so still in the tradition and with the voice of that summary exemplar. […].

And proceeded to outline the evolution of *recusatio* in Rome:

> Each generation of Latin poets, from Catullus and the neoterics on through Virgil and Gallus, through (the later) Virgil and Horace, through Ovid, and on even through the Silver poets until Statius, was to create a different image of Callimachus according to the needs of their own verse, an image which often has little resemblance to the original[10].

Ross' argument applies not only to *recusatio* but in general to the Roman fortunes of Callimachean poetics. Let me add in this respect a most striking example, Lucretius' *De rerum natura.* In *DRN* 4, 1–5 the poet claims absolute novelty in Callimachean terms for themes and pursuits – the grand subject-matter *(magnis doceo de rebus),* the passionate dedication to the task, and the ambitious mission of his teaching aiming at the liberation of man's mind from religion – which however are prominently non-Callimachean[11].

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8 Bion fr. 9, 8–11 Reed: *"ἢν μὲν γὰρ βροτὸν ἄλλον ἢ ἀθανάτων τινὰ μέλπω, / βαμβαίνει μοι γλῶσσα καὶ ὡς πάρος οὐκέτ' ἀείδει· / ἢν δ' αὖτ' ἐς τὸν Ἔρωτα καὶ ἐς Λυκίδαν τι μελίσδω, / καὶ τόκα μοι χαίροισα διὰ στόματος ῥέει ᾠδά."*

9 *Anacreontea* 23 West: *"Θέλω λέγειν Ἀτρείδας, / θέλω δὲ Κάδμον ἄιδειν / ὁ βάρβιτος δὲ χορδαῖς / ἔρωτα μοῦνον ἠχεῖ. […]. / χαίροιτε λοιπὸν ἡμῖν, / ἥρωες· ἡ λύρη γάρ / μόνους ἔρωτας ἄιδει".*

10 Ross 1975, 142–143.

11 Paschalis 2024, 13–16.

c. Lyric poetry and grand themes. Though in the *recusationes* lyric poetry was defined in contrast to epic, it did not exclude grand themes of all kinds, provided they kept within an accepted length. This had been the case at least since Pindar's *epinicians*. In Hellenistic poetry Theocritus' 'slender' *Idylls* are not incompatible, for instance, with the encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus (*Idyll* 17). This is true also of Latin lyric poetry, which not infrequently accommodates historical and political poems and encomia of the ruler.

d. The importance of Latin intertexts. Comparison with and contrast to the Callimachean model has put the focus of *recusatio* on Greek intertexts, sometimes distracting attention from Latin ones. The evolution of *recusatio* in Latin poetry, however, seems to have been conditioned more by Latin precedents, both intertextual and intratextual (poems written by the same poet) than by the Callimachean archetype. In several cases the latter does not affect the context at all, and the reader has to be reminded of its existence. Latin precedents may influence not only formal aspects of *recusatio* but also generic, programmatic, thematic, and ideological aspects. In substance, therefore, Latin intertexts turn out to be far more important than Hellenistic ones.

ii. Roman historical epic and Roman history

As noted above, starting with Virgil's *Eclogue* 6 the epic requested of the poet is historical. This feature calls for a brief survey of historical epic in Rome[12] and some clarifications. Roman Republican epic, typical specimens of which are Gnaeus Naevius' *Bellum Poenicum* on the First Punic War and Quintus Ennius' *Annales* on the Second Punic War, remained historical throughout. It kept pace with Rome's external wars and used mythical and legendary material to bridge contemporary events with the claimed Trojan origins and the early years of Rome, in a linear, chronological fashion. Despite significant developments in the Late Republic – such as the translation of Apollonius' *Argonautica* by Varro of Atax and the appearance of the Neoteric mythological *epyllion* as well as Lucretius' philosophical-didactic *De rerum natura* – historical epic continued its course into the Augustan Age, with such works

12 On Roman historical epic see Häußler 1976; Goldberg 1995; on both mythological and historical epic see Burck 1979; Boyle 1993; von Albrecht 1999; on minor epic poets of the Augustan Age see Rocca 1989.

as *Bellum Siculum* by Cornelius Severus, the anonymous *Carmen de bello Actiaco,* and others.

Precisely in the Augustan Age the composition of the *Aeneid* brought about a major change in the form of Roman epic. In Virgil's epic the mythical origins of Rome (the story of Trojan Aeneas) became the main narrative. Roman history was incorporated in it mainly in the form of narratives and descriptions inserted in the mythical plot (Jupiter's prophecy in book 1; the parade of heroes in book 6; the *ekphrasis* of Aeneas' shield in book 8) as well as through subtle allusions to historical characters and events embedded in the mythical text, which would have been meaningful to Virgil's learned audience and readers. The paradigm shift enabled the poet on the one hand to exploit the flexibility and inexhaustible potential of mythological narrative and its intertexts (especially Homer and Apollonius) and on the other hand to blend history with myth in a vital way, considering that Trojan Aeneas was regarded as the founding father of Rome as well as the ancestor of the ruling *gens Iulia.*

Historical epic did not, however, disappear from the scene during the writing and after the appearance of the *Aeneid.* In addition to the composition of historical epics like the ones mentioned above, historical epic led a latent life in the form of unfulfilled expectations resulting from 'requested and rejected verse', to modify the title of Peter White's book 'Promised Verse'[13]. There are three notable paradoxes here: first, discussion about epic in the Augustan Age concerns not so much what is being written but the epic that will not be written; second, the poets who bring up the subject of writing epic are those who refuse to write it; and third, references to epic do not concern the 'modern', mixed type introduced by the *Aeneid* but the traditional historical (or mythological) epic.

Refusal to write a historical epic should not, however, cause us to overlook the constant presence in Roman literature of its subject matter, Roman history. Horace did not yield to the requests of writing a historical epic but engagement with Roman history is nonetheless a prominent feature of his lyric poetry. This is true both of historical themes inserted in poems treating private topics as well as of poems entirely devoted to historical events and characters. This is something to be taken into consideration when passing judgment on poems praising Octavian-Augustus. Horace was not an Alexandrian but a Roman citizen, one who possessed and displayed a national historical consciousness and a sense of collective identity that were not in principle shaped with an eye to the principate and imperial favor and did not

13 White 1993.

exist for the sole purpose of serving it. Roman historical consciousness pervades classical Latin literature and from this viewpoint the 'typical Romans' of the Augustan Age are Virgil and Horace, not the elegists who resisted (or pretended to resist) the intrusion of history into their private sphere. Let me give two examples from Latin literature, one concerning prose (historiography) and another poetry, both relevant to what I will argue below.

a. Roman decline. In order to appreciate properly Augustan reforms and Augustan literature which promote the 'return' to Rome's idealized past in what constitutes a cyclical historical course, it is necessary to take into consideration the concept of 'decline'. This schematized view of Roman history haunted the Roman mind from the period of the Republic to the end of the Early Empire, whether it was the political and moral disintegration of the Roman society (Republic) or the loss of the Republic and the concomitant *libertas* (Empire). Charles Fornara has classically summarized this obsessive thinking in the field of Roman historiography with reference to Roman historians:

> We observe, therefore, a tradition of historical writing lasting for more than two hundred years, whose uniform theme is treated by individuals involved with, and suffering from, the very conditions they attempt to describe and analyse[14].

b. History in Virgil's *Eclogues*. Virgil's refusal to write a historical epic on Alfenus Varus' exploits does not mean that the perspective of the *Eclogues* is ahistorical. On the contrary, the invasion of history into the field of bucolic poetry occupies a programmatic position in the collection. Specifically, *Eclogue* 1 alludes to the land confiscations near Cremona and Mantua in 40 BC, during which many farmers were displaced to make way for veteran soldiers. In this *Eclogue* Tityrus loses his farm but retrieves it by taking a trip to Rome and obtaining the favor of a godlike ruler. Dispossessed Meliboeus goes into exile as his land has passed into the hands of a *barbarus* and *impius miles* who will from now on enjoy its crops and fruits. Thus, Virgil's bucolic world, as opposed to Theocritus', is disrupted by outside forces at the very moment of its institution. One aspect of Virgil's achievement in *Eclogue* 1, which proved to be the most influential, lies precisely in the fact that he invested in the

14 Fornara 1983, 68. On the question of moral and political decline in Rome see for instance Earl 1967; Lintott 1972; Koestermann 1973; Levick 1982; and see further Heldmann 1982 on the decline of rhetoric.

conflict of opposite fortunes and dissenting pastoral voices inspired by recent Roman historical events.

iii. The fourth book of Horace's *Odes*

According to the commonly accepted date, the fourth book of Horace's *Odes* was published in 13 BC[15]. Suetonius tells us that the work was commissioned by Augustus himself who also ordered the composition of the *Carmen Saeculare* and the poems celebrating the victories of his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus[16]. In *Odes* 4 Horace addresses the *princeps* directly on more than one occasion and the book comes much closer to panegyric than *Odes* 1–3 that had appeared ten years earlier. Six poems out of fifteen (4, 2. 4–6. 14. 15) concern, directly or indirectly, Augustus and his house.

I have chosen to discuss the last instance of Horatian lyric *recusatio, Odes* 4, 15, the *sphragis* of the collection. Crucial interrelated issues are the distinction between epic poetry and lyric encomium outlined above as well as the evolution of the lyric poet's task from *Odes* 1, 6, Horace's programmatic lyric *recusatio.* I will argue that the shadow of Virgil looms large over *Odes* 4, 15, but not in the broad sense of much discussed Virgilian reminiscences in the poem and the fourth book of Horace's *Odes.* I will specifically contend that *Odes* 4, 15 sums up the Virgilian Progression, from the *Eclogues* to the *Georgics,* and eventually to the *Aeneid,* and will furthermore explore Horace's innovative reuse of *Eclogue* 6 in shaping the structure of his last lyric poem.

2. Horace, *Odes* 4, 15 and Virgil, *Eclogues* 6

i. The Virgilian frame of *Odes* 4, 15

In *Odes* 4, 15 Apollo stops the lyric poet from narrating [Augustus'] military campaigns (1–4):

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15 See Fedeli 2008, 13–16 and Thomas 2011, 21–22 in detail; cf. also Putnam 1986, 23; Johnson 2004, XIII.

16 Suetonius, *Vita Horati,* 55: *Scripta quidem eius usque adeo probavit mansuraque perpetuo opinatus est, ut non modo Saeculare carmen componendum iniunxerit sed et Vindelicam victoriam Tiberii Drusique, privignorum suorum, eumque coegerit propter hoc tribus Carminum libris ex longo intervallo quartum addere.*

> Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui
> victas et urbis increpuit lyra,
> ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor
> vela darem.
>
> When I wanted to sing of battles and the conquest of cities, Phoebus banged on the lyre, to prevent me from setting sail in my tiny craft across the Etruscan Sea[17].

Apollo's injunction to the poet not to sing of 'battles and conquered cities' recalls the god's analogous command in Virgil's 6th *Eclogue*[18]. The overall structure of the present *recusatio,* which in addition is not found in none of Horace's earlier *Odes*[19], reinforces the initial impression. Its format is brief, compact, and analogous to Virgil's. In *Eclogue* 6 Virgil was singing of *reges et proelia;* Horace wanted to sing of *proelia* […] *victas et urbis,* both poems alluding to Roman historical epics. Also, in both cases Apollo intervenes and issues a warning to the poet by making a particular disapproving gesture (*aurem vellit; increpuit lyra*[20]). In Horace the god commands the poet not to write an epic using a metaphor contrasting 'small' to 'wide', analogous to the Virgilian contrast between 'slender' and 'fat'.

Regardless of any other influences, the *thrust* of the last Horatian lyric *recusatio* points back to the prototype of Augustan *recusatio,* Virgil's 6th *Eclogue*[21]. By adopting the path-breaking bucolic *recusatio* model intro-

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17 The text and translation of Horace's *Odes* is by Rudd 2004.

18 For well-informed introductions to the present *recusatio* see Wimmel 1960, 271–276; Fedeli 2008, 604–609; Thomas 2011, 360–363.

19 Cf. Johnson 2004, 205: "This is Horace's most precise reference to the Callimachean *dictum* and its advocacy of the compressed poetic style. Nowhere else in Horatian poetry does Apollo intervene and tell the poet to change his song".

20 Fedeli 2008, 609 corrects as follows those who construe *lyra* not with *increpuit* but with *loqui* (in the sense of *lyrico carmine,* following Ps-Acro; see Thomas 2011, 362 f.): "Orazio, dunque, per un chiaro intento di *brevitas* ha condensato in un'unica immagine due azioni ('*lyra* prius tacta, *increpuit.* docta brevitate pro 'obiurgavit', 'admonuit me', *ne*')".

21 Scholars are divided concerning Virgilian and Propertian influence on the present *recusatio.* Johnson 2004, 205 f. discusses only Virgilian influence. Wimmel 1960 ascribes the main influence to Virgil (272: "Eingang der letzten Ode ist eine Apoll-Warner-Szene im Sinn von Ecl. 6") and assigns to Propertius only the water metaphor. Fedeli 2008, 67 detects Virgilian influence only in *proelia* […] *victas et urbis* and assigns the principal influence to Propertius ("a Properzio [rinvia] sia la reazione di Apollo con la lira […] sia il ricorso alla metafora della navigazione"),

duced by his friend Virgil some twenty-five years before, Horace intended to impress upon his learned audience and readers the idea that he is *Virgil's successor* as a lyric poet. In so doing he logically expected them to spot his own innovations, originality in emulation being the goal of all poetic imitation. I will next proceed to argue that the comparative reading of *Odes* 4, 15 and *Eclogue* 6 has wider implications for the interpretation of the former.

Horace's learned audience and readers would have known that the Virgilian Apollo had not only commanded the poet to avoid "kings and battles" but had also instructed him "to sing a 'slender' song" *(deductum dicere carmen).* They would have seen that in Horace's version there is no explicit divine direction concerning a "slender" genre: Apollo only reminds the poet of his limited skills *(parva* [...] *vela)* vis-à-vis the grandness of epic *(Tyrrhenum per aequor)*[22]. Most importantly, while in *Eclogue* 6 Virgil announces his pastoral program immediately after Apollo's command (6, 8 *agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam*), Horace defers the announcement of his own lyric program until the end of the poem. In the concluding stanzas of *Odes* 4, 15 he replaces Virgil's private lyric voice with a public, communal and patriotic voice singing of Roman heroes, the mythical origins of Rome and (implicitly) the house of Augustus:

nosque et profestis lucibus et sacris
inter iocosi munera Liberi
  cum prole matronisque nostris,
    rite deos prius apprecati,

virtute functos more patrum duces
Lydis remixto carmine tibiis
  Troiamque et Anchisen et almae
    progeniem Veneris canemus.

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following Putnam 1986, 265–271 (266: "it is the influence of Propertius that is most strongly felt in the opening lines of *Ode* 15). As regards the water metaphor, Thomas detects the combined influence of Verg. georg. 2, 41–45 and Prop. 3, 3, 23f.; but Syndikus 1973, 2, 403 correctly observes that "Die Schiffs- und Meeresmetapher der nächsten Verse für Dichter und Dichtung war geläufig", beginning, quite significantly, with Pind. N. 5, 51.

22 Cf. Putnam 1986, 270: "What follows in ode 15 is one of the most brilliant ellipses in this highly elliptical poet. The reader, schooled in poetic tradition from Callimachus to Propertius, expects an epiphany of the reproving god".

> As for ourselves, on working days and holidays, surrounded by the merry God of Freedom's gifts, along with our wives and children, we shall first offer due prayers to the gods; then in song accompanied by Lydian pipes we shall sing in our fathers' fashion of leaders who lived their lives like true men, of Troy and Anchises and the offspring of kindly Venus.

Odes 4, 15 is concluded with an image 'recreating' the real or invented *carmina convivalia*[23] and marking a 'return' to the legendary collective celebration of the deeds of famous men: men gathered in symposia together with their wives and children, the poet among them, will sing *(canemus)* of Troy, Anchises (Aeneas' father) and the son of Venus (Aeneas). Rome's Trojan origins and Augustus, the most glorious descendant of the *gens Iulia,* had recently been celebrated by Virgil in his *Aeneid.* As commonly noted, only four years before Horace himself in the *Carmen Saeculare* had designated Augustus as *clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis* (50). No ancient, learned audience and readers would have missed the allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid* in both cases.

Thus, the communal song of *Odes* 4, 15 could be viewed as a *lyric distillation* of Virgil's epic[24]. Contrary to Virgil, however, whose epic encompasses, in the form of embedded narratives and descriptions, the entire course of Roman history, Horace identifies Roman history vaguely with Roman heroes *(virtute* […] *functos viros)* and its mythical Trojan origins solely with the offspring of Venus and Anchises, Aeneas and his descendant Augustus. Virgil had inserted the encomia of great Romans to be born in the mythical texture of the narrative (book 6); Horace seems to have re-read the *Aeneid* in the tradition of Republican epic. What I mean is that he lists in a linear fashion, though in reverse chronological order, first events of Roman history *(virtute functos* […] *duces)* and then the Trojan origins of Rome. Of course, a

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23 As reported by Cicero (Tusc. 4, 3), the elder Cato in his *Origines* had recorded the custom of ancient times to celebrate the deeds of famous men in song at banquets: *"in Originibus dixit Cato morem apud maiores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent canerent ad tibiam* [1, 3 *ad tibicinem*] *clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes";* also, Cic. Brut. 75; for further sources and discussion on the syntax and meaning of *more patrum* see Fedeli 208, 627f. Putnam 1986, 272 notes: "we have no evidence save the nostalgia of later writers that such *carmina* existed".

24 Cf. Fedeli 2008, 628: "Orazio sembra qui delineare con pochi tratti quello che è l'argomento dell'*Eneide,* con un probabile atto di omaggio conclusivo nei riguardi di Virgilio, anche se egli non prevede poesia epica, ma piuttosto poesia simposiaca di tipo dei *carmina convivalia,* in cui Augusto dovrà occupare un ruolo centrale".

single stanza cannot give a clear and accurate idea of Horace's conception as regards the structural relationship of Roman history to Trojan myth. The allusion to the *carmina convivalia,* however, takes us back to the beginnings of Roman literature and early Republican epic. In Ennius' *Annals* Rome's Trojan origins preceded the historical narrative in a linear fashion. Alternatively, ancient, learned audience and readers may have thought of Naevius' *Bellum Poenicum* where, according to a view first proposed by Strzelecki in 1935, the mythological and the historical narrative may have occurred in reverse chronological order[25].

Thus, *Odes* 4, 15 is framed by pivotal Virgilian intertexts, the *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid,* while between them we have a probable allusion to the *Georgics: tua, Caesar, aetas fruges et agris rettulit uberes* ("Your age, Caesar, has brought back rich harvests to the fields", 4–5). Quite significantly from a literary viewpoint, the line concerning the restoration of agricultural productivity occurs *immediately after* the allusion to the *Eclogues* and opens the catalogue of the blessings of the *aetas Augusta.* This pattern seems to evoke the Virgilian Progression. It furthermore implies a favorable reception by Horace of Virgil's generic palinode, writing the epic which he had rejected in *Eclogue* 6. Horace 'responded' by the lyric transformation of the Virgilian program.

Horace never succumbed to the pressure exerted on him to write an epos. He persisted in this course to the end of his literary career, when he composed the final *recusatio* of his entire work. He said it clearly and unequivocally in *Epistles* 2, 1, which is addressed to Augustus, was probably composed only a few months after the publication of *Odes* 4[26], and points back to the last Ode of this collection. Towards the end of the *Epistle,* Horace apologizes that his powers do not match his yearning to chronicle Augustus' achievements *(res gestas)*[27]. He argues that this has already been done in a manner worthy of the *princeps* by his friends Virgil and Varius, while he can only write "talks [*sermones*] that creep on the ground". I quote lines 245–259:

> at neque dedecorant tua de se iudicia atque
> munera, quae multa dantis cum laude tulerunt,
> dilecti tibi Vergilius Variusque poetae;

25 Strzelecki 1935, 7–8.

26 According to Rudd 1989, 1 "in the early part of 12 BC".

27 Cf. White 1993, 133: "Thanks to a fragment of correspondence quoted by Suetonius, however, we know that Augustus asked not for an epic but for a letter in verse. The case is worth remembering when inferences are teased from other refusal poems".

nec magis expressi vultus per aenea signa,
quam per vatis opus mores animique virorum
clarorum apparent. nec sermones ego mallem
repentes per humum quam res componere gestas,
terrarumque situs et flumina dicere, et arces
montibus impositas, et barbara regna, tuisque
auspiciis totum confecta duella per orbem,
claustraque custodem pacis cohibentia Ianum,
et formidatam Parthis te principe Romam,
si quantum cuperem possem quoque. sed neque parvum
carmen maiestas recipit tua, nec meus audet
rem temptare pudor quam vires ferre recusent.

But Virgil and Varius, those poets whom you love, discredit not your judgement of them nor the gifts which, to the giver's great renown, they have received; and features are seen with no more truth, when moulded in statues of bronze, than are the manners and minds of famous heroes, when set forth in the poet's work. And for myself, I should not prefer my "chats," that crawl along the ground to the story of great exploits, the tale of distant lands and rivers, of forts on mountain tops, of barbaric realms, of the ending of wars under your auspices throughout the world, of bars that close on Janus, guardian of peace, and of that Rome who under your sway has become a terror to Parthians – if only I had power equal to my longing; but neither does your majesty admit of a lowly strain, nor does my modesty dare to essay a task beyond my strength to bear[28].

Virgil and Varius make an extremely interesting pair, in the first place because it is them who started Horace on his career (sat. 1, 6: *Vergilius, post hunc Varius, dixere quid essem*)[29]. The mention of Virgil obviously refers to the *Aeneid* as an epic celebrating Augustus' achievements and points back to the last stanza of *Odes* 4, 15; the mention of Varius picks up Horace's first lyric *recusatio* (*Odes* 1, 6), where he is recommended as the ideal epic poet to write of Agrippa's exploits[30]. Finally, *parvum carmen* looks back to Horace's last lyric *recusatio,* to the *parva vela* of his boat when Apollo stopped him from spreading them in the Tyrrhenian Sea, as well as to the Matine bee simile in the first *recusatio* of his last book of *Odes* (4, 2, 31–32 *operosa parvus / carmina fingo*).

28 Text and translation by Rudd 1989.
29 See Rudd 1989, 116 with further comments on this passage.
30 On which see 2.iv below.

Commenting on the meaning of *canemus,* which he aptly relates to the Virgilian *cano* at the beginning of the *Aeneid,* Richard Thomas has argued that "Horace's prospective *Aeneid* with its choral anti-lyric ensemble […] will never come together, as his promise of song is followed by silence, the ultimate *recusatio*"[31]. Others note the intriguing character of the silence that follows the last poem of Horace's last lyric collection[32]. I argued above that what we have in the last stanza is a lyric distillation of Virgil's epic. The *recusatio* of *Epistles* 2, 1 discussed above clarifies that Horace did not intend to write another *Aeneid* or re-write the *Aeneid* in a lyric form. Therefore, what *Odes* 4, 15 may imply is that his own individual task as a lyric poet had been concluded and it was now up to the collective voice of Rome to supply the lyrics of the communal song by elaborating on his interpretative outline of the *Aeneid*[33] in conjunction with the preceding encomium of Augustus[34].

ii. *Reges et proelia:* of epic poetry and lyric encomium

In *Eclogue* 6 Cynthian Apollo had prevented Virgil from singing of 'kings and battles' with reference to Alfenus Varus' martial exploits and the poet had heeded the divine warning, expressed distaste for the bellicose theme, and announced that he will instead pursue his own pastoral program. In *Odes* 4, 15 the domain of epic is represented by 'battles and conquered cities', the analogue of Virgil's 'kings and heroes'. Like Virgil, Horace heeds the divine warning but, differently from Virgil, he postpones the announcement of his own lyric program to the closure of the Ode. Immediately after the *recusatio* he catalogues instead the blessings of the *aetas Augusta* (4–24):

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31 Thomas 2011, 374.

32 Cf. Oliensis 1998, 153: "Perhaps the silence that follows *Odes* 4.15 marks the poet's disappearance from, rather than into, the choral plural of *canemus.* And yet there is something magnificent and sublimely seductive in the swelling of this final communal voice". Tarrant 2020, 182 observes: "We should note, though, that as Horace is subsumed into the communal voice, Augustus is also subsumed into the line of Venus's descendants. By the end both Horace and Augustus as individuals have disappeared". See also Lowrie 1997, 347–349. The interpretation proposed by Zarecki 2010 that the subjects of *canemus* are Horace and 'resuscitated' Virgil is implausible.

33 Cf. his reading of the *Aeneid* in *Epistles* 2, 1 mentioned above.

34 Cf. Breed 2005, 251: "Rather the poem refuses the prospect of a Horatian *Aeneid* because, it seems, there is no need for another poetic epitome of the meaning of age when the *Aeneid* exists as a kind of communal hymn of the *populus Romanus* to Augustus' successes".

In lines 4–16 Augustus is said to have restored abundance to the fields (an allusion to the agrarian reforms that served war veterans); to have retaken the captured standards (an allusion to the recovery of the standards from the Parthians lost by Crassus in 53 BC and in later instances, a major theme of imperial propaganda); to have closed the Gates of the temple of Janus (which had been done three times in Horace's life time); and to have brought back the 'old-fashioned arts' (an allusion to Augustus' moral reforms), thanks to which Rome managed to expand from Latium to Italy and later to world rule. In lines 17–24 Augustus is portrayed as the ruler who guarantees civil tranquility (regarding the end of civil wars) and external pacification (several Roman victories over enemies in eastern and central Europe are listed).

There is widespread criticism against Horace that, by avoiding the theme of warfare, which is distasteful to pastoral, lyric and elegiac poets alike, the poet gives the impression of remaining faithful to his conventional task as a lyric poet, while in fact he is keeping up appearances; because the benefits of peace were in fact achieved by force of arms, were variously associated with war and were anyway guaranteed by force of arms[35]. It has furthermore been considered ironic that Apollo's opening command to Horace not to write of 'battles and conquered cities' comes after the poet has extolled, in the immediately preceding ode, the military victories of his stepson Tiberius, the elder son of Livia, over the tribes of the Raetian Alps, while Augustus is praised for concluding the campaign and for being the defense of Rome and Italy and the undisputed ruler of the world. *Odes* 4, 14 is a companion piece to 4, 4 which praises Drusus, the younger son of Livia, for his victory over the Raeti and the Vindelici, while his stepfather Augustus is also praised as having trained him to victory.

The major criticism is that in *Odes* 4 Horace redefined lyric as emperor celebration and implies that this development somehow adulterated his lyric voice[36]. According to these views, in *Odes* 4, 15 and in other poems of the same collection the domain of epic and the domain of lyric are essentially identified and thus Horace would have treated subjects that Apollo in the opening *recusatio* had commanded him to avoid[37].

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35 See for instance Johnson 2004, 209 f.; Heyworth 2016, 259.

36 A systematic exposition can be found in Lowrie 1997, 317–352.

37 Cf. e.g. Putnam 1986, 270: "Horace's imaginative leap over this anticipated denial is unparalleled. What is more remarkable still, however, is that the subject matter before and after the ellipsis, as we turn from *recusatio* to encomium, remains the same: Augustus and his time"; and 271: "From the opening *recusatio* we would not expect to find, in the vista of future song with which the ode ends, either *duces* or what seems another *Aeneid,* spanning from Troy to Aeneas-Augustus".

Paolo Fedeli has wisely rejected the supposed contradiction between the opening *recusatio* and the subsequent encomium of Augustus, where Horace enumerates the blessings of his rule, by making the following obvious but often disregarded distinction:

> Il programma oraziano diviene chiaro se si considera il carme precedente: la poesia lirica, infatti, puo celebrare gli eroi vittoriosi – proprio come aveva fatto Pindaro nei suoi epinici e come ha fatto Orazio stesso nel IV libro – ma non può cantare battaglie e conquiste di città, perché è compito della poesia epica[38].

The truth of the matter is that Horace himself in *Odes* 4 portrays the encomia of Rome's victorious generals as the analogue of Pindar's victorious athletes[39]. Specifically, in *Odes* 4, 3 the poet ascribes to the Muse Melpomene his poetic inspiration and the honors which he enjoys as the lyric poet of Rome. The opening stanzas clearly and unequivocally equate Pindar's victorious athletes with Rome's victorious generals:

> Quem tu, Melpomene, semel
> nascentem placido lumine videris,
> illum non labor Isthmius
> clarabit pugilem, non equus impiger
> curru ducet Achaico
> victorem, neque res bellica Deliis
> ornatum foliis ducem,
> quod regum tumidas contuderit minas,
> ostendet Capitolio:
> sed quae Tibur aquae fertile praefluunt
> et spissae nemorum comae
> fingent Aeolio carmine nobilem.
>
> The man whom you, Melpomene, have once looked on with kindly eyes at the hour of his birth will not win glory as a boxer through his exertions at the Isthmus; no spirited horse will carry him to victory in an Achaean chariot; nor will a military career parade him before the Capitol, a general

38 Fedeli 2008, 608.

39 On Horace's Odes of 'Pindaric' mode (a term sometimes used very loosely) see for instance Wimmel 1965; Miller 1998; Günther 1999; Hardie 2003; d'Angour 2012; Fitzgerald 2023.

> decorated with Delian bays, for crushing the swelling threats of princes. But the waters that flow past fertile Tibur, and the thick foliage of the woods, will shape him for fame in Aeolian song.

It is true that in *Odes* 4, 3 Horace subordinates the Pindaric praise of athletes and warriors to his Aeolic song associating the latter with the *locus amoenus* of Tibur (Tivoli), in a fashion analogous to the portrayal of his task as a lyric poet in the previous Ode in contrast to the Pindaric lyric mode. The Ode following immediately after 4, 3, however, does the exact opposite: it adopts the Pindaric encomiastic mode in praising the military exploits of Drusus, the stepson of Augustus, as well as Augustus himself for having trained him to greatness. The contrast between the poet's private and public voice in *Odes* 4 is not infrequently characterized by inconsistencies. To the best of my knowledge, no theory or structural pattern has managed to reconcile them in a definitive way[40]. One thing is certain: the book cannot have been conceived from the start as a unified collection of *Odes*.

It is also true, however, that Horace's martial *Odes* do not describe 'battles' and 'conquered cities', but praise either victories or victory celebrations (triumphs), and thus they *remain faithful* to the character of Pindar's *epinicians*. In addition, the poet dwells on the blessings of Augustan peace, both in 4, 15 and earlier in 4, 5, 17–40[41]. The *recusatio* of *Odes* 4, 2 is crucial for my argument. Horace does not consider himself capable of narrating Augustus' prospective victory over the Sygambri and asks instead Iullus Antonius to compose what, according to Stephen Harrison, would have been an epic poem[42] on the subject. What matters here is that *Horace's own reception* of Augustus' military exploits is a lengthy lyric account of his triumph and the joyful celebrations anticipating his return (33–60). I quote the first three stanzas (33–44):

> concines maiore poeta plectro
> Caesarem, quandoque trahet feroces
> per sacrum clivum merita decorus
> fronde Sygambros,

40 Most scholars adopt the triadic structure of *Odes* 4 (after Fraenkel 1957, 426); Dettmer 1983, 484–516 proposed a ring structure with numeric structures to match.

41 In the latter case the poem begins by describing the yearning of *patria* for Augustus' return (from Spain and Gaul), because it is his own safety that guarantees the safety of Rome from foreign foes.

42 Harrison 1995.

quo nihil maius meliusve terris
fata donavere bonique divi
nec dabunt, quamvis redeant in aurum
tempora priscum.

concines laetosque dies et Urbis
publicum ludum super impetrato
fortis Augusti reditu forumque
litibus orbum.

You, a poet of larger quill, will celebrate Caesar when, decorated with a well-earned wreath of bay, he drags the fierce Sygambri up the Sacred Hill. The Fates and the gods in their goodness have given nothing greater or better than him to the world, nor will they do so even if the ages return to their original gold. You will celebrate the days of joy, the capital's public holiday, and the Forum bereft of lawsuits in honour of the valiant Augustus' return which has been granted to our prayers.

A final point concerns the character of Horace's encomium of the *aetas Augusta* in 4, 15, 4–24. The pressure exerted on Horace to treat this subject did not come solely from the *princeps* but reflected also his own Roman historical consciousness discussed above. It would be simplistic to view the current encomium as reflecting exclusively imperial propaganda[43]. More than half of the topics dealt with in it[44] pursue ideological issues raised during the period of the Republic, which Horace himself had treated in earlier lyric compositions and especially in the 'Roman *Odes*'. One of them regards the national 'virtues' that led to the rise of Rome as a great power; their loss led to Roman decline until Augustan reforms restored them (*Odes* 4, 15, 9–16).

et ordinem
rectum evaganti frena licentiae
iniecit emovitque culpas
et veteres revocavit artis,

43 Cf. Johnson 2004, 201: "Horace's panegyric narrative harmonizes with Augustus's account of his accomplishments so completely that it reads like an advance outline of Augustus's *Res Gestae,* […].

44 Besides looking back to Virgilian epic themes, on which see Putnam 1986, 273–280.

per quas Latinum nomen et Italae
crevere vires, famaque et imperi
porrecta maiestas ad ortus
solis ab Hesperia cubili.

it has put a bridle on license which was straying beyond the proper limits, removed sin, and revived the ancient arts by which the name of Latium, the power of Italy, and the prestige and majesty of the Empire were extended from the sun's western bed to his rising.

These lines presuppose knowledge of Livy's Preface to *Ab urbe condita* and specifically of *Praef.* 9:

ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quae uita, qui mores fuerint, per quos uiros quibusque artibus domi militiaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit;

I invite the reader's attention to the much more serious consideration of the kind of lives our ancestors lived, of who were the men, and what the means both in politics and war by which Rome's power was first acquired and subsequently expanded[45].

Livy echoes here Sallust's survey of Roman history in *The Catilinarian Conspiracy* (6–13), where he had focused on the factors that brough about the rise and decline of Rome. This pattern was deeply rooted in Republican thought but the date of the beginning of decline was hotly debated. An emblematic quotation as regards the Republican background to Augustus' reforms would be Ennius' line quoted by Cicero in rep. 5, 1: *moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque.*

Also, it should not go unnoticed that Sallust, in the *War with Jugurtha* (41, 1, 1–5, 1), prominently associates the outbreak of civil wars in Rome with moral decline (following the destruction of Carthage), while Horace dedicates a whole stanza to praise Augustus for guaranteeing civil tranquility by preventing the return of civic madness and violence (17–20):

custode rerum Caesare non furor
civilis aut vis exiget otium,

45 Text by Ogilvie 1974; translation by de Sélincourt 2002.

non ira, quae procudit ensis
et miseras inimicat urbes.

With Caesar in charge of affairs, peace will not be driven out by civic madness or violence, or by the anger that beats out swords and makes cities wretched by turning them against one another.[46]

iii. On the mythical origins of the bucolic landscape and the mythical origins of Rome

Another question is how Horace's lyric program announced in the closure of the poem ties in with the preceding five-stanza encomium which catalogues the blessings of the *aetas Augusta.* The collective song that 'recreates' the *carmina convivalia* and marks a 'return' to the legendary collective celebration of the deeds of famous men pursues further into the mythical Trojan past the idealized image of early Rome underlying Augustan policies and reforms *(rettulit, restituit, revocavit)*[47]. The function of *nosque* introducing the public singing in the last two stanzas is precisely this, to place the communal song in the perspective of the previous encomium. In other words, it portrays the song as an aetiological response to the encomium, in the sense that the Trojan origins of Rome eventually led to the Augustan rule that created the present peace and prosperity[48]. Horace's learned audience and readers would have thought of Virgil's *Aeneid,* the difference being that here the poet progresses backwards, from Augustus' achievements to the Trojan origins of Rome, while in the *Aeneid* it is the mythical narrative which forecasts the glory of Venus' descendants through Aeneas and his son Iulus-Ascanius.

Horatian emulation of *Eclogue* 6 would not be improbable here, in the sense that the collective song in the closure of *Odes* 4, 15 that represents Horace's lyric program and Silenus' song in *Eclogue* 6 that represents Virgil's

46 See Paschalis 1980; and further Jal 1963; Earl 1966; and the literature on Roman decline cited in note 14 above,

47 Fraenkel 1957, 450: "The accumulation of *re-* compounds points to a fundamental ideology underlying the regime of Augustus".

48 Cf. Fedeli 2008, 629: "[…] è impensabile che nel verso conclusivo del libro e di un carme che intende celebrare l'*aetas* di Augusto il poeta non inviti il lettore a scorgere nella *Veneris progenies* la *gens Iulia* che da Venere proclamava di discendere e, in particolare, Augusto stesso, che nel *Carmen saeculare* aveva definito *clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis* (v. 50)".

pastoral program share an investigation *into the origins* of present conditions. In *Eclogue* 6 Virgil deals with the origins of the bucolic landscape that constitutes the essential background to the *Eclogues* and constructs a sort of bucolic mythology. The concluding lines of the scientific section of Silenus' cosmogony narrate the emergence of forests as well as of animals which are represented as roaming *(errent)* over mountains (39 f.). Forests, mountains and wandering animals are elements of the bucolic landscape and feature in several of the myths included in the song of Silenus. The alders, into which Phaethon's sisters are transformed (62 f.), complement the initial creation of vegetation. *silvae* in the *Eclogues* functions as a metonymy for 'bucolic poetry' (1, 2: *silvestrem …Musam;* 4, 3: *si canimus silvas*). In *Eclogue* 6 itself *silvas habitare* (2) is a metaphor for 'writing bucolic poetry' (this is the only other occurrence of the word in this poem); and wild animals, forests, and mountains make up the ecstatic audience of the songs of Silenus, Apollo and Orpheus (25–30)[49].

iv. The prologue (*Odes* 1, 6) and the epilogue (*Odes* 4, 15) of Horatian lyric *recusatio*

Odes 4, 15 begins with the Apollonian injunction to the poet not to write an epic celebrating the emperor's victorious wars and continues with an encomium of his peaceful accomplishments. By contrast, in *Odes* 1, 6 the lyric poet had assumed himself the role of (Callimachean) Apollo politely declining to sing of the military and naval exploits of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Octavian-Augustus' greatest general and admiral; he recommends instead Lucius Varius Rufus, a leading epic and tragic poet of the time, who is said to have written a panegyric of Augustus but is best known for his lost tragedy *Thyestes*. Horace insists instead on pursuing his own lyric program which is outlined in the last stanza.

> Scriberis Vario fortis et hostium
> victor Maeonii carminis alite,
> quam rem cumque ferox navibus aut equis
> miles te duce gesserit:

49 See further Paschalis 2001.

nos, Agrippa, neque haec dicere nec gravem
Pelidae stomachum cedere nescii
nec cursus duplicis per mare Ulixei
  nec saevam Pelopis domum

conamur, tenues grandia, dum pudor
imbellisque lyrae Musa potens vetat
laudes egregii Caesaris et tuas
  culpa deterere ingeni.

quis Martem tunica tectum adamantina
digne scripserit aut pulvere Troico
nigrum Merionen aut ope Palladis
  Tydiden superis parem?

nos convivia, nos proelia virginum
sectis in iuvenes unguibus acrium
cantamus, vacui sive quid urimur
  non praeter solitum leves.

Varius, a bird of Maeonian song, will write of you as a brave man who has conquered our enemies, recording all the feats that your fierce troops have performed on shipboard or horseback under your command. I do not attempt to recount such things, Agrippa, any more than the deadly rancor of Peleus' son who was incapable of giving way, or the wily Ulysses and his journeys over the sea, or the inhuman house of Pelops; such themes are too grand for one of slender powers. Diffidence, and the Muse who controls the unwarlike lyre, forbid me to diminish the exploits of glorious Caesar and yourself by my inadequate talent. Who could write worthily of Mars clad in his adamantine breastplate, or Meriones black with the dust of Troy, or the son of Tydeus who, with Pallas' aid, was the equal of the gods? What I sing of is drinking bouts and the battles waged by fierce girls using their sharpened nails against young men; whether fancy-free or smouldering with desire, I am, as ever, a lightweight.

Horace excludes as topics of his lyric poetry not only the military exploits of Agrippa but also a heroic epos along the line of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* and even tragedy (probably introduced for the sake of Varius). Both epic and tragedy are grand genres, but no mythological epic (or tragedy) has been requested of Horace. What the poet implies by referring especially to the

Homeric epics and outlining Iliadic scenes is that "only a grand poem on an epic scale could match the grand exploits of the addressee"[50]; the archetypal epic poem would, of course, be Homer and the right person to compose such an epos is Varius, a modern poet possessing Homeric poetic skills ("the bird of the Maeonian song", as he is referred to).

By reinforcing the domain of epic and adding another grand equivalent (tragedy) Horace intended also to enhance the generic contrast with his own lyric program, which he restricts to private themes, symposia and lovemaking. This is not a full catalogue, since it leaves out other private themes as well as his civic and political poems, including the encomia of Octavian (like *Odes* 1, 12 and 1, 37, the victory at Actium – to limit myself to *Odes* 1). Horace's choice was no doubt deliberate, as eloquently shown in the last stanza. There he describes lovemaking in terms of warfare between girls and boys *(proelia virginum / sectis in iuvenes unguibus acrium).* As commonly noted, this kind of 'battles' constitutes in fact a complete reversal of warfare in the requested historical epic about Agrippa's military deeds and in Homer's *Iliad.* It is a reversal intended to define lyric in pointed contrast to epic.

In *Odes* 4, 15 the *convivia* of *Odes* 1, 6 as a topic of Horace's private lyric poetry are replaced by the recreation of the *carmina convivalia,* public and collective sympotic celebrations of the deeds of famous men, here with special reference to the Trojan origins of Rome and the house of Augustus, both ultimately inspired by Virgil's *Aeneid.* The allusion to the latter substitutes for Homer's epics in *Odes* 1, 6, marking a prominent shift from the Greek to the Roman epic archetype. A concomitant aspect of this shift is that the *Aeneid* stands in direct antithesis to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey:* the latter treated the Trojan war and its aftermath from a Greek viewpoint while the former approached the same war from a Roman, national and dynastic, point.

Horace's learned audience and readers would have noticed the contrast with *Odes* 1, 6, but we cannot tell how they would have interpreted it. Considering that in the *recusatio* of 1, 6 the poet had provided a restricted image of his lyric domain, leaving out civic and political aspects of it, for the purpose of enhancing the conventional antithesis between epic and 'slender' genres, some may have detected in the *sphragis* of *Odes* 4, 15 and of the entire book 4, a palinode retracting the earlier narrow portrayal of his lyric poetry in the programmatic *recusatio* of *Odes* 1, 6. Others may have seen in it a statement regarding the new direction his lyric poetry had taken since the publication of *Odes* 1–3, that he now foregrounded his achievement of expanding the boundaries of lyric. In either case they would have recognized the Virgilian

50 Davis 1991, 36.

inspiration and would have probably read the last stanza as a celebration of the recently published *Aeneid* and a tribute to Virgil, something which Horace himself will explicitly do a few months later (*Epistles* 2, 1, 245–247).

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