

## Consolation and Commemoration in Horace *Odes* 1.24 and 4.12

*For it shall be my dirge and chant me down  
Over the mournful flood to the dim shore,  
Where I shall find Quintilius and our tears.  
Yes, farewell, Horace! Unto you I leave  
The laurel and the letters that we loved;  
Till we shall meet again. I cannot hold  
Your light yet heavy Epicurean creed;  
Your lays "shall outlive brass and pyramid",  
But he that made them shall outlive the lays,  
Though how or where we know not.*

- 328-37, from *The Death of Virgil, A Dramatic Narrative* (1907) by Sir Thomas H. Warren

### 0. Introduction

The death of Vergil was no doubt a tragic event for Rome and her citizens, and even more so for his friends, among whom would surely be counted the poet Horace.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, we have little extant evidence which might shed light on their friendship more generally and Horace's reaction to Vergil's death in particular;<sup>2</sup> little, that is, save *Odes* 4.12. An odd poem, it invites Vergil to join Horace at a symposium, although the

---

<sup>1</sup> On their friendship, see Campbell 1987: 314-318 and Duckworth 1956: 281-316; that the two were not friends by the time of the *Odes*, see Thomas 2001: 60 who argues that Horace and Vergil were only acquaintances and Moritz 1969: 13 who believes that the friendship was strained by the publication of the *Odes*. For a response to such readings, see Margheim 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Horace's poetry provides the sole basis for positing a friendship. Vergil does not mention Horace by name in his poetry, and no other contemporary or near-contemporary sources ascribe *amicitia* to the two poets, although by 380 St. Jerome assumes a friendship. Horace names Vergil ten times throughout his corpus (*Sat.* 1.5.40, 48, 1.6.55, 1.10.45, 81; *Odes* 1.3.6, 1.24.10, 4.12.13; *Ep.* 2.1.247; *A.P.* 55), five times in the *Satires* alone, where Vergil consistently appears as a friend and colleague.

poem was published six years after Vergil's death in 19 BC.<sup>3</sup> This post-mortem poem to Vergil forms an odd pair with an earlier ode—*Odes* 1.24—also addressed to Vergil and also written following the death of a friend. In this poem, Vergil receives frank criticism for his excessive and misguided mourning following the death of Vergil and Horace's mutual friend Quintilius Varus.<sup>4</sup> While in 1.24 Horace consoles the aggrieved Vergil, in 4.12 Horace finds himself in Vergil's position—grieving the death of a friend.

Horace confronts grief and death directly in both *Odes* 1.24 and 4.12, and each poem ends with a generalizing *sententia*, yet their import would appear contradictory.

On the one hand, *Odes* 1.24 recommends the consolatory power of patience:

Durum; sed levius fit patientia  
quicquid corrigere est nefas

*Odes* 1.24.19-20

It is hard; but whatever is forbidden to correct becomes easier to bear with patience.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, *Odes* 4.12 turns to the sweetness of folly:

misce stultitiam consiliis brevem:

---

<sup>3</sup> Though there is some debate whether the Vergilius of 4.12 is Virgil the poet, the *opinio communis* today asserts this identification (see below, p. 11 n. 20 and p. 13 n. 25).

<sup>4</sup> For readings of *Odes* 1.24, see Commager 1995: 287-90, Khan 1999, Nisbet and Hubbard 1990: 279-89, Lowrie 1994: 377-394, Putnam 1993, and West 1995: 112-15. For the Epicurean, and specifically Philodemus, influence on the ode, see Thibodeau 2003: 243-56 and Armstrong 2008: 97-99.

<sup>5</sup> Unless noted, Latin text of Horace's *Odes* is Garrison 1991 and translations are my own.

dulce est desipere in loco.

*Odes* 4.12.25-28

Mix brief folly into your plans: it is sweet to act the fool in the proper place.

This seeming contradiction invites the question: How ought one to understand *Odes* 4.12 in relation to 1.24? More specifically, this paper considers whether Horace has contradicted his own advice in 1.24 by addressing Vergil as if alive in 4.12. Taken together, these two post-mortem poems addressed to Vergil form a diptych of sorts, offering insight into how Horace believes one ought to or can mourn. In *Odes* 1.24, Horace, in the persona of a philosophical teacher, advises that one *ought* to mourn moderately and patiently; in 4.12, however, Horace the convivial poet suggests that the foolishness of mourning has its proper place. I argue that this is not an about-face in Horace's philosophy, but rather a shift in emphasis.

This paper begins with brief but thorough readings of the two odes, paying particular attention to their consolatory elements. I demonstrate that *Odes* 1.24 offers a consolation built upon Epicurean philosophy and emotional therapy, while *Odes* 4.12 draws from the Epicurean practice of commemoration. This leads me to my final argument, that the imagined symposium of 4.12 represents a poetic memorial of Horace and Vergil's friendship. In the end, I argue that Horace, in an attempt to console himself,

imagines and invokes Vergil's literary persona to share in a poetic dialogue, thereby creating a poetic space in which the acknowledged folly of such a post-mortem invocation is permitted.

### 1. Consolation in *Odes* 1.24

*Odes* 1.24 was published in 23 B.C. within the first book of Horace's *Carmina*.<sup>6</sup> Horace likely wrote the poem in the mid-20s, following the death of Quintilius Varus of Cremona, a mutual friend of both Vergil and Horace.<sup>7</sup> As Michael Putnam points out, the ode generically conflates both *epicedium* and *consolatio*; it is simultaneously a lamentation for Quintilius and a condolence for Vergil.<sup>8</sup> Structurally, these two genres divide the poem in half. Aside from its generic elements, the poem also has an "almost critical

---

<sup>6</sup> For bibliography, see Putnam 1993: 123 n. 1 and Thibodeau 2003: 243 n. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Vergil and Quintilius were members of a well-attested Roman Epicurean community whose other members were L. Varius Rufus and Plotius Tucca. See Thibodeau 2003: 248 and Armstrong 2003: 2-3 for discussion of this Roman Epicurean quartet as well as the sources that attest them. There is also some evidence to suggest that Horace was also a member of this coterie. For example, in *Sat.* 1.5 and 1.10, Horace describes Plotius, Varius, and Vergil as his "candid" friends, an Epicurean buzzword (For *candor* as a Latin translation of *parrhesia*, see DeWitt 1935: 313-4). Additionally, by 380 Saint Jerome attests Horace's participation in this Epicurean community (see *Chronicon* in the 190th Olympiad). For the position that Horace was merely an acquaintance of Philodemus, however, see Oberhelman and Armstrong 1995: 233-55; that he was only an acquaintance of the quartette, see Gigante 1995. Whether or not he was a full member of the group, however, it is beyond dispute that Horace was at least acquainted with its members and their mentor, Philodemus of Gadara. Although Horace only names Philodemus at *Sat.* 1.2.121, the philosopher's influence is felt throughout the *Satires* and *Odes*, including in *Odes* 1.24's parrhesiastic tenor.

<sup>8</sup> Putnam 1993: 123; For the rhetoric of consolation in 1.24, see Pasquali 1920: 249-57.

tone,” which Philip Thibodeau argues Epicurean frank criticism (*parrhesia*) underpins.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in *Odes* 1.24, Horace conflates eulogy, consolation, and therapy and Vergil consequently occupies three roles: the addressee in a dirge, recipient of consolation, and patient undergoing therapy.<sup>10</sup> In what follows I wish to focus upon this second function and its Epicurean context in particular.

Thibodeau argues convincingly that the poem functions as Epicurean emotional therapy.<sup>11</sup> While his argument is thorough and wide-ranging, for our purposes the central stanza will prove sufficient to demonstrate the manner and content of Horace's criticism of Vergil's mourning:

Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit,  
 nulli flebilior quam tibi, Vergili.  
 Tu frustra pius, heu, non ita creditum  
 poscis Quintilium deos.

*Odes* 1.24.9-12

He died mourned by many good men, but mourned by none more than by you, Vergil. You, uselessly pious, ask the gods for Quintilius, alas! not entrusted on those terms.

---

<sup>9</sup> Thibodeau 2003: 244; On the parrhesiatic tone, see Armstrong 2008: 97-99.

<sup>10</sup> These roles are not mutually exclusive. In *Vatican Sayings* 66, Epicurus says, “we sympathize with our friends, not through lamentation, but through thoughtful concern” (συμπαθῶμεν τοῖς φίλοις οὐ θρηνοῦντες ἀλλὰ φροντίζοντες). Horace conflates these personae in such a way as to sympathize with Vergil and simultaneously show him his error.

<sup>11</sup> Thibodeau 2003.

Horace is curt. He articulates two issues in Vergil's mourning. The shift from *flebilis* to *flebior* points to the first issue. The Epicureans taught *metriopatheia*, emotional moderation,<sup>12</sup> yet Vergil is pictured as the emotional outlier. This could be for two reasons: either Vergil is mourning excessively or Vergil, as Quintilius' closest friend, was struck hardest by his death. The former is clearly more critical than the latter. Nonetheless, one senses a critical tone in the following lines where Horace describes Vergil as "uselessly pious" (11). Of course, the deep resonances of *pious* in Vergil's own corpus speak for themselves and only ratchet up the force of this second point of criticism. Vergil may be attempting to act correctly in his mourning, but his actions are useless and therefore impious (*nefas*, the last word of the poem). Beyond merely grieving Quintilius, Vergil is apparently asking the gods to return him to life (11-2). Akbar Khan even goes so far as to argue that the ode's first half mimics an actual dirge written by Vergil in which Vergil seeks a poetic resurrection.<sup>13</sup> The whole poem is focused on reminding Vergil of the foolishness of such thoughts and desires.

Horace begins with the euphemistic description of the deceased Quintilius as "eternally asleep" (*perpetuus sopor*, 1.24.5). Near the middle of the poem, Horace be-

---

<sup>12</sup> See Armstrong 2008: 79-121 on the Epicurean allowance of emotion but prohibition of emotional excesses.

<sup>13</sup> Khan 1999: 73-84.

comes more explicit, reminding Vergil that blood, and therefore life, will not and cannot “return to the empty shade” (*vanae redeat sanguis imagini*, 15). Finally, to close the poem Horace declares that such desires are more than merely useless, they are utterly forbidden (*durum; sed levius fit patentia / quicquid corrigere est nefas*, 19-20). The poem itself answers the opening question, “What shame or limit should there be to the longing for one so loved?” (*Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus / tam cari capitis?*, 1-2). Death provides the limit; it is a threshold beyond which none can pass. These reminders, while tonally in line with the Epicurean practice of *parrhesia*, also follow doctrinal Epicurean metaphysics and ethics.

One finds the foundation for all Epicurean thought on death and the proper response to it in *Key Doctrines 2*: “death is nothing to us” (ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς).<sup>14</sup> This simple statement communicates on two levels. First, it functions as an admonition to Epicureans not to fear death while alive.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the dictum is a normative reminder of Epicurean ethics. Secondly, however, the statement that “death is nothing to us” summarizes the metaphysical argument behind this ethical position. This metaphysical argument rests on the premise that death is annihilation:

---

<sup>14</sup> All texts of Epicurus come from Usener 1987.

<sup>15</sup> For Epicurean arguments against the fear of death, see Warren 2004.

συνέθιξε δὲ ἐν τῷ νομίζειν μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἐν αἰσθήσει· στέρησις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος.

*LM 124*

Accustom yourself to hold that death is nothing to us, since all good and evil consist in sensation, and death is the privation of sensation.

Death is nothing to us because once we die, no “us” remains. If death is “privation of sensation,” one cannot experience one’s own death; if one cannot experience one’s own death, one cannot feel any pain when dead. Thus, one ought not to fear death.

Horace, throughout this poem, reminds Vergil of this latter point, that death is annihilation. This is why Vergil's supposed "piety" is useless; this is why the blood will not return to the shade. Yet the parrhesiastic therapy is only partially completed by these philosophical reminders and sentiments. In order for the poem to be truly consolatory, Horace must not only tell Vergil what to turn away from (excessive and foolish grief) but also what to turn towards. To put it otherwise, if Horace’s philosophical therapy states, “Quintilius is dead, nothing can change that,” the consolation should add, “There is still much to live for and love here.” Indeed, as I argue, the consolatory element of the ode attempts to demonstrate to Vergil that Horace himself is a friend of Quintilian caliber.

While the therapy of the poem answer the opening question, the consolation answers the poem's second question, "Is there anyone alive on par with Quintilius?":

Ergo Quintilium perpetuus sopor  
urget, cui Pudor et Iustitiae soror  
incompacta Fides nudaque Veritas  
quando ullum inveniet parem?

*Odes* 1.24.5-8

So, everlasting slumber oppresses Quintilius. When will Shame and uncorrupted Faith, the sister of Justice, and naked Truth find anyone equal to him?

If frankness is the quintessential quality of Epicurean friendships,<sup>16</sup> then Quintilius himself is the quintessential friend. For proof, one need not look beyond Horace's corpus. First, the phrase *nuda Veritas* (7) neatly captures the meaning of the Greek term *parrhesia*.<sup>17</sup> Along with justice, faith, and shame, frankness is one of Quintilius' primary virtues. Second, in his *Ars Poetica*, Horace recalls how Quintilius would reduce lines of poetry to rubble with the single word *corrigere* ("correct it!"), always willing to offer his critical, but wanted opinion.<sup>18</sup> Finally, at *Sat.* 1.5.40-42, Quintilius, Vergil, and Plotius are

---

<sup>16</sup> For the central role of frankness in Epicurean friendships, see Konstan et al. 1998 on Philodemus' treatise *PHerc.* 1471 entitled *peri parrhesias*, which was recovered from Herculaneum, the site of the Epicurean school Philodemus led. For a general introduction, see Konstan et al. 1998: 1-24. For an outline of the nine features that distinguish Epicurean interpersonal therapy, see Armstrong 1993: 193-4 and Nussbaum 1986: 31-74.

<sup>17</sup> For *veritas* and *candor* as Latin translations of *parrhesia*, see DeWitt 1935: 313-4.

<sup>18</sup> See *AP* 438-44 and *Odes* 1.24.20.

described as *candidiores*, which emphasizes their charm and frankness.<sup>19</sup> By practicing the very art that defined so much of Quintilius' character, Horace deftly reminds Vergil that *this* friend still remains.

With this reminder, Horace completes his consolation. Every facet of this robust philosophical and poetic *consolatio* can be found in the closing *sententia* of the poem:

Durum; sed levius fit patientia  
quicquid corrigere est nefas

Odes 1.24.19-20

It is hard; but whatever is forbidden to correct becomes easier to bear with patience.

These two lines summarize the two essential philosophical points of the ode:

- Death is annihilation.
- Mourning that borders on desire for resurrection is useless/impious.

They also point the reader to the key poetic point of the ode: that Horace, a good friend, remains. By repeating Quintilius' favorite term, *corrigere*, Horace surreptitiously slides into his role. The poem states emphatically yet tenderly (recall the eulogistic first half of the ode) that one cannot "correct" death, as death is final annihilation. As a result desire for the laws of nature to be reversed is *nefas*. Patience and good friends, however,

---

<sup>19</sup> See above, n. 16.

can ease the burden. These sentiments follow trends of the consolatory tradition,<sup>20</sup> as well as doctrinal Epicureanism, a fact which makes *Odes* 4.12 all the more odd.

## 2. Commemoration in *Odes* 4.12

*Odes* 4.12 is a perplexing poem. Scholars question its addressee, its genre, and its communicative purpose.<sup>21</sup> Recent work by Richard Thomas and Jenny Strauss-Clay, however, has begun to make sense of this enigmatic ode. Thomas' erudite commentary solidifies the scholarly opinion that the addressee must be Vergil the poet while also of-

---

<sup>20</sup> Johann 1968 enumerates six *topoi* of the consolatory tradition: *de dolore moderando*, *de temporis vi*, *non usui sed detrimento luctus*, *de communi hominum condicione*, *de avida spe*, and *tuamne an mortui vicem doles*. I sense all six in this poem, though the second and third (*de temporis vi* and *non usui sed detrimento luctus*) are clearly in view in Horace's conclusion.

<sup>21</sup> For bibliography on both sides of the issue, see Thomas 2011: 225-27 and Johnson 2004: 160-1. Contra Vergil, scholars point to Horace's apparent lack of decorum. As Nisbet and Rudd 2004: xxix point out, one finds this opinion stated as early as the fifth century in the commentary of pseudo-Acro: "[Horace] writes to a Vergil who was a wholesale dealer" (*ad Vergilium negotiatorem scribit*). In the tenth century, two manuscripts (Paris MSS 7974 and 7971) provide similar readings: "[an ode written] to a certain Vergil who was an ointments dealer" (*ad Vergilium quendam unguentarium*). Even in modern scholarship, many notable scholars—Fraenkel 1981 and Putnam 2006: 205-6 chief among them—follow this line of reasoning. They argue that Horace's language in this poem (*iuuenum nobilium cliens*, 15, and *studium lucri*, 25) clashes with an invitation to a dead friend, especially one of such stature as Vergil. Fraenkel 1981: 418 goes so far as to describe Horace as "a monster of callousness" for his language. Pro Vergil, scholars point to the ode's Vergilian language and themes. Belmont 1980: 1-20 imagines a Roman reader attentive to the poem's intertextuality and contends that this reader could not but identify the addressee as the poet Vergil. The thought experiment persuades many, and today the *opinio communis* asserts the identification. In the most recent commentary on *Odes* 4, Thomas 2011: 227 summarizes the argument: "The addressee is indeed the poet [because] C. 4.12 is replete with Vergilian diction, style, and rhetorical devices, and it seems perverse to take the addressee as being anyone but the poet Vergil, the Vergilius to whom H[orace] refers by the same name on nine other occasions."

fering clear analysis of the ode's rich intertextual relationships.<sup>22</sup> On the interpretive side, Strauss-Clay has demonstrated that the post-mortem publication date is not a minor detail to be explained away, but rather an integral facet of Horace's poetic purpose. Her analysis discerns a grieving Horace seeking imaginative self-consolation in the ode.<sup>23</sup> Regrettably, her analysis does not take into account the incongruities generated if *Odes* 4.12 is indeed read as a self-consolation, given the explicit consolatory advice offered to Vergil in *Odes* 1.24. Thus, having enumerated how Horace tells Vergil one *ought* to grieve in 1.24, I now turn to illuminate how Horace pictures himself *actually grieving* in 4.12.

Before turning to the poem proper, however, it is important to acknowledge a possible objection. While I follow Strauss-Clay in taking the publication date of the ode as central to any full interpretation, many scholars see this detail as nothing more than a minor annoyance. For some, the publication date is primarily evidence for identifying the addressee as some other Vergilius;<sup>24</sup> for others, the publication date is divorced from the composition date and any incongruities are seen to be resolved thusly.<sup>25</sup> To the first,

---

<sup>22</sup> Thomas 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Strauss-Clay 2002: 129-45.

<sup>24</sup> See above, n. 20.

<sup>25</sup> For a primary example, see Bowra 1928: 165-7.

it is difficult to imagine a Roman reader finishing the ode and not thinking of Rome's recently deceased national poet.<sup>26</sup> To the second, even if Horace published an ode written when Vergil was alive, his readers would nonetheless encounter it in a world in which Vergil was dead. If one takes the ode as addressed to the Vergil, one simply must deal with the full strangeness of its publication date. Before turning to these apparent incongruities, however, I wish first to demonstrate that the poem addresses Vergil the poet by closely analyzing of the ode's opening three stanzas.

*Odes* 4.12 conflates two genres, each occupying approximately one-half of the ode: spring poem (1-12) and invitation poem (13-28). The opening three stanzas (1-12) display spring enlivening the various natural spheres: the inanimate (1-4), the animal (5-8), and the human (9-12), yet each strophe also mixes spring's rejuvenation with death's melancholy.<sup>27</sup> In the second half of the ode, Horace invites Vergil to a symposium to which Vergil brings nard and Horace wine. Under this schema, the spring stanzas initiate the evocation and the invitation stanzas describe a literary *convivium* in which poets meet and share their poetic wares.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> See Quinn 1963: 11, Bowra 1928: 165-7, Putnam 2006: 93, Belmont 1980: 1-20, Moritz 1969: 174-93, Porter 1973: 71-87, and Strauss-Clay 2002: 129-45.

<sup>27</sup> See *Odes* 1.4 and 4.7 as particularly striking examples of spring and death commingling.

<sup>28</sup> Strauss-Clay 2002: 129-45, Moritz 1969: 174-93, Johnson 2004: 158-67, and Thomas 2011: 227 all propound a form of this reading.

*Odes* 4.12 opens with a natural scene that introduces the overarching themes of friendship and death. The first three words, *Iam veris comites*, indicate both the ode's springtime setting and its friendship-centered theme. First, the introduction references Catullus's spring poem: *iam ver egelidos refert tepores* ("Already spring brings tepid warmth," 46.1), in which Catullus bids farewell to actual companions. Second, *comites* may recall Horace's description of his companions on the road to Brundisium, of which Vergil was a member.<sup>29</sup> Horace's "comrades of spring" initially appear human.<sup>30</sup> Horace elaborates on the "comrades of spring," however, placing the Thracian winds in apposition (*impellunt animae lintea Thraciae*, 4.12.2). The use of *anima* for *ventus* is unique in Horace, and its uniqueness suggests its importance.<sup>31</sup> This Greek cognate usage of *anima*, following *comites* so closely, may echo *Odes* 1.3's famous *animae dimidium meae*.<sup>32</sup> Finally,

---

<sup>29</sup> *comites* (4.12.1) may echo Catullus' *o dulces comitum valet coetus* ("Farewell oh sweet company of friends," 46.9) or even Sat. 1.5.8-9: *cenantis haud animo aequo / exspectans comites* ("impatiently awaiting my dinner companions").

<sup>30</sup> Belmont 1980: 15 proposes a subtle Vergilian allusion through a wordplay in the first line: *Iam veris comites, quae mare temperant*. Belmont suggests that *ver(is) ... mar(e)* alludes to Vergil's signature in the reverse acrostic at Georgics 1.429-33: MA(RO)-VE(GILIVS)-PV(BLIVS). For examinations of Vergil's acrostic, see Thomas 1998: ad G. 1.427-37 and Katz 2008: 105-23.

<sup>31</sup> Garrison 1991: 362. See the other uses in *Odes* 1.3.8 (*animae dimidium meae*), 1.10.17 (*pias laetis animas reponis sedibus*), 2.17.5 (*meae si partem animae*), 3.9.12 (*si parcent animae fata*), and 4.10.8 (*vel cur his animis*), all of which treat *anima* in its "spiritual" sense. 3.9.12 specifically, addressed to Maecenas, recalls 1.3.8.

<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, *animae* could also recall Vergil, Plotius and Varius, described as *animae candidiores* at *Satires* 1.5.41 (Belmont 1980: 15). For Quintilius, Vergil, and Horace as members of an Epicurean quartette, see *Vita Vergilii* of Probus (Castner 1988: 45); For more on this quartette, see above, p. 4 n. 7.

the adjective *Thraciae* recalls Orpheus in *Odes* 1.24 (*Threicio blandius Orpheo*, 13). This reference could simultaneously adumbrate the theme of death and recall Horace's previous Vergil odes. In all, this first stanza places the ode squarely within Horace's previous writings to and about Vergil.

The second stanza offers an extended allusion to the myth of Procne and Tereus. On the literal level, instinct drives a bird to prepare her nest; on the metaphorical level, however, Horace sees in this act resonances of Procne's tale of death and revenge:

Nidum ponit Ityn flebiliter gemens  
 infelix avis et Cecropiae domus  
 aeternum opprobrium, quod male barbaras  
 regum est ulta libidines.

*Odes* 4.12.5-8

The unlucky bird builds her nest, moaning mournfully for Itys and the eternal disgrace to the house of Cecrops, which took foul revenge on the barbarous lusts of kings.

The central image of the second stanza points to Vergil's corpus. The *infelix avis* is unparalleled in Horace's corpus, though it recalls Vergil's abbreviated descriptions of the myth,<sup>33</sup> in particular, Vergil's description of Orpheus' lament in the *Georgics*:

---

<sup>33</sup> It recalls the image of Philomela, Procne's sister, in the sixth book of the *Eclogues*: "Or how he detailed Tereus' morphed limbs, what banquets and what gifts Philomela prepared for him, by what route she sought the desert, and on what wings the unlucky woman earlier flitted about her rooftops?" (*aut ut mutatos Terei narraverit artus, / quas illi Philomela dapes, quae dona pararit, / quo cursu dessert petiverit et quibus ante / infelix sua tecta super volitaverit alis?*, *Eclogues* 6.78-81)

qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra  
 amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator  
 observans nido implumes detraxit; at illa  
flet noctem ramoque sedens miserabile carmen  
 integrat et maestis late loca questibus implet.

*Geo.* 4.511-15

As Philomela, grieving beneath the poplar's shade, laments her lost children, whom a rough ploughman snatched as she watched, featherless, from the nest; but she weeps all night and repeats her sad song perched on a branch and fills the place around with mournful cries.

In this *Georgics* section, Vergil describes Orpheus' grief following the death of his wife, foreshadowing Horace's foolish apostrophe in the fourth stanza.<sup>34</sup> In both language and theme, Horace playfully echoes Vergil's treatments of this tragic tale.

Strophe three alludes to Vergil's *Eclogues*. Moving from the mournful songs of the nesting bird, Horace imagines music in the form of shepherds' singing:

Dicunt in tenero gramine pinguium  
 custodes ovium carmina fistula  
 delectantque deum, cui pecus et nigri  
 colles Arcadiae placent.

*Odes* 4.12.9-12

---

<sup>34</sup> Putnam 2006: 99-100 points out that this stanza recalls Catullus' mourning of his brother's death at 65.11-14: "But certainly I will love you always, I will sing mournful songs for your death always, songs like the Daolian maid sings beneath thick shade of the branches, moaning the fate of snatched-away Itylus" (*at certe semper amabo, / semper maesta tua carmina morte canam, / qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris / Daalias, absumpti fata gemens Ityli*). Both Catullus and Horace use the participle *gemens* only once in their corpora, and these lines of Catullus are the only previous direct mention of Itys in Latin literature still preserved. With this allusion, Horace suggests the depth of his loss: Vergil's death is to Horace as Catullus' brother's was to Catullus.

The custodians of fattened sheep sing songs in the soft grass with the pipe,  
and they delight the god whom the herd and black hills of Arcadia please.

Horace's references to Vergil's pastoral text are layered. While the *fistula* pipe is the primary instrument used in the *Eclogues* and Pan, the *deus Arcadiae*, appears at the climax of the final eclogue,<sup>35</sup> the reader senses Vergil's pastoral presence most vividly in Horace's reference to the mythical land of Arcadia. Once again, Horace hints at Vergil's poetic presence before his name actually appears.

This allusive evocation of Vergil's poetic persona initiates a poetic embrace. Alden Smith defines poetic embrace as the conversation between poets through allusion and intertextuality.<sup>36</sup> Poets can revivify their predecessors and peers by perpetuating their poetic voice in and through their own texts. If this understanding of allusion's immortalizing potency appears anachronistic, one need not look beyond two excerpts from Augustan-age poets. The first comes from Ovid:

... sed carmina maior imago  
sunt mea, quae mando quaecumque legas.

*Tristia* 1.7.11-12

---

<sup>35</sup> At *Ecl.* 10.26: "Pan, Arcadia's god, came, whom we ourselves saw blood red with elderberries and vermilion" (*Pan deus Arcadiae uenit, quem uidimus ipsi / sanguineis ebuli bacis minioque rubentem*).

<sup>36</sup> Smith 1997: passim. He defines "textual embrace" as "a relationship ... in a synchronic continuum between reader and author" (20). Smith examines how Ovid reads, revivifies, and so immortalizes Vergil by alluding to Vergil.

But my poetry is a better image, and whatever the quality, I entrust it to you so that you may read it.

Ovid recognized that poetry creates a persona of the poet, which is embodied in the text. The second comes from Horace's fourth book of *Odes*:

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona  
multi; sed omnes inlacrimabiles  
urgentur ignotique longa  
nocte, carent quia uate sacro.

*Odes* 4.9.25-28

Many brave men lived before Agamemnon, but all are unwept and unknown, pressed by the long night, because they lacked a sacred poet.

Horace reminds that poetry creates personae for those that the poet brings into the realm of the poem. These personae are "eternal" insofar as readers continue to read the poems that contain them. Poets can thus knowingly sustain a predecessor or peer's literary persona by being readers themselves. As writers, however, they can also "revivify" another poet by incorporating some aspect of the predecessor's poetry into their own texts. The poem can thus function as a medium in which poets, dead or alive, forever interact. In *Odes* 4.12, Horace cements this aspect of poetry's power in the image of a symposium.

Horace creates a wine-for-poetry analogy to suggest that Vergil is being invited to a literary, not literal, symposium. Wine and nard are to poetry as a drinking party is

to intertextuality. Throughout Horace's lyric poetry, wine functions as a metonym for poetry itself.<sup>37</sup> In this ode, Horace's wine "reflects the Dionysiac power of the symposium to renew all life."<sup>38</sup> Inviting the now dead Vergil to a symposium mediated by a fine wine, Horace attempts to renew Vergil's poetic life via poetic *convivium*. It is this liberating wine-soaked literary symposium to which Horace calls Vergil to hasten.

Vergil's swift arrival does not suffice, however. He must also bring a small jar of unguent (*nardi parvus onyx*, 4.12.17). Horace insists that without Vergil's gift, there can be no party.<sup>39</sup> If wine serves as metonymy for poetry, what might Vergil's required nard represent? In the Greek sympotic tradition, spikenard (νάρδος) occasionally flavors wine (ναρδίτης).<sup>40</sup> Horace proposes a *quid pro quo*: Vergil's nard for Horace's poetry. Vergil's unguent likely functions on the same metonymic level as Horace's wine. Timothy Johnson suggests that the nard represents poetry: "The metaphor, gift equals poetry,

---

<sup>37</sup> Commager 1957.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson 2004: 162.

<sup>39</sup> Horace focuses on the nard's necessity for three stanzas (*nardi*, 17 ... *brevem*, 27).

<sup>40</sup> Johnson 2004: 165 favors this reading, citing Dsc. 5.57 as an example. Horace himself references this sympotic side to nard in Odes 2.11.13-18: "Why not drink while we can, lying, thoughtlessly, under this towering pine, or this plane-tree, our greying hair scented with roses, and perfumed with nard from Assyria? Bacchus dispels all those cares that feed on us." (*Cur non sub alta uel platano uel hac/ pinu iacentes sic temere et rosa/ canos odorati capillos,/ dum licet, Assyriaque nardo / potamus uncti? dissipat Euhius/ curas edacis*).

transforms Vergil's nard into a poem that he must bring to share at the *symposion*.<sup>41</sup> The unguent is not merely aromatic; it compliments the wine. Vergil must hurry and bring his poetry to this literary symposium in order to flavor Horace's poetic wares. Vergil's nard represents his poetry, just as wine is a metonym for Horace's poetry.<sup>42</sup> Literal unguent-mixed wine does not soak Horace's proposed *convivium*, but literary wine—a simulacrum of poetry.

Inviting a deceased Vergil to a poetic symposium, however, appears no less guilty of the poetic *nefas* than doomed Vergil's mourning in *Odes* 1.24. Unfortunately, scholars' metonymic reading of the symposium have, so far, failed to resolve Horace's seemingly disparate attitudes toward death and mourning in these two odes. Horace even suggests that he is aware of his paradoxical position. At the ode's conclusion, Horace states sententiously: "to be foolish in the proper place is sweet" (*dulce est desipere in loco*, 28). Under Epicureanism folly (*desipere*) is the antonym of wisdom; it is not mere

---

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Through allusion to Propertius, Horace also suggests a funerary element to the nard's purpose: "Ungrateful man, why couldn't you pray for a wind to fan my pyre? Why didn't my flames smell of nard? Was it so hard, indeed, to scatter cheap hyacinths or to honor my tomb with a shattered cask?" (*cur uentos non ipse rogis, ingrate, petisti? / cur nardo flammae non oluere meae? / hoc etiam graue erat, nulla mercede hyacinthos / inicere et fracto busta piare cado*, Propertius 4.7.31-4). This speech forms part of Cynthia's post mortem harangue aimed at Propertius. Nard can clearly function in the funeral ceremony. Horace's *nardi parvus onyx eliciet cadum* (4.12.17) recalls Propertius' *nardo* (4.7.32) and *cado* (4.7.34). On one level, then, Horace asks Vergil to bring the unguent for his own funeral. In return, Horace will procure the jar to shatter on his tomb. Once again, the spectre of death lies just beneath the ode's surface.

silliness. As noted above, the Epicurean doctrine on death holds that death was the annihilation of one's atoms, senses, and being. In contrast, "only a fool says that he fears death" (ὥστε μάταιος ὁ λέγων δεδιέναι τὸν θάνατον, *LM* 125). Under the Epicurean schema, to follow Epicurus' dicta was to practice wisdom; to disregard them was folly. Horace, by acting the fool, suggests that he is knowingly disregarding the Epicurean philosophy that undergirded his counsel in *Odes* 1.24. Such a reading is strengthened by careful analysis of the preceding line as well. In his *Epistles*, Horace himself defines foolishness (*stultitia*) as the antithesis of wisdom: "Virtue is to flee vice, and wisdom is first and foremost to be free from foolishness" (*virtus est vitium fugere et sapientia prima / stultitia caruisse*, *Ep.* 1.1.41-42). Horace's exhortation to "mix folly with your plans, for it is sweet to be foolish in the proper place" (*misce stultitiam consiliis, dulce est desipere in loco*, 4.12.27-8) clearly has deeper philosophic resonances. Under the Epicurean philosophy that informed his criticism in *Odes* 1.24, Horace's post-mortem apostrophe is folly in the deepest sense—it knowingly ignores reality. This is his acknowledged foolishness, yet does Horace's response to the death of a friend truly fall victim to his own previous criticism? I argue no, because Horace does not seek to resurrect Vergil, but to memorialize and immortalize a friend and a friendship. Horace's avoidance of 1.24's *nefas* may be seen in the ode's climax.

Horace does not fully endorse such a foolish response to death; he adds a caveat. It may be sweet to indulge in grief-induced folly, but only if practiced in the “proper place.” Where is folly’s fit abode? I argue that Horace believes one may only ignore the reality of death within the realm of a poem. True to his craft, Horace fashions an image, rather than presents an argument to make this point. Horace does not invite an actual Vergilius to a drinking party; he invokes Vergil’s literary persona to share in a poetic dialogue. Poetry functions unencumbered by death because poets’ personae can meet in the intertextual space created by allusion to one another. As Strauss-Clay points out, when these two poet’s textual personae meet at this literary symposium, “the dialogue of these two poet-friends, which informed their lives and their work, is momentarily reanimated – through the imagination, through poetry.”<sup>43</sup> The symposium, as an instantiation of poetic embrace, commemorates and immortalizes Horace and Vergil’s friendship.

Such commemoration points to the Epicurean practice of commemorating the dead. Diskin Clay provides a thorough examination of the Epicurean practice of commemorating the dead, primarily through the festival meal.<sup>44</sup> These commemorative

---

<sup>43</sup> Strauss-Clay 2002: 134

<sup>44</sup> Clay 1998: 55-74.

meals were ordained by Epicurus himself in his last will and testament, where he institutes five Epicurean festivals.<sup>45</sup> Clay notes that for many Epicurean detractors these commemorative meals were seen as contradictory with Epicurus' philosophy. If death is nothing and an Epicurean ought to live unknown (*λάθε βιώσας*), how does one account for these meals in which deceased Epicureans are commemorated? In many ways, the contradiction one senses in Horace's post-mortem poems to Vergil is mirrored in the foundations of Epicureanism itself. Clay, however, offers a succinct account of why these feasts were so foundational to the Epicurean community: "They meant nothing to the dead; but of the living members of the Epicurean community, both of the 'family' and those who lived outside the garden, they made a single body."<sup>46</sup> The communal and commemorative meals are aimed not at the dead but at the living; they help to form a community and "family" out of a philosophical sect.

The living-centered focus of Epicurean commemoration is sensed in a fragment attributed to Epicurus:

ἡδὺ ἢ φίλου μνήμη τεθνηκότος.

---

<sup>45</sup> The first is for his parents and brothers; the second for Epicurus' own birthday; the third is for Metrodorus and Epicurus; the fourth is for Epicurus' brothers' birthdays; the fifth is for Polyainos' birthday. For a more detailed discussion of these feasts and their role in the Epicurean community, see Clay 1998: 67-74.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* 74.

## Fragment 213

“The memory of a deceased friend is sweet.”<sup>47</sup>

Strikingly, to my mind, the conclusion of *Odes* 4.12 may refer to this sentiment. Horace’s *dulce* translates ἡδὺν and both words begin their clauses, although both are predicate nominatives. In 4.12, it is folly that is sweet—a philosophical folly that ignores the metaphysics of death within the realm of poetry. Yet this folly is not without its own philosophical foundation. As long as Horace does not actually think or imagine that he might invite the dead Vergil, as long as he merely remembers and re-imagines their friendship, he is fully in line with the other half of Epicurean thought on death and our reaction to it. Horace memorializes Vergil and their friendship by playing out the Epicurean practice of commemorative symposia.

So, has Horace contradicted his own advice in 1.24 by addressing Vergil as if alive in 4.12? I believe not. Rather than being contradictory, the consolatory conclusion of *Odes* 4.12 (“it is sweet to act the fool in the proper place”) tempers that of 2.14 (“It is hard; but whatever is forbidden to correct becomes easier to bear with patience”). Horace does not forget that it is “forbidden to correct” death; rather, he has changed his consolatory mode. Like the tension between Epicurean philosophy and Epicurean prac-

---

<sup>47</sup> = Plutarch, *non posse* 1105E

tice, Horace balances views of how one *ought* to mourn and how one might *actually* mourn in these two poems. One ought to mourn with stoic patience, remembering those who still live, yet sometimes one needs to mourn imaginatively and foolishly. In order to console himself, Horace imagines and invokes Vergil's literary persona to share in a poetic dialogue, thereby creating a poetic space in which the folly of such a post-mortem invocation is permitted. If, in *Odes* 1.24, Horace reminds Vergil that a good friend remains, in *Odes* 4.12 Horace may be reminding himself that his good friend's poetry, and therefore his persona, still remains as well.

## WORKS CITED

- Armstrong, David. 1993. "The Addressees of the *Ars Poetica*: Herculaneum, the Pisones and Epicurean Protreptic." *MD* 31: 185-230.
- . 2003. Introduction to *Vergil, Philodemus, and the Augustans*, edited by David Armstrong, Jeff Fish, Patricia A. Johnston, and Marilyn B. Skinner. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 2008. "'Be Angry and Sin Not': Philodemus Versus the Stoics on Natural Bites and Natural Emotions." In *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*. Edited by J. T. Fitzgerald. New York: Routledge.
- Belmont, David. 1980. "The Vergilius of Horace, Ode 4.12." *TAPA* 110: 1-20.
- Bowra, Cecil M. 1928. "Horace, Odes IV. 12." *CR* 42.5: 165-67.
- Campbell, John S. 1987. "*Animae Dimidium Meae*: Horace's Tribute to Vergil." *CJ* 82.4: 314-18.
- Castner, Catherine J. 1988. *Prosopography of Roman Epicureans from the Second Century B.C. to the Second Century A.D.*, Studien zur klassischen Philologie 34. Frankfurt: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.
- Clay, Diskin. 1998. "Individual and Community in the First Generation of the Epicurean School," in *Paradosis and Survival: Three Chapters in the Epicurean Philosophy*. 55-57. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Commager, Steele. 1957. "The Function of Wine in Horace's Odes." In *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 88: 68-80.
- . 1995. *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- DeWitt, Norman W. 1935. "Parresiastic Poems of Horace." *CP* 30.4: 312-19.

- Duckworth, George. 1956. "Animae Dimidium Meae: Two Poets of Rome," *TAPA* 87: 281-316.
- Fraenkel, Eduard. 1981. *Horace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garrison, Daniel, editor. 1991. *Horace: Epodes and Odes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Gigante, Marcello and Mario Capasso. 1989. "Il ritorno di Virgilio a Ercolano." *SIFC*, 3d ser., 7: 3-6.
- Johann, H. T. 1968. *Trauer und Trost: eine quellen-und strukturanalytische Untersuchung der philosophischen Trostschriften über den Tod*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink.
- Johnson, Timothy. 1994. "Horace, C. IV.12: Vergilius at the symposion." *Vergilius* 40: 49-66.
- . 2004. *A Symposion of Praise: Horace Returns to Lyric in Odes IV*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Katz, J. 2008. "Vergil translates Aratus: Phaenomena 1-2 and *Georgics* 1.1-2." *MD* 60: 105-23.
- Khan, H. Akbar. 1999. "Horace's ode to Vergil on the Death of Quintilius: 1.24." In *Why Horace? A Collection of Interpretations*. Edited by William Anderson. Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.
- Konstan, David, Diskin Clay, Clarence E. Glad, Johan Thom, and James Ware, eds. 1998. *Philodemus On Frank Criticism*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Lowrie, Michelle. 1994. "Lyric's 'Elegos' and the Aristotelian Mean: Horace, C. 1.24, 1.33, and 2.9." *CW* 87.5: 377-94.
- Margheim, Stephen. 2012. "Banking on Friendship: Mercantile Language and Epicureanism in Horace's Odes Concerning Vergil."

- Moritz, L. A. 1969. "Horace's Virgil." *G&R* 16.2: 174-93.
- Nisbet, Robert G. M. and Margaret Hubbard. 1990. *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nisbet, R. G. M. and Niall Rudd. 2004. *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book III*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1986. "Therapeutic arguments: Epicurus and Aristotle." In *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*. Edited by Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oberhelman, Steven and David Armstrong. 1995. "Satire as Poetry and the Impossibility of Metathesis in Horace's Satires." In *Philodemus and Poetry*. Edited by Dirk Obbink. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pasquali, Giorgio. 1920. *Orazio Lirico*. Firenze: Le Monnier.
- Porter, David H. 1972. "Horace, Carmina, IV, 12," *Latomus* 31: 71-87.
- Putnam, Michael. 1993. "The Languages of Horace *Odes* 1.24." *CJ* 88.2: 123-35.
- . 2006. *Poetic Interplay: Catullus & Horace*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Quinn, Kenneth. 1963. *Latin Explorations. Critical Studies in Roman Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, R. Alden. 1997. *Poetic Allusion and Poetic Embrace in Ovid and Virgil*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Strauss-Clay, Jenny. 2002. "Sweet Folly: Horace, *Odes* 4:12 and the evocation of Virgil." 129-45. In *Horace and Greek Lyric Poetry*. Edited by Michael Paschalis. University of Crete – Department of Philology.

Thibodeau, Philip. 2003. "Can Vergil Cry? Epicureanism in Horace Odes 1.24." *CJ* 98.3: 243-256.

Thomas, Richard F. 1998. *Georgics Vol. 1: Books 1-2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---. 2001. *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---. 2011. *Commentary on Odes IV and Carmen Saeculare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Usener, H. 1987. *Epicurea*. North Stratford: Irvington Publishers Inc.

Warren, James. 2004. *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

West, David A. 1995. *Horace Odes I. Carpe Diem. Text, Translation and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.