

THE CLASSICAL SPRING POEM

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Thesis Abstract

Despite the existence of valuable commentaries on some Classical spring poems, this area of study has been insufficiently explored. After providing a definition and a schema of the spring poem as such, this dissertation investigates, through the detailed analysis of the specific spring poems (Catullus 46; Horace *Odes* 1. 4, 4. 7, 4. 12; *Palatine Anthology* 9. 363, 10. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16 and Ovid *Tristia* 3.12), the evolution undergone by this genre from the third century B.C. to the sixth century A.D.

The Greek spring poems form an obvious group, as their authors follow *A.P.* 10.1 as a model, employing its schema and some of its elements, while trying to vary and improve on the chronologically earlier poems. Distancing themselves from the Greek tradition, the Latin authors take the genre off in significant new directions, starting new trends and making major changes both in the content and tone of their poems. Defined by their thematic and generic admixture, the Latin spring poems are distinguished by a complexity, depth of thought and variety of form unknown to the Greek tradition.

From the spring poems of the *Palatine Anthology* to Ovid's *Tr.* 3.12, the genre has known a remarkable evolution. Despite the apparent simplicity of the theme, the authors of the Classical spring poems have reached high levels of sophistication in the way they have succeeded in transforming a relatively straightforward poetic form into a complex and sophisticated genre. Since this series of poems is more than a simple literary parlour game, but constitutes a genre on its own that illustrates, through its major features - stylistic refinement, the use of the Hellenistic techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* (especially in the Greek tradition, but also in the Latin spring poems) and the blending of literary and mythological allusions (especially in Horace's spring poems) - typical aspects of Classical poetry, the analysis undertaken in this dissertation gives the Greek and Latin spring poems the critical attention they fully deserve.

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Chapter I

The coming of spring, more than any other season, brought a dramatic (and welcome) change to the practical aspects of life in the ancient world and had such a powerful impact on the imagination of Classical writers that the numerous and very diverse references to it could hardly come as a surprise. The investigation of this material, which aims at revealing as thoroughly as possible the standard aspects and associations of spring in Greek and Latin literature, is necessary for two reasons: first, it will allow a more precise understanding of what this season meant for the ancient world; and secondly, but essentially, it will provide the necessary background against which the detailed analysis of the specific spring poems that constitutes the topic of this thesis will be set.

Any survey of the numerous references to spring made by the ancient Greek and Latin authors must begin by establishing the temporal frame to which these references allude, although this is not always an easy task. To start with the Greeks, a precise dating of the beginning and end of the vernal season is complicated by the fact that all the Greek calendars differed slightly and, in addition, various calendars were used at different times in the same city-state. At the same time, even if we refer only to a specific epoch, it is rather difficult to convert ancient Greek dates to the modern calendar, given the fact that every city-state of ancient Greece had its own lunisolar calendar (that is to say a calendar which is based on both lunar and solar cycles) of twelve months with an extra month periodically intercalated. One may try to overcome this difficulty by taking into consideration only a single city-state, and, in this case, Athens would be a favorite choice, since the Athenian calendar is one of the best known and most intensively studied, and therefore it could be used as a model. Even so, the problem remains because, as Simon (4) remarks “the Athenian

months seem extremely foreign to us. They correspond neither in chronology nor in name to our twelve months, which are based on the reform of the calendar by Julius Caesar and have the familiar Latin names. Later on the Roman months also came to Roman Greece, but until then each Greek polis had its own names of months -we know more than three hundred names.”¹

A similar difficulty is also apparent as we move to the Romans, who, like the Greeks, had initially a calendar based on lunar cycles, with months alternating between twenty-nine and thirty days. This pre-Julian calendar was in fact a list of religious festivals, and therefore can be considered a sacred calendar; however it was not an exceptionally precise one, and, in addition, from time to time, it was manipulated by the *pontifices*, who “often adjusted the chronology to suit their own political ends [...], thereby throwing the calendar into confusion” (James, 161). It was only after Julius Caesar with the assistance of Sosigenes, a Greek astronomer from Alexandria, undertook in 46 B.C. the radical reform of the calendar,² switching its base from lunar to solar, that the Roman calendar started to look like our present one. Thus, in Sosigenes’ calendar, the year, as Pliny (*H.N.* 18.69) informs us, was divided into four approximately equal parts; however, in contrast to the modern calendar, the solstice and the equinox were considered to mark the midpoint of the seasons, rather than their beginning, so that, for example, the vernal equinox was on the 24th-25th of March.

In view of all these difficulties, a better solution would be perhaps to do what the ancient Greeks and Romans used to do, namely to forget about calendars and to take into account more ‘reliable’ indicators, such as astronomical events, like the rising or the setting of stars and constellations, the arrival of various migratory birds (among which the swallow was especially

¹ The following three months were generally reckoned by the Athenians as spring months: Anthesterion (February/March), Elaphebolion (March/April), Mounychion (April/May).

² The year in which the Julian reform was introduced was lengthened to 445 days, and the first year of the new calendar began on January 1st in 45 B.C. (cf. James, 162).

trusted as a marker of spring) or the date when the West wind (named also Favonius or Zephyr) started to blow.

In the ancient world, the astronomical marker of the evening rising of Arcturus³ was considered one of the most reliable dates for the beginning of the vernal season. Thus, in *Works and Days* (564-69), our oldest source in the matter, Hesiod associates the beginning of the season with this astronomical event, which, according to him, occurs exactly 60 days after the winter solstice,⁴ namely on February 24. However, the precise date of the rising of Arcturus was also a matter of some debate among the classical authors since, depending on the location of the observers, this astronomical event seemed to occur at different times, and, as a result, different authors give different dates. Thus, according to Columella (*Rust.* 11.2.21f.), the evening rising of Arcturus occurs on February 21st, while for Pliny (*H.N.* 18. 237) it does so only on February 23rd.

In the passage cited above, Hesiod also mentions the coming of swallow, the first migratory bird to return in spring. As her annual journey across the sea corresponds symbolically with the transition from one season to another, the swallow was considered by the ancient Greeks, and later by the Romans too, the messenger of the vernal season.⁵ However, for the arrival of swallow, too, the precise date is somewhat uncertain. Thus, Pliny (*H.N.* 18.237) informs us that Caesar set its arrival on February 22, while, according to Columella (*Rust.* 11.2.21f.), in spite of the fact that the swallow does come on February 20, it is seen only on February 23, whatever this may mean.

³ The fourth brightest star in the sky, believed to be one of the first stars named by ancient observers. Its name comes from *arktoouros* or *arctophylax*, "the Bear Guard."

⁴ One should notice that for Hesiod too, as later for the Romans, the winter solstice is the midpoint of winter, not its beginning, which was considered to be indicated by the morning setting of the Pleiades in late October to early November (see Dicks 37).

⁵ See Hor. *Epist.* 1.7.12f. However, occasionally the nightingale is also mentioned as a harbinger of spring (see Sapph. *PMG* 39)

Another author who mentions the vernal arrival of swallow is Ovid, who, in *Fast.* 2.853-856, assigns this event to February 23; yet, the arrival of the bird at that time of the year seems rather to surprise him:

fallimur, an veris praenuntia venit hirundo,
nec metuit ne qua versa recurrat hiems?

A possible explanation may be that the end of February (although a premature time for the arrival of swallow) was the temporal frame assigned to it by tradition in an attempt to make it coincide with the rising of Arcturus, when, in fact, March was the month for the general settling in of the swallow (see Kelly 35). Another instance in *Fasti* (2.149f.) that is indicative of the way in which Ovid deals with the question of seasonal chronology, suggests that this could be the case. Thus, when Ovid sets the beginning of spring exactly five days after the Nones of February, his (rather) remarkable precision only makes it clear that the poet just follows the traditional Roman system of putting the equinox at the midpoint of the season:

quintus ab aequoreis nitidum iubar extulit undis
Lucifer, et primi tempora veris erunt.

Moreover, as it is only when referring to the Calends of March (*Fast.* 3.229-242), and especially to the beginning of April (*Fast.* 4.89-99), that Ovid provides actual descriptions of spring, one may safely conclude that, when his seasonal chronology seems to be too precise, it is usually too precise to be true, since it is only the result of Ovid's desire to follow the traditional chronology, while the real date of different seasonal events can be assumed to be the date when their actual descriptions occur.

Another conventional marker for the beginning of the vernal season was the West wind. However, according to Pliny (*H.N.* 2.122), the West wind starts to blow on February 8th, "when the

sun occupies the 25th degree of Aquarius,” while Columella (*Rust.* 2.2.15) gives the 7th of February and Ovid (*Fast.* 2.148) the 5th of the same month as the day of this event.

It seems thus that neither the astronomical events (in spite of their apparent precision), nor the arrival of the swallow or the day when the Zephyr started to blow can provide us with the precise date of the beginning of spring in the ancient world, as the dating of all these events differs from author to author. However, considering all of the above, one may safely conclude that the majority of calculations generally result in dating the beginning of the vernal season in February.

Another question that must be briefly considered is the date when spring was thought to end in the ancient world. This time, however, the problem is much simpler since, no matter when spring was considered to begin, most of the Classical authors take the morning rising of the Pleiades as the date when spring ends (see, for example, *Ov. Fast.* 5. 599-602; *Plin. H.N.* 18. 223). We may therefore conclude that although different authors followed different systems of calculation, the ancient spring was generally considered to last from February to around the 8th of May.⁶

The vernal season was generally considered a liminal period of the year, a time fraught with anxiety and worry, a season of ambiguity and uncertainties, but also a period of renewal and rebirth, of beauty, fertility and joyous celebration, a time of hope and purification. Thus, as Scullard (69) points out, the ancient Greeks and Romans “felt that this turning point in the year, with the promise

⁶ The modern calendar, using the solstice or equinox to mark the beginning of each season, makes the four seasons almost equal in length. Thus, the ‘modern’ spring lasts from the vernal equinox (March 20-21) to the summer solstice (June 21-22), therefore 92 days. The exact date and time of the vernal equinox, when the sun moves into the astrological sign of Aries, varies from year to year. Each year, the date/time moves progressively later in March until the year before leap year is reached. On leap year, it returns to an earlier date and the four-year cycle is then repeated. Although the majority of the Greek writers took the rising of Arcturus as the marker for the beginning of spring, some, among them the author of the *De Regimine*, postponed the arrival of spring to the vernal equinox (see Isager and Skysgaard, 163). Thus, according to the Hippocratic *De Regimine* (3.68.I), spring lasted from the vernal equinox (March 20) to the rising of Pleiades, which gives only 48 days.

of new birth after winter sleep, had to be approached with care. Hard work alone was not enough: the farmers must enjoy the favour of those powers that controlled the fertility of the land. Nor must the past be forgotten: the dead ancestors, who like the seed also rested in the earth, must be remembered and propitiated.” Consequently, spring saw the celebration of various religious festivals whose rituals focused mainly on purification and fertility.⁷

The following Greek festivals were related to the vernal season: Lenaia, Gamelia, Anthesteria, Diasia, and City Dionysia.

Lenaia took place around January 28 and, although not much is known about it, consisted of a procession and dramatic competitions.⁸ Originally intended as a festival of tragedy and comedy, the emphasis was firmly on comedy. It is considered to have been a festival in honour of Dionysus Lenaios, celebrated to arouse the slumbering vegetation and bring springtime.

Gamelia, a traditional Hellenic festival, which gave its name to the month (Gamelion), was held around February 11 and was a celebration of the sacred marriage between Zeus and Hera.⁹

Anthesteria, also called the Older Dionysia, was one of the oldest Greek festivals and one of the four Athenian festivals in honour of Dionysus as the god of spring (Dionysus Anthios). Celebrated from the 4th to the 7th of March, the festival consisted of a series of rituals intended to bring the growth of new vegetation and continue the cycle of rebirth. However, although its name indicates a festival of Flowers (*anthos*), the festival focused primarily on opening the new wine and on placating the spirits of the dead (*keres*) who were temporarily permitted to visit their relatives

⁷ However, when considering the significance of the rituals, one should always be aware of the fact that, as Beard (48) observes, “rituals gather significance; though there will always be dominant interpretations, there is no such thing as a single ritual meaning. [...] This plurality of ritual meaning is a feature of almost any ritual system.”

⁸ See Parke 104.

⁹ Cf. Parke 104.

and receive offerings. On the final day of the festival, the spirits were dismissed back to the underworld.

Diasia, celebrated on 14th of March, one of the major Athenian festivals concerning dead and rebirth, took place in the countryside to welcome the vernal season with joyful celebrations and also to honor the chthonic aspect of Zeus Meilikhios manifested as a giant snake.

However, the ceremonies of Great Dionysia that took place between the 24th and the 28th of March constituted by far the most important spring festival in ancient Greece. The last of the festivals of Dionysus to be instituted in Athens, the Great Dionysia was connected with the coming of spring and its principal characteristic was the performance of tragedies and comedies.

In February, a month traditionally considered a time of purification and expiation,¹⁰ the Romans celebrated a cluster of festivals related to the arrival of spring. Thus, on the 13th of February was the celebration of Faunus in a temple built on the Tiber Island (cf. *Ov. Fast.* 2.193f.). There followed, at the sixth hour of the same day, Parentalia, then Feralia (21st of February), marking the end of the *dies parentales* in honor of the dead, and Caristia (22nd of February), while on the 15th of February was celebrated Lupercalia, a purificatory festival that was intended to secure fertility and keep out evil (see Varro *Ling.* 6.13). The festival was dedicated to Faunus, as a god of fertility and forests, as well as to the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus.

March, the first month of the Roman year, also saw a number of important festivals. Thus, the greater part of the month, beginning from the 1st, was devoted to various festivals and ceremonies connected with the god Mars and conducted by the Salii until the 24th of the month.

¹⁰ Apparently, the month itself took its name from the instruments of purification (*februa*) used in such rites (see *Ov. Fast.* 2. 19 f.)

On March 14 was celebrated *Equiria*, a festival that involved horse racing and competitions held in the *Campus Martius* in Roma. This festival was dedicated to Mars as a god of both war and agriculture.

March 15 was sacred to Anna Perenna, an old Roman divinity, the personification of the succession of the years. On this day, both private and public prayers and sacrifices were offered to ensure a prosperous and healthy year (see Macrob. *Sat.* 1.12.6 and, especially, Ov. *Fast.* 3.523f.).

On the 17th of the month was celebrated Liberalia, the festival of *Liber Pater* (an old Italian god of both fertility and wine, who was associated with Dionysus) and his consort *Libera*. Largely a rustic ceremony, during this festival a large phallus was carted around the countryside in order to encourage fertility and protect the future crops from evil.¹¹

The 19th of March saw the beginning of *Quinquatria*, a celebration that lasted until the 23rd of the month. The Salii, priests of Mars Gradivus, played a central role in this ritual preparation (in which the arms, horses and trumpets were purified) for the season's coming military campaigns.¹²

On March 23rd, the last day of the *Quinquatria*, was *Tubilustrium*, a festival dedicated to Mars, and later to Minerva as well. This ceremony of purification of the sacred trumpets, accompanied also by a dance of the Salii, was a ritual of preparation for the campaigning season.

The festivals of April were Veneralia, Megalensia, Forcidia, Cerialia, Parilia, Vinalia, Robigalia and Floralia.

On the 1st of April was celebrated Veneralia, the festival of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, at which especially honored was a particular aspect of the deity, namely *Venus Verticordia*, the goddess who changes the human heart, protectress of feminine chastity. However, as Ovid

¹¹ See Scullard 91.

¹² See Scullard 93.

(*Fast.* 4.133ff.) informs us, an important part of this festival was also the worship of the goddess *Fortuna Virilis*; the jewelry was removed from her statue and ritually washed, and then she was offered sacrifices of flowers.

Megalensia (or *Ludi Megalenses*) established in 191 B.C. in honor of the goddess Cybele (also known as *Magna Mater*) was held from the 4th to the 10th of April. The festival included sacrifices, feasts, games and chariot races. An important part of it was the performance of drama, the *ludi scaenici*.

On 15th of April was performed the ritual of Forcidia, dedicated to the goddess Tellus, who was also called *Terra Mater*, equated with the Greek goddess Gaia and also with the fertility goddess Ceres, and associated with marriage, motherhood and pregnant women. The ritual, during which pregnant cows were sacrificed, was designed to secure the fertility of the land and flocks.¹³

On 19th of the month was celebrated Cerialia, one of the oldest Roman festivals, during which games were held in the Circus Maximus. The purpose of this festival, dedicated to Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, was to assure the growth of vegetation and to increase human fertility.¹⁴

The purpose of the ancient agricultural festival of Parilia or Palilia (see Varr. *L.L.* 6.15) was, according to Dumézil (383), “the absolution of involuntary offenses which shepherds and beasts may have committed against the divinities of the field.” The festival was dedicated to Pales, a rustic divinity of flocks and herds, and was celebrated on April 21st.

There followed Vinalia, a wine festival that was held on 23 April in honor of Zeus. Venus was also invoked as a protectress of gardens (Varr. *R. R.* 1.1.6) and the ancient writers (*Ov. Fast.* 4.863 ff.) even considered that this was primarily a festival of Venus.

¹³ See Scullard 102.

¹⁴ See Spaeth pp. 34 and 41f.

On 25 April was Robigalia, a Roman festival celebrated to appease Robigus or Robigo, the numen of wheat rust, mildew, and blight. The sacrifices offered on this occasion consisted of the entrails of a dog and a sheep, accompanied by frankincense and wine (cf. *Ov. Fast.* 4.905-936).¹⁵

However, the most important festival of the month was Floralia, held from April 28 until May 3. At this festival Flora, the ancient goddess of flowers and vegetation, who was associated with sexual licentiousness and fertility, was celebrated with theatrical representations and games.

On the 1st of May was celebrated *Bona Dea* - an earth-goddess who was variously described as the sister, daughter, or wife of the god Faunus¹⁶ - as well as the *Lares Praestites*.

On May 9, 11 and 13 took place Lemuria (or Lemuralia), both a private and public festival, during which the Romans performed rites to exorcise the Lemures regarded as malevolent and fearful spirits of those who died violent or untimely deaths. Closely related to this festival was also the sacrifice made on the 11th of the month to Mania, a Goddess of Death and mother of the Lares.

Another agricultural festival, Ambarvalia, so-called because it was customary to circumambulate the fields and pray for the blessing of the agricultural deities, was held on May 29.

Despite numerous specific differences, what all these various festivals had in common was the general purpose of their rituals: they all sought expiation and purification, regeneration and fertility. As the return of spring meant the renewal of life, the help of the divine powers was sought in this desire for regeneration. Considered a time of new beginnings, spring was also a period when the past had to be 'placated': the festivals dedicated to the dead occupied thus a central position in the cycle of festivals as the renewal of nature and the fertility of the new year was arduously sought.

¹⁵ See Scullard 108.

¹⁶ See Scullard 117.

Also, as the great majority of the festivals that took place in spring usually included music, solemn parades and games, the new season was thus celebrated with dancing, feasts and other merriments that properly reflected the dynamism and general excitement of the season.

Some of these complex attitudes towards the vernal season (from sadness to hope and joyfulness), as well as some of the activities usually associated with these festivals (such as dancing, singing, even praying) and the specific deities whose help was sought will also appear in the spring poems.

These diverse and, at times, contradictory attitudes are also to be found in the numerous references to spring made by the ancient writers. While in most of these references spring functions as a perfect vehicle for representing a joyful desire for renewal and fertility, some of them demonstrate a pervasive uneasiness about the vernal season. The polyvalent meanings of spring lend themselves to very different and sometimes conflicting views on the season and, in the end, spring appears not only as a season, but also, and perhaps even more significantly, as a state of mind.

As the positive associations of spring are more prevalent in the texts of the classical period, our investigation will start with them.¹⁷ As primarily agricultural peoples, for the ancient Romans and Greeks the fertility of spring was one of the most distinctive and appreciated characteristics of the season. Spring was thus often pictured as a flourishing season, from Anacreon (46 *PMG*), who refers to the blossoming crops, to Vergil (*G.* 2.330-5). Birds and their songs filling the sky are frequently mentioned (see *Ar. Av.* 709 ff., *A.P.* 9. 363, 10.4, 14, *Lucr.* 1.13, *Verg. G.* 2.319 f., *Ov.*

¹⁷ The aim of this section is not to enumerate every single instance where spring appears in the works of the Classical writers, but only to offer a general picture of the season based on a selection of the passages that I consider to be most significant.

Tr. 3.12.8). The landscape changes, luxuriant green grass grows and flowers are blooming in many depictions of the season (see Alc. 286a *PLF*, Anac. 44, 55 *PMG*, *A.P.* 5. 144, 163, Theoc. *Id.* 23.288-29, Aesop. 297, Theophr. *H.P.* 7.15.1, Aesch. *P.V.* 454, Lucr. 1.174, 5.737, 1395-6, 6.359, Verg. *G.* 1. 338-340, *Cul.* 70f., Ov. *Ars Am.* 185-5, *Rem. Am.* 187, Col. *Rust.* 10. 256-7, Plin. *H.N.* 21.64f.).

Another central presence in the descriptions of spring is the West wind (called also Zephyr or Favonius), whose symbolic value was put in sharp contrast to that of the North wind or Boreas. While the North wind was seen as the cause of winter, an agent of mortality (see, for example, Verg. *Aen.* 6.309-12 or the famous simile at Hom. *Il.* 6. 146-49, in which, although the name of the wind is not explicitly stated, the context makes clear its identity), the West wind, clearing the sky and bringing calm and fair weather,¹⁸ was associated with spring¹⁹ and often related to the beginning of the agricultural year,²⁰ birth,²¹ fertility²² and the opening of the navigation season.²³

The arrival of spring brings also joy and laughter (Col. *Rust.* 10. 280-285); a bright season (Verg. *G.* 1. 339), spring is personified and depicted as rejoicing and laughing (see *A.P.* 9.363, Theophr. *C.P.* 1 12.8; *C.P.* 2.1.4 in which the day laughs while the grain sprouts, *C.P.* 4.5.1 where the air laughs and grain is sown, and *H.P.* 8.2.4 where the season laughs and grain sends up a stem).

In the ancient mind, the vernal season was also (rather naturally) identified with youth,²⁴ while winter was identified with old age.²⁵ This identification, part of a general equation of the ages

¹⁸ See Plaut. *Merc.* 876f.

¹⁹ See *A. P.* 10.1.2, Theophr. *H.P.* 7.15.1, Lucr. 5.738, Catull. 46. 1-3, Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.1, 4.7.9, 4.12.1, *Epist.* 1.7.12-13, Plin. *H.N.* 2.122, 18.337, Ov. *Fast.* 2.148, 3.235-42; Col. *Rust.* 2.2.15; Cic. *Verr.* 5.27.

²⁰ It signals, for example, the time for ploughing in Xen. *Oec.* 16.10-12, Varro *Rust.* 1.27.2, Plin. *H.N.* 18.242.

²¹ See Lucr. 1.11, Cat. 64. 282, Ov. *Met.* 9. 661, Plin. *H.N.* 16.25.

²² See, for example, Verg. *G.* 1.44, 2.330f.

²³ See *A.P.* 5.169, 10.1, 2, 4-6, 14-17.

²⁴ See Hdt. *Hist.* 7.162, Arist. *Rh.* 1365a, Catull. 68. 15-16, Prop. 4.5.59-60, Sen. *Phaed.* 620.

of man with the seasons (an idea apparently of Pythagorean origin, see Diog. Laert. 8.10), was widespread in the ancient world.²⁶ From this identification of spring with youth (and, by association, with childhood and then with birth and origin) derived also the notion of primeval spring, the season in which the world was born (cf. Lucr. 5.818f.; Verg. *G.* 2.336-345).

Love and sexuality, the idea of renewal and reproduction were also frequently associated with the vernal season. Thus, the coming of the lover was similar to the coming of spring (Theoc. *Id.* 12.3), the turmoil of passion was compared to the natural storms of the season (Ibyc. 286 *PMG*), and spring was generally seen as a time of love, tumult and fervor (Theoc. *Id.* 7.96f., *A.P.* 5.144, 163, 169, 9.626, Verg. *Ecl.* 10.72-74), the season of Venus (*Ov. Fast.* 4.125-32), in which the entire world was driven by the blind instinct of procreation (Lucr. 1. 1-20, 250-64, Col. *Rust.* 10. 196ff.).

On the practical level, compared to the rest of the seasons, spring was a time of bustling farming activity as the agricultural tasks suspended during the winter were resumed. Varro (*Res Rusticae* 1.29.1), itemizing the agricultural labors of the vernal season, gives us the following list:

Seminaria omne genus ut serantur, putari arbusta, stercorari in pratis, circum vites ablacuari,
radices quae in summa terra sunt praecidi, prata purgari, salicta seri, segetes sariri.

In addition to these farming duties, ploughing is also mentioned in numerous other references (see, for example, Hes. *Op.* 458-462, Verg. *G.* 1.68, *Ov. Fast.* 1.159, Plin. *H.N.* 18.242, Col. *Rust.* 2.4.3, 2.4.9), while Columella speaks in addition of a spring sowing (*Rust.* 11.3.16 and 59) and of the pruning of vines (*Rust.* 4.23), activities which are also mentioned by Cato (*De Re Rustica* 41).

²⁵ See Verg. *Aen.* 8.508, Mart. 4.5.6, Hor. *Carm.* 4.13.12, *Ov. Met.* 2.30, 15.212-213 Stat. *Theb.* 7.361-2.

²⁶ Cf. Dehon 28 n.65.

Another important aspect of the season was the vernal resumption of navigation,²⁷ with all its positive and negative associations, among which one may include the end of isolation (see Ov. *Tr.* 3.12.31ff.), the possibility of traveling and trading, but also the dangers of a rather unpredictable weather and the prospect of being shipwrecked (see Hes. *Op.* 678-685, *A.P.* 5.169, 9.363, Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.6, Aesop. 297, Ov. *Fast.* 4.131f.).

Spring also marked the beginning of the campaigning season,²⁸ as ancient warfare usually started immediately after the crops were planted and lasted until harvest time. Campaigning in any other season, especially in winter, had certain advantages, above all, the element of surprise,²⁹ but, although employed in cases of necessity³⁰ or for strategic reasons,³¹ it was generally avoided since the logistical challenges were generally insurmountable for the infrastructure of the ancient states.

In spite of the numerous positive associations, spring also had negative, less attractive, aspects. It is interesting to discover that, in fact, usually the same vernal activities mentioned above were assigned a negative side. In general, spring was considered a dangerous period of the year primarily because what it brings is uncontrollable.³² Thus, to give only a few examples, the general excitement of the season may cause people to move around without any particular purpose (Aesop

²⁷ Farming and navigation were often linked in the ancient world (see, for example, Vergil *G.* 1. 204-7, 253f, 303f., 371ff.)

²⁸ See Thuc. 4.12, 5.15, 5.17.2, 6.71.2, 7.21, 8.24; Hdt. *Hist.* 1.190.1, 8.131.1; Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.16, 4.1.41, 4.8.6, Cass. Dio 9. 40. 6., 10. 5. A particular connection between spring and warfare is also revealed by the Roman custom of vowing in times of danger a *ver sacrum*, that is a sacrifice of all the children and the domestic animals born in the next spring if the calamity should be removed. Thus, the Romans vowed a *ver sacrum* after the battle of lake Trasimene and at the close of the second Punic war, but the vow was confined to domestic animals (see Liv. 22.9, 34.44; Plut. *Vit. Fab.* 4).

²⁹ See for example Hdt. *Hist.* 1.79.

³⁰ See for example Xen. *An.* 4.5.

³¹ See Flor. 1.6.8 describing the siege of Veii.

³² According to Hippocrates, spring is the season in which the battle between heat and cold, dry and wet takes place, and for this reason is such a tempestuous and unsettled season (see Ross 165). It is interesting to note that although spring is, from a medical point of view, the healthiest, and least mortal of seasons (*Aph.* 9), among the diseases specific of this season he enumerates first the melancholic and maniacal disorders.

297); love and the instinct of procreation may become sexual frenzy, wild *furor* (Verg. *G.* 3.272, Lucr. 1.14ff.); the place of the calming breezes of Zephyr may be taken by the intemperate seasonal storms (Verg. *G.* 1.313); the opening of the navigation season may bring shipwrecks, as the sea is an unpredictable and dangerous place, every so often connected with risk and destruction (*A.P.* 9.32, 41, 42, 82, 84, 85); the resuming of the agricultural tasks ends in fact the cessation of rest, the joyful feasting and the respite from care in which the farmers indulged during the cold season (Verg. *G.* 1. 300-2, Hes. *Op.* 493f.); while campaigning, bringing suffering and death, could hardly be seen as a pleasant enterprise.³³

Two of the most suggestive passages concerning this ambivalent attitude towards spring are the first part (1-20) of Lucretius' proem to his didactic poem *De Rerum Natura* and fable 297 attributed to Aesopus.

The Proem of *De Rerum Natura* begins with a formal invocation to Venus, and Lucretius does not explicitly refer to spring until line 10. However, as many elements of Venus' depiction are common to other passages describing the arrival of the vernal season - the winds (*fugiunt venti*, 6), the image of earth putting forth flowers (*tibi suavis daedala tellus/ summittit flores*, 7f.), the laughing sea (*rident aequora ponti*, 8), the clear sky (*nitet diffuso lumine*, 9) - we soon realize that in fact the main part of the eulogy of Venus consists of her close connection with springtime nature, the signs of spring being employed as ways of celebrating the goddess.

In spite of this discreet yet pervasive presence, in line 10 of the proem (*species patefactast verna diei*) the vernal season is introduced in a rather striking way, as usually the noun *species* refers

³³ Farming and soldiering were seen in the ancient world as strenuous occupations (see, for example, Verg. *G.* 1. 160-4, 3.346f.).

particularly to an outward appearance and thus seems to give spring a limited and superficial meaning. Nevertheless, for Lucretius *species* is a key term, used generally to describe the purpose of his work as one involving the revelation of *naturae species ratioque* (1.149, 2.61, 3.93, 6.41), an expression that summarizes the fundamental purpose of Lucretius' didactic poem. Considering this, the term acquires a new meaning, signaling that Lucretius may be in fact suggesting an inner, more profound, law of spring.

The next section (13-20) provides the key for understanding the true nature of spring. What is described in these lines is actually the way in which Venus takes total control over the animal life. Thus, although the arrival of spring is announced first by birds, they are in fact compelled to do so (*perculsae corda tua vi*, 13), as the participle *perculsae* denotes primarily a physical impact, being in essence a word of assault. A similar image of aggression is contained in the phrase *tua vi* (13). Furthermore, the violent and aggressive possibilities of spring are suggested by words as *rapidos* (15), *capta* (15), *rapaces* (17) and *incutiens* (19). Lines 14ff. express also the same disruptive potential of the vernal season since animals risk crossing raging rivers, the mating instinct having become a wild frenzy. Spring is portrayed thus as a time of conflict and subjugation. Therefore, Lucretius makes a subtle transition from the seemingly lighthearted tone of springtime birds to the aggressive and dangerous connotations of the season. What Lucretius seems to imply is that the nature of spring lies precisely in its unpredictability and its dangerous side must be feared since it is veiled in beautiful but superficial appearances. The passage employs thus a play between the actual meaning of *species* and the philosophical meaning revealed later in the poem, creating a semantic tension that best expresses the inner law of spring.

In contrast to Lucretius' elusive attitude towards spring, Aesopus 297 offers a largely (but not totally) optimistic view of the season. It presents a confrontation between Winter and Spring, with the debate centered on the way people respond to the seasonal change from winter to spring, especially on the feelings incited by each of the two seasons. Thus, while Winter mocks Spring for the ridiculous things that people tend to do as soon as Spring appears - plucking flowers, gazing upon a rose, boarding ships and crossing the seas, apparently having forgotten about the lurking dangers of nature- and boasts that, by contrast, Winter resembles a dictator or a despot, frightening people and making them tremble, Spring replies that this is exactly why mankind would be glad to get rid of Winter. As a despot, Winter demands obedience and provokes fear - hers are the harsh laws of nature. On the contrary, Spring brings men gladness and rejoicing, its departure filling humankind with nostalgia and its return being eagerly anticipated. Between spring and winter there is throughout the fable a clear-cut contrast. Extremely significant for the fable's view of the season is the fact that the mere mention of the name of Spring brings pleasure to mankind, which is another way of saying that spring is not only a season, but also (and even more importantly) a state of mind.

Spring is seen therefore in the references of the classical writers not only as a creative and liberating season of flourishing growth, bringing into the world joy, excitement and hope, but also as an ambiguous season, characterized by an element of incertitude and change unknown to other seasons. Spring is unpredictable, its activities may become dangerous, while the feelings it arises may easily turn into uncontrollable passion. Most of these complex and sometimes ambivalent attitudes towards the season will also be present in the specific spring poems. Thus, while some poems (especially those included in the *Palatine Anthology*) tend to see the positive aspects of the

season, others (in particular Horace's poems), reflect also the negative side of it or subtly employ the positive aspects only to create a contrast with the (bitter-sweet) reflections prompted by spring.

In the light of this overview of the numerous references to spring made by the ancient writers, the investigation of the specific spring poems will start from the premise that "the poems [...] of classical antiquity are not internally complete, individual works but are members of classes of literature" (Cairns, 6), so that, as Race (XVII) put it, "if we do not know what kind of poem we are reading, or what elements it shares with others of the same type, then we shall be able only to view the poem as an isolated entity in a poetic oeuvre," and "we shall ultimately be unable to ascertain what is original and important in it, for there will be no tradition consisting of comparable examples within which to measure its particular qualities." In view of the fact that a work of a classical writer exists "against the background of the reader's generic expectation which it uses as its starting-point (Cairns, 13), the concept of 'genre' that stands at the basis of this investigation, must be briefly addressed. Thus, since one may argue that the word 'genre' should be used to refer only to major categories like epic or tragedy, at the basis of this investigation will stand Depew-Obbink's (more generous) definition of 'genre' as "a conceptual orientating device that suggests to a hearer the sort of receptorial conditions in which a fictive discourse might have been delivered" (6). At the same time, considering that "a category of genre based exclusively upon formal features is clearly unacceptable" (Conte, 107), Cairns's notion of genre understood as classification of literature in terms of content (6) will prove especially useful. Although, as Conte (107) acknowledges, "it is just as dangerous to think of genre as a typology founded exclusively upon recurring contents: *topoi*, repeated themes and motifs, situations," since "a classification by contents runs the danger of never indicating the boundary between the general and the particular," the

analysis of the spring poems will start from the belief that “the function [that] gives meaning to the critical concept of genre and makes its study productive [is] the function of associating elements of content and form, putting them into relation and correspondence with each other” (Conte, 106f).³⁴ At the same time, Cairns’s view that “every genre can be thought of as having a set of primary or logically necessary elements which in combination distinguish that genre from every other genre” (6) will find its application in the analysis of the specific spring poems, in which the presence of certain elements (see below) reveals the clear intention of its author to place his poem in the tradition of the genre. However, as Race (210) observes, “far from being static entities, generic forms have proven flexible enough to permit their own change, mixture, parody and renewal.” This process is apparent especially in the Latin spring poems that are defined by an intentional ‘generic impurity,’ containing numerous thematic and structural innovations (see below). Thus, in spite of the objections that could be pressed against the generic approach, all these considerations reinforce the belief that “generic criticism creates a context within which to analyze a poem [...],” as “its value lies in establishing a background against which the particular merits and innovations of individual poems can be seen” (Race xviii).

The following section will attempt to give a definition and to provide a schema of the spring poem as such. This schema will provide an efficient critical tool, since, by comparing each particular spring poem to a general model, one may better appreciate the art with which the authors of these poems have employed the traditional elements of the genre - combining them in a different

³⁴ Thus, although there are poems in which other seasons prompt various reactions (e.g., Alcaeus fr. 338, Hor. *Carm.* 1.9, 11 and *Epod.* 13, where winter prompts the *carpe diem* injunction), one cannot talk of a full and distinct winter poem, but only of the presence of a *topos*, spring appearing to be the only season that has ‘prompted’ the existence of a genre in itself, defined by the enduring ‘fusion’ of a clear structure and content (see below) and exemplified by numerous poems, written by various authors during a long span of time (from the 3rd century B.C. to the 6th century A.D.).

way, emphasizing one or another, omitting, inverting, playing them down - or have introduced new ones. This critical appreciation is extremely important, especially when one takes into consideration that, far from offering only a description of the vernal season, a spring poem also contains a variety of apposite actions and conclusions. Thus, from the epigrams included in the *Palatine Anthology* urging the sailor(s) to resume navigation (and trade) to Horace's moralizing poems, the arrival of spring prompts different and increasingly sophisticated reactions and thoughts, and the importance and scale of this evolution cannot be fully understood without having in mind a general schema.

A spring poem may be defined as a poem that contains a major description of spring and is entirely or very largely concerned with this season and reaction(s) to it. For the purpose of this investigation, the following Greek and Latin poems will be considered as specifically spring poems: *A.P.* 9. 363, 10. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, Catull. 46, Hor. *Carm.* 1, 4., 4. 7, 4. 12 and *Ov. Tr.* 3.12.³⁵

Although the schema of the spring poem changed in time, gradually becoming more complex, all the poems of this genre contain a description of spring followed by reactions - such as injunctions and reflections - prompted by the season. There are thus striking similarities and differences between the earliest forms of the spring poems and the latest ones. The similarities present in all spring poems point to the deliberateness with which each author reminds and encourages the reader to compare and contrast them. Each author of a spring poem seems to require the reader to have familiarity with the other spring poems in order to fully appreciate his ingenuity. This led to a great versatility of the form as the spring poem developed, but at the same time to certain continuity in its basic elements. Each spring poem can be thus read on its own, as a self-

³⁵ There may well have been many other earlier spring poems that have been lost. Also there was perhaps a spring poem by Alcaeus (see Nisbet-Hubbard on Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 58) but, unfortunately, it is too fragmentary for us to tell for sure.

contained poem, but considering all of them together, the reader can both recognize the standard features and better appreciate the innovations.

In the Greek tradition of the spring poem, perhaps as the genre was still in its incipient stage, there is a greater emphasis on the description of the season while the reactions prompted by spring include a rather limited number of elements. However, as both the description of the season and the reactions to it evolved, in the Roman tradition of the spring poem, new (and sometimes surprising) details were added to the standard elements.

In the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* the description of the season contains the following elements³⁶: the (formal announcement of the) renewal of navigation (*A.P.* 10.1, 2); the arrival of the swallow (*A.P.* 9.363, 10.1, 2, 14), with the variation of the swallow building her house of mud (*A.P.* 10.2, 4, 5), sheltering her brood in the mud-plastered chambers (*A.P.* 10.16) or singing (*A.P.* 10. 6, 14); a variety of other birds, generally swans, kingfishers, nightingales (*A.P.* 9.363); the West wind (*A.P.* 10.1, 4, 14, 15), described sometimes as softening the waves (*A.P.* 10. 4), falling on the meadows (*A.P.* 10. 6) or spreading fine weather over the sea (*A.P.* 10.16); the meadows in flower (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 5, 6) or laughing (*A.P.* 9. 363); bees (*A.P.* 9.363); cicadas (*A.P.* 10.16); the absence or departure of cold winds (*A.P.* 10.6, 14), storms (*A.P.* 10.4) or winter (*A.P.* 9.363); the calm sea sunk to silence (*A.P.* 10.1), gleaming (*A.P.* 1. 14), smiling (*A.P.* 10.6) or sleeping (*A.P.* 10.16); the shepherd playing his pipe (*A.P.* 9.363), and the goatherd rejoicing in his kids (*A.P.* 9.363). A standard feature is also the presence of Priapus (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16) to whom sometimes a sacrifice is required (*A.P.* 10.14, 16).

³⁶ In the specific spring poems the standard elements do not necessarily appear in the order given in this schema as different authors place emphasis on different details.

The description of spring is followed by a series of Priapus' injunctions that man (*A.P.*10.1), sailors (*A.P.*10.2, 6, 14, 15, 16) or the merchant (*A.P.*10.4) raise the anchors (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 5), unloose the cables (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 4, 5, 6), haul up the sails (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 4, 5, 6), resume navigation (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 4, 16) and trade (*A.P.* 10. 6). A rather unusual and interesting injunction is to be found in *A.P.* 9.363 where the point seems to be that in such a beautiful and bustling season the poet too should occupy himself by singing beautifully.

The Roman spring poems (Catull. 46, Hor. *Carm.* 1, 4., 4. 7, 4. 12 and Ov. *Tr.* 3.12) while following the same basic schema employed in the Greek tradition of the genre, use the old form in a totally new way. The description of the season still contains most of the standard details or slight variations on them: the departure of winter (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4) and snow (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7); the swallow building her nest (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12, Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the reopening of navigation (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); ships drawn by the windlasses (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4); the return of grass and foliage (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7); the flowery meadow (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the chatty birds (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the West wind mitigating the cold (Catull. 46, Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7, 4.12, Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the shepherd playing his pipe (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12). Among the new elements of the description are the rivers flowing in their banks (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7, 4.12); the merry boys and girls plucking flowers (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the wars replaced by festivals (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the Underworld (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4); the party (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4); the presence of additional mythological figures, e.g. Venus (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4), the Graces and the Nymphs dancing (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7), Vulcan visiting the forges of the Cyclops (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4). Also new is the indirect (or negative) way of mentioning (positive) traditional standard elements. Thus, the meadows in flower of the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* are depicted in Hor. *Carm.* 1.4 and 4.12 as *not* frozen, *nor* white with the frost. New elements are also introduced in the

same way. Thus, in Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, the announcement of the resuming of farming activity is replaced by the statement that the cattle is no longer rejoicing in their stable, nor the ploughman in the fire (3).

However, the major difference between the Greek and the Roman spring poems is to be found in the second part of the schema as the reactions prompted by the season become increasingly sophisticated.³⁷ Starting with Catullus and continuing with Horace and Ovid, the reflections provoked by spring are diverse and sometimes opposite. Thus, if in Catullus' spring poem the season appears as a time for release, travel and adventure (Catull. 46), for Horace spring is an ambiguous season. In Horace's spring poems, the reflections include meditations on the rapid succession of seasons and therefore on the passing of time (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), on the sharp contrast between the regenerative powers of nature and the brevity of human life (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7), on the uncertainty of the future (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), on the inefficacy of piety, eloquence or love in the face of death³⁸ (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), and on the omnipotence of death (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4). Spring has thus a dual nature since the change it brings is a reminder of the eternal change, and, appearing to offer an escape from human temporality and death, spring is soon to be seen only as a reminder of them. Ovid's spring poem too expresses, although indirectly, the same ambiguity of the season. Springtime may bring joy, but for Ovid *any* possible joy only triggers nostalgia - nostalgia for his past and for Rome. With his usual ingenuity, Ovid uses the *form* of a spring poem to write in fact a poem of exile, to bring out his isolation and unhappiness in exile, in contrast to the joy that, in his remembrance at least, spring brings in the "forbidden city" (Ov. *Tr.* 3. 12.26).

³⁷ Common to the spring poems of the *Palatine Anthology* is only the injunction to sacrifice to a deity (this time to Faunus, in Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.).

³⁸ New is also in Horace the use of mythological exempla to demonstrate the inefficacy of love in the face of death (Hor. *Carm.* 1.7).

These meditations prompt a very diverse series of injunctions. Thus, in Catullus' poem we find an injunction for *himself*: *he* must travel, fly to the bright cities of Asia.³⁹ In Horace are frequent injunctions to wreath the head with green myrtle or flowers (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4), to put aside delays and the pursuit of gain (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12) and to drink and enjoy life (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12), introducing thus into the spring poem the *carpe diem* motif, while in Ovid's poem one may discern a covert injunction to be recalled in Rome.

³⁹ In contrast to the traveling from the poems of the *Palatine Anthology*, Catullus will go on a sightseeing trip rather than trade.

Chapter II

This chapter will examine the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* (A.P. 9.363; 10. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16), especially in the light of the schema established at pages 21ff. The detailed analysis of these epigrams aims to reveal the significant similarities and differences that exist between them, so that the great ingenuity with which the authors of these poems used the techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* - so much employed in the Greek tradition of the genre - can be better appreciated.

A.P. 10.1⁴⁰

Ὁ πλόος ὠραῖος· καὶ γὰρ λαλαγεῦσα χελιδὼν (1)
 ἤδη μέμβλωκεν χῶ χαρίεις ζέφυρος·
 λειμώνες δ' ἀνθεῦσι, σεσίγηκεν δὲ θάλασσα
 κύμασι καὶ τρηχεῖ πνεύματι βρασσομένη.
 ἀγκύρας ἀνέλοιο καὶ ἐκλύσαιο γύαια, (5)
 ναυτίλε, καὶ πλώσις πάσαν εφεῖς ὀθόνην.
 ταῦθ' ὁ Πρίητος ἐγὼν ἐπιτέλλομαι, ὁ λιμενίτας,
 ἀνθρώφ', ὡς πλώσις πάσαν ἐπ' ἐμπορίην.

Our first surviving spring poem⁴¹ was written by Leonidas of Tarentum who lived probably at the middle of the third century B.C. (see Gow-Page vol.2, 308). A rather short but very stylish piece of writing, Leonidas' epigram was later widely imitated by various poets whose poems were also included in the tenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*.⁴²

⁴⁰ The text of the epigrams analyzed in this chapter follows that of the Loeb edition.

⁴¹ See p. 22 n. 30.

⁴² Antipater of Sidon (A.P. 10.2), Marcus Argentarius (A.P. 10.4), Thyillus (A.P. 10.5), Satyrus (A.P. 10.6), Agathias Scholasticus (A.P. 10.14), Paulus Silentiarius (A.P. 10.15) and Theaetetus Scholasticus (A.P. 10.16).

The poem begins with a formal announcement of the renewal of navigation. In quick succession, there follow what will later become some of the standard details of the description of spring: the arrival of the swallow (1), the Zephyr (2), the blooming meadows (3), the calm and silent sea (3-4). After the description of spring follows the reaction prompted by the season, namely Priapus' injunctions (5-8): the sailor (6) is exhorted to weigh the anchors (5), unloose the stern-cables (5), and sail with all the canvas set (6) to trade in all kinds of things (8).

The structure of the epigram is symmetrical: the first half (1-4) contains the description of spring, while the second half (5-8) the reaction prompted by the season. The poem has a ring structure as its first line announces the opening of the sailing season and the last one contains the injunction to sail.⁴³

The epigram begins with a formal statement (Ὁ πλόος ὠροῖλος) whose model may be Hesiod *Op.* 630: ἀντὸς δ' ὠροῖλον μίμνειν πλόον, εἰσόκεν ἔλθῃ· (see Gow-Page 385). With Hesiod as the model here, the entire epigram could be seen as a subtle “sequel” to the Hesiodic passage (630-32), since the time of waiting for the sailing season - μίμνειν Hes. *Op.* 630 - comes (finally) to an end in the first line of Leonidas' epigram. Interestingly, Hesiod's reference to the πλόος ὠροῖλος is followed by an injunction to ready the ship, sail and trade, exactly as in *A.P.*10.1, so the Hesiodic passage foreshadows the similar injunction in Leonidas' poem. The contrast between Hesiod's prudent advice to Perses - who must be wise and patient - and the quick tempo imposed by Priapus' speech (and especially by his injunctions to action) reflects nevertheless the difference of mood that exists between Hesiod's didactic poem and Leonidas' epigram: in

⁴³ There is also verbal echo πλόος - πλώοις between the first and the last lines of the epigram.

contrast to the ‘patience’ of a didactic poem, the Hellenistic epigram ‘burns’ fast (and in Leonidas’ epigram this general ‘impatience’ is perhaps suggested by ἤδη).

In the first line, πλόος may have a symbolic correlative in χελιδών, as the swallow’s journey corresponds symbolically both with the transition - a ‘voyage’ on its own - from winter to summer⁴⁴ and with the future voyages made by the sailors. The first line of the epigram is enhanced by the assonance of ο and α, and by the melodious (and almost onomatopoeic) λαλαγεῦσα⁴⁵ which so much impressed Cicero (*Att.* 9.18.3, 10.2).

The second line of the epigram starts with ἤδη, which will become a verbal marker of the Greek spring poems,⁴⁶ appearing in almost all of them (*A.P.* 9.363, 10.2, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16). The line brings into the poem not only the gracious Zephyr⁴⁷ (in the stressed position at the end of the verse; cf. χελιδών, 1), but also the alliteration of χ,⁴⁸ which may suggest the whisper of the gentle wind.

In the third line, σεσίγηκεν, with the same number of syllables but opposite sense to λαλαγεῦσα creates a subtle contrast as the chattering swallow and the silent sea are placed in a harmonious opposition. The line contains also the assonance of ε, and a chiasmus, as the nouns, both preceded by the particle δε, are placed in stressed position, at the beginning (λειμῶνες) and the end (θάλασσα) of the line, with the verbs (ἀνθεῦσι and σεσίγηκεν) juxtaposed between them.

⁴⁴ See p. 3.

⁴⁵ Used also of other birds and cicadas (see Theoc. *Id.* 5.48, 7.139).

⁴⁶ In the Roman tradition its place will be taken by *iam* (Catull. 46, Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7, 4.12, Ov. *Tr.* 3.12).

⁴⁷ χαρίεις presents the Zephyr as a protective, benevolent element, in contrast to the rough πνεῦμα (4).

⁴⁸ Alliteration made possible by the crasis χῶ.

In the fourth line of the poem, which contains the gloomy description of the sea violently shaken by waves and rough blasts, the numerous consonants (especially κ, τ, μ, π and β) have an almost onomatopoeic effect, suggesting perhaps the breaking of the waves.

The fifth line, with the exuberance suggested by its assonance of α and αι, its rhyme (ἀνέλοιο, ἐκλύσαιο), and the injunction to action (to weigh the anchors and unloose the stem-cables) brings into the poem a sudden and invigorating burst of energy after the passive mood of the preceding verse. The line also contains a chiasmus, as the verbs, expressing the idea of release, are placed in the middle (back to back and united by καὶ) as if to oppose the (idea of) burden and tension suggested by ἀγκύρα and γύαια, in emphatic position at either end of line, since (paradoxically) the safety measures *against* the dangers of winter have suddenly become oppressive elements, *associated with* winter.

Worth noticing in this line is also the *hapax legomenon* γύαια (see Gow-Page 386). The word is employed in the sense of πρυμνήσια “stem-cables” and several explanations may be given for its presence here. Thus, its use could be part of Leonidas’ effort to achieve elevation of style by the use of rare language. The word may have been used also just to create a contrast with (the common) ἀγκύρα and thus to bring an element of surprise in an otherwise predictable end of a line, or could it be just a technical term employed to show Priapus’ knowledge of seafaring.

In the sixth line, we find what we have already guessed, namely that the injunctions were addressed to the sailor. A lexical innovation of this line is the word ὀθόνη “fine stuff” used here for the first time of sails (see Gow-Page 386). The use of this word may just show Priapus’ appreciation of the sails; however, considering that in Homer the word denotes the clothing of feminine figures

(*Il.* 3.141, 18.595), one may also suspect an attempt (in the Hellenistic indirect manner) to personify the ship, transforming it into a feminine presence contrasted with the masculine figure of the sailor at the beginning of the line. The words are carefully arranged, with *ναυτίλε*, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line, surrounded by the actions (line 5 and 6) that he must undertake. The injunctions at 5f. form a tricolon crescendo, and the sixth line contains alliteration of *π*.

Leonidas conceals until the penultimate line the identity of the speaker, a fact that creates a tension throughout the epigram. Only in line 7 do we find that the one speaking in the first person is Priapus as a harbour-god (*λιμενίτωρ*, placed in final position as if to emphasize this rather unexpected capacity, in which he also appears in several other poems included in the *Palatine Anthology: A.P.* 6.33, 89, 192, 193, 10.8). The god discloses his identity amid a preponderance of dactyls, as if to suggest his joyful character and, perhaps, to foreshadow the fast-moving action that should follow after his injunctions.

In the final line of the poem, the injunction to sail (from line 6) is repeated (with the variation that the sailor is this time addressed as *ἄνθρωπε* and urged in addition to trade). The line presents another striking resemblance to line 6, as *πλώοις πᾶσαν* is repeated, and *ἐπί* appears also in both lines (in line 6 present in *ἐφείς*). The point of this echoing could be to intensify (by means of repetition) the urgency of Priapus' injunction and to provide the specific purpose of the sailing from line 6, namely to trade. One may also notice the contrast created by the fact that god and man occupy a line each (7 and 8). This final line with the man and merchandise at either end in emphatic position and its triple alliteration (*ω*, *π* and *ε*) rounds off the poem with a flourish.

As pointed out above, there is much antithesis and parallelism in this rather short epigram, and, although the name of spring does not appear, every line suggests that this is a poem of spring. The vernal season appears as a time of new beginning, suggested by the opening of navigation, while the injunctions to action in the second part of the poem create a mood of excitement, which contrasts with the (rather) contemplative but hopeful atmosphere of the first part and the overall effect is thus one of mild tension followed by release. Leonidas' peculiar way of presenting the coming of spring (through the emphasis placed on sailing and trading) may be explained by his desire to surprise the reader by describing a less expected aspect of the season. However, as trading was a major Greek occupation at all times, perhaps Leonidas' choice was not as unusual as it appears to us. Furthermore, as Leonidas came from Tarentum, which had a harbour and carried an extensive commerce, this could also be a local take on spring. Finally, considering Leonidas' general preference for humble folk, e.g. rustics, fishermen, huntsmen (see Gow-Page 308, Gutzwiller 89f.), the emphasis on sailing was perhaps an option that particularly appealed to him.

The blending of tradition and novelty, another characteristic of the Hellenistic style, is perhaps to be seen in this epigram in Leonidas' choice of Priapus as the speaker and protective deity of sailors. Although Priapus does not appear here as a god of fecundity⁴⁹ (thus traditionally associated with spring) but as a god of harbors, a less usual guise, by the end of this short epigram he is entirely associated with the spring season. There could also be humour (via incongruity) in applying such stylish lines to (rather mundane) sailing and trading, and in putting them in the mouth of (humble and often earthy) Priapus.

⁴⁹ The presence of Priapus has incited quite provocative readings of the epigram. Thus, although Leonidas is known to avoid the erotic theme in his writings (see Gow-Page 308), some critics were quick to discover a (purely) Priapic context in this poem since, indeed, sailing was a metaphor for sexual activities and most of the key words of the epigram - *λειμώνες*, *χελιδών*, *ἀγκύρας*, *ναυτίλε* - had also erotic connotations (see Clack 72). However, such a reading would limit too much the meaning of the epigram to be seriously taken into consideration.

A.P. 10.2

Ἄκμοῖος ῥοθίῃ νηὶ δρόμος, οὐδὲ θάλασσα (1)
 πορφύρει τρομερῇ φρικτὴ χαραιοσομένη
 ἤδη δὲ πλάσσει μὲν ὑπὸ ροφᾶ γυρὰ χελιδῶν
 οἰκία, λειμώνων δ' ἄβρα γελᾶ πέταλα.
 τοῦνεκα μηρύσασθε διάβροχα πείσματα, ναῦται, (5)
 ἔλκετε δ' ἀγκύρας φωλαῖδας ἐκ λιμένων
 λαίφεα δ' εὐυφέα προτομίζετε. ταῦθ' ὁ Πρίητος
 ὕμνιν ἐνορμίτας παῖς ἐνέπω Βρομίου.

The next spring poem (A.P. 10.2) was written by another Hellenistic poet, Antipater of Sidon (second century B.C.), an author considered by Gutzwiller (237) “a key figure in establishing variation, especially close variation, as the future trend in epigram composition.” In the subsequent discussion of his work, Gutzwiller (240) divides Antipater’s variations into three main categories, putting in the first group the epigrams that repeat the subject, poetic structure, and sentiment of an earlier epigram with only a change of wording. While a close reading of the epigrams clearly shows that this is the case with A.P.10.1 and A.P. 10.2, one may also notice that, although Antipater follows closely Leonidas’ epigram as a model - and thus continues the (apparently incipient) tradition of the Greek spring poem - he also tries constantly to vary and ‘improve’ on Leonidas’ poem, the *change of wording* being, in fact, part of a complex and subtle creative process.

The great similarity between A.P. 10.1 and A.P. 10.2 is revealed by numerous structural, thematic and verbal correspondences. Thus, A.P. 10.2 has the same number of lines as A.P. 10.1 and also the same symmetrical structure, as the description of the season occupies its first half (1-4), and the reaction prompted by spring its second part (5-8). With the exception of the Zephyr (a notable absence from A.P. 10.2), the description of spring contains almost the same elements as A.P. 10.1, namely the sea, the swallow and the meadows. Also, common to both these epigrams is

the presence of Priapus, while the injunctions prompted by the season are almost the same, namely to raise the anchors, coil the cables and set the sails. The similarity between the two epigrams is also signaled by common key words (θάλασσα; ἤδη; χελιδών; λειμών; ἄγκυρα; Πρίηπος). A typical Hellenistic epigram, Antipater's spring poem, similar to *A.P.* 10.1, is characterized also by an elaborate diction (e.g. the use of rare words like προτονίζω in 7, the tricolon crescendo in 1-4, the contrast between various key words like Πρίηπος and Βρομίου), and a great attention given to sound effects (e.g. assonance of ο, α, η, ι in line 1, of ε, ι, ω in line 4, of α, ε, ο in line 7, and the presence of numerous harsh consonants - π, φ, ρ, χ, σ - in the description of the sea).

As mentioned above, throughout the poem Antipater tries to vary and improve on Leonidas' epigram. In this sense, the poem begins with a flourish as Leonidas' allusion to Hesiod is abandoned and the solemn Ὁ πλόος ὠραῖος is replaced by the dynamic Ἄκμοῖος ροθίη νηὶ δρόμος in a which the emphasis on the concrete element (νηὶ) and movement (ροθίος, δρόμος) starts the epigram with a vividness absent from Leonidas' spring poem. As another sense of ἄκμοῖος is "blooming,"⁵⁰ this spring poem begins with quite an appropriate word.

Antipater innovatively begins the specific description of the vernal season by presenting the sea through negation (οὐδέ), mentioning what the sea does not do in the spring. The waves and rough blasts of Leonidas' epigram (κύμασι καὶ τρηχεῖ πνεύματι, *A.P.* 10.1.4) are replaced by the concise τρομερῆ φρικί. Interestingly, by using the adjective τρομερός (which could mean both "frightening" and "trembling", see *LSJ* s.v.), Antipater manages to suggest not only the

⁵⁰ The notion of blooming ties in the beginning of the epigram with the meadows from line 4.

physical aspect of the wave but also the psychological reaction prompted by it. In the same line, the word *χαρασσομένη*, suggesting perhaps the sounds of tearing, hints at the violence of the wave and has a more striking effect than Leonidas' *βρασσομένη* (*A.P.* 10.1.4), which, although occurs in the same position, is a shorter word with a less violent meaning. However, the descriptions of sea in *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2 differ at a more profound level, since, while in Leonidas' poem the emphasis was on the calm and silence of the sea, therefore more on the auditory aspect, in *A.P.* 10.2 the emphasis is rather on the visual aspect as *πορφύρει* means not only "to surge" but also "to gleam darkly" (see *LSJ* s.v.).⁵¹ A similar emphasis on the visual aspect could also be noticed in the description of the swallow at 3f., since the bird is no longer presented as (merely) chattering but building her *round* nest *under* the eaves of the house. As this time the swallow has not just arrived but is presented as already building her nest, Antipater manages to amplify the sense of urgency implied in ἤδη that starts, imitating *A.P.* 10.1, the description of the *χελιδών*.⁵²

In line 4, the flourishing meadows are presented with specific details (and thus more efficiently), as the emphasis is placed on the leaves of its vegetation. In contrast to *A.P.* 10.1 where the sea is personified, in *A.P.* 10.2 the leaves are laughing, a pathetic fallacy that brings liveliness into the poem.⁵³ The personification of the leaves is also suggested by ἄβρα "delicate, graceful, beauteous, pretty" (again pregnant diction), an adjective used elsewhere of maidens (*Hes. Fr.* 218), Eros (*Anacr.* 17, 65 *PMG*) and the Graces (*Sapph.* 60 *PMG*).

⁵¹ A paradox may also be intended, as *πορφύρω* is usually used to describe the surge of the wave that does not break, which contrasts with the violence of *χαρασσομένη* (2), but suggests the hidden menace of the wave.

⁵² According to Gow-Page (65), Antipater's *χελιδών* is in fact a house martin. One of the differences between swallows and martins is in the place in which they build their nests, the swallow placing it upon the rafters, while the martin does so under the eaves (see Amott 1967).

⁵³ The word *γελῶ* appears in a similar context in *Hom. Il.* 19.362, *h. Hom.* 14. and *h. Hom.* 118.

In general, the description of spring in Antipater's epigram is more detailed than in *A.P.* 10.1, a fact that gives the poem a 'flourishing' and more vivid appearance, while the emphasis on movement and actions (πλάσσει, γελῶ) creates a lively mood of excitement and merriment.

In contrast to Leonidas' epigram, at 5-8 the relation of causality between the signs of spring and the reaction prompted by the season is explicitly expressed (τοῦνεκα). The sailors (in Antipater's poem, for variation, ναῦται (a different word and an increased number), Priapus apparently addressing this time various individuals or, more likely, a crew) are urged to wind up the cables and drag the anchors from the harbors. These injunctions occupy two lines (in Leonidas' epigram only one line) and their order is reversed, as the sailors will take care first of the cables and then of the anchors. In line 6, φωλάδωσ creates a striking image (outdoing *A.P.* 10.1.5 where the anchors are just mentioned.), as the anchors buried in the sand are described with a word derived from φωλεύω, a word used by Aristotle for describing the hibernating animals (*GA* 783b11), as if the anchors having become marine creatures, must be awakened to the vernal life.

At the beginning of line 7 may be found another example of Antipater's deliberate effort to vary on his model, as λείφει, beside "sails," could also mean "tattered garment" or "rags" (see *LSJ* s.v.), standing thus in total contrast to Leonidas' ὀθόνη "fine stuff" (*A.P.* 10.1.6).⁵⁴ In line 7, one may also notice the verb προτονίζω "to haul up," formed from πρότοινοι "the forestays, ropes from the masthead to the forepart of a ship." As the verb appears only here (see Gow-Page

⁵⁴ This line is also enhanced by the rhyme (λείφει - εὐυφέει), with δ' echoing δ' of the previous line, in the same position but, this time, between the noun and its adjective, as if to hold together (at the textual level) the "well-woven rags"- (perhaps) a deliberate (and playful) paradox, a stylish touch as this comes from a Hellenistic poet.

65), in addition to Leonidas' reasons for using a rare word (see the discussion on γύοια, p. 28), one may also suspect Antipater's desire to imitate the search for a rare word by his model.

At the end of line 7 (therefore in emphatic position, a variation on *A.P.* 10.1.7), the author introduces into the poem Priapus. In contrast to *A.P.* 10.1, Priapus, presented again as a harbour-god (with the variation ἐνορμίτας instead of λιμενίτης), appears in *A.P.* 10.2 as the son of Dionysus (and presumably Aphrodite). The presence of Priapus' genealogy has probably a double function, since it both confers more authority and dignity on (an elsewhere often undignified) Priapus, by presenting him as the son of a more important god, and, brings into this spring poem Dionysus, another (and more significant) deity even more closely associated with the vernal season.

In contrast to Leonidas' spring poem, Antipater does not mention trading as the final purpose of the specific actions commanded by Priapus. This open (and therefore intriguing) ending allows the reader to consider also fishing, traveling or exploring as possible outcomes of Priapus' injunctions, suggesting that the god is talking to a broader audience, a fact that, together with the mention of Dionysus in emphatic position in the last line that creates an elevated mood, stand in contrast to the end of Leonidas' epigram where the emphasis is only on the man and his trading.

As a conclusion, one may say that Antipater successfully manages to 'rewrite' Leonidas' poem, following it as a thematic, structural and stylistic model, but varying and 'improving' on it. The change of emphasis (e.g. in the description of spring), even the change of wording (among which also the use of different words with a similar meaning⁵⁵) have a refreshing effect, re-translating spring and the feelings it prompts into another flourishing poem.

⁵⁵ Like πείσματα *A.P.* 10.2.5 - γύοια *A.P.* 10.1.5, ναύτης *A.P.* 10.2.5 - ναυτίλος *A.P.* 10.1.6, ἐνέπω *A.P.* 10.2.8 - ἐπιτέλλομαι *A.P.* 10.1.7, ἐνορμίτας *A.P.* 10.1.8 - λιμενίτης *A.P.* 10.2.7

A.P. 10.4

Ἄυσον ἄπ' εὐόρμων δολιχὰ πρυμνήσια νηῶν, (1)
 εὐτροχα δ' ἐκπετάσας λαίφεα ποιντοπόρει,
 ἔμπορε· χειμῶνες γὰρ ἀπέδρομον, ἄρτι δὲ κύμα
 γλαυκὸν θηλύνει πρηγέλως Ζέφυρος·
 ἤδη καὶ φιλοτεκνὸς ὑπὸ τραυλοῖσι χελιδῶν (5)
 χεῖλεσι καρφίτην πηλοδομεῖ θάλαμον·
 ἀνθεα δ' ἀντέλλουσι κατὰ χθόνα· τῶ σὺ Πριήπων
 πειθόμενος πάσης ἄπτεο ιαυτιλίας.

The tradition of the spring poem was continued by Marcus Argentarius, who lived in or near the Augustan Age but as a poet was closer to the Hellenistic epigrammatists than to his own contemporaries (Gow-Page 1968, 166f.). Marcus Argentarius employs in his spring poem [A.P. 10.4] the Hellenistic techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* using both Leonidas' and Antipater's poems as models but constantly trying to vary and 'improve' on them.

In typical Hellenistic fashion, Marcus Argentarius employs various structural, thematic and verbal correspondences to reveal the similarity between his epigram and the previous two spring poems. Thus, A.P. 10.4 contains, in the same number of lines, a description of the vernal season that combines details found in both A.P. 10.1 and A.P. 10.2 (e.g. the Zephyr of A.P. 10.1.2, the ship of A.P. 10.2.1, the swallow - with ἤδη again as a verbal marker similar to both A.P. 10.1.2 and A.P. 10.2.3 - building her nest as in A.P. 10.2.3f., the flowers blooming like the meadows in A.P. 10.1.3) and similar reactions prompted by spring (e.g. the injunctions to loose the cables as in A.P. 10.1.5 and A.P. 10.2.5, to spread the sails as in A.P. 10.1.6 and A.P. 10.2.5, and set to sea as in A.P. 10.1.6). The epigram also shares the presence of Priapus with its models, as the god is revealed as the speaker and implicitly as a protective deity of the sailors in the penultimate line, as in A.P. 10.1.7 and A.P. 10.2.7. At the same time, throughout the poem numerous key words point either to

Leonidas' or Antipater's epigram or to both of them: λαῖφος (*A.P.* 10.2.7), ναῦς (*A.P.* 10.2.1), κῦμα (*A.P.* 10.1.4), Ζέφυρος (*A.P.* 10.1.2), πᾶς (*A.P.* 10.1.6), χελιδών (*A.P.* 10.1.1, 2.3), ἦδη (*A.P.* 10.1.2, 2.3), Πρίηπος (*A.P.* 10.1.7, 2.7), while ἀνθεα echoes the meadows in flower (ἀνθεῦσι) of *A.P.* 10.1.3, πρηγύγελως the smiling leaves (γελᾶ) of *A.P.* 10.2.4, and ἔμπορε the trade (ἐμπορίην) of *A.P.* 10.1.8. The stylistic elegance of Marcus Argentarius' epigram (e.g. the ring structure signaled by the mention of ships in the first line and by the injunction to undertake any kind of navigation from the last line, as well as by the verbal echo νηῶν - ναυτιλίας; the tricolon crescendo in lines 3-6 that contain the description of spring; the contrast between man and god hinted at and amplified by the juxtaposition of σὺ and Πριήπῳ in line 7; the use of rare words like εὐτροχα, employed only here of sails, ἀπέδρομον and κορφίτην⁵⁶) and the attention given to effects of sound (e.g. assonance of α, ε and ο in line 7, alliteration of π in line 8) are also features that reveal a deliberate (and successful) effort to point to the earlier spring poems.

Throughout his epigram, Marcus Argentarius employs also the Hellenistic techniques of *variatio* and *aemulatio*. The most striking difference between *A.P.* 10.4 and the previous two spring poems is to be found in the (unexpected) inversion of the (already traditional) schema of the spring poem, as the reactions prompted by spring are placed at the very beginning of the epigram, followed by the description of the vernal season and (rather surprisingly) by Priapus' injunction addressed to the merchant to undertake any kind of navigation. Since the epigram, like *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2, ends with Priapus disclosing his identity as a speaker, the description of the vernal season is thus 'bracketed' by the reactions prompted by spring. However, in contrast to the opening

⁵⁶ For all these words, see Gow-Page, 1968, 182.

phrases of *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2 in which the season of sailing is ‘formally’ declared open (especially in *A.P.* 10.1), Marcus Argentarius’ epigram seems to start *in medias res*. As the injunctions to action create a mood of alertness, the effect of this innovative inversion is a more dynamic beginning of the epigram in comparison with *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.

The first line of the epigram begins with λῦσον, a word that conveys the idea of release, echoing thus ἐκλύσαιο from *A.P.* 10.1.5, used also of cables, and outdoing it, as it is placed in an emphatic position (the first word of the epigram). The stern-cables of the ships are described as δολιχὰ, a word which, meaning “long” - primarily in space but also in time - may suggest a (hidden) impatience and allude either to the urgency of the actions (the great length of the cables requiring more time to be unloosed) or to the great length of (winter) time they were coiled, and therefore inert (much as the wintry season).

In line 2, the word εὐτροχὰ “smoothly running” or rather “easily-hoisted” (see *LSJ* s.v.) as it is (innovatively) used of sails, recalls εὐυφέα used also of λαιφέα in Antipater’s poem (*A.P.* 10.2. 7) and echoes εὐόρμων “well-moored” in the first line, creating also a contrast, since the emphasis is placed now on the idea of motion not of safety. The idea of daring is perhaps present in ποντοπόρει, a verb that usually describes a sailing on the open sea (more dangerous) as opposed to a coasting voyage (see *LSJ* s.v.). The use of this verb may, however, be prompted by the use of ἔμπορε - “wayfarer” but usually “merchant” (see *LSJ* s.v.) - in the next line, at the same time giving the reader a (rather false) hint about the meaning with which ἔμπορε is used in this epigram since, according to Simonsen (259), especially the *merchant* ships, because of their large cargo capacity, could be more independent of the shore and thus able to sustain longer voyages than any

other kinds of ships (e.g. war-vessels or the ships of the fishermen). However, after tricking the reader into believing that ἔμπορε (which also echoes ἐμπορίην from *A.P.* 10.1.8) could mean here *merchant*, in the last line of the epigram, Priapus' injunction to undertake any kind of navigation (πάσης ναυτιλίας, therefore without any special reference to trading), makes ἔμπορος mean merely *wayfarer* (a variation on *A.P.* 10.1 and also an 'improvement' since it gives Priapus a much larger audience than in Leonidas' poem). One may also note the musicality of ποντοπόρει ἔμπορε and the emphatic position of ἔμπορε, the addressee being revealed at the very end of these injunction and at the very beginning of a new line (in a similar emphatic position is also placed ναυτίλε in *A.P.* 10.1.6 (at the beginning of the line) and ναῦτα in *A.P.* 10.2. 5 (at the end of the line).

In line 3, where begins the description of spring, the use of ἀπέδρομον "to run off or away" (see *LSJ* s.v.), considered by Gow-Page (1968, 182) just a "picturesque innovation," presents in fact the (personified) winter storms as fugitives, or/and indirectly alludes to the impetuous coming of the vernal season, which, rather like a victorious army, puts to flight its conquered enemies.

In line 4, the Zephyr reappears softly smiling in the spring poem.⁵⁷ The West wind is given an interesting role in this epigram, as he softens the gleaming wave of the sea. Since the Zephyr was later associated with birth and fertility (see *Lucr.* 1.11, *Cat.* 64. 282, *Verg. G.* 1.44, 2.330f., *Ov. Met.* 9.661, *Plin. H.N.* 16.25) the verb θηλύω "to make womanish" (see *LSJ* s.v.), used only here in

⁵⁷Its smiles echo the smiling leaves from the meadows of *A.P.* 10.2.4. Also, as in Marcus Argentarius' epigram the Zephyr is presented as a more active presence than in *A.P.* 10.1, προύγελως has more effect than the corresponding epithet (χαριεις) from *A.P.* 10.1, the gentleness of the wind being concretely exemplified by its soothing smile.

connection with the sea, may also be suggestive, transforming the barren (ἀτρύγετος) sea of the Homeric poems (see *Il.* 1.316, *Od.* 2.370) into a feminine presence. The mention of the soothing Zephyr immediately after the fleeing winter storms also creates a mood of peacefulness and calm that stands in contrast to the alert mood of the injunctions from the beginning of the epigram.

In addition to building her θάλαμος, a variation on οἰκία of *A.P.* 10.2.4 and also an improvement since the word θάλαμος, usually denoting the *inner part of the house* (see *LSJ* s.v.) suggests even better than οἰκία the idea of intimacy and protection, the χελιδών is described as φιλότεκνος, an adjective that personifies the bird and also reveals the real purpose of building her “house,” namely to bring up future offspring. The twittering (τραυλοῖσι) beak of the swallow may also echo λαλαγεῦσα of *A.P.* 10.1.1, Marcus Argentarius combining thus various details found in the description of the bird from the previous two spring poems. However, in contrast to Leonidas’ spring poem, the swallow is introduced into this epigram after the mention of the West wind, while in the description of her nest, the emphasis is placed this time on the material (καρφίτης) from which it is built, not on its shape or location as in *A.P.* 10.2.3. Both the characterization of the swallow as φιλότεκνος and the mention of her twittering beak are innovations brought by Marcus Argentarius in the description of the χελιδών and, generally, this is the most detailed description of the swallow and her endeavors so far, occupying two lines of the epigram in contrast to approximately a single line in the poems of his predecessors.

In line 7, the flowers spring up (ἀντέλλουσι) on the (presumably entire) earth (κατὰ χθόνα), outdoing thus both *A.P.* 10.1.3 and *A.P.* 10.2.4, where the flowery aspect of the vernal

season is present only in the description of the meadows. Similar to Antipater's epigram (see *A.P.* 10.2.5), the relation of causality between the signs of the season and the reactions prompted by spring is explicitly expressed (τῷ). In the same line (and much like the flowers *κατὰ χθόνα*), Priapus springs up in the epigram; however, in contrast to the previous two epigrams, this time the god is introduced without any (already redundant) qualification, as the author of the poem assumes that the reader knows him from *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2 as the divinity of the harbour and the protector of the sailors. After asking for the appropriate obedience due to a divinity (and, perhaps, also hoping that, by his speech, he has also *persuaded* his listeners - another sense of *πείθω*, see *LSJ* s.v. I), he commands the undertaking of any kind of navigation (*πάσης ναυτιλίας*). As the sudden appearance of Priapus is somewhat 'oblique,' since the god refers to himself in the third person (*Πριήπῳ πειθόμενος*),⁵⁸ and the injunction to undertake every kind of *navigation* cleverly leaves the identity of his addressee to be guessed, and thus implies a large audience, the poem ends with a flourish of meanings to be taken into consideration.

One may conclude that the author of *A.P.* 10.4 cleverly combines in this epigram elements taken from both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2, introducing new details or giving up others (for example the anchors). Following the tradition inaugurated (as far as we know) by Leonidas and Antipater, Marcus Argentarius manages to write a third, fresh and innovative spring poem.

⁵⁸ Does the speaker wish to suggest that he plays only the impersonal role of a messenger, either to test the faith of his audience (as this comes from a god) or just to add a (vague) humorous note to the passage (as this comes from Priapus)?

A.P. 10.5

Ἦδη πηλοδομεῦσι χελιδόνες, ἦδη ἀν' οἶδμα (1)
 κολποῦνται μαλακαῖς εἰς ὀθόνας ζέφυρος·
 ἦδη καὶ λειμῶνες ὑπερ πετάλων εἰσέαινον
 ἀνθεα, καὶ τρηχὺς σίγα μέμυκε πόρος.
 σχοίνους μηρῦεσθε, εἴ οἱ κάδα φορτίζεσθε (5)
 ἀγκύρας, καὶ πᾶν λαῖφος ἔφεσθε κάλοις.
 ταῦτ' ὕμιν πλώουσιν ἐπ' ἐμπορίην ὁ Πριήτος
 ὁ λιμεινορμίτης ναυτιλίην γράφομαι.

Written by Thyillus (an author who probably lived in the first century B.C. but about whom nothing else is otherwise known),⁵⁹ *A.P.* 10.5 clearly continues the tradition of the spring poem. However, as the precise composition date of this epigram is unknown, in the following analysis the poem will be compared only with *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.

The epigram follows the traditional schema of a spring poem, containing (in the usual eight lines) the description of the season (lines 1-4) and the reactions prompted by spring (lines 5-8). Although *A.P.* 10.5 contains elements found in both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2, a closer look shows that, in fact, the epigram follows very closely the format of *A.P.* 10.1 (the prototype of the genre) with some admixture from *A.P.* 10.2. Thus, in the description of the vernal season, the same elements as in *A.P.* 10.1 come into the poem in the same order (the swallow, the Zephyr, the meadows in flower, the silent sea), while in the second part of the epigram, although the order of the injunctions (to wind up the cables, to raise the anchors and sail) follows *A.P.* 10.2, the last section, in which the identity of the speaker is disclosed, is similar to the end of *A.P.* 10.1 (the same length of two lines, the mention of sailing and trading).

⁵⁹ See *LSJ* XXXVII and Pauly-Wissowa II. 2.1, 227.

Between this epigram and the preceding ones there is also a striking stylistic affinity, as the author gives special attention to features of sound (e.g. assonance of ο, η in the first line, of ο, α in the second line, and of ι, ο and η in the last one) and employs elaborate expression (e.g. the tricolon crescendo in lines 5-6 that contain Priapus' injunctions, the triple - and thus melodious and almost incantational - repetition of ἦδη in the first and third line,⁶⁰ the use of rare words, like the *hapax legomenon* λιμενορμίτης⁶¹).

The epigram drops the formal announcement of the renewal of navigation from *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2 and starts in a vivid and dynamic mood, as in the description of the vernal season the emphasis, as the presence of numerous verbs (πηλοδομεῦσι, κολποῦται, ἐχέαινο) reveals, is placed primarily on the idea of action.

In the first line of the epigram, the swallows, building their houses of clay (πηλοδομεῦσι, an additional detail, not present in *A.P.* 10.1, that is more effective than πλάσσει from *A.P.* 10.2.3, as it sharpens the picture), appear in the plural form, in contrast to the singular used in both *A.P.* 10.1.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.3. Immediately after the swallow, like in *A.P.* 10.1.2, the Zephyr is introduced into the poem (however, this time, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.1.2, *together* with the sails,⁶² a rather natural addition as the wind forms a natural pair with the sails in an epigram in which seafaring is so important). Predominant in the appearance of the West wind is the notion of *swelling*, present in the neatly juxtaposed οἶδμα (see *LSJ* s.v I) and κολποῦται (see *LSJ* s.v I), the (potentially)

⁶⁰ A variation that tops both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.

⁶¹ Created by combining λιμενίτης from *A.P.* 10.1.7 and ἐνορμίτης from *A.P.* 10.2.8, λιμενορμίτης is a witty variation that surpasses by means of its length the previous qualifications of Priapus.

⁶² Interestingly, the author uses Leonidas' ὀβόνη (*A.P.* 10.1.6), qualified by μολακός, the sails forming thus a (delicate) pair with the χορμίς ζέφυρος (*A.P.* 10.1.2).

menacing swelling of the waves being thus contrasted with the benign and useful swelling of the sails.

The description of the meadows in lines 3-4 cleverly combines elements found in both *A.P.* 10.1.3 and *A.P.* 10.2.4, as all the key words - λειμῶνες, πετάλων, ἄνθεα - are present here.⁶³ The meadows are personified, and a certain suspense is created as the reader finds out the direct object of ἔχέαντο only at the beginning of line 4 (ἄνθεα, in emphatic position). The description clearly surpasses *A.P.* 10.1.3 through length and abundance of details. In the same line, the silence of the rough (τρηχὺς echoing τρηχεῖ from *A.P.* 10.1.3) strait (πόρος, also personified, a variation on θάλασσα from *A.P.* 10.1.3) echoes the silence of the sea from Leonidas' epigram.

In lines 5-6, the anchors are cleverly presented as the first load of the trading vessel (ὀλκάς), definitely outdoing the mention of pulling up the anchors from *A.P.* 10.1.5. The surprise is amplified by the position of ἀγκύρας, which comes immediately after φορτίζεσθε but in emphatic position at the beginning of the following line. In line 6 of the epigram, the syntagm καὶ πᾶν λαῖφος ἔφεσθε κάλοις echoes and comes as a variation on καὶ πλώϊς πᾶσαν ἐφείς ὀθόνην from *A.P.* 10.1.6. One could also notice that the author of *A.P.* 10.5 uses two different words for ropes (σχοῖνος and κάλως) and for sails (ὀθόνη and λαῖφος), outdoing thus both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2, and probably suggesting in this way his Priapus' superior knowledge of seafaring. One could also remark that the presence of both ὀθόνη (found in *A.P.* 10.1.6) and

⁶³ In this epigram, the leaves of the meadows (that point to *A.P.* 10.2.4) are wittily 'bracketed' by λειμῶνες and ἄνθεα (that point to *A.P.* 10.1.3).

λαῖφος (found in *A.P.* 10.2.7) in the same epigram is also a clever combination, revealing, once again, the literary ‘roots’ of *A.P.* 10.5.

The last two lines (7-8) bring into the epigram Priapus whose audience is this time constituted exclusively of merchants⁶⁴ (ὄμμιν πλώουσιν ἐπ’ ἐμπορίην from line 7 confirms this, as does also the use of ὀλκός in line 5⁶⁵). Line 7 contains also another variation as ταῦτ’ ... ὁ Πρίητος, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.1 (where it appears at the beginning of the line) and *A.P.* 10.2 (where it occupies the end of line 7), in this epigram begins and ends the line. However, the most interesting variation on the preceding spring poems comes (as a surprise) at the very end of the epigram, as γράφομαι, here *to prescribe, to ordain* (see *LSJ* s.v. 2.VII), in emphatic position, is more effective than both ἐπιτέλλομαι from *A.P.* 10.1.7 and ἐνέπω from *A.P.* 10.1.8 since it also reminds the reader of the inscriptional origin of the epigrammatic genre. Together with the *hapax legomenon* λιμενορμίτης and the assonance of ι, ο and η, γράφομαι ends this epigram in a flourish.

Although the critical appreciation of this epigram is hindered by the uncertainty of its composition date, which makes difficult its evaluation in relation to the previous spring poems, *A.P.* 10.5 is a neat and stylish piece of writing that not only follows and varies on *A.P.* 10.1, but also ingeniously employs elements found in *A.P.* 10.2, with an overall effect of freshness and refinement.

⁶⁴ *Imitatio* of *A.P.* 10.1 and *variatio* on *A.P.* 10.2.

⁶⁵ See *LSJ* s.v. I.

A.P. 10.6

Ἦδη μὲν ζεφύροιο ποητόκου ὑγρὸν ἄημα (1)
ἥρεμα λειμῶνας πίτνει ἐπ' αἰθοκόμους·
Κεκροπίδες δ' ἠχεῦσι· γαλιηαίη δὲ θάλασσα
μειδίαει κρυερῶν ἄτρομος ἐξ ἀνέμων.
ἀλλ' ἴτε θαρσαλέοι, προμνήσια λύτετε, ναῦται, (5)
πίτνατε δὲ περυγῶν λεπταλέας στολίδας.
ὦ ἴτ' ἐπ' ἐμπορίην πίσυνοι χαρίεντι Πριήπῳ,
ὦ ἴτε δὴ λιμῆων δαίμονι πειθόμενοι.

The next author of a spring poem (*A.P.* 10.6) was Satyrus, who possibly lived in the first century B.C. (see *LSJ* XXXV). However, since even this date is uncertain (see Pauly-Wissowa II. 2.1, 227), Satyrus' epigram can be safely compared only with *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.

A.P. 10.6 shares the same formal and thematic characteristics with the previous spring poems but is also an innovative epigram, in which the techniques of *variatio* and *aemulatio* are constantly (and successfully) employed. This poem too has only 8 lines and the same symmetrical structure as the others, containing in the first half (1-4) the description of the season and in the second half (5-8) the reactions prompted by spring. The description of the season includes the Zephyr, the meadows, the swallows and the sea, while the reactions prompted by spring consists of Priapus' injunctions addressed to the sailors to loose the cables, spread the sails and go to trade.

Satyrus drops (as a variation) from the beginning of his poem the formal announcement of the resumption of sailing (found in both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2) and starts (in the familiar 'ἦδη mood') with the description of the Zephyr. However, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.1.2, where the wind is just mentioned, Satyrus offers a more detailed description, and, innovatively, relates the Zephyr to the regenerative aspect of spring (1-2). Qualified as ποητόκος (a *hapax legomenon*) the West wind

is presented in close connection with the meadows, its moist ἄημα⁶⁶ making the grass grow and thus *insufflating* life to the meadows. The lines have an almost erotic feel, as the meadows, decked with flowers (ἀνθοκόμος) as they are, may be seen as a feminine presence since, as Calame (156) remarks, in spite of the masculine gender of the word, λειμῶν, when used with erotic overtones, tends to suggest a feminine entity, while the Zephyr was masculine.⁶⁷ The combination of the Zephyr and the meadows into a single (and delicate) image surpasses *A.P.* 10.1.2f. in which, although both these elements appear, they are separately (and rather succinctly) treated.

In line 3, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.2.3f., the swallows, with a dignity conferred perhaps by their royal lineage (revealed by their qualification as Κεκροπίδες), refrain from such a mundane activity as building nests, and occupy themselves just with singing as in *A.P.* 10.1.1f., although their song is presumably more decorous than in Leonidas' epigram since the (merry but rather meaningless) prattling implied in λαλαγεῦσα, could hardly be appropriate for a royal descendant.⁶⁸ Through the (learned) allusion to Cecrops, the mythical king of Athens, Satyrus achieves elevation of style, reminding the reader of the refined vein in which the poems of this genre are written. However, a humorous note could also be intended, as we can hardly imagine (at least at this stage of the epigram) the rustic (and, therefore, not particularly cultured) Priapus referring thus to swallows.

In the same line, the personified (and calm - γαληνιαίη) sea smiles, suggesting that, with the arrival of spring and of good weather, there is no danger in navigation. The use of the verb

⁶⁶ The word, meaning “blast, gale” (see *LSJ* s.v.) is quite strong for a vernal context, and, juxtaposed to ἡρέμια “gently, softly, slowly” (see *LSJ* s.v.), may suggest, via contrast, the ambiguous (and unpredictable) nature of the season.

⁶⁷ For the symbolic value of the Zephyr as a principle of life, and its associations with birth and fertility, see 12f.

⁶⁸ In contrast to λαλαγέω “to prattle” or “to chirrup,” ἤχέω “to sound” is more neutral (see *LSJ* s.v.).

μειδιόω is meant perhaps to create a (gentle) contrast to γελῶν “to laugh aloud” (see *LSJ* s.v.) employed in *A.P.* 10.2.4 to describe the smiling leaves of the meadows.

The description of spring, which started with the mention of the *warm* and ποητόκος Zephyr, ends with the reference to winter’s chilling⁶⁹ (and thus not fertilizing) winds, mirroring perhaps the natural succession of winds and conferring also a ring structure on this part of the poem.

In lines 5f., the sailors are urged to loose the cables and spread out the folds of the sails. In contrast to both *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2, where the sailors are also urged to raise the anchors, Satyrus drops them from his epigram. However, he offers instead a more detailed (and rather arresting) description of the sails (and thus indirectly of the ship), as Priapus’ injunction, taken out of the context, could just as well be thought of as being addressed to some birds (πίτινατε, plural form), whereas the subsequent image that could come to the mind of the reader could be, in fact, that of a flock of birds outspreading their wings (πτέρυξ) as they prepare to take flight. Nevertheless, as both στολίς “garment” or “robe,” (a word used only here with this meaning, see *LSJ* s.v.) and λεπτολέος “fine,” “delicate” or “feeble” (see *LSJ* s.v.) may also suggest a feminine figure, the ship as such could be also viewed as both woman and bird, which is the most striking appearance of a ship in the spring poems analyzed so far. In view of Priapus’ special relationship with birds (as a protector of the fields), women (as a fertility deity), and, as a harbour-god, with ships, line 6 seems thus to allude to all of his ‘concerns.’ On the other hand, one may say that, after a description of spring ‘dominated’ or, at least, ‘bracketed’ by winds, the great attention given to sails

⁶⁹ The word κρυερός, used here to describe the winds, could mean both “chilling” and “dread” (see *LSJ* s.v.) and thus may suggest both the physical aspect of the winds and the psychological reaction prompted by them. Similarly, ἄτρομος from τρέμω “to tremble, quake, quiver” and then “to tremble with fear, to fear” (see *LSJ* s.v.), may also suggest both the physical calm and the lack of fear which characterizes now the smiling (and personified) sea.

comes as a logical corollary in a poem about urging people to navigate, while the stylistic care employed in this line (as well as in the rest of the epigram) may explain the rather unusual epithet (χαρίεντι, 7) with which the god Priapus (rather proudly) characterizes himself. Indeed, Priapus proves himself throughout the epigram to be an *accomplished* and *elegant* speaker,⁷⁰ as the poem contains numerous features of sound and style, e.g. assonance of ε, η, ι and α (3), alliteration of π (6), assonance of ε and alliteration of π (7), alliteration of δ (8), the melodious repetition of ὦ ἴτε (5, 7 and 8), the lively and brisk dactyls at 7f., the tricolon crescendo in 5f., and also (in order to achieve elevation of style) the use of rare words, like ἀνθοκόμος (2) and στολίζ (6).

A.P. 10.6 may also contain a touch of humour, as the sailors are repeatedly urged (in lines 5, 7 and 8 - rather too many times in such a short poem) to resume navigation. However, one may also imply that, since the sailors are so reluctant to go to sea that they need to be told three times to do so, sailing is - as it was, in fact - a high-risk endeavor. Nevertheless, as the sailors must overcome their fear and become θαρσαλέοι, the repetition of ὦ ἴτε, creating an almost incantational and apotropaic effect, may help, and thus, trusting on their reliable protector, the χαρίεντι Priapus, the sailors could fear (presumably) no harm in their trading endeavor.⁷¹ For, indeed, what sailor could any longer fear to go to sea, when urged by such an accomplished speaker as Priapus?

As a conclusion, one may say that what sets apart *A.P.* 10.6 from the chronologically earlier spring poems (*A.P.* 10.1 and 2) is the combined description of the Zephyr and the meadows, the striking image of the ship, and also the humor that one may find between its lines.

⁷⁰ Therefore, a “god of taste,” and, thus, far more gracious than the Zephyr himself. The adjective χαρίεντι echoes *A.P.* 10.1.2, where the Zephyr is characterized as such. For all these meanings of χαρίεις, see *LSJ* s.v.

⁷¹ ἐπ’ ἐμπορίην at the end of the epigram echoes *A.P.* 10.1.8.

A.P. 10.14

Εὐδία μὲν πόντος πορφύρεται· οὐ γὰρ ἀήτης (1)
 κύματα λευκαίνει φρικτὴ χαραιοσσομένα·
 οὐκέτι δὲ σπλάδεσσι περικλασθεῖσα θάλασσα
 ἔμπαλιν ἀνῶπὸς πρὸς βάθος εἰσάγεται.
 οἱ ζέφυροι πνεύουσιν, ἐπιτρύζει δὲ χελιδῶν (5)
 κάρφεσι κολλητὸν πηξάμενη θάλαμον.
 θάρσει, ναυτιλίας ἐμπείραμε, κἄν παρὰ Σύρτιν,
 κἄν παρὰ Σικελικὴν ποντοπορῆς κροκάλην
 μῦνον ἐνορμίταιο παροῖ βωμοῖσι Πριήπτου
 ἢ σκάρων ἢ βῶκας φλέξον ἐρευθομένους. (10)

Composed by Agathias Scholasticus (sixth century A.D, see *LSJ* XVI and Pauly-Wissowa I, 743), *A.P.* 10.14 carries on the tradition of the spring poem, but also innovatively breaks with it.

Among the conventional characteristics of the genre, one may easily recognize the traditional schema of a spring poem and the presence of some of the familiar elements (such as the sea, the West wind, the swallow, and Priapus as the protective deity of the sailors). As all the previous poems of this genre, Agathias Scholasticus' epigram contains rare words (ἀήτης, 1) and numerous features of sound and style, e.g. assonance of ε, υ, α, η, ο, and alliteration of π in the first line, chiasmus, juxtaposition and also assonance of ο, ι, ε, υ in line 5, alliteration of κ and the rhyming pair κολλητὸν-θάλαμον in line 6, tricolon crescendo in the description of the vernal season from lines 1-4, the melodious repetition of κἄν παρὰ in 7f.

However, as the following analysis will illustrate, in spite of all these similarities, *A.P.* 10.14 also differs in various (and refreshing) ways from the preceding spring poems.

At the formal level, the major difference consists in the fact that, although the epigram does follow the schema of a spring poem, containing both the traditional description of spring and the

reactions prompted by the season, Agathias Scholasticus breaks with the tradition by increasing the length of his description of spring, assigning to it 6 lines instead of 4 as in the previous epigrams, and thus making *A.P.* 10.14 the first spring poem so far with an asymmetrical structure, and also the first one to contain 10 lines instead of 8.

Nevertheless, the most significant difference is perhaps to be found in the pointed way in which Agathias Scholasticus centers his epigram on sea and seafaring. Thus, although the formal announcement of the renewal of navigation is dropped from the beginning of the poem (similar to *A.P.* 10.4, 5 and 6), almost everything else in the epigram, with the exception of the swallow, has a maritime ‘flavour,’ referring to or alluding to sea and seafaring: the description of sea (1-4), the West wind (5), the sailor (7), the maritime routes (7-8), Priapus, as the god of the harbour (9), and the two species of fishes mentioned in the last line of the epigram.

The great prominence given to sea is apparent from the first part of the epigram, as the description of its state (that occupies 4 lines and forms a tricolon crescendo) is the longest so far in a spring poem.⁷² One could notice that the etymological root of the very first word of the epigram, εὐδία, seems to place the sea under the favourable (εὐ) auspices of the god (δία).⁷³ In the same line, the verb πορφύρεται (“to surge”) recalls *A.P.* 10.2.2, and, through its second meaning, “to gleam darkly,”⁷⁴ contrasts with the verb λευκαίνει (“to make white”) from the second line. As it creates a set of opposites, the symbolic use of colors seems too significant in this passage to be overlooked, and, interestingly, white appears as a menacing colour, recalling the common (and

⁷² One may observe that, in order to emphasize the attention given to sea, and also as a variation, Agathias Scholasticus uses in four lines two terms for sea, namely πόντος (1) and θάλασσα (3).

⁷³ For this etymology, see *LSJ* s.v.

⁷⁴ For these meanings of the word, see *LSJ* s.v.

desolate) whiteness of winter in general. The idea of danger and the bleakness associated with the wintry sea may also be suggested by the numerous harsh consonants - κ, μ, φ, ρ, χ, σ - found in the description of the waves.

Similar to the first line, the second line too recalls, through φρικὴ χαρασσόμενα, *A.P.*

10.2.2. Two possible variations on *A.P.* 10.2 could be discerned here. First, χαρασσόμενα refers here only to κύματα, not to the entire sea as in Antipater's epigram, being thus more specific, and therefore more effective. Second, in *A.P.* 10.2.2, the emphasis is placed on the motion of the sea (the colour suggested by the verb πορφύρει being only of secondary importance), while in *A.P.* 10.14.2, through λευκκίνει, the main emphasis is on colour, bringing to mind the image of the breaking waves (and the resulting foam) and anticipating thus the depiction of the stormy sea from 3f.

The image of the wintry sea shattered around the rocks and driven back to the deep is again a major innovation since no earlier spring poem contains such a detailed and dramatic depiction. Here too, the pointed style of Agathias Scholasticus may be seen in the direct reference to rocks (σπιλάδεσσι) that posed the main danger to the ancient ships sailing close to the shore, while the entire image, through its dynamism, stresses once more the present calm of the sea, and, therefore, the possibility of a safe navigation. As in the case of the preceding line, numerous harsh consonants (κ, τ and especially σ) may suggest the breaking of the waves. One could also notice the rhyming effect created by the ending in -σα (περικλασθεῖσα - θάλασσα) in line 3, while the three

successive identical endings in -ος (ἀντωπὸς πρὸς βᾶθος) may suggest the unrelenting rhythmicity of the waves following each other and dashing against the jagged rocks of the shore.

In line 5 - again a neat line, containing a chiasmus and a juxtaposition (πνεΐουσιν, ἐπιπρῦζει) - the idea of intensity is perhaps suggested by the plural form (οἱ ζέφυροι) of the West wind. In line 6, πηξομένη (from πηγνύμι “to stick, fasten together,” and then “to build”) realistically describes the way in which swallows build their nests, and, together with κάρφεσι, is an allusion and a variation on καρφίτην πηλοδομῆι θάλαμον from *A.P.* 10.4.6.

The second part of the poem begins with the injunctions addressed to the sailor to take courage⁷⁵ and sail (ποντοπορῆς, recalling *A.P.* 10.4.2.). The position of θάρσει immediately after a description of spring that, through its length and abundance of details, should have been a strong assurance that the weather was fine, effectively points to the unpredictability of the season.

The mention of Syrtis and of the Sicilian beach in 7f. has a double purpose: first, it shows Priapus’ knowledge of seafaring; and second, (and even more important) since both these destinations had associations of great danger for navigation,⁷⁶ it emphasizes - in conjunction with the allusion to the unpredictability of weather from the previous passage - the vital importance of Priapus as a protector, and highlights his impressive power. For indeed, the sailors do have a chance

⁷⁵ Similar to *A.P.* 10.6.5. However, as the composition date of *A.P.* 10.6 is uncertain, the injunction to take courage could be another significant innovation of Agathias Scholasticus, as it does not appear in *A.P.* 10. 1, 2 and 4, the only spring poems that definitely precede *A.P.* 10.14.

⁷⁶ About the two Syrtis, namely Syrtis Maior (today Gulf of Sidra) and Syrtis Minor (the Gulf of Gabès), shallow gulfs off the coast of North Africa, as some of the most dangerous places to sail, see Strabo 17.3.20. The mention of the beach of Sicily has also ominous associations, referring most likely to the strait of Messina, and reminding the reader (and especially the sailors) of the mythical Scylla and Charybdis.

of surviving even the most dangerous journeys: they just (μοῦνον, in emphatic position) have to make an appropriate sacrifice to Priapus and he will protect them wherever they may go.

In line 9, the juxtaposition of βωμοῖσι and Πριήπου⁷⁷ (in emphatic position at the end of the line) points again to the divine character of Priapus and (therefore) to the necessity of making the appropriate offerings in order to render favorable Priapus, their protective divinity.⁷⁸

Line 10, the last of the poem, is not easy to grasp, since, apart from the fact that fishes are the most suitable sacrifice to Priapus in his capacity as a harbour-god, we cannot be sure why these two specific species of fish (σκόροπος or βῶξι) are asked for as a sacrifice. It may be that these were very common species of fish, used as food by ordinary people (among them the sailors to which the injunction is addressed), or that a special symbolism, of which we are unaware, was associated with them. In either case, the injunction to sacrifice is another major innovation of *A.P.* 10.14, as this is the first spring poem in which Priapus asks⁷⁹ his addressees for something more than their obedience and trust in his protective role, which, in fact, brings a note of realism to the epigram, since the *do-ut-des* approach was a basic pattern for the god-human relation in the ancient world.⁸⁰

As a conclusion, it could be said that the author succeeds, without mentioning any maritime paraphernalia, in centering *A.P.* 10.14 on sea and seafaring, and, thus, considering that the resumption of sailing was the *raison d'être* of the Greek spring poems, in composing an epigram that, while having its own identity and pointed focus, preserves the features and the vernal spirit of the genre.

⁷⁷ ἐνομίτοιο (this time in genitive form) recalling *A.P.* 10.2.8.

⁷⁸ One may also notice the use of πορροῖ as a variation to avoid the monotony of yet another πορροῖ.

⁷⁹ One may also remark that, in his pointed style, Agathias Scholasticus limits the number of injunctions that Priapus addresses to its auditory. Nevertheless, the two injunctions effectively reveal Priapus as a god to be listened to.

⁸⁰ It may be also humor in the passage, as Priapus (presenting himself as a modest god of the humble people) is asking so little (either a fish or another) for so much (a safe voyage to the most dangerous places of the world).

A.P. 10.15

Ἦδη μὲν ζεφύροισι μεμυκότα κόλπον ἀνοίγει (1)
 εἶαρος εὐλείμων θελξινόσιο χάρις·
 ἄρτι δὲ δουρατέοισιν ἐπωλίσθησε κυλίνδροις
 ὀλκός ἀπ' ἠϊόνων εἰς βυθὸν ἐλκομένη.
 λαίφεα κυρτώσαντες ἀταρβέες ἔξιτε, καῦται, (5)
 πρηῖν ἀμοιβαίης φορτὸν εἰς ἐμπορίας.
 πιστὸς ἦνσι Πριήπος, ἐπεὶ Θέτιν εὐχομαι εἶναι
 ἡμετέρου πατρὸς ξεινοδόκον Βρομίου.

Written by Paulus Silentiarius, a contemporary of Agathias Scholasticus (see Pauly-Wissowa II, 58), *A.P.* 10.15 follows the conventions of the genre more closely than *A.P.* 10.14, insofar as it has the traditional symmetrical structure (the description of the season in 1-4 followed by the reactions prompted by spring in 5-8), and some of the familiar elements (not included in *A.P.* 10.14) reappear in the description of spring e.g. the meadows (in the adjectival disguise of εὐλείμων, 2) and the ship. This is again a refined piece of writing, containing numerous features of sound and style, such as the assonance of ο and ε in line 4, alliteration of δ in line 3, rhyme in line 5 (κυρτώσαντες ἀταρβέες) and also internal rhyme in line 6 (ἀμοιβαίης ... ἐμπορίας).

The beginning of the epigram presents the exuberant image of the vernal χάρις opening her closed bosom (μεμυκότα κόλπον)⁸¹ to the Zephyr (in plural form, recalling *A.P.* 10.14.5). Although the innocent nature of this gesture cannot be completely doubted, as the opening of the bosom could have been only a natural reaction to the warmth brought by the West wind, the image is most likely one of erotic abandon and the action a rather deliberate attempt to seduce the

⁸¹ μεμυκότα recalls *A.P.* 10.5. 4, while κόλπον is like *A.P.* 10.5.2. However, as the composition date of *A.P.* 10.5 is uncertain, we cannot compare it with *A.P.* 10.15.

(masculine) Zephyr.⁸² In line 2, the characterization of spring as θελξιύοος introduces the innovative notion that the season affects not only the natural world, but, through its charming force, even the state of mind (νόος).⁸³ It is thus apparent that, in contrast to the previous epigrams, in *A.P.* 10.15 spring is not presented only indirectly, through its specific activities, but, this time explicitly named (εἶορος, 2), plays a major and quite spectacular role from the very beginning of the poem.

The surprising imagery of these lines is matched only by their great stylistic elegance, as the pentameter contains a chiasmus of nouns and adjectives, balance in cases, and also a juxtaposition (εὐλείμων θελξιύοιο, 2). Attention is also given to sound, as the assonance of εἰ and ο may be intended to suggest the exuberance of the vernal season. Starting with the traditional ἦδη and building up tension by postponing χάρις until the end of line 2 (in emphatic position), the first two lines of the epigram effectively express a mood of release that perhaps foreshadows the striking image of the launching ship from the following two lines (3-4).

At the same time, displaying a rather affected eroticism, the stylish (and somewhat theatrical opening of this epigram - a Byzantine version of Hellenistic sophistication) stands in sharp contrast to the plain and simple beginning of some of the earlier spring poems, e.g. the straightforward announcement of the opening of navigation season from *A.P.* 10.1.1. Also, as both *A.P.* 10.1 and 4 *end* with a flourish (see pp. 30 and 42) one may also suspect that Paulus Silentarius deliberately *begins* his epigram with a flourish, as a variation on his earlier models.

⁸² For the feminine associations of the meadows (χάρις εὐλείμων) and the presumed masculine gender of the Zephyr, see above p. 48 n.70f.

⁸³ There could also be some humour in the notion of a νόος, a term with an impressive philosophical career (see Peters 129), so easily charmed by an open bosom.

The detailed depiction of the actual launching of the ship in lines 3-4 constitutes another major innovation of Paulus Silentarius, since no other author in the Greek tradition of the genre employs it. However, as a similar image does appear in Horace, it is possible that *A.P.* 10.15.3f. are a variation on *Carm.* 1.4.2 (*trahuntque siccas machinae carinas*),⁸⁴ although the image could also come from a common (and now lost) source, or its presence in both these poems could be just a mere coincidence. Nevertheless, after the ‘baroque’ image contained in the first two lines of the epigram, the description from 3-4 brings into Paulus Silentarius’ poem a note of (rather) refreshing realism. Its presence in the epigram not only illustrates Priapus’ knowledge of seafaring, but also is more effective than the image of the ship from *A.P.* 10.1, 2 and 4 (the only spring poems to which we can compare *A.P.* 10.15) since it gives the launching moment the importance appropriate in a poem urging the beginning of seafaring. The presence of this image also makes Paulus Silentarius’ epigram resemble *A.P.* 10.14 more than one would have expected at a first reading. Thus, similar to Agathias Scholasticus’ poem, *A.P.* 10.15 too places a particular emphasis on a single element: if *A.P.* 10.14 was centered on the depiction of the sea, at the heart of Paulus Silentarius’ epigram seems to be the image of the ship. That this is the case is suggested by the lengthy description of its launching (two lines), the mention of its sails (λαίφεα) in line 5, and the direct reference to ships made by Priapus in line 7 (πιστὸς νηυσὶ). It is also significant that Paulus Silentarius employs in this rather short epigram two words for ship, namely ὀλκός in line 4 and ναῦς in line 7, partly for the sake of variation, and partly for the sake of precision, as ὀλκός (“a ship which is towed,” see *LSJ* s.v.) is indeed the most appropriate word in such a context. One may also notice the neat effect

⁸⁴ In contrast to Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.2, in Paulus Silentarius’ epigram the description occupies two lines, and the emphasis is placed on the ship (in singular form), not on the *machinae*, which makes the image more pointed and thus more effective.

created by the etymological play (ὀλκός, deriving from ἔλκω, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line, echoed by ἔλκομένη, again in emphatic position at the end of the line).

The mood of release and impatience (suggested by ἄρτι and ἤδη) that characterizes the first part of *A.P.* 10.15, prepares the reader for Priapus' injunction to the sailors in the second part of the poem. In line 5, the fearless⁸⁵ sailors are urged to go forth, with their sails (λαΐφρα, recalling both *A.P.* 10.2.7 and *A.P.* 10.4.2) curved (κυρτώσονται, again an innovation, as the prospective curving of the sails appears here for the first time) by the wind. In line 6, the epithet πρηγόν (as in *A.P.* 10.4.4) suggests that φόρτον is used here as both “cargo” and “burden” (see *LSJ* s.v.), and presents trading (ἐμπορίας, recalling *A.P.* 10.1.8) as an easy undertaking, not to be feared.

Another major innovation of *A.P.* 10.15 is to be found in lines 7f. that contain Priapus' allegiance to the ships (placing again the ship in a central position), since, for the first time in a spring poem, the sailors are encouraged in an indirect (but equally efficient way) to sail: they are not to fear since Priapus will protect their ships. As a reason for his determination, Priapus invokes the fact that Thetis was once ξεινοδόκος to his father (Βρομίου⁸⁶), an allusion to a mythical episode in which Lycurgus, the king of Thrace, chasing the followers of Dionysus, frightened even the god himself who, in terror, leaped into the sea and was rescued by Thetis who gave him refuge (see Hom. *Iliad* 6.130-140; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.1; Hyg. *Fab.* 132).

At a first reading of the passage, Priapus' allusion to this mythical event seems to point out his illustrious divine ancestry, his closeness to his father, as well as his connections with the other

⁸⁵ A fine psychologist, Priapus calls the sailors ἀταρβέες perhaps in order to boost their confidence. The use of this epithet is another significant innovation of Paulus Silentiarius, as it does not appear in *A.P.* 10. 1, 2 and 4.

⁸⁶ The use of Βρομίου recalls *A.P.* 10.2.8. However, the addition of Thetis, a second god, definitely tops that.

gods (namely, Thetis, a new presence in the tradition of the spring poem), and thus to indirectly stress his position as a god, and, consequently, as a powerful and reliable protector who could be always trusted by the sailors. However, one may also (mischievously) notice that the prestige of Priapus' divine ancestry is greatly diminished in Paulus Silentiarius' epigram by the fact that Dionysus' image in the mythical episode to which allusion is made is a rather undignified one. In addition, as the (mythical) help formerly given by the goddess Thetis to Dionysus seems a rather far-fetched reason for Priapus to protect (now and forever) the ships (and, implicitly, the sailors), Priapus' discourse appears somewhat humorous and the end of the epigram seems to create a rather ambiguous image of Priapus that does not appear in *A.P.* 10.1, 2 and 4.

It is thus apparent that the novelty of the stylish and lush but, at the same time, rather bizarre and almost comic beginning of Paulus Silentiarius' epigram is matched by the unexpected figure of Priapus and the humour that could be discerned in the last lines of the poem. Since the author does use many of the traditional elements of the genre, but, at the same time, employs apparently innocent details that, at a close reading, seem to 'undermine' the 'seriousness' of his epigram, the question that might arise is whether the elaborate stylistic care and the baroque imagery of the first lines, together with the rather ambiguous figure of Priapus in the end of the epigram are not, in fact, the result of a deliberate attempt to place his epigram at a slightly ironic distance from the genre.

However, whether the author is intentionally writing a subversive epigram and *A.P.* 10.15 could be thus considered a subtle mockery of the genre, or it is just the case that the tone of his poem was influenced by the Byzantine milieu in which Paulus Silentiarius lived, *A.P.* 10.15 brings into the tradition of the genre a stylistic playfulness and self-irony unknown so far in the spring poems.

A.P. 10.16

Ἦδη καλλιπέτηλον ἐπ' εὐκόρποισι λοχείοις (1)
 λήιον ἐκ ροδέων ἀνθοφορεῖ καλύκων
 ἦδη ἐπ' ἀκρεμόνεσσιν ἰσοζυγέων κυπαρίσσων
 μουσομαιῆς τέττιξ θελγει ἀμαλλοδέτην (5)
 καὶ φιλόποις ὑπὸ γείσα δόμους τεύξασα χελιδῶν
 ἔκγονα πηλοχύτοις ξεινοδοκεῖ θαλάμοις.
 ὑπικῶει δὲ θάλασσα, φιλοζεφύροιο γαλήνης
 νηφόροις κῦτοις εὐδία πεπταμένης,
 οὐκ ἐπὶ πρυμναίοισι καταιγίζουσα κορύμβοις, (10)
 οὐκ ἐπὶ ρηγμῖνων ἀφρον ἐρευγομένη.
 καινίλε, ποιτομέδοντι καὶ ὀρμοδοτήρι Πριήπῳ
 τευθίδος ἢ τριγλῆς ἀνθεμόεσσαν ἴτυν,
 ἢ σκάρων ἀνδρήντα παραὶ βωμοῖσι πυράσας
 ἄτρομος Ἰοίου τέρμα θαλασσοπόρει.

Composed by Theaetetus Scholasticus,⁸⁷ the third Byzantine epigrammatist of the period of Justinian to write a spring poem, *A.P.* 10.16 continues the tradition of the genre, but also displays a significant number of innovative elements. Thus, the epigram has an asymmetrical structure, as its 14 lines do not follow the traditional schema of a spring poem, containing the description of spring in 1-10, and the reactions prompted by the vernal season in 11-14. The blending of tradition and novelty that characterizes this poem is also apparent in the fact that, while the standard elements of the genre are depicted with an abundance of details (see, for example, the description of the swallow in lines 5f., and of the sea in lines 7-10), Theaetetus Scholasticus includes also in his description of season new (and rather surprising) elements that do not belong to the traditional spring described in the chronologically earlier spring poems⁸⁸ (for example, the roses, the cypresses, the cicada, the binder of sheaves, the swallow's brood). Nevertheless, in the vein of all the other spring poems,

⁸⁷ See Pauly-Wissowa V, 1272f.

⁸⁸ Namely *A.P.* 10.1,2, and 4, as *A.P.* 9.363, although written in the first century B.C., occupies, through its thematic and style, a place apart from the Greek spring poems included in the tenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*.

A.P. 10.16 is also a refined piece of writing. Thus, the poem is characterized by elaborate diction, containing many rare words - ἴσοζυγής (3), μουσομανής (4), πηλόχυτος (6), φιλοζέφυρος (7), νηρόφορος (8), ὀρμοδοτήρ (11) - and especially a lush profusion of compounds, e.g. καλλιπέτηλος, εὐκαρπος (1); ἀνθοφορέω (2); ἴσοζυγής (3); μουσομανής, ἀμαλλοδετήρ (4); φιλόπαις (5); ἔκγονος, πηλόχυτος, ξεινοδοκέω (6); φιλοζέφυρος (7); νηρόφορος (8); καταιγίζω (9); ποινομέδων, ὀρμοδοτήρ (11); θαλασσοπόρει (14). The author uses also throughout his epigram numerous features of sound and style, such as the assonance of ε and ο in line 11, of α and ε in line 14; alliteration of ν in line 8, of κ in line 9; rhyme in line 3 (ἴσοζυγέων κυπαρίσσω) and 8 (νηρόφοροις κώτοις), internal rhyme in line 2 (ρόδεων... καλύκων), repetition of οὐκ ἐπὶ in lines 9f.

The epigram literally starts with a flourish, as the beginning of the poem (1-2) presents the image of the ‘parturient’ (ἐπ’ εὐκάρποισι λοχείαις) field a-flower with blossoming roses. The ‘flowerbirth’ image represents a striking novelty in the imagery of the genre, that surpasses through length and abundance of details all the other passages of the preceding spring poems that describe the flowering aspect of the season, namely *A.P.* 10.1.3 (λειμώνες δ’ ἀνθεῦσι) and *A.P.* 10.4.7 (ἄνθεα δ’ ἀντέλλουσι κατὰ χθόνα).⁸⁹ The idea of beauty and fecundity is present in all the key words of the beginning of the poem: καλλιπέτηλον, εὐκάρποισι and λοχείαις in the first line; λήμιον (initially *standing crop*, then *corn-field*, and, finally, just *field*, see *LSJ* s.v.) and ἀνθοφορεῖ in the second line. Spring is thus described as a time of beauty, birth and fertility, the

⁸⁹ See also *A.P.* 9.363.3-6.

emphasis being placed on its regenerative aspect, a major innovation in the tradition of the genre. However, since these lines are supposedly uttered by Priapus, apart from its indisputable innovative side, this change of emphasis seems, rather wittily, to ‘restore’ Priapus to his traditional role (absent in all the other earlier spring poems), as the detailed description of the flourishing *κολλιπέτηλον* *λήμιον* recalls the fact that the speaker is primarily a god of fecundity and a deity of rural life.

The choice of the rose (*ρόδον*) as the flower to bloom in the field, together with what follows in lines 3f., namely the introduction in the description of spring of the *μουσομανιῆς* *τέτιξ* which, singing on the branches of the cypresses, soothes (*θέλγει*) the binder of sheaves (*ἀμολλοδέτην*) appears, for several reasons, highly problematic. Thus, according to several ancient sources (e.g. Theophr. *HP* 6.8.2; Pliny *NH* 21.68),⁹⁰ the rose apparently started blossoming in late spring, almost at the beginning of summer, while the cicada’s presence and song was traditionally associated with summer and harvest time (see, for example, Hes. *Op.* 582-588; Alc. 347a *PLF*; Verg. *Ecl.* 2.12f., *G.* 3.328). This period of the year is also suggested in *A.P.* 10.16 by the presence of the *ἀμολλοδετήρ* (4), and by the fact that, in the description of the *χελιδών* from the following lines (5-6), the swallow is presented as if she has already hatched and is now rearing her youngsters. Theaetetus Scholasticus suggests thus that the time of the year described in his epigram is the beginning of summer, the only possible time frame in which all the elements depicted (or just mentioned) in these lines would fit somewhat together, and *A.P.* 10.16 could be considered not quite a spring poem, but rather an early summer variant on the spring song, a rather unexpected twist in the tradition of the genre - wittily enough, as this is written by a late author.

⁹⁰ See also Gow-Page, 1968, vol.2, 389.

Although this seems to be the case, it is also possible to give an alternative explanation of this passage by taking into consideration only the associations that the (traditional) context of the epigram allows. Thus, the choice of the rose could be related *only* to its amatory associations⁹¹ that make it an appropriate flower in a vernal context of birth and fertility, in a similar way in which the presence of the cypress tree in this epigram, as ἰσοζυγῆς suggests, is due *only* to its picturesque appearance, not to its traditional macabre associations.⁹² Likewise, the specific association of the cicada with the Muses in this epigram⁹³ and the use of θέλω are meant to draw attention *only* to her song, for which she was greatly admired (see Hes. *Op.* 583, Alcaeus 347, Anacreont. 3.14 West, Pl. *Phaedr.* 230c, *A.P.* 6.120; 7.195; 12,98). An argument in favour of this interpretation could be the fact that the traditional songster of the spring poems, namely the swallow, is silent in this epigram, and is presented only in the posture of a parent taking care of the offspring (lines 5-6).⁹⁴ Thus, one may even say that in Theaetetus Scholasticus' epigram the τέττιξ is presented as the real singer of spring, replacing the traditional swallow whose song appears in the tradition of the genre either as a mere twittering (ἐπιπρόξει... χελιδών, *A.P.* 10.14.5),⁹⁵ or, at its best, a chattering (λαλαγεῦσα χελιδών, *A.P.* 10.1.1), lacking the dignity and the divine inspirational rapture suggested in *A.P.* 10.16.4 by μουσομανῆς. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the mention of the binder of sheaves (ἀμαλλοδέτην), the most problematic presence in this epigram,

⁹¹ See, for example, Theoc. *Id.* 3.23, 10.34, 11.10; *A.P.* 12.8.5; 12.204.3; Pausanias 6.24.7.

⁹² See Verg. *Aen.* 3.63-64; 6.214-217; Hor. *Epod.* 5.18 Ov. *Tr.* 3.13.21-22.

⁹³ See, for example, Pl. *Phdr.* 259b-d and 262d where they are referred to as οἱ τῶν Μουσῶν προφήται.

⁹⁴ The emphasis placed on the description of the swallow's nest may suggest that the presence of the brood is not meant to indicate the time of the season (definitely not early spring), but only to emphasize her parental role.

⁹⁵ The swallow's twittering is also mentioned in *A.P.* 10.6.3 (Κεκροπίδες δ' ἴχθευσι). However, since the composition date of *A.P.* 10.6 is unknown, and since we cannot be sure which of the two Byzantine spring poems (*A.P.* 10.14 and *A.P.* 10.16) was first composed, neither *A.P.* 10.6 nor *A.P.* 10.14 can be taken into account in the analysis of Theaetetus Scholasticus' epigram.

may evoke, in fact, the harvest time as much (or as little) as λήιον in the first line indicates a crop, since ὀμολλοδέτην may just stand for ‘rustic’ and thus could be only a marker of the rural setting. If this is the case, its presence could be intended only to suggest the countryside landscape with which Priapus is usually associated,⁹⁶ not necessarily to point to a specific agricultural activity. Although the term is quite precise, and the context (especially the presence of the cicada) supports the fact that the word refers to the specific action of harvesting,⁹⁷ its use here could be as well part of Theaetetus Scholasticus’ deliberate attempt to puzzle the reader. The epigram could be thus equally considered a traditional spring poem, although the associations of the new elements found in the description of the season strongly suggest early summer⁹⁸ as the time described in the poem.

The poem continues in 5f. with the description of the swallow. Theaetetus Scholasticus not only drops any reference to the bird’s traditional song (a variation on both *A.P.* 10.1.1 and *A.P.* 9.363.16), but, in contrast to the swallows of all the other earlier spring poems, in *A.P.* 10.16 the χελιδών, having already built her ‘house’ (δόμους) under the eaves is now sheltering her brood (ἔκγονοι) in the clay-moulded chambers of its nest. A rather intriguing aspect of this description is the use of ξεινοδοκέω. Apart from the fact that it could be used humorously, ξεινοδοκέω, generally employed to describe the kindness in welcoming guests or strangers (see *LSJ* s.v.), may seem rather surprising here, since φιλόπαις (an imitation of and also a variation on φιλότεκνος

⁹⁶ And, as seen above, the first two lines strongly recall Priapus’ associations with the rustic world.

⁹⁷ Although the singing cicada may suggest that the season described is summer, the use of ὀμολλοδέτην, while apparently strengthening this suggestion, in fact may restrict it, indicating not the time-frame, but only the specific agricultural activity of harvesting. While summer was traditionally the harvest time (see, for example, Hes *Op.* 383), the ὀμολλοδέτην could be busy binding the sheaves of barley, the first crop to ripen in Greece as early as April (see Isager and Skydsgaard 25). Cf. also Mackail (380) who states that the barley harvest comes at the same time with spring flowers

⁹⁸ A search of the *TLG* has not yielded any results regarding the presence of the cicada in spring or late spring.

from *A.P.* 10.4.5) describes the bird as a loving parent, and ἔκγονοι stresses the cognation between the swallow and her offspring. However, in this passage ξεινοδοκέω is not meant to suggest an affective distance between the swallow and her brood, but only to point out to the ‘lodging’ capabilities of the swallow’s nest, and therefore to the first-rate quality of its construction, which is, in fact, another, although indirect, way of portraying the swallow who has built it as a caring parent, deeply concerned with the safety and the comfort of her young. An argument in favor of this reading is the emphasis placed on the description of the swallow’s ‘house.’ Thus, Theaetetus Scholasticus mentions the material from which the nest is built (πηλοχύτοις θαλάμοις, an imitation of and also an innovation on πηλοδομῆι θάλαμον from *A.P.* 10.4.6), indicates the location of the nest (ὑπὸ γείσῃ, a variation on ὑπόροφα from *A.P.* 10.2.3), and refers to the ‘house’ (δομοίς, in the plural form) as a whole and to its chamber (θαλάμοις, again in the plural form, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.4.6 where only the singular form is used). While the image of the χελιδὼν building her ‘house’ does appear in both *A.P.* 10.2.3f. and *A.P.* 10.4.5f.,⁹⁹ the depiction of the bird *with* her nestlings clearly surpasses all the other chronologically earlier descriptions of the swallow, not only because it is the most detailed in the tradition of the genre, but also because it brings into the poem another element that presents spring as a season of birth and growth, this time for the avian realm, a parallel to the description of the flourishing vegetal realm from the first two lines of the poem. At the same time, the internal rhyme in line 6 (πηλοχύτοις... θαλάμοις) and the *hapax legomenon* πηλόχυτος, together with the detailed description of the swallow’s nest, are

⁹⁹ It also appears in *A.P.* 10. 14.5f. However, for the difficulty of comparing these two poems, see p. 64 n. 105.

significant for Theaetetus Scholasticus' style, characterized by abundance of details and great stylistic care.

The description of the sea that follows in lines 7-10 has a symmetrical structure, as the first two lines depict the vernal calm of the sea, while 9-10, containing an imagery of the wintry sea, reinforces, through the repetitive negation οὐκ, the idea of present safety in an attempt to persuade and prepare the sailor (ναυτίλος, in the following line) for the injunction to sail. This passage is not only the longest and most detailed description of the sea in the tradition of the genre,¹⁰⁰ but also a very striking one, since the use of ὑπνώει (which personifies the sea), of ὑῶτον (*expanse* of the sea, but also *back* of an animal: see *LSJ* s.v.), of ἀφρός (*foam* of the sea, but also used of animals: see *LSJ* s.v.) and ἐρεύγομαι (used metaphorical of the sea, *to surge, break in foam*, but also of animals: see *LSJ* s.v.) may suggest the image of a savage beast charmed to sleep, the charm in this case being the φιλοζεφύριο γαλήνης spread over (πεπταμένης) its expanse. A pointed aspect of this passage is the use of νηρόφορος in line 8 which brings in the ship into the description of the calm sea, echoing thus *A.P.* 10.2.1, and outdoing it, since, by presenting the sea as benevolently bearing the ship, it smoothes the transition to the exhortation to sail in the second part of epigram (14). Lines 9f., with the repetition of οὐκ ἐπι, and the numerous harsh consonants (κ, π, ρ, γ, μ, ζ, σ) that may suggest the danger posed by the breaking waves, are also very effective, since the (possible) image of a marine beast raging against the high-built sterns and belching forth foam on the beaches stands in sharp contrast to the image of the sleepy sea from the previous lines.

¹⁰⁰ Only Agathias Scholasticus whose spring poem, due to difficulties over relative dating, cannot be taken into account in the analysis of *A.P.* 10.16 dedicates four lines to the description of the sea (see *A.P.* 10.14.1-4).

In the second part of the epigram (11-14), the sailor (νοῦτίλε, as in *A.P.* 10.1.6, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line) is urged to fearlessly put out to sea, however not before making the appropriate sacrifice of fish to Priapus (also in emphatic position at the end of the line). Although the uncertainty about the composition date of *A.P.* 10.14 and *A.P.* 10.16 does not allow the comparison of the two epigrams, one may nevertheless notice that this passage presents numerous thematic and verbal similarities to *A.P.* 10.14.7-10. Common to both poems is Priapus' injunction addressed to the sailor to fearlessly (θάράσει, *A.P.* 10.14.7 - ἄτρομος, *A.P.* 10.16.14) set sail (ποντοπορήῃς, *A.P.* 10.14.7 - θαλασσοπόρει, *A.P.* 10.16.14¹⁰¹) after making an appropriate sacrifice (ἐρευθομένους, *A.P.* 10.14.10 - πυρώσας, *A.P.* 10.16.13) of various fishes (σκάρος; βῶκας, *A.P.* 10.14.10 - τευθίς; τρίγλη, *A.P.* 10.16.12; σκάρος, *A.P.* 10.16.13) by the altars (παρὰ βωμοῖσι, *A.P.* 10.14.9 and *A.P.* 10.16.13). However, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.14, in *A.P.* 10.16 the sailor may choose fishes from three species for the sacrifice (namely τευθίς, τρίγλης and σκάρος). According to Mackail (380), ἀνθεμόεις means here “burnished” and is applied to the metallic luster of the τρίγλη. The adjective was also chosen probably because of its derivation from ἄιθος - a rather twisted way of reminding the reader that this is a spring poem (cf. ἀιθοφορεῖ in line 2). At the same time, the word ἀνθεμόεις could also suggest the brightness, colour, and perhaps even the regular, overlapping patterns in which the fish scales are arranged. If we consider also the characterization of σκάρος as ἀύδηεις, which seems to refer to the belief

¹⁰¹ Also an imitation of ποντοπόρει from *A.P.* 10.4.2. However, θαλασσοπόρει tops ποντοπόρει via length (5 syllables instead of 4) and perhaps precision, since the mention of the bounds (τέρμιοι) of the Ionian Sea as the destination of the journey suggests that the verb is used here in its proper meaning, “to traverse the sea.”

of the ancient authors that this fish was able to emit sounds (see Mackail, 380, citing Opp. *H*.134), the fishes described in this epigram are rather unusual, adding a humorous, quaint, and even slightly grotesque side to Priapus' choice and taste. On the other hand, the greater number of options, typical of Theaetetus Scholasticus' style (which is characterized by great abundance of details), indirectly portrays Priapus as a 'marine' god, familiar with the various species of fish, and perhaps also as a divinity who, leaving aside his rather peculiar taste, is not so hard to please when it comes to variety. However, at the same time, in order to increase his prestige as a god, in line 11 Priapus is called both *ποντομέδων* and *ὄρμοδοτήρ*, again an innovation, since in no other spring poem does Priapus have two qualifications. Priapus is thus presented as an accomplished protective deity of the sailors, since in his twofold capacity as "lord of the sea" and "harbour-giver," he allegedly has full authority over both land and sea, and thus the protection that he may offer extends over the entire length of a journey, from the launching time to the moment the ship anchors again in a harbour. Although meant to confer dignity and authority to Priapus, and thus, indirectly, to give the sailors the necessary confidence to set sail, the double qualification may have also a humorous (side) effect, since, while *ὄρμοδοτήρ* (a *hapax legomenon*) is more effective than both *ἐνορμίτας* from *A.P.* 10.2.8 and *λιμενίτας* from *A.P.* 10.1.7 because it suggests not only Priapus' association with the harbour, but also his ability to give the sailors a safe harbour, the choice of *ποντομέδων* as Priapus' attribute is a rather striking one, as we can hardly imagine Priapus assuming the imposing role of Poseidon who was usually called "lord of the sea" (see, for example, Pind. *Ol.* 6.103, Eur. *Hipp.* 743). However, it is also possible that this double qualification is in fact intended to counterbalance the (rather too) strong associations of Priapus with vegetation, fecundity and rustic

landscape from the beginning of the epigram (lines 1-2). Thus, through exaggeration, the double qualification may have in fact the function to remind the sailor, and, humorously, perhaps Priapus himself that he *is* a maritime god as well, since, caught as he was in his traditional role, he appears to have almost forgotten to urge the sailor to set sail, which may also explain why the season described in this epigram is not quite the traditional (early) spring of all the other poems of the genre. An argument in favor of this interpretation is also the fact that, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.1, 2 and 4, where the sailor is given specific and detailed instructions, such as to raise the anchors (*A.P.* 10.1.5; 2.6), to loose the cables (*A.P.* 10.1.5; 2.6; 4.1), and to spread the sails (*A.P.* 10.2.7; 4.2), in the second part of this epigram Priapus does not take the time (since there isn't too much left) to explain the sailor in great detail the technicalities of launching a ship, but just urges him to fearlessly go on his voyage (although, humorously, he seems to find enough time to enumerate and pointedly describe the variety of fishes he would prefer as a sacrifice). Together with the mention in line 14 of the Ionian Sea,¹⁰² again an innovation, since this is the first time in a spring poem when the sea is specifically named, perhaps in order to show Priapus' knowledge of seafaring and maritime routes, and also to give the poem a realistic touch, all the above make the epigram end with a flourish.

In conclusion, *A.P.* 10.16 is not only a refined piece of writing but also a highly innovative epigram, a rather remarkable accomplishment at such a late stage in the tradition of the genre. Distinctive through its new and puzzling elements, striking imagery (e.g. the 'pregnant' field and the 'beastly' sea) and associations (spring as a time of beauty, birth and abundance; Priapus as both the god of fecundity and the accomplished protector of the sailors), length, sophistication and humour, *A.P.* 10.16 stands out among the spring poems of the *Palatine Anthology*.

¹⁰² Another similarity to *A.P.* 10.14, since Agathias Scholasticus is the only other author of a Greek spring poem who mentions in his epigram real geographical places (the Syrtis and the Sicilian beach *A.P.* 10.14.7-8).

A.P. 9.363

Χείματος ἠνεμόεντος ἀπ' αἰθέρος οἰχομένοιο (1)
 πορφυρέη μείδησε φεραιθέος εἶαρος ὄρη.
 γαῖα δὲ κυανέη χλοερὴν ἐστέψατο ποιῆν
 καὶ φυτὰ θηλήσαντα νεοῖς ἐκομήσε πετῆλοις.
 οἱ δ' ἀπαλὴν πινοῖτες ἀξιφύτου δρόσον Ἡῶς (5)
 λειμῶνες γελῶσιν ἀνοιγομένοιο ῥόδοιο.
 χαίρει καὶ σὺριγγι νομεύς ἐν ὄρεσσι λιγαίων,
 καὶ πολλοῖς ἐρίφοις ἐπιτέρπεται αἰπόλος αἰγῶν.
 ἤδη δὲ πλώουσιν ἐπ' εὐρεὰ κύματα ἰαύται
 πνοιῆ ἀπημάντω Ζεφύρου λίνα κολπώσαντες. (10)
 ἤδη δ' εὐάζουσιν φερεσταφύλω Διονύσω
 ἀνθεί βοτρυόεντος ἐρεψάμενοι τρίχα κισσοῦ.
 ἔργα δὲ τεχνήεντα βοηγεῖνεςσι μελισσαις
 καλὰ μέλει, καὶ σὶμβλῶ ἐφήμεναι ἐργάζονται
 καλὰ μέλει, καὶ σὶμβλῶ ἐφήμεναι ἐργάζονται
 λευκὰ πολυτρήτιο νεόρρυτα κάλλεα κηροῦ. (15)
 πάντη δ' ὀρίθων γενεῆ λιγύφωνον αἰεῖδει,
 ἀλκυνες περὶ κῦμα, χελιδόνες ἀμφὶ μέλαθρα,
 κύκνος ἐπ' ὄχθαισιν ποταμοῦ καὶ ὑπ' ἄλσος ἀηδῶν.
 εἰ δὲ φυτῶν χαίρουσι κόμαι καὶ γαῖα τέθληεν,
 συρίζει δὲ νομεύς καὶ τέρπεται εὐκόμα μῆλα (20)
 καὶ ἰαύται πλώουσι, Διωνυσος δὲ χορευεῖ
 καὶ μέλπει πετεεινὰ καὶ ὠδίνουσι μελισσαις,
 πῶς οὐ χρὴ καὶ αἰδοῖν ἐν εἶαρι καλὸν αἰεῖσαι;

Traditionally ascribed to Meleager (1st century B.C., see Pauly-Wissowa XV, 481), the authorship of *A.P.* 9.363 remains nevertheless a controversial matter. Although accepted by critics like Reitzenstein (1893, 103); Geffcken (1916, 73); and Webster (1964, 213), the Meleagrian authorship of the poem is rejected by many others, e.g. H. Ouvré (1894, 241f.); Dilthey (1887, 10 n.1); Radinger (1895, 80); Stadtmüller (1906, 203); Guidorizzi (1922, 131 n.124); Wifstrand (1926, 168ff.); Gow-Page (1965, 593).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Cf. also Rossi 44 n.76.

The arguments used by one side or another in this controversy range from purely subjective opinions regarding the poetic merits of *A.P.* 9.363¹⁰⁴ to lexical,¹⁰⁵ syntactic,¹⁰⁶ and prosodic¹⁰⁷ considerations. The rejection of Meleager as the author of this epigram is sometimes accompanied by suggestions regarding its possible author, and, among those put forward for consideration, one may find writers as different as Nicander¹⁰⁸ (second century B.C.¹⁰⁹), and a presumed, but otherwise unknown pupil or rival of Nonnus¹¹⁰ (possibly fourth or fifth century A.D.¹¹¹).

Since a definite solution of the authorship controversy cannot be given, the epigram must be analyzed bearing in mind the fact that the poem could be a reaction to (at least some of) the spring poems included in the tenth book of the *Palatine Anthology*. One soon realizes that, although *A.P.* 9.363 does contain some of the elements present in the rest of the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* (e.g. the meadows, the swallow, the sailor, the image of the sails bellied by the Zephyr, the double use of ἦδη), the epigram occupies, through its length,¹¹² great abundance of details not found in any other spring poems,¹¹³ and especially its peculiar focus on the beauty and regenerative power of spring, on the joy and the mood of celebration that characterizes the season, a place totally apart among the Greek spring poems. The author of *A.P.* 9.363 seems thus neither to

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Radinger (80) for whom *A.P.* 9.363 is just “eine rhetorische Schulübung.” A similar remark makes Webster (213), who considers that *A.P.* 9.363 is “a pretty poem.”

¹⁰⁵ For example, Ouvré: “Nous avons observé en lisant les épigrammes un bizarre mélange de dialectes; l'idylle est franchement ionniene.” (*Méléagre de Gadara*. 241)

¹⁰⁶ Ouvré: “Dans les vingt-trois hexamètres qui la composent, le génitif absolu reparaît deux fois. Cette construction déplaît à Méléagre.” (241)

¹⁰⁷ Ouvré: “Les abréviations par hiatus sont assez rares dans les épigrammes, très communes dans la pièce que j'étudie.” (242)

¹⁰⁸ Suggested by Stadtmüller in his *Anthologia Graeca*.

¹⁰⁹ See Pauly-Wissowa XVII, 250f.

¹¹⁰ Suggested by Ouvré (242).

¹¹¹ See Pauly-Wissowa XVII, pp. 904f.

¹¹² It is the longest spring poem included in the *Palatine Anthology*, containing 23 lines.

¹¹³ The dawn and its dew, the shepherd playing his pipe, the goatherd taking delight in the white kids, the devotees of Dionysus, the bees, the flocks, the kingfisher, the swan, the nightingale, the poet, the indirect injunction to sing.

care too much about the tradition of the genre nor to be willing to carry, on his turn, its ‘burden.’ At any rate, *A.P.* 9.363 has certainly not influenced the rest of the spring poems, and, in the last instance, could be seen as a statement *against* the tradition, a poem written by an author who deliberately decided to ignore the traditional way of writing a spring poem while employing some of its conventional elements in order to remind the reader of the object of its ‘attack.’¹¹⁴

The epigram falls into two parts, as lines 1-18 contain the description of spring (the longest in the Greek tradition of the genre) and lines 19-23 an extended sequence of if-clauses, which summarizing the description of the season, also adds some new details, and whose apodosis (cast as a rhetorical question for the sake of dramatization) functions as an indirect injunction addressed to the poet himself who, in such a beautiful season, should also occupy himself by singing beautifully.

The poem begins with the image of the personified spring smiling after the departure of the windy winter from the sky. Placed in emphatic position at the beginning of the line, χεῖμα forms a contrasting pair with εἶαρος ὄρη at the end of line 2, while the use of πορφυρέη¹¹⁵ to describe spring anticipates perhaps the roses that appear in line 6. The poem starts stylishly, as the triple rhyme (Χεῖματος ἡνεμόεντος... αἰθέρος) brings into the first line a cadence that may suggest the steady and irreversible pace of winter’s retreat, while line 2 contains two rhymes (πορφυρέη... ὄρη and φεραιθέος εἶαρος), and the *hapax legomenon* φεραιθής.

The description of spring continues in line 3 with the image of the black earth (γαῖα κυαινέη) that garlands herself with verdant herbage (χλοερὴν ποίην). The juxtaposition of

¹¹⁴ The presence of these elements - too many to be a mere coincidence - suggests that the epigram was not written totally independent from tradition. If Meleager is the author of this epigram, then the chronologically earlier authors are Leonidas of Tarentum and Antipater of Sidon, and *A.P.* 9.363 could be compared to *A.P.* 10.1 and *A.P.* 10.2.

¹¹⁵ The word means “purple” or “bright-red,” see *LSJ* s.v. II.

κυαινέη and χλοερήν, sharply contrasting the black colour of the barren fields during the bleak winter with the green lushness brought by the arrival of spring, effectively suggests the transition from one season to another, emphasizing the almost miraculous regenerative power of the vernal season, while the use of στέφω, personifying the earth as feminine figure, points to the esthetic aspect of this change. Both the regenerative and the esthetic dimension of springtime reappear in the following line where the flourishing (θηλήσονται) plants (φυτόν from φύω “to bring forth, produce,” see *LSJ* s.v.) wave (εκόμησε), presumably in a seductive way, their new leaves.

The smile of the flowery (φερανθής) spring from the second line is echoed in the 5f. by the laughing¹¹⁶ meadows and the image of the blossoming rose (άνοιγομένιοι ρόδοιο). The mention of ἠώς and its delicate (άπαλή) dew indicates perhaps that the time of this description is early morning, quite appropriate for an epigram in which the theme of regeneration and new beginning occupies a central place, while the characterization of dawn as άεξιφυτος reinforces the same idea. The entire passage (lines 3-6) contains also various features of style, e.g. tricolon crescendo in lines 3-6, rhyme (άνοιγομένιοι ρόδοιο), chiasmus and juxtaposition in line 6.

While in the first six lines of the poem spring is described as a time of enjoyment (μειδάω, γελάω), a season of flourishing growth and fertility (θηλέω, άεξιφυτος), when earth is full of colours (πορφύρεος, χλωρός), vegetation (φυτόν) and flowers (φερανθής, ρόδοιο), the following six lines (7-12) bring into this paradisiacal world the human presence. Thus, line 7

¹¹⁶ If *A.P.* 9.363 is subsequent to *A.P.* 10.2, γελώσιυ may be an imitation and a variation on γελάω (*A.P.* 10.2.4) where the word is used to describe the smiling leaves of the meadows.

introduces the shepherd (νομέυς), line 8 the goatherd (αἰπόλος), lines 9f. the sailors (ναῦται), and lines 11f. the devotees of Dionysus who, having their hair crowned (ερεψόμενοι) with the bloom of the clustering ivy (ἀνθεῖ βοτρυόεντος κισσοῦ), give their homage to the god by crying evoe (εὐάζουσι). If the sailors are a familiar presence in the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* (although they are never presented as already sailing, like in this epigram), the shepherd, the goatherd, and the followers of Dionysus are new characters whose function is to shift entirely the focus of the poem from the natural world to the human level.¹¹⁷

The mood of joy and delight constitutes the link between the vegetal and the human world, and also between the two sections of the epigram, since the enjoyment that perfuses the previous passage is present in these lines too. Thus, the shepherd rejoice (χαίρει) in playing on his σῦριγξ, the goatherd takes delight (ἐπιτέρεται) in his white kids, and the mood of celebration culminates in the description of Dionysus' devotees. The presence of Dionysus, characterized in this passage as φερεστάφυλος, with the implication that he is celebrated by his followers as a god of wine, and, therefore, of joy and ecstatic liberation, epitomizes thus the exhilaration provoked by the season; similar to the Dionysiac wine, the spirit of spring carries man away from his usual mode of living into a mood of joy and celebration. Spring is thus presented not only as a time of renewal, growth, and beauty but also as a time of celebration, the revival of life and the resuming of the activities associated with the coming of spring being inextricably linked with the expression of joy. This part

¹¹⁷ Although both the νομέυς with his σῦριγξ and the αἰπόλος rejoicing in his kids are characters associated with bucolic poetry, *A.P.* 9.363 cannot be considered a bucolic epigram, since, as Rossi (44) points out, “the bucolic element (the shepherd with his song and the goatherd) serves to provide a touch of colour to a springtime description in which, naturally, an important role is played by the constituent elements of the *locus amoenus*. For these reasons, since the bucolic touch is purely an accessory, one cannot in fact consider the epigram belonging to the bucolic type.”

of the epigram too (7-12) is characterized by the same stylistic care as the previous section: rhyme between line 7 and 8 (λιγαίωνων... αἰγῶν); assonance of αἰ, ι, ο, οἰ; alliteration (χαίρει καὶ); rhyme in line 8 (πολιῶς ἐρίφοις); repetition of ἤδη at the beginning of line 9 and 11.

The focus of the epigram changes again in the following six lines (13-18) that contain a description of the bees and the birds. At this point, the structural symmetry of the poem is obvious, as the first six lines, describing the lush vegetation of spring, are followed by six lines dedicated to the human presence (7-12), while in the next six lines (13-18), the emphasis is again placed on the natural world, but this time on the creatures that populate the vernal landscape.

Mentioned by Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 5.21-22; 9.40), and later by Varro (*Rust.* 2.5.5; 3.16.4), Virgil (*G.* 4.281-314) and Ovid (*Met.* 15.365-68; *Fast.* 1.363-80), the spontaneous creation of bees from rotting bull carcasses alluded in line 13 may be seen as an equivalent to the growth of vegetation at the beginning of spring, since the presumed existence of the βοηγενές bees suggests that not only in the vegetal world but also in the animal realm, death and rebirth are closely interwoven, new life emerging from dead. The idea of beauty associated with the bees and their hard work is prevalent in these lines (καλά, 14; κάλλεα, 15), and mirrored at the textual level by numerous features of sound and style, e.g. assonance of α and ε (13), *hapax legomenon* βοηγενής (13), rhyme in line 14 (ἐφήμενοι ἐργάζονται), alliteration of κ in line 15.

The pleasure of enumeration apparent throughout the poem is also evident in lines 16ff. in which the song of various birds (άλκυών, χελιδών, κύκλιος, ἄηδών) seems to permeate the entire world (πάντη). The emphasis placed on the singing birds continues the mood of celebration that characterizes the season, and foreshadows the “necessary” (χρή) song of the poet in line 23.

The last part of the epigram (lines 19-23) summarizes the description of spring in a way that gives the poem an almost ‘symphonic’ character, since, although at first sight this section is just a re-enumeration of the elements found in the depiction of the season, slight variations and subtle verbal echoes ‘reshape’ the vernal landscape. Thus, the plants, the flourishing earth, the shepherd playing his pipe, the sailors, Dionysus, the birds and the bees are mentioned again, but this time the foliage (κόμοι, recalling ἐκόμησε from line 4, used also in a vegetal context) of plants rejoices (χαίρουσι, recalling χαίρει from line 7, but now, as a variation, used to describe the plants, not the shepherd); in line 19 the earth flourishes (τέθηλεν, recalling θηλήσαντα that describes the plants in line 4); in line 20 the fleecy (εὐκομα, recalling ἐκόμησε from line 4, and also κόμοι from line 19, but employed here, as a variation, to describe the animals not the plants) flocks (unmentioned before) disport themselves (τέρπεται, recalling ἐπιτέρπεται from line 8, used to describe the goatherd); in line 21 Dionysus dances (χορεύει), a variation on line 11; in 22 the birds (called this time πετεεινῶ, a term even more generic than γενεά from line 16) sing (μέλπει, a word whose other meaning, “to celebrate with song and dance,” see *LSJ* s.v., recalls perhaps or even mirrors the song and dance of Dionysus and his devotees at 11f. and 21; and, in the same line (22), the bees are depicted as bringing forth (ὠδίνουσι), a significant variation on *bougonia* suggested by βοηγενές in line 13. At the same time, however, the word ὠδινω could be also used here in its metaphorical meaning¹¹⁸ to describe the bees’ great concern for their ἔργα τεχνήεντα, although, in view of general fertility, the idea of birth is more likely the primary sense.

¹¹⁸Namely “to be in the throes or agonies of thought,” see *LSJ* s.v. II.

After the enumeration of these elements, the passage ends with a rhetorical question that reveals the unexpected presence of the poet¹¹⁹ in the vernal world, and ultimately the point of the epigram. The last line constitutes the climax of the poem, distinguishing the poet as an essential part of the season. Since the poet too must (χρή) sing beautifully and celebrate the season, his duty is to incorporate into his song as many aspects as possible of spring, which may thus explain the great length of the poem itself, since *A.P.* 9.363 is the very song required from the poet. One may even say that the poet has the duty to transform the season into a beautiful song, because ultimately only through him spring comes to birth in the mind of the readers. Also, as the author of *A.P.* 9.363 uses the word *καλόν* to describe the way in which the poet should sing, one is reminded of *καλά* in line 14 and *κάλλεα* in line 15; the implication of *καλόν* is therefore that, similar to the bees that are concerned (*μέλει*) over their *ἔργα τεχνήνεται*, the poet too should use his skill: his song must be thus the result of a deliberate effort, not the natural outpouring of enthusiasm.

Although *A.P.* 9.363 could appear just as a long and tedious list of the various aspects of spring, a close reading suggests that, in fact, the author deliberately, and rather successfully, adopted the enumeration as his primary literary technique, as the abundance of details clearly conveys the mood of exuberance and celebration, presenting spring as a time of fertility, beauty and joy. If we also take into consideration the careful structural arrangement and the great attention given to the various features of sound and style (quite a remarkable feat in such a long poem), one may conclude that *A.P.* 9.363 occupies a place apart, but in no way inferior to the rest of the Greek spring poems.

¹¹⁹The word *ἄοιδός*, from *ἀείδω*, recalls *ἀηδών*, the nightingale that ends in line 18 the enumeration of the singing birds specific to the spring season.

Conclusion

The analysis of the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* has shown that all the epigrams in the Greek tradition of the genre follow a similar schema, containing a description of spring and the reactions prompted by the season. The epigrams in book 10 in particular form an obvious group. These rather short poems (they usually have 8 lines, although *A.P.* 10.14 and *A.P.* 10.16 do have, for the sake of innovation, 10 and 14 lines) are all refined epigrams, containing various features of sound and style. The great stylistic care employed by their authors is matched only by their continuous effort to allude to the chronologically earlier spring poems, imitating them but also constantly trying to vary and ‘improve’ on them. The result of this endeavor is a remarkable series of epigrams that reminds the reader of a literary ‘hall of mirrors’ with the motif of spring at its center. This intertextuality is, in fact, the most salient characteristic of the Greek tradition of the genre.¹²⁰

Despite the apparent simplicity of the theme, or perhaps challenged by it, the authors of the Greek spring poems have reached high levels of sophistication in the way they have succeeded to transform a relatively straightforward poetic form into a stylish literary parlour game, with an incredibly long life-span (from the third century B.C. to the sixth century A.D.). Finally, apart from this tradition, perhaps a statement against it, *A.P.* 9.363 presents another, no less refined, approach to spring.

¹²⁰ At the structural level, the presence of Priapus, and the specific injunction to sail are elements that appear only in the Greek spring poems.

Chapter III

This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of Catullus 46 and will seek to reveal, by comparing it with the chronologically earlier spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology*,¹²¹ the deliberate effort and ingenuity with which Catullus, while preserving the traditional structure and some of the conventional elements, reshaped the genre and invested it with a psychological dimension and complexity unknown to the Greek tradition.

Catullus 46¹²²

IAM ver egelidos refert tepores, iam caeli furor aequinoctialis iucundis Zephyri silescit aureis. linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae:	5
ad claras Asiae volemus urbes. iam mens praetrepidans avet vagari, iam laeti studio pedes vigescunt. o dulces comitum valete coetus, longe quos simul a domo profectos diversae varie viae reportant.	10

Although a purely biographical approach would inherently lead to a limited view of the poem, the actual circumstances in which 46 was composed are nevertheless worth mentioning, since they help elucidate both the general mood and some particular points of the poem, especially those related to the geographical setting (e.g. the references to the Phrygian fields, 4; Nicaea, 5; the celebrated cities of Asia, 6) or the specific Roman elements (e.g. *comitum coetus*, 9). Thus, the composition of 46, the first known¹²³ Latin spring poem, is usually associated with Catullus'

¹²¹ *A.P.* 10.1 and 2.

¹²² The Latin text is that of Mynors' Oxford edition (1967).

¹²³ The possible existence of earlier Latin spring poems, now lost, cannot be totally excluded.

departure from the province of Bithynia, after a year in the service of Gaius Memmius¹²⁴ as a member of the propraetor's *cohors*. As apparently his stay in Bithynia was not, for various reasons,¹²⁵ a particularly happy one, the exuberance brought by the arrival of spring, noticeable throughout the poem, can be partially explained as an expression of Catullus' relief at leaving a province he did not enjoy and of returning home to Italy. However, while interesting and informative, these biographical details cannot in fact provide a full account of the poem, and, stressed too much, can even "obstruct" the view of 46 as a spring poem, since, when the references to the coming of spring and to the immediate desire of departing and traveling are too closely related to the particular events of Catullus' life in the spring of 56 B.C., there is the risk of overlooking the generic background¹²⁶ of poem 46, and especially its adherence to the genre of the spring poem. Indeed, although 46 has been occasionally referred to or described as a spring poem,¹²⁷ this aspect has been either largely ignored or somewhat superficially treated, in spite of the fact that poem 46, while making significant innovations, presents numerous thematic, structural and stylistic similarities to the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology*, which reveal that Catullus is deliberately drawing upon the Greek tradition of the genre.

Like all the other poems of the genre, 46 is a rather short, but refined piece of writing. At the structural level,¹²⁸ 46 follows the traditional schema of a spring poem, containing a description of spring (lines 1-3), and reactions prompted by the season that echo the conventional reactions.

¹²⁴ Governor of the province between 57 and 56 B.C. (see, for example, Fordyce, 1961, XII).

¹²⁵ As Small (1983,71) notes, "the usual motive for going on such an expedition was to get a start in political life and at the same time to amass wealth at the expense of the provincials." Apparently, as can be deduced from other poems (10, and especially 28), Catullus was not successful in either. Cf. also Burl 161; Wiseman, 100f; Goold 2; Lee, xviii f.

¹²⁶ A particular exception is Cairns (1972, 44f.) who approaches the poem primarily from a generic point of view. However, constrained by the rather limited number of genres he acknowledges, Cairns describes the poem only as a *syntaktikon*, a speech of the departing traveler, failing to discuss the generic mixture that characterizes Catullus' poem.

¹²⁷ See Hezel (1932) 44f.; Avallone (1964) 241-7; Schafer (1966) 33ff.; Quinn (1973) 229 n.1.

¹²⁸ As Elder (103) observes, "this poem is as artfully constructed as any of the Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic compositions in the Greek Anthology which may have consciously or subconsciously influenced Catullus in this poem."

However, in his description of the season, in sharp contrast to the previous Greek spring poems, Catullus presents a rather empty vernal landscape, and, although there may be a reference to the fertility of the season,¹²⁹ the traditional description of blooming flowers, lush vegetation and singing birds is missing. At the same time, in Catullus' poem, in which the poet himself takes the traditional role of Priapus as speaker, the conventional injunctions addressed to the sailor(s) to undertake navigation and trade, are replaced by a rather passionate self-injunction to depart, travel and visit the celebrated cities of Asia (lines 4-6). This sightseeing aspect of Catullus' desire to travel constitutes a major novelty in the tradition of the genre, highlighted also by the fact that in Catullus' poem the reactions prompted by the season are given more emphasis¹³⁰ than in *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. At the same time, although any direct references to ships and seafaring are dropped from poem 46, the mention of the pleasant breezes of the West wind (3) and especially their calming effect on the *furor* of the equinoctial sky (lines 2-3) may well hint cleverly at sailing,¹³¹ as also, as several critics suggest,¹³² perhaps, does the use of the verb *volare*, employed elsewhere (4.5) by Catullus to describe a ship.

The poem starts with a direct reference to spring (*iam ver*) and fair weather (*egelidos tepores*), followed by an allusion to the end of winter (*iam caeli furor aequinoctialis... silescit*, 2-3), and includes various other elements that remind the reader of the Greek spring poems, e.g. the Zephyr (3) and the repetition of *iam*,¹³³ not only in the first two lines, but also in lines 7-8. However, Catullus' poem contains also new aspects and elements that break with the tradition. Thus, in contrast to the authors of the Greek epigrams, Catullus is more specific in his spring poem, as the

¹²⁹ Namely *uber* in line 5, although, considering the qualification of Nicaea as *aestuosa*, it is probable that *uber* too refers to the fertility of the land in summer rather than spring.

¹³⁰ They occupy lines 4-11 and include also a psychological dimension that is new in the tradition of the genre.

¹³¹ See Quinn (1970) 229; Forsyth 263.

¹³² Cf. McKay-Shepherd (1969) 137; Schievenin 24 n.7.

¹³³ That translates the traditional ῥῶνι of the Greek epigrams.

geographical setting, including the itinerary of the future journey, is rather clearly delimited - the Phrygian plains (4), the land of Nicaea (5), the famous cities of Asia (6)¹³⁴ - while the addressee, i.e. the poet himself, is also directly named (*Catulle*, 4). As the author of poem 46 is also the speaker who himself will make the vernal journey,¹³⁵ there is also a greater personal involvement that translates into a more exuberant and excited tone than that of Priapus in *A.P.* 10.1 and 2.

Another element particular to Catullus 46 is the presence of the *comitum coetus* (9) that brings a specific Roman flavour into the Greek generic background. The farewell addressed to his fellow members in the *cohors* (9ff.), emphasizing the journey motif, defines 46 as a *syntaktikon*¹³⁶ and accomplishes the admixture of genres that characterizes the poem. The emotional farewell, expressing an unexpected regret at the thought of departure, adds also a melancholic note¹³⁷ (again, a novelty in the tradition of the genre) to an otherwise exuberant and joyful poem.

Written in the hendecasyllabic meter, poem 46 begins with two monosyllabic words (*iam ver*) that announce, with the solemnity conferred by the spondaic opening, the theme of the poem,¹³⁸ and sets the mood of immediacy¹³⁹ characteristic of the genre. In contrast to *A.P.* 10.1 and

¹³⁴ The mention of Nicaea and the cities of Asia brings also an urban aspect not found in the Greek poems.

¹³⁵ *Catulle* in line 4 replaces *νοτυλίε* from *A.P.* 10.1.6 and *νοτύτα* from *A.P.* 10.2.5. Cf. Avallone 246. While *Catulle* could be also considered an example of *Selbst-gespräch*, this does not change the fact that the addressee of the poem is the poet himself.

¹³⁶ See Cairns 44f.

¹³⁷ See Quinn (1973) 230; Small (1983) 77; Avallone 246.

¹³⁸ Recalling the Greek tradition of the spring poem but innovating by directly mentioning the season. Starting from *iam ver*, in a somewhat bold attempt to analyze the effect and the role of a group of sounds in reminding the theme of the poem, Elder (120) considers that “perhaps it is not utterly fanciful to see in the *-er* sound a subconscious association with “spring”. Then one observes that this theme-note recurs in *refert*, *ager uber*, and finally in full form in *diversae*, as well as, in reverse form, in *refert* and *reportant* (lines 1 and 11).”

¹³⁹ The multiple and symmetrical repetition of *iam* (1-2, 7-8) brings into the poem a sense of urgency and excitement unknown to *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. Cf. Forsyth 262; Garrison 119; Quinn (1962) 32 who notice the effect of this repetition, although without referring to the Greek epigrams.

2 in which the visual aspects play a significant part,¹⁴⁰ the description of the season in poem 46 presents an empty vernal landscape; in Catullus' poem spring is not seen, but rather felt, as the emphasis is placed on the warmth it brings back (*egelidos refert tepores*). Since the visual aspect is strongly implied in the reaction prompted by the season, namely, to tour the cities of Asia (6), the *lack* of any visual element becomes, paradoxically enough, a significant part of Catullus' description of spring. A possible explanation for this striking absence could be Catullus' deliberate effort to avoid the conventional descriptions of the season found in the Greek epigrams, while remaining faithful to the essence of the genre. Thus, although apparently departing from the Greek tradition by not including any visual elements in the description of the season, Catullus employs in fact the traditional technique of *variatio*, but in his poem the variation consists in totally ignoring the visual aspect of spring. As in the first two words of 46 (*iam ver*) Catullus has announced, alluding to the Greek epigrams, the theme of the poem, the unexpected absence of visual elements becomes an element of the description of spring; the empty landscape can be considered, in fact, a significant part of his description of the season, and it is the first indication that, by subtly denying spring its usual associations (like beauty, vegetation, and fertility), Catullus will invest the season with a psychological dimension unknown to the Greek tradition of the genre.

Another possible, although apparently a more prosaic explanation for the conspicuous absence of the visual aspect could be the fact that Catullus may actually refer in his poem to very early spring¹⁴¹ when, with the exception of a slight rise in temperature, the winter landscape is still unchanged (and therefore its description would be quite inappropriate in a spring poem). Even so,

¹⁴⁰ For example, the chattering swallow (*A.P.* 10.1.1), the flowery meadows (*A.P.* 10.1.3), the image of the sea (*A.P.* 10.1.3-4; *A.P.* 10.2.1-2).

¹⁴¹ According to the ancient calendars, the Zephyr started to blow in the first week of February (see p.5). However, the mention of the equinoctial sky (2) suggests the end of March as the time frame of the poem (see Ellis 130).

Catullus' choice of this specific temporal frame, far from being accidental, has significant implications for the depiction of the season since it allows him to suggest the ambiguous nature of spring. An argument in favour of this interpretation is Catullus' use of a somewhat problematic term to describe the warming vernal temperature, namely *egelidos*, a term that does describe the warming climate of spring but also strongly evokes the chilly winter season. Although the pair *egelidos tepores* has been generally considered just a "case of redundancy for emphasis" (Garrison 119),¹⁴² and the context makes clear the specific meaning of *egelidos*, the word does contain an ambiguity that allows the associations with winter to creep in, since, through its possible clashing meanings,¹⁴³ and especially its juxtaposition to *ver* (interestingly, the caesura of the first line brings together, in fact, *ver* with *egelidos*, by separating them from the rest of the line), the word seems to insidiously bring into the vernal season the cold of winter.¹⁴⁴ Thus, although the pair *egelidos tepores* can be considered just "a common Latin idiom" in which "the idea expressed by the noun is reinforced by an adjective of the same or similar meaning" (Fordyce 209), Catullus' use of an adjective that could have opposite meanings, bringing together the warmth of spring and the cold of winter, may be also an indirect way of defining the season, hinting perhaps at the unpredictable character of the vernal weather, and therefore at the ambiguous nature of spring.

The uncertain nature of Catullus' spring seems to be further alluded to in the next two lines (2f.), which contain the rather disquieting image of the equinoctial sky whose madness (*furor*, 2), although being placated by the pleasant breezes of the traditional Zephyr (introduced, amid the soothing sound of various sibilants, in line 3), still lingers, as the inceptive form of *silescit* suggests.

¹⁴² See also Schievenin 20.

¹⁴³ "Lukewarm" (Colum. 10. 282; Celsus *Med* 4.5), but also "chilly" (Verg. *Aen* 8. 610), as the prefix *e* could be either privative or intensive (see *TLL* s.v.). Cf. also Ellis 130; Quinn (1962) 32, (1970) 229; Syndikus 241.

¹⁴⁴ For a different (and plausible) interpretation of this word, see also Schievenin (20), who considers that the private sense of the prefix *e-* suggests, in fact, the gradual character of the vernal increase in temperature.

However, the passage does allow a double interpretation, depending on the value given to *silescit*. On the one hand, the use of an inceptive form (emphasizing not the result, but only that the action is still in progress) for a moment of balance so fleeting as the equinox may hint at the fact that the vernal *furor* is not completely silenced and will continue beyond the equinoctial time, characterizing thus spring as an ambiguous and unstable season. On the other hand, as *furor*, referring to the stormy weather that traditionally accompanies the vernal equinox,¹⁴⁵ personifies (together with the inceptive *silescit*¹⁴⁶) the meteorological phenomena of the season,¹⁴⁷ its mention after the reference to the warming temperature may indicate that winter is almost over, since even its stormy ‘echoes’ in spring already grow silent, soothed by the breezes of the Zephyr. The presence of *furor* creates a tension built up by postponing almost until the end of the passage the soothing *silescit*. One may say that lines 2f. mirror, in fact, the movement of the first line in which one term (*egelidos*) echoes winter, while the second (*teporos*) affirms the change of temperature, and therefore, the certain coming of spring; in a similar way, in this passage, the tension created by *furor*, a word that reminds of the stormy winter, is followed by the release brought by *silescit* and the breezes of the Zephyr that point to the arrival of spring and the possibility of travel,¹⁴⁸ and, thus, the passage may just foreshadow Catullus’ eagerness to depart from Bithynia and return home.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, Ellis (130) who refers to Plin. 18. 221; Cic. *Att.* 10.17.3; Gell. 2.22. Cf. Godwin 166; Fordyce 209; Forsyth 263; Garisson 119; Schievenin 21.

¹⁴⁶ See Quinn 229; Ferguson 133.

¹⁴⁷ See Godwin 166; Ferguson 133; Quinn (1970) 229; Godwin 166; Ferguson 133; Quinn (1970) 229.

¹⁴⁸ Perhaps even to the opening of the navigation season, since, according to some critics (Quinn 1970, 229; Forsyth 263) the mention of the pleasant breezes is an allusion to the traditional resumption of sailing brought by spring. Similarly, *silescit* recalls, as various critics (Syndikus 240 n.5; Avallone 246; Braga 206; Hezel 25) have noticed, *σεισηκεν* from *A.P.* 10.1.3, and, therefore, the traditional spring of the Greek epigrams.

¹⁴⁹ See Godwin (166) who remarks that “there is a nice irony in that the passion of the sky gives way to the poet’s passion to return home.”

The beginning of Catullus' poem, while recalling the Greek tradition of the genre, seems thus to contain, through the total absence of any visual aspect in the description of the season, the connotations of *egelidos* and the potentially disquieting presence of the continuing *furor*, a gloomier aspect, or at least an ambiguity in the depiction of the season not found in the clear-cut beginning of the spring poems included in the Palatine Anthology, which constitutes a variation and, at a same time, a subtle statement about the season itself.

The first three lines of the poem, containing an innovative and rather striking description of the season, are also characterized by elaborate diction and great stylistic elegance. Catullus employs in this passage various features of sound, e.g. the soothing assonance of *e* in the first line; of *i* in the second line, whose melodic character is also enhanced by the double presence of the diphthong *ae*; the assonance of *i* in line 3 that is also abundant in numerous sibilants (*z*, and especially *s*) suggesting perhaps the continuous and calming whisper of the pleasant West wind. Easily noticeable is the melodious anaphora of *iam* in the first two lines of the poem, expressing the impatience and the exuberance brought by the arrival of spring¹⁵⁰ and recalling also the Greek tradition of the genre. In order to achieve elevation of style and also to draw the attention of the reader, Catullus employs throughout his poem rare words. In this passage, one may find *egelidos* and also *furor*, a word that, according to Schievenin (21), can be considered a *hapax legomenon*, though a semantic one, since, apparently, is used only here to describe a physical reality. Remarkable in the second line is especially the use of the polysyllabic word *aequinocialis* that not only brings, with its 'effervescent' trochees,¹⁵¹ an excitement that counteracts the disquieting

¹⁵⁰ See Quinn (1962) 32.

¹⁵¹ Interestingly, noticing only its polysyllables, but ignoring its trochees, Quinn (1962, 32) considers that *aequinocialis* is a rather "bulky" and "unemotionally precise" word.

presence of *furor* and prefigures the eager self-injunction to travel that follows in 4-8, but, perhaps, is also meant to accomplish elevation of style, as its scientific aura¹⁵² gives the passage an unmistakable Alexandrian touch. The same effect may be also present in the use of *iucundis* (which comes immediately after *aequinoctialis*), a word that, as CJ & BG Simpson (77) argue,¹⁵³ “signals to the contemporary listener and modern reader that Catullus is making a specific reference to the New Poetry.” At the end of line 3 the archaic spelling of *aureis* is also perhaps intended to give a solemn and elevated tone to the passage,¹⁵⁴ possible because precisely in this line, more than anywhere else in the poem, Catullus seems to allude, through the mention of the Zephyr and the use of *silescit* (see p. 97 n.167), to the Greek tradition of the (refined) spring poems.

After this short but effective description of spring, Catullus introduces into his poem the theme of travel to express the reactions prompted by the season (lines 4-11). The unmistakable arrival of spring incites in Catullus, confined, even at the textual level, in the Phrygian fields (*Phrygii, Catulle, campi*),¹⁵⁵ an immediate desire to depart. As the sightseeing aspect of his urge to go away will be soon alluded to (6), the self-injunction to travel and tour the cities of Asia constitutes a significant variation on the (rather mundane) injunctions to sail and trade from *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. Catullus wants to leave the Phrygian fields and the land of Nicaea behind and his strong resolve is perhaps suggested by the long and heavy syllables of the word *linquantur* that seem to give the passage almost the solemnity of an edict. The intensity of Catullus’ reaction to the coming

¹⁵² See Quinn (1962) 60 n.5.

¹⁵³ Following Ross (78), who, considering that the word appears in Catullus in contexts in which the subject is neoteric poetry (14.2 and 50.16) states that “there is every indication ... that the word is a neoteric invention: it was not formerly colloquial (not in comedy) nor poetic but must have become a part of neoteric vocabulary through use in the elegant spoken language of Catullus’ circle at Rome.”

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Schievenin 21 n.5.

¹⁵⁵ According to Quinn (1962, 32), we should note “the economy with which the magic of the past is evoked by the single word *Phrygii*, in order to prepare the ground for the right overtones in *Asiae*, out of which we might otherwise here take only the administrator’s name for a Roman province.”

of spring is also revealed in line 4 by the self-address *Catulle*, although it may be still a matter of debate exactly what emotion this stylistic device indicates in 46. As in Catullus' poetry it usually denotes a negative or conflicting emotion, some critics,¹⁵⁶ under the pressure of an unrestrained biographical approach, have made quite an interpretative leap of faith, unsupported by any evidence in the poem, suggesting that, in fact, the Phrygian plains remind Catullus of his brother's death, and therefore *Catulle* must be an indication of his anguish. However, the self-address of 46 is most likely intended to express the joy and exuberance¹⁵⁷ brought by spring and the sudden prospect of returning home after visiting the cities of Asia.

Following the mention of the Phrygian fields, the next line further specifies the place that should be left behind, namely the fertile land of sweltering Nicaea (*Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae*),¹⁵⁸ thus giving Catullus once again the opportunity to display his Alexandrian propensity for geographical precision¹⁵⁹ and learning.¹⁶⁰ The emphasis in these two lines is on countryside¹⁶¹ (*campi*, 4; *ager*, 5) and its fertility (*uber*, 5), aspects that do not seem to impress too much the rather urban Catullus,¹⁶² but appear only to remind him of the sultry heat of summer,¹⁶³ and the urgent need to depart from a place that will soon become quite uninviting for his taste.

¹⁵⁶ See Williams 463; Ferguson 133; C.J. & B.G. Simpson 76.

¹⁵⁷ See Ellis (130) for whom the soliloquy indicates here "the joy of the soul at a change to new scenes."

¹⁵⁸ See Godwin (166) who remarks that "the vague term *Phrygii* is sharpened into the specific *Nicaea* and the general term *campi* becomes the more picturesque *ager uber aestuosae*."

¹⁵⁹ See Goodman (192), who remarks that "the accurate meteorology and geography of the first five lines are completely Alexandrian."

¹⁶⁰ As several critics (Thomson 319; Fordyce 209) remark, both *uber* and *aestuosae* are confirmed by Strabo's description (12.4.7) of the region.

¹⁶¹ Interestingly, Catullus uses two words (*campi* and *ager*) with somewhat contrasting associations. According to Quinn "'Phrygian' almost = 'Trojan', so that *Phrygii... campi* suggests the plains of Troy," probably with their martial and sorrowful overtones, recalling perhaps the *furor* of the second line, while *ager*, usually "arable land," suggest rather agricultural pursuits, hence the adjective *uber*.

¹⁶² See Wilhelm (4), who considers that Catullus "wants to run from the fertile cornfields of hot Nicaea, flee to the shiny cities of the Greeks. [...] essentially, he wants to replace nature with society." Cf. Small 76.

¹⁶³ The word *aestuosus*, as Godwin (166) remarks, "refers to the summer heat."

In line 6, Catullus finally reveals the goal (or, at least, the first and most exciting stage) of his anticipated journey, namely the *urbes Asiae*. Characterized as *claras*, a word whose double meaning - “bright” and “famous” (see *TLL* s.v.) - suggesting both their physical appearance and renown, justifies the joy at the idea of a sightseeing tour,¹⁶⁴ and generally identified as the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor,¹⁶⁵ the cities of Asia bring into the poem an urban element unknown to the Greek epigrams, and stand in sharp contrast to the ordinary and rather unexciting plains of Bithynia.¹⁶⁶ Catullus’ eagerness to start his journey is indicated in this line by the use of the poetic plural *volemus*,¹⁶⁷ which, suggesting the flight of a bird, could be also be taken as an allusion to sailing (see p. 92 n. 152), or may mean simply ‘to hasten’ (see Thomson 320).

Similar to the beginning of the poem, lines 4–6 are also characterized by numerous effects of sound and style. Thus, line 4 contains the assonance of *i* and *a* (that could evoke sighing), the alliteration of *c* (*Catulle, campi*), and also numerous other harsh consonants (*q, r, p, ph, c, n, g, t*) that may suggest (especially through the predominant gutturals *q, g, c*) the idea of struggling to escape the plains of Phrygia, while in line 5 the abundant vowels (*a, e, u*) and the repeated diphthong *ae* may suggest lamentation and grief.¹⁶⁸ One may also notice the chiasmus (*Nicaeaeque... aestuosae*) and the rhyme (*ager uber*) in line 5, while, according to some critics,¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ See Fordyce 209; Garrison 119; McKay - Shepherd (1969), 137. For an opposing view, see Ferguson (133), who is not impressed with the word, considering it “a little too tripperish and guide-book.”

¹⁶⁵ Namely Pergamum, Sardis, Ephesus and Smyrna, to which Quinn (1970, 230) is inclined to add also the cities on “the adjacent islands Lesbos, Mytilene, Rhodes.”

¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, the only city specifically named in this poem is the city of Nicaea, which, although the capital of Bithynia, is defined only in relation to its land and sweltering climate.

¹⁶⁷ For the plural form of the verb, see Kroll 86.

¹⁶⁸ Commenting on this line, Ferguson (134) remarks that it has “an exaggerated assonance usually found in Catullus with a touch of bitterness,” although, according to Elder (109), “the repeated vowel-sounds create ... “le charme ‘exotique’”.

¹⁶⁹ See Ross (162 n.10), according to whom the entire line 5 is a reference to Parthenius of Nicaea, “the Greek mind behind the discovery of Callimachus and Alexandrian poetry,” while the word *aestuosus* “was used only once

the use of the word *aestuosae* (placed in emphatic position at the end of line 5) seems to allude (again) to the Neoteric poetry.

In the following two lines of the poem (7-8), the repeated *iam*, with its sense of urgency, takes the reader back to the beginning of the poem.¹⁷⁰ The parallelism between these two passages, intended perhaps to associate Catullus' exuberance and dynamism with the arrival of the vernal season, is evident in the personification of mind (*mens*) and feet (*pedes*) that mirrors the personification of spring (or at least of the meteorological phenomena of the season) in the beginning of the poem,¹⁷¹ and also in the use of the inchoative form *vigescunt* that mirrors the verb *silescit*¹⁷² from line 3 and suggests that there is a direct causal relation (and especially contrast) between the vernal *furor* that becomes still and the growing strength of the *pedes*.

In line 7, the exuberance brought by spring and the eagerness of the speaker to start his journey is effectively conveyed by the word *praetrepidans*, apparently a Catullan coinage.¹⁷³ Although the majority of commentators¹⁷⁴ consider that *prae* is used here in its temporal meaning of “before” or “in advance,” expressing the eager anticipation at the prospect of visiting new and exciting places, the prefix is most likely employed both in its temporal and intensive meaning.¹⁷⁵ In the same line, *avet* expresses the excitement anticipated by *iam* and *praetrepidans*, while *vagari* is

elsewhere by Catullus, in a reference to Callimachus (7.5-6). Cf. also CJ & BG Simpson (77f.). However, while the word may be linked in 7.5-6 to Callimachus, in the context of poem 46 such an interpretation seems rather exaggerated.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Adler 29; Ferguson 134.

¹⁷¹ For a rather extreme (and unlikely) interpretation, see Adler (29), who, noticing the personification implied in this passage, considers that “the self-division in c.46 is not dual but quadruple: beside the speaker and ‘Catullus’, there are the *mens* and the *pedes* of ll.7-8, to which autonomous desires and actions are attributed.”

¹⁷² Cf. Schievenin 26.

¹⁷³ See Stoessl 168; Schievenin 22.

¹⁷⁴ See Ellis 131; Forsyth 47f.; Quinn (1970) 230.

¹⁷⁵ See Fordyce (210) who does concede that it may also be intensive in force, and especially Thomson (320), who considers it both intensive and temporal and translates *praetrepidans* as “violently fluttering in anticipation.”

most likely intended to convey the urge to be on the move,¹⁷⁶ rather than to mean “rush away”¹⁷⁷ or to suggest undirected traveling,¹⁷⁸ a sense that would contradict the relatively precise destination of Catullus’ journey, namely the *urbes Asiae*. However, *vagari* could also mean in this context “to roam,”¹⁷⁹ that is to move from one place (city) to another, free (at last) from any (official) constraints, a meaning appropriate enough to describe Catullus’ sightseeing project.

The eagerness of mind in line 7 is paralleled in line 8 by the zeal (*studio*) of the personified feet. The description of *pedes* does not necessarily imply that Catullus intended to make his journey by land,¹⁸⁰ since, as discussed above (92ff.), the poem seems also to contain allusions to seafaring. The presence of *pedes* is thus meant to suggest not the means of conveyance, but rather the intensity of an excitement apparent even at the corporal level, as the adjective *laeti*, conferring an emotion to a part of the body and reinforcing the idea of complete joy, seems also to indicate.¹⁸¹ Corresponding to *mens* from line 7, the presence of *pedes* could have in this line the function of a ‘marker’ of eagerness - an interpretation supported also by the fact that apparently in his poems Catullus, as Putnam¹⁸² (18 n.11) observes, “constantly associates the foot with some eagerly awaited occasion.”

This passage too is characterized by the same stylistic care as the rest of the poem; in addition to the repetition of *iam* at the beginning of each line, meant to convey the excitement at the prospect of his sightseeing tour, one may notice the word *vigescere*, a *hapax legomenon*, and also the assonance of *a* and *e*.

¹⁷⁶ See Thomson 320.

¹⁷⁷ See Quinn 1970, 230.

¹⁷⁸ See Godwin 166; Forsyth 264.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Small 77.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Wheeler 97.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Godwin 166; Quinn (1970) 230.

¹⁸² Putnam gives as examples 68.70 and 61.9-10.

In the last three lines of the poem (9ff.), containing the touching farewell addressed to his companions, Catullus introduces a specific Roman element, namely *comitum coetus*.¹⁸³ At the structural level, the farewell corresponds to the self-address in line 4,¹⁸⁴ with a movement from a single addressee (himself) to the indefinite number of his *comites*. The formality of *comites* - a term officially used to designate the members of the governor's *cohors* - is mitigated by the emotional intensity expressed by the interjection *o*¹⁸⁵ and especially by the adjective *dulces*, that metamorphose the meaning of the technical *comitum coetus* into 'friends.'¹⁸⁶

The passage contains two significant variations on the Greek spring poems. Thus, while in *A.P.* 10. 1 and 2 the arrival of the vernal season prompts the sailors' departure from home in their trading enterprise, in poem 46 the coming of spring, ending their official attributions, prompts Catullus and his friends to return home. At the same time, at the structural level, the idea of return expressed by the last word, *reportant*, seems also to confer on Catullus' poem a ring structure, as it recalls, both through its prefix and meaning, the word *refert* from the first line¹⁸⁷: the vernal season brings back the warmth; in a similar way, the roads (of spring) carry the travelers back to their homes. The second variation on the Greek spring poems is the fact that, while in the Greek epigrams the coming of spring 'unites' the sailors in their travel, in poem 46, spring separates Catullus from his friends. Also, if, traditionally, spring unites people in the joy of celebration or, through its amatory associations, in love, in Catullus' poem spring separates; the arrival of the season is now equated not with exuberance and dynamism, but with the idea of departure which

¹⁸³ For the effect of the farewell on the generic aspect of the poem, see 93f.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Godwin 166; Schievenin 26. For a discussion on the dialogic element of line 4 that resurfaces in the farewell from lines 9-11, see Newman (142), who considers that "the language of the poem is biased towards an audience, before which the poet appears as an actor, even when actor and audience are in the theatre of his mind."

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Fordyce 210.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Ferguson 134. For a possible etymological link between *comitum* and *coetus*, see Cairns (1991) 444.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Adler 29.

suddenly, although in the rest of the poem was contemplated with great enthusiasm, appears now tinged with sadness and melancholy. The sense of regret and sorrow, noticed by the majority of critics¹⁸⁸ in this passage, seems to cast its shadow over the entire poem and its presence at the end of 46 parallels the gloomy aspects discovered at its start (see pp. 95-98), conferring on Catullus' poem what one may call a ring structure of ambiguity. The slightly melancholic frame to all the joy and exuberance brought by the arrival of the vernal season, unnoticed in the previous criticism of the poem, can be seen as a subtle statement about spring, hinting perhaps at its ambiguous nature.

Characterized by the same stylistic care as the rest of the poem, this passage ends 46 with a flourish, lines 9-11 containing various effects of sound (e.g. the assonance of *o* and *u* in line 9; of *o* and *e* in line 10; of *e* in line 11, suggesting perhaps the sorrow of separation, and also the alliteration of *v* in line 11) and style (e.g. the rhyme *diversae varie viae*).

Using some of the conventional features of the Greek epigrams, Catullus writes a spring poem in which the vernal season loses almost all of its traditional associations (e.g. vegetation, beauty and fertility). The eagerness and joyfulness felt by Catullus are not prompted by the natural aspects of the season, as one might expect in a spring poem, but rather by the sense of freedom that the season seems to bring.¹⁸⁹ While the vernal landscape is totally ignored by Catullus, the psychological effects provoked by the coming of spring (great excitement, intense desire to travel and exuberance, but also a tinge of sadness and melancholy) are described or alluded to throughout the poem, foreshadowing thus the intellectual and more pessimistic approach to spring found later in Horace's poems.

¹⁸⁸ See Quinn (1973) 230; Small (1983) 77; Avallone 246; Ferguson 134.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Small 76f.

Chapter IV

Horace *Carm.* 1.4¹⁹⁰

SOLVITUR acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni,
 trahuntque siccas machinae carinas,
 ac neque iam stabulis gaudet pecus aut arator igni,
 nec prata canis albicant pruinis.
 iam Cytherea choros ducit Venus imminente Luna, 5
 iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes
 alterno terram quatunt pede, dum gravis Cyclopum
 Vulcanus ardens visit officinas.
 nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto
 aut flore terrae quem ferunt solutae; 10
 nunc et in umbrosis Fauno decet immolare lucis,
 seu poscat agna sive malit haedo.
 pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
 regumque turris. o beate Sesti,
 vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam. 15
 iam te premet nox fabulaeque Manes
 et domus exilis Plutonia; quo simul mearis,
 nec regna vini sortiēre talis,
 nec tenerum Lycidan mirabere, quo calet iuventus
 nunc omnis et mox virgines tepebunt. 20

Included in the first book of his *Carmina*, and dedicated to Lucius Sestius Quirinus, consul suffect of 23 B.C.,¹⁹¹ the same year in which the first three books of Horace’s odes were published, 1.4 initiates a ‘cycle’ of spring poems, completed later by 4.7 and 4.12. Although, as Davis (159) insists, it could be “fundamentally misleading”¹⁹² to characterize this ode as a spring poem, one cannot help but do so, ‘blaming’ the numerous structural, thematic and stylistic similarities between 1.4 and the previous spring poems¹⁹³ for indicating unequivocally the adherence of Horace’s poem

¹⁹⁰ The Latin text is that of Wickham’s Oxford edition (1957).

¹⁹¹ Which may indicate the composition date of the poem. For the chronology, see for example Wickham 19f.; Nisbet-Hubbard xxx; Lyne 73f.

¹⁹² In Davis’ view, spring could be replaced by any other season, since its presence in the poem only ‘subserves’ the *carpe diem* motif.

¹⁹³ *A.P.* 10.1, 2; *Cat.* 46 and also possibly *A.P.* 9.363 and 10.4.

to the genre.¹⁹⁴ Thus, at the structural level, following the Greek tradition, Horace employs the schema of a spring poem, including a description of the season in 1-8, and the reactions prompted by spring in 9-20. The poem starts with the dramatic image of the end of winter (*solvitur acris hiems*), followed by the mention of the pleasant change brought by spring (*grata vice veris*) and a reference to the traditional West wind, called here Favonus and presented as a companion of spring in their melting (or loosening) enterprise. As further reminders of the Greek tradition, one may find in Horace's poem the vivid description of the launching of ships (*carinas*, 2), whose presence, immediately after the reference to the Favonus, indicates the imminent opening of the sailing season; the image of the meadows (*prata*, 4), recalling and contrasting, through their frost-covered appearance, with the blossoming meadows of *A.P.* 10.1.3; 2.4, and, possibly, (if that poem antedates Horace's poem) of *A.P.* 9. 363.5f.; the reference to flowers (*flore*, 10); the mention of Faunus (10f.) who, as a protector of crops and herds, evokes (mainly because of the fertility connection¹⁹⁵) the traditional figure of Priapus. The similarity with the Greek spring poems is also evident at the level of expression, as one may notice the repeated use of *iam* (3, 5 and 16), recalling the traditional ἤδη, while the indirect characterization of spring by negation of winter's features in lines 3-4 reminds the reader of *A.P.* 10. 2. 1f. where Antipater of Sidon uses the same technique to describe the vernal sea.

However, in this passage, for the first time in the tradition of the genre, winter seems also to be given some positive associations, since *gaudet* in line 3 points to the fact that the arrival of spring

¹⁹⁴ Among the critics who do consider *Carm.* 1.4 a spring poem, one may find Campbell 96; Fraenkel 419; Quinn 4; Leinieks 57; Lee (1970) 248f.; Commager 72; Willi 231; Paschalis 184; Syndikus 70; Nisbet-Hubbard xix and 58ff. However, apart from identifying it as a spring poem, none of these critics offer a rigorous analysis of 1.4 in relationship with the other poems of the genre.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 60.

and the resuming of the agricultural year end the respite from care in which both the farmer (*arator*) and the beasts of burden (*pecus*) indulged during the winter,¹⁹⁶ while in line 4 the image of the white meadows seems to evoke the (brilliant) beauty of the hibernal season. Also, in contrast to the previous spring poems, the vernal landscape of Horace's poem is populated with a greater number of (new) presences, both human (*arator*, 3) and animal (*pecus*, 3), while the various mythological figures mentioned throughout 1.4¹⁹⁷ (*Venus*, 5; *Nymphis Gratiae*, 6; *Cyclopum*, 7; *Vulcamus*, 8; *Fauno*, 11; *Manes*, 16; Pluto, by the reference to *domus Plutonia*, 17) seem to characterize spring as a season that brings together the human, natural and mythological realms.

Similar to Catullus' spring poem, the speaker of 1.4 is the poet himself, while the addressee, namely *Sesti* (14), not only adds a new element to the Roman flavour of the poem, but also constitutes a novelty as the first historically identifiable addressee in the tradition of the genre.¹⁹⁸ However, the major difference between 1.4 and the rest of the spring poems is to be found in its second part, containing the reactions prompted by the season.¹⁹⁹ Thus, starting with the indirect (and innovative) injunctions to celebrate the arrival of spring (9-10) and to offer an appropriate sacrifice to Faunus (11-12),²⁰⁰ the reactions prompted by spring include a *memento mori* motif (13-15), followed by a *carpe diem* one (16-20) that ends 1.4 with a vivid description of a sympotic scene (19-20) which, through the mention of the young *Lycidan* (19), introduces also into the poem the theme of love.²⁰¹ All these elements, including also the mention of the dreadful underworld

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Ancona 47f. A similar idea appears also in Hes. *Op.* 493f. and Verg. *G.* 1. 300ff. (see p.17).

¹⁹⁷ Far more numerous than in earlier spring poems.

¹⁹⁸ The name of S. Quirinus appears also in Cic. *Att.* 13.2.2, *Fam.* 5.6.2, 13.8.3; Cat. 44. Cf. Will (p. 243 n.12).

¹⁹⁹ In this part is also evident the generic admixture that seems to characterize all the Latin spring poems (as the detailed analysis of these poems will reveal, similar to Catullus' poem, not only Hor. *Carm.* 4.7 and 4.12, but also Ov. *Tr.* 3. 12 depart from the Greek 'purity' of the genre).

²⁰⁰ Centuries later Agathias Scholasticus may have in mind this passage for his *A.P.* 10.14.9f.

²⁰¹ The context and especially the use of a Greek name allude perhaps also to a homoerotic relationship.

(*domus Plutonia*, 17) and the moralizing aspect, are new in the tradition of the genre. Thus, in contrast to the Greek epigrams included in the *Palatine Anthology*, the arrival of spring prompts in 1.4 very diverse and much more sophisticated attitudes, which blend the tragic of the *memento mori* with the energy burst of a frantic *carpe diem*. Through its new thematic elements, *Carm.* 1.4 brings thus into the tradition of the genre a complexity, ingenuity and depth of thought unknown to the previous spring poems.

A complex and refined piece of writing, *Carm.* 1.4 has received much critical attention and commendation, being regarded as “the most impressive spring-poem from antiquity” (Willi, 231), “the most perfectly conceived and expressed ode in all Horace” (Stinton, 164) or, at least, a “lovely forerunner” of 4.7 (Fraenkel, 419) - at any rate, a poem that “dazzles and fascinates” (Levin, 357). However, paradoxically enough, in spite of these (generally) enthusiastic critical appreciations, nothing has been more often questioned than the basic structural cohesion of the poem, as perhaps the most scrutinized aspect of 1.4 has been the thematic tension created by the rather intriguing juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory elements: spring and death. Indeed, as in a swift succession of scenes, 1.4 presents a vernal landscape whose ‘vividness’ seems only to open the path for the deadly stalk of *pallida Mors* (13), the internal logic of the poem may appear, at first sight, if not twisted, at least blurred, and the (apparently) sudden transition of thought from spring to death has puzzled many a scholar. Leaving aside Walter Savage Landor’s harsh comment that “*pallida mors* has nothing to do with the above”²⁰² - a comment that could be actually considered the starting point of this critical debate, as it incited Horatian scholars to prove the contrary - two main

²⁰² Namely with the description of spring from the first 12 lines of the poem. A.Y. Campbell was the first critic who reacted by trying to prove that, on the contrary, *pallida mors* is “the focus of the whole poem” (78). Cf. also Lee 286.

solutions have been found in order to ‘save’ the structural and thematic coherence of the poem. According to the first solution, only a (rather naïve) reading of the poem that would ignore the literary tradition in which Horace was writing could find the transition from spring to death an abrupt one, since the annual renewal of life in spring was traditionally contrasted with the linear progression of human life.²⁰³ As Stinton (162) argues, Horace could afford to omit the explicit logical connection²⁰⁴ (being thus able to give his poem an exquisite concision), since his readers were able to fill the gap for themselves. If in this case critics have tried to find the key to Horace’s ode in its literary context, the second solution focuses instead on the text of the poem itself. According to the critics who suggest this solution,²⁰⁵ there is no real gap between the first part of the poem and the second one, since, as the poem actually contains numerous parallel and contrasting notions, and also a subtle interlocking of motifs and verbal echoes that unify its parts, the entrance of *pallida Mors* into the vernal landscape of 1.4, far from being abrupt, is foreshadowed in the first 12 lines by various elements expressing notions associated in the second part of the poem (and usually in Horace’s work) with death.²⁰⁶ In their attempt to explain the thematic inconsistency of Horace’s poem critics have approached the problem from two different perspectives; however, the solutions proposed are complementary and allow a more informed understanding of the apparent structural and thematic ‘oddity’ of 1.4.

Leaving aside this controversy, the main thrust of the poem can be in fact rather easily summarized. The poem starts with a description of spring (1-8) whose elements suggest joy,

²⁰³ See Stinton 161f; Commager (1957) 72; (1962) 268; Lyne 66f. and West 20. Cf. also Nisbet-Hubbard (60f.), who quote Cat. 5.4ff. and Mosch. *Epitaphion Bionis* 99ff. as examples and possible literary antecedents of Horace’s poem.

²⁰⁴ Namely that the coming of spring reminds of the succession of seasons, therefore of time, therefore of human mortality and death in general.

²⁰⁵ For example Sylvester 262, Corbeill 92-101, Woodman 768-776.

²⁰⁶ For example, *iunctae* (6) and *impedire* (9) contain the notion of constraint that appears also in the description of the underworld in 15-16 (see further below).

activity, and love but at the same time, change, transience and death. Since these bitter-sweet aspects of spring define also human destiny, lines 9-12 contain an injunction to fully enjoy life as long as it lasts since the only certain thing in life is the fact that hateful death comes to all mortals, regardless of their wealth or social status (13f.), and it comes (too) soon (15f.), putting a definitive end to any activity and joy, including the sympotic or the erotic pleasures (17-20). However, if essentially these are the main ideas expressed in 1.4, Horace's poem is also a refined piece of writing, full of complexities and (sometimes) contradictory nuances whose aspects necessitate a more detailed discussion.

The poem begins with the description of an end - the end of winter - foreshadowing the idea of death that will occupy such a prominent place in the second part of 1.4. However, in contrast to the disquieting thought of the implacability of death, the dissolution of winter is fraught with hope as the arrival of spring brings into the poem the idea of release (*solvitur*) and pleasant change (*grata vice*).²⁰⁷ Although one may argue, as Ancona (47) does, that the focus of the first line is not on spring, but primarily on the idea of change, since “the emphasis on change is highlighted by the fact that the agent is literally the change or alternation of the seasons (*vice*) rather than spring itself”, the immediate mention of the West wind does reinforce the vernal aspect, and suggests that what Horace wants to emphasize here is the *nature* of change. Thus, in this passage change is *grata* precisely because of its vernal character,²⁰⁸ as spring was traditionally associated with joy, while in the second part of 1.4, change (for example, the future change of Lycidas in 19-20) is seen only as a foreboding reminder of the inexorable passing of time. Nevertheless, in spite of the pleasant nature

²⁰⁷ See Nielsen-Solomon 190f; Paschalis 184; Corbeill 94; Lee 66f.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Commager (1962) 268 who considers that *grata vice veris* hints that spring is only one of the year's changes, and that others may not be so pleasant.

of this particular change, the quick transition - in a single line - from winter to spring may also suggest the fleeting (and therefore disquieting) nature of time, foreshadowing the opposite but equally swift transition from the joyous vernal landscape to the disturbing image of *pallida Mors* in line 13. Thus, the joy brought by the sudden transition from winter to spring is counterbalanced in the second part of the poem by the tragic awareness of the finite nature of human life, since, while in the natural world spring ends winter, bringing the renewal of life and so a new beginning, at the human level every new spring brings the man closer to his old age, the harsh ‘winter’ of his life, a winter that, in contrast to the seasonal one, ends in a death that does not hold the hope of a new beginning.

The vernal change described in the first line prompts in the next lines (2-3) the resuming of the traditional seasonal activities.²⁰⁹ Thus, in line 2 the dry vessels are drawn down by the *machinae*, action that, after the emphatic mention of the West wind at the end of the first line, points to the opening of the navigation season, suggesting again the idea of release - as opposed to the idea of constriction associated with winter (*solvitur*) and, later in the poem, with death (*premet*, 16)²¹⁰ - but also perhaps the idea of danger. After the allusion to sailing, line 3 hints at the other activities traditionally associated with the beginning of the vernal season, alluding to the resuming of the farming tasks suspended during the winter. Portrayed as a time of action and dynamism, spring is suddenly (although indirectly) put in a somewhat ambiguous light, since, if in the first line of the poem the pleasant change of spring ended the winter, here the vernal season puts also an end to the equally pleasant repose of the *arator* and his *pecus*. The dynamism that characterizes the first two lines is thus contrasted in the third line with the ‘static’ but secure and effortless pleasure of the

²⁰⁹ See Minadeo 66; Corbeill 92; 94.

²¹⁰ Cf. Lee 67; Woodman 771.

arator and *pecus*, which, together with the (implied) brilliant beauty of the white meadows, portray winter as a season with its own special charm, lessening somewhat the effect of the dreadful *acris* from the first line, and thus indirectly presenting the change brought by the vernal season as not necessarily entirely pleasant.²¹¹ However, while critics have noticed that line 3 indirectly presents a less attractive aspect of spring, namely the renewal of the strenuous practical activities,²¹² criticism has generally ignored the fact that the passage contains also the only instance in the poem where the idea of restriction and immobility - usually found in Horace's descriptions of old age and death²¹³ - is directly related to joy (*gaudet*), and that, paradoxically, line 3 seems to associate spring with death, in view of the fact that, in the second part of the poem (16-20), death is seen primarily as a deprivation of pleasures. This unexpected association makes one wonder whether, besides the nature of human temporality, Horace does not also want to pursue in 1.4 the nature of pleasure and its relationship with time. Thus, whenever Horace refers in this poem to human pleasure, the phrasing is either hortatory, like in lines 9-10, or negative (*neque iam gaudet*, 3; *nec regna vini sortiere talis*, 18; *nec mirabere*, 19); unlikely to be unintentional, this may suggest both the current absence of pleasure and the fact that loss, or the possibility of loss, is inextricably linked with the experience of joy. Intriguingly, although in lines 9-10 and 18-20 the speaker declares the appropriateness or, in the second case, the urgency of immediate pleasure, human joy seems to lack in 1.4 the present time. Furthermore, as the vernal joy prompts thoughts about the brevity of (life, and therefore) all pleasures, Horace's poem appears to suggest that, paradoxically, by its nature, pleasure functions, through the possibility of loss, as a reminder of its own impending absence, and

²¹¹ See Ancona 48.

²¹² See for example Woodman 262; Sylvester 62.

²¹³ See Paschalis 183f.; Ancona 49.

its status is thus fundamentally ambiguous, since it seems to be at the same time both the most desirable fulfillment of human life, and a *memento* of life's (and its own) precariousness and brevity. Nevertheless, as the revival of life and the resumption of the activities associated with the coming of spring were traditionally linked with the expression of joy, the poem continues with a vivid description of a celebration whose participants are figures of the mythological world. Thus, the tableau in which, 'supervised' by moon and led by the Cytherean Venus, the joined Nymphs and Graces celebrate the season by shaking in their rhythmic and vigorous dance the ground contains the only 'actualized' joy in the poem. The passage offers a mythological parallel to the joy brought by the vernal season into the natural world (*grata vice*, 1) but also makes the absence of human joy even more conspicuous, foreshadowing thus the injunction to celebrate from 9-12, and also both the sympotic scene at the end of the poem, and the erotic aspect associate with it. In the same passage, in contrast to the joyous celebration and dance of the feminine mythological figures, Vulcan's visit to the forges of the Cyclopes mirrors at the mythological level the resuming of the practical activities in the human world. The presence of Venus (with her numerous attendants) and Vulcan in the vernal landscape seems thus to allude to the dual nature of spring, as Venus hints at the regenerative aspect of the vernal season, while Vulcan at the resuming of hard work²¹⁴ and perhaps also at spring's unpredictable weather, since, as the majority of commentators consider, the purpose of his visit to the Cyclopes' forges was to superintend the task of manufacturing the thunderbolts needed during the stormy vernal season. However, even in the description of the celebrating dance of the Nymphs and Graces seem to be ambiguous elements that cast a shadow over the (generally) happy scene, like the presence of the moon, interpreted by many commentators

²¹⁴ See Ancona 48; Corbeil 92.

as somewhat menacing,²¹⁵ or, as Nielsen-Solomon (193) argue, the idea of constraint implied in *iunctae* (6), that brings into spring a notion associated with winter and death. The entire mythological scene may also foreshadow the darker aspect to be found in the second part of 1.4, since in Horace's poems, as Williams (122f.) considers, "the movement into mythology usually prepares a movement of thought into ideas that range outside the immediate phenomena of this world to death and beyond."

The description of the vernal season in lines 1-8 prompts in 9-12 the injunctions to celebrate and to make an appropriate sacrifice to Faunus. While criticism has unanimously considered lines 9-10 as the introduction into the poem, under the 'pressure' of the joyous vernal mood, of the *carpe diem* motif, the presence of Faunus has been variously (and rather ingeniously) explained. Thus, while to some critics it seems quite probable that the god plays in Horace's poem the part played by Priapus in the Greek spring poems,²¹⁶ other critics consider that Faunus is the focus of the poem either by relating his presence in 1.4 to *dies parentales*, the Roman festival of the dead²¹⁷ or by regarding him not only as a fertility god who, naturally enough, must be propitiated at the beginning of the vernal season, but also as an oracular prophet.²¹⁸ Leaving aside the specific (and rather controversial) significance of Faunus in Horace's poem, as the ancient rustic festivals involved a feast accompanied by drink and (usually) love,²¹⁹ the sacrifice to Faunus can be considered, first of all, part of the *carpe diem* motif, foreshadowing thus, at the thematic level, the sympotic scene (and its erotic aspect) at the end of the poem.

²¹⁵ See for example Ancona 48; Nielsen-Solomon 194; Woodman 770f.; Lee 67.

²¹⁶ See Nisbet-Hubbard 67.

²¹⁷ See Bar 5-11.

²¹⁸ See Babcock 13-19.

²¹⁹ See for example Tib. 1.10

After the ambiguous figure of Faunus, the poem continues with the haunting (although somewhat grotesque) image of *pallida Mors* (13) ‘gnomically’ kicking everybody’s door. Since, poor or rich, sooner or later all humans have to hear the sinister sound of her impartial foot (*aequo pede*, 13), the obvious message of 13f. is that death comes to all. Also, as the addressee of Horace’s poem, namely Sestius,²²⁰ is immediately revealed, it is very likely that the general reference to the social status and wealth of those (soon to be) ‘visited’ by death carries a personal note. However, criticism is divided with regard to the importance of the historical Lucius Sestius for the understanding of Horace’s ode, as some critics consider that “the poem is in no way about Sestius” (Nisbet-Hubbard, 68), while others tend to see in the historical Sestius the very key of the poem.²²¹ Leaving aside the fact that his qualification as *beate* (14), a word that “suggests felicity as well as prosperity” (Nisbet-Hubbard, 68)²²² may seem slightly ironic, if not, as Babcock (19) believes, entirely hollow, as it comes after the mention of the *regumque turris*, one may perhaps, in order to avoid any extreme interpretation, agree with Anderson (116), who suggests that “Sestius, the affluent consul, stands for all those who in middle age and relatively comfortable circumstances need to remember how close Death is.”²²³ The close proximity of death is in fact the main idea expressed in the *sententia* of line 15 that, according to Woodman (774), is “reminiscent perhaps of a common epitaph-theme,” while the adverb *iam* (16) that starts the description of the (rather claustrophobic) underworld (*domus Plutonia*, 17) points again to death’s imminent nature. The thought that death not only comes to all, but also comes (too) soon, is made even more hateful by

²²⁰ For the historical figure of Sestius, see, for example, Nisbet-Hubbard 68; West 20f.

²²¹ See Will 240-245.

²²² See also West 21.

²²³ Cf. Putnam (1986, 143f.), who, analyzing the different way in which the addressee of 1.4 and 4.7 are treated, remarks that, although “Lucius Sestius [...] is honored with the fourth poem in a collection whose earlier three apostrophes were to Maecenas, Augustus, and Virgil,” in the poem itself “he appears only in the role of anyone blessed with wealth and youth, whom the speaker places in a larger continuum.”

the reference to (some of the) pleasures of life (18-20). Thus, at the end of a poem in which the idea of change occupies such a prominent place, death is presented as change at its worst, putting a definitive end to all activity and depriving the human being of any possible joy. However, the sympotic scene and its amatory aspects from the last lines, reinforces the *carpe diem* motif prompted by the joy of the vernal season and confers a ring structure on the poem as it sends the reader back to the beginning of 1.4 through various elements, including words denoting changes in temperature (*calet*, 19; *tepebunt*, 20).

Horace's poem presents thus a complex and rather ambiguous image of spring in which light and beauty, joy and exuberance are closely intertwined with darkness, immobility and death. As the natural world merges with the mythological and human world, the poem also dramatically puts in contrast the cyclical time of the natural phenomena and the timeless nature of the mythological figures with the finite and tragic temporality of human experience.

A refined piece of writing, whose complexity is evident not only at the thematic but also at the metrical and stylistic level, 1.4 was composed in a variety of meter technically known as the Third Archilochian, in which a Greater Archilochian is followed by an iambic trimeter catalectic, a meter that, according to Nielsen-Solomon (189), "sustains a corresponding flow of imagery and mood in the ode," since "it adds to the sense of motion which we detect on all levels in the poem." The perfect suitability of the meter to the theme of 1.4 is also enounced by Lee (286f.), who states that "the poem describes the cycle of the seasons and is appropriately cast in a cyclic rhythm: the movement in the long dactylo-trochaic line is reversed in the shorter iambic trimeter catalectic,"²²⁴

²²⁴See also Anderson (119), who considers that the meter "allows Horace to catch both the sense of springtime release and the urgency that derives from the vicissitudes of human life." For similar views, cf. Corbeill 99f.; Barr 10.

while Nisbet-Hubbard (61), comparing 1.4 with 4.7, the next spring poem written by Horace, consider that the meter of 1.4 reinforces the ambivalence of feeling expressed by the poem, since “the ecstatic long lines are even livelier than hexameters, but are pulled up by the slow catalectic iambs, whose closing cadence yet re-echoes that of the long lines.”²²⁵

The poem starts with *solvitur*, a word with a plethora of meanings of which many are very likely present in this passage - among them, one may consider *to loosen; to unbind; to dislodge; to dissolve; to melt; to break up* (see *OLD* s.v.). While not easy to translate, *solvitur*, a cognate of λύω and synonym of *libero*, effectively conveys, as Paschalis (184) observes, “the image of release from winter cold and of the restoration of life in nature,” since it suggests “the melting of the snow, the softening of the ground, the release of mind and body from the numbness of winter” (Nisbet-Hubbard, 62). The verb emphasizes thus at the very start of the poem the idea of change and movement that occupies such an important place in 1.4, while the pregnant diction of this beginning may indirectly suggest the fertility and abundance of spring. Besides announcing the initial theme of 1.4, *solvitur*, placed in emphatic position at the beginning of the first line, may also allude, as several critics consider,²²⁶ to Alcaeus 286, a poem that apparently deals with the coming of the vernal season, although the fragmentary state in which its text has been preserved does not allow a more detailed analysis of the parallelism between it and Horace’s poem.²²⁷

Literally surrounded by *solvitur* and the agents of its dissolution, winter is introduced into the poem by the syntagm *acris hiems* that, whether or not ‘borrowed’ from previous Latin

²²⁵ For a detailed metrical analysis of the poem, see Tremoli 8-22.

²²⁶ See Nisbet-Hubbard 58 and 62; Campbell 96; Bowie 23; Mondin 24f.

²²⁷ It seems, however, very possible that, as Nisbet-Hubbard (58) put it, “Horace has drawn his opening, as so often, from Alcaeus.”

writers,²²⁸ not only suggests the harshness of the season,²²⁹ but also makes, by contrast, even more effective the characterization of the change brought by the vernal season as *grata*. The antithetical relationship between winter and spring is also subtly emphasized by the diaeresis following *hiems* that separates the description of winter from the rest of the line, while the movement from the trisyllabic *solvitur* to the disyllabic *acris* and *hiems* may suggest, as the words are getting smaller, the melting process.

Although, traditionally, the West wind was the harbinger of spring, in Horace's poem, it follows, at the textual level, the vernal season. The position of *Favoni* at the end of the line is intended to correspond to the emphatic position of *solvitur* at the beginning of the line, while its presence after the mention of spring ends a movement from abstract (*vice veris*) to concrete²³⁰ (a process which is further emphasized by the personification of the 'favorable' Favonius) - naturally enough, as the West wind is the main and concrete cause of the melting process. The first line, with its explicit dichotomies - *hiems* in the first part, *veris* in the second; *acris* qualifying winter, *grata*, the change brought by spring²³¹ - foreshadows the contrasting pairs of elements and ideas so abundant in the rest of the poem, and, enhanced also by various sound effects - the assonance of *i*, the alliteration of *v* in *vice veris*; the abundance of *v* sound (*solvitur... vice veris... Favoni*), that may suggest the whisper of a gentle breeze²³² - starts Horace's spring poem with a flourish.

²²⁸ See Stinton 159 n.2; Nisbet-Hubbard 62. As *acris hiems* appears in Ern. *Ann.* 424 and Lucr. 6.373, Horace may have intended to achieve elevation of style by starting his poem with a syntagm employed in epic poetry.

²²⁹ The adjective *acris* may allude to the piercing cold of the season. However, Horace uses again a word with multiple meanings (e.g., *biting, piercing, fierce, severe, penetrating* - see *TLL* s.v.), several of which probably present in the syntagm *acris hiems*.

²³⁰ For a discussion and praise of the "concreteness" of Horace's imagery as one of his most important devices, see Tracy 117.

²³¹ Cf. Corbeill 94.

²³² See also Delaunois (322); Nielsen-Solomon (190). However, according to Nielsen-Solomon (191), the presence of the -*v* sounds throughout the first line may also have the effect of bonding the two seasons together.

The second line of the poem continues the description of the vernal season with the lively image of the dry hulls of the ships being drawn down to the sea. The idea of actual movement and activity expressed by *trahunt* is combined with that of release (paralleling thus the first line), as the image points to the opening of the navigation season. At the textual level, the importance of *trahunt*²³³ is revealed by its emphatic position at the beginning of the line, similar to that of *solvitur* from line 1. The use of *carinas*, although metonymic (therefore poetic) and intended perhaps to counterbalance the technical and rather prosaic *machinae*, allows Horace to suggest, through its qualifier *siccas*, not only the aridity, as Nisbet-Hubbard (63) consider, but also the long length of the winter season and the inactivity that accompanies it. The line contains an instance of interlocking, as *siccas... carinas* surrounds *machinae*, knitting thus together the elements of the scene. One may also notice the rhyme *siccas... carinas*, numerous *c* and *q* sounds, suggesting, perhaps, as Nielsen-Solomon (191) consider, the sound of the clanging pulleys.²³⁴

Hinting at the seasonal resumption of the agricultural activities, line 3 presents the intriguing image of a rather reluctant *arator* and *pecus* whose comfortable and safe winter repose is ended by the coming of the vernal season,²³⁵ while the vignette of line 4, containing the description of the meadows white with frost, evokes the desolate but also brilliant beauty of the hibernal landscape. The most remarkable feature of these two lines is perhaps their negative phrasing, since, in a subtle way, Horace not only evokes the Greek spring poems by employing the traditional *neque iam* motif,²³⁶ but also, by presenting a more complex and somewhat ambiguous image of spring,²³⁷

²³³ Apparently, the technical (and more regular) word for this action was *deducere*. See Shorey (157).

²³⁴ For a different opinion, see Delaunois (322), according to whom the effect of the *c* and *q* sounds is rather unpleasant, making the line sound “comme une cacophonie.”

²³⁵ Who, rather like the *carinas* of line 2, seem almost ‘dragged’ by the vernal season from their hibernal respite.

²³⁶ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 63; Woodman 770.

²³⁷ For the effect of the negative phrasing on the image of the vernal season, see 115f.

departs from the tradition he evokes, succeeding thus, by means of a single device, to both express his allegiance to the genre and prove his independence. Similar to the beginning of the poem, these lines too contain conflicting notions and contrasting pairs of images. Thus, enjoyment and natural beauty, both traditional characteristics of spring, seem to be here associated with winter; the idea of enclosure (protective as it may be in a hibernal context) suggested by *stabulis* (3) is opposed to the idea of openness suggested by *prata* (4); man (*arator*) and beast (*pecus*), as different as they are, share a similar joy (*gaudet*) in line 3; the warmth of *igni* (2) is opposed to the cold of *pruinis* (4), in similar emphatic position, at the end of the line.²³⁸ There could also be another contrast intended between *igni* (3) and *Favoni* (1), and, thus, in an indirect way, between spring and winter, since, as Nielsen-Solomon (192) argue, “their metrical placement in similar end-stopped positions invites identification of the two essential, but different, sources of heat,” a point of view which is reinforced by the fact that, as Lee (69) observes, “the trochaic clausulae (*veris et Favoni - aut arator igni*) are made to rhyme.” A similar contrast may be also discerned between the second and the fourth line, since, while the second line alludes to the vernal opening of the navigation season, and, thus, to sea, the fourth line, which hints at the seasonal resumption of the agricultural pursuits, is entirely focused on the image of earth (*prata*).

From the stylistic point of view, apart from the anaphora *neque... nec* in lines 3-4, the passage also contains a chiasmus in line 3, allowing *stabulis* and *igni* to (almost protectively) enclose *pecus*, *arator* and their hibernal joy. Line 4 contains a rhyme (*canis... pruinis*), while the presence of *iam* in line 3 recalls the ἦδη of the Greek epigrams. Worth mentioning also is the use of *albicans* in 4, since, flanked as it is by *canis* and *pruinis*, the word effectively stresses the whiteness

²³⁸ Cf. Corbeill 94.

of winter, both through its position, and, as Woodman (773 n.3) argues, by its status as a Horatian *hapax legomenon*.²³⁹

While the first four lines of the poem were focused on the change brought by spring at the natural and human level,²⁴⁰ in lines 5-8 the description of the season continues with the vivid image of the mythological world ‘pervaded’ by the vernal spirit. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this scene (albeit as yet unnoticed in criticism) lies in the yearly recurrence of the activities performed by the mythological figures, which is subtly suggested in this passage by the use of *iam* at the beginning of line 5. Thus, although many critics have noticed the anaphora of *iam* in lines 3 and 5,²⁴¹ and Nisbet-Hubbard (64) have even pointed to the repeated use of *iam* in the previous spring poems, the critical implications of the presence of *iam* at the beginning of this mythological vignette have been strangely ignored. One may say that, besides echoing the use of *iam* in line 3, and thus being an element of structural unity in the description of the season, in the light of its usage in the previous spring poems, *iam* places the presence of Venus, the nocturnal dance of the joined Nymphs and Graces and Vulcan’s visit to the forges of the Cyclopes on the same level as the coming of the West wind or of the swallow in the Greek epigrams. Thus, through the simple use of *iam*, the presence and the activities of these mythological figures are suddenly and subtly transformed into ‘markers’ of the coming of spring, more reliable in this poem than the rise of Arcturus in a scientific writing. These lines constitute thus the climax of the description of spring and the fact that the injunctions prompted by the season immediately follow them seems to confirm

²³⁹ It may be also remarked that, although in later writers *albicans* loses its poetical status, in Horace’s time the word hardly had the “colloquial and rustic flavour,” attributed to by Nisbet-Hubbard (64).

²⁴⁰ As Babcock (14) remarks, “in thought, lines 1 and 4 belong to nature’s changes; 2 and 3 to man’s.”

²⁴¹ See, for example, Babcock 14; Corbeill 94.

that the specific activities of the mythological figures are seen as an irrefutable proof of spring's presence.

The mythological tableau continues the series of contrasting pairs of images and parallelisms of thought that characterizes Horace's spring poem. In line 5, the word *Cytherea*, referring to the island of Cythera, the place near which Venus sprung from the foam of the sea, gives the goddess a rather Greek flavour.²⁴² The entire dancing scene that follows has been, in fact, considered by some critics to be of Hellenistic inspiration. Thus, for Nisbet (194), "Venus's dance seems to be drawn from some Hellenistic Primavera,"²⁴³ while Pasquali, for whom the entire poem "è intessuto quasi esclusivamente di motivi ellenistici" (714), includes the presence of the Venus and the nocturnal dancing of the Nymphs and Graces among them. Whether or not the scene is of Hellenistic inspiration, the word *Cytherea*²⁴⁴ is perhaps intended to emphasize Venus' associations with birth, and thus with regenerative aspects of spring.²⁴⁵ However, the presence of the moon in emphatic position at the end of the same line has been sometimes seen in criticism as a disturbing image, in contrast with the positive associations of the Cytherean Venus, since critics have found in *imminente* meanings that apparently cast a shadow over the general happiness of the nocturnal dance. Thus, after Delaunoy (323), who translates *imminere* as "regarder avec envie," the threatening meaning of the verb has also been invoked by Babcock (14f.), who believes that "this sense of threatening [...] combined with the concept of the moon's waxing and waning, [...] serves

²⁴² See Delaunoy 323.

²⁴³ See also Nisbet-Hubbard (59 and 64), who, citing Hom. *Od.* 18. 193f.; *h. Ap.* 194ff. and *Cypria* fr.5, consider that "the dance of Venus and the Graces is derived from early Greek hexameter; but as a similar dance of the Graces occurs in the companion poem 4.7 one may suspect a more immediate source in a Hellenistic epigram."

²⁴⁴ According to Wickham (48) and Maclean (18), since the conjunction of these two names is not found elsewhere, the syntagm *Cytherea Venus* can be considered a *hapax legomenon*. Through its use, Horace may have intended to achieve elevation of style, appropriate enough considering the divine nature of the figures that populate this scene and the climatic position of the mythological tableau in the description of the season.

²⁴⁵ For Venus as goddess of springtime, see Smith 18; Gamsey 52; Defourmy 187ff.; Quinn 18. For Venus as a figure that foreshadows the injunctions prompted by the season and the sympotic scene and its erotic aspect, see p.117.

as a reminder in the pleasant mood of spring that the winter which has just yielded will soon come again.”²⁴⁶ Moreover, as Nielsen-Solomon (193) argue, even “the patterning of words in line 5 avoids the importance of mythological allusions to birth and fertility associated with Venus, and stresses ominous qualities of the moon.” Nevertheless, although one of the meanings of *imminere* is indeed *to threaten* (see *TLL* s.v.), the context makes rather improbable its presence here, while the fact that *choros ducit* does separate *Venus* from its modifier does not necessarily ‘sever’ the goddess from the positive associations of *Cytherea*. Thus, a more likely interpretation is to consider that the presence of the moon is meant here just to indicate the nocturnal setting of the scene,²⁴⁷ while the only intended contrast is perhaps that between the hibernal white of the deserted meadows from the previous line and the white moonlight under which the happy dancing scene takes place.

Another ambiguity has also been invoked in line 6, as for some critics²⁴⁸ the word *iunctae*, contains the idea of constraint - generally associated in Horace with winter and death²⁴⁹ - and brings into the vernal season notions diametrically opposed to its traditional associations. However, as the context suggests, *iunctae* is intended to convey the idea of union in dance,²⁵⁰ a happy ‘constraint’ opposed to the idea of restriction and immobility implied later in *vetat* (15) and *premet* (16).

In the same line, *decentes* has also been considered a somewhat controversial presence, as Nisbet-Hubbard (65) deem it “a rather austere word for ‘lovely,’” while Woodman (772), comparing this passage with 4.7.5-6, considers, rather anachronistically, that the word means

²⁴⁶ Cf. also Ancona 48; Woodman 770f.; Lee 67.

²⁴⁷ See Nisbet-Hubbard (64), who, citing Ap. Rhod. 1.1223f; Theoc. 13.44 and Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.94f., point out that night is a favourite time of the nymphs. One may also consider that, since in Horace’s work, as Corbeill (98 and 99 n.14) - citing *Carm.* 2.11.10, 2.18.16, 4.7.13 and *Epist.* 1.12.18 - observes, the moon appears often as a symbol of change, while for the ancient mind it was frequently linked with the idea of fertility and rejuvenation, its presence here may be in fact intended to emphasize, together with the presence of Venus, the renewal of life that characterizes the vernal season.

²⁴⁸ See, for example, Nielsen-Solomon 193; Rudd 379; Woodman 771.

²⁴⁹ See Paschalis 183f.

²⁵⁰ The union between the Graces and the Nymphs is also suggested at the textual level by their juxtaposition (*Nymphis Gratiae*).

“something like ‘decent’ in our modern sense,” and seems quite disappointed that the Graces “are clothed, not so liberated,” and, therefore, “the picture is less happy than we imagined.” However, in spite of these unfavorable opinions, *decentes* foreshadows an essential aspect of the injunctions prompted by spring, since, as Corbeill (93 n.2) argues “it introduces the idea of propriety both in nature and in human custom that is a common motif of the *carpe diem* poems and that will be further elaborated by the repeated use of *decet* at lines 9-11.”

The actual description of the dance in line 7 has also provoked some critical perplexity. Thus, on the one hand, the phrase *terram quatunt* had appeared to some critics as an unfortunate choice (Williams 762) to describe the dance of the mythological figures, since, as Gould-Whiteley (66) put it, “the Graces and Nymphs might be imagined as beings too light of foot to shake the ground.” On the other hand, *alterno pede*²⁵¹ has also been seen as a somewhat ambiguous phrase, given that, as Nielsen-Solomon (193) notice “it is impossible to tell whether it means that they move with alternating feet or in alternating directions or groupings.”²⁵² Nevertheless, considering that, as Nisbet-Hubbard (65) remark, “dancing in the ancient world [...] was not effete gliding, but vigorous and noisy exercise,” one may say that the passage effectively conveys the intensity²⁵³ and rhythmicity²⁵⁴ of the festive dance, and thus the vernal exuberance of the mythological figures.

The joyful and dynamic dance scene is followed by the description of Vulcan’s visit to the workshops of the Cyclopes.²⁵⁵ The qualification of Vulcan as *ardens* is another instance of pregnant diction, since, besides “fiery” and “blazing,” appropriate enough to describe the god of

²⁵¹ The phrase foreshadows the impartial foot (*aequo pede*) of death in line 13. See Lee 69; Rudd 380.

²⁵² For a rather unlikely interpretation, see Woodman (773), who argues that “by inserting the apparently prosaic phrase *alterno pede* Horace has emphasized the naturalness of the goddesses, thus highlighting Vulcan’s deformity.”

²⁵³ As Levin (355) put it, “they do not merely dance, they shake the ground.” Cf. also Quinn 19.

²⁵⁴ As Smith (18) remarks, “the spondees [of *alterno terram*] imitate the measured tread of the dance.”

²⁵⁵ According to Pasquali (714), yet another Hellenistic motive.

fire, the word conveys also the idea of eagerness,²⁵⁶ suggesting the excitement of the god.²⁵⁷ In the same line, *officinas*, a rather prosaic word,²⁵⁸ conveys the business-like character of Vulcan's visit, contrasting with the fairy atmosphere of the previous passage, and brings into the passage a Roman flavour,²⁵⁹ presenting Vulcan not only as a god but also as a "Roman manufacturer" (Nisbet, 194).

The juxtaposition of joy and labour in lines 5-8, noticed by most commentators,²⁶⁰ represents perhaps, as Wickham (48) considers, "a mythological way of saying that pleasures and labors begin again with the Spring's arrival."²⁶¹ Several parallelisms and contrasts exist between lines 5-8 and the beginning of 1.4. Thus, the juxtaposition of joy and labour mirrors a similar juxtaposition at the beginning of the poem, as the joyous dance of the Nymphs and Graces can be seen as a concrete manifestation of the abstract *grata vice* (1), while the vernal resuming of the strenuous physical activities (2-3) is echoed in this passage by the hard work of the Cyclopes (7-8). One may also notice in the description of spring a constant interchange between light and dark,²⁶² as, in contrast to the light and whiteness implied in *igni* (3) and the image of the meadows in line 4, the dance of the Nymphs and Graces takes place at night, while the mention of the (apparently) subterranean workshops of the Cyclopes (7-8)²⁶³ evokes also darkness. Nevertheless, the scene is

²⁵⁶ See Gould-Whiteley 66; Shorey 158; T.E. Page 146.

²⁵⁷ And perhaps creating, at the metaphorical level, a parallel with his 'passionate' wife.

²⁵⁸ See Nisbet-Hubbard 66.

²⁵⁹ According to Will (243), since the word *officinas* was "the regular designation in Latin for 'pottery factory,'" the line could also be seen as an allusion at the historical Lucius Sestius who had an extensive pottery business.

²⁶⁰ See, for example, Page 204; Ancona 48, Levin 357 n.4.

²⁶¹ Cf. also Nisbet (194), who places the strong contrast between the two deities in the series of oppositions that define throughout the poem the relationship between winter and spring, since "the activity of spring is opposed to the sluggishness of winter, the gaiety of Venus to the heavy industriousness of her husband." One may also notice in this passage the juxtaposition (and implicit contrast) between the feminine mythological figures (Venus, the Nymphs, and the Graces) and the masculine ones (Vulcan and the Cyclopes).

²⁶² This interchange will run throughout the poem, as an element that defines the opposition between winter and spring (see below).

²⁶³ Cf. Corbeil 94.

lighted by an overhanging moon (5) whose white (and cold) light recalls that of the frost-covered meadows,²⁶⁴ while the adjective *ardens* (5) echoes *igni* at the end of line 3.

The passage is characterized by the same stylistic elegance as the previous lines of the poem. Thus, one may notice the chiasmus in line 6; enjambment in line 7 (juxtaposing, and thus implicitly contrasting, the joyous and invigorated dance of the gracious attendants of Venus with the image of the ponderous Cyclopes), while in lines 7-8, as Babcock (14) remarks, “*gravis...officinas* brackets its clause, and a notable positioning of adjective b (*gravis*), noun a (*Vulcanus*), adjective a (*ardens*) and noun b (*officinas*) results.” These lines contain also various features of sound (e.g. alliteration of *c* in line 5; the presence of numerous dentals (*t, d*) in line 7, suggesting the rhythmic cadence of the dance,²⁶⁵ and also, perhaps, the hammer sounds coming from the forges of the Cyclopes. All these features, together with its length (8 lines - the usual length of many of the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology*), wealth of vernal imagery and vividness, make Horace’s complex and stylish description of spring one of the most effective in the tradition of the genre.

After this detailed and refined description of spring, the poem continues with the injunctions prompted by the season, namely to wreath one’s head with myrtle or (any other) spring flowers (9-10) and to offer as a sacrifice to Faunus either a lamb or a kid, at the god’s choice (11-12). Although Babcock (16f.) argues that “the *nunc et* of 11, which adds the injunction to sacrifice, rather suggests a second act than one directly consequent on the preparation for banqueting or dancing,” therefore that the wreathing of head and the propitiation of the god are separate and quite unrelated activities, lines 9-12 are so inextricably bound together that this possibility seems very unlikely, especially when one takes into consideration that merriment and drinking, followed by the

²⁶⁴ Cf. Nielsen-Solomon 192.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Delaunois 323; Nielsen-Solomon 194.

pursuit of amatory pleasures, were essential aspects of the feast that (usually) accompanied an ancient rustic festival.²⁶⁶

The passage introduces into the poem new thematic elements (especially the *carpe diem* motif), and foreshadows both the appearance of *pallida Mors* in line 13 (therefore the *memento mori* motif) and the description of the sympotic scene with its erotic overtones at the end of 1.4, recalling, at the same time, through imagery and various verbal echoes, the previous part of the poem. One of the most important aspects of this section lies perhaps in the fact that, whereas in the first part of 1.4 the gradual change brought by spring seemed to be the only element that connected the natural, human and mythological world, in lines 9-12, as Corbeill (94) argues, “the repetition of *nunc* (9, 11) [...] situates the varied movements of spring in one immediate and unified “now,”” while the image of the banqueters garlanded with spring flowers and the offering of young animals as sacrifice to Faunus bring these worlds together, as the humans meet the divine²⁶⁷ in a sacrificial and celebratory festivity.

Pervaded by the idea of urgency (expressed by the anaphora of *nunc* in emphatic position at the beginning of line 9 and 11)²⁶⁸ and appropriateness (indicated by the repeated *deceit* in the same lines), the injunctions prompted by spring are fully and emphatically stated. One may also note that, for the first time in the tradition of the genre, although 1.4 does have a specific addressee (*Sesti*, 14), the injunctions are impersonally prescribed, perhaps in order to achieve elevation of style, as this gives the passage (in spite of the party-minded content of 9-10) a solemn and dignified tone. Starting with *nunc*, a word frequently employed by Horace as a marker of the *carpe diem* theme,²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ See for example Tib. 1.10, 2.1 29f., 2.5.101f., Ov. *Fast.* 3. 523ff. Cf. Murgatroyd 292.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Corbeill 92

²⁶⁸ That echoes the anaphora of *iam...iam* from 3-5.

²⁶⁹ See Johnson 59 n.31.

the first panel (lines 9-10) contains the injunction to wreath one's head with myrtle or (presumably any other) spring flowers. As both the qualification of *caput* as *nitidum* (alluding to the fragrant unguents and oils with which the ancient Greeks and Romans anointed their hair at banquets²⁷⁰) and the action of garlanding point to a convivial feast and a happy celebration, the passage brings the joyous vernal mood into the human world, echoing thus the festive dance of Venus and her gracious attendants from 5-7. However, apart from joy and merriment, these lines may contain a more specific allusion to Venus in the mention of myrtle²⁷¹ (*myrto*, in emphatic position at the end of the line 9), a plant traditionally associated with Venus and amorous activity²⁷² - a very likely possibility considering that, at a rustic ceremony, drinking was usually followed by sex. The qualification of myrtle as *viridi* not only brings colour into this section, contrasting the vernal preparations for celebration with the desolate image of the hibernal white meadows from line 4, but, suggesting the growth of vegetation at the beginning of spring and thus the vernal renewal of life and the fertility of the season, associates spring with youth and erotic endeavors, or, at least, if *myrto* does not allude to Venus, with festive merriment, as perhaps the juxtaposition *viridi nitidum* also indicates. Echoing the movement from abstract to concrete from the beginning of the poem,²⁷³ lines 9-10 present in the possibility of choosing between myrtle and (any other) spring flowers a movement from specific (*myrto*, 9) to general (*flore*, 10), which, together with the juxtaposition *flore terrae*,²⁷⁴ that makes even more poignant the image of the earth putting forth flowers, subtly emphasize the general fertility and beauty of the season. At the same time, *solutae*, the qualifier of

²⁷⁰ See, for example, Nisbet-Hubbard 66.

²⁷¹ See West 20; Nielsen-Solomon 195; Gould-Whiteley 66.

²⁷² See Pliny *HN* 12.3 where myrtle is listed as a plant sacred to Venus. Cf. Babcock 16 n. 14.

²⁷³ See p. 122.

²⁷⁴ The plural *terrae* can either refer to all the regions of the earth (or at least Italy) or can be a poetic plural, contrasting thus with the poetic singular *flore*. Both these meanings were perhaps intended and are possibly present in the passage.

terrae, placed in emphatic position at the end of line 10, suggests (once again in the poem) the idea of release and liberation, and, echoing, as the majority of critics have noticed,²⁷⁵ *solvitur* from the first line, presents the process started at the beginning of the poem as finished, with the implication that now indeed is the appropriate time for celebration and joy, since spring has finally and irrevocably liberated the earth from the grip of winter.

However, although the injunction contained in this panel implies preparations for banqueting and merriment and suggests - not only through direct references to colour (*viridi*, 9) and fragrances (*nitidum*, 9),²⁷⁶ but also through allusions to beauty, fertility (*flore*, 10) and erotic pursuits (*myrto*, 9) - an image of joy and liberation, critics have discovered even in these lines ambiguous meanings and ominous overtones, as almost every key word has been suspected of bringing into the passage some subversive connotations. Thus, perhaps the most debated word of these lines has been *impedire* (9), a word that, although explained by Kiessling-Heinze as a “gewählte Variante des üblichen *vincire*,”²⁷⁷ brings into this passage, according to Nielsen-Solomon (195), “connotations of the ensnaring of a victim and the hindering of an action” since “its root association is with the hobbling of animals.”²⁷⁸ A similar view is also found in Ancona (49), for whom “*caput impedire* suggests not only the pleasant activity of garlanding the head, but also the negative idea of constriction, associated not with spring (*terrae... solutae* 10) but with harsh winter (*Solvitur acris hiems*, 1) and death (*premet nox*, 16), while “its central sound ‘*ped*’ suggests a movement from the festive dancing of the Nymphs and Graces in line 7 (*alterno... pede*) to the ominous walk of pallida

²⁷⁵ See Nisbet-Hubbard 66; Page 205; Gould-Whiteley 67; Allcroft & Hayes 137; Bardon 351; Commager 268; Defoumy 175; Collinge 166; Levin 358 n.25.

²⁷⁶ As *nitidum* means actually “shining,” “glittering,” the word suggests also light.

²⁷⁷ See *TLL* VII. 531.30f. Cf. Nauck 11; Woodman 771.

²⁷⁸ While this is true (see *TLL* VII. 530.78f.), not only that it is impossible to know whether Horace was aware or not of this etymology, but nothing else in the passage suggests the possible presence of these rather extreme meanings.

Mors in line 13 (*aequo... pede*).²⁷⁹ However, although the presence in this rather happy context of a binding motive does foreshadow *the binding motive* present in the description of the underworld, while the idea of constriction implied in the action of garlanding recalls *the idea of constriction* present in the image of winter, the interweaving of the same motives in contrasting pairs of images may not be necessarily intended to undermine through ambiguity the image of spring. A more appealing interpretation could be to consider that Horace's intention was rather to create a series of contrasts *within* the motives themselves, a process already apparent in lines 3-4 where winter is paradoxically associated with pleasure (*gaudet*, 3) and the image of the white meadows evokes the beauty of the hibernal season, and then continued in line 6 where the "constraint" of *inunctae* opposes in fact the restriction and immobility associated with winter and death. In a similar way, rather than bringing notions associated with winter and death into the preparations for celebration, *impedire* offers another example of 'happy' constriction, and thus creates an even greater contrast between the vernal joy and the image of the underworld, making the latter even more hateful.

Ominous overtones have been also attributed, in the same line, both to *viridi* and *myrto*. Thus, according to Woodman (774), "the adjective *viridis* [...] can also mean 'pale', so that in effect Horace might be exhorting us to garland our heads with a colour which we would more usually associate with winter - and hence with death." As a further argument in favor of his interpretation, Woodman (774 n.1) states, referring to Fiori (3) and Polunin (265 n.824), that, "the plant *myrtus communis* does in fact produce shining white blossoms at this time of spring." Apart from the fact that it is impossible to determine the precise moment of spring described in Horace's poem, this interpretation is not only rather counterintuitive, but also based on a flagrant inaccuracy,

²⁷⁹ See also Commager (268), who also considers that "*impedire* (9) suggests, by its sound, a transition between the joyous step of the Nymphs (7) and the tread of death (13)."

since, while *viridis* can indeed be applied to pale shades, even in the only example that Woodman provides to sustain his interpretation, namely *viridis pallor* from *Ciris* 225, the notion of white is not present (see *OLD* s.v.2c.). Totally unconvincing is also Nielsen-Solomon's interpretation of *flore* (10), since, although nothing in the context allows the possibility that the word could mean "one blossom," they do consider so and conclude that Horace employs here a singular noun "in order to remind of the limitations of spring fertility, and, by extension, of life in general in 1.4" (196).

After the injunction to celebrate, the poem continues with the injunction to offer an appropriate sacrifice to Faunus (lines 11-12). The structural parallelism with the previous two lines is apparent throughout this panel, as line 11 starts with the same emphatic (and impatient) *nunc*, while the position of the verb *immolare* is symmetric to that of *impedire* in line 9, and the construction *seu... sive* in line 12 mirrors the construction *aut... aut* in lines 9-10. However, the passage does contain a significant (and very effective) variation, namely the separation of *nunc* and *decet* in line 11, a separation most likely intended to strengthen, through the juxtaposition of *decet* and *immolare*,²⁸⁰ the necessity and appropriateness of the sacrifice to Faunus, emphasizing thus the religious aspect of the prescribed action. Perhaps the most controversial presence in the poem, the rustic god Faunus,²⁸¹ apparently one of Horace's favourite deities,²⁸² seems to play in this passage, as a protector of flocks, herds and agriculture (therefore through the fertility connection), the role played by Priapus in the Greek spring poems,²⁸³ bringing thus into Horace's poem a strong Roman flavour, while remaining faithful to the tradition of the genre. Although one cannot be absolutely

²⁸⁰ One may also notice the juxtaposition *Fauno decet*.

²⁸¹ According to Babcock (15), the presence of Faunus may actually have been heralded by mention of Favonius in the first line of the poem, since apparently both Faunus and Favonius derive from *favere*. For this etymology, see *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, ed. A. Ernout and A. Meillet (Paris, 1959), s.v. Faunus. Cf. also Holleman 566 n.7; Kiessling 46; Nisbet-Hubbard 218; Putnam (2006) 17 and 146 n.11.

²⁸² See Nisbet-Hubbard 218; Holleman 563.

²⁸³ See Nisbet-Hubbard 67. For the various explanations of his presence in the poem, see pp. 118f.

sure to what Roman festival Horace alludes in this passage, it is possible that the injunction to sacrifice is related, as Barr (9f.) argues, to the vernal festival dedicated to Faunus that took place on the 13th of February, and was followed, at the sixth hour of the same day, by Parentalia, the festival of the dead, a progression that would somewhat justify or, at least, make the appearance of *pallida Mors* in line 13 less abrupt than it seems.²⁸⁴ However, as the mention of *umbrosis... lucis* points to sacred groves,²⁸⁵ and the general context of the poem indicates a rural setting, these lines refer most likely to its rustic counterpart, about which, unfortunately, we do not have too much information.²⁸⁶ The sacrifice to Faunus, explicitly introducing into the poem the idea of death, foreshadows both the disturbing appearance of *pallida Mors* in line 13 and its function in the poem, since, as the sacrifice to the god is an accompaniment to the *carpe diem* theme initiated in lines 9-10,²⁸⁷ the disturbing image of *pallida Mors* will prompt the final burst of the *carpe diem* motif in the description of the sympotic scene at the end of the poem. The passage echoes also the previous part of the poem, as the reference to *agna* and *haedo* in line 12 reminds one of the *pecus* of line 3. The qualification of *lucis* as *umbrosis* in line 11 brings again an image of darkness into the poem, contrasting perhaps with the reference to light implied in *nitidum* (9),²⁸⁸ and also hints at the renewal of vegetation in spring (and thus echoes *viridi*, 9), although, as Shorey (157) remarks, if the festival described here takes place in February, the use of *umbrosis* cannot possibly allude to the leaves of the tree, but rather suggests a nocturnal scene. At the same time, the use of the plural form *lucis* (11) may echo the plural *terrae* (10) and also its function, adding to the idea of general applicability of the

²⁸⁴ See also Nisbet-Hubbard 66f.; West 20f.

²⁸⁵ See Nielsen-Solomon 196.

²⁸⁶ For a different opinion, see Babcock (14 n.5) and Defourmy (174-94), who consider that the festival described in this passage takes place later in spring, perhaps in April.

²⁸⁷ For a rather bold (and unlikely) interpretation of the sacrifice to Faunus, see Minadeo (68) who sees in Faunus “the great phallic god of the wild” to whom Sestius must perform a “sacrifice” by sexually initiate Lycidas.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Corbeill 92.

injunction to sacrifice to the god, since, as the entire country seems to bring forth flowers, the sacrifice to Faunus should take place not only in a specific grove, but in the shady groves of the entire Italy.

The alternative sacrifice in line 12 is somewhat controversial since, as Nisbet-Hubbard (67) point out, “the sacrifice of a female animal to a male god is ritually wrong from a Roman point of view.” However, as Nisbet-Hubbard suggest, Horace may imitate here a lost Greek source. On the other hand, considering that, as Nisbet-Hubbard observe, similar anomalies occur in the works of other poets too,²⁸⁹ leaving aside the possibility that this could be just a poetic license, one may consider either that the ritual was not very rigorously observed in this respect or that our information about it is not as accurate as we think.

Characterized by a great thematic and structural unity, lines 9-12 bring thus into Horace’s poem new motives and innovative imagery, surpassing the injunctions prompted by the season from the previous spring poems.

The entrance of *pallida Mors* (13) into the vernal landscape of 1.4 dramatically changes the focus of the poem, as the haunting figure, impatiently demanding admittance into everybody’s abode, shatters also with its impartial foot the joyous mood of the previous lines. A highly controversial presence, challenging the thematic and structural unity of the poem,²⁹⁰ the image of implacable *Mors* visiting all humans, regardless of their social status, renders illusory the correspondence between the yearly renewal of nature and man’s life and introduces into 1.4 a *memento mori* motif that continues with a disheartening *sententia* (15) and a gloomy description of

²⁸⁹ *Ov. Fast.* 2.361; 4.650ff. Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 67.

²⁹⁰ See pp. 112f.

the underworld (16f.). Although considered by Andrews (109) just a “crude personification,”²⁹¹ *pallida Mors* continues the series of divinities that populate 1.4, forming however together with the *Manes* (16) and Pluto (mentioned in *domus Plutonia*, 17) a cluster of infernal deities intended to contrast with the mythological figures associated in the previous parts of the poem with spring.

The characterization of *Mors* as *pallida*²⁹² (in emphatic position at the beginning of line 13) is a Horatian innovation²⁹³ with an arresting effect. Meant to draw the attention of the reader to the unexpected figure, the qualification sets the gloomy tone of this passage and continues the interchange between light and dark that characterizes the entire poem, as the paleness of death recalls the shadows of line 11 (*umbrosis... lucis*), while contrasting with the colour and regeneration that characterizes the vernal season.²⁹⁴ Another echoing and contrasting element is to be found in the syntagm *aequo... pede* that, as the majority of critics have noticed,²⁹⁵ recalls *alterno... pede* of line 7 and opposes the lively movement of dance and the joyous step of Venus’ attendants with the relentless and almost mechanical cadence of death’s tread, while *pulsat* may be intended to suggest the idea of impatience since, as various critics have noticed,²⁹⁶ the action of kicking at the door appears especially in passages where the visitor is impatient. The semantic ambiguity of the adjective *aequo* - both “impartial” (see *OLD* s.v. 6c) and “calm” (see *OLD* s.v. 8) - allows Horace to express not only the idea of death’s impartiality²⁹⁷ but also to suggest the

²⁹¹ As Nisbet-Hubbard (67) point out, the personification of death is of Greek inspiration and it is frequently employed in Latin literature.

²⁹² A qualification “by association” (Shorey 159), since, as Smith (19) points out, “the paleness which accompanies death is ascribed as a physical characteristic to the personified figure of the destroyer.”

²⁹³ As a search of the *PHI* has indicated Horace is the first author to characterize *mors* as *pallida*. The syntagm appears later in Sen. *Herc. f.* 555 and Hier. *in Os.* 6.54. Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 67.

²⁹⁴ See Rudd 380; Brink 456.

²⁹⁵ See for example Commager 268; Rudd 380; Nisbet-Hubbard 68.

²⁹⁶ See Shorey (159) and Page (147) who cite Plaut. *Most.* 453. So also Nisbet-Hubbard (68) who refer to Call. *h.* 2.3 and Ter. *Eun.* 284f.

²⁹⁷ As Nisbet-Hubbard (68) observe, “the quality of Death is here applied to Death’s foot.”

disturbing composure of *Mors* (its ‘calm’ hinting at a lack of emotions and feelings that reveals its implacable nature). As the impartiality of death is conveyed by the image of *Mors* kicking everybody’s door and thus wiping out with its leveling foot any difference in wealth and social status between mortals, at the center of this passage stands the (rather unexpected) antithesis poor-rich (*pauperum tabernas... regumque turris*) whose presence in 1.4 may be perhaps explained by the historical identity of Sestius, the addressee of the poem. Although the personal note of the poem has been sometimes exaggerated,²⁹⁸ it is likely that Horace’s use of this sociological antithesis and especially, as several critics argue, the mention of the *regumque turris* is intended to hint at Sestius²⁹⁹. Thus, according to Will (243), “*regumque turris* [...] recalls the characteristic, tower-laden Roman villas still visible in the Ager Cosanus,” a view shared also by West (21), who argues that “the towers of kings in line 14 will remind us of the villa of Sette Finestre with its ring of turreted walls, particularly because *reges*, kings, is often used not of kings but of wealthy men.” Against the latter point, but consequent to their strong conviction that “the poem is in no way about Sestius,” Nisbet-Hubbard (68) reject, citing numerous Horatian passages in which the word *reges* is employed,³⁰⁰ the idea that “*regum* is colloquial for ‘great men’, such as Sestius himself,”³⁰¹ although they seem to serenely ignore Horace when, mentioning the (otherwise real) contrast between the prosaic *tabernas* and *turres*, they characterize the latter (rather anachronistically) as “romantic.” Nevertheless, although one cannot be sure to what extent this somber reminder of death’s

²⁹⁸ See especially Will (241) who considers that throughout 1.4 one may discover “a succession of oblique but at the same time pointed references which, taken in concert, seem to make of the poem a very personal dedication.”

²⁹⁹ The possible references to Sestius and the fact that the poem is formally dedicated to him, does not affect the universal application of the poem (see pp. 119 f.).

³⁰⁰ Hor. *Carm.* 2.3.21ff; 2.14.11f; 2.18.32ff; 4.7.15.

³⁰¹ See however *OLD* s.v. 8. That *rex* may be used in this poem to denote a wealthy and powerful person like Sestius seems also to be suggested by the symmetrical (and emphatic) position of *regum* and *Sesti*, at the beginning and, respectively, at the end of the line 14.

impartiality to a mortal's wealth and social status is directed at the historical Sestius, the possibility that this may be also an *ad hominem* warning makes even more relevant the *memento mori* motif, as it confers a personal note to what otherwise may seem an abstract theme.³⁰²

The passage is also enhanced by a striking use of sound effects, as one may notice, together with the majority of critics,³⁰³ a “lavish use of alliteration” (Barr 10) in line 13, expressing most likely “the barrage of kicks” (Nisbet-Hubbard 68). The effect is quite arresting, since, as Ancona (49) remarks, “the onomatopoeic quality of the alliteration of the letter *p* in *pallida... pulsat pede pauperum* makes the line embody its sense, merging spring with the ominous sound of death striking equally the homes of all.”³⁰⁴

The enjambment in line 14 ties, even at the textual level, the addressee of the poem with the *memento mori* motif (and thus suggests even further that the syntagm *regumque turris* may be intended to hint at the privileged social position of Sestius).³⁰⁵ The great emotional intensity of the passage is expressed by the use of *o*, that functions here both as a sign of the vocative and as an emotional interjection.

Although Nisbet-Hubbard (68) seem to suggest that the unusual postponement of the introduction of the addressee is intended to indicate the total irrelevance of Sestius for the understanding of 1.4, one may argue that this delayed appearance is rather meant to make the

³⁰² Cf. Tracy (115) who, discussing the Horatian odes according to the mode in which the thought is carried through, sees in the poem a steady diminuendo (the outlook progressively narrowing from a panorama of spring to specific incidents in one man's private life).

³⁰³ See Babcock 18; Gould & Whiteley 67; Shorey 159; Commager (1968) 268; Nisbet-Hubbard 68; Nielsen-Solomon 198.

³⁰⁴ One may also notice in 13.f the presence of numerous consonants (*p, r, t, b*) with similar onomatopoeic qualities.

³⁰⁵ For an ingenious but very unlikely interpretation of this passage, see Babcock (19), who, arguing that Faunus' function in 1.4 is that of an oracular god, considers that line 13 and the first part of line 14 constitute a “quotation put into the mouth of Faunus,” and thus “the second part of the ode should begin, then, not with *pallida mors* but with *O beate Sesti*.”

memento mori motif even more poignant, since, surrounded by references to death, the vulnerability of the addressee appears even greater, and thus the warning ‘deadly serious.’ As the qualification of Sestius as *beate*³⁰⁶ can neither dispel the disheartening mood of these lines nor hide the precarious position of the addressee - especially when his name is followed in line 15 by a *sententia* warning of the close proximity of death - the “blessed” Sestius, besieged even at the textual level by death, loses any privileged status he may have and becomes just a tragic figure, a part of the doomed *nos* (15) in the epigrammatic utterance that follows.

The dispiriting *sententia* of line 15 resembles, as Woodman (778) observes, “the conventional language of epitaphs” and stresses the brevity of human existence. The idea of brevity may be also suggested at 13-15 by the length of its sentences (much shorter and thus more pointed than in the previous part of the poem), while the expression in line 15 parallels its direct and straightforward message, making it more effective (and easily memorable). Thus, as Nielson-Solomon (198) remark, the line is characterized by “a simplicity of [...] structure and diction [that] contrasts with the complexity of the surrounding lines, and emphasizes its gnomic function.” The key term of this *sententia* is *incohare*³⁰⁷ a “bulkier, precise word [that] stands out with stark solemnity in a long line made up otherwise of words of one or two syllables” (Quinn 1963, 22). The meaning of the verb emphasizes the idea of beginning,³⁰⁸ but also suggests the lack of completion

³⁰⁶ For the lexical possibilities of *beate* and the rather puzzling use of the word in this passage, see p. 119. Cf. also Nielsen-Solomon (198) who considers that *beate* has a twofold purpose in this passage, as the word both presents Sestius as a member of the *reges* and, since not even the wealthy owners of the *turres* escape death, reminds the addressee (together with the reader) of the danger of trusting in the acquisition of material wealth as a defense against death.

³⁰⁷ Both Shorey (159) and Nisbet-Hubbard (69) suggest that Seneca’s use of the word in *epist.* 101.4 was inspired by this passage.

³⁰⁸ See *OLD* s.v. 1a and 2a.

to which any ambitious planning (implied in *longam*³⁰⁹) is doomed, while the idea of restriction, expressed by *vetat*, foreshadows the description of the mythological Underworld.

The gnomic warning of line 15 is immediately followed by a glimpse into the hateful Underworld (16f.), the quick succession suggesting perhaps the imminent nature of (Sestius') death. The passage starts with *iam*, a word that, while recalling the anaphora of *iam... iam* of lines 3-5, suggests here, as Nisbet-Hubbard (69) point out, the idea of 'all too soon'³¹⁰ and makes Sestius' death³¹¹ seem almost immediate.

Pervaded by death, the passage presents the image of Sestius (diminished to a fragile *te*) overwhelmed by *nox* (16), *Manes* (16) and Pluto (in the reference to *domus Plutonia*, 17). An interesting aspect of these lines (unnoticed in previous criticism of the poem) is the gradual movement from familiar to unfamiliar, from an image of the natural world to elements of the mythological realm, a movement that mirrors, in fact, a similar process present in the description of the season from the first part of the poem (see pp. 117, 126ff.). However, while in lines 1-8 the climactic introduction of the mythological figures was meant to suggest the exuberance and pervasiveness of the vernal season, in this passage the mythological elements 'carry' Sestius (and the reader) deeper and deeper into the horrors of the Underworld. Thus, the sequence begins with *nox*, a familiar image intuitively suggesting the notion of death,³¹² continues with the mention of the *fabulaeque Manes* (16),³¹³ the spirits of the dead, who have become "the unsympathetic and

³⁰⁹ As Nisbet-Hubbard (69) notice, *longam* means here "distant" in the sense that it takes a long time to fulfill."

³¹⁰ A variation on the traditional meaning of ἤδη. As Woodman (775) remarks, "here the temporal connective *iam* recalls the temporal connectives in lines 3 and 5 [...] which marked the [...] happy occasion of springtime; *iam* in 16, however, marks an advance towards death and is the penultimate stage before the tragic *nunc...mox* contrast of line 20."

³¹¹ One may notice the change in person from *nos* (15) to *te* (16).

³¹² For passages where night appears as an image of death, cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 69.

³¹³ The case of *fabulae* is controversial but, as Nisbet-Hubbard (70) point out, "whether nominative or genitive, *fabulae* probably suggests only that in the underworld one will be oppressed by the shades famed in legend."

oppressive *di inferi*” (Nisbet-Hubbard 70), and who will (too) soon be Sestius’ future ‘companions’ in the infernal abode, the dreadful *domus exilis Plutonis* (17), that ends the series in the ‘heart’ of the mythological Underworld. At the same time, while *nox* is just mentioned, as the elements become more sophisticated, they are characterized by an increased number of qualifiers. The idea of death and the image of the Underworld is presented thus in a *tricolon crescendo* movement (with the last element totally ‘engulfing’ Sestius, as the house of Pluto will become Sestius’ new infernal residence), every element bringing into the description new aspects and associations.

The use of *premet* in line 16 allows Horace to suggest multiple notions associated with the mythological Underworld, as the verb has a plethora of semantic possibilities. Among the meanings most likely present in this passage one may consider “to press hard upon in pursuit”; “to crowd or throng round”; “to bury in the ground”; “to tread or trample on”; “to overwhelm”; “to oppress, weigh, weigh down, overpower.”³¹⁴ Nevertheless, the main idea expressed by *premet* here is perhaps that of restriction and oppressiveness, since, as Woodman (775) remarks, “we can bring *premet* into even sharper focus if we remember that it is a conventional verb for the ground pressing down on the corpse in the grave: in this poem it is a cheerless opposite of the sepulchral inscription *sit tibi terra levis*.”

In line 16, *exilis*, the qualifier of *domus*, brings also into the passage several meanings. First, as Paschalis (183) remarks, since “the sense of *exilis* cannot be dissociated from the definition of *domus exilis* provided by Horace himself at *Epodes* 1.6.45: *exilis domus est, ubi non... multa supersunt*,” the word characterizes the house of Pluto as a place of privation (see *OLD* s.v. 2b), recalling thus the abodes of the poor (*pauperum tabernas*) from line 13 and foreshadowing the

³¹⁴ See *OLD* s.v. 6, 9, 14d, 15a, 16a, 18.

description of death from lines 17-20 as a deprivation of enjoyments.³¹⁵ The word suggests also the ghostly and insubstantial character of the Underworld (see *OLD* s.v. 3)³¹⁶ and might as well hint at the dim light of Hades (see *OLD* s.v. 4c), offering thus, together with the implicit darkness of *nox* (16) and the paleness of *Mors* in line 13, a traditional view of the Underworld in terms of color, light and dark.³¹⁷ However, while the polysemy of the word enhances the passage, it has also sparked a (mild) critical debate, as the idea of spatial narrowness that does exist in *exilis* (see *OLD* s.v. 1b) has proven to be somewhat controversial. Thus, Commager (1962, 269) argues that the primary meaning of *exilis* in Horace's poem is "narrow" or "cramped," and to give the word other meanings would "destroy the spatial sense it shares with *premet*, and hence the contrast with the openness of spring." This view is only partially accepted by Woodman (775), who, while acknowledging the spatial dimension, believes also that a less concrete meaning of *exilis* is present in this passage, since the word "seems to indicate crampedness in both style and space." However, Commager's interpretation is rejected by Nisbet-Hubbard (70), for whom the word "cannot mean 'narrow' in the literal sense; *exilis* is not the same as *angustus*." While it is almost impossible to decide whether Horace had also the spatial meaning of the word in mind or not, the use of a polysemantic (and thus potentially ambiguous word) to describe the Underworld was certainly intended, since, appropriately enough, it presents Hades as a place hard to describe and comprehend.

³¹⁵ According to Pasquali (714), yet another Hellenistic motive.

³¹⁶ Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 70.

³¹⁷ For the traditional darkness of the Underworld and the paleness of its inhabitants, cf. Murgatroyd (289) on Tib. 1.10.38.

As both *exilis* and especially *Plutonia* are words very rarely employed³¹⁸ before Horace, their use in this passage was perhaps intended to achieve elevation of style, appropriate enough for the realm of mythology to which the syntagm alludes. At the same time, since the passage containing the introduction of *Mors* and the description of the Underworld (lines 13-17) starts and ends with unusual qualifiers (*pallida*,³¹⁹ *exilis* and *Plutonia*³²⁰), one may also say that unusual figures and unusual places are described with unusual words.

Rather than ending 1.4 with the disheartening image of Hades, Horace ‘rescues’ Sestius (and the reader) from the confines of the Underworld and presents in the last section of his poem (lines 17-20) the description of a sympotic scene, a choice that allows him both to define death as the dreadful end of all pleasures and to address a covert injunction to enjoy life. Framing the *memento mori* of 13-17, the *carpe diem* motif initiated in lines 9-12 reappears thus reinforced at the end of the poem, since, not only is the banquet alluded to at 9-12 presented here in greater detail,³²¹ but also, as the *memento mori* warning has fully revealed the precarious nature of human existence, the indirect prescription (conveyed via negation, *nec... nec*, 18f.) to pursue the pleasures of life has an urgency unknown before.

Horace associates in this passage the *carpe diem* theme with the sympotic context,³²² presenting the convivial world of the symposium as an epitome of the pleasures of life. However, while drinking and love are the obvious pleasures of a banquet, the passage seems also to ‘enlist’ among the things desirable in life - since the feast, as Commager (1957, 73) remarks, has become

³¹⁸ A search of the *PHI* and *TLL* has indicated that except this passage, the word *Plutonia* appears before Horace only at Cic. *Div.*1.79.

³¹⁹ See p.141.

³²⁰ Cf. also Nisbet-Hubbard (70), who remark that *Plutonia* “is more grandiose than the genitive *Plutonis*.”

³²¹ However, while lines 9-12 refer to preparations for a rustic celebration, the banquet from the last lines of the poem seems to be an urban one.

³²² A typical Horatian device, see Johnson 56.

equivalent to life - the possibility of control, as the total vulnerability of Sestius, ‘crushed’ by inexorable forces in the previous passage, is replaced by his (potential) role as *magister bibendi*, the *regna vini* of line 18³²³ standing in sharp contrast with Sestius’ condition in Hades.³²⁴ Most likely intended, this contrast adds a new dimension to the symposium, which can be seen as an attempt to control the present, since to enjoy the present becomes the only available defense against the flow of time, and pleasure the only kingdom a man can hope to gain. Although the precarious position of Sestius and the fortuitous nature of his kingship (of which he will be soon deprived) is suggested by the fact that *regna vini* is obtained by the roll of the dice - *sortiere talis*, 18 - (which makes death, not pleasure, the only sure thing to bet on in life), one may also say that, if the inevitability, universality and egalitarianism of death bring humans to the same tragic level, pleasure too, rather like death, has an ‘impartial foot,’ since it is brought neither by wealth nor by social status, but by a chance equal to all.

The sympotic imagery of the poem continues in the last two lines (19-20) with the climactic image of Lycidas. As the majority of critics agree,³²⁵ Lycidas is most likely a poetic fiction,³²⁶ and the homosexual implication of this passage rather “a conventional motif derived from Greek erotic poetry” (Nisbet-Hubbard, 71).³²⁷ Characterized as *tenerum*, a word whose

³²³ Recalling *regumque turris* of line 14.

³²⁴ The notion of control may appear first in the passage with *mearis* in emphatic position at the end of line 17. The use of an archaic verb to describe to Sestius’ descent into the Underworld seems to be intended, as *exilis* and *Plutonia* in the same line, to achieve the appropriate elevation of style (see p.148). However, the verb not only, as Nisbet-Hubbard (70) notice, “keeps up the grandiose epic note,” but also seems to imply a disturbing lack of active agency. As Corbeil (94f.) remarks (citing Plaut. *Stich.* 442 and Lucr. 1.318, 4.371, 4.881), “before Horace, the word occurs most often in Lucretius, where it normally describes the movement of inanimate aspects of nature such as sound, air, and light; in the rare instances in which the verb describes a person’s movement, the motion is unstructured and indefinite. Hence its employment here situates Sestius as a toy of external forces.” For the meanings mentioned by Corbeil, see *TLL* VIII.785.53-72.

³²⁵ See for example Kiessling 46; Smith 18; Nisbet (1962) 194; Nisbet-Hubbard 61, 71; Nielsen-Solomon 200.

³²⁶ The name is of Greek origin and appears in Latin poetry at Verg. *Ecl.* 7.67. Cf. Nisbet-Hubbard 71.

³²⁷ Cf. Pasquali 714.

meanings (“delicate,” “young,” “sensuous,” see *OLD* s.v. 1, 2a) describe his age, delicate beauty and sensuality, Lycidas ends 1.4 with an erotic note foreshadowed by the vernal appearance of Venus and her gracious attendants in lines 5-7. The length of his description (two full lines) and the emphatic position of his image at the very end of the poem are meant to highlight the great importance of the erotic pleasure and thus to indirectly make the thought of death even more hateful. The reference to Lycidas’ present (*iuventus*, 19) and future (*virgines*, 20) admirers is intended, according to Nisbet-Hubbard (61), to illustrate the lapse of the years. However, one may also consider that, as the *virgines* will replace the *iuventus*, not only the flight of time but also the idea of change, apparent throughout the poem, is suggested in this passage. At the same time, the fact that Lycidas manages to excite the erotic interest of both sexes, suggests his beauty and great sex appeal, explaining thus Sestius’ fascinated gaze (*mirabere*, 19). The relative clause closing the poem contains various contrasts (*nunc/mox, iuventus/virgines, calet/tepebunt*),³²⁸ and, as Corbeill (96) notices, an elaborately patterned order (verb-subject-adverb/adverb-subject-verb: *calet iuventus/ nunc ... mox virgines tepebunt*) that suggests even at the textual level the idea of cycle and the continuity of love. The effects of Lycidas’ presence on his admirers are expressed in words denoting changes in temperature (*calet*, 19; *tepebunt*, 20). However, while associating youth with warmth, and thus, indirectly, with spring,³²⁹ the verbs used in the relative clause (*calet* and *tepebunt*) are somewhat problematic since the (possible³³⁰) semantic difference and the relationship between them involves controversy. Thus, as Nisbet-Hubbard (72) (just) remark (avoiding any

³²⁸ Cf. Woodman 775.

³²⁹ Cf. Levin (358 n. 25) who notices the correspondence between “the thawing out of rigid field and the thawing out of hitherto unimpressionable maidens.”

³³⁰ The verbs may just be used as synonyms (see *TLL*).

discussion about the possible critical implications of this semantic difference), *tepebunt* is less strong than *calet*. West (23) summarizes thus some of the questions that could be asked:

[...] why young men are hot, *calet*, whereas young women will be warm, *tepebunt* [?] Is it because the beauty of Lycidas is also subject to the depredations of time and will not excite the girls as much as now it excites the men? Or is Horace mischievously suggesting that young men tend to be more passionate, but young girls are more restrained? Or is it more innocent? The young men are hot now and soon the girls will be warming up (as Lycidas grows to manhood and they begin to take an interest).

The answer to these questions cannot be a sure one, as the passage allows multiple readings.³³¹ More safely, one may conclude that the (possible) ambiguity brought by these verbs is intentional, leaving the relationship between spring and (the seasons of) love ambiguous.

The final aspect of the care and skill evident in Horace's poem is the structure. Horace's ode falls into two main parts (1-8 and 9-20). Although the progression of thought from the first section to the second has been questioned (see pp. 111ff.), overall unity of 1.4 is achieved as its parts are 'unified' by various verbal echoes and a complex interlocking of motifs. Concerned with the arrival of spring, the first part of the poem (1-8) presents in 1-4 the effects of the season on the natural world, and in 5-8 the image of the mythological world pervaded by the vernal spirit. Lines 9-12 introduce into the poem the *carpe diem* motif which is followed by the *memento mori* of lines 13-15 and the description of the underworld in 16f. The poem ends with the description of a sympotic scene (17-21), which, through the reference to drinking and erotic pursuits, reaffirms the *carpe diem* theme.

³³¹ To make the ambiguity even greater, Woodman (75ff.) remarks the semantic ambiguity of *tepere*, which could mean both "to glow" and "to be lukewarm in one's feelings" (see *OLD* s.v. 2, 3), and considers, rather unlikely, that the second sense was intended here, as Horace wanted to end his poem by emphasizing "the pathetic sadness of life."

Throughout the ode one may notice various verbal echoes (*solutae*, 10 - *solvitur*, 1; *alterno... pede*, 7 - *aequo... pede*, 13) and repetitions (*neque iam... nec* in 3f; *iam* in 5; *iam* in 16; *nec... nec* in 18f.; *nunc decet* in line 9 and 11; *aut... aut/seu... sive* in 9f. and 12) that link different parts of the poem together. The poem contains also conflicting notions and images that emphasize the idea of change. Thus, the idea of release alternates with the idea of constriction and restraint (e.g. *solvitur*, 1; *iunctae*, 6; *solutae*, 10; *vetat*, 15; *premet*, 16); light alternates with dark (see above); while in the last two lines of the poem (19-20) the renewal of love is expressed in words denoting changes in temperature (*calet*, 19; *tepebunt*, 20) that confers on 1.4 a ring structure, as it recalls the warmth brought spring at the beginning of the poem.

Chapter V

Horace *Carm.* 4.7

DIFFUGERE nives, redeunt iam gramina campis
 arboribusque comae;
 mutat terra vices, et decrescentia ripas
 flumina praetereunt;
 Gratia cum Nymphis geminisque sororibus audet 5
 ducere nuda chorus.
 immortalia ne speres, monet annus et alnum
 quae rapit hora diem:
 frigora mitescunt Zephyris, ver proterit aestas,
 interitura simul 10
 pomifer Autumnus fruges effuderit, et mox
 bruma recurrit iners.
 damna tamen celeres reparant caelestia lunae:
 nos ubi decidimus
 quo pater Aeneas, quo Tullus dives et Ancus, 15
 pulvis et umbra sumus.
 quis scit an adiciant hodiernae crastina summae
 tempora di superi?
 cuncta manus avidas fugient heredis, amico
 quae dederis animo. 20
 cum semel occideris et de te splendida Minos
 fecerit arbitria,
 non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te
 restituet pietas;
 infernis neque enim tenebris Diana pudicum 25
 liberat Hippolytum,
 nec Lethaea valet Theseus abrumpere caro
 vincula Perithoo.

Included in the fourth book of his *Carmina* (published in 13 B.C.³³²) 4.7 is the second spring poem written by Horace.³³³ The ode, dedicated to Manlius Torquatus,³³⁴ a lawyer and friend of

³³² See Putnam (1986) 23 n.6.

³³³ With the exception of A.J. Maclean (1853, 253), who argues that 4.7 and the Ode to Sestius have been written about the same time, the majority of commentators consider that 4.7 is later than 1.4. Cf. Woodman 755 n.2.; Commager 280.

Horace, has been considered either “the most beautiful poem in ancient literature,”³³⁵ a “magnificent reflection on the coming of spring” (Putnam 2006, 19) or a rather insignificant spring-song (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 321). However, although this poem has been always seen as an obvious pair of 1.4³³⁶ and the constant comparison between them³³⁷ can be regarded as an implicit acknowledgement of its status as a spring poem, strangely enough, critics have neglected to identify the specific elements that tie this Horatian ode with the previous spring poems (other than 1.4).³³⁸

Thus, at the structural level, 4.7 too follows the schema of a spring poem, including a description of the season in lines 1-6 and the reactions prompted by spring in lines 7-28.³³⁹ The poem starts with the striking image of the departed snows (*diffugere nives*, 1), an image that, evoking the end of winter, announces the arrival of spring (a similar announcement of the coming of spring by reference to the beginning of the sailing season can be found in *A.P.* 10.1.1 and 10.2.1³⁴⁰), followed by the description of the vernal vegetation (*gramina campis/arboribusque comae*, 1f.) that may recall the references to flowers, vegetation and meadows in *A.P.* 10.1.3; 10.2.4 and, possibly, *A.P.* 9.363 1-6 and *A.P.* 10.4.7. As further reminders of the tradition of the genre, one

³³⁴ To the addressee of this poem was apparently also dedicated *Ep.* 1.5, a suggestion made already in antiquity by the scholiast Pseudo-Acro (see ed. Holder on *Ep.* 1.5.1; cf. also Putnam 2006, 413 n.2). Son of L. M. Torquatus, who was consul in the year of Horace's birth (65 B.C.), Manlius Torquatus, the addressee of both these poems, was a lawyer of whom we know little except that he wrote a defense of Moschus of Pergamum who was accused of poisoning (see Gow 45; Page 425; Quinn 1980, 313).

³³⁵ Housman cited by Richards (289).

³³⁶ As Kiessling-Heinze (424) put it, “wie kein anderes Paar Horazische Oden.”

³³⁷ See for example Babcock 13; Barr 6; Campbell 224; Fraenkel 419 ff.; Corbeil 98; Levin 354-58; Rudd 379-383; Quinn 14-28; Becker 146-60; Heinze 26; Leinicks 57; Page 425; Wickham 310.

³³⁸ *A.P.* 10.1, 2; Cat. 46 and also possibly (since the composition date of these poems is uncertain) *A.P.* 9.363 and 10.4.

³³⁹ Line 9, presenting spring as part of the seasonal cycle, could be also considered part of the description of the vernal season.

³⁴⁰ Interestingly, the idea of departure expressed by *diffugere nives* is present in both Χείματος ἡνεμόεντος in *A.P.* 9.363.1 and χεῖμῶνες ... ἀπέδρομον in *A.P.* 10.4.3. Unfortunately, the uncertain dating of these poems does not allow us to take them into consideration.

may also notice in 4.7 the mention of the traditional West wind (*Zephyris*, 9), while, at the level of expression, the use of *iam* in the first line recalls the traditional ἦδη of the Greek epigrams.

However, while reminding the reader of the tradition of the genre, 4.7 is also a highly innovative spring poem, as both the (rather short) description of the vernal season and the reactions prompted by spring contain new elements. Thus, while the constant emphasis on the idea of movement (and rapid change) and the shift of focus from the natural world to the mythological realm can also be found in 1.4, the mention of the departed snows of winter in the first line of the poem and the presence of the river motif in lines 3f. - that replaces the traditional maritime motif from the Greek epigrams (*A.P.* 10.1.1, 3f., 6ff.; 10.2.1f., 5-8) - are totally new elements in the description of the vernal season. The break with the tradition can be seen especially in the second part of the ode, in which, for the first time in a spring poem, all the other seasons of the year are (quickly but vividly) presented. The fact that spring is described only as an element of a recurring series shifts the emphasis from the traditional (and dramatic) contrast between the vernal season and winter to the tragic contrast between the cyclical time of natural phenomena and the linear and finite nature of human temporality. Another innovative element is the fact that, in contrast to all the previous spring poems, the injunction to *action* (and thus the *carpe diem* motif) is barely hinted at (in the mention of the rapacious hands of the heir, *manus avidas heredis*, in line 19), and thus, the reactions prompted by spring are, to an even higher degree than in 1.4, of a reflective nature.

However, the most innovative aspect of 4.7 lies perhaps in the fact that, for the first time in the tradition of the genre, an author of a spring poem writes a second spring poem and employs the Hellenistic techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* primarily on himself rather than on

others. Indeed, apart from placing 4.7 in the tradition of the genre, a close reading of the poem indicates that, through various similarities and subtle contrasts, Horace also invites the reader to make a comparison between this ode and 1.4, his previous spring poem. The structural, thematic and stylistic similarities are in fact so numerous (and significant) that a critic like Heinze (424) has even considered 1.4 and 4.7 alternative versions of the same poem, arguing that “Torquatus [...] von jenem Lied begeistert, den Freund um ein ähnliches für sich selbst gebeten habe: wie man wohl einen Maler um die Wiederholung eines in anderem Besitz befindlichen Lieblingsbildes angeht.”³⁴¹ However, in spite of the fact that, as Smith (296) put it, “the ingredients which go to make up this ode are the same as those of 1.4,” the poem is definitely more than “a simple recast version of 1.4” (Wilkinson 40), and the two odes, as Quinn (1963, 27) remarks, “are different and independent, not two shots at the same thing,” since “there are clear and important differences in the two poems, not only in their structure [...] or even their tone [...], but even in what they explicitly communicate, the statements made, the theme itself.” Nevertheless, the numerous similarities between the two poems make it clear that any rigorous analysis of this ode must also take into account its very close relationship with the previous Horatian spring poem, while trying to avoid the judgmental frenzy that seems to accompany almost any critical comparison of these poems.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Cf. Quinn 1963, 15 n.1.

³⁴² Analyzing these poems, critics generally seem to (over)indulge themselves in favoring one or the other. Thus, to give only a few examples, Campbell (224) deems 4.7 as “one of the supremely beautiful among the Odes,” “more poetically written and more harmoniously conceived” than 1.4; Fraenkel (419), while admitting that 4.7 “is certainly an accomplished poem,” considers that “we should not use its perfection to slight its lovely forerunner”; Nisbet (193f.) prefers 1.4; Quinn (1962, 27), while conceding that 4.7 is “undoubtedly a fine poem,” likes it less than 1.4, since, apparently, the ode offers “less straightforward pleasure because its imagery is weaker” and the poem seems to be “less firmly controlled in the thrust of its argument”; Heinze (26) also considers 4.7 ‘poetically weaker,’ while Woodman, in his (rather too) passionate effort to prove that 1.4 is the “superior poem” (753) between the two, considers that 4.7 is an ode ‘distinguished’ only by its “patchwork character” (765), “lack of structure” (766) and “crude technique” (778).

Both poems begin with the indirect announcement of the arrival of spring by reference to the end of the hibernal season (*diffugere nives*, 4.7.1 - *solvitur acris hiems*, 1.4.1). However, in contrast to the earlier Horatian spring poem, where the (gradual) melting of the winter snow is only suggested by the word *solvitur*, in 4.7 the opening image is more concrete, since the snows (personified by the verb *diffugere*) are directly mentioned. The idea of (sudden) change and movement that occupies such an important place in 1.4 (see above pp. 114 and 121) is also present at the beginning of this poem, not only in the verb *diffugere* but also in the following image, depicting the return (*redeunt*, 1) of vernal vegetation. However, the verb *redeunt* expresses here not only the idea of movement but, through its prefix (*re-*), may also prefigure the vivid description of the cyclical sequence of seasons from lines 9-12. At the same time, in contrast to 1.4 where the vernal vegetation is mentioned only indirectly, in connection with the *carpe diem* motif (*viridi ... myrto*, 1.4.9; *flore*, 1.4.10) and the necessary seasonal sacrifice to the god Faunus (*umbrosis lucis*, 1.4.11), in 4.7 Horace points out at the very beginning of the poem that both the grass of the fields and the foliage of the trees are returning (*redeunt iam gramina campis/arboribusque comae*, 1f.), the green lushness brought by the season effectively suggesting the definitive transition from the white winter (*nives*, 1) to spring, emphasizing also the idea of renewal and the regenerative power of the vernal season.

The idea of movement and change is also predominant in the next two lines, directly expressed by the verb *mutat* in line 3 of the poem. The passage contains also a direct verbal echo with 1.4, as *mutat terra vices* clearly recalls the syntagm *grata vice veris* from the first line of the previous poem. Although Woodman (756) considers that, in contrast to *grata vice veris* from 1.4, the syntagm *mutat terra vices* is a “cliché,” since, apparently, “Horace fails to make his observation

specific, with the result that the phrase drifts into becoming a generalized truth, the main fault of which is that it is too explicit,” one may argue that, while in 1.4.1 one could discern a movement from abstract to concrete in the immediate mention of the West wind (see pp. 122f.), in 4.7 the movement is rather from concrete to abstract, and thus, the specific elements expected by Woodman are to be found not ahead, but in the previous image, since the return of the grass to the fields and of the foliage to the trees could be seen as the vernal changes undergone by earth in line 3. At the same time, as *mutat terra vices* immediately recalls the syntagm *grata vice veris*, the mere absence of *grata* in 4.7 becomes an indirect (and very effective) qualification of *vices*, suggesting that the vernal change depicted in this poem lacks its traditional pleasant nature. Far from being a mere “cliché,” the direct verbal echo has thus a significant effect on the mood of the description of spring, 4.7 beginning, in comparison with 1.4, in a more reserved tone.

While the description of the launching of ships from the second line of 1.4 has no direct equivalent in this poem, one may nevertheless notice that in the description of the vernal season Horace suddenly shifts the scene from the image of the (dry) earth to that of the subsiding rivers (now) peacefully flowing along their banks (*decrescientia ripas/flumina praetereunt*, 3-4). One may thus consider that, as a variation on the previous spring poem, the ‘maritime’ motif of 1.4.2 is replaced in 4.7 by the river motif, which, according to Porter (199), is usually associated in Horace’s work with the theme of the quick passing of time.³⁴³

The next section of the poem (lines 5f.), containing the image of the Graces and Nymphs celebrating the return of spring with their festive (and naked) dancing, offers a direct parallel with the mythological vignette from 1.4.5-7. However, the mythological tableau is much shorter in this

³⁴³ See also Putnam (1986, 135 n.3) who notices that Horace describes the streams with a verb linked with passage through time as well as space.

poem, occupying only two lines, and, in sharp contrast to 1.4, where the presence of Venus hinted also at the beauty and regenerative aspect of the vernal season, introducing thus into the poem an erotic aspect that reappeared in the sympotic scene from the end of the ode, in 4.7 the erotic theme is (rather conspicuously) absent, and even the festive dance of the mythological figures is (somewhat surprisingly) presented as an act of daring (*audet*, 5). At the same time, although the nakedness of the Graces and nymphs alludes most likely to the fair weather of the vernal season³⁴⁴ and may thus indicate an exuberance absent from the celebratory dance of 1.4,³⁴⁵ the use of the verb *audet* could also be intended to suggest that the chill of winter has not entirely passed or hint perhaps at the unpredictability that (traditionally) characterizes the vernal weather. Similar to the absence of *grata* as a qualifier of *vices* in line 3 of the poem, a conspicuous element of this mythological tableau is the *absence* of Vulcan, who paired Venus in the description of spring from 1.4, and signified, at the mythological level, the resuming of the practical activities suspended during the winter season. Through the simple absence of Vulcan, Horace not only ‘empties’ the vernal landscape of 4.7, diminishing thus the mood of lively celebration and bustling activity, but also indirectly suggests that spring cannot oppose death, since, as a result of this exclusion, the mythological figures which are associated with death and the underworld in the second part of the poem clearly outnumber the mythological figures associated with spring in the description of the season.

In both poems, the arrival of spring prompts disheartening reflections on the implacable and imminent nature of death and the tragic human condition that shatter the joyful vernal mood. However, in 4.7 the *memento mori* motif is introduced much earlier than in 1.4, in the *sententia* of

³⁴⁴ Cf. Heinze (425): “Das Epitheton besagt natürlich nicht, dass die Grazien sich ihm Winter wärmer kleiden, sondern ... wagen sie sich erst jetzt in die freie Natur.”

³⁴⁵ Cf. Woodman (772), who sees the nudity of the Graces and Nymphs as a sign of their uninhibited and happy nature, that (in his view) stands in sharp contrast with the restrained dance of the mythological figures in 1.4.

line 7 (in which one may also find a verbal echo with the previous poem, as the verb *speres* recalls the noun *spem* from 1.4.15) that stresses the brevity of human existence and the ‘rapacious’ nature of time (*rapit*, 8). Another important difference between these poems lies in the fact that, while in 1.4 the sudden juxtaposition between spring and death has been seen as a controversial element, capable of undermining the structural and thematic unity of the poem (see pp. 12f.), in 4.7 the connection between spring, time and death is made explicit. The link missing in the previous poem is provided in lines 9-12 of 4.7 where spring is presented as part of the cycle of seasons. Since, as Fredericksmeier (17) observes, “the picture of the rapidly passing seasons is an effective indicator of our own quickly passing life and imminent death,” the arrival of spring, in spite of its initial joyful associations, becomes soon an ominous reminder of the swift flight of time. The linear and finite nature of human temporality is contrasted with the cyclic time of the natural phenomena in lines 13-14 in which humankind is excluded from the process of renewal observed in nature, while a simple *nos* (14) expresses the idea of the universal character of death (so elaborated in 1.4.13f.). The qualification of *Tullus* as *dives* (15), considered by some critics “strange and unnecessary” (Gow, 46), is, most likely, intended to hint at the opposition rich/poor present also in the previous poem, but, in contrast to 1.4 (and in the same economical manner), the second term of the dichotomy is not stated. At the same time, as Davis (162) notices, Horace may employ the figures mentioned in line 15 as “tokens of wealthy persons” and “the plural *nos* is meant to be inclusive of the appropriate antonyms (such as *inopes*; *paupers*).”

The use of (the impressive) historical or quasi-historical figures (*pater Aeneas*, *Tullus dives* and *Ancus*, 15) to illustrate the universal nature of death is also an innovative element in the tradition of the genre that confers on this poem a Roman character unknown to 1.4. At the same

time, although the Underworld is not directly mentioned in this passage, its ‘proximity,’ as in the Ode to Sestius, can be detected at the stylistic level, the infernal realm being ‘accompanied’ by an elevated tone, as the qualification of *Aeneas* as *pater* in line 15 is perhaps intended to recall the epic world, since the phrase *pater Aeneas* may be borrowed from Virgil’s *Aeneid*.³⁴⁶

Without any equivalent in 1.4, line 16 of 4.7, defining human being as mere dust and shadow (*pulvis et umbra sumus*), offers such a bleak vision on the tragic human condition that the lack of hope explicitly stated in lines 23f. will come hardly as a surprise.

The ideas expressed in lines 17-18, namely that the future is fraught with uncertainty since, as everything is in the hands of the gods above (*di superi*), we cannot know which day will be our last and death may be imminent, recall the disheartening *sententia* from line 15 of 1.4, while, at the textual level, one may also notice that the word *summae* (4.7.17) is a direct verbal echo of *summa* (1.4.15). Similarly to the previous spring poem, the injunction to enjoy the present is not explicitly stated, but, immediately following this *memento mori*, the mention of the greedy heir in line 19, whose ominous presence anticipates the death of the addressee, functions as an indirect prescription, introducing thus (finally) into the poem the *carpe diem* motif. Thus, although any direct exhortation to the banquet is absent from this poem, the simple presence of the greedy heir, a common motif in the *carpe diem* poems, approximates, according to Davis (163), the symptomatic topic through a powerful allusiveness. Nevertheless, the striking image of the rapacious hands of the heir (*manus avidas... heredis*, 19) is a disturbing one, casting a shadow over the injunction to enjoy oneself and reinforcing the pessimistic mood of the poem.

³⁴⁶ See however Quinn (23 n.2), who, admitting that the syntagm *pater Aeneas* could be an allusion to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, suggests that this may not be necessarily the case, since “the legend of Aeneas as the founder of the Roman race had long been current, as the opening words of Lucretius’ poem (*Aeneadam genetrix...*) show.”

In sharp contrast to 1.4 that ends with the vivid description of a sympotic scene filled with erotic (and especially homoerotic) allusions, 4.7 concludes with yet another disheartening *memento mori*. Introduced in line 23 (even later in the poem than Sestius in 1.4), Torquatus, the addressee of 4.7, is offered no hope but the bleak vision of an Underworld from which nobody has ever escaped. As the abundance of mythological references (*Minos*, 21; *Diana*, 25; *Hippolytum*, 26; *Lethaea*, *Theseus*, 27; *Pirithoo*, 28) brings elevation of style into this final passage, one could say that 4.7 ends in a rather solemn note, quite different from the slightly frivolous tone in which 1.4 concludes.

The rich overlap between 4.7 and 1.4 clearly invites a parallel reading of the two spring poems. The exuberant vernal imagery of 1.4 is abridged in 4.7 and the ode is thus characterized by a gloomy mood and pessimistic view that seems to engulf even the traditional injunction to enjoy the present. However, the bleak mood of the poem is somewhat mitigated by the description of the lush vernal vegetation (1f.) and the naked dance of the gracious mythological figures (5f.), while the rather demoralizing vision of the human condition does not preclude the possibility of joy, hinted at in the *carpe diem* motif at 19f.

A poem with a very complex (and often debated) structure,³⁴⁷ 4.7 is nevertheless characterized, as Smith (296) remarks, by “a more natural sequence of thought” than 1.4. Thus, as in this ode the connection between spring, temporality and death is made explicit (see p. 160), the transitions between its various sections and the general progression of ideas are more logical than in

³⁴⁷ Various structural models have been proposed for 4.7. Thus, according to Collinge (111), the poem is divided into four parts (1-8; 9-16; 17-20 and 21-28). Collinge’s view that lines 17-20 “look extraneous” appears also in Becker (153f.) who regards them as an interpolation and proposes their exclusion from Horace’s poem. Bohnenkamp (260) suggests that the poem is divided into two parts according to theme: lines 1-13 (Natur-Bereich) and lines 14-28 (Menschlicher-Bereich). Tremoli (78) also proposes a bipartite scheme of the ode, with lines 1-6, considered “illustrativa,” and lines 7-28, considered “colloquiale ed intima.” While acknowledging the unity of the first twelve lines, Bradley (288) proposes a tripartite division, with lines 25-28 seen as “a dying fall comparable to that found at the conclusion of *Carmina* 2.19, 3.4, 3.8, and 4.5” and paralleling the “epilogue” with which the quasi-triadic structure of the *Carmen Saeculare* concludes.”

the previous Horatian spring poem. While one may argue that the ode loses at the poetic level by being too explicit, since its logical thought-sequence cannot achieve, for example, the electrifying effect produced in 1.4.13 by the abrupt entrance of *Mors* into the vernal landscape, a close reading of the poem suggests that in 4.7 Horace did not intend to surprise by means of unexpected juxtapositions, as 1.4, but, as a variation on the previous spring poem, rather to overwhelm³⁴⁸ the reader through a more pervasive (and thus even more oppressive) presence of death.

In spite of its length and complexity, 4.7 can be rather easily summarized. Thus, the poem begins with the mention of the departed snows of winter that indirectly announces the arrival of spring, followed by the image of the returning vernal vegetation (1-2). Among the seasonal changes undergone by earth, Horace includes in lines 3-4 the image of the subsiding rivers flowing now peacefully along their banks, while the tableau presenting the naked (and daring) dance of the Graces and Nymphs shifts in lines 5-6 the scene from the natural world to the mythological realm. The emphasis on the idea of movement and change that characterizes the description of the vernal season hints at the transitory character of spring and leads to the *memento mori* motif (lines 7-8) which warns of the brevity of human life and the fleeting nature of time. The description of the swift succession of seasons that follows in lines 9-12 serves as an illustration of the quick passing of time and is followed in lines 13-16 by the contrast between the process of cyclical renewal that characterizes the phenomena of the natural world and the definitive end brought by death to all mortals. However, the tragic human condition is defined not only by the sureness of death, but also by the uncertainty of life (lines 17-18), a thought that prompts in lines 19f. the indirect injunction to enjoy the present since death can be imminent. The urgency of the *carpe diem* advice is reinforced

³⁴⁸ Cf. Levin (355) who, after analyzing both poems, concludes that “1.4 dazzles and fascinates; the latter [4.7] overwhelms.”

in the following four lines (21-24) by the disheartening vision of the Underworld from which nothing - not even an illustrious lineage (*genus*, 23), a great eloquence (*facundia*, 23) or devotion (*pietas*, 24) - can bring us back, while the last section of the poem (lines 25-28) illustrate by two mythological exempla the inefficacy of piety and friendship in the face of implacable death.

However, in spite of the apparent simplicity of its main ideas, 4.7 is a refined and a complex poem, characterized by a subtle interchange of conflicting notions and contrasting pairs of images. Thus, the ode begins with the description of spring (lines 1-6) and ends with the image of the oppressive underworld (lines 21-28); the departure of snows (*diffugere nives*, 1) is contrasted with the return of vegetation (*redeunt*, 1); the white and barren winter (*nives*, 1) is contrasted with the green lushness of spring (*gramina campis/arboribus comae*, 1f.); the image of the dry land (*campis*, 1; *terra*, 3) alternates with the image of the subsiding rivers (*decrescientia... flumina*, 3f.); the idea of movement and rapid change associated with the vernal season (*diffugere, redeunt*, 1; *mutat*, 3) alternates with the idea of constriction, immobility and restraint associated with winter, death and the underworld (*iners*, 12; *neque... Diana... liberat*, 25f; *Lethaea... vincula*, 27f.); the cyclical time of natural phenomena is set in opposition to the linear and finite time of human existence, while the idea of restoration and renewal of life that characterizes the natural world (*reparant*, 13) is sharply contrasted with the definitive end brought by death and with the tragic human condition (*pulvis and umbra sumus*, 16).

The constant interchange of conflicting ideas and images subserves the thematic structure of the poem, which is characterized by a careful interlocking of motives. The main themes of 4.7 are introduced at the very beginning of the ode in the description of spring from 1-6. Thus, apart from announcing the dissolution of winter, the image of the departed snows (*diffugere nives*, 1)

brings into the poem the idea of ending and thus the theme of death. In a similar way, the return of the vernal vegetation (*redeunt iam gramina campis/arboribus comae*, 1f.) introduces into 4.7 the idea of rebirth and new beginning, while in line 3 the motif of change appears explicitly stated in the syntagm *mutat terra vices*. At the same time, the celebratory (but somewhat restrained - *audet*, 5) dance of the mythological figures in lines 5-6, which introduces the theme of joy, foreshadows the indirect (and somewhat half-hearted) injunction to enjoy the present from 19f. These main themes (death, rebirth, change and joy) reappear in the rest of the poem, defining the correspondence and especially the essential difference between the natural phenomena and human life. One could thus notice that, in order to illustrate its central idea (namely that, while change and death are common to both the natural and human world, the renewal of life is possible only in the natural realm, humans being faced only with the definitive end brought by death), the poem breaks down at the structural level into different sections, each of which concerned with one of these main themes. Thus, after the ‘thematic summary’ presented in the description of the vernal season from lines 1-6, the poem continues in the next passage with the theme of death (*immortalia ne speres*, 7) and rapid change (*almum/quae rapit hora diem*, 7f.) applied to the human sphere, followed in lines 9-12 by the description of the complete seasonal cycle in which all the main motives of the ode reappear in connection with the natural world. Thus, in this section of the poem, the theme of change is implied in the rapid movement from one season to another; the motif of death is evident in the depiction of the seasonal succession in which every element of the series appears only to be quickly replaced by another, while the theme of renewal and rebirth is indicated, even at the textual level, by the circular nature of the description, as the passage starts and ends with the image of winter (*frigora*, 9; *bruma*

recurrat iners, 12).³⁴⁹ The motif of renewal and rebirth in connection with the cyclical phenomena of the natural world is further emphasized (and explicitly expressed by the verb *reparant*) in line 13 of the poem. The theme of rebirth is sharply contrasted with the theme of death in the following section (lines 14-16) of the ode. These lines, presenting a rather tragic and disheartening vision of the human condition (*pulvis et umbra sumus*, 16), implicitly contain the theme of renewal of life, emphasizing thus the fact that for humans there is no possible rebirth. The motif of change (for the worse) and the theme of death at the human level appear again in the next section (lines 17-18), and, while the presence in lines 19-20 of the motif of joy (hinted at in the mention of the greedy hands of the heir) seems to give mankind a brief hope or, at least, some solace, the theme of death ends the poem with the gloomy (and, even, through its great length, oppressive) description of an underworld from which there is no possible escape (lines 21-28). The impossibility of return from the infernal realm brings again into the poem the motif of renewal of life, pointing out once more the fact that human condition is primarily defined by the impossibility of rebirth. As a conclusion of this brief discussion of the thematic aspects of 4.7, although numerous structural models have been proposed for this ode (see p. 164 n.157), I will offer my own schema of the poem that runs as follows:

- 1-6: spring - death/change/renewal/joy both at the natural and mythological level
- 7-8: change/death at the human level
- 9-12: change/ death/renewal at the natural level
- 13: renewal at the natural level
- 14-16: death/ no rebirth at the human level
- 17-18: change/death at the human level

³⁴⁹ The idea of constant renewal is also emphasized by the verb *recurrat*.

19-20: joy at the human level

21-28: death/no rebirth at the human level

Similar to 1.4, where the change and the renewal of life brought by the vernal season in the natural world were implicitly contrasted with the finite and tragic nature of human existence whose end precludes any possible hope of a new beginning, 4.7 presents a disheartening vision of mankind. However, in contrast to 1.4, where the element of (thematic) surprise was meant to convey the abruptness and irrevocability of death, in 4.7 the orderly sequence of thought and the subtle interlocking of motives and contrasting pair of images offer a more cohesive (and thus an even more oppressive) demonstration of the tragic human condition, while the constant emphasis on the fact that no rebirth is possible at the human level makes for even greater gloom than in the previous spring poem.

The complexity and ingenuity that characterize the thematic structure of 4.7 are also evident at the metrical and stylistic level of the poem. The ode was composed in the First Archilochian, a meter in which a dactylic hexameter is followed by a dactylic trimeter catalectic. This variety of meter, employed by Horace only in this poem (see Gow 46), reinforces, as Reckford (130) observes, “the contrast between nature’s continuity and man’s abrupt end,” and, as “the closest lyric equivalent to the meter of funerary epigram” (Frischer 98), perfectly suits the theme and the gloomy mood of the ode. At the same time, as the preponderance of spondees gives an overall impression of speed, the meter subserves the thematic level of the poem, suggesting the rapidity of movement and the swiftness of change. As Fredericksmeier (20) observes, “the meter with its quickly moving

dactyls in alternating lines of hexameters and half-pentameters gives a sense of the quick rhythm of nature, of life and death, and in this rhythm there is not much time for us.”³⁵⁰

The poem starts with the syntagm *diffugere nives* that suggests the vivid image of the last patches of snow melting everywhere (*dis-*) under the influence of the vernal change. The verb *diffugere* - “to run away or flee in several directions,” and, when applied to inanimate objects, “to scatter,” “to disperse” (see *OLD* s.v.) - personifies the snows of winter and emphasizes from the very beginning of the ode the idea of movement and implicitly the idea of change. In contrast to 1.4.1, where *solvitur* presents the ‘melting’ of (the snow of) winter as a (gradual) process, the snows of 4.7 suddenly disappear, the use of *diffugere* emphasizing the abrupt nature of their departure and thus the swiftness of change.³⁵¹ At the same time, since the verb, as Putnam (135) remarks, “when concerned with mankind, regularly means to take to flight in terror before some looming menace,”³⁵² the running away of the personified snows hints also at the (almost) violent nature of change that seems to characterize throughout the poem the phenomena of the natural world (see below, especially the discussion on the description of the cycle of seasons). Although spring is not explicitly stated in this passage, this is by far the most ‘vigorous’ vernal season in the tradition of the genre, its impetuous coming decisively putting to flight the harsh winter. In fact, as various critics have remarked, the opening image of 4.7 may even have martial overtones, the first line presenting an almost “military setting” (Andrewes 109), since the snows of winter are depicted as having fled “like a routed enemy,” while, “as if in triumph, grass is returning to the fields and foliage to the

³⁵⁰ See however Reckford (130), who considers that “the regular over-all rhythm expresses not urgency nor flight but a quiet, melancholy certainty.”

³⁵¹ Cf. Ancona (53) who remarks that “the movement suggested by the poem’s first word, *diffugere*, with its sense of flight underscored by the prefix *dis*, points to the swiftness of the change of the season.”

³⁵² Putnam (135 n. 2) gives the following examples for the use of the word in this sense: Cic. *Phil.* 2, 108; Lucr. 5.1338; Verg. *G.* 3.150, *Aen.* 2.212 and 4.123, while *OLD* s.v. cites also Ov. *Fast.* 2.211; Stat. *Theb.* 11, 251.

trees” (Fredricksmeier 16).³⁵³ However, while *diffugere* suggests the victory of spring over winter, introducing the motif of ending and death that occupies such an important place in this poem, the opening image may also hint (especially in view of *redeunt*) at the idea of a possible return of winter and at the cyclical character of natural phenomena (suggesting thus the theme of rebirth and renewal of life). Thus, *diffugere* does not refer to the utter destruction of the ‘enemy’³⁵⁴ but only to its (temporary) departure from the ‘combat zone,’ leaving thus room for its future return, as the snows of winter, routed as they may be now, can regroup and reinstate the ‘ancien régime’ of winter whose ‘restoration’ is in fact described in lines 11f. (where the hibernal season is ‘brought back’ by *recurrat*, a verb in the same semantic sphere as *diffugere* and *redeunt*).

However, apart from referring to the natural phenomena, the presence of *diffugere* at the beginning of 4.7 may also, according to Commager (1962, 278), prefigure the correspondence between humankind and nature developed later in the ode, since, in Horace “‘fleeing’ is frequently associated with life’s swift passage and the coming of death.”³⁵⁵

Another important aspect of the opening image of 4.7 is the direct mention of the winter’s snows (*nives*). The reference to snow(s) makes the beginning of this poem more concrete than that of 1.4 and clearly suggests that the syntagm *diffugere nives* should be compared and contrasted with *solvitur acris hiems* (1.4.1). Thus, while the previous spring poem begins with an abstract statement in which *solvitur* only hints at the (concrete) thawing of snow, 4.7 begins with the description of a

³⁵³ Cf. also Porter (1992, 14), who leaves any doubt apart and unequivocally states that “the poem opens with a military metaphor: the onward march of the seasons is described by the flight of the snows before the grass which now masters the fields.”

³⁵⁴ As Putnam (1986, 135) put it, “the snows of winter neither liquefy nor evaporate. They merely scatter their collective strength before the vigorous manifestations of spring.”

³⁵⁵ Commager (1962, 278 n. 36) gives the following examples: *Carm.* 1.11.7; 2.11.5; 2.14.1; 3.29.48; *Epod.* 17.21; S. 2.6.40.

concrete element, *nives*, which, in turn, is a synecdoche for winter. The direct mention of snow also allows Horace to contrast the seasons in terms of colours and (thus, implicitly) of fertility, since the immediate (and striking) juxtaposition of the snow drifts with the lush vernal vegetation defines winter as a white and barren season in total opposition to the green and fertile spring.

After this indirect announcement of the end of winter by reference to the departed snows, the poem continues with the vivid image of the returning vernal vegetation (*redeunt iam gramina campis/arboribus comae*). The presence in the same line of both the reference to winter and the description of the (vegetal) manifestations of spring is most likely meant to emphasize the swift succession of the seasons and thus the rapidity of change. At the same time, the decisive ‘victory’ of spring over winter is also suggested by the length of their descriptions; thus, if the hibernal season is dealt with in only two words (*diffugere nives*), the rest of the first line, as well as the following five lines, are dedicated to spring, and thus winter seems, even at the textual level, overwhelmed by spring.

The idea of movement and rapid change reappears in the description of the returning vernal vegetation, expressed by the verb *redeunt* (1) that also introduces into the poem, through its prefix (*re-*), the theme of periodical renewal and rebirth³⁵⁶ at the natural level, prefiguring thus the description of the cyclical succession of seasons from 9-12.³⁵⁷ However, according to Ancona (54), although “the sense of return (*redeunt*, 1) of the grass to the fields and the leaves to the trees may suggest that the rapidity of change should be seen in terms of a natural cycle, [...] the emphasis is far more on the sense of sudden change itself.”

³⁵⁶ According to Putnam (2006, 20), the word *redeunt* hints at the fact that “the difference between seasonal or annual repetition and the uniqueness of our human passage through time will [...] be a central theme [of the poem].”

³⁵⁷ The verb also starts the series of verbs in *re-* that will continue with *recurrat* (12), *reparant* (13) and *restituat* (24). Cf. Putnam (2006) 403.

At the stylistic level, one could notice in the first two lines the presence of *iam* (recalling both Catullus' spring poem and the traditional ἦδη of the Greek epigrams), the use of the poetic word *comae* (2), and the chiasmus of the last four words (*gramina campis/ arboribusque comae*), which, according to Garrison (355), "gives a sense of order to the natural cycle."³⁵⁸

The motif of change, only indirectly suggested in the first two lines of the poem where the focus was mainly on the notion of movement (*diffugere, redeunt*), is explicitly stated (and thus emphasized) in line 3 by the syntagm *mutat terra vices*. Although disparaged by Woodman for expressing a "generalized truth" in a "too explicit" manner (see pp. 158f.), the phrase *mutat terra vices*, as Commager (1962, 278) observes, "warns, even more clearly than the prophetic *grata vice veris* in the Ode to Sestius (C. 1.4.1), that spring is only one of the year's changes."³⁵⁹ An innovative syntagm,³⁶⁰ *mutat terra vices*, with its almost pleonastic ring (as both *mutat* and *vices* express the same idea), succeeds, through its novelty and double reference to change, to draw the attention of the reader and to associate spring with a notion that will reappear throughout the poem.³⁶¹ At the same time, hinting at the transitory nature of spring, the phrase prefigures the description of the cyclical succession of seasons in lines 9-12 of the ode.³⁶² Thus, in a rather striking departure from the tradition of the genre, spring loses its 'privileged' status (which may explain the relatively short description of the season in this poem), while the conspicuous absence of the

³⁵⁸ *gramina campis* is possibly borrowed from Lucr. 2.661 (*gramina campo*). Cf. Woodman 756 n.1.

³⁵⁹ At the same time, the syntagm indicates, according to Quinn (17), "spring is well advanced," since "things are in the process of happening in nature [...], not just starting to happen."

³⁶⁰ Even Woodman, its most critical commentator, after characterizing the phrase as "a cliché" (756), seems to notice the novelty of expression when he 'admits' that "it is the thought, rather than the language, which is trite" (75 n. 2).

³⁶¹ Cf. also Levin (355), who considers that the emphasis on change is in fact so pronounced in the description of spring, that the lines "eschew pictorial variety in favour of a single-minded concentration on the concept involved in the verb *mutare*."

³⁶² According to Davis (155), the phrase *mutat terra vices* emphasizes "the regularity of the alternation." Rudd (383) also considers that *vices* is a marker of the "cyclic theme." Cf. also Elder (118 n.2) who considers that the entire poem "pivots on *mutat terra vices* of line 3, that is, on the notion of the recurrent seasons."

qualifier *grata* (that characterized in 1.4 the change brought by spring) indirectly suggests that even the traditional associations of the vernal season are only of a secondary importance in 4.7.³⁶³

After the explicit introduction into 4.7 of the theme of change, the poem continues with the vivid description of the subsiding rivers flowing along their banks (*decrescientia ripas/ flumina praetereunt*, 3f.). The presence of the river motif in this passage serves several important purposes. First, it represents a subtle (and rather unexpected) variation on the maritime motif from the Greek spring poems (see p. 159), allowing Horace to both recall the Greek tradition of the genre and, at the same time, achieve distance from it. Second, as the image of the overflowing rivers alludes to the thawing of snow it can be considered a reminder of winter or, at least, of the moment of transition from winter to spring.³⁶⁴ However, the image is also a statement about spring, since the rivers are presented as peacefully passing along their banks, as if they are ‘tamed’ by the vernal season. This fact not only indicates that the period of time referred to in this poem is rather late spring³⁶⁵ - which is also suggested by the presence of *iam* (1) in the description of the vernal vegetation - but also indirectly presents spring as a safe season, hinting nevertheless at the violent and abrupt nature of change that seems to characterize in this poem the succession from one season to another (see below). Third, the image of the ‘subdued’ streams, suggesting yet another change in the vernal landscape, allows Horace to suggest - as it comes after the mention of the transformations undergone by the dry land (*terra*) - that the arrival of spring affects the entire natural world. Fourth, as (usually) rivers overflow their banks during spring as a result of *rapid* melting of snow, the

³⁶³ Thus, one may notice that only the regenerative aspect of the season is emphasized in 4.7 (in the description of the vernal vegetation from the first two lines), since the idea of renewal and rebirth in the natural world is essential for the argument of the poem.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Ancona (54), who remarks that “the image of the rivers’ shrinking back over their banks, while descriptive of spring-time events, indirectly recalls the time when rivers were swollen with the melting winter snow.”

³⁶⁵ Cf. Quinn (17).

passage reinforces the idea expressed by the syntagm *diffugere nives* in the first line of the poem, namely that the departure of winter snows has been not a gradual process but a rather sudden occurrence, emphasizing thus the great rapidity of change and the abrupt transition from winter to spring. The same idea is also expressed by *decrescientia* (3) and *praetereunt* (4), verbal forms that, as Fredricksmeier (16) remarks, “denote [...] the notion of movement and change.” Fifth, the presence of the river motif as such may be intended to recall the theme of the quick fleeing of time, since the image of the flowing streams evokes, naturally enough, the notion of continuous movement and the idea of passing. Thus, according to Porter (199), although the connotations of the image are joyful, since the end of flooding in the rivers is a sign of spring’s arrival, the river motif is generally associated in Horace with life’s inexorable passing. A similar notion is also suggested in this passage by *praetereunt*, since the verb could be used to express the notion of time passing (see *OLD* s.v. 4a).

The next section of 4.7 (lines 5-6), mirroring a similar movement in the previous spring poem, suddenly shifts the focus from the description of the natural world to that of the mythological realm. The image of the dancing Graces and Nymphs³⁶⁶ celebrating the return of the vernal season introduces into the poem the motif of beauty, grace and vulnerability,³⁶⁷ while the idea of movement from the previous lines finds in the dance of the mythological figures a gracious

³⁶⁶ Although nothing in this passage suggests a symbolic distinction between Graces and Nymphs, Fredricksmeier (16) suggests that “the Nymphs represent the element of nature, while the Graces represent the qualities and activities which bestow beauty and grace on the life of man.” Another rather improbable reading of this passage is given by Dyer (81), who, while refraining from considering 4.7 a political poem, considers nevertheless that in this passage Horace wanted to make a political statement about the ideals of the Augustan Age, and argues that *Gratia* “is not merely a circumlocution (number one and her two sisters) for the three Graces; she is the personification of the real gratitude for peace and prosperity which Horace now sees as the great virtue of the new order.”

³⁶⁷ For a very different (and too harsh) opinion, see however Quinn who considers this scene “less convincing” (19) than the corresponding section of 1.4, since, in his view, the Graces and nymphs in this poem serve only as “ornament,” since they do not “restate, or expand, the theme of the poem in another kind of poetic language, one that elicits the reader’s collaboration from his knowledge of the legend [...]” (27).

representation.³⁶⁸ At the same time, while in 1.4 the dance scene is an image of enjoyment and vernal merriment, in this poem the (rather conspicuous) lack of details³⁶⁹ and the shorter length of the mythological tableau suggest a more reserved celebration, prefiguring thus the restrained *carpe diem* injunction that follows at 19f. The most significant aspect of this mythological scene is perhaps the tension between the celebratory mood of the naked dance and the idea of daring (and thus of danger) expressed by the verb *audet* (5). However, strangely enough, some critics seem to overlook the fact that the presence of this verb fundamentally affects the festive tone of the vignette, focusing only on the nudity of the gracious mythological figures. Thus, according to Woodman (772), the nude appearance of the Graces and Nymphs should be considered primarily as a sign of their totally uninhibited and happy nature, the mythological tableau of this ode standing thus, in his opinion, in sharp contrast to the dancing scene from the previous spring poem where, apparently, ominous overtones and notions of restraint, constriction and immobility (associated usually in Horace's poems with the winter season, old age and death) are present, spoiling thus any possible happy reading of the passage (see p. 129). Yet, even in 4.7.5-6, the idea of danger, clearly suggested by the verb *audet* (placed in emphatic position at the end of line 5), seems to cast a shadow over the celebratory feat and seasonal merriment of the mythological figures. The ominous presence of the verb *audet*, together, perhaps, with the generally unfavorable comparisons with the similar scene from the previous spring poem (see pp. 159f.) have led other commentators to offer an opposite critical interpretation of this mythological passage. Thus, according to Quinn (1962, 19), these lines, while recalling the similar scene from 1.4, are not intended to suggest the merriment and joy

³⁶⁸ For a similar reading of the dancing scene, cf. also Putnam (1986, 135) who remarks that in the description of the season "divinities close to nature, Grace and Nymphs, celebrate this renewal of spring with their own form of motion."

³⁶⁹ For example, in sharp contrast to the previous poem, in 4.7 the dance of the Nymphs and Graces is not described.

brought by the vernal season, since “the dance of the Graces and nymphs has all suggestion of emotion withheld,” and, therefore, the presence of the mythological figures in the ode has only the function “to point to the mildness of mid-spring weather, not to mark the excitement of spring freshly come.”

Another possible critical approach, which may also have the advantage of avoiding any extreme interpretation, would be to consider the celebratory dance of the naked Graces and Nymphs in connection with the preceding section of the poem (lines 3-4), describing the image of the overflowing rivers finally ‘subdued’ by the arrival of the vernal season. Thus, it could be argued that the idea of beauty and grace, movement and merriment, while present in this mythological passage, subserves the notion of safety. As in these lines Horace alludes (through the characterization of the Graces and nymphs as *nuda* in line 6) at the fair weather of the vernal season, the mythological tableau defines spring primarily in terms of temperature, prefiguring thus the reference to the *frigora* of winter mitigated by the warm West wind from the description of the vernal season in line 9 of the poem. Although the presence of *audet* may indeed have ominous overtones, since the verb hints perhaps at the chill of the winter season³⁷⁰ and also at the unpredictable nature of the vernal weather, in the context of the passage the word is more likely intended to suggest, somewhat paradoxically, primarily the idea of lack of danger that was also present in the previous section. Simply put, the fact that even the Graces and the Nymphs (such gracious and delicate beings) dare to dance naked can be considered an irrefutable proof that winter

³⁷⁰ As Ancona (54) put it, “that the Grace and Nymphs “dare” to dance naked suggests the chill of winter is still near.”

is (at least for now³⁷¹) definitively gone, a sign of the undisputable victory of spring over the hibernal season.³⁷²

After this (rather short) description of the season, the poem continues in lines 7f. with a stern sententia warning of the brevity of human existence (*immortalia ne speres*, 7) and the fleeting nature of time (*monet annus et alnum/quae rapit hora diem*, 7f.).³⁷³ The introduction of the *memento mori* motif so early in 4.7 has been considered somewhat “unexpected” and “a bit of a jolt” (Fredericksmeyer, 16) to the structural unity of the ode, reminding critics of the unexpected entrance of *pallida Mors* in 1.4, although, as Campbell (224) admits, “the modulation at line 7 [of 4.7] is less bold than that at line 13 of the other poem.” However, while the disheartening gnome does contrast poignantly with the vernal (and generally bright) mood of the beginning of 4.7, its presence after the description of spring does not challenge the logical coherence of the poem, since, as Ancona (54) remarks, the sententia of 7f, with its “striking personification of time,” continues in fact “the emphasis on temporal change” that characterized the first six lines of the ode. At the same time, as several critics have remarked, the *memento mori* motif of these lines has been anticipated by various elements included in the description of the vernal season. Thus, according to Fredericksmeyer (17), “if we turn back for a moment to the initial picture of spring, we can see what at first we did not, that there are all along subtle warnings of the transitory nature of spring.”³⁷⁴ A

³⁷¹ See Fredericksmeyer (16), who discerns in this passage a warning of the fleeting nature of the season, considering that “*Gratia... audet* suggests that this condition is only temporary.” Cf. also Syndikus (357), Becker (149).

³⁷² For a (too) martial (and thus highly improbable) reading of this passage, see Porter (214), who discovers military overtones even in these lines, considering that “the reappearance of the nymphs as a sign of spring is also couched in military terms: *audet ducere*.” While *ducere* has indeed martial meanings (see *OLD* s.v. 2), in spite of the idea of daring expressed by *audet*, it is rather hard to envisage the gracious mythological figures mounting an onslaught.

³⁷³ The presence of this sententia after the description of the mythological figures seems to confirm Williams’s observation (122f.) that in Horace, “the movement into mythology usually prepares a movement of thought into ideas that range outside the immediate phenomena of this world to death and beyond.” Cf. p. 118.

³⁷⁴ Among these warnings, Fredericksmeyer includes the restrained dance of the mythological figures and the fact that all the verbs in the description of the season denote the idea of movement and change (see pp. 175 and 178 n.181).

similar view is held by Babcock (13) who, comparing the description of the vernal season of 1.4 and 4.7, characterizes the mood of 4.7 as “uncompromising” and remarks that “even in the scene of winter’s departure a procession of words potentially foreboding in their context prepares the listener for *immortalia ne speres* in line 7 (*diffugere-redeunt, mutat... vices, decrescentia, praetereunt, audet*).”³⁷⁵

The sententia that introduces into 4.7 the motif of death, one of the major themes of the poem, starts, in an apparently paradoxical way, with the word *immortalia*, a choice that has been both praised and disparaged by criticism. Thus, Quinn (22) considers that “the opening word *immortalia* with its fine confident sound raises hopes that alternately fall and rise again during the next six lines, until dashed by the awful last word *iners*.” However, according to Woodman (774), the presence of *immortalia* has only the effect of transforming this sententia into an “ineffectual hyperbole,” since “immortal hopes are usually out of our grasp anyway, so Horace’s advice is too exaggerated to be effective.” While Quinn’s interpretation takes into consideration the context in which the word appears, Woodman misses the point of this sententia since, as the warning comes from the personified time (*annus*, 7; *hora*, 8), through the use of *immortalia* (in emphatic position at the beginning of the line) Horace prefigures the description of the cyclical (and incessant, therefore ‘immortal’) movement of the seasons, and emphasizes the radical difference between the human condition and the phenomena of the natural world. The gnome continues with a verbal echo that, recalling the previous Horatian spring poem (*speres* 4.7.7 - *spem* 1.4.15) fundamentally changes the tone of 4.7, plunging the reader into the demoralizing mood of the *memento mori* motif. However, the reference to *immortalia* in 4.7 is more than a simple variation on the long hope (*spem longam*)

³⁷⁵ Cf. also Fraenkel 419 ff.

of the previous spring poem, since it emphasizes even more clearly the fundamental difference between the ‘hopeless’ human condition, defined primarily by mortality, and the permanent renewal of the natural world, making thus the *memento mori* motif of 4.7 even more poignant.

The essential role of this sententia in 4.7 is acknowledged by Levin (356) who argues that “the impact of the poem is summed up [...] in the words *immortalia ne speres* (7),” since “every line, every image chosen by the author in some way reinforces this theme.” However, the passage has been harshly (and unjustly) criticized by Woodman (776) who considers that “the restrained language in 1.4 is far more effective” and “more convincing” than a gnome distinguished, in his view, only by its “triteness,” although even he admits that “line 7 has the merit of actually portending [...] what becomes the main theme at 13-28.”

The rest of the passage, revealing that the warning was given (or prompted) by (the personified) year and hour, contains a (rather unexpected) series of terms denoting the notion of time (*annus, hora, diem*), and stands out especially through the vivid image of the hour snatching away (*rapit*) the nourishing day (*almum diem*).³⁷⁶ Although Woodman (757) considers that “the interplay of the different expressions of time” is just a “technical virtuosity,” a close reading reveals that Horace had more subtle intentions in this passage. Thus, as Ancona (54) observes, “the relative clause, *almum/quae rapit hora diem*, repeats the sense of the immediately preceding *annus*, adding another subject for *monet*, but, through its greater length and further specification of temporal vocabulary (*annus*, then *hora* and *diem*), it expands upon and makes more vivid the bare statement *monet annus*.”

³⁷⁶ According to Putnam (1986, 136), *hora* is meant to recall and contrast with the dancing Graces of the previous passage. As he put it, “in Greek iconography, the *Horae* parallel the Graces, sustaining the natural world by their attendance. In Horace [...] the Grace can take courage to dance, but the *Hora*, complementing the personified admonitory *Annus*, only snatches away the nourishment day’s light offers the world.”

Apart from bringing vividness into the passage, the numerous terms denoting time (concentrated in only two lines) have also an overwhelming effect, suggesting perhaps (even at the textual level of the poem) the incessant ‘pressure’ of temporality (on the human being). The quick succession from *annus* to *hora* hints also at the fleeting nature of time, with the effect that, as Putnam (2006, 403) observes, in this poem “day and hour remind us not of a joyous immediacy but of the inexorable passing of quotidian time.”³⁷⁷ A similar effect is present also, according to Ancona (54), in “the juxtaposition of ‘grasping’ *hora* (subject) with *diem* (direct object) [that] makes graphic through word order the characterization of time as rapacious.”³⁷⁸ The passage continues thus the emphasis on the rapidity of temporal change from the beginning of the poem and prefigures the abrupt and violent succession of seasons at 9-12.

At the same time, if one takes into consideration the fact that, as Reckford (1997, 602 n.33) observes, “the Roman funeral inscriptions offer a striking parallel to these verses when they indicate (in that order) the number of years, months, days and even hours that the defunct has lived,” it could be also argued that this series of temporal terms may as well be intended to confer a solemn (and sepulchral) mood on these lines, quite appropriate for a *memento mori* motif.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the passage is the characterization of *diem* as *almum*. Although Schiller (145) considers that *almus* is “ein sehr gewöhnliches Beiwort zu *dies*,”³⁷⁹ and thus (unwittingly) ‘determines’ Woodman (757) to state (with his usual aplomb), that “*almum*

³⁷⁷ Cf. also Becker (149), who argues that “die Häufung der Zeitbegriffe... weist auf die Flüchtigkeit jeden Augenblickes hin.”

³⁷⁸ Cf. also Toll (155) who considers that “one of the most successful devices in the Horatian bag of tricks is the juggling of words to achieve juxtaposition of opposites [...]” In this particular case, “by juxtaposition, Horace contrasts *diem* with the fleeting *hora* which snatches it away, and therefore emphasizes the theme, *immortalia ne speres*.”

³⁷⁹ Cf. Elder (116) and Gow (46) who cite Verg. *Aen.* 5.64 for the syntagm *diem ...almum*. So also Elder (116), who considers that the syntagm may reflect Virgil’s *diem almum*, but argues that “doubtless both Horace and Virgil look back to Lucretius’ *alma Venus*.”

is nothing more than a verbal cliché adorning an undisguised truism,” the adjective, as Ancona (54) observes, “by emotionally coloring *diem*, [...] heightens the sense of loss involved in the passage of time, when the hour seizes the day.”³⁸⁰ At the same time, since *almus* (usually “nurturing” or “life-giving”) could also mean “kindly, gracious” (see *OLD* s.v. b),³⁸¹ the adjective hints perhaps at the beauty and fertility of a spring day.

However, perhaps the most interesting aspect of this passage (unnoticed yet in criticism) is the (rather strong) presence in the *memento mori* of a surprising allusion to the *carpe diem* motif. One could even argue that in these lines the *carpe diem* motif is ‘engulfed’ in the *memento mori*. Thus, while traditionally the addressee (a human being) is urged to ‘seize the day,’ this passage presents the arresting image of the (personified) hour (*hora*) snatching away the nourishing day (*almum... diem*), with a verb (*rapit*) that, while recalling the verb *carpere*, places emphasis only on the rapidity and violence of the action³⁸² rather than on the enjoyment usually implied in *carpere* (see *OLD* s.v. 2a). The *carpe diem* motif appears thus in an unexpected (and twisted) guise, the place of man being taken by time itself. The image of time consuming itself in a mechanical and violent (*rapit*) movement prefigures the cyclical alternation of seasons characterized, in this poem, by an extreme rapidity and aggressiveness that suggest the savage haste of time.

After the ominous sententia of 7f., in a striking departure from the tradition of the genre, Horace expands the focus of 4.7 by including in the ode the description of all the seasons (9-12). Although this inclusion may seem highly unusual for a spring poem, the passage is a logical corollary of the previous two lines, since, after the *memento mori* given by the personified *annus*,

³⁸⁰ Cf. Page (426), who also considers that *almus*, “a natural epithet of day [...] is added here to suggest a reason for our regretting each passing day.”

³⁸¹ Even Woodman (757 n.4) admits that “*almus* is pretty multivocal.”

³⁸² According to Porter (214), the use of *rapit* suggests (again) a military context.

the depiction of the complete seasonal cycle indicates *how* exactly the year warns of the fleeting nature of time, namely by its incessant unfolding (whose only visible ‘traces’ are the changing seasons). Thus, with a bold move (that at first sight seems to jeopardize even the status of 4.7 as a spring poem) Horace succeeds not only in making explicit the connection between spring and temporality (transforming spring into a reminder of the rapid passing of time) but also (emphasizing again the idea of continuous change) in introducing into the poem the notion of the cyclical temporality of the natural phenomena that will be (dramatically) opposed at 13-16 to the linear nature of human temporality.

The passage starts with the image of spring described indirectly, through the mention of the end of winter. This indirect way of presenting the vernal season mirrors not only the beginning of 1.4 but also that of 4.7,³⁸³ whose first line is also recalled by the presence of the West wind, with the variation *Zephyris* instead of *Favoni*. At the same time, the emphasis on temperature (*frigora*), together with the image of the Zephyr mitigating the winter’s cold and the rapid movement from spring to summer in this line, has reminded critics of Catullus 46. Thus, according to Putnam (2006, 22), “Horace’s ninth line [...] is a clear reminder of 46.1-3, which takes us from *iam ver* to the silence of the post-equinoctial spring (*iucundis Zephyri silescit aureis*).” In addition to Catullus, critics have also discerned in this passage an even more distant influence, namely Lucretius. Thus, the presence of the Zephyr and the fact that the procession of seasons starts with *ver* (although in itself a rather natural choice) make Wickham (311), Elder (117) and Lee (21f.) compare these lines (9-12) with Lucretius’ description of the seasons at 5. 736-47.

³⁸³ The same technique appears in the Greek tradition of the genre (for example in *A.P.* 10.2), but it seems to be especially favored by Horace. Astronomers warn that, if one wants to see with his own eyes some very distant and dim celestial bodies, one must avoid looking straight at them. On a metaphorical note, one can contend that to define spring by reference to the end of winter would be an indirect and thus, paradoxically, more telling way of looking at the vernal season.

Leaving aside the issue of the possible influences on this line, the most interesting aspect of the syntagm *frigora mitescunt Zephyris* is perhaps the inchoative aspect of the verb.³⁸⁴ Thus, at first sight, *mitescunt* seems to emphasize, as Ancona (55) remarks, “the *gradual* [italics mine] nature of the transition from winter to spring,” and therefore the inchoative form appears to suggest an idea that stands in sharp contrast to the rapidity that defines the succession of seasons from the beginning of the poem, where, in the space of a single line, the winter snows having been put to flight by the sudden arrival of spring, are quickly replaced by the vernal vegetation. However, if one considers the context of the entire passage, it becomes clear that *mitescunt* suggests in fact, with subtlety (and somewhat paradoxically), not the gradual change from winter to spring, but rather the sudden and aggressive haste that characterizes the *entire* cycle of seasons. Thus, the inchoative aspect of the verb expresses the idea that, while the Zephyr is *still* mitigating the cold of winter,³⁸⁵ summer, in a quick and aggressive (*proterit*) movement, takes the place of spring. One could say that, if in the first line Horace presents the rapid transition from winter to spring, in line 9 he goes even further, and, through the image of spring and summer almost ‘overlapping’ each other, emphasizes the total lack of transition between the two seasons, and thus suggests the *extreme* rapidity of change.

The idea of impetuous movement is also combined in this line with the notion of aggressiveness, strongly suggested by the verb *proterit* (‘to tread under foot, crush to the ground, trample down’ and also ‘to oppress, crush, abase,’ see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 2a). Although some commentators³⁸⁶ limit (unnecessarily) the meaning of *proterit*, bringing it down to the physical level by considering that Horace intended to refer only at the violent and devastating effect of the

³⁸⁴ For Putnam (2006, 22) the presence of an inchoative verb is yet another parallelism between this line and Catullus 46.3.

³⁸⁵ The word, through its meaning ‘to grow mild, soft’ (see *OLD* s.v.), may also hint at the melting of winter snows, recalling thus *solvitur* from the previous spring poem.

³⁸⁶ See Shorey (441), Smith (29) or Fredricksmeier (17).

scorching heat on the bloom of the vernal season, the verb,³⁸⁷ apart from personifying the summer,³⁸⁸ adds also to the passage strong martial associations³⁸⁹ that, once again, reveal the similarity between line 9 and the first line of the poem. Thus, as Page (426) remarks, “*proterit* would be accurately used of a mounted soldier pursuing, overturning and trampling on an enemy” and, in this passage, “expresses the victorious speed with which summer follows on spring.” However, since the military overtones (remarked by several other critics³⁹⁰) are even more pronounced here than in the first line, and, taking into consideration the reference (in a single verse) not only at two (like in line 1), but at three seasons (winter, through the mention of *frigora*, *ver* and *aestas*), one could say that line 9 mirrors but, at the same time, surpasses the description of the seasonal succession at the beginning of the poem.

The ‘oppressive’ mood that characterizes the seasonal change(s) in this line is suggested even at the textual level. Thus, line 9 is distinguished by a careful positioning of its words, as both *frigora* and *aestas*³⁹¹ are placed in emphatic position at opposite ends of the line, while the terms suggesting or denoting the vernal season (*Zephyris*, *ver*), are positioned - juxtaposed (back to back and each facing its ‘adversary’) - in the middle,³⁹² as ‘besieged’ by the extremes of winter and summer. The symmetrical patterning is also evident in the position of the verbs, as *mitescunt* occupies the second place of the line, while *proterit* the penultimate position, the ‘pacifying’ breezes of the Zephyr standing in sharp contrast to the martial overtones of summer’s arrival. The great

³⁸⁷ According to Elder (117), the syntagm *proterit aestas* is a variation on Virgil’s *praeterit aestas* (*G.* 2.322).

³⁸⁸ Cf. Andrewes 109.

³⁸⁹ For other associations, see Putnam (1986, 136), who, giving as example Columella’s use of *protero* at 2.20.3, suggests that Horace may also hint at an agricultural imagery, since “summer tramples spring, like corn to be threshed.” For this meaning of the verb, see *OLD* s.v. 1b.

³⁹⁰ See Page (426); Andrewes (109); Collinge (27); Porter (214) Putnam (1986, 136f.) and Garrison (355), who give Verg. *Aen.* 12.330 as an example for the use of the verb in a military context.

³⁹¹ According to Putnam (2006, 46 n.17), the noun *aestas* is yet another reminder of Catullus 46 whose fifth line ends with the word *aestuosae*.

³⁹² Cf. Bradley 288.

attention given to symmetry in this line is perhaps intended to suggest the perfect (and mechanical) regularity of change that characterizes the succession of seasons, despite their impetuous movement.

Although in line 9 summer seems to have the last ‘word’ (*aestas*), the following verse abruptly dispels the sense of ‘victory,’ revealing that, in spite of its highly aggressive (and successful) ‘blitzkrieg,’ summer too is destined (*interitura*, 10) to end soon. The future participle *interitura*, with its almost prophetic sound that confers on this particular seasonal succession an air of (almost solemn) doom, stands in sharp contrast to the (apparently unstoppable) onslaught that defined summer in the previous line and suddenly (and fundamentally) changes the mood of the passage. Thus, as Ancona (55) remarks, “the violence of summer towards spring is quickly undermined by [...] *interitura* (10), which modifies and immediately follows *aestas* (9), for now we know that summer, too, will perish.”³⁹³ The word *interitura* can be considered a key term of the poem,³⁹⁴ incorporating almost all of the thematic aspects of 4.7. Through its main meanings ‘to die, perish’ or ‘to be destroyed, disappear’ (see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 2, 4), *interitura*, as Levin (355) notices, “hints at man’s ultimate destiny,”³⁹⁵ and explicitly expresses the theme of end and death (at the natural level), revealing the transitory nature of the season.³⁹⁶

One of the most interesting aspects of this line is the subtle way in which Horace succeeds in creating a sense of suspense even in the rapid enumeration of a very predictable series of

³⁹³ The “fine” contrast between *interitura* and *proterit* is also noticed by Page (426).

³⁹⁴ The word draws the attention of the reader not only through its placement (in emphatic position), but also through its length (*interitura* is the longest word to be found in the description of the seasons).

³⁹⁵ Woodman (757) too remarks that through the verbal form *interitura* Horace prefigures the thematic development at lines 13-28.

³⁹⁶ The word expresses also the theme of permanent movement and change, while hinting perhaps at the ‘amalgamating’ (*inter- eo*) effect of time, in whose continuous flow, that ‘carries’ each particular season, the seasonal differences, however great, ultimately disappear, as spring, summer, autumn and winter form the expanse of the year (*annus*). One could notice that, in a similar manner, in line 14 of the poem, human beings too, in the face of time, lose their individuality and are referred to as (an encompassing and anonymous) *nos*.

elements. Thus, while line 9 ends with the word *aestas* and (most of) line 11 describes the bountiful autumn, line 10 seems somewhat suspended between the two succeeding seasons, defining the former and anticipating the next. Although, Fredericksmeyer (17) considers that “the moment’s pause at the end of the line suggests a moment longer for summer to last,” one could nevertheless argue that the ‘break’ between seasons is also meant to create tension in the passage and that line 10 - a lesson in suspense - does this by ominously foretelling the fate of summer while leaving to the following verse the task of revealing the precise moment (anticipated by *simul*) of its ‘demise’ and of indicating the abundant autumn as the ‘downfall’ of summer. Thus, while the fact that summer is followed by autumn could hardly be a surprise, Horace manages, at least at the textual level, to build up tension by postponing the obvious. At the same time, the imminence of summer’s end is suggested perhaps by the very short length of this line, and by the fact that the season, as Fredericksmeyer (17) remarks, “is not described but characterized only by the necessity that it perish,”³⁹⁷ while, as Ancona (55) observes, “the message of summer’s future death, occasioned by autumn, is brought closer to the present by the temporal conjunction *simul* (as soon as) (10) and the future perfect *effuderit* (11).”

The description of seasons continues in line 11 with the vivid image of autumn. The season, innovatively characterized as *pomifer*³⁹⁸ (in emphatic position at the beginning of the line) brings into the poem a sense of abundance (*effuderit*) that seems to counterbalance, at least at a symbolic level, the quickness of the seasonal succession and to offer some solace. However, in spite of the promise of enjoyment which (the personified) autumn seems to bring through its *fruges* (a

³⁹⁷ Cf. also Commager (1962, 278) who remarks that “summer dies even in its victory over spring.”

³⁹⁸ Although Collinge (111) disparages *pomifer autumnus* as a trite expression, the epithet, as a search of *PHI* indicates, is new to Latin poetry (cf. Woodman 757 n.5). Both the novelty and the position of this adjective are meant to draw the attention of the reader.

word that is derived from the same etymological root as *fruor*, see *OLD* s.v.), the continuous flow of time does not allow any respite and soon - *mox*, stressed as *pomifer* by its position - this season too is to be replaced by its successor, the sluggish winter (*bruma... iners*, 12). As Fredericksmeier (17) observes, “autumn is here described by its fruit bearing bounty for man, but we note that its arrival and its imminent end are presented as virtually simultaneous.” Thus, the autumnal season, in spite of its lavish abundance, ‘burns’ fast, and an indication of this may be given, somewhat surprisingly, by the verb *effuderit*, the very word that suggests, according to Quinn (22), a “prodigal abundance of life,” since, as Putnam (1986, 136 n.8) observes, “the verb Horace allots to autumn, *effundo*, means both “pour forth” and “expend,” “use up.” This secondary sense associates even nature’s most fruitful period with the *damna* that seasonal time imposes.”³⁹⁹

The return of winter in line 12 ends the seasonal cycle and confers a ring structure on this passage (9-12), which begins with a reference to winter (*frigora*) and ends with the description of the hibernal season.⁴⁰⁰ However, as Ancona (55) argues, “this time Horace characterizes winter not through temperature (i.e. the cold, *frigora*) but through time (i.e., as the season with the shortest days - *bruma* as superlative of *brevis*).” A similar view is also found in Putnam (1986, 137 n.10), who believes that “this etymology (*bruma* = *brevissima*) is one reason why Horace uses a word for winter which alludes to time, not to the sensation of cold (*hiems*).” While this may be true (and if so, it would make the characterization of winter even more poignant, ending the passage with a climatic emphasis on the idea of quick movement that defines the entire succession of seasons), one should nevertheless be cautious since it is impossible to know for sure whether Horace was aware

³⁹⁹ For these meanings of the verb, see *OLD* s.v. 6c and 11a, b.

⁴⁰⁰ The ring structure of the passage is evident not only at the thematic, but also at the semantic level, as its first word - *frigora* - finds a symbolic equivalent in its last word, *iners*.

or not of this etymological ‘bonus’. What one *can* say with certainty is that the word *bruma*⁴⁰¹ is a variation on *frigora*, making thus winter the only element of the seasonal series referred to with two different terms, and drawing in this way the attention of the reader on this particular season, most likely in order to stress the idea of renewal and cyclical return, since, as Woodman (759) puts it, “the explicit return to winter implies that the cyclic mutation will continue indefinitely.” The line, as several critics have remarked,⁴⁰² contains also, through the verb *recurrat*, military overtones that reminds one of line 9, while the characterization of winter as *iners*⁴⁰³ ends (paradoxically enough) the description of a succession of seasons defined by its extreme speed, through a word denoting sluggishness. A word with a plethora of meanings, many of them most likely present in this passage, the use of *iners* has been variously explained. Thus, according to Gow (46), this qualification of winter is appropriate since it defines a season when work is at a standstill.⁴⁰⁴ At the same time, as Page (426) observes, “the epithet by its position draws marked attention to the similarity between the end of the year and the end of man’s little round of existence,” while according to Ancona (55), “its juxtaposition with *recurrat* creates an oxymoron that calls added attention to both words, with *iners* implying lack of motion and *recurrat* implying the opposite.” In addition, since another meaning of *iners* is ‘cowardly’ (see *OLD* s.v.), one could also argue that the word stands in an oxymoronic relationship with the military aspect implied in *recurrat*.⁴⁰⁵ Considering that *iners* may also suggest the idea of infertility (see *OLD* s.v. 5d) and that one of its

⁴⁰¹ According to Elder (117), “*bruma* of C. 4.7.12, however common be the word, may echo Lucretius’ *bruma nives* of 5.746.”

⁴⁰² See Porter 214; Andrews 109; Collinge 27.

⁴⁰³ According to Page (426), “the epithet by its position draws marked attention to the similarity between the end of the year and the end of man’s little round of existence.”

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Smith 297.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Putnam (1986, 137), who remarks that “cowardly winter can hurry back only because her unrelenting enemy, spring, is momentarily displaced.”

meaning is ‘*useless*’ (see *OLD* s.v. 2d), the word is most likely meant to recall and contrast with *pomifer*, the epithet that characterizes the bountiful autumn in the previous line,⁴⁰⁶ emphasizing in this way the fundamental difference between the two succeeding seasons. Through its numerous meanings and associations with the notion of immobility, infertility and death,⁴⁰⁷ the word *iners* climatically ends the description of the seasons, emphasizing the fact that the seasonal cycle “has opened and closed not with spring, the season of hope and of life, but with winter the sad and death-portending season” (Fredericksmeyer 17).

The description at 9-12, presenting the ‘whirl’ of seasons, introduces into 4.7 the idea of circular time and continues the emphasis on change and movement. The idea of rapidity is suggested even at the textual level by the description in only four short lines of the entire cycle of seasons. One could also remark that, with the exception of *et* (11), in the rest of the passage the conjunctions are omitted, the asyndeton producing the impression of speed and concision. Throughout the passage, numerous verbs (*mitescunt*, *proterit*, *interitura*, *effuderit*, *recurrat*), as Fredericksmeyer (17), remarks, “again, and now conspicuously, [...] denote persistent movement and change [...]” The same idea is suggested at the metrical level, where worth noticing is especially the dactylic ‘frenzy’ of line 10 and 12, while in the entire passage, as Commager (1962, 278) observes, “long lines alternate with short to catch the very rhythm of life, a slow opening out and quick contraction; each couplet reproduces the movement of C. 1.4 as a whole. The second line of the couplet is catalectic, and the double weight, followed by sudden quiet, that falls upon *iners* (12) makes it lie upon the page heavy as a gravestone. Winter has the last word, rushing back to

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Woodman 759 n.2; Becker 149.

⁴⁰⁷ As Fredericksmeyer (17) remarks, “winter is agile, quick to return and finish autumn, but once here, it is sluggish, listless, lifeless [...]”

close the cycle that began with its flight.” However, although change is at the heart of the natural phenomena, the permanent mutability does not bring final death, but only ‘rebirth’ and, in a paradoxical way, a timeless permanence.

After the vivid description of the entire seasonal cycle, the poem continues in lines 13-16 with a *memento mori* that points out the radical difference between man and nature by contrasting the cyclical time of the natural phenomena to the linear and finite human temporality. The passage, bringing together all the main themes and key notions of the poem (change, ending and renewal in the natural world, death and rebirth at the human level), reveals the tragic human condition and the painful awareness that, although man is a part of nature, he does not share, as an individual, the constant ‘rebirth’ that characterizes the natural phenomena. The movement from the description of the seasonal changes undergone by *earth* (not only in spring but throughout the year) to that of the changes and losses suffered (but constantly recovered) by *heaven* (*damna caelestia*, 13) expands the focus of Horace’s poem and emphasizes the idea of the universal nature of change and renewal. However, as mankind is excluded from the general renewal that characterizes the natural world,⁴⁰⁸ the mood of the poem becomes gloomier. The ontological gulf between humankind and nature derives from the fundamentally different way in which time and change are experienced at the natural and human level. Thus, as the flight of time brings humans closer to (a definitive) death, change can be only for the worse, while in the natural world any end is followed by renewal, in a cyclical and thus timeless movement.

The idea of constant regeneration at the natural level is illustrated in line 13 by the description of the swift moons (*celeris lunae*) restoring the celestial losses (*damna caelestia*).

⁴⁰⁸ One could notice that, paradoxically, even winter, the season of death and infertility, is ‘reborn.’

Although the image is striking and the notion of renewal is explicitly expressed by the verb *reparant*, the syntagm *damna caelestia* is (most likely intentionally) ambiguous and its precise meaning has been long debated. Thus, some critics⁴⁰⁹ consider that the phrase refers only to the phases of the moon.⁴¹⁰ According to Fredricksmeyer (24 n.9), Horace describes “the changing phases of the moon, that after the night of the full moon diminishes each day and yet soon regains its former shape.” However, the fault of this interpretation, as other critics have argued, is that the qualification of *damna* as *caelestia* would be in this case “either otiose or meaningless” (Collinge 1961, 96), since, as Kidd (13) put it, “where else would you expect to see them [the phases of the moon] but in the sky? The epithet is pointless, and therefore un-Horatian.”⁴¹¹

Another explanation has been proposed by Kiessling (348), who argued that the syntagm refers to “der Tod der Natur durch die Wiederkehr der *bruma*.” However, the return of winter “is an event that happens only once a year, and ill suits the plural *damna*,” while “the point of *caelestia* still remains unexplained” (Kidd (13). Although *damna caelestia* could be a poetic plural, a reference *only* to winter after the depiction of the entire seasonal cycle is improbable, since line 13 is meant to be a *general* statement about all seasons and the regenerative power of the natural world.

Totally unlikely (since it is far too restrictive and rather peculiar) is also the interpretation given by Villeneuve (167) who, following a suggestion made by Lambinus (132),⁴¹² considers that the phrase *damna caelestia* refers to the seasonal plagues caused by weather (*caelestia*) and argues that the phrase “il ne s’agit pas des phases de la lune, mais [...] des pertes qu’inflige à la terre la révolution des saisons, et que réparent les Lunes, c.-à-d. la succession des mois.”

⁴⁰⁹ See for example Allcroft-Hayes (243); Ancona (56); Garrison (355); Commager (1962, 278f); Nauck (187).

⁴¹⁰ See, however, Smith (297), who argues that “the moon, [...] is put as a representative of the whole celestial system.”

⁴¹¹ Cf. also Woodman 762 n.2.

⁴¹² Cf. Kidd 13.

The last (and most plausible) interpretation of *damna caelestia* considers that the syntagm refers primarily to the quick passing of stars from the sky. As Kidd (13) put it, “it is a commonplace of ancient poetry that each season is characterized by the constellations that are prominent in the night sky during it, and as each constellation temporarily disappears from view at its heliacal setting it marks clearly the passing of its season. *Damna caelestia* then means the successive disappearance of constellations from the night sky.” However, as one meaning of the word *damna* refers specifically to the waning of the moon (see *OLD* s.v. 2b), it is clear that the syntagm hints also at the *celeres lunae*, that stand as “personified emblems of nature's ability to restore itself (Putnam 2006, 403). The reference to both stars and moon is acknowledged by Collinge (96f.) who considers that “Horace is making the point that from day to day the loss from the visible zodiac at the western horizon at sunrise is balanced by the emergence of a fresh and equal section at the eastern, and from moon to moon the loss of a twelfth part by the appearance of a new twelfth.”

However, apart from the astronomical acception, the syntagm brings into the line at least two other significant associations. Thus, as *damna* may be used to denote ‘military losses’ (see *OLD* s.v. 2c), it could be argued not only that the syntagm has martial overtones⁴¹³ (recalling *proterit* and *recurrat* from the previous passage), but also that, through *caelestia*, the phrase makes the military setting of the line even more pronounced, since it expands the ‘battlefield’ into the cosmic realm. At the same time, line 13 brings a sense of closure to the martial ‘plot’ of the poem, since we learn that in nature’s incessant ‘war’ with itself there is no actual death, as, in spite of the extreme violence of the action, the injuring and the healing occur almost at once, and, after being ‘eliminated’, the same combatants reappear, on the following year, on the battlefield. As Putnam

⁴¹³ Cf. Porter 214.

(1986, 137) remarks, “we are soon disabused of any notion that seasonal nature’s inimical expense of energy against herself is more than passing. [...] Heaven’s “deaths” are recurrent but transitory.”⁴¹⁴

At the same time, as several critics have noticed,⁴¹⁵ since the word *damna* may also refer to a financial loss (see *OLD* s.v.1a), the syntagm has also commercial overtones. As Porter (209) put it, “in the commerce of life and death, the constellations ‘make good their losses,’ but for man there can be no recovery of time spent. The only sensible transaction is to spend one’s opportunities on the pleasures of the present while it is still possible.”

The idea of loss (in its astronomical, military or commercial acception) is opposed to (and quickly counterbalanced by) the idea of recovery expressed by *reparant*.⁴¹⁶ The verb, as Ancona (56) observes, recalls, through its prefix, the verb *recurrat* from the previous line and underscores the idea of continual rebirth in nature. The process of renewal is not only constant but also swift, a fact (indirectly) revealed by the qualification of *lunae* as *celeres*, the rapidity of renewal continuing the emphasis on speed from the previous passage. Interestingly, while the haste that characterizes the seasonal succession is only *suggested* (by various means, like the quick transition from one season to another, the use of asyndeton or verbs denoting violent action, see above), the speed of ‘recovery’ is *explicitly* expressed by *celeres*, as if to draw attention to the idea that rapid (and constant) revival is what really differentiate natural world from humankind. At the same time, the fact that the speed of the seasonal succession is ‘matched’ by the speed of recovery from any losses incurred in the process suggests, paradoxically, the notion of immobility, as, in spite of the perpetual

⁴¹⁴ Cf. also Fredricksmeier (18, who remarks that “the heavenly bodies, which determine and control the seasons, though swift to pass, experience damage, losses, not really death, and these losses they forever recover or, if we do apply the word “death” to nature, there is an eternal succession of life, death, and rebirth.”

⁴¹⁵ See Daube (130); Poschl (21f).

⁴¹⁶ The presence of *reparant* reminds Heinze of Lucretius’ *reparari* at 5.734.

changes it suffers, nature remains in itself unchanged, hinting thus at the idea that the permanence of nature is due to its constant change.

Placed in emphatic position at the end of the line (and in tension with the *damna* they counteract⁴¹⁷), *lunae* continues the (gentle) ambiguity of the line, since the word is most likely used in both its concrete and abstract meaning. In the first case, as a heavenly body, it recalls and contrasts (through its qualification as *celeris*) to the overhanging moon (*imminente Luna*) of 1.4.5. At the same time, since *lunae* can be understood as an equivalent to *menses*, the image emphasizes the idea of the quick passing of time,⁴¹⁸ and brings into the poem another temporal term.

In contrast to the natural phenomena characterized by constant renewal and regeneration, lines 14-16 present the image of humankind faced only with the inexorable and definitive end brought by death. The gap between the natural world and man is suggested in this passage even at the textual level by the adversative asyndeton. Thus, as Page (427) notices, *nos*, through its emphatic position at the beginning of line 14, immediately after the mention of the *lunae*, “shows the contrast without the use of any adversative particle.”⁴¹⁹ The pronoun, including in its generalizing plural form not only the speaker, the addressee of the poem and the reader but presumably the entire humankind,⁴²⁰ expresses the idea of the universality of death, which will be further illustrated in line 15 by the enumeration of the impressive historical and quasi-historical figures (*pater Aeneas*, *Tullus dives* and *Ancus*). However, the most arresting aspect of this line is the use of *decidimus*, since the verb, in tension with *nos* (and in the same position as *lunae*), continues,

⁴¹⁷ One could notice the chiasmatic structure of this line.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Collinge 96.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. also Garrison (355) who notices that the pronoun *nos* is suggestively placed at the center of the ode.

⁴²⁰ Comparing 1.4 to 4.7, Putnam (1986, 144) considers that “there is [...] special prominence in the later poem given to both speaker and addressee as part of a universal “we”. The first poem used *nos* only once, at line 15. The commonality of our mortal doom is the subject of the central stanza of ode 7, as “we” - speaker, hearer, and reader - are dust and shade.”

through its astronomical connotations ('to sink', see *OLD* s.v. 1b), the imagery of the previous line, while introducing (through another of its main meanings - 'to die, fall', see *OLD* s.v. 3) the theme of death at the human level. Through a single word, Horace manages thus both to allude to the celestial bodies and their rejuvenating powers (since their setting is invariably followed by their rise) and to define the tragic human condition characterized by the definitive 'setting' of death. The word may also hint at the different way in which change 'operates' at the natural and human level. Thus, while change brings to the celestial bodies a continuous cycle of settings and risings (therefore, loss and recovery, injury and healing), to the human bodies it brings only decay, and could be thus seen as a continuous 'fall' that ends only in death. At the same time, the idea of fall expressed by *decidimus* may also continue the emphasis on the notion of rapidity so prominent throughout the poem (idea that may be also suggested here by the very short length of this line and the quick dactylic tempo), while hinting at the abrupt and unexpected end of human life, since, as the verb "suggests the falling into the pit, abyss of death" (Shorey 412),⁴²¹ humans, as Fredricksmeier (18) remarks, are presented as if they live "on a trapdoor, and once it is dropped, suddenly, abruptly, [they] drop down below." Thus, as *decidimus* hints at the precarious nature of human condition, one could argue that the verb prefigures also the emphasis in lines 17-18 on the uncertainty of life. The use of *decidimus* increases also the gloomy mood of the poem, since man, situated "between heaven and hell," is offered "only the downward descent to darkness" (Putnam 1986, 143). The idea of fall from a better to a worse condition, which characterizes the human condition, is in fact expressed by another meaning of the verb (see *OLD* s.v. 4) that is most likely present here.

⁴²¹ Cf. also Fredricksmeier (24 n.10).

Another noteworthy aspect of this line is the Catullan allusion it contains. Thus, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁴²² the syntagm *nos ubi decidimus* is most likely intended to remind the reader of Catullus 5.4ff., a passage in which, similar to Horace's poem, "the progress is from a natural-phenomenon-enduring-change (*soles*) to the human situation of life and eternal death (*nos*)." In spite of (or, better said, due to) the fact that, as Woodman (761) remarks, "the circumstances of the two poems are completely different," the allusion to Catullus' poem, as it is unanimously agreed in criticism, "provides extra pathos at this point in the ode" (Woodman 761). The effectiveness of this allusion derives mostly from its 'ricochet' effect. Thus, while Horace recalls in this line *only* the Catullan phraseology (*nos ubi decidimus*, 4.7.14 - *nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux*, Cat. 5.5), the verbal echo triggers a chain reaction since it draws the attention of the reader to the (perhaps significantly dis-)similar astronomical imagery (*soles*, Cat. 5.5 - *lunae*, Hor. 4.7.13) found in the previous line of each of these passages, and to the difference of outlook between the two poems that, finally, reinforces Horace's disheartening message, making his *memento mori* even more poignant and increasing the gloom of the passage. At the same time, in view of the fact that, as Collinge (97) remarks, in his poem "Catullus had used the sun's course as a convenient symbol of the unbroken repetitiveness of the universal order," one could wonder whether, apart from its regenerative powers and its status as a marker of change, the presence of *lunae* in 4.7 may not be also explained by Horace's desire to offer a variation on Catullus' use of *soles* in 5.4. Thus, although a single (and simple) explanation cannot (and should not) be given, one could nevertheless take into consideration this hypothesis, since it is rather plausible that, as Woodman (763) remarks, "clearly intending his Catullan allusion to infuse additional pessimism

⁴²² See Ancona (56); Commager (1962, 280); Fredricksmeier (24 n.10); Fraenkel (420); Putnam (2006, 9 and 20); Woodman (761f.); Smith (297).

into his poem, [Horace] has changed *soles* to *lunae*, which are imagistically more melancholy because (unlike *soles*) they conventionally foreshadow death.” Although Woodman does not offer any evidence for this claim, it is undisputable that *lunae*, with its nocturnal appearance and ominous associations with Hecate, is a more somber presence than *soles*, increasing the gloom of the passage. However, apart from the different associations that each of these celestial bodies may have, the astronomical imagery of the two poems serves ultimately a similar purpose. Thus, as Putnam (2006, 20f.) explains, “just as Catullus’ speaker had equated the lives of himself and Lesbia metaphorically with the light of day only to point up the difference between the two entities, so Horace urges the commonality between himself, the as-yet-unnamed addressee Torquatus, and the *lunae* whose restorative characteristic he has just mentioned, only to illustrate that any parallel between human and celestial time immediately breaks down.” What really differentiates then the two passages and makes Horace’s *memento mori* appear, by contrast, even gloomier, is not the symbolism of the celestial bodies they refer to, but the general mood of the poems. In this respect, as Ferguson (14) remarks, “Catullus is dominated by the joy of present opportunity; Horace by the lack of future opportunity.” This sharp contrast has prompted critics like Commager (280) to consider that “the echo serves only to dramatize the difference between the two authors,” since “where Catullus rebounds with renewed vigor, Horace moves to a still darker view.” However, it could be argued that among Horace’s means to make his *memento mori* appeal more effective was also this allusion to Catullus’ poem. Thus, one could consider that Horace’s darker view - in which the *carpe diem* injunction seems to be almost suffocated by the uncertainty of life (17f.) and the references to the underworld (lines 21-28) - appears so much darker precisely by contrast to the feverish mood of Catullus’ poem, in which, as Ancona (57) observes, “the awareness of human

mortality as a shared predicament leads to sleepless lovemaking, which forestall and momentarily banishes from thought one kind of *nox... perpetua* (death) and substitutes another (erotic activity).⁴²³ If so, in the end, it could be argued that it is not only the simple verbal echo, the similarity of astronomical imagery and its *memento mori* use that makes the reference to Catullus so significant for line 14, but also the tension created by the contrast between the general mood of the two poems, and it could be said, as Woodman (763) did, that Horace managed “to use the Catullan allusion to emphasize the pathos of death.”

The poem continues in line 15 with a topos that occurs first in Homer’s *Iliad* (18.117f.; 21.107ff.), namely that better men than ourselves have died.⁴²⁴ While the enumeration of the three important historical (or quasi-historical) Roman figures (*pater Aeneas, Tullus dives* and *Ancus*) is meant primarily to illustrate the idea of the universal character of death, its presence serves also several other important functions in the poem. Thus, together with the idea of descent expressed by the verb *decidimus*, the enumeration indirectly designates the place (never explicitly stated in the poem) to which all humans are doomed to go, namely the Underworld.⁴²⁵ At the same time, the qualification of *Tullus* as *dives*, introduces the idea that all men, in spite of their high status or great wealth, have to die. The triple enumeration gives also the passage a strong Roman flavor and prefigures (at least at the formal level) another group of three Roman elements, namely the virtues (*genus, facundia, pietas*) that will be of no avail to Torquatus in lines 23f. However, since, apart

⁴²³ Cf. Putnam (1986, 142): “Catullus allows himself only for an instant the philosophizing that dominates Horace’s poem. [...] For Catullus the moment’s physical rapture constitutes an escape from the thought.” See also Putnam (2006, 21): “Catullus the lover urges forgetfulness, as momentary displacement of temporality, and non-acceptance of man’s incompatibility with nature’s changing unchangeability, which is to say with the imperturbabilities of celestial time. Whereas Horace asks that we accept the truth of our differences with nature, Catullus urges that we attempt to obfuscate them by reveling in the moment’s passion.”

⁴²⁴ Cf. Woodman (763) who cites Curtius 80ff.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Shorey (442), who observes that Horace “indicates [the Underworld] by saying that it is that place where Aeneas, Tullus and Ancus are.”

from the Homeric origin of the topos as such, the most important element of the series, namely *pater Aeneas*, is intended to remind the reader of the epic genre, perhaps the most significant function of this enumeration is to bring into the passage an elevation of style and solemnity meant to emphasize the tragic nature of human condition, the pathos of death and thus to increase the bleak mood of the *memento mori*.

Thus, the enumeration starts in (epic) force with the mention of the most illustrious Roman hero, Aeneas. Although some scholars doubt, mainly on the ground of the legendary status of the hero, that Horace has borrowed the syntagm *pater Aeneas* from Virgil (see above, p.162 n.157), the phrase has been generally considered a clear allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*⁴²⁶ and thus to the epic genre. The qualification of Aeneas as *pater* is most likely intended to emphasize the high status of the hero, suggesting that not even such a momentous deed as the founding of the Roman race could save a mortal from his tragic condition. At the same time, since, in addition to his legendary role as a founder, the Virgilian hero was also renowned for many other great qualities and virtues, like courage, intelligence and especially his remarkable *pietas* (a fact which may also explain and prefigure the emphatic mention of this specific Roman virtue at the end of line 24⁴²⁷), the mention

⁴²⁶ See for example, Dyer (83); Fredericksmeier (24 n.15); Garrison (355); Putnam (1986, 138) Shorey (442); Woodman (764). A search of the *PHI* has indicated that the syntagm *pater Aeneas* occurs in Virgil's *Aeneid* 17 times: 1.580, 699; 2.2; 3.343, 716; 5.348, 461, 545, 700; 8.115, 606; 9.172; 11.184, 904; 12.166, 440, 696.

⁴²⁷ It should be mentioned that the text of the poem has been considered uncertain at this point. Thus, according to several critics (Wagenwoort 82f.; Macleane 237; Putnam 1986, 138; Shorey 442), one should read here *pius Aeneas* instead of *pater Aeneas*. Nevertheless, regarding the later variant as the *lectio difficilior*, the majority of critics favor the reading *pater Aeneas* (see, for example, Heinze 182, Page 427; Woodman 764 n.1). Leaving aside the (rather lengthy) debate over the manuscript authority, one could argue that, since Aeneas was considered in the Roman world the man of *pietas* par excellence, *pius* is *implicitly* present here, and the simple mention of his name prefigures the *explicitly* stated *pietas* in line 24. At the same time, since the qualification of Aeneas as *pater* does bring into the poem *another* fundamental dimension of the Roman hero (see above), one could consider it more effective and thus more plausible. For a different view, see Putnam (2006, 410 n.35), who prefers the reading *pius Aeneas*, arguing that the repetition *pius... pietas* is more effective, while the presence of *pius* could be also intended, in his view, to create also a sound effect, since "Horace compresses the sounds of *pius*, *Tullus*, and *dives* into *pulvis*. Attributes as well as names become like dust in the Underworld."

of Aeneas may be intended to suggest (and prefigure) the idea that even people with various admirable qualities (like Torquatus in lines 23.f) go to the Underworld. In addition to this, the reference to such a distant event as the founding of the Roman race could be intended to reinforce the idea of the mortal nature of human condition, since it suggests that always, even in the *illo tempore* of foundation, people have died.

The elevated tone of the passage is further strengthened by the mention of two other early kings of Rome, namely Tullus and Ancus. A rather debated aspect at this juncture has been the qualification of Tullus as *dives*. Deemed by Woodman (764) as an “anomalous” characterization, since, although the epithet does bring into the ode the theme of the “Futility of Wealth in face of Death” (758), such a motif, in his view, “has nothing whatever to do with 4.7 as a whole” (758), and disparaged by Gow (46) as “strange and unnecessary,” or explained as a reference to Livy 1.31 (Page 427; Smith 297), *dives* can be better understood as a variation on 1.4. Thus, although, as Putnam (138) remarks, “Tullus [...] is known for his riches with which he cannot barter his way into the realm of heaven’s gains and losses,” one could argue that, since in 1.4 Horace illustrated the universality of death by *emphasizing* the fact that all men are ultimately equal because, regardless of their wealth and status, they cannot escape the mortal condition, in 4.7, as a variation, he only *hints* at the (too general) opposition rich/poor and stresses instead the inefficacy of the specific Roman virtues (*genus, facundia* and *pietas*, 23f.) to secure immortality. The same process is also evident in the indirect praise of Torquatus for his *genus* in line 23, since, in the Roman world, the notion of *genus* generally implied also the idea of wealth. Thus, instead of directly praising Torquatus (the primary addressee of 4.7) for his wealth and status, Horace, more subtly, just places *genus* at the beginning of the series of human virtues that will prove useless in the face of death.

The enumeration (and the line) ends with the mention of Ancus. The reference to the fourth king of Rome is meant, according to the majority of critics,⁴²⁸ to remind the reader of both Ennius (*Ann.* 149), who, as Woodman (763) remarks, was “the first to use the names of Roman heroes,” and Lucretius (3.1025), who, partially imitating Ennius, used the name of Ancus in a context which, as Putnam (138) observes, “deals with the powerlessness of the mighty when confronted with death.” By alluding, through a single word, to both Ennius and Lucretius, Horace ends climactically a line that started with an allusion to Virgil. Since, as Woodman (764) remarks, “epic was recognized to have a language all of its own, and an allusion to the two most archetypal of Roman epic poets cannot fail to bring into Horace’s ode a distinctly elevated tone and a uniquely Roman *color*, symbolizing the very irrefutability of what he has to say,”⁴²⁹ one could say that the apparently straightforward enumeration increases the efficacy of the *memento mori* motif. The line successfully illustrates the idea of the universality of death, since, as Fredericksmeier (18) remarks, if “even such worthies as rich, powerful Tullus and Ancus and, most tellingly, the founding father himself, Aeneas, have gone, never to return, then surely we, like all others, are dead, nothing [...]” At the same time, since, apart from the different associations that each of these figures may bring into the line, “what unites all three,” as Putnam (1986, 138) observes, “is the idea that the powerful become powerless,” the enumeration stresses the inexorable nature of death, suggesting that no (human) power can stop its coming, and also, indirectly, underlines the feebleness of humankind by showing that even the most powerful men are but weaklings in the face of death.

⁴²⁸ See for example Wickham (311); Smith (297); Shorey (442); Kiessling (348); Woodman (763f).

⁴²⁹ See also Fraenkel (*RE*, Suppl. 5.606): “Der Sprachform des römischen Epos verblieb vom Anbeginn her das Vorrecht grösserer Lebensferne, selbst gegenüber der Tragödie, erst recht im Verhältnis zu anderen poetischen Gattungen.” Cf. Woodman 764 n.2.

The disheartening *memento mori* continues in line 16 with the image of humankind presented as mere dust and shadow (*pulvis et umbra sumus*). The syntagm (which, according to the majority of critics,⁴³⁰ may have been borrowed from Soph. *El.* 1159 - σποδόν τε καὶ σκιάν)⁴³¹ reveals, with a bleak stark simplicity, the tragedy of man, whose ultimate fate is to become “*pulvis*, in the urn; *umbra*, in the underworld” (Page, 427).⁴³² Moreover, as if this would not be disheartening enough, the present tense of *sumus*⁴³³ may suggest the imminent nature of death, foreshadowing the idea of the uncertainty of life, which will be explicitly expressed in the following section of the poem (17f).⁴³⁴

The disturbing ideas and disquieting images of this passage (lines 14-16) are reinforced by several remarkable stylistic and sound effects. Thus, one could notice that the entire section is bracketed by *nos* and *sumus*, as if to suggest that human condition is defined precisely by what is included between these words. In line 15, the anaphora *quo ... quo* emphasizes perhaps the fact that there is a single final destination for mortals, while suggesting the idea that, one after another, all of us will eventually reach it. Worth mentioning is also the abundance of *u* at the end of line 15 and especially in line 16 (*Tullus et Ancus/pulvis et umbra sumus*), whose ‘ululating’ effect increases the gloom and the effectiveness of the passage. Thus, as precisely in line 16 humans are defined as almost in the grip of death, the idea of mourning and lament suggested by the repetition of *u* only reinforces the notion that we are doomed, if not already but dust and shadow. Another striking

⁴³⁰ See Page (427); Wickham (311); Gow (46).

⁴³¹ Cf. however Fredericksmeier (24 n.10) and Shorey (442) who mention in addition Asclepiades, *A.P.* 5.85.4 (ὄστρακα καὶ σποδίη) as a possible source of inspiration for this phrase.

⁴³² Cf. Nauck (187); Allcroft-Hayes (243).

⁴³³ The present tense of the verb may also be another allusion to Cat. 5. Thus, commenting on Catullus 5.6 Putnam (2006, 21) remarks that “there is one continuity that we must anticipate in the future, the uninterrupted present of death. The demands of this “is” (*est*), which await us after we have passed through the single cycle allotted humankind, are taken up by Horace [...] with the word *sumus* (16) - we are, not will be, dust and shade [...]”

⁴³⁴ Cf. Fredericksmeier 18.

sound effect is also created by the great profusion of *s* in this passage. Thus, as Putnam (1986, 138) observes, “in the span from *nos* to *sumus*, nine words end in that letter, and each of the three lines in question concludes with the syllable *us* so that unusual rhyming complements persistent sibilance and the impressive alliteration of *u* in line 16 to create a verbal imitation of the uniform fate of all mortals. Monotony of sound mirrors the loss of individuality to which we, insubstantial humans, are forever subject.”⁴³⁵ While one may argue that Putnam gives too much importance to this sound effect and that his interpretation is thus (too) subjective, it could be nevertheless said that the overall finesse of these lines may offer a solace for the disheartening notions they contain.

The next section of 4.7 emphasizes the uncertainty of tomorrow (lines 17-18) and introduces into the poem the *carpe diem* motif (lines 19-20). The passage has been the subject of a long-standing critical debate, since some scholars, considering it superfluous, have labeled it as an interpolation⁴³⁶ or, at least, a highly controversial presence that challenges the overall unity of the poem. The arguments invoked against these lines range from opinions (more or less supported by evidence) regarding their (apparently detrimental) effect on the structural and thematic coherence of the poem to stylistic considerations. Thus, the first two lines (17-18) of the passage have been disparaged, since, according to Quinn (25), “the reference to the uncertainty of life’s span adds nothing to the argument of the poem, which is that death is inevitable and permanent; not that the time of death’s coming is uncertain. It is a natural further reflection, but one that weakens the impact of the poem.” A similar view is also held by Woodman (766), who considers that “the structure [of the ode] is utterly ruined” by this passage, which, in his opinion, “not only has nothing to do with the consistent theme which surrounds it on both sides (death is once and for all), but has nothing to

⁴³⁵ The sonic effect created by the *s* endings has been also noticed by Garrison (355).

⁴³⁶ Cf. Collinge (111); Becker (152ff).

do with anything else in the poem either.” In spite of this harsh (and unfair) criticism, one could nevertheless argue that lines 17-18 serve multiple functions at the structural and thematic level of the poem. Thus, on the one hand, by adding to the idea of the absolute certainty of death (explicitly expressed in the previous passage) the idea of the total uncertainty of life, these lines increase the gloomy mood and thus the overall efficiency of the *memento mori* motif. On the other hand, since the uncertainty of tomorrow suggests the imminent nature of death, they amplify the urgency (and thus the efficiency) of the (indirect) *carpe diem* injunction that will follow in lines 19-20. Another important function of the passage is to bring into the poem other aspects that define human condition. Thus, through the mention of the *di superi* and the idea that death can come at any time, these lines emphasize the helplessness, inferiority and mortality that characterize humankind.

At the same time, lines 17f. are clearly intended to recall the previous spring poem, since the notion that the future is fraught with uncertainty reminds the reader of the disquieting *sententia* of 1.4.15, while, at the textual level, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁴³⁷ the word *summae* (in emphatic position at the end of line) is a direct verbal echo of *summa* (1.4.15). Although Quinn (25) goes even further in his negative appreciation and considers that “the attempt at a motto-couplet is a little fussily phrased, missing the stark simplicity of 1.4.15 [...]” it could be argued that these lines are a successful variation on 1.4.15, since, whatever they may lack at the stylistic level, they fully compensate by introducing into the poem new ideas and nuances absent from 1.4.15. Thus, in contrast to 1.4.15, the uncertainty of tomorrow and especially the idea of lack of control are much more emphasized in lines 17f. by the mention of the *di superi* (18) in whose hands rests the fate of each mortal. A rather interesting aspect of these lines (unnoticed in the previous criticism of the

⁴³⁷ See Gow (46); Page (437); Wickham (311).

poem) is the fact that the idea of decision taken by the gods above prefigures the *splendida arbitria* passed by Minos below in the underworld (21f.). At the same time, lines 17f., characterized by a much more complex imagery than 1.4.15, may also have a commercial overtone that reminds one of line 13 of the poem. Thus, according to Putnam (1986, 139), “Horace enhances his point by continuing the metaphor from economics [...]. Heaven repairs its losses, but we can expect a set sum of todays beyond which none will be further affixed.” Apart from this implicit contrast between man and the natural world, lines 17f. suggest also the great divide that exists between man and gods, since both the impossibility of knowing the future and the description of man under the power of gods hint at the limits of human condition.

At the stylistic level, one could notice in these two lines the homeoteleuton and the parallelism present in *hodiernae crastina summae/ tempora*. At the same time, although the fact that *sumus* (16) and *summae* (17) are placed in emphatic position at the end of each line may not suggest, as Putnam (1986, 139 n.38) considers, that “our final ‘sum’ is a continual existence as dust and shade,” their alliterative effect is worth mentioning.

The poem continues in lines 19f. with an indirect (and much debated) *carpe diem* injunction. By far the most controversial couplet of the ode, the passage has been generally received with critical reserve, sometimes openly disparaged, and (too) rarely praised. Thus, according to Quinn (26), the presence of the greedy hands of the heir brings into the poem a misplaced satirical note, and thus, the couplet “reads a little too much like two lines from an epistle, done in lyrical meter: an idea versified, and overly satirical; not an idea transformed into poetry and the satire refined to irony.” The presumed element of satire in this passage leaves also Rudd “a little puzzled” since, in his view, “it is one thing to conclude a poem with a whole stanza of satire like *absumet*

heres (II, 14), but quite another to introduce a greedy *captator* and then relapse at once into profound melancholy.” At the same time, other critics who are not troubled by the presence of the heir find these lines “rather colorless” (Elder, 114), or, even worse, “notable only for their hackneyed phraseology (*manus avidas*) [and] stylistic irregularities (*amico animo* etc.)” (Woodman, 777).⁴³⁸

While the majority of scholars do not hold such a harsh view, they do seem to share a similar critical uneasiness about a presumed ‘inadequacy’ of the *carpe diem* injunction in this otherwise pessimistic poem. Thus, the usual type of comment on this passage is that “the *carpe diem* motif is not sufficiently developed, and so the invitation sounds half-hearted. The tone is also rather discordant” (Rudd 383). In the same vein, Fraenkel (421) argues that at the center of this poem is “the thought of death” and, although “the lighter mood is not completely absent,” the *carpe diem* injunction “appears only in a passing remark [...], which in its context sounds rather conventional; one does not believe that the poet’s heart is in it.” Similarly Levin (355) considers that, “in 4.7 the idea that one must ‘seize the occasion’ is barely hinted,” while, according to Commager (1962, 280), in this ode the encouragement offered by the *carpe diem* is “dim and perfunctory at best. The vision of why it is necessary to pluck the day seems to have paralyzed his will to do so.”⁴³⁹

However, in spite of the (almost general) critical reserve regarding the presence and especially the efficiency of the *carpe diem* injunction at 4.7.19f., one could argue that Horace uses the (rather) disturbing figure of the heir and the pessimistic tone of the poem to reinforce his urging to seize the day. Thus, to start with the controversial mention of the rapacious hands of the heir

⁴³⁸ Cf. also Collinge (111), who considers *avidas* an uninspired epithet.

⁴³⁹ Cf. also Bardon 353.

(*manus avidas... heredis*, 19), although, as Fredericksmeier (18) observes, “the fortune hunter (*heredis*, 19) was at this time becoming a notorious character in Roman society,” who, “pretending to be your friend (*amicus*), [...] really hoped for your early demise, so that he could inherit your wealth and possessions and enjoyed them himself,” his presence in this passage does not necessarily have satirical overtones. As Commager (1962, 287) observes, “the heir’s role is different from that which he plays in the *Satires*. Logically, he remains part of the cycle Horace brings before us, a triumphant reminder of time’s passing.” The reference to the heir is thus mainly meant to anticipate the death of the Torquatus, and, as Davis (162) remarks, can be considered “[an] economical way of reintroducing the topic of mortality.”⁴⁴⁰ One could thus argue that Horace ‘hijacks’ a marker of a *memento mori* motif and ingeniously incorporates it into a *carpe diem* injunction in order to amplify its urgency. At the same time, the presence of the heir may also be explained as a variation on the previous Horatian spring poem. Thus, the two poems differ in the way in which the succeeding generations are presented; if in 1.4 the erotic dimension seems to be a bridge between different generations, as Lycidas, loved now by Sestius, will be loved by youths and girls (1.4.19f.), in this poem the view is much more pessimistic, since, as (Corbeill 103) remarks, “the members of the next generation are represented as nameless heirs, whose sole interest lies in acquiring their predecessors’ wealth.” However, the major difference between the two poems is perhaps to be found in the *carpe diem* injunction as such. Thus, if in 1.4 the injunction to enjoy life has a definite erotic and sympotic dimension, as Sestius is urged to find solace in his love for Lycidas and in the company of other people at the symposium, in this poem, by contrast, the plurality of convivialists is replaced by one’s own *animus*, implicitly defined in this ode as one’s

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. also Shorey (443) for whom the mention of the greedy hands of the heir is “a poetical *memento mori*.”

only friend (*amico... animo*, 19f.). Although Davis (162) considers that, through the simple presence of the heir, “a common ancillary motif in *CD* [*carpe diem*] poems,” this passage “though it contains no formal, direct exhortation to the banquet, nevertheless approximates the topic through a powerful allusiveness [...]” it could be argued that, while the sympotic dimension may be present, these lines do not necessarily limit the *carpe diem* injunction to a simple sympotic invitation. In fact, this ‘open’ *carpe diem* injunction has allowed interpretations diametrically opposite to that proposed by Davis. Thus, according to Ancona (55), far from suggesting a sympotic context, “the injunction [...] is to withdraw the self from connections to the world and quite literally to enjoy one’s self in the here and now.”⁴⁴¹ While it is highly improbable that the speaker of 4.7 urges Torquatus to become a self-sufficient recluse of a kind, one could say that the *carpe diem* injunction of these lines has a much wider scope than the usual banquet, as the syntagm *animo amico dare*, perhaps the most arresting of the poem, introduces into the ode a dimension unknown to 1.4. The phrase, according to Page (437), “seems used somewhat colloquially to express the satisfaction of personal gratification.” However, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁴⁴² the syntagm is highly unusual.⁴⁴³ The phrase may be a imitation of the Homeric syntagm φίλον ἦτορ (*Il.* 3.31; 5.250. 364, 670; 9.705; 13.84; 19.307; 21.201; *Od.* 16.92; 17.514) and its use here could be intended to bring into the *carpe diem* motif an elevation of style similar to that brought into the *memento mori*

⁴⁴¹ The rejection of the sympotic aspect does not hinder Ancona from analyzing a presumed eroticism in this *carpe diem* injunction. Thus, the critic considers that “where Catullus holds open the possibility that eroticism might offer a shared defiance of temporal inevitability, Horace instead here reduces the predicament of temporality to a kind of onanistic economic triumph. The self that confronts temporality sees only the greed of others, a greed that can be defeated only by the ambiguous eroticism of *amico*.”

⁴⁴² See for example Gow (46); Ancona (55).

⁴⁴³ A search of the *PHI* has indicated that the syntagm appears before Horace at *Cic Sest.* 121, *Prov. Cons.* 41.

by the references to the epic genre (see above).⁴⁴⁴ However, it is also possible that, as Fredricksmeier (20) argues, “Horace’s *amicus animus* means much more than the formulaic Homeric expression. Behind it lies Horace’s philosophical conception of friendship with oneself, *amicus sibi*, as a positive virtue.”⁴⁴⁵ A similar view is held by Gautar (131), who considers that the philosophical conception expressed by Horace is “einen veredelten Egoismus, dessen sich der Dichter nicht zu schämen braucht, den er, im Gegenteil, sowohl sich selbst als auch den anderen als ein Lebensideal empfehlen kann,”⁴⁴⁶ while Putnam (1986, 139), implicitly acknowledging the philosophical content of the syntagm, remarks that “the philosopher’s self-love is [...] the only untainted form of *amicitia* because it is completely un beholden to the demands of others. It posits a responsive yielding to the desires of the inner spirit, and a truth to one’s talents and inclinations. As long as the gods dispense life, the “fleeing” and the “giving” that form part of this solipsistic commitment are man’s to dictate and not contingent on celestial mutability.”⁴⁴⁷ However, even

⁴⁴⁴ Fredricksmeier (20) cites Plaut. *Amph.* 131 (*suo animo morem gerit*) and *Mil.* 677 (*es, bibe, animo obsequere*); Theocr. 16.24 (ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ψυχᾷ, τὸ δὲ πού τι δούναι αἰδοῶν); Aesch. *Pers.* 841 (ψυχῆ διδόντες ἡδονήν) and Eurip. *Cycl.* 340f. (τὴν δ’ ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἐγὼ σὺ παύσομαι δρῶν εὖ) as passages that express the notion of indulging one’s soul. Other critics - Cataudella (229-32); Oates (76ff.); Wickham (311) - have proposed Simon. Frg. 85 (ἀλλὰ σὺ πάντα μαθὼν βίτου ποτὶ τερμα/ψυχῆ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τλήθι χαριζόμενος) as a possible source for this syntagm. Although Oates (82) considers that there is a difference in tone between the two passages, since “whereas in fragment 85 the reader is exhorted to delight his soul with life’s goods by the use of a bold and strong imperative, τλήθι, Horace has modified his appeal, made it somewhat more subtle by including it within a subordinate clause,” one could argue that in Horace the extreme urgency of the injunction is given by the gloomy context in which it appears.

⁴⁴⁵ Strangely enough, for Ancona (55) “the word *amico* clearly signals the erotic as well because of the unusualness of this usage in Latin.”

⁴⁴⁶ According to Gautar, this conception was derived from Aristotle (φιλοσυνία), who argued for it on philosophical grounds against Plato who condemned it (Pl. *Lg.* 731D-732A2; Arist. *EN* 1168a27-1169b2). Cf. Fredericksmeier (22).

⁴⁴⁷ For the philosophical implications of the passage, cf. also Schmid (723): “Die horazische Verbindung des ‘carpe diem’- Motivs mit der Vergänglichkeitsreflexion ist genuine epikureisch. Das zeigt mit besonderer Deutlichkeit die Ode 4,7,7 welche die der kosmischen reparation gegenüberstehende Einmaligkeit der flüchtigen Ich-Existenz gerade deshalb vergegenwärtigt, um aus diesem Gedanken das Recht, nein, die Notwendigkeit abzuleiten, der im Heute enthaltenen Lebenswonne innezuwerden.”

leaving aside its possible philosophical implications, the syntagm draws the attention of the reader through its arresting novelty and thus increases the efficiency of the *carpe diem* injunction.

Far from being a detrimental element at the structural and thematic level of the poem, the indirect *carpe diem* injunction of these lines brings into the ode the motif joy and thus, by contrast, makes the thought of death even more hateful. At the same time, the gloomy mood of the surrounding sections (the preceding *memento mori* motif and the references to the underworld that follow at 21-28) amplifies the urgency of the injunction. As Fredericksmeier (19f.) puts it, “in a pungent statement the poet exhorts us to live life fully, physically as well as spiritually, while we can [...]. The voicing of *carpe diem* in only one distich is not a ‘passing remark’ but an indication that, since our life is only a passing moment, we must seize quickly the chances we have to enjoy it [...]. The *memento mori* points toward and gives urgency to the *carpe diem* appeal. The statements on death, which precede and follow the appeal, say essentially the same thing: tomorrow you may die, to be dead forever, and once you are dead you will never come back. Thus the two statements can be seen, not as presenting a sequence of thoughts about death in which *carpe diem* is only a passing remark, but as focusing and enhancing the appeal.”⁴⁴⁸

However, in spite of the great urgency of the *carpe diem* injunction, its short length (only two lines in a poem of 28) and its particular expression (through the mention of the heir, reduced to and defined only by the disquieting image of his greedy hands) do cast a shadow over the idea of enjoyment and maintain the overall pessimistic view of the poem.

⁴⁴⁸ For a similar view on the efficacy of the injunction, see Putnam (2006, 403 n. 49), who observes that “in the expansive context of the *carmen*, where nature’s fleeing and returning act to place paltry mortals in their vast, death-driven setting, the speaker urges us, for the brief extent of two lines, to snatch what we can from the covetous grasp of our heir, because what lies in wait for us brings no possibility of pleasure on any level.”

At the stylistic level one may notice in these lines the metathesis *mamus avidas* and the paradoxical juxtaposition *heredis, amico* that puts together (at least) at the textual level antithetical notions. The plethora of meanings totally opposite to *heredis* that the epithet *amicus* brings into the passage (“one’s own,” “dear,” “friendly,” “well-disposed,” see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 3b), amplifying the sharp contrast between one’s heir and one’s soul, is another noteworthy aspect of this syntagm. One could also remark the use of *fugient*, a verb that, in a poem in which the idea of flight and rapidity is generally associated with the passing of time and death, relates the idea of flight with the theme of joy and links thus this passage to the beginning of the poem (*diffugere*, 1).

The poem continues in lines 21-24 with a *memento mori* that emphasizes the implacable and definitive nature of death. The passage, revealing (at last) the addressee of the poem, namely Torquatus, both further increases the gloomy mood of the ode and reinforces the urgency of the *carpe diem* injunction, since, as Fredricksmeier (19) observes, “the poet returns to the theme of death, as if to punctuate the need immediately to act on advice.” Although formally intended for Torquatus, who, appropriately (or ironically) enough for a lawyer (see p. 155 n.147), will (soon) be faced with the sternness of Minos’ *splendida arbitria* and the impossibility of any ‘appeal,’ since none of his great (Roman) virtues (*genus, facundia, pietas*) could secure his return from death and the underworld, the warning has a much larger scope, the addressee being in fact the entire humankind, since, as Becker (156) remarks, “[es geht] nicht allein um Torquatus; daher steht nicht *tuum genus, tua facundia* usw.”⁴⁴⁹ Thus, at the thematic level, the passage suddenly shifts the focus of the poem from the motif of enjoyment to the motif of rebirth and renewal at the human level,

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Fredericksmeier (19), who shares a similar view, arguing that “Torquatus may or may not have had *genus, facundia, pietas*. It does not matter. Horace addresses us, and the human condition. We all should make the best use of our gifts and qualities while we can, for soon they will avail us nothing.” See also Porter 191.

emphasizing the fact that humankind is totally defenseless in the face of implacable death, since, in spite of the great qualities that mortals may have, there is no possible rebirth for them.

The passage, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁴⁵⁰ starts with an allusion to both line 14 of the poem and Cat. 5.4, since *cum semel occideris* is most likely a deliberate variation on both *cum semel occidit* and *nos ubi decidimus*. Although disparaged by Quinn (26) as a “too facile [...] echo of Catullus” and a “weak rephrasing” of line 14, one could argue that, by alluding to these passages (in which the idea of death is so prominent), the syntagm effectively brings at a concrete and personal level the (previously general and abstract) theme of death,⁴⁵¹ the double allusion with its ‘burden’ of ominous meanings reinforcing the *memento mori* addressed to Torquatus. The reference to Catullus reminds again the reader about the contrast between the general mood of the two poems (see pp. 199-203), while *occideris*, similar to *decidimus* (14), brings into the line multiple meanings (‘to fall’; ‘to die’; ‘to sink, go down, set’ (of the heavenly bodies) and ‘to pass away,’ see *OLD* s.v. 1, 2a, 4a, 5) that emphasize the tragic human condition. Another similarity between the two verbs is the fact that *occideris* too implicitly contrasts, especially through its astronomical usage, the definitive nature of death at the human level with the idea of constant renewal that characterizes the natural world, as suggested by the swift recovery of the *damna caelestia* (13).⁴⁵²

At the same time, apart from explicitly expressing the idea of death, the syntagm may also hint at the suddenness with which the final end may come. Thus, although Quinn (25) considers that the “light-moving dactyls” of the first half of the hexameter could imply that “we are not at all

⁴⁵⁰ See Shorey 433; Woodman 765; Fraenkel 420.

⁴⁵¹ For the movement from general to particular in this poem, cf. also Woodman (765 n.5) and Levin (356).

⁴⁵² Cf. also Putnam (2006, 21).

downcast by the thought of death,” it could be argued that, since nothing else in the context supports such an interpretation (which stands also in opposition with the pessimistic view and gloomy mood of the entire poem) the meter suggests rather the idea of rapidity (emphasized throughout the ode) and thus the imminent nature of death. However, the quick tempo (of the impending death) is suddenly brought to an end by caesura (suggesting perhaps the suddenness with which our life is cut short), while the three long monosyllables that follow (*et de te*) slow down the rhythm and (hinting maybe at the ‘frozen’ temporality of death) bring into this line a solemnity (heavy like a tomb stone) that, appropriately, accompanies the imposing presence of Minos (in emphatic position at the end of line) passing his stately (*splendida*) and stern verdicts.⁴⁵³ The reference to Minos, the ‘ultimate’ judge, apart from being a variation on Pluto from 1.4 (mentioned in the syntagm *domus Plutonia* at 1.4.17), appropriately suggests to (the lawyer and orator) Torquatus⁴⁵⁴ the implacable and irrevocable nature of death, the idea that both in life and in death humans are but feeble beings, totally at the mercy of the gods above (*di superi*, 18) and below, allowing also Horace to introduce into the poem the disheartening notion that human virtues are totally irrelevant in the face of death, while conferring on this line (through the mention of an important mythological figure) an elevated tone.

However, the most interesting aspect of the passage (lines 21f.) is the striking qualification of *arbitria* as *splendida*. This qualification has been variously explained by critics. Thus, while for some the epithet is “purely ornamental” (Collinge, 111), for others “most of the line’s power undoubtedly resides in *splendida*” (Rudd, 382). According to Fredricksmeier (19) “the judgment is

⁴⁵³ Cf. also Rudd (382), who remarks that “it is partly a matter of sound and rhythm, in that *de te* prepares us for the great, tolling line which follows.”

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Smith (297) for whom “there is an appropriateness in confronting the orator with the judgment-seat of Minos as a type of the inexorable doom of death.”

called *splendida* [...] because it is not dark and enigmatic but decisively, brilliantly clear, in that it consigns us, without ambiguity or chance of appeal or reprieve, to everlasting death.” At the same time, as Gow (47) notices, “the epithet is frequently applied to oratory and probably refers here to Minos’ stately eloquence.” A similar view is also held by Putnam (2006, 403), who remarks that “one keen irony here lies in the fact that these ‘splendid’ judgments have nothing to do with the literal sheen of a setting in the world above. In this realm of gloom and darkness the adjective *splendidus* largely keeps its stylistic sense, applied to the quality of Minos’s dazzling adjudications and to the brilliance of their deliverance.”⁴⁵⁵ An interesting and plausible interpretation, considering the indirect eulogy of Torquatus in the next two lines is proposed by Nauck (187), who argues that “*splendida* geht nicht auf den äußern Glanz des Tribunals, das Goldene Zepter u.dgl., sondern das Zeugnis, welches dem Leben des Torquatus ausgestellt wird, selbst ist glänzend.” A possible argument (overlooked by Nauck) in favor of this interpretation could be perhaps found at the textual level of the poem, where *te* (i.e. Torquatus) is immediately followed by *splendida* and *Minos*. However, although a single interpretation cannot be given, it could be said that the syntagm does draw the attention of the reader both through its striking novelty⁴⁵⁶ and through the sharp contrast between the numerous (and unexpected) associations brought by *splendida* (a word with multiple meanings, many of them most likely present in this passage - ‘bright, shining,’ ‘clear’; ‘dazzling, superb’; ‘brilliant’; ‘illustrious’, ‘bright, vivid,’ see *OLD* s.v. 1d, 3a, 4a, 5a) and the gloomy mood of the *memento mori*. The main effect of the sense of brightness brought by this unexpected adjective (into the Underworld) is to make, by contrast, the realm of the shadows seem even

⁴⁵⁵ Cf however Wickham (312), who considers that “the magnificence, stateliness of Minos’ court is transferred to the decrees he passes.” For a similar opinion, see also Smith (298) and Allcroft-Hayes (243).

⁴⁵⁶ A search of the *PHI* has indicated that this is the only place where the syntagm appears. The novelty of expression may also be intended in the use of *fecerit*, since, as Orelli (552) (giving as examples Liv. 24.45; Tac. *Hist.* 4.21 and Curtius 6.1) observes (and a search of the *PHI* confirms), “frequentius est *arbitria agere*.”

gloomier and thus to make the perspective of death and the *memento mori* even more disheartening.⁴⁵⁷

The poem continues with the demoralizing warning given to Torquatus that no virtue can bring him back from death and the underworld (23f.). Although introduced much later than Sestius in 1.4 (as if to suggest that the message of the ode applies not only to its formal addressee but to the entire humankind),⁴⁵⁸ Torquatus receives (as if Horace wanted to compensate for this late introduction) “his full share of that praise of distinguished men [...]. True, he is given no direct eulogy, but in the form of a negative statement [...] threefold excellence is ascribed to him” Fraenkel (421).⁴⁵⁹ The enumeration of these specific virtues (*genus, facundia, pietas*) both confers a distinct Roman flavor on this passage, and, in view of the high esteem in which these qualities were held in the Roman world, reinforces the idea of the universal nature of death, since it suggests that even the most meritorious people die. However, although Dyer (83) argues that, since “the three virtues whose efficaciousness against death is denied set us in the conceptual world of the aristocratic Roman of the day, of Augustus and of *pius* Aeneas,” the pessimistic mood of the ode and especially the inefficacy of *pietas* provide strong clues that 4.7 is an anti-Augustan poem, it is

⁴⁵⁷ For the diversity of meanings that characterizes the word *splendida* and the general effect of the phrase, see also Rudd 382, according to whom “*splendida arbitria* is an expression which English cannot translate. ‘August,’ ‘stately,’ and ‘imposing’ are worthy efforts, but they prevent the metaphor from shining out as it does in the Latin, intensifying the gloom of the ‘infernal darkness’.”

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Putnam 2006, 402.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Wickham (312): “The personal address implies that Torquatus possesses the gifts of which Horace speaks.”

highly unlikely that the ode has such a (harsh) political agenda⁴⁶⁰ or that Horace is “in the totalitarian state of Augustus, [...] a Pasternak, weeping in words that the cause he loved has failed him, in the infinite sorrow that hope and dreams must fade.” The most plausible interpretation is (also the most simple one, namely) that the enumeration, indirectly praising Torquatus for his birth,⁴⁶¹ eloquence⁴⁶² and piety is meant to give the addressee a straight and realistic assessment of his chances to escape his mortal condition. As Woodman (764) put it “Torquatus in Horace’s ode appears almost in the guise of one of the heroes in line 15. And the same fate awaits him.” At the same time, since the fact that “Horace has [...] presented us with a schematized character-sketch of the type so familiar in Roman historiography [...] imposes a formal element of firm tradition on the ode” (Woodman 764), one could argue that this enumeration is also intended to continue and reinforce the solemn tone of the preceding lines, since, as Rudd (382) remarks, “the somber *gravitas* of the concluding section is strengthened [...] by the aristocratic qualities of *genus*, *facundia*, and *pietas*.” The solemn tone and the gravity of this passage reveals also the main difference between 4.7 and the previous spring poem, since, as Fraenkel (420f.) put it, “one could hardly find a more significant illustration of the wide difference between the Grecian *παύζειν* with its elaborate

⁴⁶⁰ For a more restrained view, cf. Putnam (1986, 140), who, although considers that “[Torquatus] *pietas* makes him a modern-day representative of *pious Aeneas*, an example, perhaps, of Rome’s renewal under Augustus,” does not regard this as a negative allusion to the political climate of the day nor 4.7 as a subversive poem. According to Putnam (143f.), this enumeration of Roman virtues is intended to make the appeal of the poem more general, since, while in 1.4 Sestius “appears only in the role of anyone blessed with wealth and youth, whom the speaker places in a larger continuum,” so that “whatever the strength of its generalities, the poem is essentially immediate and private,” the situation of Torquatus is, by contrast, more public,” as “we sense his Romanness, not only because he was a lawyer of good breeding, but because his characteristic piety makes him a latter-day Aeneas, an analogy in the present to a major figure in the historical past.”

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Smith (297): “Torquatus belonged to the Manlian *gens*, among the oldest of the Roman noble house.”

⁴⁶² According to Smith (298), Torquatus’ *facundia* is especially praised, since “in the varying metrical accent on *nón*... *non té*... *nón te*, the stress here falls on *te*.”

regulations for the *συμπόσιον* and its devotion to *παιδικὸς ἔρωσ* on the one hand and on the other the full *gravitas* of the *res Romana* as embodied in the traditions of the nobility.”

The somber tone of these lines is also reinforced, according to Quinn (25), by the triple anaphora of *non* that emphasizes the sternness of the *memento mori*,⁴⁶³ each negation shattering another virtue and hope of redeeming.⁴⁶⁴ At the stylistic level, worth mentioning in this passage is also the asyndeton that leaves the addressee no respite from the rapid ‘blows’ of negation, while the tricolon of these lines seems to crush Torquatus under its progressive weight. The passage contains also remarkable sound effects, as the assonance of *o* and *e* may be intended to give the lines a mournful tone, while the alliteration of *n* and *t* (*non, Torquate... non te... non te*) may suggest the vehemence of the appeal. At the semantic level noteworthy is the word *restituēt*, that brings into the passage a great abundance of meanings (‘to make sound or healthy again, restore to the proper physical state’; ‘to revive, restore’; ‘to bring back into existence’; ‘to put back in its original place’; ‘to restore to a given position, status or condition’; ‘to reinstate (a disgraced person) in his former dignity or position’, see *OLD* s.v. 2a, 3a, 4a, 5, 6a and b) and ends the series of verbs in *re-* from this poem (*redeunt*, 1; *recurrūt*, 12; *reparant*, 13) and any hope of revival at the human level.⁴⁶⁵

To conclude, one could say that the passage, as (even) Woodman (777) admits, “with its Catullan reminiscence, its apposite metaphor *splendida*, its archaic-sounding anaphora and the pleasing ambivalence of *genus, facundia* and *pietas*, is perhaps the best in the poem.”

⁴⁶³ According to Woodman (764), the use of anaphora in this passage is also “highly reminiscent of the archaic style of Latin writing in general, especially Ennius, thus complementing the tone of the poem at this point.”

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Putnam (141), who remarks that “the trice repeated *non*, negating each quality before the concluding *restituēt*, is a last reminder that even gifted humans have no share in the primaverl return of grass to the fields (*redeunt*) or the monthly restorations of heaven’s swift moons (*reparant*).”

⁴⁶⁵ As Putnam (1986, 141 n.15) observes, the word, appropriately enough in a warning given to a lawyer, has also, a legal rig when it means ‘restore one’s due.’ Life is not due to Torquatus, for all his talent.” See *OLD* s.v. 6c.

In sharp contrast to the previous spring poem, whose “final image [through its the sympotic and erotic aspects] stresses not the finality but the continuity of human existence” (Corbeill 98), 4.7 ends with the disheartening image of Hippolytus and Pirithous who, confined to the infernal realm, cannot be restored to life and brought back from the Underworld by either Diana or Theseus. The function and especially the efficiency of this final section of the poem has been the subject of a long-standing critical debate. Thus, while some scholars consider that “the concluding tetrastich (lines 25-28) is deliberately anticlimactic, just as death itself is a quiet sequel to life’s energetic striving” (Levin 356), others argue that, on the contrary, these lines offer a key to the poem, since “our sense of the significance of [the] finality [of death] will depend upon our understanding of the two mythological exempla” (Ancona 58). One of the most controversial aspects of this passage has been the fact that, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁴⁶⁶ one of the myths chosen by Horace to illustrate the irrevocable nature of death (namely that about Hippolytus) has also an ‘happy-end’ variant, in which the hero *was* actually restored to life, although by Asclepius not by the goddess Diana. The existence of such a variant (although a common characteristic of many other myths in Greek and Roman mythology) has prompted Collinge (111) to accuse Horace of a “maladroit use of mythology,” since, in his view, it “nullifies the whole point of the allusion” (19 n.2). A similar disappointment is also shared by Woodman (765) who finds Horace “guilty of an unthinking allusion here,” an allusion that apparently just proves “the ode’s patchwork character.” However, while the existence of such a variant may seem problematic, the criticism brought to this passage is unfair and misses the point of this allusion. Thus, it could be argued that (apart from the obvious point that a tragic end of Hippolytus brings into the ode), after the ‘intense’ Roman flavour brought

⁴⁶⁶ See Gow 47 and Smith 297, who cite Verg. *Aen.* 7.765 and Ov. *Met.* 15.479 as passages where the happy-end version appears.

in the previous lines by the references to *genus*, *facundia* and *pietas*, Horace deliberately chooses, for the sake of variation, a Greek variant of a myth.⁴⁶⁷ At the same time, by ending his poem with references to Greek mythology, Horace succeeds in offering the reader, as Levin (356) remarks, “a well managed balance between corroborative examples of man’s mortality drawn from Roman history or quasi-history - Aeneas, Tullus, Ancus (15) - and those taken from familiar Greek myth - Hippolytus and Perithous (25-28).”

After the warning of the previous lines (23-24) has shattered any hope that the virtues and the qualities of an individual could give him a chance of escaping his tragic fate, these mythological exempla suggest the helplessness (and ultimate loneliness) of mortals. The impossibility of renewal and rebirth at the human level is thus (through repetition) further emphasized, increasing the gloom and the pessimistic mood of the poem. As the passage alludes to the moral worth of Hippolytus (through his characterization as *pudicum*, in emphatic position at the end of line 25), while Pirithous was not distinguished (at all) by his chastity, critics have long debated whether or not the antithetical relationship that exists between the two mythological figures affects the overall message of these exempla. Thus, according to Putnam (2006, 26), “the lines are [...] bound by implication to the argument of lines 23 and 24. Hippolytus was *pudicus*, Pirithous was not, but the grip of death is as fast on the lecher as it is on the model of chastity,” and, accordingly, the passage, as Levin (1968, 318) considers, is meant to illustrate the idea that “in the face of death the moral worth of the individual proves quite irrelevant.” However, since the two mythological figures are also associated with numerous other qualities (like high birth, youth, and courage), one could say that the passage reinforces the idea expressed in the previous lines (23f.), namely that, in spite of any virtues, all

⁴⁶⁷ Horace, as critics have noticed (see for example, Smith 299; Kiessling 349), follows the Greek version of the myth found in Eur. *Hipp.*

humans are doomed to die. At the same time, while the juxtaposition, hinting at the worthiness and the various qualities of the two antithetical figures, cannot be regarded as random, it could be argued that the emphasis here is not on the inefficiency of human qualities and virtues (an idea that has received enough attention on the previous section), but on the inability of *others* to save a mortal from his tragic fate. Thus, the two mythological exempla, as Fraenkel (420) observes, simply illustrate that “neither the protection of a goddess nor a hero’s friendship could rescue those who had to go down to Hades,” and suggests that, in the face of death “even the most exquisite affection, whether sacred or profane, has its absolute limits” (Minadeo 1982, 87). A similar view is also shared by Ancona (59), who remarks that “the depiction of Hippolytus as a prisoner of the dark underworld, and Pirithous caught in the chains of Lethe, where desire is impotent to overcome death, produces a grim commentary on the delusion that the eroticism of spring might triumph over the human experience of time.”⁴⁶⁸ Since neither one’s qualities, nor one’s friends (be they gods or humans⁴⁶⁹) could change the final outcome of one’s life, man is portrayed as a helpless and (ultimately) lonely being, the two exempla giving thus the last touch to the demoralizing depiction of humankind. The mortals, incapable of helping others or being helped themselves, are placed between (and contrasted with) the divine and the natural world. Thus, as Putnam (1986, 141) observes, while “the gods are on high, associated with the heavenly bodies [...],” “the dead remain prisoners of darkness below (*infernus tenebris*). Their attributes are the polar opposite of the height and brightness belonging to the celestial gods, and their frozen bondage serves as antonym for the energetic, varied motion that seasonal nature vouchsafes to man as an emblem of recurrence.”

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Porter (206); Putnam (1986, 141).

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. however Kelly (815), who considers that the passage presents also a contrast between divine abstention from helping (*neque... liberat*, 25f.) and human inability to help (*nec... valet... abrumpere*, 27). However, one could argue that the ‘divine abstention’ is not different from the human inability, since even the gods could not change the fate.

Although the two somber mythological exempla are meant primarily to illustrate the irrevocable nature of death at the human level, the passage serves also several additional important functions, bringing into the ode numerous other ideas and associations. Thus, while the idea of permanent movement and rapid change is emphasized in the rest of the poem, in these final lines Horace stresses the idea of constriction, immobility⁴⁷⁰ and restraint (*neque... Diana... liberat*, 25f.; *Lethaea... vincula*, 27f.). At the same time, death and the infernal realm, depicted here as “a dark prison house inhabited by shadows” (Rudd 382), are associated with the idea of darkness and gloom explicitly expressed by the word *tenebris* (25) that ends the alteration between light and darkness apparent in the second part of the poem (*lunae*, 13; *umbra*, 16; *splendida*, 21).⁴⁷¹ The word *tenebris* may also recall the demoralizing sententia *pulvis et umbra sumus* (16), since (although we cannot be sure whether or not Horace was aware of this connection), the ancient etymology,⁴⁷² as Putnam (2006, 404) observes, links it with the word *umbra*. The idea of (physical) darkness is also accompanied by the idea of oblivion, suggested by the *Lethaea* (27), adjective derived from the name of the river that obliterated in the souls of the dead their memories of earthly life. As Quinn (23) remarks, “the chains are called ‘Lethaea’ to conjure up a picture of Pirithoos chained by the River of Forgetfulness: he has forgotten his friend; Theseus still remembers.”⁴⁷³ The Underworld is thus depicted as a hateful place of darkness, constrain and forgetfulness, so that, as Putnam (2006, 403) remarks, “a salient part of [Horace’s] warning to Torquatus to seize the moment lies in this very loss of individuality that follows upon the end of our day. [...] In death we become formless continuities, forgetting and forgotten.”

⁴⁷⁰ That appeared previously only in the description of winter (*iners*, 12).

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Woodman 766 n.1.

⁴⁷² For this etymology, Putnam (430 n. 37) cites Isid. *Orig.* 13.10.12 (*tenebrae dicuntur quod teneant umbras*).

⁴⁷³ Cf. also Putnam (1986, 144 n.20), who argues that “*Lethaea* reminds us of our forgetfulness, and of the forgetting of us, in death.”

At the stylistic level, one may notice in this section the parallel and emphatic positions of *Hippolytum* (26) and *Pirithoo* (28), drawing the attention of the reader to the mythological figures, and also of *pudicum* (25) and *caro* (27) that emphasizes the virtue of Hippolytus and the affection of Theseus for Pirithous. Noteworthy in these lines is also the demoralizing repetition of negations (*neque... nec*) and the irony of the inability of releasing (*liberat*) someone whose name contains the idea of release and liberation (*Hippolytum*, from $\lambda\upsilon\omega$),⁴⁷⁴ or of having forced to immobility someone whose name (Pirithous) means “the exceedingly swift”.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, as Putnam (2006, 404) remarks, “the extraordinary feeling of these final lines is underscored with further etymological play. Hippolytus, in life ‘the releaser of horses,’ not only cannot himself escape from death’s dark prison but not even his divine patroness can accomplish such an act of freeing. Likewise, Pirithous, ‘the exceedingly swift,’ now, after transition from upper to lower world, lives the opposite of his earthly name. The sublunar runner is now confined by unbreakable chains.”

The passage contains various sound effects, like the assonance of *i* in 25f., of *o*⁴⁷⁶ and *i* in 27f., suggesting perhaps the idea of sadness and lament and reinforcing thus the mournful mood of these mythological exempla. Conspicuous is also the presence of numerous rhymes (*infernos... tenebris*, 25; *pudicum... Hippolytum*, 25f.; *caro... Pirithoo*, 27f.), while the abundance of mythological references (and Greek names⁴⁷⁷) is most likely intended to bring elevation of style. A similar effect has also, according to Woodman (765), the phrase *infernos... tenebris*, reminiscent of

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Kelly 815 n.2.; Horsfall 136; Paschalis 183f.

⁴⁷⁵ For the etymology of Pirithous as “der sehr Schnelle,” see *Lexicon des frühgriechischen Epos* 2001.1110, s.v. Cf. Putnam (2006, 404 n.34).

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. also Collinge (34), who argues that “the contrast between the long and short quantities of the letter o has probably never been used so expressively as in the falling cadence at the end of 4.7: *vincula Pirithoo*.”

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Bardon (23): “sur nous, comme sur Horace, opère le charme d’un vocabulaire sonore, emprunté à la Grèce.”

two passages in Aeneid 7 (*infernisque... tenebris*, 325; *tum pater omnipotens aliquem indignatus ab umbris/mortalem infernos ad lumina surgere vitae*, 770f.).

Another aspect of this passage worth mentioning is the highly effective juxtaposition *vincula Pirithoo* in line 28 that suggests, even at the textual level, the idea of constraint. Since in this mythological exemplum, as Commager (201) remarks, “Pirithous [...] figures [...] as a symbol of man’s common fate,” it could be argued that this spring poem ends (appropriately enough, considering the general pessimistic mood of the ode) with the disturbing image of mankind forever confined by the shackles of its tragic condition.

To conclude the analysis of this poem, one could say that 4.7 is a highly elaborate piece of writing, an ode that brings into the tradition of the genre new thematic aspects, and unexpected ideas and associations. In contrast to all the other poems of the genre, in 4.7 spring is presented as part of the cycle of seasons and the connection between the vernal season and (fleeting) time is made explicit. The sharp contrast between the cyclical time of natural phenomena and the linear and finite nature of human temporality prompts disheartening reflections on the tragic condition of mankind. Although an obvious pair with 1.4, the numerous structural, thematic and stylistic similarities serve as a background against which the differences between the two poems are even more conspicuous. In contrast to 1.4, in 4.7 the vernal imagery is much abridged and the emphasis is mainly on the idea of movement and permanent change. Throughout the poem, the theme of renewal and rebirth at the natural level is contrasted with the motif of death at the human level, and the indirect *carpe diem* injunction that ‘fulgurates’ amid bleak *memento mori* warnings cannot dispel the pessimistic mood that sets this poem apart in the tradition of the genre.

The various similarities between 1.4 and 4.7 are not intended to lure the reader into the temptation of ranking the two poems - a vigorously pursued, though rather superfluous endeavor of criticism - but only to enhance each one's particular appeal, which, in the case of this ode is perhaps to be found in its more reflective and pessimistic nature.

Chapter VI

Horace *Carm.* 4.12

Iam veris comites, quae mare temperant, impellunt animae lintea Thraciae; iam nec prata rigent, nec fluvii strepunt hiberna nive turgidi.	
nidum ponit Ityn flebiliter gemens infelix avis et Cecropiae domus aeternum opprobrium, quod male barbaras regum est ultra libidines.	5
dicunt in tenero gramine pinguium custodes ovium carmina fistula delectantque deum cui pecus et nigri colles Arcadiae placent.	10
adduxere sitim tempora, Vergili; sed pressum Calibus ducere Liberum si gestis, iuvenum nobilium cliens, nardo vina merebere.	15
nardi parvus onyx eliciet cadum, qui nunc Sulpiciis accubat horreis, spes donare novas largus amaraque curarum eluere efficax.	20
ad quae si properas gaudia, cum tua velox merce veni: non ego te meis immunem meditor tingere poculis, plena dives ut in domo.	
verum pone moras et studium lucri, nigrorumque memor, dum licet, ignium misce stultitiam consiliis brevem: dulce est desipere in loco.	25

Included in the fourth book of his *Carmina* and dedicated to (a certain) Vergilius - who may or may not be Virgil, the poet (see below) - 4.12 concludes the cycle of spring poems written by Horace. Although the (frantic, but ultimately inconclusive) search for the (elusive, and, to some extent, irrelevant) identity of the addressee has almost monopolized the criticism of 4.12, so that scholars have rather ‘neglected’ to define and rigorously analyze this ode as a spring poem,⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ The few critics who do consider 4.12 a spring poem and offer a more or less detailed analysis of it from this perspective are Kiessling 449; Fraenkel 418 n.2; Williams 123; Commager 275f.; Quinn 1963 4-14.

opinions *against* its inclusion into the genre have been nonetheless formulated. Thus, according to Belmont (11), “those who link *Odes* 1.4, 4.7 and 4.12 together as ‘spring songs’ fail to see some fundamental differences,” since, while “1.4 and 4.7 overtly *do* resemble each other,” 4.12, in his view, “hardly belongs with the other two,” the poem being, apparently, just “an invitation which happens to be set in, but does not depend on, spring.”⁴⁷⁹ However, while the differences between the previous two Horatian spring poems and 4.12 *do* exist, the main fault of this critical approach is that of ignoring not only the adherence of 4.12 to the genre, but also the fact that its status as a spring poem fundamentally affects the overall appreciation of the ode and the *significance* of the differences that exist between these poems, which are prompted exactly by the pressure of a genre characterized by a continuous striving for variation, and, in its Latin tradition, by a remarkable thematic admixture.

Like 1.4 and 4.7, this ode too contains numerous structural, thematic and stylistic similarities with the Greek spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology*. Thus, 4.12 follows, at the structural level, the traditional schema of a spring poem,⁴⁸⁰ including a description of the season in lines 1-12 and the reactions prompted by spring in lines 13-28. The poem starts with the vivid image of the vernal winds (*veris comites*), presented as calming the sea (*quae mare temperant*, 1) and swelling the sails (*impellunt lintea*, 2). The first two lines of the ode recall thus the traditional announcement of the coming of spring by reference to the opening of the navigation season from *A.P.* 10.1.1 and 10.2.1. At the same time, the image of the sea soothed by the spring breezes recalls the description of the vernal sea from *A.P.* 10.1.3f. and 2.1f., while the direct mention of the spreading canvas (*lintea*, 2) reminds the reader of the references to sails at *A.P.* 10.1.6 (ὄρθουσι)

⁴⁷⁹ For a similar view, see also Johnson 49 n. 4.

⁴⁸⁰ Apart from 1.4 and 4.7, the previous spring poems are *A.P.* 10.1, 2; Cat. 46 and possibly *A.P.* 9.363 and 10.4.

and 2.7 (λαίφεα).⁴⁸¹ In line 3, the image of the meadows (*prata*) no longer frozen recalls the meadows of *A.P.* 10.1.3; 2.4, and, possibly, (if that poem antedates 4.12) of *A.P.* 9.363.5f. In the same passage (lines 3-4), similar to *A.P.* 10.2.1f., spring is characterized indirectly by the negation of (some of) winter's features (*nec... rigent, nec... strepunt*). In the following section (lines 5-8), the traditional swallow (conspicuously absent from all the Latin spring poems so far) makes an impressive comeback (in four learned lines), and, in spite of her grief, seems to find enough strength to dutifully build her nest (*nidum ponit*, 5), like the swallow of *A.P.* 10.2.3f.,⁴⁸² while, in the last passage of the description of the season, the image of the singing shepherds may be intended to remind the reader of *A.P.* 9.363.7 (again, if that poem antedates Horace's ode). The mention in line 9 of the soft grass (*tenero gramine*) recalls the tender leaves (ἀβρά... πέταλα) of the meadows from *A.P.* 10.2.4, and also the references to vegetation in *A.P.* 10.1.3 and, possibly, *A.P.* 9.363.1-6 and *A.P.* 10.4.7. In the same passage, the reference to *deum*, identified by the majority of critics with Faunus,⁴⁸³ the god of flocks and fields, may evoke (through his associations with the idea of fertility) the traditional figure of Priapus, while *pinguium ovium* (9f.) and *pecus* (11) possibly recall the fleecy sheep (εὐκόμα μῆλα) of *A.P.* 9.363.20. Apart from these elements, one may also notice, at the level of expression, the repeated use of *iam* in the first and the third line, recalling the traditional ἤδη of the Greek epigrams.

However, in contrast to the Greek spring poems, the vernal landscape of 4.12 contains also new elements, while some of the traditional ones are presented in a very innovative way. Thus, one could find in 4.12 new human (*custodes*, 10) and (more numerous) animal (*pinguium ovium*, 9f;

⁴⁸¹ And possibly recalls also the λαίφεα of *A.P.* 10.4.2 and the λίνια κολπώσαντες of *A.P.* 9.363.10.

⁴⁸² And perhaps that of *A.P.* 10. 5f.

⁴⁸³ See, for example, Allcroft-Hayes 248; Shorey 456.

pecus, 11) presences, new geographical references (*Thraciae*, 2; *nigri colles Arcadiae*, 11f.), while perhaps the most striking departure from the tradition of the genre is the replacement, at the beginning of the poem, of the traditional Zephyr with the rather unexpected *animae Thraciae* (2). New also is the extended mythological background that accompanies the building enterprise of the grief-stricken swallow that, surpassing any appearance of the bird in the Greek epigrams, stands in sharp contrast with the swallow of *A.P.* 10.1.1 whose joyous (but rather silly) chattering (λαλαγεῦσα) becomes in Horace's poem a dignified and tearful moan (*flebitur gemens*) that brings into the joyful and dynamic description of spring an unexpected darker mood.

Nevertheless, as in the case of 1.4 and 4.7, the most important difference between 4.12 and the Greek spring poems appears in the second part of the ode (lines 13-28). Thus, the main reaction prompted by the season is a lengthy and humorous sympotic invitation that, apart from conferring on the poem a mood of playfulness⁴⁸⁴ that reminds of the light-hearted and cheerful *A.P.* 10.1 and 2, brings into the poem a generic admixture unknown in the previous spring poems.

Another interesting aspect of 4.12 is the tension created by the careful juxtaposition of Greek and Roman elements. Thus, if in the description of spring various elements suggest a Greek setting (*animae Thraciae*, 2; *Ityn*, 5; *Cecropiae domus*, 6; *colles Arcadiae*, 12), in the second part of the ode, words like *Vergili* (13); *Calibus* (14) and *Sulpiciis horreis* (8) give the poem a strong Roman flavour. One could almost say that in 4.12 spring comes in a Greek fashion (as if Horace wanted to express his allegiance to the tradition of the genre), but prompts Roman reactions, a device that allows Horace to elegantly depart from its models while paying due respect to them.

⁴⁸⁴ In spite of the (brief) mention of the bitterness of cares (*amaraque curarum*, 19) and the darker note brought by the *memento mori* of line 26 (*nigrorumque memor, dum licet, ignium*) the *carpe diem* motif is predominant and the general tone of the poem light-hearted.

Apart from recalling the epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*, 4.12 contains also numerous elements that remind the reader of the Latin tradition of the genre, as Horace, the only author who ‘dares’ to write a third spring poem, alludes in this ode to both his previous two spring poems and Catullus 46. The result of this endeavor is a very complex poem, in which Horace makes, with great dexterity, extensive use of the techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio*.

The ode, as it has often been noticed in criticism,⁴⁸⁵ starts with an allusion to the first (known) Latin spring poem, since its first two syllables (*iam veris*) clearly recall the beginning of Cat. 46 (*iam ver*). However, as Commager (275) remarks, “*aemulatio* rather than *imitatio* prompts Horace, for he calls attention to his model only to depart from it.” Thus, not only is Catullus’ direct reference to the change of temperature (*egelidos tepores*) brought by spring absent from the beginning of Horace’s poem,⁴⁸⁶ but the *iucundis Zephyri aureis* are replaced by the (rather intriguing) *animae Thraciae*, while the vernal resumption of sailing, only hinted at in Cat. 46 (see p. 99 n.152), is described in much more detail (recalling the vivid description of the launching of ships from 1.4.1f.). At the same time, while the idea of companionship present in Catullus’ poem (*coetus comitum*, 9) appears also 4.12 (not only in the reference to *veris comites* from the beginning of the poem, but also in the mention of the *iuvenum nobilium*, 15), in 4.12 the arrival of spring does bring the friends together, the farewell of Catullus’ poem being replaced by a sympotic invitation.

The shift of focus from the maritime scene (lines 1f.) to the image of the earth (lines 3f.) reminds the reader of the similar movement at 1.4.1-4, while the description of the meadows is a variation (with two direct verbal echoes - *nec prata*) on 1.4.4. However, in contrast to the meadows

⁴⁸⁵ See, for example, Garrison 362; Reckford (1969) 129; Commager 275; Belmont 13; Putnam (2006) 98.

⁴⁸⁶ Although, in an indirect way, the notion of temperature does appear later in *nec rigent* (3) and is implied in *hiberna nive* (4).

of 1.4, in whose description the emphasis was on the visual element (*albicans*, 1.4.4), in 4.12.3 the focus is on temperature (*nec rigent*), while the entire line dedicated to the meadows in the previous poem is replaced by a more succinct statement. Another noteworthy aspect of this section (1-4) is the presence of both the maritime (1f.) and the river motif (3f.), outdoing thus both 1.4 (which contained only the maritime theme) and 4.7, in which the river motif replaced the maritime one (see pp. 160 and 175f.). In contrast to 4.7.3f., where the image of the rivers peacefully flowing along their banks (*decrescientia ripas/flumina praetereunt*, 3f.) only alludes to the thawing of snow, in 4.12 the winter snows are explicitly mentioned (*hiberna nive*, 4), the description being more specific and thus more vivid and effective.

While at this juncture both 1.4 and 4.7 continued with a mythological tableau that introduced into the vernal landscape a variety of figures celebrating, either through joyous dance (*Cytherea Venus* and *Nymphis Gratiae* at 1.4.5f; *Gratia cum Nymphis*, 4.7.5) or work (*Vulcanus*, 1.4.8), the arrival of spring, in the next section of this ode (lines 5-8), Horace succeeds in making variation on both the Greek tradition of the genre and on his previous spring poems. Thus, by bringing into 4.12 the swallow (a traditional element of the description of the season), accompanied by a mythological excursus, whose tragic note constitutes a striking variation on the use of mythology from the previous two odes, Horace both recalls his Greek models and his own spring poems and departs from them.

In the next section of the ode (lines 9-12), the presence of *custodes* and their *pinguium ovium* recalls the *arator* and his *pecus*⁴⁸⁷ from 1.4.3. The scene, through the reference to vegetation (*tenero gramine*, 9), hinting at the regenerative power of the season, and the mention of the piping

⁴⁸⁷ One may also notice the direct verbal echo *pecus* at 4.12.11.

(*dicunt ... carmina fistula*, 9f.) with which the shepherds delight the god (*deum*, 11) introduces into the poem the motif of renewal in the natural realm and that of joy at the human and divine level, foreshadowing the sympotic invitation at 13-28. In contrast to the previous Horatian spring poems in which the motif of joy was evident especially at the mythological level (in the dancing scene of 1.4.5ff. and 4.7.5f.), and the ‘union’ between gods and men in the celebration of the vernal season was apparent only in the injunction to prepare for the banquet following the sacrifice to Faunus (1.4.9-12), in this ode joy seems to bring men and god together, and the relationship between humankind and divine appears more ‘relaxed,’ lacking the ritualistic aspect present in 1.4.

While the description of the season contains many elements common to 1.4 and 4.7, the reactions prompted by spring are of an entirely different nature in 4.12. Thus, in the previous poems the arrival of the vernal season prompted mostly disheartening reflections on the universal and imminent nature of death; in 4.12 spring is strongly associated with the *carpe diem* motif and the sympotic invitation (barely hinted at in the 1.4 and 4.7) occupies the longest part of this poem (lines 13-28). In contrast to 1.4 and 4.7, where the demoralizing meditations on the tragic human condition shatter the joyful vernal mood and the gloomy tone ‘engulfs’ the brief injunctions to enjoy life, in 4.12 the vernal mood generally precludes the dark thoughts of the previous poems, and the brief *memento mori* of line 26 (which seems a rather formal element) is ‘besieged’ by the humor (another dimension absent from 1.4 and 4.7) of a light-hearted sympotic invitation.

Since the reactions prompted by spring were in 1.4 and 4.7 mostly of a meditative nature, 4.12, with its insistent injunctions to (sympotic) action, resembles more Catullus’ spring poem in which the vernal season prompted not reflections, but the injunction to action, to travel to the bright cities of Asia (Cat. 46.6)

Another aspect worth mentioning is the fact that, like 4.7, this ode too contains numerous commercial references (*merebere*, 16; *merce*, 22; *immunem*, 23; *studium lucri*, 25). However, while in 4.7.13 and 17f. the commercial overtones were related to the idea of loss at the human level, in 4.12 the “business” language is intended to tease the addressee and to amuse (at least the reader).

In sharp contrast to 1.4 and 4.7, where the coming of the vernal season was seen mostly as a foreboding reminder of the inexorable passing of time and thus of life, in 4.12 spring appears as a period full of life, a liberating season that brings *sitim* (13), thirst for life, friendship and enjoyment.

One could thus say that, after the gloomy 1.4 and the even gloomier 4.7, this ode concludes the series of spring poems written by Horace on an optimistic tone, ‘redeeming’ thus the vernal season and restoring its traditional associations with the idea of beauty, regeneration and pleasure.

A sophisticated piece of writing, containing a profusion of allusions to the previous spring poems and an intricate thematic and generic admixture, 4.12 can be nevertheless easily summarized. The beginning of the poem (1-2) announces the arrival of spring by alluding to the opening of the sailing season. In the following section, the maritime scene is replaced by the image of the earth, lines 3f. presenting the vernal changes undergone by meadows (*prata*, 3) and rivers (*fluvii*, 3). The description of spring continues with the image of the swallow building her nest (5-8), while in the idyllic vignette of lines 9-12, the vegetal (*tenero gramine*, 9), animal (*ovium*, 9f.; *pecus*, 11), human (*custodes*, 10) and divine (*deum*, 11) realms are brought together in a joyful celebration of the season. The invitation to a symposium that follows in lines 13-28 further associates spring with the idea of joy and celebration, while the humorous elements enhance the light-hearted tone of the poem. After ‘blaming’ the vernal season for provoking the sympotic urge (*adduxere sitim tempora*, 13), in lines 13-16, Vergilius, the controversial addressee of the poem, is invited to quench

his thirst with a choice wine (*pressum Calibus ... Liberum*, 14), offered, however, on a *quid pro quo* basis, as the guest has to bring nard (*nardo*, 16) in return. In lines 17f. are given the details of the ‘bargain’ (a small quantity of nard for an entire jar of drink), while lines 19f., in a business-like manner, extol the quality of the ‘merchandise,’ in this case the efficacy of wine in giving new hopes (*spes novas*) and making one forget the bitterness of cares (*amaraque curarum*). In lines 21-24, the *quid pro quo* nature of the sympotic event is once again stated, and, after an injunction to put aside any delays (*moras*) or the pursuit of money (*studium lucri*, 25) and a laconic *memento mori* (26) that gives urgency to the injunction to enjoy life, the poem ends with a *carpe diem* sententia (27-28).

However, if these are the main (and happy) ideas of 4.12, the poem contains also various elements that bring into the vernal landscape ambiguous and darker associations that undercut the dominant cheerful mood. Thus, while in the first two lines, introducing into the ode the idea of new beginning (of navigation, at least), spring is portrayed as a time of companionship (*comites*, 1), action, dynamism and force (*impellunt*, 1), the presence of *animae Thraciae* has been generally considered a reminder of winter.⁴⁸⁸ Likewise, in lines 5-8, the motif of renewal of life suggested by the image of the swallow building her nest is ‘undermined’ by the tragic note of the mythological excursus, while the idyllic Arcadian landscape is ‘marred’ by the ominous reference to its dark hills (*nigri colles*, 11f.). At the same time, the mention of the bitterness of care (*amaraque curarum*, 19.f) and the reference to the black fires (of the funeral pyre) (*nigrorumque ignium*, 26) are effective reminders of the tragic human condition defined by suffering and death. Nevertheless, in spite of some undertones of sadness, the general mood of the poem is cheerful and optimistic, and these elements do not affect the overall unity and coherence of the ode.

⁴⁸⁸ See, for example, Clay 132; Hamar 141; Putnam (2006) 99.

The poem consists of seven stanzas, all of them end-stopped, a characteristic that has been often noticed and variously commented upon in criticism. Thus, while Quinn (1963, 9) argues that the “decision [...] to group [the] statements [of 4.12] in seven blocks of sense, each occupying a stanza” is “fatal to the poem’s success,” since, in his view, it forces Horace to add “otiose” elements to the ode, Fraenkel (418) deems “the neat separation of each stanza from the subsequent one” as one of the poem’s merits, since it creates an “effect of effortless perfection” and gives the reader an “impression of lightness.”⁴⁸⁹ However, although the extent to which the success or failure of 4.12 depends on this particularity of the ode is a matter of debate, one could nevertheless notice Horace’s virtuosity and the variation he brings even at this level in his cycle of spring poems.

Another important aspect of 4.12 is its generic admixture, which becomes evident from line 13, when the ode becomes an invitation poem. The metamorphosis from spring poem to sympotic invitation (accompanied by the change from a Greek to a Roman setting, see p. 238) does not appear as a discordant element at the structural level of the ode, not only because the invitation, a reaction prompted by the season, perfectly ‘fits’ into the traditional schema of a spring poem,⁴⁹⁰ but also because the transitions between the main sections and themes are smooth and the general progression of ideas logical.

However, the most controversial aspect of 4.12 is the identity of the enigmatic addressee of the poem. Since, as Porter (1972) remarks, “in Horace’s odes the poetic direction taken in the individual pieces is often closely connected with the character and personality of the addressee,” the

⁴⁸⁹ An interesting point is made by Belmont (20 n.72) who suggests that the end-stopped stanzas are “an attempt to imitate the structure in certain of the *Eclogues*’ amoebean song contests.”

⁴⁹⁰ Several structural models have been proposed for this poem. Thus, Collinge (77) remarks “a neat triadic plan of thought, grouping the verses 12-12-4, the stanzas 3-3-1.” According to Williams (1968, 123), although “the poem, in fact, tends to fall into two halves: the first, the highly poetic opening; the second, the invitation,” the ode is divided into two sections of three stanza each and connected by a central stanza so that 13-16 connect 1-12 with 17-28. A similar model is proposed by Belmont (20 n.72): “1-12, scene-setting; 13-16, address and invitation; 17-28, details and conclusion.”

identity of Vergilius, as the majority of critics acknowledge,⁴⁹¹ is important for the overall understanding of the poem, and, as such, it has sparked a spirited and long-standing debate.

The first attempts to establish who Vergilius of 4.12 may be are found in the manuscript titles and in the scholia to the poem. However, in spite of (or due to) the fact that various identities have been proposed (*Vergilius poeta; negotiator; medicus Neronum* or *unguentarius*⁴⁹²), the uncertainty has persisted and the debate has continued with renewed vigor in modern criticism. The dissatisfaction of modern scholars with most of the solutions proposed in antiquity is best expressed by Bowra (165), who argues that “little trust can be placed in the identities of this Vergilius given by the manuscripts and ancient commentators,” since “the superscription of the two Paris manuscripts, 7974 and 7971, ‘ad Vergilium quendam unguentarium,’ bears the mark of pure invention: ‘quendam’ is a patent confession of ignorance, and ‘unguentarium’ is an unimaginative deduction from ll.17-22. [...] Nor are other explanations such as ‘mercatores’ or ‘medicum Neronum’ really more convincing. The first may well have been derived from l.25 ‘verum pone moras et studium lucri,’ and the second looks like an ingenious theory intended to give a joint explanation of ll. 19-20 (*curarum eluere efficax*) and l.15 (*iuvenum nobilium cliens*).” However, although some of the identities proposed by scholiasts (e.g. *medicus Neronum* or *unguentarius*) could be easily dismissed, the discussion surrounding the other two (*Vergilius poeta* and *negotiator*) still occupies the center of the debate. Thus, starting with Bentley (174), the first modern scholar to assert the identification of the addressee with Vergilius the poet, critics have passionately tried either to

⁴⁹¹ With the exception of Commager (274), who, strangely enough, considers that “the question of whether or not this Vergil is Vergil the poet should not be more than peripheral,” scholars are generally aware of the critical implications of the identity of the addressee. However, sometimes its importance is exaggerated, and extreme positions are taken, like that of Wickham (257), who argues that “the chief interest of the Ode centers in the question to whom it was addressed.” Leaving aside these excessive affirmations, an investigation of this issue is more than necessary, considering its impact on the meaning of the ode.

⁴⁹² Cf. Page 441.

prove⁴⁹³ or to reject⁴⁹⁴ this possibility, with only very few of them adopting a more cautious critical position.⁴⁹⁵

Scholars who oppose the idea that the addressee of 4.12 is the poet, point to the fact that the ode was published in 13 B.C., therefore six years after the death of Vergil, and, arguing that a sympotic invitation to a dead person would be a rather absurd gesture, find any critical attempt to prove the contrary futile. At the same time, in their view, the bantering tone of the ode and especially the reference to the addressee as *iuvenum nobilium cliens* (15), together with the mention of his *studium lucri* (25) and the abundance of commercial terms (*merebere*, 16; *merce*, 22; *immunem*, 23), would “hardly fit” (Shorey 456) the author of the *Aeneid*, leaving aside the fact that, by presenting his long-time friend as a greedy man who tries to better his fortunes by attaching himself (*cliens*) to the young aristocrats of Rome, Horace would be not only unfair, but also uncharacteristically rude and tactless.⁴⁹⁶

However, the validity of these arguments is vehemently attacked by the proponents of the view that *Vergilius poeta* is the addressee of this poem. Thus, in order to counteract the fact that the ode was published only after Vergil’s death, these critics point out that, despite being published in 13 B.C., we cannot know when Horace actually wrote it (Belmont 13), and thus, 4.12 “may be an

⁴⁹³ See Batteaux 82; Campbell (1945); Dacier 286 ff.; Doering 231f.; Maclean 248f.; Bowra 165f.; Clay 131f.; Collinge 75f.; Hahn xxxii; Hamar 138f.; Quinn 11; Perret 179ff.; Wili 358; Domseiff 6; Porter 72ff.; Minadeo 162; Moritz 119; Pemble 181; Putnam 2006, 54; Smiley 28;

⁴⁹⁴ See Allcroft-Hayes 248; Fraenkel 418; Johnson 51; Müller 315; Kiessling&Heinze 449; Orelli; Page 441; Plessis 306; Reckford 128; Shorey 456; Wickham 257; Franke 222f.

⁴⁹⁵ See Nisbet&Hubbard 40; McKay&Shepherd 151f.; Kirby 36; Ferguson 11 and Smith 312, who consider that the addressee could be, but it is not necessarily, Virgil, the poet.

⁴⁹⁶ See especially Fraenkel (418 n.1), who erupts in indignation: “Fancy Horace addressing the poet Virgil of all men as *iuvenum nobilium cliens* and ascribing to him *studium lucri*, and then publishing the poem after his friend’s death! A minimum of common human feeling should save us from the sense of humour that turns Horace, the most tactful of poets, into a monster of callousness.”

early poem which Horace intentionally included in this late collection as a memorial to Vergil and a poetic recollection of the two poets' former companionship" (Porter 72).⁴⁹⁷

A radical departure from the views of those who deny that the addressee is the poet is also apparent in the appreciation of the tone of 4.12. Thus, the elements perceived (and labeled) by the other 'party' as insulting and demeaning for Vergil are deemed by these critics as a humorous display of ancient humor and witticism. And, since Roman humor, as Belmont (12) remarks, "is something that often may elude us," while "ancient wit is the hardest of all things to recapture" (Bowra 165), 4.12 becomes a poem in which Horace "is teasing Vergil" (Hahn xxxii). As for the *iuvenum nobilium cliens* (15), although, as Maclean (250) remarks, "any attempt to determine who these were, until it is settled whom the ode is addressed to, is useless,"⁴⁹⁸ the majority of these scholars argue that, whether Horace "is referring to Vergil's long relationship with, his admittedly generous patronage over many years by such luminaries as Augustus, Varus, Agrippa, Pollio, Maecenas, as well as by younger members of Augustus' family and circle like Drusus and Tiberius" (Belmont 13) or not, the phrase "has caused much unnecessary consternation," (Collinge 75) since "for one thing, the depth of Horace's affection for Virgil can scarcely be doubted, so that this half-playful, half-serious phrase should not be misconstrued" (Clay 134), while, on the other hand, since the patronage was a honored Roman institution, being a *cliens* had no negative associations.

A similar approach is also evident in the discussion surrounding the phrase *studium lucri* (25), which, no longer regarded as an accusation of greed, and thus a rather gross irreverence, is now 'redeemed' as either a "bluff joke" (Collinge 75) or an indirect praise, since, as Belmont (13)

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. also Bowra 166f; Dewitt 318f; Hahn xxxii.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. also Page 442.

argues, “*lucrum* is used not only in regard solely to finances, but also to whatever is profitable or useful [...] in any aspect,” and therefore Horace could be “referring to Vergil’s well-known diligence in seeking poetic perfection” (Porter 1972, 86). The poetic ambitions and accomplishments of the two poets may also explain, according to these critics, the commercial terminology of the poem. Thus, as Porter (1972, 72) argues, “the commercial motives are symbolic and humorous rather than literal and serious,” and the commercial language of the ode was in fact a jargon used by Horace and Vergil to refer to their own poetry.⁴⁹⁹ At the same time, their presence in the ode and especially the allusion to greed may also be an indirect proof that the addressee could *not* be someone who was involved in commerce, since, as Perret (179) points out, “this is precisely the type of joke that one must not make to a merchant.”

In addition to these arguments, the real strength of the case for the identification of Vergilius with the author of the *Aeneid* lies, according to the scholars of this group, in the distinctly Vergilian language and motives that, according to them, can be noticed especially in the description of spring in the first three stanzas of the ode. However, even if one concedes that Horace had in mind the world of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* when he wrote 4.12,⁵⁰⁰ does it necessarily follow, as Kirby (36) asks, that the addressee must be the author of the echoed passages? In spite of any possible lexical and stylistic similarities between 4.12 and various Vergilian passages, ultimately the identity of the addressee remains elusive, and, although critics may deplore this limitation of knowledge, the ambiguity only adds to the appeal of the ode. One could thus conclude that, while Vergilius could be Vergil the poet, it might just as well be an ordinary man, possibly a merchant, an

⁴⁹⁹See also Wili 358; Dornseiff 6.

⁵⁰⁰A ‘leap of faith’ since most of the examples offered are not entirely convincing. For a list of presumed Vergilian echoes, see Bowra (165f.), who, strangely enough, has persuaded many a critic that the entire poem is made up of borrowings from Vergil.

intimate to whom Horace, with grace, humor and style, dedicates his last spring poem as a token of friendship.

A final point that should be made before the detailed analysis of the poem is related to the general critical reception of the ode. Although numerous favorable commentaries have ‘redeemed’ 4.7 from the ‘bad name’ given by the disparagement of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (321), 4.12 has not fared so well in criticism. Thus, on the one hand, since critics have been feverishly preoccupied with the thorny problem of the addressee, the actual critical appreciation of the poem has been relegated to second place. On the other hand, the comparisons between 4.12 and the previous two spring poems written by Horace have been generally unfavorable to this ode. Thus, according to Quinn (1963, 9), “to the sensitive reader they [1.4 and 4.7] are, obviously and immediately, poetry in a way that iv, 12 is not,” since, in his view, both are “in craftsmanship as well as theme, demonstrably superior to iv, 12” (27). However, before judging the poetic qualities of 4.12, a ‘sensitive’ reader should first take into consideration the *entire* tradition of the genre, so that he may better appreciate the dexterity and grace put into the writing of this ode that combines, in a maze of literary associations, a spring poem with the ingredients of a sympotic invitation.

The poem, written in the Third Asclepiadean,⁵⁰¹ begins with a maritime scene (1-2) in which Horace deftly combines traditional and innovative elements to suggest both the excitement brought by the arrival of spring and the ambiguous nature of the vernal season, while alluding to the previous spring poems (see pp. 235f. and 238f.) and foreshadowing elements and motifs that will

⁵⁰¹ Since 1.4 was composed in the Third Archilochian and 4.7 in the First Archilochian, it can be argued that Horace deliberately employs variation at the metrical level in his cycle of spring poems to further increase each ode’s particular appeal.

appear later in the poem. Starting with the traditional *iam*, the description of the winds swelling the canvas hints at the resumption of sailing, and, announcing the arrival of spring, portrays the season as a bustling time, characterized by the resumption of traditional activities. At the same time, since the opening of the navigation season meant the recommencement of trade, the beginning of the poem may also foreshadow the commercial banter that follows in the second part of the ode. An apparently simple and straightforward scene, this passage contains nevertheless numerous nuances, as many words are distinguished by a remarkable abundance of meanings, some of them (gently) clashing with each other.

Thus, the word *comites*,⁵⁰² apart from personifying the Thracian winds (and thus, indirectly, the vernal season whose intrepid attendants they are) and introducing into the poem the idea of companionship (that will play such an important role in the second part of the ode), suggests also the image of spring arriving, as Quinn (1963, 8) puts it, “like an important official, with his retainers.”⁵⁰³ Although Quinn does not elaborate on the possible critical implications, one could argue that this image adds solemnity to the arrival of spring and thus emphasizes the importance of the vernal season, but at the same time, by hinting at the idea of rank,⁵⁰⁴ may foreshadow the notion of status and subordination present in the syntagm *iuvenum nobilium cliens* at line 15 of the poem.

Another interesting aspect of this passage is the semantic tension created by the juxtaposition of *temperant* (1) and *impellunt* (2), both in emphatic position at the end and the beginning of their respective lines. Thus, while the verb *temperant* (which hints at the stormy and excessive weather of winter) introduces into the poem the idea of control and moderation

⁵⁰² A clear allusion to Catullus’ *coetus comitum* (46.9). See p. 239. Cf. also Putnam 2006, 98.

⁵⁰³ For this sense of the word, see *OLD* s.v. 4a. The imagery of this passage may derive, as Quinn (1963, 8) points out, “from one of those half-personifications congenial to the Roman mind.”

⁵⁰⁴ See also *OLD* s.v. 2a.

(foreshadowing perhaps the notion of temperance and appropriateness that appears in line 28 in the syntagm *in loco*, through which the speaker aims to restrain, this time, the excessiveness of joy and celebration), the verb *impellunt* suggests the idea of force and movement.⁵⁰⁵ One could thus argue that, in the image of the winds stilling the sea, but swelling the sails, the soothing *temperant* stands in contrast with the dynamic *impellunt*, so that, as Commager (275) remarks, “the effect of *temperant*, *impellunt* (1-2) is almost that of an oxymoron, and prepares us for the paradoxical significance of spring that the second stanza brings out more clearly (5-8).”

However, the most arresting (and puzzling) aspect of this section is the replacement of the Zephyr, the traditional attendant of spring, with the Thracian winds. While no single explanation can be unequivocally accepted, and scholars are still at variance about the critical implications of this unexpected presence, the syntagm *animae Thraciae* brings into the poem a plethora of meanings and (sometimes opposing) associations. First, the metonymic use of *anima* for *ventus*, perhaps more than just “a pun on *άνεμοι*, the ordinary Greek word for winds” (Quinn 1963, 8), may reinforce the personification of winds and thus, presenting the Thracian winds as living beings, further associates the vernal season with life. However, the positive associations of *animae* are greatly outnumbered by the disturbing connotations of *Thraciae* (in emphatic position, at the end of the line). Thus, if one takes into consideration that the Thracian winds are associated elsewhere in Horace with cold, loneliness and old age (*Carm.* 1.25) and are depicted as violent and wintry blasts, which make the sea and the woods roar (*Epod.* 13.3), while Thrace itself appears as a remote and bellicose land (*Carm.* 2.16),⁵⁰⁶ white with snow (*Carm.* 3.25.10f.), through which the river Hebrus, the “companion of winter” (*Carm.* 1.25. 19) flows, the replacement of the tepid Zephyr by *animae*

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Quinn (1963, 9): “the winds’ urgent energy [...] is well suggested in *impellunt*.”

⁵⁰⁶ For the close connection of Thrace with Mars, cf. also Verg. *G.* 4.462 and *Aen.* 3.13f.

Thraciae does seem a rather bizarre choice. Indeed, since Thrace is also associated in Horace with Bacchus (*Carm.* 2.19), and the Thracians (in dire need of more refined sympotic manners) are depicted in an inebriated state (*Carm.* 1.27), one could argue that the word *Thraciae* may foreshadow the invitation to party from the second half of the ode. However, while important, these are not the primary associations of the word (especially when it refers to winds), and, as such, they cannot justify the ‘usurpation’ of the Zephyr by the Thracian winds.

In their attempt to explain the presence of *animae Thraciae*, critics have approached the problem from two different perspectives. Thus, some critics argue that, in spite of its Thracian origin, the wind mentioned here is the traditional Zephyr, and, to reinforce their view,⁵⁰⁷ cite Hom. *Il.* 9.5, where both Zephyr and Boreas are described as coming from Thrace.⁵⁰⁸ However, since “the warm west wind can only blow from Thrace when you are in the eastern Aegean [...] on the coast of Asia Minor” (Clay 132), the implication of this identification is that, “Horace [...] adopts a Greek [...] orientation,” and, therefore, “the spring-motif is totally Greek and seen from a Greek point of view, since Thracian winds could only signify winter to an Italian” (Williams 123). Considering the Greek origin of the genre of spring poems and the fact that Greek elements appear throughout the description of the season (see below), while one of the main characteristics of the poem is its great abundance of literary allusions, this interpretation, which takes into the account the fact that the location in which the speaker may be (or to which the speaker may refer) could be other than Italy, is worthy to be taken into consideration. However, since lines 15 and 17f. strongly suggest Italy as the setting of this poem, a more plausible explanation is given by the critics who, citing Columella 11.2.21 (*x. Cal. Mart. Venti Septentrionales, qui vocantur Ornithiae, per dies*

⁵⁰⁷ See, for example, Shorey 456; Smith 313; Gow 55; Garrison 362.

⁵⁰⁸ Horace may also allude to Virgil, since at *Aen.* 12.334 too, the Zephyrus is described as coming from Thrace.

triginta esse solent; tum et hirundo advenit),⁵⁰⁹ argue that *animae Thraciae* are just ‘winds from Thrace,’ that is to say, from *north*. Their presence in the vernal landscape is most likely meant to suggest the ambiguous nature of spring, since, as Putnam (2006, 99) remarks, “*animae Thraciae* [...] would mean for the ancient reader the north wind, bringing with it not reinvigorating warmth but a furtherance of winter’s chill.” Thus, together with the darker connotations of Thrace, and the tragic elements (which they foreshadow⁵¹⁰) from the following stanza, as well as the mention of the dark hills of Arcadia, *animae Thraciae* is the first element through which, as Clay (132) remarks, “Horace subtly undercuts his cheerful description of spring’s return,” and offers a more complex image of the vernal season, characterized not only by joy and celebration but also by contradiction and ambivalence.⁵¹¹

Another interesting aspect of line 2 is the use of the technical word *lintea*,⁵¹² and especially its (suggestive) position, since, surrounded by the *animae Thraciae*, the winds seem to compel the canvas even at the textual level. The passage contains also a variety of stylistic and sound effects (metonymy, personification, juxtaposition; use of peculiar meanings of words; assonance of *e* in the first line; rhyme in the second line - *animae lintea Thraciae*).

The next section of the poem contains the description of the vernal changes undergone by earth, presenting the image of the meadows (*prata*) and rivers (*fluvii*) no longer in the grip of winter (3-4). The presence of *iam* (again, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line) links this scene to the previous one, suggesting the idea that spring affects the entire natural world (sea, land, rivers).

⁵⁰⁹ See Page 441f. and Pemble 180.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Commager (275 n.35), who also, taking into account the ominous associations of the word *Thraciae*, considers that “they perhaps foreshadow the Thracian events described in the second stanza.”

⁵¹¹ At the same time, it could be argued that the martial connotation of Thrace ‘confer’ on the gentle Zephyr the necessary strength to be an efficient *comites* of spring, capable of calming the winter storms of the sea.

⁵¹² Cf. Quinn (1963, 9 n.1), who suggests that “Horace perhaps got it from Catullus (Poems 4.5; 64, 225 and 243).”

Although Quinn (1963, 9) considers (strangely enough) that “*iam nec prata rigent* expects perhaps rather much of the reader, who has to draw upon his memory of spring clichés and remember that the *ueris comites*, by their warmth, soften the frozen fields,” chances are the reader may not find this phrase particularly difficult to grasp, as the image is rather familiar (especially after 1.4. and 4.7) and the association of spring with the notion of liberation and release a traditional one. The negation (*nec*) of *rigent*, apart from indicating the change in temperature, hints at the idea that the arrival of the vernal season ends the restriction and immobility that ‘plagued’ the natural world during winter, an idea suggested in the previous passage by the opening of the navigation.

The image of the rivers no longer swollen by the (melting of) winter snow⁵¹³ may indicate, as several critics argue,⁵¹⁴ that the period of time referred to in this poem is late spring. However, the description is more likely just a traditional exemplification of the effects of spring at the natural level, which was not meant to point to a particular temporal frame. Worth noticing in this passage is the emphasis on the auditory aspect,⁵¹⁵ and also the use of *turgidi*, a word which, describing the physical aspect of the streams, suggests the fast melting of snow, therefore the rapid arrival of spring.

In the second stanza of the ode, Horace brings into the vernal landscape the swallow, surprising the reader with his innovative treatment of this traditional motif. The appearance of the swallow in 4.12 is distinguished by its extended mythological background, which stands, through its tragic tone, in sharp contrast to the vernal mood of the previous stanza. Although, according to

⁵¹³ According to Porter (1975, 199), this image may foreshadow the tragic mythological story from the following stanza, since, despite the fact that the surface connotations of the river motif are joyful, its presence is usually in Horace a ‘harbinger’ of a darker mood. While this may be true for 4.7, where the river motif could be associated with the theme of the passing of time and the river of the underworld, in 4.12 its presence is most likely meant only to suggest that the arrival of spring changes (for the better) the entire natural world.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Maclean 249; Page 442.

⁵¹⁵ Notice the almost onomatopoeic *strepunt*, in emphatic position at the end of the line.

Macleane (249), the distressing story “is gracefully introduced here to give ornament to a common fact and sign of spring,” for the majority of critics⁵¹⁶ the mythological excursus has more than just an ornamental function, as its darker side could be also seen as a statement about spring itself.

The passage starts with a simple and matter-of-fact phrase (*nidum ponit*, 5), which introduces into the poem the theme of renewal of life, as the image of the bird building her nest hints at the future offspring and, indirectly, presents spring as a season of birth. At the same time, the syntagm portrays the swallow as a caring (future) parent, deeply concerned with the safety and the comfort of her brood. However, in a surprising movement, the passage continues with the mention of Itys, her son, whom she herself killed to avenge Tereus’ *barbaras ... libidines* (7f.), and whom now, an *infelix avis*,⁵¹⁷ she is bewailing. Thus, at the thematic level, the focus of the poem suddenly shifts from the motif of birth to the motif of death, and “the preparations for life’s renewal and continuity, exemplified by the building of the nest, stand in painful contrast to the mythological allusion to the brutal and tragic tale of loss and murder” (Clay 132).

The presence of this mythological excursus changes, or at least blurs, the traditional associations of the swallow. Thus, as Commager (275) remarks, while in general (and in particular in the previous spring poems), the swallow is a “happy omen of the change, [...] Horace’s *infelix avis* is a bird of a different feather,” since “the harbinger of spring is at the same time a bird of ill omen, an ‘eternal disgrace’ whose ancestry is studded with violence and death.” The mythological tableau, bringing into the poem the idea of loss and death, ‘contaminates’ the vernal landscape and

⁵¹⁶ See, for example, Clay 132f; Commager 275f; Putnam 2006, 99.

⁵¹⁷ The existence of another variant of the myth in which Procne was changed into a nightingale, combined with the fact that the swallow is referred to in this poem only by periphrasis, has made some critics (Wickham 325; Smith 313; Putnam 2006, 100) wonder whether by *infelix avis* Horace meant the swallow or the nightingale. However, considering that the Roman poets usually use the variant in which Procne was metamorphosed into a swallow (see, for example, Ver. G. 4.15, Ov. *Met.* 6.412; cf. Gow 56), and taking into account the genre to which 4.12 belongs, *infelix avis* is very probably the traditional swallow.

suggests that spring, traditionally a time of unadulterated joy, is also an ambiguous season. At the same time, the story of Procne may also be seen as the story of the entire mankind, suggesting the idea that human condition is ‘plagued’ by loss, pain and sadness. Since the tragic mood of this tableau makes, by contrast, even more appealing the subsequent *gaudia* (21), the passage gives urgency to the *carpe diem* injunction from the second part of the ode, while its learned allusions (*Ilyn*, 5; *Cecropiae*, 6) may be intended to achieve elevation of style.

At the lexical and stylistic level, worth noticing in these lines is the qualification of the swallow as *infelix*, a word that points not only to her grief and unhappiness, but also to her childless condition (see *OLD* s.v. 1 and 3a).⁵¹⁸ Other words with multiple meanings, many of them most likely present here, are *libidines*, 7 (see *OLD* s.v. 1a; 2b; 3a and b), and *barbaras* (7), which indicates both the Thracian origin of the king Tereus and the savagery of his deed (see *OLD* s.v. 1b and 3). Suggestive also is the juxtaposition *male barbaras*, which puts on the same textual (and moral) level the two evils (the lust of Tereus and the cruel revenge). The passage contains also various sounds effects, for example, in lines 5f., as Commager (275) notices, “the plaintive *i* and *e* sounds [that] produce a mournful resonance.”

The ode continues in lines 9-12 with an idyllic vignette whose joyful mood, standing in sharp contrast to the tragic mythological excursus of the previous stanza,⁵¹⁹ immediately lightens the tone of the poem, foreshadowing the sympotic injunction that follows in lines 13-28. The pastoral tableau ends climatically the description of spring by bringing together the vegetal (*gramine*, 9), animal (*ovium*, 9f.; *pecus*, 11), human (*custodes*, 10) and divine (*deum*, 11) realms in

⁵¹⁸ Many other meanings of the word may be present here (see *OLD* s.v. 2a; 2b; 3b).

⁵¹⁹ Worth noticing is also the contrast in sound between the two passages. Thus, the tearful moan of the swallow from the previous stanza is replaced in this section by the joyful tunes of the piping shepherds.

a celebration of the vernal season, depicted as a time of singing (*carmina*, 10) and enjoyment (*delectant*, 11), a period closely associated with the idea of regeneration and fertility, suggested by the mention of vegetation, the qualification of the sheep as *pinguium* (9) and the presence of the god of flocks and fields.⁵²⁰

One of the most interesting aspects of the passage is the reference to Arcadia that, bringing another Greek (and innovative) element into the poem, may also be intended to ‘counteract’ the mention of Thrace at the beginning of the ode. Thus, although, like Thrace, Arcadia is a remote (and primitive) country, in contrast to the ominous overtones of *animae Thraciae* (2), the syntagm *colles Arcadiae* (12) evokes a world of natural beauty and idyllic bliss, a *locus amoenus* inhabited by happy shepherds and rustic deities.⁵²¹ However, as the majority of critics have noticed,⁵²² the qualification of *colles* as *nigri* (in emphatic position at the end of the line), anticipates the death’s black flames (*nigrorum ignium*, 26) and brings a tinge of melancholy even in this paradisiacal landscape, although, considering the mountainous terrain of Arcadia, the adjective may just refer to the shade of the evergreen vegetation.⁵²³

The mood of excitement at spring’s coming and the joy brought by the season is suggested in this passage not only by the presence of the piping shepherds, but also by the use of *delectant* (11), placed in emphatic position at the beginning of the line. The idea of pleasure is also highlighted, at the end of the stanza, by *placent* (12). However, while hinting at the fact that the god

⁵²⁰ Although the god is not directly named, the mention of Arcadia and the pleasure he takes in music and animals, allows his identification with Pan, the god of flocks and fields. See p. 214.

⁵²¹ In their effort to prove that the addressee of 4.12 is Vergilius, the poet, some critics have considered the entire passage an allusion to Virgil’s *Eclogues* (see Belmont 16; Bowra 166; Clay 133; Garrison 362). However, since the ingredients of this tableau (the piping shepherds, the grazing sheep and the rustic god) are not exclusively Vergilian, but traditional pastoral elements, they do not constitute a conclusive proof regarding the identity of the addressee.

⁵²² See for example Reckford (1969) 128; Hamar 142; Clay 133.

⁵²³ Cf. Garrison 363. For the meaning, ‘black from absence of light, dark, shadowy,’ see *OLD* s.v. 3a. One could notice the subtle contrast between this line and the succeeding one, as the reference to shade is followed by the mention of the thirst (*sitim*, 13) brought by the season.

is 'affected' both at the auditory (*carmina*, 10) and visual (*colles*, 12) level, the verb does not refer to an action that happens only in spring, so it does not "needlessly repeat *delectant*," as Quinn (1963 11) argues, but is most likely meant to serve as an element of identification, suggesting that the divinity referred to in this passage is Pan, the god of Arcadia.

One may also notice in the passage the suggestive position of *custodes* (10), who stands (as a good shepherd should), even at the textual level, among his *pinguium ovium* (9f.), a witty touch that enhances the light-hearted tone of these lines. At the same time, the use of *placent* may be intended to bring a tinge of humor into the description of the god, since the verb could also have erotic undertones (see *OLD* s.v. 2c) that fit the amatory proclivities of Pan. Worth mentioning is also the juxtaposition *carmina fistula* (10), that puts together the songs and the instrument that produces them.

The description of spring concludes thus on a note of joy and harmony. In contrast to the previous stanza, in which the description of Procne suggested the idea that human life could be cruel and horrific, this stanza offers a more positive picture that leads directly into the injunction to enjoy oneself.⁵²⁴ One could conclude that, in spite of a few disturbing elements, Horace, presents in 4.12 a vernal season that affects the entire world (sea, winds, land, rivers, hills; animals, man, god) for the better.

In contrast to the previous spring poems, the arrival of the vernal season prompts in 4.12 a lengthy sympotic injunction (lines 13-28), distinguished by its humorous and light-hearted tone. The metamorphosis from a spring poem to a convivial invitation is facilitated by the (largely)

⁵²⁴ One could even argue that the presence of Pan may foreshadow the idea of foolishness suggested in the last line of the poem by the verb *desipere*.

cheerful description of the season, while, in its turn, the generic admixture, by combining the vernal and the sympotic mood, increases the overall playfulness and optimism of the poem.⁵²⁵

The first stanza of the invitation (lines 13-16), describing the vernal season as a time that brings thirst (*sitim*, 13) - a succinct and arresting way of associating spring with the *carpe diem* motif⁵²⁶ - offers also the 'liberating' antidote, namely a choice wine (*pressum Calibus ... Liberum*, 14). However, in a jocular (and rather unexpected) twist, the invitee is warned that, in order to quench his thirst, he *must* first reciprocate by bringing nard to the banquet. Apart from (passionately) attempting to discover the identity of Vergilius and the possible implication(s) of the phrase *iuvenum nobilium cliens* (see above), the majority of critics⁵²⁷ have also noticed that the sympotic invitation of 4.12 is a witty imitation of Catullus 13, in which the poet playfully invites his friend Fabullus to dinner, making clear, however, that the guest must bring the meal (and all the other ingredients of a successful party, like wine, wit, laughter and, especially, the indispensable *candida puella*, 13.3f.), while he, as a good host, promises to supply a wonderful *unguentum* given, in fact, (to Lesbia) by Venus and Cupids (13.11f.). However, in contrast to Catullus' poem, in 4.12 the bargain is reversed, as this time the guest must supply the nard if he wants to quaff the wine, an innovative variation through which Horace, while hinting at Catullus 13, succeeds in distancing his ode from it.

The presence of this Catullan allusion has a double function in 4.12. Thus, on the one hand, since Horace's spring poem begins with an obvious allusion to Catullus' spring poem (see the

⁵²⁵ The *memento mori* warning of lines 25f. does not spoil the joyful mood of the invitation but only increases the urgency of the *carpe diem* appeal.

⁵²⁶ Although this is the first time in the tradition of the genre when spring is defined as a period that prompts the sympotic urge, Horace is not the first poet to associate the vernal season with drinking. An earlier author who might have influenced Horace is Alcaeus, who, in fr. 367, directly connects the arrival of spring with the urgent (τάχιστα) need of drinking wine.

⁵²⁷ See, for example, Clay 130; Ferguson 11; Garrison 362; Smith 313; Wickham 325; Williams 1968, 122.

discussion on *iam veris*, 4.12.1 - *iam ver*, *Cat.* 46.1, p. 216), the fact that the second part of 4.12 (when the ode becomes an invitation poem) contains a clear allusion to Catullus 13 (an invitation poem, too) is not only a remarkable (although unnoticed in previous scholarship on the poem) display of virtuosity, but also a subtle (and learned) way of bringing symmetry at the structural and thematic level of the ode. On the other hand, since in the second part of 4.12 Horace adopts a playful and witty tone, the reference to a poem written (by a different author, but) in the same vein (and distinguished by its light-hearted mood and numerous teasing associations) creates a background that reinforces the humorous mood of his sympotic invitation, while allowing him to display his skill in using the technique of variation.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of this stanza is the metonymic use of *Liberum*, in emphatic position at the end of line 14. As the counterpart of the Greek god Bacchus, apart from giving the passage a strong Roman flavor, the presence of the deity (whose name hints, through its etymology,⁵²⁸ at the liberating effect of wine) stands in contrast to the subordinated social status of the addressee (*cliens*, in emphatic position too, at the end of line 15) to whom he may give a (temporary) relief from cares, and foreshadows the losing of inhibitions suggested in line 28 by the verb *desipere*. The emphasis on the idea of liberation could be, in fact, considered the first element (of a long series) through which Vergilius is indirectly characterized. Thus, together with the ‘barrage’ of humorous and teasing allusions that will follow - such as the syntagm *iuvenum nobilium cliens*, 15 (that portrays the addressee as an individual concerned with his social status, and eager to be in the company of the young aristocrats of the day), the reference to *studium lucri*, 25 (that suggests his earnest effort to make money) and the injunction from 25f., that reveals his

⁵²⁸ See, for example, Paschalis 185, Page 442; Clay 134. Cf. Maltby s.v.

apparent need to be reminded to ‘dilute’ (once in a while, at least) his tedious seriousness with some exciting foolishness (*stultitiam*, 27), in order, perhaps, to become a more pleasant and ‘sweet’ (*dulce*, 28) person - the reference to the loosening effect of wine, gives ‘flesh’ and individuality (though not precise identity) to the enigmatic addressee of the ode.

One could also say that, the presence in a single stanza of two terms for wine - *Liberum* (14) and *vina* (16) - emphasizes the sympotic dimension of the passage, while the reference to a god brings elevation of style and confers on the convivial injunction an almost ritualistic dimension.

Worth mentioning in these lines is also the witty (and rhyming) syntagm *pressum ... Liberum* (14), which suggests, as Putnam (2006, 96) remarks, the paradoxical image of “the ‘Freer’ who has to be ‘confined’ in order to fulfill his role,” and the presence in line 15 of yet another rhyme (*iuvenum nobilium*). Although it could be an unintentional effect, the rhyming syntagms, (placed in succeeding lines) do put together, and thus contrast, the young aristocrats whose *cliens* Vergilius is now, and the wine under whose influence the addressee of the ode will (hopefully) be soon.

The juxtaposition *nardo vina* (16) could be also considered another suggestive element of these lines, since, as the following stanza (lines 17-20) is almost entirely devoted to the praising description of the wine, while the spikenard is granted only three words, this is the only instance in the poem when the items of the proposed barter are placed (at least at the textual level) ‘on equal foot.’ The high quality of wine is suggested in this passage by the mention of *Calibus* (14), a renowned wine-producing center in Campania,⁵²⁹ which further indicates - together with the name of the addressee (*Vergili*, 13), the presence of *Liberum*, and the reference to one of the main

⁵²⁹ Cf. Garrison 362.

institutions of social life in Horace's time (*cliens*, 15) - the Roman setting and tone of the second part of the poem.

In the following section (lines 17-20), the speaker gives the specific details of the bargain, and, in order to persuade the addressee to accept the proposed exchange, downplays the value of the nard, while praising the high quality of the wine. The two items are first compared from a quantitative point of view. Thus, the qualification of the flask (*onyx*, again a metonymic use of a word) of nard as *parvus* is intended to suggest that the exchange would be clearly advantageous for Vergilius since only a small quantity of perfume is necessary for coaxing forth an entire cask of very fine wine (*cadum*, 17).⁵³⁰ Without any other reference to Virgil's contribution,⁵³¹ line 18 continues the praising of wine by disclosing the present whereabouts of the jar, namely the Sulpician warehouses,⁵³² a detail most likely intended to suggest, as Clay (135) remarks, that the wine "not only is [...] of the finest origin - a *premier cru*, so to speak, *pressum Calibis* from Campania, home of Massic and Falernian - but it has also been properly aged, having rested in Sulpician *horrea* - clearly a wine reserved for a very special occasion." However, as the next two lines (19f.) reveal, what should make the bargain really appealing to Vergilius is the wondrous quality of the wine to confer new hopes (*spes*, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line) and

⁵³⁰ See also Gow (55), who considers that "the contrast of the little scent-box with the huge *cadus* is meant to be comic."

⁵³¹ While not an everyday item, nard, an ointment highly esteemed in Rome (see Pliny, *H.N.* 12.26), was obviously a luxury that Horace could afford, as its constant mention in his poems indicates. Since elsewhere (*Carm.* 2.11.16 and *Epod.* 13.9) nard appears as an essential part of the sympotic trappings, while in *Epod.* 5.59f. its excessive use (*nardo perunctum*) betrays a lecherous old man (*senem adulterum*), its presence in 4.12 functions as a marker of the *carpe diem* motif. Considering the allusion to *Cat.* 13 (see above), as the *unguentum* promised to Fabullus is of a rather special origin and nature, the reference to the more mundane nard could be also seen as a variation on Catullus' poem. At the same time, its mention could be an indirect allusion to trade, and thus it may bring another humorous element into the ode, since, as the arrival of spring meant the commencement of trading, if the addressee of the poem were indeed a merchant, the man of commerce would have expected to be told to renew his activity and bring nard to Rome to make money, not to use it himself in Rome, in order to gain access to a banquet.

⁵³² As Page (443) explains, "these warehouses, which were on the Tibur at the foot of the Aventine, subsequently became part of the imperial domain, and were well known as the *horrea Galbiana*."

its efficiency in washing away the bitterness of cares. A traditional marker of the *carpe diem* motif, wine functions in this poem as a link between the sympotic world and the vernal season, associating spring with the idea of renewal (*novas*, 19) of hopes and lack of cares.⁵³³

The function of the sympotic invitation disguised as an exchange of items is to bring humor into the poem, since, if the addressee is a merchant (as seems to be the case) and the nard was not a very expensive item, the light-hearted *quid pro quo* demand appears as an appropriate (but teasing) way of enticing to a party someone who cannot resist the temptation of a good bargain (in this case an entire jar of excellent wine for a small quantity of nard).

A noteworthy aspect of these lines is the use of *eliciet* (17), a verb with multiple meanings, some of them possibly present in the passage⁵³⁴ and most likely intended to personify the wine jar. At the same time, as Putnam (96) remarks, the description of the jug “at rest waiting other instructions, abets the personification,” and, with wit and humor, evokes also a familiar sympotic scene, since the verb *accubat* (18), as Allcroft-Hayes (248) notice, “is frequently used of ‘reclining at table,’ according to the Roman custom.”⁵³⁵ The personification of *cadum* is also suggested by the verb *donare* (19) that describes the new hopes (*spes novas*) as a gift of the wine jar,⁵³⁶ that seems to replace the *iuvenum nobilium* (15) as it could be seen as a (temporary but) powerful (*efficax*, 20) and generous (*largus*, 19) patron of Vergil, the *cliens*. The qualification of the wine jar (offered by the poet) as *largus* may also be intended to indirectly (and witty) characterize Horace himself as a generous host.

⁵³³ One may notice that the idea of bitterness (*amara*) of cares foreshadows (and opposes) the sweetness brought by the mixture of folly and sagacity (*dulce*, 28) at the end of the poem.

⁵³⁴ See *OLD* s.v. 1a “to coax, entice, or lure out”; 1c “to entice to some action specified or implied”; 2a “to call forth, summon (persons)”; 4a “(of persons, circumstances, etc.) to excite, arise, awaken (a latent quality, feeling, etc.).”

⁵³⁵ For this sense of the word, see *OLD* s.v. 1.

⁵³⁶ See *OLD* s.v. 1.

Although the mention of the bitterness of cares could be seen as a disturbing element that reminds one of the suffering that defines human condition, these lines too continue and enhance the optimistic mood of the *carpe diem* motif.

In the next section of the poem (lines 21-24), the invitee is warned that his eagerness (*properas*, 21) to partake in the pleasures (*gaudia*, 21) brought by wine must be accompanied by an equal haste (*velox*, in emphatic position at the beginning of line 22) in bringing his own contribution (*merce*, 22) to the symposium, since the host, unlike a rich man in a well-stocked house, (cannot afford, and thus) has no intention of letting his guest drink to his heart's content (*tingere*, 23) without paying a share (*immunem*, 23). As the previous two stanzas, this passage too is characterized by a lighthearted and witty tone. However, while in the preceding lines (17-20), the poet, in order to convince Vergilius of the advantageous nature of the bargain, presented himself as a generous host, in this section he changes the 'tactic,' and, by alluding to the fact that he is, in fact, a man of rather modest means, who cannot compete in largesse with a rich man, emphasizes the *quid pro quo* basis of the symposium, an idea that is also reinforced by the commercial language (*merce*, 22; *immunem*, 23) of these lines. The terms of barter and exchange, together with the reference to *dives* (24), bring also a teasing dimension into the stanza since they allude both to the mercantile nature of the addressee (foreshadowing the *studium lucri* of line 25) and to the fact that the guest is very likely one of those rich men,⁵³⁷ and, as such, he should not even contemplate the possibility of coming to a party without bringing something as a compensation. A humorous note is also brought into the passage by *tingere* that hints at the saturating effect of wine and, teasingly presenting Vergilius as an

⁵³⁷ Cf. Belmont (18), who remarks that "*plena dives ut in domo* (24) [...] certainly ties in with the *iuvenum nobilium cliens* of verse 15."

almost insatiable drinker who would deplete Horace's reserve of wine, may also suggest that the addressee has a lot of *curae* and, as such, he is in dire need of the *spes novae* brought by wine.

Another aspect worth mentioning of this stanza is the emphasis on the (presumed) eagerness and haste of the guest (expressed by *properas*, 21 and *velox*, 22) that could be seen as an indirect praise of the wine offered (since it suggests its irresistible appeal), while further linking the vernal season with the notion of desire and dynamism.

At the stylistic level, one may notice in these lines the rhyme *meis... poculis* (22f.), the suggestive juxtaposition *ego te* (22), that puts together, as Page (442) notices, the poor poet and the rich money-maker, and also the witty positioning of *dives* within *plena domo* in line 24.

The last stanza of the poem contains a reiteration of the invitation to the symposium (lines 25-28). Thus, after an (almost impatient) injunction to put aside any delays and monetary pursuits (25), followed by a *memento mori* (26) meant to give urgency to the *carpe diem* injunction, the ode concludes with a *sententia* urging the addressee to enjoy the sweetness (*dulce*, 28) brought to life by a mixture of serious plans (*consiliis*, 27) and brief follies (*stultitiam brevem*, 27).

Although (especially in contrast to the previous three stanzas) the tone of this passage is less lighthearted and playful, these lines too contain teasing elements, as the (rather controversial⁵³⁸) expression *studium lucri* (25) hints at the perpetual quest for profit, an ingrained personality trait of a merchant, while the injunction to cast apart his (business) plans (27), portrays Vergilius as a (too) serious person, in dire need of relaxation. Worth noticing in line 25 is the (apparent oxymoronic) juxtaposition *moras... studium* that puts together the irreconcilable notions of delay and eagerness,

⁵³⁸ For a survey of the critical discussions surrounding this phrase, see p. 225. Leaving aside the controversy, one may notice the numerous meanings brought into the passage by *studium* ('earnest application of one's attention or energies to some specified or implied object, zeal, ardour'; inclination towards a thing, desire, fancy'; 'enthusiasm, eagerness (for)', see *OLD* s.v. 1a, b; 2).

a subtle way of pointing out the differences in *Weltanschauung* between the host and the addressee, since, what is for Horace just an annoying delay, for the merchant is a time dedicated to his zest for profit, Horace urging in fact the addressee to delay, but his mercantile endeavors not the coming to the party, and, leaving aside his thirst for gain, to quench first the thirst brought by spring.

The mention in line 26 of *nigrorumque ignium* - a striking phrase and an oxymoronic juxtaposition⁵³⁹ - evokes, as the majority of critics remark,⁵⁴⁰ the gloomy image of the funeral pyre, which, together with the phrase *dum licet* that hints at the brevity of human life, constitutes an effective *memento mori* that enhances the urgency of enjoying life while it lasts.⁵⁴¹ Apart from the ominous associations,⁵⁴² the qualification of *ignium* as *nigrorum*, recalling the black hills of Arcadia from 11f., brings also into the poem an element of symmetry, since it links the end of the description of spring to the end of the reactions prompted by the season.

The injunction to mix serious plans (*consiliis*) with brief follies (*stultitiam brevem*) that follows in line 27 shifts again the focus of the poem to the *carpe diem* motif. Worth mentioning here is especially the use of *misce*, a verb that (wittily enough) alludes perhaps to the Roman practice of diluting the wine with water,⁵⁴³ and, as such, both foreshadows the party that will soon follow and seems to project the entire human life into a sympotic dimension. However, as the

⁵³⁹ Perhaps also a Vergilian reminiscence (see *Aen.* 4.384; 11.186).

⁵⁴⁰ See for example Clay 126; Garrison 363.

⁵⁴¹ It is worth noticing the emphatic position of both *nigrorumque* and *ignium*, at the beginning and at the end of the line, and especially the fact that, at least at the textual level, the entire human life (*dum licet*) is surrounded (as it should be (*memor*) by their of ominous presence.

⁵⁴² Worth noticing in the passage are the numerous (gloomy) meanings brought by *niger* (see *OLD* s.v. 4b '(of fire, light) murky, smoky'; 7 'black as the colour associated with death or the dead, dark, somber: a (of the Underworld, or things associated with it); 8 'black as a colour of ill omen').

⁵⁴³ For this sense of the verb, see *OLD* s.v. 1b. A polysemantic word, *misce* may bring into the passage many other meanings (see *OLD* s.v. 1a 'to mix or blend (two substances together, or one substance with another)'; 1d 'to stir, mix (a homogeneous substance)'; 1e 'to introduce as an ingredient, mix in'; 2a 'to produce (a substance) by mixing, compound, concoct, or sim. (also transf. or fig.); 3a 'to entwine, interlock; 3c 'to unite or merge (what has been separated); 5a 'to combine or attach as allies or associates.'

qualification of *stultitiam* as *brevem* (in emphatic position at the end of the line) suggests, what Horace recommends here is only the right mixture of things in life, the idea of measure and equilibrium being also perhaps suggested by the metrical equivalence of *stultitiam* and *consiliis*.⁵⁴⁴ Thus, rejecting both the morose seriousness and the excessiveness of joy and celebration, the ending of the poem, as Reckford (1969, 129) remarks, “gives no incitement to riot or rebellion. Folly must be brief and in place. So controlled, it is part of life’s wisdom, of the right ‘mixture’ that Horace embodies and recommends; but carried further, it is very ugly.”

The poem ends with a *carpe diem* sententia that pointedly restates the idea that enjoyment (*dulce*) in life is brought by an occasional and appropriate⁵⁴⁵ (*in loco*) indulging in foolishness (*desipere*). However, in spite of the idea of moderation suggested by the syntagm *in loco*, the use of *desipere* (‘to be out of one’s mind, to lose one’s reason,’ see *OLD* s.v. 1a) may suggest that Horace is contemplating a rather heavy drinking at the upcoming party.

To conclude the analysis of this poem, one could say that 4.7 could be in itself considered an example of *dulce est desipere in loco*, an ode which, distinguished by its light-hearted tone, cheerful mood and abundance of teasing elements and literary allusions, ends the cycle of Horatian spring poems on an optimistic tone, redeeming spring, a season that here, in contrast to 1.4 and 4.7, appears not as a reminder of the tragic human condition, but as a suitable time (*in loco*) for enjoyment and cheerful celebration.

⁵⁴⁴ Again, a word with numerous meanings, many of them most likely present in the passage (see *OLD* s.v. 5b ‘an intended course of action, plan, policy’; 7 ‘the exercise of judgement or discernment’; 8 ‘a capacity for judgement or invention, mental ability, intelligence, sense’). Cf. Reckford, 1969, 129.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Commager (277), who remarks that “*in loco* [...] refers not to a single moment, but appeals to a more ample sense of what is fitting: ἐν κούρω.” See also Gow 575.

Chapter VII

Ovid *Trist.* 3.12⁵⁴⁶

FRIGORA iam Zephyri minuunt, annoque peracto longior antiquis visa Maeotis hiems, inpositamque sibi qui non bene pertulit Hellen, tempora nocturnis aequa diurna facit.	
iam violam puerique legunt hilaresque puellae, rustica quae nullo nata serente venit;	5
prataque pubescunt variorum flore colorum, indocilique loquax gutture vernat avis;	
utque malae matris crimen deponat hirundo sub trabibus cunas tectaque parva facit;	10
herbaque, quae latuit Cerealibus obruta sulcis, exit et expandit molle cacumen humo;	
quoque loco est vitis, de palmite gemma movetur: nam procul a Getico litore vitis abest;	
quoque loco est arbor, turgescit in arbore ramus: nam procul a Geticis finibus arbor abest.	
otia nunc istic, iunctisque ex ordine ludis cedunt verbosi garrula bella fori.	
usus equi nunc est, levibus nunc luditur armis, nunc pila, nunc celeri volvitur orbe trochus;	20
nunc ubi perfusa est oleo labente iuventus, defessos artus Virgine tingit aqua.	
scaena viget studiisque favor distantibus ardet, proque tribus resonant terna theatra foris.	
o quantum et quotiens non est numerare, beatum, non interdicta cui licet urbe frui!	25
at mihi sentitur nix verno sole soluta, quaeque lacu durae non fodiantur aquae:	
nec mare concrevit glacie, nec, ut ante, per Histrum stridula Sauromates plaustra bubulcus agit.	30
incipient aliquae tamen huc adnare carinae, hospitaque in Ponti litore puppis erit.	
sedulus occurram nautae, dictaque salute, quid veniat, quaeram, quisve quibusve locis.	
ille quidem mirum ni de regione propinqua non nisi vicinas tutus ararit aquas.	35
rarus ab Italia tantum mare navita transit, litora rarus in haec portubus orba venit.	
sive tamen Graeca scierit, sive ille Latina voce loqui (certe gratior huius erit;	40
fas quoque ab ore freti longaeque Propontidos undis huc aliquem certo vela dedisse Noto),	

⁵⁴⁶ The Latin text is that of Owen's Oxford edition (1915).

quisquis is est, memori rumore voce referre
 et fieri famae parsque gradusque potest.
 is, precor, auditos possit narrare triumphos 45
 Caesaris et Latio reddita vota Iovi,
 teque, rebellatrix, tandem, Germania, magni
 triste caput pedibus supposuisse ducis.
 haec mihi qui referet, quae non vidisse dolebo,
 ille meae domui protinus hospes erit. 50
 ei mihi, iamne domus Scythico Nasonis in orbe est?
 iamque suum mihi dat pro Lare poena locum?
 di facite ut Caesar non hic penetrare domumque,
 hospitium poenae sed velit esse meae.

Tristia 3.12, the last (known) spring poem in the Latin tradition of the genre,⁵⁴⁷ is a highly innovative piece of writing, distinguished by its length,⁵⁴⁸ generic admixture and abundance of allusions to its literary antecedents. With a remarkable ingenuity, Ovid uses the structure and (some of) the conventional elements of a spring poem to write a poem about his exile, a poetic supplication, in fact, meant to gain sympathy and support among readers at Rome, and thus, to facilitate his recall to the capital or at least the change of his place of relegation. However, partly because literary criticism on Ovid's exilic poetry "still remains one of the last frontiers of classical scholarship" (Nagle 5),⁵⁴⁹ the poem, in spite of its undisputable merits, has been largely neglected. Thus, although a few scholars have indeed provided a general critical assessment of *Tr.* 3.12,⁵⁵⁰ no

⁵⁴⁷ The third book of *Tristia* was completed and sent to Rome for publication in 10 A.D. For the chronology, see Evans 50. Cf. Wilamowitz 301f.; Syme 38.

⁵⁴⁸ With its 54 lines, *Tr.* 3.12 is by far the longest spring poem.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. also Evans (1), who explains this lack of criticism by the fact that "scholarly interest in the exile poetry has been largely concerned not with the poems themselves, but with the autobiographical information they present, the chronology of their publication, and the prosopography of Ovid's addressees."

⁵⁵⁰ See especially Kenney (1965, 43f.), Nagle (1980, 42) and Evans (1983, 64f.). However, even they offer a rather limited examination of *Tr.* 3.12 and especially of its status as a spring poem. Thus, although Evans (64) remarks that *Tr.* 3.12 is "a variation on a well-known literary model," he does not provide further details and the rest of his discussion is mostly of a descriptive nature. A more extensive treatment is to be found in Kenney and Nagle, who do mention the Hellenistic epigrams as its literary antecedents but focus their discussion on a (rather brief) comparison between *Tr.* 3.12 and the previous Latin spring poems (Catullus 46; Horace *Carmina* 1.4, 4.7, 4.12).

detailed commentary or rigorous analysis of its relationship with the previous spring poems (and especially with the Greek epigrams)⁵⁵¹ has been yet undertaken.

The adherence of *Tr.* 3.12 to the genre (and Ovid's clear intent to allude to the Greek tradition) is revealed by the numerous similarities with the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology*. Thus, recalling *A.P.* 10.1.1 and 10.2.1, epigrams that start with an indirect announcement of the arrival of spring, Ovid begins his poem with a reference to the end of winter, the image of the cold (*frigora*, 1) abated by the traditional Zephyr indirectly suggesting the fair weather of the vernal season. As further reminders of the Greek tradition, *Tr.* 3.12 contains also numerous references to the fertility and beauty of spring. Thus, the mention of *violam* in line 5, the image of the meadows (*prata*) clad with variegated flowers (*variorum flore colorum*, 7) and the description of the budding grain (11f.), vines (13) and trees (15) bring into the poem the traditional associations of the season and recall the references to flowers, vegetation and blossoming meadows in *A.P.* 10.1.3; 10.2.4 and, possibly, *A.P.* 9.363 1-6. At the same time, the mention of the prattling birds (*loquax avis*, 8) and the image of the swallow building her nest (9f.) remind the reader of the swallow of *A.P.* 10.1.1, 2.3f. and, possibly, of the numerous birds mentioned in *A.P.* 9.363 15ff. Similar to the epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*, the poem contains in line 29 a description of the sea no longer in the grip of winter, recalling *A.P.* 10.1.3f. and especially *A.P.* 10.2.1f., where Antipater of Sidon uses the same technique (indirect characterization by the negation of its winter features) to describe the vernal sea, while the references to ships (*carinae*, 31; *puppis*, 32), shores (*litore*, 14; *litore*, 32; *litora*, 38), harbours (*portubus*, 38), sailors (*nautae*, 33; *navita*, 37) and

⁵⁵¹ Apart from *Cat.* 46 and Horace 1.4, 4.7, 4.12, the previous spring poems are *A.P.* 10.1, 2 (and also possibly *A.P.* 9.363 and 10.4.).

seafaring (*adnare*, 31; *vela dedisse*, 42), strongly associate (and thus recall the Greek tradition of the genre) the arrival of spring with the opening of the sailing season.

Another aspect of *Tr.* 3.12 that reminds one of the Greek epigrams is the depiction of spring as a time of dynamism and bustling activity. However, while in the spring poems of the *Palatine Anthology*, only Priapus' injunction(s) addressed to the sailor(s) to begin navigation and trade associates spring with the idea of action, in Ovid's poem, apart from the beginning of sailing (31f.), the notion of dynamism is also brought out by the vivid depiction of the vernal *ludi* (17-24).

Apart from the similarities with the Greek epigrams, the status of *Tr.* 3.12 as a spring poem is also 'reinforced' by the presence of numerous elements that remind the reader of the Latin tradition of the genre. Thus, the poem not only starts with a direct allusion to *Cat.* 46, but, through the initial reference to the end of winter, *also* recalls the beginning of *Hor. Carm.* 1.4 and 4.7.⁵⁵² Another Catullan allusion is also perhaps to be found in line 4, which, as Nagle (42) remarks, "expands on the word *aequinoctialis* in *Cat.* 46.2, while the mention of various flowers (5 and 7), the depiction of the budding trees (15) and the various references to the fertility of the season (11ff.) may remind the reader of the return of vernal vegetation in *Hor. Carm.* 4.7.1f. Another element in common with Horace's spring poems is the description of the swallow in lines 9-10, clearly recalling, through its (tragic) mythological allusion, the image of the unhappy bird in 4.12. 5-8, while the depiction of spring as a time of merriment (*hilares*, 5) and cheerful celebration (17-24)

⁵⁵² As Nagle (42) observes, the phrase *iam Zephyri* (1) recalls *iam.../...Zephyri... aureis* (*Cat.* 46.2-3). At the same time, the syntagm *Frigora iam Zephyri minuunt* recalls *frigora mitescunt Zephyris* (*Hor. Carm.* 4.7 9), while the phrase *nix verno sole soluta* (27), that begins the second description of spring in Ovid's poem, clearly recalls *Solvitur... hiems grata vice* (*Hor. Carm.* 1.4.1). For a discussion on the significance of these literary allusions, see below the detailed analysis of the poem.

may recall the festive dance of the Graces and nymphs in 1.4.5ff. and 4.7.5f., hinting also perhaps at the extensive use of the (vernal) *carpe diem* motif in 4.12.

Like all the other Latin spring poems, *Tr.* 3.12 contains also a profusion of elements (*Cerealibus*, 11; *Virgine*, 22; *Italia*, 37; *Latina*, 39; *Caesaris et Latio*; *Iovi*, 46; *Lare*, 52; *Caesar*, 53) that gives the poem a strong Roman flavour, while the presence of historical (*Caesaris*, 46; *Caesar*, 53) and mythological (*Hellen*, 3; *Cerealibus*, 11; *Virgine*, 22; *Lare*, 52) references recalls Horace's use of historical (or quasi-historical) figures in 4.7.15 and the various mythological allusions of 1.4, 4.7 and 4.12. At the same time, the presence of numerous geographical references (*Histrum*, 29; *Ponti*, 32; *Italia*, 37; *Propontidos*, 41; *Latio*, 46; *Germania*, 47) reminds one of Catullus' spring poem (with its *Phrygii*, 4; *Nicaeae*, 5 and *Asiae*, 6), while the urban aspect, strongly implied in Ovid's nostalgia for Rome, recalls Catullus' eager desire to reach the bright cities of Asia. Nevertheless, perhaps the most important characteristic of *Tr.* 3.12 that situates the poem into the Latin tradition of the genre is the complexity of the reactions prompted by the arrival of spring (see below) and especially the thematic admixture that recalls the thematic innovations present in all the previous Latin spring poems.

However, while recalling both the Greek and Latin tradition of the genre, *Tr.* 3.12 contains also an abundance of new structural and thematic aspects. The striving for innovation and the great ingenuity employed in this poem are first to be found at the structural level, where Ovid succeeds in a triple 'ruse.' Thus, as in the first 24 lines the reader is 'deceived' (by the numerous conventional elements) into believing that the description of the vernal season is part of yet another traditional spring poem, only to discover in lines 27-32 another description of spring, followed by a long section (33-50) that introduces the theme of exile and a last couplet in which the poet, realizing his

painful condition (51f.), prays (*di facite*) that Caesar may pardon him (53f.), one may think that *Tr.* 3.12 departs radically from the traditional schema of a spring poem. A closer look at the poem reveals however that Ovid abandons only the traditional *succession* of elements (namely, the description of spring followed by the reactions prompted by the season), as *Tr.* 3.12 contains in fact the same basic components of a spring poem. What is remarkable is only the fact that the reactions prompted by spring include *another* description of the vernal season. Thus, in an ingenious and totally unexpected move, the poem begins with a reaction prompted by the season, as the actual spring experienced in Tomis (27-32) prompts the recollection of how spring is at Rome (1-24), a nostalgic remembrance of an ‘ideal’ spring (hence the great profusion of traditional elements).⁵⁵³

Apart from ‘deceiving’ the reader, the presence in Ovid’s poem of two descriptions of the vernal season (even if one of them is only a nostalgic recollection) is a highly innovative aspect that distinguishes *Tr.* 3.12 from all the other spring poems. Noteworthy is also the great length (and the abundance of details) that characterizes the description of the ‘ideal’ spring (24 lines, the longest description of the season in the tradition of the genre⁵⁵⁴), and also its (suggestive) juxtaposition with the much shorter (only 4 lines) description of the actual spring at Tomis that indirectly emphasizes the contrast between the happiness of his former life and the present circumstances.

In addition to the innovation at the structural level, one could also notice that *Tr.* 3.12 contains new human (*puerique... puellae*, 5; *iuventus*, 21; *bubulcus*, 30) presences, and numerous

⁵⁵³ Although Evans (64) offers an elegant structural model of the poem, which, in his view, “divides itself neatly into two halves with a concluding couplet,” one could argue, taking into the consideration the adherence of *Tr.* 3.12 to the genre, that the poem divides into the following parts:

1-26: the description of spring at Rome as a reaction prompted by the arrival of the vernal season.

27-32: the description of the actual spring at Tomis.

33-54: another reactions prompted by the arrival of spring, namely the eager anticipation of meeting a sailor who could give him news from Rome (33-50), and, after the realization of his condition (51f.), a prayer which functions as an indirect injunction to be recalled from exile (53f).

⁵⁵⁴ The second longest description of spring (18 lines) is to be found in *A.P.* 9.363.

novel geographical (*Maeotis*, 2; *Getico*, 14; *Geticis*, 16; *Histrum*, 29; *Ponti*, 32; *Italia*, 37; *Propontidos*, 41; *Germania*, 47; *Latio*, 46; *Scythico*, 51), mythological (*Hellen*, 3; *Cereallibus*, 11; *Virgine*, 22; *Noto*, 42; *Iovi*, 46; *Lare*, 52) and historical references (*Caesaris*, 46; *Caesar*, 53). However, the break with the tradition can be seen especially at the thematic level, in the strong (and unexpected) association of spring with the idea of exile. Thus, paradoxically enough, although the description of the season from the first section of the poem (1-24) abounds in traditional elements, in the end spring appears only as a reminder of the exilic condition, a radical departure from the traditional associations of the season, that recalls Hor. 1.4 and 4.7, in which spring ‘emerges’ as a reminder of change and prompts disheartened reflections on the tragic human condition. However, while in Horace’s spring poems the season was also associated with the *carpe diem* motif, *Tr.* 3.12 does not contain the anticipation of any erotic or sympotic event, and all the possible enjoyment brought by the season is ‘relegated’ to the past. At the same time, like in *Cat.* 46 where the coming of spring prompts Catullus’ eager desire to return home from Bithynia, in *Tr.* 3.12 the vernal season prompts Ovid’s desire to return (or at least to hear news from) Rome. However, in contrast to Catullus’ poem, in *Tr.* 3.12 the emphasis is placed not on the idea of action, but on the nostalgic remembrance of Rome and the frustration brought by the impossibility of return.

Another noteworthy aspect of the poem is the fact that, in contrast to the Greek epigrams and all the previous Latin spring poems, *Tr.* 3.12 is aimed at a much larger audience, as the poet hopes that, by gaining the sympathy of his readers at Rome, he will increase his chances of being recalled from exile. Since, unlike the previous spring poems, *Tr.* 3.12 has an ulterior motive, the entire thrust of the poem is changed, Ovid succeeding in writing, under the disguise of a spring poem, a passionate (albeit stylish) plea for forgiveness. However, although *Tr.* 3.12 has an urgency

and a personal tone unknown to the previous spring poems, the allusions to its literary antecedents play an essential role, being part of Ovid's 'strategy' to present himself as a learned and gifted poet, who deserves to be pardoned. At the same time, in addition to the references to the previous spring poems, Ovid's skill and the adherence of *Tr.* 3.12 to the genre are revealed by its polished style as the poem, a refined piece of writing, contains numerous stylistic and sound effects, for example alliterations (*nullo nata*, 6; *prataque pubescunt*, 7; *malae matris*, 9; *sole soluta*, 27; *stridula Scauromates*, 30; *quid... quaeram, quisve quibusve* 34; *fieri famae*, 44), assonance (*exit et expandit*, 12), rhymes (*variorum... colorum*, 7; *transit... venit*, 37f.; *auditos... triumphos*, 45) and anaphoras (of *nam procul a* in lines 14 and 16; of *quoque loco est* in lines 13 and 15; of *nunc* in lines 17 and 19ff.; of *nec* in line 29; of *sive* in line 39; of *iam* in lines 51f.).

A final point that should be made before the detailed analysis of *Tr.* 3.12 is related to its status and efficacy as a poetic supplication. Thus, since the poem is primarily intended to be a plea for forgiveness, all its structural, thematic and stylistic elements are meant either to 'prove' Ovid's worthiness as a poet or to convey his distress over being in Tomis and far from Rome (transforming it into a public statement) in an attempt to make the readers sympathize with his plight, so that his pardon could be more easily granted. As the effectiveness of the appeal depends on Ovid's ability to rouse pity, the poem poignantly contrasts the happiness (*beatum*, 25) of his readers at Rome to the suffering entailed in his exilic condition by juxtaposing the description of the lush and dynamic Italian spring (1-26) with the austere depiction of the Tomitan spring (27-32). The contrast between *here* - a barren land which lacks even vine and trees, a place isolated from Italy by a large tract of sea (*tantum mare*, 37), with inhospitable shores (*portibus orba*, 38) to which only very few sailors (*rarus navita*, 37) dare to come - and *there* (*istic*, 17) - the fertile land of Italy and the city of Rome,

bustling with action and dynamism, and defined by vernal joy and lively celebration - is thus meant to 'startle' the readers from their indifference to Ovid's fate and make Augustus realize that the punishment imposed on the gifted (and delicate) poet was harsher than he deserved or is able to bear. At the same time, the nostalgic recollection of the past (springs) and the anxious anticipation of meeting someone who could give him news from Rome, allows Ovid to 'evade' from a present and a place he can neither enjoy nor escape, while suggesting to his readers the mental anguish suffered by the poet, his deep frustration and earnest desire to return home.

The poem (and the effort of winning over his audience) continues with the references to the triumphs of Caesar (*triumphos Caesaris*, 45f.) and to the military conquest of Germany that are meant both to suggest Ovid's (still) deep interest in the affairs of Rome and to gain the sympathy of August by (flatteringly) portraying him as a great leader (*magni ducis*, 47f.), under whose feet lies the sorrowing head (*triste caput*, 48) of the *rebellatrix Germania* (and in whose hands the fate of the sorrowing poet).

Tr. 3.12 (appropriately enough for a supplication) ends climactically with a prayer (*di facite*, 53), which reveals the real *raison d'être* of the poem. Starting from an apparently innocent description of spring, Ovid builds up (with rhetorical grace) his pleading, and, in the end, dares to ask directly for forgiveness. While his prayers were not answered, the poem still remains a subtle and original plea for clemency, proving, if not Ovid's innocence, at least his excellence as a poet.

The poem starts with the image of the winter cold (*frigora*) abated by the breeze of the Zephyr, which, hinting at the warm weather brought by spring, serves an important function, since it constitutes an indirect announcement of the arrival of the vernal season, recalling thus the

previous spring poems.⁵⁵⁵ The allusion, in a single line, to both the Greek (*A.P.* 10.1.1 and 10.2.1) and Latin (Cat. 46. 2-3, Hor. *Carm.* 1.4 and 4.7.9) tradition of the genre is intended not only to show Ovid's great ingenuity, but also to 'deceive' the reader into believing that *Tr.* 3.12 is a traditional spring poem, increasing thus the surprise brought by its subsequent departure from the genre. At the same time, the emphasis on temperature, and especially the fact that *frigora* is the first word of the poem, may foreshadow the description of the desolate Tomitan spring at 27-32, while the specific allusion to *frigora mitescunt Zephyris* (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7.9) brings yet another somber element, as it reminds the reader of the most disheartening spring poem in the tradition of the genre.

After the syntagm *annoque peracto*, which points to the fact that "the Roman calendar began not in January but in March, so that 'the year's closure' came with the end of February" (Green 249), the poem continues with a line that has been long suspected of textual corruption. Although, with the exception of *longior* and *hiems*, the authenticity of all its words has been doubted,⁵⁵⁶ the major problem of this line is, in fact, the presence of *Maeotis*, since, as Green (250) remarks, "the Maeotic Lake (Sea of Azov) is tucked away behind the Crimea, hundreds of miles from Tomis; the word will not even scan in context unless, by special pleading, granted a wholly irregular short initial syllable followed by synizesis." This geographical and metrical anomaly has prompted scholars⁵⁵⁷ to propose various emendations to the text. Thus, taking into consideration the general context of the poem, Lachman (56) favors the replacement of *Maeotis* with *Tomitis*, while Green (250), accepting the emendation of *uisa* proposed by Bailey (see above, p.256 n.371), argues that one should read *meauit* instead of *Maeotis*, the reconstructed line running, in his view, as

⁵⁵⁵ See p. 250 n.366.

⁵⁵⁶ Thus, Bailey (393) argues that *uisa* should be changed to *uersa*, while Green (250), considering that *antiquis* is "meaningless," proposes its replacement with *adsuetis*.

⁵⁵⁷ An exception is Owen (27) who, leaving aside the geographical aspect of the problem, argues that, from a metrical point of view, the presence *Maeotis* is not so anomalous as it seems.

follows: “*longior adsuetis uersa mecum hiems* - the winter, longer than those I’m used to, has turned [the solstice] and gone its way.” However, in spite of the oddity of *Maeotis*, one could argue that, since *Tr.* 3.12 is not a scientific treatise, Ovid’s ‘fuzzy geographical reference could be a deliberate ‘exaggeration,’ meant to suggest that his place of exile is situated at the very end of the world and, thus, to emphasize the harshness of the winter that has just passed, the poet being less concerned with geographic accuracy than with persuasion in his effort to elicit the sympathy of his readers. Although a definitive solution to this problem cannot be given, one could nevertheless agree with Green (350), who remarks that “the general sense of the line, in context, must inevitably be: a wearisomely long winter is over at last.” Since any critical interpretation is hindered by the uncertainty of the text, what could be safely said is that the passage is intended either to suggest Ovid’s anxious waiting for the arrival of spring that will also bring with it the hope of hearing some news from Rome⁵⁵⁸ or, if the line refers to the Italian spring (as the mention of the Zephyr in the first line may perhaps suggest) to enhance the appeal of the vernal season by pointing out the long length of winter. However, since, from a psychological point of view, it is very likely that, as an exile, Ovid would feel and characterize as *longior* a winter spent in a harsh and hostile environment, far from the civilized world of Rome, and, considering that a Tomitan winter *is* actually longer than an Italian one, the possibility that the second line of *Tr.* 3.12 is not part of the nostalgic remembrance of spring at Rome but refers to the real winter experienced by the poet on the coast of the Black Sea is worthy of consideration.

The poem continues in lines 3-4 with a mythological reference, which, bringing elevation of style into the passage (and presenting Ovid as a learned poet), announces the arrival of spring by

⁵⁵⁸ The implication of this interpretation at the structural level of the poem is that the first two lines of *Tr.* 3.12 could be considered part of the description of the Tomitan spring.

hinting at the vernal equinox when the length of day is equal with that of night. Thus, as Green (250) explains, Ovid alludes in this passage to “the ram from whose back Helle tumbled into the strait later named on her account, the Hellespont (Apollod. 1.9.1, Ovid *Fast.* III. 851ff.), and later, sacrificed by Phrixus to provide Aeëtes with the Golden Fleece, was catasterized into the constellation Aries, which the sun enters on 22 March, the vernal equinox.” Through this astronomical allusion, the passage is also intended to recall the tradition of the genre, since, as Nagle (42) remarks, line 4 “expands on the word *aequinoctialis* in [*Cat.*] 46.2,” Ovid outdoing Catullus’ reference via both length and complexity.

An interesting aspect of this passage (although unnoticed in the previous scholarship on the poem) is the (partial) similarity between Helle and Ovid, as the poet himself could be seen as a tragic character, who, ‘fallen’ from the graces of Augustus, was sent into exile (a fate worse than death in Ovid’s view) to a place in the vicinity of the Hellespont. At the same time, the terrifying death of Helle brings yet another darker note into the poem, tempering the impact of the joyous description that follows at 5ff.

The description of spring continues with a series of images in which the presence of both conventional and innovative elements illustrates the traditional aspects and associations of the season and builds up a picture of vernal happiness, dynamism and renewal. Thus, in lines 5f., the image of merry boys and girls gathering flowers, associates spring with the idea of joy (*hilaris*) and youth (*puerique ... puellae*), while the mention of the wild (*rustica nata*) violets hints at the natural beauty and fertility of the season. The plucking of flowers may allude to a festival or perhaps to the preparations for a party, but the scene could depict just a spontaneous celebration of the season. The emphasis on the fact that the flowers are not cultivated (*nullo serente*, 6) is meant to draw the

attention of the reader to the regenerative aspect of spring, presenting the season as an almost paradisiacal time, while the verb *venit*, although in this context means “to come up, grow, arise” (see *OLD* s.v. 5), brings with it the idea of motion and activity, increasing thus the overall dynamism of the passage (and of the season).

The poem continues in line 7 with the description of the flowering meadows (*prata*, in emphatic position at the beginning of the line), an image intended both to recall the tradition of the genre and, by bringing into the poem yet another reference to vegetation, to portray spring as a lush season, full of life and beauty. However, if the mention of *violam* in line 5 was probably meant to allude to the delicate fragrance of the spring flowers,⁵⁵⁹ in this line the emphasis is placed on the visual aspect, the variegated (*variorum colorum*) flowers bringing color into the vernal landscape.

In line 8, the image of the chattering birds (*loquax avis*) continues the description of the natural world ‘affected’ (*vernata*) by spring and introduces the motif of joy at the animal level. The qualification of the ‘loquacious’ birds as ‘untrained’ (*indocili... gutture*) is most likely intended to hint at the spontaneous nature of their celebrating song, and to suggest, again, that the arrival of spring brings on earth a golden age of a sort. However, interestingly enough, after the reference to the ‘uninstructed’ (but happy) birds, the poem continues with a learned allusion to the distressing story of the swallow, as the bird building her nest (9f.) appears accompanied by her mythological background. The reference to the tragic story brings a darker mood into the description of the season, while achieving elevation of style and recalling the tradition of the genre, as the line reminds the reader of Horace’s description of the swallow at 4.12. 5-8. However, while in Horace’s poem the emphasis is on the disheartening story and the building endeavor of the swallow is only

⁵⁵⁹ The word *viola* may not point to a specific flower, since it is “the name given to several spring flowers, usu. fragrant [...]” (see *OLD* s.v. 1).

succinctly mentioned (*nidum ponit*, 4.12. 5), in *Tr.* 3.12 half of the description is dedicated to her mythological background and half to her determination to build a cradle and house (*cunas tectaque*, 10), an image which, hinting at the bird's future offspring, associates the season with the idea of birth and renewal.

The poem continues in lines 11f. with the description of another sign of the vernal season, namely the germination of the grain. The reference to the seeds hidden in the furrows dedicated to Ceres (*Cerealibus... sulcis*, 11) alludes to ploughing and sowing, reminding thus the reader of the vernal resumption of the agricultural activities, while the image of the tender blades (*molle cacumen*, 12) emerging from the earth strongly associates the season with the idea of growth and fertility. Apart from the reference to Ceres, which has the function of defining precisely the meaning of *herba*⁵⁶⁰ as grain, while conferring a Roman flavour on this description and bringing, at the same time, a divine figure into the vernal landscape, one could also notice the use of *latuit*, a verb with numerous meanings of which many could be present in this passage (see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 2, 3, 5: 'to go into or be in hiding,' 'to be out of sight, be invisible,' 'to lie below the surface, be latent,' and, especially, 'to take refuge, shelter,' which suggests the image of the seeds protected by the earth from the harsh cold of winter). Worth mentioning in this section is also the assonance of *e* in line 12 (*exit et expandit*) and the presence of the prefix *ex* in both *exit* and *expandit* which emphasizes the idea of emergence.

After the description of the sprouting grain, the poem continues in lines 13-16 with the image of the budding vine and trees that concludes the series of references to the vernal vegetation. The depiction of the vine whose buds (*gemma*) are pushed forth from the shoot (13) and of the

⁵⁶⁰ The word *herba* could refer not only to corn but also to "other plants in the early stages of growth" (see *OLD* s.v. 4).

swelling (*turgescit*) branches of the trees (15) reinforces the association of the season with the idea of growth and renewal of life. However, since this passage contains the first hint that the exuberant vernal imagery of the previous lines was only part of a vivid recollection, the primary function of this image is to create a sharp contrast between *here* - the poet suddenly revealing the place of his exile in the reference to *Getico litore* (14) and *Geticis finibus* (16) - and *there* - the fertile land of Italy, (unnamed directly though until line 37). The passage, foreshadowing the desolate image of the Tomitan spring that will follow in lines 27-32, depicts the Getic land as a barren place situated far way (*procul*) from the civilized world,⁵⁶¹ the reference to the absence of vegetation being intended, in Ovid's effort to win the sympathy of his readers, to present the Black Sea coast as an antithesis of the Italian landscape.

Worth noticing in these lines is also the great abundance of anaphora (*quoque loco est*, in line 13 and 15; *nam procul a ... abest*, in lines 14 and 16) that, bringing an almost lamenting tone into the poem, draws the attention of the reader to the sudden shift of focus from the image of a traditional (and ideal) vernal season to the depiction of the real and desolate spring at Tomis, making even more poignant the contrast between Italy and the place of Ovid's exile.

After the description of the changes brought by the season at the natural level, the poem continues in lines 17-24 with a picture of spring at Rome, *Tr.* 3.12 offering thus, for the first time in the tradition of the genre, a (rather detailed) description of the activities prompted by the arrival of spring in a city. However, this time the fact that the vernal tableau is only a nostalgic remembrance of springtime in Rome is made clear by the use of *istic* in line 17, which may also be intended to

⁵⁶¹Cf. Kenney (42), who considers that the reference to vine is essential since, in his view, "viticulture spelt civilization: barbarism began where wine gave place to beer."

suggest the (supposed) epistolary form of the poem,⁵⁶² (again, an innovation in the tradition of the genre) and thus to reinforce its status as a plea of forgiveness.

While in the description of the natural world affected by spring the emphasis was placed mainly on the idea of beauty and fertility, in this section the season is defined as a time of celebration and dynamism, a period in which the regular activities of the city are suspended and people engage in festivities, games and theatrical performances (again, in sharp and sad contrast with the lack of holidays and festivals at Tomis). The description starts with the word *otia*, which bringing into the passage a plethora of meanings (“freedom from business or work, leisure, leisure-time,” “rest or relaxation from work, a holiday,” “relaxation from pain, toil, etc., ease, rest,” “a peaceful or tranquil existence, security, safety,” “tranquility, calm of weather, etc.,” “temporary cessation, respite, lull,” see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 2a, 2b, 3, 4b, 4c, 6a), strongly associates the vernal season with the idea of relaxation and pleasure (in sharp contrast with the tormenting anxiety suffered by Ovid at Tomis). At the same time, since the image of the garrulous wars (*garrula bella*, 18) of the forum giving place (*cedunt*)⁵⁶³ to the public games (*iunctisque... ludis*) refers the fact that the arrival of spring was celebrated by “a succession of festivals (e.g. the *Megalesia*, the *Floralia*, and, on 19 March, the great *Quinquatrus Maiores*) marked by, *inter alia*, the closure of the law courts” (Green 250), these lines depict the vernal season as a time of harmony and public concord, a period which, ending, at least temporary, the disagreements between people, brings the community

⁵⁶² See *OLD* s.v. 1b: “(in letters) where you (the recipient) are.”

⁵⁶³ One could notice that, through its military and political connotations (“to give in, yield, submit: a. to an enemy. b. to other opponents, factions, policies, etc.” see *OLD* s.v. 10a and b), the verb *cedunt* suggests the (rather interesting) image of the battle themselves being defeated by the orderly ‘troops’ of vernal festivals, reminding the reader of the martial overtones that accompanied the arrival of spring (and the succession of seasons) in Hor. 4.7.1 and 9-12 (see pp. 156, 171ff.).

together in joyful celebration (an image that stands in sharp contrast with the isolation and sadness experienced by Ovid on the desolate shores of the Black sea).

An interesting aspect of this passage, unnoticed in the previous scholarship on the poem, is the fact that, although these lines do refer to the entire series (*iunctis ex ordine*, 17) of festivals celebrated in March, the first month of the Roman year⁵⁶⁴ (suggesting thus the idea that the season, bringing numerous occasions for public rejoicing, is distinguished by its celebratory mood), the fact that the description of the vernal *ludi* starts with the mention of the equestrian displays (*usus equi nunc est*, 19) may suggest that Ovid alludes here specifically to *Equiria*, a festival which, celebrated on March 14 and dedicated to Mars as a god of both war and agriculture, involved horse racing and competitions held in the *Campus Martius* in Rome. At the same time, the second half of the line, although it may refer, as Green (250) argues, only to exercises in the use of arms, could refer to the *Salii*, priests of Mars, who, dressed up in an archaic (and light) armor (*levibus armis*)⁵⁶⁵ and carrying the sacred spears and shields, performed, during the *Quinquatria* (a festival held between 19 and 23 of March), ritual dances on the streets of Rome in honour of the god of war, marking thus the beginning of the campaigning season. An argument in favour of this interpretation is the fact that all these references to festivals in honor of Mars, while adding another dimension to the season, since it portrays spring not only as a time of joy, but also as a time in which the preparations for the coming military campaigns were made, would also foreshadow the references in lines 45-48 to the military successes of Augustus.

⁵⁶⁴ The time frame of this description is revealed in the first line of the poem by the syntagm *annoque peracto* (see p. 256). For the festivals celebrated in March, see pp. 7f.

⁵⁶⁵ For this sense of the word, see *OLD* s.v. 2a.

The description of the *ludi* continues with references to various popular sporting activities, such as ballgames (*pila*, 20) and hoop bowling (*trochus*, 20), followed in lines 21f. by the image of the wearied youths bathing (or swimming),⁵⁶⁶ which, as the mention of the oil (*oleo labente*, 21) with which the athletes would anoint their bodies before exercising in the *palaestra* indicates, constitutes an indirect (but more extended) reference to boxing and wrestling.

The emphasis on the idea of enjoyment and entertainment continues in lines 23f. with the image of the stage bustling with life and activity (*viget*, 23), which alludes to the theatrical performances (*ludi scaenici*) that, together with the *ludi circenses*, accompanied the vernal celebration of the public games (*ludi publici*). Worth noticing in line 23 is especially the use of numerous words that, expressing the idea of lively action (*viget*) and passionate enthusiasm (*favor*), further increase the mood of dynamism and celebration, while in the following line Ovid suggests (once again), through the vivid image of the roaring (*resonant*) theatres replacing, as centers of city life, the forums (the centers of judicial and business affairs),⁵⁶⁷ that the only ‘heated’ (*ardet*) disagreements between people in this period of the year are those related to their entertainment.

The description of the Italian spring ends climactically in lines 25f. with an emotional outburst that reveals both the depth of Ovid’s anguish and his great nostalgia for Rome. The poignant couplet, whose lamenting tone is set from the very beginning by the distressing exclamation of grief (*o*, 25), serves multiple functions in the poem. Thus, on the one hand, these

⁵⁶⁶ As Green (250) explains, *Virgine... aqua* is “a reference to the outflow of the aqueduct known as the *Aqua Virgo*, constructed by Agrippa, and opened on 9 June 19 B.C., mainly to feed the public baths he was building.” Commenting on the qualification of *aqua* as *Virgine*, Green argues (after sending the reader to the aetiological tale of Frontinus, who, in *De Aquae Ductu* I.10, explains that the source-spring, near the eighth milestone on the *Via Collatina*, was revealed to some soldiers by a young girl) that “a more likely explanation is the coldness and purity of the water, much touted in antiquity,” while adding that “the ninth of June was also the feast-day of Vesta; so the *Aqua Virgo* may in fact have been named in honour of the Vestal Virgins.”

⁵⁶⁷ See Green (251): “The three theatres were those of Pompey, Balbus and Marcellus [...]; the three public squares were the *Forum Romanum*, the *Forum Iulium*, and the *Forum Augusti*.”

lines may function as an indirect injunction addressed to his readers to be aware of their happy condition and fully enjoy the ‘blessings’ of the city, in which case Ovid succeeds in making a variation on the traditional *carpe diem* motif by replacing it (rather unexpectedly) with an indirect (and rather innovative) ‘*carpe urbem*’ injunction. On the other hand, the implicit (and stark) contrast between the absolute (*quantum et quotiens non est numerare*) happiness (*beatum*, 25) of those who could enjoy Rome (*urbe*, 26) and Ovid’s despondent condition is meant to gain the sympathy of his readers, increasing thus the efficiency of his appeal for clemency, while the word *licet* (26), hinting at his relegation, alludes to the fact that his happiness stands in the hands of Augustus, whose forgiveness he is desperately seeking. At the same time, while the forbidden city (*interdicta urbe*, 26) functions as a metonymy for all the happiness the exile has taken away from Ovid’s life, the word *frui* (26), bringing into the passage a multitude of meanings (“to enjoy the produce of, the proceeds from,” “to derive advantage from, profit by, avail oneself of, enjoy,” to have as one’s lot (something good), be blessed with, enjoy,” “to derive pleasure from, delight in, find enjoyable, enjoy,” see *OLD* s.v. 1a, 1b; 2a; 3), directly associates, for the first time in the tradition of the genre, the joy brought by spring with the urban motif, suggesting Ovid’s great distress caused by the grim place of his exile and his fervent desire to return to Rome.

To conclude the analysis of the description of the Italian spring (lines 1-26), one could say that, starting with a vivid depiction of the season that becomes an indirect eulogy of Italy and Rome, Ovid succeeds in transforming a traditional element of a spring poem into an efficient appeal for forgiveness. Thus, the great length and abundance of details that defines this section suggest how important the Italian landscape and the city of Rome are for the poet, while the abrupt shift from the picture of vernal happiness and renewal to the emotional final couplet (lines 25f.) hints at the

anguish and nostalgia suffered by Ovid and constitutes an indirect injunction to be recalled home or, at least, have his place of exile changed.

After the nostalgic remembrance of the Italian spring, the poem continues in lines 27-32 with the depiction of the actual spring experienced by Ovid at Tomis.⁵⁶⁸ The juxtaposition of the two descriptions is intended to make even more poignant the contrast between the Italian landscape and the place of Ovid's exile, and, thus, between the happiness of his readers at Rome (*beatum*, 25) and the tragic condition of the poet (*at mihi*, 27). The sharp contrast between the lengthy description of the Italian spring, in which the vernal season appears as a time of birth, growth and fertility, a period of dynamism, joy and celebration, and the short (only 6 lines) depiction of the Tomitan spring, in which the season is distinguished only by the conspicuous absence of these traditional associations, is an efficient way of suggesting that spring on the barren shores of the Black sea is an antithesis of the Italian one. At the same time, together with the references to the absence of vegetation from lines 13-16, Ovid succeeds, by the *omission* of any other details, in suggesting the bleakness of the Tomitan landscape, while focusing the description (highly plausible from a psychological point of view) on the only aspect of the season that (in his anxious waiting) could bring some hope in his life, namely the opening of the navigation. Thus, all the elements of the passage, starting with the image of the melted snow (27) and of the water no longer frozen (28), and continuing with the depiction of the sea no longer congealed with ice (29), followed by the image of the Sarmatian herdsman unable to cross the (no longer frozen) Danube,⁵⁶⁹ allude to the warm

⁵⁶⁸ As in the description of the Italian spring, this passage too starts with an indirect announcement of the arrival of the vernal season by reference to the end of winter, recalling thus the tradition of the genre, while the syntagm *nix verno sole soluta* (27) is intended to remind the reader of Hor. 1.4.1 (*solvitur...hiems grata*). See p. 250 n. 366.

⁵⁶⁹ An image that serves a double function in the passage, since Ovid hints here also at the extreme cold of the Tomitan winter, and thus at the hardships he has to endure in this particularly harsh place of exile. At the same time, in spite of the fact that winter seems to facilitate transportation, the Sarmatian herdsman (*Sauromates... bubulcus*), although

temperature brought by spring and thus to the resuming of navigation, while the image of the ships sailing ‘even as far as here’ (*tamen huc*, 31) suggest both the great distance that separates Tomis from Rome, and Ovid’s hope that the arrival of spring will end the isolation in which he lives.

Suggestive of the emotional state of the poet, the admixture of gloom and hope that defines this description of the season increases the efficiency of Ovid’s supplication by presenting the place of his exile as a barren and isolated land, while suggesting that the only appealing aspect of the Tomitan spring is the fact that it brings with it the possibility of leaving Tomis or at least of receiving some news from the outside world, perhaps even Rome.

Animated with sudden hope, Ovid continues his poem with an account of the much-anticipated meeting with the sailor whose ship will arrive first at Tomis (lines 33-50). The great length and abundance of details that characterizes this section suggests how important this meeting is for the poet (and how often he has imagined it), hinting thus at the anguish provoked by the too long isolation, and therefore at the (undeserved) harshness of the punishment. At the same time, this lengthy description of an isolated contact with the exterior world pointedly contrasts with the description of the Italian spring, distinguished by its numerous human presences, once again emphasizing the difference between the vibrant city life at Rome and the desolate life at Tomis, an isolated city on the distant shores of the Black sea.

Ovid starts by expressing his eagerness (*sedulus*, in emphatic position at the beginning of line 33) and haste (*occurram*) to meet the sailor. After the exchange of greetings (*dictaque salute*),

peacefully traversing the frozen river, appears as a marker of a rustic and barbarous world (in sharp contrast with the urban and civilized Roman world described in the previous section of the poem), while the loud and inharmonious shrill sound (*stridula*) that accompanies his crossing, not also that could have martial overtones for the anxious exile, but also grates the ears of the refined poet. It could be also remarked that, although the frozen Danube seems to make the region more accessible and thus less isolated, in reality it only increases the possibility of an attack, making thus life on its shores even more dangerous.

the poet will first ask about the purpose (*quid veniat*, 34) of his coming to Tomis (hoping perhaps that the sailor could be a messenger sent by the emperor to announce his pardon), then ask who he is (*quisve*) and from what place (*quibusve locis*) he comes (hoping that he would come from Italy). The flurry of questions (three in a single line) and the alliterative ‘volley’ of *q*’s suggest both the excitement of the poet and his impatience to hear some news from the outside world. At the same time, the eagerness of Ovid (the refined poet and man of taste, who used to enjoy the company of the sophisticated social elite of the capital) to meet a simple sailor hints at the extreme loneliness experienced by the poet at Tomis and his desperate need to talk with anyone who, even if not distinguished by his polished manners, is different from the barbarian people of Tomis at least by his knowledge of the civilized language of the world (see below).

In his effort to gain the sympathy of his readers, Ovid emphasizes the isolation of his place of exile by remarking that the arrival of a sailor from Italy would be indeed a marvelous thing (*quidem mirum*, 35), since usually the ships reaching Tomis come from the neighboring regions (*regione propinqua*, 35), having sailed⁵⁷⁰ in the safety (*tutus*, 36) of the nearby waters. The idea of isolation from the civilized world is further emphasized in lines 37f. by the mention of the fact that only very few⁵⁷¹ sailors dare to cross so large a tract of sea (*tantum mare*, 37) that separates Italy from the inhospitable shores (*portibus orba*, 38) of the Black sea. Nevertheless, whoever the sailor may be (*quisquis is est*, 43), as long as he could speak Greek or, even more pleasing (*gratior*, 40), Latin - and chances are someone, helped by a steady South wind (*certo ... Noto*, 42), has sailed from the Hellespont (*ab ore freti*, 41) and the waves of the sea of Marmara (*longaeque Propontidos*

⁵⁷⁰ One could notice the (metaphorical) use of *ararit* that, while bringing into the poem another term for sailing (after *adnare* in line 31), casts also a rustic shadow over the entire region.

⁵⁷¹ The anaphora of *rarus* in 37f. emphasizes the idea of rarity.

undis, 41) - he could tell Ovid, (hopefully) with a faithful voice (*memori... voce*, 43), the latest news from the outside world. The presence in two lines of two terms for news (*rumorem*, 43 and *famae*, 44) and the striking image of the sailor who seems to embody (*parsque gradusque*, 43) them suggest again Ovid's deep sense of isolation and his fervent desire to connect with the 'real' world.

One could remark on the fact that the mention of the sailor's knowledge of Greek or Latin serves multiple functions, adding a new and very effective dimension to Ovid's plea for forgiveness. Thus, apart from the fact that such a knowledge would facilitate the conversation between the poet and the sailor, the reference to Greek and Latin, the languages of the civilized world, hints at the barbarian nature and remoteness of the Tomitan region, suggesting also the fact that the relegation of Ovid to this place has meant for him, as a Roman poet, also a 'linguistic exile.' At the same time, the great distance that separates Italy from the shores of the Black sea is again suggested in the description of the maritime route a sailor must follow to reach Tomis.

The poem continues, in a patriotic (and rather flattering) mood intended to gain the sympathy of Augustus, with the mention of the specific news that Ovid is so eager to hear (lines 45-48). Thus, the poet prays (*precor*, 45) that the sailor would be able to tell him of the triumphs of Caesar (*triumphos Caesaris*, 45f.),⁵⁷² of the vows that have been fulfilled (*reddita vota*, 46) for the Latian Jove, and of the defeat of the rebellious Germany (*rebellatrix... Germania*, 47).⁵⁷³ The function of these lines is to increase the chances of Ovid's appeal for clemency by presenting the poet as a patriotic citizen, very much concerned with the political life of Rome, and especially with

⁵⁷² While *triumphos* may be just a poetic plural, in view of the flattering tone of the passage, it is most likely that Ovid refers here to *several* (military successes worthy of) triumphs, especially since in lines 47f. Augustus is qualified as *magni... ducis*.

⁵⁷³ According to Green (251), "these lines were written in hopeful anticipation of military successes by Tiberius, who led an expedition against Germany after the crushing defeat of Varus, with the loss of three legions, in the Teutoburger Forest (A.D. 9)." As this defeat, one of the worst ever suffered by Romans, greatly affected Augustus (see Suetonius *Aug.* 23), Ovid knew that the image of Germany at last (*tandem*, 47) subdued would please the emperor.

the military successes of the imperial family, therefore as someone who, in spite of his former mistakes, should be pardoned or, at least, given a more lenient punishment. At the same time, the passage presents Ovid as someone who has not been embittered by his exile and has not turned on Augustus and Rome.

One could remark in this passage the tricolon crescendo (*auditos... triumphos*, 45; *Caesaris et Latio reddita vota Iovi*, 46; *teque, rebellatrix, tandem, Germania, magni/ triste caput pedibus supposuisse ducis* 47f.) and the personification of the *rebellatrix Germania*, who, defeated at last (*tandem*, 47), has laid her sad head (*triste caput*, 48) beneath the feet of Augustus,⁵⁷⁴ portrayed thus as a great leader (*magni... ducis*, 47f.), who has the power not only to defeat those who stand against him but also (especially important for Ovid's situation) to forgive them.

The importance for Ovid of being informed about the latest events is further emphasized in lines 49f. in which the poet declares that anyone who could tell him about these topics will be immediately welcomed as a guest (*hospes*, 50) to his house. However, in spite of the excitement prompted by the prospect of finally receiving some news from the exterior world, the grief (*dolebo*, 49) of (being far Rome and) not being able to see himself (*non vidisse*, 49) these events, spoils the (only) joy (brought by the vernal season) and increases thus the overall sadness of the poem. Even more painful, as Kenney (42) remarks, “with the word *domui* (v.50) the poet suddenly realizes his situation,”⁵⁷⁵ since the fact that *his* house (*domus Nasonis*, 51) is now in the Scythian world (*Scythico... orbe*, 51) and his home (*pro Lare*, 52) a place imposed by his punishment (*poena*, 52) makes him fully understand his exilic condition.

⁵⁷⁴ One could notice the suggestive juxtaposition *caput pedibus* (48) and the multiple meanings of *supposuisse* (“to place at the foot (of),” “to place under the authority or control (of), make subject (to),” “to put at the mercy (of),” see *OLD* s.v. 1d, 4a and b).

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. also Evans 65.

Apart from the anguish expressed by the exclamation *ei mihi* (51), one could also remark in this couplet the juxtaposition *Scythico Nasonis* (51), putting together even at the textual level the poet and the place of his exile, and the anaphora *iamne... iamque* (51f.) that suggests the suddenness of Ovid's realization of his tragic fate, a remarkable innovation of the use of *iam* in the tradition of the genre.

After the disheartened mood of lines 51f., the poem ends climactically with a prayer (53f.) that gods (*di facite*, 53) may change Augustus' mind so that, giving in to the plea of the poet, he may mitigate the sentence, making Tomis only a *hospitium* (54), a temporary shelter of Ovid's punishment. This last resort to gods, an entirely unexpected conclusion for a spring poem, suggests Ovid's hopelessness and the depth of his despair, making even more poignant the effect of the attempts made throughout the poem to gain the sympathy of his readers at Rome and persuade Augustus to have pity on him.

As a conclusion, one could say that Ovid uses the structure and some of the elements of a spring poem to write innovatively a poem of exile, a plea for clemency. Starting with an apparently traditional description of the vernal season and contrasting his vivid remembrance of the Italian, (hence ideal) spring with the actual spring experienced at Tomis, Ovid continues with the detailed account of his much anticipated meeting with the sailor and ends with a touching prayer for forgiveness. The permanent shift between now and then, here and there, between hope and anguish, excitement and despair, keeps the reader in tension and increases the emotional appeal of the poem, while the numerous literary associations add a stylish tone to Ovid's poetic supplication, presenting him not only as a gifted but also as a learned poet. As Kenney (43) remarks, *Tr.* 3.12, "viewed in any light, it is a genuine and moving poem; seen as a variation on the spring theme with its existing

actual and literary associations it gains greatly in force and pathetic effect.” Thus, both a surprising spring poem and an emotional poem of exile, *Tr.* 3.12 is a remarkable poetic accomplishment, especially considering the harsh conditions under which it was written, and occupies a special place among the spring poems, ending in force (but also with grace and sadness) the Latin tradition of the genre.

Conclusions

The detailed analysis of *A.P.* 9. 363, 10. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, Catull. 46, Hor. *Carm.* 1, 4, 4. 7, 4. 12 and Ov. *Tr.* 3.12 has revealed that, in spite of the various differences between them, all these poems are united by their adherence to the genre of the spring poem.

The beginning of the genre can be traced back to *A.P.* 10.1, an epigram written by Leonidas of Tarentum, an author who lived probably at the middle of the third century B.C. (see p. 25). Although the existence of even earlier spring poems that have been lost cannot be entirely dismissed, Leonidas' epigram is the first *known* spring poem and has had a significant influence on the subsequent poems of the genre.

The spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* form an obvious group,⁵⁷⁶ as their authors follow Leonidas' spring poem as a model, employing its schema and (some of) its elements,⁵⁷⁷ while trying to vary and improve on the chronologically earlier poems. These authors have been constantly able, through the extensive use of the Hellenistic techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio*, to 'reinvent' the genre, a fact that explains its incredible lifespan (from the 3rd century B.C. to the 6th century A.D.).

A brief comparison of *A.P.* 10.14, 15 and 16 (poems written in the Byzantine period) with *A.P.* 10.1 could best reveal the fact that the 'endurance' of the genre was due to its remarkable

⁵⁷⁶ With the exception of *A.P.* 9. 363, which, through its greater length and different tone occupies a place apart in the Greek tradition.

⁵⁷⁷ For the schema of a spring poem, see p. 20. Starting with a formal announcement of the renewal of navigation, *A.P.* 10.1 contains a description of the vernal season that includes the image of the swallow (1), the West wind (2), the blossoming meadows (3), the calm sea (3f), followed by the reactions prompted by spring, namely Priapus' injunctions that the sailor weigh the anchors (5), loose the stern-cables (5), and sail with all the canvas set (6) to trade in all kinds of things (8).

versatility, since, almost seven centuries after the first spring poem was written, the authors of these epigrams were still able to produce highly innovative poems.

Thus, although, in contrast to Leonidas' epigram, *A.P.* 10.14 does not begin with a formal announcement of the opening of sailing, and does not include any mention of the maritime paraphernalia present in *A.P.* 10.1 (ἀγκύρα, 5; ἄνακτα, 6), Agathias Scholasticus does center his poem on the sea (by providing a lengthy and dramatic depiction of it in lines 1-4) and seafaring (through the reference in lines 7f. to the dangerous maritime routes that could be undertaken by the sailors protected by Priapus). Through these innovative elements, Agathias Scholasticus succeeds in composing a poem with an intense maritime "flavour," that reminds the reader that the resumption of sailing was the *raison d'être* of the Greek spring poems. At the same time, as a further variation on Leonidas' epigram, Agathias Scholasticus increases the number of the reactions prompted by the season, including in *A.P.* 10.14 the injunction that sailors go fearlessly on their voyage after making an appropriate sacrifice of fish to Priapus.

In *A.P.* 10.15, Paulus Silentiarius replaces the plain and simple beginning of *A.P.* 10.1 with the image of the vernal χάρις opening her closed bosom (μεμυκότα κόλπον) to the Zephyr. The exuberance, affected eroticism and theatricality of this beginning is matched at the end of the poem by the ambiguous and rather humorous image of Priapus who pledges his allegiance to the ships on account of a mythical episode in which his divine ancestry is greatly diminished (see pp. 58f.). These elements, together with the fact that, in contrast to *A.P.* 10.1, the vernal landscape of Paulus Silentiarius' epigram does not contain the traditional image of the swallow and of the flowering meadows, may be intended to place *A.P.* 10.15 at a slightly ironic distance from the genre. At the same time, apart from a detailed description of the actual launching of the ship in lines

3f. (that constitutes another major innovation that distinguishes this poem from *A.P.* 10.1), Paulus Silentiarius' epigram, similar to the previous Byzantine spring poem, contains also the injunction that the sailors should take courage and sail.

Finally, in sharp contrast to *A.P.* 10.1, Theaetetus Scholasticus' epigram contains puzzling elements (e.g. the blooming roses, the cicada, the cypress, the binder of sheaves) and arresting imagery (e.g., the "pregnant" field and the "beastly" sea), while the depictions of the traditional elements (the swallow, the flowering meadow, the image of the sea) are distinguished by their greater length and abundance of details.

Although written at such a late stage in the tradition of the genre, the spring poems of the Byzantine period are characterized by a more striking imagery and a less conventional description of the vernal landscape than their Hellenistic counterpart and their originality, evident both in the depiction of the vernal season and in the reactions prompted by the season proves the remarkable capacity of the genre to reinvent itself.

Distancing themselves from the poems of the Greek tradition, the Latin authors, while preserving the traditional schema (by including in their poems descriptions of spring and reactions prompted by the season) and employing some of the conventional elements, totally transform the genre not only by adding new elements to the standard ones (see p. 22) but especially by incorporating into their spring poems new (and rather unexpected) thematic aspects.

Thus, largely ignoring the traditional associations of the season (e.g. fertility and beauty), Catullus introduces into his poem the journey motif and emphasizes the intense and contradictory psychological effects provoked by the coming of spring by presenting the season as a period of release and adventure, a time that brings excitement but also sadness and melancholy.

A similar thematic admixture is also evident in Horace's spring poems. Thus, Horace's *Carm* 1.4 and 4.7 are distinguished in particular by their intellectual and more pessimistic approach to the vernal season, as the arrival of spring prompts various disheartening reflections, introducing thus into the genre the *memento mori* motif. However, these bitter reflections do not preclude the possibility of joy, reinforcing, in fact, the urgency of the *carpe diem* injunctions that do appear in these poems, albeit in an indirect form (1.4. 9-12, 18ff; 4.7.19f). In contrast to both 1.4 and 4.7, odes that form an obvious (and rather gloomy) pair, in 4.12, a poem distinguished by its humorous and playful mood, the *carpe diem* motif, in the disguise of a lengthy sympotic invitation, occupies the central place, 'redeeming' the vernal season that appears as a period full of life, friendship and enjoyment.

However, apart from the thematic admixture, complexity and deep of thought of his poems, Horace's most remarkable accomplishment is the fact that he succeeded in writing not one but an entire cycle of spring poems (a new and rather unexpected development of the genre), applying the techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* not only to the previous spring poems, but also to his own poems.

Finally, Ovid's *Tr.* 3.12 too is defined not only by its thematic but also by its generic admixture (a real 'revolution' in the tradition of the genre), the poem beginning as a traditional spring poem only to end as a poem of exile and a plea for forgiveness.

The evolution undergone by the spring poems in the Latin tradition of the genre could be best revealed by a brief comparison of the ways in which *Cat.* 46 and *Ov. Tr.* 3.12 have departed from the Greek epigrams. Thus, while Catullus departs from the Greek tradition by reducing the description of spring to simple references, by 'emptying' the vernal landscape of its traditional

elements and by replacing the conventional injunctions addressed to the sailor(s) with a self-injunction to travel back home (including also in his anticipated journey a rather unexpected sightseeing aspect: see pp. 79f.), Ovid breaks away even further by including in his poem two descriptions of spring, by associating the season not with joy and merriment, but with nostalgia for home, and, especially, by the generic admixture of *Tr.* 3.12 which is both a spring poem and a poem of exile.

From the spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* to Ovid's *Tr.* 3.12, the genre has known a remarkable evolution, becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated. Apart from the minor changes in the length of the spring poems⁵⁷⁸ or in their description of the season (where to the traditional elements⁵⁷⁹ new ones were added⁵⁸⁰), the major changes can be seen in the reactions prompted by spring and especially in the thematic and generic admixture that defines the Latin tradition of the genre. Thus, if in the Greek epigrams the reactions consisted mainly of Priapus' injunctions urging the sailor(s) to resume navigation (and trade),⁵⁸¹ in the Latin tradition the season

⁵⁷⁸ While the epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology* generally have only 8 lines (with the exception of *A.P.* 9.363 that has 23 lines), the length of the Latin spring poems is much greater (the longest is Ovid's *Tr.* 3.12 that has 54 lines).

⁵⁷⁹ The formal announcement of the renewal of sailing (*A.P.* 10.1, 2); the arrival of the swallow (*A.P.* 9.363, 10.1, 2, 14), with the variation of the swallow building her house of mud (*A.P.* 10.2, 4, 5), sheltering her brood in the mud-plastered chambers (*A.P.* 10.16) or singing (*A.P.* 10. 6, 14); a variety of other birds, generally swans, kingfishers, nightingales (*A.P.* 9.363); the Zephyr (*A.P.* 10.1, 4, 14, 15), described sometimes as softening the waves (*A.P.* 10. 4), falling on the meadows (*A.P.* 10. 6) or spreading fine weather over the sea (*A.P.* 10.16); the meadows in flower (*A.P.* 10.1, 2, 5, 6) or laughing (*A.P.* 9. 363); bees (*A.P.* 9.363); cicadas (*A.P.* 10.16); the absence or departure of cold winds (*A.P.* 10.6, 14), storms (*A.P.* 10.4) or winter (*A.P.* 9.363); the calm sea sunk to silence (*A.P.* 10.1), gleaming (*A.P.* 1. 14), smiling (*A.P.* 10.6) or sleeping (*A.P.* 10.16). To these *A.P.* 9.363 adds the shepherd playing his pipe (*A.P.* 9.363), and the goatherd rejoicing in his kids (*A.P.* 9.363).

⁵⁸⁰ Like the description of the rivers flowing in their banks (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7, 4.12); the merry boys and girls plucking flowers (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the wars replaced by festivals (Ov. *Tr.* 3.12); the Underworld (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4); the party (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4); the presence of additional mythological figures, e.g. Venus (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4), the Graces and the Nymphs dancing (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7), Vulcan visiting the forges of the Cyclopes (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4).

⁵⁸¹ The only exception is to be found in *A.P.* 9.363 in which the poet is indirectly urged to sing about the beauty of spring.

prompts philosophical meditations⁵⁸² and a very diverse series of injunctions⁵⁸³ that bring into these spring poems not only new thematic aspects, but also, in Ovid's *Tr.* 3.12, a surprising generic admixture. While in the Greek epigrams the emphasis was on a single aspect of the season (namely the opening of sailing) and variety was obtained by the skillful combination of the traditional elements and by the occasional introduction of new ones, the Latin authors, considering perhaps that the approach to spring of the Greek epigrams was too limited or that its poetic possibilities have been already exhausted, employ the topos of spring with a remarkable versatility, associating the vernal season not only with the renewal of life, with joy and merriment, but also with nostalgia (Catullus, but especially Ovid), with the transience of human life and death (Horace). The complexity, depth of thought and variety of form that characterizes the Latin spring poems constitutes thus the major distinction between the Greek and Latin tradition of the genre, the Latin poets taking the genre off in significant new directions, starting new trends and making major changes both in the content and tone of their poems (see above).

One could thus conclude that, despite the apparent simplicity of the theme, the authors of these poems have reached high levels of sophistication in the way they have succeeded in transforming a relatively straightforward poetic form into a complex and sophisticated genre.

Although the arrival of the vernal season, with its numerous and sometimes contradictory associations, had a significant impact on the imagination of numerous Greek and Roman writers,

⁵⁸² For example meditations on the rapid succession of seasons and therefore on the passing of time (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), on the sharp contrast between the regenerative powers of nature and the brevity of human life (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4, 4.7), on the uncertainty of the future (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), on the inefficacy of piety, eloquence or love in the face of death (Hor. *Carm.* 4.7), and on the omnipotence of death (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4).

⁵⁸³ In Catullus' poem the injunction addressed to himself to fly to the bright cities of Asia, in Horace the injunctions to wreath the head with green myrtle or flowers (Hor. *Carm.* 1.4), to put aside delays and the pursuit of gain (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12) and to drink and enjoy life (Hor. *Carm.* 4.12), while in *Tr.* 3.12 Ovid replaces the injunction with the plea to be forgiven and recalled in Rome.

the composition of spring poems was especially appealing to learned and refined poets (like those of the Hellenistic, Augustan and Byzantine period), who could both integrate in their poems (by means of sophisticated literary allusions) the tradition of the genre and depart from it in imaginative and original ways.

For the sake of completeness it should be also mentioned that, in addition to the Classical spring poems, there are also two other poems from late antiquity, namely Ausonius' *De Rosis Nascentibus* and Alcuin's *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis*, that are largely concerned with the vernal season. However, since they are very different in tone and do not follow the classical Greco-Roman tradition of the genre, they cannot strictly be considered spring poems. Thus, in Ausonius' *De Rosis Nascentibus*, the contemplation of a garden on a chilly spring morning, and especially the image of the beautiful roses whose blossoms will inevitably wilt and fade, prompts bitter reflections on the transience of beauty and life, which are followed by a *carpe diem* injunction addressed to a young (and apparently unwilling) girl: *collige, virgo, rosas dum flos novus et nova pubes, / et memor esto aevum sic properare tuum* (49f.). For Ausonius, much as for Horace in 1.4, the vernal season, while associated with the idea of beauty and fertility, with youth and erotic endeavors, functions primarily as a reminder of the passing of time and of the brevity of human life, reinforcing the urgency of the appeal that one seize happiness while one can. However, as this is the only aspect of the poem that may remind us of (one of) the Classical spring poems, *De Rosis Nascentibus*, although a striking and profound poem, cannot be considered part of the tradition of the genre.

Alcuin's *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis* too, although concerned with the vernal season, is entirely different in tone and structure from the Classical spring poems. The poem, containing an animated debate between the allegorical figures *Hiems* and *Ver* on the topic whether the coming of

the cuckoo signals the recommencement of toil (*labores*, 19) and strife (*proelia*, 20) or the return of vegetation (*flores*, 28), the resuming of peaceful navigation and the general renewal of life (*generat soboles*, 30), has its literary precedents in Aesopus 297 (a similar verbal battle between winter and spring: see pp. 16f.) and the Vergilian Eclogues rather than in the tradition of the spring poem. Alcuin does employ in his poem the topos of spring, but, through its tone and structure (a series of statements and refutations), *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis* initiates, as Conlee (xiii) points out, the medieval debate poetry. While these different approaches to spring by later authors are both original and interesting, they lack both the complexity and the stylistic polish of the traditional spring poems.⁵⁸⁴

A last but essential aspect that should be mentioned is the fact that, while each of the poems analyzed in this thesis could be (and generally has been) read on its own, any informed critical assessment must take into consideration their adherence to the genre, since, as my approach has revealed, their status as a spring poem clearly affects (for the better) their overall appreciation. At the same time, since this series of poems is more than a simple literary parlour game, but constitutes a genre on its own that illustrates through its major features - stylistic refinement, the use of the Hellenistic techniques of *imitatio cum variatione* and *aemulatio* (especially in the Greek tradition, but also in the Latin spring poems) and the blending of literary and mythological allusions (especially in Horace's spring poems) - typical aspects of Classical poetry, the analysis undertaken here gives the Greek and Latin spring poems the critical attention they fully deserve.

⁵⁸⁴ Spring is also the theme of numerous other poems from the mediaeval period (especially from the *Carmina Burana* anthology) and Renaissance (like Petrarch *Rime Sparse* 310, Landino *Xandra* 1.25, Tito Strozzi *Erot.* 4.8, Buchanan *El.* 2, Basini *Isott.* 3.1.1ff., to give only a few examples). Again, between these poems and the Classical spring poems there is no relationship.

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