A Sense of an Ending: Closure in Horace's *Ars poetica* (453–76)[1]

József Krupp

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapeste, Hungria

krupp.jozsef@btk.elte.hu

ABSTRACT

In this article, the final passage of the *Ars poetica* (v. 453-76) is analyzed in its function as the ending of the poem. In this interpretation, it is argued that the bodily configurations that are used to bring about a sense of closure follow a certain logic of regression which is enhanced by the complex intertextual connotations of the passage.

Key words: Horace; *Ars poetica;* ending; closure; closure theory.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, analisa-se a passagem final da *Ars poetica* (v. 453-76) em sua função de encerramento do poema. Em nossa análise, defende-se que as configurações do corpo empregadas para trazer um sentido de final [*closure*] seguem uma certa lógica de regressão, ampliada pelas complexas conotações intertextuais da passagem.

Palavras-chave: Horácio; *Ars poetica*; final da obra [*closure*]; *closure theory.*

1. ON CLOSURE

The closure of Horace's *Ars poetica* – a central poem of the Augustan age and an important contribution to the canon of world literature in general –, has received surprisingly little scholarly attention until very recently.[2] In this

---

[2] Besides the commentaries on the poem, certain recent studies focus specifically on the closure of the *Ars*. Ellen Oliensis deals with the self-fashioning and authority of Horace in the poem. The *Ars poetica* is *inter alia* "a study in self-defacement"; in the closure we see a "perfectly self-reflexive figure" which coincides with the separation of powerful poet and exhausted audience. Oliensis 1998, pp. 198 and 220 ("Horace is a powerful bear concealed

article, I will analyze the final passage of the *Ars poetica* (lines 453-76) in its function as the ending of the poem. In my interpretation, I will argue that the bodily configurations that are used to bring about a sense of closure follow a certain logic of regression which is enhanced by the complex intertextual connotations of the passage.

While considering these aspects we must, of course, always bear one question in mind: What does an end do? Several important works of classical philology can shed light on this problem. We have, for instance, a set of classical philological theories of "closure" – in other words, a theoretical field that manifests itself in different interpretations, resulting in a *philologische Theoriebildung*³ in which classical philology has once again shown that it is not only interested in the application of existing theories, but also capable of reading texts with theoretical precision. I will comment on certain aspects of these theoretical works that are relevant to the appreciation of the *Ars*. At the end of the eighties, Don Fowler (1989) published his article *First Thoughts on Closure. Problems and Prospects*. It exhibits thorough knowledge of the earlier literature on closure⁴ and analyzes the most important aspects of literary closures in ancient texts. Key concepts treated in this essay were carried further some years later (Fowler 1994, Roberts, Dunn and Fowler 1997). In those works, central passages of Greco-Roman literature are interpreted on a broad theoretical basis. The issue of closure was, however, neither exhausted nor solved by these works, as a recent 2013 volume makes clear (Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013).⁵

within a leech's smooth skin"). From a similar perspective, Timothy S. Johnson considers the opening and final verses of the *Ars* a part of Horace's iambic criticism, "since it grounds its literary criticism in the necessity of bringing into discourse disparate entities, the artist in combination with audience". Johnson 2012, p. 234. Marcos Carmignani (Carmignani 2013) argues that the caricature of Eumolpus by Petronius is based on the Horatian picture of the *poeta vesanus*. In 2014 a special issue of the journal *Materiali e discussioni* was edited by Attila Ferenczi and Philip Hardie (*New Approaches to Horace's* Ars poetica). In this collection four scholars deal intensively with the closure of the poem (among other themes). Philip Hardie and Ábel Tamás concentrate in their intertextual readings on the Empedoclean context of the closure (Hardie 2014, Tamás 2014). Michèle Lowrie and Tom Geue analyze the political meanings of the work and interpret its closure in a similar way (Lowrie 2014, Tamás 2014). Important for the closure is also Jürgen Paul Schwindt's interpretation of the beginning of the *Ars* (Schwindt 2014).

³ Schwindt 2012 shows how philological theory can be actively formed and developed.

⁴ One of the most influential studies on the topic is Smith 1968.

⁵ As the editors point out, their book picks up where Fowler stopped. The interpretations of closure in this collection rest on a wide range of approaches, but it is not the place here even to enumerate the most important ideas of these works. In my subsequent analysis of *Ars poetica* – a work that is not analyzed within any of the aforementioned studies – I will, however, draw attention to the questions and results of the earlier scholarship whenever it touches on the important structural problems of the Augustan poem's ending.

In all of the aforementioned studies it is clear that classical research on closure is marked by a characteristic tension. On the one hand, there is the forceful Aristotelian tradition; on the other, the contemporary viewpoint tends to be governed by the idea of an "open work" (an *opera aperta*, cf. Eco 1962). The definition of Aristotle, according to which a whole *(holon)* work has a beginning, a middle and an end (*Poet*. 1450b), has decisively influenced the history of aesthetics. That definition, however, was not universally accepted in literary practice and theory even in antiquity, let alone in more recent times with their experience of Romanticism and Postmodernism. Writing in the context of these latter approaches, Don Fowler aptly characterizes the idea that "the classic work is a rounded organic whole, *simplex et unum*: it ends in resolution" as "nonsense".[6]

The problem of closure is thus related to a more general issue: the unity/openness of interpretation,[7] in that the ending of a text, and that ending's relation to the whole, to a great extent determines its meaning (cf. Krupp 2014).[8] In her book on the narrative odes of Horace, Michèle Lowrie writes about "narrative desire", by which she means a "desire for closure", "a desire for both an ending and for sense".[9] In fact, probably for anthropological and epistemological reasons, ending is almost always associated with aim, *telos*: works are focused on their end, they are a whole only through their ending, indeed, they achieve their sense only at their end.[10] This means that endings do not only play a key role in terms of structure: rather, reflection on ending is also loaded metaphysically and ideologically.[11] Perhaps for the same reason,

---

[6] Fowler 1994, p. 231. It is not without interest that Fowler cites Horace's *Ars* 23 here.

[7] See the following remark on closure, openness of interpretation and classical philology: "Nowhere is the provisional nature of the scholarly 'last word' more apparent than when dealing with literally fragmented texts or artworks." *Is this the End?*, introduction of the volume *The Door Ajar*, Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013, p. 2.

[8] On closure in Propertius, "von der aus das ganze Gedicht erst recht verständlich wird", see Jacoby 1914, p. 398 (on Prop. 1,9 with general remarks on Propertian elegies). Cf. the concept of "Schlußpointe" by Lefèvre 1966, pp. 131-56.

[9] Lowrie 1997, p. 311. The concept of "narrative desire" is characterized by Brooks 1984. An interesting approach to "narrative desire" in Latin love elegy is to be found in Kennedy 2008.

[10] On two types of endings see Odo Marquard's essay: "Es gibt das Ende als Ziel und das Ende als Tod; abstrakter gesagt: es gibt das Ende als Vollendung und das Ende als Endlichkeit, es gibt die Finalität und die Mortalität." Marquard 1996, p. 467. As we will see, the second type mentioned by Marquard plays a major role in the closure of the *Ars*. Marquard's article (like Herzog's, see below) was published in the last volume of the series *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, entitled *Das Ende*, an indispensable contribution to the philosophical-theoretical approach to the questions and problems endings pose.

[11] Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko remark: "From eschatological aspirations and apocalyptic visions to the social utopias put into practice by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century and the announcement of the end of history after the ultimate demise

the Humanities today seem to prefer paradigms that favour open endings.[12] The editors of the volume *The Door Ajar* adopt a rather radical position when they comment on Fowler's famous five points[13] "that any finality reached in interpretation of literature is but subjective and provisional, and that thus, to put it bluntly, any closure is of necessity a false closure".[14] I will not venture so far in my interpretation of Horace's most famous poetological work.

Why, then, is it important to talk about the ending of the *Ars poetica*? And how should we do it? Although the ending of a work constitutes one of the main structural parts of the whole, here I can only deal very perfunctorily with the structure of the poem – a complicated issue that has been of central importance in research on Horace since the twentieth century. (Cf. Laird 2007, pp. 135-36.) In order to answer the question about the poem's ending, I shall first approach it on a descriptive-thematic level, focusing on the subject of the last passage: the mad poet (cf. *vesanum … poetam*, v. 455).[15]

2. THE *POETA VESANUS*: ON KNOWLEDGE AND SENSES

Ut mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget
aut fanaticus error et iracunda Diana,
vesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam   455
qui sapiunt: agitant pueri incautique sequuntur.
hic, dum sublimis versus ructatur et errat,

of the Soviet Union in the early nineties, the need to ascribe a transparent teleological thrust to a series of contingent events is probably one of the most characteristic features not even so much of Western culture as of human thinking in general." Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013, p. 10-11. However, this thought takes on a different light when we take into consideration the concept of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *Our Broad Presence*, the idea that the future today does not appear to be an open horizon. Gumbrecht 2014.

[12] On the idea "the more modern the opener" in certain streams of criticism, see Fowler 1989, p. 79.

[13] Fowler distinguishes, "at the risk of much oversimplification", between five different senses of 'closure' in the critics of the '80-ies. "(1) The concluding section of a literary work; (2) The process by which the reader of a work comes to see the end as satisfyingly final; (3) The degree to which an ending is satisfyingly final; (4) The degree to which the questions posed in the work are answered, tensions released, conflicts resolved; (5) The degree to which the work allows new critical readings". Fowler 1989, p. 78. The aspect remarked in the adverb "satisfyingly" by Fowler plays an important role in the characterization of the closure of the *Ars*; see below.

[14] Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013, p. 1. See also Victoria Rimell's witty remark characterizing the term 'false closure': "It puts a postmodern love-affair with indeterminacy in bed with a philological pleasure in pattern, order and decidability." Rimell 2013, p. 103. For another conception of false closure developed with reference to Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, see Grethlein 2016.

[15] On the context of this topos in hellenistic theory see Hajdu 2014b.

si veluti merulis intentus decidit auceps
in puteum foveamve, licet 'succurrite' longum
clamet, 'io cives!' non sit qui tollere curet.   460
si curet quis opem ferre et demittere funem,
'qui scis an prudens huc se proiecerit atque
servari nolit?' dicam, Siculique poetae
narrabo interitum. deus immortalis haberi
dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam   465
insiluit. sit ius liceatque perire poetis.
invitum qui servat, idem facit occidenti.
nec semel hoc fecit, nec, si retractus erit, iam
fiet homo et ponet famosae mortis amorem.
nec satis apparet cur versus factitet, utrum   470
minxerit in patrios cineres an triste bidental
moverit incestus; certe furit ac velut ursus,
obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clathros,
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus.
quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,   475
non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

Men of sense are afraid to touch a mad poet and give him a wide berth. He's like a man suffering from a nasty itch, or the jaundice, or fanaticism, or Diana's wrath. [456] Boys chase him and follow him round incautiously. And if, while he's belching out his lofty lines and wandering round, he happens to fall into a well or a pit, like a fowler intent on his birds, then, however long he shouts 'Help! Help! [460] Fellow citizens, help!' there'll be no one to bother to pick him up. And if anyone should trouble to help and let down a rope, my question will be, 'How do you know that he didn't throw himself down deliberately? Are you sure he wants to be saved?' And I shall tell the tale of the death of the Sicilian poet. [465] Empedocles wanted to be regarded as an immortal god, and so he jumped, cool as you like, into burning Etna. Let poets have the right and privilege of death. To save a man against his will is the same as killing him. This isn't the only time he's done it. If he's pulled out now, he won't become human or lay aside his love of a notorious end. [470] It's far from clear why he keeps writing poetry. Has the villain pissed on his father's ashes? Or disturbed the grim site of a lightning-strike? Anyway, he's raving, and his harsh readings put learned and unlearned alike to flight, like a bear that's broken the bars of his cage. [475] If he catches anyone, he holds on and kills him with reading. He's a real leech that won't let go of the skin till it's full of blood.[16] (*Ars* 453-76.)

To put the passage into its broader context: we are concerned with the second half of the work (if we follow Norden's [1905] old division),[17] i.e. the

---

section about the poet (verses 295 to 476).[18] As Manfred Fuhrmann [1992] observes, the madness of the genius is treated in the context of knowledge and wisdom (social ethics) in lines 295-322; in lines 453-76, the text returns to the same theme, but associates it with his exclusion from society. The second main part of the *Ars poetica* (vv. 295-476) is thus framed by the topic of the *poeta vesanus*.[19] However it is worthwhile to observe how this craziness is constructed and the other notions that are articulated in its elaboration.

At a certain point in the second half of the poem, Horace discusses *quo ferat error*, "in what direction error leads" (v. 308), i.e. how the poet can fail, what happens if he lacks the most important condition of poetic creation, i.e. an understanding mind. The advice *scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons* ("wisdom is the starting-point and source of correct writing", v. 309), is turned into its negative here. As Brink observes, "the *uesanus poeta* is so clearly the *perfectus poeta* turned upside down – a spirited caricature – that no traditional literary theory must be looked for" (Brink 1971, p. 421). From the depiction of such a *poet*, then, we gain the impression that the second part of the poem is soon to be completed, and so the whole work: The conclusion will recall the opening verses.

> Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
> iungere si velit et varias inducere plumas
> undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
> desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
> spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

> Imagine a painter who wanted to combine a horse's neck with a human head, and then clothe a miscellaneous collection of limbs with various kinds of feathers, so that what started out at the top as a beautiful woman ended in a hideously ugly fish. If you were invited, as friends, to the private view, could you help laughing? (*Ars* 1-5.)

The beginning and the end of the *Ars* are closely connected. However, what exactly happens at the end? In Kiessling and Heinze's (1961, p. 287) commentary, the passage between the verses 453 and 476 is labelled as "der toll gewordene Dichterling" (something like "the poetaster turned mad"), and

---

[18] Norden 1905; Brink 1971. Manfred Fuhrmann's division is very convincing. He labeled the poem in two parts as follows: 1-294: "der werkästhetische Teil", 295-476: "der produktions- und wirkungsästhetische Teil". See Furhrmann 1992, p. 125-44.

[19] These are parts 9 and 14 of the poem according to Fuhrmann. Furhrmann 1992, p. 128-29. Reinhard Häußler, who has written about the motif of the poetaster *(Dichterling)*, correctly remarks that there is an important difference between Democritus (295-98) and Empedocles (463-66), each of whom play an important role in the two parts: "jener sucht die Einsamkeit und meidet die Bäder, dieser will rezitierend durchaus unter's Volk". Häußler 1986, p. 249-50.

Brink sets the section (as well as verses 453-76) under the subtitle "error (cf. 308) personified: the mad poet" (Brink 1971, p. 421). The latter formulation implies that the poetic "error" (an idea that, as we saw, was formulated on a descriptive-thematic level at an earlier stage of the poem) is further elaborated here and illustrated in very vivid, rhetorical language.[20] *In concreto*, Brink states that an *ingenium sine arte* is presented as a person here. However, I argue that what we are dealing with here is not a mere personification. The image of the *poeta vesanus* opens a part of the poem which consists of a series of images which follow a certain logic – a logic of regression, or, in other words, of devolution. In this respect, the passage preceding the lines on the *poeta vesanus* also needs to be considered.

> vir bonus et prudens versus reprehendet inertis,   445
> culpabit duros, incomptis allinet atrum
> traverso calamo signum, ambitiosa recidet
> ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,
> arguet ambigue dictum, mutanda notabit,
> fiet Aristarchus; nec dicet 'cur ego amicum   450
> offendam in nugis?' hae nugae seria ducent
> in mala derisum semel exceptumque sinistre.
>   Ut mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget
> aut fanaticus error et iracunda Diana,
> vesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam   455
> qui sapiunt: agitant pueri incautique sequuntur.

[445] A wise and good man will censure flabby lines, reprehend harsh ones, put a black line with a stroke of the pen besides unpolished ones, prune pretentious ornaments, force you to shed light on obscurities, convict you of ambiguity, mark down what must be changed. [450] He'll be an Aristarchus. He won't say, 'Why should I offend a friend in trifles?' These trifles lead to serious troubles, if once you are ridiculed and get a bad reception. Men of sense are afraid to touch a mad poet and give him a wide berth. He's like a man suffering from a nasty itch, or the jaundice, or fanaticism, or Diana's wrath. [456] Boys chase him and follow him round incautiously.

The section beginning with verse 453 is closely linked to the previous line, which concerns the reception of poetic failure. The formulation in *Ars* 451-52 is reminiscent of a line in the *Epistle to Florus*: *ridentur mala qui componunt carmina* […], "those who compose bad poems are laughed at" (Hor. *epist.* 2.2.106). But the image of the ridiculed poet recalls the statement, made earlier in the *Ars*, about the opposite situation, namely of a work of art that is very successful: *ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus afflent / humani*

---

vultus, "the human face smiles in sympathy with smilers and comes to the help of those that weep" (*Ars*, 101-2).

At the end of the poem, the human face (*humani vultus*, v. 102) does not look at the work of art with a benign smile anymore but merely with derision. Moreover, the *ut* in verse 453 acts as a powerful caesura: What is referred to in the next section is not a work of art, but the artist himself. Instead of focusing the receiver's face and in the facial expressions, the poem will represent the artist in a synesthetic and dynamic way, namely with regard to touch and movement.

This fact is interesting because it concerns the basic question of the bodily configurations of Horace's poetry. Joseph Farrell has shown in a groundbreaking article that in the oeuvre of Horace there are two types of body, in that the satiric and the lyric body are fundamentally different. In the *Satires*, words associated with digestion, copulation, etc., play a much more important role than in the *Odes*. Statistically, we more frequently find in the *Odes* nouns that refer to "the expressive parts of the body: the head, face, eyes, lips …" (Farrell quotes here M. Bakhtin). The satiric body is a suffering and tainted body: the debasement serves as a principle of a grotesque realism. The lyric body is instead a "locus of pleasure" and is "constantly aestheticized".[21] We will see that the closure of *Ars* deals with a satiric rather than with a lyric body.

In lines 455-56 we read about those viewers "who have a sense". The *vesanus poeta* is in fact contrasted with the idea of *sapere* that was mentioned earlier as the principle of good poetry.[22] The dangerous nature of touching the mad poet is underlined by the alliteration of "t" *(TeTigisse TimenT fugiunTque poeTam)* and the assonance of the vowels "e" and "i" *(tEtIgIssE tImEnt fugIuntquE poEtam)* – a piece of sonorous advice that the "men of sense" among Horace's readers would certainly perceive.

In turn, the mad poet fails when it comes to the two *sensus* that are closest to *logos*: hearing and sight. The lack of both is implicit in lines 458-59. Although these verses refer to the bird-catcher, they can also be interpreted as humorously referring to the poet.[23] Moreover, even when he fails in his *ars*

[21] Farrell 2007, pp. 177-81. Farrell's thoughts on the parallels between body and book as well on the body of the poet are very convincing. I will discuss some further aspects of his study further below.

[22] Brink does not point out this aspect when he compares the beginning and the ending of the *Ars*, but he mentions the "imagination uncontrolled by reason", Brink 1971, p. 421.

[23] Brink points out convincingly that in putting the verb of the *si* phrase in a comparison, Horace "satirically identifies poet and fowler so closely that it is hard to know which of the two is *merulis intentus* and falls into a well or pit". Moreover, *auspicium* was also an obligation of augurs; for that reason we can associate *auceps* with *augur* and maybe with *vates*. (See Walde–Hofmann on *augur* and *auceps*. Walde–Hoffmann 1938, I., p. 79 and 83.)

(which depends on orientation by seeing and hearing) the bird-catcher-poet is presented as having human relations, and these are described in physical and spatial terms. Only children pay attention to the mad poet (v. 456), and, if we come to the very end of the passage, we read that somebody *fugat*, "puts to flight" and *tenet*, "holds on to" (vv. 474-75) the animalized poet:

> (…) certe furit ac velut ursus,
> obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clathros,
> indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus.
> quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,
> non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

> Anyway, he's raving, and his harsh readings put learned and unlearned alike to flight, like a bear that's broken the bars of his cage. If he catches anyone, he holds on and kills him with reading. He's a real leech that won't let go of the skin till it's full of blood. (*Ars* 472-76.)

The final image of the poem, which I will discuss in a more detailed form below, is explicitly about touch and physical contact. Whether *Ars* is 'closed' or not, it is in any case undeniable that the body plays a central role in the last twenty lines of the poem.

3. ILLNESSES, BODY FLUIDS AND THE LOGIC OF REGRESSION

The image of the body in the final section of the *Ars poetica* is not determined by bodily forms that could be judged by their beauty (face, neck, etc.). Rather, it is about substances, physiological functions and diseases. *Vt mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget* (in verse 453): at the beginning of the parable, we first encounter an individual who suffers from *mala scabies*, "a nasty itch", a disease that has to do with touching and is contagious.[24] Next, there is *morbus regius*, "the jaundice", an illness that manifests itself on the skin – much like the disease that preceded it.[25] Only the third in the series is a mental disorder, *fanaticus error*, a "fanaticism" explained by the phrase *et*

---

[24] On the relationship between this verse and the first mention of *scabies* in the poem see Johnson 2012, p. 257. In the description of the great cattle-plague at Noricum at the end of the third book of the *Georgics*, it is pointed out that infected sheep could not be shorn since an *amictus* made of their fleece would have infected anyone trying to wear it would have instantly suffered from a cancerous ulceration on their *membra* and *artus* (*Georg*. 3.561-66). This passage provides another instance of closure that uses the picture of a contagious illness of the human skin.

[25] Lowrie states that it is not a coincidence that in this passage this phrase is used: *morbus regius* as a "kingly element picks up the danger kings face at l. 434, namely the difficulty of finding a true friend, who will say what he really thinks". Lowrie 2014, p. 138.

iracunda Diana, "Diana's wrath". This expression involves "religious mania" and "prophecy", which can be seen as part of a discourse about the poet, but, according to Kiessling and Heinze, also as an allusion to those oriental cults known for "self-mutilation [committed in mindless ecstasy] and tearing limb from limb" and "beggar-priests of Diana, which can be dangerous to encounter in their rapture" (Kiessling and Heinze 1961, p. 363).

Besides, there is a motif of digestion that is related to the performance of poetry. The poet does not recite, but *versus ructatur*, "belches out his lines" (v. 457). The commentaries are split about the exact stylistic significance of that verb, but in any case, it retains "its onomatopoeic notion" (Brink 1971, p. 424),[26] its physical connotation ("to belch"). This contrasts with the adjective *sublimis*, which in turn has a satirical effect: The poet walks "head high", belches poems and crashes. The word *sublimis*, central element of the Lucretian tradition in the meaning 'sublime', becomes here an object of satirical subversion.[27]

Scabies and *sublimis* are also connected in *Epistle* 1.12, a central *Horatian* intertext to this passage of the *Ars*:

> miramur si Democriti pecus edit agellos
> cultaque, dum peregre est animus sine corpore velox,
> cum tu inter scabiem tantam et contagia lucri
> nil parvum sapias et adhuc sublimia cures […]

> We marvel that the herds of Democritus ate up his meadows and corn-fields, while his swift mind wandered abroad without his body; though you, in the very midst of the contagious itch of gain, still have a taste far from mean, still set your thoughts on lofty themes […] (*Ep.* 1.12. 12-15.)

In the subsequent lines of *Epistle* 1.12 the philosophy of Empedocles plays a key role – another topic that connects this letter with the closure of the *Ars* (as we will see).

In the *Ars* there is a further locus in which *scabies* plays a role:

> an satis est dixisse 'ego mira poemata pango.
> occupet extremum scabies; mihi turpe relinqui est
> et quod non didici sane nescire fateri?'

> But is it enough to say:[28] 'I write marvellous poems. The itch take the hindmost! It's a disgrace for me to be left behind and admit I don't know something that, to be sure, I never learned?' (*Ars* 416-18.)

---

[26] Note the alliteration "veRsus RuctatuR et eRRat."

[27] On *sublimis* in the *Ars* and *Carm.* 1.1 see Hardie 2009, pp. 197-202.

[28] At this point, I have altered the translation of Winterbottom, accordingly to the *coniectura* of Shackleton Bailey. Winterbottom follows the text transmitted in the codices *nunc satis est*. On the textual critical problem of the line see Brink 1971, p. 399.

The poetaster, who does not want to admit that he has gotten the worst of it, is speaking here. The ancient commentaries state that in this passage a *ludus puerorum* is being referred to, a foot-race in which the children called the last one to reach the goal *scabiosus* (see Brink 1971, p. 400). Therefore we see that the taunted poetaster uses the same tool, when he tries to reinforce his poetical self-reliance, as the speaker of the *Ars* who satirizes the mad poet will do: he mentions an itch. Although the itch in the line 417 is a proverbial one, we can perhaps see a self-ironical point when the speaker at line 453 repeats a gesture that has been made ridiculous just 35 lines earlier in the text.

Horace uses the noun *scabies* three times in total (*Ars* 417, 453, *Epist.* 1.12.14), the verb *scabo* 3 just once, in *Satire* 1.10. It is worth taking a brief look at this passage, since it is an important intertext to the *Ars*.

> sed ille,
> si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in aevum,
> detereret sibi multa, **recideret** omne quod ultra
> perfectum traheretur, et in versu faciendo
> saepe caput **scaberet** vivos et roderet unguis.

> Yet, had he fallen by fate upon this our day, he would smooth away much of his work, would prune off all that trailed beyond the proper limit, and as he wrought his verse he would oft scratch his head and gnaw his nails to the quick. (*Sat.* 1.10.67-71.)

This is a *sermo* in which Horace criticizes Lucilius. In the above passage the satirical speaker concedes that Lucilius in Horace's times would write more refined poetry. Farrell shows that here the grotesque satiric body is connected with the process of writing poetry; we see "a body that suffers as it writes, that is metaphorically dismembered when words are rearranged on the page" (Farrell 2007, p. 188).

In a parallel passage, in *Ars* 445-50, just before the picture of the *poeta vesanus*, we read about Quintilius as representative of the type honest critic.

> vir bonus et prudens versus reprehendet inertis,
> culpabit duros, incomptis allinet atrum
> traverso calamo signum, ambitiosa **recidet**
> ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,
> arguet ambigue dictum, mutanda notabit,
> fiet Aristarchus;

> A wise and good man will censure flabby lines, reprehend harsh ones, put a black line with a stroke of the pen besides unpolished ones, prune pretentious ornaments, force you to shed light on obscurities, convict you of ambiguity, mark down what must be changed. He'll be an Aristarchus. (*Ars* 445-50.)

That this passage is connected with *Sat.* 1.10.67-71 in multiple ways has been demonstrated by Emily Gowers.[29] We might add that because in the *Ars* there is an echo of the self-criticism praised in the satire quoted above (1.10.67-71), in which *scabere* plays a positive role as part of a conscious, active process of a poet, the contrast between the *vir bonus* and the *poeta vesanus*, who has *scabies*, a disease that he can not control, becomes much stronger.[30]

The bodily language at the end of the *Ars* includes further images that involve bodily fluids: *nec satis apparet cur versus factitet, utrum / minxerit in patrios cineres an triste bidental / moverit incestus*, "it's far from clear why he keeps writing poetry. Has the villain pissed on his father's ashes? Or disturbed the grim site of a lightning-strike?" (vv. 470-72). The desecration of tombs, known to us from inscriptions, is enhanced here by the fact that it is related to a paternal grave. The use of the "low" word *minxerit* ("pissed", v. 471) and the mention of urine correspond to the satirical genre, as becomes clear from the parallel passages cited in the commentaries.[31] The body is here brought into public view and a physical function that cannot be addressed in sublime art is on display. The integrity of the human body is therefore clearly injured in the last verse, where another body fluid, blood (*cruoris*, v. 476), is drawn by the leech-poet.

Scholars have noted that the imagery of the ending of the poem calls to mind the opening verses.[32] At first glance, however, it appears that the two sections deals with different poetic problems. The grotesque image of the first four verses of the poem concerns the question of the unity of the artwork. If we take *membra* (*undique collatis membris*, "a miscellaneous collection of limbs", v. 3) as a key term,[33] it becomes clear that the beginning deals with the mistaken structure of a bad work of art. In this sense, it is meaningful that

---

[29] Gowers 2012, pp. 332-33. Brink discusses shortly the parallel between *recideret* and *recidet*. He claims that there is "a touch of imagery" in this phrase in the *Ars* that is not found in the epistle. Brink 1971, p. 418.

[30] On the relation of *scabo* and *scabies* see Walde–Hoffmann 1938, II, pp. 484-85. The two passages (*Ars* 445-52 and 453-76) share another common noun: *prudens* (l. 445 and 462). This link makes the cohesion of the closure of the work with the earlier part stronger. See on this link Hajdu 2014b, p. 40.

[31] Hor. *sat.* 1.8.38.; Petron. 71.; Pers. 1.113-14.; Iuv. 1.131. Brink 1971, p. 429; Rudd 1989, p. 228.

[32] On the opening verses of the *Ars poetica* see recently Citroni 2009, Schwindt 2014. Oliensis considers the very first and very last words of the poem, *humano* and *hirudo*, a "mocking echo", Oliensis 1998, p. 216. In a very formal analysis, Johnson discusses the parallel of the alliteration "f" in lines 4-9 and 467-74, Johnson 2012, p. 237.

[33] Cf. discussion in Brink 1971, pp. 75-126 and 468-76.

at the end of this passage we see multiple images, not parts of one individual image.

Although it also deals with the reception of a work of art, the final image of the *Ars* is not concerned with unity and does not take the poem's structure as its central theme. What both passages have in common is therefore not their subject, but a certain logic of regression that can be noted in each. We remember that in the first verse the human head is connected to the neck of a horse, then the feathers further down are mentioned; at the top we can see a beautiful woman, at the bottom a black fish.[34] At the end of the *Ars poetica*, *membra* play a minor role, and, as we mentioned above, the body is presented in its raw materiality, reduced to its fluids.[35] The principle of regression connects the beginning and the ending of the poem and we find a ring composition created by the grotesque parallelism between the two parts.

4. ON PHILOSOPHERS, BEARS AND PARASITES

To summarize some of the points analyzed above in their order of appearance in the poem: The transfigurations of the mad poet at the poem's close take place in a rapid succession of images. First, we get the comparison with various diseases (*Ut mala quem scabies* […], v. 453), which leads to the social dimension of the poet (*tetigisse timent* […], vv. 455-56). This is followed by the comparison with the bird-catcher, which introduces the short scene of the poet who falls into a pit and calls for help in vain, and the mentioning of Empedocles.

> hic, dum sublimis versus ructatur et errat,
> si veluti merulis intentus decidit auceps
> in puteum foveamve, licet 'succurrite' longum
> clamet, 'io cives!' non sit qui tollere curet.   460
> si curet quis opem ferre et demittere funem,
> 'qui scis an prudens huc se proiecerit atque
> servari nolit?' dicam, Siculique poetae
> narrabo interitum. deus immortalis haberi
> dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam   465
> insiluit. sit ius liceatque perire poetis.

And if, while he's belching out his lofty lines and wandering round, he happens to fall into a well or a pit, like a fowler intent on his birds, then, however long he

---

[34] As Jürgen Paul Schwindt shows convincingly in his examination of this picture, the narrative can never meet the "the human standard". Schwindt 2014, p. 66.

[35] At the end of the poem the body is not represented as a whole (as it would be contrary to *membra*), but once again in parts (e.g. blood). This probably means that even when you invert something twice, at the end you will still not have the same thing as at the beginning.

shouts 'Help! Help! [460] Fellow citizens, help!' there'll be no one to bother to pick him up. And if anyone should trouble to help and let down a rope, my question will be, 'How do you know that he didn't throw himself down deliberately? Are you sure he wants to be saved?' And I shall tell the tale of the death of the Sicilian poet. [465] Empedocles wanted to be regarded as an immortal god, and so he jumped, cool as you like, into burning Etna. Let poets have the right and privilege of death. (*Ars* 457-66.)

The poetic *persona* of the *Ars poetica*, here again assuming the role of advisor, explains in a rather long digression why one should not help the mad poet in a hole or pit. According to the satirical[36] discussion that follows, it is possible that the poet fell deliberately. This idea is supported by a brief narrative about Empedocles.

Scholars have analyzed in depth the way in which Empedocles is an important element within an intertextual domain in Augustan poetry associated with the concept of the 'sublime'. As Ábel Tamás has formulated it, in Empedoclean allusions in Augustan poetry "one can envisage a paradoxical configuration which condenses the conflicting desires of poets to see the world from the outside (both in literal and figurative sense of the word): to be, at least poetically, immortal, and at the same time to manage the fantastic, grotesque, marvellous and ridiculous conceits (cf. 'madness') implicit in these desires."[37]

Horace makes an ironic comment on this tradition. Within a passage in which the opposition cool/burning (*ardentem frigidus*, v. 465) contributes much to the rhetorical force of the text, a fragment of Empedocles resonates, namely the passage in which he announces the following to the inhabitants of Acragas: "I move among you as an immortal god, no longer mortal, honoured amongst all, as is fitting" (Fr 112 D-K);[38] moreover, Horace explicitly mentions the skeptical tradition according to which the philosopher of Sicily dived into Aetna in order to pretend that he ascended into heaven.[39] As Brink

---

[36] It is a central point of Frischer that the *Ars* is more a satirical poem than an epistle: Frischer 1991. pp. 90-95. On the genre of the *Ars* see in the newest scholarly literature Hardie 2014, who reads the work in the tradition of didactic poetry.

[37] Tamás 2014, p. 186. Tamás makes clear the relations between this passage of the *Ars* and *Epistle* 1. 12, in which he sees a satirical interpretation of the Empedoclean philosophy. On the topic of Empedoclean intertextuality in Augustan literature is fundamental Hardie 2009. Tamás makes hints of an as yet unpublished paper by Philip Hardie *Horace and the Empedoclean Sublime* (forthcoming in a conference volume).

[38] Translation from the commentary of Rudd 1989, p. 226.

[39] In her "political" interpretation Lowrie discusses the link between Empedocles and Republicanism. Lowrie 2014, pp. 138-40. Among other things, she considers whether the motif of the desire of immortality echoes the divinization of Julius Caesar, especially after the mention of kingship (v. 453: *morbus regius*). It is interesting to note how Lowrie makes an allegorical interpretation from disparate elements of the texts. "To push the parallel between

notes, Horace omits the malicious legend according to which Empedocles' sandal was transported back to the surface from the volcano (Brink 1971, pp. 427-28). Instead, with *frigidus*, he underlines another physiological detail that has many philosophical connotations and is related to ancient notions concerning blood. Philip Hardie's remark that "Horace's placing of this incident at the end of his poem is perhaps an ironic comment on the practice of closing a poetic work with the claim to immortality, for example *Odes* 2.20," is today the *communis opinio*.[40]

The Empedocles passage, which declares the philosopher's deification impossible, leads to the most sublime point of the final section of the *Ars*: *sit ius liceatque perire poetis*, "let poets have the right and privilege of death" (v. 466). The commentaries rightly emphasize the solemnity of this requirement, which is, however, varied by a strong oxymoron (i.e. the privilege concerns death rather than anything positive).[41] After a general sententious discussion that spans more than three verses,[42] the text returns from the general to the *poeta vesanus*: as the cause of his persistent verse-making (*versus factitet,* v. 470) it mentions a possible curse *(minxerit in patrios cineres)*. The poem ends with another parable *(poeta – ursus)* and with the image of the *hirudo*.

the poet and the statesman that simmers throughout the poem would imply that if a king becomes crazy, wants to be considered immortal, and kills people – even if only by boring them to death – he may legally be abandoned by citizens and left to die. Horace of course leaves the connections up to his readership. If Augustus put the pieces together, he would hear affirmation of his not taking on kingship and of his resistance to emperor worship." Ibid., p. 138. According to this interpretation, we find a poet with very strong intention who disperses elements of political meaning in the text, and we find an Augustus who is able, in a way similar to that of a philologist, to collect these dispersed elements.

[40] Hardie 1997b, p. 189. Häußler speaks on an ecstatic semi-poet ("Halbdichter") who is swept along by his daemon (Häußler 1986, p. 245). On a meta-level, the passage has perhaps another meaning. As Diogenes Laertius has it, Empedocles claimed that he had once been a fish (Diog. Laert. 8.77). Since the commentaries note that *piscis* in Hor. *epist.* 1.12.20-21 can refer to Empedocles (cf. Mayer 1994, p. 200), I think one could associate the verses of the *Ars* that relate to Empedocles with the beginning of the poem, *desinat in piscem*, "ended in a fish" (4). Luciano Canfora has suggested that behind Horace's Empedocles lies the figure of Lucretius – see Hardie 2009, p. 198.

[41] Tom Geue, who concentrates in his political reading on the addressees of the text (the Pisones as central figures of the political opposition), sees in this moment a political comment, a hint on the *amor mortis* of the "Republican opposition". Geue 2014. pp. 170-71.

[42] The verse *invitum qui servat, idem facit occidenti*, "to save a man against his will is the same as killing him" (467) has been deleted both for metrical and for contextual reasons: I do not think that this is right. Especially noteworthy is the assessment of Kiessling and Heinze, who find the line striking because of its metrical uniqueness (as the only *versus spondiacus* in Horace's hexameter poems), and suggest it to be a quotation or possibly a proverb, a *sententia* (Kiessling and Heinze 1961, p. 364; the gnomic present supports this view).

From this rough summary one can see that the linguistic arrangement of the final section of the *Ars poetica* is highly diverse. It begins with similes, contains a dramatic interjection (*succurrite* […] *io cives*, vv. 459-60), employs metatextual utterances of a deictic character (*dicam* and *narrabo*), maxim-like statements, and a further simile *(uelut ursus)*. The wide range of linguistic structural elements is matched by a variety of images. From *scabies* and *morbus regius* we arrive, by way of Empedocles, at the last *similitudo* of the poem.

> nec satis apparet cur versus factitet, utrum   470
> minxerit in patrios cineres an triste bidental
> moverit incestus; certe furit ac velut ursus,
> obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clathros,
> indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus.
> quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,   475
> non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.[43]

> It's far from clear why he keeps writing poetry. Has the villain pissed on his father's ashes? Or disturbed the grim site of a lightning-strike? Anyway, he's raving, and his harsh readings put learned and unlearned alike to flight, like a bear that's broken the bars of his cage. If he catches anyone, he holds on and kills him with reading. He's a real leech that won't let go of the skin till it's full of blood. (*Ars* 470-76.)

Until this point, although some animals have been mentioned, we have remained within the human sphere – it is here that the animalistic really breaks into the poem. Through this, the exclusion of the poet from society[44] reaches an extreme.

The image of the bear is not unknown in Horace.[45] In the *Epistle to Augustus* we read that it is uncertain whether the bloody tastes of the Roman people will allow the poet recite to the end: *media inter carmina poscunt / aut ursum aut pugiles; his nam plebecula gaudet*, "call for bears or boxers in the middle of the play. That's what the plebs enjoys" (Hor. *epist.* 2.1.185-86).[46] In this context the bear serves as a counter-image of poetry. In the *Ars poetica*, however, the mad poet is compared to the animal – he is presented as a bear, unable to achieve success with his own audiences.

The simile is constructed by Horace in a manner similar to the comparison with the bird-catcher. As Brink notes, "it seems almost as if *recitator acerbus* has broken out of a cage with the *ursus*" (Brink 1971, p. 430). However, the

---

[43] Borzsák, Klingner, Brink and Rudd, put a semicolon after *acerbus* (v. 474), which creates not only a greater syntactical coherence but also a closer connection between *ursus*, *recitator*, and *hirudo* and might thus be preferable to the full stop.

[44] Cf. Fuhrmann 1992, pp. 129 and 144. See also Hajdu 2014b.

[45] There is a hint of ironic soundplay between *versus* (470) and *ursus* (472).

[46] In fact, if it is an allusion to the prologues of the *Hecyra* of Plautus, they affirm that the spectacle was interrupted by other kinds of spectacles. Cf. Brink 1981, p. 219-20.

metamorphoses[47] of the mad poet do not end here. The final transformation is not developed in a fine rhetorical prelude, but arrives with "startling suddenness" (Brink 1971, p. 431). In the final verse, *non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo* (v. 476), "he's a real leech that won't let go of the skin till it's full of blood", we see an *apposition* that is put not *after*, but *in* the bear-comparison – as a foreign element within it. The *ordo* of the tissue of images seems here to be disturbed.

If we look closer, we notice that – like a leech, a true parasite! – a metaphor lives on and from the simile of the bear. The "disconcerting change of image" (Rudd 1989, p. 229) leads to the endpoint of the reverse evolution. After the body of the poet discloses itself (*minxerit,* v. 471), and the body of the caged bear tears away his artificial boundaries (*valuit si frangere clathros* […], "[a bear] that's broken the bars of his cage", v. 473), we find a real violator of boundaries, an animal that lives on and from another's body. The uncontrollable leech – which does not even serve as a source of entertainment (as does the bear), which has no voice and can hardly be spoken of in terms of *membra*[48] – is placed at the conclusion of the inverted hyperbole of the last twenty verses. This devolution, descending the *scala naturae*, from human, beast, to invertebrate serves to chronicle the dehumanization, deculturalization and decline that arises from the lack of *ars*.[49]

5. CLOSURE BETWEEN GENRE AND MEANING

Is the *Ars poetica* "open-ended" ("like many poems of H.", Brink 1971, p. 421), as widespread opinion holds? We could invert this question: Is any Latin

---

[47] On the metamorphoses of the Horatian body in *Carm*. 1.1, 2.20 and 3.30 see Farrell 2007, pp. 189-93. In the "metamorphoses" depicted in the closure of the *Ars*, scholars see a satirical version of Horace's own transformation into swan in *Carm*. 2.20. See on this topic Hardie 2009, pp. 199-202 and Tamás 2014, p. 188. Tamás argues, with regard to the "metamorphoses" of the mad poet into the leech, that we can read Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as "a radicalised and exaggerated version of the Horatian poem" (Ibid., p. 192). Another approach on the relation between the *Ars* and the *Metamorphoses*: Kozák 2014.

[48] Oliensis associates the leech with women's nether parts, "a graphic or pornographic image of the female sex" (Oliensis 1998, p. 217). On the proverbial and metaphorical meanings of the leech in Greek and Roman literature see Brink 1971, p. 431. ("None of these instances resembles H.'s poetic *hirudo*"). Geue interprets the picture of the leech politically: on the one hand, as an "emblem of thirsty Pisones", on the other hand, as a hint on the activity of the poet: "this poet has sweated for 476 lines to catch and kill the (old) Pisones, sap them of their vital forces (or corrupted blood) until they are Republicans no more". Geue 2014, p. 171.

[49] Johnson shows another view of the logic of this movement when he reads the figure in a linear way (poet – bear – reciter – leech: human – animal – human – animal). Johnson 212, p. 253-54.

poem not "open-ended"? To answer these questions, we must first consider the point emphasized by Fowler 1989: The part of a text that is perceived as closure is always a matter of (philological) segmentation. But this is not really an issue in the *Ars poetica*: lines 453-76 are usually seen as the last part of the poem, and with good reason. As I have demonstrated in the sections above, this part has a thematic unity and is structurally built in a very pointed way. This structure is not disturbed but, as I will show, constructed also by the "suddenness" of the image of the *hirudo*.[50]

The final 24 verses of the *Ars* have little to do with what one traditionally associates with closure, i.e. with the established patterns and motifs that make up the diversity of ancient closures. For example, at the end of the *Ars poetica* we see neither a return of terms found at the poem's beginning (cf. Lowrie 2013, p. 94.) nor intertextual hints such as the citation of an opening; no maxim, *epiphonema*, *makarismos*, pointed application of the word "end", return, or "social closure" such as the funeral rites in the *Iliad* can be found.[51] With the exception of the mentioning of death (that of Empedocles, vv. 464-66), – a motif presented at the close of the *Aeneid* – we have no other topoi of this kind. And, I would argue, this is not only due to the genre of the *Ars poetica* – whether it be considered an epistle or didactic poem.

We find in the close of the *Ars* neither a review of the central themes of the poem nor a *sphragis* (lit. "seal"), a kind of poetic signature which occurs so often in didactic poems. It is particularly odd that, as Peta Fowler has shown, there is a tendency for didactic works to end with a formal conclusion. (Fowler, P. 1997.) But if we do not want to read the *Ars* in the tradition of a didactic poem, and try to explain the end of the poem with reference to the generic code of *sermo* instead, one could say that we have a "mixture of comic and serious", a *spoudogéloion* (Brink 1971, p. 421). Since in a satire thoughts often rub against one another, what we have here is, then, a satirical tone[52] – a poetic resource that is not unknown at the close of Horatian epistles.[53] But,

---

[50] See also the word order of the last line. *Non missura* (abrupt change of gender after *ursus*) has the reader expect a feminine noun. This expectation is not fulfilled until the very last word of the line (and the poem).

[51] All such aspects were enumerated by Hardie 1997a.144. On end and death see Marquard's remark, above.

[52] Frischer shows in a comparative table of all the epistles of Horace that they have "topics appropriate to the closing section of a letter" – the *Ars* is an exception with its "lack of ending". "In having a 'non-ending,' the *Ars Poetica* resembles more a *sermo* than an epistle." Frischer 1991, pp. 93-94. Cf. Frye's remarks on the problem of ending in satirical texts: "An extraordinary number of great satires are fragmentary, unfinished, or anonymous." Frye 1971, p. 243.

[53] Cf. e.g. the end of *The Epistle to Augustus*, where worthless art is discussed and Horace depicts himself as a subject of bad poetry: Hor. *epist.* 2.1.264-70. Cf. Brink 1982, p. 259.

even if we were correct in describing the ending in terms of genre, it would still be important to ask whether we would thereby come any closer to the construction of the meaning of the text.

However, the last verse contains items that interfere with the creation of an "end". *Non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo* (v. 476): this last line of the work is to be read as precisely as possible. First, *non missura,* with the future participle opening the perspective, is of great significance: I would suggest that there is here an implication that there is something after the work. At the same time, we can say that the negativity of the phrase implies that the described condition of the ending will last. In contrast, the phrase *nisi plena* introduces the idea of fullness, which at the end of a poem may of course be a highly pregnant concept, particularly since it evokes the topoi *satis* and *satur*, which are elements of a closural cluster in *Satire* 1.1 of Horace.

> inde fit ut raro qui se vixisse beatum
> dicat et exacto **contentus** tempore vita
> cedat, uti conviva **satur**, reperire queamus.
> Iam **satis** est. ne me Crispini scrinia lippi
> compilasse putes, verbum **non amplius addam**.

> Thus it comes that seldom can we find one who says he has had a happy life, and who, when his time is sped, will quit life in contentment, like a guest who has had his fill. Well, 'tis enough. Not a word more will I add, or you will think I have rifled the rolls of blear-eyed Crispinus. (Hor. *Sat.* 1.1.117-21.)[54]

In this passage, we find two aspects that require attention as closural patterns. On the one hand, the picture of the satisfied man who leaves life like a contented guest – a topos with complex intertextual connotations.[55] On the

---

[54] The English syntax does not allow to imitate the Latin word order and place the verb *addam* at the end of the line.

[55] Cf. Ellen Oliensis' interpretation of the terms *plenus … amator*, "full lover" in the last piece of the first book of the epistles (Hor. *epist.* 1.20.8) and *conviva satur*, "satisfied guest" in the closure of Horace's first *sermo* (*sat.* 1.1.119). Oliensis 1995, p. 224. *Iam satis est*, "Now it's enough" (*sat.* 1.1.120) and *lusisti satis* […], "You have played enough […]" (*epist.* 2.2. 214-16) belong to it as well. Oliensis 1998, p. 219. Emily Gowers has commented on the Virgilian and Lucretian, as well as the Horatian intertexts to the ending of the first *satire* (as far as the structural setting is concerned, the most important locus is the last verse of Virgil's final eclogue: *ite domum saturae, uenit Hesperus, ite capellae*, Verg. *Ecl.* 10.77). Gowers 2012, pp. 84-86. Hardie stresses the presence of Lucretius and the Virgilian *Georgics* in this passage (*DRN* 3.938 and 959-60, "the wise man who is content to take his leave of life when he has had his fill of it"; parallel between *sat.*1.1.114-16 and Verg. *Georg.* 1.512-14). As he notes, the *Ars* mirrors the beginning of the first *satire* ("each begins with an image of inconsistency, respectively in behaviour and in bodily shape, which provokes laughter"); furthermore, in the blood-filled leech in the *Ars*, he sees "a grotesque variation on *Satire* 1.1's closural figure of satiety". Hardie shows that in the scene with Empedocles, beside the Lucretian stuff, there is

other, the self-commentary of the satirical speaker who closes his text, which I will comment below. At this point, it is important that the picture of fullness as an element of a closure is supported by other passages of Horace.

Non missura and *nisi plena* in the last line of the *Ars* create a tension and seem to render the question of what happens at, and will happen after, the end of the poem unsolvable. Although the leech violates boundaries (as I have indicated above), it is placed precisely at a point where a border should be found. Such an animal knows no measure when it comes to blood-sucking:[56] it falls off of its own accord once it is full. But who knows when (or whether) it will be full? The *hirudo* sheds light, *mutatis mutandis*, on a problem that J. Hillis Miller puts as follows: "The difficulty in deciding whether to call a given ending an untying or a tying up arises from the way it is impossible ever to tell whether a given narrative is complete." (Miller 1998, p. 54.) The last line of the *Ars* is concerned with completeness – a motive that is, at this passage, is delayed (by *non missura*) and characterized as conditional (by *nisi plena*). We could paraphrase Miller: it is impossible to tell whether the leech will ever be satisfied.

From another perspective, it can be said that the problem of the ending of the *Ars* is closely related to the importance of the "theory" presented as a "doctrine" in the work. Even in the recent scholarship, one encounters interpretations according to which the end serves a clear doctrine, a "message": Christiane Reitz, for instance, remarks that the two pictures of the bear and the leech drastically heighten the warning.[57]

6. CLOSURE

The end of the *Ars* is indeed a startling ending – and I mean it not in the sense that Fowler has pointed out in a general way ("when the external division comes upon us unawares", Fowler 1989, p. 97). At the ending of a work that so pointedly addresses artistic unity, it is intriguing that, as we have

---

an intertext from the *Georgics* (between *ardentem frigidus*, v. 465 and Verg. *Georg.* 2.483-84); thus, the intertextual structures of the closures of the *Ars* and *sat.* 1.1 could be similar. Hardie 2014, pp. 44-47.

[56] Oliensis interprets the moment of the blood as a metaphor, since Horace calls his audience *Pompilius sanguis*, "the blood of Numa" (*Ars* 292, transl. by Oliensis). Oliensis 1998, p. 220. On Horace's view on the role of the audience in literary process see Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 2013.

[57] "Der fehlgeleitete Maler und der wahnsinnige Dichter sind abschreckende Beispiele eklatanten Scheiterns; die beiden Bilder vom tobenden Bären und vom prallen Blutegel steigern die Warnung ins Drastische." Reitz 2005, p. 213.

seen, the unity of the final comparison is faulty.[58] If the end is opened up by the image of the leech, one can indeed talk about the *Ars* as an "open-ended" work.[59]

It appears that we are not simply dealing with a standard form of closure, but rather with a unique invention of great poetic power.[60] The negative evolution, such as the withdrawal from the human and the *logos*, reminds us that this ending does not concern *telos*, but *Aufhören*, that is ceasing.[61] Because of the last word, *hirudo*, just as seemingly insignificant and negligible as its referent, it seems as if the text simply ceased to be written – as if it were "sapped" of its drive. As the American poet, Billy Collins writes, not without irony: "This is the final bit / thinning away to nothing. / This is the end, according to Aristotle […]"[62]. But in Horace's poem it is a deception of *ars*:[63] the ceasing is prepared for very consciously by a withdrawal, whose structure commemorates a rhetorical anticlimax.

As Alessandro Barchiesi writes, bringing something to an end is a sign of power (Barchiesi 1997, p. 207). At the end of the first satire, we get the hint that the satirical speaker is stopping his speech (*Iam satis est.* […] *verbum non amplius addam.* – Hor. *Sat*. 1.1.120-21.) This is the gesture of a person who can control his speech, showing consideration for his audience. In the last line

---

[58] Cf. J. P. Schwindt's remark: "And why should the appearance of the human being in the first word, *humano*, be truer than his blood sucking parasite, *hirudo*, in the last word of the *Ars*?" Schwindt 2014, p. 59.

[59] The same is true for the *Ars poetica* as a foundational work. Don Fowler saw as a feature of any great literary works that therein "ending and continuation [are] in tension". Fowler 1989, p. 81. On closure and foundation see Lowrie 2013. Cf. the very interesting idea of Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko: "the reason why the *Aeneid* can never reach 'final closure' is not only that its ending leaves too many questions open, but also that, from its very inception, we always already see its dynamic interaction with society and culture (both contemporary and later) in a two-way creative process of semantic renegotiation". Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013, p. 10.

[60] We can, indeed, put the (rhetorical) question: Does the text want to give an example of how to write an ending by having an idiosyncratic closure?

[61] On the semantic field of German 'Aufhören' in comparison with its synonyms see Herzog 1996, p. 327-28.

[62] In his poem *Aristotle*, published as the final piece of his collection of poetry *Picnic, Lightning* (1998). On the motif of 'nothing' in another passage of the *Ars* (*munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo*, "without writing myself, I will teach function and duty", v. 306) see Hajdu's witty remarks: "Of course we may try to find a way out by supposing that Horace did not regard a *sermo* as a real poem, or writing one as creating poetry, but the text does not actually say he writes no *poetry*. If we stick to this idea, we must regard *Ars* not as a *sermo*, or something like the *nugae* of Catullus, but definitely *nothing*. And then we can translate the utterance as follows: «And I personally will teach (how to make poetry) through writing (this) nothing»." Hajdu 2014a, p. 87.

[63] See Kaesser 2013 on the concept of *Trugschluss*, false closure and deception.

of the *Ars*, we see the reckless poetaster compared to a leech that cannot cease sucking human blood. If it does cease, this is merely because it has become full. Through this, we observe the impotence both of the *poeta vesanus* (who cannot restrain himself) and of his victims. But this picture of impotence and unconsciousness is set here in a subtle poetic way. At the and of the *Ars*, we encounter a being that cannot speak and that will most likely, at one time or another, cease performing its main activity. Yet the poet does not follow the activities of the *hirudo* and the *ursus* any further.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARCHIESI, A. (1997). "Endgames: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15 and *Fasti* 6," in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler 1997. pp. 181-208.

BRINK, Ch. O. (1971). *Horace on Poetry II: The Ars poetica*. Cambridge.

BRINK, Ch. O. (1982). *Horace on Poetry III: Epistles Book 2: The Letters to Augustus and Florus*. Cambridge.

BROOKS, P. 1984. *Reading for the Plot. Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge.

CARMIGNANI, M. (2013). "*Poeta vesanus, recitator acerbus.* Die auf Horaz basierende Karikierung des Eumolpus in Petronius, Sat. 118," *RhM* 156. pp. 27-46.

CITRONI, M. (2009). "Horace's *Ars Poetica* and the Marvellous," in Ph. Hardie, ed., *Paradox and the Marvellous in the Augustan Literature and Culture*. Oxford. pp. 19-40.

ECO, U. (1962). *Opera aperta. Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee*. Milano.

FAIRCLOUGH, H. R. (1991). *Horace. Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*. [First published 1926.] Cambridge, Mass. and London.

FARRELL, J. (2007). "Horace's Body, Horace's Books," in S. J. Heyworth, ed., *Classical Constructions. Papers in Memory of Don Fowler, Classicist and Epicurean*. pp. 174-93.

FOWLER, D. P. (1989). "First Thoughts on Closure. Problems and Prospects," *MD* 22. pp. 75-122.

FOWLER, D. P. (1994). "Postmodernism, Romantic Irony, and Classical Closure," in I. J. F. de Jong and J. P. Sullivan, eds., *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*. Leiden, New York and Köln. pp. 231-56.

FOWLER, D. P. (1997). "Second Thoughts on Closure," in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler 1997. pp. 3-22.

FOWLER, P. (1997). "Lucretian Conclusions," in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler 1997. pp. 112-38.

FRISCHER, B. (1991). *Shifting Paradigms. New Approaches to Horace's Ars Poetica*. Atlanta, Georgia.

FRYE, N. (1971 [1953]). "The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire," in R. Paulson, ed., *Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism*. Englewood Cliffs (N.J.). pp. 233-48.

FUHRMANN, M. (1992). *Die Dichtungstheorie der Antike. Aristoteles–Horaz–'Longin'. Eine Einführung* (2nd ed.). Darmstadt.

GEUE, T. (2014). "Editing the Opposition: Horace's Ars Politica," *MD* 72. pp. 143-72.

GOWERS, E. (2012). *Horace: Satires Book I*. Cambridge/New York.

GRETHLEIN, J. (2016). "Minding the middle in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica:* false closure, triangular foils and self-reflection," *Classical Quarterly* 66. pp. 316-35.

GREWING, F. F., ACOSTA-HUGHES, B. and KIRICHENKO, A. (2013). *The Door Ajar. False Closure in Greek and Roman Literature and Art*. Heidelberg.

GUMBRECHT, H. U. (2014). *Our Broad Present. Time and Contemporary Culture*. New York.

HAJDU, P. (2014a). "Horace's Ars poetica as Pure Poetry," *MD* 72. pp. 85-96.

HAJDU, P. (2014b). "The Mad Poet in Horace's Ars Poetica," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 41. pp. 28-42.

HARDIE, Ph. (1997a). "Closure in Latin Epic," in Roberts, Dunn and Fowler 1997. pp. 139-62.

HARDIE, Ph. (1997b). "Questions of authority: the invention of tradition in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15," in Th. Habinek and A. Schiesaro, eds., *The Roman Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge. pp. 182-98.

HARDIE, Ph. (2009). *Lucretian Receptions. History, The Sublime, Knowledge*. Cambridge.

HARDIE, Ph. (2014). "The Ars poetica and the Poetics of Didactic," *MD* 72. pp. 43-54.

HÄUßLER, R. (1986). "Der Dichterling. Zu einem ungeschriebenen Kapitel der Poetik," in U. J. Stache, W. Maaz and F. Wagner, eds., *Kontinuität und Wandel. Lateinische Poesie von Naevius bis Baudelaire. Franco Munari zum 65. Geburtstag*. Hildesheim. pp. 217-53.

HERZOG, R. (1996). "Vom Aufhören. Darstellungsformen menschlicher Dauer im Ende," in Stierle and Warning 1996. pp. 283-329.

JACOBY, F. (1914). "Drei Gedichte des Properz," *RhM* 69. pp. 393-413, 427-63.

JOHNSON, T. S. (2012). *Horace's Iambic Criticism. Casting Blame (Iambike Poiesis)*. Leiden and Boston.

KAESSER, Ch. (2013). "False Closure and Deception," in Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013. pp. 29-42.

KENNEDY, D. (2008). "Elegy and the Erotics of Narratology," in G. Liveley and P. Salzman-Mitchell, eds., *Latin Elegy and Narratology. Fragments of Story*. Columbus. pp. 19-33.

KIESSLING, A. and HEINZE, R. (1961). *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Briefe*. Berlin.

KILPATRICK, R. S. (1990). *The Poetry of Criticism. Horace,* Epistles *II and* Ars Poetica. Edmonton, Alberta.

KOZÁK, D. (2014). "Si forte reponis Achillem: Achilles in the Ars poetica, the Metamorphoses, and the Achilleid," *MD* 72. pp. 207-21.

KRUPP, J. (2014). "Textus sui interpres optimus. Zu einem Prinzip philologischer Hermeneutik," *Geschichte der Germanistik* 45-46. pp. 151-56.

LAIRD, A. (2007). "The *Ars Poetica*," in S. Harrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*. Cambridge. pp. 132-43.

LEFÈVRE, E. (1966). *Propertius ludibundus. Elemente des Humors in seinen Elegien*. Heidelberg.

LOWRIE, M. (1997). *Horace's Narrative Odes*. Oxford.

LOWRIE, M. (2013). "Foundation and Closure," in Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013. pp. 83-101.

LOWRIE, M. (2014). "Politics by Other Means in Horace's Ars poetica," *MD* 72. pp. 121-42.

MARQUARD, O. (1996). "Finalisierung und Mortalität," in Stierle and Warning 1996. pp. 467-75.

MAYER, R. (1994). *Horace. Epistles, Book I*. Cambridge.

MILLER, J. H. (1998). *Reading Narrative*. Norman.

NORDEN, E. (1905). "Die Composition und Literaturgattung der Horazischen Epistula ad Pisones," *Hermes* 40. pp. 481-528.

OLIENSIS, E. (1995). "Life After Publication: Horace *Epistles* 1.20," *Arethusa* 28. pp. 209-24.

OLIENSIS, E. (1998). *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*. Cambridge.

REITZ, Ch. (2005). "Horaz' Literaturbriefe und die Lehrdichtung," in M. Horster and Ch. Reitz, eds., *Wissensvermittlung in dichterischer Gestalt*. Stuttgart. pp. 211-26.

RIMELL, V. (2013). "(En)closure and Rupture: Roman Poetry in the Arena," in Grewing, Acosta-Hughes and Kirichenko 2013. pp. 103-27.

ROBERTS, D. H., DUNN, F. M. and FOWLER, D. P., eds. (1997). *Classical Closure*. Princeton.

RUDD, N. (1989). *Horace. Epistles, Book II and Epistle to the Pisones (Ars Poetica)*. Cambridge.

RUSSELL, D. A. and WINTERBOTTOM, M., eds. (1972). *Ancient Literary Criticism. The Principal Texts in New Translations*. Oxford.

SCHWINDT, J. P. (2012). "Über Genauigkeit," in E. Hoppe, *Mathematik und Astronomie im Klassischen Altertum*. Vol. 2. Ed. J. P. Schwindt. Heidelberg. pp. 269-301.

SCHWINDT, J. P. (2014). "Ordo and Insanity. On the Pathogenesis of Horace's Ars poetica," *MD* 72. pp. 55-70.

SHACKLETON BAILEY, D. R. (2008). *Horatius. Opera*. Ed. ster. ed. quart. 2001. Berlin and New York.

SMITH, B. H. (1968). *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End*. Chicago.

STIERLE, K. and WARNING, R., eds. (1996). *Das Ende. Figuren einer Denkform*. München.

Tamás, Á. 2014. "Reading Ovid Reading Horace. The Empedoclean Drive in the Ars poetica," *MD* 72. pp. 173-92.

TSITSIOU-CHELIDONI, Ch. (2013). "Horace on the Role of the Poetry's Audience in the Literary Process," *Trends in Classics* 5. pp. 341-75.

WALDE, A. (1938). *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. 3., von J. B. Hofmann neubearbeitete Auflage. I–II. Heidelberg.