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## HORACE'S *ODE* 1.12: SUBTERRANEAN LYRICS

Dr Elena Giusti

[E.Giusti@Warwick.ac.uk](mailto:E.Giusti@Warwick.ac.uk)

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### ABSTRACT

Horace's *Ode* 1.12 is commonly thought to be alluding to the wedding between Augustus' nephew C. Claudius Marcellus and Augustus' daughter Julia in 25 B.C.E., but there are equally good poetic reasons for reading the poem instead as alluding to the young Marcellus' demise in the last quarter of 23 B.C.E. and see it in direct dialogue with the epicedia for Marcellus composed by Virgil and Propertius. The present paper reviews the evidence for either dating and proposes that the poem actively resists and at the same time engenders historicist interpretations by virtue of lyric's ability to create its own historical temporalities. As a poem touching upon the thorny issue of the acceptability of imperial succession in a period when Augustus' life was in danger, *Ode* 1.12 can be read as actively engaged in a hermeneutic "conspiratorial" game with its readers, prompting them to question or imagine allusions to contemporary events at a time of utmost political instability.

**Keywords:** Horace; Virgil; Augustus; Pindar; Marcelli; Hermeneutics of Suspicion; lyric poetry.

## I BELOW THE SURFACE

Horace's poetry has long been fruitful terrain for historicist readers engaged in the practices of so-called "hermeneutics of suspicion."<sup>1</sup> His inclusion of details about his past political partisanship on the side of the Caesaricides has sometimes allowed critics to fill in political and contextual gaps, interpreting silence and ambiguity as a sign of self-censorship and doublespeak operating against an authoritarian and possibly oppressive political context.<sup>2</sup> But Horace's "suspicious" critics have also long shown awareness that to read an Horatian composition as an historic-political puzzle demanding to be solved<sup>3</sup> plays down both the polysemy of these poems and the indeterminacies of historical interpretation. It also fundamentally misunderstands how linguistic utterances work in anticipating and therefore incorporating their own subversions at the variable and open-ended moments of their receptions: as Duncan Kennedy has shown, in what has become a very influential chapter in the critical history of Augustan poetry, all panegyrics include in themselves the germs of their subversive readings, because all poems can be read suspiciously, in so far as they all play with their readers' ability of supplementing their utterances.<sup>4</sup> Yet, no few Latin literary scholars have expressed their dissatisfaction at what they see as resulting in an unavoidable aporia of such deconstructive turn: for some, the disavowal of the old polarised debate over the "Augustanism" or "anti-Augustanism" of Augustan poetry runs the risk of hindering the historical analysis of how both ancient and modern repressive authoritarian systems control and influence artistic production.<sup>5</sup>

The present article aims to offer a mediation between these two views, attempting to make a joint use of the two methodologies that underpin them, which are often perceived as traditionally opposed to each other: historicism and reader-reception theory. The case study for such analysis is Horace's *Ode* 1.12, an early imperial panegyric whose historical interpretation and political allegiance appear undermined by its own reticent speech. As I am going to argue, this ode builds upon and evokes its own historical context in such a way as to suggest that this is crucial for the poem's interpretation – and yet, while the poem actively anticipates the suspicious hermeneutics of its future readers, its reticent refusal to provide the clues to pin down that very context to which it alludes ends up sabotaging the historicist quest that it elicits. This double movement of revelation and concealment of information about the recent private and public history of the Augustan era is akin to the game that Stephen Hinds has recognised as central to Ovid's exilic poetry: in their ambiguous hints at the context of the exile, Ovid's exilic elegies create “an atmosphere of reticence, suspicion, and obsessively paranoid reading,” warranting their participation in what Hinds calls a “poetic of conspiracy.”<sup>6</sup>

While Ovid's exilic poetry belongs to a later and perhaps more authoritarian period of the Augustan regime (as reflected in the scandals and exiles of the two Julias and the deaths of Iullus Antonius and Lucius Aemilius Paulus), a comparable climate of conspiracy surrounded the years around the so-called publication of Horace's collection of *Odes* 1-3, and recognition of such climate is crucial, I argue, for capturing the tone and undertones of *Ode* 1.12. In what follows, I read the poem's reticence and the presence of gloomy underworldly elements as springing from and at the same time constructing their own shifting and uncertain historic-political context, where the risk of murderous plots which would plunge the Romans back into the horrors of civil

war is constantly behind the corner. The poem's subterranean symbolism, which may evoke the possibility of death for the ode's historical characters (as I shall discuss), is also an apt metapoetic metaphor for its suspicious readers: these are the historicist critics-as-archaeologists, who insist on searching for what lies "below" or "beneath" the surface of texts, assuming that there is indeed something to find.<sup>7</sup> In *Ode* 1.12, such quest ends up in frustration if we cannot look further than its historicist input. But its aporetic outcome does not make the journey itself unfruitful, once we pair our contextualisation with a focus on the poem's literary form and on the ways in which it conjures up and hides those truths that suspicious readers are so eager to find. Undeniably, it is the historical (and historiographical) context of the early Augustan period that invites us to engage in this conspiratorial game. But more crucially it is the poetry that prompts the quest for contextualization, supplementation, interpretation as necessary and inevitable: it is the un- or half-said of Horatian lyrics that triggers contextual interpretation as a meaningful exercise while also simultaneously rendering it futile, as the text ends up resisting historicist readings by the very act of calling these practices out.

## II BENEATH THE GROUND?

A shifting political context for a reticent poem is no recipe for precise contextualisation, and *Ode* 1.12 poses more questions than it answers. The most pressing is its date of composition, 25 or 23 B.C.E., depending on whether it alludes to the death of Octavia's son C. Claudius Marcellus, who married Augustus' daughter Julia in 25 B.C.E. and died of a mysterious illness in the last quarter of 23 B.C.E.<sup>8</sup> Suspicious readers eager to fill in the gaps may regard the lack of

mention of Marcellus' death in Horace's corpus as quite a remarkable absence. Horace would be a very likely candidate for authoring, together with Virgil and Propertius,<sup>9</sup> one of those "poems written to glorify the memory of Marcellus" that Seneca tells us were recited after her son's death to the inconsolable Octavia (Sen. *Dial.* 6.2.4 *carmina celebrandae Marcelli memoriae composita*). But the absence of such a composition is less surprising once we consider that scholars traditionally read *Ode* 1.12 as alluding to the wedding of Marcellus and Julia, "syntactically pictured... in the asyndetic juxtaposition of these two families"<sup>10</sup> in such a way that would have been untactful after Marcellus' death.<sup>11</sup>

crescit occulto uelut arbor aeuo	45
fama <b>Marcelli</b> : micat inter omnis	
<b>Iulium</b> sidus uelut inter ignis	
luna minores.	
(Hor. <i>Carm.</i> 1.12.45-8)	

Growing unseen, like a tree, in hidden time	45
is the fame of <b>Marcellus</b> ; among all these	
the <b>Julian</b> star shines, like the moon	
among the lesser fires.	

The very fact that a possible reference to the young Marcellus is ambiguous and indirect contributes to the ode's secrecy: Marcellus is first and foremost M. Claudius Marcellus (captor

of Syracuse and victor of the *spolia opima*), who features as the climax of a list of Republican heroes and is here conflated with the young Marcellus by association in transition towards the Julian household.<sup>12</sup> It is this chain of associations that has made scholars suspect a reference to the wedding, which would help the dating not only of this ode but of the whole collection: if the first three books of the *Odes* contain no reference to Marcellus' death, then we can assume that *Odes* 1-3 must have been "published" (i.e. issued together, and sent to Augustus) before this event, between 25 and 23 B.C.E.<sup>13</sup> As we know from the probable year of the publication of *Odes* 4 in 13 B.C.E.,<sup>14</sup> Horace would not issue another collection of lyric poems until much later, and although there is no reason to suppose that he ever stopped writing lyrics in the meantime, his epicedion for Marcellus (if indeed he composed any) would have lost its timeliness if issued a decade after the event. If so, *Ode* 1.12 would have been available for Virgil to engage with in his parade of heroes in the underworld of the *Aeneid*, which closes with the very same pair of Marcelli, but explicitly laments the death of the younger (*Aen.* 6.868-86).

Yet, readers may also entertain, or "suspect," another possibility. Namely, that the *Iulium sidus* of *Carm.* 1.12.47 not only refers to the comet of catastersed Julius Caesar, but also adds a veiled allusion to the topos of ascension to heaven as consolation for the death of a youth.<sup>15</sup> The same conflation of the two Marcelli with Caesar is found in the closing distich of Propertius' epicedion, which places Marcellus between Marcellus the Elder and Caesar and boldly suggests that, a Claudian and a Julian, he partakes in the glory of Sicily's conqueror, but just like Julius Caesar, he will "forsake the path of men and rise to the stars" (*Prop.* 3.18.34 *ab humana cessit in astra uia*). While Horace would be wary of explicitly suggesting an apotheosis for the young Marcellus, catastersism and more generally divinisation are reiterated in the different sections of

this poem, from the figures of Heracles and the catasterised Dioscuri, who structurally respond to the Marcelli-Julii by closing the parade of demi-gods (*Carm.* 1.12.25-32), up the final image of Augustus ascending to Olympus on a par with Jupiter in the ode's close (*Carm.* 1.12.49-60).<sup>16</sup> These astral references, taken together, become a consolatory affirmation of the glory of Augustus' household, and a poignant reminder of the mortality of its individual members. If we were to assume the death of the young Marcellus as the historical event that influenced this ode's intimations of mortality, we would have to revisit Horace's intertextual relationship with Virgil's Underworld, bearing in mind not only that both parades must be connected with the figurative programme of the Forum of Augustus and may have been inspired by Marcellus' funeral procession,<sup>17</sup> but that intertextual readers should more appropriately imagine an intricate context of multi-layered composition, mutual recitation and reciprocal interaction, which defies a model of straightforward allusion from one "source text" to another.

These two interpretations of *Ode* 1.12, opposite as they appear, are nonetheless aligned in reading the poem "suspiciously": that is, they both look for contextual interpretive clues to provide a stable referent beyond the poem's surface text. The aim of this paper, instead, is to highlight the productive potential of this hermeneutic conflict for our understanding of the ways in which we read Horatian lyric. What is missing from both interpretations is the literary appreciation for the ways in which the poem gestures at its own historicity by explicitly encouraging us to (re)construct its context, while at the same time emphatically refusing us the keys to access it. Partly, this is symptomatic of the context: the years between 25 and 22 B.C.E. were so eventful that almost each month could bring authors to revisit, and readers to reinterpret, poetic allusions to contemporary politics. But I would like to put forward the provocation that the



context is also symptomatic of the poem: it is the poem's selective choices and its underworldly lyric imagery that load its parade with anxiety about the death of military and political figures.

It is central to my argument that the ode poses as a Latin counterpart to Pindar's Second Olympian: this is another composition written for a monarch in a context of political turmoil, and which similarly engages in an exercise in reticence, while meditating in a pessimistic but consolatory vein upon the passing of men, heroes, gods, and tyrants. What I hope will emerge from this reading is that Horace's poem allusively invites us to wonder what death would mean for the Princeps and his supposed successor in either 25 or 23 B.C.E., both years which saw Augustus fall dangerously ill to the point that he believed he might never recover.<sup>18</sup> Placed straight after an invocation to Hermes Psychopompus (*Carm.* 1.10.16-20) and the *Carpe diem* reminder that our days are numbered (*Carm.* 1.11), *Ode* 1.12 – especially if read in dialogue with Virgil – evokes an underworld of heroes, a funeral parade, a *laudatio funebris*, and a possible apotheosis after death that would nicely match the aftermath of the young Marcellus' demise. And yet Horace manages to leave it open to his readers – and to Augustus *in primis* – to supply who the (un)fortunate dedicatee of such honours may be.

## I A SHIFTING CONTEXT

Several elements cluster around 23 B.C.E. as a plausible *terminus ante quem* for the publication of *Odes* 1-3. Politically speaking, this is a momentous year, marking the resumption of consular elections, with Augustus stepping down from the consulship but receiving the more insidious bestowal of a lifelong *tribunicia potestas*.<sup>19</sup> It is also a year in which the Princeps fell

dangerously ill before he had an obvious power to bequeath.<sup>20</sup> Had he died in 23 B.C.E., “there might well have been a civil war.”<sup>21</sup> But Augustus did not die. His heir-apparent did, looked after by the very same physician, as well as a number of aristocrats, put to death after the discovery of a conspiracy to take the Princeps’ life.

Augustus’ political victory in this year nicely squares with Horace’s major poetic accomplishment. In July 23 B.C.E. Augustus appoints L. Sestius as suffect consul,<sup>22</sup> which would explain the prominent position of ‘the ode to Sestius’ (*Ode* 1.4) straight after those addressed to Maecenas, Caesar and Virgil.<sup>23</sup> But another famously dubious reconstruction is that Horace would not have addressed *Ode* 2.10 to “Licinius Murena” (if we are to recognise Maecenas’ brother-in-law as the addressee)<sup>24</sup> after he was accused of conspiring with Fannius Caepio against the Princeps’ life,<sup>25</sup> and certainly not after he was convicted and put to death.<sup>26</sup> Since the poem seems to imply *a* Licinius’ misfortune, and *a* Varro Murena (who may not be the conspirator)<sup>27</sup> is mentioned in the Capitoline Fasti and in no other Fasti as consul of 23 B.C.E., soon replaced with Cn. Calpurnius Piso, Nisbet and Hubbard posited that the poem may allude to a different phase of Murena’s downfall, when the *consul designatus* was removed from office, for whatever reason, in the first half of the year, still in time to be omitted from the Fasti, but not from *Odes* 1-3. *Ode* 2.10 would thus offer consolation before “further catastrophe”:<sup>28</sup> there would follow Murena’s defence of M. Primus for having crossed the borders of Macedonia to start a war against the Odrysians,<sup>29</sup> and the revelation of Murena’s complicity in the conspiracy, both events that are however difficult to assign to the end of 23 or to 22 B.C.E.<sup>30</sup>

This reconstruction leaves a rather short window of time for Horace to have sent the *Odes* to Augustus straight after the Princeps’ recovery,<sup>31</sup> between July 23 B.C.E. (when Sestius took up

his consulship) and the last quarter of the year (when Marcellus died and arguably Primus was put on trial). Perhaps Horace did issue the collection within this timeframe, but if so it is difficult to accept the dating of *Odes* 1.12 and 2.10 as based on the idea that his poetry needed to be tactful about scandals and private matters in the imperial household, given the ironic coincidence that these poems are sent off to Augustus at a rather critical juncture, only months before they may end up being read by the Princeps against their poet's best intentions. It is ironic that Horace's injunction to follow a golden mean should be addressed to the man, or a homonymous reminder of the man, who shortly after the poem's publication would take the most ambitious and dangerous path imaginable in the current political climate. Nor would it be less ironic for Horace to send off to Augustus a poem that meant to celebrate Marcellus' wedding, but could in fact be read, as I am going to argue in detail, as shrouding him in images of the afterlife, if Marcellus was to die straight after Augustus' receipt of this composition. And how are we to imagine the reception of this poem, which might have celebrated Marcellus' wedding as that of a potential successor, as read or listened to by the Princeps just before he had a change of heart about his nephew's suitability to the role? This is something that many historians suspect, on the basis of Dio's (perhaps fabricated) comment that on his presumed death-bed in 23 B.C.E. the Princeps gave his signet-ring to Agrippa (later to become Julia's second husband),<sup>32</sup> and given Pliny's cryptic inclusion of Marcellus' "dubious intentions" among the many difficulties that Augustus had to face in the first years of the Principate (Plin. *Nat.* 7.149 *suspecta Marcelli uota*). And it goes without saying that the mysterious death of the nineteen-year-old at the hands of the Princeps' own physician Antonius Musa caused as much room for suspicious rumours in antiquity as it did in the modern reception of this story.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, if Agrippa was the

viceregent that Augustus had in mind all along, explicitly so in 23 B.C.E., then it doesn't help that Horace only writes a punning *recusatio* on this second-in-command, who could not flaunt the pedigree of the Marcelli (*Carm.* 1.6).<sup>34</sup>

In other words, to imagine that Horace would have been too tactful to send these poems to Augustus after this window in 23 B.C.E. does not make the poems themselves tactful, if read by or recited to the Princeps in the aftermath of the events. It also denies both Horace and the poems any foresight into the immediate turns in the political landscape.<sup>35</sup> While it is worth remembering that processes of composition and reception, especially considering authorial variants and contexts of iteration via recitation, are multi-layered and spread across different spatio-temporal contexts, it goes without saying that there must have been a first reception of *Odes* 1.12 and 2.10 by Augustus, if not a first context of either public or private recitation.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, if we wish to argue that these poems allude to the death of Marcellus and to the conspiracy, we must imagine both this moment of reception and the collection as a whole as issued after the events took place. Alternatively, if we imagine this original moment of reception as predating both events, we may still wish to notice how it is the very climate of political uncertainty and conspiratorial paranoia in which these poems were composed that is reflected in their “tactful” hesitancy to allude to contemporary historical events.<sup>37</sup> Such hesitancy can be read instead as a powerful political and poetic strategy to turn these odes into a poetry that will be able to stand the test of time, despite the contextual referencing necessary in what we may anachronistically refer to as “court poetry,” meant to be received by powerful – but temporally contingent – political patrons. In simpler words, our inability to assess these poems’ historical context is dictated by their very nature as poems: historical reconstruction necessitates a chronological narrative that lyric compositions

resist by their own nature, since their existence depends upon performance and iteration, and their cipher is adaptability.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps *Odes* 1-3 attempts to crystallise Horace's oeuvre and impose stillness on these compositions as in a bronze monument (*Ode* 3.30), but since this is no less made up of jumbled and juxtaposed temporalities, why should we find it surprising if it refuses to tell us a coherent story-line?

In what follows, I read *Ode* 1.12 as evoking funereal themes in such a way that invites us to "suspect" that the poem is alluding to the death of Marcellus. Ultimately, however, proving this suspicion becomes more tangential than the realisation that the poem is at any rate engaged in flaunting the possibility that not only Marcellus but also Augustus may die, at a time when Augustus was not yet a monarch and Marcellus was not yet an heir, and neither could yet be properly deified. This is what leaves Horace's Muse with the difficult task of not knowing how to praise either, and how to enhance the "glory" of the Marcelli without also contributing to the "rumours" that surrounded them – a double meaning of *fama* which I see as encapsulated in the *fama Marcelli* of the twelfth stanza. The ode's emphasis on the passing of generations, when read within a historical context (whether in 25 or in 23 B.C.E.) in which Augustus had no male offspring, and had fallen dangerously ill, points to the mention of Marcellus at the end of the parade as the veritable hinge of a poem that deals with the unmentionable nature of what would in retrospect become a hereditary monarchy, although this was too early a date to accustom the Romans to the idea of imposing a successor.<sup>39</sup> It is not only modern scholars and ancient historians who have found it hard to understand what Marcellus stood for within what would only become the "Principate" in retrospect:<sup>40</sup> his role must have been tricky to determine at the

time of this ode's composition too, and the whole matter required careful political and poetic handling.

### III A WAVERING POEM

*Ode* 1.12 opens with a *dubitatio* about its content and selection, as Horace asks the Muse Clio what man, hero or god they should celebrate (1-6).<sup>41</sup> The poem then lingers for one and a half stanzas on the arch-poet Orpheus (7-12)<sup>42</sup> before proposing possible names to sing:<sup>43</sup> first the gods (13-24 Jupiter, Pallas, Liber, Diana, Phoebus), then the demi-gods (25-32 Hercules and the Dioscuri), finally the *uiri* (33-48). These are the kings (33-5 Romulus,<sup>44</sup> Numa, Tarquinius Superbus) then the Younger Cato, highest example of self-sacrifice for the Republic (35-6) followed by other, older, examples of immolation (37-8 Regulus, the Scauri, Lucius Aemilius Paulus) and ancient Roman frugality (39-44 Fabricius, Curius, Camillus). Marcellus the Elder is the last *uir*, fused into one with Marcellus the Younger as we transition into the stanza that he gets to share with the Julian star of catasterised Caesar (45-8). Then comes a three-stanza coda (49-60) truly dedicated to the "Praises of Augustus":<sup>45</sup> to imperial expansion, and to an indirect comparison, in ring-composition, between the Princeps and Jupiter.

The ode opens the so-called "parade of lyric predecessors"<sup>46</sup> in *Odes* 1 with a "motto"<sup>47</sup> from Pindar's Second Olympian:

Quem uirum aut heroa lyra uel acri  
tibia sumis celebrare, Clio?

quem deum?

(Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.1-3)

What man or hero, with lyre or sharp flute,

do you take to celebrate, Clio?

What god?

Ἀναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι,

τίνα θεόν, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα δ' ἄνδρα κελαδήσομεν;

(Pind. *Ol.* 2.1-2)

Hymns, masters of the lyre,

which god, which hero, which man shall we celebrate?

Undoubtedly this acting epinicion has an encomiastic tone, also elicited by its Hellenistic intermediaries,<sup>48</sup> and its initial doubts appear justified once we agree with Denis Feeney that its conclusion focuses on Augustus as the one divine/heroic/manly figure who reunites the three Pindaric categories into one.<sup>49</sup> However, both *Ode* 1.12 and the Second Olympian display a continuous alternation of tone, wavering between victory and defeat, life and death, in such a way that makes both blur the boundaries between epinicion and consolation, choral afflatus and monodic introspection.

This alternation of tone also applies to the section that is most supposed to embody *Ode* 1.12's official face: the parade of heroes. Here, we inevitably stop on the oxymoronic *nobile letum* of Cato Uticensis, an "oblivion to remember" as much as a "famous death,"<sup>50</sup> anachronistically placed between the kings and the *uiri*, and emphasised by enjambment in the adonius of line 36:

Romulum post hos prius an quietum  
 Pompili regnum memorem an superbos  
 Tarquini fasces dubito **an Catonis**                     35  
       **nobile letum.**

Regulum et Scauros animaeque magnae  
 prodigum Paulum superante Poeno  
 gratus insigni referam camena  
       Fabriciumque.   40  
 hunc et incomptis Curium capillis  
 utilem bello tulit et Camillum  
 saeua paupertas et auitus apto  
       cum lare fundus.

(Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.33-44)

After these, I don't know if I should recall Romulus,  
 or the quiet reign of Pompilius, or the arrogant



rods of Tarquinius, or Cato's 35

**famous death.**

Regulus, the Scauri, and Paulus, prodigal  
of his mighty life, when the Carthaginian was winning:  
these I shall gratefully mention with the glorious Camena,  
and Fabricius too. 40

He, and rough-bearded Curius,  
and Camillus, were brought forth to be of service in war  
by cruel poverty and an ancestral farm  
with household gods to match.

The mention of Cato has long been a “notorious stumbling block”<sup>51</sup> in the scholarship on this ode. Suggesting that his praise would have been offensive to Augustus, scholars have proposed a number of emendations in the attempt to attribute instead the *nobile letum* to the character who follows, Regulus.<sup>52</sup> But the presence of the last and most illustrious exponent of the republican faction in the poetic gallery of heroes fashioned by a poet who himself fought on the side of the republicans and was nevertheless reintegrated among the illustrious men in the Princeps’ court provides no real critical difficulty. Especially if we imagine the poem composed, or sent to Augustus, in the year in which the Princeps had just offered the consulship to L. Sestius, a man of republican partisanship, who had always been an enthusiastic follower of Brutus, and had fought at his side throughout the civil wars<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, Cato's mention is in fact in line with the following *exempla*. What is striking about this parade, especially in comparison with Virgil's, is its lack of successful heroes. Where are the Scipios (*Aen.* 6.842-3)? Where is Quintus Fabius Maximus (*Aen.* 6.845-6)? The characters following Cato are, just like Cato himself, famous for their death in the face of defeat. This is true of Marcus Atilius Regulus, captured and killed by the Carthaginians in 255 B.C.E.,<sup>54</sup> and of one of the Scauri, Marcus Aurelius, defeated and killed by the Cimbri in 105 B.C.E. in an episode structurally similar to that of Regulus.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, some of these characters seem to be cast as the defeated counterparts of their triumphant homonyms in the *Aeneid*:<sup>56</sup> from the Younger Cato replacing Virgil's *magne Cato* (*Aen.* 6.841), through M. Atilius Regulus standing in for the triumphant C. Atilius Regulus "Serranus" (*Aen.* 6.844),<sup>57</sup> up to Lucius Aemilius Paulus being not the conqueror of Greece (alluded to at *Aen.* 6.838) but his father, the defeated general at Cannae, forever destined to share a line with the triumphant Carthaginian (38 *superante Poeno*) – a man who had no "small" (38 *paulum*) gift to offer but his "great" (37 *magnae*) soul.<sup>58</sup> It is true that Rome's victory appears rescued by mention of Gaius Fabricius Luscinus, a hero of the Pyrrhic wars and victorious against Samnites, Lucanians and Bruttians,<sup>59</sup> Manius Curius Dentatus, the conqueror of Pyrrhus at Beneventum in 275 B.C.E., and Marcus Furius Camillus, conqueror of Veii and rescuer of Rome from the Gallic sack in 390 B.C.E.,<sup>60</sup> but emphasis is on their frugal habits rather than military valour. A most influential interpretation of this list reads it as a short history of Rome "through defeat to victory" via examples of "steadfast courage and patriotism."<sup>61</sup> While this reading somewhat undermines the very nature of *exempla* as a privileged site for polysemy, controversy and critical reflection,<sup>62</sup> it also reads a teleology of victory in a passage that does not mention victory at all.

This is not to mean that “victory” is not a concern of the poem. Undoubtedly it is, given the ode’s initial posing as a Pindaric victory ode, matched by another allusion to the Olympian in its final image of the “chariot” with which Jupiter is meant to shake “Olympus” (*Carm.* 1.12.58 *tu graui curru quaties Olympum*).<sup>63</sup> But Pindar’s Second Olympian, an intertext and explicit model that allows us to access the mood of *Ode* 1.12,<sup>64</sup> in turn problematises its theme and genre through a melancholic reflection upon the mixture of happiness and suffering that makes up mortal life and allows success to “project anxiety.”<sup>65</sup> The Olympian also contains a vision of the afterlife that is the oldest attestation of metempsychosis, and which was clearly a source for Virgil’s eschatology in *Aeneid* 6.<sup>66</sup> *Ode* 1.12’s lingering on Orpheus (7-12), Hercules and the Dioscuri (25-32) may indicate that it too partakes of the underworldly and subterranean setting of Pindar’s and Virgil’s poems. These four characters all experienced underground journeys, and are all mentioned by Aeneas as katabatic models in a passage of *Aeneid* 6 that also shares a line ending with *Ode* 1.12 (*Aen.* 6.120-3).<sup>67</sup> Orpheus, whose *katabasis* was narrated by Proteus in Virgil’s fourth *Georgic* (4.453-527), reappears in Elysium in his double guise of singer and priest (*Aen.* 6.645-7), and Orphism is believed to be a possible background both to *Aeneid* 6 and to the Second Olympian.<sup>68</sup> It is beyond this paper’s scope to disentangle the intricate interconnections between these texts and their own literary and philosophical sources. What I wish to highlight here is a common thread in Horace’s and Pindar’s odes, which allows us to engage in an “underworldly” reading of Horace’s parade, and of its climactic twelfth stanza.

Pindar’s Second Olympian, a victory ode for Theron of Acragas on the occasion of his chariot race victory in 476 B.C.E., is reflected in *Ode* 1.12 in more ways than one. This is also an encomiastic epinicion that opens and closes in ring-composition with praise for the tyrant of

Acragas (*Ol.* 2.1-15, 89-100; but also 46-53, right in the middle), who is indeed the “man” to praise alongside Zeus as “god,” and Heracles as “hero.” Just like Augustus, Theron is the alpha and omega of this poem, the point of departure and arrival of song, trawling a long history of divine, semi-divine and mortal ancestors.<sup>69</sup> What has so far gone unnoticed is that there is also a striking resemblance between the climate of conspiracy and danger that surrounded Augustus and the complex political intrigues in which Theron was implicated, which plausibly brought uncertainty upon his dynastic hopes too.<sup>70</sup> At the time of the Second Olympian, Theron had to deal with conspiracy and insubordination in the city of Himera, which he had allocated to his son Thrasydaeus to rule.<sup>71</sup> The ringleaders were Capys and Hippocrates,<sup>72</sup> who seem to have been executed by the tyrant together with such a huge number of Himerans that the city had to be repopulated afterwards.<sup>73</sup> In this year too, political marriages played a crucial role in confirming renewed friendship with Hieron of Syracuse, who preferred to reveal the conspiracy to Theron rather than support the rebels. Theron’s daughter had been previously married, sequentially, with two brothers of Hieron, Gelon and Polyzelus, the latter of whom had come into conflict with Theron and sought refuge at Acragas, an event which had almost caused war between the two tyrants.<sup>74</sup> In response to Hieron’s decision to uncover the Himeraean conspiracy and be at peace with Theron, the new friendship was formalised by another union, this time between Hieron and the daughter of Theron’s brother Xenocrates, celebrated in the Second Olympian as Theron’s “coheir” and “brother” (*Ol.* 2.49 ὁμόκλαρον... ἀδελφεόν).<sup>75</sup>

This shifting climate of political uncertainty<sup>76</sup> feeds into the ambiguously crafted, dark but consolatory character of Pindar’s song to the tyrant of Acragas. After its encomiastic opening, the Olympian’s first *gnome* tells us that time cannot undo what has been done, but a fortunate

destiny may bring forgetfulness and ease the pain (*Ol.* 2.15-22). The daughters of Cadmus suffered, but two of them, Semele and Ino, found happiness in the afterlife (23-30). Just like Leuconoe<sup>77</sup> in *Ode* 1.11, Theron is reminded that humans are not allowed to know when they will die, or how their day will end (31-3) and “various streams of happiness and pain come at various times upon men” (33-4). Pindar brings as examples Oedipus and his progeny, whose tragic destiny was eventually counterbalanced by the glory of Polynices’ son Thersandrus, an ancestor of Theron (38-52). “Wealth embellished with virtue” (53), such as Theron’s, is “a conspicuous star” (55 ἀστὴρ ἀρίζηλος), “the truest light for a man if one has it and knows the future” (55-6 ἐτυμώτατον / ἀνδρὶ φέγγος εἰ δε νιν ἔχων τις οἶδεν τὸ μέλλον).<sup>78</sup> This future is the afterlife of the soul: punishment awaits those who have committed sins upon the earth and the just deserve an afterlife with no toil, while the Isles the of Blessed will welcome those who have lived three lives according to justice (58-83).

Both Pindar’s and Horace’s poems thematise the passing of generations. In *Ode* 1.12, at a similar distance from beginning and end we find “father” Jupiter (*Carm.* 1.12.13 *parens*, 49 *pater*). The list of divinities is a list of Jupiter’s offspring, opened by the key verb *generatur* (16), which signals that Jupiter too was in turn generated by Saturnus (50 *orte Saturno*), the Latin counterpart to Kronos – conflated with Chronos: at the top of the genealogical tree is “Time, Father of all,” who opened the first gnomic section of Pindar’s Second Olympian (*Ol.* 2.17 Χρόνος ὁ πάντων πατήρ). On display in *Ode* 1.12 is a cyclical succession of power that is handed down from Saturnus to Augustus in a direct line, bringing back to earth the *Saturnia regna* of Virgil’s fourth *Eclogue* (*Ecl.* 4.6). Augustus becomes the viceregent of Jupiter on earth by means of an expression that blurs the line between his divine and mortal status (51-2 *secundo*

/ *Caesare*)<sup>79</sup> and puts him on a par with Jupiter as “father,” the one responsible for “sowing” a new era of peace and a virtuous line of descent.<sup>80</sup>

Alex Hardie has shown how both Pindar and Horace thematise the passing of generations by evoking cyclical conceptions of time. Harmony itself, which opens both compositions in the figures of Orpheus and the “hymns,” is closely associated with the cyclicity of the seasons, as well as with the secular notion that all earthly powers are subject to change and decay (Polybius’ ἀνακύκλωσις).<sup>81</sup> It is within this cyclical variability of fortune that we are meant to interpret the alternation of success and defeat characteristic of Horace’s parade. But Hardie does not allow Rome to also partake of this cycle: on the contrary, he takes the parade’s climax as simultaneously alluding to the military success of Marcellus the Elder and to the marriage of the Younger, thus “point[ing] ahead to further birth and growth.”<sup>82</sup> In its political climate, this hymn to the passing of generations cannot but thematise the issue of imperial succession.

The Olympian’s wavering between fortune and misery can in fact bring into Horace’s poem a more pessimistic tune, leading to ominous associations. One obvious case is the motif of (Eteocles and Polynices’) “mutual slaughter” (*Ol.* 2.42 ἀλλαλοφονία), which in Pindar encapsulates the misery of Theron’s Theban ancestors, and would likely remind Theron of the strife with his relatives: this would productively import into Horace’s ode an unspoken reminder of the Roman civil wars.<sup>83</sup> Pindar seems to identify ‘forgetfulness’ (18 λάθα) as “the next best thing to the impossibility of Time’s going backwards to undo what is done,”<sup>84</sup> in full knowledge that suppressing the past risks making it spring back in anger (20 παλίγκοτον). This very same tension between remembering and forgetting, acknowledging and suppressing, characterises Cato’s *nobile letum* in Horace (*Carm.* 1.12.36) as illustrative of the ode’s overall attitude to civil

war, and of Octavian's involvement in it.<sup>85</sup> Ανακύκλωσις also reverberates with Robert Brown's interpretation of the first names of the parade (Romulus, Numa, Tarquinius and Cato) as symbolising Rome's constitutional transitions: the city's foundation, the institution of the monarchy, and the beginning and end of the Republic.<sup>86</sup> What this poem comments upon and attempts to define is the last, conspicuous but undistinctive change in the Roman political outlook: the change that brought about what would, with hindsight, effectively become the "Principate." We have seen how both in 25 and in 23 B.C.E. Augustus was concretely drawing up contingency plans as a response to his illnesses.<sup>87</sup> In this context, *Ode* 1.12 also reveals an obsession with the frightening possibility that, should Augustus die, the end of this revolution may come when it is still too soon to know what the next stage has in store. It is fitting for Horace to express doubts as to which gods, heroes and men to praise in a period when doubts must have been spreading, and rumours humming, about who, and what, would succeed the Princeps in the worst-case scenario. If the parade should lead towards Marcellus, the glory of the Scipios may be suitably passed over in silence to grant his ancestor the full merit of the Second Punic War. But if anything should thwart this plan, then how is posterity going to judge Horace's and Clio's historical selection?

#### IV THE TREE AND THE MOON

With chronology eluding us, our interpretation of the tone of *Ode* 1.12 and its relation to the Second Olympian can inform our preference as to whether the twelfth stanza alludes to Marcellus' wedding or to his death. Crucially, however, both Horace's and Pindar's poems

display precisely this continuous alternation of tone that makes both historicist interpretations viable. A close reading of the stanza, whose imagery suits both an epithalamic and a funereal context, supports an interpretation of the ode as engaged in anticipating both possibilities in its critical reception.

The double comparison to the tree and the moon invites us to think of an *eikasia*, a comparison game proper to epithalamic songs. This is in line with a poem that tunes into monodic poetry, and Sappho's poetry in particular, through its Sapphic stanzas.<sup>88</sup> Menander Rhetor (404.5) encourages comparing both bride and groom with plants,<sup>89</sup> and Sappho herself compared a bridegroom with "a delicate branch" (fr. 115V ὄρπακι βραδίνῳ).<sup>90</sup> The same imagery of the moon outshining the stars (*Carm.* 1.12.46-8 *micat inter omnis... uelut inter ignis / luna minores*) can be traced back to Sappho, where it appears in one fragment that may or may not belong to an epithalamion (fr. 34V ἄστερες μὲν ἀμφὶ κάλαν σελάνναν / ἄψ ἀπυκρύπτοισι φάεννον εἶδος, "the stars hide away their shining form around the beautiful moon") and as part of a consolation for Atthis for the absence of a faraway friend/lover (96V.7-9 ὦς... ἃ βροδοδάκτυλος σελάννα / πάντα περρέχοισ' ἄστρα, "like... the rosy-fingered moon, surpassing all the stars"). If an epithalamic reading is thus at play in the stanza, it is evoked only to be dismantled. Bacchylides had already adopted Sappho's comparison in an epinician context, where Automedes outshines his fellow pentathletes "as the moon with her beautiful brightness on a mid-month night outshines the light of the stars" (Bacchyl. 9.27-9 ὦς / ἄστρον διακρίνει φάη / νυκτὸς διχομηνίδος εὐφεγγῆς σελάνα). The detail that it is only the "mid-month" full moon that eclipses the stars, and "it will only be a matter of time before the stars will again outshine the moon," allowed him to "reconfigure the Sapphic image as a meditation on the inherent



*transience* of success.”<sup>91</sup> The permeability of Bacchylides’ epinician language to Sappho’s melancholic imagery of loss projects onto the victory ode a sense of the impermanence of beauty, success and life similar to the one that we have seen as characteristic of the Second Olympian.

The growing tree too may not be a reassuring metaphor, since Greek literary comparisons to saplings tend to denote “young (but still growing) men... struck down before their time.”<sup>92</sup> Our passage is close to Thetis’ lament for the future death of Achilles in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 18.59-60), and Horace himself will use the tree metaphor for Achilles in this sense in *Ode* 4.6 (9-120).<sup>93</sup> In *Aeneid* 6 Marcellus is a *propago* (“the layer or set by which a plant is propagated”)<sup>94</sup> struck down before it could achieve its full potential (*Aen.* 6.870-1).<sup>95</sup> But what appears certain beyond doubt is that the tree, “a persistent metaphor in the context of dynasty-building,”<sup>96</sup> must be symbolic of the new family tree that the wedding between Marcellus and Julia has just planted. The same tree imagery recurred in the Second Olympian, where Thersandrus was presented as the “shoot” (*Ol.* 2.45 θάλος) that would save the lines of Adrastus and Oedipus and from whose “seed” (*Ol.* 2.46 σπέρματος) Theron’s “root” (*Ol.* 2.46 ρίζαν) would spring. In joining the Younger with the Elder Marcellus, and both Marcelli with the Julii, the stanza partakes in a kind of grafting which, as Emily Gowers argues for the *Aeneid*, “can be seen to be wrestling with a contemporary dilemma... between the ideal of natural succession and the pragmatics of adoption.”<sup>97</sup> At the same time, by making the tree’s *comparandum* not Marcellus, but his and the Elder’s *fama* (45-6 *crescit... fama Marcelli*),<sup>98</sup> Horace emphasises the poet’s role in this new symbolism. In its metapoetic connotations, the tree harks back to the woods and “long-eared

oaks” that followed Orpheus’ singing at the start of the poem (7-12 *silvae... auritas... quercus*).<sup>99</sup>

In singling out *fama* as the passage’s *comparandum*, the stanza also appears to evoke a *gnome* of Pindar’s eighth Nemean used to console Deinias for the death of his father Megas, where “valour grows like a tree that springs up from fresh dew” (*Nem.* 8.40 ἀύξεται δ’ ἀρετά, χλωραῖς ἐέρσαις ὡς ὅτε δένδρεον ᾄσσει) “when lifted to liquid heaven among wise and just men” (*Nem.* 8.41-2). Pindar cannot bring Megas back to life, but he can erect a monument to the Muses, a song, for his homeland and the Chariadai (*Nem.* 8.44-8). Pindar’s *gnome* is highly compacted in Horace, where Latin *fama* simultaneously indicates the “renown” that “valour” brought to the *Marcelli*, the “rumours” that helped lifting it, and the “fame” that the poet brings both to himself and to the *laudandi*. *Fama* must be a crucial word in a poem addressed to the Muse of κλέος, and Horace can be seen here, as Philip Hardie writes of Livy when struggling to juggle the *famae* about the death of Marcellus the Elder, as “caught up in the struggle for control of *fama* between the great men of Rome... as he strives to establish his own fame.”<sup>100</sup> As has been shown, there was plenty to juggle with in fixing the controversial figure of the Elder Marcellus, and Virgil himself in *Aeneid* 6 can be seen as crafting an “expertly reticent” *elogium*.<sup>101</sup> In Virgil’s parade, Anchises points to Marcellus as winner of the *spolia opima* following the battle of Clastidium in 222 B.C.E. (*Aen.* 6.855),<sup>102</sup> mentioning his military exploits against Gauls and Carthaginians (*Aen.* 6.858), but passing over in silence the capture of Syracuse in 212 B.C.E., which earned him as much blame as praise for the “rapacity of the sack” and “the thoughtless killing of Archimedes.”<sup>103</sup> Yet, if Marcellus could play the hubristic role of the conqueror, his dedication of part of the looted spoils in temples and his tears in looking down at Syracuse mark him instead

as a tragic character, whose sensitivities are in line with those of *Ode* 1.12.<sup>104</sup> While Livy admits that reports were varied,<sup>105</sup> he immortalises him as “a dying man, pierced by a lance and slipping from his horse” (Livy 27.27.7 *Marcellum... transfixum lancea prolabantem ex equo moribundum*) – the victim of a Carthaginian ambush near Horace’s very own Venusia. This makes him an especially good companion to Paulus and Regulus in Horace’s parade of defeated men from the Republic.

Horace’s *elogium* to Marcellus is similarly reticent. The characteristic growth of his tree-like fame is specified with an unparalleled *iunctura: occulto... aeuo* (45-6). The expression can be literally translated as “in the hidden lapse of time” and has been interpreted as synonymous with the adverb *occulte* (“imperceptibly”) or its archaic form *occulto*.<sup>106</sup> While scholars have attempted to amend the passage,<sup>107</sup> the jarring hyperbaton may purposefully invite readers to form this *callida iunctura* by themselves, taking together what initially appears as a stand-alone adverb (*occulto*) and an ablative of time (*aeuo*). It is tempting to take Horace’s *aeuum* as translating Greek αἰών to indicate the eternity of time, sometimes used in post-mortem existence in the upper- or underworld.<sup>108</sup> Similarly intriguing, for readers suspicious of Marcellus’ death in the stanza, is the choice of an adverb or adjective deriving from *celo* (“to hide”) to highlight the mortal existence of historical characters whose fame would be “concealed” were it not for the work of the poets. The context and language can be compared to a passage of Theocritus’ *Idyll* 16, a recognised model for *Ode* 1.12, according to which poets must be honoured if you want to be well spoken of even when “hidden in Hades” (*Id.* 16.30 εἰν Ἄϊδαο κεκρυμμένος).<sup>109</sup> At any rate, emphasis is cast on an ambiguous phrase, matching the stanza’s ambiguous reticence. The irony of the Marcelli’s *fama* growing undetected may not be lost: after the deaths of the Elder

Marcellus' son and grandson, “the family was *politically eclipsed* until three members held the consulship between 51 and 49.”<sup>110</sup> These three Marcelli, whose name Horace joins in harmony with Julius, all led a vigorous opposition to Julius Caesar.<sup>111</sup> The wedding of Gaius Claudius Marcellus Minor (cos. 50 B.C.E.) to Octavia had sanctioned Octavian's “access to the aristocratic hall of fame.”<sup>112</sup> The union of their Marcellus with Julia now presents the occasion to re-unite the once divided factions of the late Republic into a single party. While *aeuo* encapsulates the poem's cyclical temporality and the passing of generations, also hinting at the eternity to which Horace's *monumentum* aims (*Ode* 3.30), *occulto* flashes to the suspicious reader as a far-from-hidden clue to what Horace's encomiastic voice must both “hide” and reveal, forget and acknowledge. Taken together, they aptly highlight the undetectable nature of time passing in a lyric that is actively resisting being pinned down to a precise chronological moment.

Here too, the Second Olympian comes into play. I have already touched upon the ode's opening on the necessity to “forget” (18 λάθα, etymologically connected to λανθάνω, “to go unseen, to escape notice”) in order to avoid a kind of “return of the repressed.”<sup>113</sup> We can now notice that its closing *gnome* seems to deal with what poetic praise should or should not mention in a textual passage that is even more uncertain than Horace's, but which similarly includes a rare expression in the noun κρυφόν or else adjective κρύφιος, both deriving from κρύπτω, “to hide.”<sup>114</sup> Pindar's last gnomic message to Theron seems to be that it is better not to allow “praise” (αἶνον) to be overtaken by “excess/satiety” (κόρος), “not keeping to the just limits, but coming from greedy men” and “eager to place mere chatter” as “a cloud/an obfuscation” (κρυφόν) “upon the good deeds of noble men” (*Ol.* 2.95-8 ἀλλ' αἶνον ἐπέβα κόρος / οὐ δίκαια

συναντόμενος, ἀλλὰ μάργων ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν, / τὸ λαλαγήσαι θέλων κρυφὸν τιθέμεν ἐσλῶν καλοῖς / ἔργοις).<sup>115</sup> It is telling that the suggestive obscurity of this passage is matched by the scholia's notice that these lines hide a reference to the Himeraean insubordination of Capys and Hippocrates.<sup>116</sup> When dealing with sensitive praise, Pindar and Horace seem to agree, it would be much better to remain silent; but if you have to sing, it had better be *sotto voce*.

To sum up, what the imagery of the twelfth stanza of *Ode* 1.12 conjures up is not – or at least not only – a wedding *eikasias* between the young Marcellus, the groom who grows strongly but imperceptibly like a sapling, and his bride Julia, whose beauty outshines the stars. Rather, this is a locus of deep poetic intricacy, whose historical context and literary heritage turn into an especially iconic passage for our understanding of the poetic complexities and political negotiations not only of this particular poem, but of the whole of Horace's production. On the one hand, the comparison between Caesar's star and the moon echoes poetic consolatory literary models while cleverly stopping short of identifying a precise referent for a catastrophe that would not be appropriate at this time, or would in fact even be dangerous, to associate with either Marcellus or Augustus. On the other hand, the tree simile, which activates a number of underworldly associations, is also an iconic and enigmatic image for the risky ways in which Horace's poetry participates in the rumours and renown surrounding both Marcelli since their union with the Julian family – the *fama* of an entangled family tree whose roots grow imperceptibly beneath the earth, with ramifications that lie well beyond the poet's control.

## V CONCLUSION

The enigmatic “hidden time” surrounding Marcellus’ *fama* in its arboreal form is symbolic and symptomatic of the delicate balance that this poem should keep between concealing and revealing, historical mortality and poetic immortality, transience and timelessness. What Horace hides here about Marcellus reflects what he does not or cannot say about Augustus. This relates both to his contextual situation (and we may perhaps hear a hint at the Princeps’ poor health in the attribution of his care to Jupiter at 50-1 *tibi cura magni / Caesaris fatis data*, “you have been entrusted by the fates with the care of mighty Caesar”) and to his Hellenistic aspirations to immortality, with the model of Alexander the Great highlighted by enjambement of the epithet *magnus* as applied to *Caesar*.<sup>117</sup> In the poem’s close, where Augustus/Jupiter appears to reunite the characteristics of the original kingly pair of Romulus and Numa in operating simultaneously on the military (53-6) and religious (59-60) domain, the evocation of the *regnum* (34) looms large (52 *regnes*), reminding us that after all what this ode mourned in its parade was the defeat and loss of the Republic. That such a loss may come at a high cost, even at the cost of subversion of the cosmic order, could be alluded to in the ambiguous expression *secundo / Caesare* (51-2): this is a last-minute correction of line 18 (*nec uiget quicquam simile aut secundum*, “nor is any living thing similar or second to him”), which can be translated as “with Caesar as your second,” but also “with Caesar favouring you”: an echo of the traditional *secundis dis* that risks verging on the blasphemous.<sup>118</sup>

The possibility that Horace’s poem may include blasphemous singing becomes disquieting in the last stanza, where what is perhaps a similar impiety is doomed to incur Jupiter’s anger, since he will strike down with “bolts of wrath” (59-60 *inimica... fulmina*) “groves” that are “not chaste enough” (59-60 *parum castis... lucis*). Alex Hardie reads this as a reference to the lightning strike

that destroyed the original *aedicula Camenarum* on the Caelian grove, later repositioned by M. Claudius Marcellus in the temple to Honos and Virtus.<sup>119</sup> An ancient etymology of the Camenae as *castae mentis praesides* (“guardians of a chaste mind”) reinforces the possibility of the association,<sup>120</sup> even more so since both the Camena and Marcellus are present in this poem. The final adonium (*fulmina lucis*) re-echoes the twelfth stanza by joining astral and arboreal imagery in a final conflagration. This image of utmost brightness (conveyed by an etymological wordplay between *lux* and *lucus*, derived from the light that filters into a clearing) contrasts the shadowy woods (5 *umbrosis... oris*) of the Helicon, Pindus and Haemus that opened the poem with their Orphic katabatic imagery.<sup>121</sup> Both woods become symbolic of the poet’s audience and of the poem’s reception, perhaps as opposite models, with the oaks (sacred to Jupiter) becoming “all ears” (11 *auritas*) to Orpheus’ singing and the groves “play[ing] deaf to the hymn’s complaisant pieties,”<sup>122</sup> in subversion of the order that Horace’s ode celebrates.<sup>123</sup> But there is nothing in the text that would hinder an anti-Augustan reading of the ode from taking these two arboreal images in parallel instead, thus interpreting the final stanza as an image of divine (and political) retaliation against the reception of Horace’s own poetry. If Alex Hardie is correct in imagining that the old (Republican) Camenae are punished by Jupiter/Augustus at the end of the poem, we are left to wonder whether the reason for this anger may not just be the inappropriate hinting at a divinisation of Augustus, but rather the ode’s memorialisation of its Republican heroes, sang precisely with the help of the “glorious Camena” (39 *insigni... camena*).<sup>124</sup> Regardless of whether the cause of this fire lies in the trees’ reception or in their deafness, this last stanza implicates the poet, Clio, and their readers in divine and historical violence.

In conclusion, there may be enough in this poem's internal imagery and intertextual networks to make us suspect that it was written with the death of Marcellus in mind. The poem may have been composed, or reworked, in late 23-22 B.C.E., and more may be gained from seeing Horace as alluding to Virgil rather than the other way around. But what is simultaneously frustrating and fascinating about *Ode* 1.12 is that no matter how carefully we look at it, it will never tell us for sure whether or not it speaks of the death of Marcellus. If we stick with the traditional dating, we may suppose that the sense of death and impermanence that it inherits from the Second Olympian could fit a context in which the Princeps was on his presumed death-bed having returned from Tarraco, and appeared to have hurried to arrange a wedding that would turn Marcellus into a Julian, and Augustus into a Marcellan (and a Claudian): that is, he would make the young Marcellus a suitable heir to a role whose possibility of inheritance had not yet been established, but which the very ancestry of Marcellus the Elder (symbolic successor to the Syracusan tyrants) could help Augustus to set up.<sup>125</sup> But even so, let us try to imagine a knowledgeable Octavia, mindful of Virgil's poetry and well read in Greek lyrics: what could her emotional response to this song be after the death of her son, especially when read, or listened to, alongside the compositions in his honour composed by Propertius and Virgil, whose imagery and language are so like this poem's?<sup>126</sup>

If *Ode* 1.12 conjures up ghosts, they are the ghosts of its contemporary readers. As John Henderson puts it, "lyric recognizes history only in so far as it can serve as another route to its own aims, of telling for everyone the tales where their experience can cohere."<sup>127</sup> Written for and about its political context, *Ode* 1.12 breeds historicist readings and actively invites us to engage in them, to imagine ourselves as characters in their grand narratives. We can read the poem like



Octavia (the mother of the groom or the mourning parent), or we can read it like sick Augustus (in 25 or in 23 B.C.E.), torn between the anxieties about his, and Rome's, future. But we can also read it like conspirators, and expect it to hide clues about the early Augustan political mysteries that only we are privy to. These and the following years were a minefield for the Princeps, who had to juggle "so many mutinies of his armies, so many dangerous diseases, *the dubious intentions of Marcellus*, the shameful dismissal of Agrippa, a life so repeatedly threatened by assassinations, the suspicious losses of his sons..." (Plin. *Nat.* 7.149 *tot seditiones militum, tot ancipites morbi corporis, suspecta Marcelli uota, pudenda Agrippae ablegatio, totiens petita insidiis uita, incusatae liberorum mortes...*). "On any realistic view of human nature, speculation and intrigue must have been rife."<sup>128</sup> If anyone's intentions could provide room for suspicion, so could those of lyric, which has long been considered as almost by definition detached from the intentionality of its poets, and whose formulations of power are protected by vatic-mantic interpretability.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term was coined by Ricoeur 1970. Cf. Jameson 1981 with Felski 2015, 56-69.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars speak of Horace's "tactful evasion," "self-restraint" (Oliensis 1998, 102-53), "reluctant praise" (Thomas 2011, 4-5, 13). Iconic examples are *Sat.* 1.7 (Henderson 1994; Gowers 2002) and *Sat.* 2.1 (Lowrie 2005). On the authoritative context, cf. also *Sat.* 1.3.4 with Gowers 2012, 122; *Epist.* 2.1.228 with Rudd 1989, 113. *Ode* 2.1 suggests that engagement with history and politics was a veritable minefield around 23 B.C.E. (Henderson 1996; Giusti 2018, 1-8).

<sup>3</sup> What Dressler 2016 calls a "kerygma" or "code-poem."

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Kennedy 1992. Cf. Derrida's "supplement" as innate to writing (1974, 141-64), with Tamás 2021 on Catull. 51. Cf. Ahl 1984, 176-9 on *emphasis*.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Casali 2006; Boyle 2003, 9 n.22; Davis 1999 and 2006. I discuss the reception of Kennedy 1992 in Giusti 2016, where I propose rereading the essay in the light of the literature on totalitarian regimes and their subversion of language.

<sup>6</sup> Hinds 2007, 209, 211; Cf. Rimell 2021 on Ovid. On conspiracy reading in Latin Literature see especially Pagán 2004 and 2012, with focus on later imperial periods (cf. also Dressler 2013 on Tacitus). The case of Horace's *Ode* 2.10 (on which see Dressler 2016) is discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> See a critique of Freudian and Marxist readers in Felski 2015, 56-69.

<sup>8</sup> Between mid-September of 23 B.C.E. and the end of the year. See Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, xxxvi; Badian 1982, 22; Gleason 1998, 121.

<sup>9</sup> Prop. 3.18 and Verg. *Aen.* 6.868-86. See Horsfall 2013, 577 on Augustus' *laudatio funebris* as common model (Dio Cass. 53.30.5; Plut. *Marc.* 30.5; DServius *ad Aen.* 1.712).

<sup>10</sup> Williams 1974, 149.

<sup>11</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 145: "it is hardly possible that Horace could talk in the way he does after that date." Horace's text is from Klingner 1959; translations are mine.

<sup>12</sup> Almost all scholars agree that both Marcelli are meant here (but caution in Brown 1991, 336), which led to Peerlkamp's conjecture *Marcellis* (unnecessary, with Merkelbach 1960, 152 n.1; Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 162). Emily Gowers points out to me that the syllabic repetition in *fama Marcelli* phonetically encapsulates the doubling identification while alluding to the young Marcellus' growth.

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<sup>13</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, xxxvi, 145. Against the publication of *Odes* 1-3 as a collection see Hutchinson 2002, believing that *Ode* 1.12 may predate the wedding (p. 523, but *contra* Nisbet 2007, 12-14).

<sup>14</sup> See Thomas 2011, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> On the suggestion that these lines allude to Marcellus' death see Pandey 2018, 54-7, 38 n.5. She is anticipated by Reed 2007, 153 n.16 and Putnam 2009 on *Ode* 1.24. *Contra* Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 162 find even a reference to Julius Caesar "unlikely."

<sup>16</sup> On the Dioscuri's catasterism see Eur. *Hel.* 140; *Tro.* 1001. On Augustus' divinity in this poem see more recently Xinyue (forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> The chronology is intricate. Suetonius' anecdote that Virgil read the episode to Augustus in late 22 B.C.E. may not be reliable (*Vita Verg.* 32; cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 6.681 with Flower 1999, 240; Glei 1998, 122). The Forum was formally inaugurated in 2 B.C.E., together with the temple to Mars Ultor (Dio Cass. 60.5.3; Vell. Pat. 2.100 with Simpson 1977), but the temple was vowed in 42 B.C.E. (Suet. *Aug.* 29.2; Ov. *Fast.* 5.569-78) and likely repurposed in 20 B.C.E. (Rowell 1941; Degrassi 1945; Richardson 1992, 160; Geiger 2008; *contra* Frank 1938; Kockel 1995, 289). Pandey 2018, 158-60 reads the Forum as a response to the *Aeneid*, but see *contra* Harrison 2006, 178. On Marcellus' funeral parade see Flower 1999, 240-1; Freudenburg 2017, 120 n.13.

<sup>18</sup> On Augustus' illness in 25 B.C.E. see Dio Cass. 53.25; Vell. Pat. 2.90; Flor. 2.33; Oros. 6.21; on 23 B.C.E. see Dio Cass. 53.30 and Suet. *Aug.* 81. Horace mentions the physician Antonius Musa (who saved Augustus but could not save Marcellus) at *Epist.* 1.15.2-3.

<sup>19</sup> See *RGDA* 4.4 with Cooley 2009, 126-7.

<sup>20</sup> See n.18.

<sup>21</sup> Badian 1982, 34.

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<sup>22</sup> Dio Cass. 53.32.4.

<sup>23</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, xxxvi, 68; Nisbet 2007, 14; Mayer 2012, 12; *contra* Hutchinson 2002, 522.

<sup>24</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 151-7; caution in Harrison 2017, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 19.1; 56.4.

<sup>26</sup> Vell. Pat. 2.91.2; Dio Cass. 54.3; Macr. 1.11.21.

<sup>27</sup> Swan 1967; Badian 1982, 28-30; Potheary 2009, 217.

<sup>28</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 156.

<sup>29</sup> Dio Cass. 54.3.2. See Badian 1982, 20, 35-6; Potheary 2009, 214-5.

<sup>30</sup> Dio Cass. 54.3 assigns them all to 22 B.C.E.; Vell. Pat. 2.93 (who writes that the conspiracy happened “at around the same time” of Marcellus’ death) to the end of 23 B.C.E. - beginning of 22 B.C.E. The fact that Marcellus, unlike Augustus, did not appear in court as witness at Primus’ trial may indicate that he was either dead or dying. See Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, xxxvi-xxxvii; Badian 1982, 19-36 and Potheary 2009, respectively dating the conspiracy to 23 B.C.E., 22 B.C.E. and the end of 23 B.C.E.

<sup>31</sup> See *Epist.* 1.14.3 *si ualidus*, which Mayer 1994, 203 connects to the illness of 23 B.C.E.

<sup>32</sup> Dio Cass. 54.30.2, with Badian 1982, 34 and Simpson 2005.

<sup>33</sup> See Dio Cass. 53.33.4 on accusations against Livia, which made their way into *I, Claudius*.

<sup>34</sup> See Cairns 1995 on *Carm.* 1.6.3 *ferox... equis* being a Greek pun on Agr-ippa (ἄγριος ἵππος).

<sup>35</sup> Victoria Emma Pagán reminds me of the comparable case of Clutorius Priscus as evidence that Roman poets did compose panegyrics in anticipation of events: author of a poem lamenting the death of Germanicus, Priscus was then executed in 21 C.E. for prematurely writing a second

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panegyric about the death of Drusus, who ended up recovering from his illness (Tac. *Ann.* 3.49-51; Dio Cass. 57.20.3).

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps in the *horti Maecenatiani*, which Wiseman 2016 suggests hosted a private theatre.

<sup>37</sup> As suggested to me by an anonymous reader, we may also imagine Horace as deliberately establishing a “dramatic” date for the poem (e.g. Marcellus’ wedding or illness) which would differ from the dates of composition and “publication”; see Kraggerud 1995 on this technique in *Ode* 3.6 and *Epode* 16.

<sup>38</sup> On the limits of contextual referentiality for understanding the *Odes* see Lowrie 2009, 63-97.

<sup>39</sup> Badian 1982, 35; Simpson 2005, 181; Gleis 1998, 120-1. Sources are too anachronistic to be taken into consideration: Seneca and Plutarch may speak of Marcellus as successor (Sen. *Dial.* 11.15.3; Plut. *Ant.* 87; cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 6.861) but see *contra* Vell. Pat. 2.93.1 and Dio Cass. 53.30.1 with Brandt 1995.

<sup>40</sup> See Cooley 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Hardie 2018, 38-9 suggests that *sumis* (2) may refer to possible iconographies of Clio carrying a book-scroll. It would be tempting to imagine Clio as the Muse of history in this “historical” poem, but the oldest attestations date to the Flavian period (Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 146).

<sup>42</sup> Son of Clio according to Eustathius on *Il.* 10.442, but most commonly of Calliope (Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 148; Hardie 2003, 377-81).

<sup>43</sup> The singing subject here may be either Horace or Clio (or else the whole chorus of the Muses responding to the invocation): see Henderson 1997, 102; Hardie 2018, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Perhaps bridging between demi-gods and *uiri* (Labate 2013, 210).

<sup>45</sup> As Fairclough’s Loeb entitles the poem. For Hardie 2003, 388 and Morgan 2010, 262 Jupiter remains the main *laudandus*.



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<sup>46</sup> See Lowrie 1995.

<sup>47</sup> On the term see Fraenkel 1957, 159 n.2 and Cavarzere 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Especially Theocritus *Id.* 16 and 17: see Labate 2013, 208-9 and La Penna 1963, 96.

<sup>49</sup> Feeney 1998, 111; see *contra* Morgan 2010, 262 on the supremacy of Jupiter reinforcing the human/divine divide. Merkelbach 1960, 149-50 reads each character in relation to Augustus.

<sup>50</sup> See Hardie 2003, 392 on the “etymological oxymoron” of *nobile letum* (< λήθη): a “famous oblivion.”

<sup>51</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 155.

<sup>52</sup> See Housman (*an catenis, nobile, laetum Regulum*) and Hamacher (*an catenis nobilitatum Regulum*) in Diggle and Goodyear 1972, 94-6; Heyworth 1984 (*an < ... > nobile letum Reguli*).

<sup>53</sup> See Dio Cass. 53.32.4 on how Augustus admired Sestius’ loyalty to the republican cause. On the presence of Cato as actually in line with Augustan ideology see Brown 1991; cf. also Williams 1974, 150.

<sup>54</sup> The story, which features in *Ode* 3.5, may be mythical, but a famous paradigm at Rome at least since Cicero (*Off.* 3.97-115). See Langlands 2018, 267-90.

<sup>55</sup> Bettini (*EO s.u. Scauri*); see Livy *Per.* 67.

<sup>56</sup> Drew 1925, 162.

<sup>57</sup> Cos. 257, triumphant over the Carthaginians (Austin 1977, 260).

<sup>58</sup> On the pun see Mayer 2012, 124.

<sup>59</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 159; Mayer 2012, 125. Henderson 1997, 110 notes he is “one-eyed,” just like Hannibal.

<sup>60</sup> An “Augustus *avant la lettre*” (Henderson 1997, 110).

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<sup>61</sup> Williams 1968, 373. Cf. Williams 1974; Brown 1991, 335 (“such was the perseverance and courage which won a world empire”); Morgan 2010, 265-6.

<sup>62</sup> See Langlands 2018, 13 and Roller 2018, 12-13, cf. **below** on Marcellus the Elder.

<sup>63</sup> Hardie 2003, 372-4.

<sup>64</sup> I follow Hardie 2003, in response to Jocelyn 1993 and Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 143. *Contra* Morgan 2010, 264-269 interprets the motto as highlighting Horace’s doubts “about the applicability of the Pindaric template” and takes “death” as a wholly “unfamiliar concept” to *Ode* 1.12.

<sup>65</sup> Fitzgerald 1983, 52.

<sup>66</sup> See Laterza 2021 on Virgil and Pindar; Ciampa 2021 on Pindar and Empedocles.

<sup>67</sup> *Fidibusque canoris* (*Aen.* 6.120 and *Carm.* 1.12.11). Norden 1957, 159 wonders about a common source; Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 149; Austin 1977, 77; Mayer 2012, 121 and Horsfall 2013, 141 all read Virgil as alluding to Horace.

<sup>68</sup> On Virgil, see Horsfall 2013, 437 and *passim*; Mackenzie 2019. On Pindar, Gentili et al. 2013, 53-6; Ciampa 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Labate 2013, 211.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Nisetich 1988, 3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Diod. Sic. 11.48, *Sch. ad Ol.* 2.173fg and *Pyth.* 6.5a with Gentili et al. 2013, 46-7.

<sup>72</sup> Probably Theron’s cousins (*Sch. ad Ol.* 2.173fg), if not his brothers (8a); see Gentili et al. 2013, 46 n.6.

<sup>73</sup> Diod. Sic. 11.49.3.

<sup>74</sup> Diod. Sic. 11.48.5.

<sup>75</sup> On the wedding see Gentili et al. 2013, 47.

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Gentili et al. 2013, 47: “il complesso e fluttuante sfondo storico.”

<sup>77</sup> A fictitious name, from λευκός and νοῦς, perhaps connected to Pindar’s obscure λευκαῖς... φρασίν (*Pyth.* 4.109) and close to Leucothea, Ino’s name after her transformation (*Ov. Met.* 4.542). See Marsilio 2010.

<sup>78</sup> For the punctuation, I follow Gentili et al. 2013, 400; *contra* Nisetich 1988, 8 assigns significance to the anacolouthon. Pindar’s star may be evoked in the “bright star” of the Dioscuri (*Carm.* 1.12.27-8 *alba... stella*), who alternate their days between the underworld and heaven.

<sup>79</sup> See **below**.

<sup>80</sup> See Varro *Ling.* 5.65 *Pater, quod patefacit semen*, and Saturnus’ possible etymology from *sero*, “to sow.”

<sup>81</sup> Hardie 2003, 397-9, 401.

<sup>82</sup> Hardie 2003, 400.

<sup>83</sup> Laterza 2021 makes the same point for Virgil’s parade. On (Theban) civil war in Virgil see Rebeggiani 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Fitzgerald 1983, 53.

<sup>85</sup> See **above** and n. 50 on the etymological oxymoron of *nobile letum* and **below** on the puzzling expression *occulto aeuo*. Fitzgerald 1983, 53-4 reminds us that Zeus too in the Olympian, not unlike Theron and Augustus, “has his own skeletons in the cupboard.”

<sup>86</sup> See Brown 1991, 330-1. On Marcellus the Elder re-evoking ἀνακύκλωσις see **below**.

<sup>87</sup> see **above**.

<sup>88</sup> Hardie 2003, 400. Morgan 2010, 260-74 interprets the metre as “anti-Pindarising”; for Lowrie 1995, 36 Horace’s doubt between lyre and tibia (*Carm.* 1.12.1-2 *lyra uel acri / tibia*) indicates fusion of monodic and choral lyric.

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Nausicaa’s comparison to a “shoot” (*Od.* 6.157 θάλος) and a “sapling” (*Od.* 6.163 ἔρνος) in a context full of marital associations, with Ragusa and Rosenmeyer 2019, 66.

<sup>90</sup> See Ragusa and Rosenmeyer 2019 on the unusual comparison, concluding in favour of its complimentary nature.

<sup>91</sup> Fearn 2003, 362-4.

<sup>92</sup> Ragusa and Rosenmeyer 2019, 67 with sources.

<sup>93</sup> See Thomas 2011, 166-7.

<sup>94</sup> *OLD s.u.* (1a); used of plants in general, not specifically of trees (e.g. vines at *G.* 2.63).

<sup>95</sup> See Horsfall 2013: 599. The term may evoke Aeneas as θάλος in *Hom. Hymn* 5.278.

<sup>96</sup> Gowers 2011, 101.

<sup>97</sup> Gowers 2011, 114.

<sup>98</sup> See n.12.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Fenton 2008, 572. Orpheus’ katabatic imagery also informs the subterranean connotations of the arboreal metaphor: cf. the “shadowy Avernus” in Propertius’ elegy to Marcellus (*Prop.* 3.18.1 *umbroso...auerno*) and Virgil’s *silua antiqua* (*Aen.* 6.179).

<sup>100</sup> Hardie 2012, 231 on Livy 27.27.12-14.

<sup>101</sup> Flower 2003; Freudenburg 2017, 126-36, borrowing the phrase from Beard 1998, 88.

<sup>102</sup> See Flower 2000 on Augustus “re-inventing” the *spolia opima* tradition.

<sup>103</sup> Freudenburg 2017, 128-3. See Jaeger 2008, 77-100 on Archimedes.

<sup>104</sup> Gowers 2010, 79-81. On Marcellus’ tears see Livy 25.24.11-14, *Plut. Marc.* 19.1-2, *Sil. Pun.* 14.666-7 with Rossi 2000.

<sup>105</sup> See Flower 2000, 39.

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<sup>106</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 161: “one does not see time passing or a tree growing, yet these things happen slowly but surely”; Rudd 2004, 49; West 2008, 36. On the adverb *occulte/occulto* see Lucr. 1.314; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.49; *Met.* 10.519 and, especially close to our passage, Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.80 *multis occulto crescit res faenore.*

<sup>107</sup> Bennett 1914, 146-7 conjectured *occulte* to avoid taking the term together with *aeuo*; in response, Allen 1915, 56 proposed *obducto aeuo* “by length of time.”

<sup>108</sup> See e.g. Enn. *Ann.* 1.110, Cic. *Rep.* 6.13. Note that this is also the use of αἰών in Pind *Ol.* 2.67.

<sup>109</sup> The passage may also be drawing on Simonidean *threnoi* (see Hunter 2014, 30 with bibliography). On Horace’s engagement with this poem in *Ode* 1.12 see n.48. Cf. Barchiesi 1996 on *Odes* 4. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

<sup>110</sup> Mayer 2012, 126, my emphasis. Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 162 call this “a late efflorescence.” See Flower 2000, 46-7; Gowers 2010, 82 n.85.

<sup>111</sup> See Gruen 1974, 102-5; 155-8; 460-70; 482-3.

<sup>112</sup> Gowers 2010, 82.

<sup>113</sup> See **above**. Note that Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 161 gloss Horace’s *occulto aeuo* with Greek λεληθότως.

<sup>114</sup> See Gentili et al. 2013, 413.

<sup>115</sup> I follow Willcock 1995 in accepting Hermann’s conjecture τιθέμεν for the τε θέμεν of the paradosis and I read καλοῖς (already in Aristarchus) rather than κακοῖς, but see *contra* Gildersleeve 1965; Gentili et al. 2013, 413.

<sup>116</sup> *Ol.* 2.173fg., see Gentili et al. 2013, 413.

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<sup>117</sup> On the model of Alexander in this ode see Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 145, 168; Labate 2013.

*Aen.* 6.791-807 (with Norden 1899) provides a further point of comparison between the two texts.

<sup>118</sup> Collinge 1961, 91 n.1 “its ambiguity is almost blasphemous... one piously expects *ille secundo Ioue regnet*”; cf. Henderson 1997, 104 and Morgan 2010, 267.

<sup>119</sup> Hardie 2016, 74, with n.166; 2018, 38 (for the episode see Servius ad *Aen.* 1.8).

<sup>120</sup> Hardie 2016, 55 (etymology in Paul. Fest. p.43 L).

<sup>121</sup> See **above**, with n.99.

<sup>122</sup> Henderson 1997, 102.

<sup>123</sup> This is the view of Fenton 2008, 572.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. also a possible allusion to Mnemosyne in *memorem* (34).

<sup>125</sup> See Flower 2000 and Gowers 2010, 82-3.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Ziogas 2017 on reading Octavia’s grieving at *Aeneid* 6’s recital (Suet. *Vita Verg.* 32; cf. Servius ad *Aen.* 6.681) as a meaningful paratext for Virgil’s poem.

<sup>127</sup> Henderson 1998, 120.

<sup>128</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 153.

<sup>129</sup> A formulation I owe to John Henderson, whom I thank immensely for his support on this essay since its very first inception in 2011 as a chapter of my Italian MA thesis. I have since amassed debts of gratitude towards a great number of teachers and colleagues: Emily Gowers, Philip Hardie, Fiachra Mac Góráin, Victoria Rimell and Alessandro Schiesaro all gave invaluable feedback to previous written versions; William Fitzgerald, Giovanna Laterza and Bobby Xinyue generously shared their own work; and the audiences of oral versions of this paper delivered in Dublin, Cambridge, Coventry and Birmingham, together with a number of

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